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## Albertson, Charlie ~ Oral History Interview

Barbara Garrity-Blake

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# **Interview with Charlie Albertson by Barbara Garrity-Blake**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

## **Interviewee**

Albertson, Charlie

## **Interviewer**

Garrity-Blake, Barbara

## **Date**

November 18, 2014

## **Place**

Beaulaville, NC

## **ID Number**

VWWF\_CA\_001

## **Use Restrictions**

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## **Biographical Note**

Charlie Albertson is a former North Carolina Senator from Beaulaville, North Carolina. He was born in 1932.

## **Scope and Content Note**

Former North Carolina Senator Charlie Albertson was interviewed to explore his role in passing the North Carolina Waterfront Access and Marine Industry Fund which protected waterfront parcels of real estate for commercial and recreational uses. Senator Albertson spoke of being raised in a family dedicated to public service, with deep roots in the agriculture industry, which helped inform his interest and support of the fishing industry. He explains he learned from his colleagues the value of protecting access for the commercial fishing industry and the value of North Carolina's fish houses to the state's coastal heritage, and how they all wanted to do something to help protect that heritage.

## **Indexed Names**

Rossetti Thigpen, Margaret Thigpen, Wendell Murphy, Harold Hardison, Mark Basnight, Sean McKeon, David Hoyle, Ron Campbell

## **Transcript—CA\_001**

Key:  
Sen Albertson=Answer  
[Inaudible] = Inaudible  
[Word] = Attempt at Word  
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1 **[Begin NC Sen C Albertson Interview]**

2

3 **00:00:00**

4 **Interviewer:** My name is Barbara Garrity Blake and I'm sitting here talking to Senator Charlie  
5 Albertson, right here in downtown Beulaville, your hometown, right?

6

7 **00:00:11**

8 **Senator Albertson:** That's correct. Well I live just outside of town about three miles.

9

10 **00:00:15**

11 **Interviewer:** Okay.

12

13 **00:00:15**

14 **Senator Albertson:** But this is my hometown; yes.

15

16 **00:00:17**

17 **Interviewer:** Okay; great. And it is November 18, 2014. So I really appreciate your time

18 Senator Albertson.

19

20 **00:00:24**

21 **Senator Albertson:** Glad to be here.

22

23 **00:00:25**

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24 **Interviewer:** Now during this interview would you like me to call you Senator Albertson or  
25 Charlie?

26

27 **00:00:28**

28 **Senator Albertson:** Whichever you think works best for you; it's Albertson here in Duplin but  
29 once you leave here most of the time you know if you get west of Raleigh it's Albertson. And of  
30 course my music has always been Albertson.

31

32 **00:00:41**

33 **Interviewer:** Your music has been Albertson, well then--

34

35 **00:00:43**

36 **Senator Albertson:** But I use either one; either one works for me.

37

38 **00:00:46**

39 **Interviewer:** Okay; well great. Well so to start, Senator Albertson--Albertson, could you tell us  
40 a little bit about when and where you were born and where you grew up?

41

42 **00:00:59**

43 **Senator Albertson:** I grew up here in Eastern Duplin County, born in 1932 right at the height  
44 or--in the Depression. And grew up on a farm, five brothers and three sisters; I was next to the  
45 youngest one in the family. And I learned how to crop tobacco and tend to hogs and do farming  
46 chores and when I was about 11 years old I purchased my first guitar and took lessons from a

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47 blind lady who lived right across from the elementary school. She taught me how to play *Little*  
48 *Brown Jug* and that was the beginning of a--my music career.

49

50 **00:01:43**

51 **Interviewer:** How about that. Do you remember her name?

52

53 **00:01:44**

54 **Senator Albertson:** I do; [Miss Rossetti Thigpen], Miss Margaret [Thigpen] in fact, great lady.

55 She was blind and her husband was blind, but they went around the churches playing music and I

56 can still recall and remember them playing that old gospel song, *I Won't Have to Cross Jordan*

57 *Alone* and they were good at it. They--it was a great inspiration to me.

58

59 **00:02:09**

60 **Interviewer:** Nice. So this area has always been very agricultural hasn't it?

61

62 **00:02:15**

63 **Senator Albertson:** Very agricultural and now of course we're the largest agricultural

64 producing county in the State of North Carolina, one of the top 10 or 15 in the nation in fact.

65

66 **00:02:23**

67 **Interviewer:** I didn't know that.

68

69 **00:02:25**

70 **Senator Albertson:** That's correct.

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71

72 **00:02:25**

73 **Interviewer:** What's the big crop?

74

75 **00:02:27**

76 **Senator Albertson:** Well the big crop, agricultural crops is swine and turkeys, cattle, soybeans,  
77 corn. You name it we grow some of it all. We have Murphy's which everybody is familiar with,  
78 Murphy's, Johnson, folks over in Sampson County, Prestige Farms, Cuddle Farms is a great  
79 producer of commodities so we have a lot of agriculture here.

80

81 **00:02:54**

82 **Interviewer:** Yeah; and--and this is Duplin County right?

83

84 **00:02:57**

85 **Senator Albertson:** Duplin County.

86

87 **00:02:58**

88 **Interviewer:** So Duplin County has really become one of the hog capitals of the eastern coast of  
89 the United States hasn't it?

90

91 **00:03:07**

92 **Senator Albertson:** It's the largest producing--Sampson is next as far as hog production in the  
93 State of North Carolina and of course North Carolina as a State is number two in hog production  
94 behind Iowa.

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95

96 **00:03:19**

97 **Interviewer:** Okay.

