

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MAREA KAHER FOSTER

INTERVIEW 911.2

This is Dorothy Richardson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 900. I am interviewing Mrs. Marea Kafer Foster, interview number 911.2. This interview is being conducted on November 21, 1992. We are at 1504 Lucerne Way, New Bern, North Carolina.

Dorothy Richardson: Marea, let's go back. You are getting ready to graduate from high school. Tell me something about the schools that you were in in New Bern, what they were like during your school years.

Marea Foster: Okay. I want to make one correction. My fifth grade teacher I said was Vivian Flowers, but it was Mrs. Vivian Holton, a sweet lady. Eleanor Marshall School, when I went there, was called Ghent School. It was a large brick building with windows all across the front and the back. The ends were bricked in except for a door on each end, an entrance and an exit. It was just two floors. As you were standing in front of the building, if you're standing on Rhem Avenue looking at Ghent School, downstairs on the right was the sixth grade, Miss Eleanor's room. On the left was the third grade, Mrs. Purser. There was a long hall that went the length of the school.

Opposite Mrs. Purser was the second grade and that was Leatha Allen, and next to her was Miss Eleanor's office. Then opposite Miss Eleanor was the first grade, and the first grade teacher was Marguerite Armstrong, Mrs. Baxter Armstrong who lived on Spencer Avenue. Now upstairs as you're looking at the building, on the right and part of the center was the auditorium. That went from Rhem Avenue to Spencer Avenue so to speak. Then on the left hand corner upstairs was our

library. Opposite the library was the fourth grade where Margaret McKeel was. Then on the other side of the auditorium was the fifth grade, and I had Mrs. Flowers. I mean Mrs. Holton. I don't know why I call her Mrs. Flowers. I have that in my mind, but it was Mrs. Vivian Holton. The floors were of wood. The bathrooms were on either end, by the first grade and on the other end by the second grade. We would have what we call assemblies once a week. We would all go up to the auditorium. There was a stage. There would be programs. There might be movies or there might be health educational type movies. We always started the assembly with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and after the program we would sing. We always sang "My Country Tis of Thee", "America the Beautiful", and then we sang these really nice peppy song like "Billy Boy."

DR: How about "Santa Lucia?"

Marea Foster: Oh yes! We always sang "Santa Lucia" and "Reuben, Reuben." They were the ones I remember. But we did sing "Santa Lucia", umhuh. In our schoolroom, the morning began with a prayer and the pledge of allegiance. I mean that was just accepted. School started about nine o'clock in the morning. About ten thirty to quarter of eleven we'd have recess. We did not have a bell tower. Miss Eleanor had a large hand bell and someone in the sixth grade was appointed each week to ring the bell to bring us in in the morning, to let us out for recess, to get us back in, and to let us out at lunch time. You'd have to run around that building at least twice. You could

hear the school bell a block away. It was a very large hand bell.

Now, we got out at twelve for lunch, or for dinner, because I think everyone then had their big meal in the middle of the day. Then we had to return to school at one o'clock and we got out at three or three thirty, closer to three thirty I believe. For recess, we played on the grounds because there was no gymnasium. The girls would play hopscotch or we'd jump rope. The boys were usually playing marbles. Sometimes we'd play tag, and in the spring always played softball.

DR: Did ya'll have a May Day that you competed with the downtown, with the school?

Marea Foster: No we did not, because this was really the war years that I was there. It was the beginning of World War II that I was there. Then in the seventh grade we went downtown to school.

DR: Excuse me Marea, do you remember how the fire alarm sounded at Ghent School because it was right there?

Marea Foster: I certainly do.

DR: And the trash heap would be on fire.

Marea Foster: I certainly do. And the whistle was over at the water and light plant and it would blow. There would be a long blow for different numbers. If it blew three times and then stopped and then blew twice, then it would be number 32. The fire was at location number 32. All of the firemen had a paper printed with these numbers so they knew if it was 32, they knew exactly where to go for the fire.

DR: And you could smell the trash.

Marea Foster: It was the city dump over at Lawson's Creek Park.

That was the city dump. It was fun to go over there and poke through the junk. (laughter) We did that once in a while until mother caught us, then we never did it again. Downtown my first year at Central School, I was in the Bell building. That had eight rooms in it. It was a two-story brick building with a center hall and two rooms opening off from both sides of the hall on both floors. Mr. H. B. Smith, the Superintendent, had his office up there. They rang the school bell for us to come to class.

DR: Did you change classes or did the teachers change?

Marea Foster: The teachers changed in the seventh grade. In the eighth grade I was in the New Bern Academy. That was a brick building built about 1802. The original building had burned. It was of wood. That had a center hall going from the front door to the back door with steps on the right side going up to the second floor. There was one classroom on each side of the hall on both floors. We changed classes in the eighth grade and our teachers let us know when it was time to change. We went from the Academy building to the Bell building, back and forth for classes in the eighth grade.

DR: Do you remember what courses you had in the eighth grade Marea?

Marea Foster: I had English, I had History, Health, and Reading. We always had Reading, and Mrs. Myrtle Turner always gave us a Spelling test at least once a week. I never could spell separate and every week she'd look at me, because I sat right by her desk, and she'd say, "sep a rate", so I would learn how to spell it. (laughter)

DR: Did you take Algebra in the eighth grade?

Marea Foster: No. I did not take Algebra until high school. We had a graduation ceremony from the eighth grade into high school.

DR: Where did you have that Marea?

Marea Foster: In the auditorium at the high school, which was very nice.

DR: Who attended that?

Marea Foster: All of the eighth graders and their parents. That was a big event because we were now old enough to go to high school, which was ninth through twelfth. The high school was in the Moses Griffin building. As you faced that, it had a new addition that went across and there were eight rooms in that new addition. It had a hall going from the front door, a wide hall, all the way to the back door.

And again, the floors were of wood. Along the walls were wide boards with wooden pegs and this is where we hung our coats. If it were raining and you had galoshes, you left them there. You could put your books there and leave them. No one would steal anything. Mr. Farnell our Principal, had a very small office there. In the high school there was a bell system that they rang for changing classes. We had about five minutes between classes to change, because all the classes were in that particular building. Upstairs we had a very large auditorium that was in the rear of the building with a stage.

DR: The old part of it.

Marea Foster: The old part of it. Donald Smith was the choir director. At one time, Billy Fitzgerald was the band director, and

then Ed Benson came to be the band director. But Donald Smith was the choir director, and we had a marvelous choir. We also had assemblies once a week, and again, started assemblies with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. In high school we were assigned a homeroom, and I do not remember any prayers or Pledge of Allegiance starting the day. We had about fifteen minutes in there before we went to class.

DR: Were you aware of class assignments? Was there any kind of grouping, A-1, the brighter students, A-2?

Marea Foster: No. We were alphabetical. Then, we either took a vocational course, which at that time was called Distributive Education.

DR: Which would separate really.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. Or a college prep course. Depending on which of the two you took, then you had certain classes you had to take. We always had a study hall. The school library was right next to the study hall. We used the New Bern Public Library in the John Wright Stanly house an awful lot.

DR: It was so close.

