

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

WALLACE BOOKER

INTERVIEW 904

This is Dorothy Richardson representing Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 900. I am interviewing Mr. Wallace Booker, interview number 904. This is being conducted on August 5, 1992. We are at 413 Bern Street, New Bern, North Carolina.

Dorothy Richardson: Mr. Booker, will you tell us when you were born, and where, your brothers and sisters, and your parents?

Mr. Booker: I was born July 18, 1915 in Richmond, Virginia. I come from a family of just my parents and myself, no brothers or sisters. My father was a blacksmith and mechanic in Richmond. My mother taught school in the Henrico County school system prior to her marriage. After she got me started, she returned to teaching where she taught until she died in 1955. My mother was Lucy Wallace Booker. My father was Henry Wilson Booker. Both of them were natives of Richmond, in fact, my roots are in Richmond.

DR: Did you go to school there, Mr. Booker?

Mr. Booker: I attended the public schools in Richmond. I graduated from the Armstrong High School in 1932. I attended college at Virginia State College in Petersburg, graduating from there in 1936.

DR: What was your major?

Mr. Booker: My major in college was chemistry. I had the desire to be a chemist, but I was not successful in getting employment as a chemist, so, I ended up being in the field of education.

DR: Was the famous Booker in your lineage?

Mr. Booker: No. That's a question I've been asked many, many times. You're referring to Booker T. Washington, I believe. I don't

know where the line of Booker's came from, but it has been a small family. My grandparents had three boys; Henry, who was my father, James, and Harry. So, it's just the three boys. Henry, who was my father, had one child, which was me. James had a set of twins, a boy and a girl, and another girl. So, it's been a small family from the very beginning.

DR: What did you do when you graduated from college if you couldn't go into chemistry?

Mr. Booker: I ended up in teaching. There was a choice of between either collecting insurance, which never appealed to me, or teaching. Teaching did not appeal to me at that time.

DR: Teaching was a field that was really open for you.

Mr. Booker: Yes, it was open. I taught originally in Galax, Virginia. Then, I came to New Bern. Mr. J. T. Barber was in need of a math teacher, and so he had contacted my school. My school, the Virginia State College, was one of the places he contacted. The person in charge of making recommendations recommended me to Mr. Barber, and I came here to New Bern.

DR: Why did you decide to come to New Bern?

Mr. Booker: Because a job was available.

DR: And times were hard?

Mr. Booker: And times were hard. We were just coming out of the Depression in 1938. We were barely beginning to come out of it about 1937, but in 1938 we were still feeling the effects of that long Depression that started way back in the stock market crash of '29.

DR: How did you get to New Bern, Mr. Booker?

Mr. Booker: That's a interesting fact. I caught a train in Richmond and didn't know anything about New Bern. I had not been in this area prior to that. So, I caught a train in Richmond one night around ten o'clock, and rode, and rode til I got to Rocky Mount where it was time to change. So, I changed trains in Rocky Mount and then I had to wait for the next train. I caught a train in Rocky Mount, and that train ran from Rocky Mount to Goldsboro, and I got off again.

I had to wait until about seven in the morning. I had ridden and sat up in the stations all night long, and about seven in the morning I caught a train to New Bern.

DR: Got off up at the depot.

Mr. Booker: Yes, at the depot down there. It's where the old station is.

DR: And you looked around.

Mr. Booker: I looked around and I shook my head, but I'm still here! That was in 1938 which represents fifty-four years next month.

That's quite a life time I've spent here. In fact, I've spent more time here than I have in Richmond.

DR: In growing up.

Mr. Booker: Right.

DR: Had they found a place for you to stay?

Mr. Booker: That was another problem. I was told to get in touch with Mr. Barber. Now, Mr. Barber was the principal of West Street School.

DR: What month was this now?

Mr. Booker: September.

DR: Hot!

Mr. Booker: Yes. Principals usually looked out to get lodging for new teachers. Now, being a male, there weren't any available.

