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DR. LAWRENCE MATTHEWS and CARL RENFROE

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DR. LAWRENCE MATTHEWS

Recording begins in the middle of welcoming remarks by JAMES MACKAY, then president of the DeKalb Historical Society.

MR. MACKAY: . . . came up here to do some talking, and we're very honored to have DR. LAWRENCE MATTHEWS here today to talk about anything he wants to. He brought his scrapbook with him.

[Inaudible off-camera remarks from another participant, perhaps DR. MATTHEWS, in response to MR. MACKAY's words.]

MR. MACKAY, to DR. MATTHEWS: We're going to put a very elaborate introduction on this tape at a later date, but we don't want to usurp your time. As the custom is--

[Inaudible off-camera remarks from DR. MATTHEWS, asking how long he has to speak.]

MR. MACKAY: You got an hour. And then we're going to go into the courtroom and have a little reception for you. And we want to inquire about your rates now. [*Audience laughter*] I told this black lady that works at our house, "Dr. Matthews delivered twelve thousand babies." She said, "He's got plenty of money." [*Audience laughter*] And we hope you kept all that money. But this man touched my life in a wonderful way in delivering our

two children. And, remembering back in those anxious days, I can't imagine a doctor with a greater manner and professional style in dealing with us anxious people.

My son, who is deceased now, but who arrived after—arrived eight weeks early—always was impatient—and I stopped him [DR. MATTHEWS] in the hall and said, "Is he going to make it?"

And he said, "He's got a good kick and holler. I think he'll make it." But being a cautious doctor, he said, "It's a fifty-fifty chance." Well, we were happy with those odds; and it worked out fine.

But not to take any more of your time, I present to you DR. LAWRENCE B. MATTHEWS. [*To DR. MATTHEWS*] You can sit over here. We have a camera on you, but forget about that. [*Dr. Matthews takes his place on-camera.*] And we've got some eye-witnesses here, Doctor, like Andy Robertson back there. So if somebody gets up and contradicts you, you—

DR. MATTHEWS, *pointing to audience*: I know who he is, though.

ANDREW ROBERTSON, *off-camera*: Ain't much. Ain't much. One year.

MR. MACKAY, *as he moves off-camera, to DR. MATTHEWS*: I believe you can handle yourself, though, if somebody contradicts you.

DR. MATTHEWS: When do you want me to talk? Now?

MR. MACKAY: Right now. You're on camera, son.

DR. MATTHEWS: Well, I have a little difficulty hearing. I hear, but I don't hear words right. Now if I don't talk—if I talk too fast, slow me down. I [*inaudible*] through it. [*Looks down at stack of notecards in his hands*] To go back a little bit further, my grandfather, W. P. Bond, practiced medicine in Lithonia and died in 1898; and he came from Rock Chapel. That's where the Bond family was buried—about twenty-seven of them—in that cemetery there. My mother was a Bond, Annie [*inaudible—could be Parks or Cobbs?*] Bond, who was born in Lithonia; and she married my father, who met her at the tent—I guess it's called a tent—at Rock Chapel at a camp meeting. And she had six sons in a row and then a girl and died with the next one.

[Looks up from notes] I took some notes, but [rest of sentence inaudible]. The old man says, "What's your trouble?"—Doctor says, "What's your trouble?"

He says, "I can't remember anything."

He said, "Well, lie down there on the couch and discuss your trouble."

He said, "Which trouble?" [Audience laughter]

[Glances down at notecards] Anyway, my mother had her first child in Lithonia, and then she moved with her husband to Redan. And if you don't know where Redan is, it's down the road a little way. But Redan, when I was a child, was much more modern than it is now. There was a railroad station there, there was a station master, and we had two local trains going and coming, one from Atlanta to Social Circle. And my father commuted from Redan to Atlanta. And then we moved to Decatur in 1913—that's the year after the *Titanic* sank.

To go back a little bit, there was a gin in Lithonia and Redan. There was a sawmill there. Marshall [inaudible] old country store, and the Johnsons had a country store; and the Johnson house is still there. And little has changed. You got a nursery across the street, and I see they've got a shopping mall down there that we didn't have.

Now, we moved to Decatur, as I said, in 1913. I went to Glennwood School in fifth grade; and Mrs. Fulton, whom all of you remember, I know, was the—what you call it—the principal. And I went to high school and graduated in 1922, Decatur High School. And then I went to Emory after that. Before that, though, I carried papers around the court square, down Ponce de Leon, Ponce de Leon Place, and Clairmont, and the last house was Mrs. Ripley's [spelling?] house, where the Krystal is out there. And [name inaudible—sounds like Mattie Bell?] Ripley is still living, and she's in a nursing home in Valdosta. She had a [inaudible], and we lived just two houses this side of her. After [inaudible] my mother died in 19—the 17th of September, 1922, after—it was her eighth child. She bled to death afterwards. Old Dr. McCurdy [inaudible] was her doctor and came all the way from Stone Mountain, and she bled to death after he went back home. Left my father

with six sons and one little girl. And I went to Emory—beginning Emory—in that same month that she died.

A little bit about the cost of going to Emory—it was seventy-five dollars a quarter [*audience laughter*] when I started to school. And at Emory I did just about everything you could do—I'll tell you a little bit more about that later on. But anyway, I went to medical school. It was ninety dollars a semester, and that's a hundred and eighty dollars a year. It's over ten thousand dollars now to go to Emory at the medical school. I worked in the laboratory with a Dr. [inaudible—sounds like "Chase M."?] Guy as a laboratory employee taking care of the stock. Then in the medical school as for the second year I worked for Dr. [inaudible—first name could be Howell?] Blenko [spelling?]. And I helped embalm bodies and clean bones and about everything you could possibly do, and I had to stop school after my second year because I didn't have any money. And I worked with Dr. George Bachman, who was a professor of physiology. And I was an instructor in physiology; worked there for six years. And then I finished the last—medicine—the last two years—the junior year, two years, and one year, senior year, and graduated in '35. And I interned at Grady Hospital and had an assistant residency and residency in obstetrics and gynecology there and worked for Dr. [inaudible—could be Bert, Burt, Britt?] McCord. I worked for the biggest men in the university. Dr. Guy and Dr. Blenko and everybody—nobody knows Dr. Blenko [spelling?] right, do they? [*laughs*]—like we did—and Dr. Bachman and Dr. McCord, [inaudible first name] McCord, Grady Hospital.

I started the practice of medicine in the old [inaudible] Bank & Trust Company building over here on the corner in 1938. Dr. Pickett, Dr. [inaudible—sounds something like "Hoyt Allen"?], and the Cobb brothers, and Mr. [inaudible—could be Kerr or Curren?], he worked on that floor. The rate was sixteen dollars a month, which was too much. I couldn't pay that, either. My first month's income was fifty-five dollars. Some of that wasn't paid [*audience laughter*].

A little bit—going back just a little bit further—I'll get on with this, though—anyway, I practiced at Emory until Emory began to change and let you—have to be paid to

be a professor out there; and I moved to Crawford Long, where I stayed until 1961, and then went to DeKalb General [now DeKalb Medical Center], where I finished practicing medicine. And I had very good luck; I had four nurses who practiced with—take care of my patients around the clock, so that they were kept with them always in labor.

Let me go back a little bit further about DeKalb County. Like [inaudible] done told you, I helped Mr. [inaudible first name] Jackson, whom some of you may remember, who was a surveyor. We surveyed all the land around the county, just about during the summertime. And I worked for the post office department—Ms. Kirkpatrick. We had a post office on Sycamore Street. That was the first post office I worked at, right next to the [inaudible] store. Then I—after the first year at Emory I sold Wearever Aluminum in Con—in Albany—in “Albinny” [audience laughter] [inaudible] cooking, but I did.

But anyway, I didn't have any money. I used to work at—[inaudible—could be “Ed and Ella Matthew”?] had a furniture store on Piedmont Avenue. I rode the streetcar, which was five cents. After—going back to town I had to walk sometimes because I didn't have five cents. But we were poor folks in those days.

[Looks through notecards] Remember the Houstons I know of, old Dr. Houston lived right here on the corner where the bank is. The house is still there, turned around on Church Street. And the Houstons were very prominent people. They— [first and middle names inaudible—sounds like “Abelonious Forehorn”] Houston, who lived down on Clairemont, right opposite where [inaudible] Drive was, [inaudible—could be Hallie or Allie or Ellie?] Houston died just a few years ago. The YMCA was on the corner where the Rigb—no, the Gibbs house, it was called, and right next door and across the street from Mr. Jack Johnson's house—all of you remember Jack Johnson, I know—he signed the note for me for \$125 so I could get back into medical school—only note he ever signed. He was very—and do you know the story about Jack? He was in the flood of Jamestown. [Responding to correction from audience member, off-camera] It was Johnstown?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Johnstown

DR. MATTHEWS: Anyway, he was washed up on a mattress. Only two years old. Nobody knows who he was. He assumed the name Jack Johnson. I made the first prediction I ever made. She was pregnant, Mrs. Johnson was; and I told my mother she was going to have twins, and she did [*audience laughter*]. [*DR. MATTHEWS makes an inaudible comment.*]

[*Goes through notecards*] Let me tell you about my mother. She graduated from Wesleyan [Macon, Georgia] in 1898. She went to Agnes Scott Academy, it was called in those days, for one year. She graduated from Wesleyan in 1898. And X-rays were just beginning to be made. I remember she showed me a picture then of somebody's hand taken with an X-ray. And since 1904, when I was born, on the 16th of October, Redan—it was a cold Sunday morning--I remember it real well [*audience laughter*—just think of what change has taken place, everything, since 1904. There were telephones, but very awful telephones; and there was no electricity much, anybody had. My father had the first plumbing in a house in Redan. He put it in himself. And he had the first telephone. And everybody who wanted to talk at night, they would come up to his house and ask him to ring, and he got so tired of it, he yanked it off the cord and didn't use it anymore [*audience laughter*]. And there were no doctors in Redan at that time. And I went to school in a little—right across from the cemetery where the Redan school is now—to the third grade. I went to Lithonia for fourth grade and walked to Lithonia sometimes, but that's four miles down to Redan. And now you can't walk over a mile [*laughs*—have to ride the bus over there.

After moving to Decatur we had a garden. We had a cow, and we had chickens. And I remember we had a garden, and I sold potatoes around the court square here; they had a farmers' market around the court square. And I [*inaudible*] my price for—I charged more for a pound than I did for a peck [*audience laughter*]. And an old man who came up and says, "I'll pay for a whole peck." Says, "You charge more for a whole peck than you are for the pounds." So he picked it out, and we got a deal, and he bought it. And [*indicating an off-camera audience member*] Mr. [*inaudible—could be Major?*] over here, his father or

brothers had a shop over here on Mell Avenue, where the old DeKalb [inaudible—sounds like “brewery”?] was, up in a house; and they moved up down here on Sycamore sometime later. [Inaudible—sounds like “He shoed all the shoes”] for as long as I can remember until they retired, and I--down here on—now that I mention, you paid before you get your shoes fixed. Because they charged \$47.50 for two pairs of shoes I took down there.

[*Consults notes*] Listen, [*looks at his watch*] I haven't talked very long, I know that. But I had rather ask questions, and I believe I can answer better than I can talk.

JAMES MACKAY, *from the audience, off-camera, invites DR. MATTHEWS to sit down to take questions; DR. MATTHEWS sits and invites questions from the audience.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Where did you deliver most of your babies?

DR. MATTHEWS: Well, at Crawford Long I delivered more. We—one year—the highest year I had was 638. And the most that I [inaudible] a little over six thousand at Crawford Long.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: When did they go from delivering them in the home to a hospital?

