

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

IZORA FORBES BANKS KIRKMAN

INTERVIEW 419

This is Marea Kafer Foster representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 400. I am interviewing Izora Forbes Banks Kirkman, interview number 419. This interview is being conducted on the 4th of August, 1992. We are in Mrs. Kirkman's home at 701 Williams Street in James City, North Carolina.

Marea Foster: Now, Izora, if you'll give me your full name and your birth date please.

Mrs. Kirkman: Izora Forbes Banks Kirkman born January 25, 1920 to Elijah Forbes and Rowena Boyd Forbes.

MF: Where were you born?

Mrs. Kirkman: In James City.

MF: Were you born at home?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, as far as I know.

MF: Did you live near where we are now?

Mrs. Kirkman: I was born right on the end of the street.

MF: On the end of Williams Street?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: And this was in your parent's home?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: Sometimes I know expectant mothers would go to their parent's homes to give birth.

Mrs. Kirkman: No. That was at my grandparents, on my father's side.

MF: What were their names:

Mrs. Kirkman: My grandparents on my father's name was Josephine

Forbes and David Forbes.

MF: What about your mother's side?

Mrs. Kirkman: John Boyd and Winnie Boyd.

MF: Any brothers and sisters? I know you have a sister and your mother is still living, I know that.

Mrs. Kirkman: I have three sisters living, one died at birth. I have three living sisters and two living brothers.

MF: You want to tell me your sister's names?

Mrs. Kirkman: Rebecca Forbes Towe, she married a Towe. The other one is Addie Forsey.

MF: And your brothers.

Mrs. Kirkman: James Forbes and Edward Forbes.

MF: So, there are actually five of you still living.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: That's wonderful.

Mrs. Kirkman: The one Eddie, was named after my father.

MF: Did either set of grandparents live in the home with you when you were born, or when you were little, or growing up?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes as far as I know. I was in between both of them. I grew up in the house mostly with my grandparents on my father's side.

MF: With your Forbes' grandparents?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: And who were some of your playmates?

Mrs. Kirkman: How many do you want?

MF: Just a few of them. Are any of them still living today?

Mrs. Kirkman: Emma Henderson. All the rest are dead. I hate to say it.

MF: Well, that does happen.

Mrs. Kirkman: Lossie Delamar Harris.

MF: And she was Harris?

Mrs. Kirkman: Delamar Harris. She had a sister named Margie and we were all together, Margie Delamar.

MF: Were they any kin to the Mr. James Delamar I read about in the paper?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, his sisters.

MF: Okay. What games did ya'll play when you were growing up?

Mrs. Kirkman: We played ball. There was a light right out there on the corner in front of my grandparents, we used to go out there and play ball until the boys run the girls away.

MF: The boys didn't want you playing out there in that spot, did they?

Mrs. Kirkman: No. We had a game that we used to call hopscotch. You draw it on the ground and we played that.

MF: I played that.

Mrs. Kirkman: We used to take rocks, course in later years you could buy the things, but we'd take rocks and play what we called "Bob Jack". Do you remember that?

MF: Yeah, and I never could do it.

Mrs. Kirkman: That's when we would fall out and we'd holler,

"You out, you dropped that!"

MF: Did ya'll play marbles?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we played them because we sometimes liked to do stuff like boys. I had a uncle. He was older than I was, and he didn't like for us to play that. Boy he would run us out!

MF: Did you ever play dolls?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I played with dolls. I used to make grass dolls.

MF: How did you make a grass doll?

Mrs. Kirkman: Some way we could pull the grass out by the root and leave the root and they (roots) would be like a whole lot of little hair.

MF: Yeah.

Mrs. Kirkman: We used to make grass dolls out of them.

MF: We used to make clover chains. You know, pick the clover and put a little hole in it and put another clover in the hole and then we'd have a necklace of clover. Ya'll didn't ever do that?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, we didn't ever do that. I'll tell you what we did used to do. I don't know if you remember this, a chinaberry tree?

MF: Yes.

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, they had things you could get, some little hard berries, and we used to take them and make necklaces, put holes in them and run them around.

MF: You're right. They're like little hard balls. I never did

that. I never even thought of that one or I would have done it. Izora, tell me about going to school. You started in the school over here in James City, is that right?

Mrs. Kirkman: The only other place that I went to school, the old man, I guess he wasn't old, at that time I thought he was real old, but he lived down on the other street over there, he had a kindergarten at his home.