Mr. Barber, who lived on West Street, had a large house, and he usually lodged female teachers. So, there was no place available, and so, I became the first male to live there. And so, I lived with Mr. Barber for two years.

DR: Had school started?

Mr. Booker: I believe the day I arrived was the day of teacher's meeting and school started the next day. You see, you didn't have the pre-preparation that they have these days. You just started right after Labor Day. We had the teacher's meeting that afternoon and got directions.

DR: What kinds of things did they tell you? Do you remember, as a new teacher?

Mr. Booker: No, I don't recall anything specific, except, I had an assignment as an assistant football coach.

DR: You didn't know about that?

Mr. Booker: Oh yes, I knew about it after I got here. But as for knowing what to do as assistant to the football coach, that wasn't any problem.

DR: What grade were you assigned?

Mr. Booker: At that time the North Carolina schools went to grade

eleven, so grade eight was the first year of the high school. Most of my classes were with the first year of high school people. Of course, I did work with others. I don't think I taught any senior classes the first year. I taught largely mathematics, of course, like I said I majored in chemistry, but came in as a math teacher. Of course, I had a minor in math, and so, I taught the math and the science.

DR: How many students were in a classroom?

Mr. Booker: I imagine it was thirty or more. I don't recall specifically.

DR: They were drawn from the city of New Bern?

Mr. Booker: The city of New Bern, James City, down Highway 17, what we call the Rocky Run section, and Pleasant Hill section. There was probably a bus coming from farther down beyond James City down Highway 70, but generally it was New Bern. I don't think there was but one bus serving West Street school at the time.

DR: How many students do you remember were at West Street?

Mr. Booker: Well, West Street ran from grade one through the high school, the eleventh grade. I don't know how many. There were several hundred, I'll put it that way. There weren't a thousand.

DR: There was nothing about compulsory school attendance then, was there?

Mr. Booker: Well, they had the law on the books, compulsory school attendance, but it was just there. We didn't have an attendance officer to enforce it. In those days, teachers were required to visit homes, so that took care of a lot of the truancy of the smaller children.

The drop out rate was terrific. The boys dropped out. It was popular for the boys to join the Navy, so, we served the Navy quite a bit. Of course, others dropped out to work and things like that.

DR: Were your students pretty well prepared? How did you feel about the curriculum?

Mr. Booker: As such, I think we did a satisfactory job with them. Those that we did graduate, who were able to go off to other schools of higher education, were successful. We had people to go to some of the largest schools all over the country, so, we're proud of that.

DR: You had some famous football stars, didn't you?

Mr. Booker: Yes, we've had outstanding football stars. One who comes to mind right now is Bobby Mann, who was the son of Dr. Mann. He played with the Detroit Lions, I think. I can't think of any others right now, but there were a few who went on in other fields.

DR: In the curriculum, did you offer the same thing at West Street that was offered in the New Bern school? The same text books?

Mr. Booker: I will assume that it was the same even though it may not of been as much variety, but now, I say I assume because I was not acquainted with what was there. One thing that was noticeable, the students at West Street school did not get the new books. They got used books that had been used in New Bern school. The reason why we knew that is because the books had the names and writings of students from down there. So, by having similar books or the same books, we can assume that the courses were the same. You had certain required courses. The state required that, so I'm sure we had that. Now, the

electives, I know we didn't have as many electives as the New Bern High School did.

DR: What were some of the electives that you offered?

Mr. Booker: We had a course that was a one semester course in Negro history. I remember Mrs. Rivers taught that. She taught one semester of North Carolina history and one semester in Negro history.

The home economics, I don't know whether they had that or whether it was just out. We had brick laying I know. I don't know if they had brick laying or not. I wasn't familiar with the set up in the white schools. They were completely separated.

DR: You had no interaction?

Mr. Booker: No interaction. The superintendent at that time was Mr. H. B. Smith, and of course, he would conduct his meetings there. Then, he would conduct the other meetings at the white schools.

