

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

GEORGE H. DUNSON

INTERVIEW 1509

This tape is number 1509 made for the Memories of New Bern Committee on April 21, 1993. It is an interview with George H. Dunson at 812 Smith Street in New Bern, North Carolina.

BILL EDWARDS: Mr. Dunson, tell us where you were born and anything about that.

MR. DUNSON: Okay. As you heard, my name is George H. Dunson. I was born and reared in James City just across the Trent River. I had an interesting, poor life, but a lot of fun. My parents, mother and father, name Samuel and Rosa Dunson. My mother taught school in the Havelock area, Havelock and Harlow area. My father was in the taxi cab business years ago. I went to elementary school in James City, and of course to the New Bern school at J. T. Barber, and that was then on West Street. I took me a job, more or less, in the produce business with Boyd Brothers that was then on South Front Street.

BILL EDWARDS: Was that after you grew up?

MR. DUNSON: After I grew up. I was sixteen when I went to work for Mr. Boyd. I just loved that family; Guy, his wife Dallas, the three children; Guy, Jr., Peggy, and I forget the youngest one's name.

But I worked there for twenty years. In fact it's the only job I ever had. When I quit there, I had decided to go in business for myself.

I opened up a chicken market, chicken and fish, in the Five Points area, from there to the Frog Pond in service station, and now, I'm in the bail bonding business. A whole lot of interesting things I remember about New Bern. Fact, a poor life can be a fun life if you accept your responsibilities and get respect from the people that

surrounds you. Down the line I created a lot of good friends, both white and black. During the period I worked for Mr. Boyd I learned a whole lot about business; how to make money, how to buy and sell, and those type of things. I remember some cold weather back there then. Neuse River almost froze over. To name a few businesses downtown from the then South Front Street; the old coca-cola plant used to be down there and it used to make coca-colas there, Lucas and Lewis Wholesale Groceries, Sam Lipman and Son. One Lipman was in the furniture business.

BILL EDWARDS: That was Joe Lipman.

MR. DUNSON: Joe Lipman was in the furniture business. I even remember when Belk's and Montgomery Ward was downtown there. There was black barbers cutting the white peoples hair down there, and that was more or less common place. That's all we knew.

BILL EDWARDS: Where was that, George?

MR. DUNSON: That was at the foot of Middle Street right near the coca-cola plant. Between the coca-cola plant and Lucas and Lewis Grocery place.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, I declare. Well, Pollock never did have a barber shop down there, did he?

MR. DUNSON: No.

BILL EDWARDS: He had one over here at Five Points.

MR. DUNSON: He had one in Five Points. But I remember Doug Darden. I don't know whether you remember Doug Darden or not. He drove a horse and cart hauling freight with it. He'd go by the stores and

pick up boxes of freight and go from one store to the 'nother, make sort of a wholesale deliveries there. Half a dozen boxes or so at a time. Kind of like the old west you see, the Wells Fargos in the cowboy movies. And further on down Middle Street there was Land's Store - T. E. Land I believe.

BILL EDWARDS: T. E. Land. Is that the ship chandlery, where they sold supplies for ships?

MR. DUNSON: I believe they did. Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Sort of a hardware store for marine stuff.

MR. DUNSON: Right. That type of surplus. You know there was Maxwell right down further.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: And in front of Mr. Maxwell was Mr. Lupton, who later on became to be mayor of the town.

BILL EDWARDS: Right.

MR. DUNSON: I had two or three brothers that worked for Mr. Lupton. He was in the wholesale fish business.

BILL EDWARDS: Right.

MR. DUNSON: Had fish boats coming up Neuse River, docking there and bringing their catch, and Mr. Lupton would buy everything they had. I had a couple of brothers that helped grade the fish out and pack them up and ship them north, in that particular area. Then on further up the line, I remember doing business with Mr. Boyd, or working for Mr. Boyd. I knew a few of the bankers; Mr. Fitzgerald with Branch Bank and the Dunn boys that had the old Bank of New Bern I believe

they called it.

BILL EDWARDS: Right.

MR. DUNSON: And Earl Hughes used to work there. You remember Earl Hughes?

BILL EDWARDS: Oh yeah.

MR. DUNSON: You do?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: And then of course on up further there, I remember the soda shop on the Middle Street side on the right side. I believe it was Jacobs Soda Shop.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, Jacobs Soda Shop. I remember that.

MR. DUNSON: And across the street was Gaskins Soda Shop.

BILL EDWARDS: Um huh.

MR. DUNSON: I used to sell papers at the Sun Journal when I was young.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, did you?

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah, and that's where I learned those places.

BILL EDWARDS: How old were you then, George?

MR. DUNSON: I was 14, 15. I always did something.

BILL EDWARDS: Did you ride a bicycle?

MR. DUNSON: Rode a bicycle. My brother used to bring Mack Lupton's bicycle. He worked for Mack Lupton and he'd bring that home so I could ride it back to pick up the papers in New Bern. All of those were sort of like I say the poor years, but what else did we know? They were good years.

BILL EDWARDS: Anybody that lived through the Depression knows what poor years are.

MR. DUNSON: Knows what the poor years were. Yeah. In James City we had a fire. Our home burned over there. My mother and father moved to New Bern. I think this was in 1936.

BILL EDWARDS: They didn't have any fire department over there then, did they?

MR. DUNSON: No, it burned to the ground. I don't know what the cause of it was - accident. Houses are burned. I went in the military in '43. I think I was 22 or 23 years old. No, I got married in 1940 when I was 22. I wanted to get married. I knew I was gonna have to work the rest of my life and I wanted a family! Then I stayed in the military three years and got out in '46.

BILL EDWARDS: Where'd you report for duty, Fort Bragg?

MR. DUNSON: No, I was in the Navy, Navy Seabees. Yeah. We went to Raleigh in one them old cattle cars they called them. From there I went to Camp Perry in Virginia, right outside of Norfolk, and got my training there. Then I went to Gulfport, Mississippi and got further advanced training, and went to Port Hueneme in California, and from there to Hawaii. All these trips was further training. From Hawaii we went to the Marshall Islands: Kawajalein and Einewetoc.

BILL EDWARDS: You weren't there for Pearl Harbor attack were you?

MR. DUNSON: No, no.

BILL EDWARDS: You got there after.

MR. DUNSON: I got there after the attack. That island was about to sink with military men when I got there. After the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt sent them over there. (laughter) And from there, my last duty station was in the Marianna's. That's on Guam, Guam and Saipan island. Not Einewetoc, but Tinian. But I used to hear blow by blow description on the radio when the ships were shelling Japan. Man, just like a prize fight, the radio announcer was telling us about it. When the big bomb dropped on there, boy, that was something!

BILL EDWARDS: Did you get a radio report on that?

MR. DUNSON: We got it afterwards.

BILL EDWARDS: That's what I mean.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. "Enola Gay", it was based on Guam out there in northwest field I believe. I used to see those B-29's leave northwest field on Guam going on a bombing raid. Most thing about that that bothered me, but this was war, was we were in a battalion that unload ships, merchandise, support the Marines, you know, and I'd visit Marines in their camp and see those guys sleeping in pup tents in mud on the ground in the rain. Rough duty! But they did it!

