

East Carolina University: Oral History Project

Oral History Interview
With
Elizabeth Baker Ward

By Julie Gorman
Speight Building, ECU
November 20, 2001

**East Carolina University
Oral History Project: History of ECU**

GENERAL TOPIC: The significance of East Carolina for eastern North Carolina and its people. The changes in public education at K-12 and college level from 1950s until current day.

NARRATOR: Elizabeth Baker Ward

INTERVIEWER: Julie Gorman

DATE: November 20, 2001

PLACE: Speight 134
East Carolina University

PERSONAL DATA:

Birthdate: 1940

Spouse: Charlie Ward

Profession: Educator, Elementary Education Professor, ECU

BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Baker Ward was born in 1940 and grew up in Farmville, NC. She lived on a small farm until she was in the sixth grade, and then her family moved into town. Her mother was an educator for 39 years and her father was a small farmer and insurance salesman. Upon graduating from Farmville High School in 1958 she attended East Carolina University for summer school in order to avoid working in the tobacco field. Her plans to transfer to Greensboro Women's College were deterred when she fell in love with East Carolina College and the excellent education she received that first summer. Elizabeth Baker was very involved in campus life; she was a dorm hall advisor in Cotten Hall and worked in the dorm office, a member of Sigma Sigma Sigma, a member of the Panhellenic Council, and a member of the school Judiciary Board. Since graduating from ECU in 1961 she has been a teacher and administrator in North Carolina public schools and has earned a Master's degree and Education Specialist degree here at ECU. She married Charlie Ward and had three children, all of whom attended ECU at one point. Currently she teaches in the Elementary Education program at ECU and is a member of the Pitt County Board of Commissioners.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

Elizabeth Baker Ward is an articulate narrator with strong pride in Eastern North Carolina, and especially East Carolina University. She grew up in this area and discusses at length the significance of small town, rural living on her own life, as well as the development of East Carolina. Her comments on the affect the Medical School had on Greenville and the surrounding areas are very valuable. The interview was nostalgic, yet

full of information about East Carolina and some of its most important figures from the past 40 years. She talks about the advantages of small, rural schools in public education and the changes in the public education system during her career as an educator. This recording portrays an Eastern North Carolina raised educator who obviously loves her job and the many students she has worked with. Her comments are inspiring for future teachers and her pride in East Carolina University is uplifting.

Interview Index

DATE: November 20, 2001

SETTING: The interview was conducted in Elizabeth Baker Ward's office in Speight 134 on the East Carolina University campus. The location worked well, but there were a couple of interruptions by a ringing telephone. We simply paused the tape so she could quickly take the call. The interruptions are minimal and did not hurt the quality of the interview.

Number of Tapes: 1

Number of Sides: 2

Tape Length: Approx. 70 minutes

Side One: 45 Minutes

<u>Counter</u>	<u>Topic</u>
000	INTRODUCTION
005	Born in Farmville, NC and attended Farmville High School and Fountain Elementary
009	Mother was an educator and graduated from Women's College in Greensboro
012	Came to ECU the summer after high school, planned on transferring to Greensboro
014	One brother that still lives in Farmville; Mother is 94 years old; Father is deceased
017	"I am what Farmville made me"; Description of Farmville
022	Walking to school, drugstores, received a good education
030	Farming community; "They do it the Farmville Way"
035	Town swimming pool
043	Everyone in town knew you; friendships
048	Growing up on a farm; moved to town in 6 th grade
050	Rheumatic Fever in the 5 th grade
056	Father still farmed and family still has the farm; father also sold insurance
061	Playing on the farm; Tobacco chores
074	Brother and her were in 4-H; never paid on the farm; chores were the way you lived

