

**VOICES OF THE CAPE FEAR  
INTERVIEW WITH DR. R. BERTRAM WILLIAMS JR.**

**MARCH 1, 1994**

**INTRODUCTION**

**This is a recording on the evening of March 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 p.m. at the home of R. Bertram Williams, Jr. on Forest Hills Drive. This is a recording of Sam Bisette interviewing Dr. Williams.**

INTERVIEWER: Talking about Wilmington and going to the days gone by, I think you were ahead of me in high school. You were probably about three years ahead of me, weren't you? You graduated in 1936?

WILLIAMS: I finished in 1935.

INTERVIEWER: You finished in 1935 and I finished in 1938. Well that's good.

WILLIAMS: That is about three years.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you living when you were born?

WILLIAMS: Well, my family was living over on Red Cross Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. I can't remember a lot of course, but then they built the house over on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between Walnut and Grace Street. That's the thing I can remember. I can't remember being actually moved from the house on Red Cross to the new house. I can remember my uncle pulling me over there in a wagon down 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

INTERVIEWER: Really!

WILLIAMS: We made that corner at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Red Cross.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a pull wagon?

WILLIAMS: Just a little plain old four wheel red wagon. That's my earliest memory that I have.

INTERVIEWER: Now, that's the house that was next door to the Jacobi House?

WILLIAMS: Yes. My father built it. He bought a lot there and it didn't turn out to be quite as wide as he wanted so he bought the next lot to it. He ended up owning two lots on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. That's when 3<sup>rd</sup> Street was a residential section. Now it's all business, but it was residential houses all along that area all the way down to the City Hall. There were houses on the block with City Hall. It was a very nice residential section with lots of big live oak trees out there that I couldn't even reach around. Those things must have been five feet in diameter. Back in the early days, the highway was not 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, it was 5<sup>th</sup> Street. So, the traffic wasn't very heavy.

INTERVIEWER: You know, I didn't realize that 5<sup>th</sup> Street was the prominent thoroughfare.

WILLIAMS: That was the one that the main Highway 117 came in on.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me, how far was Wilmington built out?

WILLIAMS: When you got to Burnt Hill Creek, you were pretty much at the end of Wilmington going on Highway 17. Of course, west, the river stopped it. At that time, there weren't any bridges across the river and we had two ferries at the end of Market Street, so they could cross at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the one that was a mechanized ferry and the other ferry was the one they skulled across?

WILLIAMS: I thought both of them were mechanized. One would go upstream and the other would go downstream. They'd hit the other side of the river, of course, off to the sides. About the same time, they'd load up and then do the same thing coming back.

INTERVIEWER: Were they cable ferries? Was there a cable across?

WILLIAMS: I don't know about a cable across. They just had motors.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when the bridge was opened?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I remember that. We were still living on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

INTERVIEWER: I heard it was somewhere about 1927 or so.

WILLIAMS: I don't know the exact date, but I was a child at that time and I remember going down there when the bridge officially opened. It was a toll bridge when it opened. I remember the cars all crowded there going across that bridge for the first time when it opened. Of course, you didn't pay a toll that first day, but then after that, it was a toll bridge. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street was not very busy, then. I had a good friend who lived across the street, Hugh Caulder. Hugh and I would throw baseballs back and forth across 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

INTERVIEWER: I moved to Wilmington in 1936. The one thing I noticed was that people ate shrimp and threw the hulls on the sidewalk. During your earlier years, what was it about the downtown section that you remember particularly? Anything of interest?

WILLIAMS: Well, downtown was the real center of Wilmington. A great majority of the businesses were located on Front Street. The traffic was pretty heavy and they still had a street car running straight down Front Street when I was a child. The headquarters for the beach traffic was at Princess Street.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's where the beach car left from.

WILLIAMS: They had 2 street car tracks from Front and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets, so a street car could go in each direction the same time all the way down Front Street. The great majority of businesses were located down there. It's interesting that now stores kind of close up on Saturday, but Saturday was their biggest day at that time. They would stay open the latest of any time during the week on Saturday night. They used to stay open until about 9:00 p.m.

