

K-10

NANCY HOLT

27 October 1985

Interview with  
Frances E. Webb

FIELD NOTES, TAPE INDEX AND TRANSCRIPTION

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPTION

Tape 1, Side A

Frances Webb: I think I'd like to start out talking about maybe your childhood and growing up in this area and things like how many, how much of your family lived here and what kind of relationship you had with other people in the neighborhood and that sort of thing.

Nancy Holt: There was twelve children in our family and, we, because there were no other children in this area and because of the isolation that most people maintained then except on Saturdays and Sundays and in times of need. The unique thing about this community I think is that you - there's not alot of exchange and visiting on a regular basis, but if there is a definite need, you can be sure that the neighbors will come in to help whether it is raising a barn or helping at the time of death or illness. But as children, our first real social contact other than church was at school. And we had, of course living on a, a small farm having that many children, your summers were pretty well taken up with preserving food and doing all sorts of things that were necessary to get back to the point that you were ready for another winter. And it truly was a seasonal kind of life. Our closest neighbors, of course, was the Armstrongs and I can remember as a child going down there and hearing the guinea hens way before you could get there. And Miss Dinah, Coy Armstrong's mother, was an elegant lady with of lots of white hair all piled up on her head and if she would let down her hair it would come to the back of her heels - beautiful, beautiful woman. And then the Bradshaws and the Apples around here. We all knew each other. It

was certainly a cordial relationship, but primarily all visiting was family oriented. The families got together every Sunday for Sunday dinner. Everybody came back home. And I think that was true for other families too.

FW: You went to your grandparent's house?

Holt: No, they all came here. Our grandparents, my husb... - my dad's - family and my mom's both were mountain people. Dad was Cherokee and something and mother was, my mother was Scotch and Irish. And they lived on a little - an original land grant - in, around Valdese. So we came here shortly before I was born so I've, I've lived here all my life. [Brian answers the telephone.] Anyway, I remember it as being a pleasant time. All these were dirt roads around here, and people walked a lot. In fact, we very seldom ever had a car. And if you wanted to go somewhere in the near neighborhood you did. And you did so by walking. But we were pretty isolated here. You would go to town.

FW: What, which town did you usually go to?

Holt: We generally went to either Mebane or to Burlington, or Graham - never went to Burlington, that was a big city time. And I generally never went to town except once right before school started.

FW: To get your school clothes?

Holt: Uh-huh. No, to get your school shoes. Shoes was the only thing we didn't have. All the other clothes were made.

FW: Where did you buy the cloth?

Holt: They were feed sacks. And feed sacks used to be beautiful. Absolutely. You would have stripes, flowers, you know all sorts of stuff. You would

have something to make masculine-type clothes out of and then the pretty prints and flowers and things like that for the, the girls. So the feed sacks really controlled the fashion of the day [laughter]. Of course, we didn't make overalls or pants or anything like that. But for the girls, and there was seven girls and three boys, one child died as a baby, everything was generally taken care of at home. I can remember Mama complaining when coffee went up to thirty-nine cents a pound. She said "What's the world coming to?" And, I don't think our - as well as I can remember the most that was ever spent on groceries was like twenty-five dollars.

FW: So you just raised everything.

Holt: Yeah. We didn't eat a whole lot of meat. The only meat we had was pork, and, maybe some chicken. But you didn't eat a whole lot of your chickens unless they had already got old enough to stop laying eggs and then you had chicken pie. So it, it was very elemental. And I think we had a direct cause and effect in our life. You do this so this will happen or so, so these things will be taken care. And I think it was an excellent way to perceive life. It gave you a direct responsibility for what happened.

FW: You knew if you didn't . . .

Holt: If you did not prepare enough canned vegetables or whatever, then you wouldn't have enough to eat. It was, it was just that basic. And I remember my father, although he had one leg and he had a wooden leg, he would go hunting. And I loved rabbit and squirrel stew and we ate all that stuff. He couldn't bring himself to shoot birds, so we never had

any dove or anything like that. He did shoot one wild turkey. And I was very disappointed in that turkey as a child. I expected it to be something just absolutely wonderful like the Pilgrims had. But in fact it was all dark meat and it was like duck - very disappointing. But we had rabbit and squirrel. And ham or fat back or something like that for breakfast. There was no such thing as any of the - we did not eat beef. If we happened to have a cow, the cow was used for milk. And I remember lots of the activities and a lot of the news, anything that went on, was exchanged at church on Sunday. And we went to Cane Creek Church over here. And it was, it was more a social experience than a religious experience. In fact the first time I got kissed it was at church, I mean, where else did I see people? And I think I was about nine, which was wonderful and it sent me in ecstasy for years, I think, just thinking about it [laughter].

FW: What kinds of other social things did they have at the church?

Holt: You would have an ice cream supper, occasionally. Always a Christmas pageant. And of course the other religious holidays, the Easter types of things. Bible school during the summer, maybe a fall festival. It, there was - there were something generally year around. If there was somebody in the neighborhood having a, a bad time we would give 'em a pounding.

FW: I don't know what that is.

Holt: A pounding is - I don't know where it comes from - but it's, it's like you sharing a pound of flour, a pound of cornmeal, a pound of sugar. Everybody contributing some kind of staple or, and foodstuff. So it -

that was generally carried out through the church too.

FW: So the church sort of was an outlet for people to help other people?

Holt: Um-uhm, um-uhm. And it was, I think it was acceptable through the church. Whereas it may not have been totally acceptable if the neighbors got together and went to help poor old so-and-so that was having problems, because there was a lot of pride here. And I think one of the reasons that there was not a lot of social contact between families is to preserve this kind of innate dignity and privacy, that you still see in some of the families here that - now they may be the biggest brawlers in the world, but they close ranks if, if something has been, somebody has been threatened, and you know, the family as a whole feels threatened. They most definitely will close ranks. So, I think it was probably like a lot of the other very, very rural areas. And the thing that I think is unique is being so close to Chapel Hill. And Chapel Hill was always viewed with a jaundiced eye out here because it had those strange people that weren't from here, did not have generally the same values, generally did not understand.

