

**VOICES OF THE CAPE FEAR  
INTERVIEW WITH HUGH MACRAE II**

**AUGUST 7, 1995**

**INTRODUCTION**

**This is Sam Bisette, today is August 7, 1995 and we're in the conference room of Oleander Company at Hanover Center, and I am with Hugh MacRae. Hugh, do we say Hugh MacRae, or Hugh MacRae the II?**

HUGH: Well Sam, the second is on there just for legal reasons. As you well know, my grandfather being Hugh MacRae, I'm not a junior because I'm a grandson. They always put the second on the grandsons. It's important for check signing, deeds, legal matters, as you would well understand.

INTERVIEWER: Well from now on it's Hugh, and we know who we're talking about, we're talking about Hugh MacRae.

HUGH: Yeah, once you've done the second one time, you can always say Hugh MacRae, you know.

INTERVIEWER: All right, we're all settled on that. Hugh, I'd like to see if we could establish a basis here and I wonder if you can tell us where and when you were born?

HUGH: Born in Wilmington, November 24, 1924 at the old James Walker Hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Out at Tenth and Red Cross?

HUGH: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Please tell me a little about the early part of your life, schooling and grammar school, and up to the point maybe when you were in high school.

HUGH: Early schooling for the first two or three grades at Miss Ruth Pleasants private school on Third Street where she taught 12 or 15 children. Then on to public school at Forest Hills. St. James Church in those days did an awful lot of church-school education, which made quite an impression on us. To New Hanover High School for one year preparatory for going away to boarding school in New England, where I was sent to my father's school, St. Paul's School when I was 13 years old, and that was quite an experience.

Then I went on to Princeton University right after St. Paul's in 1942 for one year. Left in 1943 for wartime service, came back in '46 and '47 and graduated from Princeton on to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a graduate degree in business in 1948. That's a thumbnail scenario of my education.

INTERVIEWER: That's exactly what I wanted and I appreciate it. That's a good foundation to build on.

HUGH: All right.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little about the military service in World War II.

HUGH: Well, I always wanted to fly. Flying was my dream and around here in high school days and in prep school in New England, I used to take occasional flying lessons and we could all see World War II coming. My dream was to go into the Air Corps and become an aviation cadet which I did between 1943 and 1945. I went through flying school, graduated in the Air Corps, flew B17's and B24's, very briefly trained at Langley Field, Virginia, on my way overseas, but just before going overseas, the war ended and I never did get that first mission over Germany or Japan. If the war had lasted two weeks longer, I would have had one mission over Germany and I've always been curious about that.

INTERVIEWER: I'm running several years ahead. I mean, I was over there waiting for someone to come over.

HUGH: Age made a big difference in those days, a year or two in your age made a great deal of difference in your military service, as you well remember.

INTERVIEWER: That's correct, and so many of it was chance as to how things worked out.

HUGH: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Hugh, just go back just a minute, back to grammar school. What grammar school did you attend in Wilmington?

HUGH: Forest Hills, and it's the very same Forest Hills school that's there today. I know the school is improved, but it's still pretty much the same building.

INTERVIEWER: And then at 13 was when you went away to New England?

HUGH: I did, I had that boarding school experience Sam, which was quite something. We could talk the whole 45 minutes on that, but my father had gone there, a very intense experience for 5 years with athletics being compulsory and the very finest academic education there could ever be.

Football in the fall was compulsory, ice hockey in the winter was compulsory, crew, baseball and track compulsory in the spring, and I learned some athletic skills that I never would have gotten otherwise. I made some very interesting friends who ended up in the brokerage houses and banks of New York, and got an education that was simply, almost unbelievable.

INTERVIEWER: It was a marvelous experience?

HUGH: Yeah, a great experience, and it was almost like being in the Marine Corps in civilian clothes given the discipline and the regimentation along the way. We had to go to church, for example, 8 times a week, once every morning at 8:00 and twice on Sunday, 11:00 and 6:00, but as I say, this part of it could take 45 minutes. It was quite an intense experience.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, but it's interesting to know that if you will let me be humorous for a second, that you ended up with finishing school at Carolina?

