

Rhonda Mawhood: Ms. Forbes from interviewing your brother Mr. Boyd, I understand that you were born in James City?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes I was.

Rhonda Mawhood: And is your family from here?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Were your grandparents born in this area ma'am? Your grandparents?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: So your family goes back far here?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They do.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you know your grandparents when you were coming up ma'am? You did. What kinds of things do you remember about your grandparents, ma'am.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: In that day she used to wake up and serve. She used to wait for the man to cook and he used to have a little cook place and she used to fix hamburgers and stuff for him.

Rhonda Mawhood: And your other grandmother?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you know her?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Sally Boyd.

Rhonda Mawhood: Sally Boyd. What kinds of things do you remember about Ms. Boyd?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They used to have farm to raise hogs and chickens and stuff like that, and gardens.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you work on the farm or in the garden ma'am? When you were a little girl?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, I did.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kind of work did you do?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Helped chop, used to chop the holes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did they grow cotton?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No.

Rhonda Mawhood: They didn't grow cotton?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Just vegetables.

Rhonda Mawhood: And then what did they do with the vegetables once they were grown, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They just take them to the market and sell them.

Rhonda Mawhood: Oh, there's somebody at your door. So did you ever go to the market to sell these vegetables?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, I did never. I just help pick them and gather the up, she'd take them up and she take him over to the market, she and the grandfather.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things do you remember about your grandfather ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: The same thing he was done there, the raising of the farm and take over there in the horse and cart.

Rhonda Mawhood: A horse and cart? That's how they carried the vegetables?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: And is that the kind of work that your parents did also, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, that's what they did.

Rhonda Mawhood: So did your family eat any of the vegetables from the garden yourselves?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, we did.

Rhonda Mawhood: Where did you go to school, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: It was a place called James City. [indistinct 00:03:02] talking about James City coming

across their bypass. That was James City in them days.

Rhonda Mawhood: And you went to school there? Did you like school ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah. Liked it pretty good. then after then they held school out here, over across the road. You see that big place over there?

Rhonda Mawhood: On Highway 70?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That was our school too.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things did you do for fun when you were growing up ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Nothing. Didn't have nothing. We'd go out and play ball, you know, trying to play handballs.

Rhonda Mawhood: I'd like to ask you a little bit more about school. How far did you go in schools, Mrs. Forbs?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I didn't go full in school.

Rhonda Mawhood: Do you remember any of your teachers, what they were like?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Which ones stand out in your mind now?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: We had one named Mr. Pender.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mr. Pender.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's way back now. And Richard Sawyer.

Rhonda Mawhood: Richard Sawyer. What was it about them that makes them stand out in your mind now ma'am? Did they ever visit your house? No. What kinds of things did they teach you? Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Pender.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: It was in first, second, third grade.

Rhonda Mawhood: And were there any women teachers in this school, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: During that time there was none. Later on that did come.

Rhonda Mawhood: And how did you get to school?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: We had to walk.

Rhonda Mawhood: How far was it?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: From over here, we stayed during them time to James City. Over there by the bypass. That's where the school was.

Rhonda Mawhood: Seems like it's about four miles or so?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you go to school every day?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Every day. Nine till three.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you walk to school with your friends?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mr. Boyd tells me that you're the only girl in the family.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: What was that like being the only girl with all those boys?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: All them boys, I was the only girl in that family.

Rhonda Mawhood: And what was that like being the only girl?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: One time I wished I had a sister like the other girls had, they had my friends had sisters and I didn't have nobody but brothers.

Rhonda Mawhood: Why did you want a sister ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Like I just wanted a sister.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you have any play sisters? You did. Were your play sisters older than you or younger or the same age?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: About the same age.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you used to go over to their houses?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes I did because they was my friends.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you have a play mother?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Who was your play mother ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: One the friends, the girls I go out with.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you stay friends with these ladies as you got older?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: And all of them gone.

Rhonda Mawhood: I'm sorry.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes. Well my friend Nia's in a home.

Rhonda Mawhood: The house that you're living in now, ma'am, how long have you been living in this house?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Over 20 years.

Rhonda Mawhood: So when you left school ma'am, what kind of work did you go to do?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I went to the 'bacco factory, stemming 'bacco.

Rhonda Mawhood: Can you tell me what you do when you stem tobacco ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: The leaves stemming the leaves off the stems and they pack it up and ship it away to the factories.

