

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MAREA PENNEY KAUFER FOSTER

INTERVIEW 911

This is Dorothy Richardson representing the Memories of New Bern. My number is 900. I am interviewing Mrs. Marea Kafer Foster, interview number 911. This interview is being conducted on November 19, 1992. We are at 1504 Lucerne Way, New Bern, North Carolina.

Dorothy Richardson: Marea, tell me about being born in New Bern, North Carolina.

Marea Foster: Well, my full name is Marea Penney Kafer and I was born on October 17, 1933 at 6:30 in the afternoon on the, I'd guess you'd say the third floor of Kafer's Bakery, which was at 132 Middle Street.

DR: You were born at home then.

Marea Foster: I was born at home and Dr. Harvey Wadsworth was the doctor. The bakery was where Merritt Shoe Store was and now I think it's New York Fashions in that particular place. That was the second location of the bakery on Middle Street. The bakery was of course on street level, then there was a floor above it where my grandparents lived, and the floor above that, my mother and father lived.

DR: Who were your parents Marea?

Marea Foster: My father was Alfred Albrecht Kafer, Jr. and his parents were Alfred Albrecht Kafer, Sr., and his mother, Sarah Burgwin Kinsey. All the Kinsey's are from Fort Barnwell. Nannie's family has been here since, well, as far as we can trace it, about 1720. My mother was Margaret Marea Frances Penney and she was born in Apex and her father was Early Robert Penney, and her mother, Margaret Esther

Martin. They called Nannie Penney "Daisy", and the name suited her perfectly. They lived in Keanansville when I was growing up. But Papa was a lumber man and he moved his mills around from place to place, so mother lived in different places but was living in Warsaw when she and daddy were married.

DR: How did they meet Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, mother always wanted to be a nurse. My grandparents did not think that was a suitable profession for a young lady and they discouraged her. So she went to Peace, and she was not happy. She wanted to be a nurse. They sent her to Duke, and she was not happy. She wanted to be a nurse. So she went to Carolina, and she was not happy. She still wanted to be a nurse. So Nannie and Papa looked into all the hospitals and they chose St. Luke's in New Bern and one other in Raleigh, and I can't remember the name of it, and told her she had her choice. My grandfather knew, I'm not sure if it was Dr. Jones or Dr. Patterson, and they would only send their daughter to someplace where they knew someone and they also knew the doctor in Raleigh. But again, I don't know his name. For some reason, she chose New Bern. So she came in 1928 to go to St. Luke's School of Nursing.

DR: Where did she stay Marea?

Marea Foster: She stayed in the nurse's home which was right across from St. Luke's on Broad Street and the house was right next to the John R. Taylor house.

DR: How many years did the nurses attend then?

Marea Foster: I think it was three. Annie Ragsdale Humphrey was in her class. Lela Badham came along later. Smitty Bartling was in an earlier class and Rowena Hill McSorley. Miss Guthrie Sledge was the Superintendent of nurses and Alberta Bagley was the operating room nurse. It's interesting how mother and daddy met. John Whitty was one of daddy's closest friends and he had a broken leg. Daddy went to the hospital to visit Mr. Whitty and that's when he met mother. So Mr. Whitty always said that he brought Shorty and Penney together.

DR: Well, your daddy's parents, how long have they lived in New Bern Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, my grandfather was born in New Bern on July 4, I think it was 1886. I believe that's right.

DR: Who were his parents?

Marea Foster: Jacob Kafer who came from Worms, Germany and Katherine Pfeifer came from, at the time she was born, it was Allegheny, Pennsylvania, but it's now Pittsburgh. And they met in Norfolk because Grandma Kafer was working in a bakery with her cousin. This was right before and the early years of the Civil War, and that's when they met. Then they later married and had a bakery in Elizabeth City, one in Edenton, and then came to New Bern.

DR: Wonder what decided them to come to New Bern.

Marea Foster: Well, I'm embarrassed really to say it, but I will say it because my great-grandfather said it, "Mrs. Kafer, the Jews are moving to New Bern and we're going to New Bern because if they're moving, there's bound to be money." And that's what made them come

to New Bern.

DR: Did he have any family here?

Marea Foster: No. No. He left Germany to escape service in the Kaiser's navy. He came when he was fifteen. He did not want to serve in the German navy, so he left Germany and came here.

DR: How many children did Jacob and Katherine have?

Marea Foster: There was Aunt Bertha, Bertha Mathilde Kafer Duffy who married Dr. Leinster Duffy. There was Oswald Ottmar who became a doctor and we called him Uncle Buster. There was Oscar Adolph who married Lucy Gibbs and they lived on National Avenue. He ran the bakery for a while and then my grandfather bought it, and then he (Uncle Oscar) managed the Masonic Theater. They had no children. There was a Jacob who went to South Carolina, to Florence, to establish a bakery. And my grandfather, Alfred Albrecht Kafer was the youngest and he was born here in New Bern.

DR: Interesting Marea.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. It really is. Then my grandfather went back to Germany to die. He told Grandma that he knew his time was up and he wanted to die in Germany and I believe he went back in about 1903. He died, I think it's 1905. I have it written down but I don't have it with me.

DR: Did she go with him?

Marea Foster: No. Grandma stayed here.

DR: With the children.

Marea Foster: She lived with Aunt Bertha and they lived on Pollock

Street in the house that young Charles Duffy, Jr. still lives in. Oh gracious, it's next to the Dixon Stevenson house that is part of Tryon Palace.

DR: They've been there a long time.

Marea Foster: Um huh. Now, it's the only place that I know that Aunt Bertha has ever lived. So she (Grandma) lived there, and as I said, turned the running of the bakery over to Uncle Oscar because he was the oldest son. And then he in turn, sold it to my grandparents.

DR: What did your father do Marea?

Marea Foster: Then my father ran the bakery with Nannie because my grandparents had separated, and so daddy went into the bakery business. He wanted to go to Carolina but could not. He had to go to baking school in New York.

DR: During that time, the times...

Marea Foster: Were twenties. Um huh. And he had to do that to run the bakery and provide a living for Nannie and his two sisters.

DR: So, he was responsible for them.

Marea Foster: He was responsible for them. Um huh. And they were able to go to college, which he could not do because he worked. He and Nannie worked and made sure they could go.

DR: Did your mother, after she graduated, did she work before she was married?

Marea Foster: No. Uh uh. Well, she might have for a little while. She did not go back into nursing until I was about, maybe, fifteen or sixteen. That's when she went back.

DR: Returned to nursing.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. She did that because daddy decided to sell the bakery and he was looking for a job. So mother went back to nursing at Kafer Memorial Hospital. She did not have to go back to school and take a refresher course at that time. Uncle Oscar helped her. All the doctors helped her and all the nurses there helped her, and within a few month she was proficient in her profession.

DR: Your father was very active in the community. What are some of the things he did? He contributed so much, as did all the Kafers.

Marea Foster: Well, daddy did, and I didn't know about a lot of it after, well, he was elderly I'll say. He worked with the Boy Scouts for twenty to thirty years testing them on their badges. That's something I never knew. He was an Alderman, and that's real funny.

Mother did not know he was going to run until she saw his name on the ballot and she almost killed him. (laughter)

DR: She didn't see it in the Sun Journal?

Marea Foster: No. I think he served one term and decided that was enough for him. He was very active in St. John's Masonic Lodge, and in Scottish Rite, also in the Shrine in Sudan Temple. I'm very happy to say that my father rose to be the Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina in 1966 and 1967. And he really was a very good Grand Master and a very popular one, because daddy made it his aim to visit every lodge, and he did. He did.

DR: What were some of the activities that your mother participated in, being an educated woman?

Marea Foster: You know, I don't really remember. She was very active in the Red Cross and bloodmobile, active in the church, Christ Episcopal Church, and a chapter member as well as altar guild. She was really never a joiner, so she did not join the Woman's Club or anything like that.