BILL EDWARDS: I've been there.

MR. DUNSON: You have?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. I was in the infantry.

MR. DUNSON: You were in the Army infantry?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: I saw the Marines, boy... And we had where we lived,

I forget the name of the island, where the fleet post office was, close to the docks down there, and I've seen them bring them Japanese in that was hiding out in the hills. They'd bring them in on little liberty boats and put them up. But after they'd bring them in, God damn, they'd treat them better than our Marines.

BILL EDWARDS: I never have understood that, George.

MR. DUNSON: I'm telling you. I've seen some in Hawaii just as fat, eating ice cream and playing volley ball.

BILL EDWARDS: No kidding.

MR. DUNSON: I have seen that in Hawaii. Course you had those Marines with 50 caliber machine guns all around. They was in a wall fence. But those guys was enjoying the good life.

BILL EDWARDS: We didn't treat them like they treated our prisoners.

MR. DUNSON: I swear they didn't. No, we sure didn't.

BILL EDWARDS: That Bataan death march, that was a terrible thing.

MR. DUNSON: Isn't that something? Isn't that something.

BILL EDWARDS: But we fed them ice cream.

MR. DUNSON: Fed them ice cream and they're out there playing volley ball. Knocking the ball over the net. They're just as fat!

Oh me! (laughter) But after the war was over, after the bomb, I sat and heard on the radio a description of the, what was the name of the ship there? Was it the Missouri, the battleship, that MacArthur accepted the surrender?

BILL EDWARDS: I believe it was the Missouri.

MR. DUNSON: The USS Missouri where the Japanese surrendered. They told us all about that. And then after that they had a point system where if you'd been over x number of years and days, you were eligible to go home. The trip back home on the USS Yorktown, they treated us like kings.

BILL EDWARDS: Good.

MR. DUNSON: The ship, the Yorktown crew. I was a machinist mate second class, and that gave me the authority to have a platoon. And on the trip back, every other day, I'd take a detail and clean the ship up and take care of what we had messed up. Coming back, movies every night, chaplain letting us know what the news were, having what they call smokals. That's where guys would fight in the ring; you know, managed, organized fights. Just for entertainment, you know. There were amateur guys would sing and play music. Whatever talent you had there. And all that was coming back.

BILL EDWARDS: Did you sing?

MR. DUNSON: Naw! I tried on Guam when our battalion was forming a glee club and had the instructor and said, "Heck, I'm gonna get into that." I got into it and the instructor picked me out of a hundred guys, said, "You, hey, sailor! You, you come down here and stand with me." (laughter) "You mess'n up this whole choir!" (laughter) Lawd, all of that was fun. Aboard the ship though, the biggest problem was trying to take a shower with that soap. You know, sea water and the soap wouldn't lather. They had what they call salt water soap, but that wasn't like Ivory and Dove and that kind of stuff. (laughter)

But we came back to Treasure Island. That's the only time I've ever been to San Francisco. We'd get liberty from Treasure Island and catch what they call a liberty boat and go to San Francisco during the day.

Then we caught a pullman and came back East. Had a man there cleaning our beds every night. Every time you'd get up in the morning, had a porter there putting us on new sheets, new pillow cases. (laughter)

That was a good ride back. This was in the first of '46 is when I was discharged.

BILL EDWARDS: Did you come back to New Bern?

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah. Well, no, we came deportation at Camp Perry, Virginia.

BILL EDWARDS: That's where you went in, wasn't it?

MR. DUNSON: That's where I went in. Come back to Camp Perry, Virginia, and from there I came to New Bern. Come back and stayed off a week and went to work back to my job with Mr. Boyd and I've been working ever since. And I've been working ever since. I'm 75 now and I've been working a good 58, 59 years.

BILL EDWARDS: Looks like it agrees with you.

MR. DUNSON: I have no problem with it. Work hadn't bothered me. (laughter) And I've had a pretty good life. I made some money.

I'm doing pretty good I want to think. I'm living better than I ever thought would be possible for me to live.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, that's good. You deserve it.

MR. DUNSON: Well, thank you. And today I have a pretty good time.

BILL EDWARDS: Good. Tell me about some of the people maybe you had some conflict with and that you have enjoyed times with, or whatever. Frank Pollock or anybody like that.

MR. DUNSON: Frank and I were good buddies. He was a little older than me. He served in the Coast Guard. A lot of things I disagree with, but he was an older man than me and I didn't give him no hostile respond. I never would've gotten belligerent and tough with him because I respect him. The man had a big family. Had about three tons of boys there to feed. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: They were big boys.

MR. DUNSON: I liked all the Pollocks. All the Pollocks.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, well, I like them too. I used to play tennis with one of them a little bit at the rec center. Good boys.

MR. DUNSON: And Charlie Blount down here. He's dead now. And course both of them are dead. He run the store down here right at the end of this street. He built that place.

BILL EDWARDS: Was that the one that Pollock took over later on?

MR. DUNSON: No, no, not that one. Hayes Crary's son, I forget his name, ran it for awhile. It was right on Main Street here. In the middle of Main.

BILL EDWARDS: Okay.

MR. DUNSON: Between Bern and West. And Governor Rhodes, he's still living.

BILL EDWARDS: Who is that?

MR. DUNSON: Governor Rhodes. He's got a store, Eubanks and Main

Street over there. I used to deliver them produce for Boyd. I remember Ralph Warrington had the store out in Duffyfield.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, I remember that too.

MR. DUNSON: Well, you take Jimmy down at, used to be Williams Cafe down there, Middle and Broad Street, I remember him very well. And there was Hayes Crary, Ronald Ipock was on Broad Street and then he went over to the Red and White on George. Earl Peterson I believed worked down there a long time.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, I remember him. In fact he's still around. I saw him the other day.

MR. DUNSON: Is that right? I don't see too many of the old guys I know now, once in awhile. When I go to the Sheraton or out to The Flame on special occasion for my wife and I, anniversaries, birthdays, or that type of thing, I look for some of the older white guys that I know. I just look for them and I don't see them.

BILL EDWARDS: We old folks don't get around like they used to.

MR. DUNSON: They sure don't. When I saw you out at, where was it, Pizza something?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Sub, Famous Sub.

BILL EDWARDS: Famous Subs, right.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. That's the first time I'd seen you in quite awhile. And it's a good feeling to see people like that too who can talk with you.

BILL EDWARDS: I agree.

MR. DUNSON: It's a real good feeling. Have I missed anything?
(Interruption) ...anybody that I had to get real mad about. Just probably several people that you might dislike, but you just leave them alone. That's all I did.

BILL EDWARDS: That sounds like good philosophy.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. They don't want to accept me as I am - good! I'll move on to somebody else that will accept me.

BILL EDWARDS: What was the man's name up here that used to take pictures? I worked for him. I worked on a camera for him. Lightening?

MR. DUNSON: Lightening in Five Points? Did he take pictures?

BILL EDWARDS: Somebody up here took pictures and I worked on a camera for him one time.

MR. DUNSON: It could have been Lightening. I forget his name. He's up north now I think. I know he is, if he's still alive. But you know right there where the Ramada Inn is now, well, it's Days Inn now, Frank Hargett had his place there. You remember?

