

**VOICES OF THE CAPE FEAR  
INTERVIEW WITH E. STUART BENSON, JR.**

**SEPTEMBER 1, 1995**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Good morning, this is Sam Bissette on September 1, 1995. I'm here at home at 1939 South Live Oak Parkway and with me is a good friend Dr. E. Stuart Benson, Jr. who is going to talk with me about some of his recollections of Wilmington, recollections of his life here, and we're going to see if we can't get something down on tape that in places may be interesting, maybe not. We don't know where it will go, but we'll see.**

INTERVIEWER: Stuart, let's start out just a little bit about you because someone listening to this perhaps wouldn't know you. Can you tell me where and when you were born and how you happen to be in Wilmington?

BENSON: Well, I was born in 1918 at the corner of Front and Castle Streets in a building known at that time as Harper's Sanatorium and I've never lived anywhere else but Wilmington and I've resolved long ago that I would never live anywhere else but Wilmington.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Okay. You being a lifelong Wilmingtonian, how far does your family go back? Do you know anything about that?

BENSON: Well, actually, we've lived in New Hanover County for well over 200 years, but there's a little caveat, a little explanation necessary. You have to realize that New Hanover County was once one of the largest counties in the state and for a considerable period of time, my people were farmers at a place called Carver's Creek which is just up 87 and not too far from Reigelwood. They are buried in a historic Methodist churchyard there and there are tombstones there when George Washington was president with the Benson name on it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well that's interesting. That really does go back. What are some of your very earliest recollections as a small boy might have been?

BENSON: What was most vivid, were the occasions when I was frightened, I suppose. My mother always maintained there was no way I could remember them moving from a certain house to another one because I was about three, but I remember because the movers came in and they were taking my whole world away including a little toy wagon, automobile. It was a toy and when they picked it up, it made an impression on me that I remember whether I was three or not. I'm 77 and I still remember it because my world was dissolving all around me.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's amazing. I don't recall anyone ever remembering that far back. Mine goes back to about age five or somewhere back then. Tell me, where did you go when you went into school?

BENSON: I went to Isaac Bear first and wasn't too comfortable the first day and I really knew that the bell was ringing for recess, but I went home.

INTERVIEWER: You went home early. Well, I guess you could be forgiven at that early age. After you got into school, what was school like in those days? Tell me about it a little bit.

BENSON: Mark it different to my way of thinking to the way it is now. My impression of what I hear

and read is a general lack of respect for teachers and discipline and I can say that when I went to school, I was frightened at just going to school and being with that great number of people. We certainly held the teachers in a certain reverence and it never occurred to anyone to be even impolite to a teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, what did they do when you didn't behave?

BENSON: They made you stay in after school. There was a teacher in high school and she's probably been commented on before, Mrs. Hester Struthers, who was a great teacher and a wonderful person. She took a quote from a poem or a book, I believe about World War I and the recurring line was, "Lest ye forget." If someone misbehaved or didn't do to suit, she would go to the blackboard and write, "Lest ye forget, eighth period," and your name would go right under. Eighth period meant you had to stay over after school.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

BENSON: And I'm afraid that...

INTERVIEWER: This was in high school?

BENSON: This was in high school and Mrs. Hester kept that up there. She got to where she would just leave it up there. When you'd walk in it would say, "Lest ye forget." She was all ready to put it up there.

INTERVIEWER: She was trying to prevent you from...

BENSON: Well, I thought she went too far with it, though. Towards the last of the year, I'd walk in there and she would already have my name up there and class hadn't even begun.

INTERVIEWER: She knew you were going to do it anyway, so she was just saving time. Tell me, back in grammar school again, did they keep the boys separate from the girls or did they mix the two?

BENSON: They did at Tileston. I went there until about the second or third grade I believe, and I walked around there and the yards were separate. I made the mistake of going in the girls yard and then I couldn't get out. The girls thought it was very amusing and they were all tagging along behind me, hollering at me, laughing at me, and I was desperate to get out of there. There was only one gate and it was on the Ann Street side as I recall, and I eventually climbed a high chain link fence to get over into the boy's yard and I was much relieved.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any other recollections of early school?

BENSON: Well, okay...

INTERVIEWER: What about what happened after school? How did a boy entertain himself in those days?

BENSON: You're assuming that I wasn't made to stay in after school.

