

**VOICES OF THE CAPE FEAR
INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MARTIN FALES**

JUNE 21, 1995

INTRODUCTION

This is Sam Bisette and it's a rainy afternoon on the first day of summer, June the 21st at about 4:15 and I'm at Dr. Fales home in Beaumont.

INTERVIEWER: To start off with, where and when were you born?

FALES: I was born in deep Dry Pond back in 1907. My mother and father, that was their home at 620 Castle Street or 7th and Castle Streets. My mother and father were both born in the Masonboro Sound area. They moved to Wilmington in 1895 because of business reasons. In those days the horse and buggy and horse and wagon were the trade. There wasn't anything like the new machines that would eventually come out.

INTERVIEWER: We've got a lot of other people that are Dry Ponders in town.

FALES: Yes and I'm proud of being a Dry Ponder. We moved to 518 Castle Street in 1909 and spent a number of years there and then we eventually moved to 311 South 5th Street, which was my mother and father's home until my father died in 1925.

INTERVIEWER: That's the attractive two-story house.

FALES: My mother survived until 1945.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Well now, where did you go to grammar school?

FALES: I went to grammar school the first year in 1913 at the old Union School, which is located on the northwest corner of 6th and Ann Streets. It was a wooden building two stories high with a full basement. You did not take lunch to school those days but you took a sandwich or an apple and sometimes the teacher would borrow the apple from you before you could eat it. Margaret Goldstein and several other old-timers, we started school in 1913 and remained there until we were in the 7th grade and then we were sent over to Tileston School where we spent the 7th and 8th grade. Then we came along and that same year and they were building the New Hanover High School on Market Street. The first class was in the fall of 1921. That's when we entered and we finished New Hanover High School in 1925 and I went to Wake Forest College.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. That was when Wake Forest College was at Wake Forest.

FALES: That was 17 miles north of Raleigh.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well you got your undergraduate at Wake Forest. Tell me, where did you do your degree work?

FALES: When I came along, there was not a senior medical school in the state of North Carolina. We had two junior medical schools. Wake Forest taught the first two years of medicine in Carolina and the University of North Carolina taught the first two years of medicine. Duke was in the planning stages. The way it was, if you wanted to be a doctor, you took the required courses at the college and then you transferred to the Medical School at the college. In my case, I went to Wake Forest, after completing the first two years. I

transferred to Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, which was one of the oldest medical schools in the country.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you there?

FALES: I went there in 1930 and remained there to 1932 when I received my M.D. and then, I went to the Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia for three years for hospital training before I returned to my hometown of Wilmington in 1935.

INTERVIEWER: That was quite a transition from Dry Pond, wasn't it?

FALES: It was quite a transition, but Dry Pond as I considered it at that time, was a good section to have started off with to get your preliminary courses.

INTERVIEWER: Well, there are a lot of stories about the boys being raised in Dry Pond, which is something for another day. There are a lot of interesting tales about the things that we kids used to do and the boys on the north side of town and on south side of town did their share, I guess.

FALES: Many people ask me, "Where was Dry Pond and where did it start?" Well, to my knowledge, as far as I could tell, everything south of Church Street was Dry Pond and everything north of Red Cross Street was Brooklyn.

INTERVIEWER: There is a dip in the road there at 3rd and Wooster Streets and 3rd and Dawson Streets right now. That was where the low part was. Let's move on just a minute after you got your medical degree and after you were in Philadelphia for three years. Did you come back to Wilmington after that?

FALES: I looked around numerous places, but if you'll recall the great depression was on at that time. Things were pretty rough going. I didn't get much encouragement any place I went to see, but finally I made up my mind I would come back to my hometown Wilmington and start here. My mother was still living and she gave me part of her home on 311 South 5th Street as an office. I didn't have any money to pay office rent.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FALES: So, I remained there for seven years until I went into the U.S. Army, shortly after Pearl Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were in practice by yourself?

FALES: I was in lone practice. There were 29 doctors in Wilmington at that time and at that time, a doctor did solo practice. We had several specialists.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Then, tell me about the Military part of it. You are getting out into 1940, 1941, and the war, I guess.

FALES: Well, after Pearl Harbor, as you know, everybody was talking about the war. The newspapers were full of stories of the war and I felt like it was my duty to go, so I volunteered. I didn't wait until I was drafted, I volunteered and had my physical examination done up at Camp Davis. The first place they sent me to was Gulf Port, Mississippi, which was a beautiful area. There was a big Naval Base there as well as an Army/Air Force Base. At that time, the Air Force was under the Army, the Navy, and the Marines. Now, it's a separate force, as you know. I remained there for a period of time, then I was sent two or three other places but I don't know why, but made all my time in the United States. I was fortunate enough to be connected with a large hospital.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Then, the war ended, I guess?

