

## **William and Mary Duckworth**

### **Side 1:**

[60] Mary has lived in Asheville 50 years. Bill's family, moving from McDowell County following the Civil War, has lived in Lower Hominy on a farm following a short time on Woodfin Street. His grandmother and grandfather raised their family on Monte Vista Road, near the Pisgah Academy. His father went to Sand Hill School, then Rutherford College and met Bill's mother while attending Strong's Business School when she was in Meredith College in Raleigh. [Elizabeth Revell Duckworth, William James Duckworth, William T. Duckworth Sr., Margaret Ball Duckworth]

[70] Upon graduation Bill's father became bookkeeper and assistant property manager for his uncle, whose office was in the Revell Building on Pack Square. [Oliver D. Revell]

[81] Bill was born on Pearson Drive, went to Grace School (now called Jones) for the full 11 years, attended Mars Hill College where he met Mary and then Wake Forest to finish his B.A. while she went to Duke. They were married in 1942 after graduation and before he entered the service.

[98] He speaks fondly of his classmate Wilma Dykeman and his teacher Miss Edwards, who came in from Barnardsville every day. He and Bob visited Ira Jones in the Green Tree Nursing Home several months ago. The Grace School was named for him (see Jesse Huff and Elmer Ownbey tapes). [Wilma Dykeman Stokely, Jane Edwards, Bob Carter, Ira B. Jones]

[131] He had had a number of summer jobs when he was growing up - Recreation Park, a carrier for Citizen-Times, working in construction and painting for his great uncle, and the Blomberg men's shop. At Fort Jackson he was assigned to the alteration department because of his shop experience but, when he was transferred, he was with the F.B.I. He considered law school or seminary (so he could teach religious education) but, on discharge in 1946, the door opened for him in the field of Real Estate. [Maynard B. (Buster) Blomberg]

[197] Mary found people friendly when she moved here. The Jr. Chamber of Commerce was wide open to young men. She became president of the J-cettes and knew Genn who also became president later (see History Club write-up in black notebook). They made many friends this way. The Kelehers are neighbors (see their tape and History Club write - up). [Genevive "Genn" Sullivan, Michael and Barbara Keleher]

[224] Bill chaired the March of Dimes drive with Hays, and the Jr. Chamber of Commerce started the Youth Jamboree. Maria Fletcher was the winner of the contest held in June of each year. She later became Miss America, daughter of Beale and Peggy, who describe the contest (see Fletcher tape). [Hubert Hays, Maria Fletcher, Beale Fletcher, Peggy Fletcher]

[274] Bill worked with the March of Dimes (to raise money for Infantile Paralysis) and took the money to CP&L to use their money counter. They raised several thousand dollars which they put

in a locker for safe keeping until the bank opened. They were phoned by the manager to say they had left a bag of bills behind and had to go back and retrieve it! [Paul Swearinger]

[299] Weir gave Bill a summer job at Recreation Park. Many high school students were employed for \$20 a week, some came each day and others slept in a barracks above what is now the zoo. Rent was \$7 a week for room and board. It was like summer camp and he had a chance to meet boys from all over town. The hours were from noon until 9 p.m. unless there was a dance. The dance hall closed at 11 p.m. [the dance hall is now called Mama T's (see her tape). [Weldon Weir, Mitzi Tessier]

[346] Canoes and row boats could be rented on Lake Craig. Later the water was drained as it was considered unsafe. [Governor Locke Craig (1913 - 1917)]

[352] The swimming pool at Beaver Lake at one time had a sandy beach, bath house, volley ball court and a pavilion, where refreshments were sold. Because of a breach in the wall the water became polluted and the pool was dismantled (see enclosure).

