

O E Starnes

Side 1:

[1/1] He was born May 3, 1924 in Raleigh. His father called "Ed" was born in Buncombe County as was his father and mother. He knew his grandmother well. His father, along with his grandfather and other Asheville men formed the Imperial Life Insurance Co. His father was educated through the Asheville Farm School. Mother educated through Normal School. Business took his father to eastern North Carolina where he met and married the daughter of the Fletchers. His father was transferred to Asheville with Imperial and built some houses on Biltmore and Mitchell Ave. in West Asheville. In 1936 he bought house in Malvern Hills area. [Oscar Edwin Starnes, Sr., Elizabeth "Lilly" Euneda Bell Smith Starnes, J. Pink Starnes, Marion Fletcher Starnes, Minnie Gaston Fletcher, William E. Fletcher]

[1/38] Starnes Ave. named after a woman who ran a rooming house - no relation. [1940 Asheville City Directory: Z. Gonano Starnes, furnished rooms, 144 Rankin Ave.] [Miss Gonano Starnes]

[1/45] There is a Starnes Cove between Asheville and Enka. His uncle was a Methodist minister who had several churches. Reunions were held there every year. Then had reunion near US 25 at his cousin's house. This later became the Country Kitchen - no longer there. ["Uncle" Alfred Starnes, Walter B. Starnes]

[1/66] In 1952 he build a house in Malvern Hills on a lot behind his father's house, where he lived until 1967. He was told about a hotel where water was drawn up from a spring and he found shards of pottery on his property (may be one in picture enclosed).

[1/90] He remembers the Malvern Springs Motel. It was one of Asheville's first motor courts, located on what is the old golf course and belongs to the Asheville School for Boys (see tape with Wade Huff and tape of Robert Webb). [J. B. Jackson, Wesley Vrabel, Myrtle Cogburn Vrabel]

[1/94] His grandfather was a motor man at one time and the street car served the old hotel. In his time the end of the car line was Brevard and Haywood Rd, ½ block from grandmother's house, 750 Haywood [1940 Asheville City Directory: Mrs. Lillie E. Starnes]. She was also called "Liz." Her younger son built her a rock home farther out but she like to be in the heart of things. May's Market [747 Haywood Rd.] was across the street, Dunn & Groce Funeral Home [756 Haywood Rd.] next to it. Bilbro Drug Store [733 Haywood Rd.], the Isis [743 Haywood Rd.] and Palace [789 Haywood Rd.] theatres (see Ray Gibbs tape) were close by (Isis enclosure). [Elizabeth Euneda Starnes, Charles Starnes]

[1/123] He went to school with several of the May's who had a market which was sold around 1960. [John May, Nancy May Leppert]

[1/137] So he wouldn't have to cross Haywood Street he was sent to St. Joan of Arc School. The sisters thought "O. E." stood for "Oliver" and father put them straight, but when he was in

college his birth certificate was officially changed from O. E. to Oscar Edwin. The Army, if one does not have a middle name, uses "N.M.I." (see enclosure). [Lacy Griffin]

[1/165] He transferred to Vance School (old enough to cross the street) (see enclosed) then Hall Fletcher and Lee Edwards and graduated from the 11th grade. Went to Davidson College and served 3 years in army. (High school had only 11 grades from mid 30's to 50's.)

[1/178] Played band in high school at David Miller - clarinet, oboe, piano and sang in choir. He was on the student council at Lee Edwards and president of the student body.

[1/187] In the service he was a machine gunner in the European theatre, and was shot in the head.

[1/191] He had 2 years at Davidson and graduated in 1950 from Chapel Hill. He joined the law firm of Harkins, Walton and VanWinkle - he is the senior lawyer there now.

[1/196] He was practicing law 5 ½ years when he was approached by two members of the House and Stikeleather of the Senate asking him to run against Crawford for a seat in the House. He was busy with his law practice and had a wife and three children to support. [Weldon Weir, John Y. (J. Y.) Jordan, George Craig, James G. (Jim) Stikeleather, I. C Crawford, O. E. Starnes III, Amy Elizabeth Starnes, Jane Marion Starnes, Sara Jane Whitmire Starnes - married 1948, died 1976]

[1/234] His wife had been teaching in Orange County for several months after their marriage but when she became pregnant and the Army increased pay she stopped. She died 1976.

[1/237] He married a widow with 4 sons in 1978. Her brother was his friend. [Lyda Martin Starnes, Harry Martin]

[1/246] The seniors in the law firm were consulted before he was asked to run for election. Crawford announced for the house and though he "came out" - four were running, three elected, and he was not elected. As a result of the publicity he was offered the job as corporation council on a retainer until 1967 when he moved to Biltmore Forest and outside city limits (see enclosure re Mulvaney). He is now lawyer for Biltmore Forest. [I. C. Crawford, Weldon Weir, Earl Eller, Frank Mulvaney]

[1/294] The Sinking Fund Commission was an ongoing concern. He was a corporation council with the city on a retainer. Other lawyers also served the city. [Curtis Bynum, J. Y. Jordan, Jimmy Howell, Anthony Redmond]

[1/317] Now city affairs are so complicated there is a full staff.