DR: Where were they married?

Marea Foster: They were married in Richmond, Virginia on August 30, 1931.

DR: It was a fast courtship.

Marea Foster: Um huh. Well, I guess they'd been going together two years. At least two years before they were married.

DR: And then you came.

Marea Foster: Then I came along two years later. Um huh. The first year of my life was spent at the bakery, which I have no memory of at all. Mother moved us to Park Avenue. She wanted a home and a yard. She wanted to be away from an apartment situation. And our first house was on Park Avenue. At that time it was the 200 block, now it would be the 1400 block of Park Avenue. It's actually the first block of houses.

DR: Who were some of your neighbors there Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, as you face the house on the left were the Fitzgeralds, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Clark Fitzgerald and their sons Tommy and Billy. On the right, were Mr. and Mrs. Will Flanner and their daughter Alice Lou. I believe there was a son but I never knew him.

Mrs. Fitzie was my godmother. Tommy Fitzie, I was in love with and

was always going to grow up and marry but he married someone else. (laughter) Tommy used to babysit me. Mother would pay him. I think I was just such a spoiled child that she was glad to get me out of the house, and she would pay Tommy ten cents an hour to pull me up and down the sidewalk in a red wagon.

DR: Marea, let's go back. You do have a sister.

Marea Foster: I have a sister Jo Kinsey Kafer and she was born June 28, 1937 when we were living on Park Avenue. Jo has never married. She lives in Blacksburg, Virginia.

DR: What was her training?

Marea Foster: She has her degree in Physical Education, a Masters degree in that.

DR: She's older.

Marea Foster: She's younger.

DR: Younger?

Marea Foster: Um huh. I think I'm three years and maybe eight months older than Jo. We're very different. She's very, very athletic and I could care less about sports.

DR: Your father was very interested in sports.

Marea Foster: Daddy was very, very athletic. One thing daddy did, with the support of mother, because it really took it, in, I believe it was 1944 and 1945 and 1946 or may have been '45, '46, '47, I'm not sure of the three years, but daddy and Nicky Simpson and Mike Jowdy coached the New Bern High School football team. These were the war years. There were no coaches, and they were very civic minded. They

all loved sports and they wanted the boys to have a chance to play.

So, they coached the football team. There was no, as Mr. MacDonald says, remuneration except at the end of the first year they got a leather jacket. They did that for three years. It was an expense for my father.

Daddy and Mike Jowdy also for three years coached the baseball team.

I don't remember who the basketball coach was.

DR: Marea, how long was your father with the bakery?

Marea Foster: Well, he'd always worked in it. I was a junior in high school when he sold it. I think this must have been around 1949. I think that's when he sold it.

DR: That's what I was wondering.

Marea Foster: I'm not really sure. And when he could have made a fortune during the war, he couldn't get the flour, the sugar, the butter. But I'll tell you something very interesting. There was a man who sold yeast, and I will not use his name, and he did enjoy his whiskey. On Saturday afternoons, daddy would work for Mr. Guy Gaskins in the liquor store, which was just two stores down from us. The liquor store was on the corner of Hancock and Broad Street and then there was the little cafe, the Blue Goose I think, and then the bakery, so daddy would work Saturday afternoons in the liquor store and he would get, of course, his normal coupons. So he would trade his liquor coupons to the yeast salesman for extra yeast. (laughter) That's one thing I remember from the war.

DR: Well, going back to being raised on Park Avenue. What was the neighborhood like then?

Marea Foster: Well, it was just one row of houses. Because across the street from us were the railroad tracks and an open field. From my house down to the right was where Ghent Casino was. I do not remember that. My playmates were in the next block, Beau and Alfred Bremer, and they were the sons of Mary and Alfred Bremer. Alfred, we called Brother. Beau was the oldest. They were my playmates as well as Tommy and Billy Fitzgerald, who were much older than I was. Tommy taught me to ride a tricycle and to ride a bicycle, and as I said, would babysit me. With the train tracks and open field, I can remember the circuses coming. The circus would come in on the train and they would unload a little bit below our house near where Mr. Crump's brick building was, you know where I'm talking about, and we would watch them from our front porch. Mother and daddy would always have their crowd out for drinks before they would go to the circus. And I have a funny story I'll tell you. I remember this vaguely, and I don't think I was over three and a half years old. It was before my sister was born.

I remember walking around the dining room table. There was a maid.

In fact, there was a nurse for me from the time I was born. For the first year of my life there was a nurse with me at night and one all day. Then after that, just during the day. It was Frances and she was there to babysit. I remember walking around the dining room table and there were all these glasses. And of course, I wasn't very tall, but if they were close to the edge I could reach them and I, of course, drank out of the glasses. I remember getting the glasses and I remember drinking from them and I don't remember anything else. Well, I later

asked mother about that and she laughed and she said that Frances told her when she and daddy came home, "Oh, Mrs. Kafer, I'm so sorry! But Miss Marea has drunk all the liquor and she's drunk." (laughter) I had passed out.

DR: At three and a half Marea.

Marea Foster: Can you believe it! Maybe that's why I don't like alcohol today. Well, you know, there's bound to have been more than one kind of whiskey on that table, and if I could reach the glass I emptied it. (laughter)

DR: You did go to kindergarten Marea.

Marea Foster: I went to Mrs. Ernest Bender's kindergarten. Her first name was Mary. Mrs. Bender was the sweetest lady. I remember that she was on crutches because she was minus a leg. I think that was due to diabetes. Her kindergarten was up Spencer Avenue. It would probably be maybe the 1600th, maybe 1700th block now. Mother would watch me to the corner, or Frances would, and I would turn right to go to Spencer Avenue and on the corner Billy Smith lived. His parents were Bill and Kathleen Smith. Then Mrs. Smith would watch Billy and me walk up to Mrs. Bender's. As you face Mrs. Bender's house, it was very high off the ground. On the right there was a door on the side that led down to the basement and that is where she had her kindergarten.

DR: Do you remember the kinds of things you did?

Marea Foster: I remember that we played games. I remember we all had to take a little rag rug. Because after we'd been outside to play, and she had a side yard, a nice big empty lot there, we would

come in and have milk and cookies and then we would have to lay down on our little rag rug and rest for a little while. I think I was four at this time. But I remember games, songs, dances, paper pasting.

DR: Like when I went to school. Curriculumums.

Marea Foster: Yeah. And we always had a little program. I remember one program that we were all dressed as flowers. And that's all I can remember, we were dressed as flowers and I was a pansy. (laughter)

DR: You remember that.

Marea Foster: I was a pansy. Um huh. (laughter)

DR: Oh my gosh.

Marea Foster: But Mrs. Bender was the sweetest thing as I remember.

DR: Do you remember any of the children that attended?

Marea Foster: No. Except for Billy Smith, I do not. I think Jack Menius went. I'm not sure if Patsy Rivenbark lived on Spencer Avenue at that time or not.

DR: Mostly area children.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. Just neighborhood children.

DR: Well, after your kindergarten years, where did you attend school Marea?

Marea Foster: My first year was at St. Paul's Catholic School because my birthday was after the cutoff date and mother just felt that I needed to go to school.

DR: Where was that located?

Marea Foster: It was on New Street between Craven and Middle in the Convent. As you would go into the front door, you would walk into a room that would be sort of left. I do not know what was on the right-hand side, but it was like a parlor and steps went upstairs.

Well, behind that parlor was a school room and there were three grades; first, second, and third grade.

DR: In one classroom.

Marea Foster: In one classroom. The first and second grades were on one side of the room and there was an isle and the third grade was on the other side. Robert Shriver was in there with me and Sister Imelda was our teacher. And we did have to go to mass.

DR: Did she take all three classes?

Marea Foster: She taught all three classes.

DR: What was some of the activity?

