

2012.3.23

GRACE ROBINSON

*Recording begins after ROBIN HARRIS's introduction of GRACE ROBINSON has begun.*

ROBIN HARRIS: . . . I do want to tell you one thing that she has long since forgotten but that I will always remember: Two or three of us, when we were seniors, decided that the thing to do was to have our heads shaved; and we did [*audience laughter*]. It wasn't particularly pleasing to my mother. The next day when I went to school, I wore a beanie, and I went into Mrs. Winn's class. Class started; and she looked over at me, and she said, "Robin, you do not wear a hat in class. Take it off." I reached up, took it off, and she looked. It was a look of utter disgust. She said, "Put it back on" [*audience laughter*]. [*Inaudible summons to MS. ROBINSON*] [*Sits*]

GRACE ROBINSON *taking her place on-camera*: I think they have it fixed for me to sit down. I'm not used to sitting down, but I'm going to try. If it doesn't work, then I'll stand up. [*Brief exchange ensues between MRS. ROBINSON and a Historical Society member who is supervising the recording about whether MRS. ROBINSON will stand or sit.*] The nicest thing anybody's ever said to me in a long time was when I came in here and these gentlemen were working on the [audio and video] equipment. Somebody said, "Who's going to be the speaker today?" And I said, "I am." And he said, "Oh, I thought they just had old people" [*audience laughter*]. And that really made my day.

I have worked long and hard trying to put my memories together and trying to give you things that you would enjoy hearing perhaps. When I tell you some of the dates, you'll know that it wasn't just—I mean, the compliment was, you know, not actual, because I really am getting sort of old. I was born Dorothy Grace Robinson on June 22, 1915; so that means that I'm going to be seventy this summer, and that's hard for me to believe. I still feel like sixteen on the inside some days, it's just that the body doesn't work as well as it used to. But maybe some of you understand about that.

I was born on what is now Rockbridge Road, the Avondale end of Rockbridge Road, not more than a couple of blocks from what we now call North Clarendon. Everything now has a different name from what it had when I grew up there. That was the Old Stone Mountain Road; and the only way you got to Stone Mountain was down the Old Stone Mountain Road, which is now North Clarendon. And I think Rockbridge

Road carried the name of Pine Street when I was born on it all that many years ago. But this was in a community called Ingleside, and it remained Ingleside for some, well, ten, twelve years; because it wasn't until the mid-twenties that Mr. Willis came in and made Avondale Estates out of it. But I lived in Ingleside for the first ten or so years of my life. And my father, who was Clarence Robinson—and some of you may have known him, if you were here a long time—had a grocery store in Ingleside. It was in the building which is directly across what's now North Clarendon from Avondale Pharmacy. The building's still there. Of course, it didn't look like an English tavern at the time; but it was there. And there on the corner was the filling station, and the grocery store took up just about—well, the other part of the building.

I found some old pictures, which are over there; and you may like to have a look at them later. I know you can't see them from now [sic], but that middle one on the right just might be the original store. We found it, and my grandfather is standing in front of it; and the first store he had was called W. L. Robinson & Sons. Agnes Davis, who's responsible for my being here—she talked me into coming [*Waves to someone in audience, presumably Ms. Davis.*—I keep seeing familiar faces [*audience laughter*]. You'll have to excuse me if I interrupt to say hello to some people who have known me a long time. The store may have been the original one, and it may have been down on Rockbridge Road somewhere; I'm not sure. Nobody seems to know, and that—the whole generation of my—of the Robinson family has now disappeared. My last uncle, Roy Robinson, died just this year. And do you know, I should have asked him some things before he died, because he might have known, if I'd had that picture in my hand. I might have been able to get him to, because some of the people—because he was one of the folks who kept the store, at least when they could get him to, he did it. My dad always said he [Uncle Roy] was in a corner reading a magazine instead of doing the work. But Agnes [Davis] said that when she was young and lived there in Avondale, they delivered groceries in the wagon, horse and wagon. And Raymond, another one of my father's brothers, was driving the horse; and they let the kids ride along, you know, so they could get a ride on the wagon. My dad used to walk to the store with this little order pad in his hand and take orders, you know, as he walked to the store; and then they would deliver them. When I was a child, they had graduated to a little old T-Model black truck; and that's what I first remember as the thing that they used to

deliver groceries in. [*Presses handkerchief to her face.*] I don't know if you folks are warm; I may have to come out of this jacket.