The teachers never met together, so they had no opportunity to know each other or to know what's going on. Therefore, I'm not able to give a definitive answer to that because I don't know. It's unfortunate.

DR: Vocational rehabilitation, what was that called in the schools then? The different kinds of practical education courses, and you had brick masonry, and things like shop. Did you have mechanics?

Mr. Booker: When I came here, we just had the brick masonry, as I recall, and home economics. Now, later on we were able to add what we called a pre-carpentry course, which was the second vocational course. I don't know about the girls off hand. I know at one time

we had one home economics teacher. Mrs. Carrie Fisher was the home economics teacher here. Later, there was a second teacher added, and so, they divided it up. I would say cooking was one half of the course, and the next course would be dealing with fabrics, dress making and draperies, and things like that. So, the teachers switched.

DR: I don't remember when this came in, but were you all required to recertification? Did you have to go back to school?

Mr. Booker: Yes, we had to do it. The teachers were all state certified. They had to have teaching certificates.

DR: Did you take the same one that the teachers at New Bern High School took?

Mr. Booker: Yes, it would be the same because it was the state requiring that. Of course, we went to different schools to get it because even then schools like East Carolina and Carolina and State were not accepting the black students. So, these teachers that we had in the black schools, attended Hampton, and Fayetteville State, and Shaw University. Some of them went farther; for example, when I came here, I continued my advancement. My education was somewhat different. I was still interested in chemistry, and so, I went to Cornell University and took courses during the summer in chemistry.

I did all my physical chemistry at Cornell. Then, I switched to the University of Pennsylvania and took more chemistry. This was a situation that caused an interruption in my work experience. At that time, black teachers were not paid very well. There was a difference in pay. When the war came, I was still earning less than \$100 a month.

DR: Was that just for the school year?

Mr. Booker: Yes, that was for a school year, which was an eight month year. We started in September and we ended in May, so, there was four months of the year you had to make provisions for. But we made it though.

DR: Were you married then?

Mr. Booker: No. I got married in 1940, two years after I came here.

DR: What was your wife's name?

Mr. Booker: My wife was Adelaide Fisher, who was a New Bern girl. She taught at West Street also.

DR: Then when she died, you married whom?

Mr. Booker: The present Nellie Hardin, who is my present wife.

DR: She's nice.

Mr. Booker: Yes, she's nice. I was very fortunate.

DR: Did you have to pay your own tuition to these colleges, or were there scholarships available?

Mr. Booker: When I came here, I still maintained Virginia citizenship for a time. Now, Virginia would rather pay me to go to another school somewhere else than to go to the University of Virginia, and so, I was able to get money that way. The white folks went to a great limits to keep us out of their schools, so they would pay the tuition. I left teaching and went to work with the United States Employment Services. This is during the war now. Of course, my salary was upped. That's why I left because of the low salary.

DR: Were you employed here?

Mr. Booker: No, I went back to Richmond to work and worked up there.

DR: What year was that?

Mr. Booker: 1943. I worked through December 1942, so after Christmas vacation, I did not return. I went to the Employment Service there.

DR: Did they have trouble here in getting teachers when men left?

Mr. Booker: Not to my knowledge because I understand they didn't have any difficulty in replacing me. They knew somebody who was unemployed and available, so, he stepped into the position I had vacated. Then, I got caught in the draft, and so, I went to the service.

DR: What branch were you in?

Mr. Booker: The Air Corp of the U. S. Army.

DR: What year was that?

Mr. Booker: 1945. I went in when the United States got nervous after Germany made their great push in the Remagen Forest in December 1944. I went into the military and came out in 1946. So, I stayed there less than two years. Then, I went back to the Employment Service when I came out.

DR: You didn't take advantage of the GI Bill?