Marea Foster: It was so close, and we had to use that an awful lot. Now my senior year in high school when I took senior English under Lucy Hodges, who was absolutely wonderful, we did have our senior English class in the Bell building. As you're looking at the Bell building, it was downstairs on the right on the front. We had senior English there. I remember she took us to see "Hamlet" with Sir Laurence Olivier. We got permission to go over and she took the class to see

that across the street at the Masonic Theater.

DR: Was everybody able to attend?

Marea Foster: You know I don't remember paying. I really don't. It may be that we paid or it may be that Miss Hodges paid or maybe they let us in free. I really don't know. The school might have paid. I don't know. I remember school buses. There would be one school bus for my area, Ghent.

DR: Oh, you were able to ride a school bus.

Marea Foster: No, we could not. You had to live really in the country to ride the school bus. There was one bus for Ghent, one for Riverside, one for Bridgeton. There were three school buses. The one assigned to Ghent would pick up the little children and drop them off at Eleanor Marshall at Ghent School and then continue on down for seventh and eighth graders and for high school students. So, grades one through twelve rode the same bus. But there was no problem at all about that because the older students looked after the younger ones. We had very few bus students, maybe a full bus, from our area of Ghent. The bus students had to bring their lunch every day with no cafeterias. Every now and then mother would let me bring a friend home for a hot meal.

DR: How'd you get back and forth in an hour?

Marea Foster: Well, that's when I told you last time, daddy would pick us up or we'd ride the city bus.

DR: Get home and then get back for classes.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. My senior year, sometimes I ate downtown.



DR: You were allowed to do that?

Marea Foster: Oh yes, because lunch was from twelve to one and you could go have lunch wherever you pleased. Most people ate at Clark's. A lot of people ate at Clark's because they had a lunch counter, Clark's Drug Store.

DR: You remember how much a sandwich was?

Marea Foster: I think you could have lunch for twenty-five cents, a hot dog with cole slaw and a drink, which is not bad at all. After school, in high school, we would go to Gaskin's Drug Store and have a coke and just visit around until we'd catch maybe the four o'clock bus home. Well, if we didn't have cheerleading practice, we had to do our homework. Homework had to be done before we could go out, and we did not date during the week.

DR: Where did you have your cheerleading practice?

Marea Foster: On the school green.

DR: When were your games played?

Marea Foster: On Friday nights.

DR: And where?

Marea Foster: Kafer Park.

DR: Which is now...

Marea Foster: It's still Kafer Park.

DR: Where the armory and now the police station is.

Marea Foster: Yeah. Basketball games in the armory. Baseball games were at Kafer Park. But we practiced on the school green. Then if you wanted to be a cheerleader, the football squad chose the

cheerleaders. We had to try out, and you had to be a junior.

DR: The football team.

Marea Foster: The football team. We were juniors. You could not be a cheerleader until your junior year. You had to audition and the football team selected you. I was not going to try out. I was there and Jack Gaskins came up to me and he said, "Go on, try out. You'll be good." I said, "Oh, Jack." "Go on, do it!", and I did and I was selected.

DR: How many did you have Marea?

Marea Foster: I think there were maybe 8 or 10 of us. There were two boys, Billy Brinkly and Robert Shriver.

DR: Do you remember any outstanding students in your senior class?

Marea Foster: Peggy Needham, James Bengel, and Lillian Day were the smartest ones in the class. They really were.

DR: Were they able to go on away to school?

Marea Foster: Yes, uh huh. Peggy went to Carolina and eventually got her Master's degree in nursing. She nursed and she taught for quite a while. She lives in Charleston. I don't know what James is doing. But those that could, went on to college.

DR: And you did.

Marea Foster: And I did. I went to Hollins in Roanoke, Virginia, and I was out of my element. I was in over my head. I thought I had received a very good education at New Bern High School. I loved school and I loved all my teachers. It was fun and I enjoyed it. I had a wonderful time. I got to college, and here's the gymnasium, an indoor

swimming pool, which I had never seen one. I had to take courses like Sociology, Economics, Philosophy, and I had no idea what they were talking about.

DR: You didn't have the background.

Marea Foster: No, I did not have the background. The girls that had gone to private school breezed through these classes. I had a terrible time.

DR: How old were you Marea?

Marea Foster: I was seventeen, and that may have had something to do with it. But I don't really think so because I was not exposed to any of those kind of subjects.

DR: That kind of thinking.

Marea Foster: Right. We were not exposed to deep thinking or reasoning at New Bern High School.

DR: You had good basic...

Marea Foster: I had good basic ABC, but not to prepare me for...

DR: Deductive reasoning.

Marea Foster: Exactly. We didn't even write essays. We had to write a thesis for Lucy Hodges. She's the only one that ever required one. I got to college and you had to have an essay every week. I hardly knew what one was. It was very hard. I really was not happy there, so I transferred to Marjorie Webster Jr. College in Washington, D.C.

DR: When was that Marea?

Marea Foster: That was in 1952.

DR: Had you completed a year at Hollins?

Marea Foster: No. I completed a semester. I got to Marjorie Webster, which was in Rock Creek Park, and the school was established sometime in the 1900's, the teens, maybe 1915, something like this.

Anyway, my Aunt Sallie had gone there and Mary Emma Hurst from New Bern had gone there, and I walked in there and I thought, "This is where I belong. I am home." I was taking a Kindergarten course. Again, I had Economics and Philosophy, Psychology, all of these subjects, and I loved every minute of it.

DR: Where did you live Marea?

Marea Foster: I lived in the dorm. We all had to live in a dorm. We had a house mother. We could not go out during the week.

DR: This was after the war.

Marea Foster: This was after the war in 1952. The same was true at Hollins. We had a house mother and you could not leave school.

Freshmen couldn't anyway the first year. You couldn't even go off for a weekend unless your parents wrote a letter to the house mother giving permission for you to leave campus for the weekend. Mother got tired of writing, so she wrote a blanket permission for me to leave whenever I wanted to on the weekend.

DR: That was giving a lot of faith in you.

Marea Foster: It certainly was. On Friday nights we would walk into Silver Springs. It was perfectly safe for us to walk just a few blocks away from Marjorie Webster into Silver Springs and have supper at the Hot Shoppe and see a movie and walk back to school. We'd get

back at eleven o'clock at night. We were only allowed to ride, and I cannot remember if it was the Diamond Cab Company or the Yellow Cab Company, but we were only allowed to ride in one of those two cabs. We could not ride in another cab.

DR: It was protective existence.

Marea Foster: It certainly was. It was home and I loved every minute I was at Marjorie Webster. Those of us in the Kindergarten course and in the PE department, for the summer for our practice teaching, had to go to the Marjorie Webster Day Camp. We were the counsellors.

DR: Very good hands on...

Marea Foster: It was a hands on experience. It was wonderful. Our instructors chose me to be the head counsellor, which I was really...

DR: Singularly honored.

Marea Foster: Quite honored. I was also chosen to be in charge of a bus full of these youngster by myself without a teacher.

DR: How many?

Marea Foster: Oh, 30 or 40 on a bus. We had about four buses.

DR: Where did these children come from? What neighborhoods did they come from?