Marea Foster: I do not remember. I only went one year. I remember going to mass and I remember my mother being very upset about that.

Because mother was raised a Baptist even though she became an Episcopalian. So then mother had to, and I remember this, going up to the Bell building in Mr. H. B. Smith's office. Mr. H. B. Smith was Superintendent.

DR: Were you still living on Park Avenue?

Marea Foster: We were living on Park Avenue but in the process of moving to Rhem Avenue, which was 211 Rhem and later became 1412 Rhem. I went with her to Mr. Smith's office. I do not know what was said or what happened; anyway, he had to approve of me going into the

second grade, into the city schools, and luckily he did. But Robert Shriver, for some reason, had to repeat the first grade. So I went to Eleanor Marshall School.

DR: Who was Principal then?

Marea Foster: Miss Eleanor.

DR: Wasn't she a wonderful lady?

Marea Foster: She was wonderful.

DR: Who was your teacher?

Marea Foster: My second grade teacher was Leatha Allen. Mother would watch us across the street. Carolyn Everhart was going to school, and then, she lived in my block, Betty Joe Blanchard up from me, so Betty Joe would get Carolyn, Carolyn would get me and we would walk on to school. I had Miss Leatha Allen. Jack Menius, of course, was in my class and Roy Holton and Ernest Waters, we called him "Bubba", Patsy Rivenbark. Then in the third grade, I had Mrs. Horton Purser--Ailine.

DR: She was still teaching?

Marea Foster: Yes! And she was absolutely wonderful.

DR: I remember the multiplication tables. You learned them!

Marea Foster: You certainly did. I had not had a good background in math, so I had a hard time. But anyway, during the third grade, so many of us were out with measles that they closed the third grade for one week and then we had to make that week up in the summer time.

DR: Marea, do you remember, did they put a notice on your front door? "Quarantine."

Marea Foster: Yes. "Quarantine." And I was home in the bed for two or three weeks in a darkened room.

DR: Very sick.

Marea Foster: Very sick! Mother would sit in the hall and read to me constantly. Whoever was available had to read to me.

DR: Did your sister get it?

Marea Foster: I don't remember Jo getting it. She probably did but she wasn't as sick as I was. And, of course, Uncle Oscar took care of us.

DR: What other kinds of illnesses do you remember in childhood Marea?

Marea Foster: I had mumps, chicken pox. When I was an infant, I had, I think it was first, maybe the second year of my life, somewhere in there, I wasn't over two years old, I had diphtheria and whooping cough together. Dr. Ernest Bender took care of me.

DR: That was life threatening for a baby then.

Marea Foster: Yes it was.

DR: That was before the shot.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. I remember when we got our small pox vaccination, and I bet you remember this too, when they would stick those little needles in and then they put this little plastic bubble over it and the bubble would have a few little holes in it so it could breathe. (laughter) That was to protect the scab.

DR: On Rhem Avenue, then, you were older.

Marea Foster: I moved there when I was almost six years old to

go into the second grade.

DR: Who were your other teachers Marea?

Marea Foster: Fourth grade was Margaret McKeel and she was wonderful. This was during the war.

DR: During World War II.

Marea Foster: Beginning of the war. Um huh.

DR: What was your understanding then?

Marea Foster: Of the war?

DR: Um huh.

Marea Foster: I just knew that we were at war with Germany, that it was very bad, my two uncles were in the Navy, and we had to have blackout curtains. Everything had to be blacked out.

DR: At home.

Marea Foster: At home. In the summer when we went to the beach, there were blackout curtains in the hotel. No lights showing. I remember hearing about submarines sighted off the coast. I remember daddy saying he just couldn't get enough sugar, he just couldn't get enough butter. I remember having coupons for gasoline and for shoes.

DR: Living out on Rhem Avenue, that was a distance from downtown shopping.

Marea Foster: Yes, it was. And as a child, I don't ever remember going downtown to shop except for new shoes.

DR: Where did your mother take you for shoes?

Marea Foster: She went to the Bootery that Nathan Thompson had on Middle Street. That was the only place to go to get children's

shoes.

DR: Did you ever go to any of the drug stores downtown?

Marea Foster: Not at that age. No. No. Uh uh. We did not go downtown. Mother ordered our clothes. She had a personal shopper in New York, a Miss Adler. For our good clothes, she would write Miss Adler with our sizes and tell her what she wanted and she would send them from Lord and Taylor or Best and Company and B. Altman. Then, she would make our clothes. As I remember it then in elementary school, we wore plaid dresses to school but always leggings in the winter time to keep yourself warm, and a sweater. I don't remember at that point in time wearing skirts and sweaters. That came later. Do you remember coats with leggings?

DR: Yes. Yes. They were big.

Marea Foster: (laughter) The boys wore corduroy knickers and of course the knee socks when we were elementary school.

DR: Who'd you have in the fifth grade Marea?

Marea Foster: Oh, I wanted to tell you about Mrs. McKeel during the war. Kathleen Whitty, Mrs. John Whitty, taught me how to knit, and after lunch each day, Mrs. McKeel would read us a chapter out of maybe Five Little Peppers or the Bobbsey Twins or something like that, or Little Women and we would sit there and knit squares.

DR: What did the boys do? Were they taught to knit?

Marea Foster: I don't remember. I honestly don't. Mother collected the squares and I guess they put them together for something, maybe scarfs, for the soldiers and the sailors. Oh, and my mother

did an awful lot of knitting for the service people, service men, during World War II. She really did.

DR: What did your daddy do after he left the bakery?

Marea Foster: Daddy worked for the city for a while as building inspector. I don't know how long he worked there. Then he became manager of the Masonic Theater.

DR: That was a job during World War II.

Marea Foster: Well, this was after the war. He sold the bakery after the war. There was something funny I wanted to tell you and it totally slipped my mind. Oh, even though I had Mrs. Purser and she was so good in the third grade, my math still was not good. So the summer after the third grade I went all summer long, every morning, five days a week to Mrs. Purser to be tutored in math so that I would no longer count on my fingers. (laughter)

DR: I still do. And she lived over here.

Marea Foster: She lived on Neuse Boulevard next to Burke Taylor.

DR: In the brick house.

Marea Foster: Um huh. And the sweetest lady.

DR: Oh yes!

Marea Foster: The sweetest lady. In the fifth grade I had a lot of teachers. They were Marine wives and they might be here a month or two. We ended up with Mrs. Vivian Flowers who was a love. Fifth year was very, very hard for me, for all of us, because I think we had five teachers that year. And then in the sixth grade we had Miss Eleanor and she was the principal.

DR: She was a task master but she expected the best from you.

Marea Foster: Um huh. She was wonderful.

DR: Marea, do you remember any clubs or things that ya'll had? Were you in scouting?

Marea Foster: I was in Girl Scouting and mother helped us with our badges. We cooked, you know, a cooking badge at our house. She helped us with our health badge. We had hikes. We did everything the Girl Scouts did. We did not go camping.

DR: What about summer time? How'd you learn to swim Marea?

Marea Foster: I didn't. I have a fear of the water.

DR: Living and raised in New Bern!

Marea Foster: Yes. I think it happened because, you know, when I was growing up and I know when you were to, the businesses closed downtown on Wednesday afternoon at one o'clock. This was during the summer, I think from Memorial Day til Labor Day. Every thing downtown closed at one o'clock. Daddy and Mr. Albert Brinson owned a boat together and we would go to Broad Creek to go fishing or crabbing. My sister who just could not be still...

DR: Didn't the Shriners have a house down at Broad Creek?

Marea Foster: I don't know, but the Brinson's did. They might have. I don't really know. Jo just could not be still. She couldn't swim. She thought she could and she jumped overboard. Then, daddy jumped overboard to get her. My daddy was not a tall man, about five/feet, and the water barely came up to his waist. I remember my mother saying, "Oh my lord Shorty, you could have broken your neck."

