

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

7/16/99

Anne Kratzer (AK): Today is July 16th. It is two o'clock. I am with Mr. Robert Heater at 201 Tweed Circle in Cary. Bob, can you tell me when you were born and where?

Bob Heater (BH): I was born February 27th, 1929 on Dry Avenue in what is now the third house on the left going west from the school. The corner house was Mr. Dry's house, that was the first house. And then () lived in the second house and we lived in the third house. That's the one that I was born in.

AK: And did your family live there?

BH: Yes, my sister was born there too, we were both born in the front bedroom of that house. That house is still there today. And then we moved out, well, it was... The old house, we moved to Garner, I mean we moved to Morrisville, on the left.

AK: The Nancy Jones house?

BH: The Nancy Jones house, yes. We moved out there. I reckon, I'm not sure how long, a year and a half when I was about two years old at the time. Mother wouldn't stay there because she couldn't keep the doors locked. Then Daddy bought the house on the corner of Dry and Harrison and we moved back into that...

AK: The same one you were born in? This was ...

BH: No, across the street. The brick house on the corner of Dry and Harrison.

AK: Oh, all right. I was thinking that's where you were born. No.

BH: Do you know where Ms. () is?

AK: No, but I do know where the Dry house is, now I'm on the right side of the street for you. The Dry house and then the gray house, and then...

BH: Charlie Brown, and recently his wife lived in his house right behind the Dry house. The most recent ones that I know of. And the brick house, the only brick house on that side of the street was the one I was born in. And then when we came back on the opposite side of the street.

AK: I'm clear now. You were telling me a little bit about Erma Ellis. Do you remember any of your experiences at school? You went to Cary Elementary.

BH: Cary Elementary, which was Cary High School and Elementary. Our class was the first twelve grade class. Prior to this, it only went eleven grades. We all went to school there. It was about four hundred, four hundred and twenty students from the first grade through high school when I graduated. It was a little unusual. We had two sets of twins in our class, James and Janette Atkins, and Lewis and Lois Woodhall. Lewis and Lois still live just outside of Cary going toward Macadonia. Janette lives in Wilson and James did. But Miss Erma, in her class, she had a circle bench in the front of her class and we all sat there. We knew if you missed a question you had to go to the foot of the bench. Of course everybody wanted to be at the head of the bench because that meant you hadn't missed any questions. While I'm talking about this, in the second grade Miss Ruth Fox taught me. She was Ruth Gaddon at the time. And later on when my daughter went to school, Ms. Fox taught her in the same classroom that she taught me in. She swears that I used to pat her on the fanny every time she walked by. I told her I knew good looking women when I was young. She was real pretty, a real pretty woman. She gave me a dog when I was in her grade. Everybody in town knew that dog. Everybody in town knew that dog good because he'd go down to sit in front of the grocery store and sit up and beg for stuff. Because Cary wasn't very big then. I was thinking the other day, I could just about go up Academy Street and tell you just about everybody living on the street in sequence. And the same

thing. On Dry Avenue, the house across the street from the one that I was raised in on the corner, Mr. (). And when you went behind his house you were going in the woods.

AK: Was the cemetery there then?

BH: Cary Cemetery goes back a long time. It was White Plains' Jones who gave that land to the town, well, I don't know. Back way before then. And then Harrison Avenue going back towards Chatham Street didn't have a house on it until you go up to Park Street. Park Street stopped at Harrison. The Franklins lived on the left side in a two-story and I don't remember who it was that lived on the right side in the one story house. Johnny Phillips had a brick house on one corner that used to be there. Northeast corner. I think there was one house on Park Street from there up to the church, and that was the House's house. I don't believe there was another house on that street at that time.

AK: And this was about in the late '30s. I'm thinking you were maybe ten years old at this point. This would have been pre-World War II. Well, World War II is just starting.

BH: Yes, that would have been about the late '30s. Prior to World War II.

AK: How was your school day? I'm just interested in your school day. Do you remember if you went home for lunch or how did ...