Mr. Booker: Eventually, yes. I went to the Employment Service, returned there, because that's where I left to go to the service. I got to the point where I had been spoiled by having the summer's off, so I became dissatisfied there. I had to work twelve months of

the year! So, I returned to teaching. I was already married. My wife was here, and so, I came back to New Bern and found employment here.

DR: What grades were you teaching then when you returned?

Mr. Booker: They'd gone up to twelve years of school then, so, I had anything from nine through twelve; from freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. I was still doing the math and science.

DR: Did they offer chemistry?

Mr. Booker: Yes, they offered chemistry.

DR: But you didn't get to teach it?

Mr. Booker: No, I never taught chemistry here. I did teach classes in biology and general science, but I never taught chemistry or physics here. It might of been just as well because the lab facilities were pretty poor at that time.

DR: They really were at New Bern High, too.

Mr. Booker: Yes. In fact, they didn't have anything that we could really point to as a science laboratory. We did do biology over at West Street. When they built J. T. Barber School, they had the labs there, which were designed for it and set up for it. When I came here, like I said, I taught at West Street. Then, when they opened J. T. Barber, I moved from West Street to J. T. Barber.

DR: What year was J. T. Barber opened?

Mr. Booker: J. T. Barber opened in 1951, but, it was not built completely, so, we just had the seventh and eighth grades over there. It was about 1955 when the high school moved over there.

DR: I remember about the water situation. My husband was on the Board of Alderman, and I remember there was a lot of discussion.

Mr. Booker: Yes, there was quite a bit of it because there was no water or sewer lines over there. We just had to rough it for a long time. We finally got water and sewage in that area. In fact, the school, I think, was largely responsible for water and sewage getting into that community.

DR: But it was not readily available. Everybody wasn't sold on extending the water and sewage out there.

Mr. Booker: That's right. Well, when you say everybody wasn't in favor of it, it reminds me, going backwards a little bit, I was here before either of the housing projects were built. There's been quite a bit of objection to that. Particularly some of the people who have problems in renting property. They thought it was going to destroy their opportunity to rent their houses, so, they objected to building Craven Terrace and Trent Court.

DR: Trent Court was built first, right?

Mr. Booker: Yes, then Craven Terrace.

DR: But you did get water and sewage at J. T. Barber?

Mr. Booker: Yes, we got water. When it opened, we got the water, but, they used septic tanks initially. I can remember that poor janitor had a hard time with those septic tanks. He had problems quite often.

DR: There was someone in the black community that came over to see my husband, we were living over on Pollock Street, and he said, "those flies, same flies, fly downtown." Then, you stayed with J.

T. Barber for a while?

DR: When did you become principal?

Mr. Booker: When they opened J. T. Barber in 1951.

DR: You were the first principal?

Mr. Booker: Yes, I was the first principal there. I stayed with J. T. Barber until Mr. Danyus, who was principal at West Street Elementary School then because we moved to high school over at J. T. Barber, died in 1962. When we closed up for the Christmas holidays in 1962, I came back to West Street in January 1963. J. T. Barber was relatively small compared to West Street, which was the elementary school. It just had grades one through eight. I think West Street had over forty teachers in it at that time. Of course, it was a pay on the basis of a number of teachers, so that was quite a boost for me. So, I stayed over at West Street. They'd changed their name to F. R. Danyus in honor of Mr. Danyus who was a previous principal. I stayed there until 1974, I believe, when I went in the central office with Mr. Pittman as his assistant.

DR: Will Pittman.

Mr. Booker: Yes.

DR: What about the pay scale? When did that change for the black teachers?

Mr. Booker: I don't know. I will assume that it was somewhere in the forties because like I said, I left here because of more pay, and so, when I came back it was already changed.

DR: When the school system integrated, what year was that?

Mr. Booker: You know the Supreme Court ruled that the segregated school system was unconstitutional in 1954. Of course the powers that be, fought this all along and tried all sorts of things to circumvent this. I think integration finally hit New Bern about 1966.

DR: Was there any preparation for the teachers for the integration?

