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## JOHN RIDLEY AND CAROLINE RIDLEY HOWARD

(brother and sister)

*CAROLINE RIDLEY HOWARD is the daughter-in-law of William Schley Howard, the wife of Pierre Howard, Sr., and the mother of Pierre Howard.*

*Recording starts shortly after the presentation has begun.*

JOHN RIDLEY: . . . that came along. Now, has anybody been here since 1913? Somebody--how about-- [*Several inaudible comments from off-camera audience*] How about 1918? All right, Tom--[*inaudible*] I've already sworn you to secrecy [*audience laughter*] [*Inaudible comments*] But Tom back there is a friend of long standing, and he could catch [*inaudible*] the tale right off quick, but I've sworn him to secrecy, so everything's all right.

I think the best way to start this little chat off is how we got started in Decatur. My father used to come out to his father's home on the streetcar, the old Decatur streetcar; and he saw the Mead place was for sale, up on Mead Road. And he watched the sign for a long time, going back and forth on the streetcar. And finally, about the time they took the sign down, he checked into it, and he bought that old place.

The architectural style I would say would be about early Halloween [*audience laughter*]. The house had a steeple on it, and it had a lot of oak trees around it, and even in the yard we picked up arrowheads in what we called the side yard. And it was a wonderful place for youngsters to live and raise. The house at first faced the Augusta Railroad, and one of my first memories is my grandmother waking us up in the morning and telling us it was time to get up. She said, "The train's gone by, it's 7:20, [*inaudible*] dusty, going to Augusty," and here we'd get up and listen to that train go by.

The old house that we lived in, the old Mead place, the first recollection that I have of it changing hands was when it went from a Mr. William Deering to Douglas C. Daniel [Daniell?] in 1852, and my father bought it from Mr. Mead in 1906 and later moved his bride out there. [*To CH*] But I don't think you were born the following year, were you? [*Audience laughter*] Well, Mead Road was Hopkins Street in those days, and you know, they moved this tremendous old house with one mule, and they turned it

around from facing the Augusta--I don't know why they did that--but they turned it around to face Hopkins Street. They used one mule to do it, and my grandmother made preserves the whole time [*audience expresses surprise; a few inaudible comments*]. But unfortunately it didn't. The old house was added to many, many times, I suppose. It had been there a long time, and there were seven of us who lived in that house. There were four women and three men: my grandmother, my grandfather, my two sisters, my mother and daddy, and me.

CAROLINE HOWARD: Took all of us to keep him straight [*audience laughter*].

JR: I know this, that the bathroom was built on the back of the house; and every time I'd get there, that thing was closed from the inside. I tell you, every time I'd get there, the door would close. And so when I built a home, which was down on Garden Lane here close by, the first thing I said, "We've got to have two bathrooms. That's all there is to it. I want one for myself." And so I--*[audience laughter]*.

Caroline and I were both—this being Caroline—Caroline and I were both born in that house on Mead Road, at 123 Mead.

CH: And John, I can remember—he doesn't know that I'm going to tell this, but I am. I didn't understand about having a little baby in the family; but mother--my grandmother called me one morning, and she said, "We have something to show you." And I walked in—I thought it was going to be something to eat or *[inaudible]* preserves or something, and here is this baby in a basket [*points to MR. RIDLEY*], and it was John. And I remember exactly how he looked. And then when my sister came home from Oakhurst School, I *[inaudible]* was sitting on the front porch, and I said, "Marty! Guess what we have!" We had an aunt who was always coming to see us, and she'd bring a treat. And Marty said, "Peppermint candy from Aunt Claire!" [*Audience laughter*] And I said, "No, we have a baby brother."

JR: Well, I think they were disappointed from that day on that it wasn't peppermint candy [*audience laughter*]. Aunt Claire—she *[CH]* mentioned Aunt Claire that used to come to see us. And Aunt Claire is the woman for whom Clairemont *[Avenue]* was named. And you probably heard the story of old Dr. Ridley, had a place down here on Clairemont; and they wanted to pave the road coming into Decatur and asked him for some land. And he said, "Yeah, I'll give you the land if you'll name it, name the street, after my oldest daughter." And that was Claire Ridley. And that's where Clairemont comes from.

And I remember between East Lake--East Lake, the crossing up there at East Lake and Mead Road, there was a tall bank. [*To audience member named Tom, last name unknown*] Tom, do you remember that bank?

TOM \_\_\_ [*from audience, off-camera*]: Sure do.

JR: There were some caves cut in that bank and some sculpture--wonderful stuff all up and down there. I remember that bank very well, and I don't know how they ever cut it down, to tell you the truth. But up at one end, up near Mr. William Schley Howard's house up there, at the East Lake crossing, there was a big Purina Foods store. And I remember as a child that the most dramatic thing that ever happened in Decatur was a fire that we had up there at that Purina Foods store. It burned and smoldered for I don't know how long. I also remember--now, Caroline married--Mr. [Pierre] Howard--Mr. William Schley Howard, who was an attorney here--I don't know how many of you know. How many of you knew him? [*Inaudible audience comments*]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Too many [*audience laughter*]

JR: She married the youngest son, Pierre, and Schley was kind of a mechanical genius. Schley was an attorney; but Lord have mercy, he knew mechanics better than anybody I ever saw, to the extent that one day one of those people that worked at the Purina Food place had a Model T Ford, and after Halloween one night, that Ford was on top of the Purina place [*audience laughter*]. On top of it! Now, how they got it down, I'll never know. There were a lot of things they used to do Halloween that were kind of profitable. I remember one fellow in the neighborhood that used to take the lawn furniture, and he'd run it to the top of a flagpole and then climb the flagpole and tie her up. And nobody could get the furniture down except this fellow, and he would always get paid to do it [*audience laughter*]. But that happened--