Rhonda Mawhood: And did you get paid a certain amount per hour or was it according to how much you stemmed?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: According how much you stemmed and then you went on after for later on they started paying by the hours.

Rhonda Mawhood: So did you work long enough to get paid both ways? You worked first by how much you stamped and then later on you got paid by the hour?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: Which did you like better ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I like the by the hour better.

Rhonda Mawhood: Why was that ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Because it could make more money.

Rhonda Mawhood: That's a good reason.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes sir.

Rhonda Mawhood: Were you a fast stemmer?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, someone was beating me. I couldn't stem fast as some of the rest of them.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did women teach each other how to stem fast?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: Was it only Black ladies who were spending or did White ladies work with you too?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: It was all Black during the time I was working there.

Rhonda Mawhood: What hours did you work, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I think we work from seven to five in the evening. Seven o'clock morning till five o'clock in the evening.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you get a break during that time?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, we got about an hour. We knock off 12 o'clock and go back about one.

Rhonda Mawhood: Who was your supervisor?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: His name Monks.

Rhonda Mawhood: Monks. So it was a man?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, that's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: A White man or a Black man?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: White.

Rhonda Mawhood: How did he treat the women who were stemming tobacco?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: He treated them nice.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did all of the supervisors treat the stemmers nice?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Mm-hmm.

Rhonda Mawhood: You don't remember any problems between the stemmers and the supervisors?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Mm-mm.

Rhonda Mawhood: And then when you were working there you said that all the stemmers were Black ladies. Did the Black workers and the White workers ever have anything to do with each other? No. So did you work there all the time you were working or did you have other jobs, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's all I left there into chair. After working there I went to Cherry Point.

Rhonda Mawhood: You went to Cherry Point? What were you doing there, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I was cleaning. That's all I did there, cleaning.

Rhonda Mawhood: How long ago did you go to Cherry Point? Was this in the fifties? Were the forties?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I went there in the forties and I reckon I came out in the sixties. Might have been a little longer than that but I know.

Rhonda Mawhood: How were you treated at Cherry Point?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: It was really nice. We had White supervisors.

Rhonda Mawhood: How did people in your community feel about the base when it was opened up?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: A lot of them was glad to get down there so they had some work to do.

Rhonda Mawhood: So. So other people you knew got jobs at Cherry Point?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: And you didn't have any problems at Cherry Point? Did you know about any people who were working there, any Black people who were working there who had problems with the soldiers or the supervisors? No. Did you know some of the people you were working with from before you went to Cherry Point? How did you hear about the job at Cherry Point?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They had papers out while they was hiring folks and we've been down there and signed up. We had to sign up then later on to call you.

Rhonda Mawhood: And did you have to go for an interview? Yeah. What was the interview like when you tried for the job?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They wanted to know how far was in school and like that, and where you had worked before.

Rhonda Mawhood: So which did you like better working at Cherry Point or working in the tobacco factory?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I liked down at Cherry Point better.

Rhonda Mawhood: Why was that?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Because you got more time down there.

Rhonda Mawhood: During the day or vacation time?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: During the day. Because they would have certain time you work. In the tobacco factory, they just have certain season.

Rhonda Mawhood: So in the tobacco factory you wouldn't work all year, but at Cherry Point all year?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: So that was better for you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, it was.

Rhonda Mawhood: When you were working at the tobacco factory, when they didn't need you all year, what did you do when they didn't need you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: You just little sign up, they started taking out social security right to the tobacco factory. And then when you wasn't out of job you could go to the employing office and sign up and get a little money like that.

Rhonda Mawhood: How old were you when you started working at the tobacco factory, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I reckon I was about 20.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you ever work in service? Work in people's houses? You did. How old were you about when you did that?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I reckon I was about 21 or 22 years old.

Rhonda Mawhood: So that was while you were working at the Tobacco Factory?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right, after I went to the tobacco factory.

Rhonda Mawhood: Was that during the months when you weren't working at the tobacco factory or was it in the evenings after you got off work?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: This was after I left the tobacco factory.

Rhonda Mawhood: After you left the tobacco factory, I see.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Then I went to— they had an oyster factory down there. We built this road. I used to [indistinct 00:16:33]. He had a oyster factory to go down there and open oysters.

Rhonda Mawhood: What did you do at the oyster factory, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: We opened the oysters and then he'd ship them off. He paid about 50 cent. Before that 50 cent a gallon on the opener, little steam and you open them and then he had cans to put them in and then he'd ship them away.

