

MEMORIES OF NEW BERN

DR. DALE T. MILLNS

INTERVIEW 1011

This is Dr. Joseph Patterson representing the Memories of New Bern Committee. My number is 1000. I am interviewing Dr. Dale T. Millns at his home at 213 Johnson Street in New Bern. The number of this interview is 1011. The date is September 8, 1992.

Dr. Patterson: Dale, I just want to tell you first of all that I'm delighted to be here and thanks for letting the Memories program come to you and talk to you. I know you're a part of this program, but you're very important to the life of New Bern in addition to that. So, let's go ahead and let me ask you first about yourself. Where were you born?

Dr. Millns: I was born in Toledo, Ohio.

JP: What year?

Dr. Millns: 1921. I grew up in Toledo and lived there until I went off to medical school, which was 1943.

JP: What school did you go to?

Dr. Millns: What's now called Case-Western Reserve University. It was just Western Reserve University when I went there. I grew up in Toledo, which is a big city. It's a city of 400,000 now. I went to the University of Toledo, which has also grown to be an enormous university. It wasn't so big when I went there. I finished my undergraduate work there and then went to Cleveland, Ohio for medical school.

JP: Where did you serve your internship?

Dr. Millns: St. Luke's Hospital. Of course, this was during World War II. I graduated in 1946. The medical schools

went on a twelve month schedule, so we had three calendar years with four consecutive nine month sessions of the regular medical curriculum; four years were compressed into three years during war time. I had my internship at St. Luke's Hospital in Cleveland and then went on active military duty in the Army for two years.

JP: What all did you do at that time in the Army?

Dr. Millns: I took a rotating internship, which includes time on all the different services. That was sort of what my military career was like. I went on active duty when they were demobilizing and went to Fort Meade, Maryland. That's where I was sent. It was an enormous base, but it was just becoming a ghost town. I was in a hospital with two thousand beds, and we had fifty-two doctors and only fifty patients! So, there was really nothing much to do. It was a matter of being bored and killing a lot of time. Then, they decided to let a lot of doctors go and maybe half of them were released early. Those were the men that had to go back in for Korean service. I served out my two years. The last year and a half of it was like doing general medicine. I did obstetrics for most of the year.

JP: At the same place?

Dr. Millns: At the same place, and I did a lot of OB. I was the only doctor delivering babies. I thought I wanted to go into obstetrics, I enjoyed the experience so much; but, residencies were hard to come by. Everybody wanted to be in a

residency and they didn't pay any money and I was married and had one child by that time; so, that entered into my decision of what to do when I got out of the Army. In addition to obstetrics, I did some general surgery. Then for a while, I was sort of the general practitioner to the people who lived on the base; so, I had a varied experience. I decided I'd go into general practice.

I looked in Michigan and I corresponded with some doctors there.

I like Michigan because my grandparents had a summer home there and we'd spend practically every weekend of my summer vacations with them. Anyway, on my way out I decided to go and talk to the people in Cleveland where I'd had my internship. They were so enthusiastic about the programs in the specialties that were developing then after World War II, that the man who was in charge of surgery at the Veterans Administration said, "Why don't you come here and take a residency in surgery?" And that's what I ended up doing. I started in general surgery and then at the end of the year, I decided that that was not my thing and changed to urology and finished up there. As I was completing residency, I gave a lot of thought to where I wanted to practice; the climate around the Great Lakes is a mean climate. You don't have much summertime and you have a long, long grey winter. I decided I wanted to go to a sunnier place. I had a brother-in-law who was a physician and was practicing in Rock Hill, and that's what got me started looking at this region.

JP: That's South Carolina?

Dr. Millns: South Carolina. So, we came down to visit them about the beginning of my second year of residency. We had such a good time, that we decided we wanted to live in the South. So, I began looking around, and I really looked at the Charlotte/Rock Hill area first. But it just really wasn't very satisfactory for a urologist at that time. I talked to some urologists who practiced a long time in Charlotte, the McKay brothers, and they told me about places in North and South Carolina. They mentioned many different places that wanted a urologist and mentioned New Bern, and then mentioned your name and your brother, Simmons. They said, "You ought to write to them. That would be the place to live." They said they want a urologist, and that's just beautiful country down there. Of course, that started it, and you and I corresponded. I eventually came here for a visit, and I was completely taken with the place.

JP: I met you at the airport and we went to my house in Trent Park and we had lunch. Alice was ill at that time. She had hepatitis.

Dr. Millns: I remember that. And we sat and listened on your phonograph to "The Confederacy." At that time, I really didn't know very much about the South, but you had just gotten the record called "The Confederacy". Do you remember that?

JP: Yes.

Dr. Millns: A phonograph record. It really is a beautifully made thing about the songs of the Confederacy and the

music and all, and I was just fascinated with that. The other thing that I remember is the literature that was sent to me, either by you or by the Chamber of Commerce. Included in the package was Miss Gertrude Carraway's book, Land of Enchanting Waters. I was just really taken with that. I thought that was a marvelous name. I notice every now and then it turns up in promotional literature again. But way back then she had a paperback book that was called Land of Enchanting Waters. I remember vividly coming in February of 1953 and seeing you. Then, Bill Bell took me on his rounds. He went to Jacksonville and Morehead City. I think three or four times every week, he drove the circuit and did all the radiology. He took me down and showed me those towns and introduced me to doctors and all. I went around and talked to several doctors who were practicing here; and anyway, ended up moving here in August of 1953.

JP: When you came Dale, what type reception did you have from the physicians locally?

Dr. Millns: I got a very warm reception with maybe one exception. The physician who was doing some urology wasn't particularly keen about my coming, but he was gracious about it.

He told me so. Another one who did some urologic surgery said he would welcome me; but he did some urologic surgery; and he planned to continue doing some; but that he didn't do any endoscopic surgery, so he would send any of that to me. In fact after I was here for maybe six months, he came to me and said

that he was going to give up urology and would refer such cases to me. So, I had a very, very warm reception.

JP: You were badly needed in New Bern at that time. The urological situation just wasn't covered, and you were very welcome. When you came, Dale, how did you find the physician situation and the hospital situation? What do you recall about that?

Dr. Millns: I must of been an optimist in a lot of ways. My whole medical career up to that point had been in the city of Cleveland and in the Army; big hospitals and big city. The hospitals, both where I interned and had my residency, were enormous places with all kinds of services. In coming to a community of this size, because I wanted to lived in a small community, I found the hospital facilities vastly different. I think good quality but different nevertheless. The thing that always sticks in my mind is the anesthesia situation. Like many things, medicine was changing rapidly, and I think anesthesia particularly had changed so much during World War II. When I came here, the only available anesthetic really was drop ether. There was some inhalation anesthesia with nitrous oxide, but nobody right at that time was doing intubation anesthesia. That came not too much later. That concerned me a little bit, because of course in doing renal surgery, you have the patient up on his side and I really had very little experience with only open drop ether. Then there were three hospitals: Kafer Hospital; Good

Shepherd Hospital; and St. Luke's, and it really was necessary to go to all three. All three really welcomed me and did everything they could to acquire the equipment necessary to do urology. In some cases we sort of made do. Another major change was that none of them had any urologic instruments. I bought all my own instruments and carried them with me from hospital to hospital in a physician's bag. As I look back on it, it was just amazing that I was able to do the volume work I did. I carried my instruments in and they would sterilize them and then I would go to work, and then, pack them up and go to the next hospital. But it worked well. Anyway, I had a good reception and almost immediately my practice started growing. A warm welcome from everybody. I've often thought about this; about my coming from the North, and I don't think I ever had any thought about coming in and having anybody think I was an outsider. Actually, after I was here several years, it dawned on me that a lot of people did think that way, but we felt great warmth from the people. Not only the physicians, but the community, the patients, people we met, everybody was so very nice to us.

JP: Dale, when you came, how many physicians would you think were here?

Dr. Millns: I was the eighteenth physician.

JP: It was increasing in numbers. And specialist were...

Dr. Millns: Just amazing! I think we now have 120, 125 physicians.

JP: That's what I hear. Do you recall who these doctors were?

Dr. Millns: Most of them. Of course, you and Simmons were here in general surgery; and Charlie Ashford, Sr.; Richard Duffy practiced pretty much surgery and some medicine; and Charles Duffy did general practice; Frank Hammond; and Franklin Grady. There was one black physician, a very distinguished gentleman.

JP: Dr. Holt, was it?

Dr. Millns: No, this was before Dr. Holt.

JP: Dr. Mann?

Dr. Millns: I remember those names, but it was neither of those. William Willis was here, Dr. Hollister, Francis King, Bill Bell, Ernest Richardson, Dr. Harvey Wadsworth, and Dr. Barker.

JP: These were the older ones?

Dr. Millns: That's right. And you know a very nice thing was I think, for those of us who came in, was that by and large, the medical profession was fairly open here. And I think that was an important thing. When I looked at Rock Hill, South Carolina, they had two separate groups of physicians, and that was the case in many, many medium size communities. They had two or three groups, and they were civil to each other, but that's about all. Fortunately in New Bern, there really was not any polarization. There were certainly groups that favored others, but it wasn't polarized. So, I think new doctors could come in

and find a place.

JP: The Little's came in too.

Dr. Millns: The Little's came in, and then Jack Barefoot; I think after I did, and the Little's about the time I did.

JP: And Ben Warren?

Dr. Millns: He had gone to Oriental.

JP: Dale, you mentioned anesthesia, and of course I'm interested in that topic. How long was it before anesthesia became what you might call suitable for the procedures you did?

Dr. Millns: You know, Kathleen Edwards was at Kafer Hospital. Kathleen had sort of been taught there, and she did a good job with ether and nitrous oxide inhalation, but she had no experience in intubation. Then Jessie Coats, at the time I came, had gone off to take maybe a year's fellowship and to learn intubation. While she was gone, Miss Lou Justice, a very distinguished elderly lady, was the anesthetist at St. Luke's. She was an artist with open drop ether. She could give it to anybody and do very well. So, that was the situation. Then at the end of a year, Jessie Coats came back and she could intubate patients pretty well. We then had intubated anesthesia.

JP: Now, Kathleen Edwards went away too.

Dr. Millns: Later, yes, she did.

JP: At Good Shepherd, this capability became present too. So a few years later, all hospitals could provide satisfactory anesthesia.

Dr. Millns: Well, the anesthesia was satisfactory. We never had any problems, Joe. They did an excellent job. Today, it's just so vastly different that we forget that it was pretty good then.

JP: I think the first endotracheal anesthesia that was ever given here, was at St. Luke's one Christmas day when Simmons and I were on call and some man got shot in the chest. There was no way to send him away because he was too ill. An anesthetist from Laurinburg where Simmons had been practicing, was visiting him. She knew how to do an endotracheal anesthetic. She came to St. Luke's and provided the anesthesia, and we operated on that man and removed part of his lung. If it hadn't been for Simmons' friend, we would have never been able to do that.

Dr. Millns: I remember that lady. She used to come and visit them every Christmas for several years.

JP: Dale, do you recall some of the nurses who were here when you came?

Dr. Millns: Of course I recall Dorothy Ritchy. She's always been a great favorite of mine. Dorothy was at St. Luke's.

Kathleen was at Kafer Hospital. I remember Mrs. Lewis at Good Shepherd Hospital. Mrs. Lewis subsequently became a nurse anesthetist, but she was a general duty nurse there. I remember her as a good hardworking nurse. Of course I remember the Sisters at St. Luke's; Sister Carmel-Joseph in the operating room, and Sister Frances in the lab. I was trying to remember

the name of the Sister Superior. Sister Fidelis became Superior, but when I came, there was another older woman who was the Sister Superior. She was a very distinguished and quiet woman. She came to her office each morning, and she would walk through the hospital but that was about all. But the Sisters were wonderful, and I thought they were hardworking and diligent. And of course I remember Helen Kafer so well. Gosh, she worked so hard to make that hospital go. She was such a brilliant, brilliant woman. She did everything and anything necessary to make it go. That was an uphill struggle for her. I remember Eliza Turner, the business manager at Kafer. She was sort of number two in command there.

