

WILLIAM BREEN
2012.3.53

Recording opens with the opening remarks and introduction by an unidentified gentleman standing in front of the audience.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: . . . was so very gracious and agreed to change the month from a month or two from now to this month. He did fuss at me a little bit about not giving him much time. But being as he is, I figured he could put it together very quickly. And I have some information about him. [*Displays thick, comb-bound softcover book.*] This is a sort of resume about him. I'm not going to read all of this. [*Audience laughter*] That would take all his time.

[*Reading from notes*] But he was the—William Breen was born in 1926 here in Decatur. He grew up here and attended Decatur High School and from Decatur to Boys' High—[*glances up at audience*] I expect we've got some folks here who know Boys' High—[*resumes reading*] and he graduated from there in 1943. He went into the Navy and served there, and he graduated from Georgia Tech with a B.S. in 1948 and a Bachelor of Architecture in 1949. He worked in St. Simons with an architectural firm and in Atlanta since [sic; means "until"?] 1955, when he started his own architectural practice [*glances up at audience*] I guess here in Decatur all that time. [*Resumes reading*] He's married to the former Betty Bond Matthews, and they have four grown children: William Breen III, Hannah Armstead [spelling?], Florence Allen [spelling?] Breen, and Bonnie Crichton [spelling?] and five grandchildren. [*Glances up at audience*] Is that—that's the right number?

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER possibly MR. BREEN, *off-camera*: No, six.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Six grandchildren—excuse me—since this was written. [*Resumes reading*] He was on the Decatur City Commission from '61 to 1970 and was the mayor in '69 and '70. He is a lifetime member of Decatur Presbyterian Church and is a member of the American Institute of Architects and is president of the Decatur Rotary Club from 1979 to '80. [*Leafing through the book; addresses audience*] And he's a fine architect, and some of his renditions are in this booklet up here. [*Inaudible*] you might want to look it over today; you might want to take a look at some of these pretty buildings he's done.

At any rate, we want to thank him for coming today [*voice trails off as he sets down book and moves off-camera*].

WILLIAM BREEN, *moving to front of room, on-camera*: Thank you, Johnny. Johnny came rather late in the week with the message that he wanted me to move up a month, but I agreed to it. He came in in a hurry one day and wanted some information. I apologize for giving you so much; it was uncalled for, because [inaudible] very pleasant group of knowledgeable people who already know more about it than I would want to try and tell you. With our “professional witness” out here in the audience, Mr. [Andrew] Robertson, and some of you other people, I’m afraid that I’m probably out of place up here.

I’ll tell you an interesting event that took place a few moments ago. Mr. Robertson was sitting—seated at a coffee table across the street, where I was present, and he said that he was planning to hang around a little bit longer today because he was waiting until four o’clock when he went to the “I—I—” [*to audience member, off-camera*] What is it?

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: “Remember.”

MR. BREEN: “We Remember Hour.” I remember, but I’m not sure what your official title is. And I said [to Mr. Robertson], “Well, who’s the speaker today?”—knowing that I was and realizing that he did not know that I was.

And he said, “Well, I don’t know, some lady whose name I cannot recall.” *Audience laughter* And we talked about the “I Remember Hour” for a few moments; and after a while he said, “To tell you the truth, after today I’m afraid they’re sort of going to get to the bottom of the barrel.” [*Audience laughter*] “Do you know who the speaker is today?”

MR. ROBERTSON, *from the audience, off-camera*: I stick to my statement. [*Audience laughter*]

MR. BREEN: Well, I must assert that I have to agree with him. [*Sits*] But anyway, I’m going to be comfortable as I can and see if I can get us along here. I started out thinking first about the time before 1926 when I was born. I will, just very briefly, hit some highlights. All of that’s in Caroline Clark McKinney’s book. [*To MR. ROBERTSON in audience, off-camera*] Caroline McKinney Clark’s book? Which is it, Mr. Robertson?

MR. ROBERTSON: It’s Clark.

MR. BREEN, *to general audience*: It’s Clark. Well, on the Fulton side I’m the daughter [sic] of Henrietta Fulton Breen. She was the middle child of Anna Rebecca Fulton and Thomas [inaudible—could be “N” or “M”?] Fulton. Thomas [N. or M.]

Fulton's father came to these parts from Virginia. He came to Athens first when he was a very young man with a tutor at the University of Georgia. He met the Hamiltons there, married one of their daughters, and came back here and purchased eleven acres, I think Caroline has reported, property between Avery Street and Columbia Drive now, which used to be Oak Street and before that—I've forgotten what they called it. [*Looks through notes.*] Before that—oh, Flat Shoals Road, I believe.

When I was born—well, I'll back up just a little bit. The story goes, the older of their three children, Sara[h?] Fulton, whom I am sure most of you know of anyway, Sara[h] is now in the Americana nursing Home. Her birthday was February 16, and I was there talking with her and going over some old times and trying to get her to tell me something, as I do each time I'm with her; and she was talking about her mother being away from home when the Strickland family moved into the Fulton family. Dr. Strickland was a minister, and their home burned down. And an announcement was made in the Baptist church here, where Thomas Fulton was attending; and he offered the hospitality of his home. His first wife had died some seven years prior, so the Stricklands moved in with him till they could do something about replacing their home. Anna Rebecca was away teaching school. She came home in the early spring, met Minister Fulton, fell in love with him, and they were married May the fifteenth. Now, that's nine months and one day before Sara[h]'s birthday, and Sara[h] confided in me that it might have been a very passionate spring [*audience laughter*]. She never knew. But that's the way that did happen, apparently, from all the stories that I've heard.

I grew up the first, I guess, six-and-a-half years of my life living upstairs in the apartment in that old home, which was built in 1968 [sic—means 1868] and purchased by Thomas Fulton—

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: 1868

MR. BREEN: Excuse me—1868. [*Laughing*] Thank you, I appreciate your—

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I wondered how that 1968 came up.

MR. BREEN: The Fultons had been there 101 years, I think. They moved there in 1888, stopped at 7:30