CH: I want to tell them about the first time you dressed up. We dressed John up for Halloween. We were all so excited, you know, because the little boy in the family was going out for Halloween [*audience laughter*]. Everybody in the family worked on him and put this on him and put that on him. And they said, "Now, John look in the mirror, see how you look." He screamed so loud [*audience laughter; rest of CH's comment inaudible over audience laughter*]. [*JH also makes inaudible comment during audience laughter.*]

JR: During the Depression there was a lot of hobo activity along there-- [*inaudible*] everywhere was hobo activity, wherever a railroad ran. But along that

railroad, there was a great deal of hobo activity, and they had our house marked some way, I'm sure, because time and time and time again there would be somebody at the back door for food. *[Laughs]* Now, we didn't have as much food as they did, but they always got something there. And my grandmother would make them stay outside--I remember that very well. But they always got something to eat, and they would go on their way after it was all over. But there was a lot of nice folks traveling around in those days. I'm sure a lot of you remember that. Good people traveling those rails, trying to find a job in various places.

CH: I want to tell them about the gypsies.

JR: Tell them about the gypsies.

CH: John's so young, he didn't remember about the gypsies, but I remember--

JR: Let me say this: I have said now that *[comments directed at or about CH rendered inaudible by audience laughter]*

CH: *[First part of comment inaudible; audience laughter]* but a lot of what I know is about him, and he was privileged to go places that I couldn't go because my grandmother and my mother were trying so hard to make ladies out of their daughters that John would get to go places that he'll tell you about that Marty and I couldn't go. And I remember one time I wanted to go up to Oakhurst--had new drugstore up there. It was the only one in the community. We were so excited about the drugstore on the corner of East Lake Drive and College Avenue. And my grandmother said, "Well, it will be all right. Now, when you cross East Lake Drive, be very careful, because there are a lot of vehicles coming down East Lake Drive." They were on their way to East Lake Country Club, and you know, there were people *[inaudible]* about every night" *[audience laughter]*. And she said, "And when you go down College Avenue, I understand there is a barber shop--a new barber shop--up past the Howards' house. Don't look in the barber shop *[audience laughter]*. Don't look in barber shops" *[audience laughter]*. *[Next sentence inaudible]*

*[First few words inaudible]*; I guess most of you remember where Patillo Memorial Methodist Church was on Feld Avenue. There was some vacant land there, and every once in a while, I can remember on two occasions, real gypsies with all the costumes or whatever it was they wore came and camped there. And they would come down to our backyard to get water out of the spigot in the backyard. Incidentally, I thought that word for so long was "spicket," *[audience laughter]* *[inaudible]* how to

spell “spicket.” And now I still say “spicket.” And then they would--if they came to the back door for anything, Ma, who was our grandmother, would give them some maybe cornbread or sweet potatoes or something. But they didn’t bother anybody, and they would finally drive off [inaudible]. They were very polite. To think we had gypsies in Decatur! We have some people now that might pass for gypsies [*audience laughter*].

JR: So Tom, you mentioned Mr. William Schley Howard. There’s a picture of him downstairs in one of the offices, I noticed, and well there might be. He was quite a character. He knew law, but he knew human nature so much better than he knew law. And it used to worry me that he was a criminal lawyer and defense attorney a great deal of the time, and it bothered me that he would defend these people. I asked him one time, I said, “[Inaudible], why do you defend these people?” Well, he explained to me about American jurisprudence, that a man was innocent until he was proved guilty and so forth, and it was his duty to do it. Well, I asked him about one of the fellows that he was defending. I said, “Is that fellow crooked, Mr. Howard?”

He said, “Johnny, that fellow is so crooked that he could steal the sweetening out of a chocolate cake and never disturb the icing” [*audience laughter*].

And there was a great tale about him, too. He was a friend of a judge, and the judge was a friend of his, but they [inaudible] didn’t like each other at all. And on one occasion they called a case of Mr. Howard’s, and Mr. Howard wasn’t in court. And the judge saw a chance to sock it to Mr. Howard, so he said, “Mr. Howard, your case”--when he came in, said, “you were late.” And said, “Your case has been called, and you weren’t here when it was called, and I’m just going to fine you ten dollars for contempt of court.”

And Mr. Howard was pretty quick on his feet, and he said, “Judge, ten dollars wouldn’t show my contempt for this court. [*Next comment inaudible due to audience laughter*]”

JR: One of the places--[*To CH*] you can break in at any time, now. [*CH makes inaudible reply.*] But anyway, one of the places that was so great and around which so much activity transpired was Oakhurst Elementary School. We had a good year. Actually we had a good football team, too. Tom was on it. [*Scattered laughter among audience*] “Ashes to ashes, sand to sand. If you want a good-looking papa, get an Oakhurst man” [*Audience laughter*] [First several words inaudible] yellow and green, and we had a

football team. And [name inaudible] was coach of that football team. But it was a great place.

And the thing I remember about Oakhurst School was, it seems to me, we were always trying to get up money to buy a curtain for the auditorium [*audience laughter*]. I don't know if we ever got that curtain. [Inaudible comment] But anyway, just to show you some of the things that went on there, in an effort to put that curtain up, we'd have community plays. Tom remembers [inaudible] being there? He was very talented. His whole family was talented. They were all musically inclined. He played the steel guitar, Connie played the guitar, his wife played the piano, Jimmy played the drums-- Jimmy was my age, and the two daughters sang. Well, he just had a field day when the time would come to have a community play to make money for that curtain. The only thing was that, no matter how many times he was on the stage, he told the same jokes, it seemed.

CH: And his daughter sang the same song. [*Utters two high-pitched syllables; word or words unintelligible. Sounds like "Mattee!"*] [*Audience laughter, obscuring her next comments.*] They were lovely people. And they [inaudible]. They had a cow. I bet Tom remembers. Tom, we're bringing you into this, because you were there.