Marea Foster: Fox Hall Road, this area, the better classes of Washington, D.C., Embassy children. We would go pick them up. My run was Fox Hall Road. Absolutely gorgeous, you know, plenty of money, and the cutest children. It was really quite an honor for me. I was

the only one that had a bus without an adult. Our bus drivers were black students from Howard University. Miss Webster was very, very particular who she would let drive the buses. She had all these precious children that she was responsible for. We had a complete program for them. And this was our practice teaching for, I think it was eight weeks.

DR: So you didn't come home.

Marea Foster: I did not come home. We just stayed right there. It was wonderful. I loved every single minute of it. I really did. The black man that drove the bus for me, his name was Bell. I cannot remember his first name. I think he was studying law at Howard. I've often wondered what happened to him. The children were so cute.

DR: Marea, how long were you at Marjorie?

Marea Foster: I was there two years.

DR: You got an Associate degree.

Marea Foster: No, I did not because I lacked a couple of classes that I needed to repeat. Instead of doing that, I thought I was smart enough and I got married.

DR: Where'd you meet your husband Marea?

Marea Foster: I had met him at Cherry Point the summer I graduated from high school. He was a midshipman at the Naval Academy. The officers at Cherry Point had a dance for the midshipmen that were on what they called an air cruise for the summer. This meant that this particular class of midshipmen, each summer they took a different type cruise. Summer of their sophomore, it was an air cruise and they visited

with different naval and Marine bases and had some sort of instruction, and of course, partied a lot too. So the Marine Corps sent out invitations to a lot of us in New Bern and they also sent a bus for us. We went down to New Bern High School and the bus was there to pick us up and take us to Cherry Point to the Officer's Club and this is where I met him.

DR: What was his name Marea?

Marea Foster: His name was Robert Ashmore Foster.

DR: Where was he from?

Marea Foster: He was born in Charlotte, North Carolina but grew up in Florida with his grandparents. We dated for two years and then married in 1953.

DR: After he finished.

Marea Foster: After he graduated. He chose to go into the Air Force and he was what was called a "ground pounder," meaning he did not fly. His vision was not up to par for flying.

DR: What year was that Marea?

Marea Foster: 1953. We were first stationed in Georgia at Warner Robins AFB. From there, we went to Wright-Patterson AFB outside of Dayton, Ohio for Bob to get a Master's degree in aeronautical engineering at the Air Force Institute of Technology. From there, we went to Patrick AFB. This is Cocoa Beach, Florida. He was in, what I'll say, the missile business and worked on the Titan missile. That was an extremely exciting and interesting time to be in Florida.

DR: During that time.

Marea Foster: During this time with the Titan with the Thor with the Atlas, with the Vanguard. Dorothy, when you see a missile fired at night, it is one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen in my life. To see this burst of light and this vapor trail at night, it is perfectly gorgeous. It's very hard to believe that anything so beautiful can be so deadly! It's just almost incomprehensible that something that pretty can kill like it does.

DR: Your husband probably couldn't share a lot with you.

Marea Foster: No, he could not. The only way we could find out if there was going to be a shoot at night, I had a very good Army friend, Bobby Conzelman, whose husband Pete was a graduate of West Point. Pete would call Bobby and say, "Take out the garbage at eight o'clock tonight", and Bobby would call me, and we would go outside.

DR: Did you have children Marea?

Marea Foster: At this time I had Bobby, my son. We had a child who died in Georgia, a child who died at Wright-Patterson, and then Bobby was born in Ohio while we were at Wright-Patterson. He was born in Toledo, Ohio May 9, 1956.

DR: What a blessing.

Marea Foster: Yes. I had one precious boy. We were there at Patrick for five years. My daughter Betsy Marea Foster was born November 27, 1959 in Jacksonville. She is my adopted daughter.

DR: You have grandchildren Marea?

Marea Foster: I have one grandson, Robert James Shaver. Sure do. Oh, and my son's name is Robert Kafer Foster. Anyway, we were



at Patrick for five years. Then we went to Montgomery, Alabama for Bob to attend Command and Staff school. I loved Montgomery, Alabama. From there, we went to California.

DR: Did you live on base a lot of the time?

Marea Foster: No. We lived on, what they say, the economy, meaning we lived in town. When we went to Los Angeles, we were there five years. That was an Air Force station. We did not have a base, so we used the naval base at Terminal Island. But again, we lived on the economy in Torrance.

DR: What was it like living out in Los Angeles Marea?

Marea Foster: Los Angeles itself is very, very small. It's all the small communities around it like Gardena, gosh, I can't even remember them all, and Torrance and Manhattan Beach and Redondo Beach, Inglewood, it's all these little areas that make up Los Angeles proper.

It was an entirely different world from anything I had ever been exposed to. I saw things there I never knew even existed. (laughter)

DR: And the little girl from New Bern, North Carolina.

Marea Foster: It was an education, and I would not take anything for it. It was nice weather all the time, but in the afternoon we had a terrific breeze from the Pacific Ocean. We did not need air conditioning except maybe two weeks out of the year when the Santa Ana winds would come and it was terribly hot. But we did not need air conditioning and needed very little heat in the winter time. Anything would grow. You could stick anything in the ground and it would grow. I had a gorgeous yard out there. You had very small yards

because property was at a premium. But it was really quite an adventure to live in California.

DR: It was expensive living.

Marea Foster: Yes it was. And Bob did not fly, so we did not get flight pay. I helped out with our income by selling Avon and also substituting in the schools. Then we came back to the East coast to Springfield, Virginia. He was assigned to the Pentagon. After several years there he went to the Industrial War College.

DR: Did your friends, being military, were they primarily military?

Marea Foster: Military and civilian. We lived on the base at Wright-Patterson and at Patrick. The other places we lived on the economy, but we were always members of an Officer's Club. The longer you're in the service the more friends you meet, and wherever you'd go...

DR: They keep popping up.

Marea Foster: They keep popping up because you usually stay in the same command. He was in Air Force Systems Command. He had one year at the Industrial War College which was at Ft. McNair, a perfectly beautiful old, old Army post. From there we went over to Andrews Air Force Base, and I loved that. That was the first place that we ever had an Episcopal chaplain. We had always attended the base chapel when we lived on base and most of those ministers were Lutheran. The majority of them were Lutheran. A few Presbyterians. In California and Alabama we did go to the local churches. But Andrews was the only

place we had an Episcopal chaplain. It was a lovely small chapel that the Episcopalians used. Father Swanson was our chaplain.

DR: Did he conduct the regular Episcopal service?

Marea Foster: Yes. This was for Episcopalians. This chapel had been part of a large, large farm and the government purchased it.

I don't know when they purchased it or who from. They purchased it and the family that sold it stipulated that this chapel must be used and it could never be torn down. It was on the far side of the base, very small, white clapboard, chapel, very sweet.

DR: How old was it Marea?

Marea Foster: I don't really know Dorothy. But very, very small. Maybe a hundred people could get in there.

DR: Did you haul the children?

Marea Foster: I certainly did. They were confirmed. Not there. They took confirmation classes from Chaplain Swanson and they were confirmed at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

DR: Oh Marea!

Marea Foster: Which was a wonderful experience for everyone of us!

DR: Oh yes!

Marea Foster: It really was. It was very moving. That is a beautiful place, the National Cathedral. Then from Andrews we went back to Wright-Patterson. I've always loved Wright-Patterson. It's a very old base. The quarters were built by the WPA in the thirties.