HUGH: Well I went on to Princeton, which a lot of North Carolina boys do and then Princeton taught me only economics. It did not have a business school, so I came on down after Princeton to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to get today's equivalent of a Master's in Business and that business school there was really first class at Chapel Hill.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's great.

HUGH: Yeah, it was really first class.

INTERVIEWER: Well I have great respect for Chapel Hill and one of my children came through Chapel Hill.

HUGH: We don't want to digress, but there's a very close relationship between Chapel Hill and Princeton which could be the subject of another story. I don't think we've got time for it here.

INTERVIEWER: No, we don't. Let's go ahead for just a minute, and see after you got through, get your background, after you finished at Carolina, what happened then?

HUGH: Well I did what so many Wilmington boys did, or boys all over America did, if you had a family business to come home and go into, you were considered quite fortunate. We didn't exhaust ourselves looking for a lot of other careers unless it would have been law or medicine or something like that. Most of my friends who had family businesses came home and went into those businesses, like Robert Bellamy and Bellamy Drug, Walker Taylor and Walker Taylor Insurance, Allen Strange and Allen Strange Insurance.

It just seemed natural for me to come home and join my grandfather in his real estate development and investment business. That's what I did. We all felt we were very lucky to have a place to come to in those rather lean days, and they were lean days.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, they were, yes they were. Those of us who lived through those had an experience that children today would find it hard to realize.

HUGH: That's true, a good job and a roof over your head and three meals a day were great privileges and \$5.00 in your pocket would last you all summer long as far as ice cream cones and Coca Cola.

INTERVIEWER: Let's get the genealogy part of it right quick from your grandfather, Hugh MacRae, down. How about giving me just a quick rundown on your brothers and sisters?

HUGH: Well my grandfather was Hugh MacRae and my father was Nelson MacRae, who died during World War II, not as a result of World War II, but his death occurred during the period of World War II. He had a sister, Agnes MacRae, who married Julian Morton, who was my Aunt Agnes, and then in my own generation, there's myself and my sister, Marguerite MacRae. Marguerite is married to an Englishman by chance and lives over there now. Her last name is Boucher.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, speaking of your grandfather, I have always had a great admiration for the stories that I've heard about what he attempted to do and did do in connection with his ideas of bringing people from Europe and bringing them over and establishing colonies in southeastern North Carolina of certain groups, but I've never had a chance to hear firsthand the story of that and I know that I'd really appreciate knowing.

INTERVIEWER: Well much has been written about that. It was one of many projects of my grandfather. My grandfather's belief was that he always wanted to do something for the South and for North Carolina and for Wilmington, New Hanover County. As far as agriculture was concerned, he felt that the South coming out of the Civil War was just a broken area, which it was economically, and the South had to change its system of agriculture. He felt that the tenant farm system with cotton, corn and tobacco, impoverished the soil, which it did, and he felt that if new types of agriculture could be developed it would be much more beneficial to the South economically.

Not many people in the South knew about other farming methods so he conceived the idea of bringing over groups of Europeans, like the Hollanders who had raised bulbs and flowers in Holland, and like the Germans who had done so much dairy farming. He brought these different groups over and settled them in different communities with those different types of farming activities. There at Castle Hayne with the Dutch, at Marathon with the Greeks, at St. Helena with Germans and Russians, at New Berlin and Delco with Germans and, I think, Hollanders again, they developed these farms which raised vegetables and flowers. The railroad was run right through the middle of all these farms. It was all part of a rather grand, economic scheme. Some of the little communities succeeded and others failed, although failure would not be particularly the right word.

After a while, some of the ethnic groups found that farming was pretty hard work and they started moving to the cities to get easier jobs that paid more money, but in the main, it brought a lot of new agricultural practices in, as you well know Sam, because the flower industry, the vegetable industry, the truck farming all around this area and all through the South is largely the product of my grandfather's experimentation and foresight.

Much has been written about this in very scholarly treatises and books so it's all pretty, generally well known, but those are my own impressions, my own memories. I know my grandfather enjoyed that work a lot and spent an awful lot of his time on it. It was one of his great projects that he thought a lot of and put a lot of energy into, a lot of his own personal money.

INTERVIEWER: Apparently your grandfather was a very wonderful man and a person that was involved. To be involved as a person in this, are there other interests that he had a common interest in?