BILL EDWARDS: I remember Frank Hargett's name but I can't remember. He was a county commissioner.

MR. DUNSON: He was a county commissioner, yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, yeah, I remember him.

MR. DUNSON: I remember when he worked for a fellow named Metts. You remember a man named Mr. Metts?

BILL EDWARDS: No, I don't.

MR. DUNSON: I guess he had a general store. You remember the Everhart brothers, don't you?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, they had markets up there.

BILL EDWARDS: What about Mr. Barwick? You remember when he used to have...

MR. DUNSON: I remember he had a furniture store up there.

BILL EDWARDS: It was about where the Days Inn is now. Wasn't it in that same general area?

MR. DUNSON: In that same general area. I believe it was across the street. He had a furniture store up there where he would sell furniture a dollar down and a dollar a week, you know, a dollar a month.

It was one of them type of stores. And I remember Jack Lee and the Home Pride store.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, I remember Jack.

MR. DUNSON: He put a five and dime up there called Ben Franklin. And there were some Syrians up there; Eddie Kaleel. BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, uh huh.

MR. DUNSON: And there was another one named Louie. They wanted to sell that property to me a little while back.

BILL EDWARDS: What did you use to deliver produce for Guy Boyd?

MR. DUNSON: Truck, pick-up truck. That's where I learned to drive.

BILL EDWARDS: Was it a Model T?

MR. DUNSON: No, it wasn't that far back. He had just a quarter of a ton pick-up truck. Leonard Horn, you might not remember Leonard Horn. His family lived in Morehead City. He was working for Mr. Boyd

and he liked me and I used to ride with him. He taught me how to drive.

But Mrs. Boyd was the real friend that I liked. She took an interest in me, and I was young and she saw something in me that she liked.

I'd eat dinner with them, she and her children. Made sure that I had something to eat and showed me a lot of things about doing business; how to make out invoices and that type of thing.

BILL EDWARDS: Sounds like you had a sponge for a mind.

MR. DUNSON: Well, I could move. See, my nickname was "Rabbit" then.

BILL EDWARDS: Rabbit. (laughter)

MR. DUNSON: Rabbit. That's what they called me. Hell, that boy moves like a rabbit. He's fast.

BILL EDWARDS: Was Boyd's where it is now? It's not Boyd's anymore.

MR. DUNSON: It's not Boyd's.

BILL EDWARDS: Across from Barbour Boat Work.

MR. DUNSON: Cross from Barbour Boat Work.

BILL EDWARDS: It's been there all that time.

MR. DUNSON: Well, he built all of that there. He built the building. Tryon Seafood is there now.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: It seemed like to me old Sam Roach, old man Sam Roach, I call him an old man because he was older than me, on South Front Street there.

BILL EDWARDS: He had a junk yard, wasn't it?

MR. DUNSON: No, Raymond Goldman had a junk yard. Sam Roach had

a machine shop.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right.

MR. DUNSON: That's what he had, a machine shop and worked on motors and machinery and that type of thing. He's dead now, isn't he?

BILL EDWARDS: As far as I know he is, but I'm not certain. Go ahead.

MR. DUNSON: My first car was a 1936 Ford. I believe it cost me four or five hundred dollars. I bought it off of, who was the man that used to sell cars on Craven Street? He sold Fords.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, I know who you're talking about. He lived across the river.

MR. DUNSON: He lived across the river. I can't think of his name.

BILL EDWARDS: I can't either. Hagood, wasn't it?

MR. DUNSON: There was Hagood, but there was a man that worked for Hagood. I can't think. There was a black guy, they called him "Moose" that worked for him too and had him a garage in Five Points where he worked on cars. But that was a 1936 Ford. I sold that after I went into the Navy. When I come back I bought a '47 Chevrolet. What did they call it? A Fleet line or something, but it had a vacuum shift on the steering wheel. You remember that?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: It was done by vacuum.

BILL EDWARDS: Uh huh.

MR. DUNSON: It wasn't no automatic.

BILL EDWARDS: I remember that.

MR. DUNSON: You put it in drive and it would take off like an outboard motor, slow and would build up vacuum. (laughter) Take off real slow. I used to wash that thing twice a day. I was proud of that car. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: I bet you were.

MR. DUNSON: But after I decided to go in business for myself, I sold it and got me a pick-up so I could sell some fish. After that, I bought an International pick-up and I used to haul fish to the country and sell it and sell chickens.

BILL EDWARDS: Outside of Craven County?

MR. DUNSON: Outside of Craven, well...

BILL EDWARDS: In partly.

MR. DUNSON: In partly and in New Bern. Outside of New Bern. But Fort Barnwell and Trenton area and down at the Harlow area. You know, going back, I made deliveries to the first Marines that moved on Cherry Point in a quonset hut. I think it was sixty of them. Mr. Boyd had the contract to deliver them produce and I used to take it down there to them. I've seen Cherry Point and Havelock grow, grow, grow. I wish my mother and father were here to see Havelock now. 'Cause from Havelock, there wasn't anything down there but the Trader's Store. You know, Hugh Trader had a store there.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: And there was dirt roads from Havelock all the way

to Adams Creek. My mother taught in Adams Creek and she taught in the Harlow.

BILL EDWARDS: And Craven Corner.

MR. DUNSON: Craven Corner! You familiar with that?!

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, yeah. I remember.

MR. DUNSON: All that was dirt road. I'd go down there with my daddy and you had to stay in the ruts. Follow the car ahead of you that had already been there. And if you meet a car, you got to get out of them ruts, and you're liable to get in the ditch. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: You might not get back.

MR. DUNSON: You might not get back. Well, all that was the good, well, the good old days as you call them. Course, I like these days today! (laughter) Days today are very good. I sort of served on a few boards in the last ten years, maybe, that I enjoyed; Neuse River Council of Government, the Mental Health.

BILL EDWARDS: Um huh. Do you remember the urban renewal project that they proposed for the Five Points area?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Tell me what you remember about that.

MR. DUNSON: Well, I believe Cedric Boyd was involved in getting some people together.

BILL EDWARDS: That's very likely.

MR. DUNSON: And the people rejected it. The people didn't want it, a few property owners. I thought it was a good thing, maybe I didn't know. But to me it sounds like a good thing. But people that

was older than I was at that time, they didn't like it. Once the government gets your property, you got a job getting it back.

BILL EDWARDS: I agree.

MR. DUNSON: You do? (laughter) I didn't know that. I wasn't familiar with all of that.

BILL EDWARDS: You know I ran the redevelopment project down on the waterfront. They gave up this one and then moved it down there.

The one they proposed for Five Points didn't go through, so they took one down where the Sheraton is now and that's the project I had charge of.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, is that right?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Did the Sheraton get any federal money? I know they got some city money.

BILL EDWARDS: I don't know whether they got any federal money or not. Not to my knowledge. That took place after I left it. I stayed down there about ten years working on that project.

MR. DUNSON: You did? You put it together?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. Well, it was partly planned before I went to work down there, but it was not approved by the city until later.

MR. DUNSON: Mrs. Bengel was mayor then, wasn't she?

BILL EDWARDS: No, this was before Mrs. Bengel. Let's see, who was mayor? I think Dr. Millns was mayor then.