FALES: The war ended and then I returned to Wilmington.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. You returned to Wilmington then, and that would probably be around the end of 1945 or the first part of 1946.

FALES: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Did you pick back up with the practice at that point?

FALES: My mother had departed this life in the meantime, so we moved into 311 South 5th Street, but I realized then that things were different than it was before I went in the Army. We had two small little children. So John Stevens, who practiced law here longer than any lawyer we've ever had or in fact, that applied to the state of North Carolina, helped me find an office in the Murchison Building. So, I lived at 311 South 5th Street and had my office downtown in the Murchison Building for a number of years.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Now, we're going to digress for just a minute for something real important. We want to say a word about Sarah and the children before we end this tape up and forget to say anything about them. Tell me a little bit about when you and Sarah were married and how many children you had.

FALES: Sarah and I were married in 1940 after I had been in Wilmington practicing for seven years. We have been blessed.

INTERVIEWER: What was her maiden name?

FALES: Her maiden name was Sarah Taylor. Her father worked for practically fifty years in the U.S. Post Office there at Front and Chestnut Streets.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FALES: Since we've been married, we've been blessed with two children, Alice and Robert Jr.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well let's move on now. The war was over and you were back into practice in the Murchison Building. There were a number of professional offices in the Murchison Building. That seemed to be a place where dentists and doctors had their offices. In fact, my father was in the Murchison Building for a number of years, remembering back. Tell me if you would, what were the days like then at James Walker Hospital?

FALES: That's a good subject. Every time I hear anyone mention James Walker, I try to stop and listen. James Walker has a long story. You could talk about it for two or three hours and not say all you should say about James Walker. The James Walker Hospital was given to the citizens of Wilmington on a silver platter by James Walker. It happened in 1899, but he first had an arrangement with the County Commissioner and the city commissioners at that time as to how it was to be operated and who was to pay for the costs.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FALES: But, James Walker the man, he and his brother who was four years older came to Washington D.C. from Scotland and worked on the erection of the capitol building where the House of Representatives sits and where the United States Senate sits. They worked there for a while and then they were transferred over to building the new museum in Washington. They were sent there and worked for a while and finally, James

Walker received notice to come to Wilmington, North Carolina in 1857 to build a Marine Hospital. He came and constructed the Marine Hospital at 8th and Ann Streets, which was approximately where it was erected. It was a beautiful institution, small, but it was beautiful. It served in various capacities here for a period of time and as a child, I remember playing in the Marine Hospital when it was deactivated. It was reactivated two or three times and considered quite an asset for the Wilmington area.

INTERVIEWER: We had an unexpected interruption with the doorbell a moment ago, so we're going to pick back up on the tape and I'm going to ask Bob to continue. We are talking about James Walker and the hospital that he built at 8th and Ann Streets.

FALES: The Marine Hospital at 8th and Ann Streets was not the largest Marine Hospital, but one of the most beautiful ones and it existed for a long period of years. It was used by the state and national government before it was demolished approximately thirty years ago. James Walker Hospital was given by James Walker himself and it was approximately at 10th and Red Cross Streets on what we called Kline's Gardens, which was an entertainment park. It consisted of several blocks and this was purchased and the James Walker Memorial Hospital was built there without any costs to the citizens of Wilmington except to as its existence in the future. It required that the County Commissioners and the City Commissioners donate a certain amount of gifts each year for the treatment of indigent patients that were taken in. This particular procedure was carried through for years. James Walker Hospital, as time went along, developed into a real hospital, one of the best in the state. Along the last part of the century, it became quite obvious to many people that hospital facilities were lacking in Wilmington, so James Walker was occupied and existed for years.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to put in just a little word there because as you may know, I married a young lady who was a nurse at James Walker and I remember that later the Marion Sprunt Annex was added. The nursing home was in the rear and the big annex that was built during the war. It turned into a two-city block hospital. Now go ahead, I just wanted put that in.

