

NANCY SITTERSON
MAY 21, 2002

BETH MILLWOOD: Conducted in Chapel Hill May 21st, [2002] that way I can keep an eye on our sounds levels, and actually they look like they're pretty good. We're in good shape. I wanted to start with a follow-up question that occurred to me when I was reading through the transcript. I should've sent you a transcript. I apologize for that. You mentioned train rides to Weldon, and you mentioned that you enjoyed the train rides when--I need to look up his name--Captain Hawkes was on the train. Tell me about him.

NANCY SITTERSON: Well, Mother would ask Captain Hawkes to look after us. It was a hundred miles. The train went from Kinston to Weldon, and so she knew him. I think he was from Weldon originally, and that's where I was born in Weldon, and so you entrusted your children, people just looked after each other, and families knew each other, and it was very--.

BM: You felt comfortable.

NS: Felt safe. You felt comfortable.

BM: Okay. The other question I came across, and I forget the period we were talking about. You mentioned that you had sponsored a dance or done a dance for Ferebee Taylor. This was fairly early--.

NS: When I was in graduate school, he and my brother roomed together, and so I don't know whether it was homecoming or something. It was in not Carmichael, Woollen Gym which was the—oh, I guess it was the Woollen gym. Usually the dances we went to, most of [them] were in the Tin Can, [it] was the main place. Were they decorated? You've never seen as much crepe paper in your life, and they don't use crepe paper now. I guess it's a fire hazard, and they won't let them do it.

BM: These would have been during the war years of course in the Tin Can or after--.

NS: In the '30s. When I was in college we'd come up from Converse for the weekend. Then they were in the Tin Can, but in graduate school, I don't remember. I think anyway this one I know was in Woollen Gym. We had the tea dances then. I wish you could've seen the hats we wore.

BM: Now what's a tea dance?

NS: Tea dance, the dresses were three-quarter length, not evening dresses, but three-quarter length.

BM: And this was late afternoon or--

NS: Five o'clock.

BM: Tea was served?

NS: No, no, no. They were just called tea dances because they just came at teatime.

BM: You also mentioned your hats...

NS: It was hard to, I couldn't wear the big ones because I couldn't dance if I--

BM: You're so petite. You wouldn't be able to--

NS: With my neck going back. I say that's what happened to my neck. I would try to dance close and looking up.

BM: What was the attire of the men, suits for these occasions?

NS: Yes. Suits. Right. I was looking through Bill Powell's history of the university. Then I looked through, I've got the annuals for some of those years, and it's the earlier period everybody's dressed in suits and proper attire, beginning of the '60s,

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well '65, '66. You look at the pictures for the teas that we had and the coffees that we had. Everything was very formal. The ladies wore the hats as you see. Now, there was--

BM: 1966.

NS: And gloves, and then I think probably by the end of that they had stopped doing that.

BM: Unfortunately, here in this one they call you Mrs. Charles Sitterson.

NS: Well, they did get--I hadn't even seen that.

BM: March 4th, *News and Observer*. I'm just making a note for the tape. So we know we have a copy of this. It's a lovely, lovely picture.

NS: There, what we wore then a lot were these costume suits with the coats.

BM: The coat is over a dressy dress.

NS: Sleeveless, sleeveless things. Like they have now. They were shorter.

BM: Right. Right. Now, I'm not certain I've seen this. I have not seen this article. This is a 1970, September 27th.

NS: That was, as a matter of fact I've got on the outfit I wore for my daughter's wedding, which was at the Chapel of the Cross, and that was interesting. Would you like for me to tell you about it?

BM: I'd love to hear about it.

NS: It was difficult when she [Mary] was married for me, for us to figure out the guest list, very difficult. So what we did was to have two receptions in February. The wedding was the 4th of April 1970 the year she and her husband both graduated from the university in February, and they were married on April the 4th. So what we did was to have two receptions, and that included all, the chairman, deans, everybody in the

university, and I guess some of the town people that connected with the university, the board. The wedding was at the Chapel of the Cross as I say, and that was kind of a general invitation. We didn't send any invitations in town. I think there might have been an announcement in the paper and in our church bulletin and sent out invitations to family and friends outside of town. Then they were the only ones except for people who'd entertained who were invited to the wedding breakfast at the chancellor's house out on the patio. It was a beautiful day.

BM: April.

NS: But I had to plan too in case of bad weather.

BM: You had to plan inside and outside.

NS: We did have the canopy up. When I entertained, we entertained, I always had to plan two parties. We wanted to be outside, but if it rained, we were inside. There was one occasion soon after Lyle became chancellor. He had his [class reunion at the house], he finished in class of '31. So it would've been the fall of '6--the spring of what, '66, '67, the spring of, '67--

BM: If he graduated in '31, it was the thirty-fifth anniversary?

NS: Yes. It was the thirty-fifth, and we had it there. It rained. For the patio-- well, they never put a canopy there before, and you could go from the library out to where the patio was. So we had that put up. That night it rained. Well, it [the canopy] started sagging. All during the night I had to go out with a broomstick and poke it up and get the rain off. [laughter] That's what I remember. What I remember about things are those for instance, University Woman's Club teas, which we always had there in the fall,

the yellow jackets would descend. We'd have a canopy up. The yellow jackets would descend. So that's--the main thing--

BM: Things that stick out.