MR. DUNSON: That was a good while back.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. 1970 is when it started.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, Dale Millns could have been mayor.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. Along about that time anyway.

MR. DUNSON: Well, Mack Lupton loved the city.

BILL EDWARDS: Didn't he though?

MR. DUNSON: He was crazy about this town. (laughter) I helped him to get elected a couple of times there.

BILL EDWARDS: How many votes were you good for, George?

MR. DUNSON: I don't know. But I took him out and introduced him to the people to visit, knock on some doors and then get out and work for him during election day.

BILL EDWARDS: Now, he was a good mayor.

MR. DUNSON: He was a good mayor. He was a good mayor. I tell you, he was mayor when Stanley Tools came here.

BILL EDWARDS: I think he was.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. I almost know he was because Ethridge Ricks was on the board at that time. I near about believe Paul Cox might have been serving at that time.

BILL EDWARDS: That was during that period anyway.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. But New Bern has grown so much.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh Lord! There's houses where I used to hunt squirrels. Out in the bushes!

MR. DUNSON: That's right. That's right. Well, you know, the beginning of Neuse Boulevard up here at the end of Broad Street where the ABC Store is and First Citizen Bank and where the hospital is now, I used to hunt out there.

BILL EDWARDS: I guess you did.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. And there was a prison camp out there.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right. I'd forgotten that.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: What was that man's name that...

MR. DUNSON: Capt'n Jake they called him.

BILL EDWARDS: Capt'n Jake, yep, you're right.

MR. DUNSON: And you'd go on up to Simmons Street, Simmons Street is where all the restaurants are now, you know. And going across Simmons Street, I know when that road was built through there. Used to be dirt.

BILL EDWARDS: Went straight to Oaks Road.

MR. DUNSON: Through to Oaks Road and over to Pollock Street where Trent Boulevard is now.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, that used to be dirt.

BILL EDWARDS: Somebody told me that the road from Pollocksville used to come in on Pollock Street. Do you remember that?

MR. DUNSON: I don't remember that. There was a brick road just wide enough for one car.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, Nine Foot Road.

MR. DUNSON: Nine Foot Road they used to call it. I've seen that road. Been down that road just looking.

BILL EDWARDS: I have too.

MR. DUNSON: But I don't remember when that road was built.

BILL EDWARDS: I don't know. That was probably built before you were born.

MR. DUNSON: It probably was. It was just brick laying there. There wasn't many automobiles, was it?

BILL EDWARDS: No. What automobiles they had were glorified carts.

MR. DUNSON: I remember when you could get a new car for less than a thousand dollars.

BILL EDWARDS: I agree. I remember that too.

MR. DUNSON: Less than a thousand dollars.

BILL EDWARDS: Yes sir.

MR. DUNSON: When I came out the Navy in '46, and naturally I had some money saved up and I wanted me an automobile, and I went to buy me a car and they wanted \$3,000 for that car and I thought them people were crazy. Three thousand dollars!!

BILL EDWARDS: Well, wouldn't you like to get a car for \$3,000 now?

MR. DUNSON: Any kind of thing that'll run. (laughter) Three thousand dollars!!!

BILL EDWARDS: Do you remember the Cutter Pamlico that used to be here?

MR. DUNSON: Vaguely. I don't remember too much about that.

BILL EDWARDS: You didn't ever carry any produce to them, did you?

MR. DUNSON: No, no, no, I didn't.

BILL EDWARDS: Did you get to know Haley?

MR. DUNSON: That's what I was gonna mention. I didn't know Haley. I read about him, but I didn't know Haley. He was in the Marine Corps, not the Marine Corps, he was in the Navy aboard the cutter.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, he was aboard the Pamlico.

MR. DUNSON: Right, he sure was.

BILL EDWARDS: I didn't know that until I read about it.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. Frank Pollock would probably remember him.

BILL EDWARDS: Probably would. Is he still alive?

MR. DUNSON: No, he's dead. The boys are. He's got four boys alive.

BILL EDWARDS: How many children do you have, George?

MR. DUNSON: I don't have but one.

BILL EDWARDS: One.

MR. DUNSON: One. He's done all right too.

BILL EDWARDS: Where is he?

MR. DUNSON: He's in Raleigh now.

BILL EDWARDS: What's his name, George, Jr.?

MR. DUNSON: No, no. His name is Henry. My middle name. He went to college and finished Livingstone. He came out of college and was a claims adjuster for Aetna Casualty Insurance Company. He stayed there seven years and got some training for pharmaceuticals. Not a druggist as we know it, but he made sales to doctors and hospitals and that type of thing, and he's still in that. Doing very good in it too.

BILL EDWARDS: Based in Raleigh?

MR. DUNSON: Based in Raleigh, yeah. He's doing very good. He's married, got one son.

BILL EDWARDS: So you got one grandson.

MR. DUNSON: One grandson. (Interruption)

BILL EDWARDS: What kind of business was in that building directly across the street from Maxwell Company? Do you remember?

MR. DUNSON: Mack Lupton had a wholesale fish market there.

BILL EDWARDS: In that building? Now he built one little farther down from Governor Tryon and had the, what was the name of that, that Club Diamond upstairs.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. That's what Ralph Warrington opened up. That was a freezer locker.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right.

MR. DUNSON: That was a freezer locker.

BILL EDWARDS: But his fish business was in the other building.

MR. DUNSON: In that other building. It was an old looking building, but it was right on the docks there. It was a big building.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: I think Alan Ives used to store potatoes in one side of it.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, I think you're right.

MR. DUNSON: Where they could cure.

BILL EDWARDS: And Texaco was in there at one time.

MR. DUNSON: Texaco was down in that area someplace there.

BILL EDWARDS: And then the restaurant at the end of the street.
What was the name of that?

MR. DUNSON: At the end of...

BILL EDWARDS: Middle Street out on the water.

MR. DUNSON: Sure was. I remember that now. I can't think of the name of it, but it was one there. It was sort of a seafood restaurant.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: I don't remember too much about that, but I remember it was there. This has been interesting, Bill, it really has. I have a whole lot more I probably could think of.

BILL EDWARDS: You remember the Lipman's Men's, or Department Store.

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: That was on Middle Street.

MR. DUNSON: On Middle Street on the right going up towards Pollock, yeah. I see one of his sons now, Adolph I believe. He's still living.

BILL EDWARDS: He's over here at the...

MR. DUNSON: At the Towers.

BILL EDWARDS: Right.

MR. DUNSON: I see him now and then. Do you remember Jack Hoffberg?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, Jake Hoffberg.

MR. DUNSON: Wore about a 14 inch shoe! (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. He sold shoes too.

MR. DUNSON: He sold shoes, yeah. He married one of the Lipman girls I think.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, did he?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, cause he worked in that store.

BILL EDWARDS: Then the department store down there where the Bear Plaza is now, directly across from Belk, what was the name of that?

MR. DUNSON: Coplon and Smith.

BILL EDWARDS: Coplon and Smith.

MR. DUNSON: Right.

BILL EDWARDS: Bynum Smith ran it.

MR. DUNSON: He did? Was he related to the drug store Bynum?