And I think that has stayed with me and I do not like any water unless I can see the bottom.

DR: That's unusual though.

Marea Foster: I like to sit and watch it from a distance. I am not going out on any pier unless it has railings. If you're on a floating walkway or something, I am frantic. I have to get off there.

DR: So, the rivers were for beauty for, but not for swimming.

Marea Foster: Mr. Frank Alston had swimming lessons down there at a little sandy beach on East Front Street between Johnson and maybe King.

DR: Where Joe Pat and Alice live.

Marea Foster: Somewhere around that. Do you remember that?

DR: Uh huh.

Marea Foster: Mother sent me religiously and he just said, "Mrs. Kafer, you might as well give up."

DR: How old were you then Marea?

Marea Foster: I don't remember. My sister and I were very fortunate that during the summer time we were able to go to Camp Montreat.

DR: In the mountains.

Marea Foster: In Montreat, North Carolina. I went there for three years and I absolutely loved it. Mother again wrote and said please teach this child how to swim! That mountain water was so cold, but once you got in it, it was absolutely wonderful. But I just would not do it. But I enjoyed canoeing. I really enjoyed canoeing. I

went in more for arts and crafts and drama. I liked archery. I was very good in archery. Tried basketball, but that wasn't my thing.

Not after Dollie Bray stepped on my foot one time. (laughter) That was in high school. But I was very fortunate to be able to go off to camp. It, you know, didn't seem like a lot of money at the time, but it was a lot of money for the time.

DR: It was for during that time. Well, when you came back and then you transferred, all Ghent children had to go downtown.

Marea Foster: Right. We had to go downtown and we rode the city bus.

DR: This was in the seventh grade?

Marea Foster: This was in the seventh grade. The bus parked by Williams Cafe, which is now the Chelsea. You know, on the corner of Broad and Middle.

DR: Yes.

Marea Foster: It would make a right turn onto Middle, then a right turn onto Pollock, come down Pollock, go down Rhem Avenue, go around Colonial Park out here, and then come back to Spencer Avenue. The bus drivers knew all of us.

DR: Do you remember how much the fare was Marea?

Marea Foster: I think ten cents.

DR: A day.

Marea Foster: Um huh. I think it was ten cents. We would ride the bus unless we could get a ride. Daddy, of course, had already gone to work. He still had the bakery and he had to leave at four

o'clock in the morning. A lot of times Col. Joe Mullineaux, he lived next to me, would take us. We'd be over there rushing him to finish his breakfast to take us to school. Then daddy would pick us up at lunch time and bring us home.

DR: No lunches at school.

Marea Foster: No. This was in, gracious sakes, Dorothy, I graduated in '51, so about 1946 I guess. Later on there was a little green building back behind the Bell building and they started a cafeteria in there, but it was very, very small. Once in a while I'd go in there to eat.

DR: That was for free students though, wasn't it Marea?

Marea Foster: Yes. And later on when I was in high school, we could eat there. But not many people did. Not many students did.

Most of us went home because we had an hour for lunch. And if we didn't have a ride or daddy couldn't get us, we caught the city bus, get off in front of the house and eat my lunch and go over to Spencer Avenue and catch it back. So, you could have plenty of time to play.

It would be Carolyn and the Holton boys, Alex and Roy, and Bobby Sasser and Barry Eubanks, Betty Joe Blanchard, and an older crowd of Anna Lancaster Askew and Bill Kelly, whom I had a crush on. Bill had a wonderful voice. And when he'd get on the bus, he would lead everybody in singing, and we would sing all the way back downtown.

DR: Do you remember who your teachers were in the seventh grade?

Marea Foster: Yes. I had Louise Anderson who taught me English I believe. No, I'm wrong on that. I'm sorry. I had Helen Morton.

We were upstairs in the Bell building. I had Helen Morton and Mary Grey Moore. They are the only two teachers I remember in the seventh grade. I adored Mrs. Morton. She was a wonderful teacher. Just a wonderful teacher. In the eighth grade I had Louise Anderson, because we were downstairs in the Bell building. You know, Dorothy, I've got that wrong. I was in homeroom in the Academy building in the eighth grade with Mrs. Myrtle Turner, Mrs. Charlie Turner. Then, we would go to Miss Anderson and Miss Dameron and I think I had Lucille Minton, but I'm not sure. We had English and Math, Geography. We had History.

DR: Science?

Marea Foster: I don't remember. Science was not my strong suit. I loved being in the Academy building. The fireplace was there and beside the fireplace to the back of the building were just cabinets where Mrs. Turner stored things. Then we had a board from the cabinets to the other end of the wall with little pegs that you hung your coat on. That was our first year of changing classes. That was a big deal.

DR: I remember those steps. How worn they were.

Marea Foster: Um huh. They still are. Then in high school, it was during this time that daddy was coaching football.

DR: Excuse me, Marea, in the eighth grade did you take Latin?

Marea Foster: Not until I got to high school. I took Latin in ninth grade from Mrs. Laura Roberts Rhodes. She was the sweetest lady. They lived down the street from us on Rhem Avenue. She had a daughter my sister's age.

DR: Married a Hart.

Marea Foster: Yes. The daughter was Adelaide Hart. Mrs. Rhodes first husband was Roy Hart.

DR: Did you have Hi-Y when you were in high school?

Marea Foster: Yes. And I was very, very fortunate. Really, it was quite a privilege, that as a freshman in New Bern High School I was one of five, I think it was, five freshman to be asked to join the Hi-Y. That was really quite an honor. I'm looking in my yearbook because I can't remember everybody that was in there with us. But Dolly Bray was one, Emalou Harman, and actually there were only four of us. There were four of us.

DR: From the eighth grade?

Marea Foster: From the ninth grade.

DR: And you were voted on.

Marea Foster: We were voted on. And it was Dolly Bray and Emalou Harman, Peggy Needham, and myself. Aggie was in there too. So, there were five of us. I don't have her circled, but I know Aggie was in there too.

DR: It had such high ideals.

Marea Foster: Wonderful ideals.

DR: Miss Laura was our advisor.

Marea Foster: Well, Johnie Green was ours.

DR: Oh yeah.

Marea Foster: And she was fantastic. Kay P. Lewis was our advisor also. One project we did which I think is memorable, there was an

empty room...

DR: Excuse me, where did ya'll meet?

Marea Foster: We met in the Methodist church.

DR: We met at the fire station upstairs.

Marea Foster: Did you really? We met at the Methodist church.

Before we were old enough to drive, mother would take us or daddy or Emalou's parents would because she was not too far from me. But the project we did, there was an empty room upstairs in the high school and the teachers had no lounge at that time. So we decided we would paint this room and fix it up and make a lounge for the teachers.

DR: This was in the old high school on Hancock Street.

Marea Foster: The old high school on Hancock Street, the Moses Griffin building. And as you stand in front and look, it was upstairs on the right. I guess it was a storage room. Anyway, Mr. Farnell was our principal and he gave us permission to use that room and we painted it.

DR: Yourselves?

Marea Foster: Um huh. We sure did. Patsy Taylor and Emalou and Peggy and Aggie and myself and I know a number of others that had joined by that time or been invited by that time. Anyway, we did paint it, we did put curtains in there, and we got furniture and fixed a lounge for the teachers, and that was the first lounge they had.

DR: Isn't that wonderful.

Marea Foster: And we felt that was very worthwhile. Once a month our group would always go to church and...

DR: As a body.

Marea Foster: As a body, we visited different churches.

DR: You always attended Christ's Church, didn't you Marea?

Marea Foster: Always. Uh huh. Sure did.

DR: Who were your rectors Marea?