98

99 **00:03:20**

100 **Senator Albertson:** And we have a big winery over here, the largest and oldest Duplin Winery,  
101 Muscadine winery right here in Rosedale so we have a lot of agriculture.

102

103 **00:03:30**

104 **Interviewer:** Yeah; so when you were growing up was hogs as big a deal as it is today?

105

106 **00:03:35**

107 **Senator Albertson:** No; most families had a few in the backyard in a pen. And we had a big  
108 hog-killing you know in the fall of the year, like most people. And we grew our own food and  
109 cropped tobacco and that was--that was our livelihood for the most part.

110

111 **00:03:51**

112 **Interviewer:** Okay.

113

114 **00:03:51**

115 **Senator Albertson:** Went coon hunting at night though. It wasn't much else to do.

116

117 **00:03:54**

118 **Interviewer:** Right. Okay; well as you know this project is going to be part of the NOAA's  
119 Voices from the Fisheries Collection, and it is being sponsored by the National Working  
120 Waterfront Network folks. Now for people that are listening to this interview, they probably  
121 don't understand or can't envision where we are in relationship to the coast, so how far are we  
122 from the coastline, Charlie?

123

124 **00:04:25**

125 **Senator Albertson:** Well if I go over to Texel Island I'm about--I can drive there in about 50  
126 minutes. So that would be the closest access to my house to the beach.

127

128 **00:04:34**

129 **Interviewer:** So almost an hour?

130

131 **00:04:36**

132 **Senator Albertson:** Almost an hour; yes.

133

134 **00:04:36**

135 **Interviewer:** Okay; all right. So well before we get into the specifics of the Working  
136 Waterfront, can you tell us how you came to get into politics?

137

138 **00:04:46**

139 **Senator Albertson:** Yes; our father was very much involved in the life of our community. He  
140 only went to the fourth grade; most people didn't go to school back in those days very much. He



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141 went to the fourth grade but he--in later years he served on the School Board in Duplin County.  
142 I--I recall going with him when one of our neighbors died, I--when I was six years old. He laid  
143 him out; that's what they called it you know. He prepared the man for burial; you know shaved  
144 him. They built the coffin with boards and--and buried him. And when somebody had a big hog-  
145 killing they would always get my father to come cut out the hog, to trim the hogs, you know.

146 **00:05:33**

147 So he was always doing things. He served as an Elder in the church. So he was always  
148 doing things in the life of the community and that was a great inspiration for me. And one of my  
149 brothers served as a Commissioner; two of my brothers ran for Commissioner. They wasn't  
150 successful but that's always been a big part of our life you know. You know giving back to the  
151 community.

152

153 **00:05:57**

154 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; so what was your first foray into politics?

155

156 **00:06:01**

157 **Senator Albertson:** Well I retired with the--it goes back really to when I worked; I retired with  
158 the US Department of Agriculture. And most of my work was here in Duplin County but I did  
159 work some in surrounding counties. So and of course I was playing music all that time at  
160 Wallace on Saturday night. We played there for 20 years every Saturday night; had large crowds.  
161 People came there from everywhere.

162 **00:06:26**

163           And then when I retired I was 55 and it just so happened that Senator Murphy--who  
164 became Senator Murphy, he was then a member of the North Carolina House and Harold  
165 [Hardison] from Kinston, who ran for Lieutenant Governor which meant the Senate Seat was  
166 open, so Wendell Murphy--Murphy's Farms, he ran for the Senate and was successful. And I ran  
167 for the Seat that he held in the House and was successful.

168 **00:06:54**

169           That was--and I was elected in 18--I mean 1989. And went on to serve two terms in the  
170 House and following his retirement from the Senate I ran for the Senate and served there for 18  
171 years for a total of 22 years in the Legislature. But it was my experience, my involvement with  
172 working with all the farmers in the District, playing music all over the District; I was also serving  
173 at [Shuman] James Sprunt Community College Board of Trustees.

174 **00:07:26**

175           So a lot of people knew me and I knew a lot of people which you know is very important  
176 if you run for political office to have good name recognition. So all those things were sort of in  
177 the background; that was enablers to help me become elected I think.

178

179 **00:07:44**

180 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; and what year did you decide to not run again? So you retired?

181

182 **00:07:48**

183 **Senator Albertson:** Two thousand ten. I had served 22 years and you know it was--it was quite  
184 an honor to serve all those many years and I wouldn't take anything for my experience. I had the  
185 opportunity to meet so many wonderful people and had the opportunity to learn so much about

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186 the State, just like the beef and the fisheries you know for example, which I'd go down  
187 occasionally but I didn't do a lot of fishing. But I came to--to value that industry and others  
188 across the State and so it was a great experience and I'll be forever grateful to the people who  
189 elected me to serve.

190

191 **00:08:28**

192 **Interviewer:** Yeah; so could you talk a little bit about how you got sort of pulled into the world  
193 of fisheries as a State Senator?

194

195 **00:08:36**

196 **Senator Albertson:** Well I came--when I came to the Senate from the House, Senator Basnight  
197 who is someone I love and respect so much who--who has been such a great positive force for  
198 the State, we had a discussion and of course he knew of my interest in agriculture and knew  
199 where I lived and what it meant and knew it was the number one industry in the State. And--and  
200 I think his talking and getting to know me, he knew I had a great interest in the environment,  
201 equally as interesting as I did in agriculture.