They tell me that at one time the Ingleside Post Office was in this grocery store. I don't remember that. It was my-- [*Nods to audience member, acknowledging question or comment.*] Yeah?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera, makes inaudible comments regarding the post office's location.*

MS. ROBINSON: Next door? A small building. Well, I remember it first as a separate building and that Ms. Annie Ford was the postmistress; and her daughter—she had a daughter named Annie, who was about my age, went to school with me and then Nancy and [*inaudible name—could be Errol or Carol or Harold?*] and all of these people. And if any of you lived around Avondale Estates or Ingleside, in those days, you would remember. But that's what I remember about the store and the early days.

Later on the other boys went in other directions, but my dad kept the grocery store and continued to run it as C. L. Robinson Groceries & Meat. It had earlier been more of a general store when it was W. L. Robinson & Sons. And I remember—once and a while now you go into a store that has been restored, like the Old Sautee Store [*in the Sautee Valley of north Georgia*] or something, and I feel so at home. It's just exactly like that grocery store was. And, of course, I felt—and all my friends felt—that I was highly privileged to be able to go and stick my hand in the candy case, you know, and get out penny candy. [*Responding to off-camera laughter and conversation*] Penny candy, well, that's the whole thing, isn't it.

Well, my paternal grandfather and my father's people on the poster there that I made, there on the right [*referring to family-tree poster, off-camera*], my mother's people on the left, my paternal grandfather was William Lemuel Robinson. We and all the other children in the neighborhood called him "Pa," and his family called him "Lem," and my grandmother called him "Mr. Robinson" [*inaudible*] [*audience laughter*]. And he had come--I understand his family had come from England by way of Savannah and moved up the state; and he had been born in Dublin [*Georgia*], but he's the only one of my grandparents that was not born in DeKalb, so far as I know. But he came into DeKalb County as a young man and lived there the rest of his life.

He had a brother named Arthur, whom we called Dick. And if any of you all have read Olive Ann Burns's *Cold Sassy Tree* and followed the language, I feel right at

home in that book, too. You know, we used to call folks “cudd’n” [cousin]. “Cudd’n Sally.” [*Continues with other examples, inaudible over audience responses and laughter.*] You never said “uncle”; you said “unca.” “Unca Dick.” “Unca Dick and Aunt Jessie.” Well, that’s how I remember these folks, and he [Dick] had a sister named Molly. Those are the folks I remember on my grandfather’s side.

My Grandmother Robinson had been an Austin, and the Austins who lived down—and Joyce, back there [*indicates an off-camera audience member*], we’re cousins by way of the Austins, because she married an Austin ancestor; and so we’re sort of kissing cousins from way back there. But my Grandmother Robinson said her name was Niecy Salomar, spelled N-I-E-C-Y and “Salomar” with an “r” on it. I’ve been in touch recently with a second cousin in the Austin clan named Aurelia Austin, and she insists that this was supposed to have been Nancy Salome—you know, Salome, as in the Bible. [NOTE: RootsWeb, ancestry.com, gives the name as Nancy Salome Austin, noting the nickname “Neicy.”] But it was spelled this way because spelling wasn’t the most important thing in the world in those days, anyway, I guess. But anyway, all Ma’s—she was “Ma Robinson”—all Ma’s friends called her “Loma.”

There’s a story I always like to tell about her. She said—and she was—it was a story she told on herself, so I guess it’s all right if we tell. She said that she had a friend one time who said, “Loma, I used to think you was just the ugliest woman in the world. But you ain’t ugly no more—you just Loma.” [*Audience laughter*]. And, you know, that’s the way it is, isn’t it? When we come to love people, they’re not how they look anymore; they’re just dear. Anyway, I always think about that when I think about Loma.

But she was an Austin, and she had lots of brothers. I think I’ve listed all of them. They were John and Elmer and Walter and Herbert and Vergil, and many of them settled into sort of the southern end of DeKalb County, where Austin Drive is. And so many, many of the Austin children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, are still in DeKalb County. And there was a sister named Valeria that—I think she moved out of the county, so I’m not sure about her descendants. I have this cousin, Aurelia Austin, [who] said that one branch of the Austin family had been traced back as far as Charlemagne; but the rest of

my family's extremely spotty. I just remember bits and pieces and have been able to put them together only in bits and pieces.

My mother was Willie Lena [spelling? Could be one word, could be "Wilhelmina"?] Spivey, daughter of Preacher Spivey, who lived down out from Clarkston, off Norman Road. He was born there in a log cabin in 1862, and I don't know how long his family had lived there. By the time I came along, the log cabin, which was made of squared-off logs and put together with pegs, had been built onto and around and over until you had a hard time even seeing a log. But since Grandpa's death—and he died during World War II, when I was away from here—but since his death and nobody lived in the old place anymore, one of his grandsons, one of the Spivey grandchildren, has taken that old cabin down, piece by piece, and numbered the logs and reconstructed it on the bank of a lake down there, which they made from damming up the creek we used to fish in for minnows and horny-heads. So I have seen the cabin as it first—as it originally stood, and it's there for anybody to see. I'm sure he'd be glad for anybody to have a look at it. It's really a wonderful restoration.

