

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
HISTORY 5960 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:  
INTERVIEW WITH MR. BILL CAIN**

**ORAL HISTORY REVIEW**

**WITH**

**MR. BILL CAIN**

**BY: JEFF PRINCE  
NOVEMBER 14, 2001**

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**HISTORY 5960 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:**  
**INTERVIEW WITH MR. BILL CAIN**

**GENERAL TOPIC OF INTERVIEW:** A look back at the life experiences of Mr. Bill Cain. Also, a look at how a former alumni of East Carolina College made his way back to his alma mater to become the Athletic Director for East Carolina University.

**NARRATOR:** BILL CAIN

**INTERVIEWER:** JEFF PRINCE

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 14, 2001

**PLACE:** OFFICE OF BILL CAIN  
MINGES COLISEUM  
GREENVILLE, NC

**PERSONAL DATA:**

**BIRTHDATE:** 1933

**SPOUSE:** YES

**OCCUPATION:** PART-TIME WITH EAST CAROLINA ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

**BIOGRAPHY**

Bill Cain was the Athletic Director at East Carolina University from 1975 to 1980. Bill Cain was born in Rockingham in Richmond County, where he gained an appreciation for sports. His hard work ethic and determination took him to the college level. He chose East Carolina College, came in the fall of 1953, and played football as a walk-on. Bill Cain decided to enlist in the Army, in 1955, because he felt he was too small to play football and to get his obligation out of the way. He served two years, beefed up from 148 to 210 pounds, returned to East Carolina on a scholarship, and became co-captain of the football team. After graduating in 1959, Bill Cain became the coach for Suffolk High School, in Virginia, for five years. After other coaching jobs, he returned to East Carolina University in 1968. He was the freshman football coach from 1968 to 1970, and was the golf and tennis coach from 1972 to 1975. Today, Bill Cain works part time with the athletic department in Minges Coliseum and is very active. Truly a very proud alumni of East Carolina.

## INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

It is very true that everyone has a story to tell. Growing up as a child listening to family members tell their stories of the past and to ourselves telling similar ones to friends, it is very enlightening. I never knew that there was a field that actually studies the method of oral history. I am very glad to be a part of such a class and have enjoyed the learning process involved. The process of interviewing is very fun and serious. It is so, because you want to interview someone who is interesting and energetic but at the same time you want to do a good job, ask relevant questions, and make it a pleasant experience. Well, I must say that I was very nervous when I conducted my first interview. I performed some background work to help me prepare and I actually found it both comfortable and enjoyable. I had a good narrator, as well, and received some good information in return. I made some mistakes and have learned from them. Now, it is time for another interviewing project.

The second interview has come rather quickly. I chose Mr. Bill Cain because he was, and still is, involved with sports and was a former Athletic Director at East Carolina University. I gave Mr. Cain a phone call at his office, where he still works part time with the university. As soon as he answered, I knew I would have another great interviewing experience. I told him my name, what I was doing, and he agreed to the interview immediately. He asked if I knew a Bill Prince, and I had to think for a minute. I told Mr. Cain that he was a distant relative but I did not know much more about him. Mr. Cain then began to call me "Bill". I thought, oh no! This is really going to be interesting! I told him my real name, again, and Mr. Cain said, "forgive me, when you get my age you start to forget things sometimes." We talked some more, about sports and what I was doing in school, and then we agreed to a specific time for the interview to take place. I was excited and looked forward to the interview on November 9, 2001. I went to the archives at Joyner Library to do some fieldwork on Mr. Cain, but only found a couple of articles. The archives section was in the process of rearranging material, so by the time I was given the

what  
how he  
do?

articles I had very little time to examine them. I did get enough information in order to ask some good questions.

The interview process with Mr. Cain was shorter than I expected and was plagued with several interruptions. In working part time, he is quite a busy person. However, I did get about forty-five to fifty minutes worth of interview time. The experience was a lot better the second time around despite all the difficulties involved. Mr. Cain made me feel very welcomed as I entered his office in Minges Coliseum. There were pictures of the university, one of a former athletic director and football coach, Coach Stasovich, and as Bill Cain stated, "the standard retirement rocking chair<sup>by</sup>." Bill Cain provided some interesting remarks about Ficklen Stadium, his love for football, his passion for the school, his work ethic, and how the school has changed. The down side to this interview was that it did not last long because he had to leave at a certain time. He did invite me to come back later if I was to ever need anything. Listening to the tape, I cut down, tremendously, the laughter and I tried to refrain from the personal comments. One thing, that I am ashamed of and did not know until I listened to the tape was a comment during a talk about the Dodge car Mr. Cain owned. As soon as Mr. Cain mentioned something about the car having ninety thousand miles and it being a 1967, I got excited. When I went to say something, Mr. Cain mentioned that his father, having passed away and given the car to his son, always rides with him. I mentioned the car and not his father passing away. That hit me very hard because I have several relatives that I was close to, that have passed away, and feel the same as Mr. Cain in which they are, in a sense, still around. Sorry! I have gotten emotional here. Moving back to this project, I have written out the majority of the interview to make up for the lost time of the interview. In the end, this entire interviewing process has been very rewarding and it will definitely help me as I continue to pursue my graduate degree.

How great that you're so aware, though.

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**PLACE: OFFICE OF MR. CAIN**  
**MINGES COLISEUM**  
**GREENVILLE, NC**

**NO. OF TAPES: 1**  
**LENGTH OF TAPE: 90 MINUTES**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 2001**

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**SIDE A**

**COUNTER**

**TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

002

**Introduction**

I was born in Rockingham, North Carolina and raised here and went to Rockingham High School and from Rockingham High School I came to East Carolina College and that was in 1953. I came here to go to school and try to play football and I weighed about 148 pounds at that time, Jeff. I got up with Coach Boone and he allowed me to come out and eventually I made the team.

007

**Childhood**

Well...my mother and father...we didn't, we didn't have a whole lot then. They were very hard workers. I, I felt like that they gave me everything I needed to have and they taught me some discipline and respect to hard work and dedication, loyalty..and ~~they carried over,~~ <sup>that</sup> over the years. I look back and refer to my days in Rockingham very fondly. So, I have good memories.

012

**Family**

My mother was a, was a house wife and my dad was a foreman in a textile plant in Rockingham. He retired from that. They both passed away several years ago but they lived in Rockingham at the time of their departure. I have one brother who lives in Rockingham, now, and he is a younger brother..and I have one sister who lives in Faison, South Carolina, near Charlotte. My sister and I are very close. I wouldn't say that my brother and I are

close but we communicate. There's no family squabble. There's about three, four years separation. I am the oldest in the family. In fact, my dad passed away about five years ago and he had bought a car, a Dodge in 1967, and if you see a yellow Dodge, 1967 Dodge, riding around I have my initials on the back. It's got ninety thousand miles on it. So, I am riding around with him when I am in the car.

025

#### Ideals/Work

I think a strong work ethic...having not knowing and not having an awful lot...I was expected to work. So, I worked, went to school, played sports. They have carried over even today. I make a statement everyday that the day I wake up at 4:30, in the morning, and don't wanna get up, that's the day I quit and out of here. Its really been helpful to me to try to accomplish some things in my life.

035

#### School (Likes/Dislikes)

[Liking/Disliking School]...I probably did...It wasn't because of the fondness of the academic part of it, it was fondness of the socializing and playing some sports, and seeing friends, and so forth. I think the academic part came a little later. I was involved in football and baseball, in those days. I worked! I remember working at the A & P, bagging groceries. I delivered newspapers. One friend who is now the vice chancellor, vice president, over at Campbell University was a good friend and, he was here at East Carolina, he encouraged me to come to East Carolina. And some of the other friends never even went to college. [Towards Dating]...I always had, and I might been a little unique, I always had at an early age...I set particular standards that I had for myself and for people I associated with. I wouldn't associated with one that would drink and smoke. I felt that there were plenty of them. That carried through right 'til I got married. [School]...Coming from what they called the Old Mill Section, you had maybe a fifty percent dropout and then we merged into a central high school, there in Rockingham, at that time it was Rockingham High School. We were very strong in sports. Most of the mornings I would be up at six, I mean working at six, go to school at 8 o'clock, and I would practice afterward, then, at night, go back to work a couple of hours.

Isn't he referring specifically to Ferralaw here?

073

#### Going to East Carolina

I never made that decision until the summer after I graduated. I was playing semi-pro baseball and working at the cotton mill and seeing I didn't want to spend the rest of my life in that environment,

I had a friend and wanted to know if I wanted to go to East Carolina College. East Carolina College was probably seventy-five, twenty-five. That might have had a little bearing on me also...seventy-five female, twenty-five male. I was really shocked when I went to the cafeteria over there and looked around and there were very small numbers of males. I met my wife here, she was a music major. So, East Carolina has really been great to me. When I came here, I majored in physical education and teaching. Even when I was at a younger age I had my sights set. I was very much interested in sports and knew I had to do whatever it took. The coach I had in high school was a role model. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to play against him later on when I was a head coach.

094

#### Playing Football (Teacher vs. Student)

I came here in '53, fall '53, and we had a great team. In fact, they went to a bowl game the year before. We played Elon, Guilford, and others. I new my size was a handicap and I wasn't doing well in the academic part of it. So, in the fall of '55, I went into the service, stayed twenty-one months, and came back in '57. When I came back, I had developed out of the Army from 147-150 pounds to 210 pounds. So, when I came back...Coach Boone gave me a scholarship and I became a co-captain in 1959. I thought that was, it was an accomplishment. I graduated in '59, then in '60, I took the coaching job up in Suffolk, Virginia and stayed there for five years. I coached against my former high school coach, in high school. That was after I stayed at Virginia for five years. I wanted to move back to North Carolina and so...I got a job as Athletic Director and head coach at Albemarle Senior High School, over near Charlotte, which is about forty miles from Rockingham. It so happened that the schedule had been set up before I got there..that we play Rockingham, and it happened to be in Albemarle. It was quite an experience to have Coach Useley..[I do not know if the spelling is correct]..bring his team, to bring the Rockets in to play. We were the Bulldogs. Somehow or another, I motivated our players and we ended up winning. I think Coach Useley was a much better coach than I ever had dreamed of being and I, I had better material at that time. He lived up to his reputation as a coach because he got a lot more out of his kids than I did mine. I stayed three years at Albemarle and then came back to East Carolina as the freshman football coach in 1968. Stasovich hired me..(cough)..he was head football coach and Athletic Director here. So, when I came back, freshmen did not play varsity ball. I had my own team. I like to brag a bit, but..we played NC State here in 1968, on Friday afternoon, there wasn't anybody at the game

— Can you email him to confirm?

but....PARENTS! We won by two touchdowns. Freshmen couldn't play on the varsity team. NCAA allotted only three years so, some had to play on the freshmen team. So, some people got together and voted to let freshmen play. So, freshmen come in and they still don't have games like we had but a lot don't play until their second year.

142 Interruption (Knock On The Door)

145 Being Away From Home

I guess, I was, when I came along and I came to East Carolina in '53, I must have been seventeen or eighteen, and I really have never been back[home]. That's the way life is. I have always been an independent person, free thinker. What you do doesn't influence me at all...with what I am gonna do because I have always been a person to make my own decisions. When I got hungry I would go home, as usual. I was always close to my mother and as time went on, again, we were close. It wasn't every weekend like some of the kids because it's four and a half hours.

father

158 In The Army

I went in the Army in September of '55. I stayed a couple of years and then went into the service, stayed two years, then came back. I knew I wasn't never going to be able to be a player, get a scholarship. Plus, during that period of time I wasn't on track with academics, so those put together...I said I need to grow up more and more maturity, plus get my service obligation out of the way. I went to Fort Jackson and stayed eight weeks and played football, two seasons. Back in those days service sports was big. Now it's not big. It was huge then. We had college players on the team. It ended up very enlightening. We competed against other bases with an eleven game schedule. We played against guys that played in the pros and stuff like that. Quite a thrill!

went to Ft. Meade

176 Back At East Carolina University

I received a scholarship until I stayed in a dorm, and then I got married my senior year. I remember staying in Jones. Ragsdale was a dorm when I first came here. [Construction On Campus]...It had begun when I came in fall of '53. We only had...Christenbury Gym was the only building located out over there. You have to realize that behind Christenbury there was a baseball field. So that took a lot of space. The only space...the Graham building was the only one along with Wright Auditorium. You did have the theater over there but that was an old Walcoat School. Where the nursing building, the Croatan, Brewster, the chemistry building, the Austin

Wahl - Coats



building...<sup>h</sup>none of those were there. The old Austin building was over there were Jenkins is. It was a huge mistake..[as far as tearing it down]. I happen to be on the living history committee, I might have told you this. I...it will be a mistake as big if we tear Christenbury down and if we tear the Graham building down or the biology building. I think we have torn down all the buildings we need to tear down, to have any history left.

201

#### The Big Yellow House

That's when the chancellor brought all the males up and had them in the auditorium and had a few words to say. In today's society, that was a joke. A few kids, <sup>and</sup> a few girls had a party in their house. The party was very mild under today's society. I never was much of a party person. I have a very strange philosophy and I am not a very religious person but I go to church. My wife is active as an organist in Saint James church...but I had my own ideas. Interruption (Phone Call)..I never been a party person but I am not opposed to parties. I just turned sixty-eight and I have never drank a sip of whiskey or beer. It's not because I haven't been around it...my father...he was very active in both of those. I used to fuss at him. I only had one rule when I was coaching. I would say, okay gang...here's the rule...if I do it you can do it. That means if I go downtown and get drunk, you can do it, if I go out and run around, you can do it, or if I do pot, you can do it. I said you have to live..a person has to live by their own example. I can't say do this and not do it myself. I have never done that. If I want to do it, I would do it.

237

#### Campus

It was small and with an old look. I think it looked more like a Davidson[~~painting~~]. I give Dr. Jenkins credit, for a great deal of the order we have now. I give Eakin great credit for the aesthetics we have going on the grounds, within the last ten to twelve years, bushes, shrubs, paint, exterior buildings, interior buildings. If you go in any of the buildings today, there is a great effort going to make all of it look good. I can remember going in the Whichard building and remember when it was a music building. To see these gold letters, the carpet, and how it looks in there...is fantastic! We have done a tremendous job and it's going to get even better. I never dreamed back when I graduated, back in '59, that we would be as big as we are. I think we are beyond the level that they can push us back. Location...location, location is the key. We have been able to manufacture this into being a spot. Which is unusual. UNCW has a lot going for it due to its location and Boone, where Appalachian is and the mountains. So, it is amazing to me..why in

the world would anyone come to Greenville! It's because of East Carolina! That's why I say we have grown to a certain point that they can't push us back.

283

#### Challenges

Everything is a challenge. The challenge of what you do as opposed to the important things in life are tough. Those people that don't have any challenges aren't living. I told Coach Boone that I would continue to play football until got carried off the field on a stretcher. I like aggressiveness. I never missed a practice..that includes service, Army, high school, whatever. When you make a commitment to something you make a commitment.

340

#### Injuries

I made some injuries. My knees, I use to have, my senior year, I use to have both my knees drained before every practice. They would suck out some fluid. I have never had any surgery on my knees or anything like that. I play three times a week, racquetball, and still hanging in there pretty good for an old man. I was an end, defensive end, offensive end. I like to think I gave some good hits but I got hit too. I always believed it is better to give than to receive.

362

#### Changes On Campus

We played over there, when I was in college, where Brewster building is and the Croatan was the fifty yard line. We had stands for a couple thousand people. To me it looked big. Ficklen was in 1962. We brought Stasovich in, I was not here at the time. We started with one small section, the south side, and that was it. I look for sixty-two or sixty-four thousand..[seats]..when we finish both sides and close in the end. It is my understanding, it will be boxed on the South, on the East end. On the South side, they will take the press box out and make another side like we have on the North side. The magnitude of its expansion is unbelievable. A lot of people have to be credited. We have one of the most loyal followings. Once you are a pirate, you're a pirate.

405

#### Being Back

I have been back here, in an academics and athletic capacity, since 1968. I actually only left..I was gone, I guess, eight years. Interruption (Knock On The Door)..Coach Stasovich retired from coach in '70 and he hired me in as business manager of athletics, and the ticket manager and then the next year he made me Assistant Athletic Director, which he didn't have, and I went in there which meant I was stadium operations, the Pirate Club. From that period,

'70 to '75, I was the assistant associate and that's when he put me in as a golf coach. Whatever he needed he would call me in. I did it for two years. Coach Stasovich passed away in '75, and I was elected to be Athletic Director form '75, and I stayed in there for about a five year period. That was about all I could handle. I left in 1980. From 1980, to today, I have been in the academic side and working with the school of, department of, exercise and sport science. I worked with dean, associate dean, department chairs, interims. So, I handled all the administrative duties in our school over a period of years. I have been in athletics for twenty-two years. That's really kept me going. Interruption (Knock On The Door)

469            **Big Accomplishment**  
One of the biggest things we did during that time...Dr. Jenkins and I..made the major decision to get out of the conference, which was big time because we were comfortable there. We made the decision to go I-A, and if we hadn't made that decision, we would still be in the conference and I don't think we would have the stadium we got today.

490            **Passion For Football**  
If you go out there and measure money, the money coming in from the Pirate Club, and I don't mind being recorded on...that, in basketball I want us to win...but life is going to go on if we don't. If we don't win in football..that's going to be a tragedy. We decided in 1971, I said we decided in '61, that football was going to be the emphasis. We weren't going to get any publicity unless we do something in football. All the PR..[public relations]..we get is primarily from football. Interruption (Phone Call)

## **SIDE B**

556            **Playing Football Today**  
Playing better teams is a big deal. We are competing more consistently and there is a lot more money in the program. You know, the guys are driving Cadillacs now and back in those days, they were driving Fords. The coaching staff's finances are much higher. They are traveling in airplanes..when we used to ride on buses. Overall, we are getting a lot more recognition. It is relevant to what time it is.

572            **The End**

1806 Bradford Dr. Apt. #7  
Greenville, NC 27858  
December 6, 2001

Dear Mr. Bill Cain,

I apologize for the delay of this letter. I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity in conducting the interview, between you and myself, in order to learn about the history of East Carolina University through your experiences. The interview session will be placed in the university archives and available upon request. I think your sense of hard work, dedication, and passion for East Carolina and, especially, football is truly remarkable. I wish everyone could share the same attitude. As a matter of fact, although people have different experiences at East Carolina, you do set the standard for what it truly means to be an East Carolinian. I want to personally thank you for giving me an even greater appreciation to be a part of East Carolina. Also, I want to let you know that I will always be proud to call myself a "PIRATE". Again, I thank you very much.

Sincerely

  
Jeff Prince