

## **OAKWOOD ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT**

Barry and Nancy Poe (moved into Oakwood in 1972)

Interviewed by Peter Rumsey on June 27, 2012 at the residence of Peter Rumsey and Barbara Wishy

Peter: It is June 27th, at about 5 minutes after 10, location 515 n. Bloodworth St, the personal residence of Barbara Wishy and Peter Rumsey. The temperature is in the lower mid 80's, low humidity, a beautiful day out. This will be SR-28 recorded interview with Nancy and Barry Poe as part of the oakwood oral history project.

Peter: Nancy and Barry, thank you for participating in the oral history project of the Oakwood society. It is particularly appropriate and a pleasure given the fact that you were both had been involved in the original creation of the organization. I would like each of you to give me your name and your current address and then we'll get into the questions and discussion here in a moment.

Barry: Ok, I'm Barry Poe. My current address is 6224 Turtle Hawk Dr in Wilmington, NC.

Nancy: I am Nancy Creighton-Poe [at the same address].

Peter: Why don't you tell me when you have lived in Oakwood and then why you came to Oakwood.

Barry: We came to Oakwood in July of 1972 and before that we lived in Raleigh on [Lake Boone] Trail and we had done our first house renovation on a house on Ash Avenue off of Hillsborough Street and we enjoyed that very much and were sort of successful about it and we had read about Oakwood and so we decided we would like to get involved and we came to Oakwood and bought a house 318 N Boundary St.

Peter: What interested you about Oakwood?

Barry: Well we knew that there were other people here restoring homes and had gone through the neighborhood and were real impressed with the Victorian style houses and it looked like it was a 20 square block area and a lot of stone dwellings, but we saw about 8 or 9 houses that had been purchased by young professionals and we got the bug and went from there.

Peter: Had you done renovations before the doing them on Ash Avenue in Raleigh?

Barry: Yeah, the first house we ever owned we started our marriage in Knoxville Tennessee and we bought a house in a real nice neighborhood called [Soquiet] Hills and we found a house that needed renovation and that was our first house and we really got a lot of pleasure out of that.

Peter: The house at 318 N. Boundary, how did you happen to find it and what were your first impressions of it?

Barry: I think Nancy should answer that one because she knew Craig and Tarleton and had visited with them and she knew about the antique shop in the house.

Nancy: They had the antique shop downstairs and lived upstairs in the house. And then we saw that it was for sale and thought perhaps this is for us. A little bit of hesitation because the neighborhood and surroundings were shaky except for the Arthur house across the street which is still spectacular. So we got interested, and were childless, and had the energy of young people and of people who had no children. Both of us were very skilled with woodworking and so forth and both of us [were] workaholics. So both of us thought we could do this.

Peter: Where were Craig and Tarleton moving?

Nancy: They went to a huge commercial location at the corner on Glenwood. Maybe just a couple of blocks from Hillsborough St. It had been maybe a manufacturing concern. It was a huge building that they had bought and had beautiful [pieces]. People came from all over and from other states, people who could buy really fine antiques. I remember going in the new building there and a dining room set and chairs cost more than the Boundary St. house.

Peter: You mention the Arthur house, which is across the street at the corner of Bloodworth and North Boundary facing Bloodworth. Tell me about Mr. Arthur.

Barry: He was just a wonderful gentleman and a little bit of a character. Just an old fashioned Southern Gentleman. For example, we would see him out on the yard on Saturday morning, mowing, and he would be in a sport coat and tie, and a hat... he always wore a hat. We struck up a friendship and he liked us and we loved him. So we maintained a friendship with him for the whole period we were here.

Peter: Tell me about the renovation process of 318 N. Boundary St.

Barry: Well, I think the first thing we found, that was an unpleasant surprise, is that we shared the driveway with our next door neighbor and she didn't like these newcomers coming in so she wasn't happy from the very beginning. That was the first thing that came to my mind. When it comes to the renovation I don't think we tore the walls out or anything like that. It just had beautiful moldings and high ceilings and things like that. We had been very successful on the previous renovation on Ash Avenue and had converted it to a triplex and rented it out to college kids. So we thought we could take the back of Boundary Street and convert it to a little apartment. So we did. We had two renters during the time we were there. One was [to] a young college professor at NC

State and the other was a couple we became friends with, and they stayed with us for years.

Barry: That was the first time we did a renovation to the back of the house.

Peter: And you lived in the house from the beginning. You did it as you lived in it.

Nancy: We lived in it, on the job site. And Barry even built a spiral staircase in that apartment. It was a two story dwelling. It had a little laundry room and Barry used heart pine to make the steps of the spiral staircase.

Barry: When you came into the house, on the left, was a parlor, and one of the first things we built was floor to ceiling bookcases because we had quite a few books, and it was more painting and sanding floors and things like that, than it was tearing out walls. We did an extensive renovation on the kitchen. It was completely gutted and [we] put a copper hood back there. I can't remember all the details. [and] The kitchen was probably the more expensive renovation along with the apartment of the house.