087 Creative playing
089 Mother attending college; most of her siblings were sent to college
094 Always expected to attend college
097 High school was very difficult with high expectations
104 60 in graduating class; extracurricular activities
115 Richness in the small high school because you could be in many different activities; walks home after school
122 Owned her first car after her second child
132 Memorable teacher in high school; Ms. Joyner, literature; Mr. Sam Steele, history
153 Mr. Stale leaving teacher for salary reason; "Sweepers vs. Teachers" published in the News and Observer
175 Mr. Stale remained in education and later entered politics
184 At least 85% of the 60 graduates in her class went to college; many came to East Carolina
199 Students admitted to college by grades and recommendations, now high school counselors
204 Always knew she wanted to be a teacher
210 Confidence from growing up in a small town
219 Senior trip to New York
224 Participation in activities and great high school teacher gives you confidence
229 Achievements of various people in her high school class; Ten co-salutatorians
253 Five retired generals in the town of Farmville
268 Decided to stay at East Carolina because of influential teachers
283 Best teachers taught Freshman/sophomore classes
289 Dr. Herbert Paschal taught her history
295 Dr. Prewett, Psychology; minored in psychology
302 Dr. Todd and Sweetheart
315 A very helpful atmosphere at East Carolina
318 Decided to stay with Elementary Education as her major, rather than social studies
329 Math at East Carolina; first time she understood
344 Made the decision to stay at East Carolina halfway through that first summer
362 Cotten dorm; RA on the second floor; two years in Cotten, half year in Slay dorm
372 Graduated from East Carolina in 2 ½ years; took classes in the summer
379 Signing out of the dorm, curfew
394 Difference in dorms then and now
403 Visitors in the dorm
410 No men on the hall
413 No shorts on campus
422 First time she ever had Pizza

428	Most students left on the weekends, but she stayed to work on the weekends in the dorm
433	Campus dances at Wright Auditorium and the Soda Shop
440	Member of Sigma Sigma Sigma; first pledge class; first sorority house
451	Virginia Minges was a Sigma Sigma Sigma and their counselor and her family contributed to them getting their house
460	Stayed in the house one quarter; member of Panhellenic Council and Judiciary Board
470	Meal tickets; three meals a day
475	Old Yellow Party
496	Dean White and Dean Mallory raided Old Yellow
506	Fraternity parties
520	Old Yellow Party description
541	Many students suspended
560	Parties at Dora's
565	Creative in signing out of the dorm
578	Students' recognition of administrators
597	Professors and Deans knew you by name
601	Did not miss class; most students lived on campus

Side Two: Approximately 25 minutes

<u>Counter</u>	<u>Topic</u>
001	Dr. Messick as President of college
008	Dr. Messick walked around campus a lot and knew many students
013	Dr. Jenkins and first wife were family friends
015	He was a visionary for the university
020	"East Carolina was just kind of 'the school out here in the country, this college in the country that trained teachers'"
024	Dr. Jenkins knew the importance of connecting with legislators, politicians, and businessmen
033	Struggle for the Medical School; they campaigned from Roanoke Rapids and Quantico, Va.
041	Significance of East Carolina in Eastern North Carolina
053	"To me the most important thing it [Medical School] did was that it brought good medical care to Eastern North Carolina. The medical school itself brought the attention to the hospital, and it has done nothing but grow."
065	Growth of Greenville with the growth of the hospital and medical school
075	Changes in the public school systems
078	She was very prepared for college because of her public school education
087	First job at Elmhurst School—Principal had a school wide vision
096	Self-motivation as a teacher
104	North Carolina is different than most states with the public schools
110	Standardized tests

114 Left East Carolina feeling very prepared to be a teacher
122 Preparation of teachers coming out of East Carolina now
138 Big difference is the amount of time Education majors spend in classroom
148 Year round internship
155 Family legacy at ECU; mother had two masters' degrees from East
Carolina; she and her husband at East Carolina; all three of her children
attended ECU at some point
175 Her children are not educators
178 Oldest Son attended East Carolina, played football, graduated in
Communications
190 Other son attended East Carolina for a couple years and left to be a
photographer
198 Daughter attended Pitt Community College, transferred to Charlotte for
Culinary school, returned to East Carolina for a year, and is currently
finishing at Mount Olive College
209 Family legacies at East Carolina, many graduates remain in Eastern North
Carolina
219 Family Practice was the focus of the Medical School, doctors would return
home to work in family practice
223 Many alumni return to graduate school, ballgames, or reunions—kids see
that connection
238 Connection with the students at ECU
246 County Commissioner—Her parents were very political
255 Mother was mayor of Farmville at 84 years old—started the Dogwood
Festival
260 Was always involved in clubs and leadership positions; fascination with
government
273 “You have to be a part of something to benefit from it.”
279 Father's influence
283 Job as a school principal
295 Was appointed to her first term for two years
300 Was elected in 2000 for four more years
304 Approval of the Board of Trustees to run for public office
315 School of Education very supportive of faculty running for public office
321 Current major issues of the Board of Commissioners—County zoning,
social services, emergency services
368 Final thoughts on Eastern North Carolina and East Carolina University
392 “There are people who never would have gone to college if East Carolina
had not been here, and a lot of those people are still in this area.”
397 ECU serving the military bases
414 Greenville is the cultural center of Eastern North Carolina because of the
university

Journal—fieldwork; 11-12-2001

Sources:

--Bratton's book gave me a background in what was happening at ECU while Mrs. Ward was an undergraduate in 1958-61. During this time the campus saw major changes and the college grew considerably. The president of the college changed from Dr. Messick to Dr. Jenkins. Both of these men were known as visionaries for East Carolina. Campus life was still very regulated and girl's dormitories were very strict. Fraternities and sororities had become more popular on campus and were growing in numbers. The college's infamous scandal was a party at the Big Yellow House, called Old Yellow, in 1959.

