

2012.3.28
SARAH FURSE
(MRS. STEPHEN FURSE)

Recording begins in the midst of JAMES MACKAY's opening remarks to the audience. MRS. FURSE is seated behind him.

JAMES MACKAY: . . . dub in the introduction later. And she is so modest that she might actually get flustered if we [*The rest of MR. MACKAY's sentence is inaudible, due to audience laughter; but he suggests that a glowing introduction might embarrass MRS. FURSE.*]

MRS. FURSE, *approaching MR. MACKAY and patting him on the shoulder, laughing*: You know how much I love you. [*MR. MACKAY and the audience laugh, and she returns to her original position.*]

MR. MACKAY: Well, I appreciate you. I've told half of you this. I was touched and honored to be awarded an honorary degree at Emory's sesquicentennial, and I think the reason is that I have identified myself with the DeKalb Historical Society and the Georgia Conservancy and a lot of other people that have done a lot of work that I felt I sort of got credit for.

But to show you the uses of mothers, my mother will be ninety-nine in August; and she's a little addled, but she's in better shape than her children [*audience laughter*]. And I drove her from the Fountainview [assisted-living facility] over to my house on Thanksgiving for dinner. And as we drove through the Emory campus, as her baby boy, I said, "Mother, did you know that on December the tenth they're going to give me and nine other Emory alumni honorary degrees?" She said, "Well, why?" [*audience laughter*]. And you go home and kind of pray over that [inaudible] had to come up with an answer.

Since all of us are tied with great sentiment to all of our years here in DeKalb County and our identification with our church or school or college or whatever, I was just telling Elizabeth Barthold [spelling?] here, who is a newcomer to DeKalb and works with *The DeKalb Neighbor*—she's down here to see what we do—I told her that the whole sesquicentennial over there [Emory] was a time of great sentiment for me, because my father came as a new young Scotch-Irish [sic] Presbyterian to Emory

College at Oxford eighty years ago this September, and he was predestined to be a Methodist preacher [*audience laughter*].

But seventeen of us have been enriched by our encounter—with this total community and with Emory University—so it was a very special occasion. And I'll tell you the one good story that I picked up that I hadn't heard. President [James T.] Laney said when he got to know Mr. Bob Woodruff, who flunked out his first semester down there, sent home--the rich man's son, sent home, he said, "You wouldn't expect him to give Emory a hundred million dollars" [*audience laughter*].

Dr. Laney said, "Mr. Woodruff, did it ever occur—have you ever thought about if you'd gone back down to Emory and made up those courses and gone on and graduated from Emory, what the situation would be?"

And he [Mr. Woodruff] jiggled his cigar and said, "Yeah, I figure I'd be about five years behind where I am right now" [*audience laughter*].

Anyway, we started at the top of the pack, and MRS. FURSE has--and her whole family have just been marvelous parts of our community and our county; and she's been deeply involved. The only time she left town was when she went down to St. Augustine and drank out of the Fountain of Perpetual [sic] Youth [*audience laughter*]. [MR. MACKAY takes his seat in the audience, off-camera.]

MRS. FURSE: I was state president of the Mental Health Association when I moved down to Covington. And being a newcomer, you know, they always latch onto you to do something that's died already; and that Mental Health Association had died on the vine, and so they made me president. And I dug back in the files and got it going again. Jim [Mackay] was just—he was great to go to the meetings with me and support me really. So that's--of course, I've known Jim a long time; but that was where we first really became real close friends. And I admire Jim greatly. He's just gotten another honor--the Christian Council of Atlanta have honored him; he's just being honored all the time.

MR. MACKAY [*from the audience, off-camera*]: I'm getting [inaudible] [*audience laughter*].

MRS. FURSE: I'm happy to have our two daughters here today. One of the sons is babysitting—papa-sitting--[inaudible] so I could be here. But this is really an honor to be invited to speak to the Historical Society of DeKalb County, and I really feel very humbled to be asked.

At the end of the Civil War my grandfather, Charles Garrow [spelling?], came back to the family plantation in Onslow County, North Carolina. So I wasn't born and bred here. And he and with his young wife undertook to run this and get this—to make a living on this plantation, which they were certainly not prepared for. But they had character and determination. And by seeking the help of the Lord they were successful and most successful in this plantation that—after the Civil War, you can imagine.

But this is where I was born, eighty-one years ago. And when I started to school, I was the youngest in the family. My brother drove a little horse and buggy [inaudible] Nellie. And the roads were sandy roads, so the ruts were this [*holds two fingers apart to indicate depth*] deep and when-- You didn't hear an automobile very often, but once—occasionally an automobile—you could hear in the distance, and Papa would pull Nellie's head in the bushes so she wouldn't rear up [inaudible].

And when I was seven and a half, my father moved us to [sic] North Carolina. He was with Hilton Dodge and [inaudible—sounds like “lumber company”?] in Savannah. And it was 1913. And my grandfather came back from the Civil War, and this is the beginning of World War I. We came to Savannah on a train, and my father didn't have an automobile. He'd bought a horse and buggy, but it was out in the country; and he bought a place out by Cedar Hammock. And, of course, you wouldn't know where that was, except that it was down the road from the Bethesda Orphans' Home. And Father met us at the train and put us—we all got on the streetcar, and—rode the Isle of Hope streetcar and went—got off at [inaudible—sounds like “Sand Fire”] Station and walked down the road; and by that time it was plumb dark. And so here we were, getting initiated in a foreign country [MR. MACKAY *chuckles*]. We had to walk out in the country in the black dark to our new home.

