2012.3.18
MR. AND MRS. SAM HASTINGS
and WHEAT WILLIAMS

Recording begins with Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, seated, on-camera. Off-camera, the voice of unidentified female (perhaps Dorothy Nix?) picks up mid-sentence, in the midst of conversation with James Mackay, setting up the presentation.

DOROTHY NIX? [*still off-camera*]: . . . Mr. Goodger [*spelling*?], who was a former fire chief of Decatur.

JAMES MACKAY [*off-camera*]: And then [*inaudible*].

DOROTHY NIX? [*off-camera*]: Well, we just don't have it set up.

JAMES MACKAY [*still off-camera*]: All right. Anyway, we are going to tape Mr. Wheat Williams, who should have been taped before now because he's been a part of the history out here. And we're going to get Mr. [*inaudible—sounds like* Norse *or* Louis *or* Norris?] Stone, who is one of the great figures in the bar [association]; and he's agreed to be taped. And some of this taping is going on at times other than on this particular hour. But we feel like that we've got the outstanding couple in DeKalb County when we have the Hastings [sic] here. That is a superb name in this state and in this county. And these two people, through their service to this community, have added as much luster to it as anybody I know. We are not doing a formal introduction now for the tape, because we don't want to take up your time. But in the permanent tape we are going to put an adequate introduction, and then we look forward to having this in our archives. And we are all interested in the battle of the sexes to see how this time is going to be divided [*On-camera, Mr. and Mrs. Hastings take turns pointing at each other.*] and who's in charge. But anyway, it's a pleasure to present the Hastings [sic]. Let's welcome them. [*applause*]

MRS. HASTINGS: To show you the battle of the sexes, I said that he [*pointing to Mr. Hastings beside her*] could be first. [*laughs*] OK, Sam.

MR. HASTINGS: We all ready to go?

MRS. HASTINGS: Yeah.

MR. HASTINGS: Well, I do want to make one correction. It was in *The DeKalb New Era* and also in the bulletin. We didn't come here directly from Ohio. About 1880-somewhere or maybe 1890 my Grandfather Hastings was living in Springfield, Ohio; and he had some trouble with his health, and the doctor told him to go to

Florida. So he went to Florida and built this—founded this little town of Interlachen. [NOTE: *According to Interlachen's Historical Society, the Hastings family arrived in 1881, a few years after the town had been founded by other individuals*.] He'd been to Switzerland—in fact, he traveled all over Europe—but he got to Switzerland, and this little town of Interlaken, Switzerland, which was between two lakes. So he was looking around Florida for a similar place, and he saw this space of land between two lakes, Lake Lagonda and Chipco. He said, "This is the place." So he founded the town. It was around 1890, and they built a house there. [NOTE: *According to Interlachen's Historical Society, the town was incorporated in 1888, and Hastings Seed Co. opened there in 1889. It operated there until it burned down in 1910*.]

And then my mother and my father moved in close vicinity—I don't know whether in Interlachen or not. But anyway, in 1889 we moved to Atlanta. Lived out on Forrest Avenue—boarded—not boarded, but rented—rented a house for, oh, I guess a couple of years. Forrest Avenue in 1899 was out in the country. And then from there we moved to—after a year or two—we moved to Kirkwood with Uncle Billy, cousins. He wasn't my uncle, but we called him "Uncle Billy" and stayed there a year or two. And then in 1903—October 1, 1903—we moved to Decatur when Dad bought the old Ramspeck place down off—what we called Webster Street then. It was Shallowford Road before then. And got this two-story house with a servants' house in the back, two-story servants' house. And two or three years after we moved, an elderly couple came by there and said, "May we see your servants' house?" Of course, we'd want to know why. They said, "We lived there during the Civil War. And the Battle of Atlanta was getting pretty furious around Decatur." This servants' house had two large granite fireplaces, and they crawled into those fireplaces to keep out of the way of the bullets. And that's the story of that part of moving in. But they changed Webster Street to Clairemont Avenue later on.

At that time they had one elementary school; it was up on East Ponce de Leon, about halfway between Church Street and that other street next to it. And I went to school there for about four, possibly five, years. I think it was when I was in the fourth grade that the bell in the belfry broke loose and fell down through the ceiling and missed the teacher's desk by [*holds up both hands, about twelve inches apart*] not more than a foot. I was sitting up there at the front of the class; it scared us all to death.

Then Donald Fraser was a prep school run by G. Holman Gardner, and they—there up on Clairemont or Webster, whatever they wanted to call it at that time. But they broke up shortly, oh, three or four years after we got there. Then Scott Candler, Sr., had just graduated from Davidson and wanted a job. And he went to the parents of some of the pupils and said, "If you'll guarantee me a thousand dollars a year, I'll start a private school." So we signed up, and I went over there. And he ran that for a year or two, and then he quit. And Paul J. King took over and added some more professors. Scott was the only professor at the time because there wasn't [sic] but about twenty or twenty-five of us at the school. But Paul J. King took over and enlarged the faculty and classrooms and started a boarding school, too. And I stayed on with Paul J. King until I graduated from high school and went on off to college. But he had a dormitory over in the Masonic Building, which is across the street from here ["here" being the "old courthouse" on the Decatur town square, where this session was videotaped]. And then there was another building—I can't get it straight in my mind—I can't get any information about it. But it was a rather large, great building where the Ackerman building [West Court Square building, just west of the old courthouse] is now. And as Paul J. King's school enlarged, he made a dormitory out of it [i.e., building formerly on the site of the West Court Square building].

Then, of course, there was Agnes Scott [College]—the main building was up there. I think they called it Agnes Scott Institute at the time. And then as it grew, they changed [the name] to Agnes Scott College.

When we moved here in 1903, there were no paved sidewalks except one; it was up here at Sycamore Street in front of the recreation building there by the [Decatur] Presbyterian Church. There was no water—no public water, and no sewer system. But everybody had a well. And it was good water, too. They put in the waterworks and sewer in 1906 or 1907, and shortly after that they started paving the streets and laying sidewalks. But before they laid the sidewalks, there was just plain dirt. And M. D. Googer was chief of police—in fact, he was the police department. [*audience laughter*] He used to ride around with a horse and buggy sometimes; sometimes he'd walk. And he was very strict. And when my older brother, Ray, and two or three others were playing marbles on the sidewalk. M. D. Googer came by and gave them all a copy of charges for playing marbles on the sidewalk. [*audience laughter*] And it nearly broke my mother's heart that one of her sons had to go to court. But Dad took Ray and these

other boys up to court; heard the evidence. Fined them seventy-five cents apiece. [*audience laughter*]

But to get back to school: I remember two of the teachers, Miss Arthur and Miss Clifford, and they were paid the magnificent sum of forty dollars a month. Then, as I understand it, after the first year or two they raised it to sixty. And that was big money in those days.

Oh, the post office was the little building down on the corner of Church and East Ponce de Leon [NOTE: *Mr. Hastings may mean "East Trinity," where the old Federal Building still stands.*] and had one employee—well, regular employee, Ms. Kirkpatrick. And you had to go up there to get your mail or mail a letter. She did have a colored helper who had a cart. He'd go to the depot whenever the train came through with the mail, pick up the mail, and then take the other mail back so it could go on in the regular way.

