

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

MELISSA EVELYN STERLING VAILES

INTERVIEW 408

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Melissa Evelyn Sterling Vailes, number 408. The interview is being conducted on Tuesday the 17th of March, 1992. We are in Mrs. Vailes' daughter's home at 911 Eubanks Street in New Bern.

MAREA FOSTER: Now, Mrs. Vailes, if you will give me your full name, birthdate, mother's name, father's name.

Mrs. Vailes: My mother's name is Daisy Chadwick Sterling. My father's name was George Sterling.

MF: And you were born where?

MRS. VAILES: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, but I was raised here in New Bern. I came here when I wasn't walking as a little baby.

MF: Did you give me your birthdate?

MRS. VAILES: November 4, 1911.

MF: Please tell Mrs. Barden and me what you remember about the fire of 1922. Everything you can remember about the fire.

MRS. VAILES: Me and my sister was in the yard and my mother was washing. The fire broke out across town over on Kilmarnick Street.

My sister and I ran over to see where the fire was. I looked around and I saw my mother. My mother was on crutches. I saw my mother and I said, "Joyce, there's mama, let's go." We come on back home. By the time mama got back home, mama said, "You all go in there and take the clothes and put them in the tub and set them aside." So, we did that.

Mrs. Barden: You told me that your clothes were on the wall.

MRS. VAILES: On the wall, that's right. We took them off the wall.

MRS. BARDEN: Cause you didn't have closets.

MRS. VAILES: No mam, we didn't have no closets. They was hanging on the wall. But we was washing. My mother washed for Mrs. Martha Mengel and she also washed for Mrs. Grace Blades' sister. We went on and took the clothes off and put them in the tub. Then she said if that fire come as far as George Street to the warehouse, we'd get everything together so we can take them out. Sure enough, the fire did come as far as that. I remember the fire setting all the way around George Street coming up Queen Street and hitting Jenkins Alley. The whole neighborhood was black with smoke. My mother said, "Ya'll take the clothes up. Take everything out. Take everything out." By that time, Mr. Ernest Johnson was working for the Pepsi-Cola Company and he was coming up the street from George Street with these two big horses and his cart. I remember them very well. He told the people, "Bring everything out and we'll take them to the railroad station." Somebody came along was saying, "Take everything to the railroad. Take everything to the railroad." About that time, the train had pulled up with flat cars and everybody was running to the railroad to put their things on the railroad on the cars. So, we got on the cars. All of us got on the cars. I stood there at the corner of the house we were living in on the corner of Good and Willis Street. On that side of the street was Mr. Dill's horse stables. He'd bring his horses up here when the people come in with their

tobacco, selling tobacco. His warehouse was on that side of the street right side the railroad. They would come in with their horses and their wagons with the tobacco on it and take the tobacco off in the warehouse and then they'd come on down and put their horses in the stable. Over on that side of the street was where they would leave the carts and things for the horses. At that time it wasn't tobacco season then. I looked down Jenkins Alley. The fire was burning on each side of the street and it was lapped over just like it was a arch you could walk under. The fire was lapping over. My mother said, "Come on. Melissa, come on you and Joyce and take these things to the railroad!" My mother was on two crutches. As I say, she was working washing for those people and she had to leave everything right out there in the pot. She stood to the tub with her knee up in the chair washing. We would go to the railroad and over to the mills and bring wood and walk up and down the railroad and pick up coal and come home. My sister, what wood had to be cut, she would cut it and I carried it in the house. She couldn't do too much, my mother couldn't. So she said she'd send me to school one half a day. I'd go to school and I'd come out of school. I think it was twelve o'clock or something like that. Then the next day, she'd send my sister to school. We had turns at staying home with her with her washing and her ironing and stuff like that and had to help go get the wood and stuff. It was rough. It was hard for my mother back then. It was hard. So anyway, then the fire came along. We went on and got on the railroad, on the flats, and they went way, way, way up the railroad.