HUGH: Yeah, well you know, he was in the power companies and in the real estate development and in which resulted developing the western part of the state, the development of coal mines in Virginia and I don't personally see, in those days of limited communication and limited transportation, how on earth he did it all. But Senator Sam Ervin told me one day in Washington, he says, "You know your grandfather may have been the most productive, single citizen to ever live in North Carolina". And this may be true, but how he ever did it all is really hard to conceive because he certainly was into 8 or 10 different projects, all of which had a tremendous economic benefit to the state and the South as a whole.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's talk about the other end of North Carolina in the Linville area for a minute because that is in our state. I wonder if you could tell us about how that occurred?

HUGH: Well that occurred because my grandfather went up there to look into attractive land that was recommended by the engineer who was developing Tweetsie Railroad, through the Linville Valley between Tennessee and Johnson City and Blowing Rock. The surveyists

surveyed the line of the railroad through the valley there by Grandfather Mountain and said he had found some of the most beautiful country in the United States.

He was acquainted with my grandfather because they were both engineers and he wrote my grandfather a letter. My grandfather went up there and looked at it and decided that was true. So, he and my great-grandfather bought the Linville property and then conceived the idea of building a beautiful little resort town right down in the middle of it. I think that they had grander ideas than just a resort town. I think they hoped it would turn into a bit of a small city, but it turned out to be so ideal for resort purposes that that's what it ended up being. But in 1892 to 1893, they built the first golf course in North Carolina up there. It was within a year of the earliest golf courses in America, Shinacock Hills and St. Andrews in Chicago. So, it was very, very early and once again very foresighted on the part of my grandfather.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's an interesting side light about the golf course. That's the first time I knew, the one either at the Homestead or the Greensboro, one of the others are at least one of the older ones too.

HUGH: That's right and they are not as old as this course at Linville and my grandfather brought this idea from Scotland, where golf was so popular in Scotland that he predicted golf would become very popular in America. Back in the early 1900's, when he used to say this, people said it will never become a popular game, it's just a rich man's game. But grandfather said no, it's going to spread and become popular all over America, and it certainly has done that. He had the gift of foresight, the unusual gift of foresight, which is what a lot of people remember about him.

INTERVIEWER: It's interesting that you had maintained an interest in your Scottish heritage.

HUGH: That's true.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us just a little about that because I know that something of that is active.

HUGH: Well, we came from the Scottish Highlands and I've been back to Scotland to meet my distant cousins over there and it's very beautiful country, as you know, the Scottish Highlands. We know where we came from and we know who our distant cousins are and it's quite an interesting side light to our lives really.

INTERVIEWER: Well hasn't this been perpetuated somewhat in the games in Linville?

HUGH: That's right, that's been the thrust of developing the Highland Games. That was done by Aunt Agnes Morton primarily. I helped in a small way on the side and when she started it, we all ordered kilts from Scotland and we put on the kilt and wear it every July up there and have a lot of fun with it.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. Let's come back to Wilmington for just a minute and see if we can get a little bit up-to-date about your own developments, your own interest in real estate and the things that you had inherited. You said you were in the real estate business with your grandfather when you came out of school and please tell us what happened with some of that?

HUGH: Well, I did go into business with him and I guess it was a happy thing because I enjoyed real estate development and dealing with real estate. At the outset, we continued the development of Oleander and Forest Hills and Piney Woods and those places that we were already in, and I

always enjoyed building the houses and dealing with you Sam, at the savings & loan, and I remember interest rates being 4, 4 ½ and 5% in those days and loans being quite liberal and houses costing \$8 to \$10 a square foot.

It was all a much simpler time. I enjoyed the real estate development business and then, as you know, in 1956 we got into the commercial side of it. That was an outgrowth of my education at Princeton where I was thrown with a lot of people that went to work for James Rouse in Baltimore who became one of the great developers of commercial shopping centers and the redevelopment of downtowns in America.

In talking to James Rouse and my friends who worked there, they were developing shopping centers or beginning to. I said why not do one here in Wilmington, and James Rouse was our consultant because he hadn't gotten so internationally famous in those days, and he came down then and helped us pick the site, helped us lay out the stores and he said it would really work. We weren't sure that it would and the bankers weren't sure that it would, but when we opened it, it did work very well because it was well-placed and well-planned under James Rouse's directions.