JP: I went to Eliza's funeral when she died a couple of years ago. Dale, when you came to New Bern, you were practicing alone. Where was your office initially?

Dr. Millns: Over the Clark Drug Store, the Clark building. It was really interesting. There was not much available office space when I came. When I looked around, what was shown to me was very disappointing. But Sam Clark was a real entrepreneur. He ran the drug store. He wanted the offices on the second floor over his drug store to be rented entirely to physicians. He had some business people up there who weren't physicians. I told him what I thought my space needs were, and he said, "Oh, I can provide that for you." I said, "well, I don't see where." He said, well, he would just move a man out! A man who had been

there for a long time! Sam wanted a lot of doctors upstairs figuring the patients would come down to his drug store with prescriptions, so he moved Mr. Mohn out! Mr. Mohn had his hay and feed brokerage business up there, and he just told Mr. Mohn he'd have to move down the hall to smaller quarters. Then Sam had a man who did carpentry for him. I've always been interested in carpentry, but this man was amazing. He came in with a helper, and the only tools he had were a hammer and a ruler and a circular saw. He did everything with those tools. He didn't do really fine finished carpentry, but it was amazing what he did do. He built drawers, he built cabinets for me, he hung doors; everything with that small passel of tools, that's all he used. But he fixed up a pretty nice office for me.

JP: How long did you stay there in that office?

Dr. Millns: I started in '53 and stayed there until '60. It was about 1960 when Ernest Richardson built his new office building on Pollock Street, and I moved there; so, seven years.

JP: In your offices in those days, Dale, did you have separate waiting rooms for the blacks and one for whites?

Dr. Millns: Yeah, we did. That's sort of an interesting story. That really troubled me a little bit. That was something that was totally new to me. But I did in that office have a separate waiting area. I sort of went along with the local custom. Now, this was 1953, and in 1954 the Supreme Court rendered their decision on integration. Of course changes were

slow to come about, but that was the beginning, the following year. This is getting a little bit ahead but I joined the Rotary Club right after I came, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. They were a grand group of people and it was so nice for me because I immediately met a lot of people that probably would have taken me a long time to meet otherwise. But after I'd been here maybe a year, they asked me one time if I would, as a northerner coming here, be the speaker for a program, on my impressions and thoughts, about integration. I stepped right into it and I gave the talk. It seemed fairly well received. I'm no radical on it, but I had to comment as a person who had grown up unaccustomed to some of these things and what I observed upon coming here. I remember that talk so vividly! Well, boy I'll tell you, you talk about bearding the lion! I walked right into it, but as I say, they were very gracious.

JP: That's good. That speaks well for the crowd. Dale, can you think back to how much you charged for some procedures in those days; say a TUR, a transurethral resection of the prostate or a cystoscopy?

Dr. Millns: I remember some of the fees. I remember my great difficulty about this because in all my training and all my years in residency, no one ever taught me anything about the business part of running a practice. They certainly didn't teach me anything about it. I walked into this really not knowing anything about what to charge. I didn't know what other

physicians charged. I inquired around, and I was sort of amazed at the low fees. I didn't know a lot about fees in the big city, but I knew they were more than here. I finally established a fee of \$250 for a transurethral prostatectomy.

JP: What does it cost these days?

Dr. Millns: I'm gonna guess ten times that much. I'm not sure of that. I've been out of it long enough that I'm uncertain. It certainly would be between \$1,500 and \$2,000, I would think. But that was \$250. Office visits, it seems to me, \$5, and a cystoscopy, \$15. I believe that's right.

JP: Come back to work, Dale!

Dr. Millns: But you know we prospered, Joe. At the end of the first year I was delighted that I had made a living.

JP: Did you make house calls?

Dr. Millns: Yes, some. Certainly in urology there is not much that you can do on most house calls, but I made a good many.

Lots of times I'd make a house call that turned out not to be urological, but you couldn't tell that to people on the telephone. The idea that backache was caused by kidney trouble was a very common one then, and I suppose it still is. Of course the fact is that most backaches are anything but kidney trouble.

I would get house calls to go out and see people who were so crippled by a severe backache they couldn't get out of bed, and they just insisted that it was kidney trouble. I remember one of them was Mack Lupton, who was mayor of the city for several

times. Mack wanted me to come out "right then!" The poor man just had terrible spasms in his back. He literally couldn't get out of bed. But I did make house calls.

JP: How many hours a week did you work, Dale, when you started out? You were on call most of the time, I guess, since you were the only urologist here.

Dr. Millns: I'm sure sixty, seventy hours, Joe. I don't know that I ever figured it up.

JP: Did that persist?

Dr. Millns: For a long time. Partnership practices, as far as I'm concerned, are the only way to go.

JP: When did that start for you?

Dr. Millns: 1964. I was in solo practice for eleven years. I didn't think it would be that long, but it was. One of the hardest things about practicing medicine is necessary on call time. You never feel very comfortable, certainly going any distance away, if you have any real sick patients when you're the only one. Particularly in urology. There was no other urologist. Other physicians were not comfortable looking after post-operative patients who've had urologic problems. If I took a vacation, I had to try to get rid of all my hospital patients before I took off.

JP: There was no one in town who could cover for you?

Dr. Millns: Nobody who was willing to do it. They just were very fearful of bleeding, particularly after transurethral

surgery.

JP: You developed, then, a partnership practice. Who was your first associate?

Dr. Millns: Joel Clark was my first associate. He came in 1964. By that time, I really needed an assistant. Urology has changed so much. I did a lot of medical, that is non-surgical urology, which urologists just don't do anymore, but I did it then. I took care of a lot patients with nephritis and nephrosis and a lot of urinary infections. We put a lot of them in the hospital. Far, far more than we do now. I remember at one time I had thirty-two patients in the hospital by myself. But you see, we just put practically everything in. I couldn't do any male cystoscopies in the office. The males just wouldn't sit still for it with the discomfort that was involved. They all had to be put in the hospital. We had literally no out-patient surgery. Women patients I did in the office, the cystoscopy; but anybody who was very sick was hospitalized, and it was necessary. But it made a big hospital practice.

JP: When Joel joined you, did you stay in the Richardson building?

Dr. Millns: We did. We moved. Francis King had had a partner at the time the Richardson building was built. Joe Diab was his partner, and they had a double office. Joe Diab left and went to Raleigh, and Francis moved and joined John Baggett and Bob Holmes. They had just started a practice and had their

office out on Professional Drive. So, that office became available and we did some renovating and Joel and I moved. I was in the Richardson building already, but I had a single office; Frank Hammond moved into my old office. We stayed there until the new Medical Arts building was completed in 1970.

JP: That's next to the hospital?

Dr. Millns: Next to the hospital. A group of us got together and bought that land.

JP: You bought it from Reece Little.

Dr. Millns: Yes, from Reece Little. We organized as a corporation and built the offices, and then, we each rented offices from the corporation. Later, that was changed, but at that time, that's the way we did it. It was a big step forward as was the new hospital and all of the medical facilities together.

JP: And still there was just you and Joel?

Dr. Millns: Yes, until Reed Underhill joined us. I have forgotten how many years ago that it is. Joel in 1964, Reed, eight or nine years later. Then Larry Altaffer came. That was when Joel wanted to go away for a year. He took off and so Larry came and joined us and then Joel came back. Going back to the earlier years, the business of going to three hospitals, that was a very inefficient way to do things. I was very envious of the Beaufort County Hospital. That was a brand new hospital. It was just being completed about the time I started to practice.

JP: Where was this?

Dr. Millns: Over in little Washington, Beaufort County. I think that we all looked with envy at it and began to talk about Hill-Burton funds. That was the federal legislation that provided funds to build so many hospitals. It seems to me that they provided something like seventy or eighty percent of the financing. Is that right?

JP: I think so.

Dr. Millns: Along about 1955 or '56, the Kafer Hospital always had trouble staying in the black; I'm not sure they ever did. I think Helen Kafer and her in-laws and her parents put a lot of money into that place to try to keep it going. Then, the Atlantic Baptist Association thought they would try to build a hospital. Do you remember that fund raising effort? They organized a group and then decided they would buy Kafer Hospital and run it until they could build a hospital.

JP: This was in the early sixties, wasn't it?

Dr. Millns: It was earlier than that, Joe, because the new hospital, Craven County Hospital, was finished and occupied in 1963. St. Luke's Hospital closed in 1962, so this goes back, I would say, three years before that. I remember the attempts to organize, and they did raise some money. But the amount of money they raised was disappointingly small. I met with them a good many times, and I think they had the feeling that the Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem would support this effort, and I think

they did not. I think they had all they could handle in their own financing and operating a hospital, and they didn't come through with anything. So, it was a local effort, and they just didn't get the money. They did buy Kafer Hospital, and then in a matter of I would think a year or less, they decided they had to close. They just couldn't make it financially. So they closed it and sold off all of the assets, the equipment and all. It was a very disappointing thing. That left St. Luke's Hospital and Good Shepherd. We got along with that. It must of been after the failure of the Baptist fund drive that we seriously began to look into Hill-Burton. I recall a meeting at my house when we lived on National Avenue. My recollection is that between fifteen and twenty people got together; just people representing the community to talk about a new hospital.

JP: Dale, at that time, you were mayor?

Dr. Millns: No, I wasn't mayor yet. In 1957 I became an alderman, and I was an alderman for four years, so I think I was on the Board of Aldermen at that time. I would date this meeting about 1957. Anyway, I remember the meeting and talking about a hospital. I can only remember a few of the people who were there, but it was kind of a talk meeting.

JP: Who were some of these people?

Dr. Millns: Weren't you there? Simmons was there.

JP: I think I was there because out of this came a television appearance over on the Greenville station or

something.

Dr. Millns: There are a lot of gaps in my memory, but you and Simmons, and I remember Larry Pate for sure, and I was there. Beyond that I'm a little foggy. A lot of people I think of but I can't be real sure about; anyhow, the thing took hold. I recall our going to the county commissioners to talk to them about a bond referendum. You had to some provide local money for this. I think in an amount of ten or twenty percent. You also had to have a referendum and provision for a tax levy that would support the hospital. That was necessary. The two had to go together on the ballot. The commissioners kind of scoffed at the idea. They were not much for referendums. They said that it would never pass and they weren't interested. People put pressure on them, and I really think they finally said, "Okay, we'll have a referendum. It won't pass anyway." I think that really was their attitude. Well, of course, they had the referendum and it passed overwhelmingly. It seemed to me it was like nine to one in favor of the bond referendum. So, that was the start of the new hospital. I think construction started maybe in 1961 and it was finished in 1963.

JP: What was happening at St. Luke's all during this time?

Dr. Millns: I always liked the Sisters and I think they did just a fabulous job. They ran a good hospital. But there was no support organization like an auxiliary. It came to me after St. Luke's decided to close that they didn't have any community

organization that constituted a fund raising group for them. But anyway, they ran a good hospital. The new hospital was under construction, and I recall that the steel framing was up for this new building. Then about 1961 or '62, the sisters discovered that the floor had settled on the second floor of their hospital. The original St. Luke's hospital was built in 1914. That's the part that stands at Broad Street and George. Then at the beginning of World War II, they added the extension that ran back along George Street. And that was a three-story extension. As I understood it, that part was frame construction with brick veneer walls outside. I think at various times, probably when the Sisters took over, they had done some renovating. In any case, on the third floor of that wing the floor began to settle. It settled down like two and a half inches. They had installed a terrazzo floor back there because that was the delivery room area. They became very concerned about structural damage. Alarmed would be a better word because they were afraid that it might herald a serious building collapse. By that time, I was mayor. I recall having the city engineer go and look at it. Then, they had private engineers come in and look it. Most of the engineers said they felt there was no danger of any imminent collapse, but, there was some danger. The Sisters were very upset because, obviously, it would have involved a tremendous renovation to try to shore this up. The Mother General of their Order came down from their headquarters in Newark, New Jersey.

