

**VOICES OF THE CAPE FEAR  
INTERVIEW WITH WALLACE I. WEST**

**FEBRUARY 20, 1995**

**INTRODUCTION**

**I'm at the home of Wallace and Virginia West on Canterbury Road, Wilmington, on a Monday afternoon, February 20, 1995. I'm going to check with Wallace this afternoon on a few things about Wilmington, his life in Wilmington, the things that he can remember that perhaps might be of interest to us. I'm going to start things out a little I think with asking Wallace if he'll tell me just a little bit about the fundamentals — where he was born, when he was born. So Wallace, how about it?**

WEST: Sam, I was born on February 6, 1915. I was born on the northern, on the northern side of Wilmington. As you know, Market Street divides north and south. But the days ... I don't remember anything in my early young days over on the north, because we had moved over into Dry Pond, and I lived on the, next to the corner of Third and Queen Streets. And that's where I grew up and where I went to school. The first grade was in William Hooper School, and then they re-districted. I spent my next year, from the second grade on through the seventh grade at Tileston School. And then we moved. My brother was a sickly boy, and old Dr. Stone said to Daddy that if you'll move out in the country, I don't think you'll have any more problems with your son, Charles. So we moved to Winter Park.

INTERVIEWER: Winter Park was the country then, wasn't it?

WEST: Absolutely. It was out in the country and from then on, I stayed in Winter Park, and of course I can talk about Winter Park later on. I stayed there until I went off to college, after high school, and then while I was in college ...

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go to school?

WEST: Uh, to college? I went to the old Wake Forest School that's on the other side of Raleigh, 18 miles. It was an all male school, Sam. I've said many times ...

INTERVIEWER: A good Baptist school too, wasn't it?

WEST: A good Baptist school. I said many times that I'm glad I went to an all male school, but I don't think I'd have ever finished college if I'd gone to a coed school

(Laughter.)

WEST: But, uh, that's where I got my B.S. Degree. Uh ...

INTERVIEWER: Well how about high school?

WEST: High school I finished in '33. I went to New Hanover High School as a student.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the same building that we have today?

WEST: It's the same building we have today. It was... school was started in about 1920, and the contractor went broke. And then they had to get another contractor and they finished, and that school opened in 1922.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever realize you were going to be principal of the high school one of these days?

WEST: I never realized that in my life. I was not only a student there, but I was also, for three years, on the faculty there in the Vocational Department. Then later on I became principal.

INTERVIEWER: Was T. T. Hamilton principal when you were there, or later?

WEST: He was, no, he was, W. O. Hampton was my principal. And then after W. O. Hampton came T. T. Hamilton.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

WEST: He was the principal there when I was on the faculty out there.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I knew him because he was principal when I was there.

WEST: Well he was a cat bird. Now, he was a, he was a good administrator, but he was hard, man. He, uh, he, when he said anything, everybody stepped aside.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I know that. Let me see if you can reminisce about some of the things that might have happened in the period of time growing up in Wilmington and on into high school before you left to go to Wake Forest that might be of interest. We all have some things that happened. Do you remember anything?

WEST: Yes, uh, I can remember several things. These are not in order, but, uh, my mind went back — my mind goes back to the time — I'm over on now, I'm over on Dry Pond.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

WEST: Third and Queen Street. The roads, the roads were not paved, the streets were not paved from Castle Street on out, straight on out, at that time. But I can remember, uh, in my young days when the policemen, all of them, rode bicycles. And then there was the police wagon, was an old solid, uh, solid black vehicle. I think it was a Model A Ford. We called it the Black Mariah. And it was something with little siren on there. I also ...

INTERVIEWER: Are you saying you never took a trip?

WEST: No, but I looked at it on the inside and I figured I never wanted to get into that, into that vehicle. (Chuckling.) But, I do remember during the Prohibition time, Sam, and the police would catch the bootleggers, and they had to bring that stuff into Wilmington. And so on certain days, they would announce this thing, and on the back side of the present Federal Building, beginning at that alleyway, they would break those containers, glass containers, and let that liquor flow down by the curb into the drain there on Water Street. And you'd be surprised how many people it attracted. They would bring these wash cloths and towels along and soak that stuff up while it was running down the drain there by the curbstones. (Chuckling.)

