

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

ANNA LAWTON LUMSDEN PARKER
(MRS. JOHN HARVEY PARKER)

INTERVIEW 402.2

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400 and I am interviewing Anna Lawton Lumsden Parker (Mrs. John Harvey Parker), interview number 402.2. This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, 3 September 1991. We are in Mrs. Parker's home at 213 New Street in New Bern.

MAREA KAFER FOSTER: Now, Mrs. Parker, tell me what you can remember about the Depression, about money.

MRS. PARKER: When the banks closed, I had thirteen cents and John had nineteen cents. I gave him a penney so he could get a shave.
(laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Now, was Mr. Parker able to earn a living for ya'll?

MRS. PARKER: Oh yes, he was working, and it wasn't long he got some money in his pocket because he was in the tire business, sold automobile tires and automobile gasoline, the gasoline for cars.

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh.

MRS. PARKER: And he had filling stations all around and besides bulk plants where a boat would come in and bring the gasoline.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh!

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh, to the different bulk plants. Then they had trucks from there to go to fill up the filling stations.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. Well, did you have to help him in any way earn any money?

MRS. PARKER: No, I never worked after I was married. I worked before but not after.

ANNE HORNER: Didn't you make wedding cakes and stuff like that?

MRS. PARKER: Oh yes, I used to make wedding cakes and birthday cakes, but that was my own money. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, that was your spending money!

MRS. PARKER: I just did it for pleasure. I enjoyed making pretty things. I always did. So I used to make a lot of birthday cakes and wedding cakes and never charged more than five or ten dollars for them.

MAREA FOSTER: How 'bout that. Do you remember who you made the cakes for?

MRS. PARKER: I know I made one of the prettiest ones for Clara Seifert. Mr. Seifert used to be here with the coca-cola people.

MAREA FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. PARKER: Um huh. And Clara was married and lived next door to us when we lived on the river and I made her birthday cake and she said it was the prettiest cake she ever saw.

ANNE HORNER: Wedding cake.

MRS. PARKER: I made little cakes and then the big one and sitting on those little cakes were doll babies dressed like her bridesmaids.

MAREA FOSTER: So this was her wedding cake that you made instead of a birthday.

MRS. PARKER: Wedding cake for Clara Seifert. And I used to bake a lot of wedding cakes and a lot of birthday cakes. Cherry Point was here then. I don't think that was real early, but anyway, I used to get quite a lot of orders to make wedding cakes and birthday cakes.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, that is so interesting!

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Go ahead Anne.

ANNE HORNER: Didn't you make Billy Hand and Katherine's?

MRS. PARKER: Huh?

ANNE HORNER: Did you make Billy and Katherine Hand's wedding cake?

MRS. PARKER: Katherine who?

ANNE HORNER: Hand. Billy and Katherine Hand, didn't you make their wedding cake?

MRS. PARKER: I don't remember.

ANNE HORNER: Elizabeth Hand's son.

MRS. PARKER: I guess I did cause I was living over there. I'm not sure about that, don't say it.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

ANNE HORNER: Well, I know you helped with the wedding.

MRS. PARKER: I helped with the wedding. I set the table and did the things, set the flowers and all that for Elizabeth Hand when Billy was married. I lived across the street from Mrs. Hand.

MAREA FOSTER: I see.

MRS. PARKER: And I got a lot out of her, cause I was just married then and saw her a lots. So I used to fix her flowers cause I always did love to play with flowers.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh how interesting!

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Now can you tell me, if you remember, and I sure

hope you do, how much things cost during the Depression? You remember the cost of butter or eggs or...

MRS. PARKER: No, I don't. I remember when the banks closed. I had seventeen cents and John had nineteen cents and I gave him a penny to get shaved. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. (laughter)

ANNE HORNER: Yeah, but he had some checks that were out too; your hospital bill and he had paid for the bulk gasoline, the bulk oil.

MRS. PARKER: Oh yes. What do you mean about gas?

ANNE HORNER: You told me that the checks closed before they cleared through the bank. The bank closed before the checks cleared and he had to make them good the second time.

MRS. PARKER: Yeah. Yes. Right many checks didn't go through the bank I know.

MAREA FOSTER: Do you remember how that was handled at that time?

MRS. PARKER: The banks went busted, you know, here, and then I had seventeen cents and John had nineteen.

MAREA FOSTER: We'll go on to something else. But as far as knowing how much butter cost a pound or eggs a dozen...