Marea Fosters: Before we go any further, I started out with the Methodist church because wherever Mrs. Fitzgerald went I was gonna go. I adored Mrs. Fitzie and Mrs. Fitzie taught Sunday School at the Methodist church. And if I wanted to go with Mrs. Fitzie that was fine with my mother and daddy, just so I went. So I went with Mrs. Fitzie until I was five years old and then I went to Christ Episcopal Church. I'd been christened there anyway.

DR: You remember who christened you Marea?

Marea Foster: No. The only minister I can remember was Mr. Williams, my growing up years. And then later, Ed Sharp. They are the only two rectors that I remember.

DR: In high school, what other clubs were there Marea?

Marea Foster: I have to get the yearbook and look. I can't remember all that.

DR: I just wondered what they offered then.

Marea Foster: They offered, oh my gracious sakes, I was on the newspaper, the Bear Cub, a reporter and assistant feature editor, and then the Junior Tri-Hi-Y for three years.

DR: There was something you wanted to tell about before we began.

Marea Foster: Oh yes, I do. This was during the Depression.

I really don't have any memory of the Depression because I was born during it, except, for one thing. I remember being in a large room with railings, with benches, and sort of like a big desk up on a little platform.

DR: How old were you Marea?

Marea Foster: I think I must have been three and a half or four years old. It would have been after the Depression. No, I wasn't as old as four. I know that. I was three or three and a half. I remember standing on a chair and Mr. Flanner holding a hat and saying to me to put my hand in the hat and draw out these slips of papers.

I did, of course, as Mr. Flanner asked me to do. Later on when I was older, I asked mother what in the world, did I dream this, what in the world was this memory? She said Mr. Flanner was the Clerk of Court and he would get me to go down to draw the jurors' names out of a hat. This is how they selected the jury.

DR: In that era?

Marea Foster: Um huh. I drew the names out of the hat. And she said, "I was delighted for you to do it because they paid you and I could buy you some shoes."

DR: And you were paid.

Marea Foster: I was paid to do that and mother said she spent it on shoes. (laughter) Well, you know how children wear out shoes.

DR: Oh yeah!

Marea Foster: So, that was an earlier recollection.

DR: Marea, what are some of the things you remember, courses

that you thought were meaningful in high school?

Marea Foster: Civics. Anything to do with history, government, geography.

DR: Who were some of your teachers that were outstanding that really turned you on?

Marea Foster: Sara Hunnings taught me Civics and Spanish and she was great. Lila Smallwood for History and I loved it.

DR: I did too.

Marea Foster: Kay P. Lewis, Geography. Rosa Lancaster taught me Algebra and it was fascinating. And then I had Jimmy Smith for Algebra II, the one year that he was there before he went back to school, and he was excellent. I took Latin under Mrs. Laura Rhodes and she was just a lovely lady.

DR: How many years did you take it?

Marea Foster: I had two Latin and two Spanish. That's all you could take.

DR: That's all that was offered.

Marea Foster: Um huh. I had geometry, and I'm sorry to say, that's not my thing. My classmate, Worth Dees, helped me with my homework every morning. The teacher I had simply could not get through to me. She and I did not have a rapport.

DR: (whisper) I hated Mrs. H. B. Smith.

Marea Foster: (laughter) I won't say who I had. A lovely lady. Other people did not have any problems with her, but she and I were not on the same wave length. Another teacher might have helped me.

If my classmate, Worth Dees, could have taught Geometry, I would have had a wonderful time in Geometry, cause he's great. He, by the way, is now a vice-president at Georgia Tech. So, I'm very proud of my friend Worth Dees. I had Lois Mayo for Chemistry and we were down in the basement. And lord, that was the coldest place! The laboratory was so bad and so dark...

DR: So ill equipped.

Marea Foster: So ill equipped that Miss Mayo would only let us make two things. One thing was soap, which doesn't take much to make soap and I can't remember the other thing. Twice in the whole year we went into the lab because it was so bad and so dangerous and it was so cold in that basement. When it rained, water would come in the windows and you sat there with your coats on. It was just very bad. We did not have any gymnasium. We didn't have one when you were there either.

DR: Did you have any set time for physical education?

Marea Foster: We did not have physical education. We had health classes, but we did not have any physical education. The girls played basketball in the armory, which is now the police station and Hattie Ellis Lewis was the coach. I really don't remember the boys coach. That was the only sport for a girl.

DR: In townlife, Marea, what were some of the things in high school that ya'll participated in?

Marea Foster: In town?

DR: You know, socializing.

Marea Foster: Oh, socializing. Well, Dorothy, when we lived on Rhem Avenue, mother and daddy built a playhouse in the backyard for my sister and me. Quite a large one. After school we would go there because we had a piano and a wind up victrola and we'd dance and we'd sing and mother would always have cookies and coca-colas for us. So, we did a lot of playing there.

DR: Did you play the piano Marea?

Marea Foster: I tried. (laughter)

DR: Who'd you take from Marea?

Marea Foster: I took from Pauline Nassef, and it wasn't her fault that I did not learn to play the piano very well. I also had to take it when I went to college as part of my kindergarten course. You had to be able to play "Happy Birthday" to all these little children you know. But, no, I'm sorry to say I cannot play the piano. I'm not musically inclined.

DR: What were some of the boy/girl thing?

Marea Foster: Dances. We had a lot of dances. We were always having dances.

DR: Where did you have them Marea?

Marea Foster: Well, a lot of them back in our playhouse because it was so big. When my sister and I outgrew it, daddy moved it onto the lot next door to us and added a bathroom and a kitchen and rented it as a house. So, that gives you some idea of how large the thing was! We danced down at the Shrine Club, the old Shrine Club.

DR: On East Front Street.

Marea Foster: On East Front Street. Uh huh. A perfectly beautiful place. I used to go with Billy Smith. His daddy would take us and pick us up. We went to the Woman's Club at Union Point.

DR: Lovely.

Marea Foster: The popular thing then was to have tea dances and mother at Christmas would always let me have a tea dance from five to seven sometime during the holidays.

DR: And all the mothers took out their silver and had their goodies.

Marea Foster: Um huh. We would dance after the basketball games and football games at the Rec Center on George Street, which is now the Senior Citizens building. But we would go there for our dances. We did a lot of dancing. For our big birthday celebrations or birthday balls, they were at the Country Club.

DR: Was everyone included Marea?

Marea Foster: In my birthday parties everyone was. I don't know about anyone else. My parents always said to me, "If you cannot invite all your class, you do not invite anyone." I remember in the third grade, it's the first time that we had a Valentine box. We used to get hat boxes and cover them, you remember, and you took valentines to school, and my mother said, "You must have a valentine for everyone. You can't give to just those you see a lot. You give to everyone. You be kind. You be nice to everyone." And I've never forgotten that. Because one boy later, in fact it was several years later, said to me, "Thank you for that valentine in the third grade. It was the

only one I received." I've never ever forgotten that. I was just brought up to be nice to everyone, or try to be nice to everyone. Sometimes it's hard.

DR: Do you remember any poverty in New Bern?

Marea Foster: I don't. I really don't Dorothy. I know that working with daddy in the bakery were just colored men; Pat and Ambrose Hargett and Guy Howard and Brownie. I know that when they were ill, my father took them to the doctor and he paid the bill. If they could not come to work, they still received their salary. They were just like family and he took care of them. It was the same with the maids that we had. Tempie or Mildred, they were they two I remember, then we had Olivia, would come about eight o'clock in the morning and leave maybe three in the afternoon. And they were paid fifteen dollars a week, that I do remember, plus their taxi fare cause Tempie and Mildred lived in James City. If they were sick, mother and daddy took them to the doctor. They babysat for us.

DR: Do you remember the Salvation Army having kettles on the streets?

