



12-6-1980

Interview with Naomi Banks Bridges

Naomi Banks Bridges

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview OH #110
BRIDGES, Naomi Banks**

BRIDGES, Naomi Banks

Journalism major

At Winthrop: 1950 -1954

Interviewed: December 6, 1980

Interviewer: Kathryn Bridges

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 02:01:15

Abstract: In her December 6, 1980 interview with her daughter Kathryn Bridges, Naomi Banks Bridges describes her schooling, time at Winthrop, and the effects of World War II on her family. Bridges concludes her interview describing Christmas day and her family's Christmas traditions. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Childhood, cotton farming, Black Stock School, sports, Radio Journalism, WRHI, WWII, rationing, Korean War, Christmas

Interview Session (December 6, 1980): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction*

00:00:14 *Question:* When and where were you born? *Answer:* September 7, 1932 in Chester, SC. Born at home. Dr. Wallace delivered NB. Breach birth.

00:01:42 *Question:* Last born because you were breach? *Answer:* NB suspects. Another reason may be they had seven children and money was scarce. One sibling died young. "Blue baby."

00:03:08 *Question:* Six children when you were born? *Answer:* Yes.

00:03:30 *Question:* How long did your parents live in that house? *Answer:* 8 years. Looked for cheaper housing. Father could walk to work – state highway department. NB recalls looking through the family bible and coming across an example of how roads were built back then. Started building roads, then machinery maintenance. NB recalls the smell of her father.

- 00:07:25 *Question:* When did you move? *Answer:* 2.5 years later. Moved, because NB's father's parents had died. NB describe how her grandparents' estate was settled. Lumber.
- 00:14:00 *Question:* Did he move to farm? *Answer:* Yes. Cows. Naming animals. Generosity of neighbors. Rebuilt house. Outside kitchen. Oak tree.
- 00:21:20 [no question] NB's grandfather also grew up in the house they moved to. The house was always in the family - Wears and Banks.
- 00:22:24 *Question:* Samuel and Elizabeth settled on the family land? *Answer:* No. NB discusses how her childhood home came into the family.
- 00:25:45 *Question:* Possible the detached kitchen was the house? *Answer:* Possible. NB and interviewer determining age of house.
- 00:26:45 *Question:* How was your father going to farm and work in the highway department? *Answer:* Seven children worked on the farm – assigned chores.
- 00:28:05 *Question:* Was there money in the family to help your father? *Answer:* Nobody's salary was good. NB and her family grew or made most of what they needed. NB's mother's family had some money. Renovations to the house didn't cost much, because the lumber came from the land.
- 00:30:30 *Question:* What kind of farming? *Answer:* Raise grains for the animals. Raised cotton too. Children had to help raise the cotton. Cotton gin. Car. Not a lot of automobile expenses.
- 00:36:05 [no question] Riding bus to school. Describes school. Black Stock School. Graduating high school class was six students.
- 00:40:39 *Question:* Sports at Black Stock School? *Answer:* Basketball, baseball, and softball. "Everyone really was given a chance to play." Junior Year – basketball team was districts champions. Everybody in NB's family played sports.
- 00:42:25 *Question:* How did you manage school, sports, and chores? *Answer:* School was "broad-minded." A block of time was set aside to let students practice.
- 00:44:53 *Question:* Teams you played? *Answer:* Louisville. Great Falls. Mount Zion Institute. Jenkinsville. Monticello. Tournaments held in Chester, Lancaster, or Winnsboro. NB was captain the night they won the championship.