DR. MATTHEWS: I remember when I first moved to DeKalb—Tucker—actually, Decatur, old Dr. [inaudible] was here, and Dr. Duncan and Dr. [inaudible—could be Homer Allen?]. And Dr. Pattillo was still living. We'd get a call some night, rush out there, and some other doctor may already be there [*audience laughter*]. I didn't go into many of their homes. But you know, the trend in medicine is a deception almost. The trend is to go back home and have the baby. A woman can bleed to death in two minutes after having a baby, if she hasn't got somebody that anticipates it. It's happened. So they can do it at home; you can't anticipate what's going to happen sometimes. Because my mother bled to death, and my father's brother's wife bled to death; and both of them had excellent doctors. If you're going to get in trouble, you do it in a hospital, hear? But the trend now seems to be to want to have all the children there to watch the delivery and maybe all the aunts, too. I think that having a baby is a very private thing—ought to be, anyway. I think

the male—the human male—is always around when the female is having babies, or wants to be around.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: A lot of you folks may not—

DR. MATTHEWS: Beg your pardon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: A lot of you people may not know about Warren—

DR. MATTHEWS: What?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Recount about Warren. A lot of these people don't know that Warren was your brother.

DR. MATTHEWS: Warren Matthews was a pathologist at Kennestone, and his wife—he was murdered. And it was the biggest miscarriage of justice I've ever seen. I can't criticize it, because I don't know too much about it. But they had the [inaudible—sounds like “dead woods”] set on the people who did it. A woman said she was in on the deal, and then she revoked her testimony later on, and they turned them all loose. They never had to serve time. He [Warren Matthews] was a very smart man. He was Number-One Boy; I was Number-Two Boy. Always had been until he died; now I'm Number-One Boy [scattered audience laughter]. Anyway, he was a very studious somebody. He had a B.S., an M.S., a Ph.D., and an M.D.; and he was a very smart somebody.

Now, my next brother [inaudible] worked for the Internal Revenue Department [sic; means “Service”]. He died over at DeKalb General [inaudible] after a coronary. And Bill, who was the next—last boy, had a stroke. He was in—we had four doctors in our group out of six sons. Bill was in Cullowhee, North Carolina, having an X-ray made; and he had a stroke and died. And the other brother, Norman Matthews, was the youngest boy, practiced as a pediatrician in Marquette, Michigan. And my sister married a Presbyterian minister, and she lives in [inaudible]; and he died several years ago from heart failure.

And now we're talking about our family--all Methodists, ever since I can remember. [Last name could be “Vaughn”; first name inaudible] said they were Rock Chapel Methodists, and he went to Lithonia's Methodist church there. And Dr. Vaughn was a very

powerful man. He served both in the legislature and the senate from this county. He had a great deal to do with the insane asylum down in Macon—in south Georgia [possibly means Milledgeville?].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Who was principal of the—

DR. MATTHEWS: Beg your pardon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Who was superintendent of the Decatur schools when you graduated?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Glausier [NOTE: G. W. Glausier was superintendent in 1922, the year DR. MATTHEWS graduated from Decatur High School.]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mr. Glausier?

DR. MATTHEWS: Rainey I think was the one. [W. M. Rainey was the principal at Decatur High School.]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: No

Several brief, simultaneous conversations take place among audience members, none completely audible.

DR. MATTHEWS: Homer Wright was a professor—if any of you can remember back then—Homer Wright was a professor—taught over there [at Decatur High School]; and he was the best teacher I ever had, I believe. A Mrs. Osterhout taught us English; Mrs. McLendon [spelling?] taught us Latin. [NOTE: No one named McLendon or McClendon appears in the 1921 or 1922 Decatur High School yearbook.] And Margaret Eakes taught us French. And Mary did teach a little while over there. Dr. Sammons—Professor Sammons—taught us physics. And we didn't have lunches served to us, either. We carried our lunches to school. At Redan our lunch was a baked sweet potato and a ham biscuit. And I'll settle for that any time, right now [*audience laughter*]. [*In response to audience member*] Beg your pardon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: How did you eat the baked sweet potato that you carried?

DR. MATTHEWS: That's a good one.

Several brief, simultaneous conversations take place among audience members, none completely audible.

DR. MATTHEWS: Don't eat it too fast [inaudible]. [*Audience laughter*] And so good with butter on it.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Now, talk about some of those Emory professors. You said that you really knew about Dr. Blenko [spelling?].

DR. MATTHEWS: Dr. Blenko [spelling?] was a professor of anatomy. He really couldn't lecture very well, but he drove us to the—nineteen of us passed anatomy the first year, and all the rest of them went back to Michigan in the summertime to get [inaudible]. He was a nice man, he really was. He was so honest that if you made 73 and 75 was passing, he wouldn't pass you [*audience laughter*]. And they fired him because he would not pass one of the big-shot doctors' nephew. But you can't fire a full professor without a hearing, so they had to get him—take him back. They demoted him [skip in videotape for several seconds] . . . after he graduated—after he retired. And every time I went to the medical center, he always came and sat down beside me and wanted to talk all the time. And he hadn't been here very long before they found a malignancy in his groin and [he] died, and his wife—they went to—was it North Decatur Methodist Church?—anyway, she was killed, walked in front of a car.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: They both gave their bodies for—

DR. MATTHEWS: What?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: They both gave their bodies to research. You didn't mention that.

DR. MATTHEWS: Yeah, to Emory. Dr. Blenko [spelling?] was so well thought of that Dr. McGee [spelling?] fussed because he'd studied too much for anatomy when [inaudible] chemistry.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Give us your impressions of J. Sam Guy.

DR. MATTHEWS: J. Sam Guy was a nice man—I thought, anyway. He used to teach at Agnes Scott, you know, years ago. He was one of the founders of Decatur Rotary

Club—one of the first members. His son—Dr. [inaudible] delivered his child for him. We used to play badminton together. He hit me in the head one time with a racket. Had to have some stitches taken across [inaudible] [*points to forehead to indicate location of sutures*]. [*Audience laughter*] But then Dr.--[inaudible] he was a nice man, I thought. He was a very intelligent somebody—a good talker, which I wish I was [*audience laughter, with assurances, "You are!"*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: J. Sam played Cupid with me and my wife. He threw us together every chance he got.

DR. MATTHEWS: What?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: J. Sam Guy used to throw my wife and I together every chance he got, and I finally wound up marrying her [*audience laughter*].

DR. MATTHEWS: [Inaudible] what he used to say—I remember one of his lectures he talked about teaching at Agnes Scott—had to be very careful about what he said. He said he had to make water [*laughing; audience laughter, while he demonstrates by pretending to pour liquid into a beaker*] [inaudible]. I remember very well. Now, I [inaudible] in charge of the lab—stockroom [inaudible]. Was a good teacher, too. Anybody else got [inaudible]?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera, to MR. MACKAY*: Jim, I think it'd be real interesting to have everybody here stand up who's had children and [inaudible].

DR. MATTHEWS, *interrupting*: Interesting story about my mother—

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera, to audience member who posed suggestion*: [Inaudible] we'll do that. *To audience and DR. MATTHEWS*: They want everybody to stand up that's had a relative delivered by DR. MATTHEWS.

Off-camera sounds in audience indicate that some audience members are standing.

DR. MATTHEWS, *smiling and applauding softly*: That's good. I thank you.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Of course, you were in medical circles; but do you have recollections of Scott Candler? You want to talk about Scott and dealing with Scott?

DR. MATTHEWS: You—about the old man?

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Yeah! [*General laughter*]

DR. MATTHEWS: I knew him real well, really. I [inaudible] an honest man. I remember when he was commissioner, he was, I guess. I came to the practice of medicine then. He knew I wanted to be the [inaudible—could be “county physician” or “Candler physician” or “candidate for the position”?]. Well, instead, he owed the McCurdys political debt. He wanted to give it to me, but he had to give it to Willis [McCurdy]. [Inaudible] nothing wrong with that at all. I think a lot of people didn’t like Scott Candler, but he did more for the county, I think, than anyone had ever done. If it weren’t for Scott Candler, we’d still have privies, I expect, out here [inaudible] [*audience laughter*]. It hasn’t been very long since they were out there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Lawrence, tell them about the time you caught the governor—

DR. MATTHEWS *leans forward with his hand cupped to his ear*.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Tell them about the incident with M. E. Thompson.

DR. MATTHEWS: What about him? [*Audience laughter*]

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: You’re not going to get out of this [inaudible] free-for-all.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Lawrence and I—

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera, to audience member*: Get up so you can get on camera.

DR. MATTHEWS: He and I went to school together [at Emory University].

AUDIENCE MEMBER *makes his way to the front of the room, on-camera*: We roomed together for two years. I told him I was coming on to be sure he kept the record straight. But this incident happened in—M. E. Thompson was a dishwasher. Lawrence and I had elevated jobs: He dispensed the linens to the boys that changed the tables, and I kept the meal sheets. Both of us were on the door to not let anybody in that didn’t pay. But we had a problem out there that sometimes the boys would run in to the switchbox and turn off the lights, and pandemonium would break loose in the dining hall. We had 580

people eating in there, and they'd throw bottles—I mean, plates, glasses, everything. One of the professors got hit in the head with one of these heavy-bottomed tumblers. We called him "Heavy Duty" Thompson; he was a teacher of Bible. But we tried to guard against the lights going off.

But one night, just about twilight—it was just good dark—the lights went out. Now, I was close to my door, and Lawrence was over on the other side of his door. I jumped at the door and stretched my arms out like this. In a minute something hit me in the chest, and I closed my arms around him; and I said, "Lawrence, I got him! Go turn the lights on!" And when the lights went on, M. E. Thompson was in my grasp [*audience laughter*]. We didn't know at that time he was going to be governor one of these days. But my wife at that time--she wasn't my wife at that time, but she was dietitian. She was mine and Dr. Matthews's boss. But they were going to expel him, and she begged off for him and pleaded with Dr. Costen [spelling?], the trustees, and everything not to expel him but to give him another chance. And several years later, at the dietetic convention, M. E. was the speaker; he came up because [then-Governor] Ellis Arnall wasn't able to come and sent M. E. in his place. So M. E. told her, looked out there and he said, "Peggy," he said, "don't tell them about me and those lights" [*audience laughter*]. [*Resumes seat*]

DR. MATTHEWS: I've been here a long time. I moved here when they were building Emory. And the stopped the building when the war [World War II] was declared, and took all of the carpenters up to what we called Camp Gordon in Chamblee. And we used to walk through the buildings out there. When I went to Emory, I knew everybody, everybody knew us, all the professors knew us. I can't even pronounce their names out there now. [*Audience laughter*]. Can't pronounce a lot of the names of the doctors, either. Just because you've got an M.D. doesn't make you a good doctor. Lot of people think that just because you've got an M.D. [rest of comment inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: It'll guarantee you a living, though.

DR. MATTHEWS: What?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: It'll guarantee you a living [*audience laughter*].

MR. MACKAY: Can you think of any preachers that stand out in your mind?
Ministers. Any of your pastors, any of your preachers that you distinctly remember?

DR. MATTHEWS: I don't. You asked me a question [inaudible] I recall. I'm like the old lady who says to her husband, says, "John, didn't we have children sometime in the past?" [*Audience laughter*] If you remind me of it, [inaudible].

MR. MACKAY: Did you know Bishop Moore?

DR. MATTHEWS: What?

MR. MACKAY: You knew Bishop Moore? Arthur Moore, Bishop Arthur Moore.

DR. MATTHEWS: Yeah.

MR. MACKAY: You heard him preach.

DR. MATTHEWS: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You should have known Jim's daddy.

