

INTERVIEW OF BETSEY BOWMAN

INT: Okay, Betsey. Tell me about yourself here.

BB: All right. My name is Betsey Jean Bowman and I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on June the 12th, 1923. My parents were Frieda Evangeline Harmon Bowman and Eugene Taylor Bowman and my mother was a native of Greeneville. I grew up in Knoxville until we moved to Greeneville about when I was.. after I graduated from college. I went to high school, lived on Temple Avenue which is now Volunteer Parkway in the university section and my grandfather and my father owned the Bowman Overall Company. When my grandfather died in 1936, this was right after the Depression, but during the Depression he would not, he did not want any of his employees to go on welfare so he mortgaged all of his property and used his savings to pay for accumulating a big stock of overalls and it was costing him about \$5.00 to make a pair of overalls and it was costing him about \$5.00 to make a pair of overalls or railroad pants and they were selling for a \$1.98 so my grandfather lost most of the money that he had even though he was quite wealthy at the time that he surrendered all of this. So I grew up on Temple Avenue and graduated from Knoxville High School in 1941. My father was quite a golfer and was a member of the Holston Country Club and also Cherokee Country Club and he was a good friend of David Linienthal who was head of the TVA. And my grandfather had died and father had lost everything and David said, "There's a war coming Gene. You ought to go to Washington and take a job as an industrial specialist. And Daddy went to Washington and went to work at the War Production Board and took a room at the Willard Hotel and of course, Mother and I were in this large Victorian home down on Temple Avenue and we had a chance to lease it to TVA. So a TVA executive. So Mother and I came to Greeneville and I had been accepted at the University of Tennessee but I decided to go to Tusculum. So we took an apartment down on McKee Street in the Highland Apartments and I enrolled as a day student because they couldn't take me in as a resident student, they didn't have any room. So I commuted as a day student the first year with Dick Doughty and Francis Carter whose now Ms. Phillip Shanks and Nancy Coles who's now Ms. Robert Brown. And the other three years I was a resident student at Tusculum. Well I graduated in the Sesquicentennial graduating class in 1945 and took a job at the Greeneville Sun earning the fabulous salary of \$37.50 a week. And there was a vacancy in the welfare department and Ms. Hermine Reece called me and she says, "We need a caseworker. Would you apply for the job?" Well, it was about \$120.00 a month under the State of Tennessee but it had group insurance and it had annual leave and I thought, "Ah, hot dog this is a real future!" So I left the newspaper office and I talked to John M. Jones and he said, "I would never hold you back" so I went with the welfare department and worked for a year. And then I transferred as a child welfare trainee to Johnson City and I was there for two or three years and then I went to the University of

Tennessee working on my master's degree for my first year then I came back to Johnson City and worked and went back my second year on a scholarship under the V.A. and when I got my master's degree in social work I specialized in psychiatric and medical casework and started to work at the V.A. and I was there for about a year and then I went to the welfare department as a child welfare consultant and I was there several years before I left. Then I left the VA, I mean I left the Welfare Department to go back to the VA because they were beginning to develop a nursing home concept and of course with my experience with the welfare department I knew all the people and the public agencies and the state agencies and I'd been very active in the Upper East Tennessee conference of social work and I was a certified social worker by that time and I stayed there and in 1971 my Aunt Irene died in Knoxville. This was my father's only sister and I had an opportunity to retire. So I left the VA

INT: At the ripe age of what?

BB: At the ripe age of about 42. At about 42 and Dr. Harry Wagner was the Chief of Staff out at the VA and there was an opening for the Director of the Aging project. And he asked me if I would be interested and I was interviewed by Jack Strickland and I took the job and I reconstructed the whole advisory committee which really at that time was politically appointed and I got Dale Hanes from Greeneville, and Sarah Justice from Greeneville and Aubrey Grubbs on the regional committee and it was real interesting. Sarah Bagley called me from Nashville and she said, "Betsey" and I was also on the state advisory committee for the commission on aging. She says "I've got some money to develop an RSVP program and you're in Johnson City, where would you put this money?" And I said, "Well, Sarah, and this has nothing to do with my living in Greene County, but I said if I were going to put some money into the RSVP program, I'd put it in Greene County for this reason. I said Jane White has developed a program in Elizabethton and has a center there and they have a very active senior citizens club in Kingsport and Sue Donelson has a senior citizens center in Johnson City and I said the only thing they have in Greeneville is Adele Hanes who is working with a very small group down at the neighborhood service center out on East Church street, West Church Street. So I said call Adele Hanes and ask her if she can suggest somebody that can sponsor an RSVP program. So she called me back that afternoon and said that she had talked to Adele and Adele had suggested the Pilot Club be a sponsor just for an RSVP club chapter.