202 **00:09:13**

203 So he decided and I was so honored to--to be named Chairman, Chairperson of the Senate  
204 Agriculture Environment and Natural Resource Committee and being Chair of that Committee,  
205 which he involved about half the members of the Senate, finally got around me to--got around to  
206 me looking at the--our fisheries resource. And of course being Chair of that Committee I became  
207 Co-Chair of the Seafood and Aquaculture Study Commission. And that's what--when I got  
208 involved and began to learn about the fisheries and its importance you know to the State.

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209

210 **00:10:00**

211 **Interviewer:** Right; so as Co-Chair of--of the Seafood and Aquaculture Committee, what are  
212 some of the hot button issues that you recall?

213

214 **00:10:10**

215 **Senator Albertson:** [*Laughs*] Well I recall you know at the end of the swine industry back at  
216 that time was in its--it was growing and there was a lot of controversy surrounding the swine  
217 issues you know. That was a challenging time; you'd try to find out battles between it, you know  
218 the swine agriculture and environment. But I found that almost equally as challenging you know  
219 when I got into the fisheries resource and started talking about that because I learned there was a  
220 lot of contention between the commercial interests and--versus the recreational folks. There was  
221 stress on the stocks and the question was and I guess still remains today is who--who is going to  
222 have access to the resource and what are you going to do to restore those stocks?

223 **00:11:06**

224 And of course any of those things that you do would be contentious, you know restoring  
225 the oysters for example, cleaning up the water pollution, knowing that oysters played a real big  
226 role in that in cleaning the water. So that was a great experience, a great awakening to me to  
227 learn about that resource, to learn of its importance, but again to--to learn of the contention  
228 between the opposing sides if you will.

229

230 **00:11:39**

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231 **Interviewer:** Oh yeah. And so talking about all the pressures on the resource, you know here in  
232 Eastern North Carolina, Coastal North Carolina, gosh the housing boom, the building real estate  
233 boom really hit about in the mid-2000s, right, 2003, 2004, 2005.

234

235 **00:12:00**

236 **Senator Albertson:** Oh yes.

237

238 **00:11:59**

239 **Interviewer:** So can you talk about how you know the relationship between that and the  
240 Waterfront Access Initiative that we're here to--to talk about today--?

241

242 **00:12:13**

243 **Senator Albertson:** Well Barbara, the growth that you mentioned surely took place and we  
244 could see you know over time and--and happened very quickly that access to the beach would  
245 disappear because of the building that went on during that time. It was causing a lot of problems  
246 as far as pollution was concerned, the water runoff. We had to try to address that--we could but  
247 we saw some of the sites that had been so important you know as a part of our culture and our  
248 history and the social aspects of that--we saw a lot of that disappearing.

249 **00:12:53**

250 So thanks that we had somebody like Senator Basnight who was much more familiar with  
251 it than I was but I quickly learned, too, the importance of preserving some places for public  
252 access and trying to find some money, some ways we could set aside some resources to keep  
253 some of our fish houses you know in place, you know for the various cultures, social issues.

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254

255 **00:13:24**

256 **Interviewer:** Yeah; and--and you and I were talking a little bit earlier about recalling the  
257 Waterfront Access Study Committee that the Legislature convened in that whole process of you  
258 know public meetings to get people's input and then the Study Committee put forth some  
259 recommendations. That resulted in Senate Bill 646 I believe, which is--

260

261 **00:13:50**

262 **Senator Albertson:** I believe--believe so.

263

264 **00:13:51**

265 **Interviewer:** --the Waterfront Access and Marine Industry Fund. Can you talk a little bit about  
266 that and you know I mean what--what's in that Bill that--that addressed the issue of loss of  
267 working waterfronts and public access to the waters? And how effective do you think that Bill  
268 has been?

269

270 **00:14:11**

271 **Senator Albertson:** Well apparently it's been very successful. I recall the hearings we had and  
272 in Morehead City we had--we had a hearing over on Manteo and maybe we had one in Newbern.  
273 But we had several hearings relative to this issue. Well we heard from the public and--and--and  
274 gained some better insight and better educated about you know what was going on relative to the  
275 project we're talking about. And if I remember correctly we came up with \$20 million that was  
276 set aside you know for this purpose. And of course Senator Basnight now played a great role in

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277 that but--but we had for the most part, we had--people were onboard. They understood through  
278 these hearings we had and discussions we had in Committee. They understood better the  
279 importance of the fisheries and preserving that access and those fish houses was a big part of  
280 who we are that we wanted to maintain that for--for not only for ourselves but for future  
281 generations.

282 **00:15:22**

283 So that was sort of the thrust behind it all as I recall.

284

285 **00:15:25**

286 **Interviewer:** And--and specifically what was the \$20 million used for?

287

288 **00:15:30**

289 **Senator Albertson:** Well if I remember right and you may have to help me get straight on this  
290 but it was to provide some monies to buy some of that property, so it could be--so it could be set  
291 aside and used for you know future.

292

293 **00:15:45**

294 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; yeah and--and I think in the end there were about 13 properties--

295

296 **00:15:50**

297 **Senator Albertson:** Thirteen. I couldn't remember the number.

298

299 **00:15:52**

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300 **Interviewer:** --yeah that the State purchased which has been you know useful for both  
301 recreational and commercial fishermen to gain access to the waterways. *[Laughs]*

302

303 **00:16:01**

304 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah.

305

306 **00:16:01**

307 **Interviewer:** So it's been a positive thing. And then can you talk a little bit about the--the  
308 present-used taxation program that was part of that Bill that you know it--it was in existence for  
309 farmers?

310

311 **00:16:18**

312 **Senator Albertson:** Yes.