DR. MATTHEWS: I heard Noah Langdale [former president of Georgia State University]. You ever hear that man talk?

Several audience members enthusiastically respond in the affirmative, "Ooh, yes!"

DR. MATTHEWS: If I could talk like [inaudible], I'd be all right. [*MR. MACKAY and a few others laugh.*] [Inaudible] I took papers down the street. Johnston brothers had a blacksmith shop right down on the corner. E. F. Tuggle had the Ford agency here, and I cut my teeth on [inaudible] Model T Ford. I drove up on a [inaudible] the first time I got in it, right on top of it. They were the worst car the Lord or anybody ever made. And I remember they didn't have a radio, of course. But Dick McMaster—I know you remember the name Dick McMaster—his father worked for WSB, I think it was. [Inaudible] Rogers was singing—I remember they playing the guitar and singing. He couldn't sing, but he'd write good music. There was Snowball and her—What was it? Snowball and Sunshine was a couple on the radio. And in those days, you know, they didn't have electric radios like they've got now; they were battery-driven, most of them were batteries. And it was beautiful music, prettier than you get now.

MR. MACKAY: How do [sic] you get to Emory when you were going to Emory?

DR. MATTHEWS: Walk

MR. MACKAY: From where?

DR. MATTHEWS: Half a mile down—we lived at 1222 Clairemont, where the liquor store is?

MR. MACKAY: Yeah

DR. MATTHEWS: That's where our house was. Now, I didn't—after my mother died, I didn't have much of a home out there—didn't live at home. Went to Emory, stayed at Emory for the whole time. See, I didn't start Emory until 1922. I didn't get [inaudible] till '35 because I had to stop out and teach school to get some money—\$125. Mr. [inaudible] used to be the vice president over there at First National. I borrowed \$125 from him with [inaudible] Charlie Matthews's signature. And, you know, every time I went back to get it renewed, I thought I'd committed a crime [*audience laughter*]. He just gave me hell, sure enough. One day I walked into his office after I'd been practicing, and he said, "Why, don't you need some money? I got a good loan today." I wanted to kick him [*audience laughter*]. You can always part with money if you have some money, just about.

L. T. [inaudible—sounds like "Wanash"] was a relative of mine. He was the commissioner here one time. He built this road between Avondale and Stone Mountain and was criticized because, he said, it was a political thing. But that—the best road is still there. Most of it's still there. Better than any road that's built now. I remember when [name inaudible] used to be—I think it was the [inaudible].

MR. MACKAY: [Inaudible]

DR. MATTHEWS: --there from Lithonia. I remember him real well. I rode to Macon with him to the insane asylum one time [possibly means Milledgeville?]. A woman was judged insane and had to be committed and had to go down there, and he had to go down there with her and her husband go with her. And, "I like you driving all right, but you turn [inaudible] too fast" [*audience laughter*]. But [inaudible—sounds something like "Mar"] Rayburn [spelling?]. You remember [inaudible—sounds something like "Mar"] Rayburn [spelling?]? I know you do.

MR. MACKAY: St. Patrick's Day

DR. MATTHEWS: He always the one that carried it.

MR. MACKAY, *to audience member, off-camera*: Question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Could you name a few of the deliveries—

DR. MATTHEWS: Beg your pardon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Could you name a few of your deliveries who've gone on to be people of importance?

DR. MATTHEWS, *unable to hear, consults with audience member to clarify the question and then returns to his seat on camera*: I don't know that I-- We used to deliver babies at Grady and name them after [inaudible—sounds like "Berkford Hall"?] [*audience laughter*]. The records said [inaudible] always sent them back. Think of getting a darn call and drive out and find out that they had done changed their names.

Not all of them have been-- The old n----- woman came to my office one day— [*Aside to audience member(s), possibly MR. MACKAY*] Pardon me. But she was [inaudible] patient. And she says, "Dr. Matthews, you delivered my--me at the Grady's," and said, "and you must have been a good omen, because I named him after you, and he ain't never been in jail" [*audience laughter*]. I had several patients that I delivered down there and continued as patients afterwards.

MR. MACKAY: Can you think of any unusual names?

DR. MATTHEWS: We had a Mrs. Rush and a Mrs. Rape in the same room.

MR. MACKAY: Mrs. Brush?

DR. MATTHEWS: Rush

MR. MACKAY: Mrs. Rush and Mrs. Rape?

DR. MATTHEWS: Same room. [*Audience laughter*] I think I'd change that name.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I feel funny butting in all the time, but another little incident that Lawrence-- I tell you about Lawrence that's the truth. My wife's nephew had Dr. Matthews as their obstetrician, and the baby came early. They started from Jonesboro around I—I mean, the perimeter road [I-285], and the girl

told her husband, says, "Bobby, this baby's coming now!" So they pulled off the road over here on Memorial Drive near what's presently the police station, and a police lieutenant delivered that baby on the seat of their truck. And Dr. Matthews was waiting for them in the hospital; so after he [the policeman] delivered the baby, and everything was all right, he took them over to the hospital, and Dr. Matthews saw them after they got there. But here's the thing I wanted to mention: A few weeks after that, Dr. Matthews refunded them a portion of what they paid in to have that baby. He said, "I didn't deliver your baby, so I'm not entitled to it" [*audience laughter*].

DR. MATTHEWS: You know, talking about—I delivered babies in Decatur, twenty-five dollars lot of times. Now it costs you anywhere eighteen hundred to two thousand dollars for a complete delivery, and there's a good reason for it. My first malpractice insurance was twenty-five dollars, covered the premium. It's forty thousand dollars for any DeKalb County OB/GYN right now. A man is bankrupt when he starts practicing medicine. It costs at least fifteen thousand dollars every year for the four years of college, and then he's got to intern at least three years to become a specialist, sometimes more than that. So they see some bad debt, unless he's rich somewhere. But it sure has changed.

I quit practicing medicine because it got a little bit too high. I couldn't practice medicine, give forty thousand dollars, and pay all our bills, too. But, you know, thirty percent of the doctors have quit OB/GYN in the county alone? My Caesarean section rate was under three percent. It is nearly thirty percent—between twenty-five and thirty percent; and there's a good reason for that, too. "If you don't, we'll sue you. If you do, you shouldn't have done it." And it's bad, because people are suit-conscious now. And they monitor the baby, and they monitor the mother—it's getting so sophisticated, it's very complicated now.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I'd like to say something.

DR. MATTHEWS: Yes, sir

AUDIENCE MEMBER later identified as "Evan," *off-camera*: My wife was fortunate enough—

MR. MACKAY: Get on camera, Evan.

"EVAN," *walking up to DR. MATTHEWS, on-camera*: I just walked in, I don't know [*audience laughter*]. What you want me to do?

MR. MACKAY: Just get on camera. Stand over there by Dr. Matthews.

"EVAN," *facing DR. MATTHEWS, on-camera*: My wife was fortunate enough to go to this man with our two daughters. She was a little bit overweight, and he was fussing at her. He said, "You gained too much." So at that time he was kind of five-by-five; he's lost some weight now [*audience laughter*]. But she looked at him and says, "Well, why don't you do something about your weight?" And he says, "Well, you do as I say and not as I do" [*audience laughter*]. *Pats DR. MATTHEWS on the shoulder and walks back to audience off-camera.*

DR. MATTHEWS: You know, we used to have a patient that came from Roswell. She weighed 275 pounds. My scales wouldn't weigh more than three hundred. I said, "Do you want to lose some weight?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

And she weighed so much that my scales wouldn't weigh her [*inaudible*]. And she had a baby. And we got her on the bed by just pushing on her and then fall in the bed. And I told my nurse—by the way, Mrs. Matthews [*points to MRS. MATTHEWS, off-camera in audience*] was with me thirty-eight years, my nurse, and helped with most of the deliveries and operations. Anyway, I told her, I said, "I think her husband doesn't weigh 132 pounds with a [*inaudible*] streak in him." I went out there, he was the skinniest little fellow you ever saw [*audience laughter*]. I think she got him in the car and wouldn't let him out [*audience laughter*]. Anyway, he pulled out a checkbook, says, "How much I owe you?" He wrote it out right there and handed it to me. [*Beginning of sentence inaudible*], she weighed over three hundred pounds.

You know, I have to say this, too, because the doctors, some of them, are paranoid [inaudible]. When I first came here, you could not go to Georgia Baptist Hospital unless a doctor who was fraternity brother of mine gave you permission. You couldn't go to Piedmont unless you knew somebody that let you in—and, of course, I knew most of them. And I operated almost everywhere. [Inaudible—sounds like “Wellington”?] Infirmary was on 15 Boulevard. I operated [inaudible phrase] Negro—black man's wife. She weighed about three hundred pounds. No air-conditioning, didn't have [inaudible] on the floor, and the windows were up and started raining, and they pulled these windows down. That's the hardest operation I think I've ever been through in my life. And Harris Memorial is another colored hospital over on—way over on the West Side. And we all had to operate at all these hospitals [when they] first started.

I guess all of you remember old Dr. K. C. [Casey?] Ivey [spelling?]. He practiced medicine [inaudible] Clarkston, and he moved down below Zebulon. And he had everything—he had a big piece of land down here off East Ponce de Leon. Anyway, he was a very good friend of mine. He died not too long ago; he had a stroke and was for several years in a nursing home. He went out with doctors and operated on the kitchen table. I helped him many times.

I had a doctor from Dothan, Alabama, call me one day—talking about how doctors are. And he said, “L. D.”—I knew him real well, and he said,--“would you--if I bring a woman up there, will you take out her uterus?”

I said, “Well, bring her up and let me see.”

“No, no—you got to promise me” [audience laughter]. He says, “I delivered this woman, and everything was all right. [Inaudible] they called me; she was bleeding real badly. I took care of her, and she started bleeding again. Well, I thought I ought to remove her uterus.” But the old doctor there that ran the hospital in Dothan, Alabama, didn't let anybody operate in his hospital but him. He said, “I wouldn't let him operate on my dog.”

Anyway, he came to Atlanta with her in an ambulance all the way up to Crawford Long with two pints of blood hanging up in there. And I operated on her; and, you know, she didn't have any fever, nothing—everything was beautiful. Remarkable how nature can heal people.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Any more questions? [*To DOROTHY NIX, off-camera*]
Can we go in, Dorothy, a little earlier?

MRS. NIX: Let me check and see if they're ready for us.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Mrs. Matthews, we'd like you to stand and let us give you a hand. [*Audience applause as MRS. MATTHEWS stands*]

MRS. MATTHEWS, *to DR. MATTHEWS*: They wanted to know any prominent people you delivered. [*Repeats question at DR. MATTHEWS's request*]

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: The people you delivered who became very prominent.

DR. MATTHEWS: Oh. Dr. [sic] Curry, I delivered him—who was [Georgia] Tech coach.

Conversation among audience members confirms name of Bill Curry, former head football coach at Georgia Tech.

DR. MATTHEWS: I delivered him. And I [inaudible] one day. And I walked up and said, "Mr. Curry, you don't know me, but I delivered you."

"Oh," he said, "I wish my mother was here!" [*audience laughter*]

And Frank Tompkins, I delivered his wife. And another—there was another one, a football player--I can't remember now. Anyway, there's several people like that I can recall if I take long enough.

MR. MACKAY, *joining DR. MATTHEWS on camera*: Well, I think everybody's entitled to forget some things. I went into my mother's room—

DR. MATTHEWS: I was [inaudible], look like [*audience laughter*].

MR. MACKAY: Well, we might just put you up there in his place. Well, I went into my mother's room at Fountainview the other day. She will be ninety-nine in August; and she looked at me and said, "You have a very familiar face" [*audience laughter*].