INT: Now the RSVP stands for?

BB: Retired Service Volunteer Program. So about two days later Audra Grubbs called me. She was the president of the Pilot Club and she said, "Betsey," she said, "we're going to have a meeting of the executive board of the Pilot Club at the Light and Power Board" and this was over where the Light and Power Board is now.

"Could you come down and meet with us and talk to us about setting up an RSVP program in Greeneville? We have agreed we'll sponsor it." So I drove down and my mother was living here. My father had died in 1964 but she was still living on North Main street in the house that had been owned, had been occupied at one time by my great uncle who had built the house, Judge Dana Harmon. So I came to Greeneville and we met in the Light and Power Building and they were talking about a room in a church at the corner of East Church Street and Bernard Avenue and its the church that burned some time ago and is now used, I think by Takoma Hospital or some other agency. And while I was sitting there I said, "Wait a minute! You all are talking about a room in a church, down on Bernard Avenue. Why don't you go out for the Roby Fitzgerald School? It's slated to be torn down for a parking lot." And they all looked shocked and I said, "Look, I said they've got a vocational set up in the basement, it's being, the auditorium is being used by the Little Theatre, you've got two floors, its the oldest elementary school in town, it's right across from the Town Hall. Go out for the Roby Center as a Senior Citizen's Center. They said, "How are we going to do this?" I said, "You go tomorrow morning to see the mayor, James Hardin. There are funds available under the older Americans Act of 1965. And if the City can put some money into this project and you can get a grant from the Federal Government, you're on your way. Well they went to Mayor Hardin who was very much enthusiastic about it and they sent in the application for a comprehensive senior citizen center with a library, with a game room, everything they have today. Well, tragically, Mayor Hardin was killed and Tommy Love our present mayor today took over and he followed through. He was killed in an automobile accident coming back from a board meeting of the Kingswood school in Morristown and Tommy Love, who was an alderman for the second ward, or he may have been the first ward at that time because he has since moved. He became the mayor and he was very much enthusiastic about a federal grant and they spent about \$80,000 of federal money in redoing the building but they kept all of the original things like the original stairs, in other words, they didn't just go in and wreck the building, they used what they had. They converted what had been the dressing room; the cloakroom of the second floor was used for a cloakroom for the RSVP program. On the first floor the used the cloakroom adjoining what had been a classroom for a restroom and they kept in the building all of the important things that it looked like a school. Well, up in Johnson City, I was a good friend of Carolyn Dobson and Carolyn worked at the V.A. but she had also been the director of the program up there. And I said I am so thrilled with what they are doing down here in Greeneville with the Roby Center School, making it a comprehensive thing. Well they were talking about it because she was interested in a comprehensive center for Johnson City. So I went before the City Council and urged them to take over the Annie Stratton Wilder building which was down off of Watauga and it was the oldest elementary school in town. Well typical of Johnson City, they tore down the Annie Stratton building school and the vocational wing and they spent about

\$100,000.00 for a one story Senior Citizen modern center and lost everything that Greeneville had saved. Now they have since enlarged on their program twice and there's no telling how much money they've spent on their facility but they could not, they bulldozed their heritage.

INT: Yeah.

BB: And this is what is so tragically happening all over the United States today. But anyway they opened the senior citizen's center with Estelle Bin and Virginia Pond who were on the faculty at Tusculum College and they became the co-directors and they directed the center for about a year or year and a half and they were sort of semi-retired from Tusculum. They wanted time to travel and so Audra Grubbs took over as the director of the Roby center and continued to strengthen the program and to build it and then they had the transportation program, they had the lunch program, they had the library, they had the game room, they had the arts and crafts in the basement, they had the book workshop in the basement, they had the, now they have an exercise room and I'd say it's probably one of the most comprehensive centers in the United States, I mean in Tennessee. But the interesting thing is they saved the building and this has been one of the premier attractions for the older people in town and I have been back in Greeneville since 1977. My mother became ill and I had purchased from my aunt, Mrs. Holloway Lancaster, what was known as Harmon's Playground which is up off of Spencer Street. Had a swimming pool, this was developed, Harmon's Playground was developed in the 1920's by my great uncle and my grandfather's brother, Judge Dana Harmon. And he had no children and one day he was driving back from court over in Blountville and he was a circuit judge and he saw Bill Doughty and Jim Doughty and my uncle Russell Harmon and my uncle Bill Harmon all four of them were swimming in what was called the round pond which is out on what they called, the Kingsport Highway or North Main Street. That night after supper Uncle Dana came next door which was the Harmony House and he says, "Will I saw the Doughty boys and Russ and Bill swimming in the round pond today." My grandfather said, "Well, where else are they going to swim? There's no place to swim except the river." The next day my Uncle Dana had about fifteen colored fellows digging a swimming pool by hand. By hand. And it was concrete and they put plumbing pipes around three sides of the pool, they built a diving tower with a diving board about five feet off of, the first level was about five feet off the water and the second level was about fifteen and then they had a twenty five foot tower that you could go up and you could come down a slide right into the end of the deep end of the pool which was just about six feet or seven feet at that time. So anyway the first year they sent invitations to their friends and invited them to come. And everybody came and they brought their children, everybody took care of the children and at the end of the summer my uncle Dana said, "Julia, you know we ought to open this up to the general public. There's no place for the kids here to learn how to swim."