INTERVIEWER: Not only did it work, it's still working.

HUGH: That's true.

INTERVIEWER: Would you ever have thought that we would have had as many so-called, for want of a better word now, strip shopping centers and congregations of stores in different locations like we have now?

HUGH: No, there seems to be almost no limit because when we built Hanover Center, it was almost unheard of to have stores outside of the downtown area. And there again, my grandfather was quite foresighted because at Oleander Drive in Winter Park, he had set aside a little commercial area called Five Points Business Center. Today there's a medical building there, but they are 50 years ahead of any commercial, he had laid a little commercial area out there so once again, he was thinking way ahead of his time. It is amazing the amount of commercial development today and it's very difficult to see how so many stores can exist that there would be that much commercial business to be done, but there is.

INTERVIEWER: I would like you to please tell us how Hugh MacRae Park came to be such a fine addition to New Hanover County.

HUGH: Well, that was grandfather again, 75 year's ago. He felt that the expanding residential area out toward the beaches should have a nice city/county park. He approached the County of New Hanover and offered to give 110 acres for the purpose of a park. The county accepted it and later developed it into a park, and it really has been a great success. The people of New Hanover County value it and enjoy it and it really has turned out to be everything it ought to be.

INTERVIEWER: It probably has the prettiest stand of long leaf pines there is anywhere.

HUGH: Well, it does. The municipal golf course was part of that same thing. Grandfather prevailed upon the city at that point in time to develop a golf course on other land that he owned right next to the park, and of course, our municipal golf course has been a very substantial area of recreation for the city. The golf course, of course, was paid for by the city and it is a municipal golf course, but my grandfather either donated the land for that or sold it very, very cheaply to the city for the golf course.

INTERVIEWER: It's probably one of the most beautiful pieces of real estate I've seen in southeastern North Carolina.

HUGH: The golf course too, Sam, is something that people ought to understand was done by Donald Ross from Pinehurst. He's one of the great golf architects and a Donald Ross golf course today is valued like a fine piece of antique furniture. I've been intending to remind the city of this, that to have a Donald Ross golf course in its original condition as a city golf course is a really great asset as far as the golf world is concerned. We should bring that out and that should be recognized.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's a good thing for you to mention that. I'm glad you did. What interests do you have yourself and have had in Wilmington's business area? We have different ways people have of expressing their interests and I wondered in what areas you had interests?

HUGH: Well, we've been more identified with business development in the suburb areas and that's because our sphere of operation was in the suburbs. I've always been very much in favor of downtown redevelopment and I think what has been done downtown has been very well done and very beneficial. Also, our industrial development has been successful and I've been very much in favor of that. Our tourism development is a great thing and that certainly is being well developed. There are historic sites, I've been interested, as you know, in the Bellamy mansion and that's now been reopened. It's all part of a very wonderful, whole picture that we have here.

We have more in Wilmington, as you well know, than most major cities have. If you compare it to Charlotte or Indianapolis or even Atlanta, Wilmington has so much more; the beaches, the river, the historic district, the golf, the industry, the tourism, you name it. It's really all here where so many other cities are very limited in what they have other than just a large population.

INTERVIEWER: And with all of that that we have, it appears that our basic limitation is space now?

HUGH: That's right. It always amazed me as far as it took Wilmington so long to be discovered because you could leave Wilmington and go out and travel and you could see all these other places growing, and yet Wilmington was remaining more or less static until about 30 years ago. But I don't know why it was that it took Wilmington so long to get discovered, but it certainly has been discovered now. I've heard theories, but I don't subscribe to the fact that the Atlantic Coast Line was here that other things were kept out. I just don't believe that's true.

INTERVIEWER: Well, with the Atlantic Coast Line brings up something I wanted to ask. What do you consider some of the significant benchmarks that took place in Wilmington's development?