BH: Yes, I went home for lunch most days. Back then we had a May Day celebration where everybody brought food and they had big tables stretched out on the campus grounds out there. Everybody bring food out there and everybody helped themselves. And everybody was trying to out-do the other one with the quality of the food so their food would be the favorite. Yes, I'd go home for lunch. When I was twelve years It seems like after school I had to go to the shop. Might have even been as young as ten, I'm not sure exactly how. Must have been about ten.

AK: Do you want to tell me a little bit about the shop and what you're referring to?

BH: Daddy had Heater Well Company and we had our shop was in the back yard of our house. There is a brick house there now where we had our shop they're building some apartments there now. And my chore was to go to the shop and be there when Daddy got there. And I started earning an allowance by gassing up the trucks. I got a cent a gallon for every gallon of gas that I put in the trucks.

AK: How much did you get?

BH: A cent to a gallon. If I got a three dollar week I was doing great.

AK: What was the price per gallon, do you remember back then?

BH: About twelve cents. I laughed the other day on the radio the lady said gas is the lowest price it has ever been, it was somewhere around eighty-five cents or ninety cents a gallon. Well, that's a joke. Growing up for me, growing up during the second World War, my teenage years were different than normal because there were no one in Cary except young people and old people and drunks.

AK: Because all the young men had gone off to the War? So Cary did feel it then?

BH: Yes, I was trained with the fire department when I was twelve years old.

AK: Just because of the lack of people? Wow.

BH: I answered my first fire call when I was fifteen.

AK: Where was that? Do you remember where that took place?

BH: Yes, it was where Walnut Street, I believe its Urban Avenue that comes into () the house right in that triangle. We stretched every bit of hose we had, a thousand feet over to get to it.

AK: Were you able to save it?

BH: Yes, we put it out. The chief who was () at that time, gave me the hose and sent me through the window. And I went in and stepped through the table. There was too much water on it and the table burned around the buckets and when I stepped on the table I went through it. And there was fire all around me, under me, behind me, in front of me, overhead, everywhere you looked. I couldn't breathe so I came out and they told me to go back in and get my head next to the nozzle and I came out again and they sent me back in a third time and I came out again and he said let me handle that thing. He went in and he came out. And he said get the pipe pole. The pipe pole was a real long pole with a hook on it and we went around and knocked the back door in and grabbed the refrigerator. It was an old refrigerator. It was an old refrigerator that had sulfa gas as a refrigerant. And the gas was coming out in the room and that's why we couldn't breathe. We drug that refrigerator out, got that out there and then the next time I went in I was able to stay in and just went all around the room and was able to put it out. We held it in that one room.

AK: Chief Daniels just donated an old fire nozzle and he said it was a 2 ½ inch, three rings. He said they used them in the 50s and 60s. That one side gave you a lot of water and then if you put the three on, it gave you a very long shot of water, but it was more narrow.

RH: We didn't have that. We had a long nozzle, about 2 ½ foot and it was a real old one. The truck that we had was a '32 Chevrolet. That nozzle, we'd sell them every year since we had shorter nozzles, about ten inches long, straight stream that we used for a number of years from about 1960. Then we learned about fog nozzles and we started to switch them over to the fog nozzles. Some of those nozzles did have threads on them so that you could hook a hose or another nozzle to it standing. That old '32 Chevrolet, we used to, lot of times we'd have to hook the town truck to it to pull it off to answer the call to the fire. () It had maybe a hundred