Rhonda Mawhood: How did you like that work, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I say it's better than nothing. Then in the same time he had a tomatoes factory down there, open tomatoes and you peel tomatoes and he put them in cans and shipped them away. He had a kind like a canning factory.

Rhonda Mawhood: What was it like in the factory when you were working and they were steaming the oysters or steaming the tomatoes? What was it like in there?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: The oysters, they had big places, put them in a steaming basket and put a some in that hot place and that steamer opened, that'd open their mouths and then you go ahead and open them up. And then when got to the tomatoes, they had hot water, they would run over them and that could get the skin so you could peel them off and put them in the cans.

Rhonda Mawhood: Sounds like maybe it was hot in those places.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: It was hot.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you ever know anyone who or yourself who got hurt on the job ma'am, in those places? No. Because it sounds like it would be a place where maybe you could get burned with the heat.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, I guess they've been so careful they didn't get hurt.

Rhonda Mawhood: When you got your lunch hour, did the ladies who worked there eat together?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Mm-hmm.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did they talk when they ate?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things did they talk about, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I don't hardly know. You know how [indistinct 00:19:19] just little trash stuff.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mrs. Forbs, may I ask you where you met your husband?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Right here in this James City.

Rhonda Mawhood: James City? And how did you meet him?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: We all stayed over here. It's a big house right down on the corner, a White house, that's say he used to live, all his family's passed and gone.

Rhonda Mawhood: So did you know him when you were growing up?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: How old were you when you started courting?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I think I got married 18.

Rhonda Mawhood: You were 18? But you had known each other?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes. 1, 2, 3 4. I was seeing how many girls I had. I got 1, 2, 3, I got three daughters and I had four sons.

Rhonda Mawhood: Three daughters and four sons?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Mm-hmm.

Rhonda Mawhood: That's a nice family.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes. So I got one daughter stays there, over there in that house. Son here, my daughter live up the street and I got a son live down on the waterfront and my son live here.

Rhonda Mawhood: Here with you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, next door.

Rhonda Mawhood: Next door. Where were your children born? Was this in a hospital or at home?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Oh, my children was born at home during that time. The granny they call them, they would come to your house. all my children were born to my home. I didn't ever have to go to hospital to have my children.

Rhonda Mawhood: So the granny is the midwife, did they deliver all of your children?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: All of them.

Rhonda Mawhood: So you didn't have doctors, you had a midwife? You liked a midwife better?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, they were all right.

Rhonda Mawhood: How did you pay the midwife for her services? Did you pay her in cash or did you give her something else?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, we paid them in cash. Pay them so much like this week and next week, we paid them like that. Didn't pay them all one time.

Rhonda Mawhood: How long did it take to pay for your childbirth?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I reckon about a couple months.

Rhonda Mawhood: And did the midwife come visit you before the birth, before the date that you were due?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, she didn't come until time.

Rhonda Mawhood: Who would go get the midwife for you ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: My husband.

Rhonda Mawhood: You'd let them know when it was time? Was your husband in the house when you gave birth usually?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Sometime he was, sometime he wasn't.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did he stay in the room with you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Not hardly.

Rhonda Mawhood: So was just women.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did friends or relatives come?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: My mother.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you want your mother to be there with you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: I guess you were young when your first child was born?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah. And she had three girls and one boy. No, she had two boys and one girl. No, she had two boys and three girls, that daughter did. My other daughter she had, I don't know her name because she had twins. See my mother had twins.

Rhonda Mawhood: Really?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Twin boys, two boys, twin and that's why they say my daughter she took it and my mother she had two twin girls.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did your mother's twins both live to be grown? Did both of them die? They did. But your daughter's twins lived?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They got grown and married and ain't even around here.

Rhonda Mawhood: How old were you when your last child was born, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I reckon I was about 25, 30 years old.

Rhonda Mawhood: So you had them all pretty close together?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, that's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: Would you say that you brought your own children up pretty much how you were raised or did you think differently?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I brought them up like I was raise.

Rhonda Mawhood: So could you tell me a little bit about bringing your children up about the kinds of things that you tried to teach them or to show them?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, they all went to school but most of them come out of high school. Most all of them did. They come out of high school? I got one grandsons a lawyer.

Rhonda Mawhood: Oh my. You must be proud of him.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, he is.