Nancy: [The unusual heating system] was wonderful and it helped us a great deal with the expensive living there. That was a great bargain when we bought because no one in Raleigh wanted to live down here. We had learned in these cases that many natives didn't do it because they have unfortunate remembrances of when the neighborhood went down and won't have anything to do with it. It takes someone not native who doesn't have that bias to go in. We were in that group, not Raleigh natives.

Peter: tell me about other people that you knew who were here in oakwood at that time.

B: Well Nancy is probably a little better. I can remember, well, Ames Christopher was a key person in the neighborhood because when we really realized we were going to struggle to save the neighborhood we found he was the leader in the neighborhood in 72 early 73. Bob [Hosfried] was very vocal in most of these meetings that we had. And, uh, the Glens, another couple with several children [.....]

Nancy: They had one child and later had seven, a son and they lived sideways from the across from the [Pentleave Holdley's] house.

Peter: Which is where?

Nancy: It's at the corner of East and Polk, it has a catty corner [entrance.]

Barry: Right across from the [Holdleys] Makepeace house

Nancy: Sideways it was. And they were lovely. She had to work and he of course had to work and they had a two year old. They were doing the restoration largely on there own and yet when I was going there to see her and the house was always in lovely order and I

remember asking her if her mother was this way and she said yes, she had to be she'd been married 10 months since she had triplets and [Corin] was one of them she, was a triplet and they were charming and young and in their twenties.

Peter: To ask a question like that suggests something about your parents. Was your mother like you were?

Nancy: No, difficult person.

Peter: Barry?

Barry: No, they had no feelings for what we were doing.

Nancy: We had no family support.

Barry: As a matter of fact Nancy's step father was a car dealer in Fayetteville and we had to be very delicate with him because we were actually fighting cars in traffic so um...

Nancy: So we had to be diplomatic. We had to manage with my parents, mother and step father.

Peter: Let me ask a question about 318 and get back to traffic and other issues. It was a house with a history. The Mordecai family, tell me a little bit about the history

Nancy: It was built by Ellen Mordecai, a daughter of the Mordecais who lived in Mordecai house. She married a man from Mobile, went there to live and had two children. Her husband died young and she came back to Raleigh to live with her family with these two young children. Some time passed before she built the house at 318 N. Boundary that was built around 1875. She lived there with her son and his family with little children. The house always looked too far south to be here in Raleigh, not the deep south. And I theorize that she loved the architecture of Mobile and made her Raleigh house like what she remembered as a young wife in Mobile. When we got there the beautiful wrought iron balcony part had been folded up and put in the attic, so we put that back. It is very deep south and we loved it, but it was not in place when we got there.

Peter: As you go into the house and turn right, what room that would be?

Nancy: It was the living room

Peter: There is some wavy glass in the window there and her initials were carved in it. She used a diamond to carve her initials in it. I assume they are still there.

Nancy: I think it was the downstairs bedroom where she had carved her initials in the glass down there.

Barry: A little aside, we were in the basement about a month after we were there, and I

was reaching up over a joist and saw something up there that was an old brown paper bag, and inside the bag was a loaded pistol and so I thought that was sort of interesting. It was rusty and it was a 32 caliber revolver. I gave it to a very good friend of mine, a gun nut, and he left it in penetrating oil for about a month before he could unfreeze it. I don't know the story of why it was there.

Peter: Something you may not have been aware of about two years ago two and a half years ago the North Carolina art museum took a picture of the front of that house and then blew that up to a full size wall covering in the museum. They built a porch, a platform, in front of it that corresponded to what would have been the porch. When you came out of the exhibit, this was a gathering space where storytellers would sit on the porch and tell stories. They came to the owners telling them they wanted to picture this in the museum as evoking the good old days in the deeper south.

Nancy: That's what I figured, because it's a little out of character.

Peter: So here you've moved into Oakwood, did you know anything about, were you aware of the various struggles. What were those struggles? When did you become aware of those and how.

Barry: Well I think we moved in in July and there had been several articles in the newspaper about the so called north south expressway and we really just knew so little we didn't pay much attention to it. But uh when we got here and Ames formed this society, we became more aware of what was going on, so I decided to go to the planning department and get a copy of the proposed expressway and where it was situated relative to our house. They printed out a big plan of our house and we could see the dotted lines and I think it was part of a cloverleaf of the proposed interstate. [And] We could see we were going to be in a struggle. So that's how we found out. I don't know when that was, probably August or September.

Nancy: Probably just a couple of months after we come here, thought from the graphs, we had made the worst decision we ever made in our lives.

