

PRESERVING OUR HISTORY: ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO

INTERVIEWEE: BETSY FARMER

INTERVIEWER: KATHELENE MCCARTY SMITH

DATE: July 29, 2008

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

KS: This is July 29, my name is Kathelene Smith, and I am taking an interview with Betsy Farmer for the Preserving Our History: Rotary Club of Greensboro oral history project. Hello Ms. Farmer, how are you today?

BF: I'm just fine, Kathelene. Thank you very much.

KS: Thank you for coming to UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] to be interviewed.

BF: I'm glad to do it.

KS: Please tell me when and where you were born.

BF: I was born in June of 1946 at Duke Hospital in Durham, North Carolina. My parents were living in Greensboro at the time. My father had moved here just before the war [World War II], started to go into a medical practice with Dr. Banner who had been in Greensboro for many, many years. And my father had trained at Duke and done a couple of residencies at Duke and was on the house staff until he decided to come to Greensboro in about late 1940. And then, of course, he went overseas during the war. And so, when he came back, my parents, of course, were very familiar with the Duke doctors so Mother's obstetrician was at Duke, so they drove me down to Durham to be born in Duke Hospital. [Laughs] But, of course, I grew up here – I mean they brought me back to Greensboro, so I am a Greensboro native, really.

KS: Well, tell me about where you grew up and some stories about growing up in Greensboro.

BF: Well, my – we first lived in what is now an historic building, the Irving Park Manor Apartments on Elm Street at Sunset Drive on the third floor, I believe, which my mother says was interesting because they had no elevators. And then when my younger brother came along we moved to a house on Wrenn Street, which is also just off North Elm Street. And then my parents built a house on the

corner of Country Club Drive and Pembroke Road in 1952, and at the time Country Club Drive wasn't paved out there. That area was just beginning to be developed. They had just cut Country Club through from Lafayette to Sunset Drive. So, it's changed very much over the ensuing years. It was a wonderful neighborhood to grow up in. Of course, in the fifties, it was full of children. It was a – we look back on it now – it was a really special time. We roamed over the neighborhood, played in the creeks, played in the woods, rode our bikes up to Lawndale Shopping Center and had hot dogs and French fries at Franklin's Drug Store at the Lawndale Shopping Center. I can still remember that. Warren's Toy Store was another great attraction in the shopping center. But obviously, walked and rode our bikes to friends' houses and you know, a very much freer childhood than children today have. We walked to school. Irving Park Elementary School was just down the street and up the block, so we walked to school all through elementary school. And like I said, it was really a great neighborhood to grow up in.

My mother had a Christmas party every year – a carol sing Christmas party for the neighborhood children so we had hoards of children. A neighbor down the street, Mary Elizabeth Brown, played the piano and mother had – we had a wonderful cook, so the house was full of cookies and cake and Christmas candy and children and singing and grown-ups and I still have friends who remember that party until this day.

KS: Was your mother a stay-at-home mother or did she work?

BF: Yes, my mother – my father was an eye, ears, nose, and throat doctor. My mother stayed at home. She was very active in the community like most of her friends. She was president of the Junior League in 1951 and '52 and she was also active in church work and in other community activities: Garden Club, Bridge Club, Book Club. So she was a very busy lady.

KS: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

BF: Yes, I had a younger brother. He was three years younger than I was.

KS: So you went to Irving Park Elementary School, and then where did you go to middle school?

BF: In those days it was called Junior High School, which was seventh, eighth and ninth grades, and so I went to Aycock Junior High School and Aycock, of course, is still there. It's now a middle school. And that brought the rise of the carpool because in those days there wasn't as much bus transportation for school age children. So, parents drove carpools. And how that usually worked is you would get five parents together and it was usually by then, single sex carpools. It would be a carpool of five boys and a carpool of five girls and they just traded off, you know, one parent drove Mondays, Tuesdays – I'm sure with much switching

around, you know. But, of course, as children we didn't know that. But that was a wonderful experience because – I think the feeder schools for Aycock were Irving Park Elementary and Proximity Elementary. I don't remember if there was a third one or not. And of course, that was interesting because the Irving Park students, in general, came from a different economic situation than most of the children at Proximity which was primarily children whose parents worked in the Cone Mills and that area, but it just all seemed to work back then. And then after Aycock, high school. Page High School had opened in the late fifties, I think, and of course we had grown up dreaming of going to Greensboro Senior High School. I mean everybody's older brothers and sisters went to Greensboro Senior High and we went over there for basketball games and football games when we were children and dreamed of the day when we would be in high school. [Laughs] But then the city grew and Page was built and Aycock students went to Page, but I went to an independent girls' boarding school in southern Virginia called Chatham Hall which is in Chatham, Virginia.