MF: Do you remember his name?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I remember his name.

MF: What's his name?

Mrs. Kirkman: His name was Julius Sawyer.

MF: Julius Sawyer, and he ran a kindergarten. Well, how nice. And you went to that?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. I went there until I went to school.

MF: Before you tell me about school, was kindergarten a half a day or a full day?

Mrs. Kirkman: I would say it was half a day. We didn't go all day. But sometimes if he had to do something else, we had to come in the evening, you know. That was just something he wanted to do.

MF: Then, you started over in James City. How old were you?

Mrs. Kirkman: I must of been at least six or seven years old 'cause I started right in first grade.

MF: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I do. We had one teacher that I can remember, her name was Boyd. Later in New Bern, I think she was married. I

think she was Nanny Holley, but she was a Boyd.

MF: Miss Boyd was one teacher, do you remember any more?

Mrs. Kirkman: Miss Moye. She was right out of New Bern. At the time all of them lived in New Bern.

MF: How long did you go to school in James City?

Mrs. Kirkman: Until I think the eighth or the ninth grade. I can't remember now, but I know I went until I finished elementary school.

MF: And then you went to West Street School?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: How did you get over to West Street School?

Mrs. Kirkman: We had a bus.

MF: You had a school bus?

Mrs. Kirkman: We had a school bus, yeah.

MF: So, you went to New Bern City Schools?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, West Street.

MF: How many grades did they have at that time? Do you remember?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think we must of gone over there like they go now. We must of had the four grades before you graduated, I think. I guess we must of graduated in the eleventh grade.

MF: Yeah, I think so. It was later that they had twelve. Do you remember if you went to school eight months of the year or nine months?

Mrs. Kirkman: I can't remember, but it seems like at one time we were going to school about seven months. I don't really know.

I can't remember that. It may be nine.

MF: Well, someone had told me that the length of the school year varied depending on how much money the school board had for paying their teachers, so, I didn't know.

Mrs. Kirkman: I guess we must of went seven or eight. I can't really remember now. All I know, in the fall in September we went to school and we got out in May most of the time.

MF: That was probably about eight months then. What activities did you participate in school?

Mrs. Kirkman: In elementary school we had a lot of plays.

MF: Any special activities in high school?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, not really. I can't think of nothing special, you know, no more than like the Glee Club.

MF: Any sports? Did you participate in sports?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, I can't remember any.

MF: Now that we've gotten you through school and you've graduated from West Street High School, we'll go back to childhood and I'll ask you about your illnesses. Were you sick much as a child?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: You enjoyed good health?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, I had good health.

MF: If ya'll were sick, if you and your brothers and sisters were sick, did your mother or your grandmother doctor you or did you go to a doctor?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, yeah they would doctor you until they didn't

exactly know what the problem was and then they took you in to the doctor we had; in fact, this doctor in New Bern, Dr. Mann. Well, I think he was there when we were born, a lot of us. He just was the doctor. He was our doctor as long as I can remember until I was out of school there. There was another doctor in New Bern but I don't remember going to him.

MF: I think there was Dr. Martin.

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: And Dr. Fisher.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. Now, I never remember going to either one of them.

MF: But you went to Dr. Mann?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: I've heard a lot about him.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: A lot of nice things, in fact, nice things about all of them.
How about a dentist?

Mrs. Kirkman: I don't remember.

MF: Did you ever hear of a Dr. Burden, a lady doctor?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: I can't remember who mentioned her to me, and I don't know how long she was a dentist. Izora, let me ask you about your house. Not many people way back then had central heating, so, how did your parents heat your home?

Mrs. Kirkman: We had wood and coal.

MF: Did you have a stove in the living room?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, a stove. Well, my grandparents, we lived with them, but after a while we had our own house. We moved out from them, at least by the time I was of school age, as you go to school, we wasn't living with them. I can look back now, and I was kind of small when we living with them, and I used to look back in later years, I didn't remember anything but fireplaces.

MF: Maybe they heated by fireplace. What type stove did your mother cook on?

Mrs. Kirkman: Wood stove.

MF: Wood stove, that's good cooking.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, she used to have a wood stove. I imagine you have never seen one, wood stove in the kitchen with, I think they call it the range up over here, and on the side you had a water reservoir. You put water in there and heat the water if you wanted to take some baths.

MF: I've seen those.

Mrs. Kirkman: We had that.

MF: Do you remember how much water that reservoir would hold?

