

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

WALTER NATHANIEL "NAT" DIXON, JR.

INTERVIEW 1051

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Nat, N,a,t Dixon, D,i,x,o,n at his home at 3300 Nursery Road in New Bern. The number of the interview is 1051. The date is May 10, 1993.

Well, Nat, we are on the air now and I want to tell you first of all that it's really a pleasure to be out here talking to you. I'm glad you let me come and the Memories Program appreciates the help you've given it, and you've been a part of it, and we're glad of that, and this is going to be a great opportunity for us. So, let me start this interview by asking you, first, for your full name.

NAT DIXON: Alright. I was born in 1913 in Bridgeton and named by, delivered by, Dr. Nat Street and I was called Walter, to my daddy, the doctor said, Walter, what you going to call this boy, and daddy, said I'm going to call him Walter Nathaniel, after myself. And Dr. Street said, why don't you (he was my daddy's uncle incidentally) said why don't you call him Nat after me. So from that moment of my birth on, I've been Nat to everybody. Hardly anybody knows who Walter N. Dixon, Jr. is.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now was Dr. Street a Bridgeton doctor?

NAT DIXON: No, no. He was a very prominent New Bern doctor. I'll tell you where his house was. It, right where the New Bern Library is today, there was a great big white house there and the Tabernacle Baptist Church, which burned down, was right there. But, Mrs. Street, I never knew Dr. Street, because when I came

along, he was dead and gone, but Mrs. Street, Victoria Street was her name, gave me a graduation present when I graduated from high school and always took an interest in me since I, bore her husband's name.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is this the house on New and Craven Street?

NAT DIXON: It's not there now. It's gone. It was torn down.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It was right across from the present library.

NAT DIXON: No. It was sitting right where the present library sits.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: On the corner of Middle and Johnson

NAT DIXON: The actual corner was the old Tabernacle Baptist Church.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is this Middle and Johnson Streets?

NAT DIXON: Yes. Yeah, and that's where the church burned down. Then a filling station was built there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, I remember that.

NAT DIXON: Well, Mrs. Street's house was the next door to it. It had beautiful gardens around it, and so forth, and some of her plants were still growing there when the library was built and left in place were some Japanese Maples. They're dead and gone what with the new addition.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So Dr. Street practiced in New Bern for some time then?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, oh yeah, he was a New Bernian. As a matter

of fact, the name Street, comes from the Spring Garden area. You know, where Street's Ferry is.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: The Street family from which my ancestors and Dr. Street was one of those Streets. Matter of fact, he was, the, my grandmother's brother as I recall.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, I'm going to check this to make sure it's alright.

BREAK IN TAPE.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, what did your father do?

NAT DIXON: My father was a farmer and a building contractor.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: In Bridgeton?

NAT DIXON: Yes. As a matter of fact, he built two houses over there. When they were first married, my mother as a school teacher, before they got married, before 1910, had bought two lots in Bridgeton. So when they got married, my daddy built two houses on those lots. One on each, and he lived in one, and I was born in one of them, and it's still stands there today. The house I was born in, and I have a few faint memories about that place, because I lived there until I was four years old.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was your mother's maiden name?

NAT DIXON: Price, Jessie

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: From Bridgeton?

NAT DIXON: No. She was born in Craven County, but she lived

the latter part of her young life at Grifton.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, tell me about your early life in Bridgeton. How long were you there?

NAT DIXON: I was only there four years, so I don't know much about that place. I have two or three memories, one was going to church in the Methodist church over there, in the Methodist church which still stands there today. That's one memory I had, another was, that in those days, on Monday, women washed clothes, did their laundry, and there was a pot out in the yard and they boiled their clothes. And one day our clothes caught fire and burned up the family's clothing.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: A big iron pot was it?

NAT DIXON: Yes, yes, a wash pot. You've heard of black wash pots, yeah, that's what they are. I remember that, a little bit of that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What happened after those four years?

NAT DIXON: We moved to Oaks Road when I was four years old and I remember several things. One of the memories I have of that is coming across Neuse River bridge, which was an old rattly wooden bridge, in a jitney, in what they call a jitney. It was a Model T car. Cost a nickel to come across the bridge in the jitney and I, I don't know where he took us, but my mother held her guitar in her lap as we rode across that bridge. Isn't that strange I should remember those little details. Then we moved out here on the Oaks Road where I have been ever since I was four years old.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was childhood like on the Oaks

Road. What was Oaks Road like?

NAT DIXON: The biggest part of my life took place out here. When we first moved down there, that avenue of oaks which is there today was beside a dirt road, and it led up to the main, the office or the main dwelling place for Hackburn Willett plantation.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How do you spell that Nat?

NAT DIXON: H,a,c,k,b,u,r,n, dash w,i,l,l,e,t,t. Hackburn-Willett. It was a big, big, big plantation. This whole area, the Glenburnie Gardens area was one big plantation.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was the plantation house?

NAT DIXON: Right at the end of - when you come down the Oaks Road - you could see it sitting up there on top of the hill. It's, of course, not there anymore.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is that right where Glenburnie Road joins Oaks Road now.

NAT DIXON: Yes, yes, right straight on up the hill there, but of course, the garden, I mean the Glenburnie Gardens area reached back this way to Renny's Creek and, oh, it was a tremendous area. Glenburnie Park, all of that was part of it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was your house one of the few houses out here then?

NAT DIXON: There were only two out here then, as I recall, only two, ours was one, and that house was built by a man named Deppe who later built in the area you are living in right now, used to be that the Deppes lived right in that same neighborhood where you are.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, that's right. Right next door to where my house used to be.

NAT DIXON: That's the Deppes. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, then

NAT DIXON: We bought the house from him and the farm that went with it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You grew up out here then.

NAT DIXON: Yes I did. I lived out here from the time I was four years old until I was twenty, well, nineteen when I joined the Marine Corp.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was it like being a young boy out here in this...

NAT DIXON: Wonderful

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: wide open space.

NAT DIXON: Wonderful. I remember, now I sometimes get impatient with the kids that wander all around everywhere, you know, into everybody's fields and under their pecan trees and so forth, but I think back, I did all of those things, you know. Right where Hatteras sits today, Hatteras Yacht, was a part of that same big farm, the Hackburn-Willett Farm, and there was a lumber mill down there and which had been done away with and nothing, left nothing but the old steam boiler was left there, and we used to go down there and go in swimming in the spot where Hatteras Yacht now parks their, or where their boats take off from. It's a deep creek. I forgot the name. I think the name is Taylor's Creek. I'm not sure about that, but anyway that's one of the things that

we did, but we just wandered this territory over. I knew every square inch of it, all of us, my three brothers.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you have some friends out here?

NAT DIXON: I had, brothers. I had three brothers, and then too we had some friends, the Daniels. Linwood Daniels, and his brother Paul which were our friends that I remembered that we would have, and played baseball in the cow pasture on Sunday afternoons. It was a very good life out here, and I want to tell you about our neighbors. We had two, as time progressed, two families moved out here who were notorious bootleggers. I mean they were big time bootleggers. The biggest. I won't call their names, but they were, they were good neighbors and didn't cause us any trouble, 'cause they were kind of the big shots. They were not the ones riding up and down the road delivering half gallons of booze. They were big dealers, and that was quite a sight.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did they have their businesses right in their homes or close to it?

NAT DIXON: I never saw the actual operations. I mean, I don't know, know where the whiskey stills were.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: They supplied New Bern.

NAT DIXON: They probably did. Well Craven County corn was famous up and down the east coast, and they were producers of a lot of Craven County corn, and they probably had, I don't know, I imagine they had several different stills.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now this was an independent operation from the Harlow operation?

NAT DIXON: Oh yes, sure. I don't know whether they had their fingers in the Harlow thing or not, but I don't think so.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How did they, they operated by motor car, did they or?

NAT DIXON: Oh, yeah, that's another story. One night, one of those neighbors was, he always had a nice car, down here at the front of the National Cemetery, he failed to make that curve, and he had that car loaded down that night and he smashed into an oak tree and, he had the Morton Motor Company bring him up a, bring him out a brand new Hudson, Hudson automobile, and he switched the cargo right there about four o'clock in the morning. That was one of the things happened, but they lived very well, and they had nice automobiles, and their children, one of them, the man that had the wreck, he didn't have any children, but the other guy had two sons who were very prominent. A matter of fact, one of them, as a high school student died, and his picture was in our annual as a memorial, rather as a, one of the people who had died during the year, from our classmates. Nice, nice boys. Fine boys and sisters. Lovely family, but their daddy was a notorious.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, Nat, as you left your area and went toward New Bern, downtown New Bern to Riverside, what, did it gradually become more developed?

NAT DIXON: Yes, yes it did. Here's what happened. There was a grocery man in New Bern named H. C. Armstrong's. You remember, you ever heard of Mr. Armstrong. I worked, the first job, one of my earliest jobs while I was in high school, I used to work for Mr.

Armstrong on Saturdays. Got \$3.50 a Saturday. But anyway, Mr. Armstrong owned that great big area out there now on both sides of the road which is called Woodrow. And I remember he would come mornings out there with his bush ax and he'd slay weeds and carry on and my daddy built a lot of those little houses down there. I helped him myself, build those little houses. Mr. Armstrong built these little houses on these lots to sell them and so forth.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I'm not, I ought to know where Woodrow is, but I'm quite sure.

NAT DIXON: It's between here and town. You know where Ruth's Chapel is.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: That's the beginning of it on back toward National Avenue. That, I mean, National Cemetery. That whole area out there's called Woodrow, and this is the Woodrow precinct out here, the voting place, and the area was called Woodrow Place.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So he began putting the houses up then, Mr. Armstrong?

NAT DIXON: Yeah. He had visions of what happened. It was rather low, low cost type place. He didn't build nice houses. They weren't very, very fancy houses.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And as you continued on in town, more and more houses were in the Riverside area.

NAT DIXON: Oh yeah. Then Riverside area, of course, its development began really a little ahead of my time, but it was one of New Bern's really great, nice developments out there. Where

your grandmother lives or your granddaddy, and Judge Barden.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Fred Latham is, that's where, Nat was talking to Fred.

FRED: That's my daddy and my mama.

NAT DIXON: That's right. Sure. The, thank you. Congressman Barden lived out there in that neighborhood. I went to school there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you were growing up out here and became of school age, where did you go to school?