Barry: The city had unveiled their plan for a revitalization program and saw that there was a lot of news about that, but not so much for the north south expressway. That's really when Ames Christopher formed [The Society for the Preservation of Historic Oakwood], he was the leader, carried a load in 72 or 73. There were probably about 15 families here at that time, people who lived here, old time neighbors, who got involved with us. There were probably...how many houses when we were first came here? 8 or 9.

Nancy: Just a handful

Barry: Just a handful.

Nancy: We were on the frontier.

Barry: Our next door neighbor had a daughter in law who would get money by going to the blood bank and giving blood. We would have people knock on our doors at 3 in the morning, derelicts, and it was like that. It was pretty ratty.

Nancy: it was shaky.

Peter: The awareness of the highway, tell me about the first meetings you attended on that.

Barry: In regards to the city I don't really recall.

Nancy: Do you mean here?

Peter: In the neighborhood.

Nancy: We met on that church down the street on...

Peter: On Polk St.?

Nancy: Polk, Pentecostal, it is, and I think that was the first meeting and at the time I was secretary director at the chamber of commerce and I took the notes, shorthand.

Peter: Do you still have those notes?

Nancy: You know I don't. I'm sorry to say I do not.

Barry: We've got a lot of newspaper articles when it would come up in the news and I [saw] that in October of 72 was when the society was formed under the leadership of Ames, and there were probably about 15 newcomers and restorers and we uh I forget the church we met at...

Nancy: The Pentecostal church.

Barry: Pentecostal?

Nancy: That was just asked a few minutes ago.

Peter: I'm going stop us for a minute...

Peter: Resuming after a brief break, just a note: Barry and Nancy have prepared a spread sheet. That shows the various dates of things happening during their time in Oakwood, along side which they have shown events that are taking place in the world. I have in front of me a basket of newspaper articles and pictures that they have kept.

Barry: I think the main thing is the formation of the society, and then there were a lot of letters to the editors that were written. And I think the news observer and the Raleigh

Times were really on our side. They would come out with these editorials supporting, the concept of making Oakwood a historic district. And then as the struggle went on, trying to have downtown revitalization happen without the North-South Express way. There was this environmental group I don't if they are still here, called Wake Environmental.

Nancy: Wake Environment.

Barry: Wake Environment, and they were also very helpful to us. And so we endorsed their efforts, but both newspapers were very helpful. So I think there were a lot of letters to editors that we wrote and a lot of just good things that helped us from those newspapers.

Peter: What was the first event that gave you a sense that you might succeed?

Barry: Probably the Christmas tour, because we moved here in July. And December we had our first Christmas tour, and I think that tickets were \$2.00.

Nancy: They were.

Barry: And there were about six houses on the tour, and ours was one of them. And we had some young people come and perform a string quartet and played beautiful music it just sounded great. And I guess we had maybe a hundred people outside of our house.

Nancy: Well you know I think we had seven hundred, I think we had run out of tickets. Because we had no idea that we would get as much response as we did.

Barry: There were twelve homes on the tour.

Nancy: Yeah, twelve. So there were more than we thought.

Barry: Tickets were two dollars.

Nancy: Two dollars.

Barry: And we had this beautiful music, and I was a photographer too I had a darkroom upstairs on Boundary St. I had all of these black and white photographs displayed. They really weren't of the neighborhood, they were just pictures of the island[sp?] but people enjoyed looking at them. So, and that was very successful. I think that was the first public thing we did.

Nancy: A glimmer of the great interest that was to come.

Barry: And once in a while the city would also have an article in the paper, that the North-South Express way was really was necessary for the revitalization of this downtown revitalization project.

Nancy: And our spirits would go up and down.

Barry: Three articles that were our favorite, there were three proposing we go ahead with it. That was 1972, in 1973 I think Meredith College got involved and they made some historical sociological studies of Oakwood. Which, helped the prestige for our struggle and there were more favorable articles. And so things started to turn around in '73, I guess the parallel would be we got invaded in Pearl Harbor and our first was Midway so that would sort of be the parallel. In 1973 things started to turn around a little bit, but there was still a little struggle.

Barry: [] One of the things that happened in '73 was someone from one of the Belk Department store families had a letter to the editor expressing the need for this North-South express way. About three-fourths of the letters to the editor were trying to shoot him down. I wrote one of them that I read it for the first time today in forty years. And I said who wrote this? And then I saw my name at the bottom of it. So we had things like that going on too, but I think Mr. Belk really wanted that store to be part of the downtown revitalization program so we rejected his advice.

Peter: When did the city council first act on this that you are aware of?

Barry: I believe that was probably in the 1973, maybe 1973 and I think what they did was approve the downtown revitalization program. But they did not include the North-South express way. They didn't eliminate it, but they did not include that. So that was ...

Nancy: Huge.

Barry: We felt like maybe we were getting somewhere, I think that was in 1973.

Peter: Did you meet at any time with the city council people? Any names or incidents that you remember?