INTERVIEWER: Did we have a business section in Brooklyn and Castle Street?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they were there but they were not near as large as the one down on Front Street.

INTERVIEWER: Did you walk to high school?

WILLIAMS: I had a bicycle and I would ride. High School was on 13<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets. I would even come home for lunch.

INTERVIEWER: The high school would have been rather new along then, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: Well, it didn't look new to me at that time as I remember it. Of course, Brogden Hall was not there and 13<sup>th</sup> Street went straight across from Princess to Market.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go to grammar school?

WILLIAMS: Hemingway.

INTERVIEWER: Hemingway. That was between 6<sup>th</sup> Street?

WILLIAMS: That was between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. It went all the way through the block but it's a park now. Hemingway, Tileston, and Issac Bear were the three grammar schools at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Who were your leading merchants downtown in those days? Can you recall some names?

WILLIAMS: Yes. The two big department stores were Efirds and Belk Williams.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, J.C. Williams used to be a director of PS&L years ago.

WILLIAMS: I didn't know him, but my parents did. He must have been a nice fellow because they thought a lot of him. It was after he died that Mr. Beery, Bill Beery's father, named it Belk Beery. They built that building, when I was a child, down on Front Street. Efird's was on the corner of Front and Grace Streets. Belk's was in the same block, but a little further down towards Chestnut Street.

INTERVIEWER: I guess your main buildings in those days were the Murchison Building, the Murchison National Bank Building, and the Trust Building on Front and Market Streets. As you came along as a boy, was that before the new Post Office was built?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They had an old Post Office which had some character to it. I think it was a stone looking building. It had a kind of steeple type effect on it. It was a nice looking building. They tore that down and put this plain ordinary building that they've got there now. We also had the dime store downtown with the drug store.

INTERVIEWER: That was still around when I came to Wilmington.

WILLIAMS: That was the east side of Front Street between Chestnut and Princess Streets. There were three good size men's clothing stores. One of them was Taylor, another was Frye, and Foy-Roe was the other one. Of course, the department stores had a lot of men's clothing at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know, were you told, or do you have any idea of when traffic in Wilmington got away from horse drawn traffic to automobiles? Of course, automobiles came on the scene in the early 1900's right around 1905-1906. That was back in the days of the Model T's and Model A's.

WILLIAMS: I can remember my father had a Model T and he had a Model A. My childhood took us completely out of the horse era and completely into the automobile era.

INTERVIEWER: I knew it did, but I just wondered if you knew when it phased out.

WILLIAMS: Well, it phased out during that period when I was a child. You could go downtown, between Water Street and on some of the side streets between Front and Water. You'd have what they called drays, a little horse and an open bottomed two wheeled wagon. In fact, the horses would be lined up along Market Street, I remember, because my father's store was on the southern side of Market Street.

INTERVIEWER: That was the question I wanted to ask you.

WILLIAMS: He was a wholesale merchant and he had a small store down on the first floor and then they had a lot of space on the second floor that covered the top of a lot of stores. You could go out on the sidewalk and that would be where the horses and their wagons were all lined up out there waiting for a delivery. The horses were not tied and they just had a weight that was on the ground and their bridle was tied to that. You just picked the weight up when you were ready to go and hung it on the horse's collar.

INTERVIEWER: Well now, that's something I had never known.

WILLIAMS: They had to and I remember on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Dock Street was a blacksmith shop that you could take your horse to.

INTERVIEWER: 2<sup>ND</sup> and Dock?

WILLIAMS: 2<sup>ND</sup> and Dock, but Water Street was busy at that time. They had all the waterfront on the west side of Water Street. I think they called it Nutt Street. It had warehouses on it and it was built around the water.

INTERVIEWER: Was Broadfoot Iron Works around then? Do you remember?

WILLIAMS: Ah yes, I'm trying to think.