Mrs. Kirkman: I would say it would hold about two or three gallons, I believe, because we would take it out and take a bath with it. We didn't have no bath water at that time. At least we had that reservoir, and then you see there being about six of us, we would have it first-the girls-and fill it up and then in the meantime, especially on Saturday nights, mama she would be cooking the food for the Sunday's

dinner.

MF: So, you always had hot water that way?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, that's why we had hot water.

MF: You could have it for your coffee or whatever you wanted it for, anytime you wanted hot water. Did you bathe in a tin tub?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we had some tubs. They wasn't big like we used to wash in. We used to get some small tubs.

MF: Did your house have running water? Did you have a hand pump?

Mrs. Kirkman: A hand pump.

MF: Was it inside or outside?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, it was outside.

MF: My grandparents had one. I remember those. What about electricity?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, for a long time we didn't have any. In fact, I believe I was about in high school before we had it. We had our lamps.

MF: Oil lamps?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: Okay, because they didn't have electricity in James City at that time?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: I didn't think they did, but then I wasn't sure.

Mrs. Kirkman: No, we didn't have any, because the biggest I can remember, it wasn't too long before we had radios and stuff like that, after we had light.

MF: And the house you grew up in was a wooden house?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: Let me ask you about Sunday School. I know you went to Sunday School every Sunday.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: Which church as that?

Mrs. Kirkman: Pilgrim Chapel.

MF: Right where you go now?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right where I go now.

MF: And the full name of that is Pilgrim Chapel?

Mrs. Kirkman: Missionary Baptist.

MF: Pilgrim Chapel Missionary Baptist. I know exactly where that is.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: Did you have Sunday School in the morning?

Mrs. Kirkman: In the morning and in the evening we had BTU.

MF: Was it Baptist Youth Training Union?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: BYTU.

Mrs. Kirkman: BYTU, that's what we had. That's exactly what it was.

MF: And you'd go there about seven o'clock, probably.

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: And stay for about an hour or so.

Mrs. Kirkman: About an hour.

MF: Do you remember who your pastor was when you were growing up?

Mrs. Kirkman: I know one, and his name was Rev. Crow.

MF: Rev. Crow?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, that's what we called him.

MF: You called him Rev. Crow?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, I mean that was his name, but there was some more to it. I can't remember. I guess some of my friends could remember it better. He put a lot of, you know, like some people leave empty and they leave you. He left a lot spiritual and that's why his name come to me so quick. Everybody else now, they look back and they say, back then when we had him, you know how things has changed. He was there a long time. We had a lot of others.

MF: When you were young, after Sunday School, did you go to church?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we stayed right there.

MF: So, you had a full day of Sunday School and Church?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we had to go back, I guess it be about four o'clock in the evening. We'd go back to BYTU and that was about an hour and then like when the days were longer or shorter, it made a difference. If it was in the winter time that it get nighttime, we had to come home, but if in the summer when the days were longer, we had a chance to run around.

MF: I know you're still a member of that church and you sing in the choir, is that right?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: Now, for baptism in your church, were you all baptized at a baptismal font, or where did your baptism take place?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right down to the river.

MF: Did you wear white dress, white robe, or what?

Mrs. Kirkman: They had baptismal gowns and you'd tie your head up in a towel.

MF: How old were you when you were baptized?

Mrs. Kirkman: I guess I must of been about thirteen or fourteen.

MF: That's the age of confirmation in the Episcopal Church. Were these gowns somewhat like a choir robe?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, some people would make them for the children but then some children had on, I guess like their parent's gown, long gowns with the sleeves in them. I guess they probably made them. It was just ordinary white plain and tie a towel around your head and you had to have a towel around your waist. I don't know what they had that for.

MF: I can't imagine why. Maybe that was so...

Mrs. Kirkman: If you started getting drowning

MF: Yeah, the minister could grab you. Was baptism just for young people or was it for adults also?

Mrs. Kirkman: Oh, adults, whoever. We had adults that wanted to be baptized. Some people that had been around and been in the church, they were kind of older people that come to church and want to be baptized.

MF: That's good. Do you remember about how long the service

would last?

Mrs. Kirkman: We would go in about eleven o'clock and we got out about one or two or somewhere around there.

MF: Well, that's not too long.

Mrs. Kirkman: No, we weren't in there all that long, but we had to go back for the other service.

MF: Izora, after you graduated from high school, what did you do then?

Mrs. Kirkman: What I did was got married.

MF: Did you get married right out of high school?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes

MF: And your husband's name was?