KS: Sure, it is still in existence now.

BF: Flourishing, flourishing. Sixty five miles north of here. And that was a wonderful experience. Of course, you milk the "Oh my God, I'm going to a boarding school – no boys and no dances." But it was really, like I said, a wonderful experience. The school stressed academics. I mean in mid-sixties – the fifties and sixties, they were teaching Russian and German and Physics and occasionally Chinese and sent the graduates to then the great women's colleges – Smith, Vassar, Wellesley, Radcliff, Bryn Mar, except for the ones who wanted to go to Duke. [Both laugh]

KS: You were that girl.

BF: One of my classmates was determined to go to Stanford so we had mixed in, but as well as a lot of other schools; obviously Hollins, Sweet Briar, Randolph Macon; you know the whole range of colleges then. So that was very good, you know, high academics and you met girls from all over the country and they had some foreign students. So it was a very broadening experience for a young woman from Greensboro, North Carolina. You know, in that era.

KS: What were your favorite courses?

BF: Well, I'm a history person and I started reading history – well I came out of the womb holding a book. [Both laugh] But I've always been interested in history and English and political science. I was not a math person or a science person, but I think it was there – it was just girls, unless you had a real aptitude for it, in that era, but I tried to read my way through the library at Chatham Hall. But like I said, it was truly a wonderful experience. It's a beautiful school, and it was the right thing for me to do.

KS: So you went to Duke afterward?

BF: And then, of course, I was early decision at Duke. I ended up living in the house that my father had lived in because when my father was at Duke, they were still building the west campus and so my father lived in Brown House on east campus, and then my mother lived there when she came to Duke.

KS: Now is that the medical part of the campus now?

BF: No, this is undergraduate. My father went to undergraduate school.

KS: That part that's the medical school or the other side?

BF: Yes, Duke – east campus are the red brick buildings and that was the original Duke University, the original Trinity College. Little known facts. Duke, and its predecessor Trinity College, was originally much closer to towns and the buildings were Georgian red brick, primarily. And in 1924, when Mr. Duke set up the Duke endowment and Trinity College changed its name to Duke University, one of the things that Mr. Duke wanted to do with his money was build, you know, another campus. So about a mile west of east campus, they began to build the gothic campus that everybody thinks of as Duke University, and the medical school was on the north end of the gothic campus at that time. So, and then the women – Duke had a woman's college at that time and as this university expanded and they built the west campus, the women took over east campus and that became the women's college of Duke University. And the men were on the west campus and that was Trinity College of Duke University. So technically, I graduated from the woman's college of Duke University, and the woman's college at Duke from the early thirties – late twenties, early thirties, up until 1972 – was a separate college within Duke University. We had our own deans, we had our own student government, we had our own judicial structures. It was like Radcliff and Harvard used to be, and the men were on west and the girls were on east. Now for classes and everything, it was all one college and there was the bus that ran back and forth, you know, which made it – it was really very interesting because in many ways, the women got the advantages of going to a girls' school. You know, I said we had our own student body, or own judicial system but yet we were also – but yet we got to go to school with boys which I think is healthy; to see them as real people at 8 o'clock in a science lab, you know, 8 a.m. in the morning instead of just weekends. But we also had this sense of being ourselves, and Duke women and many graduates of the women's college were just not happy when the university did away with the woman's college and now the whole undergraduate school is Trinity College, technically.

KS: Now do you still do things through Duke? Are you an active alumna?

BF: I am very active. Of course, I have been more active in the past, but my five best friends I met at Duke; freshman week, freshman week.

KS: So when you graduated, what did you do next?

BF: So I took my history degree – I was originally scheduled to go to Carolina [the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill] and get a master's in 16th century English history.

KS: A woman after my own heart. [Both laugh]

BF: Yes. But my roommate, suite mate, all four years at Duke was from Atlanta and she was living in Atlanta which then was one of the Mecca cities for young adults, and she kept saying, "You know, I really need a roommate." And things were just different back in those days and Carolina said, "Yes," you know, "instead of starting in January, you can start in September." Because I thought that I'd go to Atlanta and try it for six months. And they said, "Yes, fine. No problem. You can come in September. Just let us know in the middle of the summer." I don't think that would happen today. [Laughs] But I went to Atlanta to room with Clare and went to work in the securities business for a now defunct brokerage firm called Goodbody and Company as a receptionist. Clare's father was the regional partner for Goodbody and both Clare and I ended up working for Goodbody, and I never went back and got that masters. I ended up working in the securities business until 1984; ended up as a partner in an investment counseling firm in Atlanta and I did their equity trading for them. I got into institutional equity trading, which is what gently nurtured Southern girls do with a degree in pre-modern history from Duke. [Both laugh] But that was another fascinating experience. I mean, I learned a lot and met a lot of very interesting people, and it was a wonderful experience.