MRS. BARDEN: Up by Oaks Road?

MRS. VAILES: Up by Oaks Road. Up that road there. So the next day, we had to stay on there all night, and the next morning we come back. Everything was all over the streets. My grandmother was living at that time too. They said, "We don't know where we're going or what we're gonna do." They had relatives on the James side and they came up and they took us over to their house. But the clothes and everything that was left that could be used, people just come along and took them.

The clothes that she left in the pot and everything, people had done took those things and gone. It was a sad, pitiful time back there then. As I say, we couldn't go to school. We didn't get no education.

We just went to school like I say, one day and my sister went the next day. I didn't get no further than second grade. It was right after Thanksgiving. When mama come from getting us from the fire across town, she said "Take your clothes off the walls", and we did. She said, "Go in the kitchen and get the food", which was a turkey and potatoes pies and stuff. So we put that all in the tub. There was more than one tub and we put that in the tub and then went on and got the other things. Mr. Johnson and others come through the street and said go to the railroad and put your things on the car, train, flat cars. You ever see these flats?

MRS. BARDEN: I know what you mean.

MRS. VAILES: So, we went on down there and we put them on. Everybody in that neighborhood did that.

MRS. BARDEN: And then you got on.

MRS. VAILES: And I got on there. After my mother got on there, then I got on there and we went on up the railroads out there. You look around and see that fire burning from one house to another, one house to another. I was a child then, but it hit me and it really done something to my life.

MRS. BARDEN: Never forgot it.

MRS. VAILES: Never forgot it.

MRS. BARDEN: I can understand.

MRS. VAILES: And as I say, she was washing for Mrs. Martha Mengel. We went back the next day to get the clothes that were in the pot and them clothes was gone. People will take. They don't care what happens to you, they'll take. Clothes or anything, they'll take it.

MF: Now you said she was washing in a pot. So, she had a big black wash pot.

MRS. VAILES: Out in the yard. When we'd come home from school evenings, we'd go to the mill and there was some people that would throw out wood to us and we'd put it in the bag and bring it back home.

We'd go up all around the mill yard and pick up wood. Then we'd come back and we'd go down the railroad with the pails and pick up pieces of coal and then we would come home. We had already washed the pot out. Then we'd go bring the water from the pump. We weren't nowhere from the pump cause it was right down on the corner and the pump was sitting over there. As I say, the horse stables was right there. So we'd go and bring the water and fill up the pots, fill up the tub, and then we lay the wood around there and the next morning we'd just

get up and light the fire around there. Cause we had to get up early.

The day that she'd keep me home, the next day she'd keep my sister home. That's just the way we was raised. She'd send me to school one day, send her to school one day. She'd get up and she'd make our little breakfast, whatever it was, and we'd go on to school. We neither one didn't get in school too far cause she wasn't able to keep us in school.

MF: Right. You had to help.

MRS. VAILES: I had to help her. I think I was about ten and then I would go out and knock on people's door and ask them did they want their floor scrubbed or anything done around the house. Sometime they would let us work. Not both of us work in one house. We'd go to different ones houses and ask them and they'd let us work sometime and scrub the floor or whatever they wanted us to do. They'd give us about twenty-five or fifty cent and give us some food from what they had and we'd go on back home. And that's just the way we was raised.

MF: Mrs. Vailes, you mentioned that when you went to school you went for two years. Which school did you attend?

MRS. VAILES: West Street.

MF: Do you remember your teacher's name?

MRS. VAILES: One was Miss Eva Collins. I don't remember what grade it was. It must have been the first or the primer, and the other was Miss Willie Blackledge.

MRS. BARDEN: Did you ever learn to read?

MRS. VAILES: Yes, and I like to read.

MF: Oh wonderful.

MRS. VAILES: I like to read. I used to pick up and try to read. I do pretty good. I work in my church now.

MRS. BARDEN: What church do you belong to?