Mr. Booker: What type of preparation are you referring to?

DR: Meetings together for teachers and principals.

Mr. Booker: I'm sure there were some but none comes to mind as such. Now, Mr. MacDonald was superintendent at the time. Prior to that, the teachers met separately and the principals met separately.

Mr. MacDonald got to the point where he'd have all his principals together, so one meeting would serve his purpose. I can assume that teachers began to meet together committee wise, like that. Now, when school opened, you would have a general meeting, and that was the time that everybody met together, so, everybody got everything at one meeting. As I can recall, it was about 1966 when integration really began to become a reality.

DR: At that time had you been moved to Mr. Pittman's office?

Mr. Booker: No. I was over at West Street. West Street had a fire. There was resistance to integrating these schools together. I can remember some picketing going on up and down West Street.

DR: Was it whites or blacks?

Mr. Booker: It's whites. I remember one time in particular, parading up in front of Mr. MacDonald's office on New Street at the

time.

DR: White families?

Mr. Booker: Yes.

DR: What kind of things would they have on the picket signs?

Mr. Booker: I don't remember right now what the signs said.

There were white students there at the time of the fire, a small number.

They tried to make this by dividing. They had what you call a choice.

DR: A freedom of choice.

Mr. Booker: Yes, certain grades could go certain places. We ended up with trying to establish districts, and then, the seventh and eighth grades, some of them could choose to go to Central and some could choose to go to West Street. K through three went to Central, and four through six came to West Street. I believe they still had Duffyfield school in operation at that time too. I don't recall the year that that closed. They built a new school in Duffyfield at one time. Those years are kind of fuzzy in my mind right now.

DR: It was a hard time for you, wasn't it?

Mr. Booker: To a certain extent, yes; but a certain extent, that one would roll with the punches, I'll put it that way.

DR: You knew how to do that.

Mr. Booker: I tried anyway. We survived. They never did get me down.

DR: In the principals meetings, were the black principals hesitant to speak up?

Mr. Booker: No, not at all. There were only three; Mr. Danyus,

over here at West Street; Mr. Fields was there at Duffyfield; and I was at J. T. Barber. We had a good relationship. Mr. MacDonald was a man that I felt very confident and comfortable with. We didn't have any animosities or problems that put barriers between us. That made the system a system we're proud of and it was a system that, I think, the relationship with all the staff members worked well. When it came to the athletic program, we shared Kafer Park for football. Of course, they had Friday nights, and we had Thursday night if we were here the same week; if not, if they were out of town and we had a home game, there was no problem.

DR: That was prior to integration?

Mr. Booker: Yes. Of course after integration, New Bern High had its own field and we still used Kafer Park. J. T Barber had its own gym and New Bern High had its own gym, so there was no problem there.

DR: When the teachers were reassigned, how did that go?

Mr. Booker: It was a bitter pill for a number of us. I can remember a lot of them pleading and complaining and begging not to be reassigned.

DR: Being a principal, you had to listen.

Mr. Booker: And of course, I knew some of the teachers from the other schools who came to West Street. They told me they expressed fear in coming to a black school, but they got over that I think. I never had any problem with them. We got along well. Of course, it was initially a fear on their part just like it was a fear on the black peoples part. A teacher would go from West Street to Bangert

school, or West Street to Trent Park school. It's not easy to make changes.

DR: Not that drastic.

Mr. Booker: No.

DR: Or considered that drastic.

Mr. Booker: Yes, it's a drastic change because it called for a whole new way of thinking. You had to look at it that way. They were living separately and everything. I can say for the most part we were blessed because we didn't have a whole lot of static from parents. You would expect a lot of white parents to object. The thing about it, the teachers here were qualified people. They were able to do their job. They didn't have people that you couldn't depend on, who didn't know what they were doing. So, the administration was very successful in selecting personnel.

DR: That was done by the city board of education.