Oh, about that time—I don't remember whether the Atlanta Transit Company or the Georgia Power Company had three streetcar lines in Decatur, and they wanted to get rid of two of them. So they went to the City of Decatur—whoever was running it at that time—and said, "We want to get rid of two of these streetcar lines." So J. Howell Green, who was the city attorney, I guess, at that time, wrote up an agreement with whichever company was running the streetcars. Said, "You can take these down, provided you'll give us a perpetual five-cent fare for this one line remaining." And they signed it all in good faith. And then a little later on, when the Atlanta Transit Company or power company, whichever it was running, raised their fare to ten cents, they wanted to do the same thing for Decatur. And J. Howell Green took them to court, and that thing went to the Supreme Court three times; and the Supreme Court told them all three times, "That's a valid contract. You've got to keep this as it is." Then in the meantime the Atlanta streetcar company, whatever it was, went up to a dime; and that's when this argument came up about the nickel fare. And you could ride as far as Pattillo Station. I don't know whether any of you remember that or not. I guess you do. It cost a dime [*inaudible*] there. From Pattillo Station, all around Decatur, back around there, the fare was a nickel. As I say, it went to the Supreme Court three times.

They had a telephone system out here at that time when we moved. And we had a telephone put in very shortly after we moved but no electricity. Then the electricity—well, there are two stories about electricity. One of them I got from Carolyn Clark

[spelling? Clarke?] said that Colonel Houston, whose house had a mill out there off of Houston Mill Road, and he ground corn, and they came and they—and she said that he had electricity, started electricity. But as I remember it, Mr. [*inaudible—sounds like* Lund Hausen?] opened up a steam plant out at the end of Maderis Drive in front of the present YMCA, and then we wired up everything. Before that, of course, we had to use lamps and candles, things of that type. But we got electricity finally. And finally they started paving. I don't remember just what year that was.

One other thing—I think it was in 1910—some of you may remember Halley's Comet coming close to the earth. And, of course, it was very interesting to everybody. But down West Alley, which is to the left of us, there were about, oh, six or eight colored houses. And some men got dressed up in sheets. One of them had a bugle, and he blew that bugle to make the colored people think that it was Gabriel's horn [*audience laughter*] and the earth was coming to pieces. [*Consults notes; comments to self about not being able to read his own handwriting.*]

Oh, some of you may remember—all of you remember—the Confederate monument out here [on the grounds of the old courthouse]. They put up the base and were putting up the shaft, and the cable broke. The shaft came tumbling down, broke all to pieces. I think it was a voluntary composition [sic]. And I don't know how long it took to gather enough nickels and dimes, quarters, and dollars to erect—to build—another shaft. But they finally got it put back in place. As I understand it, MARTA moved it back up [*inaudible*] location. But that was quite a tragedy when that thing fell.

Oh, of course, when we didn't have any city water, we didn't have a fire department. So when the city got the water in, water [fire] plugs, they bought a hose reel and had volunteers. [*Chuckles*] And Dr. Wiley Ansley had a [sic] automobile—I think was a Maxwell—had a platform on the back. And whenever the fire bell rang, the volunteers would run up to wherever this thing was stored—I guess at the City Hall—had to grab it and get on the back of the—Dr. Ansley's car had a little platform on the back. And they would jump on that, grab hold of the hose reel, and go to wherever the fire was. And one day—the headquarters was at the drugstore. It was the Masonic Building at one time. And it was kind of a gathering place. If you wanted the fire department, you'd call the drugstore. And there'd be two or three volunteers around there. When they put in the water, they put a big tank right back of City Hall. And on

that tank they had a fire bell, and you could hear that fire bell all over Decatur. In fact, that fire bell is down at the new fire station [on East Trinity]. [*Inaudible*]

MRS. HASTINGS: The Woman's Club set it up on a concrete block.

MR. HASTINGS: Well, anyway, it's in [*inaudible*]. And then in several years—I don't know exactly how many years it was—they bought a [sic] American LaFrance fire engine—a real one. And it [the fire department] was partly volunteer and partly paid. Oh—let me get back just a little bit. When they had this hose—hose reel—if they had to—didn't have to use water, they were paid a dollar. But if they had to use water, they were paid two dollars. So I remember one time Reverend Paul King, running Donald Fraser [School], had a well over there they got full of trash. It caught on fire, and they called the hose [sic] department. They came down, and it was practically out by the time they got there. They [the firemen] said, "Don't put it out, don't put it out. If we put water on it, we'll get two dollars" [*audience laughter*]. They called that American LaFrance fire engine "Little Betsy." And the first big fire that I remember was Bailey's Shoe Shop. It used to be right back of that brick building which was a drugstore-combination-office for Dr. Ansley. It was a three-story building. It had a shoe shop down on the first floor; they lived on the upper two stories. But they--that was a real fire; it really burned down. They got there a little bit too late. They had some volunteers for that, and they had some volunteers when "Little Betsy" came in.

Oh, when we first came out here, frankly, everything was built around the courthouse square. Now, *The DeKalb New Era* had a little building over on this corner of East Court Square and East Ponce de Leon, and they set the type by hand. I remember going in there and seeing that old man pick that one piece of type at the time and putting it in the slot. And they had a rotary press, and you had to turn it by hand. And that's where *The DeKalb New Era* started, and then [*points*] they moved over here on Atlanta Avenue.

And then the other big attraction was the Weeks [*spelling*? Weekes?] brothers' store down on this corner [*points*] here on Sycamore and East Ponce de Leon.

MRS. HASTINGS: Sycamore.

MR. HASTINGS: Sycamore. Yeah.

MRS. HASTINGS: [*Correcting, off-camera*] This way. [*Some chuckling from audience*]

MR. HASTINGS: And they had just about everything. In fact, it was divided into two parts: One part had groceries, things like that; the other half was dry goods. And they even had a coffin in it. Right next to *DeKalb New Era* Dr. Haupt [*spelling*?] had a two-story white house; he had a [*inaudible—could be* "bar" *or* "barn"] in back of it. There were two or three little stores down there, and that's about all there was. And down there at East Court Square—

MRS. HASTINGS: Tell them how you got your groceries, because I think that's interesting.

MR. HASTINGS: Oh, if you wanted groceries, you called up Weekes Brothers. Rather—Weekes Brothers—Mr. Josey [Josie?], one of the clerks in there—maybe *the* [emphasis his] clerk—but he would call up the regular customers every morning, say, "Mrs. Hastings, what do you want today?" He had a whole list of customers. And they had a Model-T Ford truck, and after the groceries were loaded and orders were filled, he would take that [truck] and deliver them. And over here on Sycamore Street, across the street, Charlie Alston had a barber shop. And you could get a haircut for fifteen cents, a shave for a dime. It's a little bit different now.

Oh, and instead of all these parking meters they've got strung up around the square and everywhere else, they had hitching posts all around the courthouse, where the people [*inaudible*] before the automobile come [sic] out [*inaudible*] those days. But people would come up and hitch their horses to the hitching posts. And they had two water troughs—I think was [sic] made out of iron—for the horses to drink out of. I got that from Carolyn Clark [Clarke?].

And another thing: One Sunday a year—I think it was the first Sunday in June—they had a [sic] all-day singing, and people from all around the county would come in to the [old] courthouse here, and they would sing until about noon, and then they would have lunch on the grounds, and they would sing until about four o'clock, and then they would go on home.

Oh, and another thing: Down at the Great Lakes area there was nothing but woods, except there was a small pond down there right in the middle of it. I guess that's the reason they call it "Great Lakes" [*audience laughter*]. It has Huron and Erie and all the rest of them, named for that. And they had what we called the Peckerwood Sawmill down there. And then, on a little higher ground, one of the Ramspecks—I forget which one it was—had a grape orchard, and he raised grapes and furnished the

churches in Decatur with wine for their communion. Of course, they changed that later—wine to grape juice.

Oh, and I told you about the streetcars. [*Consults notes*.] I think that's about all I've got here in my notes. If any of you want to ask any questions, I'll try to answer them.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: When was the Hastings house built—the one where First Baptist Church is now? What year was that?