MRS. VAILES: Oh, I didn't tell you about that?

MRS. BARDEN: Oh, tell us about your church!

MF: You have to tell us about the church.

MRS. VAILES: The church I belong to is Rue Chapel. All of my family belong to St. Peter's. St. Peter's was down on Queen Street, but Rue Chapel was right on the street that Ives Oil Company is. That's the street that Rue Chapel was on. It sat somewhere right along in there where this filling station is now but was a little further back. Rue Chapel sat right back there. As I say, my mother was on crutches and she couldn't get to St. Peter's so she start joining Rue Chapel and that made us go there with her.

MRS. BARDEN: That's a Methodist church?

MRS. VAILES: That's a Methodist church. AME. It's not a Zion. It's just African Methodist.

MF: African Methodist Episcopal.

MRS. VAILES: That's right.

MF: What was your sister's name? You've mentioned her several times.

MRS. VAILES: Her name was Joyce Sterling. Her middle name was Luella but she didn't like Luella. (laughter)



MF: I think that's a pretty name though. I like that. I think that's very pretty. Now, Mrs. Vailes, please tell me your husband's name and your children's names.

MRS. VAILES: My husband was named William Angelo Vailes. My daughter is named Willie Marie Vailes. She's married now.

MF: So you have just the one daughter?

MRS. VAILES: One daughter and one son.

MF: Oh how nice.

MRS. VAILES: My son's named Johnny Vailes. Mama wouldn't put no middle name there. So she just put Johnny Vailes.

MRS. BARDEN: How old were you when you got married? I bet you were young.

MRS. VAILES: I was. AC Monk Tobacco factory, I worked there.

MRS. BARDEN: Is that in Kinston?

MRS. VAILES: No mam, right here. What's that street?

MF: It was right here on North Craven.

MRS. VAILES: Maybe you know where Miss, she used to keep a grocery store there on the corner.

MF: Miss Mamie Sadler.

MRS. VAILES: Miss Mamie Sadler. Well, Monk Tobacco factory was right there. I worked there down through the years. I can't think now.

MF: Well, we'll come back to that. Do you happen to remember how much you earned when you were working for the tobacco company? I'm sure they didn't pay very much.

MRS. VAILES: No mam. I don't believe it was more than three or four dollars.

MF: Three or four dollars a week?

MRS. VAILES: A week. It wasn't much more than that.

MF: Wages were quite low.

MRS. VAILES: Very low. Very low. I worked, I remember, for the Catholic Nuns a long time.

MRS. BARDEN: What did you do for them?

MRS. VAILES: I cooked for them.

MF: And this was on New Street?

MRS. VAILES: Down on New Street.

MRS. BARDEN: Well, now, that was after you had a family that you worked for them.

MRS. VAILES: No mam.

MRS. BARDEN: Before you had a family.

MRS. VAILES: Before I had a family.

MRS. BARDEN: They ate real good too, didn't they?

MRS. VAILES: Oh yes.

MF: (laughter) You mentioned before we turned the tape recorder on that your grandmother, Lila Chadwick, ran the restaurant at the depot.

MRS. VAILES: She did. But I wasn't too much familiar with it. I hear them talking about that my grandmother ran the restaurant over there. That clothes factory is there.

MRS. BARDEN: Nassef?

MRS. VAILES: Nassef's. She was on that side of the street.

MRS. BARDEN: On Pasteur Street. Well, now, was that a restaurant for black and white people or just mostly for the black people?

MRS. VAILES: Mostly for the blacks.

MF: Since you had to work so much growing up, did you and your sister have any time for playing?

MRS. VAILES: Not too much. I guess that's why I'm like I am today though. I don't care about going much. When I was in my teens, I used to like to dance a lot. I remember going to dances. I didn't tend them too much. So after that, then I just went all out in church work. I'm not a speaker or nothing, but I just like to work in the church. I used to sing in the choir. I would have programs and things, which up until to day, I sponsor programs right now.