I said, "You ought to know." I said, "You saw it before I did" [*audience laughter*].

DR. MATTHEWS: I was just saying, I wish I could talk better.

MR. MACKAY: Well, we're going to go from here in just a moment into the courtroom for some refreshments; and you have so many constituents here that they're probably going to want to talk to you personally. We want to thank you for coming up here.

DR. MATTHEWS: Well, I wish I could do a better job.

MR. MACKAY: You did a marvelous job [*audience applause*]. [*To audience*] I'll take our guest and lead him in there first, and then y'all can follow us in there.

END OF DR. MATTHEWS'S RECORDING

DR. CARL RENFROE

Recording begins in the middle of welcoming remarks by JAMES MACKAY, then president of the DeKalb Historical Society.

MR. MACKAY: . . . interesting speakers that we're videotaping. I'm very saddened with the death of Judge Marion Guess. We wanted very much to videotape him, and he was not well enough for us to do that. [*Turns to DR. RENFROE, seated behind him*] Not to create any alarm [*DR. RENFROE and audience laugh*].

DR. RENFROE: I'll feel better when it's over.

MR. MACKAY: But time is flying. And we're happy to have some of DR. RENFROE's family, [*turns to DR. RENFROE*] and I wish you'd present this [*inaudible*].

DR. RENFROE, *rising*. [*Camera pans into audience.*] Well, my wife, of course, Mae; daughter Jean and her friend Gloria, from New Jersey somewhere.

FROM AUDIENCE [*presumably from Jean or Gloria*]: Washington [*Audience laughter*]

DR. RENFROE: I claim the next two, since they've worked with me so long: Joyce Paris and Dr. Vee Simmons, who [*inaudible*]. [*Sits*]

MR. MACKAY: Well, we're honored to have all of you here. The format, for many of you that haven't attended—most everybody in here I recognize—but you are a studio audience, and you're assisting us in the project of videotaping significant people in this county that will come here and give us whatever recollections that they have or comments that they have. We don't tell them what to say, and we find some of them taking advantage of that—just saying what they think about [inaudible] [*audience laughter*].

And we're very honored today to have DR. CARL RENFROE. We that work and Decatur and have either gone to Decatur schools or been nearby in other schools know that this city has been marked by excellence in its educational pursuits, both in public and private schools. And in the forty-one years that I've been practicing law out here I associate DR. CARL RENFROE's name with Decatur more than any other. And it strikes me that he represents a kind of excellence in professional leadership in education; and the reason that the outcome has been so good is that the citizenry—and I think he will comment on this—have shared his respect for education and the interest in education.

Now, he's going to have sixty minutes. [*To DR. RENFROE*] I'll warn you about Andy Robertson. If you jump up—he may jump up and dispute you—

ANDREW ROBERTSON, *from audience, off-camera*: [Inaudible] an old man [inaudible].

DR. RENFROE: He's a different generation [*audience laughter*].

MR. MACKAY: We can't stand too much formality. We've even had Steffen Thomas up here. And I missed that. But he got up and ranted and raved and denounced the politicians, because he tried to be one—he ran for County Commission. I wish I'd been here when he took out after those folks. But it is highly informal; and when, at any point that you want to receive questions, you can. And then afterwards we'd like for you and your family to lead us into the courtroom, where we're going to have a little reception and light refreshments. But you're going to get a much more elaborate introduction when we dub it in on the front of the tape, but we don't want to take up your time now. But we're

honored and delighted to have DR. CARL RENFROE as our speaker today. [*Sits in audience, off-camera*].

DR. REFROE, *rising*: Thank you, Jim. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I'm glad that Andy [Robertson] is here, because now I'm not the longest talker in the group [*audience laughter*]. He excels me by twofold. [*Glances at notes.*] I put lots of this in writing really to keep myself in line; otherwise, you ramble and miss and skip and so forth. And to try to crowd twenty-three [sic] years in Decatur and six years as principal sixteen years as superintendent and twenty-two [sic] years with the school system into even an hour, it gets a little heavy.

I officially became principal of Decatur High School on July the first, 1953—that's nearly thirty-four years ago. Mae and I rented a furnished home from Joe and Ione Frierson, Agnes Scott property, for two months while we looked for a home. It's true that we found a home within a week, but during that time we were going to [inaudible] for two months every summer, and Mrs. Frierson worked in the office, whom I'd met; and it was a perfect situation for us just to come in there.

Early one morning, around the second or third day we were here, about 9:00 I heard a knock on the door; and to my surprise I went out, and there was delegation of four great-big, husky football players who had come to welcome us into the town. Sam Wells, who was not only a football player and basketball four-letter man, but he was also president of the student body—Student Council, we called it. And he came down with Earl Kohler [spelling?] and Charles Maynard and Tommy Newsome, and we had a long talk. It was a rather inspirational thing to me, because I'd never been welcomed in any town [*audience laughter*] or heard of any principal of a high school being welcomed. And they were not trying to put a good foot forward; they were really sincere people just getting acquainted and wanted us to feel at home.

In Decatur working with the high school, my first experience was working with the Student Council. And I was impressed because that was a governmental body that really did function. The thing that always worries me today in national politics is we elect a

president who's supposed to be the best man in the United States to run the country, and then everybody spends the next four years tearing him down. Now, in Decatur High School, it was exactly the opposite. When they elected four officers--and we also had one homeroom representative from every class in school, so they met once a week on Monday on a rotating basis—we had a representation, about forty or forty-five people there; and they worked with their officers. Not one single time that I was associated with the Decatur schools in twenty-two years did I ever hear of a political revolt. It also was a great asset to the principal—especially a new principal coming in—to have a group to commune with and think with and plan with. And, as I said, we had these meetings on Monday; and we rotated them so—rotated the schedule on Monday—so you would miss a reasonable number of periods during the quarter. And there the representatives heard what was going on, heard the planning, heard questions, heard criticisms, heard solutions suggested, and then went back; and it was their responsibility to report to their own classroom, stressing the value of communication. This is the thing I always say, no matter what business you're in, no matter how hard you work at it, the worst thing you ever do, the worst thing I ever did, was communication. But that Student Council organization was a wonderful plan for communication. It was a democratic process; the whole student body elected the top officials. We divided not into two parties but into three parties; we didn't want this one against that. We didn't want the Democrats against the Republicans or something of that nature. We figured if you had three, you couldn't click [clique?] it off and my group against your group, so we had three parties. We would vote at-large first, and then we'd pick the top ten people; and we'd run it off again and then pick the top ones in each party and then run them against each other. So it was a very democratic thing, and we selected a strong leadership by a democratic process; and it was effective in communicating back and forth with the whole student body.

At Decatur [High School] we held pep rallies; and they were spectacular things, enthusiastic things. Decatur at that time was winning eight or ten games a year, and we had really rip-snorting pep rallies out in the stadium conducted by the Student Council

copresidents. I began to get famous for my prognostications of scores; and they would not dismiss a football pep rally without saying, "Mr. Renfro! What's the score going to be against Rome?" [*Audience laughter*] And that's always fun when you win it, see. When you win, if you miss the score, they're still happy. If you're losing a lot of games, who wants to get up and say, "Druid Hills is going to beat us twenty to six"? I'd a lot rather say, "We're going to beat Druid Hills twenty to six." And it worked very well, and it also added a community spirit with these sports.

I was impressed when I got here. The first game we played was against Murphy [High School]. I'd seen pretty good crowds; we had a state championship team in Griffin before the war, but we had reasonable crowds but not overwhelming. And here we had four thousand people—first team I'd ever seen took in about thirty-five hundred, maybe four thousand dollars. Money was kind of pouring out of our ears, and that's a godsend to an athletic program. But we had terrific support. We had—we sold reserved seats. You've never seen anybody sell reserved seats in high school; we did that for ten or twelve years, sold reserved seats. And we worked Mrs. Martin nearly to death before school started. And we had to pick an extra person to sit out there in the foyer to sell reserved seats, because people were scrambling around there for reserved seats. Great enthusiasm, and that did do a lot. As I said, we had money pouring out of our ears. The team—Coach Frank Jones was here; he was the son-in-law of Wally Butts, you know, at Georgia. He would take the team up to Dahlonega about ten days and ate at the Smith House; and they came back fat and sassy, just happy as they could be. He carried thirty, thirty-five boys up there, worked them to death, and then fed them well when they came back. It was quite an honor to be up there.

Decatur at that time we were rated very high scholastically. We were running about two years above the national average. About eighty percent of our students—we worried if it dropped to seventy-five—went to college. By the way, a month ago up in Toccoa I ran into an old friend of mine, W. C. Clary [spelling?]. He was my first boss when I got out of service. He was a banker in Waynesboro and president of the bank, and he

moved around with the—up there. We had breakfast with him the other morning. He said—he used to be on the state board of education; it's where he got this information—he said, "I sure remember Decatur. They were always one of the top two or three schools in the state of Georgia."

One thing we did then—a little of it, maybe, was based on my home experience. When I was coming through high school, my dad taught Latin and math and all that stuff and had been out of it for twenty-five years; but, you know, he could read Latin better without looking at it for twenty years than I could after I'd studied it for two hours. And before I went to bed every night, I had to show him my algebra; and we had some terrible sessions there before I could get to sleep, and I had to read all my Latin to him. In Decatur High School we demanded that a student work at least two hours every night. If a parent came in to me, as they occasionally did, and wanted to worry a little bit and complain about their child not doing so well, the first thing I would ask them, almost blunt --well, it was blunt, "How much is your child studying at home each night?" And I'd pin them down and make them answer. Of course, they could stretch it a little; but if they said it was less than two hours, I wouldn't take any time with them. And I said, "Now, listen. You go home and put your kid to work for two solid weeks, two hours every night; and then if you have some problems, come back and talk to me. Otherwise, I don't have the time to fool with it." And that is a good thing to do.

I think what's bothering me—all these things I see, ways to improve education—they'll name sixteen things, and not one is ever mentioned to work a little harder and study a little more. I brought that up right after the time the governor then set up a real fancy study committee; and they studied, studied, studied, and some of us who had retired were invited to the final session of their report. And he gave this very elaborate thing; and I held up my hand, and I said, "One question. Nobody has mentioned, 'The student must work.'" You can't get better teachers and a kid not work and they'll learn. You can have good buildings and air-conditioners and this, that, and the other and more instructional

aids; if the kid doesn't work, he doesn't learn. And nobody—they still don't mention studying as a prerequisite or part of basic learning.

In Decatur we had a lot of fun and foolishness. One foolishness that I inherited and tolerated for several years was April Fool's Day program. The seniors only could come on April Fool's Day, and they dressed in all these scandalous manners. The only thing, you had to be decent. They had to come to school, and they had to behave pretty well. And we had a committee of three teachers who patrolled the hall when they came in. Once in a while we'd have to send a boy home and make him redress; but most of them came, and we had a day of fun and foolishness. [*Refers to notes*] I added here, "We simply got tired of it and finally dropped it" after three or four years; but we did have a good time.

Decatur's always had good order and good discipline; I brag on that today. We still have good discipline; and I say, unchallenged, I think, that it's the best discipline in the metropolitan area. Several years ago we had a young president of the Rotary Club who was a fireball; he came from another city. I made an appointment to go over to the high school principal and talk over there. We got over there at nine o'clock and went into the office and closed the door. And he [the principal] said, "Do you want to see around the building?"

I said, "Is anybody here?" I hadn't seen a single person when I came in.

He said, "Well, there's nine hundred kids in school."

I said, "Well, let's look at the building."