INTERVIEWER: That's right, I'm assuming that. What about the days that you didn't have to stay in after school?

BENSON: Well, we had a baseball team through the year and we played baseball. That reminds me, we had a baseball team down at the Sprunt House on Front and Nun Streets and we were extremely fortunate

to have such a plush arrangement because they had a chauffeur named Link and they had a massive automobile that had jump seats. When our team would go out to play another team, such as Oleander, I remember they would come out here and play. Link would get all of our bats and our gloves and put them in the trunk of that great automobile and we would get in, crowd in there and we'd go out to the baseball field and then the opposing team would be there and surround the limousine and scream at us and say, "You boys can't play baseball; you've got to have a chauffeur to get here." And that was a cause of a lot of excitement when we would arrive, but that was one thing that happened. We played baseball all year around but we didn't have a season. I remember down there at the very foot of Nun Street, we had a building, which had been a boathouse and it was quite large. That's where we kept our bats and balls and of course, we had the chauffeur to take us to the out of town games and it was a very nice arrangement.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's go on now for a minute and I'm going to ask you this. Most kids got in trouble because they had an air rifle. Did you ever have an air rifle?

BENSON: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get in trouble?

BENSON: I did, but I got in a lot more trouble with a 22. I refer to it as the first time I went to jail. I was in the fifth grade and at that time, I was about eleven and there was a boy that sat next to me. He lived in what I regarded as the country, which was out near where the airport is now and he would tell me all the time why city boys didn't know anything about the country, about hunting, or how he shot ducks all the time. It sounded as though he'd go out everyday and shoot ducks, which intrigued me. I was fascinated by it and managed by repeating over and over to every Santa Claus in town that I wanted a 22 rifle. I had just gotten one the previous Christmas with some restrictions on it, of course. He invited me to come out one cold day and he was going to take me duck hunting and I was very excited about it. My mother drove me out, put me out, and we walked to a lake or a muddy body of water and I stood in the freezing cold water up past my knees for about an hour. We didn't see anything living much less a duck and I learned all I wanted to know about duck hunting right then and I was ready to go home. So, I finally prevailed upon him to give up in spite of the fact that he had always shot a duck when he went out there; that's what he lured me with. So, we were walking back and we hadn't had an opportunity to shoot at anything, so we were just firing at will. We would see a bird on a fence or a tree and we'd shoot at it. The next thing we knew, two men, great burly men with 30:30 rifles came running across the ridge and grabbed us by the scruff of the neck and took us back over. It turned out that there was a slight hill there and it was just right with the trajectory of a 22 bullet and we couldn't see anybody. It had cleared the hill and hit a convict with leg chains who was breaking up rocks and he bent over with a blow. He got hit in the rear end with a 22 slug and they took us to the stockade, which was nearby. They were working out of the stockade, which of course, was a prison. I'll never ever forget walking in the cold behind that prisoner with a stream of blood. It wasn't heavy blood, but it was enough to discolor his trousers, running down the back with those leg chains still clinking. He still had his chains on and they put us in the stockade and we were frightened to death.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to the final outcome of it?

BENSON: Well, I was able to stand on a cot. I was most anxious because I thought that when the other prisoners came back, they were going to beat us up and I wanted to get out of there before they came back because this was the big room that they slept in.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did your parents get you out of trouble?

BENSON: I stood on a cot and I saw a car coming and I knew it was Mr. John Stevens. I was as relieved

as anybody on earth because I knew Mr. John could fix anything. Of course, I was out in about five minutes and he took me home. It turned out that instead of the man that we had shot wanting to have revenge, he was delighted because my dad had to pay for him to be in the hospital for three or four days and that was much better than where he had been and where he had to go back.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's go on to something else. You told me one time a story about somebody luring you in and wanting to show you something through a peephole and then they ended up...

BENSON: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember that?

BENSON: That was when I was even smaller with my first BB gun at that time. You cocked it by bringing it down on your knee and it was just one shot at a time. I was rather small and an older boy was going to show me how to shoot birds. He told me to go into the garage and there was a place where I could peep through, watch him, and I would know how to shoot birds. So, I went in there and bent over to peek through the whole and instead of looking for a bird, he turned the gun on me and shot me in the backside with it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get him back some way?

