

V I R G I N I A B R Y A N S C H R E I B E R

Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri
August 3, 1976

S O U T H E R N H I G H L A N D S R E S E A R C H C E N T E R

The University of North Carolina at Asheville

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Interview with Virginia Bryan Schreiber, conducted by Dr. Louis D. Silveri, August 3, 1976.

[First few minutes of tape omitted]

Virginia Schreiber: . . . They say I started when I was nineteen out there at Cullowhee, and the students were about my age. . . I really enjoyed myself. . . then I got my Master's at Columbia University. I'm not bragging; you asked me to tell you. . .

Louis D. Silveri: . . . From your parents.

Schreiber: Oh, indeed! I just can't praise them enough. My father loved books; my father wrote. He worked in a mill when he was a boy in Arkansas. He has written about those days, and later he wrote a column in the Asheville Times called "The Highway House," in which he observed people and conditions in the world. All of your environment, as you grow up, influences you.

They were parents of courage and faith. My mother was quite religious. She had many, many books of different types. She was musical; she could sit down even at age ninety and play the piano, just in a beautiful way, I think. I can't praise that enough. The little bit I have, I'll praise them. She taught me to play the piano when I was a child living in Atlanta, Georgia.

Silveri: How did your brother happen to go into the field of history?

Schreiber: He didn't, immediately. He went to Duke, and he came away from Duke University feeling that he should go ahead immediately. I don't know where he got the urge, but at first he worked a while on the newspaper. He taught a year or two. Then he decided that was not

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) for him, and he went back to college and took a Master's Degree at Chapel Hill. From then on he began to teach. Later he worked and got his Ph.D. at Duke, and it was from that he published a book called Confederate Georgia, which is one, I think, of the best reference books that a person could have on that particular period. It proves everything that's in Gone With the Wind! (So the author said. . . the author, Miss Mitchell, told him.)

Silveri: Your brother recently retired from Western Carolina?

Schreiber: That's right; he taught in Georgia first at Georgia Military College, and then later at Dahlonega, which was a part of the University of Georgia system. Then he came up to North Carolina.

Silveri: You said your family had moved to Asheville. Could you give me the date on that?

Schreiber: Yes; we moved up here in 1916.

Silveri: Nineteen-sixteen; when did you come back then, to teach?

Schreiber: It was in 1928 that I started with the college.

Silveri: Now, let's go back to what you were talking about. It was called the Buncombe. . .

Schreiber: . . . County Junior College.

Silveri: Was that started the year you came to teach?

Schreiber: I came the second year.

Silveri: . . . came the second year; so it was started in 1927, Buncombe County Junior College. Was it supported by the County? It wasn't a private school, was it?

Schreiber: It was a school supported by the Commissioners with tax

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) money; with free tuition, for a very short time, because soon everything in Asheville was lost in the banks. We had nothing, and we came almost to the barter system at one time. I remember the Dean got up in the chapel and said, "Bring a bushel of potatoes, bring a bag of potatoes, bring anything you can! We just have to have something!" This is true! Even teachers from the high school went up and banged on the doors of the bank trying to get the bank doors open!

Silveri: Where was it located? Where was this school?

Schreiber: The first time it was located in the basement of the Biltmore High School on Hendersonville Road in Biltmore.

Silveri: This school was for Buncombe County residents?

Schreiber: Chiefly; the City students could come, too.

Silveri: City being part of the County?

Schreiber: Yes.

Silveri: Did they go out to recruit? Did they encourage the students from up in the coves and the hollows to come to this school?

Schreiber: Well, indeed they did. The time just seemed to be ripe for this kind of college, and it had been the dream of Mr. A.C. Reynolds for a long time for students to have further information after they finished high school. He wanted it to be free. Soon we had to charge a small tuition in order to exist, and at one time our salaries were about eleven hundred dollars a year. Many times the college could have closed. I suppose you have heard this before.

Silveri: Yes. How did you happen to get that job?

Schreiber: I went up to the Courthouse and applied. I had to go before the Commissioners (as I remember it) and tell them who I was, what I had done, and where my training had been. The first thing I knew I had the job! It didn't take too much.

Silveri: Who was the first president of the college?

Schreiber: Well, we did not call any one president. Mr. A.C. Reynolds was County Superintendent; Mr. W.H. Jones, who was superintendent of all of the Biltmore schools, helped at that time. He was a fine man, eager to help with higher education. We had what were called "deans." They went more by the name of "deans" for many years, but Mr. Reynolds supervised and looked after it all at first, and Mr. Jones met with the faculty and paid us.

Silveri: You taught grammar or English?