DR: I didn't know that.

Marea Foster: It's just a perfectly beautiful base. You have Wright Field and then you have Patterson Field. Patterson is where we lived. Wright Field is where Systems Command was and the Air Force Institute of Technology, AFIT, was over there. And Ohio is just gorgeous. So much history in Ohio. This is what I always enjoyed about every place I lived, getting to know the people and the history.

I found out that people are the same everywhere. You find nice ones and not so nice.

DR: Well, we're a little far removed from the Civil War, the War between the states.

Marea Foster: But I am going to say this, the first time I ever saw a sign that said, "Whites only", and this was at a parking lot, "No colored", now there may have been some in New Bern, I never saw them, but "Whites only" was in Dayton, Ohio.

DR: What year was that Marea?

Marea Foster: That was in 1955. I thought, "Well, I declare. They talk about us being prejudice, and it's up here too. How dare they talk about the South."

DR: Did you bring that up to your woman's group at the Officer's Club?

Marea Foster: I think I mentioned it to a few and some of them laughed and agreed with me if they were Southerners. If they were Yankees, they weren't too pleased that I had said anything. (laughter)

DR: As an officer's wife, you had to be involved in what was

going on on the base.

Marea Foster: In those days, you had to do it whether you wanted to or not. Luckily, I enjoyed it. We had hospitality coffees. We had luncheons.

DR: Every week you were committed to something.

Marea Foster: We were committed to something. Umhuh. Had something to do, and then you did things with your particular office.

It was our last time at Wright-Patterson when Bob was promoted to Brigadier General that I really had a lot of people under me. I had about, which really is not a large number compared to some of the commands, oh, about a hundred. It's the first time I'd ever had enlisted and NCO that I was responsible for.

DR: Responsible for directing the social activities.

Marea Foster: Right. Uh huh. You really had to be involved. I had to get very involved with Wive's Club up there. Parliamentarian of the Wive's Club. There must have been about 2,000 members.

DR: Gracious. But these women do a lot of good too in the community.

Marea Foster: Yes they do. And we did a lot of charity work. And we looked after our own.

DR: Scholarships for the children.

Marea Foster: Yes. Uh huh. At Thanksgiving I would go to the Chaplain and say, "Do we have any needy people?", this was true at Christmas too, "Tell me what they need, my group will do it." We did things like that and provided baskets of food and gifts and whatever

they needed. We took care of our own.

DR: Marea, this is an education in itself for a woman to hold these positions.

Marea Foster: It really is. I will say, I can speak for the Air Force and for Systems Command, I can't speak for any other service, but they look after their own. When my second child died in Ohio and I wanted this child to be buried in New Bern, some of Bob's friends that flew, flew the baby to New Bern.

DR: They flew the baby?

Marea Foster: They flew the baby. Umhuh.

DR: What about your first one?

Marea Foster: My first child died in Georgia. When we left to go to Ohio, I was not going to leave my child there. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I had called mother and she made arrangements with Raymond Pollock. He told mother, she told me what to do. I went to the funeral home and told the director that I did not want my child to stay here and please do what he had to do and put him on a plane to New Bern and Mr. Raymond Pollock would be there to pick him up. Well, the day that was supposed to take place, of course I did not go to see if it was done, it just upset me terribly, I was home and the phone rang in the afternoon and mother said, "Rea, the baby didn't come. Raymond has been over there and the baby wasn't there." Of course I started to cry and then I called the funeral home and asked what happened. I was too upset to even really remember what happen. I just said "I'm not leaving my child here." So, I called

Bob and told him he had to do something, he had to talk to these people, and we were taking this child home. They gave us a new coffin and put it in a little box and put the box in the back of the car and we brought that child home.

DR: Good for you.

Marea Foster: I could not leave him there.

DR: Marea, your third baby...

Marea Foster: My third baby is my son Bobby. He was, of course, all them were RH negative. He did have to have an exchange transfusion.

DR: Thank God.

Marea Foster: Oh Lord, yes. I'm telling you. Then with my fourth child, I was in Florida. I liked my doctor so well. The one that I'd had for Bobby and my second child had gone back to private practice and he was in Ohio. So, mother and Bobby and I went to Ohio. I wanted the same pediatrician for this child. Well, my daughter was born and lived two days and died of hyaline membrane disease. And again, the Air Force never lets you down. Some of our friends from Patrick Air Force base flew up and got her and brought her to New Bern.

DR: So your babies are here?

Marea Foster: Umhuh. All three of them are right here.

DR: At Cedar Grove?

Marea Foster: At Cedar Grove in our lot. And bless my father's heart, he took care of it.

DR: He would.

Marea Foster: He sure did. He had funeral services and

everything. But the Air Force has been good to me and it was a wonderful experience. I went places that I probably would never have gone.

We never got overseas, but I saw parts of America. I think I've seen most of the states except the northwest and the northeast. There's just such a feeling of warmth and closeness and they do take care of their own. They really do. It's an absolutely wonderful experience.

By the time I left the Air Force, wives were beginning their own careers.

DR: And it was acceptable.

Marea Foster: It was acceptable. They did not have to participate as much as wives did when I came along.

DR: At one time it was obligatory for a wife for her husband's career.

Marea Foster: Exactly.

DR: To be in everything.

Marea Foster: It was. I had an absolutely wonderful Commanding General's wife, Georgia Stewart. General Stewart was a three star, Lieutenant General, head of ASD at Wright-Pat. Georgia taught me so much stuff that I am still using today. She was just the cutest lady.

She and I hit it off. I was one of the very few, at that time, Colonel's wife's, who was allowed to call her Georgia. DR: There's a real hierarchy.

Marea Foster: There is a real hierarchy. There sure enough is.

But I made it a point that everyone that worked under Bob, called me Marea.



DR: They would Marea.

Marea Foster: And they did. I still have wonderful Air Force friends that I keep up with and visit from time to time. It was great for me Dorothy, in that, I saw something outside of New Bern, North Carolina. I had grown up very sheltered, very protected, very secure.

DR: We all were.

Marea Foster: Just like you were. I couldn't imagine unkindness or meanness or badness anywhere, and it was an absolutely wonderful education. It really was.

DR: All around.

Marea Foster: Umhuh. And it made me appreciate New Bern and its values so much. And of course when I left the Air Force there was only one place I was coming, and it was home.

DR: When did you come back to New Bern Marea?

Marea Foster: I came back in February of 1975.

DR: How many years were you married Marea?

Marea Foster: Twenty-two years. Bobby was a freshman at Bowling Green University in Bowling Green, Ohio. He finished his year there and I came home with my daughter Betsy and two dogs and a cat. (laughter)

DR: Oh gracious.

Marea Foster: I sure enough did! There was only one thing to do and that was come to New Bern. It's always been home.

DR: It put its arms around you.

Marea Foster: Everyone was so good to me. I got us a place to

live.

DR: Where did you first move when you came to New Bern?

Marea Foster: Well, we were with mother and daddy for a short while. Then I lived out on Morgan Lane.

DR: Where is that Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, it's between Hillcrest and Camellia.

DR: Now, where is that?

Marea Foster: It's off Country Club Drive.