[386] Bill's father was always a Democrat. He said that Weir was a brilliant business man. He ran an efficient government with a minimum of cost. He was up before daybreak checking the streets and checking in with the water and sewer departments before going to his office. Anyone could go in to see him and his secretary took your name and people waited their turn. The phone rang all the time and he took care of requests on the spot (see "Red" Hoyle and Lou Harshaw tapes). [Weldon Weir, Margaret M. Simmons]

[433] One of Weir's most significant contributions was the development of the airport. Others thought it could not be done and would have settled for the little one on Mill's Gap Road. He realized that the county was on the verge of building highways and that limited transportation had been the main hold up for Asheville growth. The trains had ceased carrying passengers [I think there was minimal service - we came for a trip 25 years ago]. Weir began buying property for the field and Bill, along with two other appraisers, evaluated the properties. [Weldon Weir, Eugene Constin, Bill Cathis]

[492] The former Mayor was responsible for passage of the law that allowed restaurants to serve liquor by the glass. He is best known for the work he did in developing the civic center and auditorium (see his tape). Because of facilities in Greenville, Charlotte and Atlanta, Asheville Civic Center is facing a hard time (see enclosure). [Richard "Dick" Wood]

[520] Weir was a progressive leader in the fields of education and transportation. He encouraged the development of Gerber baby food plant and the Ball Brothers plant (they worked together in that Ball bottled the food). Both plants have recently relocated out of the area (enclosed). [Weldon Weir]

[583] After 8 years of study, he became the first M. A. I. (Member of Appraisal Institute) in Western North Carolina. He was on a panel of appraisers for the Asheville Savings bank, the Veterans Administration and the Federal Housing authority for recommending loans.

[592] He did a lot of work for the Department of Transportation when I-26 and I-40 were being planned. If an agreeable price for the purchase of land could not be reached, the decision was determined in court.

## **Side 2:**

His two most important assignments were his work with the Cherokee Nation and purchase of land from the Vanderbilts for the 13 miles of right of way needed for the interstates. For many years, on a contract-case basis he traveled the 50 miles to work out fair rental returns for land use. The Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington reviewed his reports. [Molly Blankenship]

In the 60's he worked for a year with DOT to evaluate the Vanderbilt property which would be affected by the interstates. A well-known Kansas City appraiser and his crew also worked independently on this project. He later learned that, while the two groups were miles apart on appraisal value, they were very close on just compensation and an agreeable settlement was worked out with the Cecil family. He had two young men working with him. [William Davis, Alan Butterworth, Kenneth Maulsby]

[2/101] He doesn't know a lot about the widening of the Hendersonville Highway. Biltmore Forest, which is a separate entity and not included in the city, opposed to taking any property to widen the road (see Jane Bingham tape).

[2/150] There is more development to the south of the city than any other direction. Because of the mountains, not much land is available for industry. There may be available land around Reems Creek, however.

[2/175] There has been a steady increase in every type of building since WWII and the price of land, as well as the cost of construction, has increased dramatically.

[2/182] Over the years he has worked with the Cecil family - George and his son John, who own the Biltmore Dairy and land which is being developed, and William who owns the house, vineyard and winery. He appraised the roads leading to the house. [George Cecil, John Cecil, William Cecil]

[2/205] When the Akzona people sought out land for their headquarters, most of the buildings in the middle of the block on Pack Square were vacant. The main plant was in Enka (see enclosure), and the corporate building, designed by Pei, was constructed by the Daniel Construction Company from Greenville with cooperation from the West Carolina Bank (see enclosure). Bill met with Pei, who was very polite and bowed from the waist, and his consultant. [I. M. Pei, Vince Parsons, Ray Poster]

[2/235] Bill was asked for assistance in obtaining maps of the underground lines, wires and pipes. Old maps were obtained. [August Nagasaki]

[2/309] The city was petitioned and permission granted to use ground under the square for parking. The six-story building was only 68-70 ft in depth by several hundred feet in length and

required space for parking cars. The underground lot goes almost to the monument and the whole square was dug up and then returned to its original plan. The underground toilets (one for blacks - one for whites) had been closed for years.