FW: What values, how do you think the values differed?

Holt: Well, first of all they live all clustered up together. That was one. And you never knew - and I think it even goes back to that basic thing I was talking about, the cause and effect. A real tie with the land and a real tie with what we considered the, the way to live. And I think perhaps they held the same view of other people in the surrounding areas. But I think perhaps Chapel Hill most of all because it was like a transient thing. How could these people establish values when they're

only here for a short time and then they go away and another set comes in with another set of values? And I think it had some validity. One of the things I think that was a definite prejudice on their part was they did not stop to consider that Chapel Hill was a town with long term residents. That did not keep the people from this community from taking produce down there and selling it, at the Farmers' Market. But it was probably the, the lack of understanding was probably the lack of knowledge, more than anything else. I'm trying, I'm trying to think back to what it was like then as opposed to now. I don't think anybody pays any attention to it. Chapel Hill is just another place to shop or to go or to receive goods and services. And because - and I think it was an acceptance of Chapel Hill as being a contiguous part of the, the community and being that place that you could receive goods and services. Until the OWASA [Orange Water and Sewer Authority] thing happened. And then it was almost like it reverted back twenty years ago. And it was like them and us. And I think perhaps the way it was handled, the lack of concern for the people here, the lack of acknowledging the values of this community. I think the perception was that they saw this area and they thought well, there's not a whole lot of folks out there, so, and there is a lot of land with not a development on it. So who cares? Let's, let's put a lake out here for a temporary water supply. And then in twenty years we'll go away. And then they proceeded to make these things happen without considering the value of a community that had been going on for almost two hundred years with lots of the same families being in the area. And it acted



like glue. When, you know I told you that families would close rank, I think the community closed rank. And that included the recent arrivals. And Bruce and I have discussed on various occasions how grand it was, what a great effect, even though OWASA, and I think it centered on OWASA as opposed to Chapel Hill first of all, because of Everett Billingsley and his attitude and his arrogance toward the people out here. You could see doctors and lawyers and farmers and, and milking hands all pulling together. The - I guess the greatest net effect was that the newcomers suddenly became part of this big family called a community.

FW: And they really weren't before?

Holt: Well, they were on a one-on-one basis. Probably a little, a little group here that if you, if one of the newcomers came in, they were friendly with everybody there, but the whole neighborhood as a whole did not even know these people. So it had the net effect of making it a very, very cohesive group of very diverse people that ordinarily would not had a thing in common. And, I would say that it's probably the greatest thing that's happened to this community in a hundred years. The positive effect of everybody pulling together and getting to know your neighbors that lived way on the other side of Cane Creek when you wouldn't have had - ordinarily have had - a chance nor any community event that would draw all these people. Because the church in the last twenty years has stopped being the center, of any activity. Only those people that goes to this church have these activities. It - very seldom do the churches throw open their doors and have a community wide



anything. Oak Grove Church right over here will have you know, fund raising events. But it's not - I guess it's concentrated in this area. Cane Creek would do this. Bethlehem would do this. But this bypassed all religious, social, cultural lines. And it [mobilized] people in ways that I just find phenomenal. So we can thank OWASA for that, that we are all now friendly with, with, everybody around in the community. And I guess the people felt threatened and so they moved.

FW: Why do you think the new people were as concerned about the lake as the old people were?

Holt: Because, they came here for a reason. And that reason most generally was not to be part of another housing development. They have probably made a big, lifetime investment and they had planned to stay. And the community was attractive to them as it was or they wouldn't have been here. And so all of a sudden the rules were changing - everything is going to be different? And I think I probably would have been [mobilized] just as much had I been a newcomer as I was being a lifelong resident. Good, it's a good, feeling community. I went away when Bruce and I were first married and prior to getting married, I lived other places. And it didn't have the same feel. And I had always considered it because this was home. That's why I had this feeling. Now my husband will even admit that this is a good area; it feels good. The, there's a certain something here, an acceptance, that perhaps in where he came from in southern Alamance county there was not. That it took fifty years for somebody to be accepted. You know, they were viewed as outlanders and, and people that were just upstarts in the

community. And it perhaps took two generations for somebody to be accepted as a member of the community. It was never that way here. There was, unless the people were really, really active in the churches, the newcomers, they never went beyond their next neighbor which may have been a half a mile away or, or people that they had bought the land from. So they still maintained ties with whatever the outside world may have been. Until the community was threatened.

FW: So, about anybody that moved here, if they were friendly and joined the church, could make friends and be accepted.

Holt: Um-uhm, um-uhm. That was, that was never a problem. But you see we never had an influx of these people here because the only people that generally came into the community married into it. And so sons and daughters got some of the family land and they built on it. And then their children. And so that's the way - it was like a community population.

FW: So you - the friends, when you came back after you were married, the friends you made were the friends you had had before?

Holt: Um-uhm. There had been some shifting of, of who was here and who was gone and there had been the - one of the greatest tragedies, we felt, shortly before we came back, was that the Perrys had lost their dairy farm; they had gone bankrupt. And all of this land through here, all the way over to the corner of the Oak Grove Church Road, parts of it and parcels of that was the Perrys'. And they were like the cornerstone here and all of a sudden, you know, they couldn't make it as a dairy farm any longer. And their children moved away, except for Joe and

Marie. So I think that perhaps made people nervous. You know, because this was a dairy farming community. And when one of 'em, you know, one of the - what we thought was the most prosperous and the most stable goes bankrupt? It makes you wonder. But there was no new dairy farm started. No new farm started. A dentist bought the Perry farm and nothing changed a whole lot. He did not move to the community. But, he hired the young men in the community to work the farm and he had beef cattle instead of dairy cattle. So, you know, the transition there wasn't too, wasn't too great.