JR: We're trying to be nice to you, Tom. We don't want you to [rest inaudible].

CH: I wanted [inaudible], we didn't have air-conditioning back then. Now, I'm paving the way for John to tell the story about the cow that came in.

JR: Well, I do know that the Burnetts [spelling?] lived across the street. I think that was the Fenns' [spelling? Could be Venns?] cow. It seems to me that they had a cow that got loose, and had a fancy for eating curtains. And the curtains were gone on one side of the house; the cow ate them [rest inaudible; *audience laughter*].

CH: [First part of comment inaudible] curtains came out--I was out in the front yard--and here is this cow eating curtains [inaudible] Burnetts [spelling?] [rest inaudible]. Can you imagine cows wandering around Decatur? They did.

JR: Imagine Oakhurst School and the [auditorium] curtain. Well, in an effort to raise money for the curtain, they always had a play. And it seemed to me that one of the Ridley children was always on the stage. Now, it wasn't because we were good thespians at all. It was because my grandmother and my mother were both excellent costume-makers [*laughter*]. And they dressed us up in a lot of different costumes for a lot of different plays. But one of the things I remember so vividly, my mother had

heard our parts so many times that we would look out in the audience when we were on the stage, and she'd be saying every word with us [*audience laughter*], every single word. And if we ever faltered or anything, we could just check with her and go right on. So I had to bring that up. I remember, too, that they used to have silent movies to raise money for the curtain [*audience laughter*]: Tom Mix, Rin Tin Tin--I remember them just as well--and the silent movie programs that they'd have at the school.

CH: What about the candy pull?

JR: Well, the candy pull, that was--you could take the candy home and give it to your grandmother, and she would butter the top of a marble-top--clean marble-top table, and she would take care of it the way it should be done. It was made to turn white from this--sort of looked like wax when you first got it--but when you pulled it, and everything put on that marble-top table and cut it, it was real nice and just the way it should be. It was terrible on fillings, I remember that [*audience laughter*]. But it was awful nice, the way she did it. However, if you got the least bit impatient about taking your candy home and you ever got your paper on that candy away from the powder that was on the paper, I guarantee you, you ate the paper [*audience laughter*]. It never came off again.

CH: You don't remember glassblowers. I must have been in an advanced class.

JR: That was before my time.

CH: Anyway, we would have a glassblower, and it was just magic. Because for years and years, I have a little reindeer that had a calendar inside. How many of you--surely somebody has had a glassblower at school?

JR: You're the oldest one here [*audience laughter*].

CH: [*CH makes inaudible comment.*] I wish that I'd had [*rest inaudible*] Anyway, it was another way to raise money for the curtain.

JR: Well, one of the things that I remember, too, about Oakhurst School was that when I was in the first grade, [*name inaudible--could be Mamie Barnes or Bonds?*], the principal of the school, came down one day and herd me give a story to the class about Androcles and the lion. Oh, that was great. I wish y'all could've heard me [*audience laughter*]. Anyway, I had a tie on that day, and I think [*Mamie Bonds? Barnes?*] thought the whole thing was cute. And she thought maybe what we ought to do was for me to go up to the sixth grade, Ms. Whittenburg's [*spelling?*] room--Caroline was in there--and tell them about Androcles and the lion. Well, they took me to the

office, and they brought Caroline--now, I felt awfully important--they brought Caroline down to the office and asked if she thought it'd be all right if I told a story to the sixth grade, and she allowed as how it would be.

CH: I had to comb his hair. [*Audience laughter and inaudible comment from CH*]

JR: She straightened my tie, and she pulled my tie up pretty tight. I got through Androcles and the lion, but right after that, I got terribly sick. I couldn't [inaudible]. What had happened was, she'd nearly hung me! [*Audience laughter*] She pulled my tie up so tight--and I remember that they told me I could go home, and that was great, because I got out of school the rest of the day.

CH: Mother undid his tie, and the color came back [*audience laughter*].

JR: Another thing that happened at Oakhurst School and was I think worth mentioning and that was one day my sister--my older sister was in the room at the time--and I believe it was sixth grade--a little boy brought a loaded pistol to school. And I don't know how it happened, but it went off at school. Nobody was hurt, fortunately. But the point I wanted to bring out was boys do change. And the boy that instigated that explosion later became a very popular and very capable chief of police here in Decatur. Many of you knew Luther Koontz [spelling?] Spinks--that's who it was. [*Beginning of comment inaudible*] tell it, since Luther's passed on.

[*Inaudible exchanges among audience members*]

CH: I think he was proud of that.

JR: I'm glad it didn't anybody.

CH: I think he was a good aim, that's what I think.

JR: Well, one rather entire--talk about people changing--one rather incorrigible pupil that we had, I remember, in the fifth grade, they couldn't get him out of the seat with the girls--he was sitting with the girls. And while he was sitting with the girls, he would sandpaper shotgun stocks. He was in business, here in Decatur. I'm not going to tell you who he was, but I know him; I can prove it.

Another thing about Decatur that was a great joy was the fact that we used to have a very high social affair over at the Candler Hotel. It was one of the year's biggest affairs in Decatur, really elaborately written up in the *DeKalb New Era* at the time. And that was the press breakfast that they used to have over there. Mrs. Lindsay [spelling?] wrote a column for the *DeKalb New Era*, and Mr. Warner Hall was the son of the owner, who was J. A. Hall--first VanDyke beard I ever saw in my life, Mr. Hall had. But the



reason they had this breakfast was because there were children in all the different elementary schools that would write up the news for their schools. And I remember Henrietta Thompson, the druggist's wife--I mean the druggist's daughter--and I used to write up the news. And when they had this press breakfast at the Candler Hotel, I remember the Candler Hotel had just been built, and man, I was--we moved out into high society then, because people came from Winnona Park School and Glennwood School and [inaudible] School, and we were right in there amongst them. And I remember names like Fenton Dancy [spelling?] and Carlton Caruso and Katherine Donahue [spelling?] from all over Decatur, all these people, and it was really exciting. But it was a great meeting that they used to have for us at the DeKalb school [sic]. Guyton Christopher I remember--Guyton Christopher later went down following a Jap fleet in the Pacific in a patrol bomber. But a lot of these people have really risen to great heights.