[2/356] He remembers an octagonal pool in the square when he was a boy, which, at night, displayed colored lights and held trout, which were fed by the city. When fluorination of water became a health requirement the fish had to go. (Portion of this octagonal pool shows in enclosed photo).

[2/386] The Jackson building was built by L. B. Jackson. His son, also a builder, lives in Biltmore Forest. L. B. and Westall were friends and the Westall building was built without an elevator. Both buildings were to share the same elevator and staircases - but the buildings were mortgaged by different companies. When the crash came, they lost control and the buildings went into different ownership. A man from Charlotte bought the two buildings and they are now managed by Johnson. [L. B. Jackson, Kenneth Jackson, Jack Westall, Herbert E. Johnson]

[2/459] Asheville has a lot to be grateful for as many remarkable people have come here. Holden, an inspirational leader at Warren Wilson College, came on the recommendation of Clarke, a Yale classmate. McGuire developed 60 Haywood Street into beautiful condos (see McGuire tape). He and his wife bought the old Hotel Asheville, now owned by Public Interest Properties and being developed into shops and restaurants. (enclosure). [Arthur Bannerman, Ruben Holden, Jamie Clarke, Roger McGuire, Pat McGuire]

## **Tape II, Side 1:**

The Revell building stood at the N.W. corner of Pack Square and Patton Ave and can be recognized in the photos by a cupola that protruded over the sidewalk. The Revell office was on the second floor. The Thom McAn shoe store was the last tenant (see enclosed).

[II/1/30] Bill lists tenants around the block and, of particular historic interest, is the barber shop and shower in the basement. Rather than heating water at home, men could rent a towel and soap and take a Saturday shower. The Savoy, a fancy blue-plate restaurant, charged 31 cents - the one cent was for North Carolina tax. For 10 cents, Westerns could be seen at the Strand Theatre, located at Patton Ave and Lexington.

[II/1/98] The first significant building and the first high rise was the Northwestern Bank, finished in 1965 and now the BB&T (Branch Bank and Trust). All stores were moving out to the malls and the center of the city was suffering. [Edwin Duncan (president)]

[II/1/107] As soon as the block was demolished and the bank built the new building, Revell moved back into the second floor. The building was ahead of its time as there was not that much demand for good office space. Goodyear, a builder from Charlotte, demolished the Langren Hotel to supply parking space and struggled to make operating expenses. However, there was so much vacancy, Goodyear lost his investment, after which there were a succession of owners. Wilcox, of the Wilcox Travel Agency presently owns the property under the name of

Tower Investment Inc. It is now on a sound financial basis. The name change took place as a condition of the BB&T company, whose office is on the main floor. [Glen Wilcox]

[II/1/164] The Downtown City Club at one time had over 600 members. Hyman Dave stepped in several times to try to save it financially and served [as chairman of the board] without salary (see Dave tape). Bill and many attended the last meeting and all realized that, with the present rent structure, it was not economically possible. Ralph Jennings and his son, friends of the Duckworths, reopened the restaurant (see enclosure) under the name of Jeffrey's in the fall of 1995 and closed August, 1996. [Ralph Jennings, Jeff Jennings]

[II/1/207] Cecil, as well as other business managers used the club for luncheon meetings, but there was not enough dinner traffic. Bill Duckworth was a former director of the Asheville Savings Bank which held many staff meetings there. [Another firm took over after this interview - see enclosure.] [William Cecil]

[II/1/229] Parking to visit the restaurant has not been a problem but Kostas (also known as "Gus" - see his tape) felt that customers for his men's store resented or were uncomfortable for safety reasons, of the parking garages. [Kostas Rantzos]

[II/1/244] Some stores validate parking tickets [as does the Pack Library for up to 1 1/2 hours] but, since some space is saved for customers, it is difficult to get permanent parking for employees and the rate has gone from \$30 to \$75 a month.