MRS. PARKER: I know at one time they were a penny a piece, twelve cents. We paid ten cents when I was first married for eggs.

ANNE HORNER: Twelve cents a dozen.

MAREA FOSTER: Good gracious! Twelve cents, a penny a piece.

MRS. PARKER: Cause I remember they were a penny a piece at one

time. I don't know when really, but I just remember they were a penny a piece when I used to cook them.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Mrs. Parker, during the Depression, were you able to still have someone to help you in the house?

MRS. PARKER: Yes, I had a black maid that worked for me for twenty-five years. Her name was Daisey and she was working during that Depression.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, you had to keep her more or less because she couldn't have supported her family if you hadn't.

MRS. PARKER: No. She lived, John built her a house and she was paying for it with five dollars a month, five dollars a week, or something. (laughter) So I don't know whether she ever got it paid before she died.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, I'm sure Mr. Parker forgave that debt if she hadn't. (laughter)

MRS. PARKER: Cause she knew she was working for me and that made her stay on the job. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: And probably when she died he paid her funeral bill.

MRS. PARKER: Well, she had insurance for that.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, she did?

MRS. PARKER: All niggers, all blacks, always have insurance for their burial so they always have a good burial.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. PARKER: That's one thing they start, when they want work

they get insurance for their burial.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, I've heard that.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. I know we all went to Daisey's funeral and it was two pews of white people. She lived out there close to us when we lived out on the river and she lived out just walking distance from us. And John built the house for her and then she was paying him for it. I don't think she got it paid, but it didn't make any difference cause John wanted me to have Daisey. MAREA

FOSTER: That's right.

MRS. PARKER: Cause she worked for me for twenty-five years.

MAREA FOSTER: That's a long time.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. And then we moved to town, and I was sitting there eating breakfast and they called and said Daisey was sick and they called back in a few minutes said Daisey's dead, so then John and I got up and went out there to her house. I wouldn't look at her but John did. I just don't look at people like that. I want to remember them when they're alive.

MAREA FOSTER: I do too, when they're happy and smiling.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

ANNE HORNER: She had a stroke and she passed on.

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh. Well, I know we talked about World War II the last time that I was here...

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: ...and you told me that you knitted for the Red Cross.

MRS. PARKER: Yes. I went down to the Parish Hall and I had charge of the Red Cross. It was a woman here that was a doctor's wife. I've been trying to think of her name. She lived on East Front Street the house near right on the corner of New Street, it's not New, is it New, Short Street I think it was, and she lived there and she was in charge of the Red Cross. And when the war came, they took it away from her and asked me would I be chairman of the Red Cross. So then I opened up twice a week. We had meetings at the Parish Hall, the Episcopal Parish Hall, and we made sweaters and helmets. I made one pair of gloves. I remember that cause I had such a good time making the fingers.
(laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) That's the hardest part to me.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, do you remember rationing during that time?

MRS. PARKER: The what?

MAREA FOSTER: Rationing. Did you have to use coupons?

MRS. PARKER: I was living out four miles from New Bern and I could only go to town with gasoline twice a week. I had three gallons twice a week and that would take all three to come to town and go back. So the days we opened the Parish Hall for knitting, I would come in that day; I'd get the groceries and do what I had to do.

ANNE HORNER: Well, how about your shoes and sugar and coffee?

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

ANNE HORNER: Wasn't that all rationed too? Didn't you have to have stamps to get shoes?

MRS. PARKER: You had to have stamps for coffee.

ANNE HORNER: And sugar.

MRS. PARKER: And sugar.

MAREA FOSTER: And clothes.

MRS. PARKER: And clothes. And I had been making wedding cakes and birthday cakes. So John told them I was doing that, so I got my sugar all I wanted.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I see.

MRS. PARKER: Because I was making, cooking, you know, making cakes.

MAREA FOSTER: So you got extra coupons for...

MRS. PARKER: I got extra sugar cause I could make the cakes and the birthday cakes.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, did you ever have to have black-out curtains at your windows?

MRS. PARKER: Oh yes! One that we had, one black-out, I know I wasn't living in New Bern, but I don't remember living in New Bern with a black-out.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: But I was at Ocean View one time down there.

ANNE HORNER: That's World War I that she's talking about.

MRS. PARKER: And they were walking up and down the beach; they would have a dog and a man walking cause they didn't want anybody to come in, and I know we had one window they could see a crack in and they came in and told us to fix it.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay, and this was at Ocean View during World War I?