INTERVIEWER: It's now Wilmington Iron Works, I think.

WILLIAMS: Wilmington Iron Works was one of those big ones and it is still in the same location. They were all down around the wharf because of the ships that came in and they'd have to do so much with the ships.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me what you know about the theaters at that time.

WILLIAMS: There were three theaters when I was a child. The Bijou, which was on the west side of Front Street between Chestnut and Grace Streets, and that's a vacant lot down there now.

INTERVIEWER: They still have their name on the sidewalk, I notice.

WILLIAMS: Just like it was at that time. That's the one that I liked to go to because they had the cowboys and indians on Saturdays and had serials on Sundays.

INTERVIEWER: How much was admission?

WILLIAMS: Ten cents. The second theater, the Royal Theater on the west side, was a little more sophisticated and had different pictures.

INTERVIEWER: I recall the Royal that was still around when I came to Wilmington. It was next to Henry Rehder's place across from the post office.

WILLIAMS: It was across from the post office. Of course then, the Carolina theater was over on Market Street between Front and Second Streets on the north side. The Bailey Theater was built while I was a child. Three were present during most of my early childhood.

INTERVIEWER: Were there Vaudeville shows in those days?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they had some.

INTERVIEWER: They were traveling shows, I guess?

WILLIAMS: I was too young to get involved in those, but I know that they had them.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been a lifelong member of First Baptist?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Your father?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was a member too. That's the only church that I've really ever known because I joined during my early childhood.

INTERVIEWER: Now, who were the ministers back before Dr. Blanton?

WILLIAMS: Well, the one I remember best back during my childhood was Dr. Kester. He was a minister for a long time. I remember he got pneumonia and was in the hospital real sick for a long time and eventually, died from pneumonia. Today, they would be able to handle that sort of a problem very well, but back then they had no antibiotics.

INTERVIEWER: Did we have a Sunday school building when you came along?

WILLIAMS: That building was there when I was a child. It has been remodeled several times since then, but the building was there. I don't know when that was built, but it was there when I came along.

INTERVIEWER: The beach cars left from Front and Princess, as I recall. I got into Wilmington two to four years before they took the cars off, as I recall, before I came here. Tell me about the beach cars, the access to Wrightsville Beach, and how that worked. I know we didn't have a causeway where cars could go over at some period.

WILLIAMS: Well, when I was a child, going to the beach was a big deal. Of course, we lived at Third and Grace, so it was very easy for us to walk down where the beach cars were located. Beach cars, as I recall, were a little bigger and longer than the regular cars that went around downtown. They had two tracks there, so you could get a bunch that came in while one was already there. They were all run by electricity, so all you'd have to do is reverse the connection with the wire above.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever do that?

WILLIAMS: I never did that. I never saw them let anybody do it but the conductors.

INTERVIEWER: I heard that's called "jumping the trolley" or something like that?

WILLIAMS: Yes, sometimes they did jump off if it was busy. The beach car went straight out Princess Street to about 17<sup>th</sup> Street and then turned to the right going south. It went down Park Avenue and to the baseball park somewhere in the region of 17<sup>th</sup> and Dawson.

INTERVIEWER: That was getting out toward the edge of town?

WILLIAMS: Right. Then it turned east on Park Avenue and went all the way down to...

INTERVIEWER: There are still vestiges of the car line as one or two of the shelters have been rebuilt.

WILLIAMS: That's why Park Avenue is so wide because the street car tracks were there in what is now a ditch or looks like a park.

INTERVIEWER: As you got downtown, I remember some of the stations because I lived at Harbor Island before they went off line. When I got here, they had built a bridge over at Wrightsville Sound where you could go over on the causeway. I think that was apparently fairly new at that time.