But, uh, I also, another thing that was in my mind, still is in my mind — when the circus parades came into Wilmington — circus came into Wilmington. They set up shop on what now is the practice field for the New Hanover football team out there on Thirteenth and Ann Streets. They'd go, when the parade started, and I was a young boy, the parade would start and they'd go over Red Cross Street and come down Front Street and then to Castle and come up Castle. And we'd always go out there on the corner of Castle and Third Street. It was a cobblestone street, just like it is now in certain places, certain parts of it. And that was quite a highlight for we youngsters to see these elephants and all the other things coming by, and the music playing. It, uh, it was as I said, an unpaved road.

And then, I can also remember a Mr. Foxy Howard who owned the Bijou Theater. He had the only, uh, Stanley Steamer automobile in southeastern North Carolina. And you could pretty well hear him comin' down the street about three blocks away because he had to get steam up enough, and you could hear that ssssssss, hissing noise like that. And he would just drive that thing on down that rough road. Well, uh, and I course I went to the Bijou Theater at the time when there was no speaking. You just, everything you had to read off the screen.

INTERVIEWER: The days of the lantern slide?

WEST: Exactly. That was the day of the lantern slides and they had an old self-playing piano there, and they sold peanuts and popcorn. And, well, every so often you'd have a big rat to run out and grab hold of one of your peanuts there at your feet. But you'd just kick him away, you know. But it cost ten cents and that was worth it, too. And Saturday, of course, was the continued picture from one Saturday to the next Saturday on down like that.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, the old serials.

WEST: Old serials — Tom Nix and Artie Card and people like that, you know. But, uh, when I think about Tileston School, go back to Tileston School — the Tileston School, the boys, the girls' playground was over by, near Church Street. The boys' side, on the other side of the building was over on the Fifth Street side, well over on the Fourth Street side.

INTERVIEWER: Had them separated?

WEST: Absolutely. They had 'em separated. You didn't play with the girls. You didn't see the girls, and, but, maybe that's the best way it was, I guess. At that time, going to Tileston School, they didn't have football and basketball or anything like that. But they had track meets between the schools. The big rivalry was Tileston School and Hemingway School. Hemingway was in the northern part of town and Tileston was over in Dry Pond. After awhile, there was such a rivalry there that fights began to break out, just like they do in some of these games now, you know. So what they did to break up that rivalry, they brought a man in by the name of Mr. J. W. Grise and made him principal of Hemingway School and principal of Tileston School and assistant superintendent all at one time. Now he broke up that stuff because he stopped the track meets, to begin with, and so that took care of us so far as Tileston and our athletic abilities were concerned. Well, as I think about that day and time, if they had ferryboats down at the foot of Market Street. They went across over on Eagle's Island and back. If you ride the ferryboats ...

INTERVIEWER: This was about, what years are we talking about?

WEST: I'm talkin' about now, in my childhood days. I was born in 1915. I'm talkin' about ten, nine, eight, nine, ten years old.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

WEST: And ...

INTERVIEWER: You're talking about the middle twenties.

WEST: In the middle twenties. You could ride the ferryboat for a nickel. It cost a car ten cents to come over, and that's, at one time, the only way you could get back to Wilmington unless you went all the way around, up to around Burgaw and came in through the back side. But...

INTERVIEWER: Is that the days of the steamer Wilmington?

WEST: Well, yeah, and that brings me to another thing. When we wanted to go to Carolina Beach, before the road went down there, we went down in front of the Customs House, down on the river, and boarded the steamer Wilmington. And we rode down the river toward Southport, and when we got to about where the inland waterway comes into the Cape Fear River, and there the steamer docked. We got off the steamer Wilmington, and there was a little choo choo train with about three or four flatcars, and it had these risers like you see at ball, when you go see ball...

INTERVIEWER: Bleachers.

WEST: Bleachers, yeah. And they would set up on these flatcars, and we'd ride in sideways to Carolina Beach, and then ...

INTERVIEWER: And it was named Carolina Beach that early?

WEST: That's right, yeah. And I rode those several times.

INTERVIEWER: What was the attraction at Carolina Beach?

WEST: Well, it was just another good beach. They had little amusements down there, and get away from home. It wasn't big at all. It was just a small little beach.

INTERVIEWER: Well how did you go to Wrightsville Beach in those days?