FALES: The Marion Sprunt Annex was built in 1915 and 1916. It was dedicated in 1916 and was given by Dr. James Sprunt and his wife. Through the period of its ages, it delivered thousands and thousands of pregnant women. In addition to that, I must mention the nursing school, which was a wonderful nursing school and a little less than one thousand graduate nurses finished at the nursing school. It was enlarged three different times during its existence and it was considered one of the finest nursing schools in the state of North Carolina. A girl that finished nursing at James Walker Memorial School of Nursing got her training from the books as well as tremendous practical experience. This hospital continued to exist until years later when there was a movement to build a new hospital in Wilmington.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about the new hospital a minute, because right from the very beginning, I think we would be interested in the history of it.

FALES: For years, it was obvious that James Walker Hospital had served its day. It was a great hospital, but it had served its day and we needed a new hospital, but it was very difficult to get this started, so it turned into a regular controversy between those who wanted a new hospital and those who did not. Those who did not want the hospital outdistanced those who did. When the election came up the first time, the proponents that wanted a new hospital were defeated three to one by vote. In other words, it was a very sad day for this area. Of course, it depended on how you looked at it. Three years later by the grace of God, we got the new hospital by 242 votes. It was very close, but we got it. So, the wonderful structure that we look at, see, and read about didn't just come, it came with blood, sweat, and tears.

INTERVIEWER: Do I recall correctly that there was a steering committee? I'm remembering a seventy-man steering committee and I'm remembering something about Harry Solomon who more than influenced this thing coming to be.

FALES: Harry Solomon was a great man and I met him and knew him pretty well at the Kiwanis Club where we would sit and eat meals every Wednesday afternoon. Harry was a very devoted citizen and he had foresight and encouragement. Eventually, with the grace of God and as I bring that out again, no one knew how it happened, but it did. If we hadn't gotten that hospital, which we so desperately needed, Wilmington would have reverted back into a dead town.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any controversy about selecting what site it was going on?

FALES: There was tremendous controversy about everything, but apparently the committee selected a beautiful site, an elevated site, and I don't think you can find any argument nowadays about where it was located.

INTERVIEWER: The location is perfect.

FALES: Perfect.

INTERVIEWER: It sure is.

FALES: There will always be controversy in a big hospital. There's controversy and there will continue to be controversy.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

FALES: But most of this controversy is false and time will tell.

INTERVIEWER: Well I know you are proud of the building out there and now that building is just the centerpiece with everything that's going on.

FALES: I'll say this, we had a small group of interested people that would go down and call on the County Commissioners during the election of the hospital. It must have been fifteen or twenty times that they tried to get them to set a date for an election for a new hospital. We had tremendous amount of controversy.

INTERVIEWER: Would you hazard a guess as to how many doctors we had in Wilmington at that time?

FALES: There were approximately, when I came back in 1929 there were 29 M.D. doctors here. I heard several months ago and this was almost a year ago, that there are 340 doctors here.

INTERVIEWER: I had lunch today with a group of young attorneys and you might get a laugh out of this. I asked one of them how many lawyers we had in Wilmington now and he said, "Something over 300 and that's just about 100 too many."

FALES: That's right, a hundred too many.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I did want to cover the new hospital. Let's go back to your medical practice for a minute. One doesn't practice any job or profession for a while without having some meaningful experiences, some humorous experiences, and some things that happen to tell about the nature of people. I just wondered if you happen to recall any humorous anecdotes or experiences from your medical days?

FALES: Well of course in any profession, you run into those and some you remember and some of the people you tell them to, remember. I remember one concerning a famous doctor in Chicago who invented the