We walked over the entire building; and the doors that would not open, you have a glass there in the center where you can see. And since he [the Rotary Club president] was from a distant state originally, I said, "If you find one single classroom that is not a good learning situation, stop and point it out." We went over the whole building. Everybody was in a good—at ease, studying. We found three children in the hall, all with passes; two were going to the library, one was going to his locker and quietly back to his room. When I was principal, we had good order; but we were not quite that formal. So they're even a little better than they were—I hate to admit—than when I had them [*audience laughter*]. But I

started them off pretty good. Well, Mr. Adams [*gestures to off-camera office member*] started them off ahead of that.

The president of the Rotary Club was very impressed. You have to get a person's attention before you can teach them. And no matter how good a teacher you have, if this is a class, and you've got three boneheads in the back who want to cut up, you can't learn, and I can't teach. You've got to have order, and you've got to have a reasonable degree of control; and you've got to get their attention, or they will not learn.

Decatur had at that time—as did the neighboring systems—we had fraternities and sororities. Now, that was new to me, too. The smaller schools in Vidalia and Waynesboro and all that, we didn't have fraternities and sororities—in college, but not in high school. But here again, this was a social area. Avondale had them and Druid Hills, I know, had them. We had them. And they were very elaborate—it was just like in college. Boy, they went after the pledges in the eighth grade; and they also did like in college, they hazed them. So it was a good thing—an honor, you might say, socially, to be invited to one. But the fraternities and sororities—especially fraternities—began to haze the kids a little bit. They imposed all sorts of conditions upon them, and they did things that the parents—the people who complained about them were the parents of the children who were in the fraternities and sororities, not the ones who were out of it. It's different from what it usually was.

I sensed things coming to a pretty strong head, so I called in the four officers of each of the fraternities and the sororities up in the conference room upstairs in the administration building. And I knew them all pretty well, and we had again a heart-to-heart talk. And I said, "Listen, cool it, or you're going to lose it." And we had about an hour's discussion, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah"; but it didn't get any better. Two weeks later I had another so-called heart-to-heart talk; and I let it out, "Listen. I've told you, and I'm telling you again, the board's going to throw these things out the window if you don't control it. The parents of your pledges are the ones who are complaining." They were torn between the two thoughts: they wanted the kid to get in, but they wanted [*him or her*]

not to be abused. So all these parents of the children who were pledged were in great conflict, they did not change any, and finally the board did what I knew they were going to do; they laid down the law and said, "Abolish them." And I made that noise one afternoon, Friday afternoon, just before they went home.

Well, Monday morning, when I drove up behind the building, I saw a little commotion, a little group out front. And I walked on out in front, and I looked up on the flagpole; and there was an effigy swinging up there. And as it twirled a little bit in the wind, I saw this cardboard plaque, and it said "Renfroe" on it [*audience laughter*]. Well, I figured the best thing to do was walk right into trouble when you see it; so I walked out there amongst them. In about five minutes the bell rang. Two of the fraternity presidents—[*looks toward off-camera audience member*] old Don Kaiser [spelling?] was one of them. These were good kids, *see*. He came up—they came up and said, "Now, Mr. Renfroe, it was not my fraternity." "It wasn't my fraternity" [*audience laughter*]. And it wasn't. But as I started back in the office—the bell had just rung—the third president came up and said, "Could I see you, please?" And he got to the office, and he said, "Privately, please." And he closed the door and said, "I want you to know that I was the one [who] did it. There were two freshmen—now, don't blame the freshmen. I made them do it. I'm to blame" [*audience laughter*]. Well, at least he came right up and told—I didn't ask anybody. And not knowing what to do—you got to do something--I said, "OK, [name inaudible], slip out the back door and go home. And I'll think about it and let you know." That was on Monday morning.

We always had assembly on Thursday. So I got to worrying about it a little bit. I said, "Here's a good kid." He said to me, he said, "Nothing personally; and I didn't even know who was on the board of education. You're the only one I knew [*audience laughter*], so I just put a 'Renfroe' on that thing." Well, that's a pretty good statement from a great-big old football player, you know. And we had to do something, so Wednesday I called him; and I said, "Listen, I want to slip you back into class." I always had a policy, if you misbehaved privately to one person, you could apologize privately; but if you did it publicly,

you make your correction publicly before the same group. So that thing whirling up on the flagpole, knew everybody had seen and knew about it; it was a joke of the school. And it wasn't too amusing to me, but I did understand it. So I said, "Now, if you will step forward at our assembly Thursday morning, make an apology to the student body—not to me, but to the student body—I'll let you back in," I said, "on one condition—if they laugh, you don't go back in. You get up there and make a silly clown of yourself or a joke of it, you will not go back in. You've got to be dead serious. If I hear them laugh, see them laugh, it's all off."

Our custom then, when we had a speaker, and we usually did, I would sit with the speaker with the curtain drawn in front, and I let the Student Council president introduce—I mean, do the preliminaries, have the invocation, that sort of thing--and this boy was to step out and make his apology. Well, I had the curtain drawn, so I really couldn't see; but I was listening real good, just hoping that there wouldn't be any laughter. And Kay Rank [spelling?] had the invocation, and then the boy made a statement, which I couldn't hear; but everybody seemed to take it pretty well. Then they pulled the curtain back, and I stepped up to introduce the speaker. And when I stepped up, the student body rose and gave me a big, rousing applause. And Kay said simply, "Mr. Renfroe, we like you" [*audience laughter*]. It was a little bit hard for me to introduce the speaker.

Two things followed—that was Thursday. The next night we played Athens. Francis Tarkenton was the upcoming quarterback at Athens; he was famous then. He was a senior; and he got better and better and better, you know. But he was real good in high school, and he was their quarterback. We beat Athens that night sixteen to nothing. And as the game was over and the boys were leaving the field, it was my custom to walk down in front of the little fence and look back at students to keep them from jumping over and running over to the other side and having a squabble or something. So I always stepped out in front of the fence just before the game was over. And as the boys were leaving the field, they scooped me up, put me up on their shoulders--the two big Case boys, Bud and Pete—and ran the whole team out into the middle of the field. And Jim Brantley [spelling?], who was a photographer, had his camera and took a picture of me out there in

the field; and then they gave me the football, honoring me. The next day they took it back, and all the signatures are on it. Today it is my football; it is in the trophy case at Decatur High School, sixteen [inaudible] all the boys' signatures. At least seven of those boys got college scholarships. They were outstanding people; they were good character people. The thing that impressed me was this: You see, the good comes with the bad. If it hadn't been for the effigy, I would never have gotten that rousing "rah, rah, rah" in the assembly; and I would never have been picked up on the football field and the game dedicated to me. I have that picture blown up about this big [*gestures to indicate size*] in my den now, with me sitting up on the Case boys, and Candler Broome [inaudible], and me standing there grinning at the little kid—he was a junior, about seventeen years old.

So these are the things that touch you and shows you the value again of communication. They knew there was nothing malicious in what I'd done. I'd done my best to smooth the thing out and help them avoid the problem; and they didn't go along with it, so they had to take the consequences. But they did it beautifully, I thought. It's a great lesson we learned there. Then, following--you might say, then, following Decatur's action—we took a lead on a lot of things—following Decatur's action, the neighboring schools gradually began to abolish fraternities and sororities. Later on we knew they might go underground, and [they] did, so the board passed the rule that anybody who belonged to a fraternity or sorority would no longer be allowed to run for—take part in any extracurricular activity or hold any office. That only haunted us a little while. One boy, actually, who was in the top three to run for Student Council president, a good friend of ours, the family, just before he moved ahead in the final election, we found out he was a member of a fraternity; and we kicked him off the list. We made students later--a little formality--who were running for things to sign a little simple statement that they did not belong to a fraternity or sorority.

I want to say something particularly about Mr. O. L. Amsler, the superintendent when I came to Decatur. He was a great storyteller. I was new, and I was trying to be a ball of fire and all this, that, and the other, and a lot of things that would serve me more

than it would have the next year or the next. And his office was across the hall, and I'd go over there and talk to Mr. Amsler all steamed up--I guess he could tell by the look on my face—he, kind of like Andy Robertson. He'd start telling me some story, usually about a baseball team he'd coached for Gainesville or Dahlonega. And he rattled off for ten or twelve minutes, tell all this wild stuff, you know; and I'd stand there and laugh and laugh and sit down. I guess he was watching my face; and when I was cooled off, then he'd ask me what the problem was, and it wasn't much problem by then. He, in effect, was saying by his actions, "Kids will be kids. Go ahead and handle it, but don't let it bother you too much," which I thought was a wonderful thing. After working with him six years, he retired; and I moved up to the superintendency.

I became superintendent of the city schools July the first, '89. We were fortunate to have a great stability in the system because, frankly, all the principals—

MR. MACKAY, *interrupting*: You said "1989." We're not there, yet.

DR. RENFROE, *laughing*: I mean '59 [*audience laughter*]. I had it written down right. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: What was the date on the fraternities? When was that? When were they abolished—would that have been in the—

DR. RENFROE: I came in '53. It was about three or four years [*later*]. Don Kaiser [*spelling?*] was a—I remember him specifically. He was a senior that year, and that was the year we won [*inaudible*].

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: [*Beginning of sentence inaudible*] the first year it was a coeducational school?

DR. RENFROE: Second

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Second

DR. RENFROE: I [*sic*] was the second year of coeducation. The poor man ahead of me was not accustomed to having girls and boys together, and it kind of threw him. That's all I ever worked with, so there was no problem with me; and it did work well. It was about

'57 or '58, is when it happened. Don Kaiser was one of the class presidents. We did win the state basketball championship that following spring. These things I remember.

As I said, we had a great stability in the system, because when you've got all the principals there, and everybody knows everything and is running their own job, it's really pretty easy for the superintendent to move in. Then I had worked with them, you see, for five or six years, most of them, and several years all of them; so we were not new to each other, and that always makes a lot of difference. I do think it's important to [inaudible] new working relationships, so at the first staff meeting I remember saying to them, "I want you to understand two things: one, I want you to feel free to express your opinion on things we discuss; you do not have to agree with me." And then knowing Vee [Simmons] [*Points to audience member off-camera, presumably Vee Simmons.*], I said, "Now, don't you always disagree with me, either. But you have permission and freedom to express your opinion on topics as they come along." And then I added another thing: "You have my permission to disagree with each other." I said, "The one thing, though, that worries me most in Congress [is] when I see a bill has been passed along partisan lines. That means nobody's thinking; it's just a yes or no depending on which party." I said, "That's stupid. If you're doing that, you're not thinking; and we've got too good a staff to waste it. So I want you to feel free to oppose each other if you wish." I said, "But you will not do it as cliques. You can take different positions, different combinations on a question—your positions on each topic—not as cliques." I remember Joyce Paris once—she usually differed [inaudible]--and one day we were having a heavy discussion. At the end of about forty minutes Joyce said, "You know, [inaudible], there's something wrong today. I find myself agreeing with you three or four times" [*audience laughter*].

But it illustrates the freedom was there to be a free thinker and come up. "If you're not allowed to do that," I said, "you're not worth a thing to me. I want your thoughts. You've got as much sense as I have, and you all are outstanding professional people. And a lot of times when I go into a meeting with something I thought ought to be the way it be done, you're not smart if you're not willing to change your opinion when a lot

of intelligent people who are also knowledgeable take a different viewpoint." You see, it's not just a matter of being right or wrong; usually it's a matter of which is the better of two methods or maybe three methods to get something done. All the ideas might be good, but it's a matter of which is the best one.