NS: I remember about--.

BM: You were saying about your daughter's wedding. How many people in the separate receptions did you have in each reception?

NS: I guess it would've been between a hundred and fifty maybe and two hundred. The Carolina Inn, in entertaining, the Carolina Inn was all we had. Except, I'm trying to think whether or not Alice Neal, you've read about her who was Frank Graham's cook. Frances Hargrave's--

BM: You'd mentioned Frances Hargraves before.

NS: Frances is her daughter. Then there were, she had a sister named Pearl who also did catering later on, and so for receptions and coffee she did sandwiches, ham biscuits, the rolls. There were two or three things that she made, and we could have catered the tea things. But otherwise the Inn did it there. As far as what help I had at the house. I had one person five days a week from nine until five. So she was not there for breakfast. She wasn't there for dinner. Of course, he [Lyle] didn't come home for lunch every day. So we had, I had to do a lot of what was done. I remember one formal dinner party was for Cary Boshamer when Boshamer Stadium was completed and that was a formal twelve, fourteen people, and I'd gotten the roast. I was having roast beef. It was in the oven. I went to check on it about five o'clock or five-thirty because it was a big one. The oven, the oven thermometer had gone off. It had gone kaplooey. It [the roast] was already well done. [laughter]

BM: At five-thirty.

NS: So you see. That's what I remember about that.

BM: There weren't that many pizza places that you could call and say bring pizza because you couldn't do that with a formal dinner anyhow.

NS: No. But in entertaining-- I was in charge of the committee at the church-- we have a chaplain to students, and I was on his committee. But we always had a supper in the fall for his freshman. Well, that year we had gotten fried chicken and had all the other things. Well, there was a band, Kent Collins. I don't know whether you--

BM: I don't know that name.

NS: Anyway, we were having the band there for them. Well, every student who came by and heard the music came in. We had prepared for about two hundred and fifty. I think about five hundred [came]. We sent out. We called several [places]. There was a chicken place right across the hall, right across the street. So we called them. We called, there was a place between here and Carrboro to start cooking, "and we'll take everything you've got." We were passing ice water through the windows. We couldn't even get through the crowd to put water in the punch bowl. So it was--

BM: You've had some real stressful social events. When last we talked, we were focusing--we were just starting really the beginning of the chancellor years. One of the questions that came to me was as your husband went from being the vice chancellor to chancellor, do you recall thinking at all that there were new things that you were going to have to learn in your role as chancellor's wife? Who were your resources? Who did you go to to get information about how things were done?

NS: We didn't have any social person responsible. I did what I wanted to do. Nobody said what you do and what you don't do. So I had to more or less feel my way. There were some things that had been done time and time, over the years, just which one of them. I'm trying to think of the Morehead program. We always had the committee [over]. I guess I had a coffee for the wives of the Morehead committee or a tea. I don't remember. I had my list of all the people that I'd had, and I had lists of what I'd served. I kept them through all the years, and I think I must've turned them all over to the Southern Historical Collection.

BM: Good. Good.

NS: So many of the things because I was amused at my listing of the cost of the things. Never, I mean, I don't remember it ever being over fifty dollars because I did my own flowers too. We didn't order things.

BM: Didn't send out to the florist.

NS: Didn't say, "please send, please send." Now of course we always had, before the football games tradition of having a buffet for friends of the university, those in the guest box, those who were here for special [reasons], the trustees for lunch at the Morehead planetarium. They didn't have the big ball[room]--what do they call it. The State room, addition. They hadn't built the addition. So it was a smaller area. So they were not covered. They were open, those wings at the state, is it the state dining room--

BM: I think it's the State Dining room.

NS: The main, the smaller one. So they were the wings on each side were not covered.

BM: Oh, I didn't realize that.

NS: They were open.

BM: So it was a buffet.

NS: The Inn served it.

BM: The Inn served it. Okay. What's your recollection of how often in the average month as chancellor's wife you were entertaining. Was it once or twice a week?

NS: I did not entertain as much as we would like to have because of the stressful [times]. To try to be a host was difficult. So we went out a lot. There were a lot of things of course, the occasions on the campus, not like it is now. It's really hard for me to remember just, but during the year I would have groups. The students, I had, what is it, the '69 basketball team when they got to the finals. I remember that group out on the patio. It turned cold that night. But the boys didn't seem to mind. [laughter] Then I was on the women's council advisor to the women's, and so I had them for tea. Well, [for that even] they were dressed up in their high heels. You just wouldn't believe it. It started snowing. And the thing I remember about that, I remember the snowing. I got out the box of plastic bags and rubber bands for them to put on their delicate shoes. Fortunately, you see, the chancellor's house was at the corner of Laurel Hill Road and Country Club Road and was within walking distance of the campus. That is disappointing. This is really something that I regret exceedingly that the chancellor's house is not in a visible place [now].

BM: In a visible walkable place.

NS: It's very unfortunate.

BM: The women's council. What was the women's council?

NS: The dean of women, Katherine (Kitty) Carmichael, who was quite a proper lady--the president of all the different women's organizations were members of the council.