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: All right. But for World War II...

MRS. PARKER: That must have been World War II, wasn't it?

ANNE HORNER: No, that was when you were living in Virginia Beach.

MRS. PARKER: Huh?

MAREA FOSTER: That was World War I that you just told me about.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: But I didn't know if you had to have black-out curtains here during World War II.

MRS. PARKER: Oh yeah. I was not living here, I was living up north in New Jersey.

MAREA FOSTER: In Ocean View at that time, okay.

MRS. PARKER: Ocean View. And you see, that was on the water.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. But otherwise, are there any memories, other memories about World War II besides knitting for the Red Cross?

MRS. PARKER: Yes, I used to do right much knitting and I would teach the knitting.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

ANNE HORNER: Isn't that when Cherry Point was started, during World War II?

MAREA FOSTER: Yes.

MRS. PARKER: Yeah. That was after I was married and came back to New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Right.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: And Cherry Point was started.

MRS. PARKER: Started. And we had it at the Parish Hall in the Episcopal Church.

MAREA FOSTER: Right, okay.

MRS. PARKER: But for the first world war, I was living up there and I was knitting gloves.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. Cause I would knit on the street corner going back and forth to work.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh! I didn't know you worked when you lived in Ocean View. What type work did you do?

MRS. PARKER: I was a bookkeeper.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh you were?!

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. And then I was in Norfolk. I was a bookkeeper before I was married for Murray Brothers. I worked for Murray Brothers three years in Norfolk.

MAREA FOSTER: Now what type business was Murray Brothers?

MRS. PARKER: It was a ship chandler that they had tugboats and barges.

MAREA FOSTER: I see.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. Like a big grocery store. Their orders would be a hundred or two-hundred dollars when they would go out, and I'd write them up and collect rents and all from them. And I used

to keep their books. Their mail would come through the store. And there was one person it came post marked New Bern, and I always had a fit to find out who they were writing to. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: I bet so.

MRS. PARKER: So finally, I did find, it was from Boody Hawk would write to the boy she married.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh Boody Hawk did?! Do you remember who she married?

MRS. PARKER: What was his name?

MAREA FOSTER: Cause I can't remember his name. (.... Becton)

MRS. PARKER: I don't remember his name, but I used to get his mail and would stay there. A lot of people were on those boats would bring their mail there and come by there to pick it up, and when I saw New Bern on the post mark I almost had a fit to find out who it was.

MAREA FOSTER: I see!

MRS. PARKER: So after awhile I found out it was Boody Hawk. And then he came to New Bern the same week I was married and came to New Bern. He came and married Boody Hawk the same week I was married in Norfolk.

ANNE HORNER: You reckon Boody's still living?

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah, Boody's still living. Uh huh.

ANNE HORNER: Does she go by the name of Hawk?

MRS. PARKER: Is Boody Hawk still living?

MAREA FOSTER: Yes mam, and she still goes by Boody Hawk. Her

real name is Mildred if I'm not mistaken.

MRS. PARKER: What is the name?

MAREA FOSTER: Her real name is Mildred.

MRS. PARKER: Mildred.

MAREA FOSTER: But everybody's called her Boody all her life.

ANNE HORNER: But she doesn't go by her married name?

MAREA FOSTER: No, uh uh. So when you were working for...

MRS. PARKER: Murray Brothers.

MAREA FOSTER: Murray Brothers, you were the bookkeeper and...

MRS. PARKER: I was the bookkeeper.

MAREA FOSTER: ...the collector, and you were also, I can say were the post mistress too when you kept...

MRS. PARKER: Oh no, it wasn't the post mistress, his mail just came there.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, okay, the mail lady then.

MRS. PARKER: And then a lot of people on those boats, he was on a tugboat, and they would come and buy gas from Murray Brothers and they'd pick up the mail, was right there.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I see, you would just hold the mail.

MRS. PARKER: Just hold the mail.

MAREA FOSTER: Until they came.

MRS. PARKER: See, it was right many of them was getting their mail there when they'd come back to get gassed up to go on the tugboats, tugboats and barges.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, that is so interesting.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. Yeah. But when the mail kept coming in from New Bern, I almost had a fit to find who it was. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Would they ever share the news with you?

MRS. PARKER: Huh?

MAREA FOSTER: Would they ever share the news with you?

MRS. PARKER: Not much.