NAT DIXON: I went to Central, downtown Griffin.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: From the beginning?

NAT DIXON: At my first grade, and I, first room I got into was Miss Molly Heath's room.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, let me ask you how you got to school.

NAT DIXON: I'm going to get to that. That's an interesting story too. A Model T came around every day and picked us up, about six of us in this neighborhood and carried us to school and brought us home.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Who's Model T was it?

NAT DIXON: I don't remember the man's name now.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: But this was a sort of taxi affair was it.

NAT DIXON: No, it was arranged by, he got paid by the school system. It was an arranged thing and that was the first transportation. Soon after that they went to the old Model T

buses, but, Model T school buses.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So it picked you and your brothers up, did they and took you to school.

NAT DIXON: Well, I was the first one to go you see. I was the oldest of the group and later on, as I recall, that first year is the only time we rode in that Model T car. From then on it was the school bus of sorts.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So you didn't have to walk to school from way out here then. Never.

NB: I've walked that road, many times, that three miles. I used to run it. I've run that three miles many, many times back in my teens when I grew older, but. Then, the first year, I went down town and I got Miss Molly Heath's room and that, the very first day, and the second day, they took me out of Miss Molly Heath's room and put me in Miss Georgia Keene's room who was Foy Keene's sister. Mrs. W. F. Dowdy she became, and she was my first grade teacher and I went to the 2nd grade, then another famous teacher I had was Mrs. John Duffy. Remember Mrs. Duffy?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: And she was my second grade teacher. And Miss Ruth Berry. She was my third grade teacher. And they were some remarkable people, these ladies were. Miss Ruth Berry was a remarkable person, and then Miss Lila Taylor. All these were really big names in the school system. I mean, people that, I mean, some of the best educated people that I know including myself got our start under those ladies, who I'm telling you about. It's

not the same school system today that it was then. I was really proud to have been under some of those ladies. Then, after, I went to the first year in that elementary building which was torn down and done away with, right next to the Steven's house there, and then, let's see, fifth grade was out at Riverside. The sixth grade was when I left Riverside.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You went from Central to Riverside School?

NAT DIXON: That's right, and then the fourth, fifth and sixth grades were at Riverside. The seventh grade I'm back downtown Central. I went in the Bell Building, and Miss Lanta Winslow was my teacher, and Miss Winslow was a remarkable lady. During World War II, I believe it was, she, yeah, she must have been in World War II, she became a colonel in the Army or something like that. She was quite a remarkable lady.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I never knew that.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, and another teacher I had who was, and two of them that I have been corresponding with throughout my life until right recently when they died, you see, one was Miss Mazie Bookheart. Ever heard of her?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: She taught me English, and she was a lovely lady too. And, then, Miss Dunlap, who married, no, her sister married the principal Shields, but she, Miss, Miss Dunlap became a Collins and lived in South Carolina, married to a druggist down there, but she has been to see me out here and I've got Christmas cards from

both of them every year until right here in the last year or so. They died. They were getting to be old ladies, because I am, here I am eighty, and so if they taught me, they must have had to be getting on up there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you finish at New Bern High School?

NAT DIXON: Yes I did. I was the valedictorian in 1930.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What size classes did you have then?

NAT DIXON: I'll get my little, excuse me a second here. I'm going to have to go back. Hand me the book.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were they large classes?

NAT DIXON: No. No. We would, in the class room we would have twenty five or thirty people to the class room.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was it a fun time going to that school?

NAT DIXON: Oh, it was for me, because that was some of my most successful years of my life. I was to be valedictorian of the class, I mean, I was one of the top notch students and I enjoyed that, and I was a debater. I was never in athletics. I was no part of an athlete. Never have been, but I was a good student.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did folks study pretty hard in those days?

NAT DIXON: Well, we had smart ones and dumb ones too, but as I recall, I thought we had a very excellent school system, because when I compare what I remember today at my age to what some of these kids seem to demonstrate, we got taught pretty well I thought.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What did you do for fun in those days?

NAT DIXON: I worked. I mean, I came home from school. I had to get out of my school clothes into my work clothes and get out in the field and start doing whatever had to be done, whatever season of year it was. Before I left in the mornings, when I got old enough to drive, I began driving a car when I was fourteen years old. Mornings when I got up and after breakfast it would be my job, my two brothers would go out and help my daddy milk the cows. We had a dairy, and had about fifty two quarts of milk to deliver and we'd deliver them right in your neighborhood incidentally. And I would drive that car down there and deliver my fifty two quarts of milk. Come home and change into school clothes and then I'd catch the bus. Have all that done behind me.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This is before you went to school?

NAT DIXON: Yes. Get to school about...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Then you got home and you did something else?

NAT DIXON: Pulled my clothes off. Get back into my work clothes. Get back out in the field and if it was harvesting season, help haul in the corn, or haul in the hay, or if it was planting season, help plant the tobacco, or whatever.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What happened after high school?

NAT DIXON: I was without a job for awhile. I couldn't go to college. I was matriculated into Duke University and in the University of Cincinnati. Couldn't raise a nickel. That was the bottom of the depression. 1930.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You were accepted at those schools were

you?

NAT DIXON: I was actually accepted at both of them, and I, actually went to the University of Cincinnati but I just couldn't swing it, and I didn't know enough about how to manipulate to even, I should have hung around I reckon, but I came home. And I read this ad in the Sun Journal one day about they're wanting a young, personable, young man. I thought that I fitted the picture. So, I went, I wrote 'em a letter, sent 'em a picture of myself, and old man Aaron Miller who owned the Sun Journal, interviewed me and hired me, and I went to work for him when I was seventeen years old and there I stayed until...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you were how old?

NAT DIXON: Seventeen. And, I worked in the advertising department. And I stayed down in that until, a matter of fact, when he hired me, he said I want you down here at seven o'clock in the morning, and I worked every day in the week, Monday through Saturdays, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. That's when I got off. And how much money you think it paid? Five dollars a week. He said, actually, you owe me. Said, I don't owe you anything. Said, I'm teaching you a vocation, and says you really, I don't owe you anything.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This was in advertising?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, Sun Journal. I ended up staying, I stayed there

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tell me about those years with the Sun Journal and tell me about the Sun Journal, and who all took over

after Mr. Miller.

NAT DIXON: Alright. J. B. Dawson owned the Sun Journal. You remember J. B. Dawson?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: Yep. Mr. Dawson owned it and he told me this little story...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Mr. Miller didn't own it?

NAT DIXON: No, I'm going to tell you. I'm getting to that. Mr. Dawson told me this story, that one day these three men came in there. This little, funny looking little man named Aaron Miller. Another nice looking, handsome guy named Garner, and a third chap, Mr. Tom Diggs who was the editor. And they said, we want to buy the paper. How much do you want for it? And Mr. Dawson said, he thought, well, gosh, what's going on here, out of the blue like that. So he quoted them what he considered a fantastic figure. Eighty thousand dollars. Mr. Miller reached in and wrote out a check, and the next day, the paper came out, and Mr. Dawson said you won't believe it, but I'm out of here. They took over. Mr. Miller was a very wealthy old man. He wore great, huge diamonds on his fingers and he was quite a character. Chewed tobacco and spit on the floor, but he liked me and I liked him. We got along together very well indeed.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Let me ask you a question, what year, do you remember what year Mr. Miller bought that paper?

NAT DIXON: Sure. Well, I went to work with 'em in 1931, no 30, the fall of, the winter of 1930. I would say. I'm just taking

a guess. It was about 1929. He hadn't had it long when I got to work for him.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I have been told that when Mr. Dawson sold the paper, the paper was in financial trouble. Do you remember anything about that?

NAT DIXON: No, no. That isn't true at all. Here's what happened. The depression hadn't set in yet. See they were, get along just fine, but the depression set in, and they began to have, have difficulties. And, Mr. Miller owned it at the time he was having these troubles. As a matter of fact, he, every so often he had to come out of his pocket and pump money into it to keep it alive. And, I was, I would take him, when he would go home occasionally down to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he lived, his home. I would drive him to Raleigh to catch the train and we'd have lot of discussion so forth. One time he says, I'm getting tired of this. Says I'm gonna, I'm gonna turn that paper over to Diggs and it can sink or swim. Said I'm getting tired of this. And so, he turned it over to Mr. Diggs, and he evidently quit putting money into it, and it got into real tight straights. At one weekend, Miss Gertrude Carraway, who just died yesterday, Miss Gertrude was the society editor and a very important member of their staff, and she took her personal funds and lent it to them to make the weekly payroll. So that's how tight they got. And later on, in later years, Miss Gertrude at one time wanted to get a day or two off to go to her, her thing she became general of, the DAR, Daughters of American Revolution.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Daughters of the

NAT DIXON: Daughters of the Confederacy

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Confederacy.

NAT DIXON: And Mr. Diggs said, no! And she said, the heck you say, man. I'm gonna, leaving here. After all I've done for this paper and you won't let me have a couple of days off, you can have it. So she left them and never was connected with them again. But as time went on, the, the liquor advertising, when the 1933, when liquor was brought, prohibition was done away with, the paper began to get all these great big huge ads, for advertising whiskey, and that helped out like everything. And on top of that, Mr. Eure, Mr. Diggs was smart enough to know that things going, fold up on him if he didn't get somebody to help. So he went out and hired Mr. Eure, who was the secretary, executive secretary of the Southern Newspaper Association. And Mr. Eure came in and he had a formula by which he operated. He, a certain percentage of the income would go for payroll, certain percentage of it went to pay for inks, certain percentage went to pay for paper, and so forth. He has his formula and if he, he immediately forced everything into that formula which meant a lot of people got pay cuts. Drastic pay cuts. You either took it or you left. And some left and some stayed there and hung on. But, pretty soon, with this liquor advertising coming in and so forth, and the war hadn't started yet, but things began to perk up a bit. And Mr. Eure got that thing on its feet, and as the years rolled by, he made it into the finest, very successful money making instrument that it became. Mr. Eure

deserves that credit.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: All during this time, Mr. Diggs was in charge?

NAT DIXON: Yes, Mr. Diggs was the total owner. When Mr. Miller gave it to him, I say gave it, I mean he gave it. He didn't sell it to him. He gave it to him. He considered him, well, he loved him like a son really. Mr. Diggs thought a lot of him.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now Charles Midgette was involved there.