Schreiber: English; freshman composition and sophomore courses in English literature. These courses, with theme writing and research papers were easily accepted for credit at universities. Soon we started a course in creative writing, which brought us more recognition than our regular work did. We established a magazine called Bluets, which won prizes nationally, and which had editorial comments, in our local newspapers, at least. Students seemed to enjoy that type of work, and so I put a class into the curriculum called "Creative Writing." It gave a little credit and met once or twice a week. We also had a newspaper, then, in those early days, called The Highlander. The students organized and held a junior college press conference.

Silveri: These were students who graduated from county high schools?

Schreiber: That's right; some of them walked long distances, too, to get to college. I remember our present Congressman, Roy Taylor, walking up the hill to the school. He was a debater in those early days.

They came in cars, if they had cars. We didn't have as many cars then as you have, of course, today. One girl walked from Weaverville, N.C., in cold weather.

Silveri: How long did the school continue under that name: Buncombe County Junior College?

Schreiber: I forget the exact date, but it changed soon to the Biltmore College. Later it changed to Asheville-Biltmore College.

Silveri: Then to U.N.C. at Asheville?

Schreiber: That's right.

Silveri: How long was it in that location at the Biltmore High School?

Schreiber: I think until the Depression ended, which was quite a while later. Let me see if I can give you the exact time: we stayed as long as there was room for us; we were in the basement of this building, and we were there, it seems, until we moved, which must have been from 1927, I believe, until about 1936.

Silveri: This was not a vocational or technical school, this was a junior college giving liberal arts courses?

Schreiber: It did both. We had some manual training; we had home economics; we had method courses for education; we also had all the foundation work leading to what we hoped would be four-year college degrees. Later it was recognized in that way, very easily.

Silveri: There were colleges in Buncombe County then, weren't there?

Schreiber: There was Asheville Normal and Teachers College, it was called, but it was at that time for ladies only. Ours began as a co-educational school from the beginning. Then the Farm School, which is now called Warren Wilson College, had men. So there really, I believe, were not many co-educational colleges.

Silveri: Probably in the whole mountain area there were only the teachers' college at Cullowhee and the teachers' college at Boone. They were about the only State four-year colleges. Mars Hill College was also a junior college.

Schreiber: Yes; Cullowhee began as a two-year college. I think it was nearer the middle of the Twentieth Century before it became a four-year college.

Silveri: So this Buncombe County Junior College began in the basement of the Biltmore High School and stayed there as long as it was in Biltmore, occupying the school rooms in the basement?

Schreiber: That's right; we gave many other opportunities, which we perhaps forget today. Because we were in the high school building we had access to a basketball court, and our girls even had a wonderful basketball team that became quite well known. They went as far as Texas playing, at one time. We didn't go in for sports as such, but we went in for debating and the things that colleges used to do a great deal.

Silveri: Incidentally, where did the Bryan family live when they were in Asheville? Where did you retire?

Schreiber: In several places. I lived at Beaver Lake at the time I became a teacher at this college, until the banks closed. We lived out there five years, and we lost everything, as practically every person in Asheville did. My father didn't want to stay on in our home, even though we could have stayed maybe another year, since he knew we couldn't continue paying. From there we moved to other parts of Asheville temporarily, and finally moved to Royal Pines for twelve years.

Silveri: Royal Pines? Is that a part of Asheville?

Schreiber: It's out near Arden and Skyland. It's a beautiful development now, but it was a development with very few homes when we were there. I drove back and forth during the Depression years, bringing in a load of students who had no way to get in. They were very grateful to have a ride into Asheville. A mother of three former students continues to thank me.

Silveri: Do you remember any of the early teachers you taught with there? Are there any still around?

Schreiber: Strange as it seems, I'm one of the few who were there in the early days who are still living. There is a Mr. S.B. Conley, who lives at what's called Lost Cove over in the Tennessee side near North Carolina. Most of the others have died. He was Dean of Men in early days.

Silveri: You're an important link with that story!

Schreiber: Also at some times in the history of the college, I was the only lady on the faculty. I laugh when we hear so much about ERA,

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) because I think I was treated grand all the years I was there!

Silveri: It was a very small faculty at first?

Schreiber: Very small.

Silveri: What about the students you had? Did they have any particular difficulties in the subject that you taught? How was their English? How was their grammar?

Schreiber: As I remember it, it was better than it was twenty years later! I may have poor memory, but the fact that they applied themselves and were eager to have a newspaper and a literary magazine in this small college just at the beginning, I think speaks enough for them. I don't mean that we didn't have failures; we did.

Silveri: Were most of the students from Asheville and Biltmore?