So they agreed they would open it up and then Uncle Dana built twelve, a long series of dressing rooms. Six for the men and six for the women. And at the end of each of these two sections there was a toilet and there was a shower and he made everybody take an octagon soap bath before they went into the pool. And he had signs and I have one of the original signs framed in my bathroom about this is for your protection and so forth and he had it posted in each of the twelve dressing rooms and he had a Negro couple and the husband watched the men and the wife watched the women and even though I was visiting my grandmother in the next yard, I had to strip down and take a naked soap bath with everybody else and this really did irk me! But anyway the family used the pool. He also built a pavilion where you could sit and watch people swim and after the first year, he built a baby pool. So anyway the family used the pool in the morning until about 1 o'clock and then he would open the pool to the general public and they could come from about one to five.

INT: What year was this?

BB: This was about 1926.

INT: Was that when Dana built it?

BB: Oh, yes. Yes. And he would keep the thing open and on Friday night. If you wanted to have a picnic or special party or something after the first year he put in equipment. He had three swings. Great big iron swings that would swing out about twenty feet on each side. And he had an iron merry go round and he had four seesaws and he had a sand pile that had a slide that you could walk up and slide down into the sand pile and then he built a fish pond or fish pool and then he built a tennis court and then he had a pavilion where they could have garden parties or scout meetings and things like that. And then they had trapeze up on the back end and he was quite a golfer and he had a three hole golf course and I still live in what was the gardener's house which was originally moved down to its present location from the side of where the pool was and it was occupied by a Negro man and an Indian woman for years. And when Uncle Dana built the pool, they rolled the one room cabin down to where it became the gardener's house and then later when Aunt Julia inherited the property it became the caretaker's house and then when she died, my Aunt Francis inherited it and I used it as a guest house for the swimming pool and then when I came to Greeneville into 1977 I made it into my home. And I have added to it twice and I still have the swimming pool and I have an herb garden where the...

INT: How much of the original swimming pool is intact?

BB: The whole thing! The whole thing, but I went in 1965, I went to Knoxville to a pool company and I asked them if they would send a representative up to look at it and there were trees growing in the swimming pool. And they came up and they said it would not be

possible to put in a diving board because it was too shallow and I said, well, my God they been jumping off, coming down this slide going off of a fifteen foot board and why nobody ever broke a pelvis or hit their head, but anyway, Dick Doughty came down the slide one day and Alice Larue Murray was standing down at the deep end of the pool and just as Dick came up from the top she put her foot out and she put it on top of Dick's head and pushed him down into the water. Well it happened, course Dick's lungs got full of water, and it happened thank the Lord, Jim Doughty, Dick's brother was standing right next to Alice Murray and he looked down and there was Dick on the bottom of the pool, so he dove in and got Dick out and of course they gave him, they turned him over and gave resuscitation and he was alright but he never did use that slide I don't think again. But anyway Uncle Dana died in 1931 and Aunt Julia closed the pool. And it was closed then until I took it except one year about in 1945 J.C. Bullen and Francis Bernard who is now Ms. Tom Overall, went to Aunt Julia and asked her if they could use the pool. Now at that time it didn't have a leak and it didn't have the trees and they opened it up and it had a leak in it but they used it and I was in Johnson City at the time working or I was in New Jersey that summer, I'm not sure, but anyway they used it that one year and then it was closed until 1965. So what I did was add a four inch floor to the original floor and I put concrete blocks inside the original pool and then of course I put in a filter and a heavy drain line to the street and I put in, by this time of course, they original dressing rooms had been destroyed and rotted away and the pavilion had rotted down and the two towers for the collected rain water for the showers were gone, the only thing that was there was just the pool. So I redid the complete pool in 1965 and I still have it and we still enjoy it as a neighborhood family pool and thousands of people, literally of people learned to swim in Harmon's playground. And every once in a while I'll go out in the yard and there'll be a senior citizen there and they say, "I just wanted to come and see what's left of Harmon's playground." And then of course, back during the civil war, this house at 303 North Main, who is known as Harmony House, was built by my great grandfather. And Dick Doughty and I share our mutual great grandparents because his grandmother and my grandfather were brother and sister and originally during the Civil War when the town was occupied by Union forces, they used the house as headquarters for the officers. And my great grandfather had a large family and they allowed him to live on the second floor and of course, they bivouacked the soldiers out in the back yard which is now my front yard or Harmon's Playground and my uncle Dana was about three years old and my grandfather was maybe ten, twelve, fourteen years old, I'm not sure exactly how old he was at the time, but anyway one day he went up to what was known as Naff's Hill and that's where the Greeneville College has been and he came back with six or eight volumes of the original Greeneville College Library.