In Decatur the members of the school board are appointed by the city commission; and the mayor or somebody designated by the mayor sits in with the board at their regular meetings, really to keep an eye on finance. That's a non-voting position, but it makes them aware of what goes on. We followed a practice here in Decatur that was very profitable. In the spring, when the city was going to set taxes, come up with a new budget for the coming year, the chairman of the board and I would go down to the city commission two weeks ahead of their public hearing and have a private hearing; and we had, in details, drawn out the budget, item by item by item, area by area. And we had what we had in the budget this year, what we spent in the budget next year—or this year, the third column was what we proposed for the coming year, and then any reason for the change. We went over that item by item by item, and then they had two weeks to check back with us if they still couldn't remember anything. And then at the public hearing the whole board was sitting in the audience, so they couldn't be trapped on some little technical detail; and it ran very smooth. That worked real good.

When I came to Decatur, we had a terrific need for the renovation of old buildings. Fifth Avenue—I mean, Oakhurst and Glennwood over here were over fifty years old, and we had some others forty years old; and we were in need of money. The state then was putting money mostly into growth. You had heavy growth in many areas, particularly around us; and the state was throwing their money that way and putting very little into us. I did, as I first became superintendent, notice a discrepancy in the financing; and I spent about three months at night working on something that was better researched than my dissertation. And I showed it to Guy Rutland, who was chairman of the board; and Guy is really sharp with figures. And he said, "Carl, get us set up with the finance committee of the state board." Jim [last name inaudible—could be "Peters"?] was chairman, and we

started out with him and had a long session there with Claude Purcell [spelling?] and Alan [Allen?] Smith, the superintendent and finance man. Now, they let me talk—I had all this out and gave everybody a copy and went through it for forty-five minutes, and they scratched their heads and said, "Something sure is wrong." The state department [of education] had a policy of [if] something [was] suddenly wrong, they would spread it out over five years, soften the blow. Out of that little research we got \$90,000 of extra money. Since it was one shot [inaudible], we put it in renovation of the various buildings, which helped some.

When I first became superintendent, I had given the city commission and the board of education a walking tour. I saw there was a lot of need, and I didn't want to make an appeal for fixing a restroom at Glennwood or something at Oakhurst and they not even know what I was talking about. So I set up four two-hour sessions on Tuesday morning[s] from nine to eleven, and I had over ninety percent attendance from those ten people plus the city manager; and we went through every room in every area in every building. Then when I said something needs attention, they at least knew what I was talking about; and it really did help.

Following the gift of hardship money then Decatur set about to correct the problem that brought it about, and that was a matter—that would take an hour to go into it; I won't—let's just simply say Decatur and DeKalb over here were tied into Atlanta and Fulton in the division of the charge-back or the required local effort that was—the local system had to put into the state budget, and we got a sudden lick that really hurt us. We got hardship money to give us temporary relief, and then we went to correct it. We went to the state board, and they wouldn't do anything; and we went to the legislature, and then we carried them to court. We moved [the legal action] to Carrollton—we didn't want it out of here, because Claude Purcell [spelling?] lived in DeKalb. [Inaudible] you have to pick [inaudible] some board member, so we picked Carrollton. And we fought that thing and finally won it, and it saved Decatur \$85,000 a year and DeKalb about three or four times that much.

In 1964 Governor Carl Sanders got enacted the revised MFPE, Minimum Foundation Program for Education, which was a wonderful thing; but it had a little something built in there again to nip at our heels. It started off with the state school budget of x-numbers of millions of dollars, with local systems paying fifteen percent, the state eighty-five. But the local systems were supposed to pay an extra half a percent a year and over a ten-year period be paying twenty against the state's eighty. Now, you don't notice that at first, but it's like going in debt; after a little while it begins to really eat on you. And about the third year it really began to get after us, and we saw there was a terrific problem. The problem really was [that] this was a state budget, but such a large amount was coming out of local taxes. And the only way that we get tax money is on the residents; there's just one source. Then in addition to that you had your enrichment program, which everybody around here did. So the--you couldn't explain it. For one year in Decatur our tax digest jumped three million dollars, and at twenty mils tax I was getting in tax money for our schools sixty thousand more dollars. You as a citizen would think we'd be better off—we had sixty thousand more dollars. But the state's chargeback or increased amount of local effort for Decatur was sixty-six thousand dollars. We were six thousand dollars worse off than before our digest went up three million. Now, you try and explain that to a taxpayer. You cannot do it; it makes no sense to me, so how can I explain it to you? But that was really what was happening.

So our back was against the wall. In '64 the minimum foundation—well, this was a double whammy. You see, the state not only was increasing our percent, but the state's whole budget was going up. So you were jumping from fifteen to fifteen and a half percent—not of the same budget, but of a larger budget. So after about three years it became really overwhelming. [*Referring to notes*] Now, for example in 1963-64 Decatur was paying—I'll round these off--\$224,000 in required local effort or chargeback. By '70-'71 the local effort had risen to \$565,000, well over twice as much and headed higher. We didn't have to suffer with that. I did have four ulcers, but had good reason for them. But, you see, ours had doubled. And Jimmy Carter was governor then; and he was this

friendly person—you know, you could go down and see him. He was sitting behind the desk, he took his chair out there and set it down and sat right by you and called you by your first name, but you didn't get anywhere with him [*audience laughter*]. Carl Sanders was very formal. I was on the staff of both for them—that doesn't mean you can control them; that means they want your vote and support [*inaudible*]. But Jimmy pulled his chair out from behind the desk and came out there and [*inaudible*].

In the metropolitan area we have an organization of superintendents and board chairmen. It started off as just four systems and got as large as ten. And we met once a month for dinner to discuss things like this. So we scratched our heads after talking to Jimmy. We said, "Gee, goodness." Old Jack May was chairman out here in DeKalb; he and I were real good friends. I said, "Jack, we didn't get anywhere today."

He said, "I know it. Let's get him to our dinner next week."

So we went back and said, "Jimmy, we need to talk a little more about this."

He said, "Well, set it up with my secretary."

So we did, and Jimmy Carter came to our dinner, real gracious with his great-big highway patrolman that no longer can escort the coaches at Georgia and Tech, but they can the governor and everybody else. And he talked thirty minutes, we kicked around questions thirty minutes, very polite; and as he left, he and Jack May were sitting across the dinner table from me, and I said, "Jack, he didn't hear a word we said."

He said, "I know." Said, "He heard it, but he didn't want to listen to it."

So what we did when they got out the door, I said, "We got to do something because this is killing us." And we were just halfway down the line. It was going to get worse and worse and worse for the next five or six years. I said, "Let's do this. Let's get the state school board association—" they had a staff, and we really were paying all their budget, so—"let's get them to work out a little brochure, about like this, turn the thing over and have three columns. The first column will show what the 187 school systems in the state are getting assigned to them." See, the state would assign you maybe \$900,000 [*means 90,000?*]; that's in the first column. And then they'd say, "Yeah, but you pay

\$150,000, maybe \$200,000." So we did it in three batches: what was happening this year, the money supposed to come from state budget to the school system—but the second column showed how much was your local effort. And then we had the next column, what would happen with Jimmy Carter's plan, and the third column, what would happen with our plan.

Now, the difference in our plan and Jimmy's plan was he agreed to freeze it, but these are a play of words [sic]. He wanted to freeze it at the percent. We insisted that we freeze it at the dollar value. Now there's a real lot of difference. The funny thing is we read those things off and mailed one to every member of the legislature ahead of time and mailed one to every school superintendent and to every [school] board chairman in the state, so everybody could look at a sheet and know exactly what happened to them this year, what would happen under Jimmy Carter's plan next year, or what would happen under our plan next year.

The Atlanta Journal reported on January 26, 1972, "A bill to freeze the local school systems' shared statewide cost of education at 78 and a half million dollars, the figure it had been the previous year, swept through the House of Representatives by a vote of 183 to nothing." It added, "The bill took less than ten minutes to pass." I added [that] we'd gone over the governor's head to the legislators, to the people, to the school superintendents, to the board chairmen; and in ten minutes it was [inaudible; could be "reported" or "recorded"?] through the House, because they knew. I said, "Never has the value of communication been better demonstrated."

One further serious financial obstacle remained: the original 1951 minimum foundation bill and the [inaudible—could be "advisement" or "advice model"?] in 1964 under [then-governor] Carl Sanders both contained the [inaudible—sounds like "penalty" or "appellate"?] provision for city school systems, of which there were twenty-seven—like Atlanta, Decatur, Gainesville, Dalton, Athens, and that.

The state, what the state would do, they would assign a charge-back requiring local effort to a county. Then that amount of money was divided between the county and its

city system according to their relative wealth. Well, if we had the wealth one-tenth as much as DeKalb's, then here comes this massive charge-back figure from the state, and we pay one-tenth of it, would be [inaudible—could be "proper"?]. But the state law had been drawn up back in the old days, when all the wealth was in the cities; they said the way to balance it off is to put four-thirds wealth for the cities. Well, obviously, the fourth third did not exist; so you were presumed to be one-third wealthier than you were. And you couldn't tax it, because it was not even there. But you'd be surprised what a harangue [sic] it was to get rid of that. And our trouble was Jimmy Carter, bless his heart, he grew up in a Sumter County school down in Plains; and they fought like dogs against Americus. They were worse there than anywhere else because it was the only school systems in the state where the county system and the city system were exactly the same size. And it was easy to prove the discrepancy. We carried it even to the federal court; the federal court threw it out and said, "This is a legislative matter." And we carried it back to the legislature, and we finally won the thing; but it took five years to clear it. They wouldn't do it that year; and the law they passed, they wouldn't do it next year; and then they [inaudible—"would" or "wouldn't"?] do it in three years. And the last forty thousand dollars that Decatur saved was one year after I retired [laughs]. Things come a lot slower than you think in this old world.

By the time I had retired in '75, Decatur's retired [sic; required?] local effort had dropped down to \$273,000, approximately what it had been ten years before in '64-'65. Just before retiring I sent a letter to the City Commission and [school] board members and other interested citizens to give them these exact figures, and I said in part this:
[Reads from notes.]

Europe had its Hundred Years' War, and Decatur has its Ten Years' War from '64 to '74, known jokingly as The Battle of the Charge-Back. Required local effort for Decatur peaked in '70-'71 with \$565,000 of local taxes going into the state's program. At this point Decatur will spend 35.4 percent of the total MFPE. Along with Atlanta we were paying the highest percent in the whole state. For '75-'76, as the last part of these changes comes back into the picture, Decatur's required local effort has dropped to \$273,000, which is only 13 percent of the state's program.

We dropped down from 35 percent to 13 percent that we were having to pay for the state's program. [*Continues reading from notes.*]

This was a reduction of \$291,000 a year, or a reduction of local money going into the state of 2.8 mils, using a '75 tax digest in Decatur of \$104,000,000. Now, what that means to you who live in Decatur, to show you the real impact of this, if you live today in a \$100,000 house, taxed at 50 percent of real value at \$50,000, you're being saved approximately \$150,000 [sic—means \$150?] a year as a result of that ten-year struggle.

And that was when I retired. I'm speculating that the interest [inaudible—sounds like "in replacing"?] has carried that up a little bit higher, so you're saving approximately \$200 a year just on those two battles.

[*Resumes reading from notes.*] Hugh Parks was an interesting person, a great friend of mine and of Decatur High School. His son Rodney was a scholar and was later Decatur's STAR Student, but Rodney was not an outstanding athlete. But that did not keep his daddy, Hugh, from coming out every afternoon and watching football practice. He sat in those bleachers many long hours. You'd think his son was the star quarterback. When Rodney was in the eighth grade, he had Bill Morrow [spelling? Maher? Mahr? Mars? Marr?] as his coach. Bill's at college now. And Hugh Parks [a journalist with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*] ran a full article on Coach Bill Morrow [spelling?] [inaudible] eighth grade, stressing all of Coach Morrow's [spelling?] good qualities about how well he worked with kids. Coach Frank Jones, son-in-law of Wally Butts, was our head coach and having an excellent season. Frank came into my office one morning, laughing, and said, "Gee, I haven't lost a single game in a season, and Hugh Parks has not written a word about me. But Bill Morrow's [spelling?] only pushing an eighth-grade team, and he wrote a full article on him yesterday." I laughed, too, and said, "Frank, when Rodney gets on the varsity squad, you'll get your publicity." You have to recognize parental love for this boy.