KS: What was Atlanta like back then?

BF: Well, I think those were Atlanta's best years – from the late sixties through the mid-eighties – because it was growing and vibrant, but it hadn't gotten so huge and so unmanageable and just, at least for me, almost too big. And of course, the town was full of young people, young adults, lots of my Duke friends were there and it was just fun to live in at the time. There was a lot of traffic, but it was a lot more manageable, you know, than it is today. So, I really enjoyed it, I really enjoyed it.

KS: So when did you move back to Greensboro and why?

BF: I came back to Greensboro in 1984 and that story is – you just never know – I was doing a lot of volunteer work for Chatham Hall. I was on the alumni council. This was the early eighties and Chatham had survived the seventies, which were not good years for single sex girl schools in rural areas. A lot of the boys' schools were going coed which increased competition. The economy was rocky. So anyway, it was just that the seventies were a tough time. But the school survived, and they had a bright, young, energetic head of school. And like I said, I had gotten involved doing alumni activities, and I ended up as president of the alumni

council and on the board. And the school was getting ready to – I became the head of the annual fund for one year. So the school was getting ready to go into a capital campaign because they needed new buildings and they needed to renovate a lot of the older buildings. And it was one of those, one thing led to another. I was beginning to wonder if being on a trading desk was really what I wanted to do for the next twenty years. It's a high stress job. As I used to refer to it, "Do I want to spend the rest of my life yelling into telephones?" And the consultant for the Chatham capital campaign offered me a job in his firm, first to help with the Chatham campaign and then, of course, obviously he was building his business. He was based in Winston-Salem. If he'd been based in St. Louis or Houston or Chicago or New York I would have never done it because I never would have left Atlanta. But it was thirty miles from home and I was beginning to get interested in that. I was trying to think, "Do I really want to do this the rest of my life?" It was just one of those instances where everything just came together. So I thought, "I'm single, I don't have any, you know, obligations. I don't have to worry about braces and tuition and uprooting children." And so I said, "Well, I'll try it." So I resigned from the firm and moved back here; moved to Greensboro and commuted in Winston for ten years. And people would say, "You drive to Winston every day?" And I said, "Well, it takes me about as long to drive the twenty-eight miles to Reynolda Village as on many days, it took me to drive the nine miles from Buckhead to downtown Atlanta."

KS: I drive from Winston every day, and I'm from Houston, and it's the same way.

BF: And I arrive in much better humor than, you know, never getting out of second gear on the downtown expressway. So, came up here. Like I said, I moved back in September of 1984, bought a house in the same neighborhood that I'd grown up in, and worked at the firm in Winston for ten years.

KS: What was the name of that firm?

BF: It was called Allen, A-l-l-e-n, MAC, capital M, capital A, capital C, which stood for marketing, advertising, and communications. But we were really a development consultant firm for non-profits and we also did creative work – you know, brochures, letterheads, K statements, all sorts of things like that too.

KS: Did you travel up to Chatham a lot during that time?

BF: Yes, because we were the consultants for their campaign.

KS: That must have been great.

BF: Yes, that was fun because you got to meet a lot of alumni from all different age groups, you know, ones that had been there thirty years before you and then the ones, a lot of them, who had been there afterwards. So that was very interesting

- and a lot of fun. So I worked for them for ten years and then went out on my own in 1994. Started my own consulting firm in 1994; Farmer Consulting Services.
- KS: Well, that's pretty impressive! You've had an amazing career.
- BF: Well, it's very small, it's very small. I'm not real big.
- KS: Let's see, so what kind of non-profit work have you done since you've moved back?
- BF: So, volunteer work – of course my business is working with non-profits. I still do a lot of volunteer work for non-profits. Like I said, I saw my parent doing volunteer work. My mother's parents, my grandparents, were active in the community. My mother's from Burlington. So, I kind of laugh, it's genetically programmed.
- KS: Now you have an interesting perspective coming back to Greensboro after all those years.
- BF: Yes.
- KS: What changes did you see in Greensboro?
- BF: Well, it was very interesting. There were a lot of things that were the same, but obviously a lot of things that were different, which did not really bother me in a lot of ways because everything grows and changes. I mean, my good friend who grew up in Atlanta has obviously seen huge changes and that's just natural, you know. So, obviously, roads were different, buildings were different. Different people lived in houses that I remembered because, you know, especially after the last ten or fifteen years, your friends' parents downsize or move to Well Spring or Friends Home or whatever. But that's normal too. But a lot of it's still the same.
- KS: How about the political climate or economic climate?
- BF: Well, obviously huge changes. When I was a little girl, you know, Jefferson Pilot and the textile firms and Burlington Industries. My uncle was head of research and development for Burlington. Like I said, my mother's from Burlington and you know, that world is long gone. And obviously the social structure was different, the economic structure was different and of course when you're five, ten, twelve, fifteen years old, you're not paying much attention. [Laughs]
- KS: But even downtown must have been –
- BF: Oh yes, downtown was very different.
- KS: Did they still have the parades when you were little?