MR. HASTINGS: It was—I don't know when it was built, but it had been used for some time by the Ramspecks. Dad bought it—let's see, in 1903, and I think there were about eight acres of land around it. And then, as business got better, Dad bought the land between that line—the Ramspeck line—and West Adams. The colored people called it Paradise Alley. And then a little bit later on he decided he wanted the rest of the land, between the back line—our back line—and Ponce de Leon Place, so he bought that, so there were about twelve acres in all.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: If we could hold the questions, so Mrs. Hastings will have equal time, then we will [*inaudible*].

MR. HASTINGS: Thank you, Jim.

MRS. HASTINGS: One of the interesting things about when the courthouse burned down, they took that—that was great-big—the alley had a—well, just a great-big gulley. Water went through every now and then, and I always thought it was part of Peachtree Creek; but I don't know. But they took all the remains of this—of the courthouse and filled that place down. And our house was exactly where Columbia [now Commerce] Drive is. And that tree, that big oak tree on the side, is where Stanley had swings, and my—we lived on the corner—and the—my sandbox was right where Columbia [Commerce] Drive is now, down there right across from the [*inaudible—could be* railroad *or* railway *or* realty?]. [*Responding to off-camera, inaudible remark from Mr. Hastings*] Yes, it is—it's right [*inaudible*] [*Gestures to demonstrate direction and configuration or location*.]

[*Addressing audience*] I'm supposed to tell you about the Decatur Woman's Club, and that gives me a great deal of pleasure. Do you realize that the Woman's—the Georgia Federation of Woman's Club [sic] were organized in 19—I mean, 18—I have the books from 1908. In 1908—I have the minutes from that meeting. [*Holds up small paperbound booklets*.] The Decatur Woman's Club was organized in 1908, the

first one. And they had trouble, and they—I'll tell you about that. The clubs after that started [*inaudible*] in 19—I have the books—I don't have all of the little yearbooks—but it would be--the Georgia Federation of Women's [sic] Clubs was organized in Atlanta in 1896, and it [*Unclear what* it *refers to*] was admitted into the Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs in 1897, and their motto was "Wisdom Justice and Moderation." You know where they got that [*Motto is also the official motto for the State of Georgia*.] [*audience laughter*] And the—I have a list of all the different presidents that were of that time, way back there in 1896 all the way to 1914, because this [*holds up paperbound booklet*] is the yearbook for 1914. And I have '14, '15, and then some of the others. The General Federation--the Woman's Club, now, in 1908, opened up; and I have the minutes from that till 1910. And the yearbook of 1913 lists the officers. And the main purpose of the club was to support Tallulah Falls School. Now, I know we've all heard of Tallulah Falls School. I think everybody—the women of Decatur Woman's Club have been very active in asking for donations for Tallulah Falls School, and the only school that's owned and operated by a Woman's Club. It's the only one in the United States and, I imagine, anywhere else.

Well, the Decatur Woman's Club was in the Fifth [Congressional] District; and Mrs. W. C. H. Hamilton was the president in 1912. Some of you remember who she was. And these were the things that they were interested in back there from 1908 until 1914. They wanted a library [in Decatur], and Mrs. Burroughs [spelling?] and Mrs. Orne [spelling?] and Mrs. Hugh Trotti were the ones that were the forerunners of getting a library. And the library was established in the top of the [Decatur] City Hall, and the children would go there after school and get their books and read them. And the library grew from that little seed. And the Woman's Club were the ones that actually started the idea of having a library in Decatur. And another thing they worked for and that they're still working for is free kindergarten in every school. And they started asking the representatives and people to put free kindergartens in the schools back in 1910. And they're still working through that.

They had a Civic Department. And they worked—guess what they worked for? They wanted garbage disposal. And they wanted Arbor Day. They wanted to get rid of the billboard nuisances [*audience laughter*], they wanted to pass the—they're still working on that [billboards]. They wanted a Pure Milk bill. And I mean, when I say they wanted that, they went to the [Georgia] House of Representatives, and they wrote

and they talked and they had articles about this to put over what they wanted to do. They even wrote the Georgia railroad and asked them to please spruce up the station because it looked so bad [*audience laughter*]. And they wanted them to plant some shrubs and things, and they said, "Well, would you come over and help us if we'll give the money?" And, believe it or not, some of the ladies went over there and actually planted flowers. And about a year ago I saw a little gladi—iris over there that was still growing. And I know one of those ladies planted that. They were for civic improvement, and they wanted the motion pictures to be censored and not to have things in it that—anything in any moving picture that would be detrimental to the life and growth of a child. And later, a little later on, they actually had representatives from the Woman's Club, had free tickets to go and see what they saw; and if they didn't like it, they would tell them, "We got to do something about that" [*audience laughter*]. And then they pledged to get a Saturday program just for children, and they really got that. They really worked on that. They have a children's film on that.

Another thing they want—worked for was a child labor law, and that children from eight to fourteen could not work. They would not have a permit. I don't know whether any of y'all have ever been in a mill. I've been in a thread mill—the Clark thread mill in Augusta, Georgia, and I've seen those little children no bigger than that [*demonstrates by holding her hand up at a child's height*], just as pale as ghosts, working those big machines. And, you know, my dad was in the building materials business; and he supplied this certain kind of cement that—for the--they had a canal, went out of the Savannah River, went back in—and this is some sort of special cement that he had the, whatever, franchise for or something. And he took me down there, because I was one of those curious children; I wanted to go everywhere.

They [Decatur Woman's Club] had a home economics class; and they had classes in sewing and crochet and needlework and how to make baskets. And they had a special—in the home economics—physical hygiene. And they exhibited in the county fairs, and they worked in the schools. And they wanted to get—this is another thing that the Woman's Club wanted—domestic science and shop started in the schools. Now, this is back in—before 1914. And the domestic science, they wanted to teach them how to sew and to cook; and, of course, the boys took [shop]—they could take that now; you can take anything they have—they actually have that in the school. When I went to school in North Augusta, South Carolina, we had home economics.

That was in 1914. And we had home economics, and we were taught how--cooking and sewing in the school that far back. But that was put in by Aiken County [South Carolina]; that was not a national thing. But that was--were some of the things that Woman's Clubs were interested in.

And another thing that they advocated and went to war about was abolishing the public drinking cup. You know, they had places where you could pump water and had one little cup. And so that was another thing that they worked for. And another thing that they were concerned about was taking care of people who had absolutely no means of support. And Hooper Alexander introduced a bill for an infirmary for the old and sick; and they raised $11,000 and built the home for $11,000 to take care of those people that had no way in the world for anybody to take care of them. The Woman's Club started that and got Hooper Alexander—it's all written in all these little minutes—[*inaudible*] to put that through so they could have it.

Now, the Conservation Department, they—we wanted to take care of the wild birds. People, you know, don't do the sort of thing they should about their land. They don't care what they do to it. They just—erosion is rampant, way back then it was. And they wanted to have special articles in papers to save the wildflowers. And then they had what they called the "Blue Star Highway." And different clubs all over the state of Georgia planted trees and shrubs and flowers on some of those highways. Every now and then you come to a place where there's a whole little field of verbena. How you think it got there? Those ladies planted that a long time ago.

Then they had the Scholarship Committee, and they wanted to help deserving girls and [*inaudible*] to cover their education. And there's quite a little article about why they wanted to do that. So many of them were so talented and did not have the money to go ahead and further their education, especially education. Now they especially wanted them to have special education in painting, dancing, playing musical instruments, and nursing. Those were the things that they were interested in. And they—one school, I just want to take one little item out of one thing—one school wanted to have a school in their town. And that was Mineral Bluff, Georgia. I don't know if y'all have even heard of Mineral Bluff; I hadn't till I read about it. Well, they raised enough money—they raised $1,300 and built a school. Can you imagine that? And it had twenty-five pupils and two teachers, and teachers were paid $45 a month. And every cent that they spent was recorded—I have it on the little thing. Every cent

that those people did that. And they had the Educational Committee that wanted to further their education by having people that weren't teachers come in and talk to pupils about special things, and they do that now more than they used to. But that was another idea of the Woman's Club, they thought of doing that.