But it turned out that—you know, I always just fall in love with whatever it is; and I fell I in love with this place, because it was on the—not a river, just a creek—marshes, and it was just about yea [*holds hands apart to suggest narrow width*] wide between the marshes. But we had a little boat that we could paddle, and put out a line over with smelly bait on it and catch crabs; and I just thought that was wonderful. And then it wasn't very clear, pretty, cool water either; it was muddy water. But we--I learned to swim in it, the little swimming I did—dog-paddling. But we lived there for two years, and then my father decided that was a little far out.

So I remember that we caught the streetcar that came into Savannah; and I got a little basket because I had perfect attendance in going to Sunday school, and we were allowed to walk down Ferguson Avenue and get the streetcar and go into Savannah to church. But sometimes when it's hard to do, you [inaudible; *audience member coughing*], don't you? I just loved the church.

And there was a windmill at the place. And I always thought that that was great, because the windmill would pump the water; and we could have a bathtub, because back in North Carolina we didn't have a bathtub. We bathed in a—once a week—in the washtub in the kitchen by the stove. So we had a bathtub, and this windmill was supposed to turn over and pump water. But when we wanted to take a bath, we'd have to go and pump the water up into the tank and then run into the house and take a bath, because it [the windmill] never did turn; it was too many trees, I guess.

But we—my father, then, coming in on the Decatur streetcar saw—[*to herself*, "Decatur!"] Isle of Hope streetcar saw this area out there that some houses were going up, so he bought a lot. And it was on the edge of Savannah, way out, the last street. And then on beyond that was the Wren [spelling?] Estate, and it was an original grant of the king of England, and it couldn't be sold; so Savannah couldn't go any further. And it couldn't go any further that [the other] way, because the river was the other way. And the mills were the other way, so that was the only way it could go.

I went—I walked—to 37th Street School. When folks marvel at my antique age of walking around Stone Mountain [inaudible; *voice trails off*] [*audience laughter*], but I learned to walk; you can understand how I did it. So I walked to 37th Street School; and Steve, my husband, also went there; but he was a grade ahead of me. So we didn't meet until he came home for—his father sent him away in high school, sent him away to GMA (Georgia Military Academy). So he was home for the holidays, and I was sixteen; and he was sent to pick me up for a birthday party. I don't guess any sixteen-year-old has had birthday parties in this [inaudible]; but anyway, this boy had a birthday party, and he sent Steve for me. Well, Stephen never heard of me. I was a little girl, you know. In Savannah they're kind of stuffy people, you know [*Chuckling among audience members*], they came over on *The Mayflower* or something. And so if you didn't, you just weren't [inaudible; *audience laughter*]. He was sent for me to pick me up for this birthday party. Well, of course, we being the last street in Savannah, he'd never heard of that street. And I was watching for him; I saw him—saw this car--

and you didn't see many cars in those days, but anyway—come to the street just before [inaudible]. So he went back to the party, and everybody was there, and announced in this loud voice, because he wasn't at all interested in the first place [inaudible], and he said, "I can't find that crazy country girl" [*audience laughter*]. And so Steve got in the car and came out with [name inaudible—sounds something like "Mace Bullard" or "Willard"?], got in the car with him to get me. And so Steve was busy driving, and so [inaudible--Bullard? Willard?] sort of put his arm on the back of the seat; and we were talking so animatedly. And Steve said he just was real jealous. He never let me forget that [voice trails off; inaudible] [*audience laughter*]. But anyway, he never lost the way after that. From that night on, for six years, he found the way out there. Every time I would look at Mama, I'd say, "What in the world is that fellow blowing--?" He'd blow [his car horn] down the street and announce that he was coming [*audience laughter*].

So December the 26th (sic) when he was home—he was [inaudible] job, and jobs were hard to find back in that day, too—he traveled and didn't get home very often then. And so we decided that we'd get married when he came home for Christmas. That was December the 29th (sic), 1929. [*Holds up her hand.*] And does anybody know what happened then? [*Several affirmative responses from the audience*] Yes. You've been through it. ["Black Tuesday" was actually in October of 1929.] The banks crashed, and everybody was—businesses were failing. So when Steve was transferred to Louisville, Kentucky, I stayed with my mother until then; and we had this precious little baby, Stevie, eight months old. And so all—you didn't have trunks in cars then—you just—we just piled all of our—anything that anybody gave us on [inaudible] or anything to go on the seat, and then swung the baby up here [*gestures to demonstrate*], and traveled eight hundred miles to Louisville. Well, that was—those were the Depression years.

So we had them, and we had our little Sallie, who was born in 1932. And our second son, John, was born in '35. So he was just three weeks old when they decided to transfer Steve to Oklahoma City. Well, I didn't think too much about it; I was too busy. The doctor forbade me to go. He said, "You just can't go with a baby three weeks old." And I said, "I can't stay here, and I can't go later," because with three children, you can imagine [inaudible; voice trails off]. So I went on. At the end of the

first day, I was sure the doctor was right [inaudible; voice trails off] [*audience laughter*].

So we were in Louisville and traveled to Oklahoma City. And Louisville was--they burned soft coal, you know, that's where the soft coal [inaudible] in Kentucky—they burned it, everybody burned it. The houses, the factories, and everything burned soft coal; and so the buildings were black. And I just worried myself to death trying to keep the children in their little snowsuits—the grass would ordinarily be white, the Bermuda we had in the winter, but it would be black with soot. And you could imagine, I just had a scrub board and washed [the clothes] in the bathtub.