MF: That's wonderful.

MRS. VAILES: I'm getting an Easter program together now and I wants to have that on Maundy Thursday.

MRS. BARDEN: That's a special night. Special for me.

MRS. VAILES: So, that was my life. I didn't care about going out too much.

MRS. BARDEN: I bet you fixed a lot of good dinners for your church.

MRS. VAILES: I do.

MRS. BARDEN: Still do.

MRS. VAILES: I still do. Not now. I don't cook like I used to. I have cooked in the North. When I left here to go to New York, the Catholics carried me to New York with them.

MRS. BARDEN: The Catholic Nuns took you to New York.

MRS. VAILES: Yeah.

MRS. BARDEN: Did you work for them up there?

MRS. VAILES: Yes man, I worked for them. I slept in. I cooked for twenty Catholic Nuns. It was a big, big convent.

MRS. BARDEN: But they didn't make you Catholic?

MRS. VAILES: No mam. When I went to New York, I found a church and I went on into this same denomination up there. I worked in that church, People's Institutional Methodist Church.

MRS. BARDEN: How long did you live in New York?

MRS. VAILES: It wasn't too long. I married in New York too. I married my husband.

MF: Oh, you did?

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam. He was a boy from New Bern anyway and when he found out I was in New York, he came over to my aunt's house. I had an aunt living in New York too. That's where we met and we got married up there. I was up there about two or three months then we got married.

MF: Well how nice.

MRS. VAILES: I stayed in New York for about three or four years and I worked to the Industrial Home for the Blind. I cooked there for the blind.

MF: Were your children born in New York?

MRS. VAILES: No mam. I didn't have no children til I come home.

MF: Oh good. So they're native New Bernians.

MRS. VAILES: Native New Bernians, that's right.

MF: That is wonderful.

MRS. BARDEN: What did your husband do? What kind of work?

MF: Would he have been construction?

MRS. VAILES: It was a construction job. The job in New York was something like a government job.

MF: Maybe at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?

MRS. VAILES: Navy Yard.

MF: Mrs. Vailes, what do you remember about the Depression? How did it affect your family?

MRS. VAILES: It affected us right on down through the years. Even up to now. I never did make good salaries. My jobs that I cooked on, I wasn't getting a big salary for. Now, I worked here for the Catholic Nuns and I wasn't getting but three dollars a week for cooking for them. I worked for Mrs. H. C. Lawrence before I went to the Nuns. I was getting two dollars and a half a week cooking for her. She had three children and her husband only come in once in a while. But I worked there and for three dollars a week I cooked and I clean her house and I'd take the little baby out in the evening. When I went to the Catholic Nuns, I cooked for them. I'd go in at 7:30 in the morning and I'd come out at 1:00. I'd go back at 4:30 and give them their dinner and come home around 7:30. That was for three dollars a week.

MF: They were long hours. Did you have to clean the school rooms?

MRS. VAILES: No mam.

MF: You just cooked?

MRS. VAILES: I cooked and I did part of the house. I kept the kitchen clean and I kept the stove and things like that clean, what I used. I kept the kitchen, the pantry, and the dining room in the convent. The rest of the house, the Nuns did that.

MF: So, there were really not too many memories about the Depression? I mean, you didn't find the Depression years much different from other years as far as hardships went.

MRS. VAILES: In a way. The salary that I was getting back there then, you see, me and my sister still had to help take care of my mother and we had to buy food and have a little insurance on us.

MF: That's right.

MRS. VAILES: I had to keep what clothes we could buy and that didn't leave us nothing. Many a Sunday morning I'd go to church, I wouldn't have but one five cent, and some Sundays I didn't have nothing.

MF: I can understand that.

MRS. BARDEN: That was a hard time.

MF: So things weren't really too much different during the Depression as they were normally. Maybe a little harder.

MRS. VAILES: Harder.