Now, during the First World War the Woman's Club rather deteriorated, because everyone joined the Red Cross and the USO; and the clubs became smaller and smaller. And then finally the Decatur club just kind of went out of existence, because everybody was working for the war effort, for the First World War. They just—that was their thing at that time, because wars upset everything.

Now, in 1924 Mrs. Hastings—Mrs. H. G. Hastings—decided it was just time to do something about having a [Woman's] Club in Decatur. She belonged to the Woman's Club in—the Atlanta Woman's Club, and she was what they call "Extension Chairman," which meant she was supposed to get some new clubs. So she started at home. And over at Decatur Presbyterian they gave us room to have meetings of the Woman's Club. And then we had some meetings in her—executive board meetings always met over at her house. And then she was the first president. And they stayed there, and [*inaudible name—sounds like* "Joanie" or "Jolie"?] Candler was a member, and just [*inaudible*] Mrs. Charles Weeks [*spelling?* Weekes?]—I could just keep—Ms. Montgomery, Caroline's mother. So many of the ladies that you would recognize the names of: Ms. Alden, Ms. Burroughs [*spelling*?], and Ms. Trotti, and just worlds of those ladies—Ms. Duval [*spelling*?]. And so they all met there.

And Scott Candler [Sr.] became interested in it, and he gave the Decatur Woman's Club a piece of property down here on [West] Ponce de Leon, where Sharian Rug is now. It was very short, very narrow. There was nothing much you could really do with it. But we built a building there. It was a very pretty building. It was made out of gray shingles, and we landscaped the front, and we raised the money to pay for it. We raised the money—the Lions Club ate there for I don't know how long. We served them at dinner there [*inaudible*]. We rented it out. We had card parties; and we even had hat shows, where people—ladies that had hat shops, like old Ms. [*inaudible—sounds like* "Botter"?] would come in and tell ladies what kind of hats were most suitable to their [*inaudible*]—to their face, and things of that sort. So we had a talk one time, and I thought it was most interesting, on how to do makeup. You were supposed to be able to wear lipstick, you know, and fix your face. In olden times ladies saved

red cloth and faded it [*Illustrates by touching fingers to face.*] and fixed their face. And he [Scott Candler, Sr.] gave the lot, and we moved in—in the house—in 1926. And we had two hundred members. Now, that's a good membership. And some of the things we did then was to give a party for Rebecca Felton, who was ninety years old. You know who she was.

And we had the first Decatur Flower Show, and that was a ball. We had no schedule. We said, "We're going to have a flower show. Anybody that has flowers, bring 'em." And we met over in a building—right where the bank—where the parking lot is over here now—was a vacant building. And it still had some shelves and some [*inaudible*] in there. And the people that owned it let us have a the flower show. Well, honey, they brought flowers in there. They brought larkspur this tall [*Gestures to demonstrate height*], they cut down bushes, they had everything you ever heard of. We had no schedule, no [designated] place to put roses, no [designated] place to put iris, no place—we just put flowers in there; and it looked like a flower mart. It was absolutely beautiful. But the next day—year—we organized. And you had to bring roses in one place and iris in one place. They cut off Dorothy Perkins's roses—the whole trellis—and brought them in, so you can imagine what we had to do with a flower show like that. Flower shows now are nothing but sticks [*audience laughter*]. I don't care for that.

The funny part about it, the flower show was such a success; the Garden Club division of Decatur Woman's Club grew bigger than the club! Everybody wanted to join the Garden Club. And that started having garden clubs, and now they have the Garden Club of the United States and the Garden Club of Georgia. They have national garden clubs, they have—we have a Garden Club division; and there are ninety garden clubs in DeKalb County. Did you know that there were that many that like to have flower—they all have flower shows or one big flower show. And in 1928 the State Federation of Garden Clubs were [sic] held where? The Candler Hotel.

And that year the Decatur Woman's Club sent thirty dollars to Tallulah Falls [School] for a building and sixty dollars for student aid. They now have an endowment of over a million dollars, Tallulah Falls School does. And everybody that belongs to the Garden--Woman's Club, this now has gone up to four dollars a member. It started off that—they worked to have a dollar a member, everybody that belonged was supposed to give a dollar to Tallulah. This now has gone up to four dollars. We want to send—

every member's supposed to—in the club—and we have to raise our money to send that.

They—in 19—after about 1930 they wanted to have a swimming pool in Decatur. They never had had a swimming pool before. And they worked on the Community Chest show, and for the Community Chest they had a minstrel. I don't know whether y'all remember what minstrels were. Daddy [*Gestures toward Mr. Hastings*] blacked up and took his cane and danced! [*audience laughter*] That was a ball.

And then they had a cooking school, and Mrs. William Schley Howard was head of the Cooking School department. And we had the state flower show in Decatur. That was quite a thing to do. And the Decatur—we worked with the Decatur Library and the Community of Concerts [sic]. And then Mrs. Guy Hudson in 1937 was instrumental in the Dogwood Festival. Now we thought that was late—early. That's how long ago we started that. And the Decatur Woman's Club put a float in the first parade.

Now to get to today, the Education Department of Tallulah Falls, they have Home Life, Art Department, Garden Division, Conservation—all the things that they had in the beginning. The little object—objective [of Decatur Woman's Club]—that was written in the first yearbook was practically the same thing that we use now. It is "to create and maintain an organized center of thought and activity among women, nonpartisan and nonsectarian, to aid in promotion of mutual interests." And that is what we try to do. They had a big—I have all the little minutes—almost twenty—in 1950 we celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary. And then, in 194—well, it was later than that—we celebrated our—twenty-four—seventh-fifth—fiftieth, fiftieth anniversary. [*Holds up thin, paperbound book*.] This is twenty-five, and then we've had—already had—We had fifty up here. We sold the little place [the building on West Ponce de Leon Avenue] there. We sold it when parking got bad, believe it or not, in around [19]36. And we bought the house over at--on East Lake and stayed there as long as we could support it and maintain it; but it was really too much for us. You couldn't rent it out, because it was cut up into rooms for a house. It had no big place that you could have a big place to entertain, and so we finally sold that. This [*pointing to furniture around the room on camera—a table, a side chair, a decorative trifold screen*] is our furniture. We put this furniture up here. This is some of the furniture that we had. We put it in this community room and gave it to the county for them to have.

[*Holds up book, open to photograph*.] I have a picture here of a little--some of the ladies that did a little skit for the—and look at the hat—that was going back to when Tallulah Falls was started. In 1924 we did this little—I mean, [19]50—we did this little skit for the—to raise some money for them, for the club. And the things that we do now—I have five more minutes—the things that we do now are almost exactly the same things that they did there [then]. And in 1924 we organized the club. And we had our—had our little clubhouse. And then we had the convention, was here, held here. [*Holds up a file folder containing several sheets of paper*.] This is the history. This is a history of Decatur Woman's Club all the way through. And the fiftieth—and the fifteenth [sic] anniversary of the club was celebrated, honoring the presence and by active participation in the silver [fiftieth] anniversary of the LPFY—[*inaudible*] LFY [sic] was quite—gave quite a bit of money to Tallulah Falls, and she has been honored since then for starting some of the things she started at—in Tallulah.