The Order was the Sisters of St. Joseph of Teaneck, New Jersey. I think that was the official name. Anyway, this very distinguished elderly woman, who was the Mother General, came down. And she was every inch a General, believe me. She was very proper; and I started to say pleasant, she wasn't warm, but she obviously was in charge of things. She looked around and went back. I remember on April Fools day of 1962, Sister Fidelis, who was the Superior, asked me to come in and see her. She said she had word from New Jersey that they were to close the hospital in two weeks time. Boy, I tell you, that was a real shocker! It would of left us with Good Shepherd Hospital as our only facility. The question was, what could we do about it?

JP: The new hospital was not ready?

Dr. Millns: Not ready and it wouldn't be ready for a year. We looked around to see what we could do and tried to talk them out of it and tried to explore ways of helping them out, and they were just adamant. They said that the decision had been made and they would give us two weeks, but in two weeks time the hospital would close, and that's all there was to it. The Sisters said they would sell us the hospital. I went to the county and talked to them and they said they didn't have any money.

JP: Did they set a price?

Dr. Millns: No, they didn't make any price. They said they would try to deal with us in the fairest way possible, but that was final. Anyhow, it was a lengthy story. The commissioners

said they had no money, and I didn't see that the city had any money in its budget. So, a group of us got together. In the meantime, I had written to the Mother General a long letter pleading for more time. Her reply was that she sent their attorney down to talk to us; us being the city attorney and the county attorney and I as mayor, and I think the Chairman of the County Commissioners must of been in on it too. This rather distinguished looking man from New York City came down and he just put the cards on the table. He said, "The Sisters will entertain any offer that you make to purchase," but he said, "they're going to be out of the hospital business and you better move fast." Our pleadings of "no money" made no difference. The upshot was that we decided to make an offer to them. Everybody said, "We can't raise that kind of money!" I recalled that when Kafer Hospital had to close, the equipment brought pathetically low prices. It was terrible how little money they could realize from selling used hospital equipment. So I said, "It doesn't have much value in a distress sale," if you have to look at it that way. So, I asked the Board of Realtors to appraise the property, which they did. They came back and said, "The property itself, the building and the real estate, they appraise at \$55,000," which didn't seem very much. I suggested that we make an offer for that amount. The rest of our group said, "well, nobody is going to accept an offer like that." I said, "I don't know where we're going to get the \$55,000; but anyway, it's an

offer." So, I called and talked to this attorney. Well, he was dumbfounded that we would make such an offer. I said, "well, we have decided that the only way we can do it on short notice is to go to the citizens of this community and borrow the money from them on interest bearing notes." He said, "I think it's a ridiculous offer, but I'll take it to the Sisters!" Their answer was "Yes," that they would sell for that! I think it was a wonderful, wonderful gesture on their part. I'm not sure they've ever really been recognized for what they did. They simply made a gift of that place to this community. They needed to be out of it; they were fearful and they couldn't see any great future for their Order here, so they literally made a gift. I think that people ought to recognize what the Catholic Sisters did for us. But they sold it at that price, and in a matter of a few days, we went to many citizens and they loaned us a \$1,000 or \$2,000 or \$5,000, and we made the purchase. It was written up so that the county would have ownership when they paid off the notes. Lonnie Moore, who was the assistant administrator at Beaufort County Hospital in little Washington, had been employed already to be the administrator of the new hospital. He was still working in Washington as an assistant. The plan was that he would come here when the new hospital was completed. So, he was contacted and came over and assumed the job of administrator of the St. Luke's Hospital, which now became the County Hospital. It was an interesting story, and I would certainly pay tribute to those

Sisters for the gift that they made to us in a time of great need.

JP: Dale, when all this came about and the Sisters left, did they leave in two weeks? You had to staff the hospital somehow. How did that occur on such short notice?

Dr. Millns: Well, Lonnie Moore came over. I don't remember that he moved immediately, but he came over and took over as administrator, and I think they left in two weeks. Of course, they didn't have much to take with them except their personal items. That's all they took. The way it was staffed under the Sisters, the Sisters had supervisory positions. There was a Sister in charge of the business office and I think the woman who worked under her, took over that job. She had been there a long time. Sister Fidelis did the records and Miss Kaleel had worked under her, so I think she assumed the record room responsibilities. Sister Carmel Joseph was in charge of the operating room. I don't remember who took that over; maybe Patsy Setzer. She came to work after the Sisters left. She had worked at Kafer Hospital, and I think she came to work. I'm not sure whether it was right then, but eventually she did come.

JP: Was Alberta Bagley McCosley there?

Dr. Millns: Did she come there? She was in charge at Kafer Hospital. Then in obstetrics, I can't remember who took over there. Sister Frances ran the laboratory. Then, there was a Sister in charge of x-ray. Dorothy Ritchy was already the head

nurse on second floor, on the surgical floor. I think Smitty Bartling had the third floor medical. I think they just moved people into those slots. It was a reasonably smooth transition as I recall.

JP: Dale, did the hospital continue to use the addition?

Dr. Millns: They did and there was never any problem from it. I don't think they did anything about it. They decided the floor had shifted from excessive weight, but I don't remember anything by way of corrective construction. They had the year to go; this occurred in April of 1962 and in April of 1963, they moved into the new hospital.

JP: Then, St. Luke's closed as a hospital?

Dr. Millns: They closed as a hospital. The county had a bargain on their hands; \$55,000 for a big building and they moved Social Services in there. Social Services had been in the annex of the county courthouse. I had heard the building was originally a stable. It was just recently torn down to make room for this new addition. After Social Services moved out of there, they put the tax listings offices in there. That's where Social Services had been and they needed more room, and so they moved into the old St. Luke's. Of course now (August, 1992) they have moved out to their new headquarters out on Neuse Blvd. One thing that did occur that I think was a very wise move on the new hospital was to change from the original 100 bed hospital, three-stories high, to a 150 bed hospital with four stories.

JP: This is the new hospital?

Dr. Millns: This is the new hospital. It was contracted for 100 beds, but the commissioners said when St Luke's closed, "well, eventually, we are going to build a fourth story on." So, they immediately added the framing for it. As I said, the steel framing was up. They added the framing for a fourth floor, and then they finished three floors and immediately started on the fourth floor, which I think was a wise move. Good Shepherd continued to operate until we were in the new hospital. The new hospital pursued a policy of total integration as far as the employees and the patients. I don't mean it happened overnight, but gradually it was in that direction. People then really didn't want to go to Good Shepherd. As long as there were beds available, they went to the new county hospital. The county took over Good Shepherd Hospital too. The Episcopal Church had sponsored it and financially it was always a very difficult thing. So somewhere in that year or two, the Episcopal Church, I think, gave it to the county and they operated it administratively with the new hospital. So, they must have closed Good Shepherd about 1964. I don't think it stayed open for more than a year or so, and then we had the one hospital only.

JP: Good Shepherd was then given back to the Episcopal Diocese?

Dr. Millns: It was kind of a complicated thing. In

essence, I think that's what happened. It stood empty and unused for quite a while. Then, there was a black physician who acquired part of it.

JP: Dr. Littman?

Dr. Millns: Littman, that's right. That was at the time Medicaid was beginning. He felt that he could run an obstetrical hospital there; a sort of an in and out obstetrical hospital. I think that his plans never worked out. He did do it for a while.

I think he did it mostly in what had been the nurses home, but that didn't last very long. I'm not sure just when it started, probably a little later from the time I'm talking about. It stood empty, almost derelict, for a long time until the last few years when someone purchased it and made it into a nursing home.

I haven't been inside since that was done.

JP: I think this went back to the church and the church sold it as a nursing home. I think that's right. We have that story from Mr. Faison in one of the interviews.

Dr. Millns: Well, I think eventually it went to St. Cyprian's Church. It was first returned to the Diocese, but St. Cyprian's had a Rector who went to the Bishop and asked for the property. They had some plans for it. I think the Diocese agreed to give it to St. Cyprian's, and then Dr. Littman arranged to get it from St. Cyprian's. Whether he bought it or leased it, I'm not sure.

JP: Before I forget to ask this question, do you know

whether the floor in the annex to St. Luke's was ever corrected?

Dr. Millns: I don't know that, Joe. That's interesting. With all these years that have passed now with its use by social services, you know, I don't even know if they even took up the terrazzo. Terrazzo cement is so heavy. Whether they took that up, I just don't know. Interesting question. Let me parenthetically add this. The Sisters were very, very, concerned. Understandably because there had been an orphanage; it may have been one of their institutions somewhere up North where they'd had a disastrous fire, and they were very conscious of the physical imperfections of their property. That made them very upset. At the time of my pleading with them to reconsider, Sister Fidelis who was a very gentle soul, she was very direct with me. She was critical of the community, said, "We've never had any financial help from this community. They decided they wanted a county hospital and passed a big bond issue and never talked to us about whether we would operate a hospital." So she said, "All the money went for the county hospital." Obviously she was disappointed. She was a person who was normally very quiet and always of a very gentle, happy disposition, but she obviously was very disappointed about that. It was really only then that I sort of came to understand that the community should have supported them better than they did. But you see, we were in this three hospital thing, and I think we all kind of took the attitude of well, how do you support one without supporting all

of them?

JP: I think you are right, Dale, when you say that the community never gave the Sisters the credit they deserved, and they deserve a great deal. I'd like to add to that, that you deserve a great deal of credit too for the leadership role you played in getting this new hospital here. You were really the catalyst for it, and people ought to know that. So, I want that to be down here where folks can read it. Let me ask, if you would comment about the progress of the new hospital. How did it develop?

Dr. Millns: It's an astonishing thing! Just absolutely astonishing to me! When I came here in 1953, there were eighteen doctors, and now have one hundred and twenty-five today! That just amazes me when I think of it, and it's not only numbers. I don't know who gets the credit for this or how it happened, but New Bern was unusually fortunate in the quality of doctors that came here, and along with doctors, the whole medical establishment. I think it's always been a superb medical community. It still is today. I look at communities around us that I think are good communities, but they weren't so fortunate in their whole medical establishment. They just never made it the way New Bern did. I don't know just how that all happened. I think this has to go back to the climate at the time you came here to practice and I did and Bill Bell and Francis King. Obviously, the time was right. The physicians who were

practicing were all middle aged or older. There weren't any young doctors as I recall. So, the time was right for new, younger doctors to come in, and fortunately the ones who came were well trained, good people. I think that each in his turn must have attracted other well trained, good doctors. For a small community like New Bern to have all board certified or board qualified specialists the way we have had, is amazing; way ahead of other communities! The hospital and all developed along with that. New Bern is a city of twenty or twenty-five thousand people, and to have a medical establishment like this is a wondrous thing.

JP: Dale, when I was with the Joint Commission as a physician surveyor, I would brag about the New Bern medical staff to all the hospitals I went to. I would tell the people about it and they could scarcely believe what was happening in this small town.

Dr. Millns: It is amazing.

JP: The hospital itself, physically, has grown tremendously. Would you comment on that?

Dr. Millns: I think it kept up with all of this growth we've talked about with physicians. Those physicians as they came, each one in his turn or as groups, had a part to play in promoting the expansion of the hospital and its many departments.

Obviously when we acquired specialists in certain fields, they had certain needs to be met, and the hospital by and large was

very cooperative about that. I think there were some notorious goofs on their part where they were not cooperative. One that immediately comes to my mind is when CAT scans came in. A CAT scan then was a terribly expensive piece of equipment compared to what we'd been used to spending. It runs in my mind that a scanner was about \$650,000 or \$700,000. That was far more money than anybody had ever thought of for a piece of diagnostic equipment before. My recollection is that Bill Bell and Bert Rowell, who were the radiologists, went to the administration and said, "How about considering getting a CAT scanner for this hospital?" They were just astonished and they said, "We can't spend money like that! We can't do it." So, Bell and Bert Rowell said, "All right, can we make a deal? If we finance it and buy the machine, can we install it in Craven County Hospital?", and they did. Of course, it was enormously successful. You remember those days when it first came in, it was considered an expensive piece of equipment, the examination was terribly expensive and there was all kinds of criticism that this was frivolous beyond any reason. Of course, it has become so standard now that you're almost negligent if you don't get such an examination. It really was an enormous step forward. I remember at that time, here was Craven County Hospital with a CAT scanner. I used to go regularly to a urology meeting at Duke. Duke Medical School sponsored what they called "Duke Tuesday" which was a program for urologists. Four times a year we'd go up

there and spend an afternoon and an evening with lecture and case presentations. Sort of an update. It was an excellent program, and Joel and I enjoyed going. We'd try to go whenever we could.