Schreiber: And Buncombe; yes. You are leaving out maybe one fact, that at the same time we started Buncombe Junior College, the next year the City of Asheville started a junior college.

Silveri: Oh, what was that called?

Schreiber: It was called the Asheville City College, but it could not go on because it did not have funds. We feel that ours absorbed that college, because ours went on in name.

Silveri: But when the Depression hit, you said then that the Buncombe Junior College had to start charging some tuition?

Schreiber: Yes; very, very small tuition.

Silveri: Did that have any effect on the enrollment? Did the enrollment go down?

Schreiber: Slightly, I would say; if a family had a choice, a son or a daughter, often one would come to our college and one would go out of town to college.

Silveri: What was your salary that first year you were teaching? Do you remember?

Schreiber: It seems to me that it was eighteen hundred. I was head of the English department and Dean of Women.

Silveri: When the Depression came, did they ask you to take a cut?

Schreiber: They didn't ask me; I had to or not be there! It went down to eleven hundred. Now in between (you didn't ask me) I did have offers away from here to go into some other colleges, four year colleges. For a long period of time I was supporting my parents and I didn't have much choice, although my father encouraged me at times to take these other positions. I liked my work and I stayed; I'm glad I did. For a while, the faculty was in control of the college.

Silveri: You continued in that position up through the Depression years. You must have vivid memories of the Depression in Asheville.

Schreiber: Oh, too vivid! We had three suicides. I was amazed that someone had kept a paper which gives the whole account of the suicide of the mayor of Asheville at that time: Mayor Gallatin Roberts. I have the paper here, but it was unbelievable that he left the letter that he did. I had no recollection of this letter saying that people made him feel so guilty; and he was not guilty at all. He wrote this to the people of Asheville: (the newspaper said) "He was so sickened to death that ex-Mayor Roberts fires a bullet through his head."

Silveri: Well, you continued to teach through those years?

Schreiber: Oh, yes!

Silveri: You had that job through the years.

Schreiber: I taught on until 1945 or 1946, and then I went over to the University of Tennessee to teach. I was given a leave of absence, but I decided at the time to stay on at UT a little bit longer. Then, strange as it may seem, I married!

Silveri: Let's go back to Buncombe County Junior College. When did that change in name or position, or both? In other words, I should say, location.

Schreiber: I don't remember the date that it changed, but I think I can soon tell you. It apparently became Biltmore College in about '34, because Mr. Lloyd was the dean at that time, and a charter was secured.

Silveri: It was changed from Buncombe to Biltmore. Do you know why?

Schreiber: Well, we had been at Biltmore, and I don't think there was any particular reason. It was no longer a free county college, and the board changed. Some wanted the name changed.

Silveri: Was that a private college?

Schreiber: It was a tuition college, run by a board; yes. Always, however, the city school board had a member; the superintendent of the city schools worked with us.

Silveri: Oh, I see; that happened around 1936?

Schreiber: Yes.

Silveri: Biltmore College; you remained there on the staff, however, of this college?

Schreiber: Yes, I did, and stayed on throughout all of the Depression and throughout the good years later.

Silveri: What about some of the students you had during those years? You were telling me about some of them. You mentioned Roy Taylor as one of your students.

Schreiber: Oh, we had so many wonderful students. I look back and see what they have done for Asheville, and what they have done around Buncombe County: Mary Nesbitt, Helene Gore Ivy, of Chapel Hill, and others. Gordon Greenwood was one of the early students. Do you know Gordon Greenwood?

Silveri: Yes.

Schreiber: He's at Montreat College now doing public relations work.

Silveri: He used to be County Commissioner for many years.

Schreiber: Yes; then he was a newspaperman at one time. A friend reminded me yesterday that Gordon said in those early college days that he couldn't write. He couldn't write a column for a school newspaper and strangely he became, later, an editor.

In addition to him there was Junius Allison, who became the legal aid head of the Chicago system when that was just coming in as a new counseling service. We thought that was quite a lovely position. In addition, there have been authors. John Thayer was a librarian who wrote some children's books. Of course, Wilma Dykeman Stokeley was very outstanding as a student in those days. She debated and she spoke on

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) radio. Radio was coming in more and more for programs, but Wilma showed talent in poetry and in prose at that time.

Silveri: She was an Asheville native?

Schreiber: Yes, she was; she was born in Buncombe County and lived in Beaverdam Valley.

Silveri: What was her maiden name? Dykeman was her maiden name, right? She married Stokeley?

Schreiber: That's right.

Silveri: She would have gone to school in the 1940's sometime, I would imagine?