DR: I bet when you came back in '71, there were places that you didn't...

Marea Foster: Oh! New Bern had grown so much. Morgan Lane was a dirt road. Now, Simmons Patterson, Simmons and Ruth live in a house across from where I lived. The street is now paved and it's wonderful.

It was an awful dirt road out there. It really was. Betsy was a sophomore at New Bern High School. My cousin, Oscar Kafer, made arrangements and did everything that had to be done to get her into high school.

DR: It was a hard time for her at her age to pull up and move.

Marea Foster: It was very hard for her. Very hard for her. I went to work at the public library, and then later started working at Tryon Palace.

DR: How is the selection, I've often wondered, done of folks that work at the Palace and what is the training required and that kind of thing?

Marea Foster: Well, when Miss Gertrude Carraway first opened

the Palace, she had classes for the ladies in New Bern that were interested. They applied, she accepted. It was really quite an honor to work at Tryon Palace. The classes went on for over a year.

DR: Before you were able to be...

Marea Foster: Before you were able, you had a very good background in history. Everything they knew about New Bern, about Governor Tryon and his Palace, any information they had at that time, these ladies knew it. When I went, I went to see Cookie Ipock.

DR: This was in 1975.

Marea Foster: 1975. I said I would like to put in an application to work at Tryon Palace. I filled out my application and she told me to be there on a certain Saturday that Mr. Donald Taylor who was the Administrator would have a class. I went and there must have been fifty of us. Anybody that applied, went. Well, out of that fifty there were about five of us that ended up. DR: How often did you meet?

Marea Foster: That one time. Then Donald set up another training session. This was just to familiarize us with the Palace. It was all in the auditorium, you know, about groups going over and how often they went and the procedure. Then he set up another training session, and five of us showed up. This was minimum wage. DR: How much was that Marea?

Marea Foster: Three something I think at that time. So, Donald Taylor gave us training in the Palace. We met with him, oh gosh, at least three times and he trained us in the Palace. Dabney Coddington

later trained me in the Dixon-Stevenson House and the Stanly House. Margaret Wall trained us too.

DR: Did you have to study on your own?

Marea Foster: We had to study on our own. We had to go down and follow the older guides. Well, all the older guides knew me, Mrs. Maxwell, Mary Charles Maxwell; Miss Rose Carraway, Mrs. Georgia Dowdy was there; Corinne Pate was there; Margaret Dunn; Evelyn Shupp. These were ladies who had trained under Miss Gertrude. Clara Smith was there.

They, bless their hearts, took me under their wing and taught me everything they knew. They would listen to me when I gave a tour, and if I made a mistake, after my group left, boy, they called me on the carpet. But they gave me an excellent training.

DR: What were your hours?

Marea Foster: We went to work at nine and the last group goes in every day at four o'clock. So, if you didn't get the last group, you could leave at four; otherwise, you did your last group and it was probably five, sometimes later than five o'clock. But, usually from nine to five.

DR: How many days Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, it was really part-time work for all of us, but it got so I worked four days a week. And I really enjoyed it.

We had to work at least a year in the attic, the basement, and the East Wing before we were allowed to learn the second floor. Then you were suppose to work that six months to a year before you could work the first floor. The highlight was when you had graduated to the first

floor of Tryon Palace. I will say I was taught very well. Miss Rose Carraway let me tape her tour and I memorized it. My children got so sick of hearing this. I would listen to it and I would say it and have the kitchen timer, because you had to get through in twenty minutes. You had twenty minutes on a floor; ten minutes in the attic, well, five to ten minutes in the cellars, and twenty minutes in the East wing. I would time myself with the kitchen timer so I could do it in twenty minutes. After, oh, a year, I went to the second floor.

One day Mrs. Vera Ipock, because I had been following so much on first, said, to me, "Come on down from that attic. We need you on the first floor", and I went down and did it.

DR: Were you apprehensive?

Marea Foster: Yes I was, because this was a tremendous step to give a tour on the first floor at Tryon Palace.

DR: There is so much.

Marea Foster: There's so much. Uh huh. And the guides make or break the tour.

DR: Oh yes.

Marea Foster: They're the first people to greet the guest and they set the tone of the tour. It was easy for me to meet and greet people because I like people so much. I always enjoyed everybody I had and we all seemed to have a good time. The nicest thing is when they turn to you and say, "We enjoyed this. Thank you."

DR: Yes.

Marea Foster: That means more than any pay. It really does.

DR: How long did you stay in that as a guide?

Marea Foster: I don't know how long I did that. I learned to do the Stanly House and the Dixon-Stevenson House. Then I started working in the little garden shop. Georgia Byrd was running that.

DR: What did that involve Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, that was selling drinks. At that time there were a few little souvenirs and selling drinks. I really got into that when Georgia had a death in the family and Dabney Coddington called me one morning to come take over the Garden Shop. So from then on, I did the Palace and the Houses and the Garden Shop. Then I started working in the Museum Shop. Then I sold tickets for four years.

DR: Over at the...

Marea Foster: Uh huh, in the Reception Center. Then I worked with Nancy Blades for a while doing costumes and scheduling of guides, and then I went back to guiding. And now, just work in the shops.

DR: Where they need you.

Marea Foster: Umhuh. I even answered the phone, was temporary secretary for a while. But it was a very nice place, and I say was, because it was a nice place to work. It was a nice big happy family.

The ladies all wanted you to learn because it reflected on them if you told anything wrong. Now the training is totally different! There is really no screening of applicants. They turn away very few people.

The training is just very different. They do not get the in-depth training that I was fortunate enough to get. We, I know this sounds awful when I say it, have a lot of Northern guides.

DR: Yes.

Marea Foster: When I was selling tickets, I have heard guests, the tourist, come in and be greeted by a Northern guide, and I've heard them say, "We didn't come down here to hear somebody from the North. We came down here to hear somebody from the South", and it always tickled me. I thought that was absolutely wonderful.

DR: Well, I think their image of us...

Marea Foster: Right. And they like the Southern drawl. They can picture a Southern lady in a costume like that. I don't know why, but they just have this image and this is what they want to see.

DR: It's disappointing.

Marea Foster: Umhuh, it is. The Palace is now integrated and we have black guides and it seems to work out very well. But it is very, very different! The family atmosphere is not there that used to be there when Donald Taylor was there and when Mrs. Kellenberger was alive. Our Administrator now, has done and is doing an excellent job with, say, the physical part of the Tryon Palace complex. She has really not much to do with the training. I do not think that the new guides get the in-depth training and have not gotten it for a long time.

DR: That is so important.

Marea Foster: It's very, very important. Uh huh.

DR: The manner and the tone of voice that introduces the Palace.

Marea Foster: Right. We would have classes on how to speak, how to conduct ourselves, and this is very beneficial. Whether you're

going to be a guide at Tryon Palace or not, it's very beneficial.

DR: How long have you been there Marea?

Marea Foster: Seventeen years. I like the people I work with very much.

DR: May I ask, are you still making minimum wage? (laughter)

Marea Foster: Yes, we do. We make minimum wage.

DR: Thank heavens they passed the minimum wage.