As part of the program, there would be presentation of three or four cases and then usually there would be a prize for what the group considered the best presentation. I had an unusual case of a woman who turned out to have a carcinoma of the kidney. We had done a CAT scan on her, and the enhanced CAT scan showed a little tiny tumor. It showed a tumor that you couldn't of shown by the traditional methods of x-ray. I presented the clinical history; the IV pyelogram and the routine x-rays. At that point the experts offered their opinion as to what the diagnosis might be.

The woman was bleeding. Then I said, "Well, this is what made the diagnosis", and I put this film from the CAT scan up. Well, the people at Duke were amazed. They didn't even have a CAT scanner! They said, "Where'd you get these?", and I said, "Craven County Hospital." They said, "You have a CAT scanner in eastern North Carolina? We didn't even know you had it." It was a fabulous thing. Anyway, I won a bottle of wine for that presentation! I think it's been an administration and trustees who really have tried to keep up or keep ahead of medical progress. The other place I think they made a serious mistake was when they did not agree to have an outpatient surgical center. A medical staff group went to them first and asked to have one built. The physicians said that they thought it was the

direction of the future, but the trustees said they'd committed all their funds to expansion of the bed capacity and they thought it would be six or seven years before they could consider it. Then the physicians said, "Well, if we build one, you won't stand in the way?" They said, "No, we won't stand in the way." So, that's how the outpatient surgery center came into being. Other than those things, I think we've had a very responsive hospital organization.

JP: Dale, in your own practice, you added more people to your group. Who else came in?

Dr. Millns: There were four of us. I started, then Joel Clark joined me, then Reed Underhill, and then Larry Altaffer. Those four continued until I retired. Joel Clark and I retired at the same time. Then, John Lasater joined Reed; and now more recently, a third urologist has joined them, Mark Doyle. So, it's a three man group now.

JP: What year did you and Joel retire?

Dr. Millns: Five years ago, 1987.

JP: Let me look at all of this in a philosophical way and ask you questions in that vein. Do you think, in looking back, that the level of medical practice in New Bern all along has been pretty good?

Dr. Millns: Excellent. I'd say outstandingly good.

JP: From the time you first came until now?

Dr. Millns: Looking from the inside, we were fortunate in

so many ways. I think almost every community has one or more doctors who can be bad apples. By and large, we were spared that. We had some who posed some problems but very few, and eventually they, one way or another, were taken care of. So, we never had to contend with individuals who posed problems like that. I know that you know, with the kind of work you do, that that can be a tough thing.

JP: This next question I'm gonna pose is one that is discussed a great deal and it deals with patient-physician relationships. How would you view that relationship in your early days in New Bern with the way it is today?

Dr. Millns: I'm not quite sure how to answer it. You know, Joe, certainly as I get older and probably as we all get older, we tend to hark back to our own earlier days and maybe be critical of the way things are done in this day. I guess I have some of that thought, but mostly it's hearsay. People tell me of disappointments they've had with their doctors or one thing or another, and I don't know whether it's changed very much or not.

I'm not sure I could really speak knowledgeably about it. My information comes from hearsay and what I read in the papers, and I think often times those are biased sources. I was mostly impressed during my active years that physician-patient relationships were good here. As some tangible proof of that is the fact that we almost never had any malpractice actions. That's a phenomenon of recent years. They have had some in

recent years, but in all my years of practice I never had the threat of a malpractice action. As far as I know, most of the physicians in New Bern were not troubled with that. The last ten years, I think, have been different. I know that that reflects change in the overall climate; but nevertheless, in the twenty-five or thirty years that I'm thinking about, we were totally free of that. I think that indicates by and large a satisfaction between the profession and the patients.

JP: Have there been any disappointments in your career as a physician?

Dr. Millns: Not really, Joe. I enjoyed practicing medicine. I enjoyed everyday that I spent at it, and I was pleased. I was happy that I came here. In my early years, I sometime wondered if it had been a wise decision. Mostly because practicing alone has its particular set of hardships. Maybe the greatest hardship is the lack of a colleague who really can sympathize with you and help you with difficult things. Unless you practice by yourself, I think you can't really appreciate that. But you practiced by yourself for a while, so I'm sure you know that. I think it was one of the great things of my partnership with Joel that medically we thought alike; and whenever we had problems, we worked well together on them. I can't think of anything that was a great disappointment to me.

JP: If you had it to do over again, would you do it?

Dr. Millns: You mean practice medicine?

JP: Yes.

Dr. Millns: I sure would! I can't think of a more exciting, wonderful way to make a living. Everyday is a new challenge and is different and I guess I like people and I like working with people. I liked everything about it. So, I'd sure do it again.

JP: Wish you'd come back and practice again. Would you, Dale, advise young people to go into medicine these days that came to you for advice?

Dr. Millns: I would. Absolutely! I think it's a great profession, and it's always going to be great as far as I can see. It's beset with some big problems in terms of health delivery, but look at the challenges, Joe! I think it's almost breath taking the challenges that are there. People are people and they are going to be contentious and there are going to be problems, but that doesn't change it overall. I think it's still a wonderful way to go.

JP: I gather from what you said, that your glad you came to New Bern.

Dr. Millns: Very glad. There were times when I wasn't sure I'd made the right decision. I'd say during the first five years. I think when you move from a totally different community as we did, there are a lot of things that are different and it takes a while to decide whether you like them and can accept them, or just what your feeling is. I'd say five years was sort

of the climatization period for us. We kept harking back to things that we had known; living in a totally different kind of community; a big city. I liked the big city. I didn't dislike it, but when I decided to go into practice, I did see some real problems that I didn't like. The main ones being that all the hospitals were very over crowded at the end of World War II. There had been a great hiatus in construction. So, I considered going in practice in Cleveland, Ohio and Toledo, Ohio. Those were the two places that I seriously talked to physicians about.

In Cleveland, I would have had to practice in four hospitals. I would have spent at least two hours a day going through city traffic. In two of those hospitals they had no resident staff, and that means that an awful lot more of your time has to be spent in the hospital. Toledo wouldn't have been the same situation, but it made me think long and hard about going to a smaller place where I wouldn't spend half of my life tied up in traffic. Anyway, that sort of turned my thinking toward a smaller community. I guess in all honesty I would say that I just like small city or small town life. I like the relationships that you have with people. I think it's one thing that has departed a little bit from New Bern from the day when I came, and that you remember so well; when you felt you didn't really know everybody in town but you knew an awful lot of people. And you had close relationships with so many of them. As we've grown bigger, those close relations with so many people

just aren't the same. But I'm glad we came to New Bern.

JP: It's nice to talk to a happy man. Dale, before we leave the topic of medicine, let me ask if there are any other things that you'd like to speak to.

Dr. Millns: There is. Last night I found my old records of major big cases that I submitted to the American Board of Urology for my board certification, you know, prior to my board examinations. In the American Board of Urology, the requirement is that you complete your formal residency requirements of four years plus internship. Then, you had to be in practice for two years before you were eligible to take the board examinations which consisted of an oral and written exam. Then, you had to submit twenty-five major cases, written in great detail, that you had done yourself in those two years of practice. You also had to submit a listing of every surgical case that you'd done in those two years. It was fascinating to me to get this big thick book out and review those twenty-five cases. I mentioned it because coming from a big medical university center, you know you get the idea when you've spent so many years there that that's kind of the center of the medical universe and that the big hospital is the only place where you see a great variety of unusual cases. Well, going through these twenty-five cases of my first two years of practice, the variety is absolutely amazing! It is the whole gamut of the field of urology.

JP: In New Bern?

Dr. Millns: In New Bern. And that was commented on many, many times. Going back to these Duke meetings, we used to present cases pretty regularly up there, and they always marvelled at the kind of cases that we handled. So, coming to a small town doesn't take you away at all from the mainstream of medicine.

JP: That's a great observation.

Dr. Millns: The other thing I would mention, are some of the people who worked with me who were just so great through the years. One of them was Margaret Kelly, who was my office nurse for about twenty years. Margaret's a native of New Bern. She came like a breath of fresh air because I was so green about the operation of an office. I didn't know anything, and when I got here, I hired some people who knew less than I did, which was pretty bad. The first year or two I kind of floundered, and then Margaret became available. She and her brother had run the Trent Pines Club. but gave that up; so she came to work for me, and she just was fabulous. Every doctor has to have a right hand in the form of a nurse who helps him out, and Margaret would do that. She ran my office until she reached retirement age. And I would have to pay tribute to her. Then, Kathleen Edwards came to work for me for several years, and she was good. I was really blessed with some splendid help. When Margaret retired, Edna Goodrich took over and was my faithful nurse until I retired. I think back to those years and how necessary it was to have those

people who can be of such help to you.

JP: That's great, Dale. We'll interject here something more about your family. We got away from it a little quickly. How about telling me about Jane and your children.

Dr. Millns: Jane and I were married while I was in internship. Jane came from southern Ohio. She had finished college and had come to Cleveland, Ohio, to take a job with Standard Oil Company. We were married there during my internship. By the time we came to New Bern, we had four children. We had four children under five years of age at one time. I see these young mamas today and I wonder how in the world she ever managed, or we ever managed, but we did. Youth is a great thing and it's wonderful to have the energy that goes with it. Anyway, we came here with four children. When we came to New Bern, we rented a house down on East Front Street. It was a frame house that stood right next to the Sparrow Daniel's house, the tall brick one that's at the corner of Pollock and East Front Street. Our house was right next door to it, and it belonged to Mrs. Estelle Babcock. She rented it to us. My reason for commenting on this is that right behind where that house stood is the new hotel that's being built, the Comfort Inn. That's of some interest to me because when we moved in there with four little children, the American Legion had what they called the American Legion Hut, which must of stood right on the site of that new hotel because it was behind us. The problem was

that to get to it, there was a driveway that must have left East Front Street right near Union Point Park. In other words, you had to go in behind it. Well, come Saturday night, they would have the noisiest parties down there. Then the guys who were going from town, I guess to have a late drink, didn't know how to find it, so they'd come banging on our door. "Let me in! Let me in! Let me in! I want to come in, I'm a Veteran!" We'd go down night after night and say, "Get out of here!" Anyway, that's where we lived while we looked for a more permanent house.

Then, we bought our house on National Avenue, which we just loved from the time we first saw it. The first time I ever saw the house it looked as big as a hotel to me. It was an ideal house for a family the size of ours. We bought it and moved there in January of 1954. That brings me to another recollection. That was Jane Stewart. I'm sure other people have talked about Miss Jane Stewart. She was the lady who helped everybody around town with their decorating. She was quite a character. We went to her and asked her if she would help us decorate that big house. It just seemed overwhelming to us. The whole interior of the house had been painted a drab sort of, my color sense isn't very good, but it's an ocher-pumpkin color. It was not very pleasant. Everything had been painted that; woodwork, the walls, and all. We told her we didn't have very much money, and she said, "that doesn't make any difference, we'll work that out." She was just fabulous with us. She came

in and she helped us with not only a lot of good advice, but she had an expression that I've always remembered. There were so many things that needed to be done and we couldn't obviously do them all then. She appreciated our position in that I was just starting in practice; so she would say to us, "Now, you don't have to do this now, but when the skin grows back, do this." I always thought that was a marvelous expression; bear that in mind that down the road you'll want to do that. There were so many things that she suggested, and eventually, we made that into a very lovely house and enjoyed living there for twenty-five years.

Our fifth child, Peg, was born here in 1956. We had a happy community life. I think of the years when I was involved in politics. My children enjoyed that. There are many things that are sort of fringe benefits of a politician's life. The children got in on that and enjoyed it.