But anyway, when I looked up in Oklahoma when we went through Tulsa, and I saw those buildings, I thought I was maybe over in Holland. I'd heard of them scrubbing everything—the streets, everything—in Holland. The houses, the buildings looked as if they had just—it was Fairyland. I think I let Sallie wear a dress for a whole week because it didn't get dirty [*audience laughter*]. It was wonderful. I just loved it. But we were only there for a year; and then when John was just a year old, we went to—it was—we transferred back to Atlanta. But in the—the doctor, before I left Louisville, cautioned me of the dust storms. He said the—when you see a dust storm coming, it looks like a terrible cloud, except that it's red. Run, wet a sheet, and put [it] over the baby's crib. So I didn't have a very good impression of what I was getting into when he told me about the dust storm.

But anyway, the oil well—that was just a boom then for--oil wells everywhere. Just discovered oil, I think, in America. And they were digging oil wells right on the governor's—on the capitol lawn, everywhere. And that was something that we all needed. The car ran out of oil—the man left [inaudible], all the way, and I said, "John"—because I was the only driver, because John had just—hadn't learned to drive. He just managed to pass—he just turned sixteen—to get your driver's license, so I had to go some distance.

But anyway, this was really very exciting for us to live there. But we just—we had to go there—we were transferred in 1937 to Atlanta. We're still in the Depression. So we were in Atlanta for two years, and we built our home in Decatur. We didn't have a [inaudible]. Of course, didn't have any money--not a nickel; but my mother thought we should have a home. Everyone should have their own home. And we lived in these furnished places, and so my mother gave us five hundred dollars, and you had to own

the lot. And so we put it down—on Chelsea Drive [inaudible], [*pointing to audience member*] on your direction [inaudible]. And Cecil Ramsey [spelling?] built our house over on Chelsea Drive, in Chelsea [inaudible—could be “Heights”?]. And our house cost the huge sum of six thousand dollars. It recently sold again for about a hundred thousand dollars. We were not in the city limits, so we—and that was distressing, because we wanted to come to Decatur school system—Ponce de Leon [inaudible] was not too far away. But we were in the [DeKalb] county [system], and so we had to go to Druid Hills. So I don’t know how—somebody must have spoken to the city fathers, and they took us into the city. And so that’s how we got to come to the—we were just about three houses out.

But we had no transportation out there. This was the Ridley-Howard—Ridley plantation, over there at—the old Ridley house was still over there when we built. And it was just woods and Peavine Creek. And we loved that, too. I mean, the children just loved it. John always had mud in his shoes from swinging over the creek and falling in, but it was lovely. Then they began to build houses over there between us and Scott Boulevard; and then after they built the houses, they put up fences. Well, John had always roamed those woods—I mean, all the woods around, but John particularly [inaudible]. And so he said, “Mother!” He had to walk there all the way down the road to come by it. And he said—and he’d always been cutting through to Scott Boulevard and the school, and he said, “It isn’t fair to take our woods.” I didn’t think so, either [*audience laughter*].

But we had no means of transportation when we moved over there; and Scott Boulevard wasn’t paved, either. It was just [inaudible] road. And when it was—where it was really hard [inaudible]. But we either had to walk to Decatur to catch the Decatur streetcar, or either all the way to Druid Hills—you know, East Lake and Druid Hills. The [inaudible] streetcar just ran once every hour, and the Decatur streetcar ran about maybe twice or three times an hour. You had a long walk there. So we didn’t have too many choices there.

Then in 1939 World War II began. And Steve, having been in the National Guard in Savannah and through high school and kept up in college, he—very patriotic—entered the army. Well, he was—it would have been all right, except that they stationed him in Washington, D.C., and he had to live there; and we didn’t have anything left here. Besides that, he had to buy all his uniforms, as a captain—he went

in as a captain, which was fine; but that left nothing in Decatur. And so we were starving, all right—we could manage that. But we got a second notice from FHA, and it said, “You are delinquent [inaudible] two months, and it must be paid.”

So I got my courage up and telephoned the FHA; and I said, “We’re just holding our breath and hoping that my husband will get transferred overseas, because then he’d have [inaudible] and maybe [inaudible] his uniforms by that time” [*audience laughter*]. “But,” I said, “I don’t have any money. And so if you could just wait until they send him overseas, we’ll—I’ll pay.”

And they said, “Can’t do it.”

So Mr. Claude [spelling?] Blount was right in the First National Bank, and I screwed up my courage—I’d never borrowed any money, I always believed in paying cash if you had it, and—so I went to Mr. Blount, and I said, “Mr. Blount, I’ll mortgage the house or the children or whatever, but I have to pay this mortgage.”

And he said, “How much do you need?”

And I said, “Well, I’ll have to have a hundred dollars because there’ll be another month due.”

And he said, “Well, you don’t have to mortgage the house and the children for a hundred dollars.” But he took out the interest before he gave me the hundred dollars [*audience laughter*].

But anyway, I think the Lord had something to do with this, because there was a knock on my door, and two friends who lived way out in Dunwoody had a sack from the grocery store. They said, “We brought some wieners for lunch, and we just wanted to find out how you were getting along.” How in the world they thought of me?

And so I said, “Well, I’m pretty husky, and physically I’m fine; but I don’t have any money, and I’ve got to pay the mortgage.”