Barry: Yeah, Tom Bradshaw.

Nancy: Tommy Bradshaw was the name, and I knew him from working at the chamber of commerce and I liked him so much. He was very personal and we were on different sides we didn't talk about it but there we were on opposing sides.

Barry: Yeah, I was just going to throw this in. Nancy [worked] in the chamber of commerce. And that was another thing, she didn't get any sympathy from her boss [about] trying to save the neighborhood.

Peter: Let the record show that the boss's daughter lives in Oakwood now.

Nancy: She brought [her] house from us.

Peter: Tell me about what she did. This is Alice Garland.



Nancy: Alice.

Peter: Her married name was Swink. Tell me about the house she brought.

Nancy: She brought the house across the street from ya'll, and that we worked on with the Wishys. It was a cooperative project that we were doing. We sold it to Alice and that I thought was great irony.

Barry: I just happened to see my notes here November '72 in Raleigh Times, the city council adopts the downtown revitalization, rejects the expressway plans. So that was a big boost for us and after that there were more editorials mostly in favor of us. And then in '73 Meredith College made this historical study I mentioned. I can't remember what we did with the city council in '73.

Peter: Do you remember the names Jim Quinn or Ron Kirshbaum, I think they were on the council at that time.

Nancy: Quinn, yes I remember. I think he was probably in favor, he was an architect I think.

Peter: I believe so, but.

Nancy: I don't remember knowing him personally, but I remember feeling he is supportive of this radical.

Barry: In 1973 the planning commission here in Raleigh recommended to city council that Oakwood be made a historic district. I just know we got an article about that, that was a Raleigh Times article.

Peter: As you put together this strategy to try to defeat the highway, this sounds like a chicken and egg question. What was the sequence of events leading to the decision to hold a candle light tour to create the Society for the Preservation of Historic Oakwood? How did they relate to the efforts to defeat the highway.

Barry: Well, public interest I guess.

Nancy: We certainly wanted to let people know, that something worth while was going on here. But on a very small scale, so a tour of these few house involved was a good way to do that and we had much more response than we expected. As I said the first time we ran out of tickets.

Peter: My question is was there a strategy meeting at which people said, you know if we are going to defeat this we should organize ourselves. Or did the organization come first and say, we ought to battle this highway?

Barry: I think the organization came first, because we had to create a structure where we could do something, you know fight the city and fight their thinking about this express way and the Christmas tour was just part of it.

Peter: And where did the creation of the historic district fit into that as well?

Barry: Well that concept, the historic district concept was by Ruth Stokes, you remember that name? She was with archives department, she lived right up here too so she was a vital part of the team. In fact, she was very upset with these Oakwood early newsletters. And so she was a very vital part of it. She sort of knew the ins and outs of the political aspects of doing this.

Peter: When did you have a sense of success? You mentioned the first was when you had the candlelight tour. The second sounds like in that fall when they approved the development plan without the highway.

Barry: I think that was a little part of 1972, because there was historic committee recommended to the city council by the planning commission. The historic district be formed, so I think the middle part of 1973.

Nancy: Was probably a turning point.

Barry: A turning point.

Nancy: When we had some footing.

Peter: was there opposition to creating the historic district?

Barry: I don't recall.

Nancy: I imagine some business people, probably thought it was a lark or maybe not to be taken very seriously is the best way to say it.

Barry: When the Raleigh planning commission recommends a historic district that was a real clause and that happened in the latter part of '73 and '74.

Peter: It's interesting that today there is often very often very strong opposition, in particular to having a local historic district because home owners fear they are giving up a certain set of rights, and there might very well be a measure of the degree of absentee ownership that existed within the neighborhood.

Nancy: Oh of course, there is a lot of absentee in the ownership about houses made into apartments.

Barry: In then in '74 in the middle part of '74 the North Carolina division of history and archives nominated Oakwood to become a part of the National Registry so that was a big

plus too. In that same year Oakwood was placed on the National Registry, that was in June of 1974 so that was great.

Peter: I understand Barry you had a part to play, in fact you spent almost a year helping to create the non-profit.

Barry: That was in 1975, 1975 got here the main struggle was over so then we had a little time to put some things together and create a non-profit. So I took one year off of work, and it was wasn't just because of that, it was because we had also purchased two other homes and we were renovating those, I had my hands full. And fortunately I had a great boss, and he said well things don't work out you can come back. I took one year off to finish these two houses we were doing, and all the leg work for getting a non-profit status. So I do take credit for that, I don't remember all that I did and I think Nancy was my secretary and we must of written almost 10,000 letters.

Nancy: I think that maybe too many.

Barry: If I had a claim to fame that was it, so we got the non-profit situation set up. And I think that in June of 1975 we've received that status so from June 1975 to now it's been a non-profit. Which allowed the society to venture out do more things, if you wanted to buy property and fix it up and sell it to young professional they could do that.