--The clippings file on the Pitt County Board of Commissioners at the NC collection did not turn up much on Elizabeth Ward. She made several comments in the local papers on various issues and seems to be a very active commissioner on the board.

--The Pitt County Board of Commissioners website gives me a short profile of Beth Ward. She holds one of the seats that serves for two districts. Her term is up in 2004 so I assume she was just elected in 2000. She is a retired principal and a professor at ECU.

Question Guide—Beth Ward

1. Intro.
2. Birth, hometown
3. Describe hometown
4. Parents occupation
5. siblings
6. Early school experiences—describe—teachers
7. What brought you to ECU—did anyone have an influence on you coming here.
8. Did many girls from your school go to college?
9. Describe campus life---Dorm?—Typical Day?—Classes?—Teachers--? —Changes in campus life?
10. Big Yellow house party?—Party school reputation
11. President Messick to President Jenkins—The transfer of power?—Your thought on the two presidents?
12. Their vision for ECU—was it fulfilled? Growth while you were here?
13. Your transition from undergrad to graduate school and teaching.
14. Changes on campus in the 1960s?
15. Medical School struggle? Were you involved? What is the significance of the medical school for ECU?
16. ECC and ECU role and importance in eastern NC?
17. Teaching—changes in your field? Changes in the education students receive here at ECU?
18. Family legacy—your family—do you think this is typical?—What keeps you here?

19. County commissioner? When elected? Important issues that you have faced?
20. What drove you to seek that office? Did your involvement with ECU as an integral part of the county prepare you and lead to your desire for this office?

Self Critique

This interview was really squeezed into two busy schedules. It was difficult to catch up with Mrs. Ward until I was able to sign up on her advising sheet for a pre-interview and to set up a date. I really liked meeting with her beforehand because it gave me an idea of the topics she would be inclined to speak about. I think that it was better than my interview with Anne Maxwell because of the pre-interview meeting. I could actually have a better interview with Anne Maxwell now that I know her better. After I spoke with Mrs. Ward that first time, I looked in the library at newspaper clippings about her as a County Commissioner. I had hoped to find some sort of candidate profile since she was recently elected in 2000, but I did not find anything. The main source of preparation was with Bratton's book, which gave me an idea of the events taking place at ECC from 1958-61.

We had to reschedule the interview once and we got started late on the interview date so I was concerned about us being rushed during the interview. The interview was on the afternoon before Thanksgiving Break so under the circumstances it turned out really well. There were a couple of phone calls in her office during the interview from her husband making Thanksgiving plans, but she handled them really well and was able to pick up where she left off.

I was really excited about this interview afterward because Mrs. Ward was a great narrator and felt very comfortable discussing ECU and eastern North Carolina. My job was really simple because she anticipated many of my questions. I think that I did much better with follow-up questions during this interview. It was easy to pick up on something she commented on and return to that topic. My questions were much more straightforward in this interview than in my last. They were clearer and I felt better prepared. I also tried to be more aware of my listening skills, trying not to be so verbal, so I think that was an improvement. I would have loved to go into more depth about her mother's influence on her and the relationship with her husband that started while they were at ECU. I felt that we were pressed for time because we did not get started until 11:15 and I thought she had a meeting with a student at 12:30. The student did not come so I could have dug a little deeper at some points. I should have confirmed that meeting that she mentioned before the interview began. I really kept the interview focused on East Carolina and Education, which worked really well for our purposes, but in another setting it would have been good to delve into more personal experiences. I could have discussed desegregation in schools since she was so involved in the schools and spent some of that time in Virginia. She could have made valuable comparisons.

December 5, 2001

Dear Mrs. Ward,

Thank you for helping me in my oral history project. Your tape will make a great contribution to the history of ECU in the archives. I thought that your comments on the role of ECU in the East were very thoughtful. Your positive attitude is inspiring for me as a future teacher and your pride in ECU and eastern North Carolina is uplifting.

I enjoyed our conversations on education and look forward to talking with you again. Thank you for the tips in interviewing for jobs. I will stop by again next semester as I am applying for jobs.

Sincerely,

Julie Gorman