BM: Okay. That would be the student women's organizations.

NS: That's right. The nurse's association and sports I guess. Well, I'm not sure--

BM: They didn't have women's studies then because that hadn't come in until I think the '70s sometime then.

NS: Yes. These were more the extracurricular activities, the Y.

BM: That's right. That's right. The Y, with Anne Queen. How did--a lot of these are curiosity questions--but they're also questions of how the mechanics of the university worked then. How did scheduling work? You as chancellor's wife would've set the social schedule consulting with your husband on his calendar, but, for instance, now at the university to schedule an event you try to make sure you're not colliding with someone else's event.

NS: Yes, we had to be very particular about that. And now, I mean I get for instance one night there was the Ackland affair at the Ackland, and then there was an affair, I'm trying to think of what the other one was. But you couldn't get to two. You couldn't get to both of them. We had to schedule around that. We seldom had conflicts.

BM: Was there anyone on campus--now often we'll consult with the development office because they'll have a great deal of knowledge about a variety of events. Was there anyone on campus you were able to consult with on that?

NS: Well, now development was Charlie Shaffer.

BM: That's right.

NS: Was Charlie Schaffer--Dot Branch was his secretary, and then Diane Taylor was secretary for him, before she was secretary for Ferebee. So we could, I could get some information, or they could find out for me exactly what, and they could call the student union and find out what was set up.

BM: So you would check through those networks, sort of an informal network.

NS: That would be the usual procedure.

BM: To get on your husband's schedule in terms of--I'm sure there were events where he needed to appear at football games, but he also needed to go to the board meetings and--

NS: Well, the football games, we did not go to the out-of-town ones that much. I remember going to one at State. We flew out to Vanderbilt with the team, but the Heards, he was chancellor there, had been here at Chapel Hill. So they were friends of ours. We went out for that game and stayed with them and they, when they came to the game here, they stayed with us. And we went over to Duke all the time for their [football] games. I think Lyle went to one basketball game, and he said, "Never again." The noise, but we did go to the football games, and they would have a buffet at their, I think the Knights had it at their house, the president's house. So we would go to that.
[phone]

BM: I can stop this.

NS: Can you stop it. [tape recorder turned off]

BM: Um hmm. Okay. We're going.

NS: I was just thinking of the reception that we had when he was made chancellor. It was held in Woollen Gym, and the University Women's Club put it on,

and they had nametags, and the thing I remember about it is the receiving line. [laughter] My dress, I was able to finally find a dress, a proper dress. Well, I didn't wear my glasses that night. They started coming through the receiving line, and people had on the nametags. Well, my family was in the receiving line and Lyle's family, and I couldn't read the nametags. So when I came home that night, I put on my glasses, and ever since then I put them on the first thing when I get up in the morning, and I don't take them off.

BM: That cured you.

NS: I don't take them off until I go to bed at night. Thank goodness for nametags. That has saved my day.

BM: Yes, they do help. Speaking of his inauguration. What were the university events? You said there was the reception. Now did they install him on University Day like they often do?

NS: Yes. As a matter of fact I think in the picture of it--

BM: That might be--

NS: That's one of them. Yes, that's one of them right there. [Mrs. Sitterson indicates a photo on her wall.] There's one up there, right up there on the platform because it was done in Memorial Hall. See him singing? He liked to sing. He enjoyed singing.

Our minister, Tom Thrasher, he came here from Selma, Alabama. He had been very active in civil rights down there and was very much abused and maligned as you can imagine. It was wonderful having him here and for our congregation. With this civil rights, as I remember having the occasion with the integration at the church. Anyway with our circle, the women, ECW we had one of them join us. Lyle appointed [in] '67,

Blyden Jackson as distinguished professor in English, first black faculty appointment. He came to Lyle to see if it would upset him if he bought the house next door, Dean Carroll's house. It just, for him to feel that he had to ask us was really [upsetting].

BM: Yeah, just a reminder of what those years were like.

NS: They were wonderful neighbors. She [Roberta] was great. She was on the faculty too [in the School of Education]. They named the student affairs building--.

BM: Where Admissions is--.

NS: They named it, the admissions building, they named [it] for them.

BM: Jackson Hall now. Seeing the picture of your husband behind John F. Kennedy reminds me, do you have any recollections of that visit of the President to campus?

NS: Not that much. I was not on the stage. I remember that his brother--

BM: Robert.

NS: Ted, came here, and we were at a small dinner at the Carolina Inn. I was sitting on his right. Well, one thing I had to figure out was what to do with these people that I could not converse with about much, the intellectuals, I wouldn't call Ted exactly that. Well, I learned to ask questions. Well, I tried to engage him in a conversation. He completely ignored me as if I were never there. I've never, after he had his Chappaquidick episode, I thought anything is possible. I can believe it all.

BM: That is not surprising unfortunately. What, we've talked a bit about the social. Were there political aspects to being wife of the chancellor? You mentioned before you just couldn't share anything with anyone, and that certainly was a political aspect.

NS: Politically, Lyle, we did not make any, you never knew--he didn't say how we felt, how we voted. I think everybody knew we were Democrats, but he felt like he didn't want to influence people because of his position. It's the same way about, he was very much against the Vietnam War, but he couldn't [say anything publicly], very much against the Speaker Ban law, but he was [employed] by the state, and he had to uphold what the law was. With the food workers' strike, he was very supportive of them, and one of the things that they wanted was to have titles, the housekeepers and all wanted titles. So he sent out the memo. Well, I asked the people who worked [for us], there was a gentleman that worked at the chancellor's house one day a week cleaning. Then aside from this, the cooks, there were two at different times, but the second one was there and so I asked them because I guess I had been calling them by their first name. I had a woman who had been helping me for twenty-five years who just came and did the ironing, laundry one day a week. The woman who was the cook said she would like to be called 'Mrs.' The others said they would rather continue being called their first name. So I think it's very interesting that now instead of being [formal], everybody calls everybody by their first name.

BM: By their first name.

NS: I think some of these things disturb me. For instance, attire. The students have gotten much too informal. Kitty Carmichael, the dean of women, [said] girls could not go to and from gym in their gym shorts. They would have to put on a long coat—the other extreme.

BM: What about within Chapel Hill as chancellor's wife, did people try to involve you in causes because then they would have the chancellor's wife with them on an issue?

NS: Not that I remember. I mean, nothing that would be different from what I was doing. I think because I was, well, I'm not sure. But I was on the first board of the first public library, an organization of the first public library. But whether or not it was because I was treasurer of the Mary Bailey Pratt Library, which was the one library other than the university library. It was on the top floor of the high school, Mary Bailey Pratt Library. So I had been doing the money for a number of years. Well, when it became the public library, that library went to a house right next door. That was before they built the new library [on the corner of Franklin and Boundary]. So I had been on the board all the way through until we had the new library.

BM: Let's talk a bit about your volunteer roles. How did you select? I'm sure you were being asked to serve and asked to participate more hours than there are in the day. How did you select those volunteer things that you wanted to participate in?

NS: Well, some of them were things that I continued doing what I was already doing with the schools, Y teen board. It's hard for me to remember what things I did how I continued--.

BM: During what period?

NS: During what period. A lot of them I was not able to participate as I had. I did not volunteer to do that many things because I already had as much as I could do, and keeping the house running and keeping things on schedule for Lyle because he was a great schedule person. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, so that came first. Perhaps I mentioned

he was drafted during the war. He couldn't get in service because of his eyes. But then he couldn't go to officer training. Anyway, then he was, when he was drafted, he was discharged after six months because of hypertension. So I had to keep things on an even keel. He couldn't take that much responsibility like chauffeuring and picking the children and that sort of thing. So it was, my main job was keeping him, enabling him to perform. I went with him a lot of the time. When he would go places, I would go with him. We did have as I said, in entertaining I did that with the Morehead group. I was co-chairman with things the Y would ask [of] me, with the bazaar. I had been on the Y board and university women's club board, which I was expected to be on, I had the graduate wives, I did that sort of thing. That's the first time I've ever heard recycling mentioned.

BM: Really. In one of those meetings?

NS: The late '60s. It was one with the graduate school wives were there.

Of course, we still had our friends of things we had done with them, and both of us being from eastern north Carolina and having large families, our families would come. We still had the connections. We would go down there for Christmas and holidays, and they came, would come and stay with us and entertain. I had a write-up of a group of girls that I started in first grade with in Kinston. We would get together every year, and I had them here. In fact, I've just been on a house party with them.

BM: Oh you just got back from that. That's so wonderful.

NS: So Kinston, the family connection was large. In fact Kinston had a Sitterson Day celebration and big to do, parade downtown and had [an event] in the gym.

BM: This was to celebrate--

NS: This was to celebrate—[Lyle's being selected as chancellor of the University.]

We were in a convertible [in the parade]. The community college did a scholarship in his honor.

BM: They were proud of him.

NS: It had its good points and its bad points. He had a cousin who was some lady, some woman. They would call, children would call, and parents would call. They couldn't get their children in the university. That was a real sticky wicket. All he did was to call [someone in the Admissions Office] to find out how they were doing. I'm trying to think of what her name was, Margaret. Well anyway, [you] understood the situation he was in. Well this cousin called, very irate. Her grandchild hadn't gotten in, but the cook's son had.

BM: Yes. And he was left to try to deal with those relatives.

NS: As I say, our three children were here in the university at that time. Our oldest son graduated and then was married, and he went to graduate school, and then he was drafted, and he was sent to Missouri. They had a child down in Texas. It kills my granddaughter that she was born in Texas. [laughter]

BM: Born in Texas.

NS: She was born in Texas.

BM: I understand.

NS: We were concerned about that. Then Mary had gone to, we told our children that they could come here for school if they went off for prep school. She decided [not to go to prep school], the two boys went off to prep school, and she went to Randolph

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Macon and came home after one year. We said, 'You'll have to live at home. You can't live on the campus because you're not a junior.' She said, 'That's fine.' She said, 'I just don't like the weekends [with the] University of Virginia, they're party weekends, and I don't like party weekends. I want a boy-girl, I want my social life and university life.' I know what it is. We did not let her participate on anything on the campus when she was in high school.

BM: Because she was a high [school] student?

NS: She really thanked us and said she had a much better time in high school than her friends did.

BM: Who were trying to come over [to campus].

NS: So she lived at home then, and she made the dean's list the first semester. She says, now I've done it, but I'm not going to do it again. [laughter] Well, she had attention deficit disorder, which made it difficult at a woman's school. At home it was quiet and peaceful, and she could study.

BM: Were there university events where your children had to participate because the whole family was involved?

NS: No.

BM: There weren't.

NS: No.

BM: Okay. That made it easier.

NS: They could, then she moved onto campus in Kenan, not Kenan but one of the other two--

BM: Women's dorms.

NS: There were three of them and Spencer. She moved to a sorority house.

BM: How did you balance your children's demands with your demands of being [chancellor's wife].

NS: This is what I [dealt with], and with family demands. Both my parents were living, and Lyle's mother was living. So it was difficult at times making arrangements and that sort of thing. We did have our vacation every summer at Holden Beach come what may. He believed, Lyle believed, that you should have vacations. As one said, he liked to work when he worked and play when he played. He could [vacation], but with some of the student unrest, we didn't have a telephone at the cottage, and there were no cell phones then. But the people who we rented from were great. [We had] the same cottage every year—[they] would come and get us, and he [Lyle] would call the office if something was going on. But they couldn't reach us by phone.

BM: Which is--

NS: Immediately.

BM: Which is brilliant. How long did you vacation? Was it a two week or a month?

NS: Two weeks.

BM: Your children went with you if they were free?

NS: They would join us for part of it.

BM: Did your children work at all during high school or college?

NS: Mary worked at Town and Campus because she had expensive taste in clothes. [She] wanted a pocketbook at Town and Campus that cost something like thirty dollars. I said, 'Mary, I've never paid thirty dollars for a pocket book.'

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NS: Then she was head cheerleader her senior year. So that took care of her Friday nights, which was nice. I was just talking with Dr. John Graham who's having open heart surgery today. Curtis had worked in his lab. I remember that. Joe, I remember our oldest son had worked [with] Joe Phillips in construction during the summer. So these were the jobs that I remember they had.

BM: But they all, they wanted the extra money, then they would do the work. What were your favorite volunteer roles? Do you have some organizations that just stick out in your mind as things you really love doing?

NS: Well, I enjoyed some of the activities. At the church I enjoyed flowers and working with flowers. At that time, I was asked to join the Coker Garden Club. I was the youngest one in it. I remember very well the program I had showing them plants around the chancellor's house. What I used and what I did to prolong things. As a matter of fact this one I'm having problems with. Some of my plants I don't have a chance to repot them.

BM: It's beautiful.

NS: Yes, my roses, but this plant over here. It was a Norfolk Island pine, I had on a stand in the dining room, and I put pebbles across the top, and then didn't have to water it as much. I did remember doing eucalyptus arrangements which were dried.

BM: These things you learned on your own through just reading or just consulting with other gardeners?

NS: Well, some of them, I would ask, I guess it was Charles House. I don't guess he was at the florist then. I'm trying to think of what the man's name was, the

couple who had the University Florist. They helped me a lot. My mother was quite a gardener and arranged flowers. So I learned a lot from her, and then of course, through the years I did things I liked and things I didn't.

BM: So you worked with the church and that was involved in flowers.

NS: I didn't really do too much work with anything. I never had anything that I was gung-ho about that I, that everything else would have to wait.

BM: You were just juggling many things all the time.

NS: I just juggled many things.

BM: Tell me about the Y bazaar. I've not heard of the Y bazaar. Was it a fundraising event or what was it?

NS: Yes, they would have things from all over the world. Here's the article on it. The foreign students who were here would [help], and it was held at the Y building before Christmas.

BM: Ideal time for fundraising, yes.

NS: Before Christmas and I remember they sold UNICEF cards, and now numerous organizations in the university send out Christmas cards. We never--we didn't have the money to do all these things. We had no allowances. No entertainment budget, no, so everything that we did I would--

BM: Be reimbursed--

NS: Lyle was not one for extravagance. He grew up in the depression. I think I went into that before. But as I say there were two things that Lyle, three things I guess that he could get away and enjoy and forget problems. Of course, his teaching was one

of them. He continued teaching the whole time, which was great. He enjoyed his vacations at the beach. He enjoyed the sports.

BM: Going to sports games--

NS: Going to sports. Governor Moore, Dan Moore was governor then, and his wife was the most ardent [Carolina] fan you've ever seen. I was always glad when we sat next to them because she, you could hear her above everybody else. [laughter] Lyle was very vociferous, too.

BM: So the two of them sort of complemented each other.

NS: In fact the Moore's had had the basketball team for dinner over at the mansion. We were all [at] this very formal table. Well, they had roast beef. I remember the dish. I was at the end over here, and there were two or three boys next to me. They started it around, and by the time it was to us there was no meat left. [laughter] So in about ten minutes they brought us steaks.

BM: They hadn't factored in how much those--.

NS: They hadn't factored in how much these young people could eat! When we would go over to Duke, it wasn't a large [guest] box. Of course, with all the Duke crowd we could be, we were rather noticeable. Rather noticeable.

BM: Yes, supporting the other team. Yes. Yes.

NS: I guess it was, during all the student unrest, one of the benefactors of the university gave us a trip to Europe. So I planned it. He told me where, Lyle told me where he wanted to go. We were going to see what was happening on other campuses at that time. So he told me where he wanted to go. So I worked with, we didn't have a

travel agent here. So I worked with somebody over in Durham. So during the week we would be at the universities, and then on the weekend we would sightsee.

BM: Now how long was the trip?

NS: I think it was, I guess it must've been about a, maybe three weeks to a month. We had had a program at Goettingen. I remember [on our arrival] asking for a taxi to take us to such and such a hotel. They said okay, but it's right across the tracks. [laughter] Then our daughter met us in Cologne, I guess this was the summer before she was married.

BM: '69 then.

NS: It was '69. So she did Norway, Sweden and Denmark with us. I was looking up to see. And we were in Oslo in July when Apollo landed on the moon, which was nice. That was a wonderful--

BM: Break.

NS: Getaway. Then we had some good trips with the university. We went to the Holiday Classic in Hawaii. We went with the team. We, of course, went down to Jacksonville for the Gator Bowl game. I'll never forget, friends of the university let us have their cottage on Captiva Island. Well, after the Jacksonville thing, this was of course during Christmas break, we went over [to Captiva]. When I got there and unpacked, I realized that I had left all my beach clothes in the drawer [in Jacksonville].

BM: Speaking of travel during that period. Were you and your husband usually required to attend national meetings of college presidents, that kind of thing?

NS: Oh well, you see the president of the university had that position.

BM: So you didn't--

NS: So some of those, he did attend many organizations. But the one the chancellor of the universities, I think now they have changed it. I might be wrong, but the chancellor does attend those now.

BM: So the campus presidents are the ones going. But did you travel, was he able to keep up with his historical association kinds of things?

NS: We still might have gone to the Southern Historical Association meeting. But right off the bat, I can't remember.

BM: Just the president.

NS: I can't remember exactly. But he did keep up with his friends and colleagues as to what was going on.

BM: Because he was still in the classroom and he wanted to stay current.

NS: [In the] classroom, which was just a godsend really in more ways than one. Some of his having been at the university, I think, and people knowing us during that time, it gave them a sense of security. They knew him, and he knew them and knew the traditions of the university. He and Frank Graham were very [close], he had known him since his student days. I had known Dr. Frank because he and my father were the same class here at the university. He visited in our homes many times.

BM: Dr. Frank died '72, '73 something like that, but he was living not too far from campus if I recall.

NS: Yes, he lived off of Gimgoul with his sister, Kate who had taught school, second grade. Our son Joe had her for second grade. So we went to see Dr. Frank. The saddest thing was he had shingles--couldn't wear anything but pajamas. It was just, you just hate for somebody to have to go through that --

BM: Oh, how uncomfortable that is.

NS: Having had them I know, for a couple of years I know what he went through.

BM: Were you or your husband ever able to use, someone who'd been through it but was now out of it, like Dr. Frank, just as a sounding board as someone who knew the university so that you could either one of you just chat with him? I mean, was that a possibility?

NS: Lyle felt very close to Bill Aycock. In fact, after he [Lyle] left the chancellorship, they had a golf group that played every day at two o'clock.

BM: That's great.

NS: Every day at two o'clock. They could tell it's two o'clock. I never discussed any university things with anybody. I didn't know what I was supposed to tell and what I wasn't supposed to tell, and so I just kept my mouth shut.

BM: Which would be the only way to do it. There is a story in reading I think it was one of your husband's interviews. It was one of your husband's oral history interviews. He mentioned a time when students marched on your home, and you were already home in bed.

NS: We had a wonderful head of campus security. His name, I don't know whether you've come across it, Sergeant Beaumont. He had been a New York policeman, on the New York police force in New York and [was a] big, big man. His son had some serious disease. So he brought him down here for medical treatment. He was on the police force. Everybody knew Chief Beaumont. Just his presence commanded respect. He was very understanding of the students. He really quelled more, I don't think he's ever gotten his due and appreciation for what he did, but Lyle just had the utmost

respect for him and depended on him. So he gave us some advice on things. We had another telephone line put in to our bedroom. Only Chief Beaumont and our families had the number. At night we would turn off [the other phone], [so] we would not get the ring during the middle of the night. He could call us directly, and I remember that night he called and said the students are on the way. So he said turn off all your lights and don't make any appearance. So that's what we did. The next morning the yard looked like a mess. I'm sure you've read about [it] in the student [paper], their contact with him [Lyle] in the rotunda at his office, and he would say he would talk to as many who could get in the rotunda. He wasn't going to go outside and have them yelling. I will never forget the University Day it must've been, well, it was one of the difficult years. I've always had a siesta after lunch. I have to get a [rest], it's one of those things.

BM: To restore your energy.

NS: Yes. I just can't get through the evening. I was lying down. It dawned on me we were going somewhere [on a trip], I think. I don't know how I thought of my driver's license, and I looked at it and it had expired six months before. I hopped up out of that bed, and I went over to Carrboro. There was an examiner named Sergeant Hester, and everybody was scared to death of him. If you let your license lapse, you have to take another road test. So I had to do the road test. He didn't ask me to do anything. All he wanted me to do was to talk about the state of affairs with the university and the student unrest. [laughter] I remember that very well.

BM: One of those moments that sticks.

NS: That's a University Day I'll remember.

BM: It worked well. In the sum of things, as you look at the period where your husband was chancellor, what are some of your, are there better memories that stick out during that period? You've mentioned some of the trips clearly.

NS: Well, we enjoyed and I enjoyed most of the entertaining. I enjoy it. The hardest part of entertaining--you know what it is--is the guest list. If I can get the guest list, I'm okay. Of course then it had to be, it was more cut and dried, but even then to be sure that you had everybody, not to leave anybody out. When I did a category, I had to do the whole category. Once the party was underway, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed fixing the flowers. Through the years, I've taken pictures of my arrangements, of some of my arrangements because I really enjoy--

BM: That part. [phone]

NS: I enjoyed that part of it.

BM: Let's pause here. [tape recorder turned off]

NS: The Carolina Inn was the center of all activity. Everything, that was the only place for dinners, banquets, groups. I'll never forget receiving a maple tree with the Toronto Exchange Program. I don't know whether they still have it or not. But they would come down here. The students would come down here, and then our group would go up there. At the dinner one night, they gave us a maple sapling, and it's planted on Cameron where they have a line of maples across the street from Davie Hall. It was planted there. I had to call buildings and grounds to come and get it.

BM: The Carolina Inn also had a fairly popular lunch.

NS: Well, they had a paneled room there that people went for breakfast and had--the Pine Room was what it was called--it was paneled in pine. They had the china,

which they still have some samples in a cabinet there, with pine that was designed by I think Alma Biers who was a botanist, Dr. Coker's assistant who helped start the Coker Garden Club, the one I was telling you about, designed it. So I got some pieces of it when it was sold. I gave it to one of my children. But that's where the faculty would meet for lunch and alumni. That was the headquarters. Alumni house was right adjoined the Carolina Inn. So the alumni, it was the headquarters for all of them. Then we had the cafeteria, and that was wonderful for townspeople and faculty, and I think that is one of the things that is missed more than anything else is when they did away with the camaraderie of the campus. It moved the center, and we no longer have a center for faculty gatherings because the alumni place is not available. You have to be a member to go there. So there's, I just wish there was some center for faculty and alumni to gather.

BM: Gather and meet and socialize. Yeah, in reading the Ken Zogry book on the Carolina Inn I learned a great deal about it. But also your husband's name is mentioned there and particularly the years of turmoil that he was dealing with.

NS: They have a chancellor's ballroom down the long corridor, and they have pictures of each one of the chancellors on the outside before you go in. I didn't like the one they had of him [Lyle]. So I went and I talked to the young woman who is in charge of that. So I said, 'May I replace it?' It was, his hair stood straight up. So I had a hard time finding one, and finally I had one made, and they said sorry, but that one didn't work, the size. I took it to a photographer who had done some of this, and he took one head and put it on another body so it would work out right. In fact I think this is probably the one that they used, just the top of it. Anyway, so what they do now with photography is [amazing]. But it saved the day.

BM: I will have to go look at more detail at that picture now in the Carolina Inn.

NS: See if you can tell. See if you can tell.

BM: Because I do recall glancing sort of casually. I am getting toward the end of your questions. I wanted to talk a little bit about your volunteer work after you left the chancellor, the wife of the chancellor role. You had mentioned that you went on to start Meals on Wheels here in [town].

NS: Yes. Let's see if I can remember. That first year, I said I'm not going to make any decisions yet. I would just find myself as to what I wanted to do. They had asked me to be on the, well, they were starting the preservation society. And I just couldn't take on responsibility then. Lyle had a sabbatical, and we went to London for three or four months, and so then we did a lot of traveling. I'm trying to think of what order these things were done. I did volunteer at the church, the altar guild. I did. As I said and then the Meals on Wheels that I did. I just decided and then I was, [phone] let it ring. So I can't stand the telephone, but we'll just.

BM: Let it ring.

NS: Let it ring. Let it ring. Let it ring. Oh speaking of let it ring, let it ring, one of the groups that we had, of the student groups, was at Christmas. They would come and carol us. So we'd have them in for hot drink and cookies, and then they would help decorate the tree.

BM: What a wonderful tradition. So they would come to the chancellor's house and--

NS: Come in, and then I'd get them to decorate the tree. Then I think, I'm just trying to think of, but I spent more time with our parents [who] were needing us.

BM: They were getting older.

NS: They were getting older and enjoying our grandchild and getting the house straight again.

BM: You moved back to Hillcrest.

NS: Moved back to Hillcrest. The young, the couple who had rented it came as head of OB/GYN at the hospital. They had three or four children, and he was in his early '40s and he died the first year they were here. So bless her heart. She could not do anything, everything in the yard just went down, and so I had to--

BM: Go in and start [over].

NS: Come in and literally start over again. So I did not, I hadn't really gotten that far in my thoughts. I was as to some of my activities.

BM: Well, just let me ask you about Meals on Wheels, and then we can just wrap up, and I'll decide if we have some later wrap up questions. I think we may need sort of a follow up where I can [talk further]--but on Meals on Wheels you just decided you--

NS: Our church, the Chapel of the Cross decided we needed it. We had an organizational meeting and working it out, had the committee, and we appointed Florence Soltys as the first director. It was worked out that each of [the] different churches who wanted to be involved, I mean, it was an ecumenical thing, would have one day of the week; and the members would be from that [church]--well now it's not, individuals can volunteer to do it.

BM: They don't have to come from a church base.

NS: They don't have to come from a church or anything. It was a good beginning, and they still have some who've been with it through the whole thing. I was

on the board, head of volunteers at one time, and so I continued working doing it every Thursday until my husband got sick. So then I really gave up everything then because I had to be with him. I didn't want to leave him by himself. But he was, as I say, I didn't take on any big jobs then. I did work at the church and Meals on Wheels, but one of my things that I enjoy doing is visiting, and as I told you, so many of my friends were ten, fifteen years older than I was. At this point that continues to this day like Gladys Coates and Norma Berryhill then. So there were a lot of them needing [assistance]. I remember I was looking at a picture of the, I guess, it's the history department taken in that pictorial history taken in '33. Now I think my husband, Lyle started teaching in '34. Of course, they're all dead now. They all went some time before he did. So they were needing attention, the wives and the widows. That is the thing I'm doing with the church now, the visiting committee, [for] the people who are can no longer get out. A lot of them are my friends, and then I don't how long I can keep that up because I've got so many friends who are not Episcopalians--

BM: [To] check on too.

NS: That I need to check on too. Then in the church they asked me the first couple of years after he returned to teaching if I would be in charge of making the Christmas wreaths. We would have about twenty-five wreathes in the little chapel on the outside and in the church. I said, 'Well, I've never even made my own wreath.' But anyway, I guess I went down to Charles House, and he showed me how to make the bows. Oh no, I got one of his bows, and I took it apart and then put it back together, but it was getting all the greenery to do it and showing, training people. It was quite an affair. I did that for several years, and then I said it's somebody else's turn. So then I

helped with the decorating down at the church and was in charge of one year on projects, various projects at the church. Each guild would take [a project], one look after vestments, one look after keeping the parish house, and one the kitchen. One year I was in charge of organizing it for each different guild. Anyway, I ended up not being able to get anybody to do the vestments. So I ended up, somehow when you are the chairman of something, you--

BM: You get stuck.

NS: You get what's left over. So at Carol Woods I've continued with my flowers and arrangements. A couple of times a month or two months in charge of keeping some flowers and things in the lounge area over here. So for instance in January I did one of the same things that I had, I have a eucalyptus tree out here. So I cut that, fixed an arrangement and then it dried. I like to fix things that last. Then in the summertime in August the room was decorated in orange, had orange, which is hard to do. But I got the lilies, the orange lilies, and then after they would bloom, I would put them in my yard. So I've got them all in my yard, and some of them are blooming now. So then I could, I wish they could wait until August--

BM: When you really need them.

NS: When I really need it. I enjoy my roses and taking them over to the health center and the desk, and I enjoy taking them to people.

BM: Being able to give to people with your beautiful flowers. They're stunning.

NS: Then you know, as I say, I'm one of seven children. We're all still living. With all the nieces and nephews and the reunions we're having. We're having one this

June, the last of June, the Kinston group. Then in Weldon, my mother's people every other year we have those.

BM: So all seven children are still living. Now did your parents live to an older age?

NS: Both, one was eighty-seven, and one was eighty-eight. So they lived--

BM: Good long lives.

NS: Lyle's mother was about that age. But his father died, oh back in the '40s.

BM: Lyle lived--

NS: He was eighty-four.

BM: That's right.

NS: He died seven years ago.

BM: '95.

NS: Seven years ago, Sunday [May 19].

BM: I'm sorry.

NS: Commencement day [weekend. The day he was to have received the North Caroliniana Award.]

BM: Yeah. That is a reminder. I didn't realize it was commencement day [weekend].

NS: Well, you know commencement used to come in June. It was early June, and it was wonderful for the University Woman's Club. The magnolias were in bloom. So they were responsible for doing a reception during commencement weekend around the pool. It was a pool party on Friday nights, and we could decorate with magnolias. The interesting thing is we didn't have anything for the candles. So the University

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Woman's club bought them, bought some, and they put them in the chancellor's attic in between times. I don't know what happened to them.

BM: Where did they hold commencement before they held it in Kenan Stadium?

NS: Well, now let me see. They did hold it in Carmichael when it rained. So I guess they've had it, I remember the rainy ones in Carmichael. They were rained out. So they didn't have the academic procession. So I guess it has been in Kenan Stadium.

BM: For a number of years.

NS: For a number of years. I don't think they have the academic procession when, I don't think they have it when they have it in [the] Dean Dome. They have it there in case of rain, but it was Carmichael--

BM: In years past.

NS: In years past.

BM: Well, shall we call it quits for today, and then we can--

NS: Fine.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by L. Altizer, June 14, 2002