And we had the—we purchased war bonds, and we donated two hundred dollars to Tallulah Falls that year. That was the first time we've ever gone that high. And Ms. A. B. Lee, who you know, she was instrumental in helping people—the city fathers, the powers-that-be, wanted to tear down the courthouse and make a big parking lot out of it and have a—what do you call it? Park—a suburban plaza—a plaza. And then they wanted to cut down the trees and let them park in front. And we went to court about it—we went to places about that. I used to go around with Ms. Lee and see—in fact, we--I've been all over this court—I'm one of the few people who've been all over this courthouse [Decatur's "old courthouse"]. I've been all up in this roof and all down in here [*indicating above and below as she speaks*]. [*audience laughter*] It's real interesting if you want to find out what's happening up there.

[*Consulting file folder*] The clubhouse on [West] Ponce de Leon was sold, and we bought the other one; that was in 1952 that we did that. Then we sold—sold that one. I have just marked a few of the things that I thought here-- Then our district was instrumental in starting the Yellow Daisy Festival. You all know how big a thing that has gotten to be at Stone Mountain, and we just went out there and took a picnic lunch and had what we thought was a festival. And it grew so big that we just had to give it up. One club couldn't do it, so all the garden clubs did that. And Mrs. Race [*spelling*?]—when Mrs. Race was president in 1966, they raised the dues for Tallulah Falls to $3.25 a member, and we thought that was pretty high; but now we have to pay

four dollars. And we had to--the club got so big that the Fifth District—they called it the Fifth District—got so large that they cut off part of it and called it—made it—redistricted the places and called this, the Decatur Woman's Club, was now in the Fourth District. And that is DeKalb, Rockdale—well, it's not Fulton; Fulton is all by itself, it is so big. And in 1970 we sold the courthouse [sic—means "East Lake house"?], and our meetings are now held in this building, as you know; except quite often we meet in the homes. And we are very active in doing things. And if anybody in the Woman's Club asks you for something, cooperate with them. We know--we're a bunch of women, we know how to spend money wisely, and we know how to make it go far, and we know how to make it do for the good of our country.

And when they had their seventy-fifth anniversary of the Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs, this poem was written: [*Reads from paper*]

Eighteen hundred and ninety-six,
In a world of oil and wicks,
Women sewed with needle and thread,
Milked the cow, and baked the bread.
Dirty clothes were soaked and boiled.
The day was long in which they toiled.
Girls were taught to mop and sweep,
To always smile and never weep.
They learned to cook on a hot wood stove,
To raise the children—how they strove.
Yet, as they did the chores each day,
They dreamed and thought of a better way.
In the world around they wanted a part,
From reading, writing, poetry, music, and art.
They felt the need to learn and grow,
To stretch the mind, the urge to know.
We felt concerned for others, too.
How could they know just what to do?
They formed a club and chose a name,
And the role of women has never been the same. [*audience laughter*]
They put on programs and book reviews,

Read the papers and studied the news.
For education they soon saw the need
To have a school, so they planted a seed.
Tallulah was started on a mountain top.
The growth was slow but never to stop.
Conservation, beauty, ecology came next.
From the world around they took their text.
The study of art was to be explored,
The old and new, none was ignored.
To help each other they needed laws.
For in public affairs there were many flaws.
They brought their scope into things international,
To live in peace and to be more rational.
The club is interested in all things right,
Our homes, our loves, our country [*inaudible—sounds like* "bright"?].
So now, in nineteen hundred and seventy-one,
We feel our work has just begun.
And though our years be seventy-five,
We are hale, hardy, healthy, and much alive.
And the things we do, we do in love
Only with the help of our God above.

[*Looking up from poem*] Maybe I've told you more about the club than you wanted to know, but [*inaudible over audience applause*].

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: I want to thank our guests. I don't think we could ever surpass the program concerning interesting things. We have time for just two or three questions. I didn't mean to cut them of a while ago, but I wanted to get everything on videotape. I have one question. Mr. Carl Hudgins, our first president of this club [DeKalb Historical Society], told me that around the turn of the century that [sic] public executions or hangings were held in the Lake District of Decatur. Do you have any recollection of any local capital punishment?

MR. HASTINGS: The jail used to be down on McDonough Street. They were going to hang a man down there. So they put up a [*inaudible—sounds like* "chair"?

"shaft"?] where you couldn't see him. Of course, a lot of people stood around. But they hung [sic] a man down there at that jail.

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: Do you have any recollection of one out in the woods out around the Great Lakes pond? [MR. HASTINGS *shakes his head.*] That may have been before your time.

MR. HASTINGS: That was a long time ago. [*audience laughter*]

MR. MACKAY [off-camera, *to audience*]: All right, do you have a question or two? I have an announcement or two in a minute.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: In about 1927 I was going to school at the Decatur Junior High School, and we had an eighth-grade teacher named Miss Harvey, who came to Decatur—I think she was just out of college—and

MR. HASTINGS: What was her name?

SEVERAL VOICES AT ONCE: Harvey.

MRS. HASTINGS *to* MR. HASTINGS: She's the one that married—

MR. HASTINGS: Oh, yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: And she fell in love with one of the Hastings boys, and he took her away before the school year was even out. Is she still living?

MR. HASTINGS: Yes, she lives at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: Is that right?

MR. HASTINGS: Now, Ray, her husband, died seven or eight years ago.

MRS. HASTINGS: He was head of the—

MR. HASTINGS: All-American—

MRS. HASTINGS: All-American Selections [NOTE: *Should be "All-America Selections"—no final N on "America."* "All-America Selections is an independent, non-profit organization that tests new varieties then introduces only the best garden performers as AAS Winners."-- http://www.all-americaselections.org/]

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera*]: Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, we certainly enjoyed this. I wonder if you have any recollections of talking with or meeting Miss Mary Gay?

MRS. HASTINGS: Oh, yes, Daddy—[*to MR. HASTINGS, who did not hear the question*]: Miss Mary Gay.

MR. HASTINGS: Oh, she used to live over there, back where the First National Bank is. And when I was so high [*holds up hand to indicate child's height*], I used to go visit her.

MRS. HASTINGS: She had a Sunday school class, and she taught Sunday school on Sunday. And anybody who wanted to go could go.

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: Well, you know, you weren't here, but the tallest story we've heard since we began this series, our former mayor, Andy Robertson, says when he was a little boy, Miss Gay would go around in dressed in her little black suit and that she kissed his foot and told him that he would never forget that she had kissed it [*audience laughter*]. He may have had some preferred treatment.

MRS. HASTINGS: Well, I didn't know whether I was really eligible for talking, because I didn't come to Decatur until 1917. I came to Agnes Scott. And at that time the ladies of Decatur were interested in Agnes Scott, and they would come over and take the girls for a ride around town. And Mrs. Hastings came in her Franklin, and I happened to get in her car; and she asked me to come to dinner next Sunday and meet her son. [*Smiles and nods toward Mr. Hastings*] [*audience laughter*].

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: I think it was a good result [*audience applause*]. Any other questions? All right, we've got another one.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera, to Mrs. Hastings*]: Did you write that poem?

MRS. HASTINGS: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*off-camera, to Mrs. Hastings*]: It sounds like you. I just wanted to know.

MR. HASTINGS: There is one other thing I'd like to say. This courthouse burned down about 19—

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: Sixteen

MR. HASTINGS: --sixteen, I believe it was.

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: I wonder if the statue that we see on the pictures of the courthouse, whether it was destroyed by the fire or whether there's any chance of our locating it.

MR. HASTINGS: The whole top of the building fell clear through. In fact, they called the Atlanta Fire Department to come out and help us.

MR. MACKAY [*off-camera*]: You know, the—I wish the aspiring young politicians, men and women, were taking in these meetings, because they would really learn a lot. For one thing the—this courthouse was burned on the night that the incumbents got beat [sic] [*audience laughter*]. And nobody was prosecuted. The other thing is that as I listen to Mr. and Mrs. Hastings—I hate to admit my age—but when I was a senior at Druid Hills High School in 1936, I played in the Emory Aces dance orchestra. And you called back to my mind the fact that the Decatur Woman's Club was a place in which dances were held, isn't that correct? The building—it's interesting about the human memory, but I now remember in our little orchestra going and playing for dances there during my senior year in high school. Wasn't it down on—?