JP: You have meant so much to New Bern in so many ways, Dale. We've talked about the medical aspect of your career. You meant a lot to New Bern politically too. You have been an Alderman, and you have been Mayor. My first question along these lines is, how did you happen to get involved in politics, a busy doctor?

Dr. Millns: It was really sort of amazing. I had never really thought about politics at all. This came about because of Charles "Skeeter" Richardson, he was Ernest's younger brother. Skeeter was on the Board of Alderman. I suppose about 1955,

maybe a term earlier than that, but in 1955 he must of been on it, and he was the only young man on the board. The board consisted of really, I think, all elderly men, at least as I viewed them at that time. That probably meant they weren't too old.

JP: Do you remember their names?

Dr. Millns: I only remember a few of them. I know Mack Lupton was mayor. Skeeter was on the board and he was a very active member, and he spoke out. He often times was a lone dissenter, the others four to one against him. It must of been in the late winter of 1957. The Woman's Club, or the Junior Woman's Club every year had kind of a dinner party for the members and their husbands. It was down at the old Governor Tryon hotel. We met down there, and it was on a night when the University of North Carolina was playing basketball in the NCAA finals out in Kansas. It was a very exciting time because there were a lot of hard fought games. So, everybody wanted to get home to see this game on television. At dinner we got to talking; and at our table, Skeeter and Dot Richardson were sitting, and I think George Ballard and his wife, and Kathleen Orringer, and I guess Teensy Hodges and Lib, and Jane and I. Anyway, we got to talking with Skeeter about city government, and were sort of critical saying, "Why don't you do more? What's going on?". Finally, Skeeter said, "Listen I'm a lone voice down there. If you're so interested in city government, why

don't some of you run for the office? Run for Alderman." He said, "What we need are some young people down there." Well, we got to talking, and at that time you had to live in the ward from which you were elected, and only the electors in that ward elected you. The upshot was, we all left early and went to our house to watch this basketball game on television, but the talk about politics continued. Before the evening was out, we decided that we would go to Bob Stallings and see if he would agree to run for Mayor. Then each of us in our wards, would run for Alderman. We made a clean sweep of it. It was really amazing. It was a lot more amazing after the fact because none of us knew anything about politics.

JP: Now, this made-up board was comprised of what people?

Dr. Millns: Bob Stallings was the Mayor. The first ward was Teensy Hodges. Skeeter Richardson ran again and he was elected. Then, George Ballard and Kathleen Orringer and Teensy Hodges and I. Those were the five members. The amazing thing was I'd never run for elective office, and here I was practicing medicine by myself. So, I decided the only way to win was to go house to house and push doorbells and talk to people. My opponent was Etheridge Ricks, who grew up in the Riverside district. I really hardly knew Etheridge at all, but Ethridge was a quiet fellow by nature anyway and I hadn't heard much about him on the board of aldermen. I started going out, and I learned two things in a hurry; that the only time to politic is around

supper time. You catch everybody home then. If you go in the evening, they are busy doing things and they don't want to give you the time or else they're not at home. And I didn't have any time during the day. I would leave my office and go home and politic for two hours; then, I'd go make hospital rounds; then, eat supper; then Jane helped me. We went to every household in Riverside. I just gave them my card and told them who I was and hoped they'd vote for me. Most people would just say, thank you.

Some of them would talk with you. Anyway, we worked hard. On election day I felt pretty good about it until I got to the polling place and Etheridge Ricks was there. What absolutely appalled me was that he knew everybody by name, and I knew hardly any of them by name even though I had called on everyone. There were about six hundred voters there, and I thought, "Boy, I'm sunk. This man grew up here and he knows everybody", but when the votes were counted, I had beaten him. So I was elected, innocent as I was about the whole process.

JP: Now, Ethridge Ricks was the incumbent?

Dr. Millns: He was the incumbent in the fifth ward, and that's where I lived.

JP: He had been mayor too, hadn't he?

Dr. Millns: Not at that time. That all came later. Ethridge and I got to be really good friends. Anyway, I got on the board. We did it with the idea that we wanted to see New Bern move. We wanted progress. Only those who have not held

elective office think that some kind of magic can occur. But it's the old case of inertia. It takes a lot of work and a long time to get something like a city changed so that it begins to be more progressive or go in a different direction. Of course, we quickly found that out. We had to learn about city finance and budgets, and a multitude of things, but it was an exciting time.

Bob was a good mayor. He was very knowledgeable. I think gradually we did make a difference, and it bore fruit through many years. I think the city began to turn around and look in a different direction. You have a lot of time spent in building an infra-structure, I guess would be the word for it. Anyway, we got a lot of things started. They had a limit of two terms for the Mayor; two terms of two years each. There was no limit for the Aldermen. When Bob had served his two terms, he couldn't run again. The group that really had supported him and helped him financially and in manpower to be elected, asked me if I would run. I decided that I would do it. That was a little bit different because the Mayor had to be elected over the whole city.

JP: This was 1957?

Dr. Millns: No, this was 1961. It was in 1957 I became Alderman. I was an alderman from 1957 to 1961 and mayor from 1961 to 1963. I was helped by a lot of people. That was the answer to it. I couldn't campaign the whole city. It very quickly was obvious to me that maybe I was getting in too deep;

trying to practice alone and do that job. The Mayor's job is one where you could spend every day and every night of the week doing things. There's a lot to be done. Every organization in those days, if they had any kind of meeting, would ask the Mayor to come, if he just came to give a few words of welcome or whatever.

But I worked that circuit, all the churches and everything else.

It was fun. It was something totally different. I'd hate to tell you the times that I had to tell patients that I had to go on an emergency, when in fact, I had to go to city hall for something! There was no way I could tell a patient, "I have to leave you for a while to go down to city hall and sign some papers." The other thing that comes to my mind and I think is interesting, is the Civil War Centennial, which we celebrated in 1963. That was the Battle of New Bern, which occurred in 1863. So, we decided we would have a big celebration. Cedric Boyd, who was really a town character, was the Director of Public Works. So, we put Cedric Boyd in charge of this celebration, and he came up with some real stuff. Cedric at that time had purchased a brand new garbage truck. It was one of the new kinds of compacter trucks. He was really proud of it. He came up with the idea that we should have a big parade, and we'd bring the Marines into this parade. Then, we would reconstruct, we would re-enact part of the Battle of New Bern. Cedric being Director of Public Works, sort of had his fingers in everything. And part of that re-enactment would be the burning of the turpentine works

on Union Point. This really caught the public's imagination. Cedric hauled an old derelict house from somewhere, a house that was scheduled to be demolished. He hauled it down on one of his city trucks to Union Point and set it up on blocks. I think he must of packed it full of light wood or something. Anyway, they had this re-enactment of the troops coming across Trent River bridge, and by this time the new bridge had been built; but anyway, I can't tell you how many thousand people gathered to see that re-enactment of the burning of the turpentine works. That was during the day. The other thing that we did was to decide that we would invite dignitaries from every state who had had soldiers here in the Civil War, which meant the northern states. We had very gracious responses from all of the states, and they had some representation, but the highest rank represented was the Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, who said that he would come for the celebration. Of course, inasmuch as I was from Ohio, we sort of rolled out the royal red carpet for him. He came for this celebration and the burning of the turpentine works, and then after that, came the big parade. Leading the parade (I say lead, they probably had a band or something), but Cedric Boyd had a two-wheel cart pulled by a mule that said, "Garbage Collection - 1863". And then after that, came his brand new garbage truck - "Garbage Collection in 1963." Everybody accepted it in good grace and it was hilarious. And then there were lots of other big things in this parade. I mentioned about children and how

much they enjoyed it. Of course being on the reviewing stand with the Mayor, was a lot of pleasure. We had a new Chief of Police at that time, an ex-Marine, who was really a spit and polish guy. Immediately following the parade there was to be a reception at our house for all these dignitaries who had come to visit. When the parade was over, the Chief of Police said, "I have a car waiting for you." My boys were with me, and he took us in the Chief of Police's car up to our house with the siren screaming. My children still talk about that great day and that ride out to our house for this reception. During the reception, the Lieutenant Governor from Ohio was very gracious, and he said, "This has been a wonderful day and obviously everybody has had such a wonderful time." But he said, "You know, having been through it all, I have to ask you, who won the Battle of New Bern?", which was pretty good, we were the ones that were celebrating on this day, which marked the fall to the Union troops. But it was quite a time.

JP: You mentioned two big things, then, when you were in politics and during your mayor's career; the hospital and this centennial. What other issues were important to you then?

Dr. Millns: We were looking for industry. It was during my term as mayor that we really struck pay dirt for the first time. The search for industry is a complicated thing. Bob Stallings, after his term of mayor, had gone to Raleigh as Director of Conservation and Development. I know that he worked hard to

direct clients to New Bern, and we had several who came, and several that were disappointments. They would come and look and we wouldn't hear anymore from them. At that time Stanley Power Tools came and looked at New Bern and eventually located here. Of course, that's now the Bosch Power Tool plant. But the Stanley Company of New Britain, Connecticut is an old, well established, really grade A industry. They've been in New Britain, Connecticut for about 120, 130 years. They have always made very fine quality carpenters tools. They branched out into other lines, but that was the company. They were looking for a new plant site because they had entered into a contract with J. C. Penney Company to build a line of power tools with the J. C. Penney label. That was the first industry that we landed, and that started during the time I was mayor. I remember fondly Bill Baldwin; I think that he was the secretary-treasurer of the company. He came to New Bern as kind of advance scout, and we had a grand relationship. We really used to see him fairly often. He's still living but quite old and feeble now, but it was a great relationship, and of course, Stanley eventually came.

I would say that was really a high point. The factory wasn't built during my term. It was started but it was completed after I had left office. The other big thing was the sewage disposal plant. We entered into two, big, big projects that were very necessary. One was the sewage disposal plant which was completed during my term of government, and the other one was the

rebuilding of the utility power lines that ran to Washington Point and to Havelock. Those were big capital expenditures. And they occurred during the time I was mayor. Not such glamorous things, but important.

JP: The public was behind you in both of those last projects?

Dr. Millns: Yeah, very much so.

JP: The sewage was being dumped directly into the rivers before this plant was established.

Dr. Millns: Yes. I'll tell you an interesting thing about that. When we were working in preparation for the bond referendum to finance the sewage disposal plant, we had all kinds of publicity things. As a physician I thought, well, we just have to show the people how contaminated these rivers are with all of our sewage and the sewage coming down from up state. The idea of dumping raw sewage is aesthetically very unpleasant. None of us like to think of that, sort of befouling the water. So, I said let's get the health department people to take some samples of the water all around New Bern and down around the river, and we'll show them how bad it is. It didn't work at all.

We took those samples and they showed hardly any colon bacteria despite the fact we were dumping raw sewage. So we thought, well, we can't very well promote that as a great reason, we'll just have to appeal to them on the base of the aesthetics of it.

Anyway, the bond issue passed all right. The other thing that

comes to my mind is the airport which occupied a lot of my time.