313

314 **00:16:19**

315 **Interviewer:** And it extended to fish houses and pier owners.

316

317 **00:16:22**

318 **Senator Albertson:** That's right. It gave some tax relief relative to that--to enable--to give them  
319 a better chance of surviving if you will or staying where they were. And that was--that was very  
320 important that we had that--that use--present use tax value that we'd extended it as you talked  
321 about. That played a very important role in it; yeah.

322

323 **00:16:44**



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324 **Interviewer:** Yeah because property values were soaring.

325

326 **00:16:46**

327 **Senator Albertson:** Oh they were soaring because of all the development that was taking place;  
328 yes.

329

330 **00:16:52**

331 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; and therefore people's tax bills were going up.

332

333 **00:16:54**

334 **Senator Albertson:** Absolutely; yeah so that was--that played a very important role in it.

335

336 **00:16:58**

337 **Interviewer:** I never really thought about it until you know this Bill came of how important it  
338 must be for farmers who have so many acres to have that tax break as well.

339

340 **00:17:09**

341 **Senator Albertson:** Oh yeah; that's--and of course that's been in place a long time. I know--I  
342 recall back in '89--in '87 that was before I got to the Legislature, some tax--used tax values were  
343 put in place to help farmers you know build poultry houses, swine houses, etcetera. And that was  
344 very important you know to help grow this industry as we know it today.

345

346 **00:17:33**

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347 **Interviewer:** As this Waterfront Access Initiative was being put forth, I remember the Director  
348 at the time of the North Carolina Fisheries Association which is our largest trade group for  
349 commercial fishing, his name was Sean McKeon. He wasn't wholly supportive of it. I don't  
350 know if you remember that but I think his reservation lay in sort of a conservative ideology of we  
351 don't want government handouts.

352

353 **00:18:08**

354 **Senator Albertson:** I--I do vaguely recall that yes and it's still--you know there's some people  
355 that still have that philosophy about government. They just think you should make it or not make  
356 it based on this is how things are, but--but I don't think that's a wise course. I don't--I didn't  
357 think it was a wise course in this instance. I think what we did was the right thing, making sure  
358 that we have access and have these places preserved. They are of great value I think for people to  
359 see these fish houses for example and know how it was to some extent, although there's been a  
360 lot of growth and it's changed a lot. But those places play an important role in our culture and  
361 our social life and we want to preserve that.

362

363 **00:18:53**

364 **Interviewer:** Do you think our fishing communities and waterfront areas are unique here in  
365 North Carolina compared to other States?

366

367 **00:19:01**

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368 **Senator Albertson:** Well I think they are yes, and you may recall--I'm sure you recall; if I  
369 remember correctly, we were the last State from Maryland to Texas to--to have a fishing license.

370 And--

371

372 **00:19:15**

373 **Interviewer:** Saltwater fishing--

374

375 **00:19:15**

376 **Senator Albertson:** Saltwater fishing; it took a--it took 10 years to get that [*Laughs*] and  
377 Barbara, I will never forget the day that--that Bill passed and passed the Senate. [*Laughs*] I  
378 thanked everybody of course for sticking with us over--over all the years, but the citizens stood  
379 up and gave a standing ovation. They were glad that we had a fishing license passed and that was  
380 the end of it. [*Laughs*] But that was a long--a long hard fought battle you know to make that  
381 happen, but it really turned out to be a good thing in my opinion because we looked at all the  
382 other States. And I think we probably wound up with the very best fishing license that any State  
383 has got.

384

385 **00:19:58**

386 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; yeah the Saltwater Recreational Fishing License. I wanted to ask you  
387 getting back a little bit to the farming; do you see any similarities between farmers and  
388 fishermen?

389

390 **00:20:12**

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391 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah; oh yes, I do, yes a lot of similarities. It's--it's hard work. Fishing is  
392 hard work and fishing can be dangerous as you well know. Farming is hard work. It requires  
393 somebody who I think really loves what they do. They must love the land and the sea. They have  
394 a special bond. The farmers have a special bond with the soil. They know that's where their  
395 livelihood is and then most--most part are good stewards. And I think that's true with the--with  
396 the fishing--fishing people as well. They--they value the sea and they know how important it is  
397 because that's where their livelihood comes from. That's where their resource is--is in the water.  
398 And they know how important it is to make sure the water is clean. We learned that too late  
399 looking back. We have not been the good guardians that we should have been in the past as far as  
400 protecting the--our seas and our farms as well from pollution.

401

402 **00:21:19**

403 **Interviewer:** Well and now that the economy seems to be back on an upswing, including maybe  
404 coastal real estate, do you think we need to step up and take more action to protect North  
405 Carolina's waterfronts and public access?

406

407 **00:21:38**

408 **Senator Albertson:** I think that without a doubt has to be in the picture on the forefront, yes as  
409 we look at what's good on the day and in the future and try to foresee the future, what it's going  
410 to be like you know with all the development that's taking place.

411

412 **00:21:54**

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413 **Interviewer:** What do you think the likelihood is that the General Assembly that we have now  
414 which has gone decidedly Republican and you're a Democrat and when we got this Senate Bill  
415 passed in 2007, Mark Basnight was Senator Pro Tem and Democrats were in power; now that  
416 we've gone Republican what are the chances do you think there is that we would get say more  
417 money allocated to you know buy up property to preserve access to the water?