BILL EDWARDS: Bynum Smith. His first name was Bynum. Smith was his last name.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, that was his first name. Oh, I see.

BILL EDWARDS: He lived in that great big house that was on the back of the Baptist parking lot near the corner of Hancock and Pollock. They recently moved that and gave it to Religious Community Services.

MR. DUNSON: That's what I was about to say. They just use that as a old house for people to visit, historical thing, or do people live in it? Or do religious people use it for some religious purpose?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, they use it for a soup kitchen and things like that now.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, I see.

BILL EDWARDS: Now he lived there until he died there on Hancock

Street. He lived in that great big old white house with the red roof.

You remember that, don't you?

MR. DUNSON: I remember that, yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: And the Baptists had it moved when they were building that new building there and it took most of the parking lot.

Remember when the A&P Store was on Middle Street there, don't you?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. There was a A&P on the corner of Middle and South Front Street there.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, that was where David Brinkley worked as I understand it.

MR. DUNSON: No, he worked in Five Points.

BILL EDWARDS: Did he?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, I thought it was down there.

MR. DUNSON: He might have worked down there too, but the one in Five Points was here first.

BILL EDWARDS: I see.

MR. DUNSON: Then there was a Pender Store. Let's see what's there now. But it was on Middle Street between Pollock and Broad. It was on the left hand side of Middle Street.

BILL EDWARDS: Wasn't that where Braddy's Laundry was later after that A&P Store closed? Braddy's Laundry was in there somewhere. Not Braddy's. Was it Braddy's Laundry?

MR. DUNSON: I remember Braddy's Laundry.

BILL EDWARDS: It was along in there where...

MR. DUNSON: Where the surplus store is now?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, where the surplus store is.

MR. DUNSON: Or Baxter's.

BILL EDWARDS: Maybe the same building, I'm not sure. You know, where the Baptist bookstore is, somewhere along in there.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. Well, David Brinkley worked in Five Points I do know. That property right there where Johnson Cleaner's is now, on that corner there.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: That wasn't where the present store is across the street.

MR. DUNSON: No, no.

BILL EDWARDS: That's a different store.

MR. DUNSON: That's a different store.

BILL EDWARDS: Where Piggly Wiggly is now.

MR. DUNSON: That's a Piggly Wiggly. But A&P was the first one over there. I think that's correct. I'm almost sure that's correct. They went over there and built a big store. And they had a Big Star store out here by the post office. They got some type of factory there.

BILL EDWARDS: Big Star?

MR. DUNSON: Big Star.

BILL EDWARDS: By the present post office?

MR. DUNSON: By the present post office right behind that there.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. That was across from the Presbyterian church,

wasn't it?

MR. DUNSON: Right.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. It was later Colonial Store, wasn't it?

MR. DUNSON: Colonial, yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: We used to buy our groceries there.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. We talking '38, '39, '40 now, somewhere in that neighborhood.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. I came to this area in 1939. Course I didn't get back to stay. I had to go in service until the later part of 1943.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, is that right?

BILL EDWARDS: That's when I got out.

MR. DUNSON: You got early.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Where did you originally come from?

BILL EDWARDS: Sanford.

MR. DUNSON: Sanford, North Carolina?

BILL EDWARDS: Um huh.

MR. DUNSON: Your right here in this state.

BILL EDWARDS: My family came and took over the railroad runs from Goldsboro to Morehead.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, is that right?

BILL EDWARDS: Um huh.

MR. DUNSON: And that's what you were doing in New Bern?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, I see.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, we came here, the family came here in 1939. I was in college at the time. I had ROTC in the college, so then I got in service.

MR. DUNSON: Where'd you go to college?

BILL EDWARDS: N C State. We're getting into my history. We want to stick with yours.

MR. DUNSON: I'm always interested. I'm trying to get back to Boyd's where I started, but that was the only job I had.

BILL EDWARDS: You remember some of the kids you used to play with?

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah, over there in James City.

BILL EDWARDS: You still remember some names?

(Interruption)

BILL EDWARDS: ...you had with the bail bond business.

MR. DUNSON: Well, you know, I ran the Frog Pond down there where I used to wash cars and fix tires and sold beer and wine and sold gas.

It was in an old cigar box looking place there. Albert Ballard helped me get the money to build the place that I'm in now. Later on, I knew I wasn't keep on being a grease monkey, greasing cars and fixing tires, I'm getting older, so I wanted to get into something that was less physical strength, so I got in the bail bonding. I wasn't like you, I didn't have a college education, so I had to figure on something I could do, so I got in the bail bonding business on a small scale.

I wasn't doing much bail bonding then, but as I got older I found it interesting and profitable. I don't win them all.

BILL EDWARDS: I'm sure you don't.

MR. DUNSON: You don't win them all, and you have to pay some forfeitures. I've got a pretty good set-up now, see. I've got \$50,000 in it, I don't mind telling you that, at the Department of Insurance, see. I keep the size of my bonds at \$10,000. I can sign \$11,250, but I try to keep it at \$10,000. Anything over that I'll share it with somebody.

BILL EDWARDS: How many bail bondsmen are there in this area?

MR. DUNSON: Well, there's 2, 4, 5.

BILL EDWARDS: Five.

MR. DUNSON: Midgett and myself, Chuck Midgett and Brian Ipock, and we got two guys that work for a man. They are independent professional bondsmen. They got their own business. There's two men from Greenville. They work for a man in Greenville and live down here, and they are what they call runners. They only get a percentage of what they signed for the bondsman that's in Greenville. But if you're independent bondsman, you get it all or you lose it all, one of the two. (laughter) And I enjoy that.

BILL EDWARDS: Are there some of the experiences that stand out in your mind?

MR. DUNSON: Yes. I got one particular hardship case. A fellow that was in there. Sweet talking guy. He was from Morehead City. They had him on a \$10,000 bond. He says, "Mr. Dunson, I got the money home." Says, "You can put me in handcuffs and take me down there." That sounds fair. Well, my fee was \$1,500 and I said, "okay". So

I went and got him out of jail and put handcuffs on him. He was a big muscular guy too. Weighed about 240 and six feet. Anyway, hell, I could handle him. I carried him home. He said the money is under the house. I don't know what it was doing in the house unless he was in the drug business. It was under the house. He come out from under the house and got dirty. He come out with a little bank bag, you know, I'm assuming that it's money. He didn't have no shirt on. He was itching and had dirt all over the top of his body, and old soft me, I said, "Go in the bathroom there and wash yourself up." I took the handcuffs off him. His mother's sitting there and his sister's sitting there. I'm talking with his mother and I reckon it was about fifteen minutes and I heard the water running. Finally I heard the window go down, and he was gone! (laughter) I didn't get no fee out of him and I think I spent about close to \$3,000 to get him back; rewards, trips to Virginia, following tips, paying money for information that didn't pan out. I knew a girl in Beaufort. I had a \$500 reward out for him. I had his picture postered all over and a girl called me about one o'clock in the morning and she said, "He's here." His name was Leo Sutton. She said, "He's here." I said, "Well, keep him there, Baby, I'll be down there. Get my man to come down there." She said, "I'm gonna try to keep him there, but come on down." I called my man in Jacksonville, he said, "I'll go right now, Mr. D." When he got down there, the police had him. She had called the police. I went through that for about a year. It was just, I guess you would call it my luck, but then again I got my lawyer. Mr. Chestnut came to keep

it continued. See, cause the way that work, when you get on the bond calendar and you haven't located the man, if it's ruled judgement absolute, you got ninety days before you pay it. But within that ninety days, you put forth all effort to try to apprehend him, and the courts might give you some consideration for the effort you made.