We lost our air service at that time. Now, this is going back into ancient history. When I came to New Bern, we had National Airlines and Piedmont Airlines; two airlines serving us. National Airlines flew North and South, and Piedmont was a little new airline that was mostly in North Carolina. At that time, Piedmont flew East and West, by and large. But the main traffic was with National, and they flew big airplanes in here; big four engine planes. They, I'm sure, were having some economic problems. At that time, the airport was owned by the City of New Bern. It's now Craven County, but it was New Bern. The mayor was the chairman of the airport commission. We received this news that National Airlines planned to abandon us. I got some real lessons in Washington, D.C. politics; again, kind of a babe in the woods. I went up there to plead our case for continuation of our air services. I went to the FAA which is a huge building that has many, many people there. They are very nice to you. They treat you like visiting royalty, and they are very sympathetic, "Oh, we'll do everything we can for you." Then you find out, they don't tell you any truth. They don't do anything they say they're going to do. You then go and visit your Congressman and you visit your Senator. You don't get to see them usually, you get to see the administrative assistant. And you go through all the same promises, and you come away thinking, "What wonderful representatives we have! They're going to really

take care of us!" Well, in every case, they didn't take care of us at all, and we lost our National Airlines service eventually. Piedmont sort of filled in and we had continued air service. But I don't know how many times I went back and forth to Washington, D. C. pleading our case for that. In all of these things, I must say, they were great learning experiences. I had nothing in my background to prepare me for them. The other thing that I recall as I talk that was quite an experience, and this reflects the sort of the small town back ground, but going back to the sewage disposal plant system, the bond issue was passed. When the bonds are issued, some official has to go up to New York City to sign all the bonds. So, Eddie Russell, who was the City Clerk, and I went to New York City to sign all of these bonds. Now, this was a million dollar bond issue, which for us at that time, we thought was pretty big stuff. On the way up we thought, well, I wonder if they have any little ceremony or something; you know, you go in to sign all of these bonds. We'd been told that you go to a company down on Wall Street that does nothing but issue bonds. Of course you know blase New York City, a million dollar bond issue - Blah! That was of so little consequence to them. We went in this place where the building was about four or five stories high. It wasn't very wide. The first two floors were offices, and then when you got upstairs, they literally had four wheeled hand carts with piles of bonds. The bonds were in sheets. As I recall, maybe twenty bonds all joined together in a

sheet, perforated, but stacked up on these hand carts. There were tens of millions of dollars worth! There were lots of people on that given day signing bonds. So, here came Eddie Russell and I from the City of New Bern, and they said, "Oh yes, you go back in that corner over there." They were very nice to us. You sit and you have a pen that signs your name. You write your name and it copies it, I guess a pentagraph, it copies it on twenty other bonds as you write. So each time you write your name, it signs twenty bonds. But New York City wasn't a bit interested in our coming or going, but we thought it was a pretty big deal.

JP: Dale, you mentioned earlier something about city managers.

Dr. Millns: When we went in office, the city manager, we felt, was really not sympathetic to our board or to what we were trying to accomplish. We felt that he kind of dragged his feet on a lot of things. He didn't come around to our thinking and we finally decided that he would have to go and that we would have to get a new city manager. And eventually he did resign, and we employed a new city manager. I think he was the man that tragically committed suicide. He had some problems that we didn't appreciate. He was an awfully nice man. I believe he was the man. He did a good job as city manager and it came as a terrible shock to us when this happened. The Chief of Police had reached retirement age, but he didn't want to retire. That was

Ed Belangia. I think he'd been a good Chief of Police, and he had become Chief of Police in the days when the chief was elected. So, he was used to campaigning, and he had a tremendous following. We felt the police department needed to be modernized and had to have a different image than they had. A particular issue, was professional gambling in New Bern. It was alleged that there was a lot of professional gambling. I say alleged because I never really saw great evidence of it. But some alderman said that they had complaints about this professional gambling and that it was crooked and that it was tolerated by the police department, and that was the major issue. As I say, I know it only by hearsay, and I came to think later, well, obviously gambling is a vice where you always hear from the losers. You hear from losers as far as complaints. You never hear it from the people who enjoy it and apparently win money. I think it was that kind of situation. It maybe wasn't as big an issue as was made of at the time. But that was one of the main reasons for revamping the police department.

JP: When you came to New Bern, the Neuse River bridge had already been established.

Dr. Millns: The Neuse River bridge was finished, and the Trent River bridge was being built.

JP: But Broad Street had not been widened at that time?

Dr. Millns: No.

JP: This was an issue that came up during your political

career. Would you comment on that issue and the public's reaction to it?

Dr. Millns: It became a very hot issue at the time. The Neuse River bridge, if I'm right in my recollection, had been completed in 1951. When we moved here we lived down on East Front Street. When I came to visit in February 1953, the old bridge was still in use and continued to be in use. When we moved in August, I remember all of the pilings were in place for the new bridge and they were just beginning to deck it. So, it must of been later that year that the new bridge opened. I don't think anyone appreciated the terrible traffic problems that those two bridges were creating. At first, it didn't seem to be too much of a problem, but it rapidly became a problem. The state highway department said that Broad Street had to be widened. It couldn't accommodate the traffic. The first thing they did, they took all the parking off of it. Then eventually, they went through with the widening process. What people really don't remember, and you've heard this probably more often than I have, but they say, "Oh, I remember when Broad Street was a beautiful tree shaded street." Not in 1957, it was not! By that time, most of the trees had already been cut or destroyed by hurricanes. They'd been cut to make room for parking. The street had been widened. It was more than two lanes; but anyhow, it was not a beautiful tree shaded street in 1957. People's

memories are fooling them, and the big shade trees went back to an earlier time. The volume of traffic coming over that bridge was on all Broad Street and it was a bit of a mess. There were some big trees left that certainly were removed, but it was the state highway department that said, "this has to be done," and we went along with it. I think the violent reaction all came after, when people saw how much it was being widened. According to federal specifications there had to be concrete medians down the middle and left turn lanes and no parking on the street. Really what happened was that it was a bad choice for the location of the bridge in the first place. We said, "Well, when the bridge was put there, it was a foregone conclusion that you had to accommodate the traffic. Who wanted the bridge there?" Well, you can't find a soul that wanted that bridge put there! And yet it was put there because of local political influence. It was one of those situations where no one was going to own up to it once the fact was accomplished and the problems were produced. So, I remember it very well.

JP: The trees had been also damaged by the hurricanes of the fifties.

Dr. Millns: Yes, they must have been. I forgot to even mention about the hurricanes. They were terrible ravages. Of course, the bad ones were before I was involved in politics in 1955. Let me ask you, Joe, you remember Broad Street. In those years, do you remember it as a treelined, beautiful street?

JP: I have a vague memory of that as a beautiful street, yes.

Dr. Millns: But I bet your memories are going back further.

JP: Way back.

Dr. Millns: Way back to your childhood years.

JP: Yes. I was away from New Bern for many of the intervening years.

Dr. Millns: But when you came back to New Bern, do you remember it as a treelined street?

JP: No.

Dr. Millns: It was not then. It was really a rather ugly street with gas stations on every corner. It had become a strip development.

JP: I was interested in learning that the bridge had been in operation some time before the street was really widened to accommodate the traffic. Can you think of any other controversial issues in your political career as mayor or as alderman pertaining to officials or anything else?

Dr. Millns: I do remember one thing that was sort of amusing. I keep referring to the fact that I was sort of naive in politics, and I certainly was, and I walked right into this one. That had to do with the fire department. We had this all, literally all, volunteer fire department. It's probably still this way but not as much as it was back in those years. It was a big organization with about 130 volunteers. They had a few paid

firemen who only drove the trucks. Every year they changed fire chiefs. The Rating Bureau of the State of North Carolina, Insurance Rating Bureau, didn't like this system at all. They came down periodically and said, "you need to change the system of operating your fire department; you need more paid firemen; you need a lot of different things." About the time I became mayor, this became an issue again. We had a visit from the representative of the fire insurance rating bureau, and he made a threat. He said, "We're going to increase all of the fire insurance rates for New Bern unless you make some changes in your fire department." The changes they wanted were: more paid firemen, and a fire chief who didn't change every year. They said, "You just can't build an organization with a different fire chief, who basically is not a professional." That made sense. Why shouldn't we do it differently? Well, I didn't realize what a wild thing that was going to turn into. The firemen didn't want anybody tampering with the fire department! I didn't really tamper with it except to talk about it in some meetings at the Board of Alderman and say that we need to consider these recommendations because it is going to cost everybody more money for their fire insurance. There was some static about it; how much money is it going to cost? Well, the insurance people get very vague about that because they didn't want to say in dollars and cents. Anyway about that time, the firemen issued an invitation for me to come and meet with them. I thought, well,

that's great, we can sit down and we can talk together about this. I was to meet them at the fire house on a given evening. I can remember it yet. I didn't realize how big a crowd 130 firemen is. I walked right in and they welcomed me downstairs and then took me upstairs, and that hall was jammed packed with every firemen who was active and or had ever been active. And guess who was their spokesman? Libby Ward! And I was on the hot seat! Old Libby really put it to me about what I wanted to do to their fire department. I went, wow!, how do you get out of this?

I defended myself as best I could, but I walked off a loser from that one. I thought, "Boy, I'm not about to tackle this whole crowd and change the whole system." It eventually boiled down to the fact that we could never get an answer out of this fire rating bureau as to when they would do this and how much money it would cost everybody. So, we left it alone.

JP: What happened?

Dr. Millns: Nothing. Gradually it has evolved over the years. They still, as far as I know, change the chief every year. They have the two companies. It's just like going up through the chairs in a lodge, I think, and eventually you reach an officer status, and the next year you're a chief, and then this company elects a chief for the next year. They have a much larger paid fire department now; I'm not sure how many. The last time I paid attention to it they had 35 or 40 paid firemen. I don't how many volunteers there are.

JP: The Atlantic and Button companies have continued as separate entities.

Dr. Millns: Yes they do. It still has that sort of a fraternity spirit to it, which I think is okay. I think the fire department has operated very well. When I got into city government, I very much had the feeling, and I think this is true, that it's a very costly way to run a fire department. They used to make a lot of the fact that if you had a fully paid fire department, it would cost you so much money. The fact of the matter is, it cost you a lot of money to support the volunteer fire department. They thought everyone of them should have a radio transmitter or radio receivers of their own, a short wave radio, because that's the way they got the fire signal. They all wanted uniforms and firemen's coats and boots and I don't know what all, but it was a substantial amount of money. The numbers were too large. A city this size didn't need 140 volunteers.

JP: Did the issue of renaming city streets come up?

Dr. Millns: Oh, yes it did. I'd forgotten all about that. We thought that was a bright idea too, but we got our tails burned and we backed off from that in a hurry. That provoked more rancor than I ever could have guessed. It must of started with maybe one or two requests to change street names. Then somebody, and I might of been the culprit, who looked around and said we have a lot of streets where one street has three different names and we ought to straighten all that out. So, we

proposed this list of street name changes. I never dreamed it would provoke so much protest. But we backed off completely from that too.

JP: Well, some streets were renamed. Short Street, for example.

Dr. Millns: Yes. Along the way one or two at a time might be renamed. I think that's how that came about. Was Short Street changed to Linden?

JP: Correct.

Dr. Millns: But there was one called Muddy Street and they changed that. That was before my time. It seems to me that maybe Genevieve Dunn was the one who told me about Muddy Street. She always thought that was an interesting name.

JP: When you were involved in politics as the mayor, were there any disasters that the city had to face; hurricanes or fires?

Dr. Millns: No, there really were not. No major hurricanes that I recall. The bad ones were in 1955. I guess we haven't really had a serious one since then. We've had some threats but they didn't amount to anything.

JP: So, you didn't have to face that. Were there any other issues or any other memories about your political career you would like to speak to?

Dr. Millns: Tryon Palace has always been an interest of mine. The mayor is an ex-officio member of the Commission, so I

came closely in contact with the Tryon Palace Commission during my term as mayor and enjoyed it. I had some contact when I was alderman because it was during the time that I was alderman the Palace was reopened in 1959. I really enjoyed getting to know the people on the commission at that time. I came to know Mr. and Mrs. Kellenberger and I enjoyed knowing them very much. That relationship continued long after I was mayor. We would see them occasionally and be entertained by them or had them for dinner sometimes. I really enjoyed our friendship, and came to appreciate more and more the wonderful gift to this community that Tryon Palace is. I remember the grumbling in those days. People grumbled, "What purpose is that going to serve?" "Why waste all that money on that old palace?" "Why don't they give us a new hospital?", or "Why didn't they give us a school?" You may have heard that. It was a frequently voiced complaint. I think only today it's coming to be truly appreciated for what it is. It's a far reaching influence on this community.

JP: Now Mrs. Kellenberger was the head of the Commission when you were mayor.