Schreiber: She was editor of Bluets in 1938. Wilma has been married thirty-six years. I saw Wilma and James just last week and James said: "You know, these have been the happiest thirty-six years!" I was at their wedding, incidentally. Wilma is coming back in town this week.

Silveri: How did Wilma and James Stokeley meet?

*Schreiber: Well, the story is that Mabel Wheaton, who was Thomas Wolfe's sister, told Tom that she knew a girl that James might like to meet. They went out to the home up the valley. Do you know where Wilma came from?

Silveri: Reems Creek?

Schreiber: Well, it isn't Reems Creek; it was out Weaverville way, but only a short distance. You go to what was called Webb's Orchard, at that time. Later the Stokeleys bought that orchard. My husband and I we went out that way often on little trips around. But on this particular

*Virginia Schreiber has corrected her account of James Stokeley's first meeting with Wilma Dykeman to read that Mable Wheaton, and not Tom Wolfe, accompanied Stokeley.

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) day, Wilma has told me that these two men came to her door. "There I was in my apron with my hair disheveled, and there stood James Stokeley!" (Whom she met.) It was a wonderful marriage, apparently.

Silveri: He and Tom Wolfe were friends?

Schreiber: Indeed they were.

Silveri: This is the family of the Stokeley-Van Camp business, isn't it?

Schreiber: Yes; they live at Newport, Tennessee, after they married.

Silveri: Is he still involved in that business?

Schreiber: I would say, not actively; his family is.

Silveri: You mentioned Tom Wolfe. We might as well talk about him for a while. Did you know Tom Wolfe?

Schreiber: No, I never did know Tom Wolfe. I knew Mabel Wheaton, and I met and knew his mother slightly; Julia Wolfe. I did encourage my students to read from him, and I encouraged them to have interviews. Several of them went over to Mrs. Wolfe's house and had interviews. I was there once on Mrs. Wolfe's birthday and we had a delightful time.

Silveri: Were you one of those people who were taken aback by the publication of Wolfe's first book, Look Homeward, Angel? We know the furor that it caused here in Asheville. What was your reaction to it when it was published?

Schreiber: If I tell you frankly: I think I had no reaction, which sounds unusual. To me it was a book to enjoy, to read, and the people involved in it didn't mean that much to me. I'm not very interested

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) in gossip, but many people bought copies and wrote in the names of every Ashevilleian who was mentioned in the book. Of course, I have some curiosity to know, and I have learned about several of them, but to me a book is for reading. Most of Wolfe's work, to me, is rather poetic prose.

Silveri: So you probably didn't agree with the Asheville library in not carrying his book?

Schreiber: No; indeed I didn't. Some of his relatives were recently at this re-dedication at the Wolfe home who at first were not proud of him at all.

Silveri: Someone just told me recently that Mabel once told him that: - "Maybe we shouldn't be so mad at Tom, because after all before he published the book we were just a common, ordinary family, but afterwards he put us on the map!"

Schreiber: That sounds like Mabel! She was full of life, as he pictured her in the book!

Silveri: Also on her tombstone (I've been out to Riverside Cemetery recently) is a quote from Tom's book that she had more humanity in her than anyone else he'd ever known! (Something like that.)

Schreiber: He was very fond of his sister?

Silveri: He was very fond of Mabel; yes.

Schreiber: I think he understood her, and her exuberance, and her out-going attitude. Though he must have loved Ben very much, from the way he pictures Ben.

Silveri: What kind of family did Wilma Dykeman come from?

Schreiber: Wilma's mother is a native of Buncombe County. Her father came from New York State. I believe he came down here for his health. He was an older man than her mother, and had a son by a previous marriage when he married Wilma's mother. This son, half-brother of Wilma's, was very, very proud of Wilma. He went to friends in Asheville and would take her works or tell us when there was an article about her. His name was Jerome Dykeman, and he died just about two years ago.

Silveri: Oh, yes; I remember that. Wilma graduated from the college when it was a four-year college?

Schreiber: Oh, no; no. She finished when it was a two-year college, and I'm sure they were very happy to have this college for Wilma to come to. She then went up to Evanston, Illinois, and finished there at Northwestern University.

Silveri: Did she come back home then after that? When did she start to write and publish? It must have been very early.

Schreiber: She started most of this after she married.

Silveri: After marriage?

Schreiber: Yes; I don't remember that she spent any time here except in vacation periods.

Silveri: Let's go back to the college once again. In 1934 it became Biltmore College, but it remained in the same place. When was the next change in the make-up of the school?

Schreiber: Well, we had to leave the quarters, as we called them, out there, and so we had to look around in order to find a place. We went on from there to the David Millard School, which was a fine building,

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) recently torn down. (The college was at the David Millard building from 1934 to 1940.)