MAREA FOSTER: Not much.

MRS. PARKER: But some of them would come. Some of the cooks in there that I, see they had so much to buy groceries and they would forget how much they had (credit), they'd come in and I'd help them find out how much they could have more to buy.

MAREA FOSTER: I see.

MRS. PARKER: And real often one of them would bring me a pie.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, how nice!

MRS. PARKER: Especially if they were tied up at the dock. See, we were on a river.

MAREA FOSTER: Uh huh.

MRS. PARKER: Was right on the edge of the river on Front Street and the river was back of us, and sometimes they were tied up in the back here and the cook would bring me a pie or something because I helped them to find out how much more they could buy of groceries.

MAREA FOSTER: That is fascinating. Now, Mrs. Parker, are there any other memories that you would like to share with us?

MRS. PARKER: No, you already know about my being in jail.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes, I certainly do. (laughter) And I just love

it!

MRS. PARKER: And Rose was lucky enough to go home before we went.
(laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: She certainly was. She certainly was. Anne, anything you can add to it? Have we left anything out? One thing I will ask you, if you remember anything about politics in New Bern, if you care to comment on the politics in New Bern.

MRS. PARKER: I wasn't much on politics.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: I left that up to somebody else. I know before I was married I never paid much attention to it, and I know I let John do his own.

MAREA FOSTER: Yeah.

ANNE HORNER: Did he tell you who to vote for?

MRS. PARKER: What did she say?

ANNE HORNER: Did he tell you who to vote for?

MRS. PARKER: No! I couldn't tell John anything. (laughter)

ANNE HORNER: I said did he...

MAREA FOSTER: Did he tell you?

MRS. PARKER: No. I would ask him.

MAREA FOSTER: You would ask him.

MRS. PARKER: I would ask him because he was one that thought I had my mind of my own. And I'd ask him who I should vote for, but he never told me unless I asked him.

MAREA FOSTER: Um huh. You should make up your own mind.

MRS. PARKER: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: But you see some of them I didn't have any idea who they were. And sometime we were voting against each other.

ANNE HORNER: Do you remember some of the men that were in the early, when John was real active in the Masons, and who were some of the ones that was...

MRS. PARKER; They were all mighty nice to us, because after John died they kept bringing me boxes of candy...

MAREA FOSTER: Yes mam.

MRS. PARKER: and they still bring me a box of candy every Christmas.

MAREA FOSTER: I know they do.

ANNE HORNER: But I'm talking about way back when you all used to go on so many trips and when John was...

MRS. PARKER: Oh, we used to go on so many Masonic trips.

ANNE HORNER: He was the state officer.

MRS. PARKER: He was head of the North Carolina Masonic Masons.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay, he was a Grand Master?

MRS. PARKER: No, he wasn't Grand Master.

MAREA FOSTER: No?

MRS. PARKER: He was a representator of North Carolina.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: State representator. When we go to those meetings he was state representator, and I'd meet a lot of people. And one

family I knew from, Wannamaker, Claudia Wannamaker from South Carolina. We were always there too same time and she was very interesting.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, how nice.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. And there was one named Smith. I can't remember her first name, but Smith, she lived here in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Smith---

MRS. PARKER: She was Smith and she lived way over on the other side of New Bern and I never knew her except at these Masonic meetings.

MAREA FOSTER: You're not thinking of Evelyn Smith from Beaufort are you, Harvey Smith's wife?

MRS. PARKER: No, not Beaufort. She was here in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Here in New Bern. I can't think. I really can't.

MRS. PARKER: I don't remember her first name. We called her Smith, Smithy, or something like that.

MAREA FOSTER: Any other Masonic memories you'd like to share with us?

MRS. PARKER: And there was another family, was Minnie Pugh and we used to call her Minnie Pearl. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: Oh did you really?!

MRS. PARKER: Yeah. She was all full of life and joking all the time so we all got to calling her Minnie Pugh. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Now who was she married to?

MRS. PARKER: Dr. Pugh in Gastonia.

MAREA FOSTER: I see. I've heard of them.

MRS. PARKER: Have you? Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes mam.

MRS. PARKER: He was very active in the Masonic move.

MAREA FOSTER: Yes. Yes I have.

MRS. PARKER: And there was a Dr. Eldredge from Raleigh was another one and his wife is named Lucy, Lucy Eldredge. And they had a sister, he had a sister, Miss Eldredge was very nice lady too. And we always go to Raleigh we'd meet up with them.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, is there anything else that either of you can think of that you would like to talk about?