MF: What about World War II? What do you remember about World War II? You were back in New Bern at this time. Any memories about that?

MRS. VAILES: No.

MF: Okay. How about integration and the civil rights, integration

in the schools? How did this affect you? I know it affected you in a very positive way and we'd like for you to share those memories with us if you would please.

MRS. VAILES: Now in the schools, I wouldn't have too much to say cause I wasn't going to school then.

MRS. BARDEN: But you're children were.

MRS. VAILES: My children were going, that's right. I don't know.

MRS. BARDEN: Were your children going to West Street school?

MRS. VAILES: They did. Then out here, J. T. Barber. They went out here to J. T. Barber.

MRS. BARDEN: So that's where they were then during those years?

MRS. VAILES: Yes.

MRS. BARDEN: They might have just missed that.

MRS. VAILES: I guess.

MRS. BARDEN: The first year that they integrated and put J. T. Barber in with New Bern High School, and I'm a little bit younger than you are, so, that's where my children were then.

MF: Same age as mine. Yours would have been just a little bit older. Well, are there any other memories of New Bern that you would like to share with us. You did say church wasn't your recreation.

MRS. BARDEN: It was, in a way, rather than going out and playing. Were there any other things that you enjoyed?

MRS. VAILES: In my youth, I said I used to like to go to dances. That was at certain times and I only went to them. It was a group. They called themselves "The Jolly Makers". It was a group of men

and they would send out the invitations to the girls that they wanted to come to the dances.

MRS. BARDEN: How nice. Where did they have the dances?

MF: Oh, they only had dances when they'd have the big bands come in; like, Louie Jordan and all those bands. The majority of the bands are dead now anyway.

MRS. BARDEN: Would the dances be held in the warehouses?

MRS. VAILES: In the warehouses. That's right.

MRS. BARDEN: That's what I thought.

MRS. VAILES: I never will forget here on George Street they had a big dance there that night. Oh! that Cab Calloway.

MF: Ooooh! Wonderful!

MRS. VAILES: They had big bands.

MRS. BARDEN: And you went to hear him?

MRS. VAILES: And I went to hear them.

MF: Oh, how wonderful! That must of been just a fabulous night.

MRS. VAILES: It was a fabulous night. I'd always gone with my sister. We always go together. It was nice. They had nice dances. But that's the only recreation that I'd have. I'd go to movies or something like that once in a while.

MRS. BARDEN: How about picnics? Did your church have picnics?

MRS. VAILES: Very seldom.

MF: Mrs. Vailes, when you went to the dances, I'm very interested in clothes and so what type dress did you wear, what style dress?

MRS. VAILES: Well, when I went to dances, all the girls would



buy these beautiful evening clothes. Long dresses, beautiful dresses.

I'd buy one too. I'd put mine up. If I knew I was going to a dance or something, I'd go downtown and pick out my dress and I'd pay on it.

MRS. BARDEN: You'd go to Coplon's or Sam Lipman's?

MRS. VAILES: That's right. There's another store down there I use to buy from.

MF: There was the Smart Shop.

MRS. VAILES: That's right.

MF: And Parisian. And as Mary said, Coplon's and Lipman's and Penney's and Belk's and Parsons.

MRS. VAILES: I'd always go to Coplon's, and there was another one there that I used to go to. They knowed me very well.

MF: I can't think of another one in there, can you Mary?

MRS. BARDEN: It might be before your time Marea.

MRS. VAILES: On the same side of the Coplon's store was on.

MRS. BARDEN: The Smart Shop?

MRS. VAILES: The Smart Shop's there now, isn't it?

MRS. BARDEN: No, that's been gone a while.

MRS. VAILES: Is it?

MRS. BARDEN: Uh huh.

MRS. VAILES: Well anyway, there's two or three stores down there I'd go and I lay a way these dresses until time for the dance. I'd shop around and get my shoes and like that. Cause I always wanted to look just as pretty as I could look. (laughter)

MF: Like we all do! (laughter) We all dressed up for dances. Would your gowns have short sleeves, long sleeves, or low neck or a high neck?