Silveri: That was a high school?

Schreiber: It was a junior high school, but at the time the whole basement and part of the first floor seemed to be unused. They allowed us to go in and use it. We had built two junior high schools: one called Hall Fletcher in West Asheville, and one called David Millard.

Silveri: Although this was no longer a county school, in fact a private school, you must have had to rent that space at David Millard?

Schreiber: When I say "private," I'm afraid I left the wrong impression, because always we really were connected in some way with the public school system, in that some of them were on the board. They were always overseeing us and helping us. I'm sure we got the rent over there at a nominal fee. Maybe we paid for lights and heat, but there was such an eagerness to keep it going. I assure you we met many, many times and we often were ready to give up, but something just said: "Keep on longer"; we did. From David Millard, now, we went to the Asheville Normal grounds.

Silveri: Where is that located?

Schreiber: Where the Mission Hospital is now; Memorial Mission Hospital. The Normal was in existence at that time, and rooms in buildings were available.

Silveri: How long were you at David Millard Junior High?

Schreiber: I can't give you the exact dates. We were there, I suppose, about four years. (Really six.)

Silveri: That would take you into the Second World War period?

Schreiber: No; we were out at Merrimon Avenue during the second war period.

Silveri: Oh, that's another place!

Schreiber: Yes; yes.

Silveri: You moved up to the Asheville Normal School, and you had some rooms in that building?

Schreiber: That is correct.

Silveri: You were still a two-year junior college?

Schreiber: Yes.

Silveri: You stayed there for a short time?

Schreiber: At one time it seemed that the Normal couldn't go on, and that maybe the two colleges would combine, but the whole philosophy of the colleges seemed to be different. As I look back, I think we could have adjusted either way, but we didn't. We kept ours, and the Normal finally went from under control of what was called the Mission Board, and the books in the library were taken out to Warren Wilson College.

Silveri: Had that Normal School had a connection with the church?

Schreiber: Oh, yes; it had been under the Presbyterian Mission Board; Northern Presbyterian Mission Board, it was called.

Silveri: Did you move from there to Merrimon Avenue after that?

Schreiber: To what was called the Children's Home Building. (1940-1942)

Silveri: Is that still standing?

Schreiber: I told someone recently that I was going to call and find out. I think it's definitely a part of the Presbyterian Church, the Covenant Presbyterian Church. It's their educational building.

Silveri: This would be quite far up on Merrimon Avenue?

Schreiber: No; you know where Gracelyn Road is?

Silveri: Yes.

Schreiber: It's right there. That's the Covenant Presbyterian Church. Then the Naval Recruiting Station is up on the hill, too. If you look at this pretty new church you'll see that one building which faces Gracelyn is slightly older. That was the Children's Home at that time. Our actual meeting place was not in that building, but it was in an older building there which was called the Children's Home. You know, if you keep thinking about it, it's almost a miracle that the college kept going!

Silveri: The way you went around to various buildings!

Schreiber: Yes; I laugh sometimes and say, "Now, wait a minute! I moved everywhere the college has ever moved, including the university campus!" But also when we moved in those early days, many of us hauled books from the library in our own cars in order to save money to help.

The men would work extra hours establishing their laboratories. At one time we had some excellent faculty members. In recent years, Dr. Mann, who is now dead, left us and went over to Oak Ridge when it was just beginning its prominent work. Others got better jobs and left us, but they were with us when we were at this Children's

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) Home building on Merrimon Avenue. They helped to put up their own labs quite often, including physics, chemistry and biology.

Silveri: That was during the Second World War, then?

Schreiber: Yes.

Silveri: Now, if any time you were thinking of closing, that was probably the time, because of the lack of students.

Schreiber: We got down to so few students then, that it was almost unbelievable that we could live on that tuition, but somewhere along there (I think we have to give Roy Taylor some of this credit because he was at the State Legislature) we got twelve thousand dollars, which seemed like a bounty to us, to carry on the work.

Silveri: That was a life saver, to say the least.

Schreiber: That's right.

Silveri: So you survived through the Second World War?

Schreiber: Yes; as the boys came back, because of the increase in money for them to go to college, the college came out better.

Silveri: The G.I. Bill?

Schreiber: That's right. I'm glad you thought of the word.

Silveri: Then where did you move to?

Schreiber: Then from there we went up to Seely's Castle. We worked hard to have a bond issue. We succeeded in that, and we purchased the property up there at a very reasonable sum. Mrs. Seely wanted to get rid of it, but she wanted it to go for some good.

Silveri: What is the history of that: Seely's Castle? What is the background of that?