BENSON: Well, for revenge, I waited until one day that he had to go up to Seventeenth and Orange Streets and stand there with a plate of food for his father, who was on the streetcar. It was the beach car usually and it didn't really stop. It would just slow down and the boy would have to have the right timing.

INTERVIEWER: He worked on the streetcar, right?

BENSON: Yes, his father worked on the streetcar, he'd hold the plate up for him, and he could pick it up without actually coming to a complete stop. So, I hid behind some bushes with my rifle and when he went out there to hand the plate to his father, I got even with him and shot him in the hand and he dropped the plate on the street.

INTERVIEWER: That was a good one; you got back with him. Let's talk about your father's drug store for a minute. What was the drug store like inside in those days; just a quick description of it?

BENSON: Oh, all drug stores were neighborhood drug stores and they were tiny compared with the vast edifices they have now for drugs with very few drugs in them, I might add. But at any rate, it was a sort of a gathering place for the men in the afternoon. They'd come buy a five-cent Coca Cola and talk for two hours and everyone knew each other. You knew who their doctor was and what the doctor always prescribed for what they were complaining about. You almost knew what the prescription was going to be before they presented it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, your father owned the drug store that was in the building at Front and Castle Streets. That was in an area known as Dry Pond, generally speaking. Tell me a little bit about the building because you mentioned something about a sanatorium a while ago.

BENSON: Yes, there were small hospitals. Shall I continue?

INTERVIEWER: Go ahead.

BENSON: There were a number of small hospitals in Wilmington.

INTERVIEWER: Stuart, I think we were talking about the building. Tell me just a little bit briefly about the building and it's use as a hospital.

BENSON: It was a three-story brick building with a French bit of architecture in the way of the window treatment on the third floor and it was a small hospital. Dr. Harper was the one that ran it and I was born there in 1918. There was a drug store downstairs right on the corner, which my father bought in time and he spent his whole life there.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the drug store?

BENSON: Southside Drugs and it was something of a landmark for all the people in that area.

INTERVIEWER: I think you said it was a neighborhood drug store and as such, it served a need for the people within walking distance, I believe.

BENSON: Oh, yes. It was very important that it was on the streetcar line because few people had automobiles. It was a distinct advantage for them to get there on the streetcar.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work in the drug store any?

BENSON: Yes, I began immediately after shooting the convict in his posterior because my father said, "If you can't stay out of trouble, young man, you can come to work."

INTERVIEWER: Well it had a good effect in that way and it put you to work. What do you remember about your father's drug store and following? What are some of the stories about the drug store during the depression? It was a pretty rough time for that.

BENSON: It was indeed and while I'm quite sure my mother was very careful with expenditures, I can't say that I felt any effect of the depression. I was probably too young to realize it anyhow, but there was one summer in which I got a lesson that I'll never forget and it's vivid in my mind right now. A lot of people owed Daddy a lot of money and they didn't have it. They didn't have a job and they had no way of paying their bills. They got sick and they had to have medication. Some of them might have owed him for years and if you had a prescription and you were sick, he would always fill the prescriptions. So, I was concerned about it because there looked like a vast sum of money to me that was owed to him and he wasn't doing anything about it. He never sent a statement out and when I asked him why he didn't, he would say, "They know how much they owe me, as much as I do." So, I kept asking him why he didn't try collecting and one summer he said, "I tell you what son, you go over there and take those bills out and everything you collect, I'll give you twenty percent." Well, that looked like a fortune to me and I was elated and couldn't wait. I started out in what was called the Sandhills and that was everything south of Queen Street. It was unpaved and when the doctors would have to go over there it was an ordeal. They'd have to go down rutted sand roads and I walked around over there to find the houses and the impression that lasted so long was to walk up to a house and it was summer time and hot. A man would be sitting on the front porch, had nowhere to go, and had no job. A vast number of them had disreputable looking sofas with springs coming through them that they had pulled out on the porch. He was sitting there and I had a little speech that my Daddy had taught me. He told me not to talk ugly to anybody and just to tell them that they had bills that had been standing for two years and we would appreciate if they could possibly pay fifty cent a week or anything they could do. I wouldn't get very far before the poor man sitting there in that disreputable looking sofa would say, "Just a minute son; I can't give you what I haven't got." It wasn't what he said; it was the look of utter despair in his voice and his attitude. He looked in such a fashion that it made a great impression on me and I've never forgotten those faces.