NAT DIXON: When I, when I, let's see what caused me to leave the area. Oh, yeah, during World War II, Mr. Dawson, old man West, who lives across, Jim West, lived across the street from Mr. Dawson. He told him about looking for a traffic manager. His traffic manager had developed tuberculous and he had to have a traffic manager, and Mr. Dawson said I know just the man for you. Said Nat Dixon. Works down there at the Sun Journal. Not making any money. I'm sure he'd like to have a better job. And so, one Sunday afternoon, a taxi drove up in front of my house, and says, Mr. Jim West, that owns the Seashore Transportation Company sent me out here to get you. I said what did he want. What does he want with me. Said I haven't got the faintest idea. So I crawled in the taxi and went down there. And Mr. West said I want to hire you to be my traffic manager. I said what do traffic managers do? He said, I'll damned if I know. He said, I don't know what they do, but I know I gotta have one, and you're going to come down there and learn. And so I went down there and went to work for him, and

he immediately, we got along great together for awhile, and I what caused me, oh yeah, getting to Charlie Midgette. When I knew I was leaving, Charlie was working next door in the social security, not social security, but the security, where jobless people went and signed up for jobs and that sort of place. What they call that? Security

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Employment Security.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, that's the place. Employment Security. Yeah. Charlie was in there. You know he had been operating shoe stores for quite a long time. He was the manager of Thompson Shoe Store and he operated shoe stores for a long time. But anyway, I told Charlie, I said why don't you go there and apply for my job. So he did. He went over and Mr. Eure hired him. Went to work, and as time rocked along, he, Mr. Eure, he had a great affection for Charlie, and they got along great together, and Charlie was a, he's the kind of fellow who would work his fingers to the eye balls to make things go right, and he did some things there some times. Like when the press would break down and they had to, he'd have the print forms hauled down to Jacksonville and have the paper printed down there. I mean, Charlie self sacrificed like nobody's business and actually when Mr. Eure got sick and died, then Mr. Diggs made him general manager. And then Mr. Diggs had a stroke, you know, and got out of the picture, and so Charlie became the big cheese. He ran the show and Mrs. Diggs had a great deal of confidence in him, and he ran the place, and did a good job of it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I think she rewarded him pretty heavily

later.

NAT DIXON: I heard she handed him a nice golden hand shake when he left there, and then poor Charlie didn't live to enjoy it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, when you were with the Seashore Transportation Company as transportation,

NAT DIXON: Traffic Manager.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Traffic manager, was Shoot Hall there?

NAT DIXON: He, Shoot was, there's some interesting stories. You want me to tell about Shoot Hall?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: Alright. Shoot never got to college either. He came along out of high school about the time I did, but he went to work for the bus company down there, selling tickets in the office. And, something happened. I think they had, having a lot of, I know, just at what point, something happened that old Mr. West would get on a drunk and stay gone for two or three days.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now, this tape, we just want you to know, it's going to be listened to by the public.

NAT DIXON: I don't mind.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Ok.

NAT DIXON: All of this is history, It's well known what I'm telling you. So Mr. West would be gone and Mrs. West, the first Mrs. West, not the one that died recently, not Gloria's mother but the, his first wife or the wife that he was married to, who ran the business when he was on these binges. Shoot went in, she was having trouble. The buses were breaking down and the garage was in

a mess, and Shoot went into her one day, and says, why don't you let me go in the garage and said I think I can get this thing straightened out for you. Says, if you think so, Shoot, she says, be worth a lot more to me than you are out there selling tickets. So he got in there and had the buses all fixed and going in a day or two and Mrs. West was highly pleased and Mr. West came back, he was highly pleased. And as time rocked along, he became foreman of the garage. And then one day, again, Mr. West was on one of his binges and he wouldn't sign a check when he had any booze in him, and it came payday, a Friday, and they got all the cash they could collect out of the ticket offices and still not enough to make the payroll. So Shoot says, Mrs. West, says I have a little money in the bank. Why don't you let me make the payroll out of my money and you can reimburse me. So that's what she did, and when Mr. West sobered up and heard that, he was, again, astonished at Shoot's dedication, and he made him general manager of the company which he remained until the day the company was sold - or he retired.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, what was the, what was the Seashore Transportation Company like. Was it big outfit?

NAT DIXON: When I started working there, it was a small bus company. It first started in, as an extended limousine type things you know. Long stretched out cars driving between Wilmington and Washington, and Morehead City, and Goldsboro. And then as it, as things got better, they put on bigger buses and so forth, because back in those days, that was the principle way of transportation,

you know. You wanted to go to Raleigh. You got on the bus. You didn't drive your car up there. And, it was, but when World War II came along, that turned it into a big operation. Big money began to flow immediately, and the Marines at Cherry Point, they went back and forth to New Bern a whole lot, but down in Jacksonville, those Marines, they went to Wilmington by the thousands, and Goldsboro. That was on our franchise also, and Holly Ridge was on that franchise, and there was thousands upon thousands soldiers wanted to go all the time. So he bought everything that rolled. They built, bought some of those buses that were these automobile transport things, we'd convert 'em into long trailer buses, and bought several of those, and bought anything he could get his hands on in the way of a bus and put it out there on the road and hauled the people. And that was, that's when I was working for him. And that was, I remained

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did he get drivers?

NAT DIXON: Oh, there were plenty of people to be drivers. Just plenty of drivers. No trouble getting drivers. They had this...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So that was the biggest bus outfit in the area then.

NAT DIXON: Oh, it was the only bus thing in the area, and Trailways, up there in Raleigh, wanted in on it mighty bad, but they, Mr. West would roll over in his grave I guess when they finally joined up with Trailways, because he was a deadly enemy of the Trailways.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were you with them when that happened?

NAT DIXON: No. That happened long after he was dead.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When did you leave the bus company?

NAT DIXON: In, let's see. That's another story too. I don't know whether I want to put this on tape or not.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, just whatever you say.

NAT DIXON: I got canned, but I'd like to tell you the reason I get canned, but I, well, I'm going to tell you. I'm going to take a chance. The work, I was, at the time I got canned, I was in Jacksonville. I was the division manager down there. Had fifty six bus drivers and four dispatchers under my domain. And I knew enough about the business to know that we were doing great. Man, we were taking in money hand over fist and the routes were very profitable and so forth. And one day, I had Tuesdays off, that was my day off. I came to New Bern, and Shoot called me in the office and said, Nat, says I got bad news for you. I said, what is it? He says, the old man wants you transferred to Atlantic. I said, what you talking about, Atlantic. Says you know the old man. Says you know how nutty he can be. Says he's just got a notion you got to go. And I said, this is very humiliating, Shoot. I'd like to know what's, what he's got on his mind, but I said, I'm not going to Atlantic as you well know. So, but one week before that, Mr. Eure had met me on the street on my day off and said, why don't you come back and work for me again. I told him, I said, I'm getting so well paid. I just hate to, hate to give up that job. Said, I'd love to come back up to New Bern, but I said to him, I'm getting

well, so well paid, I don't want to quit. So, when I got canned, I went right downtown to see Mr. Eure. I said, I don't know whether you still want me or not, but I'm available. And he said, well, you got your job. Come to work tomorrow. I never missed a single solitary day of pay. Matter of fact, in my whole life I never been out of work a single day in my life.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How long were you with the Sun Journal the second time?

NAT DIXON: On that particular occasion, when I joined up with Mr. Eure, I had it in my head then, already, that I wanted to be a nursery man. I had visited my wife's granddaddy's nursery out in Albert Lee, Minnesota, it planted a seed in me, or something went off in my noggin said that's what you want to do, make your living. And so, I thought about it, and thought about it, and dreamed about it, and then this piece of property I'm on right now became available. George Scott owned it. He put it on the market for \$8,250 and I bought it, and I told Mr. Eure, I had told him that when I went there, what my dream was. As a matter of fact, I told Mr. Eure, I said I got a growing family and as, is, working here in the newspaper, what else is there for me to do. You know, what I mean, as advertising manager. You only got one, and I said what else can I do to expand. I said, can't I buy some stock in the paper, and he said, no. He says, when Diggs took me in and gave me some stock, he said, I had to sign an agreement that I wouldn't sell that stock to anybody, but to, back to him. He says, I see your position. And I said, well, I don't know whether you want me

or not under these circumstances, but one of these days, I want to start a business of my own. He said, certainly. That's perfectly natural. Said come on. Work for me as long as you can. And so when I left, he shook hands with me and said I want you to stop back in here and tell me from time to time how are you getting along and he says, I think it's just great that you making your move. And said, I well understand that you got to have more opportunities and said, I wish I could make 'em for you right here, and so that what's, I went out here and bought this piece of property right here, and everyone of my friends said, Nat, have you absolutely lost your mind. I said, I don't know. I reckon might have, but I say you giving up this good job, and getting well paid, and going out there and going to work for nothing, on a farm, in that old house, this old house here. My gosh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where were you living then?

NAT DIXON: I was living in, out here on the corner of Glenburnie, I mean on the road out there where you turn and go to the park, I built that house.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When you were working at the Sun Journal you were living.

NAT DIXON: I owned that house. My wife and I built it. So, it was a little house, but it was a real nice little house. Build, matter of fact, sitting there today, owned by the Slanns, but anyway. That's what, that's what happened out here.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was the area like, Nat, when you bought this place?

NAT DIXON: It was beginning to build a lot. During World War II, a lot of houses been built out here, and this piece of property, when I bought it, I had it in mind that this was a growing area, and I sold lots like that, and had my place paid for in a short time and had most of the land left. Sold a few lots and paid for the whole cotton picking thing. I remember when I finally all paid off. I went in and tell Mr. Eure. I said, I don't owe anybody a dime. I got a thousand dollars in the bank. He said, well, you know what you got to do now. I said what's that Mr. Eure. He says, go down to the bank and borrow some more money and expand. So I did. I went down there, made another loan, and built another greenhouse and expanded some more.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This whole tract of land was undeveloped was it when you bought it.

NAT DIXON: Yes, this had, on this, on this, twenty seven acres I'm sitting on, had this little old shack we're in right now, and nothing else but the cow pasture. George Scott's cows were wondering up and down this place here. And I envisioned the potential here of selling lots and paying for it and I sold them like that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did you get the know how to become a nurseryman?