HUGH: Well, the recognition that Wilmington had to replace industry when the Atlantic Coastline left in the early 1950's in the formation of The Committee of 100, and the bringing in of the clean industry all around Wilmington has been a tremendous boon to the economy. Also, the redevelopment of the downtown area has done well and all of the development out in the suburban area. Tourism seemed to develop naturally. There hasn't seemed to be any particular plan to develop tourism, but the demand was there and that's all developed. But all of those things we mentioned have combined to make Wilmington a very prosperous and dynamic place.

INTERVIEWER: Would you consider that, when the Coast Line left Wilmington, that that was a benchmark of sorts?

HUGH: Yes it was. It galvanized everybody into action. It frightened everybody. People felt that Wilmington was going to dry up and blow away, as you remember.

INTERVIEWER: Well one thing that happened that has affected tourism is the Battleship North Carolina.

HUGH: True.

INTERVIEWER: And I would think that possibly that might be another benchmark. That is really an icon of a benchmark.

HUGH: It is. It's a very prominent national landmark, not just a North Carolina landmark. It's one of the best there is of a big capital ship.

INTERVIEWER: It looks like that within another month, we're going to have some things taking place over at the Battleship that are national in scope.

HUGH: To commemorate VJ Day.

INTERVIEWER: That's right, and I understand the Vice President is supposed to be here, that's what I hear.

HUGH: That's what I hear, I don't know if he will be or not.

INTERVIEWER: I do not know either, but we'll have to see if that works out. Hugh, what are your recollections of Wrightsville Beach? It seems in Wilmington that people here, maybe a lifetime, probably couldn't have gotten along without Wrightsville Beach?

HUGH: I know, Wrightsville Beach was a wonderful place. My grandparents had a house down there and it was very thrilling and exciting to ride the trolley line down there. I remember you'd get as far as Seagate and you'd begin to smell the salt air. You would stop there where the baby's hospital is to change electric connections or something on the beach cars and there was a generating plant there, but you could smell the marshes and smell the ocean so clearly and get over to the beach by Newell's there at Station 1, and you could smell the soda pop and the candy and the popcorn and ride on up to the middle part of the beach where our grandparents' house was up by the Ocean Terrace and get off there on the boardwalk.

There were porters who would help you carry your baggage up to the house. Then at the house, every morning, a fisherman would come and sell fresh fish and oysters and shrimp to you right at the house. Local people would come over from the farms and bring local fresh vegetables to sell right at your back door. Of course, the ocean came right up to the front porch of the houses. It was not as heavily developed now as then, but it was still fairly, thickly developed. The body surfing out in the ocean and the sailing and the water skiing, it was just a great, a great thing, a great environment. Early summer romances in your teenagers and the dances up in Lumina Hall, that was a very nostalgic and romantic time.

INTERVIEWER: You're ringing a very nostalgic bell with me because my father built at Harbor Island in 1938, the southern end. I lived down there for three years so I got a little taste of that myself.

HUGH: You knew how it was, yeah. Harbor Island has certainly come into its own now, hasn't it though?

INTERVIEWER: Yes it has. The Shore Acres Company that developed Harbor Island in various stages probably never realized that Wrightsville Beach had the traffic junction that they have down now west of the Inland Waterway Bridge.

HUGH: Well the beach and Harbor Island both had that priceless asset of very beautiful water. As you know, no rivers empty into the ocean anywhere near Wrightsville Beach. Consequently, you've got this beautiful blue green water on the beach and the same blue green water in the sound at high tide and that's a great asset there. It's much prettier than Virginia Beach or the beaches around Jacksonville, Florida or Savannah or Charleston. They all have sort of gray green water as you know that appears to be kind of dirty compared to the water up here.

INTERVIEWER: Well, one of the venerable institutions of Wrightsville Beach, of course, is the Carolina Yacht Club started back to 1853, and I think that is one thing that rings a bell with many of the people there. If something has been there, even though the hurricanes have taken care of it a couple of times, well, it still has come back.

HUGH: That's right, the yacht club is a great institution and it's a wonderful place for people to go and socialize and swim, particularly, if they don't happen to have a home on the beach. It fills a lot of needs and thousands of people have enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: What are your recollections of...those were the days when you went over to the beach, you had to go on a streetcar, that was the only way to get over there. What are your recollections of some of the streetcars, some of the streetcar systems? Could you call some of the stations down there if you had to?