A couple of years later Frank Jones and the Decatur High School team beat Athens High, with Francis Tarkenton as their quarterback, with a score of sixteen to nothing. The next day Hugh wrote an article about me, stating, "After the Decatur Bulldogs licked

Athens 16-0, a precedent-setting incident took place. As the players were leaving the field, they ran and seized Carl Renfroe and hoisted him on their shoulders, and with Coach Frank Jones looking on grinning, they carried him to the middle of the field, took his picture, and presented him with the football by the student body chair" [sic]. [*Looks up from notes.*] I didn't tell him the background of that. [*Resumes reading.*] He said, "It was the first time we've ever heard of a school principal being accorded such an honor. Some of our effete college presidents, who frown on football, might take a tip." Incidentally, I still have that picture, as I told you, framed in my den.

Then just before I retired in '76, Hugh Parks wrote another article about me. Hugh first referred to this same incident about our playing Athens twenty years ago and added, "Well, the other night Athletic Director Bruce Yates, on the last night that Carl Renfroe was attending the honoring of Decatur athletes, presented him with a Number 44" [*Looks up from notes.*] --jersey. I got the blue jersey and the white jersey [*Resumes reading from notes.*]--"in honor of his completing forty-four years of education and for his support of athletics during that period. It may be the only case of a Georgia superintendent having his number retired."

[*Looks up from notes.*] Then one other funny thing. Hugh, in a little article in the paper, he made one tongue-in-cheek crack one time and said, [*Reading from notes*] "Louie Ericson, though a Democrat, has received a Christmas card from President and Mrs. Nixon, while neither John Crown nor I, both strong supporters of Mr. Nixon, apparently were not on his Christmas mailing list, as we didn't get a card." Reacting to sudden impulse, I sent this clipping to Mrs. Nixon and asked her to please send a Christmas card [inaudible] to Hugh Park. A week or so later I got this reply, "We appreciate your letter and wanted you to know we have no record of Lou Ericson being on Mr. Nixon's Christmas list and can only assume somebody wrote in and requested a card for him. We have sent cards, though, to Mr. Crown and Mr. Park and thought you might enjoy one as well. Signed Roland Elliott, Special Assistant to the President." Hugh got a big kick out of that when I told him later what I'd done.

[*Glances at watch.*] Decatur schools [inaudible] integration. There were two big problems that came along. One's always finances, and that will always be with you. [*Gestures toward audience member, laughing.*] Jim [last name inaudible] doesn't have any problem with finances on the parks; he's got all sorts of money, passes thirty-million-dollar projects. That's kind of the way it is with schools. It's a growing situation that's constant there. All of your systems—citizens are demanding more and more and more and more, and what do you do? Reach out and get it from them and give it back to them.

Decatur City Schools have an enviable record on the subject of integration. Judge Sidney Smith, presently chairman of the Georgia Board of Regents—he was replaced last week. His time was up in January, but he serves until replacement. And I was hoping he was going to stay one more week till I made this talk, but he was replaced last week.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: The story came out last week [inaudible].

DR. RENFROE: He's a Gainesville person, so—a very honorable person. At our last session with him—we were meeting in his chambers, so somewhat inside, the lawyers could talk; and I was talking back and forth against some of the wild charges the government was making. He [Judge Smith?] stopped and said, [*Reading from notes*] "Dr. Renfroe, I've said it behind your back, so I'll say it to your face: you have the best record of racial relations in Decatur schools of any school system in Georgia."

And I added, "Well, it's not easy." I also told him, "Judge, that's real nice"—I knew he was going to rule against me, because he had to, because of the Supreme Court. The first time we were before them, at the end of a long session like this, one of the three judges said, "We agree with every point you've made, but we cannot support you because we'd be overturned by the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court." So we knew they were going to rule against us. So when he said that we had the best race relations of any school in Georgia, I said, "Judge, I appreciate [inaudible—could be "you a lot" or "your logic"?]. But I feel like I've just fallen out of a boat in the middle of Lake Lanier, and

you're coming along in another boat, and you're going to pat me on the head just before you push me under" [*laughs; audience laughter*].

The federal government made many mistakes. In fact, they couldn't have done much worse in the way they handled integration. It came like a steamroller, with no guidance, down the hill. They should have allowed integration to begin with the first grade, so people would become adjusted to each other and grow into the thing gracefully and peacefully. Instead they said, "Everybody must be exposed to it." So they grabbed the twelfth grade and the eighth grade and the first grade and anything else you could stand and threw it at you, and then stood back and smiled at the trauma that everybody went through.

Secondly, the federal government allowed outsiders to move in on any community and create real problems. Personally, I think you're doing mighty well if you please your own people. But it's possible for a person from New Jersey to go down to Albany, Georgia, and create problems; and this was done in Albany, Georgia. It would be possible for you today to go to Seattle, Washington, and move in there like you've lived there a hundred years, and make demands--this, this, this, and this. We've never had in Decatur a single parent, black or white, to say either, "My child has been discriminated against" or "My child is not getting a good education." We were harassed technically by two blacks from Atlanta and one white woman that had moved out of Decatur twenty years [previously].

I made a trip to Washington to see why our plan had not been approved; and I said, "Why was it turned down?"

They said, "It wasn't turned down."

"What do you mean, it was[n't] turned down?" You know, I'm up in Washington to see about it.

They said, "Well, it just wasn't approved."

I said, "There's a difference between being turned down and not approved?"

They said, "Well, we have a tab on it."

I said, "A tab on it?" And I argued with the fellow for five minutes [inaudible] tell me who put the tab on it, a white lady who lived out in DeKalb, five miles away from Decatur.

This makes no sense. If you can please your local people, you're doing mighty well; and we did do that, but the other thing came in. The federal government had sent out one little form—one page, had about ten lines on it—you could fill it out in fifteen minutes. The board filled it out one night in fifteen minutes. Everybody [every school board] in the United States sent it in. When I got to Washington, I found out back-handedly—the man let it slip and was sorry he did. At lunch I just said, "I don't see how you can handle this paperwork, all these school systems in the United States."

He said, "Really"—now, this was a lawyer on the legal staff from Ohio State who was going over there four days a week to help them. He said, "We really don't have to do it for everybody." And then he was sorry he said it.

I said, "What do you mean? If I had sent this in from Chicago, would it have been accepted?"

He said, "Well, yeah."

I made him admit that every single sheet that had gone in from the thirteen southern states was thrown in the wastebasket and was challenged; every single sheet that came in from everywhere else in the United States was accepted unless there was some real charge against it, like later showed up in Boston or Pontiac, Michigan. So it could not have been worse the way it happened.

In my notes—I kept some notes from an hour-and-a-half deposition taken in February of '75 before Marjorie Pitts Hames, in her famous case, which she got rich on [inaudible] seven years. [*Reads from notes.*] Ms. Hames challenged me in this conversation to show how we'd helped black people in Decatur, and I stated—this is from the deposition I [inaudible]: "In Decatur we tied together two bond issues, the bond issue for the new Decatur High School and the bond issue for urban renewal"-- [*Looks up from notes and at audience.*] You don't remember all those shacks down there [behind Decatur High School

on what was then named Columbia Drive and is currently named Commerce Drive], but they're gone. [*Resumes reading from notes.*] “—with which the shacks that blacks were living in would be replaced by government housing in a federal project.” [*Looks up from notes.*] We plugged those two issues together, right down to the line. “We voted over fifty percent of the registered voters and passed the urban renewal issue by a vote of five to one and the vote for Decatur High School by seven to one. Everybody worked on it. We said, ‘We will pass urban renewal bond issue. We’re going to help the black people have decent homes.’ And all we’ve done since then is catch hell for it, and from the federal government at that. Honestly, it’s kind of pathetic.” But she [Ms. Hames] wasn’t interested in what I said; she was just interested in continuing that case, as she did for [inaudible].

We did have some problems. Ben Blackburn, our Congressman then, never voted money for students in federal projects. There were three classifications of students who had some federal connection, and people who lived in federal projects was Class C. We got a little money for Class A students and Class B students that were working at Lockheed or the Peachtree-Baker Building; but ten percent of our students were right down there in a federal project, and we didn’t get a single dime [for them]. And I’d write to Ben, and I’d say, “These are ‘federally sponsored’ families, and ten percent of our kids are—” I’d say, “We were better off when there was a slum there.” Those shacks paid some school taxes. The little bit of money they got went to the city in lieu of [sic] police and fire protection and that. Schools did not get one dime off of that. So a lot of counties over the state—Fulton had a big stew about it. They didn’t want any more federal projects. It was not so much, everybody said, racial; it was a matter of financial—you were being dumped with a heavy load of people moving into federal projects where there was a heavy financial burden with no tax support. And the only support you get for schools is out of residences. If you’re in a federal project, you don’t pay any school tax.

[*Referring to notes*] Then my family; there are always some personal things that stand out. When we came to Decatur, our daughters, Ann [Anne?], Jean, and Sue, were

nine, seven, and five; and they all grew up in Decatur schools, as our grandchildren are now doing. After being in Decatur for three years, my wife, Mae, was induced to become our first teacher at Scottish Rite Hospital as a special education teacher. This was a new classification of schoolwork, but Mae already had a master's degree in elementary education. Later she taught seven years our first class of the EMR—educable mentally retarded—under Ms. Willa Barrett as principal of Ponce de Leon. And she spent ten years teaching third grade at Winnona under Nellie Burgess as principal.

But Mae's greatest challenge was in 1957, when I took a year off to get my doctoral residence at the University of Georgia; I'd come home on the weekends, but I'd be gone the whole week. That year Mae taught school; supervised a major renovation of our home; looked after three daughters, ages nine, eleven, and thirteen; and she also looked after the children's fifty chinchillas we had in our basement [*audience laughter*]. If it had not been for Mae's constant encouragement—it was more than encouragement, she said [*shaking his finger in imitation of Mrs. Renfro*], "You're in it this far, you're going to finish it"—I never would have finished my doctorate [*audience laughter*]. The good Lord put five stars in Mae's crown for her work that year.

The girls survived their association with me in connection with the schools. Ann [*Anne?*] was listed in *Who's Who in American High Schools* and was a Senior Superlative. Jean was a cheerleader and was copresident of the Student Council. Sue was vice president of the senior class, a member of the drill team, and a member of the girls' basketball team. So they lived through it.

The toughest decision I ever had to make, I always thought, was when I would declare a snow day, especially if it snowed in the middle of the night. If it snowed early, you know, you call WSB and say, you know, there's not going to be any school tonight, and sleep late. But if it's threatening, and you hear it's going to come [*inaudible*], and you stay up till eleven, and it still hasn't done anything, and you set your clock for four or something—that was my nightmare, really. That was worse than anything I did [*audience laughter*]. Decatur had a little different situation. See, we didn't have buses; and you

could walk with a little snow on the ground. DeKalb had all those school bus routes, and Atlanta and Fulton. So we tried to stay together; psychologically it was good for the kids—everybody was doing the same thing. But once in a while we'd slip in a day when they [neighboring school systems] took a day off. You had to make them [snow days] up. I remember once when I had Decatur students in school when our neighbors had a snow day. That afternoon when I got home, I found my three daughters sitting around the breakfast table with solemn looks on their faces. The minute I came through the door, all three burst into tears. The problem was that their friends had been on their backs all day long because Decatur had to attend school. And one daughter blurted out, "One of my friends said to me, 'I hate your daddy'" [audience laughter]. And then they all burst out crying again. But the family survived; it's not always easy.