INT: Where was Greeneville College?

BB: Greeneville College at that time had been out on Buckingham Road.

INT: I've heard of that.

BB: Uh huh and you see Greeneville College and Tusculum Academy were merged and became Tusculum College and so anyway I think this was about 1868 that they merged but anyway, when I graduated from Tusculum, of course, my great grandfather had a medical degree as well as a law degree and he also served at one time as the principal of Rhea Academy down on Depot street where the Partnership building is now and he also served as mayor of Greeneville at one time. He firmly believed that law and medicine were very closely aligned and that's why he had two degrees. Well, anyway, course he saw the value of the books and they kept the books in the family and of course when my great grandfather died my grandfather inherited the books and when he died my grandmother had them and when I graduated in the Sesquicentennial graduating class, I gave the books to Tusculum College to put in their archives.

INT: So what kind of books were these?

BB: I don't know they were regular textbooks or classics or something. I don't remember. It's been, my gosh, we're talking 1945. My mind is not that good! But anyway I gave the books to the College and I got a letter from Dr. Jerry Moore who was the acting president thanking me for the books but he had also been the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church but I'll get back to my uncle Dana. Uncle Dana was very inquisitive little boy and the family lived on the second floor. Course they had to carry their water up to the second floor and they hid all of their hams and their meat in the attic of 305 North Main Street and one day one of the officers was out in the yard and my great grandfather was talking to him and uncle Dana came out and he took the sword and started pulling on it and he kept saying "Meats up dah. Meats up dah. Meats up dah." Meaning meat is in the attic. And the officer said to my grand father. He said "Dr. Hartman, what's wrong with this little fella. He's trying to tell me something." He said, "Oh, don't pay any attention to him, he's not right bright." And then my great grandmother was also living at 305 North Main Street and her bedroom was on the first floor of what is now Dick Doughty's library and she was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln and one day a patrol of Confederate soldiers were marching up North Main street and she was sort of feisty and she went to the window and she waived the American flag and said "Hurray for Abe Lincoln!" Now, across the street was grandpa McInturff and he was the great grandfather of Alice Larue Murray and the father of Clifford McInturff and Carol McInturff and Elizabeth and Lucy McInturff and Ms. Ruth McInturff all this big family. He was a gunsmith. Now their house originally was moved on logs down to Oak Grove Avenue and it's about the third house up the street from Tusculum Boulevard and it's vacant right now but