WILLIAMS: Well, it must have been new. I can't remember when the causeway wasn't there. Most cars would ride down to about where Babies Hospital was and there was a parking area there. They would park there and then get on the street car and go the rest of the way. The other way was to go across the bridge. It was torn down not too long ago, just before the present bridge was built. It was a draw bridge and you could go across and go up along the causeway. It had been dredged up and went down the center of Harbor Island. A big part of Harbor Island was dredged. The island wasn't there like it is now and it had to have a retaining wall.

INTERVIEWER: I guess I remember something about them putting in bulkhead retaining walls.

WILLIAMS: They're still there. They had a big parking area on Harbor Island and there was no automobile traffic over on Banks Channel, but there was a bridge.

INTERVIEWER: I heard there was a big building over on Harbor Island at one time?

WILLIAMS: There was a recreation building of some kind, then. I recall seeing it, but I don't believe I went to it because it was not my kind of a thing.

INTERVIEWER: I guess there was some action at Wrightsville Beach in those days? Especially in the summertime?

WILLIAMS: Well, I'll tell you the thing that I really enjoyed was the Lumina. The Lumina was wonderful and they had a children's night there in the summertime. We'd go down there and it had a great dance floor, but there wasn't any dancing going on with all those children down there. Kids really loved to just run and slide because the floor was so slippery. They would see how far they could slide. Sometimes, they had a movie.

INTERVIEWER: I heard about a movie screen being out in the water?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was out in the water.

INTERVIEWER: Is that true?

WILLIAMS: That's true. The screen had two big pilings on it and it was sitting out in the surf. You'd sit on the back of the surf side of Lumina in open wooden seats, kind of like bleachers, and watch the movie.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the street cars go up to the northern end of the beach in that day?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they had a track up there, but it didn't go regularly.

INTERVIEWER: I guess they used that as a freight track?

WILLIAMS: Yes, the regular run was to turn at Station One at Harbor Island. Then, the stations were numbered towards the south of the island. As I recall, Lumina was number seven. They did not routinely run south of Lumina.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, what were bathing suits like in the thirties? You were in high school and you said you graduated 1935.

WILLIAMS: You couldn't see near as much skin as you can now.

INTERVIEWER: Did the boys have to wear tops?

WILLIAMS: Yes, the boys wore pool suits at that time. They came over your shoulders and chest.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

WILLIAMS: The girls wore suits of that type, too. That was beyond the days where they had to wear them down below their knees. They did not do that, but they were well covered and two piece suits didn't come in until a good bit later and they were very modest. They just showed a little bit of midriff.

INTERVIEWER: Did your family have a house down at the beach in those days?

WILLIAMS: Not when I was a young child, but they got one a little later. They had a house in the southern end of the beach.

INTERVIEWER: What about some of the places on the beach down there? One of my first jobs was working for Lester Newell handling the Western Union and two newspaper franchises which was in about 1939 or 1940. What do you remember about the beach in the 1930's? Where were the hangouts on the beach?

WILLIAMS: During my college years for at least two summers, I worked at a place called the Anchor which was a little open type pavilion place with what we'd call a nickelodeon. It had a little counter with soft drinks, beer on draft, candy, and that sort of thing. It was in the parking area of the big Ocean Terrace Hotel.

INTERVIEWER: There have been several hotels apparently on that site in the past?

WILLIAMS: The Ocean Terrace Hotel burned. We were present when it burned. That lot was then sold to the Blockade Runner. The people of Wrightsville Beach bought the lot and gave it to the Blockade Runner.

INTERVIEWER: Now, that's coming into my time. I remember I was one of the people in Wilmington that helped to chip in to give Lawrence Lewis the lot that he built the building on.

WILLIAMS: That's correct. Didn't it cost \$20,000?

INTERVIEWER: Gosh, I forget.

WILLIAMS: We thought that was a lot of money back then. That was a big ocean front lot.

INTERVIEWER: Does the name Vadine J. Snyder sound familiar to you?

WILLIAMS: Well, Mr. & Mrs. Snyder owned the hotel when I worked down there. She's the one who really ran it.

INTERVIEWER: I remember that name from people of days of old on the beach.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Snyder was the one who really ran the hotel. Her daughter was there and she was married.