Mr. Booker: Yes, the city board. That was one of my primary duties when I went to the administrative office in 1975. I stayed there six years. I left and retired in 1981.

DR: What were some of the things your position called for when you went to the city board?

Mr. Booker: I was recruiting teachers, and establishing the curriculum. We were getting to the point where we were getting ready to go for Southern Association Accreditation, and so, I was instrumental in working with that. So, that was it.

DR: That was a job.

Mr. Booker: Yes, quite a task.

DR: Did you feel that by and large it worked out for the students at the beginning?

Mr. Booker: From my view point, yes. I had elementary children at that time. After the fire, we reorganized to have West Street school as a fifth grade school. They had built MacDonald School which had taken away the seventh and eighth pupils. Now the high school, the older children, I think if you pay too much attention to what you read in the newspaper, you'll get very upset and disturbed. But in seeing the relationship between children, it looked liked it was working all right. I can remember one situation, I don't know right now just what was happening, but school was closed because of disturbances. That was the time when Mr. Hunnicutt left here. He was principal at New Bern High. I could see when school closed, kids riding around together, both black and white, having a good time. There was turmoil in the high school.

DR: Was he a black or white principal?

Mr. Booker: He was white. Then, they took Mr. Fields over there, who settled things down and operated New Bern High until he retired, which made a world of difference. Mr. Hunnicutt apparently was not able to handle the integration process.

DR: It was hard for him.

Mr. Booker: Yes, it just didn't work for him. Mr. Fields is black, and after he went there, he turned the whole thing around. They named the old New Bern High in his honor. He succeeded me at

J. T. Barber when I came to West Street. Then, when they had the problem over at New Bern High, Mr. Hunnicutt left and Mr. Fields stepped in there and took over the school.

DR: Sometimes people just seem to be there and step forward, and everybody is not gifted that way.

Mr. Booker: That's right. He had a talent for that. He knew how to work with the teenagers, both white and black, so, he succeeded.

DR: There's never been a dress code in school, that I remember, has there?

Mr. Booker: No. Sometime I think they need one.

DR: Did you get many telephone calls at home from parents regarding school policies?

Mr. Booker: Yes. That was a real problem. I lived alone for almost nine years. It got to the point between five and seven each evening I would not answer the telephone because I was cooking, and I had ruined meals prior to that!

DR: You didn't take lunch at school?

Mr. Booker: No, I didn't eat. I just ate twice a day.

DR: What were some of the complaints?

Mr. Booker: You had all sorts of complaints; the children, discipline problems, dissatisfaction with rules and regulations, all sort of things that didn't need to be brought here.

DR: But you got them?

Mr. Booker: Disagreeing with teachers and all sorts of things.

DR: And you weren't the only one that got them.

Mr. Booker: No, I imagine not.

DR: What were some of the most difficult decisions you ever had to make regarding school?

Mr. Booker: The most difficult decision, I would say, would be discharging teachers for reasons. I had to do that. I'm thinking of one right now who was just down right disobedient; who refused to do what I demanded to be done. I had one who had a drinking problem, who I had to let go in the middle of the year. Another difficult problem I had, was in getting enough money to operate. The athletic program was a terrific headache. We suffered if it rained on a Friday night when we had a football game scheduled. I never had enough money. I had to depend on football game receipts to support the rest of the athletic programs. Anything we had, we just had to raise money for.

DR: And parents criticized that sometimes.

Mr. Booker: Yes, sometimes they criticized that because they recognized that it was diluting your mission, which you're suppose to be doing; yet, they'd expect all these activities. We had to buy uniforms. We had to buy equipment. Of course, we did have projects on from time to time, money fund raising projects. They were the big headache. Of course another big headache, was transportation. I can't forget that! That was a problem.

DR: We had an assistant superintendent up in Fayetteville. Bless his heart, he was just about ready to get out of teaching, and he still had fifteen years of teaching, because that is a headache.

Mr. Booker: That's right. They need to raise some, or get some

money to buy enough busses so that isn't necessary.