I remember, too, speaking of great heights--in Decatur Junior High, [to CH] which was one of your favorite topics, and I want you to say something-- [CH makes inaudible comment, followed by audience laughter.] and Decatur Junior High, Wheat Williams was the principal, and Wheat Williams used to say, "Now, I want all the boys that's going to be in the declamation contest to put up your hands." Well, my hand always went up, because I knew I'd make brownie points with Mama if my hand was up. But I hated myself from the time my hand went up until [inaudible]. Because everybody knew it was either Cliff Fulcher or Robert Rogers going to win our declamation contest. One of them was coached by Dr. Magaughey [spelling?] over at the Presbyterian church, and the other was coached by Dr. Moncrief over at the Baptist church [audience laughter]. Both of them ended up with their hands pointed up, and they always won [audience laughter]. One would win one time, and one the other. I was also an also-ran, and I guess one reason I was an also-ran was because Mother got into a conversation with somebody in the back of the room, and her lips weren't moving right [audience laughter].

CH: And I [inaudible]. I just sat there and let John, because I can't get a word in edgewise, you see how it is. [Inaudible name--last name could be "Field"?] was always in a declamation contest, just like John. And one topic that he had was "Is Smoke a Nuisance?" And I didn't know what he was talking about. We didn't have smoke around here, but he was worried about the fact that we were going to have a smoke

nuisance. He's probably responsible for the emissions sticker we have [*audience laughter*] in 1928. And he was known as "Smoke Nuisance Field." I always--

JR: One of the really great things about Decatur was the fact that Eastern Airlines--a big part of Eastern Airlines--started with the aid of a Decatur pilot, a fellow named Gene Brown. Remember Gene Brown? Had a brother named Massey Brown, lived, I think, on Adams Street. And I remember a picture coming out in the paper, and I thought it was great, of Massey Brown and a little dog watching the--looking up at the spotlight as though they were watching Gene come by. Well, he used to come by every night. He came by in a Pitcairn airplane, open cockpit, and he flew, as the expression went, by the seat of his pants, from Atlanta, Georgia, to New York. And he carried the first mail that was carried there. Started in Florida and came through Atlanta, and he carried the mail to New York for the first time; and that was early in the career of Eastern Airlines.

Now, Gene Brown was great. He was a great pilot. And he was a young fellow, and when he was quite young, we used to have a teacher in the second grade named Mrs. Perrine [spelling?]. I remember Mrs. Perrine used to fuss if any children came to school having had a breakfast of pancakes. Do you remember that? She'd fuss at them.

CH: Don't ever give children pancakes. Wait until the holidays, the children can have pancakes then--they're thick-headed [*audience laughter*].

JR: She was like that. She didn't like pancakes, and her husband didn't like airplanes. And their son was sort of a protégé of Gene Brown, and between Avondale and Decatur, there was a great multitude of sign boards in those days. This goes back a long time. A lot of sign boards along the way there, a cow pasture or two. And they found out--Gene and Mrs. Perrine--both found out that they were selling some World War I planes down in Florida, and Gene went down and got a plane and flew it back, and they kept it behind those sign boards out behind Avondale and Decatur. Mr. Perrine didn't like the idea too much about his son going up there in that newfangled gadget. One day he started out with a bucket of gasoline and a match; he was going to get rid of it. And they had to hold him--some of the boys physically detained him while Gene Brown got in the plane and flew it to safety. And that story was told to me and sworn by Herb Fincher [spelling?] not long ago. [Inaudible comment] Another thing--[to CH] you're not talking.

CH, *looking down at printed page*: I know, I'm going by this program here, you see. [*To audience, pointing at JR*] To see if he tells it right. [*Audience laughter*]

JR: We used to enjoy the churches so much in Decatur. One reason, it's where our friends were at the churches. I remember that--now, Andy [audience member], in the paper the other day, it said I was president of the Royal Ambassadors of the Baptist Church. That isn't so; I never really aspired to that lofty position. I did join the Royal Ambassadors, because some of the boys invited me to join. And I figured that ice cream at Mrs. Beck's house down there on Clairemont was [inaudible] deal, so I joined the Royal Ambassadors. I was an altar boy at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Sunday, and I used to go to Epworth League, taught the Presbyterian bible school over at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church, went to BYPU on occasion at the Baptist church. Now, in those days, instead of Baptist Young People's Union, we called it "Buy Your Preacher's Underwear" [*audience laughter*]. My father said, "Son, this ecclesiastical jaunt you're on doesn't fool me at all." He said, "I know you just want to be on the side of the picnic." And I answered [inaudible]. But I did get in a lot of picnics, and I did have a wonderful time. I remember the social hour they used to have at Holy Trinity Church, Reverend Holden, little bitty preacher. I remember him quite well.