Grandpa's farm was a wonderful place to me. In the first place, there were four of my cousins who lived there. My mother's sister, Lucy, had married a man named Singleton; and they had six children. And while the older four were in school—they were six, eight, ten, and twelve, I think—the mother and father and the two little ones were on the way down to Grandpa's; and there was a train-automobile accident that killed all of them. So these four older grandchildren—six, eight, ten, twelve—three girls and a boy—lived at my grandpa's house. And, of course, that just made it the best place in the world. I think I was two years younger than the youngest one. And so I loved going down there to be with them in the first place, but there were so many other things there to do and to see. And it was one of those self-sufficient farms that I guess there aren't too many of in this part of the country anymore; but there was a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, a gristmill, a cider press. They killed hogs, they made lye hominy, they boiled their clothes in a washtub—you know, in a

pot and battered them with, what do you call it, a bat? That's the way they did it, and I have always felt so fortunate that I could experience firsthand a way of life that's all but disappeared. And I guess thank goodness for that, because, of course, there were a lot of inconveniences in that kind of life. And I don't think there was ever a bathroom in that old house, even as long as people lived in it.

Grandpa was a Baptist preacher, and he preached at many country churches in this county and in other counties nearby. I remember hearing that for forty years he was the pastor at—only they didn't call them that in those days—in—had a church that they called "Macedonie." I'm sure it was Macedonia, like [inaudible], you know; but "Macedonie" was what they called it. And Grandpa had one book, so far as I know; and that was the Bible. You know, we have, our preachers now have these tremendous libraries and all these commentaries. So far as I know, he had one; and that seemed to be enough. He had one son who was a preacher, too; and I'm sure some of you knew him, was Harris Spivey. He preached at Zion Church down on what's now East Ponce de Leon but used to be Old Stone Mountain Road for many, many years. And we used to go there for August Meeting. You all, some of you, remember August Meeting? I'm sure some of you do. We had one aunt who prayed for all us cousins by name at August Meeting [*audience laughter*]. I'm it must have done a lot of good, because we turned out fairly well.

My Grandmother Spivey, who appears in that picture with all the children there [*referring to photograph display off-camera*], died when I was only ten; and I don't remember much about her. I remember her as a gentle, kindly woman who was a typical grandmother; but she died when I was so young that I really don't remember much about her. [*Again referring to photograph display off-camera*] That's Grandpa—that picture over there, that's Grandpa Spivey. That's me standing beside him; my younger sister, Hazel, standing in front. The two girls with dark hair are Singleton cousins, and the boy in back is one of the Spivey cousins. So, we're proud of that picture. I've got to have some copies made for the other people who are in it, because I think they'd enjoy it.

My grandmother, as I said, died when I was just quite young; and a couple of year later Grandpa married a widow from one of his churches—might have been “Macedonie”; seems like it was. And we called her “Miss Blanche.” I think I’d like to tell you something about that wedding. Everybody was real unhappy about it, all these folks that [inaudible—could be “lived” perhaps followed by a word or two drowned out by audience laughter]. There was Aunt Kate, who was a spinster lady and didn’t marry until she was about forty. And there were these four children [the Singleton cousins], who, by then, you know, were nearly grown. If I was ten or twelve, they were fourteen, sixteen—you know, teenagers. And they did not see any reason for Grandpa to get married. They were all here to look after him, you know. So he got married in his own house there, in the front room. And, you know, the front rooms always had beds in them. You never said “living room.” You had a front room, and it had the best bed in the house; and if company came, that’s where they slept. So they—I guess it was in the front room that they were married.

And my mother was the only one of all the children, and there were seven children in this family—six, after Aunt Lucy was killed. But none of the others would come to the wedding except my mother, and she went. This is the kind of person she was. She always thought everything was going to be all right. And somebody was acting as a go-between from the people in the kitchen, who were crying, and the people in the living room, who were listening to what was going on [*audience laughter*]. And somebody came back from the living room and said, “Well, she’s got on a gray dress.” And one of the cousins said, “I wish it was a shroud” [*audience laughter*]. But my mama was there, and my mama would always be where she ought to be.

[*Picks up and opens a small book.*] I—this past summer I put together a little book of poems, which I’ve written over a lifetime. And there’s a poem in it about my mother that I think sort of sums up how she was and how I recall her. It’s called “The Clearing-Off Shower.” [Line breaks and punctuation may be incorrect as printed here; transcribed from audio.]