HUGH: I remember the stations on the beach. Station 1 where Newell's where Wings is now, and Station 2 was about halfway up to the Ocean Terrace. The Ocean Terrace, which is now Blockade Runner, was Station 3. Station 4 was probably up there by the yacht club, Station 5 about halfway onto Lumina. Lumina is probably Station 6 and that was about the end of it. I'm probably wrong on the exact numbers, but it's approximately correct.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's just about right on the button because I remember there was a Station 6 just before you got to Lumina and Lumina turned into 7, but I could be wrong too.

HUGH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But that's what the fun of it is, trying to remember some of those things there. I can remember one of the nicknames for one of the streetcar motormen. His nickname with his high school students was Fried Onions. I did not know why, but that was it.

HUGH: Well it was a very exciting time for a child to ride those cars to the beach and grown people too.

INTERVIEWER: Some of them got a little bored with it and began to misbehave and began to do things like emptying the sand box that was supposed to be used to help stop it. They'd jump the trolley on the back and various types of things.

INTERVIEWER: Hugh, let's go along, a look at one other area. As any of us have gone through a business or profession or situation in the community, we've been exposed to certain happenings and certain things that were significant or humorous or had some meaning to us and I wondered in connection with your experience if you recall anything that would fall in the category of that?

HUGH: Well this doesn't involve a Wilmington person, but I remember the night before we opened Hanover Center, I had a business partner in with me as well as the family and Mr. James Rouse had come down and designed this whole thing. We had the whole grand opening. We borrowed a lot of money and if it didn't work, we were going to be in trouble. We came out the night before and looked at the shopping center, my partner and I. He was looking sort of quizzical and he said to me, he said, "I got something I want to say right now, you know this guy Jim Rouse that we've kind of hitched our wagon to?", he says, "I sure as hell hope he knows what he's talking about and people really come in and shop tomorrow". We laughed and the next day, they really did. As far as humorous things Sam, about people around the community, you caught me a little bit short. I could certainly think of a lot of them I know given a lot more time.

INTERVIEWER: Some of it can't be told too.

HUGH: That's true, that's true. You caught me a little bit short on that and I can't think of any particular anecdote upon quick thought like this that would be real significant.

INTERVIEWER: That's all right.

HUGH: I'll think of a dozen of them just after you've gone, I know.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure that you will. Hugh, what do you think the future outlook of Wilmington is at this particular stage? You know our present situation, the construction industry is booming and everything else is going, we're having traffic problems to beat the band. What do you think that we have ahead of us?

HUGH: Well it appears to me just more of the same. It looks like we're going to get a lot more tourism, a lot more retirement communities, a lot more population. I think we're going to become a major populated area over the next 10 to 20 years, which we already are becoming. It looks like the trends that have set in ought to continue for all of the basic reasons that they set in to begin with. I don't see us becoming a major center of business and commerce. I think that's really for Charlotte and Atlanta, but I think we'll become much more like Jacksonville, Florida; a major port, major industry and major tourism, major retirement community, just more of the same and bigger and bigger I think.

INTERVIEWER: I have had one question about the development of Wilmington that perhaps you can answer and might be worthwhile. We have so much going on this side of the river and yet on the opposite side of the river across from the state port for example and down that way, it seems that that whole area has never participated.

HUGH: Well, you're touching on something very sensitive right now, particularly with me and a lot of people like me. There is major development happening in Brunswick County now. If you

go down the River Road, you'll see that Old Town subdivision, a major new school, the Jackie's Creek area beginning to develop with a golf course and several thousand houses planned. So, down for two or three or four miles, it is happening and then below it, Bald Head Island, and below Southport, it's happening, but between that area, four or five big, historic riverfront plantations, Orton and Pleasant Oaks and Clarendon and Old Town Plantation which we own and it comprises several miles of river frontage between Southport and Wilmington.

I'm leading a movement now to get all of these places put in nature conservancies because I would hate to see these beautiful, old, historic plantations on the riverfront develop. They're perfectly beautiful pieces of land and something tells me it's going to be better to keep them as beautiful, nature-preserves than it is to develop them. So, I hope that can happen. However, Brunswick County is a huge county and all around those plantations, there can still be a lot more development. It is beginning to happen to quite a degree, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: My question a minute ago was more or less historically oriented as to why in the past, we seemed to have lagged behind in not doing that, but you've answered the question with the continuity of the plantations.