And she said—you know [inaudible], “I’ll tell Cecil [Ramsey].” That was her husband, and he was a contractor. He was [inaudible]. And so he—that was Harley Ramsey [inaudible]. And so he was building—as a contractor building the Bell bomber plant. And so she told Cecil, and Cecil gave me a little chair and a typewriter. And every now and then he’d bring me a little note to write. And I’d practice at home to-- after I’d gotten the children in bed, I’d practice on the typewriter--practice, practice—so I could write a little bit.

So, but anyway, Steve was one solid year in Washington—how we managed, I don't know, but anyway, we—I would have to leave—I had no car—and so the only way I could get to Marietta to the bomber plant was to ride with these workmen--at 4:30 in the morning, they left. This was winter, cold, dark. And here I was, this little mama. I had put out an SOS to my mother to come. I said, "Mama, please come. Help me out." So she came up from Savannah and stayed with the children; that's the reason I could get away. So we—I rode with these workmen. And one of them was Guy Bazell [spelling?], as you know [*MR. MACKAY chuckles*]. And we would slip and slide. They mowed down a whole top of a mountain to build that bomber plant, and it was slick as glass when it rained [inaudible]. Anyway, I didn't mind that. The worst part about it—I didn't care about going at 4:30 in the morning, because Mama was there, and the children were asleep, and she'd get them off to school. But it was getting home. You know, they—the men would knock off all right in the afternoon; but if they were pouring concrete—and they were pouring a lot of concrete to build that bomber plant—they couldn't stop until they got through. Sometimes we were down there at 10:00 at night. So I tried—first tried to ride the Marietta streetcar, and that was [inaudible] Decatur streetcar into--and then I'd walk over to Haverty's Furniture and get on the Decatur streetcar, which didn't come very—but once an hour—and get home. If I missed that and had to catch the Druid Hills [streetcar], then I had to walk from Druid Hills. And the only way I could get—well, that took a long time to walk, especially down Scott Boulevard, and it still wasn't paved yet. [*Gestures with thumb to suggest hitchhiking*] I'd thumb a ride [*audience laughter*]. You wouldn't do that now, would you? Not standing out there. But anyway, you know, I had to do it.

So one day I was smelling the typewriter ribbon too much, and I found out I was pregnant with little David [inaudible]. So I worked on up till the time to go to the hospital. And I went—I didn't—I couldn't afford a doctor, private doctor. So I went out to Fort MacPherson. That was another jaunt. And so I'd catch a streetcar and walk over to Rich's and get a streetcar out to Fort MacPherson. Well, I didn't mind that, either. That was all right. [Inaudible] the children were getting along fine. And I could get—I could go to the commissary out there and get some little things, because I was going on the streetcar and couldn't get too much. But I could get a loaf of bread for a dime and a gallon of milk for a quarter. I couldn't carry the milk [inaudible]. But

anyway, I could get maybe a Hershey bar, get something special from the commissary. So that was worth a trip out there. Every month I went out there, to Fort MacPherson.

So then when I knew that I didn't—I had to have a way to get out there when the baby was knocking on the door, so I asked the army if they would send an ambulance for me when the time came; and they said they would. So here I was having pains, and every time I'd screw up my face, the little children were sitting around the table—and it was Sunday morning—all these things always happen on Sunday morning [*audience laughter*] or a holiday. And so I—they sent two little recruits who'd probably never seen Atlanta before, particularly Decatur. You know Chelsea Drive, and there's a Chelsea Circle around there; and they were circling around Chelsea Circle, trying to find it. And finally they arrived, and then they took off straight down Ponce de Leon—that's the only way they knew to go. We were going the back way. They stopped at every—seems to me—about every red light. So I said, "Boys, you're going to have to deliver this baby right here if you don't stop stopping at those red lights" [*audience laughter*]. Oh! You can imagine those two little fellows, just fresh from the country, and they started—they stepped on the gas and got me to Fort Mac. But if anybody—I don't know what Fort Mac is like now, but it was sprawling frame buildings painted white. And so they ran me up and started in this side of the building, and it said, "Wet paint," and it was blocked off. So they started running—ran all the way around the other end, and we got in at this [inaudible—sounds like "stage" or "station"?]—it was Sunday morning, and nobody was on duty. Wasn't a soul in sight [*audience laughter*]. So one little fellow dropped me, and one little fellow ran this way, and the other one ran that way, trying to find somebody. Well, when I finally got in the delivery room, I heard the doctor say, "Well, I didn't have time to scrub" [*audience laughter*]. I didn't mind that, either [*audience laughter*]. So we came out of the delivery room [inaudible] into a room about three times this size. And there were little partitions, and there were twenty mamas in there. And so we talked through the partitions, around and across; and then every time one was going home, we'd get them to roll them by so we could see who we'd been talking to. Some of that was fun. So David was born, then, in 1943. We were pulling out of the Depression, now, literally. And he was two years old before his daddy saw him. He ran to meet him. Imagine that.

Well, anyway, World War II ended in 1945. So after four years Steve wanted to stay home with the family. He'd had enough volunteering. So he got [inaudible] out of

the service. He might have made general if he'd stayed in. But General [spelling? sounds like "Back" or "Bat"] wanted to send him to Australia. And I thought I would love to have gone there [inaudible—*voice obscured by audience laughter*]. I didn't know he wanted to take him to Australia. And so he had just gotten out then, and then little James was born, and the Korean conflict came. We never called it a war; called it a conflict. And General [spelling? sounds like "Back" or "Bat"] sent out a word for Steve to come back into the service. And so Steve said, "Well, I've got six children, and I don't have to come back now."