Marea Foster: Yes, I do. I remember that. I remember parades, big circus parades. That's when we usually had parades. I don't remember any Fourth of July parades. And I really don't remember Christmas parades. The time that they would have had them that I would have remembered were war years. I do remember the circus parade. There was a woman named Mary Bloomberg. Do you remember her Dorothy? (laughter) She would get out there with them and she would be painted

up for fare-you-well, wouldn't she. (laughter) I do remember Mary Bloomberg in the circus parades. I remember being in the bakery and when anybody came in, black or white, daddy would always have a bag for them. I remember that daddy would start baking his fruit cakes in September. He made three different sizes and each week a little more whiskey was added to them to season them. I remember the black people coming in on Saturday and paying twenty-five cents, or maybe a dime, on one of Mr. Kafer's fruit cakes for Christmas. And I think they all had one. Which was wonderful. He was glad to do that. Daddy made an absolutely wonderful chocolate cake called Devil's Food. It was a chocolate sheet cake with this real thick sort of fluffy icing in between with another chocolate sheet cake on the top and you bought it by the half pound or pound. I remember that. It's interesting that growing up, we were always out of bread at our house. (laughter)

We did not have cookies in our house. We would have pies, and once in a while daddy would bring home a caramel cake because I like caramel cake. But we did not keep a lot of bakery supplies at our house. On Halloween mother would hand out donuts or whatever cookies had been left for the day. Because in the bakery business you know, if it doesn't sell one day, then the next day it went cheaper. It was day old stuff.

DR: But you don't remember any giving at Christmas by the city or some organization?

Marea Foster: No. I was very active in our church youth group which was called Service League at that time. We used to go to the county home which was out by the county prison where the hospital is

now and we would go out there and sing carols and we would take gifts.

The Hi-Y would do that also to the county home. 'Cause that's the only home we had for people that had no other place. But I do remember the Salvation Army kettles. I remember at Christmas time Belk's, which was in the O. Marks building, when you would stand in front of it and the window on the right would have this angel choir. You remember that?

DR: Um huh.

Marea Foster: That was the signal that toyland was open. And that was on the third floor. I loved that choir, and they had it every single year. It was wonderful.

DR: You remember any other stores downtown that you enjoyed?

Marea Foster: Yes, the Parisian when I got older. Mr. Harry Lipman, he had the most beautiful lingerie in there. (laughter)

DR: I remember the lady who sold it.

Marea Foster: Miss Katie Ferebee worked in there. Coplon Smith, Montgomery Ward, Penney's; and Penney's is where everybody went for their materials, McLellan's, Kress's.

DR: Particularly at Christmas, I remember we used to buy Irresistible perfume by the gallons to give to our friends.

Marea Foster: Yes. And I liked Evening in Paris and you could get that in Kress's. (laughter) And I loved all those flashy diamond rings you could buy at Kress's. Kress's was fun. I loved that store. Absolutely loved it.

DR: Did ya'll attend movies very often?

Marea Foster: Yes. On Saturday, we did. At twelve thirty we would get on the bus in front of the house. Mother gave us fifty cents and fifty cents paid our bus fare downtown and back. We would go to the Masonic or Kehoe. It costs fourteen cents for the movie and it costs ten cents for popcorn and a nickel for a drink and that left twenty cents for our bus fare. We'd leave at twelve thirty and we'd get home at five thirty or six. And I know my mother was thrilled to death to get us out. (laughter) Marvin Cowell drove the bus. And as I said, he knew all of us, so he didn't put us off on the corner, he put us off in front of our house. When I first started dating, some of the boys did not have cars, so we rode the city bus. I mean, everybody did.

DR: What did you do on dates then Marea?

Marea Foster: Went to the movies. And we only dated on weekends. After the football game, you went to the dance at the Rec Center and then on Saturday night we'd go to the movies. We'd always go to the movies. I dated the nicest young boy, Preston Eakes and he had a car with a rumble seat. One of my great disappointments is I never got to ride in the rumble seat. (laughter) I saw Preston a few months ago and we were talking about that. But we'd have a wonderful time.

DR: Did you ever work when you were in high school Marea?

Marea Foster: Um huh. I worked in daddy's bakery and earned three dollars. I would work after school for a couple of hours and then on Saturdays, and earned three dollars.

DR: What would you do with it Marea?

Marea Foster: I would blow it on something at Kress's I'm sure.
(laughter) I did not have to worry about providing my own clothes.
I was very fortunate. Money was never discussed in our home. Whatever we wanted, we had. Never asked where the money came from. I mean, mother and daddy just provided whatever we wanted. I was very, very blessed. None of us had a car. That was not important. We could drive our parent's cars. Daddy had a '34 Chevrolet, you know, one seat, floor shift, you know, stick shift, really one of those old floor things. The first time I ever drove it, mother had been teaching me to drive.

DR: They didn't have driver education then.

Marea Foster: Oh no, no.

DR: Your parents taught you.

Marea Foster: Mother taught me. She taught me when I was fourteen. She thought I was old enough to learn to drive.

DR: Where did she take you?

Marea Foster: On the Country Club road. Who should we pass one day when we were coming back home, but my sister going out there with Kitty Mullineaux! So at the dinner table, and we had our dinners in the middle of the day, Jo said, "Daddy, Mama had Rea out driving the car today." Well, mother was so angry with Jo and I thought, oh, I'll never be able to drive again. Daddy never opened his mouth. He just totally ignored it, and she kept on teaching me. I was fifteen and daddy was closing the bakery and he said, "Lady, I do not feel good. You're going to have to drive me to Charles'." This was Dr. Duffy.

At this time, Uncle Oscar had died. No, I beg your pardon. Uncle Oscar was still alive at that time, but for this, he knew he needed to go to Uncle Charles. So, I said, "Daddy, I can't shift the gears in this car." He said, "I'll shift the gears, you drive us to Charles."

Then you parked head-in. The car was in front of the bakery. I did know how to use the clutch. I got us out. Daddy shifted gears and me steering, and I got us to Uncle Charles'.

DR: That was on Pollock Street.

Marea Foster: That was on Pollock Street. He told daddy that he had a kidney stone and to go home and he'd make arrangements for him to go to the hospital. So, here we are going down Pollock Street, me fifteen, steering the car, and daddy shifting the gears. We got in front of the house and mother just happened to be looking out the upstairs window and she saw daddy get out on the passenger side and me on the driver's side and she went flying down the steps and said, "Lord, help my soul, what is wrong with you Shorty?! What is wrong?!" Cause she knew something was terribly wrong to have me drive.

DR: Back then you could get a driver's license at...

Marea Foster: Sixteen.

DR: Where'd you go to get your driver's license?

Marea Foster: It was a little building on South Front Street next to where Burke Taylor had his automobile agency. Then it was Joe Alcock's. But you remember this little building next to it?

DR: Um huh.

Marea Foster: Daddy went with me to get my learner's permit.

Then he took me in the country, and I mean the country, to teach me how to back up.

DR: And use the clutch.

Marea Foster: Yeah. Well, no. At this time, the good car was the Buick and I didn't have to shift gears. It had dynaflo. Which is the best thing that's every been invented. But he had me really in the country teaching me how to back and that was really quite a job. Finally, the day came when I was sixteen and I could get a drivers license. So, daddy took me down and Mr. Guion Willis was giving the test and I s'pose I passed.

DR: A written test.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. Then I had to go driving with him.

DR: Where'd he take you?

Marea Foster: (laughter) I'm gonna tell you about that Dorothy. I had to sit on a cushion because I couldn't see over the steering wheel. Then, I couldn't see the right fender, so daddy had to put one of these fender finder things that screwed onto the fender. It was like a little pole with a little flag on it so I could find the right fender. The car was parked right in front and I got in and Mr. Willis did. Right at that corner was a BIG, RED, STOP sign, and I went right on through it. (laughter)

DR: Oh, Marea! Sixteen!

Marea Foster: Sixteen, and just got in that car with Mr. Guion Willis. He passed me, bless his heart. I think he knew that if mother and daddy felt I could drive, then I could drive, that it was

nervousness.