I remember Mama mostly as an incurable optimist.  
She never once doubted that everything was going to be all right.  
I read somewhere that a bird doesn't sing because he has a solution;  
He sings because he has a song.  
Mama was like that.  
She couldn't carry a tune in a bucket,  
But oh, how she sang,  
Especially when she sat on the back porch  
And churned the morning clabber into butter and buttermilk.  
As a child I hated rain.  
I still do; it has always mildewed my spirits.  
I would always complain mightily when it rained,  
Day after soggy day.  
But when the rain redoubled its fury  
And pounded like drum-beats on the shingled roof,  
Mama would always say, "Maybe this is the clearing-off shower."  
And likely as not, it was.

So that was Mama. And this is what I remember about my ancestors. As for myself I feel most fortunate to have grown up in this time period. I had a happy childhood; and we didn't know we were poor, because everybody who lived in my neighborhood was just like we were, and they didn't know they were poor, either. It was a very simple lifestyle, as I look back on it; but we always had food to eat. We had a grocery store, you know; and there were always things that wouldn't sell [*audience laughter*]. There's a picture of her [Ms. Robinson's mother] on that poster over there stringing beans, sitting in the store. She was always an excellent cook. I guess I missed her most to ask her, "What was it you put in this?" [*audience laughter*]. And so we got along fine.

In the house where I was born there was not electricity or indoor plumbing. I remember when we got electricity when I was a child. And we never had indoor plumbing before I left there to be married. We had a faucet on the back porch that was fed by a homemade pump and a well under the foot of the hill. And it served that faucet, when it worked, and the bathroom in my grandparents' house next door, which was a newer house than ours and had been built with a bathroom in it. So we had the use of the next-door bathroom

and that faucet on the back porch. But my grandparents had moved there when I was a child. I remember when that house was built. Before, they had lived perhaps a quarter of a mile away on the hill behind us on what was Old Rockbridge Road, if you know that section.

When Howard Winn and I were married in 1937, we moved—made our first home in that house next door and paid two dollars and a half a week rent; I remember that. I allowed myself five dollars a week for groceries, and that fed us all right. In a couple of years we bought a little house further down Rockbridge Road, down at the bottom of the hill, on the left, just in the curve; and it had three rooms and was on an acre of land. We lived there for several years. I remember that house cost sixteen hundred dollars. And in these times when money has gone crazy, I have the hardest time getting accustomed to it; because, you see, I grew up with, you know this kind of thing. Even when we bought a new house, a five-room frame house over on Kensington, just outside Avondale city limits, where I lived until only recently, when I had a second marriage and moved to Stone Mountain, even that house was less than five thousand dollars. And it's just hard for me to move into this new economic system. But we lived on Kensington until, as I say, until I remarried in 1968.

I was widowed in 1945 by World War II. My husband was killed in the Battle of the Bulge just before the end of the war; and my son, the only child I had ever, was four months old at the time. And my parents and I made our home together after that. So I had a built-in babysitter, and I went back to work in 1946 and worked until I retired.

As I've been ben putting my memories together, I've come to realize that my life's been largely defined by three institutions; and that's family, which I've just talked about, and school and church. These are the three important things in my life. I started to school when I was six years old in a red-brick building [*holds up book to show an illustration that spans two pages*] that was at the corner of—I know you can't see it from here, but I'll put it where you can later—a two-story red-brick building that stood at the northeast corner of Rockbridge

Road and Old Stone Mountain Road. There's a house there now, and it's not far from North Clarendon Church, you know, which is across the street there. Well, that's where I started to school. And it was during my elementary years that they built Avondale and Scottdale Elementary Schools, and I spent two or three years—I can't remember whether it was just the fifth and sixth grades or the fourth, fifth, and sixth that I was in that new building of the elementary school. But when I came to the seventh grade, I came back to this same building [*points to picture in book*] to go to high school and to graduate in 1931. And I came back to this same building to teach in my first teaching that I did in Avondale. So my school life was largely defined around that building for a while.

When I graduated in 1931, there were eleven girls in my class and no boys at all. We didn't even have any boys in our class. We tried to get together for our fiftieth reunion in 1981; but it took us a year, so it was 1982 before we made it. But seven of us got together. We found that three had died, and there was one that we lost track of and didn't know where to find her. But we have seen each other recently.

I wanted more than anything else to be a teacher, but I didn't know how that would happen, because it was during the big Depression in those years; and people couldn't pay their grocery bills, and Daddy couldn't say no to hungry people—you know how that goes. So there just wasn't much money. But by some miracle I was able to go to Agnes Scott, I think because it was within walking distance and because a lot of people were helpful. Anyway, with scholarships and loans and family help, I got through Agnes Scott in the next four years and graduated in 1935. So that's fifty years ago. And in April of this year we're going to have our fiftieth reunion at Agnes Scott. So time moves on, doesn't it?