And he [the general] said, "Well, we just don't know how this is going, and we're very short-handed, and we need you." Because he [Steve Furse] had been head of the communications center in Cocerno [spelling?] and gotten the highest noncombatant [commendation?] of the United States and the British award for his service. So General ["Back" "Batt"?] said, "I need you."

So he [Steve Furse] said, "Well, if my family can join me now." Well, it wasn't a war, so he said, well, that we could join him. But he was gone two more years. So we were allowed to join him. And we got this [inaudible—could be "port call" or "poor car"?], and we were just overjoyed, particularly John, who just couldn't wait. So we set out on this seven-thousand-mile trip to Portland, Oregon. Well, I always called our minister "Brother Veach." So Brother Veach was our [inaudible]. And he said, "Steve, you know, I was just at the bank here, and they have a display of Confederate money. And there's a—" he said, "you ought to go look at it." So Steve went up there, and he saw a bill that was signed by his grandfather. And back in those days the cashiers signed [inaudible], they signed the bills. So Brother Veach gave him—he said, "I have that five-dollar bill." So he gave it to Steve, and Steve framed it. [Inaudible comment]

But he said, "Well, Nell [spelling--Nelle?—you know, Nell [spelling?] Carruthers [spelling?], who married Dr. Carruthers [spelling?], is in Portland. And so—she wasn't in Portland--was near Portland. And so he said, 'I'm going to tell Nell.'" So he wrote to Nell [spelling?] that we were coming up there. And so she wrote and invited us to stay with her, which--you couldn't get there [Korea]—arrive the minute the boat was leaving. [Inaudible] some time to allow some leeway. And so she [Mrs. Carruthers] took these little ragamuffins in—because we really did look [inaudible] after the seven-thousand-mile trip—and she was—the afternoon we arrived she was not at home, but she had left word with one of the children. And she was at the governor's tea, and then to

come home and find the house full of these ragamuffins. But, anyway, she was just wonderful to us and [inaudible]. She was really a friend in need and a joy. And, of course, I didn't know Nell [spelling?] then. She had remarried—living up there a long time.

So then we—going through Yosemite in California, it was January, and there was—we turned in—well, I wanted the children to see it. I saw it in Hollywood—I mean California—everywhere I lived—to see along the way [inaudible]. So there was snow—there was deep snow in Yosemite National Forest [sic]. It was—the little park houses were just covered with snow—I mean it was up to the top of them. But it had turned real warm, and so the children saw Old Grizzly [sequoia “Grizzly Giant”], and they said, “Oooooohhh! Let us out, Mother.” So I let them out, and when they stepped in this snow where the hot sun was on it, they just—it came up to their knees, and their shoes were soaking wet. So I drove on down to—oh, we just had a big day—I had a wonderful time on the seven-thousand-mile trip. But we'd stop at a little town before lunch or something, and we would--John would hop out and build a fire. He was thrilled to do that. There was always wood. There were wonderful parks there. Wood was always there for you. And he'd build a fire and cook whatever goodies [inaudible]. And he put them on the fire and cooked them. Well, their shoes were soaking wet, so they put their shoes down by the fire to get dry. And all of a sudden--in Yosemite here, we were down, down, down, down, down in this valley—and the sun dropped down all of a sudden, and it was—oh! it was frigid, and so I said, “Oh, my! We're going to have to get out of here quickly.” So they grabbed their shoes, and the whole backs were burned out. [Inaudible sentence] And so that's when we had to go to Nell's and to get on the board [sic] on the ship with them.

When I arrived in Tokyo—no, when the ship arrived—docked—and Steve boarded, he shut the door. And I wondered what he was shutting our door for; but he said, “We've got to have a prayer meeting.” He was—I didn't realize that he was so tense, you know. I was so busy getting there that I hadn't even thought about what I was doing. And so my first—when I first arrived, there was a tea in downtown Tokyo. And so these nice ladies asked me what I had done back home. And I said, well, that I had just left an eighth-grade Girl Scout troop and what a wonderful time we'd had. And I knew that the biggest thrill that the girls could have spring holidays was to go down to Daytona, because that's where all the senior boys were. And so I said, “A Girl

Scout is a friend to every other Girl Scout,” so we got in touch with Girl Scouts along the way, and we stayed in Girl Scout cabin [inaudible]. And so when we—I didn’t take them over to the beach, you know, they were—all the boys came over to our [inaudible], toasting marshmallows and weenies--they loved it. And it was really—the girls were, you know, just really thought it was great, so [inaudible]. So I was telling her about it. So when I had arrived in Tokyo, Steve said, “You know, you have worked so hard all your life, and now you are just going to be a lady.” So he had bought a chaise lounge for me. He had a [inaudible—sounds like “top-flight”?] maid and a houseboy. Well, I didn’t have any use for the houseboy, so I let him go. I kept the maid and the chaise lounge, but I never did lie on it [*audience laughter*].

So this voice on the phone said, “I enjoyed meeting you at the tea this afternoon, and we have decided we’d like to invite you to join the Girl Scout Board of the Far East” [*audience laughter*]. And imagine, I’d made decisions all these years on my own; and I said, “Well, I’m sorry. I appreciate it, but I’ll have to ask my husband” [*laughs; audience laughter*].

So when he came home, I told him about it; and he said, “Well, what’d you tell her?”

And I said, “I told her I’d have to ask you.”

So he said, “Well, who was it?”

And I said, “I don’t know. I think it’s Admiral So-and-so’s wife.”