418

419 **00:22:26**

420 **Senator Albertson:** Well, we would certainly hope that they would be wise enough and have  
421 the wisdom to--to see what the challenges are relative to what we're talking about. But it is a  
422 different time and we don't have--I'm afraid we don't have that leader like we had with Senator  
423 Mark Basnight who is someone I love so much. He understood the coast probably better than  
424 anyone having you know lived there and in fact lived there he understood it--he understood the  
425 coast and its value and its importance to the State. And I think--I was thinking a few days ago  
426 Barbara, there ought to be some way that we could name something after Mark Basnight you  
427 know for all his great work, particularly as it relates to the coast.

428 **00:23:21**

429 And that's just one of the things, but he was such a great leader. He was always fair but  
430 he wanted things done and done right.

431

432 **00:23:30**

433 **Interviewer:** Yeah; I agree.

434

435 **00:23:31**

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436 **Senator Albertson:** He was a great human being. He is.

437

438 **00:23:34**

439 **Interviewer:** And for the listener, could you just explain why we're talking about him and he's  
440 not you know being interviewed as part of this about the condition he's suffering from?

441

442 **00:23:46**

443 **Senator Albertson:** Uh yes; he has some health issues now. And I don't think he sees a lot of  
444 people from what I understand. He would like to be remembered as he was if you will.

445

446 **00:23:57**

447 **Interviewer:** Yeah; he has trouble speaking now.

448

449 **00:23:59**

450 **Senator Albertson:** He has trouble speaking and some of his walking I think is--can be difficult  
451 at times. But I can't think of anyone who has done for this State what Mark Basnight has done. I  
452 mean it was all good. His intentions were always good. I never found him wanting to do  
453 anything that wasn't right. So I have--you can tell I have great love and respect for him.

454

455 **00:24:26**

456 **Interviewer:** Yes; I can. Yeah; he did a lot for not only the coast and the environment and the  
457 fisheries but education in this State.

458

459 **00:24:34**

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460 **Senator Albertson:** The whole State, yes, the University; he was a great spokesperson for the  
461 University, again for the environment, he strongly believed in taking care of the land and the sea  
462 and a lot of things were put in place because of his--of his efforts. I got credit for some things,  
463 you know like some of these Bills we passed, but Mark Basnight is the man who really deserves  
464 all the credit.

465

466 **00:24:59**

467 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; one thing that--one of his programs that I surely miss is the Fisheries  
468 Resource Grant Program.

469

470 **00:25:06**

471 **Senator Albertson:** Yes; yes.

472

473 **00:25:07**

474 **Interviewer:** I mean to set aside \$1 million a year for sciences and a fisherman to work  
475 together.

476

477 **00:25:12**

478 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah; yeah.

479

480 **00:25:13**

481 **Interviewer:** That was so unique and valuable.

482

483 **00:25:17**

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484 **Senator Albertson:** He was always on the forefront of issues. David Hoyle, Senator David  
485 Hoyle said Charlie he's got a new idea every hour. And he sort of thought like that but he--he  
486 would come up with unique ideas. He was a great reader apparently and but he was--he had a  
487 vision Barbara that--that sometimes really surprised me about what--how he could see you know  
488 the future and what our challenges was--you know were as far as protecting the resources, in this  
489 case the fisheries or--or farming or whatever it might be, the forests, the University. He was--he  
490 was always ahead of everyone else in his vision. And **[Laughs]** again, David Hoyle he was  
491 always funny about Mark having so many thoughts all the time. But yeah; great, yeah.

492

493 **00:26:14**

494 **Interviewer:** Yeah; yeah. So is there anything else you'd like to add Charlie about your legacy  
495 as a Senator pertaining to coastal issues? Weren't you given an award for your environmental  
496 work?

497

498 **00:26:31**

499 **Senator Albertson:** I was and you know I thought about that--NOAA, I guess you're talking  
500 about and yeah that was a great honor. But truth be known Barbara, Mark Basnight should have  
501 had it.

502

503 **00:26:41**

504 **Interviewer:** Oh come on.

505

506 **00:26:42**



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507 **Senator Albertson:** Oh yeah; oh yeah. Well you know he--he gave me the opportunity to serve  
508 as Chair of the Committee and he could have given it to someone--he could have given it to  
509 someone else. And you know as well as I do there was a lot of people who would have given  
510 anything to have chaired Agricultural and Environment and Natural Resource Committee. That  
511 was a great--that was a great honor for me to serve in that role. But--and he was the man that  
512 made it possible. There was a bunch of people who wanted that position believe you, me. And  
513 you might recall, the last--the last two years I left to become one of the Co-Chairs of  
514 Appropriations. I never was good at numbers and I knew that but I thought I was maybe good at  
515 getting people together to work out a budget. And hopefully I added something in that regard,  
516 but you know the truth be [*Laughs*]--the truth be known I was always sorry I left seafood,  
517 aquaculture and you know the environment--agriculture. That's--that was really where I should  
518 have been all the time.

519

520 **00:27:47**

521 **Interviewer:** And now there's no legislative commission for seafood and aquaculture.

522

523 **00:27:50**

524 **Senator Albertson:** That is so unfortunate.

525

526 **00:27:54**

527 **Interviewer:** It is.

528

529 **00:27:54**

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530 **Senator Albertson:** And so sad and should not be the case.

531

532 **00:27:56**

533 **Interviewer:** Why do you think that went away?

534

535 **00:27:58**

536 **Senator Albertson:** I do not know. Well you don't have someone to drive it like Senator

537 Basnight for one reason but it's rather--it's--it's shortsightedness I think on--on the part of the

538 Legislature to--to not--to allow this to take place. I don't think it's good.

539

540 **00:28:17**

541 **Interviewer:** It was important to the process because--

542

543 **00:28:20**

544 **Senator Albertson:** Absolutely.