gallons on that truck. It had a pump on the front. We got called over to the prison, only it wasn't () it was Camp Polk prison. One time to help him get control of a prisoner who had, they thought he had got hold of a knife. We took that over there and I ended up on the nozzle. Paul Matthews was on the truck. We went in with the prison guards and they told the guy, said we've got these fire hoses now. We're going to open the door. You've got to come out and around the end and come up the other side and get in that first cell there. The door's open on it. You've got to strip, so they made him strip first before they unlocked the door. When he came out, the first thing he did was jumped up, slapped a window and broke the window to get a piece of glass. I hit him with a slug of water and knocked him to the end of the hall. He took off, went around the corner to the end of the row, back up the other side. We followed him around. He hadn't gone into, he was breaking windows around to get more glass. He'd throw that glass at us. I was catching him with a stream of water. Then he started towards us and I had water. There's a lot of power in a fire hose. I hit him in the stomach with it and knocked him down and slid him down to the other end of the cell block. He got up and came back again. () That water was rough on him. The trouble was, the cell they wanted him in was only one cell away from the corner where we were standing. He was docile, talking and he got just about down there and the clutch slipped out on pump on the truck and I felt the hose slacking off. I thought, get out of my way. There was a bunch of them behind me. They weren't getting in my way much because they were trying to get back here. Then I felt the pressure coming back and I turned it around and slid him down again. They finally slipped two great big, he was a little fellow but they say he was strong as an ox. They sent two men in there, trustees, about two hundred fifty pounds. We were talking to him, trying to keep his attention. They slipped up behind him and grabbed him. He was about to overpower those men. They were one on each

side of him. I took the hose and hit his feet out from under him. We had to put him in a straight jacket. He had just gone crazy. That was quite a time.

AK: Is that sort of your most memorable, unusual time for the fire fighting?

RH: No, probably the most of that was when, do you know where Proescher's used to be? Proescher's was T-shaped, a long building with a short T. We got a call to a butane gas truck on fire. We got there and the tires were burning. So we sent back some foam, try to put out those tires. They're hard to put out with just water. See, the truck caught on fire from the heat, had to back the truck up. Then the safety valve popped on the truck on top of it, and the flame went up, about 150 feet up in the air. Just like a torch up there. Dry said, we don't have anything to worry about now. Since the safety valve's popped, it will take all the gas and will burn off there. The heat was scorching Proescher's and it was starting to smoke. Midgette, he was still Chief then, he sent me with the hose up to cool it down. I was up there on the corner in that front building when that tank blew up. It just wrapped me up in flames. Knocked Midgette down, it didn't burn Midgette but it knocked him down. He was out cold. I was in the corner of the building so the blast went around me and then knocked me down but it wrapped me up in flames. The next thing I knew, I was two hundred yards away running. I went up to a friend of mine and said something to him and he said, who are you? That shook me up. By the way, it looked like there were two hundred people down at the Cricket running, just like flies going away. It was a big enough explosion, it hit national news. It threw part of that tank into the ball field behind the elementary school. Drove the chassis of the truck into the ground. They had a Saint Bernard tied with a fly line out behind the restaurant. He broke that fly line. They found him a couple days later up near Morrisville, alive. He wasn't hurt. I looked down at my hand

the skin was just rolling down my fingers and just curling up going down my fingers. It just took them.

AK: Was there a burn center or something?

RH: No, there was no burn center around here then. Scorched my eyeballs. That was the worst thing. My ears, blisters way out here and blisters all over my face. They were all minor and my fingers healed up very well. It took about three months on my eyes. It scorched my eyeballs. Usually your eyes close real quick and you don't hurt, but that explosion was faster than my eyes closing. That was the year I was a senior in high school. I was eighteen. That was one I probably remember the most of all the fire calls.

AK: How long were you a fireman?

RH: Right at twenty years. I started having attacks of hypoglycemia which would make me suddenly real weak and that's not good being on the fire department so I resigned. ()

AK: Was it a paid position when you started, when you were very, very young?

RH: It was all volunteer.

AK: And it was like an honor, wasn't it, to be asked?

RH: Well, you volunteered to be on the department. Anybody could volunteer to be on. Then the department elected its officers. We built two trucks in my shop. We got the Seagraves. I got back out of the service in the fall of '52 and it was just getting delivery on the Seagraves at that time. So we had the old Chevrolet Seagraves and then we built two trucks, one of which was a tractor trailer. That was a memorable one because Billy Henderson and another man, Vernon ... can't think of Vernon's last name now... took it to put out a fire out behind Meredith College. They turned off the highway going up beside Meredith which was a dirt road. There

was a bunch of gravel on the road and wheels hit it and it went into a ditch, turned over and pinned Vernon and it burned him up.