Peter: Were you part of any of the efforts of the Oakwood organization to purchase and renovate.

Barry: No, I think most of that happened when left in '76, we didn't really do that. We got involved in the park.

Nancy: Just that tiny park.

Barry: The little park, Oakwood Commons I think its called.

Peter: The Oakwood Common.

Barry: Yeah, I had to go before city council and I don't know if there was a proposal I can't really remember exactly what happened. But I had to go before city council and make a pitch for that and so we got that done. Nancy and I took a walk down there earlier this morning, and it is a real thrill to see the playground and how nice it is kept and nice plaque and everything.

Peter: And in what capacity did you testify?

Barry: As president of the society for the preservation of Oakwood.

Peter: were you the original president?

Barry: No, I was the third one I guess.

Nancy: Ames was first.

Barry: Yeah, Ames was probably the first one.

Nancy: And I guess Bob.

Peter: Bob?

Nancy: What place was he? Second.

Barry: I think he was.

Nancy: Yes, I think Bob probably was.

Barry: Yes this was 1975, and I was the chairman and there were a board of directors. Ruth Stokes was one of the directors so there were about eight directors and six officers, and I was the chairman. They made me go before the city council, I was well prepared to make a good presentation.

Peter: Tell me what this document is.

Barry: This document that I'm looking at right now is one of the first newsletters that we had for the society for the preservation of Oakwood. And as you see there are about seven or eight black and white photographs here, and the main photograph here is of Barbara Wishy's front door. And then we also have a picture of..

Nancy: Of that vent.

Barry: A vent which is directly across the street from Boundary street, and I see this vent symbol on the Oakwood banners that we saw this morning on our little walk. So I was really please to see it, and there are several other pictures of restorations going on.

We had a commercial artist, his name was Gary Norton and he was also one of the directors. So he was the artist, and Nancy was the writer, and I was the photographer and we put this first newsletter together and we're real proud of this stamp place.

It says non-profit organization U.S. postage paid, permit no. 823 so that was the first one, did we ask for money? I think we probably asked for money in this. But it really gave a very accurate history of what had happened from 1972-1975 and we're going to leave this with you.

Peter: You mentioned, both restoring other properties tell me a little about what you did after you finished and settled with 318 North Boundary.

Barry: I'm going to turn this over to Nancy, because her memory is a lot better than mine. But I know from here we went to Greenwood, South Carolina it was a business move. Cause I had taken a year off from work, so we had the choice of going back to the same company in Greenwood, South Carolina. But I did have another job offer for doing the same thing in Raleigh, so we could had stayed in Raleigh. But I just felt more comfortable going back to the old company I could get things back on track a lot faster, so we left from here and went to Greenwood, South Carolina and we lived in Paris Mountain.

Peter: Now when was this?

Barry: This was '76...'77..1977 and we left here and went to Greenwood, South Carolina. And we lived there for...

Nancy: Two years.

Barry: ..two years, we didn't restore the house just lived there and go things going. And then another business move took us back to Winston Salem, and we brought a 1926 house in a beautiful neighborhood and restored that and we lived there for 18 years.

Peter: How many houses did you restore in Oakwood?

Nancy: We restored a four square house down on East St., also with Barbara and Bernard Wishy, and sold that.

Barry: At least five.

Nancy: At least five, and sold five here and we are now in the 10th house that we have restore is a grand word for this one, its just remodel because this is just a 36 year old house.

Peter: Did you do a lot of the work yourself on these houses in Oakwood.

Barry: My best trade is demolishing. No, I did a lot of work, things like painting and etc. But things like plumbing and electrical work we hired that out, but we do all of the work we just love it.

Peter: Did you find a strong real estate market? did you resell the homes or hold onto them?

Barry: The ones here in Oakwood, we sold all those. We held onto the one in Winston Salem, for all those years we lived there. And then from there we built a house, we built one house in Pamlico county, near the Neuse River. We made it an old house. And then we sold that house at the top of the housing market. And then our daughter lived in Wilmington and then we made a move to Wilmington to be close to her and that's where

we are right now. Now this house we built in 1976 but we completely regutted it so it looks like a low country old house. It would pass for an old house.

Peter: Who are the buyers of your houses here in Oakwood?

Nancy: I think the one that we did, the four square one we did with the Wishys was bought by a young lady, an attorney, who was unmarried which was still kind of unusual at that time. And I still can't remember her first name, it was unusual, I think Marcella but I can't remember her last name. Then, we did the one across the street and that was bought by Alice Garland. Then we did [Bering?]. We did ourselves another one on North-East St. that was bought by the daughter of Albert Root. Then we did another up on North-East St. and I don't even remember that. At that time we had a new baby, and I just had to withdraw some.