And he said, “Why, of course, you’ll serve” [*audience laughter*]. So that started me off. Well, I—it really was a wonderful experience, you know, because they were wives of admirals and generals and all this, so we headed a Girl Scout Board of the Far East. And so it was a wonderful experience.

And then I heard—well, some of my friends had taught in the schools and colleges over there—taught English conversation. So I heard of this mother that was going home—was being transferred back in the States, [inaudible]. And I said--and I had four—three pals that we went slumming with in the—you know, [inaudible] Tokyo. And one of them—well, one of them was from Oregon, and one of them was from the state of Washington, and the other one was British—very British lady. And so when I told them that I going to apply for this vacancy at [inaudible], they just were hilarious. “What in the world would those little girls of yours”—[inaudible aside]—“and what would they sound like with that Southern accent?” And so I did. And at Christmas they

had a--invited the boys' school over. And they asked the teachers—there were three of us there—to have something to say at the banquet. And so they said something, and the interpreter interpreted it, and I don't know—I guess I was nervous or something. I just got up and spied off; I didn't notice the interpreter. And so all the little boys and girls giggled. I said to the headmistress, "Did I say something funny?"

And she said, "No, you just didn't wait for the interpreter" [*audience laughter*]. So she asked them if they needed it interpreted, and they said no, because I spoke slowly, and they could understand [*audience laughter*]. So I couldn't wait to tell my friends about the fun that I'd had with the interpreter.

So summer came, and this was the largest housing area in the world. And we had to do something with the children. [*Looks off-camera and asks if her time is up; is told no.*] So imagine doing something with all these children on the post. So I having two teenagers, John and Julie, I agreed to take care of the teenagers. And so I thought that they should absorb some of the culture of the Far East while they were there, because I was absorbing everything I could. And they were perfectly happy to play records and sip a Coca-Cola and visit in the officers' club, in the teen club. And so I planned these trips; I got Mr. [spelling? sounds like "Ee-ee-toe"] to help me plan trips for them. And the first one I took them to was to [inaudible—sounds somewhat like "Kal Kuk" or "Kal Put"?], which is where the big Buddha is. And then I took them to Nikko—I knew they had to go to Nikko, because that's where the big, famous shrines are.

And the last trip was the prize, and that was the very end of the summer. It was the 29th of July, and it was the last time that we would be allowed to climb [Mount Fuji]. So I said, "I'll take you to climb Mount Fuji"—and they were thrilled to death—"if I can have four burly sergeants to go with us." Well, wouldn't you know they had a strike—the Japanese personnel—on the base? And they were restricted to base. So here I went off and got another mother and Mrs. Winslet [spelling?] to go with me. And Mr. [inaudible] sent four guides, and they could climb over those boulders like cats. We had to climb at night, because those boulders are too hot in the day in the summer. That's the only time [summer] you could climb, because it's covered with snow otherwise. And so we were given a stick at the beginning of the climb that you would notch for every station—there are eight stations, but I found out they were first eight, the second eight, and third eight. I thought we were never going to get up to the top

of it [*audience laughter*]. But you would stop at a station, and they would give you hot tea. Well, I wondered how on earth they got tea up there—or water up there. But they save the snow and make it. And we would drink hot tea to get warm.

Well, by the time we'd gotten to the third eighth station, the children just couldn't drag another foot. And so I said, "Well, we'll just stop here and sleep awhile," which all the—all the Japanese were just bedded down, just quietly and politely. And here our Americans—there were seventy-five of them—were just romping and [*inaudible*] and just having more fun than [*inaudible*—could be "an amusement park" or "amusement carnival"?]. So I said, "Well, looks like nobody's sleeping, so we'll just go and travel on." But I stepped outside, and there was this awful thunderstorm, lightning. It was black-dark. So I said, "Well, I'm not going any further. The third eighth station is enough for me." But John and twelve boys and one girl wanted to go on to the top, so I agreed to let them go. And when they reached the top, I found out later, their jeans were frozen on them. They were, of course, soaking wet and frozen. And this one little girl just lay down under the futon and let the Japanese guides pull--peel her jeans off and hang them by the fire. But they—I asked one of the girls to write about the trip for me, just so I'd have something to leave. And she said, well, that she was glad she went; but if she had known how hard it was, she never would have started. Anyway, it was a great experience. And when I look back now, I wonder how I had the courage to take seventy-five teenagers on that jaunt [*inaudible*].

Well, we came home in '53, that is, to--we were to be stationed at Fort Gordon in Augusta. We were there for a year, and then we came to Decatur in '54. And the changes. Well, you know, when I--in first in thinking about this, I thought, well, Decatur School [*sic*] was gone; the Davises' house was gone; and the Weekses' [*Weekeses*'?] house was gone. But I said, "[*inaudible sentence*]. They are replaced by this wonderful, busy post office, which we desperately needed." So Ponce de Leon wasn't there [*sic*], but then the post office was there. And the Weekses' [*Weekeses*'?] home was not over there on that [*north*] side of [*West*] Ponce de Leon, but there was this beautiful First National Bank. And just—you know, I just began to think of it that way when first I was thinking, "You know, this is gone, that's gone; this, too." But the—you know, and Willa Barrett was here, the principal of Ponce de Leon, and Connie Carswell, who was the first-grade teacher that everybody loved. And Scott Boulevard was paved [*audience laughter*]. And we had a bus going down Scott Boulevard. The

Decatur streetcar had been taken up from [inaudible] around here, but we still had it up there. And on Ponce de Leon [sic; means Scott Boulevard, Venetian Pools] now, where so many children—that was the only swimming pool then—learned to swim, and I just read recently that that is going to be taken over by some individual and carried on; so that's great. And Mr. Baker—Walter Baker—built it in 2918. Dug it up with mules.