DR: During your term, what accomplishment or changes were made to improve schools that you feel were the most important?

Mr. Booker: The changes that I think were most significant was first the provision of the necessary facilities to do a first class job. I'm thinking of the science program, and I'm thinking of the vocational program that was expanded. I'm thinking of the fact that we were able to make provisions for children who were really disadvantaged. The federal programs were helpful in that respect. So, they were important things, I believe.

DR: Do you think there is more positive than negative in the integration of the school?

Mr. Booker: Well, we got two sides there. They have more positive things about integration than negative. I'd like to start with the positive. I mentioned earlier about the shortage of funds. One of the positive things about it, I think, the schools are receiving more governmental support; whereas, when the schools were separate, the black schools did not receive the support that the schools are getting today. For example, if we wanted an activity bus, we had to raise money to go out and buy that bus, but now, the system has enough money to do those things. The elimination of duplication of services and projects and programs have made it possible to achieve and accomplish more, so, I think this is definitely a very positive thing. The negative thing I believe, is the students, as we said, are not getting the attention that the students received when they had all black teachers

and all black counsellors, who were really familiar with the circumstances and the background of these students that they were working with.

DR: A role model.

Mr. Booker: Yes, that's it, a lack of role models there. This is where I believe there is a need for more role models, more people who are acquainted with the people. Students have become more of just a number these days, where before, it was little Johnny and you knew Johnny's parents. In years past, teachers visited the homes of the students to find out the situation. It might not be practical now because students are so scattered around, we cover such a wide area, but it had a positive effect on it. Now, you don't know where the students live, or their circumstances.

DR: And the black students sometimes cannot really relate to the white teachers and counsellors.

Mr. Booker: Right. They don't feel free to relate to them. They don't feel free to talk about their problems. I think that's a negative aspect.

DR: And white students may not feel as comfortable talking with the black teachers about their problems.

Mr. Booker: Right. They would just go and suffer in silence, I'll put it that way. On the whole, integration, it's too bad it took so long to come; but, I think it is the right thing. Even from a financial stand point, it is right. And from a social stand point and ethical stand point, it's right.

DR: Financially, as you say, the duplication of services, there has got to have been a lot of that. We run into that every day with the county and the city, duplication of service. In the city, we pay both sets of taxes. Well, can you think of anything, Mr. Booker, in your career that you'd like to talk about? When the hurricane came, did it ever get up here to your house?

Mr. Booker: I lost some plaster up there. I had almost a foot of water in my basement for the first time, in one of the hurricanes.

DR: I remember when it came up here at Bern Street.

Mr. Booker: Yes.

Dr: You weren't here during the great fire.

Mr. Booker: No, that was prior to my time. I didn't know New Bern existed at that time.

DR: When did you come back to New Bern after the war?

Mr. Booker: 1948.

Dr: In your life in New Bern, in the black community, who were some of the outstanding leaders that you remember that did so much, not just for the black people, but for the community?

Mr. Booker: One that they can't ever forget I don't think, is the Rev. R. I. Johnson, who was the rector of St. Cyprian's church.

I think Mr. O. T. Faison is one that deserves recognition. He was the administrator of the Good Shepherd Hospital for a number of years.

He started the Smith Drug Store up here on Broad Street. It looks to me like I should be able to point out some others.

DR: How about women?

Mr. Booker: Mrs. Ella Wilson, who operated the Whitley Funeral Home for a number of years, a descendent of Merritt Whitley, one of the early funeral establishments here. Issac Smith who was a businessman here. Unfortunately, all of these people are dead.

DR: They're all gone.

Mr. Booker: Yes. Mr. Faison is the only one I named that's living.

DR: I vaguely remember him at Good Shepherd Hospital. I just want to thank you. Having worked as a educator, it's really been one of the most interesting interviews that I've had the privilege of doing.

And I do thank you, Mr. Booker.

END OF INTERVIEW