A superintendent cannot successfully lead a school system through trying times without very strong support from many directions and many agencies. The Decatur school board worked very closely with the city commission. I had twice as much work to do to sell my budget because I had to sell it to the board, and I had to sell it to the city commission. But by the same count if problems came up, I had twice the support. I had double support, and it's hard to get around the city commission and the school board working together. So it was twice as much work, but it was four times as much value really the way it was.

When the schools were in the first throes of integration, Bill Green [Greene?] was our mayor. Realizing the tension in the community, Bill appointed a committee consisting of forty people, racially distributed, geographically distributed. That was a stroke of genius. Because he knew people were disturbed, he knew they had to talk; so he set up a talking forum for them, really. Then he had a second stroke of genius. He took Dr. Davison Philips, pastor of the [Decatur] Presbyterian Church, and made him chairman; and he is a teacher, he is a diplomat, he is a godly man and a kind person. And he let them talk. They get in a room bigger than this, and they just blast. I went to one or two of these, and then I just stayed away from them. They had kind of a general free-for-all, good-natured, everybody exploding, everybody worried. When people are worried, you better let them

talk, or they will explode. So this was a release valve, really. And he did that for two years, meeting once a month. They looked forward to it, they attended heavily, and they were very expressive. But when they left, they felt better about it because you had a community feeling. These were all good people leaders.

Decatur avoided other problems—the second force that helped to deflate tension was the Decatur Cooperative Ministry. It meant a lot to us at first. First headed by Bill Jackson, later by Norman [inaudible; sounds like “Coplin” or “Coughlin”?]. Both of these men listened for undercurrents of mounting tensions and helped us to avoid many problems.

[Looks up from notes] One time we had a public hearing in the Decatur Library—lasted nearly two hours. I thought, “Boy, we did a good thing.” And Bill Jackson came to me a couple of days later, Monday, and says, “Listen, people have still got a lot of questions to be answered.”

I said, “Good gosh, we talked it out.”

He said, “They’ve got a lot of questions to be answered.” He said, “Let’s set up a meeting and talk.”

I said, “All right.”

He refereed it. He said, “How many on your board?”

I said [*laughs*], “Well, we’ve got five on the board and me makes six.”

He said, “We’ll limit their group to six so nobody will overpower each other; and we’ll do that.”

And we had those six and our six, and Bill stayed there and let it—kept it cool, and we took notes; and they raised seventeen questions. I couldn’t believe it—after you’d just had a long meeting—seventeen questions. And when they adjourned, we stayed on a little while, Mrs. Knox was on there; she was always a good thing and a diplomat. She said, “Let’s divide these seventeen questions at about two or three each, and let’s write them down in detail.”

And we took each question, wrote an answer about two pages like that, put them all together, mimeographed them, gave them fifty copies—answers to seventeen questions that I didn't dream of ever answering—and it just smoothed right on out. So these are things that are absolutely necessary. You've got to have communication; you've got to know the facts, and your opposition has to know the facts.

Decatur avoided other problems by demanding high academic and professional scores on the national teacher examination. We threw the two schools together in one lump, and we knew we had to do something; so we demanded a high score of all new teachers. We also gave our old teachers—I stress, we did not fire a single teacher; we did not cut a single teacher's salary a penny. But anybody who graded low in their field we asked them to take two courses that summer to reinforce themselves. We even paid their tuition to take it. And all but two or three did adjust and go along with it. So we did that, which I thought was good. It also started getting us toward getting people toward higher degrees. We did have a scholarship program for advanced study, and it could either to reinforce a person in the field they were in or toward an advanced degree. The last three years I was superintendent Decatur had the highest percent of master's and higher degrees of any school system in Georgia, and it's still up there in the top five or six—maybe higher, I'll check. But it is still real high. But we encouraged them and insisted on it, and new teachers coming in have to have a master's degree in five years. I said, "You can get it normally in four summers easily; there's one extra bonus summer allowed. That's to go to Europe, have a baby, and to be safe. But save it as a bonus at the end—don't use it first and then have a baby" [*audience laughter*].

[*Referring to notes*] Earlier, when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools began to accredit elementary schools—earlier, they had done the high schools but not the elementary—Decatur was one of only four systems in the entire state, 187 systems, who were accredited the first year. None of the other systems so accredited in the first year were in the metropolitan [Atlanta] area. Soon after integration began I invited the state school board to come out to Decatur. [*Looks up from notes*] Jim Peters was chairman of

the board, and I invited him to come out and have lunch and walk him around the building. I wanted to show him how well we were doing. [*Looks back at notes*] Eight members did come of the ten, and they were impressed by the order in the building and the general good appearance. Two years later I went before the state board and asked for an additional \$200,000 for aid in what they had already promised us for our new vocational unit. When I finished my request, Mr. Ed Kendrick from Metter, who was then chairman of the board, said, "It's unusual for the chairman of this board to make a motion, but two years ago Carl invited us out to Decatur to show us what Decatur was doing in a newly integrated situation. We went out there, and I was so impressed with what I saw that now I want the privilege of making the motion that we give Carl and the Decatur school system an extra \$200,000 for their vocation unit for the high school." I might add that that luncheon two years ago was the most profitable thing I've ever done [*laughs*].

Some compliments do come your way. The nicest one for me was the surprise naming of the new middle school, Carl G. Renfroe Middle School. I do caution my friends, I had to wait forty years for that [*audience laughter*].

In conclusion I wanted to name some of these key people. And some variations of these—some of these people did two or three jobs. But when I first became superintendent, we had a great stability; and I just had the best staff there in the state of Georgia, so I didn't see how I could do a sorry job. You had Lucille Sessions as curriculum director and later changed her title to assistant superintendent. You had Mary Leila Honiker [*inaudible*] teaching. She knew every kid in the city; every problem they had; what was wrong with their daddy, their mama, and everybody else [*inaudible*] saw when they got there. In high school my assistants when I first came here were Bill Purcell and Al Fisher, then later Marvin Prosser, Wallace Daniels, Randy Pennington, and now Bill Funk and Ellis Mills. In [*inaudible*] we had Bill Gardner [*spelling? Gardener?*] and Martha Moore. At Glennwood we had Joyce Paris; in Clairemont [*inaudible*]; at Westchester we had Ms. Stillwell. Of course, Vee Simmons, she was at Glennwood, she was at Westchester, she was at College Heights, and then she ran the federal program, then she was curriculum

director and assistant superintendent and then superintendent. We wore her about out by moving her around. At Trinity High School we had [inaudible—could be "Alvin" or "Alva"?] Martin, and Mrs. Alston really ran it—we gave her credit, bless her hear—but he was the head man. She was one of the greatest people we ever had, and then later Henry Brown. At Beacon Elementary, Sara[h?] Blackman; at College Heights we had Peggy [inaudible—could be "Steelman" or "Spielman"?]. Ellis Green also fitted into two or three of those spots. At Oakhurst we had Grace Cox. Willa Barrett was at Ponce de Leon. At Winnona we had Nellie Burgess. Middle school later on was Cliff Chandler and Mike Mears; Mike's now mayor [of Decatur]. And [inaudible] director we had Margaret Kerr, moving on into line with Don Griffith, who's now superintendent, and Bill Funk, who's now principal of the high school, and Ellis Mills. Since I hired Don Griffith, Marvin Prosser, Wallace Daniels, Bill Funk, Randy Pennington, Cliff Chandler, and Mike Mears and others, I take great pride in their accomplishments and successes--they're all good people. Those who were here before I came as superintendent were also good people, but [inaudible—could be "you've got to" or "you kind of"] brag on those you picked out.

Decatur staff members were always tops professionally. Each person was outstanding in his or her field. I always felt—and I'm sure I was right—that they were unmatched by any other school system.

In conclusion a good administration must always have a good support, and I had it in people like Guy Rutland, Jr., Roy Blount, Mrs. Henry Newton, Bill Wilson, Scotty Candler, Don Ingram [spelling?], John Weitnauer, Eleanor [Elinor?] Knox, Pat [last name inaudible—could be Sherhorn? Sherborn?], Hilda Levy. I never had a bad board member. Nor did I ever have a split on my board or a division into cliques. Their differences of opinion were laid on the table; and after full discussion decisions were reached, which all board members supported. Other outstanding members were Arthur McFarland, our first black; Dr. Ben Kline; and Laurence [Lawrence?] [last name inaudible, sounds like "Stripe"?], who is present and is still board chairman.

There is much discussion about appointing board members as opposed to electing board members. But when people run for office, they too often run for a certain reason or with an ax to grind or to merely represent "their" district. And when they are appointed, they know they have to represent the entire district. What happens in Decatur when there's a vacancy, four or five names come up, and the city commissioner sits there and says, "Which one of these people will represent the entire school system of Decatur?" For example, in Atlanta and DeKalb board members run for office, and you've constantly through the years noted cliques and dissention; whereas Decatur and Fulton County—Fulton changed two years ago—have their board members appointed, here by the city commission, there by the county commission. I will state that you have never heard of a split board in either Fulton County or the city of Decatur, never have. We've lived in Decatur thirty-three years, and our Decatur board members have always worked in harmony. Decatur City Commission, as I said, picks only those who are genuinely interested in the entire school system. These board members have all been strong community leaders. Whenever I've gotten a compliment on my work as superintendent, I always think to myself, "How could anyone fail to do a good job with such a staff as I had to work with and with such strong support from these board members and from the parents of the Decatur community?" We've had a very happy association for twenty-two years. [*Audience applause*]

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: We're going to treasure that tape, and we're going to give the [Renfroe] family a copy of the tape as a gift from the Historical Society. [*On-camera*] It's the only honorarium he's going to get [inaudible] [*audience laughter*]. Carl, I remember back there when—I wasn't as bright a Congressman as Guy Rutland, but I was in a meeting with some of you superintendents, and I cherish the memory of Paul West.

DR. RENFROE: Oh, yes.

MR. MACKAY: And I said, "Dr. West, why don't you get one of your superintendents to come up here and explain this charge-back thing?" He said, "Jimmy,

there are only six men in the state of Georgia that understand it, and they have asked that their names not be revealed" *[audience laughter]*.

A couple of things about the [DeKalb Historical] Society: Morale is soaring, because Richard [inaudible—could be "Rothman" or "Roberts"?] has tackled this courthouse in a splendid way, as you've read; and we can't do a thing as a society until we have professional advice and get priorities and costs and all of that. Second is, we've got Mr. Hugh Park [journalist for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*] here, and I'll bet you get a good column *[audience laughter]*. *[MR. MACKAY makes inaudible comment amid the laughter.]*

The board has not approved it—the society's board meets on the sixth of May for [inaudible—sounds like "heavy station up here"]. But we have tentative plans in early June to have a general membership meeting at the office of the Atlanta Historical Society. A lot of people have expressed a real interest in that, and we have an interlocking directorate, with [inaudible—last name could be Vogel?] and Franklin Garrett belonging to both societies. We're really looking forward to the prospect of [inaudible].

Are there any questions before we go in and visit with the Renfroes and have a refreshment? *[Nods to off-camera audience member.]* Ruby, thank you for your help. Are there any questions? *[Pauses]* If not, I've asked the Renfroes to go in first if you would, and then we'll come in there and join you.

END OF RECORDING