But when I started to teach, Mr. Rainey was the county school superintendent. Any of you all remember Mr. Rainey? Yes, somebody remembers Mr. Rainey. Well, he had a principle or a policy that whoever started teaching, started teaching in elementary school [*inaudible*] high school. Well, I

didn't know how to teach elementary school. I had one course at Agnes Scott in high school methods, and there was no such thing as practice teaching where we were in those days. But I went to Avondale Elementary School to teach the third grade; and if you don't think I worked hard that year teaching the third grade! I'd never have made it if it hadn't been for a Ms. Irene Duchon, who was what we now call an instructional supervisor. And she held my hand all through the third grade with my eight reading groups, you know, and classes this and that and the other. And I remember that we had a project. In those days you taught around projects; and we built a Dutch house, and we sewed Dutch clothes, and we, you know, did all the things that go with Holland. I remember third grade and Holland together. But after that year of teaching third grade, I was allowed to go to the high school and to teach French, which I had majored in. When I graduated from Agnes Scott, I got an AB degree and a teacher's certificate that said I could teach French and English and German and math. And I did teach all of those things at one time or another and a lot of other things, too, like typing and health and whatever it was that was there and needed a teacher. That's the way it went in those days. But it was interesting, and those early days I remember most pleasantly; they were fun.

And there was another rule in the county and that was that teachers had to be single. And my first two years I was single, all right; but I was planning to get married that next summer. And I don't know what I thought I would do. In any case, I went ahead and got married; and you know, they changed the rule that very summer [*audience laughter*]. Maybe it was that they couldn't afford to lose me. But anyway, I was glad. So many doors have opened for me, and I'm so grateful for them. And that was another one that opened. So we taught—there were about a dozen of us, I guess, on the faculty. And we moved in 1939 to the building where Forrest Hills School is now [*opens book to show photograph of school building*], over on North Clarendon; and [*holds up a photograph*] this is an aerial view of it. And that was a great new building, and we enjoyed being there. And we stayed there until 1955, when that building

burned; you may remember that. They had been in the process of building another high school over where the school presently is, next to Belvedere Shopping Center. [Belvedere Shopping Center was located on Memorial Drive near the intersection of Memorial and Columbia Drive. At the time of this recording, the building MS. ROBINSON refers to was actually next to Columbia Mall, which was situated across the street from Belvedere.] And we had been going to use two campuses. We were going to have, maybe, eighth, ninth, and tenth on one campus and eleventh and twelfth on the other, because they'd only finished the first unit of that new building [Avondale High School on Clarendon Road]. It [the old building] burned just about the time school was out, but we had to go to churches to have examinations that year. And so we all crowded into that new building, and they built another wing as soon as they could; and we got along all right again. You do what you have to do. When we moved into that new building over on North [sic] Clarendon next to Belvedere [sic], next door to it was only pastureland and Mr. Hill's dairy, if you all remember. He used to call the principal of the school and tell him the boys were bothering his cows [*audience laughter*] as they were going home from school, so we would have that problem. But things changed there, too.

My thirty-four-year stay at Avondale was interrupted only one time, and that was for the five years I was out of teaching during World War II and when my husband was killed and my son was born. I went back in '46 and started working on a master's degree at Emory and was awarded that in '52, a master's degree in education. So all my education has been in DeKalb County, too, high school and college and graduate work. In fact, I guess I'm just about as local a product as you can find.

While I was teaching at Avondale High School, there was not much that I was not involved in. I coached and directed and sponsored and took students on trips to conventions and took seniors to Daytona Beach. I just shudder at all the things I did, you know, without thinking of all the possible consequences. Well, it worked out all right. And I was younger then, so I guess it was what I

was supposed to be doing. All those years from 1938 until just about the time I stopped teaching, I was in charge of graduation, and that's the way I got to know just about everybody who graduated from the high school. And I hardly ever go anywhere that I don't see somebody who knows me and who says, "Aren't you . . . ?" You know, "Aren't you Ms. Winn?" Because mostly I was Mrs. Winn when I was there.

It was in 1968 that I had a late marriage to Clark [Clarke?] Hanson, whose wife was my dear friend, Louise Hanson, and taught at Avondale Elementary School. It was sort of a family affair, because our first mates had been brother and sister. Louise had been Louise Winn, and my husband had been Howard Winn; and they were brothers [sic] and sisters [sic]. So everybody was pleased about it; and we had almost ten years together, which were great.