MRS. HASTINGS: Uh-huh. Graham Jackson played when my daughter was sixteen-- RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY.

2012.3.18
WHEAT WILLIAMS

OFF-CAMERA VOICE, presumably that of the videographer: All ready to go.

MR. WILLIAMS: [*Reply inaudible*]

OFF-CAMERA VOICE, presumably that of the videographer: Yes sir.

MR. WILLIAMS: Folks, I tried to get out of this, but Jimmy Mackay wouldn't let me out. I'll be ninety years old my next birthday. I quit making talks ten years ago. But I'm delighted to be with you [DeKalb Historical Society]. I read about the excellent work that you're doing, and I think it's wonderful to have some organization that sponsors the historical values of the county.

I came to DeKalb County in 1920. I came out of the army, or rather, the Red Cross. I was in the Red Cross for six or eight months. And when I came to Decatur, I rode the old trolley car. [*Raises hand*] How many of you remember the trolley car? [*laughs*]

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Five-cent fare.

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, I've got company. I'm glad to see that you remember the old trolley car. I taught school in the Fulton High School for two years; I taught physics and chemistry. And I rode the trolley car from Decatur back and forth. I'll never forget the old trolley car. And after I had come to Decatur, my wife had to go to the dentist. How many of you ladies have been to the dentist? [*audience laughter*] So the dentist was Dr. F. T. Hopkins, and he was president of the Atlanta Real Estate Board—I mean, the Decatur Real Estate Board. I don't mean that, either. I mean the Decatur—he was chairman of the Decatur School Board. So he asked my wife, he said, "What does your husband do?" She said, "Well, he's a schoolteacher." So they begun [sic] to talk a little bit; and then he invited me to his office, and I didn't know what he wanted. So I went up to his office, and he said, "Mr. Williams"—I was just a young fellow. I kind of puffed up for people to call me "Mr." He said, "Mr. Williams, we have built a new high school building in Decatur, and we're thinking of reorganizing the school system." That was 1921. "And we're going to have—or we are talking about having—a junior high school. And we're going to change the system from the seven-four system to the six-three-three system: six [grades/years] in the grammar school, three in a junior high school, and three in senior high school. And we're looking for some young fellow to head that school and organize it and put it into operation." Well, I went down

and looked at the facilities; and I went back, and I said, "Doctor, the facilities don't look very good." "Well," he said, "you know, Mr. Williams, we just have to get along the best way we can out here in Decatur. We don't have any equipment." And they were going to turn the old building over to me, and nothing in it—not a thing. Not a library—no sign of a library. No place for children to eat lunches. Nothing of that kind. Just a building—an old building.

Well, I thought about it for two or three months, and I decided I would take a fling at it. So I organized a junior high school with three grades: the seventh, the eighth, and the ninth grades. And we had about, at that time, between five and six hundred students. And that was one of the largest schools in DeKalb County back in those days. We operated for ten years, and I was the only principal they ever had; and I stayed there ten years.

And the Depression hit us, and some of you folks remember the Depression. It was a real depression. It wasn't makeshift. And the Decatur school system was short of money. So they decided that the only thing they could do was to go back to the old seven-four plan. So after operating the junior high school for ten years, the system went back to the old seven-four system. And recently they have incorporated a two-year school, which they call a junior high school. I have always thought, and I still believe, that the best system for adolescent children is the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade together. We organized—I won't take time to go into detail, there's so many things—but I was very much interested in that. [*Holds up thin, paperbound book*.] The children put out a little bulletin every month, some fifteen or twenty pages. You may think this would be modern, instead of back from those days. But we were somehow modern anyway. We liked to do things like this. And I had an organization in that school that I've never seen in any other school. At that time the Atlanta schools has [sic] a junior high school. They operated them for a number of years; they had to go back. I gave every student in that [Decatur junior high] school a copy of—a printed copy of--what we called the honor system. And the teachers had nothing to do with who gets the honors. The principal had nothing to do with it. It was up to each student to decide what honors he wanted to make. Now, we printed about fifteen different things here on this little sheet. And the first day of school, the teachers took this and explained it to the students and said, "Now, this is up to you. If you want to

get honors, every student in this school can get honors if he wants to. And you can get them in a dozen different ways. And the student who makes the highest number of points gets a loving cup." And then we had eight or ten other awards that fitted [sic] into certain accomplishments. And we took the first day to explain this in detail. And we took this paper and pasted it in the back of one of the textbooks. And so every student in school had this copy. And you could take it, and you could look it over; and first thing you knew, he was—most of the students were out working to get some honors. Now, that's human nature, you know. That strikes a chord in human nature. People like to be recognized. And children are no exception. They inherited that from you. They like to be recognized. And you can get the children to working for something—doesn't matter what it is, if it's worthwhile. They work their own problems out. So I just brought this along [*holds up paper*] to call your attention to that because I've never seen anything like that before or since. And sometimes I think the schools could do a better job in many ways than they are doing it. We specialize in adolescent education. I believe the children from the sixth grade up through the ninth—they go through a great many processes physically, emotionally, culturally, and educationally. And if there isn't some attention given to that faculty and nature, they fall far short of doing and being what they should do and be. So, fundamentally, that's what I had in mind when I drew that up and presented it to them. And it worked wonderfully well, and we enjoyed it.

Now, I [*inaudible*] a few little notes here. Well, there's so much to DeKalb County, you could talk all day and make a thirty-minute talk to have to just hit a few high spots. After I joined that church [First Baptist Church Decatur] down there—I joined the first year I was here—little, tiny red-brick building—Andrew Robertson's mother is still living; she's the oldest member of that church. And I think I may be second, I don't know. I'll be ninety years old my next birthday, so I'm not far behind her. But his mother—and I'm very thankful; I remember quite well—and his father were superintendent of the Intermediate Department when I was superintendent of the Sunday school. The old preacher who was there didn't stay but a year or two. He left, and a fellow by the name of Haymore came--Dr. Haymore. Some of you remember him. And I served as superintendent for about ten years until Dr. Moncrief came. I presume that some of you remember Dr. Moncrief. And then after Dr. Moncrief, Dr. Hall. Well, I dropped out at that time, when Dr. Hall came. I served on the board of deacons for

about fifteen or twenty years and had been superintendent of Sunday school for about ten years. And I felt that I had done my part, so I dropped out. And then we tore that building down. We put up a new building down there. I was on the committee that put up the new building, and we thought that we were doing wonders. We had a budget in that church of six thousand dollars [*audience laughter*], and we couldn't raise it. It was hard going, and nobody had any money; and those were the times that we went through it. Then after that we first added the—just the Sunday school plant. Then we added the church part later. Then later they sold it out and built a filling station on it. And I helped plan to buy the present location of the First Baptist Church, which is twelve acres of land. And it had a great-big, two-story house on it, down on Clairemont Avenue. And that twelve acres and that old house cost us the big sum of twenty thousand dollars. And if you owned that property today, you could get, well, I expect a half a million dollars at a minimum. I haven't an idea. There's twelve acres there. What do you think twelve acres would bring down there when they're paying a half-million dollars for some of these lots around here? So that was quite a historical thing for me to see the First Baptist Church go from about four hundred people up to 3,500-plus at the present time. We have a wonderful plant, we have a wonderful preacher, and the church is very enthusiastic, and it's growing. I spoke of the Baptist church, because I belong to it. The other churches have made similar progress. And Decatur has been known as a church town, and I think that's one of the best things that we have.