CH: I've got to tell about my social life at that time, because it was connected with all three of the churches. And I was an Episcopalian and went into St. Luke's on the streetcar, and it took an hour to get there. And I just thought, "To go to church right here in your front yard would just be wonderful." So I enjoyed all those churches there, and for the same reason that John did. And it seems to me that Episcopalians had a lot of possum hunts, but the Presbyterians had hayrides [*audience laughter*]. So we would go on hayrides. We'd meet over at the Presbyterian church, and I remember the first time I had a date with Pierre, and his mother let him have her car, and he drove over there. He was just learning to drive, I guess. And he drove over to the Presbyterian church, and then we all got in the big truck they had full of hay. Now, I know you all think you're not as old as I am, but you've been on hayrides [*audience laughter*]. Then we'd go out to Stone Mountain and have a weenie roast. And that was it. Oh, and it was wonderful, just wonderful. [*Laughs*]

JR: I remember my grandfather was a wonderful, tall, white-haired, white-mustached man, like every boy had for a granddaddy. He was about twelve years old when the Civil War broke out. He never talked down to me; always talked to me on the

same level, and I always thought that was wonderful. But I enjoyed him so much. And if there was ever such a thing as the Hereafter, I've got a lot of questions I want to ask him, I really do. But I remember when we went to get a haircut. Now, right around the corner there was a barber shop on Mead Road. There was a lot of high-flying institutions around Mead Road--for example, Gasoline Alley [*audience laughter*], filling station. And then there was College Avenue Pharmacy and then Mr. Wellborn's grocery store. Mr. Wellborn was--had sort of a game leg. [*To off-camera office member*] Tom, you remember him?

TOM \_\_\_\_, *off-camera*: Yes, I do [*audience laughter*].

CH: Tom, you remember Mrs. Pope?

TOM \_\_\_\_, *off-camera*: Sure do. [*Both Tom and JR speak at the same time; inaudible.*] [*Audience laughter*]

JR: Tom used to [*inaudible*] for balls over in the yard [*inaudible*] heart trouble getting the balls out of it. But anyway--

TOM \_\_\_\_, *off-camera*: I remember Mr. Dozier, too.

JR: Do you? [*Inaudible*] We called him Pa. He was kind of a--well, he never really get over the fact that he'd been raised as a young man to run a plantation, and that's the truth. After the Civil War, nothing ever really suited him as well as that did. His gardens were the most beautiful things you ever saw, and I remember to this day how wonderful he used to make his garden, and how he would run his lines--he'd run a cord and plant by that cord, and his lines--his gardens were just beautiful.

CH: Tell them about the figures--you remember the figures he would have running this way and that way? Line--

JR: Well, I remember that he could take--now, I had every algebra teacher for freshman algebra in Georgia [*audience laughter*]. I [*inaudible*] some of them gave up teaching forever after I was in class with them [*audience laughter*]. I did have a grandfather that was a mathematician. He had a stroke of genius, because he could take three columns of figures and go over them like this, and put the answer down at the bottom when he got through. And to me that was the most marvelous thing. My sister--my older sister, not this one--Marty, my older sister, [*name inaudible*], taught math at Decatur High. And she said the reason for it was because he taught her math. I always said Marty, my oldest sister, got the brains, she [*Caroline*] got the looks, and I was heavier than both of them put together [*audience laughter*].

Now, Tom, here's one I know you'll remember. I'm going to talk for a friend of mine named Richard Bowen.

TOM \_\_\_\_, *off camera*: He had a cow, too [*audience laughter*].

JR: He had a cow named Daisy. And he was the best shot with the milk. He used to have a cat that would sit by him, he would--right in the cat's mouth [*continuous audience laughter*]. I'm wondering [rest of comment inaudible over laughter.]

My mother used to make the finest whole-wheat biscuits I have ever tasted, and to this day I have never tasted biscuits like it, although I may look like I've had several [*audience laughter*]. But I used to love the sweet potatoes that Richard Bowen's family would cook. I don't know what she did to them--she greased them some way, and they were just the best--the greatest sweet potatoes you ever tasted. In those days they'd always have a place where they would put some food for some of the children; if the child got hungry, they could run and get something to eat. They had it in there in the warmer in the stove. And I said, "Richard, you got any of those sweet potatoes?" And he said, "Yeah, if you've got some of those whole-wheat biscuits, I got the sweet potatoes" [*audience laughter*], and we'd swap. He had a great desire to push a wagon. Now, I never really understood that. I used to like to ride, and so Richard would push, and I enjoyed that thoroughly. Of course, he ended up with some pretty strong legs and was on track team, as well as I remember.

But we did a dumb thing. I kind of hate to tell you about this, but I've got to. Richard Bowen's mother was very conscientious about raising chickens. In those days you could get up early in the morning and hear roosters all over Decatur. I remember I had a paper route--get up early on Sunday morning, and I remember I'd just hear a rooster, one right after the other. You don't hear those anymore. So Mrs. Bowen raised chickens. She had things done [inaudible], because she very carefully wrote on the eggs when, you know, when she gathered them and so forth, put them under the hens, and Richard and I got to talking about that one day. We were talking about a lot of worldly problems [*audience laughter*], and we got to talking about those stupid chickens that took them two weeks to hatch those eggs. We figured we could do it--now, we were little bitty things--we figured we could do it in much shorter length of time than those chickens. So we made us a nest [*audience laughter*] [inaudible phrase] sand in the backyard, Richard Bowen's backyard, and we put those eggs in there. Now, we did put up a good battle getting them. I remember [inaudible phrase] chickens

[*audience laughter*], and [inaudible phrase]. Well, we got them, and we put them in the sand, and we sat on them [*laughter*]. Well, it wasn't very successful [*audience laughter*]. Mrs. Bowen came out about that time, and she saw the mess we'd made setting them eggs in the sand. You know, that was terrible [*audience laughter*]. And she went to the telephone to call Mother, said she was sending me home. And Richard got a licking before I left there. Well, Mother popped me into some hot water, and I thought it was the wrong thing to do, because I could feel those little chickens crawling [inaudible phrase] chicken mites. But we did get in that chicken house, so we did have chicken mites, and we didn't think--by God, I got a good licking, too, before it was over. That's the way it happened. Richard Bowen and I really tried to hatch some eggs [*audience laughter*]. [*Inaudible question from the audience.*] Well, we did have--Decatur was kind of country. I remember when they had wagons around DeKalb, around the courthouse here and had tollbooths.