But, as I was saying, I hardly go anywhere that I don't see somebody that I know—in the grocery store or wherever, an eating place. Even in Canada one time the girl who was running the elevator said, "Aren't you Ms. Winn?" [audience laughter] So you have to be careful when it's like that; you never know when one of your former students is going to be checking up on you.

I was so pleased to see Robin [Harris] here. He was on my list to mention, because I was going to tell you some of the people we're proud of. And we're proud of all the graduates. I see several here, and I want you to know the others. [Points to audience member, who is off-camera.] Joyce Hairston, [to general audience] do you know her? She has been on the county board of education, and she graduated from—[to Ms. Hairston] Raise your hand, Joyce. She graduated in 19—

JOYCE HAIRSTON [from audience, off-camera]: Fifty-three.

GRACE ROBINSON: Fifty-three, right.

JOYCE HAIRSTON: A mere child [audience laughter].

GRACE ROBINSON, laughing: Right. [Retrieves yearbook.] This book that I brought happened to be 1955, and I brought it because it had a picture in it. But I notice that Bill Anderson was in this [1955] class. You know, the country-

western singer, Jim Anderson's son, whom I'm sure you all know. [*Putting book away*] So that's a name that would be familiar. And there are other people around—Johnny Fletcher was the mayor of Avondale. He was a graduate. We've got some Smith boys in law and politics in Decatur who were graduates; some folks in building, the Ackermans, who were graduates of Avondale—just lots of folks. Bob Barrow, who was in the legislature, was a graduate of Avondale. Anyway, I hesitate even to start, because there are so many that I would miss; but anyway, there are lots of folks around that you may have known who lived in Avondale. And [*pointing to off-camera audience member*] Jean Shepherd—Jean Tomlin [*spelling? Tumlin?*]. OK. She was telling me that her class is planning its thirty-fifth reunion this summer. OK, anybody else who graduated from Avondale? [*Scans audience and points, recognizing an off-camera audience member.*] Yes! Agnes! Yeah, and she's supposed, in just a minute, to tell you what she remembers that I have left out. Only she said she wasn't going to, but we'll see [*audience laughter*]. Maybe she'll change her mind.

Let me finish, [*glances at her notes*] because it's only one more paragraph I have, and that's the fact that the third dimension of my life centers around church; and I'd like to tell you what churches I remember in this area. All of my grandparents were Baptists, except for my Grandfather Robinson. He was a Methodist and had been a charter member of the Ingleside Methodist Church, which later became Milton Memorial, which later became Avondale, which later became Avondale-Pattillo, which is where I am now. But I joined the Baptist Church, along with my family, when I was a child. And when I married a Methodist, I didn't really know what we were going to do about it. As it turned out, I discovered that we would either be separate or we would both be

Methodists; and so that's what happened. And I have never been sorry about that. I had seen my Grandmother and Grandfather Robinson go their separate ways every [Sunday] morning—you know, the Baptist church was on one side of the road and the Methodist on the other. They'd every Sunday go to their separate churches, and around the [inaudible—sounds like “two hour heater”] in the kitchen, I'd hear a lot of discussion of Baptist doctrine as opposed to Methodist [*audience laughter*]. And I said, “Well, that's not going to happen to me.” And for a couple of years it did; and I said, “Well, I believe I'd make a pretty good Methodist.” And I think I have.

This church is now—the Baptist church I grew up in—is now North Clarendon Baptist Church, and my brother is still active there. And I go to Avondale-Pattillo [United Methodist] Church, where I do all kinds of things. I am president of the United Methodist Women, chairman of the administrative council, and anything else they can get me to do. But my life in DeKalb County's been a happy one, and many doors have opened to me; and I've entered them with enthusiasm and gratitude. My roots are firm and deep, and I'm glad that I've been planted in such friendly soil.

And I thought I'd give you another one of my poems that I have written, since I lived in Stone Mountain, because it sort of says it for me. [Line breaks are approximate, working from oral presentation.]

I've always lived within the shadow of the rock.  
While growing up, I climbed Stone Mountain,  
A wonderful place for picnicking, for romancing, for dreaming.  
I liked to climb to the top and see the country that I loved  
    spread out before me:  
There, the little town where I was born,  
There, my grandpa's firm,  
There, the road that leads back home.  
Now that my legs no longer like the climb,

My heart can still recall that panorama.  
And when I am returning from some far-away, exotic place that  
I've been visiting,  
I know that I am almost home  
When I can see my mountain  
Standing firm and welcoming.

*[Audience applause]*

*[MS. ROBINSON gets up briefly and is joined by JAMES MACKAY.]*

MR. MACKAY: You're supposed to stay seated.