Murphy drip. At the turn of the century, there wasn't anything known about intravenous drips or injections, but we did know about the Murphy drip. That was where a certain amount of water and glucose or sweetener like Karo syrup was poured into a tube inserted up in the rectum and this solution was allowed to drip in slowly and at the time, this seemed to help. This particular technique was discovered by Dr. Murphy who worked in one of the large hospitals in Chicago. At that time, when a patient arrived with dehydration acidosis and was not able to drink anything for a number of days, quite a few of those patients died. Dr. Murphy experimented on routine treatments, as they were known in textbooks. One patient admitted with this diagnosis was treated in the usual manner and on the next bed, a patient was admitted and was treated with the new Murphy drip where a rectal tube was inserted up into the rectum apparently twelve to fourteen inches. He found out after a year or two that there was quite a difference in the mortality rate between the ones treated in the routine manner and the ones treated with this new technique. Finally he had had enough experience and felt like he should get publication, which he did and this publication went in all the big newspapers of the east and the west including medical journals scattered all over the country. Now at last, a man had found out how to give fluids to a more or less of a dying person. So, this technique became quite popular and was received by, as I said, even country doctors up in Onslow County. There was a doctor up there that had practiced for years and years with a horse and buggy practice. One night, he read about this new technique and all that was required was a rubber tube about the diameter of your little finger and a funnel to pour the solution in. So, he immediately got himself that equipment and put it into the back of his buggy. One night, he was called to one of his old friends that he had known for years. He lived seven miles from where the doctor lived and he immediately went over. When he got there, the house was full of neighbors and well wishers, so he eventually elbowed his way in and saw the patient. Mr. Ashley was his name and he was lying in the bed. He had been there for a number of days and couldn't keep anything at all on his stomach. He just vomited and vomited and apparently he was in an acidosis dehydration condition. The doctor sat down on the side of the bed and he talked to him and told him, "Well I have this new discovery that I've read about and I thought you would be a good candidate to use it on." Mr. Ashley agreed, "Anything that you say doctor, anything that you say." So the doctor stopped everything and he went out into the back yard to where his horse and buggy were stationed and got this rubber tube, the funnel, and some Vaseline. In those days, Vaseline was being used because KY Jelly was not known. So he went back into the house and he got the help of one or two of the men there to turn the patient on his side and the women folks went into the kitchen. The doctor talked to Mr. Ashley and said, "Mr. Ashley, I've already described the treatment." Mr. Ashley said, "Well what ever you say." He said, "Well, what we are going to do in your case is we're going back into the kitchen with some of these women folks and make some hot chocolate and we'll bring it out in a few minutes." And so they did that and the doctor brought the hot chocolate out in a bowl and of course he would try to see if he could swallow it. So, he got up and raised Mr. Ashley up a little bit and said, "Now Mr. Ashley, here's something that you can swallow and take two or three swallows of this and it will help you a great deal." He said, "Now I'm gonna hold this up and you can try to swallow it." He held it up and Mr. Ashley said, "I'll hold it, but I can't swallow it." The doctor said, "Well try it again." Mr. Ashley said, "I'll hold it, but I can't swallow it." So then the doctor was satisfied that he'd made all the suggestions he could. He told him about this new technique and then he told him what he was going do and that he was going to smear some of the Vaseline around the outside and inside of his rectum. Then, he was going to insert this rubber tube in, was going to bring that rubber tube up, put a funnel on it, pour the hot chocolate in the funnel, and let it run into his rectum. That was the technique he was going to use. A couple of the men in attendance had already removed his lower underwear so they could do this. When they inserted the tube, poured the hot chocolate in, and held it up elevated, it eventually started running in. In a little while, Mr. Ashley said, "Ooh, ooh, ooh." The doctor said, "My gosh, what's the matter? Mr. Ashley, is it too hot?" Mr. Ashley said, "No, it's too sweet."

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that's a good story, it sure is.

FALES: Well, every now and then I get a request like that.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk a little bit about what you've been doing since you retired from practice, your authorship, and your interests. I see you down at the library many times doing research and can you tell me a little about that?

FALES: Well I've been retired for a little over ten years now and of course I go out there every chance I get to walk around and I see that probably fifty or sixty percent of the working force at the hospital are still there. They wave at me and I wave at them. Always glad to see them and some are perfect strangers that I don't even know. It's always a joy to go out there and see what they have done. It is tremendous institution we have right here in Wilmington and it's all happened with the help of the good Lord.

INTERVIEWER: I want to get to the books.

FALES: All right. Well, during this period of ten retirement years, I've been interested in the local library and I go down there as often as I can. At one time, I was down there every day for a period of time, but I still go down every chance. Recently with the illness that I have, I have not been able to get down there in the last month or so. I developed a habit of reading quite a bit and that kind of stimulated me and I thought of some things that I was born into that might be of interest if I would write them down. So, I started writing in just the old fashioned technique of hand and pen or pencil. I'd write from day to day and try to date them. Once every two or three months, I'd try to compile the writings in the form of books. Believe it or not, I have surprised myself and have written six books.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's remarkable.

FALES: The first book was largely a pictorial book with 250 photographs...

INTERVIEWER: Illustrations?

FALES: There are 250 illustrations in this book and it sold quickly and there has been a great demand for it since then. Some day, in my humble opinion, it will be reprinted, but that's not for me to say. In addition to that, there are 5 more books that I've written concerning James Walker Memorial Hospital, the need for a new hospital, and how it was eventually accomplished with the help of the Lord and the going down before the County Commissioners to plead and beg them to put these issues up for the public to vote on.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

FALES: We were turned down many, many times, but we kept going back. Usually we were turned down by one vote but we had two good friends on that hospital committee. One was Mike Hall and the other one was Johnny Metts.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

FALES: They were our friends but the other three County Commissioners, two of them definitely were our enemies and one was fickle. He'd be yes one time and no the next. It took some time and a great deal of perseverance for us to be able to get the County Commissioners to appoint a certain date for the election as to whether or not we would have a new hospital here.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Speaking about the books, did you do all the writing in this or did you have someone editing it for you or how did that work?