NAT DIXON: I went out and studied. Grew up on a farm and I knew a lot about how to make things grow, but I didn't know anything about nursery business, and that's why, another thing, many people thought I was out of my head. But I found out there's

a lot of ways to find out. State College is up there waiting to tell you. So I went to short courses at State College frequently and I joined all the associations. I joined trade associations. I joined the nurseryman's associations, the Southern and the American, and the North Carolina, the Southern, and the American, and all three of those associations I joined. And you meet lots of nurserymen who are waiting to tell you how they succeeded, and glad to tell you, just waiting to tell you. Take a few drinks at night after supper and just brag about all their successes. That's one of the ways I learned. Another thing I did, I would go to these short courses and these professors would come down from Ohio State, and Cornell, and so forth, and in their speeches they would say, in my book, so and so, and so and so, and so and so. So, I'd go buy their book. I had a whole stack of them out there. Greenhouse operations and all kinds of nursery operations, but I studied those books, and I educated myself.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You continued this all throughout your life?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, that was the beginning of the most productive and best part of my life was my period as a nurseryman. I mean, that's really my. Anybody ask me what

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you've turned this over to Winston now.

NAT DIXON: Here's what happened. I was sixty five years old, and Winston, who's an engineer by profession. He educated at the University of Kansas and had an engineering degree and licenses and

had practiced and worked for Kansas Power and Light Company and Bosch Tools, Stanley Tools it was, and DuPont, and so forth. But he, too, wanted to run something of his own. So he came to me one day and says, now that you are sixty five years old, said what you going to do. I said, well, mother and I been talking about it. I think we'll just let the thing kind of coast down hill, and take it easy. He said, why don't you turn it over to me? So I talked it over with Eleanor. I said, what do you think of that. She says, well, if that is what he wants to do, said, that'll be fine. Give us a chance to do what we want to do. I said, what do we want to do. She said, we want to join the Peace Corp. So, that's what we did. We joined the Peace Corp and turned it over to Winston, and we...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tell me about the Peace Corp?

NH: That was a, we as horticulturists, we had been at this you see for forty years by that time, and we were hired by the Peace Corp as agriculture extension officers and we went, we were sent to the island of Barbados. Now Barbados produces a great amount of their vegetables and produce in back yard gardens. A little garden about the size of this house, they would raise vegetables and sell 'em on the markets, and just had a terrific thing going down there. And we were sent down to enhance their production. There was about ten or eleven, there was about eight of us horticulturists that were sent down there, and so when we first got there, the government that had bargained with our government for these peace corps people, these horticulturists,

were voted out of power, and another government was in power who couldn't care less. Here we are. Down there with no assignments, and but our Peace Corp instructor says, don't be dismayed. Said, you just hang around and says, the first thing you know, something will develop. And sure enough, it did. We, Eleanor and I would walk up and down the streets and wonder what the hell are we down here for, and then all of a sudden, we got into the psychiatric hospital grounds. They had a great big garden space back there where they'd produced vegetables for the psychiatric hospital, and I went in there, and I asked the man, I said, would you like to have us come in here and set up a little nursery to produce plants for your garden. Oh, he said, that'd be great. Said, I'm glad to see the Peace Corp sends somebody down here full of age and wisdom. I said, I don't know about the wisdom, but we're full of age. So, we got in that little area there and first thing you know, we didn't have a thing to work with. Nothing, old wheel barrow that was falling apart and spades that were worn to a frazzle and no water to water our plants with, and what we had to do, they gave us, assigned us an old chicken house which they had produced poultry there at one time, and we had torn the roof off'n it so the sun could get down on our plants. But we needed the enclosure to keep out people and animals. So we would, had a drum full of water, and we'd take our bean cans, soup can, punch it full of holes, and then take a dipper out of it. Dip down in this drum and water our plants, you know. And finally, we got a nice little crop of plants growing that we began to sell plants, and in spite of

that, and then I discovered that the Peace Corp had funds available. If you had a good project there that had promise, they'd advance you a grant. So I applied for a grant and they gave me five thousand bucks. So I went downtown and I bought some wheel barrows, and spades, and peat moss, and all the accoutrements of a nursery, and it went to producing plants like mad and selling 'em all over the place. Everybody from the top government official on down to lowly citizens came in and bought our plants.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did the money go?

NAT DIXON: To pay the little money, stipend they gave the patients who worked with us. That money went into the sheltered workshop fund, and they used that money in that way. And we were making two or three hundred dollars a month, clear, clean profit when we left there. And, but it eventually as things went on, me being a nurseryman, I began to see nursery opportunities and so I began to produce shrubbery and flowers as well as vegetable plants, and business picked up. We enjoyed ourselves. It was great. I enjoyed it. I really did.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: How long were you in the Peace Corp?

NAT DIXON: Two and a half years.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And you came back to New Bern?

NAT DIXON: Yes, and then, when I came back, the government hired us then to go to Florida as recruiters for the Peace Corp. We were successful as Peace Corp volunteers, so they sent us out to recruit for volunteers, for the Peace Corp which we did for another year, down in Florida. And we would have stayed with that for

quite awhile except that Eleanor developed cancer, Non Hodgkins, Non Hodgkins lymphoma, and she was treated with radiation and the tumors disappeared, but she wanted to come home after that. She felt secure back on home turf. So we came home and she got practically well though, and stayed well for seven years before it came back, but when it came back it came back massively, in the bone marrow and everything.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah, I remember that sad time. Nat, going back a little bit, you were in the Marine Corp too, weren't you?

NAT DIXON: Yes. I served in the Marine Corp from the time I was about nineteen until I was twenty three.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: This was before the war?

NAT DIXON: Yes, yes. Matter of fact, Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune had not even been thought of at the time I was in the Marine Corp. There were only fifteen thousand Marines in the entire Marine Corp, and one day, down in Paris Island, we were drilling, and they had this formation where you come and fall in and be in formation, you'd come to a single file, come marching up in it, but when you get through, you'd be back in formation again. And as you came in place, you were supposed to snap your heels and bring your rifle to order. Well, I forgot to bring my rifle to the order. I'm standing there with my rifle on my shoulder. Sergeant came. "Dixon," he says, there's only fifteen thousand Marines in the Marine Corp but all fifteen thousand of 'em bring their rifle down when they come to the order, but if you want to change it,

we'll write a letter. We'll write a letter and have them change for you."

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, you mentioned earlier that you would like to speak about the industries that have developed in this area out here.

NAT DIXON: Yeah. That land which was Hatteras, I mean Hackburn-Willett property was bought by a man, that particular corner that Hatteras is on, was bought by a man named J. A. Jones, and he was a shrimp fisherman. Matter of fact, a Mrs. Catherine Hand was his daughter, but anyway, eventually, he said he did not know what he's going to do with it when he bought it. He had all kinds of dreams, but, all of a sudden here comes Hatteras along and bought the thing, and started the Hatteras Yacht Company up there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When was that?

NAT DIXON: I'd hate to pin point the time. I can't pin it to some specific thing, but it was, we were back from our Peace Corp experience so, sometime after 1980. I think. I'm not sure really. I would hate to say. I've forgotten. But anyway, it began to build up, and there was the furniture dealer, a High Point man whose name is Foscue owned that pretty home that's been restored down there in Pollocksville. He's one of those guys. He was one of the ones. He told me this little story. They were out there fishing. He and some of his friends off the coast, and it got choppy and they decided, we better not stay out here. Just went on to say if this boat was a fiberglass boat, now this would, we could stay, it would take it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: We were talking about the early days of Hatteras.

NAT DIXON: Yeah. Mr. Foscue, incidentally, hired me to plant, do some planting.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Excuse me. They thought they were going to start a fiberglass industry.

NAT DIXON: Yeah. These guys out there fishing said let's kick in here and start us a fiberglass boat business. So then in High Point. They went at it. They started it. And, after awhile it developed so big up there, the boats got too big to haul up and down the road. So they decided to come build, build a factory down beside the water where they could put their boats in the water instead of hauling them up and down the highways. So they came to New Bern. In the mean while, Mr. Foscue who, and this is where I'm learning all this from, the man that was telling me all these things, he owned a place in Oriental where he liked to come to, and he told me, he says that he decided he didn't want in on it anymore. So he said he just got a boat. That's it. He just got a boat and got out of it, and he was living on one of his own Hatteras boats when this took place. And as time went on, they got bigger and bigger and bigger, and what really like to have wiped them out was that ten percent tax on...

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The luxury tax.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yeah. Liked to have knocked them out, but what brought them back into going again, is begin to sell to the Arab sheiks. I went over there one time with the Rotary Club group

and, King Hussein of Jordan, they were building him a boat right then. And also, Hoss Cartwright, Hoss Cartwright in the movies. You remember him? Well, I can't think of his name now, but anyway, he bought a boat and he died not long after he bought his boat. Oh, there was a number of movie actors over there and Goldwater, Senator Goldwater. I was over there working one day planting some, doing a planting in front of the office and here comes Senator Goldwater up the walk way to see his boat while it was under construction. But it got to be a big, big deal out there, but they're back at it again. Thank the Lord, because they're selling them overseas, but that was a bad move to put that tax on those boats because it knocked out a lot more income than it brought in taxes.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What are some other businesses that developed out here Nat?

NAT DIXON: Alright. The Martin-Marietta. Another part of the same plantation, over there where the rock quarry is now, was where Mr. Shriver, Harry Shriver ran his florist business. He had greenhouses back, back in the days of Hackburn and Willett they grew produce and they had a steam boiler back there to irrigate pump things with their steam engine, you know, and grew vegetables, but then Mr. Shriver took it over. That part of it. He built greenhouses and grew flowers and was in the florist business and even did some nursery activity back there. And then, when Mr. Jim West comes along and enters the picture, he had money coming out of his ears from that war time stuff. He got rich, dirty, stinking

rich there in a hurry. And the bookkeeper, Bob Ward, worked in the North Carolina Treasury and got sent off to the penitentiary for messing with the money. But anyway, Bob was his bookkeeper. And, but Mr. West began to accumulating all these little tracts he bought in the area Shriver had his flowers, and he bought the land where Hatteras eventually went. All that land up there and all behind. All this area. All little tracts that put them back together again into one big thing and then when he died, they had a big auction sale, and they sold off these sections again. And that's when Mr. Jones, Catherine's daddy, bought the land that became Hatteras. He bought it at that time. And the place where Martin-Marietta is located was bought by a man named Howell who was a plumber, and I'll never forget it. He paid sixty-six hundred dollars for that hundred acres of land with the nice house on it and tobacco barns and all of that sort. I thought, my gosh - what a guy! Of course, I didn't have any credit then. I was up to my ears over here. I'd just started off. I didn't have any. I wanted to buy that land so bad, but this Howell fellow bought it and he didn't keep it. I don't know why, why he didn't keep it very long, but he sold it to Tom Bayliss' foster father, whose name I can't recall right now. And he thought he was stuck too. So he sold it to Tom, and Tom, too lazy to farm it, he began selling top soil and things he didn't have to any cultivating. And he struck this rock back there, and one day the Superior Stone Company people, whoever they were, got Nello Teer, is that who Superior Stone. They came along and said can we do some tests back there

and see if you've got any rocks back there that we could use. Tom said sure. So he goes back there and first thing you know they bought the whole cotton picking deal. Part of it they bought on a so much a ton basis, and part of it they bought out right.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was this shell rock?