MS. ROBINSON *[sitting]*: All right.

MR. MACKAY: One of the prices you pay to be videotaped is to answer difficult questions.

MS. ROBINSON: OK, well, I'll try.

MR. MACKAY: You got a lot of eyewitnesses here. *[To audience]* Do you have any questions? We're going to have our little social hour, but do you have any questions that you would like to ask?

MS. ROBINSON: Anything I--?

MR. MACKAY: Or comments, anything that *[inaudible]*.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You said something about the cabin and the lakeside—is that Lake Spivey? Or is that—

MS. ROBINSON: No, it's off Norman Road. It's just a little private lake.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Are you related to the Lake Spivey people?

MS. ROBINSON: No, I don't think so. I mean, if so, it was way back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You know, they're coming back to log houses now, so.

MS. ROBINSON: Right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd like to see that sometime.

MR. MACKAY: I'd like for you to comment about young people. It's so popular to knock young people. You saw many school generations come along. Were you impressed that they're pretty much cut out of the same cloth?

MS. ROBINSON: I've always been optimistic about young people. I've always been able to sort of see their point of view; and I really kind of miss, you know, that contact, because I really enjoyed it. I think—I'm not pessimistic about the future of the world in their hands. I think they're all right.

MR. MACKAY: Also it's very popular to knock the curriculum and say that we are not educating people for the world in which they live. Do you see much change in the curriculum over the years that you've taught, or did you have any feelings that it was not a complete curriculum?

MS. ROBINSON: Some changes—I felt that it was fairly complete. There were times when I felt that perhaps we were not giving children enough preparation for what they had to face when they got in the world; but generally speaking, I thought we were doing a pretty good job. I heard somebody talk the other night about the things that are going to be happening under the new education law; and I said, "Well, you're talking to somebody that's been born too soon." But I'd love to be there in the middle of it and see how it's going to work out. I think it would be great. I'd just like to go over it again if I could.

JOYCE HAIRSTON, *off-camera*: May I respond to Grace's comments today? Having had English from Grace for a number of years, in church Sunday morning I was able to quote, along with the minister, as he read "Ozymandias"; and it was thanks to Grace Winn [*audience laughter*]. One of the greatest—I've had many honors—but one of the greatest compliments I've ever had was when I ran into Mr. B. E. Williams, who was a principal of Grace's and mine when I was a student. And he said, "Joyce, you remind me of a young Grace Winn." And I thought that was the greatest compliment I've ever had.

MS. ROBINSON: And I will say the same thing. You had never told me that. [*Responding to off-camera audience member's inaudible comment*] It was a great time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: The Ingleside Country Club, which, I believe, is now the Harold Byrd Legion Post—when was that established? That was the Jewish country club for a while, wasn't it?

MS. ROBINSON: I had heard that it was, but I don't know. I don't remember it being Jewish, but—[*responding to off-camera audience member's inaudible comment*] It was? A long time ago.

AUDIENCE MEMBER who supplied comment [*off-camera*]: It was what they had. Now they got the Standard Club, along with some others.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera; unidentified but a member of the DeKalb Historical Society*]: We have a paper on that club [Ingleside Country Club] in the archives if you'd like to look at it.

MR. MACKAY: Yes.

MS. ROBINSON: And it was? It was started as a Jewish--?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Forrest Hills Club was—I mean, there was a man named Forrest Hill [*laughs*].

MS. ROBINSON: Right. That [the club property] belonged in the Hill family with the dairy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That had been there a long time, too, hadn't it?

MS. ROBINSON: Yes. Yes, it had. And it's strange to see so many other things being built there where the old Forrest Hill—

MR. MACKAY: What was the site of—you saw Avondale, the site of Avondale, before it was built, right?

MS. ROBINSON: Mm-hmm.

MR. MACKAY: What was it? Was it open country?

MS. ROBINSON: Open country, fields.

MR. MACKAY: They went outside of town and laid out a town, right?

MS. ROBINSON: Right. Mm-hmm.

MR. MACKAY: It wasn't redeveloped [*sic*], in any sense?

MS. ROBINSON: I don't think so. [*To audience member, off-camera*] Do you remember, Agnes? Any development where Avondale is?

AUDIENCE MEMBER identified as AGNES DAVIS: Not much.

MS. ROBINSON: I think it was just open fields.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It was four farms: the Freeman farm, the Burgess farm, and two other farms. Mr. Willis-- The Freemans kept their old homeplace right there and sold the back part.

MS. ROBINSON: And Mrs. Freeman still lives where she's been all these years.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And one of your ancestors graded all the land there, Mr. Elmer Austin.