AK: Killed him? The truck rolled over on him?

RH: Yep. The tractor, it was a tractor trailer. The tractor for a tractor trailer fire truck. It was a water tank is what it was. We used it primarily to give us water when we couldn't get it. We took it to Garner one time because they were running out of water in the business district was burning down. They called Swift Creek because it had so much water in it they could take, pump water for a long time. They didn't have fire hydrants in Garner then.

AK: Do you remember when we got them?

RH: Fire hydrants? I don't remember it but I'm pretty sure it was in either '22 or '28. I believe it was '28 when they in the water system.

AK: So you missed World War II?

RH: I registered for the draft. Then a little bit later, Germany surrendered and they stopped the draft. It went about two or three months and they started the draft up again. While in high school I joined the Navy Reserve. That must have been in '47, my senior year. We had drilled for about six, eight months and then they quit that and you were still in the Reserves. Then when the Korean War came, I had heard advertisements on the radio that if you had construction experience, the SeaBee's would give you a rating. () Make sure you give me Petty Officer rating first before you give me active duty. They called me up on December 24th at 4:00 in the afternoon and told me to report immediately. I said, Gee, you know tomorrow's Christmas day. He said, I thought you were in a hurry. I said, not that big a hurry. He said, be here at 8:00 on the 26th. () I'm on active duty with the Navy and headed for Norfolk. () I stayed in twenty-two months. Didn't get overseas. They found out I knew railroading. ()

They put me in ship's company teaching railroading. I stayed there until I got out. I liked not to get out because I was only one left in SeaBees that had the railroad classification.

AK: Tell me what SeaBee's means again.

RH: It started out as Construction Battalion. The C and the B, of course, they shortened it real quick to CB and then they started spelling it "SeaBee's." ()

AK: Can you tell me what's involved in well drilling?

RH: It's a lot different now than it was. Early, I started to help him when I was about twelve. () I worked with [Bud] that year and I found drill work the next year. Then when I was fourteen I drilled my first well [for water] right in the corner of what is now Old Apex Road and Chatham Street. () Water is pretty much everywhere until you get into the Triassic basin, and then there's a lot of places its not. Otherwise, for home use it's mostly anywhere. Different depths. I think we hit water in that one at sixty feet. Here, the one I've got in the front yard's a hundred and sixty [feet]. ()

Our State magazine called [my father, R.O. Heater] Mr. Cary. He kept asking them to write about Cary and they finally did a historical state magazine on Cary. I think they called him Mr. Cary in that. () (Reading from a document) [From the Secretary of State, Resolution 68, 1971, the Joint Resolution Honoring the Life and Memory of R.O.Heater, ratified on the 19th Day of May, 1971 by the General Assembly.] Bob Pleasants instigated that. That tells the story of Daddy pretty good there. () When Daddy ran for Commissioner, Dr. Hunter ran against him. () That started at the end of the Second World War. He had been in [real estate] in '29, he and several others. That went bankrupt. This was a separate development company with several people in it, developed Page Park. I don't think they sold two lots in it before it went under. Then in 1930 Daddy went bankrupt. We had a bookkeeper embezzle from him into

bankruptcy. And at the same time he bought a carload of pumps and the Depression hit and he had all those pumps on hand. So he got caught real early in the Depression primarily because of his bookkeeper. Got that all finished and Mr. Dillon of Dillon Supply called, said we've got these machines. Daddy turned in two machines to him, his payment on debt. He said, get these machines, put them to work. They're not making either one of us any money. So Daddy started back with borrowed machines. He and Herman Edwards, a black man that lived in Cary. ()

Herman, he worked for Daddy for six months and there was no set pay. And Saturday would come, Daddy would go to the store and buy groceries for the family and they lived from hand to mouth. I asked Daddy one time why he didn't like potatoes. He said, son, if you had eaten Irish potatoes for breakfast, dinner, supper for a year, you kind of got tired of potatoes. I've talked to people that lived through that Depression and we can't appreciate it. One of them was at the Seaboard railroad shops down at Hammett. And then they would weld these things together by heating them red hot and taking a sledge hammer and beat them together. They had a machine shop where they worked stings and all. And there a bunch of them with big forges and sledge hammers and all. A man slipped down there, and they had a railing up there up above. The men standing up there wanting jobs and a man slipped and fell and his hand went into the molten metal and burned off the end of his fingers. The foreman just looked up there pointed to one of us and said, come on down, take his place and let that man go.