Now, let's go back to when I came to Decatur. We had a population of about six thousand people. They didn't keep records back in those days like they do now. I never have been able to find an historical accounting of the population. As well as I remember, we had about six thousand people and four residential houses up here on the square: [*points*] one across the street over here on the corner, one down where the old First National Bank—a great-big residence there, and one over on this side, and one back on that side. We had four [*inaudible—could be* "old" *or* "all"] residential houses. Now, the west side of the square was just like the other. It was a square, by the way. It was a square, with the businesses all around on each side. And we referred to the south side or the west side or the north side or the east side. The west side had a furniture store on the corner. It had a hardware store along about the middle of the block there and two or three other stores on the west side. Now, that property

belonged to the City of Decatur. Now, how the bank ever got control of it, I don't know. I'm lost when you can take a side of a square out of a town, and people take it and use it for commercial purposes. It worried me for a while, and I thought about getting somebody to bring a suit to find out if it's legal. But anyway, those of you that don't remember, the west side of the square was all business.

And Decatur—we had, in the school system, of course, we had segregation. The colored people were entirely separate from the whites. And all of my work with the Decatur schools was naturally with the white people. The colored folks had some schools, but they weren't much. And people didn't pay much attention to them. All of the attention was given to the white school naturally. Now, back in those days, with a population of about six thousand, we had—and old trolley cars running and the old houses up here on the square, and those of you who are above fifty years of age can remember the old way of doing business. We had fruit—the grocery stores would deliver groceries to your home. Wouldn't that be nice now? And the ones that delivered got the business, most of it. Most of the business. But it was not unusual to—for a customer to call up any of the stores back in those days and say, "Send me a dozen lemons," this, that, and the other. But those are some part of the old days that we can remember how they operated.

Now, back in the—back to the schools again, after we did away with the junior high school, the city erected another building. I took the old high school building, and they had just built another building, which was replaced since those days. And when we threw it back in the seven-four system, it created the Girls' High and the Boys' High. And they put the girls in one building and the boys in the other. And some people favor that and think it's the best way to do, and the other people think it isn't. They think it's better for them to go to school together and learn how to behave themselves together. And I don't know which is better, myself; but some people want it one way, and some want it the other. You can't satisfy everybody; you have to do the things that you think are in the best interests of the people.

Now, in 1925 the Civitan Club of Decatur had been organized and had been dropped. And there was a fellow by the name of W. T. Bryant, who used to run the Bryant Furniture Store. And he went to our church, and I became acquainted with him. He was a fine fellow. He was civic-minded. And he asked me to meet with a group of eight men to organize the Decatur Civitan Club. Now, we met and organized that club

in 1925. And the first president of that—[*holds up legal-size sheet of paper*] here's a list of the names--I can't read all of them—of the ex-presidents of the Decatur Civitan Club. And we elected Mr. Bryant the first president, because he was active in getting us together and getting [*inaudible—could be* "in order"]. Now, after Mr. Bryant we elected Mr. Claude Blount, who ran the bank over here for a number of years. Now, let me just read these. A number of you remember C. A. Matthews. He ran a lumber yard. And if I had time, I would tell you about the political aspects of—got into the picture and I handled his campaign, we ran him against the incumbent and defeated him, and elected Mr. Matthews county commissioner. Now, Mr. Matthews was the third president. And [he was followed by] a fellow by the name of Foster Law, a very prominent lawyer here. And then some of you remember Judge Frank Guess, I'm sure; he followed Mr. Law as president [of the Decatur Civitan Club]. And Mr. Estes Stukes of Agnes Scott College was next, and George Mew of Emory University followed him. And Mr. R. B. Cunningham of Agnes Scott College was the next president; and Claude Smith, who was our prosecuting attorney here in DeKalb County, followed him. Wheat Williams followed Claude Smith, and Mr. O. R. Quayle of Emory University came next. Vernon Frank—I'm sure a number of you remember Vernon, a very fine fellow, very active in civic work. And Mr. W. F. Tabor, who was an auditor—he audited my books for twenty-five years, a very fine fellow—he followed Mr. Frank. The next president was Congressman James C. Davis, and I always liked to talk to Judge Davis. I learned something every time I talked to him. I think he was a good Congressman, and he was judge of the Superior Court, as you remember. And I think he died last year. He lived to—I believe it was last year. A year or two ago. And then a fellow by the name of Dan [*inaudible; could be* "Scheiden" or "Shadman"?], lived out our way, was next. And C. P. McMurray, who headed the DeKalb Federal Savings and Loan Association, followed him. Now, I could go on and on; that's about half of them [former presidents]. But you can see from this that the Decatur Civitan Club fulfilled a very important mission in Decatur and DeKalb County. We had about—we were limited to seventy-five members. And I remember when I served as secretary for four years, and I enjoyed working with the men in the club. I thought you might be interested in that because some of you would recognize those different men.

Now, let's see what else we might have here. [*Consults notes, then sets them aside as he resumes speaking.*] I noticed a little article in the paper that was well-

written, and I thank you, and I appreciate it; but I hadn't intended to take any time to talk about politics. I was never in politics except one time [*mild laughter among audience members*], except I was in it for about twenty years [*laughs*] handling other campaigns. I handled Charlie Matthews's campaign for him, and we won that. And I always took an interest—I think it's your duty to do that, too. It's still my duty. We should take an interest in campaigning. You've got a right to be for anybody you please, but you ought to—I think you ought to express yourself. We've got some campaigns coming up here in DeKalb County now, pretty soon. You have a right to follow any candidate you wish. But I do think it's a citizen's duty to vote. I've been voting for fifty years; I'm still voting. And as long as I can hobble down to the polls, I'm going to keep on voting. And I was reared a Democrat; all the old folks here were reared Democrats. But I have voted a Republican ticket at times. And I'm going to continue to vote a Republican ticket when I see fit. But that doesn't keep me from being a Democrat [*audience laughter*]. There are a lot of Democrats that have voted Republican once in a while. We've become rather mixed in recent years, anyway. People are voting one way one time and one way the next.

Folks got after me to run for county commissioner back in 1954, I believe it was. I didn't want—to be frank with you—I can say it now, because it was way back yonder, thirty years ago—I didn't want to be county commissioner. I didn't want that job. I was making more money than that job paid, quite a bit more. And it cost me quite a bit of money to serve the time that I served. But people for ten years kept coming in, said, "Mr. Williams, folks are afraid of the present county commissioner. They're afraid to run against him. They think nobody can beat him." And I'll never forget when I announced, I went off to the bank and got my own personal check for three thousand dollars to enter that race.

And Walter Parris [said], "Mr. Williams, are you going to run against so-and-so?"

I said, "Yes, I've decided to make it a race."

"Don't you know nobody could beat the present commissioner?"

I said, "Well, I've heard that a long time, but . . . " [*trails off*]. Walter—Walter went to school with me, but he was for the other fellow. But anyway, I said, "If people want a chance to vote, then I'm going to give them a chance to vote. They don't have to elect me." And I spent fifty-three hundred dollars on that campaign. I don't know what my opponent spent; but judging from the fish-fries and the steak-fries and the

watermelon-cuttings, all those things, and seventeen pieces of literature that he printed—some of them were ten and fifteen pages; and I didn't print any. And I didn't have any steak-fries. And I didn't have any watermelon-cuttings. And I carried every box in DeKalb County out of—we had about thirty-eight, forty boxes—I carried thirty-four boxes. Now, I didn't have any idea I would carry Decatur, because my opponent was born and reared in Decatur. And I came here as a [sic] outsider, a Texan, wild and woolly. But I beat him by a substantial margin in Decatur; and I'm very thankful for that. I appreciate it. So after I was elected county commissioner, the county owed $500,000 when I took office. The county schools owed another $500,000. I paid off those two big items—they were big items in those days. Five hundred thousand dollars was a lot of money back in those days. I left the county with $100,000 in the bank when I left. Now, while I was in office, I did three things that I thought were worthwhile. One is, I promised the people when I ran, if I was elected, that they would have the privilege of voting on whether we'd have a multiple commission or retain a single commission[er]. So after I was elected, I got the three members of the [state] General Assembly from DeKalb County—that was Hugh [*inaudible*; *could be* "McClellan"?] and Guy Rutland, Jr., and Mel Turner—and they agreed to draw up the bill and submit it to the people. We submitted the bill to the people of DeKalb County, and they voted by a substantial margin to have a multiple commission. Now, when they voted to have a multiple commission, I told them not to include me; because I was not going to be a part of the multiple commission. That was a good excuse that I had to get out, so I asked them not to put my name on the ballot. Now, that was the first—one of the first things I did.