WEST: Wrightsville Beach — we went by trolley cars, where Lumina now was this dance hall called Lumina. It was one of the best dance halls you will find anywhere in the South at that time. Sam, they had orchestras like Guy Lombardo, Paul Whiteman, and those orchestras like that, and they did not allow any drinking at all on the floor. Those who had to nip the bottle, they'd make 'em go down underneath Lumina and do whatever they wanted to do. But anyhow, you had to wear a coat and a tie, and you had to be a real gentleman on the floor. And you couldn't break in and you were not supposed to dance with any girl that you had not met. And so, Lumina brings back a lot of memories to me.

As a kid, as a young child, I was — well, Wednesday night was children's night. This was when I was of small an age and I went out there and we walked around. They gave us gifts and I was loaded up with gifts, and then all of sudden, they released the net of balloons up above. As they floated down, I wanted a balloon so bad, and so I took all the loot that I had, that they had given

me, and I went down and laid it down in front of the band stand and went back and got me a balloon. When I came back, somebody had stole all my loot.

(Laughter.)

WEST: But it was a beautiful thing, and then in time they began to show these silent movies over the ocean here. And many times, if I was staying there, we went down — maybe spend a week at a time. I couldn't go up to Lumina because I was just a kid. If there was a...if the tide was out, then we were in good shape because we could get down underneath there around those pilings with no water to bother us, and look at that screen. But when there was a high tide, we had to hold on to those pilings so the water wouldn't wash us away. Then later on, as I got a little older, then I could get up there and go to the dance and they had seats just like, bleacher seats again that you sat in and looked at the moon coming up over the ... it was absolutely gorgeous.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. Let's go ahead now. You celebrated this month, your 80th birthday, and I presume you've gotten to the age where you're able to tell about some of the things you did that you couldn't tell about up to now.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: You weren't the one who blew up Money Island, were you?

WEST: No, I, some things ...

INTERVIEWER: I'm still looking for the person who blew up Money Island.

(Laughter.)

WEST: Well, some things I'm not gonna talk about, as I grew up, but let me say this: Even at that time, Sam, they had a Coast Guard cutter that stayed at Wilmington called the Modoc. To us, that was the largest boat I guess we'd ever seen before. But, also I will say this to you, that in my early days like that, the train tracks came down Water Street and they would pick up the stuff that was unloaded on the wharfs and in trucks and all. They'd unload coal. I remember D. C. North, when he was a younger man. That's where they unloaded the coal.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, North-Smith Coal Company.

WEST: Yeah, that's right. And all that whole wharf area was goods that they put out, and the people who were in business there would come down and haul all those things away. But, the trolley cars, to go back to the trolley cars, before we talked about the beach — I remember what happened in Wilmington with the trolley cars. They had electric cars starting way over in the northern part of town on North Fourth Street. It came to Fourth and Red Cross down to Front Street. Down Front Street, these were electric cars, double lines now, and they'd come all the way down Front Street. The spur would come off at Castle Street and come all the way down to Castle and 17th. The straight spur would go on out to a point where, what was known as Sunset Park, and then they would stop. Well, in the meantime, at that particular time also, Greenfield Lake was a real fine spot.

INTERVIEWER: Before we get off the trolleys, I want to know if you ever jerked a trolley.

WEST: Sam, I'll have to admit I did. (Laughter.)

WEST: That was one of the things like at Winter Park. These came through Winter Park. They had a double track, and ...

INTERVIEWER: They didn't have the beach car line?

WEST: Yeah, yeah, the old beach cars going to Wrightsville Beach. And, of course, Halloween and nights like that — we didn't bother them all the time, but on certain occasions we did. But, see you could run the trolley cars either front or backwards, either one, and when you stopped at Winter Park to unload, you go and jerk that cord — pull that little roller off that electric line and everything went black. Or sometimes we'd put, I say we, we'd put some kind of lard on the tracks so when he puts his brakes on, he just slides right on, right on ...

INTERVIEWER: I thought you might have been, might have done something like that.

WEST: Well, I'll tell you one more about that. On Macmillan Avenue, about a block, the two tracks went into one, and then it was one track all the way down to Seagate, and then it spread out to two tracks. And the way these conductors knew that there was a car, that they could go, they had a real great big, round, hard rubber hoop, and they would get down to the bottom step on the trolley car, beach car, hold on with one hand, and put his arm out and get that hoop. He wouldn't even stop the car, he would get it on his arm and pull it in. Well, the car on the other side would not, until that hoop was on there, he would stop. He couldn't come in because he knew ...