Peter: Let the record show that they had pictures of the house on the 500th block of North-East St. Which today is 527 North-East St, it is a dark red color. When they had renovated it, when they purchased it, the pictures show the house with asbestos siding and a very diminutive porch rail. They removed the asbestos and did replace the porch rail with a railing keeping the original character of the place. The other place they renovated on North-East St. is currently owned by Lynn Wiles at the intersection of Pace and North-East St. The east side of North-East street, I don't know where the four square is, we'll pin that down. Any funny stories of apocalyptic stories or otherwise, that you remember from your renovations here in Oakwood?

Nancy: What disasters or near disasters did we have? Well first of all I think people friends thought that we were doing something very foolish, to leave Lake Fotana[Sp?] and move down here. And we could feel that among their friends, so that was somewhat hard to deal with. And I didn't always have the best [unknown] when we had done it. I grew up in an antique town and in our own houses.

Peter: Where was that?

Nancy: In Fredericksburg, Virginia and that's the way we are.

Barry: Before we came here we renovated the house that we converted to a triplex on Ash Ave. We had the lower part, really was a basement so when we called the city inspectors out to give us the final improvement and they saw the ceilings were only six and a half feet tall. So they wouldn't approve us, so we ended up having the basement floors dug up to get our eight foot ceiling so that was kind of bad news. And then the one on East St. that we showed you last night, we found a sort of underground river in the basement. So we were told we would have to hire an engineer to tell us what to do so he came from North Carolina State University, and recommended a floating pier. Which is a huge pier a cube made of solid concrete, to hold the structure up the structure is sinking. And that is another unexpected expensive, those are two disasters that you hope you never have when you restore a house.

Peter: I remember that the city was very much in the midst of, as was the state, in developing a rehab building code in the early eighties. Were there examples of things that you confronted having to do with the application of building codes and building standards?

Barry: You know I just don't recall, and we had to get permits for all this work we did but we never had too many complications here in Oakwood. The environmental regulations that exist today didn't exist back then, so we weren't required to go through all the things you have to go through when you remove asbestos and things like that. We didn't have too many asbestos problems, that really wasn't a big issue here for the ones we did.

Peter: We'll come to the articles, and I'm going to ask you to go through in a moment. And just talk about how they bring back to mind certain things. Last evening we took a trip with Barbara Wishy, Barry, and Nancy and drove them around Oakwood. And then drove through a big loop through and around the center city. Give me a bit of your reaction to what you saw yesterday.

Nancy: It was very rewarding, and I never thought it was going to come to anything this big or tasteful and I'm very pleased that we had a part in it's beginning.

Barry: My keyword would be vibrancy, all the people eating out on tables on the sidewalks, and restaurants and things that are going on. And I guess vibrancy was the main thing, and the other thing was to see new homes being constructed and the historic district. That really gave us a lift and made us feel good, to see new homes being constructed and they have to comply with the historic commission requirements it just looks great.

Peter: Take us through some of the articles that you have here, and we will have the attendant shuffling of paper but that will be an occupational hazard at this point.

Barry: OK, well let me shuffle a little bit. Most of the articles here we leave in a zip lock bag, we'll just pull out some of the ones that...but this one this was a typical of the Raleigh Times article called an opinion of the times 'Why not downtown homes?'

Peter: What is the date? Repeat that with the date.

Barry: Oh yeah, it's dated September 16, 1976 so the struggle was pretty much over. And so this was an article saying that this was favorable toward [...] I think we might have to edited this out because I don't remember what this article was for us or against us.

Barry: Let me pick another one. Oh here's a good one, this is an article that was written August 14, 1973 and this was a letter to the editor in response to 'The Charlotte Mayor's advice rejected' yeah the mayor of Charlotte was Mr. Belk. And so we wrote a letter to the editor for him, and do you want me to read it?

Peter: Just summarize what it says.

Barry: OK, we were just telling him that we didn't agree with what his idea was on the importance of the North-South Expressway making it easy for cars to get downtown. And I think was Charlotte in our opinion held the distinction of being the quick service drive in, cross town express way, street riding and tree harvesting, motor speed way capital of the state. [A car cowtowing city,] so we socked it to him on that one and this is article about when we left Oakwood. And it is dated August 1977, and we left Oakwood for South Carolina.

Peter: This is an article that is in a passing scene 'Pair leaving Oakwood for wife in veranda', Saturday after twelve years as two of Raleigh's most loyal residents. Well I'm just going to ask you to just read the beginning of that.

Barry: Saturday after twelve years.

Peter: Start with just do you know which paper it was? You may not.