BILL EDWARDS: You mean some money consideration?

MR. DUNSON: Well, yeah. They might cut the bond some. Say if it's \$10,000, they'll cut it maybe to \$5,000. And if you got you a good lawyer, like Mark Chestnut, we might get some more. But after he got put in jail, I got off of it and I saved my \$10,000. Then when he went to court, because wasn't nobody else getting him out, and he got fifteen years in prison. So he paid his debt and the court was satisfied. But it's a little risky, but you can make some good money out of it. In fact, I do what I consider a nice living out of it. It don't take a whole lot of money for me and my wife nowadays.

(Tape turned over and picks up in this conversation.)

MR. DUNSON: She was involved. (Dr. Lula Disosway)

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, she was a missionary and she came back to New Bern.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. And there was a Dr. Johnson that started that. It's not Presbyterian, she's not Catholic.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, she was Episcopalian.

MR. DUNSON: Episcopal church, you're right.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right.

MR. DUNSON: Down here on Johnson and Queen street.

BILL EDWARDS: What is that now, George?

MR. DUNSON: It's an Episcopal church.

BILL EDWARDS: I mean what used to be Good Shepherd.

MR. DUNSON: Oh, it's a nursing home.

BILL EDWARDS: Nursing home.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, it's a nursing home. They got a lot of people in there too.

BILL EDWARDS: Have they?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Good.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, they got a lot of people in there now. They put some people to work over there, and I understand they give right good service.

BILL EDWARDS: Good. Since you're so closely associated with the justice system, what do you think's going on in the justice system now? You think it's doing the job its suppose to do? We won't put that on tape if you don't want to.

MR. DUNSON: I don't mind it. I don't mind nothing that I say if it's my opinion. When you start to talking about replacing our justice system, what were you gonna replace it with?

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, that's a good question.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. It's got some faults, sure. Number one is, I think law enforcement exceeds their authority. I just think they do some things that's not within their authority to do.

BILL EDWARDS: Have you seen much evidence of police brutality?

I hear about it a whole lot.

MR. DUNSON: I hear about it. I have never looked at it, but they are policemen and I'm sure it goes on.

BILL EDWARDS: I've seen a little. I saw a man taking a prisoner to, you remember when they held court in City Hall?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, I remember.

BILL EDWARDS: They'd take prisoners from the jail in the courthouse or wherever the jail was, yeah, the jail was over behind the courthouse, take them over to City Hall to try them. I saw a policeman taking one over there one day and that was a fight the whole way. But I felt like the prisoner was fighting.

MR. DUNSON: Well, you got no choice. If the officer smacks you and do something, he's suppose to use at least reasonable restraint.

It's just wrong! Officers got enough manpower and enough weapons and things to protect themselves. And after you get handcuffs on the accused, ain't no need of hitting that man no more!

BILL EDWARDS: I agree.

MR. DUNSON: And you got three and four officers there if you needs them. They don't never go single handed and they always call for back-up. You got some bad apples in law enforcement, but overall, I would say it's fairly decent. But then again, an officer just can't go up to somebody that they got a warrant for and say, "Come on now, Mister, will you please go with me?" They can't do it like that. That ain't gonna work! (laughter) That not gonna work. You have to go about it, but you have to use restraint and use good judgement and

protect yourself.

BILL EDWARDS: That's what I wonder about so many women on the police force. Suppose a 110 pound woman had to confront a 250 pound man half drunk.

MR. DUNSON: She's got a job, hasn't she!

BILL EDWARDS: I'm surprised some of them haven't been killed.

MR. DUNSON: There's some tough girls out there though.

BILL EDWARDS: I know.

MR. DUNSON: And they got a lot of nerve.

BILL EDWARDS: I heard they got one weighs maybe 150 pounds. Leon Scott, you know Leon, don't you?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, I know Leon.

BILL EDWARDS: He said he saw that gal up here at the armory one day put a man twice her size on the mat and he couldn't move after she got him down there.

MR. DUNSON: Well, she knows something. She'd been trained. Yeah, she'd been trained.

BILL EDWARDS: One hundred ten pounds against 150 pounds is a difference.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. We had a boy in Winterville over there, that was when Chuck was working for me, that failed to go to court. We went over to pick him up. He was in a little community there. We told him, said, "Man, we got to take you with me. You're just gonna have to go." Chuck pulled out his pistol and said, "Man, you're gonna have to go. Turn around." He said, "Chuck, I'm gonna have to take

that pistol." He weighed a good 260 and Chuck weighed about 175, if he weighed that much. He said, "You're out here and got my mama out here crying." He said, "I'm gonna take that pistol." Chuck said, "If you take another step, I'm gonna blow your damn head off." When he started toward Chuck, Chuck come around him and shot about that far from his head. That boy turned right around and put his hand on the car, "Chuck, don't kill me. Chuck, don't kill me!" (laughter)

His mother had us arrested. Well, the police charged us with firing within the city limit. His mother told him we pointed a gun at her.

So we went to court in Ayden, and in Greenville too, and the District Attorney told that lady, said, "This man ought to get a warrant out for you for interfering with him doing his job." Said, "They weren't pointing the gun at you, you walked in front of the gun!" And they dropped the case. (laughter) She went out there angry. That was an experience that I don't like to get into.

BILL EDWARDS: I don't blame you.

MR. DUNSON: Well, I can't handle it now. I don't have the nerve that I used to have. That's why I got this guy from Jacksonville, and he's real good. He is real good in apprehension.

BILL EDWARDS: I hope nobody ever tries to fight me because I can't fight back anymore.

MR. DUNSON: No. I carry some mace. I got a big piece of mace. I got one about the size of that and I keep it up here. That'll blind him.

BILL EDWARDS: It'll stop him in a hurry, won't it?

MR. DUNSON: That'll stop him and give you a chance to either get away, call the police, or put handcuffs on him. They can't handle that mace.

BILL EDWARDS: Are you allowed to use handcuffs?

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah. Allowed to carry a weapon.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, you are?

MR. DUNSON: Oh yeah. Allowed to carry that openly. Yeah. I'm not a sworn police officer now, but the state law gives us the right to carry our weapon for apprehending. And you have to use good judgment. You can't go out and kill nobody. Can't shoot nobody.

BILL EDWARDS: No, course not!

MR. DUNSON: You got to go through the court system.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, you wouldn't do it anyway.

MR. DUNSON: No, I wouldn't shoot nobody, but if you got ten grands on a man he's running, you sure want to stop him. Now, you sure want to stop him.

BILL EDWARDS: Want him to think you'll shoot him.

MR. DUNSON: That's right. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: What do you think about this move they're talking about to make it legal to carry a concealed weapon?

MR. DUNSON: That's no good. I don't like that at all. To me that is dangerous.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, don't people carry concealed weapons anyway?