NAT DIXON: It's the small

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, that's shell rock.

NAT DIXON: Whatever, yes, yes, coquina.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Coquina rock, yeah.

NAT DIXON: As a matter of fact, the whole entire area was, is underlayered around here, but that's how they got going there in that spot, and, of course, Tom, he was just beginning to collect some of that good money when he had a stroke and died. And his wife, she just absolutely frittered all that money away.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: There the two real large businesses out here?

NAT DIXON: Yes, and incidentally, this Bayliss' son, Tom Bayliss runs the electric company, Smart boy. He's the one that's trying to get the gun law changed.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, let's go back down town to your days at the Sun Journal. What was, what was it like downtown in those days. Particularly, what was Pollock Street like along that block where the Sun Journal was located.

NAT DIXON: One place that I remember, Turner-Tolsen Furniture Company was one. W. F. Dowdy Furniture was another. Both very prominent and successful.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That Mike Shapou?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yeah. I remember that place.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is that on the corner?

NAT DIXON: No, Mike's was right next door to the Sun Journal, and he made those delicious hamburgers and

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: People talk about the chocolate covered bananas.

FRED: Chocolate covered bananas.

NAT DIXON: I don't remember that. I remember, one of the things that I would do for our lunch, the secretary and I would order and go over there and get us a coke cola and a scoop of ice cream and have a float. And also, I've eaten many a one of his nickel hot dogs, or hamburgers.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was Pollock Street bricked in those days?

NAT DIXON: Yes, I think, yeah, I believe that was bricked then. I'm pretty sure it was in the early days, yes. I was going to tell you too about Oaks Road. When I came out here, of course, it was dirt and very soon after that, they bricked it with Augusta block. I remember the name of that brick. Augusta block. And it stayed like that from then until well into my married life, and one day my wife said this road is getting to be so bumpy and she got out a petition to have everybody sign it, requesting that it be resurfaced, and so they resurfaced it. And it's a, those trees, of course, one of these days probably have to go because that road is badly over used now.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: They were side by side were they.

NAT DIXON: Within a door or two or three of each other. Then in between was a place called the Metropolitan Club which still operates somewhat in that connection, and then Hammonds, Hammonds Electric Company.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Tolson. Jack Tolson's father. J. J. Tolson.

NAT DIXON: Tolson. Jack Tolson's, yeah, yeah. It became Hammond Electric Company. Well, that's, that's the place.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now where was that, what building is there now.

NAT DIXON: I think Garrick's, they right along about where Garrick's, Carolina Supply,

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Carolina Office Supply.

NAT DIXON: Just about along there, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's what I remember too.

NAT DIXON: And the Sun Journal was on up there right next door to where Branchs is now. And the First Citizens Banks was, I mean the bank is where it is today. I think that was so. I don't know what bank it was anyway. I believe, that wasn't the First Citizen. I don't know what bank it was.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was it called the New Bern Bank, Bank of New Bern?

NAT DIXON: That could have been. I forgot just what it was called, but that's what was going on there and then Mike's Hamburger Stand.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The oak trees were very beautiful.

NAT DIXON: When I went out there, it was a tunnel. In the spring time it was a tunnel of green, you know. There was no dead trees. They have put in water lines and this that and the other and cut the roots and messed them up so that a good many of those trees have died, but when my daddy moved out there in 1886, he was ten years old, the trees were just newly planted and they made this avenue right on up the street there. They developed into absolutely one of the most gorgeous avenues to be sure.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: When I was a young man, I remember those trees were so pretty then.

NAT DIXON: This was, and back in early days of automobiling on Sunday afternoons, people would ride around the belt. They would be coming out Oaks Road, go down, what is now Glenburnie Road, and back into New Bern. That's riding around the belt. Courters. Courting. That's the way you did your courting. Go out for a ride around the belt.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That was a pretty good trip in those days wasn't it.

NAT DIXON: Well, it's three miles from downtown to where I lived and so that would be three miles back and so it would be about seven miles, seven or eight miles round trip.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It wasn't just a courting exercise, it was a Sunday afternoon riding society too.

NAT DIXON: Oh yeah. Sure. Yeah. Sunday driving. Yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That's what you did on Sunday

afternoons, you went to ride.

NAT DIXON: I did a lot of my courting on that. I remember one time, we had a Model A sedan and I get, the folks let me have it occasionally, and I had this one Sunday afternoon. I had Virginia Gaskins. I don't know whether you ever knew Virginia Gaskins or not. She's Pete Chagaris' sister-in-law. And we rode around, and my brothers clocked the speedometer and the next morning, Monday morning at the breakfast table, they delivered the news about how many miles I had driven that Sunday afternoon. A hundred and some odd miles. I didn't get the car anymore for a long time.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What other memories do you have about downtown New Bern, Nat.

NAT DIXON: When I was quite young, down at the foot of Middle Street, a lot of boats were down there, and you could go down and buy a tub of oysters for one dollar. A tub of oysters was five pecks and we, ever so often, my daddy loved oysters and the whole family did. We'd go down and get a tub of oysters and come home and open them and there'd be more than a gallon of oysters in a tub. So we'd have oysters for a day or two.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did they come from?

NAT DIXON: I don't know where they came from. Oh, yeah, Newport River. Newport River, that's one thing that I remember daddy was particularly fond of the Newport River oysters.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were the oyster men New Bern people?

NAT DIXON: I don't know who they were. No, I don't really

know. I don't have the faintest idea who they were. Yeah, that's one memory I have, and another one was about the Maxwell's Wholesale Grocery down there. Old Mr. Maxwell. Remember him?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Harold Maxwell?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yeah. No, not, not, Harold was lived on East Front Street. The one that lived on Middle, on George, not George but Broad Street. He was the one, he was really the most active in the management of it at that time, but he was there. Matter of fact, Ellen Hancock, I don't know whether you remember Ellen, you remember Ellen, Ellen Hancock. She died not so long ago. Ellen got a job down there and she couldn't stand it. For old man Maxwell, he would holler and cuss and raise hell, and she just couldn't stand that atmosphere. She got out of that place. Poor thing.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat,

NAT DIXON: One other thing, I want, I remember might be of interest, and that is the hotels. The Gaston, I think they called it first, and then when Louis Howard turned it into the Tryon Hotel, right? And the Gaston, during the time it was owned by the Blades'. Alice, you remember Alice.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: Well, Alice and I, she was a very close friend of mine and during my early Sun Journal days when I was working for five dollars a week, I had a lot of time on my hand that I had to be out of sight somewhere. So I would go round and spend it with Alice at the Blades Hotel. We had a wonderful time together and

she went to the Episcopal Church and I went to the Episcopal Church 'cause I got started going to Episcopal Church, to the young people's meetings there, and with Eleanor Nelson. And then Mr. Brayshaw's daughter, I got to going there on account of the fact that she was there, and then Alice. We had dances in the parish house. I had a wonderful time. Mr. Brayshaw was pastor.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was the Gaston Hotel like?

NAT DIXON: Much, much plainer than when Louis got it. He began to polish it up all over the place. I put some nice plants in there for him and he fixed it up pretty nice. But it was comfortable.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, did you, you enjoyed dancing in your day. What about dances in New Bern when you came along. Now where did you learn to dance.

NAT DIXON: I'm trying to think of that Duffy girl's first name, because everybody knew her so well. Can't think of it to save my life, but anyway, I found out that she was teaching dancing for a dollar a lesson. So I would go around once a week and spend one of my five dollars for dancing lessons.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: In her home?

NAT DIXON: Yes, in her, she lived upstairs. Her apartment where we went to do the dancing was in an apartment along there about, across the street from Baxter's Sporting Goods. It was in that section along there. I can't think of the names of those places there. J. C. Penney's was there, and right along there. It was upstairs and she taught me one step. Slide step, slide, but

we took it, carried on from there and the dances that I was mentioning about the warehouses. They'd have these huge dances at the tobacco warehouses and they would bring these big name bands in, you know, and it didn't cost all that much money to buy a ticket back in those days.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where were these warehouses?

NAT DIXON: The one that comes to my mind most particularly, was, that where the dances took place, as you, right there at, you know where the coal shoot, you know S. B. Parker is there now.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: Right there in that spot.

FRED: Banner. Banner Warehouse.

NAT DIXON: Then, other warehouses that I recall, New Bern never did turn out to be much of a tobacco town. Warehouses went on the blink, but on down on the corner where Cedar Grove Cemetery is on the left, right across the street over there, was a great big warehouse. I don't know what that one was. Remember that one? There was a great big warehouse there and there were some other interesting things along there that, not too many in the way of houses. But then over on North Craven, there's a blank lot there right where Riverside Iron Works used to be, right beside that place, it used to be a warehouse.

FRED: Monk's

NAT DIXON: Yeah, uh huh.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What's the name of that one?

FRED: Monk's.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Monk's Warehouse. M,o,n,c,k,s.

NAT DIXON: M,o,n,k,s.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: M,o,n,k,s. And you'd have dances in all of these warehouses?

NAT DIXON: No, no, the only place I really remembered the dancing, they had them in warehouses all over this eastern part of North Carolina, but here in New Bern, it seemed to me like it was at the Banner most of the time.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you have dances at the Woman's Club and Stanley Hall?

NAT DIXON: No, all the dances I'm talking about would be little private dancing like dancing at the parish house when we have young Episcopal, young people get together.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you let Presbyterians in?