FALES: I had an editor for each book.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, okay.

FALES: I did the writing myself.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Who helped you on some of these?

FALES: They were in long hand and I was lucky enough to run into two ladies who were typists here in Wilmington. They were kind enough to type these books up and present them to the editor who was to do his work before they'd be published.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Well, I understand you are well known down in the library in the North Carolina room and I think that's a great tribute to you that you have really left a legacy of Wilmington history that would not have been there had you not done this. My congratulations go to you. I think it's great that you have done this. I'd like to ask you what are some of your recollections of Wilmington way back yonder when? Because when I put your birth date together, I come up with you being in the late 80's now and that carries you back to 1907. From 1907 to the time you were ten years old was in 1917 and that would be before World War I. Do you have any recollections of interest from that period?

FALES: Well, Dry Pond was a rowdy place at that time. Originally there were a lot of ponds over in the Dry Pond area, which gradually over a period of years dried up with the building of new streets and houses. I've had many people ask me how in the world we got Brooklyn. Of course there are many, many Brooklyns in the United States. Just how we got this Brooklyn, I do not know. I wish I did, but I made an effort to.

INTERVIEWER: You're going back to the days of the streetcars.

FALES: I'm glad you brought up the electric streetcars because we got those in 1893. You could live near the lines of the streetcar and pay five cents going from where you lived to downtown, or otherwise you walked. In those days, there were plenty of horses, drays, and buggies, but no machines. Machines came later along about the period I was born, or a year or two afterwards. I remember when I was a child there probably weren't over twelve machines in Wilmington. There were plenty of horses and mules.

INTERVIEWER: By machines, you are talking about what we now call automobiles?

FALES: Automobiles. Later on, they started calling them automobiles, but in the beginning as I recall, they were called machines. You would get in one of those machines and that was quite an experience.

INTERVIEWER: What did people do for entertainment back in those days?

FALES: Well, you had the opera house, Thalian Hall, which had been there since 1858. It took three years to build that building including the City Hall. It started in 1855 and was completed in 1858. Of course, they had vaudeville appearances but most people entertained themselves because there was no radio, TV, motion pictures, or anything like that. I remember when the motion pictures first came out; there was an excitement for everybody to go down and sit in a theater to see people on stage acting, but they couldn't talk. They weren't able and we didn't have talking movies until 1928.

INTERVIEWER: Those were the days of the old Bijou.

FALES: The old Bijou was put up as a tent in the beginning but a storm blew it down. In 1912, the one and only Bijou Theater was built. After the movies came out, by the way, the first motion picture shown in the state of North Carolina was shown at the Bijou Theater.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting and I didn't know that. You don't happen to recall the film?

FALES: Fannie Arb Buckle and all those. If you lived, you went to the Bijou at least once a week. It was five cents to be admitted and five cents for a bag of parched peanuts. They changed the menu every week and there'd be a new performance, but if you could get ten cents and that would afford you to get inside and also a bag of peanuts and you'd sit there in that darkened theater and see this motion picture, silent motion picture going on ahead of you and they'd have typed written notices at to what they were saying. As I've already stated, we didn't have motion pictures until 1928. One thing in particular while we are on the Bijou Theater is all those peanuts, everybody went in and got a bag of parched peanuts and soon after a number of years, the big wharf rats down at the Cape Fear River which is one block down on Water Street and they found out someway about these peanuts, so they made excursions up into the Bijou Theater and they took care of the peanuts that we dropped on the floor and then they got to the point that you'd be sitting there in the Bijou Theater wrapped up in this movie you are seeing and you'd feel something rubbing by your pants leg and you'd wonder what in the world it was. Eventually, it came out that by God there were big rats in the Bijou Theater. So, Howard Wells who was operating the Bijou Theater wondered how in the world they could get rid of them? They first thought of rat poison and they said, "Well that won't work because the rats would die and that odor would run the people out of the theater." So they finally relied on the good old cat. They put a bunch of cats in there and they took care of the situation. It took time, but they...

INTERVIEWER: That was a pretty good solution.