CH: And John doesn't remember this, because he was still a baby and couldn't get up to the room. But my grandfather, which he called me Dumplins, and he would say, "Dumplins, if you'll go to bed early tonight, you can get up in the morning and get with me on the streetcar"--which was just so exciting for me--"over to the courthouse to the curb market." And we had the garden, but there were certain things Pa was interested in, and he wanted to see other people there produced these things. And the wagons--isn't there a sign down there still about the wagons coming into the courthouse square? Anyway, we were going, and all these stalls would be there with their wagons filled with produce. And I guess they would come [inaudible] from everywhere. And it just looked like a big thing to me. And I guess it must have been seven or eight wagons [*audience laughter*].

JR: Well, I started to talk about the barber shop that was around the corner a while ago, and I could have got my hair cut there--and cheaper. But my grandfather liked Mr. Alston [Austin?], who was over here on the East Court Square. One of the barbers over there was a fellow named Brooks, who later became a bailiff here in the courthouse. But my grandfather used to walk me--he was a long-legged fellow, and I've always been built kind of low to the ground, and it was hard keeping up with him. But he would walk me all the way from Mead Road, which was a mile by whistle stop from Mead Road to Agnes Scott. They blew the whistle from the place. And he'd walk me over to get the haircut, and I remember it well, sure do.

And our Pa also taught me how to milk [*audience laughter*]. We had three--three little shacks on the place, one of them we later turned into a pigeon run for me. I used to--the Howards up the way had a big barn and had a lot of pigeons in it, and I just absolutely filled up the pigeon run with pigeons, because I would swap Pierre information that was said about him at the supper table [*audience laughter*]. Man, I had that thing [*audience laughter*] [rest of comment inaudible]. Anyway, the second little cabin there was something else, and then the third one was the milking--was where we milked the cow. My grandfather had a hat that he'd he put on inside of the milking shack. Had a little platform for the cow to stand on. The cow ate out of a sink--they'd rigged up a sink as a trough for the cow. And there was another thing, they had the platform, and they had a place so that if anything of a gustatorial nature happened while the cow was there, nothing happened to the milk [*audience laughter*]. Now, this day, a Jersey cow--you can take a Jersey cow and sweet feed and cow manure, and you can take away any one of the three, it messes up that odor, I don't care what you do [*audience laughter*]. But that was one of the [inaudible] fragrances--fragrance, it was a fragrance. That's what I [inaudible] [*audience laughter*], and I always felt that if you disturbed it, the prescription, you just ruined the whole thing. Well, what else are we going to talk about?

CH: Well, you want to say some more about Decatur [inaudible]?

JR: No, you can talk about that some.

CH: You go ahead. I want you to talk about the time we had a clean-up campaign in Decatur.

JR: We used to have--that was another--yeah, that was another community affair that carried a lot of attention here in Decatur. We had a clean-up [inaudible--could be "paint-up"?] campaign. And I remember that we had a big parade, and I remember Mr. E. T. Bowen over on Mead Road built a little dollhouse, which he put on a big truck, and Owen [spelling?] Stanton [spelling?] and I put on bib overalls and a straw hat, and we painted that thing for a couple of hours around Decatur.

CH: I thought John was so darling. He lost his front teeth, I remember that.

JR: I can prove that, because I went to Dease's [spelling? Could be Deese's?]

CH: He went to Dease [Deese?] studio. How many of you all remember Mr. Dease [Deese?]? He took our pictures over there, on the second floor of the Weeks [spelling?] Building, I guess it was.

JR: I [inaudible] Jake [Jay?] went over for a shoeshine.

CH: That's where I first saw Jay [Jake?]. But anyway, that was a fun [inaudible]. Made everybody clean up. And you know, speaking of the Weeks [spelling?] Building, we have somebody in this room who used to ride with Weeks [spelling?] delivery van. Hazel Rutland, tell about riding with the delivery van to deliver the groceries for Weeks [spelling?] grocery store.

HAZEL RUTLAND, *in audience*: [First few words of comment inaudible] cooks in town. Unlike John I was a backdoor girl with the cooks that usually didn't wear any shoes, and they had the best cornbread and sweet potatoes, and so that's how I knew old Tom that delivered all the, you know, the groceries to the house. You just picked up the telephone and tell Mr. Weeks what you needed every morning, and then here comes Tom. And I didn't have anything to do, so I just went around with them [*audience laughter*].

JR: That's one of the wonderful things about Decatur, you ask friends--you're friends with everybody. I remember so well Old Red, who was--well, he wasn't Black. He was sort of a high yellow--but he had freckles, and he was one of the most wonderful people. He used to let me drive his ice wagon. Atlantic Ice and Coal Company used to have some huge Spanish mules in front of these ice wagons. And the ice wagons themselves were noble structures. Those mules, oh, my Lord--they were the most wonderful things, and you could get up on the seat, and Red let you ride. It didn't make any difference whether he held the reins or not, because the mule knew where he was going. And he would stop and then--

CH: How would he holler "Ice," John?

JR: Well, Red [inaudible phrase] holler, "IIIIIIICE!" [*Audience laughter*] And he would chop off some ice, and he would say, "Would you like some ice?" Big chunk.

CH: Everybody in the neighborhood, girls and boys, would get on that ice wagon. I can remember now, it had wide boards in the bottom of it, you could [rest of comment inaudible]. We ate ice all the way down the street. It was wonderful.

JR: Used to put croker sacks over it, and one of the best smells in the world is croker sacks with ice. I've talked about some funny things that I enjoyed smelling, but I enjoyed smelling that [rest inaudible].

CH: Well, my best friend was the trash man. You know, John and I were talking about how friendly everybody was, and he just mentioned that. And everybody who



had anything to do with Decatur or lived here, we just all felt related to each other, and for a long time we had the same trash man. And I had a dollhouse. We had a double garage, because Mother and Daddy owned the house next door, and they would rent the garage--or it went with the house if the people had a car. Well, for a while the people did not have a car, so Daddy gave me the key to the garage, and I had a dollhouse. It was the most wonderful thing; I was so excited. So one day the trash man came, and I had fixed everything, and I wanted him to see it, because we talked every day when he came. And seems to me they came every day. [Inaudible comment from another audience member] [Inaudible] in Decatur now, but [rest inaudible].