[1/329] Floridation [of drinking water] a big local issue. Fannie was afraid of no one and called the City Council "metrocrats." Had to go to court over this (see enclosure; see also Morris and Price re. Fannie McCoy). [Fannie McCoy]

[1/374] Federal funds and pressure to create decent housing for blacks resulted in Hillcrest apartments. [Anthony Redmond]

[1/399] The street cars went down to the stock yards on the lower end of Clingman Ave. As a child he and his grandfather would go down, have lunch, and watch the cattle (see Kouns tape). Although Malvern Hills had a park and tennis court built by the CCC, he and his family also went to Recreation Park where there were canoes and animals. His uncle called square dances and his mother's brother still plays. All Fletchers are related (see Beale Fletcher tape). [Mitzi Tessier, Buzz Fletcher, Beale Fletcher, Maria Fletcher, Gaston Pinkney Fletcher]

[1/499] His parents used to love to square dance and often went to Casselberry's off Brevard Road. [Bent Creek Ranch - see Erline McQueen tape]

[1/520] He and a date would go to Biltmore to get shakes and dance to the juke box. There was also a pavilion at Royal Pines.

[1/542] Big bands came to the Plaza Theatre. He played in the high school band. Movies had stage shows and news reels along with the main show. [Kay Kaiser]

[1/557] In 1939-1941 he played with a little band in high school.

[1/578] The tobacco warehouse on Valley Street housed auto shows, the circus and dancing. Being born and raised in the church, big tent meetings were not exciting for him and, as a Presbyterian, they seemed "too far out."

Side 2:

[2/1] Despite the Depression he was still able to go to St. Joan of Arc along with his brother who was 18 months younger. During the summer he loved going barefoot, but when school time came he had to wear shoes. He remembers noticing that some children didn't wear shoes even in cold weather and, while at Vance he noticed 5-10 percent of the students wearing ragged clothes. His father was treasurer of the Old Forest Church in Enka and he remembers the minister received a very modest salary.

[2/63] Christmases were happy with the Fletchers and Starnes enjoying their fire crackers, skates, wagons, scooters and a 22 for target practice. Stockings were a big deal. Firecrackers were legal until a store on Broadway blew up - the restrictions are loosening a bit now. He went along with "riding the Santa Claus belief" and took it as it was. He still does the same thing with his wife.

[2/107] There were pine fields next to his house where he and his friends tossed horse shoes, built wigwam fires to cook pork and beans, smoked rabbit tobacco, roller skated and played "Hide and Seek" and "Kick the Can." Marbles - for keeps or for fun - were played in the road, which was made of sand.

[2/132] Because of the Blue Laws he couldn't go to the movies on Sunday but it was all right if 3 or 4 played baseball or football. The family had a tennis court in back of the house (he built his house on that in 1952) and croquet in the front yard. This was a very competitive game. His parents played bridge until gambling was introduced to the game and they switched to "rook" and "canasta." He was clever with his marbles. [Bob Israel]

[2/170] During Jr. High he and his friends met in different homes where they would drink coke, play "Spin the Bottle" and "Post Office."

[2/189] He and his brother went to dances at Lee Edwards - \$2.00 a couple - to the big band sound. This was before electronic music.

[2/215] The change from high school to Davidson was difficult and law school even harder. Threats of war were getting serious in 1942. A number of his friends enlisted. He decided to finish his sophomore year and went into the infantry.

[2/242] During the war people pooled their gas rationing tickets - T for truck, A for most passengers. His mother was not able to get enough sugar stamps to can as much as she used to.

[2/265] For the first 2 years of college he took pre-med but didn't like chemistry courses. His last 2 years at Chapel Hill he took law. This is his 44th year of law practice and is now doing 50 percent of the work he did in the past.

[2/286] His field is civil law, liability cases, workers compensation, etc.

[2/306] Attitudes toward liabilities have changed. There was no required insurance coverage until the mid 50's. Money is cheaper now. The value of cases has gone up. It used to be that, when a person was injured, they would say, "I'm ok," now the effort is to maximize any ailment. Jurors all more liberal, dollars cheaper, and insurance companies are considered to have "deep pockets."

[2/353] While he still sees people who are rigidly honest there seems to be a relaxation of morality in recent years.

[2/390] Everyone has legal rights. Everything begins and ends in point of law - which is the beauty of law.

[2/406] In the years past, there was no concern about walking at night, now one of the men walk the ladies to the parking lot on Church Street. Article in the paper mentioned. In individual cases the blacks and whites get along well together but he is concerned about mass problems based on economic inequality. [John Hayes]

[2/476] There were no blacks at Davidson or law school. His son was in Lee Edwards when it was integrated and there were real problems for quite a spell. Integration has not done as much as had been hoped (see Whiteside tape). There never has been any "heavy race problem in Asheville" - trouble spots but no riots. Either things are being done right or disparities not as

apparent here as other places. We don't have a big minority but it is growing. He would like to see strong leadership in both the black and white groups to improve their status.

[2/545] He has had no personal problems with drugs but suspects that marijuana was used by most of the young in the 60's and 70's. He is not for legalizing it. Vietnam was a big part in drug increase due to a feeling of civil unease. [I told him about my interview with Col. Alfred Thomas re the ROTC]. He was busy raising a family and had little contact with the drug situation.