INTERVIEWER: You say the Anchor was there right near the hotel? I didn't know about the place called the Anchor. That was something before my time, I guess.

WILLIAMS: Well, adjacent to the Anchor, was a building they used for conventions. It was a wooden building and downstairs at ground level was an open room where they could have conventions. Then had an open area on the top where they would have dances and tables up there where people would go and sit. They'd also have parties up there in that area.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall any of the names of any of the orchestras? Wrightsville Beach was prominent for it's ability to attract well-known orchestras and so forth.

WILLIAMS: Well, we had Cab Calloway and I can remember that we had a real popular one called Bubbles Becker. He got his name from blowing his bubbles.

INTERVIEWER: He was sort of the pre-runner to Lawrence Welk. Do you remember anything about fishing during those days at Wrightsville? Did you ever do any fishing down there?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that was interesting at that time because under the Lumina were always at least two boats. If a school of fish like mullet was seen offshore, the fishermen would be called and they'd rush down there with their nets and put these boats in the surf. They would pick them up, take them down to the water, get them in the water, and float them with the oars. They would let the net out around the mullet fish. You've seen that happen, haven't you?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I've seen it.

WILLIAMS: Then, they'd have one end of the net anchored as they went out and they'd go around the fish and bring the other end of the net back to the shore, and everybody back on the beach would grab it and would start pulling them in. They got enormous numbers of fish that way. All of that is gone and I haven't seen that kind of boat in years.

INTERVIEWER: It seems to me that I saw an old post card one time that had that scene on it. Let's come back to Wilmington.

WILLIAMS: Another thing about Wrightsville Beach was that they had jetties. Do you remember the jetties they had down there?

INTERVIEWER: They were built a year or two after I moved to Wilmington. They sunk the jetties and drove pilings down and had them on both sides of the wall.

WILLIAMS: That prevented the washing in.

INTERVIEWER: What did you kids do for mischief in those days?

WILLIAMS: What did we do?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, we didn't live at Wrightsville Beach at that time.

INTERVIEWER: I know as conservative as I am, I did a little.

WILLIAMS: We did a lot of simple things like skating. The sidewalks were cement and so they were real good for skating. Occasionally, a root would raise a little piece of cement, so you had to know where all the bumps were or you'd get thrown. I owned a bicycle.

INTERVIEWER: When you went to Wrightsville, which road did you take and what kind of road did you go on?

WILLIAMS: If we were driving to Wrightsville, the way to get down there then was Wrightsville Avenue. There wasn't another road that went down there.

INTERVIEWER: That was the road that was originally Shell Road?

WILLIAMS: Shell Road, yes. That was a toll road at one time.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know about that. Where was the toll house?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. It wasn't a toll road when I can remember, but I can remember hearing people talking about it having been a toll road.

INTERVIEWER: Let's come back to Wilmington for just a minute. Did you have a little airport here or do you remember anything at all about it.

WILLIAMS: Yes, flying of course was in its infancy at that time. The field at that time was in the same location that the New Hanover County Airport is now. What we call Bluethenthal Field, was named after a young man whose home was here and he was in the Air Force during WWI.

INTERVIEWER: He was Arthur Bluethenthal and I remember digging into that story when I did the Oakdale history.

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was killed during the war. If you heard an airplane was coming in, you'd frequently go out there just to watch them come in because it was not a frequent event.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever remember seeing a Ford trimotor out there at that time?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that was the biggest plane around at that time. They would have shows of people parachute jumping out of airplanes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about the train station downtown and getting in and out of Wilmington on the train? The Coast Line was a real hub of downtown in those days.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that was a big way of travel back in those days. Businesses tended to accumulate around the train stations and that was true here in Wilmington. One of the big hotels, the Wilmington Hotel, was located just about a block from the train station. I remember the ticket office being down on Front Street, on the east side just north of Red Cross. It was on the right hand side and there was a large walk way that was 30 to 40 feet wide. The train tracks, at least five to seven, were backed up and dead ended into that area. There were gates all along that way.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. You didn't have a loop for the trains that stopped like in some of the other North Carolina towns such as Rocky Mount.