MRS. VAILES: They would sometimes be cut out. You know what I mean.

MF: Uh huh. A low neck.

MRS. VAILES: I would always get one with little jackets with them. I believe the last one that I went to had the little jacket come out with a little bow tie in the front and the big sleeve.

MF: Big puff sleeves. Oh! It sounds lovely. And your favorite color.

MRS. VAILES: My favorite colors was pink and white and black.

MF: Oh, I know the dress was lovely!

MRS. BARDEN: What kind of dancing did you do?

MRS. VAILES: I couldn't do too much. The majority of the boys, we all knew one another.

MRS. BARDEN: They were all kind of bashful probably.

MRS. VAILES: Yeah. (laughter)

MF: Did ya'll ever dance the Charleston?

MRS. VAILES: Well, they did. Some of them did.

MF: Some of them did?

MRS. VAILES: Now my sister could. But I was always the slow type.

MF: I think they call that the Fox Trot, don't they?

MRS. VAILES: Yeah.

MF: I like the slow dancing also. Mary, is there anything else you wanted to ask Mrs. Vailes?

MRS. BARDEN: How about doctors? Did you ever go to doctors when you were little?

MRS. VAILES: I remember one time I had the...

MRS. BARDEN: Did you have your tonsils out?

MRS. VAILES: No, but it was pertaining to the tonsils and the earache.

MRS. BARDEN: Mastoids?

MRS. VAILES: I guess so. That was during Dr. Mann's time and Dr. Martin.

MRS. BARDEN: Do you remember when they started Good Shepherd?

MRS. VAILES: I know I do.

MRS. BARDEN: That was a good thing, wasn't it?

MRS. VAILES: It surely was. Yes mam.

MF: When you were sick when you were growing up, your mother probably doctored you.

MRS. VAILES: She did. She'd always get little things like salves and things. If we had heavy colds, she'd rub our chest and in the middle of your back.

MF: I bet she put Vicks Vapo Rub on your chest. It's wonderful for a cold. I still use it. I love it! (laughter) I really do.

MRS. VAILES: She'd give you a little piece to put in your mouth to eat.

MF: That would have been for a cold and a sore throat.

MRS. VAILES: That's right.

MF: So, there was a lot of home doctoring rather than going to a doctor's office.

MRS. BARDEN: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MRS. VAILES: Just the one sister. I had two brothers, but they died. One brother was about four or five years old when he died.

MRS. BARDEN: You know what was wrong with him?

MRS. VAILES: No mam I don't. We was all living on Good Street when he died. My mother had been home from the North for a good while then. My grandmother went North and got her. She was sick.

MRS. BARDEN: And your grandmama brought her home?

MRS. VAILES: Yeah. My brother died and she stayed sick a long time. She got up. She couldn't get around. She couldn't use her foot much.

MRS. BARDEN: What was wrong with her foot, Mrs. Vailes?

MRS. VAILES: I don't know. She said what sickness she had settled in that foot and that ankle began to inflame and it'd swell up. It got so bad.

MRS. BARDEN: So she was grown when this happened?

MRS. VAILES: Yeah, cause we were born. Me and my sister was born and my brother too.

MF: Do you have any memories about World War I? Because when it started, you would have been maybe six years.

MRS. BARDEN: She was too young.

MF: Too young. I didn't know if you had heard any family stories

about it.

MRS. BARDEN: How about the hurricanes?

MRS. VAILES: I don't know.

MF: Well, let me ask you about your church baptism. How often were they conducted? Because I know everyone is baptized in a church.

MRS. VAILES: That's right. My church didn't have the baptism. I was baptized under the Baptist church around here, Star of Zion.

MF: Oh.

MRS. BARDEN: Did they have emersion in the river?

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam.

MRS. BARDEN: Were you emersed in the river?