Well, the Boys' and Girls' High [schools] [inaudible] just one big high school, and Dr. [Carl] Renfroe had taken Mr. Amsler's place. And the--Betty Herbert was the Girls' High [principal?]. And so—but they were—you know, they were kind of special school [sic]. They were like private school [sic]. Just—the boys and girls were just really held in high esteem. So one day—of course, Betty, whom I'd known for a long time, Betty called me; and she said—Sally and Johnny [Sarah Furse's son] had just started dating—[inaudible; sounds like “at Glissen”—Camp Glissen?] that summer. And so Betty called me and said, “Sarah, I think you ought to know this, that it has been reported that Sally and Johnny are holding hands in the library” [*audience laughter*]. Sally didn't appreciate that so much; I did. But I mean, that's how particular—that was how special Girls' High was then, of course. And I know that--Steve was over at Boys' High, he said, “Mother, I just love to go over to Girls' High because it's so clean” [*audience laughter*]. Sally [sic; means Betty?] would take little scrubbing rags and dust and clean up. It was special.

And now the Davises' house—[*to MR. MACKAY, in audience, off-camera*] what was Mr. Davis's—Davis's—well, anyway [*pointing*], over on that side—became Newsome's filling station. It was torn down. It [the Davis house] [inaudible] sat [inaudible] on the hill. They [inaudible] the hill down and built the filling station. Now it is—what—West--Ponce Place. And it's just really elegant. And I said, “You know, that's just really great.” I always grieved over the Davises' house being not there anymore, but here this beautiful West Ponce Place and all those shops are [inaudible]. How many have been in there, any of you? It's really interesting.

And then we used to walk all the way over there from Chelsea Drive to A&P store, [*pointing*] right here. Mr. Stillwell [spelling?] was the manager of the A&P store. And Mr. James was the meat manager; he cut all the meat [inaudible—could be “in bulk”?]. And now that's the Decatur—DeKalb Federal. And then we had four drugstores. And Dr. Tatum's was right over here. And that's where all the teenagers

hung out. I don't know how he stood it all those years. No wonder he died early [*audience laughter*]. All of them at Tatum's. And even I, with all my children, if they needed some cough medicine or something, I'd just go ask Dr. Tatum. He was my doctor, and I loved him. And Dr. Tatum, bless his heart—I think they all worked themselves to death during the war, because it was all left to them.

And the—how many of you remember the Decatur streetcar coming down here and going around the Square? Lord, I don't know why I can't remember that. I guess I caught it, but I just was so—had so many other things going on, I didn't register. But anyway, it did [go around the Square]. And so they tell me, because I have this DeKalb book that has the streetcar line coming here.

And then the Decatur Bank & Trust was right over here [*pointing*] on the corner—Mr. Battle and Mr. [inaudible—sounds like “Harold” or “Hallowell”?] Green [Greene?] and [inaudible—could be Alan?] Long. And then Dr. Alsobrook was our dentist, and he killed himself with [overwork]—you know, all these folks that were left [at home during World War II] really had to work harder; everybody else was gone. And then I shall never forget this, when Roy Blount was on the Board of Education, and he taught the Sunday school class after he had to make that big decision to integrate and put all of the Negroes into the high school [*off-camera, only partially audible comment from JAMES MACKAY*]. And Roy said, “And we had to make that decision, we had to vote on it, and I didn't hear from one of you.” You know, we just sort of take it for granted, leave it to someone else.

And then the library was upstairs in the city hall. And the books were all over the floor, and now we have this—well, now, we've had it for years, the library—but [inaudible] upstairs. And then, of course, Bailey's Shoe Shop, that shoed all of our children. We had to have a lot of half-soled back then and sewing them up and stitching them up. He was our shoe man. And Clark's [Music Store] will never change; still the same. [Inaudible] lovely conversations. And then Vernon Frank, who is just so active in Decatur; his flower shop there [inaudible]. And, of course, the Methodist church and the Baptist church and [inaudible] churches.

But—and, of course, Scottdale Mill, that kind of makes me sad that that's closed, but I used to go up there and get stuff made, draperies, and [inaudible]; and now—and DeKalb General [now DeKalb Medical Center] is twenty-five years old. And that is getting a seven-million-dollar diagnostic center. [Inaudible] it's just wonderful. I

mean, I just—when I think of the Decatur Sheraton—I can't wait for them to get started on that hotel! And the conference center—[*to off-camera audience member*] What's that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: [Inaudible comment]

MRS. FURSE [*to off-camera audience member*]: You don't? Well, now, I was riding with some—driving—with somebody to a meeting, a couple of my contemporaries, and we passed the Fidelity Bank. And she said, "Oh, I just think that is awful! I can't stand it!"

I said, "Well, I think it's wonderful." And she said—and I said, "What's wrong with it?"

And she said, "Well, it's just a monstrosity."

Well, of course, it does look like a monstrosity, you know, among the other little buildings that had been there so long, but so did the First National Bank. And so—and the planning of the conference center. I just think it's wonderful, and they promise that they'll have it [completed] by [the date of] the Democratic National Convention.