Barry: I don't think I do on this one, August 17, 1977 and the headline is 'Pair leaving Oakwood for life in veranda' Saturday after twelve years as two of Raleigh's most loyal residents. Barry and Nancy Poe will lock their restored home in historic Oakwood, and drive to their new home in Greenwood, South Carolina and we brought and restored a home in Oakwood five years ago when restoration of Oakwood had just begun. And we had also restored four other Oakwood homes, and it goes on from there it's a very nice article. And I have another one here this is North Carolina preservation this is dated January 1976. So I think this happened in December of 1975, and historic Oakwood was presented with the Cannon Cup and I accepted it on behalf of the society of Oakwood because I was chairman at the time. And so that was a pretty nice thing, and it shows an old picture of me shows me accepting it. Banks Tally was the head of the North Carolina preservationist I guess, and so it's a nice article.

Peter: What we can do is, it's not critical that we go through all of these right now. But if there was something there..

Barry: I didn't have time to read all of these. Yeah, I think we got all the good ones here. A lot of these are just about the Christmas tour, outer doors historic Oakwood needs renovation. OK, here's a good one short and it has to do with the park down here. Are we being recorded now?

Peter: We still are...let's put these down for a moment.

Barry: OK.

Peter: And what I'll do is go through them, and certainly Matthew and Sarah, David, and others may go through as well. Sit back and relax for a moment, put the papers over to the side. Always the most interesting question in interviews like this can be do you have



any other thoughts? It's sort of the open ended question after you've taken a period of time in anticipation of coming here. We and Oakwood are most appreciative. Pulling together these articles, making a spreadsheet, you have given lot of thought, you've had lots of emotions in the last 24 hours here just returning. What, what thought comes to mind? What pictures of people or emotions or incidents or events?

Nancy: When I think we had so much to overcome, and there were times where it really seemed hopeless. And we had felt foolish that we had done it, so it was just nice to think that with the help with many people were able to just see it through. And to come to such wonderful completion that we didn't drain the scope that it was going to eventually.

Barry: It's nice to know that we made a difference.

Nancy: Very nice and very rewarding indeed.

Peter: Who are some of the people that you remember from those days?

Barry: Well you have better memory than I do.

Nancy: Most certainly Valie Henderson,

Barry: Yeah, Valie.

Nancy: And Glenn Bernard, Ames Christopher, he was a keeper and wonderful organizer and speaker and bold. And Vaughn Hoganland.

Barry: Vaughn Hoganland worked for the city I think and he certainly knew how things worked and happened so he was a big help too.

Nancy: A little bit more in the background than Ames, but he understood the mechanics.

Barry: Both of them very well spoken, Vaughn and Ames. They were a big help, and who was that couple? Frank Dano.

Nancy: Frank Dano, they lived across the street from the Glens who I mentioned.

Barry: We had some travel [UNKNOWN].

Nancy: We did.

Peter: Tell me more.

Barry: There was a lot of in fighting. Are we being recorded now?

Peter: Yep.

Barry: I don't want to mention names.

Peter: Well give the flavor of the dispute that was taking place.

Barry: Well I think some of it was jealousy.

Nancy: Some of it was just personal.

Barry: Personal.

Nancy: We had enough struggle with the city without having to deal with fights over nothing between these... Barry: I remember I had got a call from Southern Living and so they interviewed me over the phone and that probably went on for about 15-20 minutes. So I gave them some ideas of what I could envisioned of putting all these utility lines underground and having beautiful post lamps in the neighborhood. And when the article came out, it had a little bit of that in there and so a lot of people got very posed against running these heavy utility lines underground to have lamps. We hadn't had a chance to approve this so a lot of it was just jealousy. When I was chairman doing all this leg work for getting the non-profit thing, I guess I worked too quietly so a lot of folk thought didn't think I was doing anything but it really took a lot of time. I think there was a little bit of suspicion of what this non-profit thing was going to do for us.

Peter: Anything else?

Nancy: I was going to dispute some of the nasty and unnecessary jealousy between some of the others here who took up sides against each other. We tried to get out of that.

Barry: There was a lot here, a lot of end fighting you'd have that with anything just like congress today. They don't get anything done but they just argue, argue with each other..

Peter: Was there opposition subsequently to at that point you mentioned to the creation of the Oakwood district? Were there situations that subsequently evolved where somebody wanted to do something in their backyard and the district committee would say no?

Barry: Right, I think that is just human nature where you will that you have to comply to something where you want the to paint your house a certain color why can't you do it? If you take the freedom away when you live in a historic district, I think we had a little bit of that but it never..

Nancy: But we hired, Barry and I paid the expenses for Mr. Boney who is in a Wilmington an architect. He had been instrumental in having the ordinance put into effect there. And we brought him up here and he spoke in a meeting, and he tried to reassure people that it was workable and of course were always some dissenters. People who simply wouldn't go along with it, and just did what they wanted anyway but basically it worked. We met his son..nephew.

Barry: He was a leader in Wilmington historic district, and he came up and spoke to our society in a church building too.

Nancy: In Thomas Baptist Church, and we paid for his expenses for that evening and his hotel and so forth.

Peter: Was that the Oakwood meeting?

Nancy: It was, but it was to reassure people of the regulations that would come if we adopted that. But he did say that all the sweet people simply would do it.