Marea Foster: It's gone to four something now. It's still minimum wage. But I enjoy the shops, I enjoy meeting all the people and talking with them. It's very nice, they will leave their tour and they will come ask, say, "Well, the guide mentioned something but I didn't get a chance to ask her. Do you know?", and they'll ask me a question, and luckily I can answer it which is very nice.

DR: Yes you can, having been through all the steps.

Marea Foster: Right. So, it's a nice asset to the town. I can remember George Street going right through where the Palace is now. On the right hand side as you were going down to the bridge was the West Wing. We'd always go by there and I would say to daddy, "There's part of Tryon Palace" because we all knew about Tryon Palace.

DR: Frances says that she lived there. Frances Henderson's family lived there, and she said there was a big place in the floor board and when her sisters would want her tea set, she'd put them under the floor board down underneath.

Marea Foster: But it's really an asset to New Bern because the guests that are coming in are going to eat some place, they're going



to shop and they're going to buy gas, and a lot of that takes place in New Bern. So New Bern does benefit from the Palace.

DR: All around.

Marea Foster: The shops do. Yes. As you very well know, we're becoming a retirement center.

DR: Well, Marea, where else did you live in New Bern after you came back?

Marea Foster: Then I moved on Elizabeth Avenue. The Trinity Methodist Church is on the corner of Elizabeth and Simmons and I was the third house behind that. Then when mother and daddy died, they had left the house to my sister and to me, this house, and so I moved over here. We did not want to sell it, so I moved over here.

DR: Into the Park?

Marea Foster: Uh huh. Into deGraffenreid Park.

DR: How did your daughter adjust to New Bern High School?

Marea Foster: She had a tough time, because where we were in Ohio, she was attending Fairborn High School.

DR: What year was she Marea?

Marea Foster: She was a sophomore. And there were very few Blacks. The ones that were there in the high school with her were very well educated. We get to New Bern and it was a very rude awakening for Betsy and she had a lot of problems in New Bern High School with Blacks. It was most unfortunate that some things did happen. But she had a very hard time. Betsy's very easy going and can get along with anyone. I don't know. New Bern is very cliquish. I mean, it was when I was

growing up and it probably was when you were young.

DR: We wouldn't have admitted it.

Marea Foster: No, not for anything. But when you see your daughter being excluded because she's new, you know.

DR: And she felt it.

Marea Foster: And she felt it. Uh huh. But she enjoyed church. We, of course, always attended Christ Episcopal Church. She was very active in the young people's group, and I belong to St. Frances and we just got involved with the town and she got involved with sports and things eventually worked.

DR: Where'd she go to school Marea?

Marea Foster: She went to East Carolina University and has a degree in Child Development and Family Relations, but is a nurse over in Kinston. She took a nursing course too.

DR: She's really prepared.

Marea Foster: Umhuh. She's really prepared. She sure is.

DR: Well, did Bobby live here at any time?

Marea Foster: My son was with me one year. He graduated from Virginia, what do they call it now, it used to be VPI, but it's Virginia State University I think. Maybe Virginia Polytechnic and State University of Blacksburg, Virginia. He has a degree from there, and he lives in Florida.

DR: What changes have you seen in New Bern Marea?

Marea Foster: New Bern has grown by leaps and bounds. I think we're becoming a retirement center. I can no longer walk down the

street and see a lot of people I know and say hey to. People are in a great big rush to get from here to there. There's less consideration for other people. I find this in the stores. The traffic is terrible.

DR: Having lived in Los Angeles and Ohio, and you can say that?

Marea Foster: I can say that. I certainly can say it. If you can drive in LA traffic, you can drive anywhere. And I never want to go back to that type driving with five lanes going one way and five coming another. Thank goodness I was young when that happened. I don't know if I could do it today. I see more crime in New Bern. I just see New Bern growing so much as a retirement center more so than an industrial center and I'm ready for it to quit growing. I have to say it, I'm ready for it to quit growing. I miss our small town charm. I miss the loving, caring feeling that was New Bern when I was growing up. I really do. I miss that. We have three services at church and you really don't know anyone unless they attend the same service you do.

DR: And even then...

Marea Foster: And even then you don't know them all. I know it's going to continue to grow. I know that, but that doesn't mean I have to like it. I don't.

DR: I'm concerned about our view of the rivers being closed.

Marea Foster: I am too. I'm concerned about education. I think the children of today are getting a better education than I had. They're getting more of a hands on experience with their equipment. And, of course, in elementary school they're starting with computers. But

then again, sometimes when you use computers then you don't really learn your multiplication tables and you don't really use your brain.

At least I see it that way. But the schools have problems. They have bad problems caused by a small minority. The majority of students want a very good education, but it's the small percentage I mean to say, of students that are causing the problems. It's getting to be where it isn't safe to send your child to school. We could walk to school, it was no problem. You could leave your front door unlocked. You could leave your purse in your car. Now at schools, they have guns, they have knives.

DR: You think that's happening in New Bern?

Marea Foster: Yes. They have guns. They have knives. Not as bad as in other places. We do not need metal detectors at the school nor do we need a policeman there. And hopefully we never will. But I see this happening and I don't want that to happen. I'm just ready for New Bern to quit growing.

DR: You think we could control it better if it stopped?

Marea Foster: Yes. Uh huh. But more people demand more services, that means more taxes. You know how it is. But that's progress and that's life and everything changes. Whether I want it to or not, it's going to change.

DR: There's been quite a change too in the approach to medicine in New Bern.

Marea Foster: A tremendous approach and I think we're very fortunate to have the medical facility that we do have. I see a great

big difference in doctors. Dr. Oscar Adolph Kafer, II took care of us and we adored Uncle Oscar. When he walked in the room, because he made house calls, mother never called him unless it was absolutely necessary, I mean it was the last resort when she called Uncle Oscar, and all he had to do was walk in the front door and I knew I was going to get well. I feel that way about the doctor I have now, Neil Bender.

Some other doctors I've known, I do not feel that way about. I see a big change for the better as far as antibiotics, operations and health care, but the really caring part of medicine is gone.

DR: It's fast leaving us.

Marea Foster: Yes.

DR: Unless East Carolina can in their program that they have over there for doctor family practice instill that caring again.

Marea Foster: I hope so. I understand the need for all the medical test. It's to protect the doctors from malpractice suits. When I was growing up and you were growing up, nobody ever thought about suing the doctor.

DR: And yet I can see where it is a protection for gross negligence.

Marea Foster: Yes.

DR: And the medical community will back their own...

Marea Foster: Yes they will.

DR: ...rather than admit an error.

Marea Foster: Admit a wrong. I think maybe now they police themselves better.

DR: It might have been good in that sense.

Marea Foster: It might have been good in that sense that they do. But I just feel there's not the warmth, there's not the doctor/patient relationship. I am very fortunate with my doctor. When I call, the girls out there know I don't call unless I am sick, and I am just very, very fortunate with Neil Bender. I really and truly am.

DR: Ditto.

Marea Foster: Umhuh. He's just a fine man. And he always has time for me. But I hear my friends talk and how they're rushed through.

DR: And how they wait.

Marea Foster: Uh huh, and how they wait.

DR: Marea, what else in New Bern can you think of that you want to mention.