MRS. VAILES: That's right. I went over to James City.

MF: Where in James City?

MRS. BARDEN: I know where.

MRS. VAILES: It's back over in there after you leave the highway going back over there.

MF: Okay. Now I know where it is.

MRS. BARDEN: I've been to a baptism over there. My daddy took pictures of it.

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam. The year that I was baptized, I guess it was over 125 or 150.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh really?

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam.

MRS. BARDEN: You wore white robes?

MRS. VAILES: White robes.

MRS. BARDEN: And white hats?

MRS. VAILES: Had the white napkins tied on you head.

MRS. BARDEN: And everybody was sort of "Hallelujah!" when you get done.

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam!

MAREA FOSTER: Cause you feel so good.

MRS. VAILES: It was a glorious time.

MRS. BARDEN: Those black cypress trees. It was in the summer so the water was warm.

MRS. VAILES: That's right. On a Sunday morning. Early Sunday morning.

MRS. BARDEN: That was an exciting thing to see.

MRS. VAILES: It was. As I said, it was over a hundred people. Young folk and some elderly people too.

MAREA FOSTER: Was this around Easter time? Is this when baptism usually took place around Easter time?

MRS. VAILES: We had a revival and that revival would run for about two or three weeks. When it was over with, then they'd go out that Sunday morning and baptize.

MAREA FOSTER: Oh, I see. So it didn't have to be a special time during the year.

MRS. VAILES: No mam.

MAREA FOSTER: Let me ask you, when the circus came to town, did you ever get to go to the circus?

MRS. VAILES: Yes mam. My mother would let us go to the circus.

I never will forget, this is before the fire, the circus came. They'd always parade down George Street going on up National Avenue and we would be out there and see the circus and then mama would take us to the circus. We just enjoyed it.

MAREA FOSTER: It's a lot of fun.

MRS. VAILES: A lot of fun. Sure did. She loved to go to the circus.

MAREA FOSTER: That was some great entertainment.

MRS. VAILES: It was.

MAREA FOSTER: I enjoyed it. I know you did too Mary. (laughter)

MRS. VAILES: I know when I was working for Mrs. H. C. Lawrence and the circus came to town, I couldn't go that time but I saw to it that she went. She went to the circus.

MRS. BARDEN: Who was that, Mrs. Lawrence?

MRS. VAILES: I told my mother to go.

MAREA FOSTER: No, she made sure her mother went. You made sure your mother went.

MRS. VAILES: Yeah, cause she loved circuses.

MAREA FOSTER: I can tell that you certainly loved your mother.

MRS. VAILES: I did. I loved my mother.

MAREA FOSTER: And it shows in your face and in your voice.

MRS. BARDEN: How old were you when she died?

MRS. VAILES: I was grown and married. She'd been dead about ten maybe fifteen years.

MRS. BARDEN: Oh, well you had her a long time.

MRS. VAILES: A long time. I don't know that it's been that long cause I was living in the project when mother died. I can't remember the exact time, but I was living in the project when she died. I reckon it must have been about ten years anyhow.

MAREA FOSTER: Mrs. Vailes, do you have any other memories of growing up that you'd like to share with us?

MRS. VAILES: I don't know. All I know, I just worked hard all my life.

MAREA FOSTER: You certainly did.

MRS. VAILES: I just worked hard all my life and I took care of my mother.

MAREA FOSTER: You certainly did. That I know. The love and the care that you had for your mother comes through on this tape. Well, you have been so very nice to share all of your wonderful memories with Mary Barden and me and we thank you so very, very much. So, thank you so very much for participating in our oral history project.

MRS. VAILES: You're more than welcome.

(Mrs. Vailes also worked at Bynum's Lunch Room, Hotel Queen Anne, Dunes Club, Dinner Bell, Hotel New Bernian. Mary Moulton Barden, Mrs. Graham Arthur Barden, Jr. assisted with this interview.)

END OF INTERVIEW