Mrs. Kirkman: Arthur Banks.

MF: How long were you all married?

Mrs. Kirkman: The oldest child when he (Mr. Banks) died was, I think, about fourteen.

MF: So, not too long really.

Mrs. Kirkman: No, we weren't married too long because I think my son, he was the baby, and I think he had just started school because I had to put them on through school.

MF: When you were married to Mr. Banks, before he died, did you have to work or could you stay home and raise your children?

Mrs. Kirkman: I could stay home and raise them.

MF: Where did he work?

Mrs. Kirkman: He run the store and worked for the cleaners picking

up clothes.

MF: Do you remember which cleaners?

Mrs. Kirkman: I believe it was Askew's. I can't remember too good, and I used to do it after he died til I got tired of it here.

MF: Tell me your children's names.

Mrs. Kirkman: The oldest one is named Eleanor.

MF: Is Eleanor married?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: She lives in Washington?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: And the next daughter.

Mrs. Kirkman: The next one is Melba.

MF: And is she married?

Mrs. Kirkman: She's married. She's Melba Banks Haynes. Next, is my son, John.

MF: Okay, John Banks. So, you have three children?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, I got another one.

MF: You got another daughter.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I got another daughter.

MF: I thought so.

Mrs. Kirkman: My baby, she is Brenda. No, I got it wrong. Brenda is the baby.

MF: Brenda is the baby?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: Is Brenda married?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, let me see. I'm getting all mixed up here and it's a shame. John is the baby cause she (Brenda) wanted him to be older than her.

MF: I see, then John is the baby?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. Well, he and Melba are the only ones that's married. Brenda and Eleanor, they are not married.

MF: And Brenda lives in Washington?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, they all live in Washington except him.

MF: And he's in Hendersonville?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: After Mr. Banks died, you took his job with Askew's, is that right?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, see we had a little store and I used to take the clothes for a while until I got out of it.

MF: What type store was it?

Mrs. Kirkman: It was a candy store. We had like cigarettes, drinks and stuff like that.

MF: Did you sell gas?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: Where was the store located?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right out on this corner where the house is. We had a little store right out there.

MF: Where you park your car?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: Well, that was nice and convenient.

Mrs. Kirkman: It was when the children were small and I didn't want to go out and work no where right then but eventually I did have to go to work.

MF: Where was your first job after the store?

Mrs. Kirkman: Down there in Cherry, well, I say Cherry Point, but not in the base, out of the base. I worked down there a long time.

MF: From there where did you go?

Mrs. Kirkman: When I left from Cherry Point, I came and worked in New Bern. I worked for Mrs. Wolf. Do you know her?

MF: Yes, I certainly do.

Mrs. Kirkman: I worked for her a long, long time, raised all her children.

MF: From her, is that when you went to Masonic Temple?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, from there I think I went to Masonic Temple. Later I worked in the Temple. I started at the Theater.

MF: You started in the Masonic Theater?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. Later, Mr. Kafer transferred me to the temple.

MF: When the Theater closed?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, he told me he wanted me to come over there and work. That's how I got over there. In between that I would go out to the house (Mr. Kafer's) and work for a while. You know how it was?

MF: I sure do. Mother and Daddy couldn't have gotten along without you. Neither can I.

Mrs. Kirkman: They was nice people to get along with.

MF: Well, thank you.

Mrs. Kirkman: I'll never forget them. They was nice to me too.

MF: I do appreciate that.

Mrs. Kirkman: They was and they was nice to get along. Every time he called me, I had to go. I have been down there to the Temple, you know during the time he was sick, I been down to the Temple and they'd call me or tell somebody to take me out, so I could go see him and tend him.

MF: I know there was many a morning that you would come out and help him get up and get his breakfast when he couldn't. And I, as you well know, appreciate that so much. I really do.

Mrs. Kirkman: I tell you, I didn't mind it in the least because as you know he had been nice to me and nice to get along with.

MF: I think my father was a good man to work for.

Mrs. Kirkman: He was. When I was working over to the Theater, I think about this sometime, when I was working over to the Theater, and one time I got sick and went in the hospital, and when I got better I came back to work, he said, "Izora there is your money," and he had a check up there for me all those weeks that I had been out sick and I needed the money. I felt like crying. I didn't know what to do.

I'll never forget that! I never had nobody do that for me since.

MF: Well, you weren't at work simply because you were sick.