INTERVIEWER: Same line.

WEST: He was going to carry that hoop down to him. So when he got down to the other end, he'd put the rubber hoop on there and that's the way they went backwards and forwards. So, one night out there at Winter Park, uh, some boys that I know (and I'm not gonna call any names) tied a rope around that rubber hoop, and tied the other end to that pole, telephone pole, it was standing on. And here came the trolley car, three people on it, the conductor stepped down on the bottom step and held out his arm, his hand was holding on to the bar on the trolley car. He got that hoop on that arm and as he went to step up backwards, that hoop pulled him, slung him out in the ditch. Here went the trolley car, (chuckling) down the way. Well, they never did find out who, which boys did it, but they didn't do that too much.

INTERVIEWER: Well, those things are interesting to recall. You went on to Wake Forest, and you came out of Wake Forest, when?

WEST: Let me say this before that. I mentioned Greenfield Park. Now Greenfield Park, Greenfield Lake, at one time had a pavilion built out over the water, and there was dancing going on. My father had an orchestra called the Carolinians, and I was a young boy at that time. I couldn't get out there and dance, but that was an attraction. We used to swim in Greenfield Lake.

Well we can go on back now to Wake Forest. I wasn't fortunate enough to have my family to help me go to Wake Forest, but I was determined that I wanted a college education. So, when I graduated in 1933, right in the heart of the depression time, my father, when I was, in November of my senior year, my father had a stroke at an early age. Therefore, he was never able to do his work in linotype operations for the newspapers. So my brother said, "I know you want to go to college. I'll drop out of school and I'll get a job," which he did. And so, he told me, he said if you're going to college, you've got to go on your own. So, after I graduated, I worked a year on the WPA forces at that time, and then I got me a job with plumbers who were building the first low rent housing project — the Taylor Homes on Third and Greenfield Streets. So I saved

enough money to go to Wake Forest College. It cost \$125 a semester. And so the next year I left Wilmington on a bus with that \$125 pinned inside my coat with about 16 pins, and I went and enrolled at Wake Forest. I didn't know what I was gonna eat or where I was gonna put my head down, but everything worked out fine. I got jobs up there and worked. And I worked my way through school and I ...

INTERVIEWER: I met a man one time that was asking me if I knew Wallace West, and he said, "Wallace and I used to wait on tables together at Wake Forest."

WEST: That's right. I not only waited on tables, but I was official dish washer for 125 boarders.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughter.)

WEST: And, boy, we didn't wash them in a sink. We had these old big tubs, galvanized tubs, about yea high, and that's what I washed dishes in. The two old maids who ran the boarding house — we didn't have cafeterias at that time — we just had rooming houses and boarding houses. They didn't want the soap you bought in the store. They made their own soap, the homemade lye soap.

INTERVIEWER: Made it in a black pot.

WEST: Now, you're talking about some split fingers, now boy, I kept them all the time. But anyhow, that got me through school, plus living in the basement for some doctors and keeping their yard and tending his furnace and all that kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: But you wanted to come back to Wilmington when you got out?

WEST: Yes, well really I wanted to go into medicine, but I had to go before the Medical Committee at Wake Forest, at the end of my junior year. You could go into medicine in your senior year, and I had to go before the committee. They went over my grades and my grades were alright, but they said, "How are you attending college? Is your family supporting you?" I said, "No." "Well, what are you doing?" they asked. I said I was working at the boarding house. "Well what are you doing at the boarding house?" and I told them I was washing dishes for a 125 boys three times a day, taking up dry cleaning and pressing and any other jobs I could get. They asked me if I could come to school next year, to med school and not work. I said, "No sir." I said there was no way, that I had to work to stay in school. And they said they had a policy there that anybody coming into medical school at Wake Forest — see that was a two-year medical school — that they could use all that working time and put it into studies. "We want our boys, when they leave here in two years, to be good students wherever they go for the next two years." I said, "No problem." The said, "But we still have a policy, and we cannot let you enter medical school." Well, you can imagine. It just shattered me, but anyhow ... I went to my faculty advisor and told him what they said. And I said, "I don't want to leave here just with an A. B. degree." I went back to him two days later and he told me I could do this and do that and come out with a teaching certificate. I said, "That wasn't even on my mind." He said, "Well you're locked in. That's all you can do." And that's how I got into education.