545

546 **00:28:20**

547 **Interviewer:** --as you know as we were talking about earlier with this Waterfront Access Bill

548 the--you know Marine Fisheries Commission came up with a Resolution, presented it to the

549 Legislative Commission for Seafood and Aquaculture. Thanks to that--that led to the Bill that

550 established the Study Committee and then the Bill that actually passed the legislation. There was

551 a process in place; now I'm not sure what one would do. Where would one go for specific, you

552 know fishery specific or coastal specific initiatives, you know?

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553

554 **00:28:54**

555 **Senator Albertson:** Well again that's very unfortunate and being shortsighted I guess is the  
556 way you would say it. That's unfortunate that's taken place.

557

558 **00:29:03**

559 **Interviewer:** Yeah; yeah.

560

561 **00:29:05**

562 **Senator Albertson:** You know with so many issues that we have, you have to have that vision  
563 like Basnight had. You've got to try to anticipate what's taking place and try to foresee it and--  
564 and try to do things to make sure you're doing the right things to make sure everything is  
565 preserved and taken care of.

566

567 **00:29:23**

568 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; so--so looking back on your long career in the Legislature what are you  
569 most proud of Charlie?

570

571 **00:29:33**

572 **Senator Albertson:** Well you know being part of that--part of the Fisheries that was a great  
573 educational experience for me but it--it really taught me Barbara how--how to value the fisheries  
574 in the State, the 17 water basins we have, the pollution that enters these waterways that winds up  
575 on the beach for example. We see it in the news and other places. That's not talked often about. I

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576 forgot the name of the place over there-- [Inaudible] closed some waterway that--when he was a  
577 youngster; it was full of fish and that was no longer the case. And it was because of pollution  
578 primarily and maybe some over-fishing too but pollution was a big and continues to be a big  
579 challenge for the State.

580 **00:30:20**

581 But to learn all of that and find out--find ways that you can find people to have--who  
582 have the same interests and know the value of those entities we're talking about and are willing  
583 to make those things happen that preserve this place for future generations.

584

585 **00:30:41**

586 **Interviewer:** Did you ever find yourself sort of stuck between a rock and a hard place in  
587 balancing the needs of say the environment and the fisheries versus the hog farmers in your  
588 District when all that controversy especially after Floyd; remember and the flooding and the hog  
589 lagoons were overflowing? What was going on with you in all; you must have been pulled in  
590 several different directions?

591

592 **00:31:11**

593 **Senator Albertson:** I was pulled in--in a lot of different directions and it took all of my time but  
594 I was convinced you know; I--I knew how important each one was. I knew how important the  
595 swine industry was economically but I also equally knew how important the environment was for  
596 me. I recall when we was growing up my father, he rented a little farm down the road from us,  
597 called [The Elmer Place] and it was just a few acres. We didn't have a 25-acre farm trying to  
598 raise a big family, so we had to rent a little bit of land. And I recall one day he told us; he said

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599 you boys get the bush hooks and the ax and shovels. We got to go down and clean this farm up.  
600 Well Barbara when we got to the farm it was obvious that people before us had not taken care of  
601 the--the shrubs around the field, the ditch banks, and he says--it had been growing for two or  
602 three years. And he said well you got to cut all this--these--these little bushes and trees down.  
603 We got to ditch out--clean these ditches out. I said you mean you--I remember specifically  
604 asking him; I said you--you mean to tell me you're going to make us do what these folks haven't  
605 done for the last two or three years? He said absolutely. He said always remember this; leave a  
606 place in better shape than you found it.

607 **00:32:35**

608 And Barbara I have never forgotten that. And our farms have waterways around them  
609 because of that training. And when I took--when I went to the Legislature I took that same  
610 philosophy with me; leave a place in better shape than you found it. So I always tried to be fair to  
611 both and I hope if I have any legacy, if I have any one to say anything about me I hope that's  
612 what they would be able to say that he was concerned and gave both equal attention.

613

614 **00:33:07**

615 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm. What was it like here during Floyd? Did Beulaville get flooded?

616

617 **00:33:13**

618 **Senator Albertson:** I'm sorry?

619

620 **00:33:14**

621 **Interviewer:** Did Beulaville get flooded during Floyd?

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622

623 **00:33:16**

624 **Senator Albertson:** Beulaville didn't but right down the highway between here and Wallace, a  
625 lot of 41 was flooded. And I was down to the Rotary Club; they honored me a few--two or three  
626 weeks ago in fact for some work I did, you know during that time. But people's belongings were  
627 piled out beside the road and when you have a lot of development as you well know, when you  
628 have a lot of development there's no--there's nothing there like a sponge, like trees you know  
629 would be a--all this water just gets on the highways and just shoots right down to the streams so  
630 we're probably going to see more flooding in the future as a result of all the development that's  
631 taken place. So that's another part of you know taking care of the environment.

632

633 **00:34:04**

634 **Interviewer:** What do you think the greatest challenge facing Eastern North Carolina is going  
635 into the future?

636

637 **00:34:12**

638 **Senator Albertson:** Well in our case here in Duplin County and maybe to some extent across  
639 the State but probably more so here, we have the largest Hispanic population in the State because  
640 all agricultural industries have a lot of people employed in that industry. I just learned a couple  
641 weeks ago we have more--we have more Hispanic children now in our school system than we do  
642 whites or blacks in fact. So our county is changing and I talked with someone last night; we have  
643 to find a way to better communicate among the diverse population we have. We all have the  
644 same interests if the truth be known. So but we don't have I don't think the kind of

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645 communication that we need to have for us to be the very best we could be as people not only for  
646 ourselves but for the whole community.