HUGH: Well, I can answer why it hasn't developed. In hot weather it's very unpleasant over there because you've got flies and insects and terrible, hot weather on that side of the river. People historically left those plantations in the summertime. Often, the ladies in the family were sent to New England in sailing ships and the men stayed at home to work the farmhands and suffer through the summer. Or, they moved over to Wrightsville Beach or the beaches opposite Charleston and Savannah, or went to the mountains to get away from the heat.

It's only been lately with the advent of air conditioning and the golf cart, which allows you to play golf in hot weather, that you can develop over in places like Brunswick County. But that's why it's beginning to happen, but I think that the sound area and the Wrightsville Beach area and the Figure Eight area were all historically more attractive than the riverfront area, but now that the beach area is all developed, you're going to see the riverfront areas developing pretty fast, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Some of those areas down there have developed beautifully. It's interesting to see what has happened to the area where Landfall is now. Let's go back to something we talked about earlier and I want you to fill in on. If you would, please tell me, how did the Bellamy Mansion go on to the point that it was something that needed attention to the point that where it now it has a museum and a full time curator.

HUGH: Well, after the last member of the family died, Miss Ellen Bellamy, back in 1943 and 1944, there was some 30-some heirs involved in the ownership of the property. So naturally, it was nobody's baby and it began to deteriorate until about 1960, I got very concerned about it and by that time, it had been bought in by Emma Bellamy Williamson Hendron and Lillian Bellamy Boney. Emma owned 90% and Lillian Bellamy Boney owed 10%, but I was able to convince both of those ladies that they should put it into a charitable corporation so that people could give money to it freely and that it could be saved and preserved as an important, historic structure.

After we put it in the charitable corporation, we began to repair it. Then an unfortunate fire happened inside that caused a lot more damage and made the problem a lot bigger, but eventually we just kept after it and raised the money and got it repaired and opened, which it is now. Lately, we've gone in with Preservation Trusts of North Carolina that we've actually deeded the property over to, but Preservation Trust owns it and the local commission runs it, very much like the

Battleship North Carolina. It has been successful. It's now open, it's not plentiful. The money is not plentiful and we need some more money, but we're forever soliciting funds and that's the way of such charitable projects.

INTERVIEWER: It's a wonderful building. The design of it outside, the detail that's inside, the workmanship that was done; it's an absolutely, marvelous example of architecture of its type.

HUGH: It is. It's almost more spectacular than anything you will see in any southern city, just because of the grandeur of it.

INTERVIEWER: Well I'd like to see if we can about wind this up and I would like to see if there's anything further that you would like to add that any of our talking has generated. I think that I had a number of questions when I came in the room and you have done a fine job in answering and filling me in on background that I feel I should have known, but didn't.

HUGH: Well Sam, one other thing I've got interested in lately, I suppose I've had a patriotic military bent, but it's been a lot of liaison with the Armed Forces and particularly, Camp Lejeune. This has led to a lot of visits by the British Royal Navy to Wilmington and an awful lot more communication between Wilmington and the Marines at Camp Lejeune. This in itself could take 45 minutes, but I mention that as a very successful thing that we've been doing lately and part of the present heritage of Wilmington, and its patriotic situation. That could be the subject of more research and another story at another time.

INTERVIEWER: You know there's one comment that I want to add to what you've said on Wilmington's history; that we are conversant generally, most of us, with what happened in the Revolutionary War onward, but what happened from 1524 to the American Revolution era, really take good place as an area of history that part of it is a blanked out area of about 100 years when it was turned back to the Indians.

HUGH: Exactly, yes sir, there's a lot that has not yet been fully researched or brought out. Sometimes the research is there, but it just hasn't been brought out.

INTERVIEWER: The history of the Cape Fear peninsula is a story unto itself, one that I enjoy learning more about it as the years go by. Hugh, thank you very much for talking with me, and I hope that we can add this to the group that we have and make something meaningful for the reference room at the New Hanover County Public Library in Wilmington.

HUGH: Well I hope so.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

HUGH: I appreciate you allowing me to participate.