End of Side 1

Begin Side 2

AK: We also have that picture of you and your friends at the Page-Walker getting in the car.

BH: The old '17 Dodge?

AK: Yes. Tell us about that.

BH: I don't know why I got interested in it. I found out Mr. Wilkinson, whose home was the Page house. I was over there for some reason and saw that old car and an old truck in there. I bought that 1917 Dodge from him. Didn't have to do hardly anything to it to put it in running condition and get some tires for it. Make inner tubes for it because they were 37 X 4, I think, was the tire size. Bob Woodard who ran the service station, he found me some tires but he couldn't find the tubes. But he found some smaller diameter tubes and he cut them in pieces and patched them together to make them the right size for me. The leather seats were in pretty bad condition. We got it fixed up pretty good. It ran like a sewing machine. Had a Saab starter on it, starter and it was also a generator. It didn't make a, just a little whirring noise was all you heard, like a motor running.

AK: So it wasn't a crank thing, it was a...

BH: It had an electric start and it had a cut out on it. Don't know if you've ever heard of a cut out. Cut out's illegal. They used to have them. You could mash a pedal on the floor board and it would open a hole in the side of the exhaust pipe and let the exhaust come out and not go through the bumper, make a lot of racket.

AK: Okay, so it wasn't something that you wanted to save the muffler. You just wanted to make some noise going down the road? And you used to go into Raleigh, you and your buddies?

BH: We were going into Raleigh one time, we were going down New Bern Avenue. I had seventeen people on that car. I went to stop and just didn't have enough brakes to stop it. I got slowed down pretty good and I said, bail out and stop us. So a bunch of them dropped down onto the ground, grabbed and pulled us to a stop at the stop light. Then I took it to Wake Forest when the Wake Forest University was over there. Took it to a ball game one time. That was back

when the Oldsmobile was first coming out with the modern version of an automatic transmission. Some of them were breaking down on the side of the road. We were just chugging along, just nice as you could be in that '17 Dodge. The bad part about the thing was when I went into the service, Daddy got tired of it sitting around and sold it for \$100. I tell you, it really upset me when I got home.

AK: It would be worth a pretty penny today, that's for sure. Tell me a little bit about your stint as a commissioner and some of the major issues.

BH: I didn't want to be one because the last year that Daddy was commissioner, he had, I reckon you'd call it hives. He just broke out all over, itching. I covered him up with silver nitrate. He couldn't go to work.

AK: From the stress of being a commissioner?

BH: Probably that and the business. I don't really know what caused it. Our office then was on Salisbury Street right behind the post office which was just the next building over from the county courthouse. Back then we didn't have a county manager. Chairman of the board ran the county, and Daddy was chairman of the board. And he wasn't up to having people see him so they'd bring stuff to me and I'd take it to him for decisions, then take it back to them for actions. I saw where I just made the decision myself and never took it to him. He just wasn't up to dealing with it. I knew how demanding and time consuming that job could be. I didn't want to run. James Atkins tried to get me to run. He'd been running for school board and wanted me to run for commissioner and talked to me about it quite a bit. I told him, no, I'd seen what it did to Dad and I didn't want to do it. Dad was on the war bond drive five years, during the Second World War, just as a citizen. They had a number of them and that was part of the stress, I think. And then the commission that last time, which would have been in 1954. Dewy Powell ran

against him and Daddy was sick with those hives and couldn't campaign. Bob Pleasants was campaigning for Sheriff and he campaigned for Daddy at the same time that he campaigned for himself and Dewy Powell was his cousin. It was a good thing Daddy lost because he wasn't up to it.

AK: Do you remember what dates? I just wanted to get a time frame that your father was Commissioner.