Barry: I don't remember the details but there were a lot of questions regarding plaques, how that system was going to work. I don't remember too much controversy, I think that maybe by then we were getting ready to leave. And I served on the historic district commission with Mr. Arthur he was on the historic district commission, and because I was the chairman I served on it. What happened...they invited the head of IBM to come to one of our meetings. And he came and it just so happened that he and I were fraternity brothers in college, I hadn't seen him in a long time I can't even remember his name. But I think that Mr. Arthur was real impressed that I knew him, but we just made small talk and caught up on a few things.

Peter: Well that's interesting what IBM would had said at that time, cause you moved to Raleigh almost the same time IBM came. That was when, start that as a fresh thread saying we moved here when..

Barry: When did we move here?

Nancy: July '65. It was the same month that IBM...mhm.

Barry: And IBM was just coming at the same time, research was just beginning to bloom at that time.

Peter: And what prompted you to have the IBM person come to..?

Barry: Mr. Arthur invited him, he invited him and called out there demanded him to come. And I'm sorry that I just can't remember his name right now, he was a year older than me but we were fraternity brothers in University of Tennessee.

Peter: What did he say that was supportive, presuming [he was] supportive.

Barry: Uh he just made a speal about there being interest toward preservation and he really didn't say too much that made a lot of difference to which way we were going to go. We had just invited him there to, uh speak.

Peter: OK, and anything else?

Barry: I can remember we started on the historic district commission, and I can remember people coming with plans what they wanted to do and I think we approved about everything I saw. I don't think experience with that, maybe four or five but they were just architectural plans and details and colors of houses. I wish I could remember a young lady's name who worked for the city.

Nancy: Linda Harris.

Peter: Now Linda Harris Edmiston.

Barry: Aw, I'm so impressed with her she was real helpful to us.

Peter: She had the dog.

Barry: Yeah, I think she came to a couple of our meetings and just explained how things would work with the district commission. Is she still around?

Peter: Very much so, she is now on the planning commission. And she sits on an advisory commission to the Blood St. Commons and she is married to Rufus Edmiston the former secretary of state. Summarize if you can in three or four sentence that process of coming to Oakwood, defeating the highway, creating the first candle light tour, creating the first Oakwood organization, creating the historic district, creating the historic district commission. In just a couple of sentence just tie them together either chronologically or as you remember them.

Barry: Well I just remember the struggle that happened in 1972, and '73 when we get up in that balloon and look down right now. We think we made a difference, and we are impressed with what we seen and as a matter of fact I'm more impressed with Oakwood than I am the city of Wilmington the historic district.

Nancy: And that kind of disappoints us it looks a little downhill, but sometimes we just felt overwhelmed and it just seemed maybe hopeless and we thought we made a foolish mistake.

Peter: You mentioned the foolish mistake before, and how in that first candle light tour it gave you glimmers of hope. What gave you your next glimmers of hope?

Barry: Probably the favorable articles that started, that we began to see in the Raleigh times and the news observer in favor of Oakwood. Everything was gaining momentum and inertia and a lot of energy pouring in just saving Oakwood, we started receiving contributions. I have a letter here that I received from a man in [Rayford], North Carolina and it was written on the back of teletype paper. And it was about three feet long in letter, to you or the society I think you may had written him and he made a contribution to Oakwood. And it's a very well written letter of how he hoped that he would do everything he could to save the neighborhood and he believed that this should happen all over the country. And he made a small contribution a mighty contribution and then Nancy responded to him in her letter summarizes the history of Oakwood in this spot.

Peter: Final question, the other did you indicated in seeing Barbara Wishy many years that you remember teaching her how to use a claw hammer.

Barry: I don't know if I really taught her, she just had such a work ethic and she was just sort of eager to get involved. And we took on this house across the street, and I remember her down on her knees I don't know if we were using a crow bar for demolition or what.

And she was a very, very good business person too, she wanted to control business costs because this was a family business venture that we had never done this before you know combine our finances or anything. She was married to Bernard Wishy and he was a problem and he would detail us to death and try to tell us what to do. So I would tell Barbara if she kept Bernard away maybe we would get something done, I think we did maybe two houses together.

Peter: Well on behalf of Oakwood and just personally I want to thank you for all the seeds you've planted and nourished over these years. And for your handy work and your passion and your frustrations, that give us today what is so important, so valuable to so many.

Barry: And we thank you.

Nancy: And thanks for asking us, if you're doing all this work this is quite a bit of work you had to do to organize this so thanks for your thought.

Peter: I mention in closing just for the record that Matthew Brown and Sarah David will be joining us for lunch, and the papers that we have here will be given to Matthew Brown as part of the archives. We are very much looking for to the two of you joining us for in the later part of September to be part of what will be a several day celebration really of the various contributions you have made. Thank you.