647 **00:35:05**

648 The churches, we have over 200 churches in Duplin County and but we all sort of stick to  
649 ourselves to some degree. We need to have a meeting place, where we could get together and  
650 just talk and learn about each other and education remains still as important and becoming you  
651 know much more so I think as time goes by. There's a great need to address the concerns at the  
652 University. We need to make those investments to make sure that our people are educated and  
653 we have to continue to have these very best of universities. And I see some of that maybe  
654 slipping away. I think we've to some extent, we've lost a sense of community, you know caring  
655 for one another. I don't mean this to sound negative but you know when I was growing up we  
656 were all dependent upon people in our community. If somebody had a tobacco barn that was  
657 burned down, you know for whatever reason, the community came together and helped build it  
658 back. If someone got sick in the family there, the neighbors would come in while that person was  
659 out sick and they would catch up their farming, be it tobacco or whatever.

660 **00:36:24**

661 And that was a good time Barbara; those were good valuable lessons that I learned as a  
662 young person. And we still have a lot of people who do that but it seems to me we've lost some  
663 of that to some extent.

664

665 **00:36:37**

666 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm.

667

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668 **00:36:37**

669 **Senator Albertson:** So I think that's a challenge we have to--particularly here in this county,  
670 we all want and need the same thing and we're all God's people.

671

672 **00:36:46**

673 **Interviewer:** Uh-hm; well that kind of reminds me of the power of music to bring people  
674 together.

675

676 **00:36:53**

677 **Senator Albertson:** It's a great--it's a great--well you know several years ago we had the public  
678 [inaudible] which is right across the street from where we're sitting. I got the band to come in  
679 and on a Monday or Tuesday night, second Tuesday night I think in December and we got right  
680 in the sanctuary, you know moved the communion table to the side and we had a--a real good  
681 turnout of people who came. We just--we played some Christmas music, you know country  
682 music or had the Jolly Holly Christmas and all that and Merry Christmas and White Christmas  
683 but we also sang some--some Christmas hymns and so we had a good time. And--and I found out  
684 last night we're going to do that again on the 16<sup>th</sup> I think it is of December.

685 **00:37:39**

686 And the people like it; they really enjoy it. So that's a--music is--is--music is some of the  
687 best therapy I think there is and--. But music has a way of appealing to people and bringing  
688 people together unlike other things I think.

689

690 **00:37:57**



691 **Interviewer:** Do you have any venues here where a mariachi band mind be part of it to bring  
692 together the--the Latino folks too?

693

694 **00:38:06**

695 **Senator Albertson:** Well we haven't had anything like that. We do have an annual event down  
696 here called Hog Wild which we raise money to restore the old schoolhouse which we've done a  
697 lot. The people really have come out.

698 **00:38:21**

699 We don't have a--I don't think we've had a Hispanic group to come and perform there  
700 but that's something we need to do. That's a good thought. We'll work on that.

701

702 **00:38:30**

703 **Interviewer:** Yeah; so can you tell us why you're known as the Singing Senator?

704

705 **00:38:36**

706 **Senator Albertson:** Well I was on the Opry--you know Grand Ole Opry a few times back in the  
707 '70s, the '70s and '80s and there was a fellow there who had a television show and he had  
708 married--his wife was from Kinston. So Ron Campbell, so I got to know him pretty good but  
709 just--just one day he was in the news business as well; he covered the Legislature in Tennessee.  
710 And one day he just called me hey Singing Senator. So that's how that sort of got started and it  
711 kind of spread you know across the State to some extent. And I think I did a little record or two  
712 and had--called the Singing Senator on it.

713 **00:39:23**

714 So and that's interesting you mentioned that. I was at a function about two weeks ago and  
715 this guy came up to me and I didn't know him, hey Singing Senator. **[Laughs]**

716

717 **00:39:34**

718 **Interviewer:** Did you ever sing on the Senate Floor or the House Floor?

719

720 **00:39:38**

721 **Senator Albertson:** I did. I sang in the Senate Chamber. I sang a song that--I sang a song I had  
722 written and recorded in Nashville called *Carolina the Place I've Got to Be*. I got that--and they  
723 showed that on Public Television. But yes; I sang in--I sang in--upstairs room, what you call it--  
724 where they have the hearings in the top of the Legislative Building. I can't think of what they call  
725 that room right now, but--

726

727 **00:40:01**

728 **Interviewer:** Where we always met for Seafood and Aquaculture?

729

730 **00:40:04**

731 **Senator Albertson:** No; no, it's just like an auditorium up on the top of the building.

732

733 **00:40:07**

734 **Interviewer:** Oh.

735

736 **00:40:08**

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737 **Senator Albertson:** But it's where they held some big meetings that you know--but when Billy  
738 Graham's wife--not wife, when Billy Graham's daughter, she held a little service up there and I  
739 sang up there a time or two I think.

740

741 **00:40:22**

742 **Interviewer:** Did you bring your guitar?

743

744 **00:40:24**

745 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah; I think so.