I think Decatur is—I have just learned to spell the word "ecstasy." And I go in ecstasy when I think of all of these great things that-- [*To audience, raising her hand*] Can anyone spell "ecstasy"? [*Audience laughter and inaudible comments*] Who can—who—

AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: E-C-T—

MRS. FURSE, *apparently pointing to CARL RENFROE in audience off-camera*: I know Carl can [*audience laughter*]. I [inaudible] for years, I would [try to] write "ecstasy," and then I would have to pick out another word. Just until Chuck-- Charles, my minister's son-in-law, told me how to spell "ecstasy." And I--so I just--I'm using it lavishly now. So I just think [inaudible] ecstasy. [*Responding to off-camera conversations*] What's the spelling? I know that Carl [Renfroe]—I know he can spell it.

Then we're [*pointing*] getting into [inaudible] the Watkins Building. And I can't [inaudible] they said they're going to start that right away. And then the [inaudible] City Hall. And does anybody know what the Stone House is? Isn't it Stone House?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS [*off-camera*]: Marble House.

MRS. FURSE: Marble House!

AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: It's across from the high school. There are eight lawyers in there.

MRS. FURSE: I think that is won-- This young woman did that restoring, and that was a tremendous job. It was—it had almost fallen apart. Just riff-raffs were living in it. But does anybody know—and, of course, I, coming from Savannah, and my father-in-law being a cotton factor—it was a cotton factor that built that Marble House for a summer home. When the mosquitos were biting, and it was [inaudible] hot and everything in Savannah, he'd bring his family up here. And I didn't know all these years—I didn't know, because it was just rundown and grown up so—but I was thrilled with--the DeKalb Historical Society made a trip—we were invited to go over there and tour it one day. And she—I'm so proud of this young woman doing that restoring.

And then, when someone said, "Well, now, we used to have four—four!—drugstores here on the corner, and they made a living; and now we don't have any." Well, have this darling little medicine shop down here that fills good prescriptions. And he's just so darling, I just love to go there. And it's just so [inaudible]. And we don't need a drugstore that carries all kind of other groceries and things.

Well, if we have time, I'll tell you another story. [*Receives confirmation from off-camera audience member that she has time.*] OK. Well, anyway, Steve used to—before he went into the army—the service—was called overseas—he was traveling, and it was just about as bad here because he was traveling all week; and sometimes he'd be gone for weeks at a time. He'd get home—and we had no car. Well, when he'd get in, we'd all go crazy; we all piled in the car. And this particular day we all piled in the car, and my sister-in-law was up from Savannah, and so we had a carload—and the dog. And so—the dog had to go along. Well, anyway, dropped John off—little John, who was about this tall—dropped him off in front of the dime store--when we had a dime store there—to run into the dime store, while we went into the feed store. Well, as soon as we opened the door, the dog was wild—it was sitting--jumped out. We had to chase the dog. And so we got back in the car [inaudible] and went straight home. And I [inaudible], and I said, "Where's John?" [*audience laughter*] John—little old John—was still standing there in front of the dime store [*audience laughter*].

But anyway—well, anyway—I just—we had a wonderful time, and I just want—I mean, I think my time is up [*audience applause*].

MRS. FURSE sits, off-camera, and an unidentified male AUDIENCE MEMBER rises and addresses the rest of the audience: I just want to explain why Ruby Davis was protesting that matter of the hotel. You know that they're saying they'll have it ready

for the Democratic Convention. Why? Because, as they explained before the Georgia State Legislature now in session to consider the bill to ban—have a law against—nude dancing in Georgia [*audience laughter*].

MR. MACKAY: In saloons.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *continuing*: And the objective has been, “Well, we want to have that by the time the Democrats come here because that’s where the money comes from” [*audience laughter*]. We are opposed to having licentiousness here in Decatur. We can’t do anything about it over in Atlanta; but if you get a convention center here, you’re going to have the—well, like I saw one time going down Edgewood [Avenue] into Atlanta, a big, long limousine with a white chauffeur in it, full of white whores, heading for the convention hotel, downtown Atlanta. We’ll have that here if you have that kind of people here. *AUDIENCE MEMBER sits; camera pans to MR. MACKAY.*

MR. MACKAY: Well, [*audience laughter, delayed response to the previous speaker*], as I understand it, the legislature passed a law banning nude dancing in places that sold alcohol. And then they added an amendment that it would not take effect until after the Democratic National Convention [*audience laughter*]. This reminds me of our late [inaudible]—well, I mean, I’ve dealt with Lester Maddox, who, Steve Mitchell told me, understood the heartbeat and thoughts of a great many Georgians. He was told of a hoochie-coochie dance that they had out at the Southeastern Fair; and, being an active governor, he [Lester Maddox] went out and saw the whole performance first and then went and swore out a warrant that put [*inaudible due to audience laughter*].

I want to thank SARAH FURSE for what, to me, has been a fascinating encounter of the life of a family across the half-century that you’ve lived here in Decatur. I think a lot of us identify with it because this is home. But we’ve lived in a century in which war and other affairs have brought us all over the world. And we’re going to have a copy of this [presentation] for the family, this [video]cassette. And it’s been a very special occasion. [*To Historical Society member Ruby Davis, off-camera in the audience*] We going, Ruby, to the courtroom?

MRS. DAVIS: Yes.

MR. MACKAY: There are refreshments. We want our honored guests to go in there. We hope you can linger and have some punch and cookies and talk to SARAH

FURSE. [*To MRS. FURSE and her family, off-camera*] But again, Sarah, and all the Furses, we thank you very much. [*Applause*]

END OF RECORDING