- 00:47:50 *Question:* Favorite classes? *Answer:* History. Won “Woodman of the World” medal. Latin American history.
- 00:50:25 *Question:* Least favorite subject? *Answer:* Algebra. “Algebra just simply floored me.”
- 00:51:11 *Question:* foreign language? *Answer:* No. Got into Winthrop without a foreign language. NB had five years of home economics. Most of the girls took home ec. And the boys took “agriculture.” All of NB’s home ec. Teachers studied at Winthrop.
- 00:52:39 *Question:* Why not study home ec. At Winthrop? *Answer:* Studied journalism. NB wanted to change the world.
- 00:53:30 *Question:* Graduated Black Stock? *Answer:* 1950 and went to Winthrop after that. Finished Winthrop in 1954. Started off as a chemistry major – NB’s family told her that’s where the money was. Had chemistry in high school, but Black Stock didn’t have a great lab. Montgomery – head of Journalism Department. Scholarships. One of NB’s sisters had the Dining Room Scholarship. NB’s sister helped pay NB’s way.
- 00:57:33 *Question:* What was Winthrop like? Uniforms? *Answer:* Yes. Uniforms came with the cost of tuition. Dating was restricted.
- 00:58:40 *Question:* Day students didn’t have same regulations? *Answer:* Yes. Students had to take Saturday classes. Charter buses would take students back home on the holidays. Holidays were Wednesday – Sunday for Thanksgiving.
- 01:02:45 *Question:* Did you ever get the Dining Room Scholarship? *Answer:* No. NB’s senior year, she worked for Scholastic Press – write in-house publication that went out to high schools.
- 01:05:13 *Question:* How did you get the job? *Answer:* Senior journalism major. Montgomery knew she would like it. NB made a lot of contacts.
- 01:06:10 *Question:* Got a job in journalism? *Answer:* Worked at WRHI – nothing to do with journalism. Had to write and produce an entire radio program. NB describes her first program she wrote. Radio journalism was just getting started at Winthrop. Wrote mostly commercials and Christmas programs.
- 01:09:30 *Question:* Was that the kind of work you wanted to do? *Answer:* There weren’t a lot of jobs. When NB graduated Winthrop, she knew she would get a job.
- 01:11:13 *Question:* Did you and your sisters know you would work? *Answer:* NB and her sisters knew they would go to school, work, and then marry. All wanted to be independent.

- 01:12:42 *Question:* Two brothers served in WWII? *Answer:* Before Pearl Harbor, NB recalls a brother knowing war was coming. NB's brother Mac was drafted – served in Europe. Mac was a radio operator. Mac in England shortly, then went to Belgium. Mac in the Battle of the Bulge. In Europe until V-E Day. NB's brother Doc was in Okinawa. Doc wasn't in early battles. Rations and food were inferior, according to Doc. People in Okinawa were hungry and scavenge army dumps to get food.
- 01:18:10 [no question] NB remembers Pearl Harbor. Going to pick out a Christmas tree. Newsflash came on the radio. NB remembers having to send letters to her brothers through V-mail. Had to write on a special kind of paper. Photostatic copy. Letters were censored. NB remembers seeing soldiers around the house. Tents put up around Black Stock School. NB baked pies for soldiers once. NB recalls hearing her first "Yankee" talking. NB recalls soldiers drinking and took over the basketball game NB was playing in.
- 01:27:50 *Question:* Did you ever hear from these soldiers again? *Answer:* No. Hardly none of the girls married the soldiers.
- 01:28:58 *Question:* Rationing? *Answer:* Affected people more who didn't live on a farm. Sugar was rationed. Saved sugar for canning. Shoes were rationed. Could trade ration stamps with someone else. Gasoline was rationed – NB's father had an essential job, so he had a better gasoline ration than most people. Black market.
- 01:32:15 *Question:* People proud to serve? *Answer:* Yes. Houses had stars in the window to represent the number of family members who were serving. NB remembers not hearing from her brother Mac for a few months and the worry her family felt. Telegram that Mac had been wounded. Celebration after V-E Day.
- 01:37:10 *Question:* Same feeling during Korean War? *Answer:* "It was not as awesome." Recalls hearing about the Korean War. NB says it was, "Pretty disgusting." NB's brother had to sign up for the draft. NB remembers helping her brother Mac adjusting to life back home.
- 01:41:55 *Question:* Christmas? *Answer:* Didn't get a lot of toys. The girls would share a baby doll each Christmas. Boys would share a wagon. Christmas day. Gifts. Money on Christmas was spent on edibles, not toys. Firecrackers. NB's grandparents. Food at Christmas.
- 01:54:50 [no question] Talking about staying at grandparents' house on Christmas day.
- 01:56:45 *Question:* How did you decorate Christmas trees? *Answer:* NB describes. Christmas trees were meticulously dressed.

02: *End of interview*