Schreiber: You haven't heard that since you've been around Asheville?

Silveri: No; I've heard some of it.

Schreiber: Mrs. Seely was Dr. E.W. Grove's daughter, and he was the man who worked out the wonderful cure--quinine for colds, and so on. When she married Mr. Seely, it seems they wanted a different type of home, and they built it at that time. I understand it wasn't such a happy background home. I don't mean their lives, but the building itself is a little bit cold when you go into it, and cold looking. It looks like a castle.

Silveri: Was it still (the school) called Biltmore College then, or was it Asheville-Biltmore now?

Schreiber: By this time it was Asheville-Biltmore College. Dr. Glenn Bushey was the president from 1947 to 1962. It was from 1962 on that it became the four-year college. When I went out to the Asheville University, as it is now called, to teach, there were only two buildings, the Science Building and the Administration Building. That was from 1962 on.

Silveri: Let's get back to Seely's Castle.

Schreiber: All right.

Silveri: This was the first time you had a building of your own.

Schreiber: Indeed, it was; a building of our own, but it didn't last too long. We got a better one; a better building.

Silveri: Were you up there a very short time?

Schreiber: We were there about eight years. We had a wonderful night school. I used to drive up and teach at night even. We had established all of this contact with the industries around here. We had courses at Enka; we were giving courses to men and women who worked all day, and who wanted to come; women who were secretaries, maybe, who wanted to advance. We had a very good plan, I think, for older people, and it was succeeding quite well.

Silveri: Were you still the only one on the faculty teaching English?

Schreiber: No; Mrs. Wishart taught up there, too. (Before this time, we had excellent part-time instructors or coaches in dramatics.)

Silveri: She's still at the college.

Schreiber: Yes; that's right. Miss Flora McGhee, who is living in Asheville, taught speech and English. We increased because students increased. We increased our faculty; we had some very good members then in other departments. Physics was a good course. Dean Parsons was up there. We called him "Dean" then because he was the Dean of Men, I believe. He teaches only math, is that right?

Silveri: Yes; I think he's listed as an Associate or Assistant Dean of Students, now. What's the background of where the University is now? How did they get ahold of that land up there? Who were the people responsible?

Schreiber: It seems that the Board at that time, with Mr. Phillips, I believe, as head, and Dr. Bushey, were very eager to get a place where the college could expand. After looking at the terrain and the lay of the land and so forth at the Castle, though it was beautiful and lovely,

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) it seems that it did not lend itself to buildings unless they were on steep hillsides. So they looked at this property and found it (these many, many acres) and were able to purchase it. So they did; which turned out to be (I think) one of the best things the college ever did, because it's in such a delightful position between Merrimon and Broadway.

Silveri: Right up on the hill there is a good location.

Schreiber: That's right; I have a nice catalogue here that gives you the dates. I'm not very good at dates.

Silveri: I'm not primarily interested in dates at this time because they can always be checked out, but I'm interested in your experiences and your reflections on those years.

Schreiber: I forgot to tell you; I wanted to go back just a minute. At one time we had a dramatics course which was so wonderful that students wrote plays, acted in them, and went to Chapel Hill, taking first-place prizes many, many times; not just once, but many, many times. I have a picture in this old book of some of them who took part in "Our Town" at one time. Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." So we were not only doing good work in the writing all these years, it seems, but we were doing it for a while in the acting. I'm sure if you were interviewing a physics teacher he would say in physics and chemistry. I think they would, so don't think I'm taking all of it.

Silveri: Let me ask an English teacher this question: When the people came into your classroom and some of them from, perhaps, out farther in the country and spoke the mountain dialect, what was your attitude? Did

Silveri: (Cont'd.) you try to change their way of talking, speaking and writing? What I'm trying to find out is: What was your mission? What was your purpose?

Schreiber: Not unless there was a glaring error. If the error was really very bad I certainly corrected it. Or if I heard a word I had not heard before, I would say: "What is that word?" and ask them to give it to me or spell it. Sometimes it turned out to be an old English word, but most of these students were speaking rather good English at that time.

I must tell you one funny story, though. This just amused me. I didn't tell you when we were over at the David Millard building we ran a bus out into the county and brought students in on the bus. I think the bus was loaned to us from the county, but one of my college workers went out with Superintendent Reynolds to Barnardsville. He often laughed and told me: "You know what we did? We went out there to a little store, and Mr. Reynolds would say, 'Do you know any boys and girls around here who want to be in college?' They would give us the names and we would go out to see them." Now that was when the college was at David Millard, before it got up to the Castle. I forgot to tell you that, and I think that's worth putting in.