WILLIAMS: This was it. The trains backed up there and stopped. You went through the gate and got on that train. They had a mail car on the train, then. I remember my father, frequently, if he wanted to get a letter off right away, he'd go down and he knew a lot of the mailmen. They'd be up in the car working away and he'd just walk up, get their attention, and hand them the letters. They'd take the letters and deliver them to the mail car.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was in the days of railway express.

WILLIAMS: The Railway Express office was down in that same region, too.

INTERVIEWER: I remember Bones Strickland, who died recently, from the railway express agency. What was the Castle Hayne situation in those days? Was there an active community out there?

WILLIAMS: It was not nearly as big as it is now, of course, but there were a number of families that lived out there. Those that lived there then were mostly agriculturists. They grew a lot of bulbs at that time and that was their specialty. The population out there was quite sparse. I remember that Mr. Wilson had a store out there and the building is still there, but it's not Wilson's anymore. He was the brother of Mr. Boney Wilson, who was the one who started the Wilson supermarket chain. Mr. Boney Wilson's store was up at Long Leaf. He had a general merchandise store up there with a lot of groceries and that was the beginning. The present Wilsons, that we know from the supermarket grocery got it started and the sons, of course, have continued it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember, going back a little further, when was your first recollection of radios coming on the scene? Do you remember that?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I can remember that. My uncle had a furniture store and he got into radios real quick. I remember my family went to his house one night because they had to turn the radio on to listen to it. They had a singer, I believe it was, who was some sort of a real popular singer then. He didn't sing popular music, but he sang operas and that kind of thing. I remember that they would accumulate around anybody who had a radio because not many people had radios then. Of course, they got pretty popular after that.

INTERVIEWER: What are your recollections of the Depression period?

WILLIAMS: Well, the Depression was the thing that marked my generation. That was something I remember very much and I would go with my father when he was traveling around the area so I could get exposed to a lot of the areas outside of Wilmington. The cars then, were not near as numerous as they are at the present time. A lot of people would take the axles off of their cars and put some shafts on them, put a little body on them, and put their mules and horses to it. They'd use that for transportation during the Depression. People in rural areas got along pretty well because they could grow their own food. In the city, it was more difficult.

INTERVIEWER: How were the older people taken care of in those days? Was it done in the home, or was it done through other means?

WILLIAMS: Well, there wasn't anything then, like a nursing home. Every family of any size had an old person in it and they just took care of their own people. There were not as many two worker families as there are now. Usually the husband worked and the wife kept the house.

INTERVIEWER: Well, a lot of these old people were at home in rocking chairs on the front porch.

WILLIAMS: They performed a good job back then, because they were always home when the children came home from school. They were always there and it taught those children how to relate, what to expect, and how to get along with old people. They had their niche that they filled and they did a good job of it.

INTERVIEWER: When did you come back to practice here?

WILLIAMS: I came back in 1951.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come back to James Walker Hospital? That was about eight or ten years before the new hospital was built?

WILLIAMS: That was in 1951. The new hospital was completed in 1967, so that was about sixteen years.

INTERVIEWER: Sixteen years. What do you remember about the old hospital in your beginning days out there? Were there any particular characters in that group that you can recall?

WILLIAMS: Well, things were entirely different back then than they are at the present time because the whole atmosphere was different. It was not near as scientific as it is now because there's so much more known now. The technical aspects of it have changed so much. There's so many things like MRI's and CT's that weren't available at that time. The doctors had to rely more on their doctoring ability than they did on tests.