Marea Foster: I see a great change in downtown. This is just my own feeling. When Broad Street was widened for traffic and the bridge, whether the businesses wanted it or not, that effectively killed downtown. There was no place to park on Broad Street. New Bern started to grow and businesses moved out on Highway 17 South. I hate to see downtown the way it is now. I want it to be vital.

DR: I feel like it's picking up a little though.

Marea Foster: I hope so because it was so vital before.

DR: Oh gracious!

Marea Foster: I mean it was just downtown. It was just a nice treat. It's nice to go into the individual stores and not be in a

mall where everything is the same. I like the individuality. I would like to see downtown become a more vital place. I would like our waterfront to be preserved and no buildings down there. I personally see no reason why we can't have a beautiful park next to the Sheraton.

DR: I couldn't either.

Marea Foster: And there's no reason. Other towns have done it.

DR: I think we can write that off.

Marea Foster: I think so too, and it's unfortunate. We might as well have it the way it was with all those old warehouses and wharves.

But at least it was bustling and you could see the river and people were busy down there. It was a fun place to go with Maxwell's down there and Lucas and Lewis, you know, the wholesalers, and Hamilton's Cafe. And I remember Nelson's Cafe.

DR: The Oyster Bar.

Marea Foster: Yes. Whitty Milling Company on South Front Street and Mitchell's Hardware. There's no place in this world like Mitchell's Hardware used to be. Anything in this world you wanted you could find in Mr. Mitchell's store, and you could right up until he died. I think downtown is very pretty and I want it to be revitalized. But great changes in the schools. Things I never even dreamed of. In my lifetime, Dorothy, we have television. And the telephone when I was young, you just picked up the receiver and told the operator what number you wanted, and then we got so we could dial. We had three numbers. Our phone number was 407.

DR: Ours was 943.

Marea Foster: (laughter) I can still remember that. Now it's wall phones. Now it's call waiting. I like all these changes.

DR: And answering service.

Marea Foster: Answering services, yes. Tremendous strides in technology, in everything.

DR: Even in New Bern.

Marea Foster: Even in New Bern. And it's a very exciting time to live in.

DR: Can you remember any exciting things that happened as you grew up and can remember?

Marea Foster: Exciting times to me were the circuses.

DR: What about any happening in New Bern that you remember?

Marea Foster: Any happenings. I'll probably remember something when you leave. Now, I declare, I can't think of a thing. I know that there was a hurricane and I can't remember what year it was. It was not in the fifties. It had to be in the forties because we lived on Rhem Avenue and it was so bad that the water came up to our front porch and people were going up and down Rhem Avenue in canoes and rowboats. That I do remember.

DR: That wasn't the one in fifty, because we were living out on Rhem Avenue in '55 and it didn't come up.

Marea Foster: No, this was in the forties because I was probably in the eighth grade at that time. Our house, luckily, was sort of high from the ground so the water was in the basement but did not come in. That's the only bad storm I remember. I don't remember any bad



fires. The polio epidemic was going on in the forties.

DR: Yes.

Marea Foster: That's when I was sent off to camp, and it may have been why I was sent.

DR: I bet that was Marea.

Marea Foster: It could have been. I really don't.

DR: In '46, that bad polio.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. I remember when I was in high school, I think I was a freshman in high school, and the Shriners always had a big parade, you know they have one every year, and Harold Lloyd, the silent movie star, was their marshall and I got to meet him.

DR: Were you old enough to remember Harry Truman coming to New Bern?

Marea Foster: I do. I remember President Truman coming. I did not see him, but I do know that he did go to church service at First Baptist Church on Middle Street and Rev. Thomas Fryer was the minister, or pastor, there. That was quite a thing. I was not old enough, well, not even born, when Babe Ruth came. Or maybe I was, but I wasn't aware of it.

DR: You didn't get a baseball?

Marea Foster: No. That was before my time I think. But President Truman coming was probably about the most exciting thing, and I would have forgotten that if you hadn't reminded me.

DR: We were at Chapel Hill when that happened. Mother and Daddy wrote about how exciting it was.

Marea Foster: Oh yes.

DR: Of course Daddy couldn't stand Truman, but anyway. The only Democrat he never could buy.

Marea Foster: You know the one thing that I never asked Daddy was, if he ever met Harry Truman. I have a feeling he did since he was Chairman of the County Board of Elections.

DR: I bet he did.

Marea Foster: But how could I have forgotten to ask him that? Oh my gosh, something's wrong with me. But no. New Bern was just a quiet, placid, on the surface, warm, loving place to grow up.

DR: For us.

Marea Foster: It nourished us.

DR: It nourished us, that's a good word.

Marea Foster: It nourished us. So when I needed nourishment again, there was only one place to come and that was back home.

DR: That's the way I felt. We were really blessed. Marea, I remember your telling me a story about your language that you learned in Kenansville.

Marea Foster: This memory, I was...

DR: How you became the lady you are today.

Marea Foster: Yes, how I became the lady I am today. I was about three years and eight months old. I remember sleeping with my mother and I remember mother leaving the bed. I remember my Aunt Elery, mother's older sister, and the next thing I knew we were in Kenansville with my Nannie and Papa Penney. They lived in the James Sprunt house.

It was a very large, old, two-story house with a full attic. The windows downstairs went from ceiling to floor almost. There were farm animals there, although they did not farm there, and there was a tobacco barn. They used to let me play in the tobacco barn. Even though I was three, they knew that the people in there, black and white that were tying tobacco, would look after me.

DR: A great place to play.

Marea Foster: They knew they had to look after Mrs. Penney's granddaughter. I remember the dining room was on the front of the house and Papa was at the head of the table. He was a very distinguished man with this gorgeous head of white hair. Nannie Penney, who was a lot of fun, was at the foot of the table. I think my aunt was there, Aunt Elery, but I'm not sure. I was sitting on two or three books so I could reach the table. We had corn on the cob, and very calmly I looked at Papa and I said, "Papa, I have some of this god damn corn in my god damn teeth." Well, Dorothy, I thought it was perfectly all right to say that. (laughter) But I said it, and my grandfather, I will never, ever forget the look he gave me and he said, "Peaches, little ladies do not talk like that! Pretty is as pretty does." I looked at him out of the corner of my eye and then I turned my head and I looked out of the corner of the eye at Nannie and she was about to burst out laughing. But then I looked back at Papa and he had the sternest look on his face and I will never, ever forget that!

DR: And you didn't bring it back to New Bern.

Marea Foster: I did not bring it back to New Bern.

DR: You had a baby sister when you came home.

Marea Foster: I had a baby sister when I came home. I later found out that's why I was sent to Kenansville for about three weeks because the baby sister had arrived. But that is something I will never, ever forget, my grandfather talking to me like that. They never spanked me. He didn't have to. All he had to do was look at me and just say what he said. And all my life he said, "Pretty is as pretty does."

DR: Marea, growing up in New Bern, I don't remember hearing stories about children being abused.

Marea Foster: No, I don't either.

DR: You heard stories about people who drank too much or you heard stories about people who ran around. Yet, somehow it was all right for the man to do it, just so that the woman didn't. But I don't remember hearing about murders or rapes.

Marea Foster: I don't either. Things like that were not in the newspaper.

DR: Or maybe they didn't talk about it in front of us.