BF: Oh Lord, the parades. When you say, what are the things you really remember – the Christmas parade, which was held the Friday after Thanksgiving then, was to children in the fifties a massively looked forward to event every year. It was much larger than today's parade and my father's original office – Dr. Banner had a building, a small building, that was just north of the Jefferson Standard Building on Elm Street. It's been demolished there, you know, it's gone now. But, of course, that was perfect and it had windows obviously overlooking Elm Street on the second floor; perfect for, you know, watching this parade. And then, in the – I think about the mid-fifties, when Professional Village was built, which was – it's gone now, but in the mid-fifties some developers built a group of doctors' offices right next to Cone Hospital because, of course, Cone wasn't built until the early fifties. And then they thought, "Aha! Doctors always want to be close to the hospitals," because most of the doctors were downtown. So they built Professional Village, and so my father's practice moved out there but then, let's see, some of my parents' friends and the neighbors across the street were the Southern Life Insurance Company; that's long gone. And their office was on Green Street, I think. I don't quite remember. But then we found – there was someplace else we went to watch the parades and of course, [C.W.] "Moon" Wyrick, the legendary fire chief, was always Santa Claus. But the two things that stick in my mind from those childhood Christmas parades was the drill team from [North Carolina] A&T. I mean, they were sharp and, you know, they'd stop every drop and do the drill and we were just riveted, riveted. And the other thing was the Shriners in those elaborate costumes with the oriental band and, you know, of course for us in an era when – I mean I have pictures of my father and his friends at the GGO [Greater Greensboro Open], they had on suits and hats. So, to see men dressed up in elaborate oriental costumes and the big baggy pants and the turbans and the little bolero jackets waving the swords; we were fascinated by that too. And, you know, so the Shriners and their band was just – and the A&T drill team were the two things that really stick out for me and that really kicked off the Christmas season. I mean, it was the true beginning of Christmas back in the fifties.

KS: When did they finally stop? Are they still doing the parade?

BF: Yes, they still do it. I think it declined for a while and then – some of the others would know better – the Jaycees revived it, you know. But of course, it's held on a Saturday now, I think, the first or second weekend in December.

KS: Well, anything else like the parade that you remember in particular that went on in Greensboro when you were younger?

BF: Well obviously, the GGO. I mean in March and April, the GGO was a big deal, a big deal. People had parties.

KS: Can you tell me about the GGO?

BF: Well that's the Greater Greensboro Open. That was Greensboro's golf tournament that was founded in 1938 or '39. It's one of the oldest on the PGA Tour, and back then they didn't have as many golf tournaments as they do nowadays obviously, and it was a big deal.

KS: Did your daddy play golf?

BF: Oh yes, doctors always play golf. [Both laugh] Every Thursday afternoon, in good weather, daddy played golf. But he also worked on Saturday mornings, which doctors – some of them may do it now, but that was the doctors' schedule in that era. They took off Thursday afternoon, but they worked on Saturday morning. But, I mean, it was just one of the events of Greensboro, and people went out to Sedgefield and Starmount and, you know, followed the golfers, and the grown-ups had parties. And from what my mother said, in many cases, the golfers would stay at people's houses, you know, year after year. Like I said, it was just a different era.

KS: So by the time you got back, though, it was really quite different.

BF: Yes. And of course, back then downtown was anchored by the big department stores – Ellis Stone, and Meyers, and Belk. Going to the movies, to the Carolina Theater, was a big deal. The Circle K Club for children. And then, I mean, you know it's interesting – and this happens a lot with people, you know, especially if they've had a big movie palace as part of their childhood and they go back in when they're grown up and it seems so much smaller, you know. But the Carolina is still glorious, so I'm glad. I was gone in Atlanta when they preserved it. But I'm so glad they were able to save it.