INTERVIEWER: That's how you got into education. Well, that's what we want to get into now. Let's get into after you came back here. You came back to Wilmington then, apparently, in the mid-'30's. You got out of school in '33 did you say?

WEST: Well, when I got out of high school in '33, I went to Wake Forest from '34 to '38.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. But you got out in the latter '30s.

WEST: In '38, and so I finished up with a teaching certificate in science. And I got a telegram three weeks before I graduated that I had been selected to teach science and coach athletics in Columbia, North Carolina, at Tyrell County N. C. Well, I didn't even apply for the job. Well, I got to working with kids in athletics and also in their studies in science, and the more I worked with kids, the better I liked it. And that was how, and I — but they told me when I left the medical school, that anytime I wanted to save my money and come back that they'd let me in. But I never went back. I just gave 40 years of my life in public school education.

INTERVIEWER: And probably don't regret it a bit.

WEST: Five years there in Tyrell County and thirty-five years in New Hanover County.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Alright now, when you left Tyrell County, and you came back to New Hanover, you came back here, tell me a little about what you did in connection with the schools and the various things you were connected with in the Board of Education.

WEST: I came back and a friend of mine said, I met him down there one time at Wilmington. And he was a year ahead of me at Wake Forest. His name was Rupert Bryan, and Rupert, we discussed, and I was working at the shipyard at the time.

INTERVIEWER: I knew Rupert because he was a friend of mine.

WEST: That's right. And Rupert said, "Wallace, I can get you the principalship at Bradley Creek Schools right now. They are looking for a young man," he said. "And I believe you're the man." And I said, "No, I'm enjoying my work, working on liberty ships." Well I left him and went right straight home and when I got there Mamma said, "Wallace, you got a call from a Mr. H. M. Roland. He left a number there." I didn't know who Mr. Roland was, so I called and Mr. Roland was Superintendent of Schools. So we chatted awhile and he said he wanted to talk to me. I told him I didn't know about it, but anyhow that went on for about three days. And so the last time he called me, he said, "Now I'm going to hold the job open for you until Monday morning." Well, Sam, I'm not going through all of those things that I thought about, but I always wanted to be an administrator, but I hadn't been an administrator, see. I just taught school and coached. And he said, "Monday morning at ten o'clock, I'll hold it for you." I called him on Monday morning at ten o'clock and said, "I'll take the job." So I went to Bradley Creek as principal. Within six months, well I was principal and then at four o'clock I became the Associate Coach at New Hanover High School with Rupert Bryan for two years. And, at that time, well when Rupert left, then I also was under Coach Leon Brogden for eight years as Assistant Coach with him. But, anyhow, so he said — I was doing two things. I was Principal at Bradley Creek and Assistant Coach.

So Mr. Roland came down six months after I was there and he said, "West, the Business Manager for the County Board of Education is leaving. I want you to take the job." I said, "Mr. Roland, I don't want to give up my principalship." He said, "Well I don't want you to give it up either. I've got it all worked out for you." And so he gave me another teacher to teach, I had taught two classes in science. Well I was responsible for reporting from the school. So he says, "You come down here early in the morning and do what you have to do. Then at ten o'clock you leave your school at Bradley Creek, come to the Board of Education," which was in the Courthouse at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

WEST: “Start your Business Manager chores.” And then at four o’clock you go back out on the football field, or the basketball court, or the baseball diamond and do your athletics.” Well, now this Business Manager thing, it included everything. We had a lot of construction work going on. We had new buildings going up. We had renovation going on. I was in charge of all that kind of stuff for ordering the things and in charge of the buses and the bus routes and the bus drivers and the whole cotton-pickin’ thing. And for three and a half years I had three full-time jobs at one time. And, of course, it was during the war years. See, I had polio when I was two years old, and nobody wanted me so ...

INTERVIEWER: So that knocked you out of the opportunity of entering the military service.

WEST: I tried everything. I tried all the services, and I even went on the first draft of a shipment to Fort Bragg, and they wouldn’t take me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. When did you get into, become principal of New Hanover High School? When was that?

WEST: Well, the sequence of what I did ...

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, let’s pick up on the sequence and ...