BH: '46 he went in. He went out in '54 I think it was.

AK: So it would be '46 to '50, and then '50 to '54.

BH: Right, then '50 to '54. I believe that's correct.

AK: And then for awhile there were no Heaters as a county commissioner.

BH: Not until I went in in '74. Then James came back a second time to see me. He had two or three people with him. They really got after me. It was over the school issue. It was over the school district and of the merging of the two school systems.

AK: Tell me a little bit about the history of that.

BH: Well, we were opposed to it. We thought the county schools were better. If they merged them they were going to start busing and start using the community schools. We thought community schools were better, and so we opposed it very strongly. The county-wide group that was opposing it sent word by one of their organizers that they would be supporting me if I would run. I finally felt like I had to, I didn't want to and my wife didn't want me to and my mama didn't want me to, but I felt like I was obligated to. So I ran and James and I both won. It was quite interesting. In the four terms I was there, I spent a total of \$5,000 campaigning.

AK: That covers all of your campaigning? So you were county commissioner from '74 to '90? Amazing.

BH: All four campaigns, to '90. I think I won because at that time our name was extremely well known. We were advertising for the company under () and the in-state magazine. And we were about the only well driller around here in '51. The name and the fact that Daddy had been commissioner for eight years. In fact, one lady told me the second time I was running was, she'd been voting for me ever since 1946 and she would keep right on voting for me.

AK: Not realizing it was a different person?

BH: I was riding with Jim Hunt on a trip around the county and at one place we stopped I was talking to people and they said, "We've got to keep you on. If it wasn't for you conservatives running..." We got to the next stop and somebody told me, if it weren't for you old liberals running...

AK: I guess you're everybody's man.

BH: I found out, down at Rogers [Restaurant] at breakfast, where I usually eat breakfast down there all the time. I thought everybody was pretty much in agreement as to what they wanted. But right after I got elected about half of them called me up to tell me they felt differently about these things.

AK: About the integration?

BH: Various issues. I found out that you think you know what people really want, but you don't know because they don't tell you. They tend to go along with the crowd rather than...

AK: Well, I was reading Tom's book [Around and About Cary by Tom Byrd] and it was interesting to see that, one of the reasons the Cary was against the integration were for the reasons you mentioned, but also Cary seemed to have more power over its own schools. Local school boards. Did we have one in Cary?

BH: We had local school boards. There used to be a school board in Cary that controlled Cary schools.

AK: Because did we not at one point have a bond referendum that raised money for building Cary, the high school?

BH: That would have been a county-wide one.

AK: That would have been county. So any building ...

BH: The only building that I know of that, after they turned over the Cary Academy to the state, and they gave them all that. And then I think it was about 1930 the town got together and built a gym. I believe that was about the time the gym was built by the town, by the people in the town.

AK: So the gym was built by private citizens, donations?

BH: That was my understanding.

AK: But then when they tore the brick structure down to build the present brick structure, that must have been a county ...

BH: That was county. That was in about '38 or '39. I saw my first moving picture in the old high school building, *The Last of the Mohegans*.

AK: Black and white?

BH: Black and white, serial, with sound. Every Saturday morning.

AK: How much?

BH: I think it was five cents, but I'm not sure. I know later on I'd go to Raleigh down on Saturday with Daddy to go to the movies and get a drink and popcorn for twenty five cents.

AK: And that was the only place that you could go until they had the movies in the gym in the school?

BH: This was after the one at the school. This was later on when I was in my teens. I would go into Raleigh with him sometimes on weekends, Saturday, and I'd go down to the Palace Theater and I could see one in a theater.

AK: So this was probably in the early forties?

BH: Yes, it would have been probably the middle forties. Not middle forties, early forties, '42, '43, along in there.

AK: I'm curious as to what your feeling is now about the merger.

BH: At the time, I got some help from some IBM budget men to project what was going to occur when they merged them. He projected it would cost us \$5,000,000 to merge the schools. One of the arguments for merging it was going to save money but it cost us \$5,000,000 because I went in at the time of the merger. The merger was voted on while I was commissioner. I voted against it.