it has been a rental house but that house was moved and later S.B. Larue's daughter, Edith, built the present Larue house on North Main Street which is now owned by Stephanie and Shane Hite, I think it's 308 if I'm not mistaken. But anyway grandpa McInturff was sitting in his living room and he was a gunsmith and as this patrol of Confederate soldiers came up, my feisty little great grandmother waived the flag and said "Hurray, for Abe Lincoln." And a Confederate turned toward her and cocked his gun. Now grandpa McInturff saw this and he was sitting in his window and he looked at him and he said, "Don't believe I'd do that Bub!" And the other fellas that were with the Confederate that has his gun cocked said "Let's go" and he uncocked his gun and walked on up North Main Street and that's when grandpa McInturff saved my great grandmother from being shot by a Confederate soldier! So anyway my family, or my mother's family has been up on North Main Street since the house was built which was I think around 1840 and my grandfather, as I said, my great grandfather was a principal of a school and he also practiced, had a limited medical practice and limited law practice and served as mayor and then my grandfather became a dentist and went down to the Cumberland University in Middle Tennessee and he got his apprenticeship under Dr. Fowler who was a very prominent dentist at the time and who lived up on North Main Street and Dr. and Mrs. B.A. Holt live in that house now and then at one time there were five families in the 300 block of North Main Street that had lived there as neighbors for 100 years and there were the Pipers, and the McInturffs and the Doughtys and the Harmons and the Ripleys and the Millers and they were all within what is now the 300 block of North Main Street and when you went up the street Mr. Piper was in what's known as Piper's corner at 301 and he was my grandfather's lawyer and next door was uncle Dana and his wife, Julia Smith at 303 and he was the judge, circuit judge and then there was my grandfather who was a practicing lawyer, I mean a practicing dentist, and next was the house that was Julia Kate Maloney who was related to the Doughty family through the Maloney line. And then there was my grandfather's nephew, Willis Doughty, who was the father of Bill, and Jim and Dick and the daughters, Kit and Nancy. And then the next house was George Doughty who was the president of Greene County Bank who was cousin Willis' brother. So you can see that's just one side of the street. On the other side of the street, there was the McInturff's and then the Larues, and the McInturff sisters lived in the house that's now an apartment where Libby Saville lives and next door was the Larue house that the Larue's built after they moved the original house of grandpa McInturff owned down to Oak Grove and then the next house was the Holt house that was built by Tom and Evelyn Finch and she was Evelyn McInturff so we had the three McInturff folks all along there and then there was the Ripley house. And there was Paulina Ripley and Dana Ripley the brother, and then there was the Edmond Miller house and that was later owned by Tom Stevens who was the Stevens of Doughty Stevens Furniture Company and Alene Miller was a niece who lived there for many years and she worked at the water department and the water department was down in the building that

was demolished when he built the Christ Chapel right across from the hotel which is now General Morgan Inn. And all of these families were very closely related and at the bottom of the hill of the 300 block just where the underpass is there was a chestnut bridge. Now my grandfather in 1923, it was either late 23 or early 1924 wrote a book called, "A Walk Through Greeneville" and there's a copy of it, supposed to be, in the Tusculum College Library and he traced all of the families from up at cousin Rob Doughty's house which is where Kyle King is where they want to the highway straight through his living room which is ridiculous. But anyway he traced all of the families straight through down Main Street on both sides, he talked about the stores and who lived in them and who worked and who left and went Liberia and went to Mexico and who went to all these different places and it goes down as far as the Kiser Funeral Home and that's where it ended and that was known as the Terrell Field and it was, I discovered, I knew that he had written the book but I had never seen it but after my aunt Francis died in 1987, I found the original "Walk Through Greeneville" and I reproduced it. I typed it and I took it to Alex Jones and said this might be something you would be interested in cause they were going to put out a Centennial edition of the Greeneville Sun and they included it including a picture of my grandfather in the centennial edition of the Greeneville Sun when they celebrated their centennial and I gave the original manuscript, or it was just like it was written in like a notebook and I gave that to the University of Tennessee and Johnny Dobson who was a Greeneville native was a good friend of mine and he was head of special collections so I gave it to the University of Tennessee library to put in their archives in their Greeneville section because of not only my interest in my grandfather and I regret that I was very young. I was about 8 when he died, but I always regretted that I never knew him because he was so talented and I included a section about him in my second book which is called, "Nostalgia is and Other Bits and Pieces" and it's called "Tennis Set" and it is about, he charged \$10.00 a set for artificial teeth. And I had written, well several people had asked me, if I was interested in doing a column and Ms. Edith Susong had talked to me about it at one time and well my grandmother had encouraged me and my mother had so I decided "Well, what the heck! I'll just tell some of my stories about Greeneville." So I wrote the first set of things called "People and Places of the Past" and aunt Francis paid for the printing of it and I think I had three hundred copies done and I gave them all away to friends and people have begged me for copies and they begged me to have it reprinted but I just never has. And then I continued writing my column, which was on nostalgia, and it was called "Nostalgia Is". You know like nostalgia is people and places of the past. Nostalgia is Mickey Mouse celebrates his birthday, this kind of thing.

INT: What do you get nostalgic about? Of all these things what gets to your heart the most?

BB: I was a history major when I was in college and I became interested in the history of the college and then I became interested through my families' stories and that was the thing about "Stories on the Land" that impressed me so much. And I became interested; my grandmother would tell me stories.

INT: I mean your personal experience, like when you look back. What experiences do you have that just touches you the most?

BB: Well, it's real interesting. Marilyn Heilman called me yesterday about a group that's called a literary department of the Andrew Johnson Club and she said they had about twenty of them and they had just been operating since May and this was just yesterday afternoon and she said, "Betsey," she said "we asked everybody to bring a book." And she said "Somebody brought your book called "Nostalgia is People and Places of the Past" and said "how many of these have you done?" And I said well they are compilations of my columns over eleven years and the first one, I said they are all out of print, but I gave them away and I said gave two hundred copies of "Bits and Pieces" to Main Street Greeneville, no not Main Street, the Heritage Trust to sell as a fund raiser. She said, "Well somebody brought your book and said if you really want to know something about people and Greeneville, read "Nostalgia is and Other Bits and Pieces" and she said they want you to come and talk to them. I said, "Well" I said, "when do you want me to come?" She said, "We'd like for you to come in November." and I said "Well, I've got the last, I said I've done four books, I've edited my grandfather's book, that was the last one, "A Walk Through Greeneville" which is also in the library and then I did one called the "Six Senses of Christmas" and I used my Christmas columns in that book. That was the third one and then "Trip Through Greeneville" was the last one. And I said, "Bout six or seven years ago I had met Rennie Brown through her father, Eddie Dillard, who was on the airport authority with me when I was an alderman and he represented the county and I represented the city and I said one day Rennie came into a meeting and she was dressed in a red cape and a red hat and had on a dark glasses and I said, "Now, who on earth is that? That's not Greene County!" And Eddie laughed and said; "It's my daughter, Rennie. She's here visiting from New York and said she's going back to New York tomorrow." So she went back to New York and came back and Eddie had found that he was terminally ill with cancer and he was in the hospital and Reena May Morris said, "By the way, there's somebody I want you to meet." It's Rennie Brown's father is in the hospital and she comes into town and maybe could she come up and go over manuscripts and things at your house you're only half a block away. And I said, "Well, sure." Well the next day Rennie called me and said, "Would it be alright for me to come?" She said, "Did you mean what you said?" I said, "Of course I meant what I said." So two or three days later I go driving up and she's sitting in my living room. I said the door is wide-open just go on in. So she went in and she was reading a manuscript and she knew that Eddie and I were good friends and Eddie was gettin worse. And she

sort of made my house her headquarters when she was in town because she was living up on upper Paint Creek and I owned a house up on upper Paint Creek and still do and Eddie was the mayor and I was the vice mayor and he'd call me and tell me we were having problems on the creek and we were just going to have to have a meeting and this kind of thing so I guess it was about five or six days before Christmas and my little cousin down in Savannah had asked me "How did you celebrate Christmas in Greeneville?" I said, "Well I'll just have to think about it." And I started thinking about it and I wrote my recollections of Christmas in Greeneville when I was about six years old from the time I left in the bus station down on State street in Knoxville and all of the things that we did. We went to Bordon's Grocery on Depot Street and we got the ham and the vegetables and the turkey and my grandmother ordered a bushel basket of apples and a bushel basket of oranges and ten pounds of hard candy and ten pounds of assorted nuts and sent them to the Holston Orphanage down on Irish Street.

Of course they have torn those buildings down and then there was the Christmas program and the Cumberland Church when each child got a treat bag and in each bag was an orange and an apple and a stick of peppermint candy, a couple of pieces of hard candy and a couple of nuts. And they were tied...little brown bags tied with string. And each child got em. Now today you give these kids a treat bag and they'd throw it out after they go out the front door but this was a real treat and George Rhea was the local florist up on Summer Street and course, Kay Rhea is his daughter-in-law and David Rhea was his son who ran the business until he died. And he was a small man and he always played the role of Santa Clause and they'd pat his stomach. And he'd come jumping into the assembly room and he'd say, "Ho, ho, ho, I'm all out of breath!" Well, it didn't exactly sound like Santa Clause to me but this was an honor that they let him have every year. "Ho, ho, ho I'm all out of breath!" And I kept thinking, "Santa Clause doesn't have a voice like that!" So that was a part of my story. And then I told about how my grandfather used to order fireworks and they'd come from China and he would put them in his library and my uncle George, my uncle Holloway and my uncle Russell would all shoot off fireworks during the whole thing and the whole north end of town would just be nothing but fireworks. And uncle Russell had a cannon, a small cannon, and he would shoot it off and I mean it would shake the houses all around us and of course everybody just hated that but anyway he enjoyed it. And then on Christmas Eve my grandfather would take me into his library and on the wall of the library was a crepe paper silhouette of a town with Santa Claus and it was above his bookcases and they would put it up about a day or two after Thanksgiving and I would imagine that Santa Claus was over Greeneville and he would tell me stories about Santa Claus and Mrs. Santa Claus and the elves and he would start peeling an apple and he would have very, very tiny peelings and by the time we would get through the story the apple would be peeled and then he would cut a section and give it to me and then he'd cut a slice and he'd eat it. And by the time the apple was eaten it was time to go to bed and occasionally on Christmas Eve uncle Dana would

come over and he had no children but he loved children and he would sit and listen to my grandfather tell me stories and then I'd go upstairs. Well, at Harmony House there used to be a porch around the two sides of the house and the front of the house and of course there was a swing and all this furniture and everything on the porch on the floor of it and I'd go to bed and I'd hear this scratching sound across the metal roof right outside my grandmother's bedroom and it would scare me to death. I'd know that was Santa Claus coming and landing on the roof. Well, actually it was Merman Snapp our gardener pulling a rake across the roof! That's another part of the story. So anyway to get back I told all of these stories, I wrote all of these stories down to share with my little cousin who was then living in Savannah. A second cousin and getting back to Rennie. Rennie came up one day and her father was just about dead and she said "What are you doing?" and I said, "Oh, I've just finished the last chapter to a book I'm going to write. And she said, "May I read it?" I said, "Sure." She said "Oh, Betsey, this is so sweet! Will you let me have it and take it to Daddy and read it to him?" Well she took it down to the hospital which is right down the street from us now where ETSU and Walters State is and she read it to Eddie and she said, "He said oh, that was such a sweet story." So she brought it back about three days before Christmas in this little package that she had written. She said, "I have taken the liberty of reading this," and I had typed it and it was a mess!

INT: Yeah.

BB: If you want it.

INT: I think Alice would love it.

BB: Lots of stories.

INT: Okay, do you have a favorite story you'd like to tell us about?

BB: Well, since this is in conjunction with Tusculum College, I'm going to tell you a story and this is a true story. It really did happen. Happened in 1945 and it happened at Tusculum College and I can swear to it and I have Maude Macomb Crist who is the president of our class to verify that it's true and two or three other members of the class. Frannie Culleson, Frannie was Francis Simpson and she was the class of '45 and Jerry Culleson was her husband. They got married before he went into the air force and was sent overseas and we were seniors and we had what we called a senior table in Virginia Hall on the first floor and there were eight of us and course the dining room of course, has changed considerably over these years but we're talking 1945 and Frannie and Jerry were married and Jerry was sent overseas and one day Frannie got a note or got a telegram from the Red Cross that Jerry was missing in action. And all eight of us at the senior table in the dining room mourned because we just knew that Jerry had

been shot down or killed. And every night Frannie, who was a resident of Virginia Hall would go into Becky Durriay's or Roberta Beck who married Pete Durriay and Anne Corriell and Anne married Bob Fee and they would play the ouija board. And every night Frannie would say "Is Jerry alive?" "Yes." "Am I going to hear from Jerry?" "Yes." "How am I going to hear from Jerry?" "American Red Cross." "Will I be called by telephone?" "No. Telegram." "Where is Jerry?" "Germany." "Is he injured?" "No. Prisoner of war." And all of this came through the ouija board. Well, Frannie became obsessed with the idea that she was going to hear that Jerry was alive and they gave the date and let's say it was November 17th for example. So all of us at the table, there was Evelyn Smelcer and me and Maude McComb and Frannie and Becky Durriay and Anne Corriell Fee all six of us sitting at the table and she said "Well, there's only so many more days until I hear that Jerry's alive." And we would all look furtively at each other "This is crazy! She's going out of her mind. We're not going to be able to stand it until November 17th." And she kept counting the days and every night she played the ouija board and every day it was one day less. Maude Macomb and I were on the third floor of Haynes Hall and Maude said, "You know, Betsey, I'm worried." She called me Bo. That was my nickname Bo. She said, "You know Bo, I'm worried about Frannie. What's going to happen when November 17th comes and we don't hear about Jerry being alive?" I said, "I don't know. They going to have to take her off in a straightjacket." Well, finally November the 17th arrived and everybody at the senior table was very, very nervous. Breakfast came "Well, today is the day I'm going to hear that Jerry is alive." And we looked at each other. Noon came at lunch. "I'm going to hear about Jerry this afternoon." And we looked at each other furtively. Supper came. "Well, the day's not over and the Red Cross sends telegrams twenty four hours a day. I'm going to hear tonight." And after supper, they went back up to play the ouija board on the third floor of Virginia Hall. Maude and I went over to Haynes Hall and I was in my room which was across from Maude's and about 8 o'clock the bell in McCormick Hall started ringing and they usually rang a bell when somebody was either missing or had been picked up in Europe or something like that. And Maude went to the window in her room, which faced the back end of Virginia Hall where Becky and Anne had their room and she called across from Haynes to Virginia "What's the bell ringing for?" And Becky says "Have you heard? Frannie has just gotten a telegram from the American Red Cross that Jerry is alive and is a prisoner of war in Germany." Now this actually did happen and Maude Macomb can attest to it, Becky Durriay who has since died could have attest to it. Anne Fee could attest to it and Frannie could attest to it and Evelyn Smelcer. All the people at the senior table can attest that this actually did happen on the campus of Tusculum College on this particular day in 1945. And I remember Doc Rhinehart was a senior and I used to have coffee and it was quite interesting for a freshmen or a sophomore to have coffee with an upper classman but Doc was on the staff of the Pioneer and I was selling advertising for the Pioneer

newspaper and Jimmy Moyer was the business manager of the Pioneer and when Jimmy didn't come back his next year I got stuck with the job of being the business manager and Doc Rhinehart was the first person that was killed, but I would have coffee occasionally with Doc and we'd talk about the Pioneer which was the newspaper and how the advertising was going and what some of the stories were going to be and Doc and I were real good friends and he was the first person who was killed and I remember Bob Bouscher sat next to me in Dr. Harry Ragan's class on American History and Bob was the second person who was killed in service, but on the afternoon of Pearl Harbor I was studying for a history exam. You could always count on Dr. Ragan to have history exams on a Monday and this was on a Sunday. I was in the room that June Barrett and Phyllis Welch and Genevieve Langdon had on the first floor of Morgan Hall. Now Morgan Hall was demolished when they built Katherine Hall. And we were all studying for this exam and we had the radio on and we got a delayed broadcast that Pearl Harbor was being attacked. And the next morning, course we went to history class and we were all just shocked and a lot of the boys left on Monday, this was before President Roosevelt went before Congress that next day and declared war on Japan. And we discussed the attack on Pearl Harbor in the history class that next day and the boys or several of the fellows left and went to Johnson City to enroll to enlist in the service and I was dating J.C. Bullen and Jay had graduated from Riverside Military Academy in Florida and he was in the reserves as a lieutenant and they called him up fairly soon and he was shot down, he was on a British, a United States transporter a small boat over in the Indian Ocean and poor old Jay had two briefcases. One was filled with k rations and one was filled with cigarettes and they torpedoed his ship and it went down and he was out on the Indian Ocean for about seven days and they had an inflatable raft and fortunately they had some water in the raft in cans and everything when it was inflated they had the water there and I remember when Jay came back they flew him into Miami and he was a red as a tomato and had been out for seven days on the Indian Ocean before he was picked up and flown in and I said and I was dating him you know pretty steady and you know we were kind of serious and all that kind of stuff and I said "Well, honey, I'm just so glad that you didn't starve to death!" He said, "Well, let's just say we smoked a lot" and of course, he had grabbed the wrong briefcase and he had a briefcase full of cigarettes and the k rations went down with the ship. But we learned fairly early, we grew up awfully fast because my class started in September of 1941 with 135 freshmen, by our sophomore year, we were 85. By our junior year we were 35, and the only two men who were considered members of the class and they weren't really on campus was Bob Brown who was in medical school at Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia and he was engaged to Nancy Coles and Everett Brooks and they were the only two men and they were considered because they had enough accrued hours to be considered as juniors but they weren't present and there were 23 women in the senior class and that was the only all woman graduating class in the history of the college. And it

went from 135 down to 23 in the four years and I remember on I think it was May the 6th it may have been May the 4th or 5th, I was in my room after breakfast and Maude Macomb came running into my bedroom and she says, "Bo, the war is over in Germany!" And I remember distinctly the day that the war was over in Germany and then later that summer we graduated in June and I think it was June the 4th and they were going to dedicate the USS Tusculum in Philadelphia and Jenny Marks whose mother had been a Lawrence who had lived in Morgan Hall, it was the Lawrence home that became Morgan Hall which later became Katherine Hall, Jennie was going to dedicate the USS Tusculum Victory and six members of our graduating class were able to go. I didn't go and Nancy didn't go but they did go to the christening of the USS Tusculum Victory and then I remember that summer I went to New York and we had a reunion in New York of the recent graduates of three months or something like that but then I came back and I had an attach of appendicitis and on the 14th day of August...

INT: Boy, you timed that just right!

BB: I was in the hospital having had an appendectomy and back then they kept you ten days you know. Now they just send you home the same day. But they had me in the hospital and I remember I had a radio, course this was before TV, and I had the radio on and I heard em broadcast that Japan had surrendered on the 14th. So I remember that I was in the Greeneville Hospital, which is now the Dixon Williams Mansion.

END OF INTERVIEW

*For historical reference; the USS Tusculum referred to was actually the SS Tusculum Victory. The Victory class ships were troop transport and supply ships. The first 35 were named for the United Nations; the others were named for US towns, cities, colleges, and universities.