WEST: I was at Bradley Creek three years with those three jobs going on. And then, Mr. Roland wanted me to become, take a job at New Hanover High School in the Vocational Department, getting jobs for kids who were not going to college. It was called D. O., Diversified Occupation. And I thoroughly enjoyed it because I was in contact with all the business people in town in getting these kids jobs and making up their programs. And they went into the workforce rather than going to college. They didn’t want to go to college.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

WEST: And so I was that for three years. And then after that, there became a vacancy. They moved Dale Spencer from Sunset Park Junior High into Mr. Hamilton’s place at New Hanover High School. They wanted to move me to Sunset Park, which I did. I went, that was grades one through nine. I spent five years in that big building. I had to double-session three of those five years because I had all the kids from Greenfield Park to Fort Fisher — all the students on that end of the line. And so they built a new school across the highway, up on the opposite side — Central Park Elementary. So I took that school and I stayed there eight years. And then when Miss Annie Snipes retired at Chestnut Street School, uh, the superintendent asked me to go and take that school, which I did for a year. And after that one year, then he came and said, “We want you to take over New Hanover High School. The principal’s leaving.” And so I got into the principalship of my school in ’61 I think it was that I started.

INTERVIEWER: I know I had a son there during the time that you were in the school.

WEST: I remember and I remember your girl too, very well.

INTERVIEWER: My daughter too.

WEST: They were good students. And so I think that those were some of my finest years that I think in all my memory. We had a dress code at New Hanover High School. We had a Dean of Boys, a Dean of Girls. Boys could not wear their hair any longer than their collar, and they couldn't have moustaches or beards, and they had to act like gentlemen. And we had an ROTC unit that was the only junior unit in a high school in North Carolina, South Carolina, and the state of Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about it. I was in the first year of it.

WEST: You ought to know then. But that was the most ...

INTERVIEWER: The first year was 1938.

WEST: Yeah, that's right. That was the most wonderful thing that ever happened at New Hanover High School.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

WEST: At that particular time at New Hanover High School, I had the largest high school in the state of North Carolina. I had over 3000 students.

INTERVIEWER: I know. My graduating class was the largest graduating class. We had 345 in 1938. I want to take the few remaining minutes that we have now and want to see if I can't get you to touch on some of the contributions that you've made in your civic career in Wilmington, and in connection with the First Baptist Church. And what were your areas of interest? Let's delineate those for the minute. First Baptist Church, which would be one, Wilmington Lions Club would be another.

WEST: Well, I've spent 50 years so this all started in '45 when I joined the Lions Club. The Lions Club. I aspired to do the very best I could in the Lions Club, so in time I became President of my club, just like you did at one time. Then there were friends of mine who wanted me to go higher than the presidency. So the next thing was the District Governor's job which I served. The District, we had six districts at that time in North Carolina, so I became District Governor.

Then after I got through with the District Governor's job, I became, I became involved with the North Carolina Association for the Blind. I became President of that. And then I became President of other things in Lionism.

And then I had a lot of friends, not only in my state here, but in other states. In fact, when I was principal, I was the state president of the Principal's Association at New Hanover High School. And while I was there as Principal, Governor Dan Moore appointed me on the Blue Ribbon Committee to think about the education, the public education for the next 20 years to come. There were about 16 people and I was one of them who was on that Blue Ribbon Committee. I consider that quite an honor because we did talk about a lot of things that really we did in the years to come.

Then, so the friends that I had around the state and my boys, wanted me to run as — wanted to run me as a candidate for Director through the Lionism State Conventions. The state had to select the man they wanted to put up, and so I allowed them to put my name in the pot. And, I went out in North Carolina as a prospective candidate for the Board. So the time came for the next International Convention. There were 17 men running for seven positions and I was one of the

seven that was selected. So I spent two years, that was a term of two years, so I was on the International Board of Directors for Lions International for two years.

INTERVIEWER: Now let me, is there anything else you wanted to add to your work with the Lions Club? There are some other things I wanted to ask you.

WEST: Well, yes, let me say this. I have accumulated, I met all the leaders of Lionism through the years. I have 14 International President's Awards of Lions International. And during the late sixties, I received the highest award in Lionism. It's called the Ambassador of Good Will Award. The President, at that time, could select 12 men out of all the men in the world that were Lions. He could select 12, and I was selected as one of those.