NAT DIXON: Well, I was Methodist. They let me in. I would have probably, if times hadn't a changed, I would have probably become an Episcopalian. Frank Challen, you ever remember who Frank Challen was. He was manager of the Sun Journal for awhile, business manager. Matter of fact, he's the man who hired me when I came home from the Marine Corp, Frank Challen was the manager at that time, and he hired me. And he and his wife were Episcopalian. The church sent her up there at Greensboro to girls' college. She had that activity and every other week, we'd drive up to Greensboro to be with her, and that's one thing got me to going to the Episcopal Church too.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did you travel a lot over eastern North

Carolina to go to dances?

NAT DIXON: No.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: There were a lot of people who did that though in those days. Sort of a group from New Bern would travel around.

NAT DIXON: Yes, I was gone during that period of time. During that time, I was in the Marine Corp, and when I came home from the Marine Corp, I was a married man with a baby and I didn't have the money or the facilities either.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, what do you remember about fires in New Bern?

NAT DIXON: I remember a lot. I remember on the Saturday morning, December 2nd, that New Bern caught on fire

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: In 1922.

NAT DIXON: It was December 2, yep. Saturday morning. And it was about breakfast time and we heard about this huge fire going on down there. And also, we later learned what happened, they had had a fire at the Rowland Lumber Company. That's where all the fire fighting equipment was, out there, fighting the fire at Rowland Lumber Company when this fire got started out in the colored section out there kind of behind the new Cedar Grove Cemetery on the right. Back over in that area somewhere, and it was a windy day. And first thing you know, it was going like hot cakes all up and down the street and the place just, I was only. Let's see, how old was I. I was born in 1913. This was 1922, so I'd be nine years old. We didn't go down to see what was going on, but a day

or two later we went down there and there was just nothing but chimneys sticking up all over everywhere. You remember it. You're too young.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I remember it Nat, a little bit. I was younger than you were. Was there any influx of people who had been burned out to come out this way?

NAT DIXON: No. Harry Jacobs was very active in the rehabilitation, in what he did. He was very active in getting things and doing things to get those people a cover, and there was a tent city. Tremendous area with tents, and I remember those tents.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: One of the stories we heard was that people were placed on flat cars, these burned out people, and brought out to the Oaks Road area to get away from the troubles downtown.

NAT DIXON: I don't remember any of that. No, I mean, I don't think, I don't think it, there's nowhere out here for a flat car to come. That don't make sense to me.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What do you remember about hurricanes?

NAT DIXON: Plenty. The only one, the ones I remember most of all, of course, in 1933 when Neuse River bridge washed away, I was in the Marine Corp. I was up in Norfolk, Virginia, and I heard a lot about it. The bridge washed away. But in 1913, the year I was born, the bridge washed away. I was born in February. September the hurricane came along and washed the bridge away. And then the next one was 1933, and I was up in the Marine Corp in Norfolk.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was the 1913 bridge in the same location as the '33 bridge?

NAT DIXON: Yes. Yes. I think so, yeah. Came up right there,

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Come into Johnson Street?

NAT DIXON: Right, Johnson, yeah, Johnson. Then in 1955, those are the ones that really got me. Three of them in a row came over this nursery and I mean, I had, I was damaged each time to some degree and that third one just about finished me off, and I thought, my God, this is the end of the road, 'cause everything I've got to sell is dead and wiped out. What am I going to do, and here comes this notice in the paper about the Small Business Administration disaster loans are going to be made available to New Bern people who need it. So I went down. I told my Eleanor, I said, good, I think we're a disaster customer. So I went down to see the man. I told him I would like to borrow some of that money. I've had a disaster. And said, we will come out and look it over. If you've had a disaster, you can get some. So he came out and he looked around, and said, my gosh, you have had a disaster. Because I had nine, nine electric motors in my greenhouses. All those motors went under water and the plants in the greenhouses died. The water was somewhat salty, and my plants in the field drowned and died. Oh, it looked like the end of the road, but I got that cash money. Incidentally, this was during the Eisenhower administration. And Mr. Rouse, you remember W. B. Rouse, was Republican representative here during the Eisenhower

administration. Anything you had to do with the government, you had to go through Mr. Rouse. So, they issued the money to Mr. Rouse, and every time I would make a purchase, he would issue a check. I went down to Charleston, South Carolina to buy plants. I had to use this money as they prescribed it, and I went down there, and I went to see this great big wholesale nursery, and I asked him, I said, "Will you deliver this stuff for me." He said, "I'm not in the transportation business." I said, "Look man, I'm down here and I want to buy as many shrubs as you can stack on one of your tractor trailers and pay cash for it. That interest you?" He perked right up and said, "Come on, get in the pickup here." We rode around and I said I'll take fifty of these and a hundred of those and so forth and so on and so on. Loaded down and I got, took my bill to Mr. Rouse. Mr. Rouse wrote me out a check and that was the beginning of that, and I brought those plants out here and I went to Tennessee and bought a lot of bare rooted trees, you know. Apple trees, peach trees and all them sort of things, and there was no where else for people to buy that stuff from in those days. So I lined it out there in the field and it looked so beautiful sitting there in the ground, you know, baled in burlap. Just put it in the ground, and I had the best year I had ever had. I made more net profit, clean, clear money that year I had ever made in my life doing anything. I thought this wasn't a curse. This was a blessing.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, did the river come way in here?

NAT DIXON: The water got this deep right where we're sitting.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What, two feet?

NAT DIXON: No, one foot. Inside here, it got about a foot deep inside. Yeah, it sure did. Yep. I didn't have that kind of carpet then, thank goodness.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: That was the only time the water came up in all those three hurricanes.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, the only time water came up, in all those years I been here, that's the only time I've ever seen water even close to my house in fact. Well, what happened in that case, the center, the epi center of that storm passed just below Neuse River bridge and the storm surge, the full force of the storm surge came across here. It was ten feet deep at the corner of Holiday Inn down there by Neuse River Bridge.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, during World War II, you were in Jacksonville most of the time.

NAT DIXON: Yes. I was classified as 2A, and one time it appeared that they were going to get me anyhow. Matter of fact, Shoot called me in the office one day and said, said both our numbers are coming up and you know who they will take don't you. I said, not you. He said, that's right. They're going to take you. Said you go home and start, begin thinking about it and making preparations because you're probably going to get called up pretty soon. And then a ruling came out that nobody under, over twenty six would be taken. So that cleared me for awhile. And then they took that one down and they went back to taking them at all ages. Gus Mann got that. That time he got it. Gus Mann and

I were the same age. And I, but they passed over me that trip and before I ever got called again, the war was over. But I stayed 2A throughout the war which probably saved my life.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, do you know anything about Camp Battle?

NAT DIXON: Lots about Camp Battle. When I first came out here, that was in Glenburnie Park. A very nice park. It had a great big pavilion in it. It had a piano in there. Had big dances out there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was this located?

NAT DIXON: Right straight behind my house, back here between here and the river. You ever met Professor Bordeleaux.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes.

NAT DIXON: He used to conduct those dance bands out there. And they had a zoo. They had animals, monkeys and all that sort of thing, and there was a pier built out there because in earlier days (I never saw this take place) I understand that the steam boat came out from New Bern, brought people, and there was this, the pilings for the old railroad tracks were still there. The railroad would come out here to this park, and then as time rocked along, one, that building turned into a junk pile. The city began dumping trash, just dumped the trash at the end of the road down there. And the pavilion caught on fire and burned down and the park went to the dogs. And my wife went, I think Mayor Lupton was in charge at that time, but anyway, she got a petition up and went down. She was, my wife was, she was an activist, and got a petition to show

that that was ridiculous, the dumping out there on that beautiful place, dumping, just making a city dump out of it. And so they cleaned it up. And it wasn't so long after that, Bill Pierce came in the picture. The recreation man in New Bern. Died of cancer. Bill, he even had a pool dug out. They were going to have a swimming pool. Dug a great big pool in the ground. Filled it with water, and the kids were having a wonderful time in that pool and then somebody came along and said that's not healthy and had to close it down, fill it full of, fill it up. But, then, they, as time rocked along, the war started, and when it did, the Army sent operational troops in here. Now those troops came here for the protection, and not of Cherry Point or anything like that. They were, went down here on the beaches. They were watching out for the German submarines who might land up and down the coast. You've heard about, you ever hear about how the Germans were landing submarine groups along the shore. That's what they were there for, to protect the rivers and the bridges and things down on the coast. They were operation troops, and the Cherry Point had the very first Marines planes in there and they were dropping bombs on those subs out there, and then when that particular phase of the war was over, they turned it into a prisoner of war camp. And they brought in lots of Germans. And those Germans were farmed out to the farmers around here. Mr. West, incidentally, would hire, send a bus, go get a whole bus load of German solders and go out. They were fine workers. My brother, Basil, was in the war right through, he got injured in the Battle of the Bulge and was sent back in to be a

guard in a prison of war camp, and he said those Germans were nice, decent boys. Said those cotton picking French people, he said they didn't have the quality that the Germans did much, even though they were the enemy. They were nice to get along with.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Now this was all of course before you bought this place.

NAT DIXON: No. Yes, yes, yes. That's true, yeah. That's right. Yeah. I bought this in '46, and the war was between '41 and '45.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were there a lot of German prisoners in there?

NAT DIXON: Oh yes, yeah, lots of 'em.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: It's a big place?

NAT DIXON: Yes, uh huh, yeah.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: There's been something in the news lately about armaments being found in various camps.

NAT DIXON: I always wondered, I never heard anything about that before. Ever.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Wasn't Camp Battle one of the places?

FRED: Camp Battle was one of the places.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes

NAT DIXON: Uh huh. I never knew anything about it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The paper said that this was one of the places where either think there were armaments under ground or sure of it, but you don't know anything about that?

NAT DIXON: Not a thing in the world. I read that and I

wondered what, who came up with that.

FRED: Did the German prisoners, didn't they build Kafer Park, the stone wall over in there. I remember that was, they built that around it and then built the new grandstands.

NAT DIXON: One of the things that took place in the early stages of Camp Battle, on Sunday afternoons, the Army would have band concerts, and the citizens would come out and sit around out there and listen to the music of the bands.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: They'd drive out?

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yep.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, did that later become Glenburnie Park?