Silveri: Yes; it is, very much so. There was an obvious attempt to go out and recruit in the farther reaches of the county. I suppose there were some students who couldn't even afford a little tuition!

Schreiber: O, yes; that's true. We had among our students a girl who is principal, now, of Oakley Elementary School. She came from out in

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) the Candler section, and I recall vividly a teacher bringing her in and asking if we could give her a position or some type of work so that she could come. We did, and she proved herself very quickly.

Among our graduates I should mention again our Representative Mary Nesbitt; she is a graduate. Helen Wells, who has worked in education for years and years. Really, if you wanted them: James Hall is the head of the Carolina Power and Light in Asheville; George Tisdale is head of the telephone company in Asheville. He is a graduate. Lawyers and doctors, there were quite a number. Of course, over a period of years you would have some of them anyway, but they are here. John Bridges at the library. Have you met John? At Pack Library? (Patty Schartle Myrer was an early book editor in New York City.)

Silveri: No; I haven't.

Schreiber: Oh, you should know him. He is a delightful person. He's a graduate. He is what you call a public relations man now, but he did have charge of the exhibits, and he still does. He's quite a musician, a traveler, and an authority on art. You should meet him.

Silveri: I asked you before about Marie King. When did you first know her?

Schreiber: Oh, years and years ago, she and also her husband at one time worked for my father in Lyceum in Chautauqua. I don't know whether that's why they came here or not. I really think it is. She was Marie Talbert, I believe. . .

Silveri: Marie Halbert.

Schreiber: Halbert; that's right, Halbert.

Silveri: Yes; I interviewed her, incidentally. They were in Florida when the Depression hit. Her husband was a salesman for a steel company. Of course, there were no orders or anything, so they came back home to weather the storm. She got a job with the National Youth Administration during those years.

Schreiber: Yes; yes.

Silveri: Did you have any connection with her? Did the school hire anybody associated with any of those New Deal projects, that you recall?

Schreiber: It seems to me that we had older people coming to the library occasionally. Public works programs, we called them. A book was published, I remember, here in the county. Well, no, I didn't have any direct contact with her in that way. It seems to me that I've just known her for years. Then I've known her in poetry groups. I have known her as a friend, and I taught her son, Dick King. I taught his wife. She was Nellie Gee (g-e-e).

Silveri: I haven't met him yet, although I have corresponded with him. He has an insurance business, doesn't he? I've met his wife briefly. It's funny how you meet people. I was interviewing Eugene Clarke, who was an old-timer here and was working for the railroad years ago, and she was his foster daughter, I believe, or something like that.

Schreiber: Is that right? I knew there was something of interest about Nellie Gee's background, but I had forgotten what it was.

Silveri: Marie King, then, wrote poetry, and she had some published by the Stephens Press at a later time.

Schreiber: I have one of her books of poetry. We talk occasionally,

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) and she has invited me many times to come out there, but I'm sorry, I just haven't been.

Silveri: It's a pleasant little place she has out there. I've got to go back and see her. I haven't seen her since 1973, I think it was when I visited her, or 1972, the first time. She's given me a good part of her time in talking about the years in Asheville as a National Youth Administrator. Also, when she was growing up in Kansas she had some fascinating stories. She also read me some of her poetry. Speaking of poetry, you must know Charlotte Young.

Schreiber: Yes, indeed. I sent her a book recently of her own making. She had written a letter to the paper headed, "Help, Help." She wanted a copy of this particular book, The Heart Has Reasons. She apparently had no copy of her own book. I had a copy, so I agreed to give it to her. Reluctantly, I mailed it to her. She exchanged another book by another poet. I don't see Charlotte. Of course, Dr. Hulme does work with her a little bit more in the poetry group; but we talk. I've been asked to work with that poetry group, but I have to limit myself to duties right now. I have more duties since. . .

Silveri: I also interviewed her. Since her father fought in the Civil War, I've been able to get almost direct stories about that experience through her.

Schreiber: Isn't that wonderful? I didn't realize that.

Silveri: You mentioned John Ehle before. He was a student.

Schreiber: I think John came only one semester. His parents are good friends of mine, and Mrs. Ehle calls me every now and then to tell me

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) that his wife is to be on a TV program. Rosemary Harris is an English actress whom he has married. But I never did know John as well as I did the Stokeleys, but I think he has done something in accomplishing a great deal of the background of the mountains, especially in The Road. . .

Silveri: The building of the railroad?

Schreiber: Yes. The book shocked his mother quite a bit at first. She is very religious, and she couldn't see how he could possibly write these books. I don't think I'm betraying anything to tell you this, but I think now that he has gained more recognition she's becoming reconciled.