FW: Your family, they didn't have a dairy farm?

Holt: Uh-unh, uh-unh.

FW: What kinds of things did they do?

Holt: My father was - for a while ran a sawmill. And, then he worked after he sold the sawmill back in, at the end of the war [World War II], worked for Kearny Rogers who was another member of the community. So, . . .

FW: So, your farm was . . .

Holt: Well, it was, it was small. It was just enough to sustain a family of twelve [laughter]. No, we did not grow produce and things like that for sale. So we were, we were not the landed gentry [laughter].

FW: Is there sort of a class scheme around here, do you sort of think there's a . . .

Holt: No, I think there's a behavior scheme. I don't think class has anything to do with it. I think it's, your social acceptability, is based on your behavior. If you go out and get drunk on Saturday night and raise hell, then you're not as acceptable as if you went to the ice cream

supper [laughter]. And there have been members of my family, other family people in the community that - they were tolerated. But not socially acceptable. And I did not feel, being at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, I really did not feel a great class difference.

FW: You were as acceptable as somebody with more money if . . .

Holt: I think so, because I was smart. You know, and, and if you - they appreciated people that had smarts. Now, I don't know whether somebody that did not get the DAR award and stuff like that, how acceptable they would be. One of the greatest influences in my life was [Margaret] Stanford, the first grade teacher. And she made me competitive. And [laughter] she would say things like "Now you really don't want Mary Jo to get ahead of you, do you? Now you need to read three books because Mary Jo's read two." And she'd do the same thing to Mary Jo. So she, she truly made me competitive and it was not so much competitive with somebody else but competing with myself to see how far I could go. Another great influence was White Cross School. That's where everybody went to school. Four classrooms, a big central auditorium in the middle and you'd have lots of community affairs there. You know, but they were all school-related like fall festivals, Christmas pageants and, ball games in the summer time, a big picnic in the spring. I thought it was a wonderful place.

FW: What grades were there?

Holt: The first through the eighth. First and second in one room, third and fourth in the next, and. The great thing about it was that if you were sharp, you didn't have to go anywhere you'd just go sit in with the

second graders. And sometimes you could go sit in with the third and fourth graders. And that's what Mary Jo Morrow and I did, used to do. And we were great friends. I'm surprised at our, we were such great friends with people making us competitive. But we, we had a real good friendship and, and we were allowed to - because we both liked to read and I think reading was Margaret Stanford's greatest thrust in the community. She kept telling you, if you, if you read you'll never be lonely. And she was single, and I thought that was, in later thinking about it that was, that was pretty poignant. If you read you'll never be lonely. It was, it was a good life and I think when Bruce and I married and came back here I wanted that for Mike and Brian. I wanted them to feel a sense of community, a sense of continuity. I didn't want them to ever get to the place that they valued transient types of things. The - I didn't want 'em to feel that this was an anonymous world. That if you had a sense of self and a sense of community then already you've got stability. And if you have stability, you have a, less chance of things going awry in your life. And I guess perhaps it's discipline. And if you are anonymous, there's no social controls. And I wanted to give them those same values. Now we left the community where Bruce's parents were because - you know, the Holts started the community, it was an original land grant. Bruce was still an upstart. And there was no sense of self and community up there. And we felt like this would be the place to, to raise our kids. And there was this . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Tape 1, Side B

Nancy Holt: . . . Brian had any problems with acceptance. It was just like you picked up your threads again, and kept on moving. And I think the greatest fear in the community is these threads will be broken. I also realized with some great horror that we're getting to be the older generation, for God's sakes. I'm still a baby. And I realized that the people that I had always felt were the elders of the community are dying and we're the next in line. And where in the hell are we going to get the wisdom, that I always felt these people had? You know, we're just struggling too. And I thought, well maybe wisdom and, and perception are two completely separate things. Maybe you don't have to be wise, just everybody think you're wise [laughter]. So it's, it's been a good life; it's been interesting.

Frances Webb: I thought maybe you would tell me a little bit about how you and Bruce met and, and your work and moving back here?

Holt: Because there was so many people in the family we learned early that if you wanted anything other than the, the shelter, food and clothing, you had to go get it yourself. So I started to work when I was fourteen. And during high school I drove the school bus and I worked at Colonial Store, which was a grocery store, and went to school. And then after I graduated I was making plans to go to college and I'd saved up all my money, so I would have enough for the first year at Elon. And, the store closed, and one of the members from Byrd's Food Center came to Colonial Store and wanted my sister and myself to come to work for them. She choose not to and I needed the money. I was eighteen at that



time, just graduated from high school, and I needed the money to get in school. So I went to work for Byrd's and I met Bruce then. Well, during the summer, my brother had had an auto accident and I was the only one with money. And he had no insurance and so I had to take the money - I didn't have to, I just felt compelled and I couldn't stand to see my mother worry about what he would do. So we used my college money. And, it just kind of took the winds out of my sails for a while. And, it was like the worst tragedy in this whole world that I had lost my dream and I had, I had gone so far in making sure that I had just enough money to pay my tuition, my books - everything. And I would live at home and go to school. And, then I thought, well, I'll do something different but I can't do anything different without money. So I continued to work. I met Bruce that summer. And, he used to come and stand and look at me. And so I told somebody that knew him, I said, tell him to stop looking at me, if he wants a date have him to ask me, otherwise stop looking at me, cause he was making me nervous. So he asked me for a date and I immediately fell in love, head over heels in love with him because he kissed my hand and nobody had ever kissed my hand before. On, at the end of the first date - we just talked and talked and talked and talked and talked - and he kissed my hand while I was walking up the steps. And I was lost from that point on it was it. And besides he was, he was very intelligent and he had a different world, and I thought, well maybe I ought to change worlds. And so we dated for a couple of years and I continued to work. And I became active in working with the kids in the Elon Orphanage on a volunteer basis. Wanted to bring 'em all