INTERVIEWER: That's a wonderful story. Do you have any other thoughts of the drug store in that time? We used to call him up and ask him if he had Prince Albert in a can and if he'd say "yes," we'd say, "Let him out." Did you have any instances like that?

BENSON: Oh, we had a lot of comedians like you. We would have people call up and wonder if we were on the streetcar line and we figured they wanted to get here by the streetcar. When you would say, "Yes," they would say, "Well you better move, the street car is coming." That was supposed to be hilarious.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's a good one. I had never heard that one before. You talked to me on a previous interview about that. Before we leave the drug store, do you have any other thoughts? Do you know where the name Dry Pond, came from?

BENSON: My understanding is that there was a pond over there and it simply dried up, but I don't really have any information on that.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

BENSON: I'd like, if we have a moment, to tell you briefly about a man that owned the drug store at one time.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

BENSON: Mr. Mark O'Brian came over from Ireland and did well for himself. Of course, he was Catholic and he was dedicated to the Irish. So, when he made enough money, he wrote to his mother to pick out a wife for him and send her over, which she did and he lived with her without children until she died. After a suitable period, he wrote back to his mother and told her to send him another wife, and so she sent him another wife and he had two children by her. He was the one that owned the drug store building and he was in there. He traded there and the two girls would come in with him often. One day, I was a boy and I was working in there in the summer and Mr. O'Brien was in there with his daughter, Catherine. Catherine was about my age and her daddy, who was used to sending to Ireland for the proper wife that his mother picked out, thought he would pick out a husband for his girls. You could hear him all over the drug store and there were a lot of men in there standing around drinking Coca Colas. He said, "Doc, you've got a good business here, I own this building, and you got a nice boy and I got a nice girl. What do you think about them getting married?" We were about twelve or thirteen and that girl, looked like she was going to go right through the floor. I still feel sorry for her under those circumstances.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about Hargrove Bellamy? You had mentioned something to me about a little recollection there.

BENSON: Well, I have a highly favorable recollection of him because when there was a moratorium on the banks and all the banks were closed, many of them didn't reopen and people lost everything that they had. It happened that my father had a savings account and a checking account and he owed for everything he'd sold for the previous month. He got his checks out before the tenth because you got a two percent discount if they arrived before the tenth and that caught him, so he didn't have a cent. He sent the checks out, but when the bank didn't open, he began to get calls from Trask Candy Company, Atlantic Tobacco, and different suppliers that everyone was frightened. People can't understand that because there was a fear in people and everything was gone. People were losing their homes that had comfortable livings. The candy company, the tobacco company, and all called up and wanted their money and my daddy, of course, was extremely depressed. Mr. Bellamy at Bellamy Drug Company really had a

reputation of being an extremely tough businessman and not anyone you wanted to cross, but he didn't wait for daddy to call him. He called daddy and said, "Doc Benson, you've always paid your bills right on time and I know how things are now and you don't worry about what you owe me," which was a lot more than he owed all the rest of the suppliers. He said, "You pay me when you can."

INTERVIEWER: That's a great story. Let's leave the drug store for a minute and let's find out how you became a dentist.

BENSON: Well, like most of my life, it was because someone else told me what to do and the only credit I can claim is that I paid attention. I not only knew nothing about dentistry, but I had crooked teeth. I had never even been in a dentist's office and a good friend of mine, called Dr. Auley Crouch, would occasionally come by the apartment when he was making house calls at night. He came by one night and said, "You were supposed to apply for Med School." I already had my degree but he said, "When are going to do it?" I said, "Well I don't know?" I was married then. He said, "You're going to sit around and not do anything until you're too old. If I had it to do over again, I think I'd consider dentistry. I don't see them riding around out here at night making house calls and they do all right." That was all he knew. I found out I rode around at night some too. He said, "Sit down, we're going to write Dental Schools right now." I said, "I don't know any Dental schools." He said, "I do. There's a good one in Richmond and we'll write them." So, I wrote them and at that time and I was working at the shipyard and was married. Ten days from that night, I was in the YMCA in Richmond. I had gotten a call from the dean and I was told that I was well qualified in every respect except that I had not had physics and I couldn't get into dental school without physics. You didn't have to have it for Medical school, so I didn't take it because I heard it was difficult. I would have to take the course at a BPI extension up in Richmond and it started in a week. If I passed that in the summertime, I would be admitted to the fall class. So, as you see, although I've had a lifetime in a profession that I've loved and enjoyed, I had nothing to do with it. Someone pushed me into it.