Silveri: That's good.

Schreiber: So many have to learn that life has this realism, and that people don't talk in all of our beautiful terms all of the time, do they?

Silveri: No, no. He's done very well; all of his books have been published, I guess, by Harper. They are national publishers. I guess that's what he does full time. He's a novelist full time, isn't he?

Schreiber: Yes, I think so. He did do work at Chapel Hill first. He taught, and had communications types of programs for a while. I have one or two of his books: the one about the preacher in New York City; then I have the one with the Civil War background laid around the Morganton-Watauga section.

Silveri: There's another family whose son is quite a famous novelist, Chappell. Do you know them, the Chappells?

Schreiber: No, I don't.

Silveri: I guess he's teaching English now down at UNC-Greensboro or

Silveri: (Cont'd.) Charlotte, I have forgotten which.

Anyway, when the Asheville-Biltmore College moved up to the present campus, does that have a special location or name to it, where they moved? There was an old farm there wasn't there, at one time?

Schreiber: I always referred to it as the Roberts property. I think it was more of a meadow and field, and maybe a farm; yes.

Silveri: That was purchased by the Trustees of Asheville-Biltmore, and you went up to teach there. How long did you teach there?

Schreiber: I didn't explain. I went back to do part time teaching only, under Dr. Bushey. I did that much against the wishes of my husband. He thought I shouldn't teach, but I enjoyed it, so when it went to the new campus I went for a year. I wasn't too eager to continue, and I talked to Dr. Highsmith and told him that I thought I would stop teaching.

Silveri: You had gone off to Tennessee?

Schreiber: Yes. I went over there and I stayed two years.

Silveri: What two years were these?

Schreiber: Forty-five to forty-seven.

Silveri: You went to teach?

Schreiber: The G.I.'s were coming back there also, and many, many teachers were needed. I was offered a position under Dr. John Hodges, who was head of the English Department.

Silveri: At the University of Tennessee?

Schreiber: Yes.

Silveri: In Knoxville.

Schreiber: Knoxville; so I took it, and I was telling someone recently

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) usually there would be maybe twenty-three men and maybe two girls in a class. They were so serious about it and so eager to get ahead! It was just delightful! Another teacher and I have almost concluded that maybe our Senator Baker was in one of our classes. We taught on the quarter plan and the men moved rather fast, so I really don't know. I'm sorry.

Silveri: Is that where you met your husband?

Schreiber: No. I met my husband right here in my own home. He came from Milwaukee originally, but he came up from Florida. He decided he was going to settle in North Carolina and he had been staying at a place for a week in Asheville. He decided he would take a room somewhere. I did not want to leave my mother alone so I had advertised for a roomer. He answered the ad.

Silveri: In this house? Is this the old family house right here?

Schreiber: Well, this isn't an old family house; no. This is the one my mother and I purchased in the 1940's, after we left Royal Pines. My mother never did like living out there. It was too far for her. She liked to be where she could go to church easily, and to her club and to musicals. So we bought this at a very reasonable price at that time. Then later my husband and I owned a business on Church Street of forty rooms. It was a residential hotel up town. My, life was very different then!

Silveri: You mean you managed it? You were there, you and your husband? Living there and managing it? Wow!

Schreiber: Problems! I can tell you things you'll never learn in

Schreiber: (Cont'd.) the classroom! I can certainly tell you! But later we decided to help my mother. She hated to go into an apartment, so he made a little apartment for her. We rented one so she could stay. Afterwards we came out, after we sold our property.

We sold our property to the United Methodist Church, and the educational building is there now on Church Street. We came out here and my husband put a great deal into this home to keep it up, to maintain it, and so on. I've been reluctant to leave. Many people think I should just get out.

Silveri: Oh, it's a delightful place!

Schreiber: I like it; it's a great deal for me to keep up, though.

Silveri: When did Dr. Highsmith's association with the school begin?

Schreiber: I think this was in 1962. In 1962 he became the president.

Silveri: He had been teaching at college before then, hadn't he?

Schreiber: Oh, no; he came as the president. He came up from Jacksonville, Florida as the new president. He took over immediately. The Board seemed to take on new life and to push things. I'm sure Dr. Highsmith was such a good organizer and a good business person that immediately they worked with him, but the character of the college changed a good bit when he came.

It was to be a four-year liberal arts college only. That meant they did away with many of these night courses, and they did away with all of those that we thought we were establishing so well. Some of that we didn't like, but we didn't say anything because it wasn't up to us to say. Now I understand they are putting some of those same courses in and, eagerly, also educational courses for teachers.

[END]