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Taxes were lower, too [*audience laughter*].

CH: He thought that dollhouse was the finest thing, and so in a day or two, when he came back, he brought me a black pocketbook that had come out of the garbage, because [rest of comment inaudible over audience laughter]. And I know Mother didn't--she thought, well, I don't know about that, but anyway, I thought that was so friendly and so nice. It was. And then--I don't think my mother ever went to a grocery store. I never remember Mother going into a grocery store, because she would call Mr. Fleming--remember Castles [spelling?] and Fleming?--in Kirkwood would call and get Mother's order, and then they would deliver every afternoon. And the wagon--would you call it a covered wagon? I remember that it had canvas over the top.

JR: Well, that was--I don't remember that. I remember they had a wagon. [Inaudible comment--possibly "with the largest cookies ever"?].

CH: And I thought it was Mr. Fleming, I called the driver. I just thought he was everything. I thought he was Mr. Fleming.

JR: That was Luke. That was Luke.

CH: And John always had a hard time getting--I remember those wonderful cinnamon rolls [inaudible].

JR: I always asked her to get those, and they asked Luke if they had them when he came up the side yard. That was an amazing thing, to hear Mother, and she always had kind of a loud voice. And I could hear her on the telephone in the front hall. We had a front hall and a back hall, door between, like most houses did, and I could hear her talking to Mr. Fleming out at Castles and Fleming, or Mr. Castles, whoever it was. And Margaret and I would be sure and holler, just as sure as she got on the line, "Be

sure and get cinnamon rolls!" And Luke would always bring them. But those were friendly days with all--you knew all the delivery people.

I remember when the American Legion here in Decatur sponsored a real good money-making idea. I don't think they were trying to buy curtains or anything, either [audience laughter]. They wanted to make some money, and they got up a bunch of ponies, and I can remember their names: Big Christmas, Little Christmas, Lady Fingers, Scottie, Bucky. And if you led the ponies around the yard, around a certain yard three times, you got a free ride. What they were doing was getting money from all the little kids in town that couldn't ride the ponies by themselves, they had boys riding them around, just leading the ponies by the halter, and they weren't paying the boys anything, was they just let them ride. But I remember what a wonderful thing that was and how much we enjoyed it and for a long time, a long time. Mr. Maynard was the man that ran the ponies, and we had ponies in Decatur. And I remember the gas company used to hire them from time to time for an Old Stove Roundup. Man, that was really something. You'd get to ride ponies all day, all over town, with a big hat on them, all that kind of stuff. Old Stove Roundup, it was really great.

We used to have a lady in Decatur named Mrs. [inaudible--sounds like Jeela Abby or Addy or Eddie?] that lived up on College Avenue. She had a fine son, James, who later became an architect. Mrs. Addy[?] could do two things. One was that she could teach music, and she could make the best lemon cheese cake I think I ever tasted. She taught my sisters, both my sisters. One of them learned "The Blind Harpist," and this one learned "Sunny Fields." Took seven years, both of them took seven years [audience laughter]. Now, this one was pretty good at "Casey Jones." She could play that, and I always liked that because she would let me accompany her on my harmonica. And I wish I had a harmonica, because I see we've got a piano over there [inaudible phrase] real treat [audience laughter]. But Mrs. Addy [?] used to have these recitals, which were big social affairs in those days. I remember Dr. McCain from Agnes Scott and all kinds of folks would come to those recitals, and the children would get up and perform. And one night Mrs. Addy informed the parents that they were going to let the children play "The Butterfly," and the one who sounded the most like a butterfly, which would be decided by popular vote after the thing was over, would get a prize. And so all the children played it--Lord knows how many times they played "The Butterfly," but they played it [audience laughter]. And they went around the room and asked who sounded

the most like a butterfly. And Dad broke the meeting up when he said, "Mrs. Addy, I don't believe I ever heard a butterfly" [*audience laughter*]. I said that she learned to play "Sunny Fields" on the piano, and she did.

CH: By memory!

JR: Yeah, but she learned it so well that every time they had a recital, she played the same thing [*audience laughter*]. And Mrs. Addy would say, "Well, you do that nicely. Play 'Sunny Fields.'" She played it so much that my father used to have an apple orchard up at Alto, Georgia, within site of the sanitarium, it was in those days. And I'll be dogged if he didn't name that place "Sunny Fields" [*audience laughter*]. To this day I've got a stamp that he had that he used to stamp boxes of apples that left there "Sunny Fields." I think that was a good place that we used to sneak off to when the creditors started getting pretty persistent, along about the time of the Depression. I think that little apple orchard really lengthened his life. And--

CH: Sent me to college.

JR: Yeah, he always said--we would want something, and we'd tell Dad about it, and he would always say, "Well, when the apple orchard hits, we'll just get that." I waited for all my life for that apple orchard [*audience laughter*]. [*Inaudible comment*]

I'd like to call your attention to this picture over here [*points*]. Now, I see Senator Howard back there. His picture's going to be here someday. It's in my den at the moment. But that is the DeKalb County courthouse in 1842, and that picture was painted by Mr. Wilbur Kurtz, who was the technical advisor for *Gone with the Wind*. And I asked him to paint that for me, and he did. I said, "Mr. Kurtz, put some mules in the yard. I want some mules so bad" [*audience laughter*]. He said, "Well, oxen would be a little more appropriate than mules, but I'll put them both in"; and he did.

CH: Tell about your trip to the blacksmith shop.

JR: Well, it was the only place I used to--

CH, *interrupting*: He would sneak out--sneak out! We didn't know where John was.