INTERVIEWER: The someone who pushed you into it, was Auley Crouch.

BENSON: Auley Crouch?

INTERVIEWER: This was Auley Crouch?

BENSON: Junior.

INTERVIEWER: Junior. There are three of them that I know of. What were things like downtown in certain areas like the train station? Do you remember the train station downtown and what it was like in those days?

BENSON: I think of it often, but I try not to because I'm so upset about it being destroyed, particularly that great concourse and the excitement of walking down what looked to be a tremendous area to a little boy and going to see the trains backed in. They backed in so they could go out in the proper fashion and there would be big crowds there. When you'd get on the train, there was a lot of excitement and not only from your family, but your neighbors because it was quite a big deal during the depression to have the privilege of getting on a Pullman and going to the mountains every summer. Everyone always went to a church in the mountains because most of the churches in Wilmington had certain areas that they went to and they had services during the period up in the mountains.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, what about the theaters downtown?

BENSON: Well, all of them were downtown and I was intimately acquainted with the Bijou, where they

had popcorn and peanuts all the time it was going on and there were cowboy movies.

INTERVIEWER: How did you happen to get to go there frequently?

BENSON: Belk's was immediately across the street and my mother felt that it was every woman's duty to put on her best frock, a hat, and if it was summertime, not to wear the gloves, but carry them in her hand or put them on her pocketbook with an appropriate fancy handkerchief attached. She would leave me there and caution me not to move out of that seat which gave me an opportunity to see the movie at least twice. I spent a good bit of my youth in the Bijou Theater.

INTERVIEWER: While she was in Belk's? How many theaters did we have downtown then, do you remember?

BENSON: We had the Bijou which is still marked by ceramic tile on the sidewalk there in a park and up about a block away, right where the Orton Hotel was, was the Royal and then, there was one called the Carolina which was at 2nd and Market Streets. The one at 2nd and Market Streets had vaudeville and my father would take me there on occasion with live performers and chorus girls...

INTERVIEWER: What did your mother think of that?

BENSON: As far as I know, it was satisfactory with her for us to be out of the house, but of course, I don't know what she said to my Daddy when he got back.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other sights downtown that you can remember that were particularly of that period that we don't have now?

BENSON: Well, no I can't think of any individual things in particular; however, the entire downtown was in such a different position than it is now. It was the center of town and that's where everything was. If you wanted amusement, you could go to the movies and if you banked down there, there was very little anywhere of a business nature outside downtown. All the merchants were there and there were little small areas of business on North Fourth Street. My grandfather said that the original downtown was on North Fourth Street. I've never been able to confirm that, but he said that they gradually moved from North Fourth Street to Front Street and if you'll think about it, it wasn't too long ago that there were houses down there. The Cape Fear Club was at Front and Chestnut and it was in a home as you recall.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

BENSON: But in any event, there was also a very respectable shopping area on Castle Street and that was say, between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets.

INTERVIEWER: And this was all connected with the streetcar line.

BENSON: You couldn't have anything if it wasn't close to the car line because most people had no transportation except the streetcar. Of course, most Wilmingtonians that have been here any time know that made possible, a complete transformation in the city. If you worked at the Coastline, which is where just about everyone worked that had a decent job, you had to be within walking distance, so all the residences were quite close to the downtown because they had to walk to the Coastline and walk back. Wilmington was the first city in North Carolina to have streetcars, which made it possible for areas like Chestnut Street or 17<sup>th</sup> Streets to become highly desirable areas because people could ride the streetcars down to their work place.

INTERVIEWER: What was considered the country when you got as far as 17th Street was concerned?

BENSON: You were in the country at 17th Street.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you were?

BENSON: Anytime you passed 17th Street, you were in the country.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any other memories of Wilmington at that time or about some experiences relating to your profession? Do you remember any of those that would be interesting to recall?

BENSON: As I outlined, I knew nothing about Dentistry. The first dental office I walked into was mine, but I loved the profession and I still love my patients and it's great to go out and receive the hugs and the nice things they say. I'm not too sure they said many nice things when I was actually treating them, but they have good memories now and it's the happiest part of my life.