AK: Was there another person who voted against it also?

BH: I don't remember. But I don't think there was, but I'm not sure. Anyhow, I said if we merge them, unless support them to make them the best schools in the state. As done, the only thing you do then is try to make the best of it, do the best job you can. It was real interesting to me that the cost involved for the county schools was raising the salaries to match those of city school system. The cost involved for the city school system was putting programs in that the county had that the city didn't have. So you had a better program in the county system than you had in the city system, and the city system was paying higher wages. I don't know if they got better teachers or not. You could argue that until doomsday. I fought, I supported the schools. () I did an estimate of what I thought it would take to maintain the buildings we had then. This was probably in '75, might have been in '76. My estimate at that time, it would take

\$5,000,000 a year just to maintain the schools we had at that time. And we hadn't built any new schools at that time. Of course, it was a lot cheaper then too. Trying to get them to give the schools \$5,000,000 didn't succeed.

AK: Who were you trying to convince to give the schools... who had the authorization? Was that the commissioners? So the commissioners, with you voting against it, the majority of the commissioners voted for the merger but not for the funding that would have supported it?

BH: Right. It was very emotional.

I remember, we pulled two things. We got the recreation department started in Wake County. () Four of them went to Hawaii for the national convention. () He hadn't been on there but a very short time, a real old family from out in Knightdale. () John and I got to talking to George that we need a recreation. Let's set up an ad hoc committee with you as chairman, George, and let's see what we can do on this thing. We discussed it and George happened to be there and he was asking me about it. He thought it was the best thing. Well, let's get set up and when they get back we can move right on into it. I said, who's going to be on it, we named the board members to start with, and who's going to be chairman. We called Tom Hynes out at State College who was head of the Recreation Education Department. He agreed to chair it. George was a strong state man. () They came back from Hawaii, and we had a three vote floor in that first meeting. We moved to put it into affect. () was very forward-thinking, and he was our fourth vote, I knew we would get his vote. They tried to change George's mind, but George said, "You're not going to change my mind." () said, "Let them play in the creek like I did." George went swimming every day at the Y. He stayed with us and that's when we got the recreation program started. We even had the funding.

AK: That's a wonderful story.

BH: But that's the way you do things. Sometimes you have to do them that way.

AK: And that was probably in the sixties, maybe. That was before...

BH: That would have been, it had to be probably '76.

AK: I'm just wondering if Cary had a recreation department by that time.

BH: Yes, because they were one of the first ones taking... Tom Hynes came in with matching funds. He set up a yearly program. Cary took advantage of it. Cary put up money which we would match. Then that would double the money. And then that could go to the federal government and they would match that. So the 25% Cary put up would then become 100% to use. We tried to get the land where Bond Park is before it was gotten. I went up to Virginia and I forget who all went with me, with the paper company to try to get it. We couldn't get it at that time. Later on we were able to get it, and then Bond Park which was put in with matching funds. Cary utilized the pool out of that thing until people of the whole town started becoming aware of it, started putting in a recreation program.

AK: Because I know we've always had a pretty strong recreation department.

BH: It's funny the things that you can do sometimes just because you're commissioner. One of the things I treasure the most was Florida Health was giving us a report and they showed us pictures of teeth on some of the poor people. It just turned your stomach their mouth looked so bad. There was a man here in Cary, I won't call his name. He had a son whose teeth hit on the outside of his lips. He had them corrected. I got to thinking about it, these poor kids can't do anything about it. I asked the dentist when they were making their report one day, I asked the Board of Health Director. I said, "You all got this program going to work on teeth?" We had a mobile dental office that we carried around the county.

AK: I remember that. It went to the schools too, didn't it?

BH: Went to the schools and the County set it down in Holly Springs for a long time. The county dentist would fix the teeth but there was nothing done orthodontically. I asked him, I said, "Any way we can do anything orthodontically?" He said, "I don't know so I'll check into it." That's all he said. Because I was commissioner, he went back checking. All of the orthodontists in Raleigh agreed to give their time. The dental school at Carolina pitched in with it. We got an orthodontics program going. Only about two or three years later, he was back there and he was making his board. He said, "Mr. Heater, I think you'd like to know that we've corrected 250 very severe orthodontal problems."