DR: If he trusted them...

Marea Foster: He trusted them and knew that they would not have taken me down there if I had not been capable of driving. It was funny. It's a good thing a train wasn't coming.

DR: The train was right there. The railroad tracks were right there.

Marea Foster: Other than that, I do not know where I went, where I had to drive around town. I used to drive that old car an awful lot. All the policemen knew us. The firemen all knew us. We couldn't get into any trouble.

DR: What was the population, do you know?

Marea Foster: I don't know. I really don't. Ten to fifteen thousand. Maybe ten at that time. Well, more I guess because of Cherry Point. Probably fifteen. But everyone knew everybody else. You went downtown, you knew someone. It was just a nice, big, warm happy family.

DR: You knew everybody and they knew you.

Marea Foster: Um huh. And I knew that I'd better behave. If I didn't, by the time I got home, my mother would have known about it and I would have had a switch'n. And you didn't dare misbehave in school, because if you did, you were going to get worse punishment at home.

DR: Do you remember any that did and how they coped with it, say, in high school?

Marea Foster: No, I really don't. In elementary school, the

teacher would slap the palm of our hand with a ruler. I've seen Miss Eleanor do that. I never got that. I used to have to write, "I will not talk in school" about 500 times. (laughter)

DR: But in high school, do you remember any drinking?

Marea Foster: No, not in my crowd. I'm sure some of the boys did, and smoked; which, that I was aware, none of us did. There was not a lot of that when I was growing up.

DR: That was in the forties.

Marea Foster: That was in the forties. After the dances on Saturday night or after the movie, we would go to Union Point and park.

DR: Oh yes. Remember the Cape Jasmine bushes?

Marea Foster: Oh yes! They were absolutely marvelous! And, you know, here's this whole circle and it's just one car after another. Well, the police would make several rounds.

DR: The moon on the river there.

Marea Foster: It was gorgeous! Yes. And we behaved ourselves.

DR: And we were protected.

Marea Foster: We were protected. Um huh. And the police knew all of us. Well, we were brought up to behave. We were brought up to respect authority. If mother and daddy said, "No", and I said, "Why not?", "Because I said so", that sufficed. I did not ask for an explanation. I knew I had to treat my elders with respect and I always enjoyed older people. They were always a lot of fun and had such wonderful stories to tell you.

DR: Do you remember any characters, so to speak, in New Bern?

Marea Foster: Other than Mary Bloomberg, Crazy Bill used to come in the bakery and he would absolutely terrify me because I was very small and he would run around and go around in circles. Then, daddy would always have a bag for him. Oh, and another lady, Dorothy, and I know you know her, was Miss Lizzy Montague.

DR: That sort of rings a bell.

Marea Foster: Well, she was Nannie's age. Miss Lizzy had a mole with these long hairs sprouting out from it. She was a sweet old lady, but I was very young, and she'd look around at me and say, "Well, hello little Marea. How are you?", and I would be terrified with this mole and all these hairs.

DR: Like a witch.

Marea Foster: Like a witch, yes. But she was such a sweet lady. I remember Mary Louise Waters, a good friend of Nannie's. She was a character. Miss Meta Whitford, Mrs. John D. Whitford, was absolutely lovely. She was in charge of the welfare department. Isn't that right?

DR: Um huh.

Marea Foster: Then, Miss Neta Whitty, Mrs. Fred Whitty. I remember Miss Leila Styron, Miss Inez Styron, Mrs. Ethel Cook.

DR: All genteel ladies.

Marea Foster: Oh yes. And Mrs. Mattie Turnbull and Miss Daisy Hurst, and so many more. Mrs. Lillian Tolson was a good friend of Nannie's. These ladies, Dorothy, well, they all seemed the same to me when I was young; big bosom, you know, the same type dress buttoned down the front.

DR: Portly.

Marea Foster: Portly is better, yes. Matronly I guess. They never went anywhere without their hats and gloves. I remember Miss Neta taking her granddaughter Neta and me down to Morehead to visit Kathleen Whitty, Miss Neta's daughter-in-law, and it's summer time.

Miss Neta had her hat on and her gloves. She was wearing a white dress because it was summer, but normally the widows wore black or gray or white. My grandmother, though, wore beautiful print dresses, colorful dresses, Nannie did. But the ladies were just so nice and whenever I'd see them, I'd always stop and talk to them. But they seemed to be very interested in me. In all of us. They were interested in all the young people.

DR: I think that's one of the secrets of New Bern - caring.

Marea Foster: Yes, everybody cared. Because, thinking back on it, their children were friends of my parents, and so they were interested, probably, to see how we turned out. It was just like one big family. It was just a wonderful place to grow up. And I'm sorry that my children and my grandson have not had the opportunity to grow up in a warm, loving town like I was fortunate enough to grow up in.

DR: It really was.

Marea Foster: Yeah. It was. It was great.

DR: Well, Marea, in high school...

Marea Foster: I'll finish telling you the activities we did in high school. Our yearbook was called the Bruin. I was on the business staff and then I was selected the Sophomore Editor, the Junior Editor,

and then I was the Editor of the yearbook my Senior year, which was a wonderful honor. Then, I was in the Latin Club. We had a May court each year. I've forgotten what we raised the money for, but we did for something.

DR: Did you have the May pole?

Marea Foster: We did that day, uh huh. I was a marshall for the graduating class of 1950.

DR: You had to have the grades to do that.

Marea Foster: I had the grades for that. In the Future Teachers of America Club, I was a member of that. In the Safety Council, and I declare, I can't even remember what the Safety Council was now, but I belonged to it. A cheerleader for two years, which was the most athletic I ever was. (laughter) But I loved every minute of it.

DR: Did you wear cute little uniforms?

Marea Foster: We wore red pleated skirts and white sweaters with the red NB.

DR: They weren't short?

Marea Foster: To our knees. And then my senior year in high school, I was awarded the DAR Good Citizenship Award, which was really quite an honor, and I'm most appreciative of that. I'll tell you something. I always wanted to be a teacher, and won't ever forget this. My senior year in high school Mr. Farnell called me in, well, he actually called me at home early in the morning and he said, "Marea, I want you to not come to school today. I want you to go and substitute for the first grade teacher at Eleanor Marshall. She has had an

emergency and cannot take her class today and I want you to go out and take her class. So, you do not come to school today. You go immediately there." And I was a senior in high school.

DR: What a compliment!

Marea Foster: It was just an absolutely wonderful compliment. I went and had the first grade and had a wonderful time with them. I always wanted to be a teacher, but I was sidetracked. I never quite made it.

DR: Well, Marea, did you have guidance counsellors or anyone to talk with you about different colleges or things that you wanted to do?

Marea Foster: No. I think most of us in those days knew if we could or could not go to college, and it was a matter for most of us of being able to afford it.

DR: What about grades?

Marea Foster: We had to have grades. I've forgotten what my average was for the four years. Maybe 93 or 94.

DR: Do you remember the Valedictorian of your class?

Marea Foster: Yes. Peggy Needham. And if I'm not mistaken, Lillian Day was the Salutatorian. Peggy Needham was just a brilliant girl and a real good friend of mine. She lives in Charleston, South Carolina. I think Lillian Day was the Salutatorian. Very, very smart. There were a lot of smart kids.

DR: You had twelve grades.

Marea Foster: I had twelve grades and we went nine months. A

lot of my classmates, well, I shouldn't say a lot, but maybe 20 or 30 of my classmates...

DR: How many in your graduating class.

Marea Foster: Ninety. But there were about twenty that were not able to graduate with us because they had joined the National Guard, and the Korean War was going on, and our senior year they were called up. So, some of them when they returned, finished high school, got their GED, and went on to college. One who did was Tommy Karam. One of the nicest men and nicest boys. He was as nice the first day I met him as the last day I saw him before he died. He was just a nice, nice person.