MS. ROBINSON, *nodding*: He was the man with the big equipment, wasn't he.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He did all the work.

MS. ROBINSON: My great-uncle.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I would like to ask, whether we do it now or a little later, I would like to ask your former students to go up there with you.

MS. ROBINSON: Oh, that would be [inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And any Avondale graduates.

MS. ROBINSON, *beckoning them forward*: Right.

MR. MACKAY: Well, let's get the former students first.

MS. ROBINSON: Jean and Joyce.

MR. MACKAY: Robin?

MS. ROBINSON: And Robin, right.

ROBIN HARRIS, *going up front to stand with MS. ROBINSON*: I'm the most former student [*audience laughter*].

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you don't mind, stand by MS. HANSON [GRACE ROBINSON].

ROBIN HARRIS, JEAN SHEPHERD, and JOYCE CHAMPION *take their places behind MS. ROBINSON, on-camera*.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you don't mind, each one of you introduce yourselves and give your year of graduation, if you can.

MR. HARRIS: Robin Harris, graduated in 1942.

MS. SHEPHERD: And I'm Jean Shepherd Tumlin [spelling?]. I graduated in 1950.

MS. HAIRSTON: And I'm Joyce Champion Hairston, and I graduated in 1953.

MS. ROBINSON: And I'm Grace Winn Hanson, and I graduated in 1931.  
*The three former students return to their seats in the audience.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Beautiful. Are there any other students?

MR. MACKAY: Those of you who went to Avondale. Any of you who went to Avondale. Anybody else here that attended the school?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd like to see Agnes step up there for a minute, and—

MS. ROBINSON: She did.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you don't mind, Agnes, go up here and face this way, so we can see.

*AGNES DAVIS takes her place with MS. ROBINSON on-camera.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Now, what do you have to say about yourself, Agnes?

AGNES DAVIS: Well, I finished in '33.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: From Avondale?

AGNES DAVIS: Grace was smarter than me. We started together, but we didn't finish together [*audience laughter*]. She skipped grades!

MS. ROBINSON: I don't know what they did with me, but I got out when I was fifteen—or a little before I was sixteen. That's pretty young. I was still a child.

MR. MACKAY: I debated Avondale in 1936 and got beat. Y'all were a formidable school.

MS. ROBINSON: Yes, sirree. Well, Joyce was a debater. I coached the team, and she was [inaudible; includes the words "state tournament"].

*AGNES DAVIS resumes her seat in the audience.*

MR. MACKAY: Let me make an announcement before we go in for cookies and punch. We have just been through the most interesting week since I've been connected with the historical society, thanks, not to us, but to the State Department of Archives. I think most of you know that, in our history roundup, we decided we wanted to publish a book, *Vanishing DeKalb*, similar to *Vanishing Georgia* and *Vanishing Gwinnett*. And we went down—Kathleen Lee and I went down—to the state department; and we found out that this is a permanent project of our state government, and that is to preserve photographs of early Georgia. And they said they would come out here, as they did; and they were here in the courtroom for two days. And we had people bring in all sorts of interesting photographs, which were copied while the people waited. Then they went to Lithonia and to Stone Mountain and to Oglethorpe, so we've had five days of collecting old photographs. And we have the formidable task now of sorting those out and getting the best pictures that we can and to make the most interesting visual presentation that we can get. And, of course, they will be helpful, too, in connection with the main history project that we have. But I would like to solicit you to think about what might be in your albums and attic and boxes and drawers—old pictures. They like pictures that give you a sense of the activities of early Georgia or early DeKalb. They're not limiting themselves to early DeKalb. Activities, unusual dress, unusual architecture, and all that sort of thing. So we're going to continue that rather strenuously for another six weeks, and we hope to really get a great harvest of pictures.

The other exciting thing is that the county is in the process of trying to find additional office space. We don't know where it will be. I heard the terrible rumor that I might be getting evicted from my office across the way [*audience laughter*]. And that would tear me up. But the good thing that will happen when they get more county office space is that the county government is unanimously in agreement with what we're trying to do, and that is to make this old courthouse a great center of interest for the whole community in terms

of our county's history. We're extremely proud of our museum; but Mr. Ed Cummings, the chairman of our museum committee, is hampered, because people really want to bring in all sorts of things, and we don't have a place to store them. Nor do we have a place to exhibit them. But if we get a real increase in space over here, we'll really be able to make this place an extremely interesting building. It is a beautiful building, and we have a committee now that's trying to see how we can restore the old courtroom in there. And we're going to adjourn into that room, and we want you all to come up and speak to our speaker. And I think we want to give her one more round of applause. And we want to thank you. *Audience applause*

END OF RECORDING