[II/1/297] The new Federal Building has its own lot but it is not adequate for the employees and invitees.

[II/1/306] He was involved with the Board of Adjustments under the Planning and Zoning Board under the City Council. Because of the 35 foot set-back requirement for some residential buildings, topographical situations could work a hardship and requested exceptions might be granted.

[II/1/341] There were no problems with view obstructions [which is a factor on flat land] but there are laws limiting building height.

[II/1/351] he Ridge Law was passed after his period of service (see Norma Price tape). A series of condominiums on Beaucatcher Mountain called Windswept and Wind in the Oaks attract young couples who work in town.

[II/1/385] Bill's great uncle bought Zealandia from Brown at the turn of the century, as his honeymoon home. He had to keep several servants - a footman, doorman and a "group of horses." He later built on Charlotte Street near the corner of Chestnut and then built on Lookout Mountain. [Zealandia was sold to Philip S. Henry] [Oliver D. Revell, John Evans Brown].

**Tape II, Side 2:**

Mary and a small group of people met in Orr's office and founded the Preservation Society. She became president and she and Eleanor are shown in the enclosed during the first tour of homes. They had docents for the Manor grounds, a Montford home, Zealandia, Governor Vance's house on Reem's Creek, and a home belonging to two governors that is now on the grounds of Beaverdam Run Condominiums - old frame and log building (see photos). The program sponsoring tours continues - one in the spring and one in the fall. There is now a paid executive who makes office arrangements. [Robert Orr, Eleanor Hall, Zebulon Vance, Governor David Swain, Governor Joseph Lane, Harry Weiss]

[II/2/47] Bill appraised Seely's Castle when it was owned by Asheville-Biltmore College (now UNCA) and they attended a party there one Christmas (see Richard and Ann Parham tape).

[II/2/54]The Grove Park car museum was purchased by Blomberg (see Phillip Merrell tape). [Harry Blomberg]

[II/2/58] The Gudger Home in Montford was preserved by the society and now is home to the Pisgah Legal Service. Clyde Savings gave a break in mortgage financing.

[II/2/75] Her garden club, "The Town and Country Garden Club," which has been meeting to share knowledge and present garden tours for 30 years, often holds luncheons in the Richmond Hill Inn. The Inn had to be moved before restored (see Matthew tape) and one room was named for Dykeman. [Wilma Dykeman Stokely]

[II/2/88] The Town and Country Garden Club has been in existence for about 30 years and sends a representative to the council of the garden association. Funds raised by the clubs help support the Arboretum and the Botanical Gardens on University property (see Hussey tape). Quality Forward and the RiverLink project are also assisted by them (see enclosure and Jean Webb tape).

[II/2/160] Property values have continued to increase since WWII, especially along the major routes - Patton Ave, Merrimon Avenue, Biltmore Avenue, Hendersonville Road and Tunnel Road. Downtown suffered with the advent of the shopping centers. The centers offered easy parking, convenience and informality. Shopping habits changed but with the redevelopment of downtown, small specialty stores are filling the vacancies.

[II/2/215] Bill served as President of the Central Asheville Association and worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchant's Association. In the past, chain stores were looking for locations in the center of town - now they go to the malls.

[II/2/232] He strongly supported the cut over the "double barrell shot gun," which refers to the concept of double tunnels. He felt that this was necessary to carry the volume of traffic.

[II/2/253] Downtown is better every year. The plans for the old Asheville Hotel have been approved. There will be shops on the first floor and apartments on top (clippings enclosed).

[II/2/276] They just came back from visiting their daughter Lynn who has been married to Richard for 20 years, has her B.S. in nursing and her masters from Boston University. Lynn is helping at a school but said that the pace is mighty fast for children and that there are hard times in the schools.[Lynn Revell Breed, Richard Breed III, Linsey Breed, Ashley Breed, twins Richard and Mary Stewart Breed]