Rhonda Mawhood: When your children did something wrong, how would you discipline them?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I give a switching to them.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things would you switch them for?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Things they've done, which I tell them not to do. You know how children is.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things would you tell them not to do ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Just go around here and be bad and messing with other children, fighting and carrying on.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you go to the Baptist church with your brother, Mr. Boyd and your mother? You did?

Because Mr. Boyd told me that your father was a Methodist.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: But you went to the Baptist church?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, that's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: Why did you choose to go to the Baptist church and not the Methodist church, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: See, I lived with my mother. I was raised to go in church with my mother and that's how I got in the Baptist church.

Rhonda Mawhood: So your father didn't insist that you go to church with him?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I had two brothers went with him to the Methodist church.

Rhonda Mawhood: And why do you think they decided to go to the Methodist Church?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They used to go to church with him all the time. That's why they got in there.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you like church when you were a little girl?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I did. I really did.

Rhonda Mawhood: What did you like about it?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I liked to be in the service.

Rhonda Mawhood: How old were you when you were baptized?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I reckon I was about 19 years old.

Rhonda Mawhood: And where were you baptized? Do you remember?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Right down there's a big river down there. That's where.

Rhonda Mawhood: The Trent River?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: You go right down, it is right back down there.

Rhonda Mawhood: The News River?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: The News River. Okay. So were there a lot of other people baptized at the same time?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: A lot of people.

Rhonda Mawhood: And was it a big event, a baptism?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, it was during that time, but it fell off now, there ain't so many now like it used to be.

Rhonda Mawhood: How did you feel when you were baptized ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I felt like it had saved my soul.

Rhonda Mawhood: So it sounds like it was a happy day?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: A happy day.

Rhonda Mawhood: And did you bring your children up in the church ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, all of them in the church right today.

Rhonda Mawhood: The same one, the Pilgrim Chapel? And was your husband a Baptist?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: And he love all his family was a [indistinct 00:29:35].

Rhonda Mawhood: When you were growing up, did the church organize fun things to do?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things would they organize?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: They have the called BYPU, they would go church Sunday evening and have all the children they had speaking and singing in.

Rhonda Mawhood: And you used to go to that? Yeah. Did they organize, I don't know, picnics and things like that?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes, that's right. Sure did. Used to go to different places.

Rhonda Mawhood: Where would they go?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: A lot of times they'd go right down here to Morehead City,

Rhonda Mawhood: To the beach? Did you go to the beach on these trips?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah, I went all I could. After then I joined the senior citizens and they used to have picnics and go all places and spend nights and few days I used to go with them, but I ain't been able in about 10 years to go.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you ever go to the beach with your brothers or with your friends besides church trips? Did you ever go on your own?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, I visited the senior citizens. I used to go with them, my friends.

Rhonda Mawhood: And when you got married, ma'am, did you get married in the church?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No I didn't.

Rhonda Mawhood: Where was it that you married?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: In some friend's house.

Rhonda Mawhood: And were there a lot of people at your wedding?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, there wasn't nobody there hardly. I didn't have any big wedding. A small one.

Rhonda Mawhood: So it was quiet. Did your mother or you, someone make a new dress for the wedding?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: No, I just wore what I had.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did your husband ever go into the military ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yes he did.

Rhonda Mawhood: He did? When was that ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: The second war.

Rhonda Mawhood: Second war. So did he have to go away? What was that like for you being here while he was gone?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: See I had all my children then.

Rhonda Mawhood: So you had a lot to do.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: That's right.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of changes would you say that you've seen living in James City all these years? What kinds of changes have you seen over the years?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: The one thing I see that changes are them roads and things and the bypass. So my grandmother used to stay up there, could hardly know where she stay now since they changed the roads and things around.

Rhonda Mawhood: Big change.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: If I were to ask you Mrs. Forbs, do you have any advice for young people today coming up to give them the benefit of your years of experience, what would you say? What kind of advice would you give, ma'am?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I'd give them stay in church and be in service because they ain't nothing out here but a lot of trouble. And be around, go around with some of these people prefer to go around with that makes it bad for them. So they get in more trouble by going around with these boys and girls that do anything they wanted to do and when you knew anything you was in trouble with them. So it's the best to stay out that kind of company.

Rhonda Mawhood: Thank you.

Rowene Boyd Forbes: You're welcome.

Rhonda Mawhood: Do you know how your parents chose your name, why they chose that name for you?

Rowene Boyd Forbes: I sure don't.

Rhonda Mawhood: It's pretty though.