INTERVIEWER: Ruby and I were talking about this just a little and I asked her if she had heard as much about cancer as in this present time being a leading killer. I asked if they had cancer back then or what would happen? She said, "I don't know, they had cancer by different names. I think I had an aunt that died of cancer. Now that I think of it, I think it was called TB of the colon at that time. Consumption was a name for tuberculosis and different things." One of the doctors told the Civic Club one time, that they had one man out at the James Walker Hospital that was a jack of all trades. He said if it hadn't been for this man, the damn place would have fallen apart. Do you remember any characters like that out there?

WILLIAMS: I don't remember anybody like that, but they did have orderlies at that time. You don't see orderlies over there now, but they had orderlies at that time that filled a very important job and dedicated their energies to that profession. They would do that work for their whole life and some worked for forty to fifty years. The hospital didn't have air conditioning, then. The operating room in most hospitals was up at the top level so they could open the windows and let the air circulate through while they were operating. You wouldn't think of doing that now because of the bacteria in the air that would come in and would infect the wound. Air conditioning came along and you could close the hospital up and control the air.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you had some characters out there among some of the doctors. One of them was named McEachern, if I recall. He bedeviled my wife so much while I was in the Army that I was ready to run him up the alley when I got back home. It seems like to me that in an institution of that kind, you develop key people who are strong characters. Do you remember Beadie Britt?

WILLIAMS: I certainly do. Yes, I remember her very well.

INTERVIEWER: She was Director of Nursing.

WILLIAMS: She was Director of Nursing, and that meant she was automatically head of the nursing school, too. She was a fine lady and so was Miss McDuffy. I'm sure Ruby will remember Miss McDuffy. She was supervisor out there at night and she was just one of those people that her life was working at the hospital. She'd sleep all day and go out there at night and work all night. She got a little age on and had to retire and she's still living I think, but she's in a nursing home up in Lumberton. When the foundation opened and sent out a few brochures to different places, they got a letter back from her. She attached a little note saying she was in a nursing home and that she didn't have any income to amount to anything and didn't have much money. She wanted to give a little gift because she thought every little bit would help and included in that envelope was a one dollar bill.

INTERVIEWER: She had the right spirit, anyway.

WILLIAMS: She did. We wrote her back and the foundation sent her a cup which they were giving to most people. That probably cost them about 90 cents to a dollar as a gift. They still have that letter over there and they're keeping it because it's truly a treasure.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of your better known doctors back when you came in?

WILLIAMS: Of course, I was involved mostly with the surgical service and Dr. Roberson, Dr. Joseph Cook, and Dr. Graham was with Dr. Roberson, at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Is that Charles Graham?

WILLIAMS: That's Charles Graham. Bob Fales, Dunc McEachern, and Fred Barefoot, who later moved to Whiteville, were here.

INTERVIEWER: Which one of them had the x-ray?

WILLIAMS: Yes, Graham Barefoot, the present Graham Barefoot's father. He was the best story teller in the world. He could tell stories like nobody and he was just great. You'd give him a couple of drinks and he was good for the evening.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I heard through the nurses, because you know I did a lot of courting over at the nurse's home, stories about the hospital and imagine it's an interesting place to be. Well, I think that you have helped me put together a lot of the things that I wanted to get during the time that you were here. I appreciate your spending the time with me this evening to put some of this on tape. I do think these things are worth it.

WILLIAMS: One thing that I think would be kind of interesting, when I was a child, the Wilmington Light Infantry was headquartered in the WLI building over by First Baptist Church. They had actual firearms but I don't know that they had any ammunition. They would have close order drills up Front Street. They would, block the Third Street off, and this group practiced marching up and down Third Street. They'd come up Market Street, go out as far as Red Cross Street, usually turn around there, stop, and go back and forth. I remember that very well and it was always at night because most of those people had jobs.

INTERVIEWER: Well yes, that's something that had not occurred to me. Anything else interesting you can think of?

WILLIAMS: Of course, you think back on it and it's all interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me who blew up the Money Island? I heard time and time again, but nobody will ever admit to the big explosion on Money Island. Well, I've enjoyed sharing those things with you. I suppose we will sign off with that.

WILLIAMS: Ok.