But, you know, we came downtown to shop, groups of girls in junior high school – Brownhills and Montalvos and Meyers and Ellis, Stone. So, and Friendly [Shopping Center] opened when I was about ten, eleven, twelve years old. But the shopping I remember from my childhood is downtown Greensboro.

KS: So you got back and downtown was probably pretty deserted by then.

BF: By 1984, downtown was dead. And that's one of the great things that's happened in the last ten years is the revival, the continuing revival of downtown which has happened in a lot of places too.

KS: It's so impressive.

BF: It is, it is. I just hope we can keep the momentum going, which I think so, which I think so. I think there's enough steam and ideas.

KS: I've had a couple of people say that you have could shot a cannon down the street downtown and no one would have – it's amazing how much it's changed.

BF: Oh yes. It really had changed tremendously. And then, of course, one other signature events starting in the early sixties was the ACC basketball tournament; when that first came to Greensboro. Of course, again, different – there were only eight schools. It was always held in Greensboro, and that also was not only a sporting event, it was a social event. People had parties and, you know, the alumni of the various schools would come to town. And in that era, a lot of people knew each other. You knew people from Charlotte and Raleigh and Wilmington and Richmond and you know, all over. So people would have parties. They would have brunches, and then everybody would go to the basketball game, you know, the nights they didn't have basketball games, people would have parties, you know, it was a really big deal.

KS: So your family liked basketball? You were basketball fans?

BF: Oh of course, being Duke people, you know, we were big basketball fans too. Well, back when I was a little girl, Duke football was really big. I mean, my parents had season tickets and a parking space right by the gates – the east gates of Wallace Wade Stadium, and they went down every Saturday that Duke played a home game with a hamper full of fried chicken and homemade pimento cheese sandwiches and deviled eggs and brownies and all sort of goodies. And, you know, those were big social occasions too. My brother and I got to go to one game a year which was another really big deal. And my first Duke/Carolina game was the game where Carolina beat Duke 50 to nothing.

KS: And you see, you'll always remember that. [Laughs]

BF: I'll always remember that. [Laughs] A crushing blow.

KS: Oh, no.

BF: So that's another – but I don't know, maybe Duke football will revive too just like downtown. But, let's see, the GGO was big, the ACC tournament was big time, the Christmas parade. Especially when I was in junior high school, tennis tournaments, a lot of my peers were very, very good tennis players. So when the junior tennis tournaments would come through here, those were big for the junior high school crowd to go to and see Richard Holderness and Melinda Wyrick; those were the two, I guess, really big stars, you know, playing those junior tennis tournaments.

KS: You had a lot going on.

BF: And Greensboro then – also swimming was, you know – it's big now, we have all this interest in building a big new swimming facility because the Greensboro

- Swim Association is very active and large, but back in the fifties, swimming meets were really big at that time too, at Lindley Park. I mean, I can remember that.
- KS: Now has that changed? Do you know if that's still –
- BF: It's still held at Lindley Park.
- KS: So most of the sporting events that were ushered in have remained.
- BF: Yes, a lot. Of course, what's interesting, there was no soccer. I mean, back when I was a little – God, this sounds like I'm 100 years old. But really, in the fifties and the sixties, there was no soccer in the South. Now there was soccer at Chatham Hall, but there were a lot of girls from the Northeast and the Midwest at Chatham Hall, so at Chatham we played field hockey and lacrosse and soccer, none of which were played in the public schools in North Carolina. And, of course, now soccer is it.
- KS: Now what are some of the issues that you find are facing Greensboro such as population growth, economic growth, leadership, race relations, and water shortage? Were you here during some of the race relation issues?
- BF: Oh obviously, I mean in the late – you know, I was eight years old in 1954, with *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- KS: So, do you remember the sit-ins?
- BF: I remember it. I was in – I think I was at Chatham – 1961, let's see. I remember it. I may have been away at school. February, 1961, no. I remember it but not sharply, but I do remember, obviously, the discussions and all of the issues and activities that revolved around integrating the public schools in the late fifties and early sixties. Of course, I think, I was not at either of the – obviously I was too young when Grimsley, when Greensboro Senior High was first integrated. And I think – because I went away to school in September of 1961. So I missed going to a public school as they were integrated. And of course, I was up in Virginia and then of course, you know, I was in college. So I missed most of the really – the bussing controversy and how that began, you know, I missed the changes in the school assignment schedules just because I had outgrown the school system. So I knew it was going on, but I had kind of grown out of the public school issue. But, I mean, I remember it being discussed. And one of my parents' friends, Ed Hudgins, was Chairman of the School Board at the time and he was very instrumental in trying to handle it in the best way possible. So it was, you know, it was a part of conversation. But in that era, children lived one life and to a large extent, parents lived another life. Children were not as involved in grownup life like they are nowadays in many ways.