JR: I was really a good child. She's making me out to like I'm not [*audience laughter*]. My sister--my only claim to fame in all my life is the fact that my sister wrote an essay about it and won a state essay contest, and she called it "The Nonconformist."

CH: Not I, but Margaret.

JR: Well, that was my older sister. She was the one with the brain. [*CH and audience laugh.*] But Mr. [inaudible--sounds like "Wilco" "Wilcove"?] Jones, who was later editor of the *Journal*--editorial page--he had a Shakespearean quotation for everything that came down the pike. He was a brilliant man and the most elegant gentleman you can imagine, Mr. [Wilco?] Jones. Used to live up on Howard Street up there?

CH, *confirming*: Howard

JR: Just as the car turned--the streetcar turned going up McDonough Street and turned, he lived right there. Mr. Jones was an elegant journalist and well-loved by everybody who knew him. Major Cohen was editor of the paper in those days, and Major Cohen wore a white suit. He, too, was a very elegant gentleman. There was one thing that nobody would bother, and that was the right to enter Mr.--Major Cohen's bathroom. That was sacred area. And he told [Wilco? Wilcove?] Jones--he liked Mr. Jones so much--he said, "Well, I want you to use my bathroom any time you want to use it" [*audience laughter*]. [Inaudible comment] If you remember the old *Journal* building, it was a terrible old building. It was ancient, and there were a lot of rats in it and that kind of thing. And one thing Mr. Jones, in Major Cohen's absence, entered the bathroom there, and there was a rat in the commode. And Mr. Jones was terrified, but he looked around to see what he could dispatch the rat with and looked; he saw Major Cohen's golf club [*audience laughter*]. So he picked him out a nine iron, and he went over to work the rat over pretty good. About that time, Major Cohen came in and the porcelain commode was torn all to pieces [*audience laughter*]. Mr. Jones was very enthusiastic about dispatching that rat, and Major Cohen wanted to know what had happened, and Mr. Jones told him. "Well, Jones," he said, "you played the devil with the commode, but you sure did use the right club" [*audience laughter*].

On the western corner of the Square, across the street over there, used to be Atlanta Avenue. And at the head of Atlanta Avenue was a blacksmith shop. It was down on the ground floor, and on the upstairs was a Johnson's hardware store. Of course, you remember. That was a great place. It was the only place that I really ever ran away to, was--well, I did run away--got lost on Jefferson Place one time [*audience laughter*]. But I used to run away to the blacksmith's shop and sit there on a box inside the door. Because I want to tell y'all something, they'd get that forge going, and they'd grab that horse and start shoeing him, now, that was living. That was really great stuff, and I

used to love to go up there and did many times. But Jimmy Johnson from that family is now a minister up in North Carolina, I believe. And I always thought it was so great because the Johnsons never said anything to me. They let me go in that blacksmith shop; nobody ever bothered me. They let me sit on the box, and I sat there and watched them shoe a horse.

Well, what about it?

[*Audience applause*]

CH: I wish some of these other people would tell things they remember, because I know John and I started talking about this. We didn't have any order at all, but he would say, "Do you remember so-and--?" and we'd just go into hysterics laughing about it. I don't know, we just--everything about Decatur was so much fun, and it was really--everything was funny, especially when John was connected with it [*audience laughter*]. There are a lot of people in here who have some good memories. I wish we had time to hear them.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly moderator], *standing*: This is an ongoing series, and we'd certainly like to invite you back for another twenty-year segment [*audience laughter*].

[JR makes inaudible comment.]

CH: I'm going to say that I might be the oldest one in here to remember back to 1913, but I feel sorry for all of you who didn't go back that far. I just had a blast. Well, you missed a lot [rest inaudible].

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly moderator], *standing*: Well, we normally take a few minutes for questions and answers, and then we'll have refreshments. So I think we've got time for just a couple of questions. And then we'll have some repercussions [sic] afterwards.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: I'd like to know why they dropped the E out of the other end of Clairmont [Avenue].

JR: That will always remain an unsolved mystery. I do know—now, I belong to the bunch that likes C-l-a-i-r-m-o-n-t; and I think Caroline is of the persuasion that likes the E. But I do know that in 1900 and—eight, [*to CH*] was it, when Mother and Dad were married?

CH: Yes.

JR: I have at home in both the scrapbook on my father's life and on my mother's life a clipping from the newspaper, one of the parties that were given for the bride- and groom-to-be. And one of the parties was at Clairmont, which was the summer home of old Dr. Ridley. And that was C-l-a-i-r-m-o-n-t. Now, somebody very—somebody I think with a diplomatic turn realized that you could spell it both ways, and so it is spelled both ways frequently, as you know: C-l-a-i-r, C-l-a-i-r-e, m-o-n-t. Claire—Aunt Claire—was C-l-a-i-r-e.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *on front row, with back to camera*: The 1912 atlas has it both ways.

JR: Sir?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *on front row, with back to camera*: The 1912 atlas has it both ways.

JR: Oh, is that right? [Audience member makes inaudible comment.] That's interesting. She used to live on a high bank about where the Fidelity Bank is now.

CH: By Decatur Federal.

JR: Huh?

CH: By Decatur Federal.

JR: Decatur Federal?

CH *makes an inaudible comment*.

JR: She lived there. I have pictures of my sister with long curls taken on the front steps of that house.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I'm sure that I've missed it--I've been so entertained with this. But I need to ask this question: Did you get the curtains for Oakhurst? [Audience laughter]

JR: I'm not really sure about that [audience laughter]. [Audience member makes inaudible comment.] I believe that if you would send them a donation [rest drowned out by audience laughter].

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly moderator]: [Audience laughter interfering with audibility of first part of comment] we need to continue this informally.

JR: OK. Thanks for y'all coming.

END OF RECORDING