NAT DIXON: No, it's been Glenburnie Park since the word go. This, I'm going to tell you a little story about that. Mrs. Hollister, Dr. Hollister's mother, she wrote a letter to the Sun Journal one time and it was discussing this. But that was when my wife had found out about this place being Glenburnie Gardens on the map. So she thought that if it's Glenburnie Gardens, lets call it Glenburnie Gardens. So she went down to see post master Eagle and see if he would let us use that Glenburnie Gardens as a direction for delivering the mail. Said sure, that's what it is. A matter of fact, he's the one that surveyed the place and put the name Glenburnie Gardens on the map. That's how my wife found out about it. And then, she went to see the highway people and asked them if they'd put up signs. So they did. They erected signs, Glenburnie Gardens, and that's when the Glenburnie Gardens came back into

being again. The way it got to be Glenburnie Gardens. Mrs. Hollister wrote a letter to the editor one day and said that this property out here was bought by a man named McDonald from Scotland, and he named it Glenburnie Gardens after his, some little spot in Scotland, Glenburnie, Scotland. And so, that's how it got its name, but the name never caught on until my wife revived it, but then it caught like nobody's business. You see that great big sign as you drove in there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes. Yes. Well how did the park develop, Glenburnie Park.

NAT DIXON: The city of New Bern owned that property before I was born. I mean, from the time I ever remember it was Glenburnie Park, owned by the city of New Bern and all this things I'm talking about, the railroad line, and the steam line, and the pavilion, and all that was built before I knew anything about it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Was Camp Battle where Glenburnie Park is now?

NAT DIXON: Yes. Yes.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: So after the war was over, it became a

NAT DIXON: They tore it down.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: municipal park.

NAT DIXON: Again, again, yes, yes, yes, yeah. Yep.

FRED: They had the public wells there too.

NAT DIXON: That's true. For a long time, the city of New Bern's water supply came from there. Right. City, New Bern's water supply came from right out there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Are those wells still there?

NAT DIXON: They filled them up. Capped them over, but they are still in the ground.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, what was the depression like in New Bern?

NAT DIXON: As a farm boy, we didn't suffer very much from it. We ate as good as we ever ate in our lives. I'm telling you. The food was wonderful, but and I didn't, I wasn't conscious of it, but we didn't have any clothes to wear. I mean, we couldn't buy anything. I remember my coat sleeves got way up here, you know. I was in my teens, began to get in my teens, and my coat sleeves were going up my arms, and my mother extended those sleeves, but I had neighbors out here, Joe, that had a terrible time. There was a family named Rhodes, Jeff Rhodes. You ever hear, remember anything about Jeff Rhodes? But anyway, he, Miss Mamie Sadler, you remember, ever heard of Miss Mamie Sadler. She was a saintly person. She, during those years, a lot of people ate that wouldn't have eaten if it hadn't been for her. She trusted them. Some of them paid her back when they finally got where they could, and some never did pay her back. So I hope she's reaping her rewards in heaven for her good deeds, but those, I knew of other families. Grown men with children who had worked a week for five lonely dollars. Can you imagine that? All week long. And when Franklin Roosevelt came along with the WPA, that's when things turned around, turned the corners, because they hired so many people to do so many things. I remember out where, Eleanor and I, when we were

first married out there in San Diego, the WPA band would play concerts in the park. The WPA artist painted pictures on walls and post offices, and the ditch digger, I mean, a lot of people, they put them to digging ditches, and clean up all the ditches and drainage lines. Mosquito control they called it, and a lot of people began to have an income again who didn't, who weren't having any income. So that's why Franklin Roosevelt is remembered so kindly and he gave birth to the Democratic Party that survives today. I mean, the kind of Democrats that we are a product of Franklin Roosevelt's.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: But you, you were not really affected by the depression except for your clothing.

NAT DIXON: That's right. We owned, you see, my daddy owned his farm, you know, and we had a dairy, and we had all the good food you could eat and everything. So and when he wanted, when he had to have, actually had to have some cold cash, he would go kill a pig and grind him up into sausage, and he had an excellent reputation, Mr. Dixon's sausage was well known. And he'd go up and down National Avenue to all the people who knew him, and they wanted his sausage. Glad to get his sausage. Got his hands on some ready cash that way.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: The lumber mills were a big part of Riverside's history.

NAT DIXON: That Rowland Lumber Company was one of the biggest in the south land at one time. Tremendous thing, and that railroad that brought in the logs every day, came right across where the

Riverside Hardware now sits. There was a railroad that came in there every day and the entire area out there in front of National Cemetery was stacked with logs. As matter of fact, there's some bad spots out there for houses now where they're going to settle down on that pine bark. They had foundation problems because of that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did logs come in by the river too?

NAT DIXON: Oh yes, sure, sure. Down, the logs that came in by the river, I was going to tell you about that too, but anyway those logs were sawed up over there at Buntings in Bridgeton and also down on North Craven Street there, Slaters, not Slaters. Yeah, Slaters, sure, and Aberly's. Those mills. That's where those logs came to, but the Rowland Lumber Company, they were such a huge outfit that they required tremendous amounts. And they may have had some come in by river too, but I remember particularly that train that came in every single day full of, loaded down with logs.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Fred, behind your house there's so many railroads, tracks, where do they go.

FRED: That railroad track. That one that comes right, it comes in from Kinston and goes right, the one right behind us, goes right straight on over to Kinston on up to Goldsboro and Raleigh, and through there it goes from Riverside. It goes right across National Avenue and curves on around to the left. It goes across the Neuse River and to the right. It goes right on down through Hancock Street and on across the Trent River.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: There are about six or eight separate tracks though.

FRED: It's sort of a marshalling yard right there in Riverside. There was a coal chute and water, watering tower there.

NAT DIXON: That name, coal chute, still hangs on to it, that area. I remember, and, when they were the trains together, your daddy used to get so damn mad. Well, I mean, what they'd do, they would slam bang in the middle of the night. Whamo, Whamo. He would go down there and raise the devil about it.

FRED: Yeah, that's Doctor Latham. They would wake him up every night, and he was trying to get some sleep there and he slept on the back of the house, and at two o'clock in the morning. Edgar Ferebee used to be on there and he,

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Who was?

FRED: It was a Ferebee. It had, he later had a little, took in laundry and things like, lived down across from the, on Queen Street, right across from the depot, and I'm trying to remember his first name there. He said, "Your doctor shouldn't be fussing like that." Said we got to keep this thing going he says, and I says, "My daddy said you haven't got to yell like that."

NAT DIXON: I remember a terrible slam banging. You could hear it all the way out here.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, during the civil rights period in the sixties, and the Martin Luther King tragedy, you were here. What do you remember about those days in New Bern.

NAT DIXON: I remember that night that Martin Luther King was

killed how they blacks just tore hell out of everything in sight.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Downtown or in...

NAT DIXON: Out in Five Points area, in the black area and on Queen Street. You know Wyatt's, where Wyatt's tv place is. Knocked the glass out of there. I don't know what, all down that way. But Dick Skinner owned a warehouse out there that the bread people rented from him. They tore into that place. Pulled the commode up and threw it out the door. Pulled the water, I mean the wash basin. Threw it out the door and knocked all the glass out and just wrecked the place.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was this?

NAT DIXON: This was in Five Points, about a door or two from the corner. There not far back in there. Dick said that was a million dollar riot as far as he was concerned. Insurance company paid for it, got to build it back, built back better than it was before.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were there, before, getting away from the Martin Luther King episode, did New Bern go through a hard time?

NAT DIXON: There were times when it was really tense. I remember one time Winston had a job. A man named Sasser, out at Five Points, who's, I think he sold second hand clothes, but anyway, Mr. Sasser hired Winston to work with him on Saturdays. And I was so worried about Winston out there in that black section that I went down to see the Chief of Police, and I told him, I'd sure appreciate it if you kinda keep an eye on, from time to time,

and see if everything is quite and peaceful around that situation. So he did.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were there marches in New Bern, sit-ins?

NAT DIXON: I don't remember anything like that, no. Of yes, the sit-ins, oh yeah, yeah. Matter of fact, New Bern was kind of historic in that area. Mr. Huey was the man's name. Ran Kress'. They pulled a sit-down on him.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: At Kress'?

NAT DIXON: Yes, and they also, they boycotted him, and Kress' volume dropped two thirds just like that, and he worried to death about that thing, and one day he told me, he was a member of the Rotary Club. Matter of fact, Mr. Huey got me in the Rotary Club, and he was telling me all about it. He said I just can't stand this much longer. Says, I'm going to start feeding 'em. So one day he hired him some black girls to go to work in there and he opened up his counters to the, anybody come, and began to serve them. And just like that all over town, begin to hire, you would see black faces appearing in the store as clerks, and the banks, and Mr. Huey kind of broke the ice. Walter, my son Walter, was home from college and he asked Walter, Mr. Huey had the Rotary Club program. He wanted Walter to come in and give the views of the college students about this situation, and he said now I want you to say what's on your mind. Said forget about your daddy sitting out there. Said you're not quoting him. I want to hear you. So Walter turned it on just like he thought it was. I don't remember

anything particular raucous about it but, but I don't recall any big deals about the walks and such, I mean, marches or whatever? Do you, Freddy?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Were your children in school during that time here in town when segregation, integration.

NAT DIXON: Yes, yes, yeah. Matter of fact,

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did they have troubles?

NAT DIXON: The older ones were about out of it by the time all that took place. Matter of fact, I think, I think they were all out of it, but except Todd, and Todd was in so bad, it was so terrible then that we took Todd out and put him in a private school.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where did you send him?

NAT DIXON: Miss Danes, Lois Danes. She had the first private school in town.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I'd like to know more about that school. I know something about it. Can you look back there?

NAT DIXON: This had nothing to do with the one eventually got started out in River Bend. This had nothing to do with. This was Mrs. Danes, I tell you who sort of brought her down here. Mr. Don Dicktel who operated the Culligan Soft Water. When he found out they wanted a private school, he said I knew just the lady to do that for you. So he got her and brought her here, and she started the school up.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was she from?

NAT DIXON: Iowa, Ames, Iowa.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Is this D,a,n,e,s?

NAT DIXON: Yes, I think that was the way it was, yes.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where was the school located?