746

747 **00:40:26**

748 **Interviewer:** *Carolina the Place I Want to Be?*

749

750 **00:40:28**

751 **Senator Albertson:** *Carolina the Place I've Got to Be.*

752

753 **00:40:30**

754 **Interviewer:** *I've Got to Be.* Can you sing--

755

756 **00:40:32**

757 **Senator Albertson:** Well I've been to Kansas City and down South to Arkansas. I been out to  
758 California. I've heard about St. Paul. Been a Soldier down in Texas; I've seen the Opry out in  
759 Tennessee. But I've come to one conclusion. Carolina is the place I've got to be. I've seen my  
760 neighbors in Virginia, Nebraska from the air; danced in Oklahoma, heard from friends in

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761 Delaware. I've seen those Georgia peaches and the White House up in Washington, DC, but I've  
762 come to one conclusion. Carolina is the place I've got to be. From Manteo to Murphy, folks will  
763 treat you fine. And whenever I'm away from her Carolina is on my mind. Her majestic Smokey  
764 Mountains to the sea, how I love her shining sea, and I've come to one conclusion. Carolina is  
765 the place I've got to be. And there's one more verse.

766

767 **00:41:36**

768 **Interviewer:** [*Claps*] Love it. And you wrote that?

769

770 **00:41:39**

771 **Senator Albertson:** I did; yeah.

772

773 **00:41:40**

774 **Interviewer:** That's beautiful.

775

776 **00:41:42**

777 **Senator Albertson:** Thank you. I was in Kansas City one time on a legislative conference and I  
778 was actually by myself. I was the only person who was at that conference. And I was about 20  
779 stories up and one of those big hotels and I woke up, I think a Saturday morning. And it was  
780 raining a little bit and I looked out across Kansas City. Of course I'd always sung about Kansas  
781 City, you know so *I'm Going to Kansas City; Kansas City Here I Come*, and I looked out across  
782 that place [*Laughs*] and I thought to myself, well Kansas City, you're a good-looking place. I've

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783 never been here before but I can tell you one thing. You don't come close to being anything like  
784 North Carolina.

785

786 **00:42:24**

787 **Interviewer:** *[Laughs]*

788

789 **00:42:25**

790 **Senator Albertson:** And that's when I started to write that song. And Barbara, I--everything in  
791 the song is true. The last verse is a--you know when I did those tours back in the mid-'70s and  
792 went to 26 countries over a four-year period, all these places I visited are in this--really are in  
793 this song and the song is really true. Everything in this song is true. Been up north as far as  
794 Alaska; I went up north--been up north as far as--been up north as far as Greenland where I saw  
795 the Eskimos, as far south--far south as Barbados where it never ever snows. I've seen the snow-  
796 capped Himalayas and I've sailed upon the Caribbean Sea. But I've come to one conclusion.  
797 Carolina is the place I've got to be.

798 **00:43:09**

799 So I have to all those places that I write about in the song.

800

801 **00:43:14**

802 **Interviewer:** Yeah; did you record that?

803

804 **00:43:16**

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805 **Senator Albertson:** I did. I recorded it as a--well it wasn't beach music. It started off with a  
806 horn, saxophone, and then I recorded it later as a beach--like beach music style.

807

808 **00:43:28**

809 **Interviewer:** And why were you doing all that touring in the '70s all around the world?

810

811 **00:43:31**

812 **Senator Albertson:** We were--we were entertaining--we were employed by the Armed Forces  
813 Professional Entertainment Office in Washington.

814

815 **00:43:39**

816 **Interviewer:** Oh your--your band?

817

818 **00:43:40**

819 **Senator Albertson:** Yes; excuse me, a band.

820

821 **00:43:41**

822 **Interviewer:** What was it called, the band?

823

824 **00:43:44**

825 **Senator Albertson:** I think the first year we went--excuse me by the name of Swinging Masters  
826 and that was an old name the band had but later on it would be my name--excuse me.

827

828 **00:43:58**

Key:  
Sen Albertson=Answer  
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NC Sen C Albertson

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829 **Interviewer:** The Charlie Albertson Band?

830

831 **00:43:59**

832 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah; yeah. Yeah; so that was a great experience, now you know to see the  
833 world and so many different places and that was a great, great, great time, yeah.

834

835 **00:44:09**

836 **Interviewer:** That's wonderful.

837

838 **00:44:11**

839 **Senator Albertson:** Uh-hm.

840

841 **00:44:12**

842 **Interviewer:** All right; well Senator Albertson it is almost 11 o'clock, so we are just right on  
843 schedule here today, which is unusual in my life. Is there anything you'd like to add?

844

845 **00:44:24**

846 **Senator Albertson:** Well Barbara it's been such a great pleasure to be with you and you sort of  
847 reminding me about some of the fish--fishery issues.

848

849 **00:44:32**

850 **Interviewer:** And the hot--the hot spots and the controversy. **[Laughs]**

851

852 **00:44:34**

Key:  
Sen Albertson=Answer  
[Inaudible] = Inaudible  
[Word] = Attempt at Word  
[Gesture/Action] = Gesture/Action

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853 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah; but I remember all the good times we had working together on those  
854 committees and you were always such a great lady and again, it just brings back so many  
855 memories that I will forever be grateful for to have had this opportunity to serve in this capacity.

856

857 **00:44:47**

858 **Interviewer:** Well and I really appreciate your--your service to this State.

859

860 **00:44:52**

861 **Senator Albertson:** Yeah.

862

863 **00:44:53**

864 **Interviewer:** And I also appreciate your time here today. I know you're a busy, busy man, so  
865 thank you so much.

866

867 **00:44:57**

868 **Senator Albertson:** Thank you. Thank you very much Barbara.

869

870 **00:44:59**

871 **[End NC Sen C Albertson Interview]**