KS: I wonder why that is? I wonder what brought on the change.

BF: I just think it's just because of it's maybe a more open society. Children are exposed to so much more than they were back then and I just think it has a lot to do with the increasing – and children grow up so much faster nowadays. I mean, we were still playing with dolls when we were seven, eight, nine years old. I mean, Barbie didn't show up until I was too old for dolls.

KS: Oh, now that's a shame. [Laughs]

BF: Yes. But I had a Madame Alexander doll, which is much better.

KS: Those are wonderful.

BF: Those are wonderful. So children were more protected than they are nowadays.

KS: I know that some people really want to see Greensboro grow. Others really would rather see it cap off and kind of stay the size it is. What are your thoughts on that?

BF: Well, I don't think any city that wants to survive can stop growing. I mean if you don't grow, you die. I mean, that's just the nature of urban life. But on the other hand, you can also ruin yourself by growing, you know, too fast in an unplanned way. I mean, it's like cancer. Our cells all grow and divide and change, but when they get out of control, they can kill you. And I think the great challenge for Greensboro and just about any city is how to manage growth and how to strike that balance between providing the resources, the infrastructure, housing, schools, industrial and commercial land, without destroying something that Greensboro has always been famous for, which is the quality of life. It is still a very livable city, and it is still a very beautiful city, and my friends who come visit here from Atlanta and Houston and Miami all talk about how beautiful it is. Lots of people talk about how beautiful it is. You know, it's beautiful in the spring, it's beautiful in the fall, and it's even pretty in the summer and the winter. So, we are – I think Greensboro is a very special place, you know, the fact that it's just where it is geographically. We've got enough hills to be interesting. We never have the extremes – the weather never lasts too long. We're not hemmed in by a river or other cities, really. I laugh, I say, "If I live to be as old as my mother," who is ninety-six, "I'll probably live to see Greensboro and Burlington meet." because I've lived to see Greensboro and High Point meet. But I think that managing growth is going to be a real issue.

KS: Well, I know that there is the issue, for example, of water shortage. What do you think? Are you concerned about that?

BF: I think anybody has to be because we are not on a major river and all of our water comes from the sky. And I was, what, eight years old during the drought of 1954

and I have vague memories of that because I do remember when the remnants of Hazel, Hurricane Hazel, came through in October of 1954, which broke the drought. I can remember at first, everyone's concern, because it was such a bad storm, but then people being so grateful for the rain. And I have vague memories about talk about seeding the crowds and putting bricks in the toilets and you know that type of thing.

KS: Bricks?

BF: To conserve water, you know.

KS: I've never heard of that.

BF: It displaces the water in the tank so it doesn't use as much water to fill up, I think.

KS: That's interesting, I've never heard of that.

BF: Yes. So I think, obviously, managing that and managing the wishes of all the cities and municipalities that are involved with the Randleman Dam is going to be a challenge. I think we've got to learn not to be so territorial. Some territorialness is good, but I think we've got to let go – all of the cities in this area, we have got to learn to let go of some, of almost all of this putting ourselves first. I know it's hard to do, but we've got to learn how to think regionally.

People, you know, cross back and forth all of the time. Like I said, I worked in Winston for ten years, you live there; people go back and forth all the time. And I think managing the water, I hope that with the most recent severe drought, you know, last summer, and it appears that people are still being good about conserving even though they've lifted most of the water restrictions. I'm hoping that we've kind of learned a little bit of a lesson about being careful with the water we use so that we don't use it indiscriminately either because we think it's rained every week for the last six weeks. So I hope that's taught us a lesson because I think conservation and wise use of water resources are going to be important. I don't know if I'm wildly enthusiastic about everybody drilling wells because ground water feeds the reservoirs but you can't stop it.

KS: Now with Greensboro having its 200th anniversary, what do you think it holds for the future?

BF: I think that there are a lot of good things that are happening. I think, obviously, the revitalization of downtown. Obviously, we just talked about regionalism, those conversations are still going on and as long we're still talking about it and people are still working at it, I think, as time goes by, you know, that will help. I think our challenges are learning to be one city instead of a collection of neighborhoods or ethnic groups. That troubles me; that everything or so much is seen in terms of black and white. I know it's hard to lose that lens, that way of

viewing things. But I do think we've got to work harder at seeing what is best for all of us in the city.

KS: Were you surprised coming back from Atlanta to see that still going on?

BF: You know, when you're just kind of like an ordinary citizen, it comes through the filter of the news and the newspaper and you know, you don't know if you get the whole picture. And I think it's gotten more intense in the last ten to fifteen years. When I first came back, it didn't register, and I think the politics in Greensboro and Guilford County has gotten a lot more intense in the last fifteen or twenty years. It's certainly not that way in a lot of other cities. I mean, there are still the same tensions and the same issues, but it seems to be so much more intense here and that troubles me a little bit because, you know, we are all still citizens of Greensboro.

KS: So, how do you think Greensboro can go about improving the quality of life?

BF: I think we have to make careful attention to such things as rezoning, bringing in new developments. I would rather, you know – we need to preserve land for commercial and industrial use. And I know it is tempting to rezone it to build another housing development, but is that the highest and best use of the land and where do we get the political will and the leadership that is willing to, perhaps, lose an election, but to vote for the right thing. And that's a question of leadership and we've been talking about the issue of leadership in Greensboro, Lord knows, for ten or fifteen years and I think it's still a problem. I don't know what it is about us that we can't develop dynamic and charismatic leaders that aren't immediate subject – subjected to severe and maybe unnecessary criticism.

KS: No one can withstand that.

BF: Yes. And good people will not go into local politics because they – a lot of them won't, now many of them do, but a lot of people, I'm sure, have said, you know if they've been approached say, "No, I just don't want to go through all the infighting and bitterness and, you know, the unnecessary criticism." Which is not to say we don't have many good people who do, and I applaud them because it's had to balance competing interests and we certainly do seem to have it.

[End of Tape 1, Side A] [Beginning of Side B]

KS: I know you are still very involved with Duke, are you connected in any way to any other local colleges?

BF: Well, I've really kind of retired from most of my heavy volunteer work with Duke. I did things in stretches. I was very heavily involved in Chatham for many years, then I kind of rotated off the board and kind of retired from that and then I had a spell working on a lot of Duke committees and then I kind of retired from

doing that. Then I spent many years being very involved in First Presbyterian Church, which is where I grew up. But I kind of had my two terms as an elder on the Session and I kind of retired from that, so I don't do quite as much volunteer work as I used to.

KS: What do you enjoy doing?

BF: Well, I still do some volunteer work for First Presbyterian; I was on a committee this winter but it had a beginning and an end. And I am the secretary of my garden club and I go to my book club and am newsletter editor at Rotary. I'm spending most of my volunteer time right now working with Rotary.

KS: Well, I never want to forget to ask about what people's hobbies are because I've had couple of people say, "Well, aren't you going to ask about my hobbies?" And so many people do so many amazing things.

BF: Well, obviously I love to read. I love to read a lot of different things and so I still keep up with doing that whether it's mystery novels or – I just finished this wonderful new book called *Troublesome Young Men* and it's about a group of young politicians in England in the thirties who were really instrumental in the vote of no confidence that sent Neville Chamberlain out of power and brought in Winston Churchill. And it was fascinating because it sheds a whole new light on that era. You know, there's the classic story of, you know, when the war really kind of heated up after Hitler invaded the Low Countries in France and the disaster and, you know, and Chamberlain resigned and Churchill came in and, you know, that's the story. But this back story behind it was really fascinating and that's an era that I'm really interested in.

And I worked – the Guilford Battleground Company was a client of mine for many years so I've gotten really interested in that and that's another one of Greensboro's great treasures. I'll put in a plug right here.

KS: Well, that's a beautiful battleground.

BF: It is and people – they're getting there but people still don't realize that one of the most important battles of the Revolutionary War was fought at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse.

KS: Now when did those reenactments start? Do you remember those from when you were younger?

BF: No, they started after my time.

KS: Because those are well done.

- BF: Yes, and so I'll put in a plug for that. I've read a lot of Revolutionary War history and nineteenth century English novels, and just a variety of things. Much more non-fiction now than I used to. And when I have time, I would like to play with my garden.
- KS: Now have you ever been involved with politics at all, national or local?
- BF: Not really, when I was – my first cousin once removed was a United States Senator from North Carolina, Everett Jordan. And I have a memory of – it must have been his first campaign, of handing out flyers in front of a polling place.
- KS: How old were you?
- BF: I must have been around eleven, twelve, thirteen, you know, because he – let's see, he was appointed, I think, when Luther Hodges died and then he ran. He was Senator until 1972. But that's about – now I vote every single time, but that's the closest I've ever gotten to really being actually involved in politics.
- KS: How have you seen the Greensboro non-profit sector change?
- BF: Oh, it's grown so much. Greensboro really has a very vibrant and involved non-profit community. You know, in consulting for non-profits and seeing how it operates in other cities, we really do have a very strong non-profit community here in Greensboro which I think is one of the great things about the city. We have a lot of them but one of the reasons that we have so many of them and why I think the community is so strong is that Greensboro has been blessed, primarily because of our heritage, to have a number of area foundations that give primarily in Greensboro and/or Guilford County and that provides, you know, the fuel for a lot of these organizations over time. Now, of course, you know, in the last few years, many of them have been heavily involved with the revitalization efforts, but having gone into other cities to work with small community non-profits and realized that they didn't – those communities don't have a Tannenbaum-Sternberger, a Cemala, a Weaver, a Bryan, you know. A strong community foundation is just, you go, "Oh! If only Greensboro knew how fortunate we are."
- KS: People credit them with actually getting Greensboro through low points.
- BF: Yes. That was a tremendous catalyst. So, I think that is one of Greensboro's real strengths, is the size a quality of its non-profit community and the presence of so many foundations that are willing to get involved. They don't just sit there and read grant proposals and hand out money. They really want to be part of the process and be involved.
- KS: Now how did you come to join the Rotary Club?

BF: Well, two people in Rotary asked me within about a couple of weeks of each other so it was just providence. I mean I had always known about Rotary. My father was a charter member of Summit Rotary and when I was a little girl I can remember Daddy going to Rotary meetings. And this Rotary magazine came into the house and since I read everything except for Daddy's medical magazines which had icky pictures in them. So I remember Rotary and I remember that the wives were Rotary Anns because back in that era, obviously, women weren't members of Rotaries – Rotary Anns, you know, that was the term for a Rotarian's wife. So I knew about Rotary, but it never crossed my mind because when I was growing up, you know, Daddy was a member of Rotary, Mother was in the Junior League. That was kind of the way things worked. So, of course, I grew up and became a member of the Junior League.

KS: In Atlanta?

BF: Well, I became a member here and immediately transferred out to Atlanta and then transferred back here when I came back and I'm kind of retired from that too.

KS: Me too. [Laughs]

BF: But, again, a wonderful experience. So, I knew about Rotary and then like I said in a period of a couple of weeks back in winter, 1998, two members that I knew said, "Have you ever thought, you know – "And I thought, "Well, yes, sure, fine." And it's been a wonderful experience. I knew a lot of people in Greensboro Rotary through growing up here and, you know, volunteer work in the community and First Presbyterian and in general and I think it's been a wonderful experience; I've enjoyed it. I just think it's a good club.

KS: Well, I'm about to the end of my questions but is there something that we haven't covered that you can think of that you would like to add?

BF: Well I will just say one thing. I have always been very proud to be from Greensboro, North Carolina. Even when I was living in Atlanta, the Mecca city of the South, people would say, "Where are you from?" or "Where do you live?" And I would say, "Well, I'm from North Carolina," or "I'm from Greensboro, North Carolina. I just live in Atlanta." But, you know, a lot of North Carolinians are like that. They never really leave North Carolina. But I was always very proud of being from Greensboro because it was a wonderful place to grow up; not perfect, but it was still a wonderful place to grow up. And even, like I said, those fifteen years in Atlanta, I was still interested and involved; I liked to hear what was going on and when I did come back it was a conscious choice to live in Greensboro and commute to Winston-Salem.

Now obviously, my family was here, my childhood friends were here, I knew my way around, you know, but part of it was because I really do like Greensboro and I just hope that the city can continue to grow and evolve yet

remain this wonderful, family-orientated quality of life place where we have the bright lights and the big city and wonderful restaurants and wonderful shops and wonderful things to do; symphony and EMF [Eastern Music Festival]. Lord, what a wonderful organization. And there's so much to do here if people will just pay attention. But that it still remains a city that's easy to live in where it's a wonderful place to raise your children because I think a key group for Greensboro's future is young marrieds with children. I know everybody is fascinated by the young singles in their twenties but I think a core group for a growing, thriving city is a good place to raise a family, no matter what the family structure is, because those people are grounded in your city when they're raising children there and then they come to love it. Those are the people who will get involved in the city because they want it to be a good place. They want it to be the type of place their children will grow up and live in.

KS: And come back to.

BF: Or come back to. So – and I've been happy being back. I want my Atlanta friends to come live up here. [Both laugh]

KS: You're recruiting them!

BF: It's kind of gotten out of control, but, you know, I still think Greensboro has a bright future in front of it, but we've all got challenges that we have to face.

KS: Well, great. Thank you so much for coming and speaking with me today. I appreciate it.

BF: Well, I enjoyed it.

KS: Thank you very much.

[End of interview] [End of Tape 1, Side B]