NAT DIXON: You know where Peterson's architecture offices are? That's where it was first.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Johnny Mitchell's old home.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yeah. That's first, and then she eventually bought Riverside School. Matter of fact, we kicked in two hundred fifty dollars extra and above our, about twelve hundred dollars a year she charged us, to buy that school, Riverside School, which she bought for a ridiculous price I think. Paid twenty thousand dollars or something like that for the whole block, the school buildings and everything.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And she ran a private school up there in the old Riverside School. When was this Nat?

NAT DIXON: Well, let's see, Todd, let's see, he was born in '59, and so he was about high school age and that would have been about nine years, ten years, sixty nine. Somewhere along there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did she run this school in the old Riverside School building for very long?

NAT DIXON: No, I don't know whether it was, she couldn't make it financially or what the cause her to close up. I don't know exactly why, because by that time my kids were totally out of it.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yeah. Did she then go out to Riverbend.

NAT DIXON: No, that was another deal.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Different school.

NAT DIXON: Different outfit.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What was the name of the school at Riverbend?

NAT DIXON: I don't know what it was. They called it Howell's. Now it's a place for retarded children or grown people or whatever.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And that building was used for the school. Is that correct?

NAT DIXON: That's, they built it, built it for that purpose, out at Riverbend.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: What do you remember about medicine as you grew up. Doctors, hospitals, nurses, dentists.

NAT DIXON: Well, this is my recollection about that. In, during the 1918 flu epidemic, my mother had the flu. She's the only one of the family that had it, thankfully, because it was a terrible flu. A lot of people died and she was desperately sick herself, but Dr. Richard Duffy was our doctor then. In my own personal experience, I didn't have much medical problems as I was growing up. Thank the Lord. I had one. I got appendicitis when I was fourteen years old and Dr. Richard Duffy operated on me.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Where?

NAT DIXON: In the New Bern General they called it. It was a yellow, it's a house, a dwelling house right where Craven and Middle join. Right there.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Yes, just been restored and we remarked

about it as we came out, how beautiful it was.

NAT DIXON: Yeah, yeah. I was in the upstairs bedroom there. I mean that's where my room was. And in those days, you stayed in the bed ten days. I mean, you're not suppose to get up and go to the bath room or anything. And now.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: I guess you had ether anesthesia too.

NAT DIXON: That's right. Yeah. I got so that the smell of that stuff would make me sick to my stomach. One time, Evelyn, my oldest daughter, had to have her tonsils out, and this was in Saint Luke's and I went in there, and Eleanor says what's the matter with you. You're white as a sheet, and I know so. I feel it coming on.

But the smell of that ether was about to get me. I didn't know what it was doing to me, but that's what it was.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You don't remember the cost of these operations, how expensive they were.

NAT DIXON: Well, I think it cost two hundred and fifty dollars for my appendicitis bit, the whole bit, the hospital and all, two hundred and fifty dollars. And those days, you stayed in the hospital ten days.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you remember many of the old doctors?

NAT DIXON: Oh sure. Let me think a minute. Dr. Wadsworth. Dr. Jones, your daddy, Dr. Patterson. Richard Duffy, of course.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Dr. Latham.

NAT DIXON: Oh sure, matter of fact, I think of him as in the later years. He was my daddy's, he tended to my daddy, and all of

us, in fact, in the family. Then eventually on to Ernest Richardson.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: In those days, the doctors would come out to your homes

NAT DIXON: Oh yes, indeed. As a matter of fact.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: On the interview with Nat Dixon, this is side "C". Nat you were talking about having mumps one time and they went down on you. What do you mean by that?

NAT DIXON: You want me to say it and what it was?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Explain it then.

NAT DIXON: Alright. The testicles expanded. Now when I say expanded, I mean they grew to the size of a grapefruit, and I was only fourteen years old, and my daddy was really upset about that thing. So he called Dr. Duffy, and Dr. Duffy came out. He gave him salve to rub on it. Said, it'll straighten out in a few days, and then after it was all over, he said, bring him down here to see me. And while I was there, he examined me and he said it won't amount to a row of pins, or a hill of beans, was his words. Won't amount to a hill of beans. And it must not have, because I proceeded to have five kids.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, probably helped you.

NAT DIXON: It didn't do any harm.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, we've talked about so many things. I need to ask you at this point, what other memories you have of New Bern that you'd like to speak about or other things that are on your mind you'd like to tell us.

NAT DIXON: There was one person that I haven't mentioned that I feel like I should mention, that is Dr. Andrew Chesson. You remember Andrew Chesson?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: S,e,s,s,o,n?

NAT DIXON: C,h,e,s,s,o,n.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Chesson, Andrew Chesson.

NAT DIXON: Andrew and I were classmates together. I was the valedictorian. He was the salutatorian, and we were rivals in every sense of the word, and friends. As a matter of fact, we even courted the same girl and she didn't accept either of us. We lost out. Both of us lost out to that gal. But when I went out to Oregon last year, not this year, last year, when I came home, on my answering machine, there was a message that somebody in New Bern wanted to get up with me because there was a Dr. Andrew Chesson, Jr., wanting to learn something about his father and he wanted to talk to somebody who knew something about it. So, I thought, my gosh, I'm the prime target for that. So, I found out where Dr. Chesson was, down in Shreveport, Louisiana, and I called him up, and he was delighted to hear what I knew. His father was a surgeon and he and his wife were on a trip during one of the hurricanes, probably the 1955 hurricanes I reckon, but in the Albemarle Sound and the ship sank and everybody, both his mother and father, both got drowned. And he was only four years old. So he has little memory of his father and mother. And they lived down on National Avenue. As a matter of fact, he and I were great buddies. I spent the night at his house, and we were in the same room at school all

throughout our years.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Did he ever practice in New Bern?

NAT DIXON: No. He practiced in Raleigh, and I don't know where, I didn't even know where he went to medical school, because I was busy getting married and my life was very busy at the time.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Nat, your life has been enriched by many things and one of them has been travel. You and Eleanor took many a good trip.

NAT DIXON: We were very blessed in that to be privileged. I was looking through some of my albums today, and found one there of Greece. Recently a group of local people just going to Greece on one of the groups, and I was accepted, I mean I applied for that, but they didn't have enough slots. So I backed out and stepped out since I had been to that particular spot. But we've had some wonderful trips. We went together to China, to Israel, to Africa, to Europe, many times to Europe, but then after she died, I have continued my travels to Russia. Year before last I been to Denmark, then to Belgium Holland, and then I've been on a couple of cruises. I'm signed up for one right now if this medical problem doesn't stop me.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Do you travel with tours when you're doing this?

NAT DIXON: No, well, I do both ways. We found that you get more for your money if you go in a group, an organized tour, because when you go by yourself, you spend all your time trying to find out where, how to get to where you want to go, but if you go

with an organized tour, they know where to take you and they have already picked out the good places. I think one of the really particularly nice ones was our trip to China. We was escorted by two Chinese guides from the word go, and then each city that we landed in, one of the governmental guides would take over. Bring out the bus and stay with you throughout the trip, but these two guides that were part of the trip, were Chinese people. The two that were with us all the time spoke excellent English, and were charming people too. That was a terrific trip. That trip to China.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: To wind this up, let me just ask you to be a little philosophical. What do you think about the future of New Bern and of this area out here?

NAT DIXON: I think New Bern has been tremendously blessed with the influx of all these retirees. They come in here with money. They come in here with a good way of life, and it catches, it spreads. I think that's one of the great blessings for New Bern and I hope that we continue to foster that type of growth.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You think New Bern's doing well right now?

NAT DIXON: I think so. Yes, I do. We are blessed in this regard. We got ourself a underpinning, economic underpinning of Cherry Point which depressions kind of come and go, but that sort of stands steady, steady on, and I think that that and the type of industries that have come in here are nice, clean industries and don't smell up the place, particularly Weyerhauser. I remember

when Weyerhauser came that Pop Beasley's wife conducted a campaign and I signed her ads in the paper. A fellow stopped me on the street one day. He said are you nuts? I said what are you talking about? He said signing the ads here about that Weyerhauser plant. I said, well, man have you ever smelled a good strong paper plant. I said I have, and I said, it's bad. But when Mr. Weyerhauser came, himself, the old man, one of the big shots, and made his speech at the Holiday Inn, he spent forty five minutes talking about what they had done to control odors. That's the main thing he talked about. And so I have an idea that our campaign didn't hurt any, you know, because I'm telling you, that's a ruinous thing, that smell is ungodly. But here it has never been any problem. I never smell it. Do you?

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, are you glad you grew up in New Bern?

NAT DIXON: Oh, indeed I am. It's a wonderful place. I'm devoted to New Bern. I really am. My ancestors date back to the very first boats that came over here. The Dixon side of the family, and both sides, my mother and my father. Dixons settled down in Greene County and a lot of those people over there now, Sugg, the lawyer Sugg, his family is some kin to me, and the doctor, Gorham, his wife. She is one of my cousins from the Dixon side, but on my mother's side, Askins and Ernul were my grandmother's maiden name and her father's. Her mother's name was Ernul. Askins was my grandmother's father, and Ernul was her grandmother's mother. So they were prominent back before the Civil

War, those days.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Anything else on your mind, Nat?

NAT DIXON: I'll probably think of some things when you're gone, but I just can't recall anything else

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: You've talked very steadily and I know you must be a little tired. Well, this has been a great interview.

NAT DIXON: Well, I appreciate that.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: And we're very happy that you let us do this. It's going to help the Memories Program. Like I said at the beginning, you've been a big help to this program anyhow.

NAT DIXON: I appreciate it. I felt guilty though, when I stepped down from the job that you had given me, but I knew I wasn't able to perform. I discovered too this year, all of a sudden a lot of my talents are dissolved on me. Not exactly my talents, my capabilities. Put it that way. One of the things that put it to me, one night I went down to see you and I got the wrong night. But in the meantime, on this particular night, I turned into, going around a corner, I turned into somebody's front yard, and I thought, damn, I've got to cut this out. And then another time I turned into out here in my own neighborhood, I turned into a front yard instead of my lane that I'm suppose to come up. I thought, I've got to cut this out, this driving at night, and I have. I've cut down the driving at night.

DR. JOSEPH PATTERSON: Well, Nat, I'm going to cut this off now, and thank you again for letting us come. We've enjoyed it a lot.

NAT DIXON: I appreciate you including me in.

END OF INTERVIEW