DR: That's right, the Korean War came about.

Marea Foster: Um huh.

DR: Did you discuss that in high school? You were older then.

Marea Foster: We knew they were going.

DR: About why we were involved in Korea.

Marea Foster: No, we certainly didn't, that I remember. I just remember my parents saying this is a war that had to be fought, this is a just war, we couldn't let the Communist take over. And at that time, I really had no political opinions of my own. We did not have a lot of deep discussion at New Bern High School.

DR: Academic. You were there to pass the basics.

Marea Foster: Exactly. We did not get into the whys the wheres or anything. We really did not. We just knew these boys were called up, that they might not come home, and we hoped for the best. Most

of us at that time were just intent on graduating and going to college and getting on with our lives. You see, we were so young in World War II. I know it was absolutely awful, but it really didn't effect me. That's awful to say, but it didn't.

DR: We were sort of isolated here in a way.

Marea Foster: Yeah. But you went through it in a different way.

DR: Um huh. Yeah.

Marea Foster: And I was younger, so I didn't. My mother went through it the same way you did with her brothers there and very worried and very concerned. But the Korean War did prevent a lot of, well, at least twenty from graduating.

DR: Where did ya'll have your graduation?

Marea Foster: We had the Baccalaureate sermon in the Methodist church and graduation was at Kafer Park.

DR: We had ours at the Masonic Theater.

Marea Foster: Did you really? It was Kafer Park.

DR: Was it a pretty day or pretty night?

Marea Foster: It was a beautiful night. Um huh. And I can't even remember who the speaker was. (laughter) I have probably got it.

DR: But you graduated.

Marea Foster: I certainly did Honey. I graduated!

DR: Did you have graduation parties or did you all go to the beach?

Marea Foster: Our Commencement speaker was Dr. John Messick who

was President of East Carolina. After graduation, mother and daddy and Mr. and Mrs. Barnhardt had a dance at the Woman's Club for Becky and for me and all the classmates were invited. It was Junior/Senior prom that we went to the beach. We would take a weekend. After the prom, we'd go down to the beach. One year our chaperons were Margaret and Fred Conderman, and they were just the nicest people as chaperons.

The next year, it was Betty and Bill Flowers. Betty was the librarian in New Bern High School, and Bill, the principal at Eleanor Marshall.

DR: Bright people.

Marea Foster: Very bright! Betty was kind of strange, but they were a lot of fun! They really were. And we had a good time. So, we did all that.

DR: Did you discuss going to college with your parents?

Marea Foster: Oh yes.

DR: What schools did you consider? What'd you do that summer after you graduated?

Marea Foster: Oh! I worked at Kafer Memorial Hospital. I worked the switchboard.

DR: That was your uncle's hospital?

Marea Foster: This was Uncle Oscar's hospital. Um huh. And I worked the switchboard.

DR: That was an experience for you Marea.

Marea Foster: It really was. I did it part-time and mainly on call. Robertha did it and I'd fill in when she wanted time off or she was going on vacation. But it was pretty much steady that particular

summer.

DR: Do you remember what you earned?

Marea Foster: I certainly don't, but it all went to the Parisian I'm sure. (laughter) I do remember that I had hayfever and Miss Ritchy who was Superintendent of nurses, Dorothy Ritchy, gave me a Benadryl, and the next thing I knew, they were picking me up from the floor.

It had knocked me out! So I know that I cannot take Benadryl. Frances Pittman was lab technician and when she wasn't busy, she'd come up and stick my finger just to practice. That's when I found out I was O negative. That's when I got to know Dr. Richardson well. Mother was working there. She was head of maternity on the second floor.

DR: How many patients? Do you remember?

Marea Foster: Dorothy, I don't know. When I remember Kafer Hospital, when you walked in the front door, on the left was a ward and I remember at one time there were women in there. And then, I know another time, there were men in there. On the right were several private rooms and then the business office. Eliza Ellis Turner was the business manager. As I said, Dorothy Ritchy the Superintendent of nurses, Nell Parker was the assistant to Mrs. Turner. The elevator was back here and then there were some private rooms. Maternity was on second floor. Dr. Richardson was there and with him, Dr. Grady, Dr. Willis, Dr. Hollister, and of course, Uncle Oscar and Uncle Charles.

DR: Dr. Ashford?

Marea Foster: I don't remember seeing Dr. Ashford at Kafer Hospital. Now, he might have gone. I don't know. They are the ones

that I remember. And later on, Bardy, when he came back, which I think was the next year or maybe 1952.

DR: He took care of my children.

Marea Foster: I remember that. I had forgotten until Oscar reminded me that as you're facing the house, back on the right was a lovely fish pool and the patients who were ambulatory could go out and there were benches around it. There were large porches around that patients could sit on if they were ambulatory. I do remember a very bad fire truck accident. Booley Broadstreet was driving the fire truck and they were rounding the corner up here where, it's off Trent Blvd. and you turn right, and I can't remember, it must be Fourth Street. No, Chattawka Lane. The grate for the sewer jutted out in a point, and Booley was racing to a fire, daddy was in the seat with him, and he hit that grate which slashed the tire, threw the fire truck over to the right, daddy jumped clear, Booley did not and he suffered brain damage and was at Kafer Hospital. He was upstairs. At the very front of the house there was a very small room and it was a private room and he was in there for a while. Uncle Oscar took care of him.

I think they sent him to Duke, maybe Baltimore, I'm not sure. My father had a broken ankle and he was in the back part of the hospital.

That I do remember. Talking of my father, he was for over fifty years a member of the Atlantic Steam Fire Company and their treasurer. I think Mr. Albert Brinson was the secretary. For over fifty years, daddy was the secretary of St. John's Lodge. Oh, and daddy was also, it was 20, maybe 25 years, Chairman of the County Board of Elections

for Craven County.

DR: That was a big job.

Marea Foster: A big job. And I can remember the paper ballots.

DR: Could you hear him this year?

Marea Foster: Oh yes. He would not have liked this year's election at all. (laughter) He would bring the paper ballots home. Mother would clear off the dining room table and he would pay my sister and me one penny per hundred ballots. I gave that up as non-profitable. My sister stuck with it and counted out the ballots for daddy. (laughter) But they were all paper ballots. So many would go to the different precincts.

DR: He had to be accountable.

Marea Foster: Um huh. He certainly did. Owen G. Dunn, as I remember, printed the ballots. We voted at Ghent school I think. I didn't vote, my parents did. I think they voted there. Because they used the schools then. And the fire station was a place to vote.

I know that daddy was a Democrat. Daddy was what you would call "behind the scenes" politician.

DR: It's fascinating.

Marea Foster: It was absolutely fascinating. He was great friends with Senators Jordon and Sam Ervin. They were very good friends of his. Even Jessie Helms. And Walter Jones. Daddy and Walter Jones, the late U. S. Representative Walter Jones, and Alton Lennon, who was also a Representative...

DR: He was a good one too.

Marea Foster: A good one. They refereed and umpired high school football games in the forties. The three of them did.

DR: That's interesting.

Marea Foster: Yeah. They'd get a game and off they'd go. Then I found out that daddy, and I think it was Mike Jowdy, I'm not sure, it might have been Nicky Simpson too, but they refereed and umpired the games for West Street High School.

DR: Gratis probably.

Marea Foster: Yes, it was gratis. This was something they did for the black community. I don't know what else daddy did because he was not one to talk about these things. Other people are ones who have told me about the Boy Scout involvement.

DR: And his contributions.

Marea Foster: Uh huh. And about refereeing for West Street High School. I did not know this because he never talked about anything he did, and neither did mother. They never discussed sadness in the house. Money was never discussed.

DR: Noblesse oblige.

Marea Foster: That's right. We were raised in a very happy atmosphere.

DR: Secure.

Marea Foster: Very secure.

END OF INTERVIEW