MR. DUNSON: A lot of people do.

BILL EDWARDS: That's what I was thinking. Glove compartments

in cars. That's one thing they've been talking about is weapon in a glove compartment.

MR. DUNSON: Well, you know, a gun makes you bigger and stronger when you've got one on you.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: You do things that you wouldn't ordinarily do. I don't want to walk down the street and think everybody I meet has a gun. I wouldn't want to come up to a stop light and a man drive up beside of me and I know the man got a gun over there. That's dangerous.

BILL EDWARDS: I agree.

MR. DUNSON: That's too dangerous.

BILL EDWARDS: I don't think anybody ought to be allowed an assault rifle. Nobody needs an assault rifle unless police, and they don't even use them unless there's a riot or something.

MR. DUNSON: That's right. That's right. But them Saturday night specials, them things will hold six rounds, that you can very easily put in your pocket. Now, I don't leave here at night, at no time, less I got my pistol and my mace. See, and the police stop me. And Pete Bland, the sheriff, told me, said, "George, just take it and put it in your dash if the policeman stop you" cause I used to make night deposits But I don't do that no more. Always, when I get out to go to the bank at night, I have a pistol in my hand. You don't know who's gonna drive up there. You just have to be careful. But Pete Bland said put it in your dashboard if an officer stop you. Let him stop you, it's not concealed. You don't have it under the seat. Sometime,

not even on the seat, just put it in your dash. I don't have no problem with that, but I just can't ride around with nothing to protect me cause I can't fight him.

BILL EDWARDS: I can't either.

MR. DUNSON: I just can't fight him.

BILL EDWARDS: It makes me wonder sometimes, if I had a weapon and somebody attacked me with his fist, if I at my age defended myself with a gun, what would the court do?

MR. DUNSON: That would be your best bet, is to shoot that man!

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. I don't have any choice.

MR. DUNSON: You 75 years old and being attacked by a 20 year old boy out there. You wouldn't have no choice but to shoot him. That's what I would do.

BILL EDWARDS: George, did you serve on any local committees or boards when you were coming along?

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, yeah. I served at the Neuse River Council of Government and the Mental Health Board and I served on the Senior Citizens Board around here with Thelma Chadwick. I worked in local politics quite a bit cause I enjoyed it. I remember a lot of the work I turned down because I didn't have the time, and some of it I just wasn't interested in, didn't know enough about it. But I learned quite a bit from serving on them boards. I learned how the government worked, and that's interesting. And I learned how to get things done. But now, I'm too tired. I'm too tired and don't have any energy to meet

nights. There were a couple of other boards that I served on too.

BILL EDWARDS: What do you remember about the streetcars or trolleys?

MR. DUNSON: The trolleys used to go right down Queen Street, cause they had a railroad track out there. And they used to go down Broad Street and they'd go down the middle of Broad Street. I think that's the way they went, down Broad Street cause the railroad track on Queen Street was for the Southern Railroad.

BILL EDWARDS: Atlantic Coastline.

MR. DUNSON: Atlantic Coastline. And they didn't go no further than Ghent out there. First Street now.

BILL EDWARDS: That's where they had the barn, wasn't it, the car barn?

MR. DUNSON: The car barn where they'd go in there and turn around and they'd come back down Broad Street. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: Well, let's see, they used to come down Pollock to Middle and then turn down Middle to what was South Front and then up to Craven and out Craven.

MR. DUNSON: And come to Broad.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah. Well, it went in fact beyond that, didn't it?

MR. DUNSON: Well, I thought Broad Street was the main street.

BILL EDWARDS: Somebody told me it used to go up to the old passenger station.

MR. DUNSON: It probably did. Maybe that's where I got the Queen

Street from.

BILL EDWARDS: Probably.

MR. DUNSON: Cause it would come down Queen Street and Queen Street would run right on through Five Points right on into Pollock in the Ghent area, which is First Street now.

BILL EDWARDS: Right.

MR. DUNSON: And they'd go in that barn and turn around and do their thing again. (laughter) Where did it get its power? From some wires over the top of it.

BILL EDWARDS: Well, some of them were battery operated, because Callie Newman's father had something to do with the trolleys. Exactly what, I don't know. But anyway, he showed me some invoices for batteries. They charged the batteries at night I guess and run the trolleys during the day.

MR. DUNSON: But seemed like to me I remember...

BILL EDWARDS: They had the overhead trolley line.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, yeah. Cause the trolley man had to get out, if he was going east and west, if he was going west he'd have to get out and pull that thing down and turn it around to east.

BILL EDWARDS: To go the other direction.

MR. DUNSON: To go the other direction, yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: How many trolleys did they have? Do you have any idea?

MR. DUNSON: I don't have no idea. I guess a couple of them is all they would need.

BILL EDWARDS: There wasn't many, was it?

MR. DUNSON: No, it wasn't many.

BILL EDWARDS: Weren't many people in New Bern then, were there?

MR. DUNSON: Wasn't a whole lot of people in New Bern. And a lot of people during that period of time, mostly business people. Where they fly airplanes now to take care of their business, they would come in on the train. You know, I said , my daddy used to meet the train; the eight or nine o'clock train and the five o'clock train coming in from Goldsboro or Rocky Mount, one of those places. These are salesmen, people who got overnight business in New Bern or two-day business.

BILL EDWARDS: What kind of vehicle did he have?

MR. DUNSON: He had a Model T Ford. Had the first one there was in James City. Had a Model T Ford. Like I told you, in the beginning he had a horse and buggy with two seats in it. Then he got a Model T Ford with, I remember, the magneeter. You remember the magneeter on there? It had something to do with starting it.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: And after the thing would start up, you would push something down and it would go forward. And when you crank the thing up, if you didn't move out of the way quick the damn thing would run over you.

BILL EDWARDS: Absolutely. It would also kick back.

MR. DUNSON: It would kick back and break your arm!

BILL EDWARDS: Keep your thumb out of the way when you crank it.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, just like when you shoot a rifle.

BILL EDWARDS: (Phone rings) During the Depression days, George, you were talking about that a minute ago. Tell me something about where you got your food and what kind of food it was and so forth.

MR. DUNSON: Well, during that particular period, and me being young, many, many a days there, if it wasn't for Neuse River and our neighbor' garden, we wouldn't have anything to eat. During the summer, these pick-up drivers used to come in from Morehead City and stop in James City over there and they got a pick-up load of big, nice spots it seemed like, dumped on the truck coming off the beach, right fresh.

We had a song. We made up a song. As kids we would sing, "Here comes the fish man - Go get your dishpan!" And he'd fill up that dishpan with fish for about ten or fifteen cents. They was the good old days. (laughter) And everybody over there in James City had a garden that they were raising. They would have a surplus. You remember, well, I remember that butter beans, black-eyed peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, we would raise them and the women would walk from James City to New Bern. Walk up George Street where the old Tryon Palace was, the new Tryon Palace wasn't there then, and walk up Metcalf Street.

BILL EDWARDS: Cross the old wooden bridge.

MR. DUNSON: Cross the old wooden bridge. If you had a little wagon, you were well off. Most of the women, you might have seen them in black Africa now, where women will carry things on their head. They would put a bucket of shelled butter beans on their head when they leave James City and walk cross that bridge and never touch it.