ANNE HORNER: Well, I was thinking about when John went to the State College it was a military school.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, that college was?

MRS. PARKER: Oh yes. We used to go to State College. He graduated from State College and he was always very active, going back to the reunions. So anyway, at the very last reunion there was only six of them there. He went so long til just six was living.

ANNE HORNER: But tell her about when he went there it was a military school and they wore uniforms.

MRS. PARKER: When what?

ANNE HORNER: When he went to State College it was a military school...

MRS. PARKER: Yes.

ANNE HORNER: ...and he wore uniforms.

MRS. PARKER: No. If he did, I didn't, cause that was before I was married so I don't know.

ANNE HORNER: (showing picture to interviewer)...cause there's a picture of him.

MAREA FOSTER: You don't know.

MRS. PARKER: I imagine he did, it was a military school I know that.

MAREA FOSTER: North Carolina State University was a military school?

MRS. PARKER: State College was military, uh huh, at one time.

MAREA FOSTER: At one time.

ANNE HORNER: And he graduated in 1916.

MAREA FOSTER: And Mr. Parker graduated from...

MRS. PARKER: Mr. Parker did.

MAREA FOSTER:at State College in 1916.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

ANNE HORNER: I think that's when he graduated.

MAREA FOSTER: That's really fascinating.

MRS. PARKER: And he had a brother that graduated from there and he put him through college.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. Anything else, Anne, do you know?

ANNE HORNER: I can't think right now.

MRS. PARKER: John had three, there were three men; Will and John and Frank, and John put Frank through State College. Frank had two girls; Anne and Frances Parker and I still keep up with them.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, that's wonderful!

MRS. PARKER: They're John's nieces. They always call me on

Christmas. And Frances lives in Raleigh and June and July she comes down here we go down and eat crabs down to Oriental.

MAREA FOSTER: How nice!

MRS. PARKER: One of them lives there.

MAREA FOSTER: You enjoy that.

MRS. PARKER: And Anne lives in Martinsville, Virginia, but she keeps up with me by telephone or calling or something like that.

MAREA FOSTER: I've heard you speak of Anne.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh, Anne and then Frances. I see Frances more than I do Anne.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay. Anne, anything?

ANNE HORNER: I can't think of anything else.

MRS. PARKER: They used to when they were little girls they would both come. They lived in Raleigh and they both would come and spend summer with us when we lived out on the river.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I know they enjoyed that!

MRS. PARKER: Every summer. The day school closed, the next day they were with us.

MAREA FOSTER: And you'd have them all summer.

MRS. PARKER: I'd have them all summer, so I felt like I had children.

MAREA FOSTER: I know you did! Kept you busy!

MRS. PARKER: And if they couldn't get a ride, they came on the bus. I went to meet them one time on the bus and one was sitting on one side and one was sitting on the other side because they both wanted

a window. (laughter)

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Well, I can understand that.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Okay.

MRS. PARKER: I can see them right now when I got to the bus stop, they would come over there and call me there, and they'd call up and say, "Aunt Lawton, we're coming on the bus."

MAREA FOSTER: (laughter) Oh, that's nice.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh. Cause I felt like they were all my children.

MAREA FOSTER: Certainly you did.

MRS. PARKER: And Frances lives in Raleigh so I see her some, but Anne will call me once in a long while, but Frances calls me up every Sunday.

MAREA FOSTER: That's wonderful.

MRS. PARKER: That is nice.

MAREA FOSTER: It sure is.

MRS. PARKER: Uh huh.

MAREA FOSTER: Well, Mrs. Parker, I want to thank you so very, very much for consenting to these interviews and I have enjoyed every single minute of it!

MRS. PARKER: But I've enjoyed it just as much!

MAREA FOSTER: Well, thank you, and thank you...

MRS. PARKER: It's nice to get re-memories that will come back.

MAREA FOSTER: It certainly is, and everybody is going to enjoy these memories. And I want to thank your dear friend Anne Horner for

being with us and sharing the memories, because you've told her so many, many things.

MRS. PARKER: Yeah.

MAREA FOSTER: And she was able to bring up subjects that I never would have thought about. So I thank you Mrs. Parker and you, Mrs. Horner, very much.

MRS. PARKER: Thank you so much. I've enjoyed every minute of it.

MAREA FOSTER: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW