

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

3/4/09

Peggy Van Scoyoc (PV): Hi, this is Peggy Van Scoyoc. Today is Wednesday, March 4, 2009. I am in the home of Charlotte Phelps, and she is going to tell us today all of her memories about growing up in downtown Cary. And she grew up in the house that had the very famous, historic tree right across from the Cary Elementary School. Sadly, we are about to lose that tree so we want to learn all we can it as it's being cut down so that we can preserve those stories of the tree, and also her life. So, shall we start there, with your memories of the tree?

Charlotte Phelps (CP): Sure. That tree was a special tree to me for many reasons. We played in that tree. We had a tree house in that tree. It was actually, we had some electricity there, and we had a rope. The rope was the only way you could get up to the tree house. So if there was someone we didn't want up there when we were playing, we just pulled the rope up so they couldn't get up. We had many fond times playing in that tree house. My brothers, I had two brothers, one who is now deceased, named Ed. And my other brother Jim, and we all played in the tree house at various times. We especially played in it, I did, and my friends. That oak tree was just a great place to play. Sometimes we just climbed up and sat on the limbs of the tree. We could sit there and read a book, or just have fun, hang out. My mother, Otelia Lancaster, wrote a poem about that tree. I hope to get to Peggy a copy of that poem. It was written, and it was about a man praying under the big oak tree. It was just a beautiful poem. That whole area back there where... Dr. Hunter lived two doors down from us. His property connected with our property. He had a pond back there. And when I was growing up, we would play back there and we would fish. My two brothers decided one day that they were going to throw me into the pond, told me to sink or swim. I didn't think that was too funny. They finally threw me an inner tube so I could get out.

PV: How deep was this pond?

CP: It was a pretty deep pond. So I went home soaking wet. My mom was not too happy with them. But anyway, they thought it was really funny. Just like when they'd take us back there in the woods and told us we were going snipe hunting, and carry a bag and a flashlight. So, I did that, stood back there. They said, you have to stay a long time, you have to wait. And finally I realized it was a big joke, so I came home. Again, my mom wasn't too pleased about that either, because she didn't know where I was. And they carried me off snipe hunting.

Anyway, that was just part of being a child. When I played, it was mostly boys around the area to begin with. Charles Adams, who most of you know is the Athletic Association director, he lived across the street. Jackie Hunter lived, of course, that was Dr. Hunter's son, and he lived two doors down. And Johnny Upchurch lived to the left of us. So I played football with the boys. Dr. Hunter used to come by and tell my mother, I was, he'd worry, he used to come by and tell my mother I was going to get hurt really bad playing football. But it was, I never did, and we also played kick the can. We had a lot of fun. That was a great pastime, playing kick the can, and hiding. There were other people that eventually moved in, and young girls, and so I had some girls I could play with.

But when, I moved here when, right before I started first grade. Irma Ellis who lived in downtown Cary, was my first grade teacher. Mrs. Fox, before she married, was Ms. Cathey, and she was my second grade teacher. And she married Mr. Fox after his wife died, and lived up there on Chatham Street, where that's next to the railroad track, Reedy Creek Road, at that corner. That's where she lived. Then Mrs. Williams lived in the teacherage, and she was my third grade teacher. And then Margaret Jordan, who was, she used to live on Chatham Street as well. She was my fourth grade teacher. And Mrs. Maynard, who lived on Kildare Farm Road,

was my fifth grade teacher. So they were all had lived in Cary for quite some time. I was right there at the school, so I hardly anywhere to travel. But all these people were very interesting teachers, and each had their special, unique thing that you remembered about them. I know Mrs. Williams one day was going down the street. She had a wig. And we were sitting on the porch. It was a real windy day. And it actually blew her wig off, and she was chasing it. I'll never forget that. But maybe I shouldn't be telling that. That's part of my history, and I remember it.

In the teacherage, there were a lot of, Simon Terrell lived over there in the teacherage, as well as Dot Alexander who lives here now. She was Dot Stell at the time, before she married her husband. They've lived in Cary for years, and both were members of First Baptist as well. And Mrs. Smith who had a daughter and a son, and she taught Spanish in high school. I played with her daughter Pat. When Dot was dating Bunk Alexander, we would see them going to the car and we'd always go up to Dot's room after, the next day to find out all about how her date went with him. It was so funny. Then there was the Lorenzo's lived over there who had a daughter named Billy Anne. Of course, we played with her, and we played all around the school and various places.

We used to like to walk all over town. Back then, people could walk all over town. When I first moved here, there was a movie theater down there where the auto parts place is. And so we could go to the movie, and get the popcorn and whatever for less than you could even buy a soda now. But on the corner where the appliance place is now, that was a grocery store. I'm sure you probably already have that in your history.

But we used to, my dad was an electrician by trade, and so he worked in various people's homes. He started the first automatic, when you could come in your door, the remote control lights. Mr. Hobby had the first one in town, and he wired Mr. Maxwell, whom he later worked

for at Maxwell Insecticide Company. He did his home. We have, he made a little board where all the little lights would light up the different switches. So from any room, like in his bedroom there was a master control. He could turn on any light in the house from that room. So, when he came into his garage he could automatically turn on every light in the house if he wanted to, or he could turn on a single light. So we played with the lights, because with the little board that he had designed it with, we played with that. That was great fun. My mother, she actually had a little stove that I had for Christmas one year. It was a real electric stove. And so my mother used to bake little tiny biscuits and I had a little tiny pot, and she would give me navy beans and we'd cook the navy beans in the pot and use the oven, cook the little biscuits. My friends and I had tea parties, with the biscuits. It was a different kind of tea party than you have now. But that was our tea party. We had something to drink in the little cups. Most of the time it was either milk or something of that sort, maybe juice.

PV: Was this in the tree house?

CP: No. At that time it wasn't. We had it up there one time.

PV: You did have the oven in the tree house?

CP: But we didn't have it so that we could cook in that actual oven in the tree house itself. We could have, but at the time we didn't. We just played up there. But when we had it in the house was when we actually used it, and it worked. I guess it would have put too much of a strain on the one light switch and stuff that we had up in the tree house.

PV: So that was mostly just for the light bulb in your tree house. But your father rigged that up for you. How big was the tree house?

CP: It was a fairly good-sized tree house. I can't, it was big enough for us to get up there, for several people to get up there and be in there at the same time. So it was, he had fixed it and

it was just a neat little place. And we could all sit down and tell ghost stories or whatever we wanted to.

PV: So it was a rope ladder kind of thing that you used?

CP: Just a rope strand. Just a strand of rope.

PV: So you had to go hand over hand?

CP: You had to shinny your way up, and that was the only way you could get up. So it was just, you really had to want to get up there, to be able to do it. But we had fun. So, we had, I know most of Cary when I came here, there was Chatham Street and Academy Street and a few, like Kildare Farm Road, to be part of that was not paved. Where I went to elementary school it was. And the old school building that I had in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades, and is no longer there, as well as the teacherage, was torn down. Years ago the cannery, there was a cannery there. People used to go up there and can their summer vegetables and things. It was really interesting.

PV: So were they actually, the food they brought to can, was it put into jars or was it actually put into cans, like the kind of cans we have today?

CP: It was actually put into jars into a can.

PV: So a tin can that was sealed?

CP: Well, it wasn't a tin can, it was a jar but in a big old pot. It was like a big old tin pot, cooking pot. And that was there. Of course, that was part of, the gym was connected to that, I think, best I can remember. They later tore all that down and built a new gym. That's where the band met and so forth. When Mr. Capenella was the band director, I think I was probably in the maybe fourth or fifth grade. And he had junior majorettes, and I was one. So for a long time I had my outfit. But I don't have it anymore. I had my baton and all, my little hat and everything.

We actually had a little uniform. Occasionally we'd have a parade down the street, during school hours. It was fun. And then Mrs. Adams across the street that Mr. Adams owned the drugstore. And then Mitchells owned the other drugstore that was eventually, that wasn't even there when we moved here, but it later was made into a drugstore.

PV: So now did you move to Cary from somewhere else?

CP: Angier.

PV: Oh, from Angier. When did you move here? Do you remember what year it was?

CP: It was right before I started first grade, so I was still five, well no, I probably had turned six because it was right before I started to school. I was already six years old, because my birthday is in June. I was born in Angier. So we moved here, my dad had a business in Angier and also did electrical work there. He did a lot of work at Fort Bragg too. Then we moved here and we bought that house that I lived in, which had a huge front porch. We could sit on the front porch and watch people go by. Then we had a, there was a sun room and we had a big swing on the front porch. I know the teachers used to stop by as they were leaving school and talk to my mother, because they all admired her flowers. She had lots of flowers. One of the state workers came over one day to see her flowers. He'd heard about them. She had a huge row of tulips, pear tulips and rainbow tulips, and he wanted to know what she did to her tulips to get them to be that big. And she said, that was her military secret. So she was quite a character. Just about everybody in town knew my mother and daddy.

He often helped other people, and I know one Christmas, I can remember very well, we went to this lady's house that lived over on North Academy Street. Her husband was in prison for stealing. He was trying to, he would steal food for the family. She had called my dad. Her stove was out. She had no way to cook. We went over there, and I went with him. I was his

sidekick part of the time. So I went with him to help get his tools out and things, and we got through, he'd asked the lady what was she going to do about Christmas. After he fixed the stove, she wanted to know how much she owed him. He said nothing because he knew she didn't have any money. She said, "Well, I will pay you if you ever need any help for any reason." He said, well he appreciated that. So he asked about each one of the children, what size clothes they wore and things like that. There used to be a kin bin up town and that was next to Ashworth Drugstore, where Ashworth's is now, it was Adams. So we went there and we bought each one of them something to wear and each one of them something to play with. We took it back to them. Those little kids were so excited, they hid the toys under the bed because they were so afraid somebody was going to take them away from them. But not only that, but we went to the grocery store. My dad bought her a ham and turkey and everything she needed, flour, sugar, to cook with. And tears, when we left, the tears were just streaming down her face. Later when my mother was sick, she came up and helped my dad clean the house up. So she never forgot. But he would often go do things for people and said, "If your ox is in the ditch then you need to get him out." So he would help people a lot, and never charged for it.

But he helped, well there used to be a dairy here, back in where we are, where I'm living. There was a barn up there was part of a dairy. He helped wire parts of that dairy. He worked on the dairy where Mr. Keisler ran for Pine State.

PV: The Kildare farm, the actual farm.

CP: Yes. And Mr. Keisler's daughter and I were good friends in high school. I used to go spend the night there, and enjoyed seeing all the cows and watched them milk the cows and things like that. Then Charlene, another girl who was in my class, she was an assistant, her father was, and so he worked on the dairy too. I used to go out there quite a bit. We had, people knew

people back then, different from what they do now. Now hardly people know their neighbors sometimes. But you knew just about everybody in town, and they knew you. So you had to watch what you were doing or else you would get reported. Don't do what you weren't supposed to.

PV: What do you remember about the Kildare farm itself, other than milking cows? Do you, where there a lot of cows, and was it done by hand or a machine?

CP: Oh yes, there were a lot of cows. Well to begin with, it was a lot of them were done by hand, but then they got the machines in. It was a big place. The, of course the Keisler's home was moved from the property after they built Farmington Woods. It was all back in that area when all that shopping center went in, all that was moved and the big barn, all that was moved from the present location to where it is now. But all that whole road back in there was just, there were a few residential homes back in there, but mostly it was just open woods. I know I had visited one of my friends one night and I came back home, and as I was coming home, there was a whole bunch of little pigs and they just ran out in front of me. I thought, "Oh no, I'm going to kill these little pigs." But fortunately they scattered. But my foot was shaking so bad I could hardly drive home.

That was just, mostly just farmland. And so was Walnut Street. The Maynards lived out there too, where the mall part is now. They lived next to that part and back in there, all that was their land. They had, I know they had a garden. I don't remember how, whether they had a garden for themselves. I know they sold, if I can remember correctly, vegetables to other people. So that's all that was back in there. And same thing, Ten Ten Road, Penny Road and all that, that was just woods. And it wasn't paved, a lot of sections. Down across from the elementary school wasn't there. And the black cemetery, I know we used to go walking down back in there. And

the black cemetery is before, is off of Kildare Farm Road, but it was before you got to the other cemetery in Cary.

PV: Was it near the black church that was back there, or was it just by itself?

CP: Yes, it was near there. And that was a small old church, the best as I can remember. I know when we were Girl Scouts, we went over to the cemetery as part of a group one night. And then they were telling ghost stories and things, and some of those people got so scared, they were ready to leave. But even back off of 54, most of that was woods. There was some homes back in there, where the Bragassa's lived. She was in a troop that I was in with the Scouts. And I know once we had camped out, and then we went on a hiking trail over there. And we came upon some people making homemade booze. Yes. And we saw them, they were sitting there and they had their little cookers going and everything. And so we turned around and started running and they were coming after us. We were really scared, but we got back to the road and to the cars that we were in and we reported it. I don't know, I guess the law enforcement went down and I guess they got rid of it. But they were actually back in the woods and making moonshine. People bought moonshine back then, so they were right over there, right off of 54 making it. That was another scary thing, because we didn't know what they were going to do.

Alice Batts, who lived on Harrison Street, she was our troop leader. We actually went to Williamsburg on a trip. We saved money and sold things and we went up there, our little Scout troop that I was in. And that was, we had a lot of fun. She was a great Scout leader. Her sister had several sons, and at least one of them was in my brother's age group, middle brother. I was the youngest and he was in the middle. So we, I can remember Don coming up and playing with them. And there was a lady in town who they would call and ask if her refrigerator was running,

or her clock running. And they just had more fun talking to that lady. I'm sure she wanted to kill them, calling her up. Is your clock running? Well you better go get it. Things like that.

PV: Was it the same woman that they called all the time?

CP: Yes, and they'd call her up and said, "Is Heddy there?" And she'd say, "Heddy?" And they'd say, "Heddy call." Well tell her Author-itis is on the phone." Just stuff like that. They were so funny. But they didn't do that when my mother was home.

And there was a lady who lived, Dr. Hunter would always tell my mother when somebody was sick. If they needed some help, he'd call my mother up and say, well so and so needs some help and I know you wouldn't mind doing. This lady had cancer. And my mother would fix meals for her and carry to her. We did that until that lady died. I can remember that. She was a real sweet little woman, and lived up there back off of Kildare Farm Road in a little tiny house.

PV: So the doctors actually alerted the community when somebody needed help, and they knew who to go to within the community that would be willing to help. And everybody, neighbor taking care of neighbor? How wonderful.

CP: Yes, they did. And I know the Adams', one of their family members lived on Harrison Street at the time, but she became with the Rogers. And she became sick, and my mother took food over to her. She took food everywhere. She cooked all the time. She'd cook three meals a day. We didn't have any sandwiches at our house. She was just, that was just part of what she did. She liked to cook, and she was a very good cook. And my brother would bring home his friends from school. Occasionally, I'd bring home somebody too, but he brought home more people than I did. So we used to tease my brother about, my older brother and I would tease him about, he had blue eyes and the rest of us had brown. And we told him he was adopted.

And we shouldn't have done that, but we did, because he would get after us about something. He was the brain in the family. And he was the president of his class when he graduated and he went on, he had mono. He was going to be appointed to the Air Force Academy. It had already been arranged with the representative, or whoever. But he got sick with mono. By the time he was getting over that, he was beyond the age that they appoint somebody. So he ended up going to State, but the mono was so severe, he had to drop out. But then he went into the Air Force. He was the last captain, the last person promoted to captain that did not have a college degree. But he ended up retiring as a full colonel in the Air Force. He loved it. He flew C-130s. He went to pilot school and everything. But he just flew all over everywhere.

PV: Did he get caught in any of the wars or anything?

CP: He actually flew C-130s over to Vietnam. But he didn't, he was over there for about six months at the time, but he didn't stay like some of them had to. I know one time he came back, he really didn't want to talk about it. But he was over there one Christmas, and he said he'd gone down, I think it was in Saigon, and there was this little girl looking in the window at dolls, and he saw her. And so he pointed to the doll, and pointed to her. I guess she wasn't sure what he meant. So he went in and got the doll and came out and gave it to her. And he said, she just went screaming through the street. He said, it just really brought tears to his eyes, because that little girl was so happy, so excited. So he would talk about things like that. But he said it was actually kids who were throwing grenades. A man got killed, one of the officers in, I don't know if embassy over there. Somewhere they were there and this kid came in and threw a grenade and killed this one officer. So he said, you never knew who your enemy was over there. And they'd be Vietcong by night, and Vietnamese by day, so you would never know who your enemy was. You had to be totally alert at all times. It was a very difficult war, he said. But he would not talk

about it other than that. There were so many people who came back from that war and just were really troubled. I can't imagine, the Iraq war, people going over there and seeing all those people and their buddies and friends. How could that not do something to you? War is a terrible thing. So I wish they could find some way to have peace over there in that area, but those people have been at war for so long, I don't think they know any other way of life, unfortunately. We as Americans don't know how lucky we are, or how blessed we are. We really don't. We take so much for granted. We don't appreciate things in the manner that we should.

PV: Here you were, growing up in this wonderful, close-knit community where everybody looked out for everybody else, and so, things have changed, a lot.

CP: The world has changed a lot. Quite a bit. Like I said, we used to walk the streets of Cary all over, never fearful. We walked the streets in the rain, we walked the streets in the sunshine. I mean, it was just, if you wanted to go somewhere, you walked. You didn't have cars as teenagers, not many people had cars. And I used to stay with Mrs. Jones who lived on the corner that was Jean Hobby, that was her grandmother. And I would stay with her some at night. I will never forget one night, I thought she was going to die on me, because she was breathing hard. I thought, I'm going to be over here by myself and this woman's going to die. And she, all of a sudden, said she had to go make water, and I thought she was going to get bowls of water. Of course, she was talking about going to the bathroom. I will never forget that. But fortunately for me, she didn't never pass away on me. Later they had someone who came and stayed with her. But I stayed with her some at night until they could find somebody to stay. And the little, across the, with the Adams, they lived on the corner. The Adams' were in the next brick house and then in the house where the Hills lived later, that was the Methodist parsonage. So one of the ministers there, his little girl played. We babysat with her, and she was a doozie. But we enjoyed

that family so much when we went to babysit. And then there was a big old house kind of where the library is now, and I can't remember their last name... Pauline? Anyway, she was Dr. Yarborough's nurse and then she ended up later marrying Dr. Yarborough. And then Ms. Templeton, well, as you are going on down the street, Esther Ivey was just a world of knowledge about everything. She had gotten interested in the gourds. And she got my mother and daddy involved in the gourd club. So I went with them to these meetings and my dad made a lot of lamps out of gourds and different things. They used to have this gourd, I think they still have the gourd convention, where they display all the gourds. But it was different from what it was back then.

PV: Now did he use special hand tools, or power tools? How did he carve up and make things out of the gourds? Do you remember?

CP: He actually used some type of knife, and carved it. He would very carefully cut them when he made the initial cut. And then he would get all the lining out. Ms. Esther made a lot of things, beautiful things out of gourds. But I know one time, I made a doll. That was the ugliest doll you have ever seen in your life. I made it. She had big old eyes, and her mouth went from the front to all the way to her ears. But that was my only doll, out of a gourd. That was so funny. But she was in the gourd show when my daddy took her to the gourd show.

PV: Now did your dad display any of his work at the gourd show?

CP: Yes.

PV: And did they award prizes or...

CP: I think back then they did, as to who had ... and we used to, I'm trying to think of those people's names, because Ms. Irma Ellis lived with them. And that's where we went, the Wray's. They lived down there on the corner of Harrison in a big old house. That was torn down,

it hasn't been too many years ago that house was torn down. But that's where we had a lot of the meetings and things. Then Ms. Esther had this plant that was called a night-blooming cereus, and she gave me one. And it blooms only one time a year at night. It blooms about midnight. It has the most wonderful smell. But it shoots out this long limb and on the end of that limb, it really looks like a big Easter lily kind-of a lily. But you can smell it days before it ever opens up. And we would watch it. And then when my brother died suddenly, I was over at my mother's so much, I forgot to water it, and it eventually died. But her niece lived in the house that is still there. She had one, and I happened to call her one day to see if she still had it. You won't believe it, I just put it on the street. Some man came and asked me if I knew what I'd put on the street. She said, "I said, yes. I was just tired of it." And so he got it. But you can't find them. They are so hard to find. People don't know what they are. If you say night-blooming cereus, they don't know what you're talking about. There was a lady in Raleigh that someone said, one of my customers said she had, and she was going to try to get me a piece of it. The woman had promised her some, but apparently she never did give her any of it. But I would love to get one sometime. It's a beautiful plant.

PV: I'll bet. Is it a color, the bloom?

CP: White. We watched it bloom out on... and like I said, you could smell it for days. And you knew it was going to bloom, but it opened up just that one time, it bloomed that one time.

PV: And then it would close up again by morning?

CP: It actually would stay open, but it didn't bloom until night. And I guess that's how it got the name the night-blooming cereus. I've looked on the Internet for them and haven't been able to find one. And if you call a garden center, they don't know what you're talking about. But

she had a lot of unique plants. She liked plants and flowers and so did my mother and daddy.

I've got big camellia bushes in the backyard that my daddy started from a seed. And then I had a peach tree over on the side of the house. She gave me two peach trees, one for Sheree and one for Marci. And Marci's is still in the backyard, and the one over here, a neighbor planted a pine tree next to it. I think that's what killed it. It just sucked all the water from it.

So it was just, and my dad was a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church for, I think it was 42 years. He was a deacon, but he also helped start the first missionary house for our church. And he said he met a lot of the missionaries and corresponded with them. And they came to see him. They sent my mother a beautiful collar one of them had made. They were over in the Philippines, so they got to meet a lot of interesting people that way. ()

PV: You were telling me on the phone before we met, that you had some interesting and unusual pets when you were a kid. Tell me about those.

CP: Yes. Jackie Hunter had a little ring-tail monkey. For some reason, I don't know if his mother didn't want him to have it anymore or whatever, he gave it to my older brother. And so, his name was Bobo. We had him for quite a few years. He loved grapes, and he loved Pepsi cola. If you gave him a Pepsi cola he would chug-a-lug that Pepsi, and then throw it down, because it was bottled then. Not like in the cans you get now. And he'd reach out for another one, he wanted another one, so we had to watch that. But he had a combination lock on his cage. One night, I had put him up because we were getting ready to have dinner, and he beat me back to the table. I thought, I know I locked that cage. How did you get out? I happened to put him back in, and again he went running right past me, to my chair. So I took him back in there. There was a wall separating where he was and the dining room, so I stood behind the wall and watched him. He pulled this combination lock up to his ear, and turned it, and when he heard it click he

reversed it and heard it click again. Out he came. So we had to change the locks often. That was a smart little monkey. I know one day this lady came to see my dad about doing some work, repairs on appliances or something for her, and that monkey was out. He loved it when people were afraid of him. Evidently that just tickled him. And he was jumping up and down in front of her and swinging on the curtains. That lady was scared to death. And I was trying to chase him and get him out of there. He was just swinging from the curtains, and he would laugh. He would look at you and just laugh. So I chased him into my bedroom, and he was jumping up and down on my bed, doing flips. He was hilarious.

PV: How big was he?

CP: He was about this tall.

PV: About a foot tall?

CP: Yes. We had, I could put him in a carriage. I had a little pillow, and dressed him up. And he would lay down in that little carriage and I'd give him a little bottle of milk and he would drink that milk and lay back down on that pillow just like he was a baby. We rolled him up and down the street. And then one day some friends and I got this bright idea to let him hold a can to see if we walked down the street with him, to see if anybody would put any money in it. We didn't have the little musical thing for him to play. He would hold out his little hand and they'd put some money in there. When we got enough money to go and get some drinks and a candy bar. We thought that was fantastic. But we didn't do it every day. We thought, well, they'll know what we're doing now. That little monkey was a hoot.

PV: How long did you have him?

CP: Until I went off to college. And so we had him quite awhile. But he was hilarious.

PV: Did he eventually die, or what happened to him?

CP: No, we actually gave him back to Jackie when I left. My mother said she wasn't looking after no monkey. But he loved bananas. He'd peel a banana and eat it, and just stuff it right down. And grapes, it was funny him eating grapes. He did not like glasses. I did not wear glasses at the time. But a friend of my brother's, Mr. Franklin who owned the other drugstore, his son came over, and he snatched his glasses off and was stomping up and down on them. We got them out of the cage, but he just didn't like glasses. I guess he could see himself, the reflection, and that's why he didn't like them. But he was quite a character. All my friends loved him. They'd come over just to see the monkey.

And my brother-in-law now has a monkey named Cassie. She is about this tall.

PV: About two or three feet tall?

CP: Yes, and she wears a dress. When Marshall was in the hospital, we had a picture of her. When the nurses would come in, they'd say, "Oh, you got a picture." He said, "Yes, that's my niece." And you could, at first from a distance they saw the dress and everything and thought it was a real person. And when they'd get over there and they could see the expression on their faces. "That's your niece?" He said, "Yes, that's Cassie." You don't call her a monkey. She has her own room, her own play toys. She's just like a human being to them. Her name is Cassie.

PV: Now didn't you say something about a black pig?

CP: Yes, my brother had a black pig named Oink.

PV: Is that unusual, black pigs?

CP: Well, it wasn't for us. It was just pig that we brought home from my aunt's. They had some sows and they had pigs, and we thought he was cute and we...

PV: How long did you have the pig? It was just a piglet when you brought it home, right? So it must have grown up, though.

CP: Well, it got big. I don't know, I can't remember what happened to him. Seems like my dad gave him to somebody. We had a garden on one side and the pig was on the other side. That was before you got to the oak tree. But that was his little pig. Then my older brother, like I said, he had the chickens. There was one special chicken. It would get on his shoulder and walk around with him. So I think that chicken, I don't know what happened to him. I don't know if he became dinner one night or what. I don't remember, but... We had cats, we had a dog.

And we once had, my brother and my father, I kept hearing this noise going up the side of my bedroom, like somebody was trying to get in. It was a scratching noise. And I thought, what is that noise, and I went and told my dad. Finally, they went up in the attic, and it was this possum who had babies, and she was going up and down the side of the house at night. She could get in through the vent thing in the attic. I liked to never got her out. But they got all those babies, and we had them out there in a cage for awhile. It was interesting to see them. If you put a piece of meat in there, they would about tear each other up, those little babies, to get it. Somebody finally got them out one day and we never saw them again. I don't know if my dad decided to let them out, or somebody did when we were gone. But we had a lot of interesting pets.

PV: So now what happened to the house?

CP: It was torn down. My dad sold it to Mr. Johnson and his son from Johnson's BBQ. And they were going to build apartments there. I'm so glad they didn't. Somehow their financing fell through or something happened. They sold it. I tried to tell me dad he was not selling it for the money he should, but he thought they were offering him a fair price, which they really did not. But he was the kind of person that, he didn't believe in taking advantage of people. He would have taken less money than more money. But anyway, they tore the house down.

PV: The next people after the Johnson's?

CP: Yes. Where they built the dentist office. So they, that's when they tore down the house.

PV: There it was. Do you know how old it was? Do you have any idea when it was built?

CP: I don't. Mrs. Raines owned the house that my dad bought. I know it was an old house. My dad installed a furnace after we bought it, a floor furnace. All the other rooms in the home had fireplaces. One, my room, the actual fireplace was inside of a closet. Whoever had moved in there at one time, they closed in that part as a closet, big, huge walk-in closet. But my dad and mother's bedroom had a working fireplace. He had put a stove in there, and then there was another working fireplace in... there was an apartment on the back of it that they rented out. They rented it to my aunt and uncle for a long time. And then some other people lived there as well with us, that came in and wanted a place to live until they could find a place. The Landstreets lived there for a long time. And K.B. Jinks lived there, who later became a pharmacist. He was going to school. So they had that. And there was this huge fig tree out back of the apartment, that had the best figs. We would go out there and get figs, and it was huge.

PV: It was probably pretty old too.

CP: It was. Then down below, between right there at our property line, there was a big old pear tree with the best pears. There was just all kinds of things there. We had a garden. We had a cat that as a Persian cat that my dad brought back from Canada when my brother was a baby, just about, and my mother said that the Canadian authorities told them they couldn't take the cat over the border. And so they would have to take the cat. So my mother said, "You mean you're going to take the cat away from my son?" And they said, "We'll have to." And she said, "Well, you'll have to be the one who takes it." So he started to take it, and my brother started

crying. And he said, "Well, if you can get it past the American authorities, you can go." Of course the Americans didn't say anything when they crossed the border. And so that was a Persian cat that lived to be nineteen years old. She liked fresh vegetables. She would go down to the garden with us, and she would pick string beans with her mouth. She'd get a whole bunch of string beans and come up to the back porch. And while we were snapping green beans, or whatever we were doing, she would eat hers. She learned to ring the doorbell. Whenever she wanted to come in the house, she couldn't press it hard enough to make it... we had a doorbell that my dad had. It was an unusual doorbell that would ring, and it was chimes. It was eight chimes one way and eight chimes back the other way. So it chimes like sixteen times every time the doorbell rang. Well, it had a beautiful sound to it, though. She would press it enough to make it make a noise. Whenever she had a mouse or something she wanted us to see, she'd press that doorbell. Or if she wanted to come in the house. She learned how to stand on the rocking chair and reach up and press that doorbell.

PV: You had very smart animals.

CP: Yes, we did. This one is a smart little kitty too [in her lap.] She was the one that got my husband up when I broke my back. She heard me and she went running to the back...

PV: and got him, and he came?

CP: Yes. He was asleep. She woke him up. It was starting to rain, and there was nobody home. And I knew, I thought how am I ever going to get into this house. I had just gotten in the house, because she heard me screaming. But I managed to get in by moving my feet, and that's how I got into the house. I was holding my back. Outside the door I had left a jar. I had... my foot rolled on some gumballs that were up underneath some leaves and caused me... and we had built that sunroom and the dirt around it was just like concrete. I heard the crunch. So, the inside

door was not open, and I had to keep reaching up trying to get in. And I came in here and fell on that couch, and I didn't move after that. By that time she had gotten him up, and he was in here when I came through that door.

PV: That's incredible. So did you end up having to have surgery?

CP: Actually, no. I got, I went to the hospital. () I got a heavy back brace. ()

PV: Did he grow up here in Cary, your husband?

CP: No, he was from Wilson. He went to State. I actually, he actually dated one of my best friends when I met him. He broke up with her later, and asked me out. I called her and I said, is it going to bother you if I go out with him, because I wouldn't go out with him if it did. She said, no, but I actually think it did. She told me that was the guy she was going to marry when she first met him. He was just a neat person. I never knew anybody that met him that didn't like him.

PV: So now, after you met and you married, were you living here in Cary or in Wilson?

CP: We were in Raleigh to begin with, right down from the governor's mansion on Edenton Street. And we lived on the third floor, and could actually see the demonstrations that went by in the sixties, when they were demonstrating in downtown Raleigh. It was so neat, because we could walk to the theaters, to the movies, to the State Theater and the Ambassador Theater downtown. And we could go to the theaters after work. It was really neat.

PV: Now, what were the demonstrations for? Was it civil rights?

CP: Yes. We'd sit on the porch and see them going by.

PV: Wow, you got to actually see them. Did that happen very often?

CP: Yes, right during the time when all that was going on, there were quite a few demonstrations.

PV: So they were marching in front of the governor's mansion?

CP: They would march down from the governor's mansion from the capital around. They'd go down by the capital and then they'd come around and go down in front of the governor's mansion.

PV: Were you living down there when Martin Luther King was assassinated?

CP: No, I think we had moved to Cary when he was assassinated.

PV: Now were they basically peaceful or did they get ugly, that you remember?

CP: No, they were basically peaceful. There were a few incidents where people got ugly, but for the most part I think they were pretty peaceful.

PV: You didn't see dogs and fire hoses and that kind of thing going on.

CP: No. They did have the National Guard called out, because my husband was in the National Guard and he thought one time he was going have to be called out for that. He was called out for a couple of others but they weren't here. He'd actually knew basically when they were going to occur.

PV: So they were planned ahead of time and they got wind of it and making plans for it.

CP: I know we had bought a new Ford Fairlane. It was parked on the street. And one morning it snowed and I happened to be looking out the window, and all of a sudden this car comes careening over, skidding and smacked right into our new car. Back then, at those apartments there was no place to park except on the street. Those apartments are still there. You can still rent them. They redid some of them, I think. But they had radiated heat. That was the nicest, warmest heat. And it was a real nice older couple that lived there. We enjoyed them.

PV: So then from there you moved to Cary?

CP: Yes. We moved back here, and my husband worked for DOT. His whole career, he was in the National Guard for 28 years, and worked with DOT for 38 years.

PV: Were you living in this house?

CP: No, we actually lived in several places. We lived on Walker Street in an apartment. That's when I was pregnant with my first child. And then we moved down, not Walker Street, Urban Drive, then we lived on Walker Street in a little house that the Oliver's, who Ms. Oliver was a teacher. She taught first grade. And we lived there. And Herb Young who owned the pool and his wife Peggy, they lived on the corner there from us. And then we moved here in February of 1973. And it snowed the day we were moving. But the sun hit the driveway, so it would clear the driveway. So we could get in and out. But the rest of this area, when it snows going up that hill and then down the hill to the Chatham Street. That's down the hill to Chatham Street usually does not get much sun, and it's real icy and sometimes people couldn't even get out of here because of it. If you went that way, it was icy too. Some people moved in up there and redid that barn that was part of the dairy here. And they lived in it, but they never finished it. And on one side of it, if you look at it you can see where it's not finished. But it looked like that critters would get in there, and could come in where you are.

PV: And they're still living there now?

CP: Yes. Well, the guy that was the architect that did it, he died. They were the first ones that lived there. I don't know who lives there now. But he died. That brick house was part of the dairy. The people lived there, and we used to babysit for some children that lived there. And we babysat for the Ashworth's kids growing up. We had a lot of interesting experiences babysitting. We had some good children, and we had some that were little demons.

PV: So how many children do you have?

CP: I have two daughters.

PV: Two daughters, okay. Now did they go to school with the Ashworth's boys? Were they the same age?

CP: No. The Ashworth boys were older. They were born before our children were. Our children went to school at Cary Elementary, and then they went to West Middle School, and of course, to Cary High School. We were supposed to be the first class to graduate in 1959 from the new school. It was being built, and we were supposed to be. But it was completed in time. So we were the last class to graduate from the old school. So that was, I think, more special than moving into the new school. And it was so funny because, my husband went to Charles L. Coon School and he had a ring there. And they built that Ralphel Fike. And they were the first class to graduate from Ralphel Fike. So he had two high school class rings. One was from Ralphel Fike and one was from Charles L. Coon. And he grew up, his father was a surveyor. He grew up surveying and that's how, what he did. He was in the location and surveys unit for the state.

PV: What was your husband's name?

CP: Louis Marshall Phelps. There was Marshall Phelps Junior. He was a great guy.

PV: Sounds like he was.

CP: He was, very special. He helped me do anything. I never went anywhere that he didn't open the door for me. And I never went anywhere that he didn't tell me I looked nice before we left. He was just a very special man.

PV: Now what have your daughters done? Are they still here in Cary?

CP: One lives in Angier, actually. So they went back to Angier. It was interesting, because when we went back down there trying to figure out, because the railroad track. You know the homes that we lived in there were gone. And there was other things there. So we were

trying to remember, my other brother and I were trying to remember exactly where we lived. Because that was near our school house. I know my mother was giving my younger brother a bath one day, and she got involved in doing something. Somebody came to the door, I don't remember exactly what. But he got out of the bathtub, and went streaking down the street. He was going to the "cool" house to see... that's what he called it, the cool house. He was just maybe five years old, because I was about three or four. He was going down the street. My grandmother lived with us, and she went and got him and brought him home. It was funny. His hair was like cotton, we called him "cotton top," because his hair was so blonde, it was white.

PV: So your daughter ended up back in Angier?

CP: Yes.

PV: So she's back there. Is your other daughter still around here?

CP: She lived in Mt. Gilead until my husband passed away, and then she moved back here. She's actually manager of the Blue Tiger in Apex. So that's a real unique gift shop. So she lives in Apex. So I get to see both of them. I have two grandsons. Michael, I used to keep him some for Sheree, and when he would come, he was unusual. When he wanted to, you know a lot of kids don't like to take naps. But when he got sleepy, he would go get Marshall by the finger, "Come on, Granddiddy," that's what he called him, Granddiddy. "Let's go take a nap." And that tickled my husband to death because he liked to sleep. And so he'd go back there and sleep. And then finally Michael would sit up in the bed and then he would punch my husband and try to get him awake. "Come on, Granddiddy, it's time to get up." It was so funny.

And when we play games, it's so funny, because he said, "I spy with my little eye." So and so and so, when we play I spy. He always says, "I spy with my little eye." And I just found a book that shows shapes and things, and that's what it says in that book, "I spy with my little

eye.” So that’s why I got that little book for him. I don’t know if he learned that at church, in one of the little... because he’s just five. He turned five in January. He’s quite a little character. She has two boys.

PV: I’m sure you enjoy them both very much.

CP: She works at First Citizens Bank over there off that Tryon in Garner, in that big facility. She enjoys that. And we had, this is where all of her friends congregated. At my house they all congregated, when I was growing up, we came to my house and played. And that’s what happened over here, all the little neighborhood kids would come over here. And some of them still do. They see me out in the street or whatever in my yard, and they come up and talk, want to play. ()

I’m sure you probably got something about the Dennings having their grocery store.

PV: Yes, we interviewed Doris Denning many years ago, before she passed away.

CP: She was one of my Sunday school teachers.

PV: Was she? She was great. She was talking about raising her kids behind the meat counter in the grocery.

CP: She was just a neat lady. And Mr. Denning was too. I remember, he had big feet. He wore these big black shoes that people wear a lot when they’re on their feet all the time. He was a big man. Of course, their first grocery store was there right beside of what’s Ashworth’s. And then it moved across the street. And when he closed that grocery store, and people used to go in an charge groceries, run up a bill and pay it, but if they didn’t have the money at the time. And then he started Grocery Boy Jr. He owned that, what is now that service station down here, that Citgo, that little mini-mart. That was a Grocery Boy Jr.

PV: Right at West Chatham and Old Apex?

CP: Yes, that was a Grocery Boy Jr. And then that one down there that sits next to Cooper's Furniture store, that was a great big Grocery Boy Jr. That was just called a Grocery Boy. But he owned a bunch of Grocery Boy Juniors, all over Raleigh and Cary. He was quite an entrepreneur.

PV: Yes he was, because I don't they had many, if any convenience stores in this part of the state before he introduced that.

CP: No, they didn't. If there were, they were few and far between. Actually, there might have been some here and there.

PV: There were some other grocery stores way back when as well, right?

CP: Yes. There was the Piggly Wiggly on the corner where the appliance place is now, that was Hobby's appliance place. Then that became a Winn Dixie, and then later the Winn Dixie built this new building. And then that became the appliance place. And then later on, where the movie theater was, that became the Cary Clothiers.

PV: Okay. I recently saw a picture of that.

CP: Randy Chandler ran that. Then after he closed his store, he went to work for Belks, and then that became the auto parts place. Then there was Maxwell () was up there where that Austin Food place is now. Part of Maxwell's was over here in that big building was there. That became Austin Food. There was, the Gowers, Macon Gower and his mother lived over there near the railroad tracks. Then, seems like they moved into another house on the right-hand side, like you're going out, one of those big houses. Then there was an A&P where the Cary News is now. That was there for quite awhile. Because when, I worked for the Highway Patrol at the communications center when I first got out, after I came back home after I went to Elon for one semester. My mother was sick. Then I went to (). When I left (), I went to work for the

Highway Patrol. That was an A&P at that time. So, and there was a cleaners. Mr. Holland, where that cleaners is now, he ran that cleaners for a long time, that was downtown. And the post office was across the street, where the bank is now. At Fidelity Bank, that was the post office, back in there.

PV: Oh, that's where it was. I haven't in my mind quite placed that post office.

CP: Yes, it was back over on that side where that bank building is now. And the other Jones, which was the son of the Jones that lived across the street from us, lived next to the Baptist church, which is now owned by the church, that house is. And Elva Templeton lived in the house across from the Methodist Church. She used to have a little dog that she walked all the time. She loved that little dog. But she was quite a character too. And Torene Woodlief lived down on, as you're, Mr. Heater lived on the corner of Harrison and Dry Avenue. And she lived on this, and the Bettingfields lived across from there, and Ms. Bettingfield taught school. And then across from the Hobbys, directly across on the corner of Harrison was the photographer, Mr. Coggins. He made my first recital picture. When I played piano, the piano teacher lived in that house on Kildare Farm Road, that one that is now apartments. That's where she lived. But she and her sister lived there. And then across from the Bettingfield house, on Harrison was where Torene Woodlief lived for many years. And then Joe Sturdivant, who married the Cooper daughter that owns the furniture store, lives right down that street. And Mr. Franklin lived down that street that owned the pharmacy. So there was just a few areas all back in that area, Russell Hills was woods when I came here.

PV: Hadn't been built yet.

CP: No. None of that was built. I've seen quite a few changes.

PV: Now wasn't there a drive-in theater over somewhere near the Cooper's Furniture?

CP: That was where McSwain's trailer park is now. They owned, McSwain's brothers owned that trailer park. But that was before they owned that, that was the outdoor movie theater. And we used to go there and watch movies and things.

PV: How fun. Do you have any idea how long it was there, or when it closed?

CP: It closed, my aunt lived across the street from there. I sold her property, that little small thing that is now a glass shop. Their property went all the way to the railroad tracks. It was built, well I was in high school, I know, the trailer park was. So I'm trying to think. It's been a trailer park for a long time. I think the drive-in probably, and they left the drive-in, part of it before they completed the whole trailer park. They left part of it as the drive-in when they first were developing it.

PV: So there were trailers in and around the drive-in theater?

CP: Yes. In fact, we lived in that trailer park when we first moved back to Cary, we had a trailer. Yes, and neither one of us liked it. So, my husband said, "I'll pay somebody to take this trailer." We lived right across from the pond. But you could hear everybody and everybody could, it was just... This couple lived across the street from us, and if you came and go, you could see the curtain coming back and everybody was watching everything you did. But we didn't live there long.

PV: A good place to start.

CP: Yes it was. But back then people didn't think that you were a good character if you lived in a trailer park. You know, banks and things that would lend you money or whatever, or if you wanted... like if you wanted to take an ad out in the News and Observer, if you had a trailer address, you couldn't get that, you had to pay cash. I mean, trailer people had bad reputations back then. That was another reason we didn't want to stay there. And it wasn't true, but try to

convince somebody. You couldn't do it. But it was funny, because my brother was the president of his class, and Marshall was the president of his class in Wilson. And he was also voted the most friendly in his class, but he was a person who liked to be around smaller groups of people. He didn't like to be around large crowds. That was just interesting.

But, I don't know if you have any other questions about Cary or not.

PV: I can't think of anything off-hand. I just loved hearing your stories about growing up in Cary and graduating in the last class in the school.

CP: That was a neat thing. And you know, we had Mrs. Marley who lived on Reedy Creek Road was a school teacher. She loved the boys. If you were in her class and you were a boy, you automatically were going to get passed no matter what. You could be the dumbest thing on the block and you would get passed by Ms. Marley. She loved my older brother. They went to New York and they had the best time. And my other brother's class was the last one, I think it was the one after him, I believe, so they were so rowdy in that class, we didn't get to go. So we were supposed to go, but they were the last class, the one before us, so we didn't get to go to New York or Washington. They went to Washington D.C. and New York. So Mrs. Marley was the one that always who put on these Elizabethan plays, and you had real costumes that she rented, and critics would come and be at the plays and things. And they sold tickets, and lots of people came. We did Macbeth. I mean, it was really neat. She was very into, she was very theatrical-acting herself. But she was just a real interesting teacher. She knew a lot about plays and how to designate characters in the play, and I mean, it was a production back then. It wasn't like anything we had.

Ms. Rice was our English teacher. She taught my brother and me. And she just loved, this was my other brother. She just loved him. And then she taught me. I could remember, if you

yawned in class, she would say you were bored and you weren't getting enough oxygen so she made you go raise a window. If she caught you chewing chewing gum, you had to swallow it. But she was a good English teacher. We learned a lot from her. And Ms. Boldridge was our Latin teacher. She was an interesting lady. And we had one of the first, I think we were the first class that, Mr. Lane who was the coach, taught history also, and we had that, our lesson was taught by the TV. We had a lot of lessons that we listened to this woman on the television. I think our class was the first one that did that.

PV: So they had a television in the school that they brought into the classroom?

CP: Yes. And Ms. Rood was the chemistry teacher who lived in the pink house. Her and her husband lived in that pink house across from the church that Sheila owns now. And Sheila and her family, they lived up near the other furniture store, Nowells. In between Cary and Raleigh, as you're going out of Cary and Nowells... They had, it was like, Sheila and her husband built a house, I think, next to her parents and lived there for awhile. And then she started her own business. You know, she was in advertising and worked for this company, and she said that they didn't really cater to small businesses. So she started her own company and it's been very successful. So she's done a lot for the community, I think. The Ashworths have done a lot for the community.

PV: Yes, definitely. Cary has been blessed with a lot of really dynamic people.

CP: Yes. And Robert Heater, old Mr. Heater, Mrs. Heater was a character. If you ever knew her, she was just a hoot, telling about different things. R.O. Heater, everybody knew R.O. Heater. But they had, one of their children had twins. Tom and Jerry, I think his name is Jerry, and they used to go, and they lived in the house on the corner. And they would go up to Dr. Hunter's house and get him up. He'd go in there and they'd be in the bed. So he'd tell them to go

down to our house. And they would come down, they would get into bed with my mother and daddy. Their parents didn't know where they were. And they'd want to eat breakfast with us. Their daddy came one day and tracked them down. It was hard to tell them apart. And so he was whipping one of them, thought he had Tom But he said, "I not Tom, I Jerry." But they were just, he thought he had one and he had the other. And it was a riot. They would come up to our house all the time. Just jump out of the bed and they'd take off. But they'd go to Dr. Hunters, and Dr. Hunter said, "Go see Ms. Lancaster, I know she's got something." It was so funny. That Dr. Hunter was a character. He was a... his office, he finally built an office that was down there where that Serendipity is now. And then when Dr. Thompson came and took over his practice, that's where he was. And then he moved up to that building now that's across from the church. That's where, her name was Nanny something, and she had a lot of chickens and rabbits and all kinds of things.

PV: Nanny Leach?

CP: Yes. And people told my mother when she was going getting donations for charity, not to go down there. And do you know, they found money in that house in the walls and everything after she died. But she gave my mother money. Nobody could believe it, but she did. I used to go down there and they had, she had her little chickens in the house. It was, she had all kinds of things around there. She was a character too. There were quite a few characters in Cary.

PV: Well, Charlotte, thank you so very much for taking your time today to meet with us and to tell us all your great stories about the tree, and growing up in Cary, and all the people you remember. We so appreciate it and the town values all of these stories. So thank you for sharing with us today. We really do appreciate it. End of Interview