Just both hands swinging. The rhythm in their head or something just kept that bucket of beans up on top of their head and they'd walk by and people would come out and buy it.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah, I remember when they used to offer the stuff for sale downtown.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah, yeah.

BILL EDWARDS: Fresh butter beans.

MR. DUNSON: Fresh butter beans, corn. Like I say, if you got a little wagon, like the kids play with, just a four wheel wagon, you put it in that and you would pull that up and down the street. And you got good, fresh vegetables.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: They raised it right in James City. And during that particular time, Bill, anybody give you nothing but your neighbors. The government wasn't giving anybody anything.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right.

MR. DUNSON: Wasn't no welfare checks. Wasn't no surplus food from the government. You raised it! You worked for it! And that was appreciated. That was appreciated. I know when the first guy from James City, during my time, he was my first cousin, he was very smart, smart in school, very smart. And the neighbors got together and the churches over there and contribute their nickels, dimes, and pennies and sent that boy to college in Durham. They did. His mother was a seamstress and she sewed a little bit. They were related to me. It was North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, and he come

out of there and got into the school system. But he was one of the first guys from James City, during my time, that went to college.

BILL EDWARDS: And he graduated?

MR. DUNSON: Oh, he graduated and come back here and worked. Worked in Fort Barnwell and contributed to the community there.

BILL EDWARDS: What did he do, you remember?

MR. DUNSON: Mathematics. He was good at that. He taught mathematics in the high school.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, he was a teacher then.

MR. DUNSON: He was a teacher, yeah. He taught school. During that time that's about all black college people could do was teach. They'd come out of college and teach. But now with the technical institutions around, you can get all kind of trades to learn to do, technical trades. Industry wasn't high. During that important time in eastern North Carolina, I'm sure there wasn't that many qualified blacks to do technical jobs. When they'd come out of college they went in the school system and they taught black children. And there were some damn good black teachers back then too.

BILL EDWARDS: Oh, I'm sure. There's some good ones today too.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. There was some dang good ones. I remember one specifically in James City. She would punish you and make you learn! If you get kind of sassy with her, she would beat your butt. And if you go home and tell your mama, your mama would beat your butt and send you back and take you back and make you apologize to the teacher, cause she was there to trying help the kids.

BILL EDWARDS: Sure. I well remember if I got a beating in school, I could count on another one when I got home.

MR. DUNSON: Another one when you got home. You don't sass no teacher and you don't talk back to them. It's "Yes mam and No mam."

And that pays off. It really pays off. Course today you got a different generation. Today there's more money and everything is much, much different. And the parents don't want nobody to touch their children.

BILL EDWARDS: I know. My wife taught school for 22 years and she said that she wouldn't touch one of them, not in the last 2 or 3 years.

MR. DUNSON: I know. You get in trouble.

BILL EDWARDS: Absolutely.

MR. DUNSON: They'll sue you.

BILL EDWARDS: They don't care anything about the kids themselves, but you better not touch them.

MR. DUNSON: That's right. But you know, that's why sometime today, in fact two or three years ago I remember there was a survey, a poll taken, and high school kids, coming out of high school, twelve grades, and can't look up a telephone number, can't address a letter, can't fill out an application, some of them is reading at a fifth grade level. That's pitiful!

BILL EDWARDS: It is pitiful.

MR. DUNSON: That is absolutely ridiculous.

BILL EDWARDS: And it shouldn't be that way.

MR. DUNSON: It just shouldn't be. They got everything to make

them learn and make them productive. But, "Don't touch my child. Don't beat his butt." You gonna beat the damn hell out of him if he... (laughter) That's the only way I could learn.

BILL EDWARDS: I've had my share.

MR. DUNSON: I've had my share!

BILL EDWARDS: That keen switch my mother used to use.

MR. DUNSON: You ever heard of the red gum switch? And some of them were plaited. Take two switches and plait them together.

BILL EDWARDS: That's cruel and unusual punishment, George. (laughter)

MR. DUNSON: That might be considered cruel, but it wasn't so unusual then. (laughter) But it taught us to work. It taught us to work.

BILL EDWARDS: It taught us discipline for one thing.

MR. DUNSON: That's the word! It taught us discipline - and that is good! I'm a living example. A lot of black guys, especially younger than I am, they got a chip on their shoulder, and sometimes you find some of them, especially girls, they think the government owes them something. I argue that. They don't like it, but it's my thinking. And if you don't work, you ain't got no business eating! If you don't work! The government don't owe me nothing. If it creates a society that will give me an opportunity to make something, to work and earn something, then the government has done its job.

BILL EDWARDS: I agree.

MR. DUNSON: If it creates a respectable society and have industry

and businesses here that will hire people, if they do that, then let me get out here and do something. I had a brother that made a living, a cheap living, selling peanuts. Put them in a box. Didn't have a cart. Put them in a box across his shoulders and would go to places where people worked; to the mill and to the sewing room, to where people were having lunch, and would sell them ten cents a bag. And he did all right at that.

BILL EDWARDS: I remember the peanut man that used to come around here. I think he had a roaster on wheels, and he'd come downtown when I was working for the railroad down there.

MR. DUNSON: Didn't he have some type of disability, physical disability?

BILL EDWARDS: I can't remember definitely, George, but I do remember his coming around and selling peanuts, and they were some of the best peanuts I ever tasted.

MR. DUNSON: They were roasted and they weren't but a dime a bag.

BILL EDWARDS: That's right.

MR. DUNSON: Ten cents. But when you didn't have ten cents, you were broke. You didn't have it, that's all. Had an experience the other day at the Frog Pond. This is just an experience and it's true.

Ain't been but about a week ago. Two little kids came in the store.

I like children and I'm friendly to them. The boy said, "Good morning, Mr. Dunson. How are you?" They say it so friendly and nice, you know, you have a feeling. "Hi fellows. How are you?" I said, "You guys are mighty nice. Wait a minute, don't go. Let me give you something."

And I reached in my pocket and gave them a quarter a piece. The biggest kid looked at me and said, "Mr. Dunson, what can I do with this?"
(laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: He was right.

MR. DUNSON: I said, "Son, you are so right! Let me give you another quarter." It cost me a dollar. (laughter) But I thought that was the funniest thing. (laughter) He can't even buy a pepsi-cola, he can't go to Hardee's and buy nothing with that twenty-five cents.

BILL EDWARDS: There's no such thing as "penny" candy anymore.

MR. DUNSON: Oh Lord, and I've eat a many, many a pound of penny candy.

BILL EDWARDS: I have too.

MR. DUNSON: Penny candy. A penny was a whole lot.

BILL EDWARDS: Do you remember the big old glass jars that had an opening about that big and you reach in?

MR. DUNSON: In the top of it.

BILL EDWARDS: Yeah.

MR. DUNSON: Yeah. I used to steal it in them stores. You reach in there and catch the man when he wasn't looking and get me one of them. (laughter)

BILL EDWARDS: You don't want that on tape do you, George?

MR. DUNSON: I don't care. (Interruption) I like to go down there just to be around the guys. We got a little place in the back where we play poker, sit there and drink, and talk about what we used to do.

END OF INTERVIEW