INTERVIEWER: It's a great honor.

WEST: That was in '67-'68.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Tell me a little. How long have you been a member of the First Baptist Church?

WEST: Fifty years, 50 years. I taught a men's, a young men's, started a young men's Bible class, and I'm still with that class. So I've been teaching, I've been teaching ...

INTERVIEWER: Well I know you've done ...

WEST: 50 years.

INTERVIEWER: You've done just about every job in that church at one time or another.

WEST: Well, I, I tried to do the best I could. And then of course we've been married 50 years now. We ...

INTERVIEWER: You have been, you've also been associated with the community in other ways of a civic nature. Are there any of those that you'd like to ...

WEST: Yes. When I was in the Jaycees, I served as President a year. I didn't have many years in the Jaycees because, you see I came here when I was about 27 years old or 28 years old, and you had to, you "roostered" out at 36. You had to get out of the Jaycees. Well, I became Vice President and I became President, and I was awarded the Young Man of the Year, the Distinguished Young Man of the Year. And, my contribution to the Wilmington College, the University as it is now. I was asked to meet with the committee. Mr. Wilbur Dozier who was Postmaster at that time, wanted to have lunch with me. So when I went to lunch with him. There also was Dr. Hoggard, who was Chairman of the Board of Education. There also was Mr. J. C. Rowe who was the Vice-Chairman at that time. And so they talked to me ...

INTERVIEWER: You're naming all the school namesakes.

WEST: Well, what they wanted, they said, "It's time, and we want you to think with us. It's time we ought to start a Wilmington College here, but we've got a big thing in front of us, and we were going to ask you if, since you're the Chairman of the Education Committee in the Jaycees, if you would take it upon yourself to get your committee and your fellow Jaycees to do this kind of thing." They wanted to go ahead and go and have on the ballot that ten cents of every dollar

would be put into a Wilmington College fund. And also he said the worst thing is that this thing voting against registration means that everybody who was signed up to vote, if they didn't go and vote, that was a "no" vote at that time. He said he wanted me to work out some system, and see if we can't, with this "no" vote business, if we could get those people who could put in. So I went back to my committee, and they said, "Okay." I went back to the, all those. The end result was, we had baby sitters. We were hauling them right to left.

(Laughter.)

WEST: I mean we had everybody, the wives all in ...

INTERVIEWER: You were packing the polls, weren't you.

WEST: And we won it. And at the same time, the TB Sanatorium people wanted five cents and they won theirs.

INTERVIEWER: It's hard to realize that Wilmington College would have, be the source of what we have today.

WEST: That was my contribution toward Wilmington College.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's great. We have just about another minute or two. Was there anything else you'd like to mention? I'd like to see if you could think of anything.

WEST: Well, Sam, there's a lot that I could say, and ...

INTERVIEWER: I know you've been helpful with the Wilmington Executives Club for 40 years in connection with them. Also the Wilmington Contractors Association, and have been associated with them for long years.

WEST: The Executives Club and even when I retired, I gave my part time job to the Community College and Technical Institute. I gave my times as Stewardship Chairman to the First Baptist Church for 10 years. At the same time, I got involved with the North Carolina, the National Retired Teachers Association, and then also with the State Retired Teachers. And then it merged into AARP so I gave them nine years of my life.

INTERVIEWER: Well, in all of this, you couldn't have gotten along without your wife, Virginia, who we want to be sure to mention that that's who you're married to.

WEST: Well let me say one thing. When I took the job as Business Manager, and the first day I reported down at the Courthouse as Business Manager, Mr. Roland was showing me everything about my desk and files. I said, "Mr. Roland, do you have a secretary with this job?" "No," he said, "we have a part-time secretary." I asked who it was and he told me it was the head bookkeeper, Miss Virginia Leeds. She became my secretary and I married my secretary. I told, on my second date with that girl, I said, "I'm gonna marry you."

INTERVIEWER: Well, when we got down to the nitty-gritty, why you got involved in an affair with your secretary ...

WEST: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEWER: And you married her.

WEST: And 50 years we celebrated this year.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's a good note to end on, and I thank you for sharing these things with us this afternoon. I hope that this tape, which is destined eventually to go into the files of the New Hanover County Library, will be meaningful to the people who may hear it in the future. Thank you lots.

WEST: I want to thank you, Sam. It's been a pleasure.