Marea Foster: Well, my parents didn't discuss things like that in front of us and they certainly did not use language like I just used in front of us. I picked it up over there in Keanansville, and I left it there too. (laughter)

DR: Is there anything else we want to talk about Marea?

Marea Foster: I would like to say that my Grandmother Penney was a great influence on my life. Nannie Penney was maybe five feet,

six inches tall, very slender, and had a wonderful sense of humor.

She had heart problems, so when I was growing up she was confined to the bed or to the sofa. She just believed in having a good time, being a good girl, doing what you were told, but have fun. She taught all of us how to play Chinese checkers. She taught us all to play cards. She would sit on the sofa and let me stand behind her and brush her hair by the hour and braid it. One thing she taught us that I still enjoy today, she taught us all how to blow bubbles, to chew bubble gum and to blow bubbles.

DR: Oh, she must have been a doll! So like your mother.

Marea Foster: Mother's just like her. She taught us that. My grandfather would come in at night and he'd have a little brown paper bag and he'd say, "How do Mrs. Penney", and Nannie would say, "How do Mr. Penney", and he'd hand her the bag. In it would be five long sticks of bubble gum. Nannie could blow the biggest bubbles you ever saw, and she taught us all how to do it. She also taught us how to dip snuff. She sent us out to get the smallest twig we could and she taught us how to peel the bark and then how to peel the fibers down to a certain point. You would have the smallest, softest brush. It was just absolutely amazing how soft it was. Then you'd dip that brush into the snuff can and stick it in your mouth. (laughter)

DR: Your lower lip. Did you bring that back to New Bern?

Marea Foster: No, I left my snuff dipping habits over there. I only dipped it one time. Once was enough for me to dip snuff. Jo did it numerous times and my cousin Earl Martin did too until they

got sick. But Bill Martin and I only did it one time.

DR: How old was your grandmother, Marea, when she died?

Marea Foster: Nannie was in her fifties. She would come and stay with us and Uncle Oscar took care of her. Then Papa would come on Sundays and visit with Mrs. Penney. I never heard either one of them call the other by their first name. My grandmother's nickname was Daisy and it suited her perfectly. So I have wonderful memories of her. She always said, "Pretty is as pretty does, beauty is only skin deep, and mind your manners, mind your elders, and have fun." She taught me that.

DR: Marea, did you teach your children to say yes mam and no mam?

Marea Foster: Yes I did. I had to do it. That's the way I was raised and my children were raised that way. We got to Virginia and my son was in the sixth grade and he said yes mam to the teacher. He came home from school and he said, "Mom, the teacher fussed at me today and said I'm not to say yes mam." So I went marching up to the school and said, "What in the world do you mean that he's not to say yes mam?" She said, "That isn't necessary. Yes and no will suffice."

I said, "Not in my home it doesn't." Well, from then on, Bobby never said yes mam in school, but he sure did at home.

DR: My children haven't taught it to their children.

Marea Foster: Betsy somewhat teaches Bobby, but I do. I'm teaching my grandson. But my children were taught to say yes mam and no mam and yes sir and no sir.

DR: That's part of that Northern influence.

Marea Foster: It certainly was. I was just absolutely appalled that a teacher said yes and no will suffice.

DR: Well, Marea, is there anything that we'd like to talk about?

Marea Foster: Gosh Dorothy, we've talked about everything in this world.

DR: You think so?

Marea Foster: I don't think we've left out a thing. I don't remember the trolleys. Carnivals were held on I think Mr. McCarthy's lot on Pollock Street where the telephone company is now and Zaytoun Cabinets.

DR: Yeah.

Marea Foster: Circuses were later held there but usually on Park Avenue.

DR: Yeah.

Marea Foster: I do want to say that, we've talked about swimming before, and my crowd went swimming, everybody but me. But I did learn how to swim when I got to college because I could see the bottom of the pool safely.

DR: Oh, I'm so glad.

Marea Foster: We did not do any sailing.

DR: We did.

Marea Foster: None of us had a sailboat. Some families later had power boats, speed boats, and they started skiing about that time, but no sailing.

DR: I remember George Baxter made his own and Edgar Jackson. You know they made their own.

Marea Foster: But we did not sail. My friend Peggy and I would take a rowboat. I didn't mind at all getting in the boat with Peggy. We would just row all up and down these creeks on the Trent River.

DR: And you couldn't swim.

Marea Foster: No I couldn't swim. But it didn't bother me at all because Peggy was there. She wouldn't let me drown. (laughter) You know, blind faith in your friend.

DR: And the age. No fear.

Marea Foster: We'd take our lunch and we would just go rowing and be gone most of the day. Mr. and Mrs. Needham didn't worry about us. We weren't worried. We were having a good time rowing up and down the river. A great way of living. I wouldn't let my child do it now.

DR: No gracious. Well, Marea, this has been wonderful and we thank you.

Marea Foster: Well, I thank you. It's really quite an honor for you to ask me and I do appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW

(The following was added to the tape by Mrs. Marea Kafer Foster)

My grandparents incorporated Kafer's Baking Company in 1888. The bakery moved from Middle Street to Broad Street around 1938. The bakery had a horse and wagon for early deliveries. Later, there was



a panelled truck for deliveries to Pamlico County. The bakery also supplied bread to the CCC Camp. Harvey Daniels drove the bread truck, and before Harvey, Guy Howard made deliveries.

I have a memory about World War II. Mother, Daddy, my sister, Jo, and I were at my grandmother's house, Nannie Kafer's, listening to the radio and President Franklin Roosevelt was delivering his Day of Infamy speech. During the war, war bonds were sold. At school, one day a week was stamp day and the stamps were ten cents each. We took our dimes to the teacher and she bought our stamps. We pasted these stamps in a little book that was about 3x5. When the book was filled, daddy would turn it in to the bank or the post office, I'm not sure which. At maturity the bond was worth twenty-five dollars.

Now, Fort Totten was behind our Rhem Avenue house and it was built by the Confederates to protect New Bern from invasion by Yankees during the War Between the States. The fort was on the western outskirts of town. The boundary on the North was Neuse Blvd.; on the East, Carolina Club Apartments; on the South, Trent Blvd; and West, Fort Totten Drive. There was a double row of hills with a shallow valley between the hills. Of course, it was overgrown with weeds and so forth when we would play on it. It was really a perfect place for games and riding your bicycle. In the 1950's the fort was leveled by the city. I do not know if there were any archeologist present when the fort was leveled or if anyone sifted for artifacts.

In closing, I want to say that one of the most important and exciting things to happen to me was to be asked to join the Memories

of New Bern group by Karen Crawford Adams. I began as an interviewer.

A few months later, Dr. Joseph Patterson, chairman of the committee, asked me to be the fiscal agent. Then he asked me to coordinate the program. I accepted with pleasure and was and am quite honored that Dr. Patterson has such confidence in me. The project has been so very rewarding and I have learned so much about New Bern. But most important of all, it has been a privilege for me to know and work with Dr. Patterson. The good doctor is one of the finest gentlemen I have ever known. He is the heart and soul of Memories of New Bern. Thank you Dr. Patterson for your dedication to Memories of New Bern. Without you our memories would still just be memories. Thank you.

END OF TAPE