INTERVIEWER: You know, when we were talking before one day about this down at the Cape Fear Club one night, you were telling me about the signaling system that they used on the car line and this was maybe on the beach line. I'm not sure, but can you tell me a little bit about that?

BENSON: The particular sophisticated signaling system that I had referred to, had to do with the beach car. That was necessary because that was the only section of the track that was likely to have a traffic jam. You couldn't let more than one beach car into that area of the track between where Newell's was, which was Station I and Papa Gray, who had a soda fountain and a place where you sat around tables outside, which we romantics always thought of as being very much like Paris with outdoor areas. So, they had to take pains to make sure that the beach car didn't go in when there was one already up there because then he'd have to back out to let the first beach car out. So, they had a highly sophisticated arrangement of a bicycle tire with a hook on a telephone pole and when a beach car would go up towards the Lumina, he would swing out and put the bicycle tire on the pole. Well, they had to come back and had to take it off of the pole so the next beach car would know it was safe to go into that area of the track. Would you care to hear the story about that?

INTERVIEWER: I want to know what the boys did with that, because that's a sitting duck for mischief.

BENSON: Well, I want to make it clear that I only heard this.

INTERVIEWER: We'll pass judgment on that after we hear it.

BENSON: Well, the conductors were respected by all the boys. We thought they were romantic figures with their uniforms and authority. They would put on a show once in a while and they learned that they didn't have to stop the beach car when they were retrieving the bicycle tire. The motorman would just slow down to something like ten miles an hour and they would stand on the steps, lean way off, and hook their arm in such a way that they would engage the bicycle tire and sweep it off. Everyone would admire their grace and so that was the procedure. Now one time, some boys here who will remain nameless, got the idea of climbing the pole while the tire was up on the hook. The hook was made of wood and they drove nails in through the tire and fastened it to the hook. I'm afraid that when the conductor came and made his graceful sweep out off the steps of the moving streetcar, he hung up on the tire and the pole, and broke his arm. The boys, who again I won't mention, thought that was amusing.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when you were telling me that was the signaling system, I knew it was a sitting

duck for some type of trouble. Let's go back and pick up on a few of the things that we might not have gotten because our time is beginning to run out. You apparently went off to school. Where did you go to school after you left high school?

BENSON: I went to Wake Forest. Like everything in my life, someone had made the decision for me and pushed me into it as I mentioned before. It turned out to be a very happy and a wonderful time in my life. I didn't have anything to do with picking out Wake Forest. Mr. John Stevens and Mr. Red Allsbrook were dedicated Wake Forest men and they and my father were good friends. They came to talk to him about where I should go to school and I had decided on William and Mary and had been accepted. In fact, I had already begun to accumulate some things in my trunk and had it addressed to Williamsburg. Red Allsbrook and Mr. John Stevens came and talked to my dad. My daddy was not the kind of man that would come home and say, "Son, you're going to Wake Forest." He just came home and said, "Son, I'd like for you to think about going to Wake Forest. Mr. Allsbrook and Mr. Stevens said it was a fine school." My relationship with my father was such that if he said he wished I'd do something, I was going to do it.

INTERVIEWER: That was tantamount to an order, wasn't it?

BENSON: Not really, he really meant that he left it up to me, but I had a great respect for him.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, tell me something. We've got time enough for one or two more stories and I remembered one about you finding something in a stump one time. Do you recall what I'm talking about?

BENSON: To give you an idea of how long ago it was, we would go to have picnics in what is now Forest Hills. There was nothing but pinewoods and some underbrush and my daddy had a fancy table that he kept in the trunk of the car. He would assemble it and we'd have fried chicken and banana cake out there on occasion. My sister and I, she was four years younger than I, would wander around while they were preparing. She looked in an old tree stump out there and found a mason jar that she didn't know anything about. She picked it up, came back, and my daddy saw it and demanded to know where she had found it. She told him and he said, "You show me where young lady." He marched with her and said, "Now, you put that right back where you found it."

INTERVIEWER: It was bootleg whiskey. Stuart, I appreciate you coming out this morning and I think that will wind it up. Our tape is just about at its end and thanks so much for the stories of Wilmington and the days that have gone by. I hope that this will be something that will be of value to other people as time goes on. Thanks, once again.