Mrs. Kirkman: That's right. That's what he said. He said, "I feel like you need it," and that stayed on my mind a long time. But

you know it was a surprise!

MF: Things like that you never forget.

Mrs. Kirkman: Never.

MF: You're right about that. Izora, let me ask you about the Depression. When the stock market crashed in 1929 and then times got real bad, and in 1929 you would have been nine years old and going into your teens during the Depression years, do you remember anything about the Depression?

Mrs. Kirkman: My father he worked at the oil mill. I can't really remember that we had it too bad.

MF: Your father was in World War II?

Mrs. Kirkman: Was it World War II?

MF: No.

Mrs. Kirkman: He wouldn't of been in World War II.

MF: It would of been World War I.

Mrs. Kirkman: Right. That's how we got a house of our own. He got what they call a pension, and it was right during that time when it was kind of hard times, and he got a pension during that time. I remember that, and he was able to build a house cause we were renting a house at the time. Do you remember the September storm?

MF: No, I want to ask you because I was born during that or after it.

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, we were living right down the street there in a house. He had started the house, and the September storm hit. They called them like that, they got names for them now.

MF: Yeah, the hurricanes. We didn't have names for them then.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, the hurricane.

MF: This was in 1933 I think.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I think it was. He had the house all framed up for us and he started on, and got this pension. We was kind of small children. All my brothers and sister, all our ages are close together. The storm blowed the house down, the frame of the house, and so you know how people come and look and see what's going to happen.

So, we was all out there sad. The little children out there, I guess they was crying. I know I was, but I was the oldest one. I thought we was going to have a new house and the wind blew it down!

MF: But your father was able to rebuild it?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, that's a good thing about it. They gave him money to build, the Red Cross that's what it was.

MF: The Red Cross helped him rebuild?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, they framed it back up and got it started. Of course he had to finish it. That stayed for a long time in my mind.

MF: Things like that do. But during the Depression, you didn't notice any difference in the fact that maybe there wasn't as much food to eat or as many new clothes? Or did you?

Mrs. Kirkman: Food I don't remember too much. I had an aunt that lived in New York, my daddy's sister, she was living in Brooklyn at the time, and she didn't do it but very seldom, but she would send

me and my sister our clothes to help out. She never did have but one daughter.

MF: That was nice.

Mrs. Kirkman: She used to send us our school clothes. Then, my mother she could sew and make some of our clothes.

MF: Do you remember where she bought her material?

Mrs. Kirkman: Not really, not when I was real small. When I started growing up like when I got in high school, do you remember Efird's store? That store stands out in my mind.

MF: I've heard of it, yes. In fact, I think there was an Efird's store, when I was growing up, on Middle Street.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. I remember she used to go up there and buy material.

MF: Yes I do. I'd forgotten it until you mentioned it. And so she would make your clothes?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: What about World War II? How did this effect ya'll?

Mrs. Kirkman: Was that the war what they call....?

MF: That's where Hitler was trying to conquer Europe. Was your brother old enough to be in the service?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes. Which war was that? That wasn't at Pearl Harbor, was it?

MF: Yes, that was Pearl Harbor.

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, yes, all my brothers was in the Navy.

MF: During the war, do you remember if you had blackouts?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we used to hear the siren blowing.

MF: Did you know that during World War II that they did have German prisoners in New Bern out at Glenburnie Road?

Mrs. Kirkman: I didn't know it at the time, but I heard about it afterwards.

MF: Well, Izora, there was rationing. Did you have to have coupons for the food and for clothes?

Mrs. Kirkman: I know we had to have them for food. Not all food, certain foods.

MF: To make your menu better, did ya'll have a garden?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we always used to have a garden.

MF: So you could have your own vegetables?

Mrs. Kirkman: Our own vegetables, and then in the summer time stuff like beans, whatever you raised you could can it for the winter.

MF: That's right. So, actually during the war there was no problem about food?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, not really.

MF: After the war, when your brother came back from the war and other men came back, did the men in the black community have a hard time finding jobs? Do you remember?

Mrs. Kirkman: I can't remember it too good. Cherry Point wasn't down there?

MF: Yes, it was.

Mrs. Kirkman: All of them went down there and got jobs.

MF: So, as best you can remember, the black returning servicemen

were able to get jobs.

Mrs. Kirkman: At Cherry Point, yes.

MF: Well, I had been told that a number could not get jobs and went to New York.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I guess they did go to New York. I don't know how hard a time my brothers had but all of my brothers went to Cherry Point.