AK: That is to your credit. Good for you.

BH: That just shows you the power of the job. All they did was took this question. That's the kind of thing that you can do sometimes. To most of the people in the county, it doesn't mean a thing, but those 250. ()

AK: I wanted to ask you just a little bit about Mitchell Dairy barn. I know there was that subdivision called Montclair.

BH: That was Blalock's barn.

AK: Blalock's barn. It's not Mitchell?

BH: Mitchell came along a lot later. Blalock and then it was Morris and then it was Mitchell. Morris owned a lot of real estate here in town.

AK: And Blalock was the one who built it?

BH: I don't know that he built it. He the first one I remember. Mr. Rogers developed that development over there and it just went nowhere. I think he built it but I'm not sure.

AK: So your dad had purchased that area and then that didn't go anywhere, and then...

BH: Are you asking about developments? At the end of the war, Daddy bought land on () Street and Fairview. He put those two streets in there and called it Veteran's Hill. Sold lots to veterans at cost. They went so fast. Mr. Coggins was trying to buy 35 acres where Russell Hills is for \$1,000. There was a flaw in the title, so he went to buy it. Daddy bought it. The flaw in the title was that Pat Gray's sister who had been in Dix Hill for thirty years got out of Dix Hill that her property was to be used to send her to college. She was in her fifties then and the chance of her coming out of Dix Hill and going to college was nothing, so we got the title insurance on it. Daddy bought 35 acres for \$1,000, sold the timber the next day for \$600, and \$400 for 35 acres. Gave two or three acres for the cemetery, which is the new section, second oldest part of the cemetery () Area where Daddy's buried. Up and down that street. Then he went in there and he put in water lines and paved streets. They laughed at him downtown that he would never be able to sell it, get his money back paving those streets and all. The way he got his money, he'd go into the drugstore and they'd say, "Well Russell, how are things going in your hills over there?" That's why he started calling it Russell Hills. Sold the first two at \$800 apiece, the next two at \$1,200, as I recall, and then after that he got \$2,000 a lot for them. We went from there to Russell Hills extension one where the Presbyterian Church is over there. () Then we optioned the next area when they had Russell Hills III. \$200 an acre and Jeff Suggs walked in and offered us \$500 an acre for our options. All we'd done is I'd just taken a map and sketched out a lot of neat roads there. And we sold them. Then we did, I forget, the one over there behind the () plant. Left at Dixon Avenue on the north end, across the railroad. I forget the name of that now. () came along and bought that before we could develop it, he bought it out. We'd sold it to him. We were cutting other streets in and he came in, bought them all. Then we developed West

Russell Hills which was the pasture for the dairy, and developed that, and that was our last development. That was our stake for getting out of the development business.

AK: Now Shirley Drive, I understand that was the Holleman farm, is that right? So you never owned that?

BH: Right. No, we had an option for that and this property out here.

AK: MacGregor?

BH: Yes, which was Holleman farm. This was the Holleman farm and the home used to be up there.

AK: You mean, the Holleman farm went from Shirley Drive?

BH: No, two different pieces. This was the farm out here and they owned that up there.

() Later on, Mrs. Holleman died, the children sold it.

This thing has a lot of stuff in it. It didn't get everything, but it has a lot of stuff in it that happened while I was there.

AK: does that cover all the years that you were there?

BH: Yes. I asked for that to be done before I got out and they did it.

AK: So it covers sort of the major decisions that were made during your ...

BH: Some of the major decisions they didn't pick up that I thought were major, but they didn't. I can go through here and pick out ones that I... The 911 program, that was something I pushed and pushed and pushed everything. () to this day it is there because I pushed it and I tried not to get that center in Raleigh's control, and they are still having trouble with that.

AK: They are. That has been in the news.

BH: The county library, that is something else I pushed, and various things through there.

END OF INTERVIEW