home. Bruce and I got married a couple of years later. Mike and Brian were born. Mike was born and a couple of years later Brian. And at that time we were living on Bass's Mountain, which is his folks' land. That is now his. And, there was just not the right sense of community. Even though three-fourths of the people in the neighborhood were his relatives, distant or close, or whatever, there was no sense of community; there was no sense of, of togetherness. And if you had problems, you had your problems all by yourself. And their reserve was such that they didn't, unless they were invited, they never dared cross that line. Now who in the time of trouble is going to think of saying, hollering at their neighbor, saying I need your help? To me, it ought to be obvious that somebody is having troubles and they need your help. And it just wasn't right for raising Mike and Brian - just was not right. And this house had - the Perry's kids had built this house maybe fifteen years before and there had been a series of people in and out, some of them newlyweds in the community that would live here for a short time before they built their own home or move somewhere else. And this was for sale and it was right in the community and Bruce and I came and looked at it. And we decided this is where we wanted to be. And Bruce has always loved Chapel Hill. And at that time he was working at the University [of North Carolina at Chapel Hill], and come to think of it, so was I. And it just seemed to be a perfect move and I wanted Mike and Brian to go to the schools here as opposed to Alamance county.

FW: Did they still have the White Cross school?

Holt: No, White Cross had closed, so they went to Hillsborough, went to

Cameron Park and all the schools there. But, Mike and Brian were part of a group of boys. It seemed like there was maybe two girls in the whole neighborhood their age group. The rest of them were boys. Right? [Nancy addresses Brian, who nods yes.] Every kid was a boy. So it was just like - you know, they just fit in perfectly and no problems at all.

FW: Well, so what do you - the community still have sort of community feeling when you moved back that you had when you were a child?

Holt: Um-hum, um-hum. See nothing had changed. There may have been more family members living here. And one or two people had moved in from the outside, but essentially the community had remained unchanged. There were still family farms, the big family farms, you knew who was here, you had no problem knowing the values of the community because they hadn't changed. You may have had a new preacher or two, people had gotten older, some of the elderly folks had died off. Nothing had changed; it was still the same community. No, it was still the same. Nothing had changed. There's - and that may have been all in my head, because I was coming back home. But I didn't sense it; I didn't, I didn't feel any change. And it wasn't as if I had to re-acclimate myself to the community. I was just here. And I had brought my family back.

FW: You sort of still shopped in the same places and . . .

Holt: Um-hum, um-hum. But you see, I never had that feeling about Chapel Hill; I was always fascinated by it. And I loved to walk the streets of Chapel Hill in the fall, and it was, it was just a vitality there that

I really appreciated. And up until about ten, maybe fifteen years ago, Chapel Hill was still - had not changed a whole lot, since the time I went to school down there. It had not changed.

FW: So did you ever, you did get to go to college down there?

Holt: Well, off and on. Between kids and [laughter] all sorts of things, I guess I, I've studied nursing, I studied accounting, I studied psychology and, just, whatever interested me. And between family and working and kids, whatever I could plug in at any given time. And that's probably more suitable to me then having to follow that much structure because I had to use whatever time was available. And I was curious.

FW: I think that's the best reason for going to school. You have two businesses now. Health Office Support.

Holt: Office Support Systems. We changed the name in '83 so we can take care of commercial clients as opposed to all medical. And the Cactus Medical Group, which is the software development company. And the other one is management consultant company. And we have been doing that for ten years.

FW: We?

Holt: Three other ladies from the community. Well, two of the other ones from right across Haw River. That's, they're still part of - Eli Whitney is an extended part of this community because we never felt any separation. Eli Whitney, because the feed mill over there, and the vet was there and, and that's a real strong recreational center. There was really no difference. I never felt any crossing of lines, community

lines, with Eli Whitney. It was just all like an extension. So two of them came from that community.

FW: I sort of heard that there's sort of three different areas - isn't there something called Teer and Oaks and Orange Grove? Doesn't, doesn't that make up Cane Creek?

Holt: Yeah.

FW: But you, you sort of see the whole area as one community. . .

Holt: Yeah, yeah. Never, never has - you see, we didn't even know that these things were called Oaks, Teer and Cane Creek until somebody from the outside told us. It's like when I went to school I came home one day and I said "Mama, what's poor?" She said "Why?" I said "Somebody told me I was poor today." And it's like having to go to school to find out you weren't rich, cause we'd never given it any thought. And until somebody from the outside came in and told us we were three separate communities, hell, we didn't know it [laughter].

FW: I guess you sort of felt like four [communities in one] then?

Holt: Yeah. I don't - there was no great separation at all, it just was. It was home. The only separation that I could see was in the city limits, where those people lived right next to each other, all scrunched up together, which we thought was strange. Cause you need more space than that. But no, there was never - the only lines that you could ever say was the church boundaries. But it really had nothing to do with I am from Teer or I am from Oaks. We didn't even know we were Teer and Oaks. Just really did not. And Cane Creek. Because it was church centered. You had Bethlehem, which was a Presbyterian church; you had Oak Grove

which was Baptist; you had Cane Creek that was Baptist; Antioch that was Baptist. And they were the four primary churches. But they were predominately Baptist. Now, on the outside, around - there was Orange Chapel Methodist. But that was, that was a little further out of the, the very core of the community I would think. So it was very, very Southern, very Baptist. And very family oriented.