FALES: But you'd be sitting there shortly after that, and something would rub by your leg and you wondered whether it was rat or a cat.

INTERVIEWER: One thing before we get finished that I want to ask you is, do you have any direct recollections of any events during World War I in Wilmington? Can you think about it for a minute? That was quite a disturbing time I'm afraid.

FALES: I remember some of the family happenings, particularly the Armistice Day of 1918.

INTERVIEWER: 1918.

FALES: Armistice Day was probably the most celebrated day that I remember in the history of Wilmington. The newspapers in those days came out two or three days ahead of time hinting that a possible Armistice was going to be in effect, but the war continued on and there were lots and lots of GIs that had been slaughtered and killed over there. We didn't have any radios or TVS then, but word got around. The newspapers would all publish these newspapers and we boys that sold newspapers would go down there and get an armful of them everyday and carry them around and sell them for five cents a piece. You'd buy them for two and a half cents and sell them for five cents each. The day of the Armistice was so near from what we heard but yet it wasn't. Lots of people in Wilmington didn't sleep at all the night before. I know in my family, we were up time and again asking if anything had been announced. They said they would blink the reflective lights such as we had then and the street lights on such a day at midnight, they would blink those lights if the Armistice was signed. If they blinked the lights twice that meant deliberations were still going on, so many, many people stayed up to see if those city lights blinked two or three times at midnight on Armistice Day. The next day we were supposed to go to school and we were fortunate to have a colored cook with us and she worked for us about thirty-five to forty years. She did all the cooking and did all the washing. She was just a great person to have at hand and she had a hot breakfast ready for us. When they said that Armistice was effective, all the whistles, trains, and manufacturing plants were blowing and the streetcars would come around. The streetcars usually stopped around twelve o'clock at night.

INTERVIEWER: That was quite an event.

FALES: When time came for us to go to school, we were told to go to school and I went to the 6th and Ann Streets school and Ms. Nellie Cook was the principal of the school at that time. She met us at the door and said, "The Armistice is signing right now. There will be no school today so you children go back home." That excited us that much more.

INTERVIEWER: We are getting where we've got two or three minutes left and maybe there is something that you wanted to say that you had forgotten about before or you might want to tell me what direction you want to take in the future? You certainly seem to be a person who is not going to take his retirement sitting and doing nothing, but you've been active and that's one of the reasons I'm out here this afternoon. Is there anything you want to say to wind up?

FALES: Yes, on the Armistice Day in 1918, we arrived at school and were met by the principal Ms. Nellie Cook who told us that Armistice was at hand and for us to go back home, there would be no school that day. Instead of going back home like she told us to do, we ventured downtown to Front Street and I don't know in the world we got there. I've never seen so many people on Front Street; it was packed and jammed. There were lots of policeman down there, but they couldn't do anything about it. The crowds were standing up and firecrackers were going off everywhere. People didn't think anything of lighting a firecracker and throwing it right down at your feet. Cars got stuck there and they could not move. It was jam-packed and I have never seen such a congested area in my whole life.

INTERVIEWER: That must have been something to watch.

FALES: We made up our minds then, that we were going home as Ms. Nellie Cook told us to.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Excuse me, a minute ago I thought you had finished at that point when she told you to go home and I interrupted you. I apologize.

FALES: I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER: That's all right. That must have been quite an event?

FALES: Actually, that was the most people that I've ever seen on Front Street and the most excitement. Women and men were kissing each other and it had just gone crazy.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to make a little personal reference right here as we wind up. On November 11, 1944 I was sitting on the wall of the American Embassy in Paris at the Armistice Day Parade on the Champs Elysees and right in front of me was General Dwight Eisenhower, Winston Churchill and General De Gaulle in a car. That was a celebration of the Armistice Day. Then, when the war was over in Europe, I wasn't home to see that. Thank you for telling me what it was like during the First World War.

FALES: It was a tremendous celebration and I've never seen a day like that particular day happen. It was quite a problem to get home and when we got home, all the whistles of the railroads, plants, and boats with all the whistles blowing. Everyone went crazy again and that was the end of the war.

INTERVIEWER: I see our tape has about a minute left on it just to wind up and I'd like to do that. I thank you for letting me come out and record some of these experiences of yours, Bob, and by doing so, I think you have added some more to Wilmington's history yourself by the recollections that you have. My thanks go to you for allowing me to do this and I hope that this tape ends up along with a lot of the good people that you know from Wilmington. They will be kept in the New Hanover County Library in the North Carolina room as an oral history of Wilmington. Thanks again.