Dr. Millns: That's correct. Her husband, John Kellenberger, was the treasurer and finance officer. They both were interesting people to know. As I look back, they were really marvelous in their dedication to the palace and in the amount of their own money that they spent. Not just what they left when they died, but they spent enormous amounts of money

during their lifetime. Twice a year the Commission would meet here, and they personally picked up all the cost of those Commission meetings. Mrs. Latham had caused to be written into the legislation that established the Tryon Palace Commission through the state legislature, that no commission member will ever benefit financially from association with the Commission. They could not be paid anything. There are no financial perks that go with the job. So, to belong to the Commission, really costs you money. You don't gain anything monetarily. But in the years that they were alive, they'd always have this big elegant banquet for each of the meetings; spring and fall, and in those years always at the Governor Tryon Hotel. They would have certainly a hundred people and probably more than that. They picked up the tab for the whole thing, and they didn't make anything of it. But they did those things.

JP: After Mrs. Kellenberger stepped down, Bob Stallings became the chairman. Did you continue on as a member of the commission?

Dr. Millns: No. I was named a member of the Commission by Governor Martin. I think I've been on the Commission six or seven years now. I'm not sure.

JP: You're on it now?

Dr. Millns: I'm on it now. I was on as ex-officio member when I was mayor of the city, just for that two year period. Then I was not on again until 1986 when I was named to the

Commission. I'm now the treasurer and finance officer and have been for three or four years.

JP: Is there an executive committee on the Commission?

Dr. Millns: The executive committee consists of the elected officers; the chairman, the vice-chairman, secretary, and finance officer, and one member at large. There are five members of the executive committee.

JP: How does the Kellenberger Foundation relate to that?

Dr. Millns: It doesn't directly. It's completely separate. It was set up under the terms of Mrs. Kellenberger's will. She named in her will what was then NCNB, and now is NationsBank, to be financial trustees of her estate and to handle all decisions relevant to the investments. They would not have any decisions to make regarding the spending of the money. She named as administrative trustees to spend the money, by name: Miss Gertrude Carraway and Mr. Dick Douglas, who had been her lawyer for many, many years. They were named to serve during their lifetime or as long as they wished to. All the other members are ex-officio; the chairman and the vice-chairman of the Tryon Palace Commission, the mayor of the city of New Bern, the chairman of the Craven County Commissioners, the president of the Historic Society, president of the Historic Preservation Foundation, and the Secretary of Cultural Resources of the state, and Bill Price the Director of Archives. Those are the trustees.

She said, "they'll have complete discretion in the spending of

the money. The bank has nothing to say about it." The trustees just tell the bank how much money they want, and there's no limit. They can spend the corpus or they can just spend the income. They've been very conservative about it through the years and generally have spent only the income. They sometimes dipped into principle a little bit. The corpus of her bequest was three and a half million dollars; she has been gone twelve or fourteen years, and it's now worth almost six million dollars. And they spent three and a half million dollars during that time!

So, it's a wonderful thing. The relationship is a rather complex relationship, but as I mentioned, by state statute the Commission was established. Mrs. Latham, of course, was the first chairman and continued until her death. Then upon her death, Mrs. Kellenberger became chairman. The legislation is fairly brief about the Commission. It says that the Commission shall consist of twenty-five people appointed by the Governor and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. So, you get the appointment and you continue to serve until they write you a letter and say "Thanks for your good service." The original Commission were all friends of Mrs. Latham. That's gradually changed over the years, and now, it's much different. The Governor exercises his prerogative and generally appoints people who usually have some reputation around the state but they often times are people to whom he feels politically indebted. It's more and more that way, but not entirely. I don't think as far

as my appointment was concerned, it was not political. I live in New Bern, and George Ives, who was the chairman at that time, asked me if I would like to be on the Commission. He said that he would like to have me. I think he had some influence and it was probably through that that I was appointed. The complex part of it is, that the Commission really only has charge of Mrs. Latham's trust. They generally oversee the operation but the real clout comes from the fact that we control that trust money.

Now her trust is about 3.0 million dollars. All of the income from that goes to support the Palace's programs. All the buildings, all the property, are owned by the State of North Carolina. By law, it has to be so. Most of the people that work there are paid by the State of North Carolina. But that the Latham trust provides extra money for programs that we couldn't otherwise have. All of the educational programs operate under the sponsorship of that trust and the income from the museum shops. So, the finance officer and treasurer primarily is charged with overseeing that trust and the finances that are associated with it. The vast income of Tryon Palace comes from the State of North Carolina and paid admissions. The Kellenberger Trust is a separate thing, but the Palace is the largest beneficiary of that.

JP: Dale, let me shift to something else. You served one term as mayor, is that correct?

Dr. Millns: Yes.

JP: You elected not to run again?

Dr. Millns: I elected not to run again. I didn't touch on the fact that there was no way that I could do that and continue solo practice of medicine. It really almost broke my back. Trying to serve another term, assuming I had been elected, I was either going to ruin my practice or wouldn't have had any family left. Jane said, "You can't do it all," and I couldn't. So, I chose not run. I enjoyed it so much that I thought, "I'm going to get an associate and then I'll get back in here again", but I never did.

JP: I think it's remarkable that you could do it for one term.

Dr. Millns: I do too.

JP: I just couldn't imagine doing that. You then retired about 1963 from the mayor's job?

Dr. Millns: That's right.

JP: What about the subject of integration and segregation in the sixties? Were you in office in any of those time? I'm interested in what happened in New Bern during those times.

Dr. Millns: I was active in some aspects of it. As far as my term as mayor was concerned, there were no real big problems. Integration was proceeding slowly, but we thought peacefully. And I think by and large it was peaceful in New Bern . There were no overt demonstrations, certainly no violence. There was a "Good Neighbor Commission," I think it was, and after I finished

my terms as mayor, I got in a lot of things like this.

JP: Who was on that Commission that you were talking about?

Dr. Millns: The Good Neighbor was a fairly big group and the only one that comes to my mind was the minister of the big AME Zion church on Queen Street. His name was Rev. Babbington Johnson. He was a man of distinctive appearance. He was an enormous man. He must of been six feet four or five inches, and big, huge! He was very well spoken. He came from one of the Caribbean Islands originally, so he had a distinct English accent. He really held forth at those meetings. Janet Latham was on it.

JP: Was Ed Sharp on it?

Dr. Millns: He may well have been, yes.

JP: What was the job?

Dr. Millns: We didn't do very much in fact.

JP: You were on it?

Dr. Millns: I was on it. It got to be a podium for everybody who wanted to stand up and talk endlessly, and talk endlessly they did! Finally I thought, this is accomplishing nothing. There is no point in just sitting here listening. For instance, some of the blacks would harangue about the great injustices done to them and to their people for three hundred years. I can hear it yet! I thought, come on, what does that have to do with it? We all admit that. We know that's true. We're not arguing about the injustice. But, out of that grew the

idea on the part of some of them that because they'd suffered that injustice, now we were going to suffer because of that. I thought, "There's nothing good neighbor about that." There was no reasoning with them. There was that strain of bitterness. I don't mean they all were that way. I would say that the majority of them were quiet, but there were a few who held forth. And whoever was the chairman, was not in good control then. I don't remember how long I served but I remember feeling that nothing was being accomplished and I abandoned the effort. I suppose I resigned, I'm not sure.

JP: Did this continue on as a commission?

Dr. Millns: For quite a while it did. I don't know what eventually happened to it. I think it must of just kind of fizzled out.

JP: James Gavin was part of that.

Dr. Millns: I'm sure he was. Then the other thing that I got on was the Board of Public Welfare. I was named to that. Then, I got on the Housing Authority, thinking that these were jobs that wouldn't be so demanding and I was interested, and maybe I could play a role. I was interested in those things.

JP: This was after you gave up the mayor position?

Dr. Millns: Yeah. Do you remember Connie Rabon was head of the welfare then?

JP: Yes.

Dr. Millns: I always thought highly of Connie and thought

she did a good job, and I just liked her personally. She said to me, "Why don't you get on the welfare board? We really could use you." I guess she let that be known to the County Commissioners and I was named. Both of those; the welfare board and the housing authority, I don't know whether they've always been this way, but certainly by the time I got on them, all of the welfare policies were dictated at the state and the federal level. Being a local board member meant nothing! All you could do was sort of rubber stamp what they required, and for the obvious reason that they provided most of the money. Just like today, we're hearing about the federal mandate, "You do it", but now they're saying, "You spend your money to do it." It's a bad situation. But we would meet and meet and meet, and Connie would tell us what we could do and what we couldn't do because the state mandated it or the federal government would. The only thing that the local board could do was if there was a vacancy, if the director left, then the board had the final say on hiring the new director. I quit that. Federal Housing Authority the same way. Everything came out of Atlanta regarding housing decisions.

JP: Dale, let's go back to civil rights for a minute. You were here during all of the sixties and you saw what went on, Martin Luther King's death and so forth, what happened in New Bern during those turbulent times?

Dr. Millns: I don't remember very much happening, Joe. I'm sure something happened but it certainly wasn't dramatic enough

that it sticks in my memory.

JP: Do you remember marches of the blacks downtown or any violence?

Dr. Millns: I do not. I don't remember any violence.

JP: The commission that we were talking about, did it play much of a role in all of this as far as you recall?

Dr. Millns: Not in my recollection, Joe. I always thought that the integration in New Bern proceeded slowly but without any violence. I don't remember any violence.

JP: Dale, looking back at the political career you had, are there any other comments you would like to make about that aspect of your life?

Dr. Millns: It was a great experience, Joe. Before I got into it, I had never dreamt of running for elective office, but it turned out to be an interesting and happy part of my life those six years that I was involved in it. Whether or not I made a difference, I worked hard at it and I gained a lot from it. Times were changing but I think we maybe influenced the changes that took place and that's a good feeling.

JP: Let me ask this philosophical question before we leave this area. What do you think of the future of New Bern?

Dr. Millns: I think it's a wonderful future. We have talked about the medical situation, and I see New Bern as a beautiful community; prosperous. A lot of people have been disturbed about the number of newcomers here. I think it's

absolutely wonderful because those people are the best industry we can have, Joe. They come here, most of them with money. There are no welfare recipients in that group. They come in here with money, good retirements. Most of them are people of comfortable means, a lot of talent, and lots of time and lots of energy. They want to be involved. What better industry could you have? And we've had lots of them and we're going to have lots more. I think they're a very, very positive force. As I look back on when I came here and I look at it today and I think it's a beautiful city. The slow steady development of our historic districts. The other part of it is, I think economically and otherwise, we've diversified in business and industry enough to have a good economic base. If you look back thirty years, thirty-five years ago, we didn't have any diversification. We had agriculture, which was sort of dying out, and the Cherry Point Marine base. But we didn't have any other industry. We've got some pretty good industry now. You always would like more, but I see a good balance here. A great place to live. My only worry is that the rest of the world is finding that out too.

JP: Do you think New Bern is going to grow?

Dr. Millns: I sure do! More than I want it to probably. I like the small city part of it. I think some growth is desirable, but I would not like to see it be explosive.

JP: We've covered some very important things of your life.

Now, let's just focus on some general things and let me ask you to speak to whatever you'd like to speak to about town life in New Bern outside of these serious topics we've talked about. What are some other memories you have of New Bern; living here, the people here, the things you've done, what's happened?

Dr. Millns: You know, each age has its happy memories. The things that sort of, I'll say charmed us when we came, one thing that comes to my mind is the old Country Club. I thought that was such an attractive place, and we enjoyed it. When I was growing up, I grew up in a big city where you didn't even think about a Country Club unless you were really wealthy. We came to this small city, and if you were middle class or even of modest income, you could belong to the Country Club, which I thought was great. I thought that was very attractive. I remember the Trent Pines Club with great affection. I thought that was just the most wonderful place to go for dinner. It had a great elegance about it. Whether the Medical Society met there, or Jane and I, and maybe friends, for dinner, it had a particular charm which we can never recapture. The Medical Society could do things like that when we were only 18, 20, or 30 people strong. I remembered we'd go out there and meet and mostly have a nice social hour and then a very good dinner. I'm not sure we did anything very scientifically oriented, but it was pleasant. I remember those things. It does seem to me in those days I knew an awful lot of people. You'd walk down the street and within a block you'd

certainly know a dozen people to stop and chat with and say "Good morning" to anyway. That's changed some. It's inevitable as big as we are. I think of some of the that people I knew and enjoyed. One comes to mind is Mrs. (Joe) Latham, who was, of course, our neighbor on National Avenue for so many years. She was one of the very first ones who called on us on National Avenue. I always thought she was a very charming woman. Sort of the epitome of southern womanhood, and she didn't grow up in the South. She grew up in Wisconsin, I think. But nevertheless, she adapted very well. I remember your mother and meeting her early on and how charming, how very gracious she was in her home, too.