FW: You said the church was more a social place, but when they did talk about religion what kinds of things . . .

Holt: I don't think anybody bothered talking about religion. It just was. It was one of those givens. And I think it was such an integral part that was woven into your lives, that it had no special significance because you either - it permeated everything you did, or you didn't go. And it was just like eating, sleeping - Sunday you went to church. Just that simple. And I don't think anybody ever bothered talking about religion, maybe it was a personal thing, I don't know. I can remember asking some embarrassing questions when I was around sixteen. But that - I thought I knew all the answers then, which, which was asinine [laughter]. The older I get, the real - the more I realize I don't know doodley-squat.

FW: What kinds of questions?

Holt: First of all, the conflict between the Old and the New Testament. I couldn't resolve that. On the one hand it's an eye for an eye and on the other hand it was love everybody. And I thought, now that's silly. I can't love everybody. I'd be a hypocrite. And so these - and I guess it was, I was trying to form my own philosophy and my own personal feelings; and they just kind of went - and, and looked at me, "Why are

you asking these questions?" [laughter].

FW: Maybe they didn't want to deal with them.

Holt: Well, they had probably heard it before; I don't think I was that unique, in asking those question. I'm sure young people have asked these questions millions of times before. But I was real perplexed, because I couldn't - all of a sudden I'd run up against something that had no answer. And I think - they said you had to believe. And I thought I don't know what to believe. And so, as most teenagers do, I went through a period where I decided religion had no value. You know, it just - well if they can't answer my questions, pppt with it. And then, like Mark Twain says at sixteen his father - when he was sixteen his father was rather dumb and didn't know anything and when he was eighteen he was amazed at how much the old man had learned, in such a short time. Well I'm kind of that way too. You know, just the arrogance of youth sometimes blows my mind and I see it in my own children and, and this being the, almost like the teen center of the community, for the young boys.

FW: Your house?

Holt: Yes. I never know from one day to the next how many kids will be here, how many will be sleeping here. Which is fine with me. I'd rather they know that they have somewhere to go. They can come here on Friday night and fix pizzas and sit down and have rap sessions and do all of the things, that are acceptable to the household rules here, which is no alcohol, you know. It's, it's a haven. I've had kids to stay three months. The - when Mike graduated I had three kids to ask me if they

could come and live here since Michael was going away to school  
[laughter]. So, very strange, but neat.

FW: Mama, my mother always adopted two or three too.

Holt: Yeah. I've, I've probably fed - when Bruce was working at UNC before he retired, he used to bring home students. They would be students that had a special project or, or that he had met and he always picked up hitchhikers and he would bring people home. And I never knew any night how many, people would be here for dinner. It depended on how many people standing along the side of the road wanted a lift home. [Brian answers the telephone.] Sometimes students moved out here to stay in the community. And somehow or the other Bruce always found them and brought them up here to eat. So I was, I was mom to a lot of students. And we've kept in touch over the years; some of 'em go back ten years and I still get cards from 'em where - and they'll write letters every now and then telling me what's going on and, how life has been for them or, if they come by they'll stop. It's neat.

FW: Well, you've talked a little bit about the Reservoir. I was sort of saving that controversial thing for towards the end. Did you ever get involved in the Cane Creek Conservation Authority?

Holt: From the first. I was the lady that made all the biscuits, that put all the ham in it for seven, I guess, seven years. Bruce and I were very, very actively involved in everything that went on. [Brian hands Nancy a telephone message.] Thank you. In fact, over our thirteen or fourteen years of marriage, prior to this Cane Creek thing - I guess it must have been fourteen years of marriage - I had fallen in love with



silver. I had acquired a lot of pieces of silver. And when we had the first Cane Creek fund-raising, I gave every piece of silver I owned to be auctioned off to raise money. The - everytime there was something going on, I either provided - depending on who was running the show, I always provided all ingredients for the bread making, oftentimes paid for all the kitchen ingredients for any of the craft fairs, always made the barbeque sauce for the things. So, this was my contribution, maybe a couple of hundred bucks every, everytime something was going on. We had our Christmas sales; and I'd handle the bake sales; and I'd bake things and - it was fun as well as having a cause. Great sense of community. I guess, intellectually, I knew that the community could not continue the way it was. I knew that. Because you're running out of land and the population is increasing. My gut feeling was I felt threatened; our way of life was threatened. And, you know, you never go through this introspective period. And you never wake up every morning saying, "Gee this is a wonderful place to live and I'm so glad I'm here." You don't do that at all. It's just an acceptance of a level of comfort, a sense of self, a sense of community, a sense of belonging. And all of it - and that's a lot to be threatened. And the way it was handled, the complete disregard for the people that lived here. Because we were small in number, the assumption was that we had no value. And our perception of the way the whole OWASA thing was handled, is that they had a meeting and decided one day that this would be a nice place to put a lake. And then they proceeded to do it. Without regard to the people; without regard to the laws; without regard to the people of

Chapel Hill. Now it's cost the people of Chapel Hill millions of dollars. And for a temporary solution to a long-term problem. Chapel Hill should have become a part of this county-wide or, or counties - future planning for the use of the natural resources. They should have looked at the long-term needs of the area and made some type of sharing arrangement instead of going off on a tangent. And in, in their tangent they have split people in the community. They have created a monster that threatens the livelihood of lots of people for a temporary solution. And there was no validity to them coming here except that they decided there wasn't enough folks out here to worry about.

FW: What do you know about the alternatives that they rejected?