MF: So, for them finding a job was no problem?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: I wanted to ask you about integration and when this came about and Dr. Martin Luther King. If you don't mind talking about it, would you tell me about the night that you heard he was shot? Where were you, do you remember?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think I was right here.

MF: You were home and you heard it probably on the TV.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. The siren was blowing.

MF: The siren over here was blowing?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: And it was a very, very sad time.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, it was real sad. I don't know if you ever knew it but he had just preached a sermon about "Come to the Mountain Top"?

MF: Yes, I have, "Come to the Mountain Top."

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, he preached there about a week. I guess it was a week, maybe a little more before he had said he knowed he'd

never would live to be old. It was real sad when he got shot.

MF: He must of had a premonition.

Mrs. Kirkman: That's what I meant.

MF: I know the black churches had memorial services but did you have them at each church or did the whole community go together and have one big memorial service?

Mrs. Kirkman: They had them at different churches then they got together and then they had a big service.

MF: Do you remember if there was any violence, any riots, any fights?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right around us?

MF: Yeah, over here in James City.

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: People grieved, but not violence?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, I can't remember violence over here.

MF: I think you would have if there had been.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. The most violence I can remember about it was maybe like in cities I guess, but by we being in the country, maybe that's why. In the cities I heard about a lot of violence, but none around here that I can remember.

MF: Dr. King preached non-violence and coming together peacefully. Do you feel that leaders today are still trying to work with peaceful means? I'm not saying this very well. Are some of them hot headed and want violence? Do most of them advocate peaceful means to obtain the goal?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think they've gone above what he was preaching about the violence. I really do, but I guess that's the way they see it. A lot of the violence that I have seen I know he didn't believe in it.

MF: No, I know he didn't and I think he'd be very upset and very hurt if he knew this were going on. But it seems to be younger people, because everyone that I have talked to in your generation is all for peaceful means.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: And I am too. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Dr. King?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, only that a lot of things that he really was working for I have seen some of it come to pass.

MF: What was that?

Mrs. Kirkman: You know like the children in school and now they mixed together and seem like they can go to any school they want to go to and seem like they get along pretty good, of course, he was fighting for that.

MF: Yes, he was. That's a very positive change, I know that. Do you remember when the schools did integrate? Well, you wouldn't of had any children. Did you have children in school when that passed?

Mrs. Kirkman: No. When they really started integrating, mine had all gone on.

MF: All graduated?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, they were in school but they wasn't here,

they were off to school.

MF: The tape stopped right in the middle of what you were telling me. We were talking about the violence in the schools during integration and your children were off at college at this time, but was there violence in the schools? Do you remember any?

Mrs. Kirkman: I don't remember any around here

MF: Anything else you would like to tell me about integration? I know it's been a very positive thing for everybody.

Mrs. Kirkman: One thing I think about, since the children and school have been integrated, I don't see that all our children take advantage. It seems like they had the advantage since the schools been integrated.

MF: Better equipment?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think about that from when mine went, I know a lot of things they can get now, mine couldn't get.

MF: Let me ask you, we're really jumping around, if you don't mind, there are no black doctors in New Bern now, and I think that's a shame, I think Dr. Barnwell was the last one and he left to go to Meharry in Nashville, I think, to continue his training and maybe to teach, do you mind going to a white doctor? Does this bother you?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, I've come to the place now that it really doesn't, but I went to Dr. Barnwell.

MF: He was a good doctor.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. In fact, I had an operation before he left.

MF: But you have adjusted?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I adjusted.

MF: Well, it would be hard.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, it was hard. I was a long time before I had any problems and had to have a doctor.

MF: As you say, you had to go. I wish there were some black doctors in New Bern.

Mrs. Kirkman: I hate to say this, but if he had got enough cooperation, you know.

MF: Are you saying from the white doctors in the hospital?

Mrs. Kirkman: I won't say. I'd better not say it.

MF: Okay, but I know he was our last one.

Mrs. Kirkman: He was a good doctor too.

MF: Yes, he was a very good doctor and I think he was thought of very highly in the medical association. I wanted to ask you about voting, and I know you vote, because if you worked for daddy I'm sure he made sure you voted! Did you have any problems when you went to register to vote?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: Have you ever had any problems when you have gone to vote? Did anyone ever try to stop you from voting?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: So, that's gone very smoothly?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes. I can't remember ever having any problems.

MF: Some towns had problems with voting and I didn't know if New Bern had.

Mrs. Kirkman: No, I didn't have any.

MF: I wanted to ask you about Mr. Kirkman. Would you tell me about him and when you married him? How long were you a widow before you married Mr. Kirkman?

Mrs. Kirkman: A long time.

MF: A long time.

Mrs. Kirkman: I should know. All my children were in college that year. I'd been here a long time by myself.

MF: Were you living in this house?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, I was. This same house.

MF: And you met Mr. Kirkman?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: And his name is Shelton?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right.

MF: And so ya'll married?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: Well, he's a nice man.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, I guess I got kind of lonesome.

MF: Well, I can understand that. I sure can. Izora, when you were dating and married to your first husband, were there places around New Bern where you could go for dances? Were there any clubs or places to dance?

Mrs. Kirkman: I guess there was places in New Bern but I spent most of my time in James City and there were places over here.

MF: There were?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: Where over here?

Mrs. Kirkman: There's a place down the road there. They called it the White Owl.

MF: The White Owl?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think that was the name of it. But more than that, where I spent my time mostly like was James City. I don't reckon you would know, but right down the street there used to be what we called a beach and they had a dance hall down there. I thought it was nice and they would have dancing down there and picnics, and we'd would go down there.

MF: And you could swim down there?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, you could swim down there.

MF: Because my next question was where did you swim?

Mrs. Kirkman: Right down there.

MF: Because James City is just in a beautiful part and you're up high, and I don't think they'll be any damage of flood because you are so high.

Mrs. Kirkman: The only time,-one of the hurricanes I thought the water was coming up here.

MF: Boy, that was a bad one.

Mrs. Kirkman: That was the bad one!

MF: And it must of been full moon, too, and high tide.

Mrs. Kirkman: And at the time they was working on the highway out there, they had dug it up and the water started up there

and run down there and started backing up on across the highway.

MF: But you've never had any flooding otherwise until they worked on the highway?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: Well, did ya'll have dances year round, summer and winter?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, it was mostly summer. Sometimes they would have something special. The place be closed in the winter.

MF: Did you ever go down to the ocean?

Mrs. Kirkman: Like the Fourth of July or a holiday. Sometimes our church or Sunday School would run picnics. We would go like that.

MF: Would the church have buses to take you down there?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: Here in James City with the Trent River separating you from New Bern, to get back and forth, you have to have a means of transportation. If you don't have a car, how did you get to and from New Bern?

Mrs. Kirkman: There used to be two or three people here that drove what they call a taxi. Like if I had to go to work and I didn't have any transportation, they would take me to work and then come back and pick me up.

MF: They would take you. Were there any grocery stores on this side of the river here in James City?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah. There were about two. They didn't always have food, but you could always pick up stuff.

MF: With your garden, ya'll probably grew almost all your

vegetables.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, we raised most our own chickens. Cause we used to have chicken stew.

MF: And fried chicken on Sunday?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: I love it. There's nothing like it, fried chicken livers.

Mrs. Kirkman: We used to raise chickens when I was growing up.

MF: Izora, I want to ask you, we're talking about chickens and gardens made me think of milk, did the milkman come over and make deliveries for milk or did you have to buy it at the store?

Mrs. Kirkman: You had to buy it at the store. I can't remember the milkman.

MF: When you were growing up, did you have an ice box?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes.

MF: How did your mother get the ice? Did she have to go over to New Bern to the ice house and get it or did the ice wagon come over here?

Mrs. Kirkman: This man overhere used to come around and bring the ice.

MF: So, he would go to New Bern and get it?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes, and bring it to our house.

MF: About how many times a week would your mother have to get ice?

Mrs. Kirkman: Usually about two times a week. One time I can remember we only had it one time.

MF: Izora, when you were growing up, did ya'll ever go anywhere by horse and buggy?

Mrs. Kirkman: We didn't, but a lot of people did.

MF: When did you have your first car?

Mrs. Kirkman: When we were growing up, we didn't have no car in our family. There was a man over here that used to take people whenever they had to go to the doctor or grocery store, you know more like a taxi.

MF: Is there anything that you would like to tell me about your life? Any special people that you remember? Anything about your church?

Mrs. Kirkman: Did you get this about Truman when he came to New Bern?

MF: No, tell me about that. Did you see President Truman?

Mrs. Kirkman: Yes. He went to Cherry Point and we stood on the road and saw him go by.

MF: I know that was an exciting time.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah it was.

MF: I think that was 1949 if I'm not mistaken.

Mrs. Kirkman: Something like that. We saw him on the highway. I think there are some teachers that I had at James City School there on the list.

MF: Do you want to mention them?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think I mentioned one of them. One of them was Mrs. Emma Moye. There's one Miss Nanny. I think she was a Boyd.

She was one of our teachers when we were in first grade.

MF: Miss Nanny Boyd, and you said she married and her name was Holley?

Mrs. Kirkman: That's right. And Professor Cheek, he was principal at James City School. I imagine you would remember this one, W. W. Ryder.

MF: I've heard the name.

Mrs. Kirkman: His wife still lives in New Bern, Mrs. Ryder. I was out of elementary school when he started over there. I think Mrs. Moye is married again. Them were some of the first teachers I can remember. We had another one, Mrs. Hawkins. She just died about two months ago, but she didn't live here.

MF: When you mentioned the name Mrs. Hawkins, it brought to mind the public library. So, I wanted to ask you, did you have library service over here in James City or did you have to go into New Bern if you wanted to check out books?

Mrs. Kirkman: We had to go in New Bern.

MF: There was no branch library here?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: What about a fire department? Was there a little substation for the fire department?

Mrs. Kirkman: No, I don't remember none. Most of the fires over here, we had to put water in a bucket. A bucket brigade.

MF: For police protection, did the police or sheriff department patrol this area?

Mrs. Kirkman: No.

MF: There probably was no need to.

Mrs. Kirkman: The onliest time police would be over here something had happened and they would get the word. I can remember you see police go by and you'd run out and see what's the matter.

MF: James City is a very quiet, stable community.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah.

MF: As far as I know, there has never been any violence over here, no problems.

Mrs. Kirkman: No, not that much. Now, people gets in more trouble with all this dope business and different stuff. We didn't have that back then, so, it was quieter then mostly.

MF: A nice place to raise children.

Mrs. Kirkman: That's right.

MF: Were your parents strict in raising you?

Mrs. Kirkman: I thought they were. It wasn't no where much to go but then you weren't allowed to go out unless you had some grown-ups, especially at night. Like when the church would run trips somewhere, a picnic or whatever, you couldn't go unless there was another grown-up that was going to be over you if your parents couldn't go. You couldn't just take off and say I'm going, you had to have somebody over us.

MF: So, your parents knew where you were at all times?

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, yeah, they had to think they knowed.

MF: Maybe they didn't.

Mrs. Kirkman: When I was growing up, I had about three or four,

I guess I called one or two of their names, friends that I grewed all the way up with. Two of them, there's James Delamar, he was a boy, but then his sisters I grewed up with them and we always went everywhere together. Sometimes you get into mischievous places.

MF: Oh yes, but nothing like today.

Mrs. Kirkman: Nothing, nothing, nothing.

MF: Let me ask you about the changes in New Bern. There have been an awful lot of changes in your life time. How do you feel about these changes? Do you think they're for the good or maybe were changing too fast? What are your feelings on this subject?

Mrs. Kirkman: I think some of them is for the good. I don't have many children since schools been integrated around here. My children was out, they was gone. So, I don't know what influence it takes on them, but I feel like it should be for the best because all children, if they want it, you can't make them as before, get the same quality of education. That's one reason I feel that. Now it seems like when my children finished high school, I had to send them off to school. But now if children can't go and want an education, they can go out to the Community College and they can always take some kind of trade. There wasn't nothing like that around here.

MF: You had to work and pay tuition for your children to go to college?

Mrs. Kirkman: That's right, and they had to work too, all of us worked. But everybody had to work. I guess that was good for them too so they'd appreciate it more.

MF: I think you're right, I really do. Well, is there anything else that you would like to discuss on this interview? You think we covered it all? I know we skipped around but you'd say one thing and then it would trigger a question from me.

Mrs. Kirkman: Well, I hope I said it right for you.

MF: You did. Well, if there is nothing else, then I want to thank you on behalf of Memories of New Bern for participating in our oral history program. We certainly do appreciate it.

Mrs. Kirkman: I'm glad to do it. I'm just not a good talker.

MF: Yes you are, and I've enjoyed it and, thank you.

Mrs. Kirkman: It really was a pleasure to talk to you because I feel comfortable with you.

MF: I know. We're friends. We go back along way.

Mrs. Kirkman: Yeah, that's why.

MF: Well, thank you, Izora.

Mrs. Kirkman: I appreciate you having me.

END OF INTERVIEW