And Parkhill Jarvis. I remember the first time I met Parkhill. What a character he was. He introduced himself on Middle Street to me. He came up with a cigarette in his mouth and a jaunty bow tie, and he came up and said, "I heard that you were in town and I wanted to introduce myself to you." So, we always had just a grand relationship through the years that he was healthy. A little bit later on I joined the Dunes Club. I thought that was wonderful and we still are members of the Dunes Club. It was ideal for us. The distance from here down there was so convenient. In practicing alone, I had at one time considered having some kind of a vacation house. But the Dunes Club was ideal for us. I quickly decided there was no point in having any beach cottage or vacation house being on call all the time. So, the Dunes Club was ideal. You could go down for a day. Jane

could take the children down. We enjoyed that through the years.

When I was a child growing up, my grandparents had a summer home in Michigan on one of the lakes up there. There are a lot of lakes in the southern part of Michigan. We went there every weekend. So when I picked a place to live, I thought, "I want to live on the water." And that was an important consideration in coming here; having a sailboat, I enjoyed the rivers and the sailing on them through all the years. I just sold my boat about three years ago.

JP: You've been active in a number of other things. In the Episcopal church, you have been senior warden, and the church has meant a great deal to you and your family. What do you think the church in general, not the Episcopal church or Presbyterian, but just churches, what have churches meant in New Bern as far as you can tell? Have they played an important role in the life of New Bern?

Dr. Millns: I think they played an important role. I think they're playing an important role today and I think it's a changed role from what it's use to be. It certainly is as far as Christ Church is concerned. I see the great change in the Religious Community Services; that joint effort that, I think, marked a certain turning point in the life of every church involved and churches that have come into it since it started. It started with a relatively small number of churches. I think that it marked a sort of a moving outward from the close knit

groups that churches were before. I remember in years gone by in Christ Church, we had some of what we call "outreach," but it was minuscule compared to today. In our church there is a great feeling that this is an important part of the church's work. It's reaching out into the community in many, many ways. As I look around, I know that's true of First Presbyterian and St. Paul's Catholic, all of them, twenty-nine, thirty, whatever number of churches. They've become deeply involved in this.

JP: Who would of been some of the people in New Bern responsible for this religious community service effort?

Dr. Millns: The ones that I know about, and I know there are lots more, but the real movers and shakers were Genevieve Dunn and Rev. Mike Thompson, the Associate Rector of Christ Church and Rich Boyd of the First Presbyterian Church and Rev. Robert, who is the minister of the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church.

He was a black man and I came to know him really well when I went to Chicago on the All America City contest. He was with us then. He was just a great guy. He's a real leader. A man of sort of modest personality, but awfully good. They formed a council and a lot of people became involved. My recollection is that it started off with eleven churches and it grew to its present size. They do a lot of things that are great.

JP: It's been a major force in your opinion in drawing churches together and has influenced the town?

Dr. Millns: Yes. And I think the good part of it is, Joe,

I think the churches were too in-grown, they needed to reach out.

I see a much greater cooperative effort than use to be. I've heard ministers say that the Ministerial Association is not much of a

potent force, and has never been. That's just sort of private minister talk that I heard, but I think it's true. I think they get in there and each one sort of either protects his turf or argues for his particular point of view. This is the opposite of that. This is a more of a reaching out. We don't all need to be alike, but we see a common need and there's some real action to solve some of those problems. I think in our situation we have an open dialogue with the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. That to me is quite amazing. Having grown up in a time when the Roman Catholic Church was so exclusive as far as other churches, this to me is a whole new day. This organization is called "LARC," Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic. It's quite a dialogue. Four times a year we get together for worship service.

What it will eventually lead to I don't know, but it's open. It's leading to better understanding. I think that in many such things what has held us back really have been the clergy and the hierarchy in various churches. People by and large would like to understand each other better; would like to understand their religions. But I really fault the ministers and the hierarchies sometimes for holding that all in check. They get very involved in the minutiae of theology.

JP: Another area you've been active in is the New Bern Craven County library. You led the fund raising drive for the addition to the library. Could you speak to the library in New Bern and what it has been, what it has become, what it means to the town?

Dr. Millns: I've always been a great fan of the library and enjoyed it. I particularly enjoy it in my retirement. I became really aware of its operation, again, when I was in politics. Each year they would come to the city with their budgetary request for funds to support the library and that's how I really came to know Elinor Hawkins. I knew that for her it was always a time of great anxiety to have to meet before the distinguished city board and then the distinguished county board to ask for money and hoped that she got some. I was amazed at how little they asked for. When I became mayor, I said to her when she came with her request, I said, "Now, Mrs. Hawkins, is that all you really need for the library? Don't you want to ask for more money than that?" She's told me many times since then that nobody ever said that to her! But I was serious about it and I told her later that you ought to ask for twice as much money as she asked. I said, "You might not get it but eventually you will." I think that she sort of followed that. Of course, I just have great, great respect for her. I think that she really has made the library go where it has. She's been a great librarian. She's had some good help; but nevertheless, she has

been the leader. That effort was certainly fraught with problems that I didn't dream of. I thought it would be a relatively simple thing to do. As you know, we ran into all kinds of road blocks.

JP: With the fund raising?

Dr. Millns: With the expansion of the library. But it's turned out very happily. The city and the county cooperated. In looking back on it, I believe that the county could have included that in the big bond issue they passed for education, and it would of passed easily, but they thought it would not at the time. That's how we got into the private fund drive. But I think that was a good thing for the community. I think a great many people not only participated but take great pride in their library and that's a very positive thing.

JP: How much money did you raise in this private fund raising drive?

Dr. Millns: In round figures, we raised about a million and a half dollars. We wanted more than that. When I say we raised that, that includes some grants that we received, through the state for instance. I think we received two grants from the state of \$125,000 each. The great disappointment in the fund drive was that we did not receive anywhere near the big gifts that we had anticipated that we would. Some industries and businesses were terrible disappointments, and some individuals were. Here again, I'm sure that is probably true in most fund

drives. I just hadn't had enough experience to know that. I think that the individual we employed as a professional advisor to us, oversold us on how much money could be raised. Nevertheless, there were some significant disappointments. There were a few very happy surprises, but they were not as many as we hoped for.

JP: You must feel good though about what was accomplished.

Dr. Millns: I really do. Again, headed it, but believe me, there were some people without whom we couldn't have succeeded. In the midst of this, two things; I told them first, that I couldn't do it while I was practicing. There was no way. They said, "We'll hold off, you're going to retire next year and that's when we will do it." I was hoping they would pick somebody else but they didn't. Then in the midst of it I was ill and had to go through major surgery. I thought there was no way I could get back after that. But the drive had gone on for much longer than we thought would be necessary. We thought within twelve months we could wind it all up. The other thing was the YMCA decided to run their campaign along with ours. I think that hurt both of us.

JP: When was the library first put in its present location?

Dr. Millns: In 1966.

JP: Do you remember back then whether there was opposition?

Dr. Millns: I don't remember any opposition. I don't remember much about it. I was pleased they had decided on it. I

thought it was a beautiful place, and I just don't remember very much about it. I think the county and the city financed it. There was no bond issue for it.

JP: Was the filling station on that site just before the library went there?

Dr. Millns: It was. It must have been torn down sometime before the library was planned. I can only vaguely remember it.

JP: I think the filling station and the traffic from the old bridge probably co-existed.

Dr. Millns: That's probably right. It may have fizzled out when that traffic was gone.

JP: Do you have any other recollections about New Bern that you would like to speak to?

Dr. Millns: I'll tell you one other story that I think is sort of amusing and that has to do again with the fire department. I'll tell you two stories. There is a tradition in New Bern that each fire truck is named for a mayor. If a fire truck is purchased during a mayor's incumbency, then his name goes on the fire truck, which I thought was a great idea. During my period as mayor, they purchased the new ladder truck. It was a very glamorous fire truck and it replaced a very ancient ladder truck, which you may or may not remember. I think it was a ladder truck that they had purchased in 1922, or 1924. So, this was a very glamorous new fire truck with my name on the side of it. In the early years when it was new, they always featured

that in the Christmas parade. They had Santa Claus riding on that new fire truck and he would bring up the end of the parade. You remember Sidney Barnwell when he came here?

JP: Yes. He was a black physician.

Dr. Millns: Sidney was born and had grown up in Guiana, which is in the Caribbean or just on the coast of South America, and then came here for his education. He always spoke with a distinct English accent and he was really a very cultivated gentleman. The year that he came - he came in the fall and the Christmas parade occurred in early December. This was several years after my time as mayor. Sidney was just getting accustomed to New Bern ways and American ways. He and I were scrubbing preparatory to doing some operations in the operating room and this conversation took place. He didn't know about the tradition of naming the fire truck for the mayor, so he said, "I saw the Christmas parade yesterday." There was a pause. He said, "It was a wonderful parade." I said, "Good, I'm glad you enjoyed it." He said, "I also saw your fire truck." A long pause again. He said, "That was a very generous thing for you to do." So, I went along with it to see if I could keep a straight face. I said, "Well, thank you Sidney." Again a long pause. He said, "Would you mind telling me how much that cost you?" So, I couldn't keep a straight face at that point. But I said, "Fifty thousand dollars!" He just shook his head. I said, "Sidney, I have to come clean. I didn't buy that truck." I'll tell you one

other story I think is amusing. I've always enjoyed having my name on the fire truck, and I didn't think anything of it except as a local custom. Now, you know, when you travel around the state, and particularly up around Raleigh, every highway has a name on it; like the Bradshaw Freeway. In the early days of the beltline around Raleigh, they didn't get all of their signs up, good directional signs up, but they got all those signs up about the Bradshaw Freeway. I made a wrong turn one time coming from the airport and I was mad because the route was marked so poorly and I got off on the wrong turn. I was fussing and carrying on about these cheap politicians that name all these highways for them and they can't get decent signs up. It got to be a family joke the way I would crab about these named highways. Anyway, some time passed and when we were planning to put the bells in the Christ Church tower; the ring of bells that we put in a number of years ago; I was chairman of that committee and we were talking to representatives of bell foundries, and we decided what we should do was go and hear some bells. We'd heard recordings of them. There was a French company that we were interested in and they had put a ring of bells in a church up in Henderson, North Carolina. So, a station wagon full of us decided to go up and hear these bells. It's a fairly long trip up there. Howard Constant was with us, and he is usually a very quiet spoken man. He's a member of Christ Church. He used to run the Southeast Equipment Company. He's now retired. He's just a grand person

and has a kind of a quiet sense of humor about him. He was riding in the back seat and I was driving. We came to some particular town along the way and there was a by-pass. It wasn't a very big town but they built a by-pass around it. Here was this big sign, "The James or somebody another by-pass for this town". So, I went into my usual spiel, "These signs they put up for all these politicians! I don't know who that guy is. Why'd they name a highway for him?" And I was fussing and fuming. From the back seat came this quiet voice that said, "Something like naming a fire truck for a mayor, isn't it?!" I thought, "Touche' ". He really fixed me.

JP: This has been a great interview. Thank you for letting us come and talk to you. You certainly have been a remarkable person in New Bern's story. You've done so many wonderful things and I mean that.

Dr. Millns: I appreciate that. You know, it's been a wonderful life in New Bern.

JP: Well, you have added to that life considerably and people know that.

Dr. Millns: I think this is a great project and I hope that I live long enough to see all of it in print or in some form so we can all enjoy it.

JP: It has been fun for me being here; for me just talking to you and listening to you.

Dr. Millns: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW