

DAINTRY ALLISON

Interviewed July 31, 1975

by Dr. Louis D. Silveri

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Daintry Allison, interviewed by Louis Silveri. Second interview:
July 31, 1975.

Louis Silveri: I wanted to ask you if you had anything more to add to what you said about that first year of teaching in 1914.

Daintry Allison: That girl that I punished so severely: I would quote to myself privately and silently, "Inasmuch as you've done it to the least of these you've done it unto me," and I had a guilty conscience. And I taught with a guilty conscience, being extra particular to hew that tight line between being over-indulgent and over-punitive. So I didn't get over that thing until several years back. We went to this decoration over the mountain where my husband's people buried, and here came this great big portly woman, gray-haired, and folded me to an ample chest and said to the young woman who was with her: "This is my teacher. Oh, Miss Graham, hello." She never recognized the Allison. To all those old students, I'm Miss Graham, yet.

She turned around and said, "This is my granddaughter. You know, I just had one child and that was a daughter, and she died when this girl was born and I begged her daddy to give her to me and for him to go out and marry again and start all over." She said, "I've raised this girl and I've raised her just like you told me."

Allison: (Cont'd.) night. Now she's made an honest person out of me and I've made one out of you." Then she turned to me and said, "You know, my granddaughter is entering the Rutherfordton hospital to train for a surgical nurse."

That girl has made a grand surgical nurse. She assists in cancer operations particularly. That was the finale of that, and then I thought what I'd been saying to myself, I should get a new scripture: "Her children rise up and call her blessed."

Silveri: I wanted to ask you then: You finished in December of 1915 at that school and you went home and . . .

Allison: . . . Went home and stayed a week, and then a girl down in Burke County got married and they were having trouble with her seventh grade. I always thought she got married to get out of that, and it turned out to be pretty much that way. So I went down and tamed the seventh grade; stayed there until the 21st of March. Then I came home and the principal of Old Fort school had a baby that was on a nursing bottle, and instead of buying regular baby food then, you found a good cow who produced the milk that would make that child grow. So he was getting milk from our home. He came for the milk and said, "Oh, goody, you're here, you're here, at last. I'm so happy."

Allison: (Cont'd.) He said, "That's all right. You come on in there. If they were there tonight I'd get you over there tonight."

So I taught there in Old Fort till the end of school, which was the 27th of May. Then I had to go take the second group of children, because, as I told you, I was in training to be a principal, and I was a sort of trouble shooter, and there was this school there down below Bethlehem, down about eight miles southeast of Old Fort. They had a bunch of big boys there who would stomp down the steps if they were built of wood; they would knock out the windows. If you sent a girl down there, a young single girl, one of them would date her and take her down a long shady lane and declare very fervent love, with his buddies all in the bushes, listening, because he knew just where they should be. Then the next day they would all quote back to her the whole thing.

No teacher had stayed there longer than two months. If they sent a man down there, the boys just threw rocks at him and chased him out. So the principal said, "Miss Graham, I want you to go down there and find out what in the world is the matter." So when I went my reputation was pretty well established. What I had done up on the river the previous year: they knew that Miss Graham was not to be

Allison: (Cont'd.) for four or five days; then they began to come in. They'd come in escorted by a father: "I want my boy to come to this school. I think you're gettin' along pretty good up here."

I'd say, "Well, why hasn't he already come? I've been here four or five days." Whatever the term was that had elapsed. So it kept on, until by the end of the third week, all nine of those big boys were in there. I said, "All right, after school when I march the others out, and this and this one, I want you to remain in your seat, and you and you and you." And I pointed to each one of those big ones.

"Oh, Miss Graham, have I been bad? If I have, I'm sorry. What have I done?"

I said, "I didn't say a word except 'Sit still,' I'll be back in a minute." So when I came back in, I resurrected a long sheet that had come from my superintendent and had come to him from the state. They were getting ready for consolidation. We knew it was coming; we could begin to feel that great groundswell for education. What did the boys want to learn in school? We knew the girls wanted to learn to type and to sew and to cook; those three things should be feminine occupations, but what would we do with the boys? So I said to the

Allison: (Cont'd.) the boys had not been consulted at all.

I said, "I'm in earnest. I need help. What would you like to do? Just suppose we had a great big high school down here between here and Marion, and it had eight or ten teachers and big trucks (they couldn't comprehend the bus then; they hadn't been invented, we were going to haul the children in trucks). . . and big trucks would haul you down there, and lots of other students, too. What would you want to learn?"

They looked at each other, and it took a good minute for the idea to soak in. Finally one boy said, "I'd like to learn to lay brick."

Another one said, "I'd like to learn to make concrete." And another one said, "I'd like to learn to build houses"; and another one said, "I'd like to learn to read a house plan and to figure building material."

I said, "Figure building material? Open your arithmetic text book and turn to page 280. It's over there."

"Oh," they said, "we've always been used to wearing out the first fifty pages of the book and then get a new teacher and she'd turn you back to the first page. Our books are perfectly clean and

Allison: (Cont'd.) fact, I helped to draw them. Now, the big dollar question is: Who will borrow a team and wagon and take two or three boys and myself to Old Fort Saturday? We will go to my father's office and from him I'll get all the things we need." I said, "We can learn to lay brick; I can teach you. We'll get all the things we need."

And they looked at each other like I was absolutely out of this world, or had come from Mars, or somewhere, and said, "All right, I can take a team."

I said, "Now wait. Before we stop. Who can bring up a wagon load of good sharp building sand?"

"I can; I can, out of our creek."

I said, "Good. We'll get the sand up here before Saturday, and Saturday three or four of us will go to town with him and we'll get what we need."

So, we did. We got from my father's office old house plans. We went in debt for three hundred brick; I was going to see that they made some steps they couldn't stomp to pieces. We got all the brick-laying equipment and tools that we needed. My father said, "All you have to do now is to make a list and thumb-tack it up there on the wall so I'll know where this stuff is," and said, "you're responsible for bringing it back."

Allison: (Cont'd.) there. After school, of course, and they couldn't learn unless they stayed. Well, the result was: about 4:30 half the daddies of that community were there to watch. We had quite an audience. The boys were standing in line, each one wanting to lay the next brick. One feller was the mortar maker and one feller had the instruments so that those brick steps would be absolutely plumb, and absolutely straight. We used the three hundred brick, laying them. But before we got half through: "I'd like to get some steps like that made at my house. When can you come down there?"

I said, "Just wait a minute. Here's the manpower. You have to ask them when they can come. Me, I don't have to do anything after school but eat and sleep and grade papers, and I can come any time."

So the result was: the first thing we knew we had made brick steps around three or four houses; we'd made some concrete forms and built some watering troughs; we had made walks, concrete ones. The joke was: we used one, two, three mix. That is, one part cement, two parts sand, three parts of stone, and part of it stayed there till it had to be dynamited out, or knocked out with a calf-head hammer.

Not too long ago, I was down in that community and saw one of those old watering troughs that we had reinforced with steel

Allison: (Cont'd.) from Miami Beach, and we began to write to those fellers for jobs of work. From my sister, who was on the railroad, we got the railroad material so we could figure out what a ticket to that place would cost, and how much wood we would have to cut and sell in order to have ready money in our pockets. All right. When school closed, was ready to close, two or three days ahead, here came two or three of the daddies: "We don't want the school to close. You've been here five months, but that's not long enough, and you say you're going so-and-so after this year's over, but we want this school to go on."

I said, "All right, won't take anything but some old wood to burn and my salary. Go to town; see the county superintendent. I'll do what he says." So I stayed two more months: January and February. When school closed and I left there, three days later you couldn't find a boy in that whole area that owned a pair of long pants. They all had jobs, and they'd all gone to them.

What did we produce? One young man was Columbus Burgin, who later became a contractor and builder in Marion. He was the feller that had wanted to learn to read the house plans. He and one of the McCall boys own Burgin and McCall hardware in Marion. Two boys went to Akron, Ohio, and became contractors. When they retired from there they went down to the West coast of Florida and had them a development of their

Allison: (Cont'd.) outfitted with black Angus cattle, very expensive, pure bred stuff, and the most beautiful ranch type, four bedroom, three bath home on it. Oh, my.

Silveri: Let me ask you some questions about that second year that you were teaching. Did you get a raise in pay?

Allison: No; I got thirty-five dollars a month. I didn't get any raise of salary; no.

Silveri: Okay. Now was the school building that second year about the same as the one the first?

Allison: No; it was more dilapidated. It was older, and it had a flue that went right up through the center of it, and that flue had been put together with very cheap mortar and the result was that I had to march children out of a burning building and the big boys went back and put out the fire and that was another task for us: to cover that flue on the outside with cement. But that was the last year that building was used. We accomplished one thing there, and that was the idea that they needed a two-teacher school, and I had the high privilege of helping to plan it.

Silveri: How many students did you have that second year?

Allison: I had forty-five; nine girls and thirty-six boys.

Silveri: How come the superintendent was able to find your salary

Silveri: You had no major disciplinary problems at that school, did you?

Allison: Well, that was the year that I found the only bad boy that I've ever found in forty-seven years of teaching. That boy had been reared without a father. His father got killed in a logging accident when he was a baby. They lived up in the edge of McDowell, where the McDowell and Yancey line join. The mother had come to Marion then, and taken a position in a cafe, cooking, to pay for her parents to rear her son, and they hadn't done a very good job of it. They soon moved across the Yancey line out of McDowell, and, to tell you the truth, supposedly they were moonshiners and bootleggers, and they taught that boy that the thing to do was to make liquor and they taught him, evidently, how it was done, and that a hawkbill knife should be the answer to a good many questions, particularly self-defense, and offense, too. So, he was twelve years old when his mother married again. That father owned a lovely farm in the area where I was teaching, so they brought Dallas home, and Dallas was supposed to come and enter school, and he did. Dallas was twelve years old and a first grader, and I didn't know any better than to seat all the first grade together, regardless of age or size; all of the second and the third and fourth, and so on. The biggest thing I had was seventh. I had no fifth grade that year. But

Allison: (Cont'd.) 'Mith Daham, Dallas Harris ha' been a-hurtin' my ear again. Mith Daham, make Dallas Harris leave me alone."

So, pretty soon, I said, "All right, Dallas, you take your reader and stand down there in the corner until I finish this history class, then I'll 'tend to you."

He went down within about six feet of the corner, and said, "I'm not a-goin' in that corner. It's hot."

I said, "Dallas, do as I tell you."

"I'm not a-gonna do it. You can't make me."

Of course, I grabbed a tree limb and started after him. I mean, I grabbed a nice big dogwood switch. Dogwood was our favorite thing. It ought to be a scarce item these days, and no wonder. It's the state flower of North Carolina, because it was what we used to use for switches. Well anyway, Dallas was barefooted. He had on heavy pants and he had on a thin white shirt, and had suspenders, galluses, across his shoulders to hold up his britches. So I grabbed a handful of shirt front and both galluses, and I began to whip: "Get in that corner; get in that corner." The pieces began to fly all over creation and the little children began to dodge under benches. The big boys began to come to the edge of their seats wanting to come and help; they wanted a-hold of him. He began to jerk toward the front door, and I kept whipping him.

Allison: (Cont'd.) He was standing outside with a bunch of boys, and I arrived with some of the young ladies of the area, and I knew that Dallas said something about me, because everybody turned and looked, and the big boys, I could just feel them getting mad as fury, but I went on up the hill, up the path, and said, "All right, it's time for us to start the Sunday school. Come on in and sing."

I went in pumping "Amazing Grace" out of that wheezy organ and they all sang, but I could still tell that they kept looking outside. Dallas never came in. That was the last I ever saw of him, because that night his stepfather said, "See here, young man, you get ready and march right back to school in the morning. You hear me."

So that night, Dallas climbed out the window and made a bee line back to Yancey County to his grandad's and began making moonshine liquor. The Sheriff happened to raid that still and the Federal men raided that liquor still, and the cousins and whoever else happened to be along with him (I didn't know who). Anyway, Dallas was left alone there at the still. The rest of them ran. He took the hawkbill knife to a Sheriff or two and cut them pretty severely.

Along about December, a Federal Judge came to Marion to hold a short term of court, and Dallas was a prisoner and he was accountable because he had passed his thirteenth birthday between that time that I

Allison: (Cont'd.) "written ten times; Miss Graham, here's my arithmetic paper that I have to hand in."

I had been listening for them to go off the deep end some day and decide that they weren't going to act civilized any longer. I said: "What's the matter, boys?"

"We have to go to Marion today. We'll be here tomorrow, though. I'll come down to Miss Lula's where you board and let you give me out my spelling tonight, because I've had a hundred every lesson this year."

I said, "All right, just go ahead."

All they left was this little boy that couldn't talk plain. He said, "Mith Daham, I'll tell you where dey done."

I said, "All right, Paul, where have they gone?"

"Dey done to Marion to de tourt."

I said, "To Court?"

"Yes; de Judge come. He goin' try Dallas Harris."

I said: "Try Dallas Harris?"

"Yeh, dey have to go and tell dem what kind of boy Dallas Harris is: Dallas Harris say if you go off to people's house and go to take supper he'll wait in de bushes and knock you in the head and kill you. They have to tell dat Judge he bad boy."

Allison: (Cont'd.) really educate and to get to the inner core of that boy, that I could have made something out of him. Because my definition of education is: not just some techniques or skills, those superfluous things that really skim the surface, but education has to go in deep and get to the inner core of that pupil and strike the spark that makes him want to lift himself. And until we've done that, we just haven't educated.

Silveri: That's the second school, now. What was the name of the school?

Allison: Curfew.

Silveri: Curfew School, and did you also board out?

Allison: Oh, yes; I boarded down there at Miss Lu Reel's and had a big time. Oh, they started revivals the second week of school, and they'd revive at one church and come on up to the next one and revive there two or three weeks and come on to the next one, and we'd just revive till. . . we'd go in wagons with straw in there and you sat down in the straw and you rode up to the place where the meeting was going to be, and then, by and by, before it got so cold I saw two preachers take forty-seven people down into Crooked Creek. The two of them: one preacher would get a-hold of one arm and the other preacher would get a-hold of the other one, and dip them under,

Allison: (Cont'd.) pianos in rural churches.

Silveri: You finished in that school, in Curfew, at the end of February or March. . .

Allison: . . . February. . . came home to Old Fort and there was the principal of the school; had heard that I'd come home, and one of his first-grade teachers had got pregnant. Mrs. Stepp was pregnant again. Could I take Mrs. Stepp's place the rest of the year? So I taught there dutifully, till the school ended.

Then came the 1916 flood, and I went up Mill Creek, way up in there close to where Andrews' Geysers is, to teach a little school. The trouble up there had been two factions of parents, and each one wanted to boss the school. So the superintendent said, "Now, you boss it." He said, "You're a pretty good boss, and I'm expecting you to take charge." Well, I went up there and never had a particle of trouble, not a particle.

But, my husband came in there to help repair the railroad, (my future husband) after the 1916 flood. He had a great roll of blueprints; he'd just been promoted and he didn't know all he needed to know about those blueprints, and I'd helped my Dad make blueprints and I knew exactly what each thing on there meant. So after supper each evening we'd roll out the blueprints on the cook table and I would

Allison: (Cont'd.) he never would interfere with school; Two, I could do absolutely as I pleased, and he would help^{me}. So those were the two bases for getting married. I got married and continued to teach. I got married on Saturday and went right back in school on Monday, because the thing I wanted to do was teach school.

Silveri: You were twenty years old when you got married?

Allison: Twenty. . . I was twenty. That's where I'm going for the decoration this coming Sunday.

Silveri: What was the name of that third school, now, that you worked at in 1916?

Allison: Mill Creek.

Silveri: Mill Creek, and you stayed there for one term.

Allison: One term; and I had decided then that I wanted to get married. I wanted to be Mrs. Allison. I didn't care if I never made a principal. So the next school. . . we went down to Selma, North Carolina, because Consolidated Engineering Company had to drain a swamp down there and build railroad yards: "Allison, take your men, we're going to take two trainloads of equipment. We're going to Selma, North Carolina." Well, we went, and I saw a cotton mill village for the first time in my life, and found out that those people, out of sixty-four adults, only eleven could read and write. Part of them, who were working

Allison: (Cont'd.) acquainted, and I said, "Oh, please, may I stop in the shade? It's hot here." Oh, it was terrifically hot. Asphalt streets were melting and big mules were falling on the street, overcome with the heat, and my husband was having to take his crew to work at six o'clock of a morning and work until ten. Come in then and stay the hot part of the day. Then go out later in the afternoon and work six more hours. They were working ten hours a day. Big colored men, laborers, would be carried in off the job. My husband had erected a sort of shed for them to build concrete forms under, and then they took them out and set them in the proper places.

Me, being used to having my own time to do as I pleased, and full of curiosity, I had to see those mill villages. I stopped on that porch, and the woman said, "Yes, come in." Just as nice as she could be. She had a child in her arms. I was very much concerned about that baby. It was nearly two years old and just weighed eleven pounds. There was an awful crust on its head, and she believed the idea that you must not wash a baby's head until it was big enough to walk, and that one was just skin and bones, and kept fretting. She said, "Susie, fetch me a pickle out of the kitchen. Maybe it'll eat a bite of pickle. It ain't et a bite since day before yesterday."

I said, "Oh, let's don't give it pickle. Let's give it milk,

Allison: (Cont'd.) "No. We ain't got that. We drink our'n barefooted."

I said, "What about buttermilk?"

"No. We use self-risin'."

"Well," I said, "let's feed it some oatmeal."

"Oatmeal. Do you know how to cook it? I sent Susie to the store yesterday to get me a dime's worth of cornmeal, and she fetched me the quarest looking stuff here you ever did see." She said, "Fetch it out here, Susie."

Susie brought it.

I said, "Yes, this is oatmeal. I know how to cook it."

"Oh," she said, "we'll fire up the kitchen stove, then, and cook."

So, we fired up the cookstove, and made the oatmeal kind of soupy-like, and added a little sugar, and when we had cooled it enough that I wasn't afraid to offer it to that baby, that child almost snatched that spoon out of my hand as soon as it got the taste. We fed it until it was ready to go to sleep.

"Law," she said, "I'm so glad."

I said, "Listen, Mrs. Royals, wash her and have her fixed real pretty tomorrow after lunch. I'll be down here and take her picture."

I said. "Let's bathe her and put on her little Sunday dress." I said,

Allison: (Cont'd.) dressed up to have their pictures made. I used Kodak roll film. Eight exposures made a roll, then. I took it all up and talked to the neighbors, and I decided that they ought to have a school down there. Somebody ought to teach those people. Well, I found out that a Mr. Winston owned that mill, so the next day I decided to beard the lion in his den and see what could be done about it. I didn't want to teach the school. So I got after him. I went there, and I said, "I've come to talk to you about those people down there at that Ethel Cotton Mill." I just raised cain with him, and told him the situation.

"Well," he said, "the Federal government sent somebody down here from this here new thing they call the Department of Labor, and he was down here raising sand the other day. There's plenty of people that come in and raise sand with me, but there won't anybody volunteer to do what I need done." He said, "You teach that. I'll give you a house to teach in; I'll pay you wages and give you whatever you need."

"Oh," I said, "I can't do that. I'm Mrs. Allison. My husband doesn't want me to work any more. He's the Mr. Allison in charge of the construction out here."

He said, "Yes, that's just it."

Well, we talked on a little while more, and the more I told

Allison: (Cont'd.) "place. She'd take that as an excuse to take you home. . . . move to the cotton mill village. You know we couldn't do it."

I said, "There's not a thing in the world the matter with those people out there except they need teaching." I made the plea just as much as I could, and finally I decided I'd squeeze out a tear or two, and try that on him, and I tried it. For the first time in all our married life I tried a little bit of crying.

He said, "You go talk to the city superintendent of schools and see if he can send somebody down there."

So I went to the city superintendent the next day, and we talked it over, and I wanted to move down there worse than ever. He would umpire the whole set-up if I would go and do the teaching. It could become a part of the city system. They had just passed an enabling act for adult education. North Carolina was starting to tackle adult education, and Miss Elizabeth Kelly was the state head of adult education. So the superintendent, Mr. Moser, got on the line and called Miss Kelly, and the next day she was down there. It was only twenty-eight miles from Raleigh; southeast of Raleigh. Miss Kelly came down, and the result was: we kept on, we talked. We brought in my husband and we talked it all over. Finally he agreed that we could tackle it, after I tried a few more tears. That time, I leaned over on his shoulder, and

Allison: (Cont'd.) village: it took nine wagon loads to haul the tin cans and trash out of that mill village, and there were only fourteen houses in mill village.

So I began this way: Do my housework of a morning, teach from three-thirty to five in the afternoon and from seven-thirty to nine-thirty at night. That way, if a person worked at night and wanted to come to the afternoon school, fine. If they worked in the daytime and wanted to come to night school, fine. And it meant that I could do my own work and that I could go around to the village and teach those women how to change a person's bed with the patient in the bed, if that person was sick, and what to cook for a sick patient. We had four bedridden old people in that mill village.

We began to clean that mill village up, I'll have you know. On Wednesdays, from one o'clock till three, I had a cooking class in that Home Ec room. On Saturday we learned to cut out common garments using a simple pattern. We had Home Ec in that room Wednesday afternoon and Saturday. The result was that the first time we went to audit my monthly expense account, Mr. Winston said, "See here, now, you're using this money for groceries. You can't buy groceries with this money."

I said, "You come to my house next Wednesday at one o'clock and I'll show you what we're doing with the groceries."

Allison: (Cont'd.) out of water a little while.

He said, "Mrs. Allison, what do you do on Saturday afternoons?"

I said, "Well, I've been having my sewing class. Why?"

He said, "Can't you have it some other afternoon?"

I said, "Yes, we can change it to Tuesday."

He said, "I need you on Saturday. They've appointed me food administrator for this area and I didn't know what to do about it."

So, the result was that I began to hold food demonstrations. The first one I held was in Raleigh in the old auditorium there. We violated every ordinance in that town, because we had a row of chairs down each aisle and left very narrow aisles for the women to come in and out. The most up-to-date equipment we could put on the stage was an oil stove with a Florence oven.

I was just demonstrating away, and I kept hearing quite a lot of fuss out in the wings of the stage. The air kept fanning my blaze, making the smoke come up out of that oil stove. I thought the janitor was out there, and I said, "Hey, quit that. Shut that door out there."

All I heard was more noise. "I said, shut that door."

In walked the governor of the state and Herbert Hoover and Mr. Winston. I never felt so embarrassed in my life. I had to carry

Allison: (Cont'd.) ladies. But that was one of the times that my face was red, because I'd used my tongue where I hadn't any business.

Silveri: How long were you with that school?

Allison: I was down there all that winter. I stayed down there from the first of September till the next April, and then it was: "Allison, take your men. We're going to build. We're going to start a government hospital out there at Azalea." It was Oteen, but Oteen didn't even have a name, then. "Take your men and take your equipment. Leave these other fellows to finish up and go and help start that hospital."

I said, "Fine."

So I walked off and left one of the best jobs I ever had, because Mr. Winston and the state, and I don't know who all else, offered to raise my salary and just practically pay me nearly, well, exorbitant prices. But I was training two other teachers there. I knew I was going to follow Consolidated, because that was my luck in life. My husband was climbing on up. I wrote, while I was there, the first course of study in homemaking ever used for adult illiterates in this state. Later, Dr. Jane S. McKimmon took that bare bones and made it into the present day course in Home Ec. for high school. That's why I can't bake cakes on the Pillsbury Bake-off, because they count me a professional, rather than an amateur. That was where I dropped

Allison: (Cont'd.) were enough children at those schools to build a feeder school there and, instead of having a teacher there, they put a nurse, which was fine, and they still have/ At most of those mills they have a nurse for first aid to the employees, and one who goes around in homes and works. I really started something that turned out to be an expense to the mill owner, but I wasn't considering his pocket; I was considering the employees.

Silveri: Were you happy to get back to the mountains?

Allison: Oh, yes. Oh, I came home Christmas from Selma to Old Fort and there it was cold enough, whereas at Selma I had gone to a woman's house on the eleventh day of December to see if I could borrow a Santa Claus suit for the Christmas program at the cotton mill, and she was picking roses in her back yard. The tenth day of February my husband and I had walked out the Neuse River from Selma and we had seen snakes dropping off of rocks and off of logs into the river, Neuse River. I didn't wear any coat. He started out very gentlemanly with his jacket on, but had to remove it. That was all the winter that we had had down there, but when we came home for Christmas and the creek was frozen over till wagons and horses, wagons and teams, could cross on that ice; when I went out in the snow on a good, nice, steep bank and lay down and rolled over, because

[END OF SIDE I, TAPE II]

[SIDE II, TAPE II]

Silveri: Nineteen twenty-three; this was after you returned?

Allison: After I had lived here. You see, after we built the first part on Oteen, it was, "Allison, go to Kingsport. We've got to build three factories and a hundred and fifty houses there, and the men will have to live in boxcars while you drain that swamp, and they cannot take their families till we get some of those houses built."

Silveri: This was after he worked on Oteen. How long did that take?

Allison: He started there in April and they were through at Christmas. And I commenced to teach then. He went down to start Fort Bragg, and the day after he left I reported in to school for duty and parked the baby. My daughter was nine months old by that time, and I parked her with a neighbor; paid the neighbor to take care of her. I marched off to school with the fourth and fifth grade and with great delight. I was back in my own element, happy as a lark.

I taught there in Black Mountain. They hadn't gotten in the new building until after the flu epidemic and peace came. You see, Armistice was signed the eleventh of November and they were getting into a new building. School didn't start until the first of December, and the fourth and fifth grade ran three teachers out of one room in a

Allison: (Cont'd.) It knocked some bricks down inside, and I didn't know how much fire I should have without a man looking at that thing -- and there I was without a man to look, so I went down to the man from whom we were renting; the first time we'd ever rented anything.

I said, "See here, a man will have to go up there and look at that chimney."

"Oh," he said, "this would be my bad day! School's been going on one day since Christmas. They ran three teachers out of that room in that month before Christmas and this lady refused to go back, and they're out there without any teacher. Say, you're a teacher, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes, but I've got a baby."

He said, "That's no excuse. I can get you one of the best women in this town to take care of that baby for ten dollars a month, and I want you to go to school."

I said, "It's a deal. I'll be there by nine o'clock in the morning."

And sure enough, after a while one of the leading women of that town came up there and said, "Oh, I would adore taking care of your baby." So she took care of my baby, and I went to school. By-and-by, when Mr. Allison found out about it; I let him find out about

Allison: (Cont'd.) So the cat was out of the bag, but I taught right on, anyway. I said, "Now, just wait a minute. Who was this that said I could do as I please, and who said that he'd help me?" So I did as I pleased, and I taught. School got out the 27th of May, and they had passed the enabling act, the Legislature had, that January, 1919, for consolidation. That was the law that we'd been looking for such a long time. And they passed the act for building roads and levying that tax on gasoline to pave those roads, and we had actually seen pictures of buses, school buses.

Silveri: Who was the governor, then?

Allison: Don't remember who was governor, but I knew him. He followed Locke Craig; I knew that. Locke Craig, by the way, had married an Old Fort. . . he had married my daddy's old sweetheart. My father courted two Annie's: Annie Burgin, who married Locke Craig, and Annie Dalton, who finally married my dad. Well, anyway, I don't remember who followed him, but it was a man from the Eastern part of the state.

Silveri: When you talk about the bill for consolidation, what did it mean? Did it mean that the state was going to get the money. . .?

Allison: It meant this: that you could establish your boundaries for a consolidated school district; you could call a special registration of all the interested voters concerned, but you could prevail upon the

Allison: (Cont'd.) and that paid off the bonds little by little, and paid the interest on them. As quickly as those bonds were paid off, we began a great big howl for these super-consolidations, and now we're getting those, and taking the old, what used to be an old high school may be a feeder school now. Fairview's a sample of that. Reynolds has become now (that's my own high school) where they're going to bring in the seventh, eighth and ninth grade into that middle school, and put the tenth, eleventh and twelfth in a comprehensive high school and transport those pupils in there. They're expecting an enrollment in, for instance, Reynolds School, it'll be over twenty-one hundred.

Silveri: Well, they couldn't build consolidated schools until they had good enough roads.

Allison: Had to have the roads . . . We first had to put down stone and make what we called a turnpike. The way you built a turnpike was to dig out the dirt for about six or eight inches, put down larger stone, then middlesize stone, then small stone, then stone dust. The weather worked that stone dust down into the whole thing, and we did what we call macadamize the roads. Then, as we could, they would put these black things that looked like a rubber hose across the road to decide when to pave it.

We first, in this state, had to get every county seat

Allison: (Cont'd.) interstate highways that are dual lane, in some cases, and in some cases three lanes go each way, as you know, and in some cases, four lanes.

Well, anyway, North Carolina has had a firm resolve not to have a toll road, not to have a toll bridge, not to build until there was enough traffic there to pay the state to pave that road and to retire those bonds with tax on gasoline.

Silveri: Of course, it took many years to accomplish this consolidation you just mentioned.

Allison: Oh-h-h, well, we began in 1919. Nineteen twenty-nine was ten years. By that time we had nearly all . . . we had put a high school of a sort within reach of every child in this state, black and white.

Then, by the time World War II came along we realized that we had under-consolidated, but we had to hold back and begin to put these trailers in the yards to hold the surplus children until we could get World War II over with. Then, after World War II was over with, we had the men back home who had traveled extensively, and don't you ever believe that a war doesn't pay for itself by the travel of those G.I.'s. Because they come back home with new ideas that they did not have when they went out. They came back with the ideas that this was a grand place; we needed the best; we could pay for it; we

Allison: (Cont'd.) they wanted better things than we had ever had. Now, when you educate a man, you've done a lot, but when you educate a woman you've educated a family. So we had done a great deal, but now, the state has raised the salaries of teachers to the point that a lot of girls think that all they've got to do is to get the semester hours required, and hate their pupils, maybe; watch for three o'clock to come; watch for Friday. "Whatcha gonna do over the weekend?" Watch for pay day. "How much is my retirement?"

And they are not trying, too many of them, not all of them (don't get me wrong), but too many of them are not trying to strike the spark that will spark that pupil to aspire to higher things, and strike that spark that will help him fight crime, fight drugs, fight all those things that he should fight. In other words, they are not educating for character.

We used to take the reading that we read: we would take Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson and those heroes of history, and instead of learning what date so-and-so happened, we got the thinking of those fellows, and we had those pupils read that thinking until it helped to shape their ideas and their ideals. We can take the biographies of the early heroes: I just love to teach Daniel Boone and David Crockett and Jim Bowie and Kit Carson and Jim Bridger, and all those fellows'

Silveri: (Cont'd.) Mountain school for just one term?

Allison: Um hum; because at the end of that term I was elected back, but Mr. Allison had gone to Kingsport, and I told those men, I said, "I can't stay here except till Christmas."

"That's all right. We want you here. We want you."

But in that summer, the superintendent of schools was also a lawyer, Mr. W.H. Hipps, and he taught a class and demanded that every Buncombe County teacher take a course at four o'clock under him in Public School Law. It was the law that enabled consolidation and enabled the voting of bonds, so we could go out and start a consolidation and lead the communities to start a consolidation. He said, "Now I want you to go out to the North end of this county and start me a consolidation out beyond Weaverville. I know you can teach here at Black Mountain, but it won't start till the fifteenth of September when the tourists have left, and that school out yonder is going to start the fourth of August."

That sounded good to me, because I didn't like to loaf. So I parked the baby with Mamma. I thought, "All right, if we're going to be a divided family, I'll send my furniture home, and I'll send the baby home with it." My mother and daddy wanted the baby; they wanted to take her and keep her. My father said, "Good. She's

Allison: (Cont'd.) But I went. . .the superintendent said, "I want you to go out there and start a consolidation." He said, "There's two factions in that community, a Republican faction and a Democrat faction, as long as they war and raise blue cane we can't ever get a consolidation out there. More than that, there's personalities. Big men envy each other. There's a man out there named Blackstock. He's a descendant of that Blackstock that came in here surveying property, and, of course, picked out the choice spot of the county and entered a whole lot of it as. . . well, he didn't enter it as new land, but he bought it dirt cheap. But, the people out there all hated Mr. Blackstock." So he said, "Now we'll have to leave Mr. Blackstock out of it. We've got to send in somebody that doesn't know Blackstock and that Blackstock doesn't know them;has got no strings on them."

I said, "Sounds interesting. I'll take it."

He said, "We'll pay you twenty-five dollars more on the month than you'd make teaching one grade anyway."

I said, "Sounds still better. I'll take it."

So I went, and by that time my husband knew that "she's going to do as she pleases, anyway, I'd just as well smile." So I went, and we started a consolidation. It's now Flat Creek Elementary School, but it was high school for years and years and years. We

Allison: (Cont'd.) "of the county, and we're not going to have it."

So I had to take what I could get, and we consolidated, but we under-consolidated. It served the purpose for a long, long time.

Silveri: In other words, a consolidated elementary school?

Allison: Consolidated high school; it stayed consolidated and served as high school and elementary for years and years, until they built North Buncombe. They built North Buncombe in the fifties, and now the population in this area has increased until North Buncombe realizes that they are under-consolidated. Reynolds was under-consolidated, and we're building these big super-consolidations, that is, they're the big comprehensive high schools.

Now, you're a stranger here, and I'll have to tell you what a comprehensive high school is going to teach. Besides the courses to enter straight college, that is, math and English and the languages and sciences, and history and all the regular traditional curriculum, the boys are going to have a choice of agriculture, brick-laying, steam-fitting, refrigeration, air-conditioning, welding, plumbing, electricity, and they are going to have a cluster, little buildings outside of a big central building.

All right, what are the girls going to have? They are going to have this hair-fixing business, to be cosmetologists. They are going

Allison: (Cont'd.) So that when they get out of the course they'll have their typing, all their business work. But a super consolidation: you have to bring together about twenty-five hundred students, and you have to have your seventh, eighth and ninth in the old building and say to them, "See here now, if you expect to get over to the big area you're going to have to really know it. We're not going to let you outgrow the chairs any more. You can't go over there unless you actually grasp the fundamentals in that middle school. And if you don't learn to behave yourself, you're not going to get over there."

We're going to stop the behavior problems right in that middle school. That's why I'm signing up to substitute in that middle school right down here at Reynolds this fall.

Silveri: Let's get back to the twenties. You saw Asheville grow during the twenties. What kind of a town was Asheville?

Allison: Oh, I've got to go back to Asheville to 1900 and along there. I had an uncle who ran a photograph gallery right upstairs over where old Belk's used to be, 33-1/2 Patton Avenue. He's the one, by the way, that ran a gambling game there at night and won a tombstone for his first wife from the old man Wolfe; one of those angel things.

Anyway, we came up there. She was my mother's sister, my Aunt Hattie. We came up to spend Christmas. My brother was two years

Allison: (Cont'd.) around the old Courthouse, which stood where the yard of the present day Courthouse is; up on Pack Square, where the Plaza Theatre is was a yard where men hitched their horses, or un-hitched them, and let them eat out of the wagon. They had places there where they camped and cooked out, fried meat. Oh, you could smell meat frying there nearly any time you wanted to.

It was paved down to the Courthouse. Broadway was paved down two blocks, down to where the Masonic Temple is now. Biltmore Avenue was paved down one block, where Aston Street turns toward Church Street. Patton Avenue was paved down to where Coxe Street is now, but where Coxe Street is was a hollow, a ravine. Where the Arcade Building, or Federal Government Building, and Post Office are, was a high, steep hill, and Battery Park Hotel was a wooden building three stories high with a long front porch, on top of that hill, and a driveway leading up and curling around and back down again to let passengers alight from hacks. A hack was a three-seated buggy that met the trains and brought passengers up there. It cost you fifty cents to go up there from Asheville Depot. Nobody ever heard of getting off at Biltmore then. If you were a passenger, you got off at Asheville Depot. Patton Avenue was paved down that far; then a wooden bridge about four feet wide crossed there. Uncle Mac went down in there to get our Christmas tree. and came up with it: a beautiful white pine well-shaped

Allison: (Cont'd.) to pick music. They had instruments that you carry. I had heard that Louise Falk had the longest tongue in Asheville, and Mamma had said that I had the longest tongue in Old Fort. During the intermission I was passing around oranges and other fruits and my sister was passing cakes, and my older cousin was passing lemonade. I came to Louise Falk and I thought about her tongue, and I said, "They say your tongue's the longest tongue in Asheville and mine's the longest one in Old Fort. Stick yours out and let's measure." I got spanked and sent to bed.

Anyway, that's what Asheville was like in 1900. My father had built the new Post Office, which stood on Pritchard Park. He built that in 1888. That was as far as the business part of town reached. Haywood Street was paved around to where you turn down a steep street, Walnut Street, going straight down toward Lexington.

Silveri: What was the main road into Asheville from the East? Did you go over Beaucatcher?

Allison: . . . was the railroad. The railroad was practically the only passable route. There was a wagon road; the old stagecoach road. The old stagecoach route had come across the Hickory Nut Gap, and where the McClure Clarke's live now used to be an old stagecoach stopover. They changed horses there and people could get dinner there, or they

Allison: (Cont'd.) Southern crossed in Asheville. There was a round-house there and a place to repair engines and trains. There was a real railroad yard there. Asheville was smoky forevermore, amen. You couldn't come in without getting ruined. Our mother made us a blue velveteen dress for my older sister, and a red one for me. I got mine black uptown; got two or three stripes on it leaning against something. But Asheville was very sooty, because all those engines burned soft coal. You couldn't burn anthracite coal in one of those engines. It made lots of cinders because it was not sufficient. . . they couldn't put sufficient smoke stacks onto them to draw out all the heat and to make it burn adequately.

Every road that did not have paving on it. . . every street, rather, had cinders.

Silveri: I understand that it was during the twenties that the land boom began in Asheville.

Allison: It began about 1921. We came back here from Kingsport in '22, and my boy had been born. We came back here; we'd been in Tennessee and I'd been assistant to the superintendent until I found out that I wasn't making any more money than a principal. I'd much rather be a principal, because you didn't have to stay until five-thirty and you didn't have to go back on Saturday. So the first vacancy we had as a

Allison: (Cont'd.) they'd been to school. So I took all the juvenile delinquents into my school. Then, that summer we bought out toward Highland Park, and I changed and was principal of Warpath School two years. Then it was, "Allison, take your men. We've got to go back and build some more onto Oteen."

I said, "Allison, you take your men and go wherever you want to; I'm going to keep these two children here and keep them in school. You'll find us here when you get back."

So that was the year that Consolidated went bankrupt on that thirty-four million dollar dock job in Baltimore, and my husband went to doing private contract. As soon as that boy was fifteen months old I went back to teaching. I went out to Venable and took the sixth and seventh grade, because we got a high school built there and we had to get some students ready to do that high school work. There they were, coming up to the sixth and seventh grade and subtracting downhill, depending on whichever was the larger number; didn't know their multiplication tables; didn't know a noun from a verb; didn't know a complete sentence from a scrap of one; couldn't read with fourth grade ability, so I said, "Here let me a-hold of that sixth and seventh grade, and we'll do some learning."

Silveri: What school was this?

Allison: Venable.

Allison: (Cont'd.) fourth year, the superintendent had found out something and he began to use me for a trouble shooter.

"You have to go up. . . I'd like for you to go . . ."

He wouldn't say, "You have to go," because he knew that would strike the wrong spark. "I need somebody to go out to Valley Springs and take that room full of twenty-three bad boys; they're sixth grade. If they're in the fifth and they're mean, we put 'em up into the sixth; and if they're incorrigible in the seventh, we put 'em back in the sixth. Take that grade. We'll pay you a supplement to justify you driving up there."

I said, "I never did see twenty-three bad boys. Let me look at 'em." So I went.

The result was: we organized two ball teams; two nines. Any feller that didn't behave and get his work sat on the players' bench and couldn't play, but if he was a good boy he could play if it was nothing but pigtail behind the bat or play out in the field. Because they knew that I had two nines, and I trained me four pitchers and four catchers, and trained basemen, outfielders and infielders, and all that. The result was that when teacher had been there five weeks she sprained her left ankle, which is that crazy old basketball ankle. So the boys had to carry the chair I was sitting in up and down the stairs. The first thing I knew, there was an argument: "Now it's my turn. I haven't carried her up or

Allison: (Cont'd.) great big bugbear; there wasn't a thing in the world the matter with those boys except they found out that they could tease some of those young teachers. When they tried it with me, I took my apple tree switches in there and laid them on top of the box of maps and didn't let them know that there was a switch in the place until I needed one. Then I reached up and grabbed a switch and grabbed a boy by his chest clothing, pulled him across his chair and gave him what for. It didn't take but about a couple of that until it did all twenty-three of them all the good you ever heard of.

The parents began to fuss: "Don't make her take the bad ones. I want my child in that room."

Next thing, the superintendent said, "They've brought Enka here. They've brought in a lot of children from these surrounding counties, and part of them are not standard for Buncombe County schools. Go out there and take a little school."

I took a little school up at Choctaw. It was behind where Enka Lake is now. It's burned down. I took two girls; one had first grade and one had second and third, and I took fourth, fifth and sixth myself. Every child that was standard on his test went in to Candler or Sand Hill, one, or Venable, depending on where he lived. So I only taught that year.

Allison: (Cont'd.) get into the main part of the building.

I said, "I'm getting old and feeble. I can't climb all these stairs." I was fishing for what I wanted.

He said, "Take any room in the house you want. Take any grade you want. Pick out your own children. Pick out what library books you want for a grade library in your room. Just so you come back."

So I was back there three years. Then they divided this property, and we began to get ready to sell out there. By that time, my daughter had had two years at Asheville Teachers' College and flatly swore that she wasn't going to make a teacher.

She said, "Why Mamma, as much as I've seen you have to do! You've worked your way through all these years of teaching school. You've sold advertising; you've sold real estate, and I'm not going to do it. I'm going to take a business course, and I'm not going to make a teacher, and if you send me back to the Normal, I'll just fail my grade, and if you bring me home, I'll get married."

So that was the threat that broke the camel's back. I put her in Cecil's Business College, and somebody had to haul her to where she could catch the city bus to get there, because we couldn't afford two automobiles. It was Depression time, and we couldn't afford three. Bob

Allison: (Cont'd.) Children," so he wanted somebody to take them, and I went.

I said, "Good."

He said, "Oh, we'll pay you a supplement." That was the last year a supplement could be paid in this county, and I went, because I could accomplish two things: I knew if I had to sell my house that I could take an apartment in Asheville until I got through that school, and I knew that I could haul my daughter and she'd catch that bus, and I knew that I could ride herd on her pretty heavy, because she was eighteen years old, or almost that; going to be eighteen that winter, and I was keeping a close hold on that little lady. Not that she ever gave me any trouble, but I wasn't sure about it. I knew how to control boys, but how to control girls was a hard matter.

Silveri: Let me ask you now about this: You were in the Asheville area when the Depression hit.

Allison: Oh, yes.

Silveri: You lived through those years, here. What do you remember about those Depression years?

Allison: Oh, it was terrible. I remember the time when we elected Franklin D. Roosevelt for the first time, I had decided that I had the vote and I was a resident, I was a voter, therefore I would learn how

Allison: (Cont'd.) learn with method in my left eye. So I was in charge of hauling.

"Mrs. Allison, I can't go to the polls. Look at these shoes. They're all I've got. I haven't got a coat to my name to wear to the polls."

The result was that the day we hauled I had two coats in the car and two pairs of shoes, extra; one was my sister's, and they were wide; one was long and narrow, and they were mine. The woman could put on the proper shoes and the proper long coat which would cover a multitude of sins any day in the week, and she could go to the polls and vote to get Hoover out of there.

Now that was part of the Depression: how we got Roosevelt elected. But it shows you the scarcity of clothing. You could go out where wild greens grew. A green grows around this area sometimes called creasey greens, and you could find where people had cut off the tiny little bunches, wanting to eat. Then I'll give you an experience out of school, which I should not give you, but this is a fact.

I'd gone back to Venable and had picked my students, and I thought, "Oh, boy, I've got a picked crop. I'll get along fine." And the second day, when I had issued the books and got things straight; got everybody enrolled and placed in their chairs and everything, and

Allison: (Cont'd.) afternoon, health and history and geography. All right. When I brought those children back in, I strung one blackboard full of math for the fourth grade, and one board full for the fifth grade. Down went a whole lot of heads. I thought, "Uh, oh, this is a new form of rebellion. I'm not used to this; it wasn't here when I left. I must have done some wrong picking." I looked at them a little while. I built up a pretty good head of steam. A little girl named Mable would run her tongue like I would, so I took Mable out in the hall.

I said, "Look here, Mable, tell me, what's the matter here? Is this a new form of rebellion? What kind of punishment is it going to take to stop this thing?"

She laid her head over on my shoulder and began to cry. She said, "Don't fuss, Mrs. Allison. I'm so tired and so hungry, I don't know what to do."

"Well," I said, "Mable, it's all right to eat. If you're hungry and didn't take time to eat your breakfast, go in there and get your lunch bag." We didn't have school lunches then. I mean, school lunchrooms. Everybody brought a bag lunch from home.

She said, "Mrs. Allison, I didn't have no breakfast and I never brought any lunch. We don't have but one meal a day, and oh, how

Allison: (Cont'd.) will it be dinner or will it be supper?"

She said, "It'll be both; it'll be the only meal we have a day."

I said, "Who else is living like that?"

She hung her head. She said, "Well, my aunt lives down the street from us and that's the way they live."

Well, I had a boy from that family right in my room. I said, "All right, go back to your chair."

I went back in the room. You could have heard a pin drop. Everybody in there was behaving like they were expecting the ceiling to drop just any minute. I called out three or four different children that looked pretty hungry, until I got a pretty good cross-section, and I found out that out of thirty-five children only nine of them were getting three square meals a day. Four more were getting two meals a day, and the balance were getting one meal a day, which meant over half were on one meal a day.

Well, that happened to be on a Friday, because we started school on Thursday. We had Thursday to make up for Labor Day and Friday to make up for Thanksgiving Day. I went home and I told Bob about it. I'd already learned a long time ago that he was sympathetic to my problems. I said, "What should I do about it?"

Allison: (Cont'd.) That was what he always said about "think up an idea." So by morning I had a scheme out of my head. I went to J.D. Earle, Earle-Chesterfield Milling Company, on Saturday morning. I said, "Mr. Earle, you're a good public-spirited citizen. I want a donation."

"Yes, Mrs. Allison, what do you want?"

I said, "I want two bushels of wheat every week."

He said, "Two bushels of wheat. What are you going to plant?"

I said, "I'm not going to plant it." And then I told him. I said, "I'm on my way to the County Commissioners' office. We're so scarce of money in this county we've had to dismiss the Home Demonstrator, and all of her things are locked up on the third floor of the Courthouse. I'm going up there and get that great big pressure cooker and I'm going to take this wheat and clean three quarts of it every night; get out any chaff or surplus or anything; wash it good, then soak it in hot water over night, then in the morning I'm going to put it in the pressure cooker and cover it with water and put it on the back of my range and raise sixteen pounds of steam there, then push it back and let it hold sixteen pounds of steam for an hour, and that'll cook that wheat."

He said, "What'll you do for sugar and milk to serve it

Allison: (Cont'd.) morning."

He said, "That's the girl. If those children are hungry; feed them."

So the result was: I went back in school on Monday, and I said, "The health book says whole wheat this, and whole wheat that, and whole wheat the other, and you've heard it all your life, and I've heard it ever since I've been teaching. Now we're going to put it to a test. How many of you want to make an 'A' on Health on your report card?" Of course, everybody did; all the hands went up.

I said, "Good. Now, tell you how we'll do. I'll cook the whole wheat at home and bring it in a pressure cooker here, and we'll let the boys carry the cooker out of the car and set it on the radiator so it'll stay warm. Then, the little girls in this row will be hostesses on Monday; this row Tuesday; this row Wednesday; Thursday, and Friday."

I had five rows of children. I said, "How many little girls can bring a little apron? You girls will have to serve that wheat. Now, in order to be sure who's going to be first, let's arrange ourselves in a line, with the tall man in front. We'll put the manpower in the front."

You see, those big boys were making big bones faster than the other children, and they needed more food, but I couldn't dare say that. Huh, uh, I'd have bitten my tongue off, first.

Allison: (Cont'd.) "and these little girls want to rinse it out so you big boys can put it back in my car. If I take it home dirty, I'll have to scrub half the afternoon to get it clean, and you boys: How about you bringing your dish up here and eating another dish of this wheat? I believe there's more than enough for you. How about you? All of you fellers, you biggest men, let's come on and let's serve you."

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE II]

[TAPE II, SIDE I]

Allison: (Cont'd.) I served them, as long as I scraped out that cooker. The result was: In about a week, when we went out to play and came back for math, all heads were up and everybody was ready to work. Those children's energy and strength had been spent by just getting to school. Going through the reading and spelling had exhausted their energy. Of course, the ones that had the food didn't mind eating wheat, because that was fine. Teacher said so. They were going to get "A" on their report card. And that was how we met. . . before that year was up they had to take one end of our auditorium and partition it in with plywood and put some women back there with a couple of oil stoves and cook food. Because the other children in the other rooms/ . . . I had convinced that principal

Allison: (Cont'd.) "was losing weight and they wouldn't grow over half an inch. Part of these children didn't grow over a quarter of an inch last year. I wanted you back here because of that head you've got on your shoulders."

I stuck out my tongue at him and said, "Shame on you."

That was one of the things that we did. We had to keep dry clothing at that school because the bus couldn't go down the side roads and pick up the children. Some of them had to walk a mile to get to that bus line, and they would get wet in the rain, but they knew that when they came to school that they would have dry clothing there. The P.T.A. furnished it for us, and from then we had a needy closet. . . . children who needed it. But we got them accustomed to wearing clothes out of the dry grab bag, we called it. "Go to the dry grab bag and get you some clothes and go to the restroom and change out of these wet ones. We'll put the wet ones on the radiator and we'll keep you warm."

You see, my motto was: If they were cold you warmed them, and if they were wet you dried them, and if they were bad you spanked them.

Silveri: And if they were hungry you fed them.

Allison: If they were hungry you fed them. That's exactly it. In

Silveri: I've heard of Venable Academy.

Allison: There used to be a Venable. . . there was an old Professor Venable. You see, most of the high schools were private. When I finished high school in 1913 there were only thirty-three public high schools supported with state money, in this State of North Carolina. The rest were private, or they belonged to some church. Fruitland, out here in Henderson County, was a Baptist school. There was one over in Haywood: Haywood Institute, where students could board and get their high school. There was one down in Morganton called Patton High School. There was a man named Venable who came here. He was an old professor of a state university, and he had come to Asheville with a case of tuberculosis, and it was healed, or arrested, or something. He ran an academy on Montford Avenue. One of the students that he had there was named Eugene Ingle, and he was a great admirer of Professor Venable, so when they built Venable School, and were interested in naming a lot of these schools after outstanding men, Venable became Venable.

It was high school; first with one teacher, then with two teachers; then with three teachers. When I left there they had four teachers.

Silveri: You left in what year?

Allison: I was there in 1935.

Allison: (Cont'd.) daughter was at her most expensive stage, and I had to go to the advertising world. My brother came to my house and he said, "Now you just exactly let him go to his brother's and you go home to Mamma. You can't keep house on your salary."

I said, "Well now I might have to if I get sick, brother, but you watch my dust for a year and I'll keep books on it, income and outgo in composition books, nickle ones, and we'll see how we come out."

I began to type stories at night and I typed five of them.

Silveri: What kind of stories?

Allison: Oh, love stories. That was the kind that would sell, because everybody wanted to be taken out of the present-day world and put into the world of imagination. So I began to type love stories, and I sold three of them to a little pulp magazine out in Colorado. It's gone bankrupt since then. I wonderd if my stories had anything to do with it.

Silveri: Do you remember how much you got for a story?

Allison: Fifty dollars.

Silveri: Fifty dollars?

Allison: Oh, steak was a dime a pound then; eggs were fifteen cents a dozen. You could buy a good hen for fifty cents. Money was money then. Then I sold a fourth one to The West Asheville News. That was the paper

Allison: (Cont'd.) said: "Bring us in another paper, another story."

I went in to sell another story.

They said, "Mrs. Allison, we just don't have the money to pay you the cash for it, but we'll give you sixty dollars in space in the paper."

I said, "Space in the paper. What in the world would I do with that?"

They said, "Sell ads in it."

I talked it over with the newspaper men, the staff there, a little while, and they sold me. I decided I'd try it. So I went uptown to sell sixty dollars worth of space in the paper and came back with seventy-two dollars worth.

The man said, "Quit this foolishness of teaching and work with us. We'll pay you. You'll make money, because you're having to work your way through teaching, and that's foolish."

I said, "No; I'm going to teach right on, because what we want this nation to become has to be taught in public school first, but I'll work with you in my spare time." So that was the way we settled the thing and I began to sell advertising in my spare time.

About that time, the principal of the school, Venable, said, "We need our stage outfitted with curtains and back drops and scenery,

Allison: (Cont'd.) "Allison, that lady will be here next Thursday, and Mrs. Fullum will come in from the P.T.A. and take your room free of charge. Write her out some lesson plans. It takes somebody that knows the town to escort that woman around so she won't lose her time."

I said, "Good."

He said, "The P.T.A. will furnish the gasoline, a dollar's worth a day."

Oh, that filled my car up. A dollar's worth of gas was twenty cents a gallon then; good gas, at that.

I went, and met her, and met Bianci. Bianci was the Italian who was one of those rare types: blue-eyed Italians.

"Mishes Allishon, I want you to meet so-and-so. Go with her to sell the ads on this curtain."

All right. We had a great big drawing of the curtain; he had drawn it to scale, and we were to sell the ads on that curtain. He told us how much to ask for each ad, and we put that down on the ads: that space cost so-and-so. Everywhere we'd go: "Is there a ladies rest room here? Is there a ladies rest room here?" She'd go to the rest room and come out smelling like cigarette smoke.

I thought: "Gee whiz, this woman's going to kill herself smoking."

Along toward evening, though I decided it was

Allison: (Cont'd.) quarter of nine and she hadn't dressed. She was sitting on the side of the bed in her night clothes and she was weaving sideways, singing, with a bottle of liquor in one hand and a glass in the other one, and she was singing "There's a Fountain Filled With Blood." She wanted to pour me a drink, and that was the last thing in my mind when I found out the shape she was in. I knew where Bianci was eating his meals; taking all his meals, at a little restaurant called The Rathskellar. It was right down Patton Avenue just the second door on the left hand side, if you start down from the monument. I went down there and Bianci was there, taking life easy, smoking his pipe.

I told him. I said, "That woman is in no condition to go out selling ads." And I gave him chapter and verse on the situation.

"Missus Allison, if you will go and sell the ads, I will give you half of the money. I think she do drink. I think it already. I think she did drink. . . ." Down in some place in the Eastern part of the state.

I said, "I'm not going to start selling ads on a verbal contract. Here's an envelope out of my handbag. Let's write this contract down and we'll both sign it. Here, this man that keeps this cafeteria can be the witness to both signatures." So we signed it,

Allison: (Cont'd.) He said, "Missus Allison, if you will sell the ads on the curtains, I have contracts here in my coat pocket," and pulled out six, "I will give you half of the money for all of them."

I said, "Now, wait a minute: Does that mean that you will still paint those curtains and still fulfill your contract with the principal of that school?"

"Oh, yes; oh, yes; will do; will do."

I said, "All right." That time I was armed; I had paper in my handbag. I fished it out and we made contracts, duplicates, and both signed them.

So I began to sell ads, lots of days when men were begging for a dollar a day I might make sixty or seventy-five dollars on a Saturday. It was a good thing, because Bob Allison was flat of his back; I had a big boy with him that had to take him to the bathroom and bathe him and dress him and shave him, feed him, and so on. I was going to school, taking my carload of children: mine and my sister's and my neighbor's. I was teaching, and I was going to the newspaper. I was keeping house; I was putting a meal in my oven at night and cooking a good meal every night while we slept, just to be fair with you. I was really raising cane. It's the Lord's blessing I was healthy.

Allison: (Cont'd.) He said, "Do you mind if I look?"

I said, "No; that's what I kept them for. I'm not going back on any agreement."

He began to look at income and outgo, and he hadn't turned through the second book until he said, "Good Lord, you've made more money than I have, and I've been working six days a week for Southern Railway."

I said, "Well I needed every last dime of it."

So I worked at the newspaper until summertime came the next summer, and we were holding a cooking school at old Aycock auditorium for the gas company. Their demonstrator had been used to demonstrating before ten or twelve ladies at a time, but never had stood before an auditorium full and talked.

We put the newspaper on everybody's doorstep in West Asheville, and I had sold enough ads in there to get myself four hundred and some-odd dollars, and I had every dime of it earmarked what I was going to do with it. The afternoon came and it was hot, I mean, and we packed the women in there, and they began to bring chairs down those aisles. We violated every fire ordinance in Asheville and put a row of women down each aisle. That demonstrator came out on that stage at 2:30 and took stage fright. She had to be

Allison: (Cont'd.) hard this morning getting all this furniture on the stage and all these nice prizes. Just look here: we've got sixty-five free prizes for today and we've got to cook. When something happens to the cook, somebody has to cook if they can't do anything but fry and egg." I said, "I'm going to cook."

I began to roll up my sleeves to attract their attention. They began to put down babies and get big grins on their faces, and then I knew the day was mine.

I said, "I'm going to bake a cake, and if it's no good I'm going to ice it a half inch thick and slip my last dollar bill under the plate and that's to bribe that woman that takes that thing as a prize that she's not to tell anybody what it tasted like. But if it's good, we'll cut it all up in little pieces and every feller will stick a toothpick in there and we'll take the sacrament with that cake." I said, "I'm going to broil a meal here just to prove that you can broil with a gas oven. This is a Majestic range; of course I can broil."

I examined the stove and got in its good features. I just demonstrated up a storm. So when I happened to see two pretty well-dressed men come in the front door, then Mr. Reed, the editor of the newspaper, and Mr. McDonald, the gas man, went back there and

Allison: (Cont'd.) saw them leave. I went ahead and demonstrated, and we drew the prizes and the women ate the meal and they came up to the stage. I had them come up and examine all that equipment. Their drawing tickets told what appliances they were going to buy next, because we were going to get some sales out of that thing. After it was all over with, the editor of the paper and Mr. McDonald came up. Mr. McDonald handed me a fifty dollar bill.

He said, "Mrs. Allison, I'd hug you, but it won't be worth nearly as much as this fifty dollar bill."

I said, "Law, no. I can use a fifty dollar bill, and I don't need any hug."

He said, "Did you know those men were from the Magic Chef Range Company? They were well pleased with this thing. Lord, how glad I was that you had on a white dress! I never told them that you weren't my regular demonstrator. If you want her job, you can have it."

I said, "Yes, but where are the children? I can't quit teaching school. I'm under contract."

When Mr. McDonald left, Mr. Reed said, "Mrs. Allison, I didn't know you could do this!"

I said, "Gosh, I didn't either. I haven't done any demonstrating since World War I. I didn't know I could, but you can

Allison: (Cont'd.) "wants a demonstrator over there. Why don't you go?"

I said, "Sure will." So I took off the next week on Monday. The paper had gone to bed and cooking school got over with and I landed me some cooking schools with newspapers, and I thought, "Gee whiz! What do I mean? I'll just hold cooking schools everywhere." So I figured out that I'd better eliminate and peel 'em down until I'd get twelve lined up. That summer I didn't hold for anybody but Canton and the Hendersonville man. I held one at Trinity Church for us to make some money there for the Woman's Auxiliary. We needed some money there. I was teaching a Sunday school class there and I needed new furniture in my classroom, and we raised the money to buy it. I found out right then that anybody could get money that had a real good need for it. Even Columbus got the money to come to America when ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths of the people thought he was crazy. So I got a pretty scornful idea of money, except what you could do with it, and I began to hold cooking schools.

Then the women began saying, "Mrs. Allison, copying down all these recipes is too much trouble. Why don't you print a cookbook?"

So I tried a cookbook with one page of ads and one page of cooking recipes; one page of ads, one page of cooking recipes. That's

Silveri: This was during the hard times of the Depression, too.

Allison: I sold over ten thousand dollars worth of advertising right in the bottom of the Depression. I just went out with a big grin on my face and that was a rare item in the Depression time. I sold nearly every time. . . if I made a list of twenty prospects and called on those twenty prospects, I would sell about sixteen of them. That was a batting average of about eighty percent.

Silveri: How long did you do that?

Allison: Till nineteen and fifty-seven; till I got this house fixed to suit me.

Silveri: Till 1957?

Allison: I kept holding cooking schools in the summer time, but the newspaper, I left that off as soon as I moved up here, as soon as I got onto the cooking school business and as soon as times began to get to where the state took the schools over, and then the state outfitted the stage with curtains out of the tax money. I didn't like those ads on those curtains anyway. It just meant bread and butter to me, when butter was twenty-five cents a pound, the very best kind; you didn't even have to bother with churning.

Silveri: Did you teach all those years?

Allison: Yes; all those years, I taught.

Allison: (Cont'd.) finding out how they came to be problem children.

I found out that out of that twenty-three, eleven with physical defects, and we got them corrected. One boy had three vertebrae in his backbone out of whack. He had climbed a tree in the third grade to get mistletoe for the teacher and had fallen out. The result had been that the day they went back to school after Christmas he had remarked to another boy: "I'll be so glad when Christmas comes." Christmas had passed and that boy didn't know it; now that's how near insane he was. He had grown a total of three-quarters of an inch in three years, and he had gotten just like a little hornet. He had fought the fourth grade teacher; he had done all. . . he had just broken. . . you name it and he'd done it. For a boy his age and size, he'd been into all the trouble that there was. So when I got him, we didn't have any girls in there, and I had them all strip off their shirts and we were measuring for chest expansion.

I was trying to teach them that smoking cigarettes would damage your lungs and would decrease your chest expansion, and that if you wanted to stand up straight and leave off cigarettes, your chest expansion would increase. That was the burden of my lecture.

I touched Dan on his backbone. He said, "Oh, Mrs. Allison, that's that sore place."

Allison: (Cont'd.) He said, "That's right." But he stayed in the fourth grade three years, and had been promoted to the fifth to get rid of him.

He said, "You know Miss Wells." (Miss Wells is our County Supervisor now, she's a grand teacher; I love her.) He said, "Last year she hit me on that place and I just picked up my geography and hit her in the face with it."

I said, "Let's see it, Dan. You don't mind if I run my fingers down it right easy, do you?"

He said, "No, being it's you, I'll let you feel it." And he shut both fists, because he knew it was going to hurt.

I found three vertebrae out of whack. I just marched to the telephone and called his daddy. His daddy was a high monkey-de-monk in the Southern Bell Telephone Company.

I said, "I want you to come out here, Mr. Plemmons."

He said, "What's it about?"

I said, "Well, I'm Dan's teacher."

"You can beat him; oh, I have to beat him every day, just put it on him, anything he needs, I won't care a bit."

I said, "I didn't ask you if I could whip him." I said, "You come out here. I'll expect you here in half an hour."

Allison: (Cont'd.) I said, "Strip off your shirt, Dan, I want to show your daddy."

He thought I'd whipped him.

I showed him those three vertebrae. "Now," I said, "you take him to Doctor... ." and I prescribed a chiropractor up town. (He's dead now.) I said, "You take him there and let him fluoroscope Dan and let you look and see that those three vertebrae are out of place. That doctor can put them back. Take him and go right now; he's your son."

He looked at me as straight, and he said, "Mrs. Allison, I've never seen a teacher that took this interest in my boy." He said, "Yes'm, I'll do exactly what you say."

So he took him uptown to the chiropractor. I don't remember that man's name, I can't call it. His office was over the old Wachovia Bank building. I may think of that name directly. Anyway, he took Dan up there, and by-and-by he came back. He had me a four pound box of chocolate candy. Of all the things I didn't need, it was a four-pound box of chocolate candy, but, that's how I got to be like I am now: It was thankful parents and thankful pupils bringing chocolate candy to the teacher. He began to cry as soon as he saw me, the daddy did.

He said, "Mrs. Allison, how can I ever thank you? I have

Allison: (Cont'd.) "that those vertebrae stay in whack." He said, "He told me it's a wonder I didn't have a raving lunatic on my hands."

I said, "You're just as welcome as you can be. The State pays me to try to find out / ^{what ails boys.} I'm here in place of a parent, and I'm finding out what's the matter with all these children."

We got eleven medical corrections. Some of them didn't need a thing but the "bud" put to them. Some of them didn't need a thing except an arm around them and somebody that was interested in them. I lost only two out of that whole twenty-three. We had to do more double promotions at the end of that year, but I lost two because they had already found out that they could go down below Emma and catch a freight train while somebody threw a switch to run it in on the Asheville yard, run the train in on the Asheville yard, and that they could climb up on that train and throw down coal and get that coal later and sell it and get pocket money. They had learned to steal. From that they learned to break in box cars; from that the railroad detective caught them, and they did time.

But I got me three preachers, two plumbers, and three carpenters and two workers at Enka; they're bossmen out there now. The others made just honorable, decent citizens; home owners.

Silveri: What year did you come up here?

Allison: (Cont'd.) "feeder / school over there across the mountain called Nesbitt's Chapel School, and you can have that. I've got a girl living in West Asheville teaching out there and I'd like for you to take charge of that school and get those children ready to go into the big building as quickly as we can get room for them on the main campus. But," he said, "they need attention and you can do as you please there. Now I can put you in the main big building, and you're welcome at either place."

Well, I asked my husband. You see, he had inherited this land and had been born here and had lived here till he was nine years old. Then his father had taken them to Black Mountain and he hadn't lived here since. I said, "Bob, which should I take?"

He said, "I'm not making up your mind for you, but I'll tell you what you do: You go out and nose around a little bit and make up your own mind."

I said: "But which would you rather I took?"

He said, "I'm not going to tell you what I'd rather you did. You make up your own mind, 'cause you'll do that anyhow, sooner or later."

So I went over across the mountain to that neighborhood and told them I was hunting a Mr. Dotson. I was very vague about which

Allison: (Cont'd.) that I was going over there to that little Nesbitt School. I went there for three years, then we had enough room on the ground down here at Fairview. What we'd had to do down there at Fairview: we'd built a gymnasium and we had built another building on the main big grounds. The men were called on who owned property, to give so many trees. Bob gave twelve pine trees to use to build that log building. Then two men had operated a saw mill to cut the timber to build the gymnasium. The State couldn't furnish us a gymnasium, and they couldn't furnish us a library. We had ^{an} overflow of children, so we put two rooms, one at each end of a big room, and we put a library in that main big room that served also as a lunchroom, put a kitchen behind it, and a cannery back of that. Then we built a gymnasium and six classrooms up there.

I was up in that gymnasium as soon as they brought us in from Flat Creek. I taught up there. The first year, they gave me cast-offs: "Let's give her so-and-so because I don't like him. He can't read. He's fifteen years old and he hasn't got any sense. I told him so." So they gave me another bunch of throw-outs, and I was tickled to death, because when it came time for the graduation class there were more of them in that senior class of my group than there were of the classical group, so to speak. But the parents, by that time, had

Allison: (Cont'd.) one year and high group the next, and every child could go in whichever room he wanted to if he was a borderline case. The result was that we had to quit that, because when sixty-five of them came in my room and eighteen went into the other teacher's room the principal had to take a hand.

So I taught at Fairview until I retired.

Silveri: What year was that?

Allison: Sixty-two.

Silveri: I want to ask you about your association with state-wide teacher association.

Allison: Oh, yes; as soon as I had found out that it took a unit to build strength, and if we had the unit and had the membership in the National Education Association, and had the state association back of us, that we could get a lot more things than we already had. So, as quickly as I had learned from the politicians how to poll a precinct, how to be a captain of a precinct, how to bring them in, how to approach them to get them to vote, I was through with that thing. I dropped it like a hot potato, and turned right around and began to teach teachers. So, as Terry Sanford said, I'm the great-great grandmaw of the Better Schools, Quality Education in this state. The principals would have one program that we wanted to ask the legislature for; the primary teachers

Allison: (Cont'd.) "the association of the men who belong on school boards. We've got to get a consolidated front, or we'll never get to first base, and divided we fall."

When I first became president of Classroom Teachers up here in Buncombe County, I met one of the principals, who was principal of Black Mountain High School, on the street, and he was a good friend of mine.

He said, "Mrs. Allison, I want to know something, and I won't take it from anybody but you. Is it true that you are the president of Classroom Teachers of this county?"

I said, "Sure; it certainly is."

"Well," he said, "they don't meet for a thing but to cuss us principals out."

I said, "Mr. Shuford, we're going to have to educate you and all these other principals."

So I began to mimeograph the agenda, what we were going to work with at each meeting, and mail to each school, at my own personal expense, three of those agendas. One was to go to the principal. The other two: one was to go on the bulletin board and one was to go to the main representative that came from their school. They were to bring in at least one representative, and more if they wished. Then when they

Allison: (Cont'd.) in their representative's file. It didn't take but about three or four months of that until I met Mr. Shuford, well, he came across the street; "jaywalked" right across Patton Avenue.

He said, "Mrs. Allison, I want to buy your dinner."

I said, "Good; I'm hungry."

He said, "Come on, let's go here in Eckerd's; I want to talk to you."

So I went in there and we were having lunch.

He said, "I owe you seventeen apologies."

I said, "Good; let's pile them all up in dessert."

He said, "I used to think that you teachers met/ but ^{to cuss us out,} you have made me thoroughly ashamed, because I have been reading this agenda, and then reading what you do with it, what is done with your time. You people are doing the chores of this association. I want to know if you will speak to the principals of this county."

I said, "Not without an invitation from your superintendent and his associate." I was getting in high gear.

He said, "You shall have them."

The next day my phone rang: "Mrs. Allison, the principals are going to meet so-and-so and you are requested to appear."

I said, "Good; I'll be there. What time do you want me?"

Allison: (Cont'd.) By that time, I was attending state meetings and state leadership conferences and we were making a united program and carrying it out to every county and every school in this state. We were getting the powers that be with us. We knew who our legislators were; we knew who our senators were, and if they weren't school-minded men, we knew how to get some more. We knew how to groom a man for governor. We groomed Terry Sanford. If they didn't do to suit us, we knew how to do different next time. When the Democrats wouldn't come across, even on my retirement, they did it without my sanction, went and put the money on this present man, Holzouser. I was opposed to that, because I said the Governor is governor in ninety-nine other respects, besides his relation to schools. I said, "It'll take twenty years to get over the effects of what that man will do, but, I'm retired, Hallelujah!"

Silveri: What effect did the second World War have on the schools?

Allison: It had three effects: It was hard. Oh, after Pearl Harbor and when our men were retreating on Bataan, I had fourth grade and a little girl's daddy was making a permanent career of the Army. She came to me crying one morning. She said, "Mrs. Allison, can they shoot real bullets at our men?"

I had to tell her "Yes," and that they could shoot to kill

Allison: (Cont'd.) "from London to Berlin? How many air miles to so-and-so?" You had to teach them. It took an awful lot of bolstering to bolster their confidence in this country when our men were retreating at Bataan, and when the army lost. Oh, that year, you'll never know how hard it was to teach, the winter of Pearl Harbor and the following year.

Then when they began to go forward, after they landed at Salerno Beach, it began to be easier, because by that time everybody had somebody in the war. We had our service flag, and we had our service for our World War dead. We have, down here in the school yard, a monument for the World War dead of this district.

But there never has been anything any harder than to teach those children when their armies were in retreat. After Pearl Harbor men got so scarce around here we would have an officer in from Asheville to show how a man should stand. We got blackout curtains for the auditorium, and blackout curtains then for the gymnasium, and we would have Army men bring out films and show them, and Navy men bring out films and show them. But the purpose was to see the size of an American warship: "Look at those guns on that warship. Look at the men and their equipment. They're carrying ninety pounds of equipment as they stand and walk."

Then, too: "A man's coming tomorrow. Look at him and you

Allison: (Cont'd.) very next day Venable practically emptied. Every boy, you see, that I had taught was a man, then. They went and pulled out those old geographies that they owned and they were looking to see where Pearl Harbor was.

"Mrs. Allison says a man belongs to his country more than he belongs to his parents. Come on, let's go volunteer."

Boy, did I get in Dutch with one woman! Her four sons marched out to volunteer. I met her uptown and she said, "Yes, here you are! You're the one that taught my young'ns! When them Japs began that bombing over yonder they pulled out them old geographies and everybody around there came to my radio and all the boys ganged up around there and the next day they went to town and volunteered. Why there's not anybody in long breeches in Venable district."

Well, the result was, that Venable district got out with only three conscripted men. All the rest of them that were left there were volunteers.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you, before I got into the war, how the mountain people looked upon Franklin Roosevelt, F.D.R.?

Allison: He was their hero; he was their God. They would have elected him seventeen more times if he'd lived. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. . . you just go out now in the schools and see how many boys are named Franklin.

[TAPE II, SIDE II]

Allison: (Cont'd.) I've seen every president since McKinley, except Coolidge.

Silveri: Every president since McKinley, except Coolidge?

Allison: Coolidge; that was when my boy was a baby and I didn't care whether I ever saw anything with two feet any more after looking at that boy. Harding died in July of the year that we opened school and I went back when my boy was a little fellow, and Coolidge came in to fill out the term till Hoover, and I wasn't caring about anything except Venable school. I was back into my element again, preaching consolidation, getting new schools, paving roads. Brevard Road wasn't paved. There weren't but one or two telephones out there. They didn't have water. I just had a place to turn my energy loose, and I turned it right into Venable district. I didn't stop till we got a new school building; we got enough high school built to need four teachers in that high school; we were running four buses; we had the road paved; we had water bonds voted, and we had water out there.

Of course, we had bored a well at that house. That's where I learned what a bored well would do, and what an electric pump would do.

Silveri: You mentioned Terry Sanford before. Was he the Governor that instituted the sales tax on food?

Allison: No; it was not on everything until Terry came in, but I'll tell you right now, Terry Sanford was a good school man. But the trouble was: he got too big for his breeches, as the men would say. He got to where he thought: "Great Big Terry, little bitty you." He lost the vision, and as far as I'm personally concerned, Terry Sanford's name is mud. He'd better stay at Duke University. He ran for the Senate, and the teachers of this state said, "No!" and Terry didn't get it. Now we wish he had, because we had to take some pretty bum material.

I was on that committee that represented this state working for Federal Aid for Education. First I was on the Classroom Teacher committee, then I was elevated to Chairman. The fact is: I held every office that you could hold without leaving home, in my association. I couldn't leave because Bob Allison was sick. You see, Bob didn't die until '65. I had been retired from teaching three years, although I'd been substituting nearly every day. But, I could stay out if I wanted to, and if he had a medical appointment or what-not, and wasn't able to drive the truck and get there, I stayed out and took him in the car. He had a truck and I had an automobile. You see, he had given up trying to do anything then except raise beef cattle. After we came up here that helped arthritis just got him. Well, I always / helped him then. He had to quit

Allison: Um, hum.

Silveri: It's in Buncombe County?

Allison: Buncombe County.

Silveri: And you've lived here since 1936?

Allison: That's right.

Silveri: What kind of neighbors do you have out here? Are they all farmers?

Allison: No; very few farmers. . . very few farmers. Now you take the man next above me: the man himself has throat cancer. He's a disabled war veteran, but his wife is some kind of a boss down here at C.P. Clare.

The next man does refrigeration and air conditioning for Moser Plumbing Company. Then, on up yonder around the Echo Lake, one of those men (the only one that's working) is the head of a company that rents uniforms. They're Redmons; the rest of them are all on retirement, they're just up there spending their time.

Silveri: What did you say the name of the lake was?

Allison: Echo Lake.

Silveri: Echo Lake; yes.

Allison: Echo Lake; and those people are on retirement. Now, there's one young man up there who's a commercial artist. He does commercial

Allison: (Cont'd.) "women's lib." So we took pumpkins and we put on mouths that were beautifully shaped and done with very red paper, and we made artificial eyelashes and artificial brows and the most gorgeous eyes. All those women ^{liked them;} . . . the eyes were made with buttons put on paper and we did eye shadow around there. Then we tied a bow onto the handle of the pumpkin, and we made the most alluring "Jill-o-lanterns" you ever saw. I could do it all without any help, except the eyes, and I called on that commercial artist to help me with the eyes, and he did. Believe you me, the eyes had it. We sold those pumpkins to all the ladies who have a business of their own. You know, American Business Women; some of them own beauty shops and some own this or that. They bought them to take there, all except one: I gave one to my fair daughter to take to McCarley and Company, her brokerage office.

Silveri: When I came here today, I noticed that there were two very old log cabins on that road.

Allison: Oh; one of them is where Davy Crockett used to spend the night. I've got to tell you about that house: it's been remodeled and a lot done to it since Davy spent the night there, but I have a photograph of it, and with the people who were host and hostess to Davy Crockett.

You see, the Creek Indians used to come up here on a

Allison: (Cont'd.) Now, straight across this mountain to the North of me the way the crow flies, about nine miles, is Patton's original farm. Of course, it's been traded and changed hands since then, but Mr. Patton lived there and he had a wife who was very beautiful. Among all the men who went, he went to follow the Creek Indians, and they got down to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1832, and the Indians had an idea: They would take a hollow stump, and in that hollow stump they would put about five or six of the biggest rattlesnakes they could catch, and they would kill a deer and take the liver and lights or lungs of that deer and put them on a pole and shake it over that stump just as long as a rattler would strike, until the meat became perfectly green with the venom. Then they stuck Indian arrows in there, arrow-heads; it was the points, and shafts too, because they were not going to touch that thing with their bare hands, because those arrows were poison. When they took them out of there they laid them out in the sun and dried them. Then they shot them at the white men. Mr. Patton was shot, and he said that was equivalent to being bitten by all those rattlers.

He said, "David, I can't make it."

David said, "No; they got you."

He said, "This doeskin suit that I'm wearing. my wife made

Allison: (Cont'd.) David promised him he'd do all those things, and Mr. Patton told him how to get to Swannanoa.

He said, "You come through/ ^{the gap,} follow the French Broad River until you get to Muddy Creek, and then you take up a clear creek called Cane Creek. Somebody in that area will show you what direction. You follow that creek until you come to where it's so narrow it's just like a branch, and there you inquire again, because you have to go across a mountain to the North to get to my farm. Ask where the Patton place is."

So, when the battle was over and the Indians were defeated, and all the dead were buried, David Crockett came, fulfilling his errands for Mr. Patton. When he got down to that little cabin, a man named Whitaker was living there with his wife. Now, wait a minute, her name had been Whitaker before she married; his name was Jenkins. It was her property, though. Anyway, Davy stopped there; he saw that the creek was getting narrow, like a branch.

He said, "How do I get across here to the Patton place?"

They said, "Patton's? You can't get over there tonight, because the fog's down on that mountain and you'd get lost, and besides that, it's summer and you might get snake bitten. You'd better stay here the night and in the morning some of us will guide you till we can direct you to get across there."

Allison: (Cont'd.) house. Then he went back to Tennessee, and found that while he had been gone his own wife had died, and without knowing it, he was a widower. And he thought of that good cooking of Mrs. Patton and what a kind lady she was, so he brought in one of the aunties to take care of his children while he came back to propose to the Lady Patton.

And he knew exactly how to come that time; he came straight ^{Jenkins} to that/house and spent the night and took out quick as he could see, across here. That was when my husband's grandfather, William McBrayer, was a young man, and he was hunting cattle up in that gap of the mountain. He heard a young turkey gobbler just beginning to gobble, and he thought, "Gee, what good meat that would be!" He began to try to track the gobbler. Of course, he had his rifle with him. Men didn't go out in the woods without a rifle in those days. The first thing he knew, he and Davy were tracing each other; they had both heard the gobbler gobble. Davy found out first, though, that it was a man he was trailing, and they consolidated their efforts and got the gobbler.

Now, there are two tales from there on. This has been handed down as folklore. One tale is that they stopped there and barbequed it, but I just don't believe a man who was going to hunt a widow would stop to barbeque a turkey on his way to propose marriage.

Allison: (Cont'd.) one you want to. Anyway, he went on and proposed and she accepted him, but, with reservations.

She said, "We'll have to wait until my crop is gathered and my tenants are placed on other property and until I have sold my place, and maybe the tenants will be retained, but I have that responsibility. I have to decide which things I will take to Tennessee to your home. It will take two wagon loads, the best I can figure, and what livestock I want to take along. You come back in October and we'll be married."

So, in October David came back and he stopped at the house again; spruced himself up and next morning dressed up and went across the mountain and married the Lady Patton.

There's a tale that while they were getting married, one of those hogs she was going to take with her to Tennessee broke jail and came running right through the audience and ran right between David's knees and upset him, but anyway, they caught the hog and put it back. All the neighbors apparently were there, and they had a very nice wedding meal, and he took her on home to Tennessee. But she didn't like Tennessee, but she'd sold her own place and couldn't come back to it, so she talked Davy into going to Texas to get some of that free land that was being given away down there. Moreover, you could take your slaves down there.

Allison: (Cont'd.) American men. That was their idea. So Davy got caught in the Alamo. When he heard that they were expecting a battle, that was right up his alley.

So, Mrs. Patton was left a widow for the second time; each husband lost in battle.

Silveri: Did Daniel Boone ever come through this area?

Allison: Never heard of it. Davy Crockett is our hero. Oh, when read before get a book about him! little boys who never/ . . . I'm tutoring now, as I told you, and when little boys learn to read and read the biography of Davy Crockett, I reward them by a copy of that original picture and bringing them out here to see that house where David Crockett stayed and spent the night. Oh, how they will learn to read! Because, "I'll get to go to Mrs. Allison's house; I'll get to go to her house. We'll make Lafayette gingerbread."

That's another thing I tell the boys: about the Lafayette gingerbread, that was made at my grandmother's and grandfather's. I told you about that the other time.

Silveri: Yes; we have that on the tape.

Allison: So I make Lafayette gingerbread for them. Of course, they've read the biography of George Washington, and get Lafayette in connection with that, and that is the reward for learning to read: is to come up

Allison: (Cont'd.) One of the signs of a Depression is: predators and people poaching. Biltmore Estate suffered the loss of lots of bears and deer during the Depression. You see by the paper that they are starting a campaign against poachers out in the Smokies killing bear./ . . coming on the sly, and taking them in there and killing them./ . . because the price of meat is up.

Another thing: they're beginning to steal cattle. A lot of people are afraid to put their cattle on pastures and ranges that are a good way from anybody's house.

Silveri: You've given me quite a lot of time here. I just wanted to ask you if there is anything. . . Looking back over all those years since 1914, when you started in a one-room schoolhouse, you've seen fantastic changes taking place.

Allison: Oh, yes.

Silveri: Do you think that anything has been lost in consolidation?

Allison: Yes; we lost that friendly neighborhood feeling, but a lot has been gained. The gains offset the losses, about sixty-forty, if you were going to do it percentage-wise. Some of these days, some learned professor is going to write a dissertation on what consolidation has done for the blood-lines of North Carolina. Because people got out of their little hollow and married folks that they became acquainted with; instead of marrying somebody from "yander across the footlog,"

Allison: (Cont'd.) have to give part of the credit for that to radio and television, because they speak a common idiom, you might say, although I can still tell by how a person speaks whether he is from the lake area or from up around Pennsylvania, New York; or whether he's from Boston or Baltimore, or whether he comes from Down South and is from around Atlanta, or the Texas twang, the Western twang, they have it; but it is in a much milder form.

You take the first year I attended a national teachers' convention: the National Education meeting was '53, at Miami Beach. There we were much more conscious of the different dialects, different versions of the English language. In 1954 we met at Madison Square Garden in New York. In 1955 we were at Soldiers' Field, Chicago. In 1956 we went to Portland, Oregon. You see, I was representing North Carolina on the Citizenship Commission as long as there was a Citizenship Commission. . . . We were trying to stop this thing that later on became the sit-ins and lying-ins and drive-ins, and, in other words, the lawless riots. I served three, three-year terms on that commission.

Let me see: we met in Portland in fifty-six; we met in Philadelphia in fifty-seven; we met in Cleveland, Ohio, in fifty-eight. That was the year that all of the North Carolina delegation sat on the

Allison: (Cont'd.) sixty-two, because I became sixty-five when we met in Atlantic City. I was already sixty-five then, and I taught until after I was sixty-six. If I hadn't hurt this leg jumping off of a table at school and tore ^{three} / ligaments, and they said you had to request retirement while you were under contract, I had to request retirement, because the doctor said it never would straighten out and that I'd always limp and have to have crutches or a cane, or something.

Silveri: I want you to get back to that question I asked you before, about something being lost. There has been a criticism that the high schools and the junior high schools in the mountain region of Southern Appalachia have ignored the cultural heritage of their children.....

Allison: They have largely done so, and now this "Foxfire" business down in North Georgia is bringing that back. I think it should be, to an extent, but we do not want North Carolina children ever to get as narrow a viewpoint as was given to children when I was growing up. We want them to be little working citizens of a big world. We want them to appreciate their home culture. Oh, yes; and to prove it, I'm fixing to write a textbook on what Bob's granny used to know about the wild herbs of this area and how they were used in the drug business; how to make the old home remedies from them. I'm stymied right now

Allison: (Cont'd.) a great mistake; I think, by wanting everything colored. I think that is a forty percent thing against a sixty percent of the white man's culture. Now when they were brought to America they were not Christians; they had a language of their own, after a fashion, but they had to be what you call civilized.

My Grandmother Graham remembered enough of that to tell me about it. The field hands were the less cultured. The ones that would take on culture faster were brought into the house as household help. They naturally took on that culture from the white men.

I think that a great mistake would be made by saying that the colored man should take just colored culture. Forty percent of the people of North Carolina are colored; sixty percent are white. In the Western part of this state the percentage ^{of negroes} is much less. Out of eleven hundred and sixty-nine children last year, we had at Reynolds High School thirty-nine colored. We gave them their due, but we don't want to go overboard.

I believe in maintaining an even keel. I'm not going back to old ancestor worship. The Grahams trace their ancestry back to Malcolm Graham, the King of Scotland, and so on, but I'm not going to let that worry me a particle. The MacIntoshes claim theirs back to Mary, Queen of Scots, because that son of hers that miraculously

Allison: (Cont'd.) and sometimes he was called Thomas Stuart and sometimes Stuart Thomas.

Silveri: Well, I think it's time to stop here, and I want to thank you very much for your kindness.

Allison: Well, you're quite welcome.

[END OF TAPE]