Holt: They rejected the alternatives of the - using the Jordan as a water source. And I thought it was awfully arrogant. They said that the people of Chapel Hill were too good to drink the water out of there. Well they should - the people in Bynum ought to come over here and smacked 'em. Cause Bynum's been drinking it for damn years. The, the long-term planning should be communities pulling together and sharing resources of a water supply. Not putting these random temporary water supplies in a community and destroying it. Just look what the Jordan - how many thousands of acres is available there. It's time for people to start, the planners, to start thinking in long-term instead of short-term. Now if this were - I think one of the reasons that everybody got so angry is that they made it blatantly clear that this, was only a short-term water supply. They weren't even looking at it over the long haul at all. So you disrupt twenty year - I mean two

hundred years of history, two hundred years of family farms for a temporary solution to a problem that has long-term ramifications. And they have not - they refused to look down the road at what their long-term needs were. And because of the delays in court and all, and our fighting back - now the Jordan is well able to supply the water to Chapel Hill. And I had heard something one time that Chapel Hill says now, now you just set - to the people at the Jordan - now you set aside so many million gallons of water because we may want it. After this? And it, it just seems like blatant disregard, for the people of Chapel Hill as well as the people from Cane Creek.

FW: What about the University Lake alternative?

Holt: The thing that really ticked me off about that is that some man offered to dredge it out, free, to get all the silt out. All he wanted was that silt. He offered to dredge University Lake so it could accomodate more water and therefore alleviate some of Chapel Hill's needs. Free. And he was turned down flat.

FW: Why, why do you think he was?

Holt: Because this was their plan. One of the things I've learned in business, and I've run across two other people like these folks - they don't hear anything except the things that they want to hear. It's tunnel vision at its finest. These are the people that you put in charge of projects. Because they don't hear any adverse reasoning; they don't hear anything else. If you went to a meeting with . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Tape 2, Side A

Nancy Holt requested a brief delay in beginning this tape for "off the record" comments.

Frances Webb: Someone suggested, I think it was a student in the class, that it was a, it was a political thing on the part of the University.

Nancy Holt: Yeah, it was. You see the University had been told to get out of the utilities business. But they never got out of it. They never stopped being a powerful force. And whatever the University wanted, they got. And don't ever forget that for a minute because they are the political force to be reckoned with and they as a col. . . - in my mind, a collective group of very, very powerful political figures. And whatever they want they jolly well get. And so they have a temporary lake out here, the beginnings of a temporary lake. Probably one of the things that irritated me the most, was people selling real estate out here as lake front property. Seven years ago. It was ads in the Chapel Hill papers, about beautiful lake front property in the Cane Creek region. And I thought, there's no lake there, how dare you? But we're - we just did not have the powerful backing. I would suspect that had this community contained the Ralph Scotts, or the William Fridays, Jim Martins, or the Rose family - some of the other families that are very, very strong politically, they would never have looked at this community. Never. But we had no real strong political figures out here. We were just as mediocre, middle-of-the-road, middle America as you can get. Not real, real pro-active in anything, except generally taking

care of the community and the land. And I think raising fine people to populate this land. This is an excellent community in so far as the kids grow up to be, maybe they don't grow up to be presidents, but they don't grow up to be Charles Manson either. It's a community of middle America. And I firmly believe that had we had some very, very political family as residents here, OWASA would never have considered this or the University. And I, I often use OWASA and the University interchangeably because nothing really changed, when they became a separate department. Nothing really changed, except it wasn't UNC Water Department anymore.

FW: I think the Teers are the last farm that's sort of holding out.

Holt: Um-hum.

FW: They own land that will be flooded and haven't sold yet, so I understand.

Holt: Right.

FW: What do you think's going to happen?

Holt: Well I'll tell you. The methodology of OWASA was deplorable. In order to get the people to sell they used fear. And they went after the weakest links first. They went after the widowers, the lady widows, the elderly. And to me that is inexcusable. If you want a business arrangement and you want to negotiate, you negotiate straight out. Don't play on the fear of these people. All you have to do is to say to some elderly woman "Well, the courts'll take it away from you." And immediately, to these people, courts are the next thing to jail. And taking something away from you. The first two people that sold land here were recent [widows], [Gina McKiver and Pat Cates]. And it was the

fear factor. They did the same thing to Coy Armstrong; he was just rampant, you know, he would not sell, this was his family home. And they worked on the fear. And they told him, "Well if you don't want to sell, we'll take you to court and the court will decide how much money you get. And I can tell you it won't be as much money as you would get from here. So, why don't you just go ahead and settle up now with us and then we can - with this money you can be taken care of in your old age." So it's fear again. And after you get the key people, and the key pieces of land, and if you once start bringing your bulldozers in and you start knocking these, these things down and clearing land, how many people have the strong psychological resources to say "Up yours. Leave us alone. That's all you're going to get. If you can put it there, on 400 acres, then you go ahead and do it"? But they - it doesn't work that way. Because then an older couple - now there's - the controlling people in this land and the land acquisition here was always elderly people. Always. And they know that they can accomplish this with fear. And they jolly well did it with fear. Now had they come to people of my age group or the, the next line people would have said "Up yours." But they didn't do that. The key pieces of land - not all the key pieces but the majority of it - was controlled by elderly people. And what are the fear factors and what are the things that creates the most fear for the elderly? Losing their home. Courts. Legal cost. Fear of being run off their land. Every one of these things was being used. Or somebody - the courts condemning your property and giving you a hundred dollars an acre. And your life is gone? Your livelihood is gone? You can't deal



with that. There's no, there's no way that you can bypass, and overcome the detrimental effects of what they did. To me, it is the lowest of the low. To me, they used psychological warfare on these elderly people. And to me it's inexcusable. And if I turn on UNC TV and I see William Friday and he's talking about all the North Carolina people and how great it is, I think "You asshole. Do you realize what was done in your backyard?" And, and he interviews all of these elderly people and he acts like he reveres these, these things. And these elderly people were standing in his way. And William Friday is a political force to be reckoned with. And he could have stopped some of this crap. They, somebody could have jerked the chain of OWASA and stopped it. But it was something, you know, that was going to be done regardless of who it hurt, how it hurt, and the long term effects of this action. It was - there was an immediate need and somebody told Everette Billingsley to go do it and Everette is tunnel visioned all the way and there was nothing else but that. Nothing. And so, if he knew that when he was in charge of it that unless he died, it would be. Because he, he doesn't hear any opposition, he doesn't hear any divergent opinions, all he sees and hears is his goal.

FW: Do you thing the Teers are going to have to end up selling?

Holt: Well you see one of the things OWASA did was lie to everybody and everybody's not stupid out here. They said "Now we will not tell you you can't have dairy farms out here." Of course they won't tell you, the EPA'll tell you. You can't have cow shit running into a water source. You know, we're not stupid. But, some of the people



believe this that, you know, that they, "they" meaning OWASA, said that it wouldn't hurt the farms out here. Do you see all these rolling hills? You can't have cows crapping on hills and the water running down into a water, municipal water source. You can not. And so they have just - said "We're not going to tell you you have to close down your dairy operation." No they won't. EPA will do it for them. Absolutely can not have it. So Teer's, which is - Teer's farm which has been in operation - I mean the grandfather and the father and the, Lord knows. Mike Teer is like my son. And I can see what it's done to them, the apprehension. Because there's the grandfather. There was the uncle. There's Thomas. And his son. And two daughters. And their families. That's their livelihood. That's their life. That's their home. Now true, they're not going to take their house, but when you take that big chunk of land away from them and when you can't run cows because the streams run through there, and the run-off from the fields. You tell me EPA is going to allow this farm to continue. Just, you know, it's two divergent things. It will not happen. And Thomas knows that. He knows that their life is going to change and he knows these changes are coming. And I think it's awfully sad. Terribly, terribly sad.

FW: But they've been fighting quite a while. And I imagine that's an economic drain as well.

Holt: Well, Thomas and Evelyn have poured everything that they've got. I expect they've depleted their capital reserves in order to help pay for these attorneys. And, you'll have to verify this with Thomas but, I think he had placed a bid on the land that OWASA was going to buy from

the Stanfords. And CCB pulled a fast one on him. They either accepted a bid after the bid period was closed - or something. They did something. You'd have to verify that with them. But, I think Thomas was considering taking Central Carolina Bank to court too. Because once the bidding has been closed, you don't open it to allow OWASA to come in and place a higher bid. But they did. So, it is a political thing and it has political ramifications everywhere. And, and the little community could, truly could not fight. We tried to go out. I contacted fund raisers, national type fund raisers, and there wasn't a whole lot that, that could be done. We were thinking about going to people like John Deere and the big fertilizer companies and the, the big tractor companies to see if they would not give us a grant to bring in some real political powers. Or real fund-raising people. And to bring - get some lobbyists in Washington. But we could not. Because we were not a real tax-exempt organization, corporate structures are limited to what they can do to nonentity entities like this. And we were just small peanuts. We didn't have the resources to, to do it. But I think we did a hell of a job for eight years. Eight years of fighting with very little other than bake sales and community efforts and, and a dollar here and a ten dollars there and a ten dollar a month pledge. I think we did a phenomenal job. It brought the community together, made it more cohesive. And gave us a sense of purpose. And for that I thank them. And I'm sure that if the newcomers to the community would think about it, they would realize how quickly they were assimilated into a community, and became - quickly became a part of it. There was none of

this, well you are a doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief. And I am a farmer, a laborer, whatever. We were just a community. And it had it some very, very positive effects. But there is a lot of anger and resentment here. And, and how do you channel that anger and resentment?

Very, very hard, because there's so many forces to be resentful and angry with. So it will be interesting to see how it all sifts down.

FW: Were there any people in the community that weren't really opposed to the Reservoir?

Holt: Yeah. They were the ones that - some of the elderly widowers that sold out first - said "You can't fight 'em. Can't fight 'em." Of course the Stanfords, which were the ones that brought them in here in the first place, there's a lot of animosity toward them. And they tried to straddle the fence after it became a, a reality. From what I've heard, and I can't prove this, that Joyce Stanford, [Bill] Stanford's wife, went to OWASA. Their dairy farm was having some problems. Went to OWASA and said this would be a perfect place for a dam. Now this is hearsay. I can't prove it. Then, that gave them, you know - it kind of focused them on the community. And then after OWASA started looking out here, they acted like they didn't want them here. But their farm was in trouble. And they made out like damn bandits. They sold out to them. Nobody will tell you exactly what it was but I've heard estimates up to four million. So they truly bailed themselves out of a difficult situation. But they rather became piranhas. You never hear of Bill and Joyce Stanford being invited to any of the community affairs. If there's a pig picking in the community, you never see Bill and Joyce

there. Now it may be that they have other - another social set. I don't know. But you never see them anywhere. They still go to church here. But they were pretty much ostracized. After they sold. And there was some distrust there from the very, very beginning toward them. That's how I heard the rumors about them going to OWASA and saying they've got a perfect spot for them.

FW: I have one thing I'm interested in, that I didn't get to right in the early part if, if you sort of think we're finished with the Cane Creek for a minute. I was, I heard your grandfather was a root doctor.

Holt: Well, it's awfully hard to know whether you could classify him as that or what you could do. You see when we were growing up, all twelve kids, we never used any commercial medicines, except for some kind of horse liniment. Every cough syrup, everything was handled through herbs and, and things. And, it came from my mother. And you see I never knew my grandfather so I never knew the connection. And whether he was a root doctor or not. And in the mountains you never think of anybody being a root doctor; everybody does it. So it's all part of that culture that we brought down here. And I still use these home remedies with my children and with all the other kids.

FW: Could you tell me about some of them?

Holt: Some of them are real neat. If you have a bad cold, or chest cold, and this truly works. You take - now we used camphor and lard and something else, sometimes a drop or two of kerosene. And you rubbed it on your chest, covered it with flannel and then you got to drink the good stuff which was white lightening, honey and if you had any lemon juice, if

not lemon juice, vinegar. And you made a hot toddy out of that. And you drank that, covered up with all these blankets. And you had to have flannel on the, the your back and your chest. And the next morning you'd be amazed at how much better you were. Cough syrups made out of cherry bark. And for diarrhea, the, a tea made from the red oak bark. For nervousness or, you know, you're just all out of whack, you would get nettles and make a nettle tea. For a sprain or a bruise you would get mullein leaves and put it on there and that truly works.

FW: How do you use the mullein leaves?

Holt: You just put it, put it on there and then you put a hot compress on top of it. Another thing that I've used with Michael and Brian with great success for puncture wounds - you scrap an Irish potato and put a poultice on there and it prevents the wound from closing, so it prevents tetnus. And I used that maybe five years ago. Mike or Brian had stepped on a rusty nail down in the cow pasture and wanted to go to the tractor pull that night and didn't tell anybody until eleven o'clock.

Brian Holt: That was Mike, not me.

Nancy Holt: All right. That was Mike. And his foot was swollen up and he had red streaks going up his leg. We took him to the doctor and they washed it off and of course the wound had closed over. They started him on antibiotics and I brought him home and scrapped a Irish potato and put it on there. And such gunky stuff you've never seen in your life came out of there. The swelling went down and I know, being a nurse, that it was not the antibiotics working that fast.

Brian Holt: I stepped on a nail about, about a inch and a half in my heel.

Nancy Holt: And your dad used a Irish potato? [Nancy addresses Brian, who nods yes.] Yeah. So we still use lots of these folklorish things. Michael had a, a virus that - he had strep throat and then the antibiotics with the strep throat and some kind of virus called - caused lesions on the gum and the tongue and he couldn't swallow and it was all back in his throat and he couldn't even - he was salivating and he would just have to let the saliva run out of his mouth because he couldn't swallow. And using yellowroot, it was better. He hadn't eaten anything for a week. He'd laid down at the - this was graduation and he went to the beach - and he laid down there for seven days, just sick as he could be, with strep throat and all sorts of stuff. And he, he'd lost so much weight and he just could not swallow, his throat was so sore with all the mouth lesions. And we got yellowroot and pounded the root and put it on these things. In a matter of hours he was eating. In twenty-four hours it was completely gone.

FW: I don't know what yellowroot is.

Holt: Well it's found along the creeks and the roots are really bright yellow. And that's the name of the plant. So, we use lots of - we never give it a whole lot of thought, it's just a way of life. We just do this. I don't think I ever went to a doctor but once when I was a kid and that was when I split my head open. And Mama couldn't fix it. But everything else was handled by home remedies. Never - oh, for a stomach ache you would take cornmeal and toast it in a frying pan. And, put it



in a bag and lay it on your stomach. And that worked. Who knows why, but it worked. And lots of these things, you never give it a thought as to why it works. And, it just does. Some of it is Cherokee because my family is part Cherokee, part Scotch and Irish. Some of the things are old Indian lore, some of it's Scotch, some of it's Irish. And it's just like a pot-pourri of everything and you never know which is which. So anytime I see some - read something and it talks about an old Indian cure, I think, we used that, that must have been the Indian side [laughter].

FW: Do you think your sons are going to learn how to do it?

Holt: Well, they're already believers. They know for a fact that putting the stuff on your chest and drinking that hot toddy works. The potato works. So, I feel sure that they will carry that on. Our traditions, holiday traditions will be the same thing because it has a real positive impact. The nursery rhymes I used to sing to them as kids, I've seen sing to other little children. So they will remember these things.

FW: What kind of holiday traditions do you have?

Holt: Mostly traditional kinds of things. The family all getting together and exchanging gifts. Easter egg hunts, going fishing on Easter Monday.

FW: I didn't know that.

Holt: For New Year's Day, everybody getting together and eating the black-eyed peas and the turnip greens together for health and prosperity for the coming year. We had one tradition; we had Christmas bags. That Christmas bag was everybody in the family and even our



extended family - and there's fifty-two immediate family members - got a bag of goodies for Christmas. And in that bag it was usually an orange, an apple, a couple pieces of candy, a couple of English walnuts or pecans, a little box of raisins, some little candy kinds of things. But even though those things are available, it was special; it belonged to you; it had your name on that bag. And several of the other people in the community, my mother being a generous, gregarious kind of person, would, would keep drawing people in. And after she died, we continued it periodically, but it just wasn't, didn't seem right. Until my younger sister started it again last year with the help of her two daughters. And that's become a big thing to them, fixing the Christmas bags for everybody. And when you fix fifty-two bags, that's, that's a chunk. We started our own traditions here in the community. Every year at Christmas time we invite for Christmas breakfast. We have all the - we started out with just the elderly people for Christmas breakfast because I thought, these people probably don't have young people, and at that time Michael and Brian were small. And there was twelve, I think twelve, really elderly people and now there's only two left. So we've extended it to the community. [Brian answers the telephone.] And on Christmas morning, we have from fifty to a hundred people in and out of here eating breakfast, eating brunch. And it lasts until about one o'clock.

Brian Holt: Mom -

Nancy Holt: Yes?

Brian Holt: It's Pete.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

The taped interview ended here. I asked Nancy when she returned from her telephone call whether she had any concerns that we had not discussed. She felt that we had covered the important issues.