Now, back in those days, DeKalb County had a [sic] old convict camp with approximately two hundred—most of them black people—criminals. That camp gave the people of DeKalb County a world of trouble. And the director of all of the camps in the state was a close friend of the former commissioner. So he called me up one day and telling me what all I had to do about that camp to get it cleaned up. It's against the law, but they had—those convicts were sleeping two and three stories high. And they were crowded up down there in a great-big room. It—well, I haven't time to tell you the details about it, but the whole thing just didn't look good. I had one of the best men I could find in the state to come here to handle that convict camp. So when Mr. Forrester decided to tell me, "Clean up that camp! Get some new mattresses in

there!" They were full of bedbugs and all that kind of stuff. "Clean it up and give those convicts something to eat." Well, of course, he had several things to tell me what—I said, "Mr. Forrester, can you get those convicts out of DeKalb County before the end of the week? I'm giving you orders; you're not giving me any orders, sir. You're a state official, but you're not running this convict camp. The county commissioner runs it and has got sole authority for it. And I'm asking you to remove these convicts and get them out of DeKalb County." Well, he had to get them out when I demanded it. So we got rid of the convict camp. And there's been one or two efforts to bring them back, but nobody wants them. Nobody wants them around them. Would you like to have them near your backyard? No, you wouldn't. Nobody wants a convict camp. So we had to hire labor from Lawrenceville and all the surrounding towns, and we cleaned it out. And I thought that I had one of the best police chiefs in the state of Georgia, and I still think that he was one of the best—that's Chief Sikes. If I had time, I'd tell you what a hard time I'd had getting Chief Sikes; but anyway, Chief Sikes, I called him in the office and told him to take the police force down there—the whole police force. I was turning the convict camp over to the police department. And so they have fixed up those buildings. They're down there now; they've been there ever since. And you have a very good police department in DeKalb County. They have a hard job, because we have the crime wave and this, that, and the other. And so many people have moved in here, some undesirable citizens along with a great many of the others, good ones. And they just do the best that they can. That's all a policeman can do, do they best they can. I think Decatur has a good police force. And the two [DeKalb and Decatur police departments], they cooperate. They work together, and I think they make a pretty good job of maintaining order and protecting our homes. Of course, if you're robbed, you feel like the police are no good. But all public officials have some handicaps—all of them. And it's human nature with American people to criticize public servants. They don't mean a lot of it. They don't mean half they say when they're criticizing. But it's human nature. They like to criticize the sheriff. The sheriff has a big job, and they like to jump on him; and they run somebody against him, kick him out, and they get another one, and he's no better, and so it goes on down the line.

Now, in addition to getting rid of the convict camp, I set up—in setting up the county commission--we didn't have any zoning laws. My predecessor just approved

the zoning that he wanted. Now, I had the three legislators draw up the present zoning law, the one that you're using now. It's been amended two or three times, but that's the one that I drew up, got through the legislature, and put into effect.

Now, I think the most important thing that I did—I think those three things are very important—but I think the fourth thing is more important than any of them. We didn't have any money to do anything with. And I sought to raise the tax—not the tax levy, now, but the tax digest. I sought to raise that about thirty, forty percent, because we had figured out the cost, what it would cost to do a few things that should be done. A couple of lawyers down at Lithonia decided to take that into court. And they took it up to the Supreme Court. Well, I won the case in Superior Court. By the way, I had, oh, six or eight cases. I call them my "new lawsuits" [*laughs*]. Every once in a while, somebody'd pop up, "You can't do this," "You can't do that," "You can't do the other." So they took that matter into court and appealed it to the Supreme Court.

And when it got up to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court called me on the telephone and said, "Mr. Williams, do you know that the law of the state of Georgia says that every taxpayer shall go down and list his taxes [real estate] at fair market value?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I certainly do know that. I've known that for several years."

"Well," he said, "that's what you're going to have to do. We're not going to pass on this thing. We're going to just tell you that you've got to list the property at fair market value."

All right, well, they couldn't blame me for that, but still—I guess probably they did, but anyway, that was the thing that happened. Now, when that happened, I called Mr. [Jim] Cherry [Superintendent of DeKalb County schools] into my office. And I had already paid off his $500,000 school debt, and I had planned to give him a maximum tax levy for the schools. Now, let me put a little bug into your ears, and it may buzz wrong; but, nevertheless, it's what I believe. A tax levy in DeKalb County is made by your county commission. A tax levy for your schools is made by the school board and must be incorporated into the levy of the county. Now, the schools needed more money, and they got more money.

And I told Mr. Cherry, I said, "Now, Mr. Cherry, I'm going to be a little different from the other county commissioners. If your tax levy doesn't suit me, you know what

I'm going to do? I'm not going to incorporate it into the general tax levy, and you won't have any money for your schools at all."

Well, he said, "No, Mr. Williams, we're going to work together on that."

And I said, "Well, that's the way we should do."

So the tax levy for that year in DeKalb County was nine mils. You know what it is today? Twenty-four mils. And do you know that I paid all expenses to operate the county and turn over $100,000 to [*inaudible—could be* "to Claude Blount"?] on that nine-mil tax levy. Now, most people don't look at things like I do; but, you know, I'm a taxpayer. When I came to DeKalb County, I didn't have enough money for a down payment on a home. I didn't have an automobile; I couldn't afford one. I came up the hard way. I know what a lot of taxpayers go through. My taxes on my house, when I bought it forty-one years ago—the house is fifty years old—was ninety dollars per year down at City Hall. They've [taxes] gone up like a staircase [*Gestures to indicate stairs rising upward, accompanied by sound effects,* "Up, up, up, up . . . ."] for forty years. Never gone down one time. The taxes this year—city taxes on my house, a fifty-year-old house, started off at ninety dollars—are $1,022 for the city, plus the state and county taxes. [*Points to audience*] And you're in the same fix. I know what you're saying, "Well, you're no better than we are." I'm not claiming to be--just telling my personal experience. Now, that's our greatest problem, is a tax digest. And I think every one of you should take an interest in it. You ought to know what it is. When they propose another million, the schools--I didn't come to my point about that school business. My personal opinion is that the county commission, if they wanted to do it, they could leave the school levy out, if that school board doesn't want to listen to the county. The county commission can have something to do with the levy for schools. But they propagandize this thing so much, and it's been in the paper, and it's been said, "Well, the schools have absolute authority, and nobody can question it; so they can just do as they please." Then they put this high tax on you, and you can't do anything about it. Now, I don't think that's true, but that's the consensus of opinion; and I wanted to bring that out while I was here, because I think it fits in with it.

Now, [*to "Mr. Chairman," unidentified, off-camera*] Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry--I hope I haven't taken too long.

"MR. CHAIRMAN" [*unidentified, off-camera*]: You've done just right.

MR. WILLIAMS: And I was delighted to come, and the pleasure's been mine; but I hope I haven't bored you people.

"MR. CHAIRMAN" [*unidentified, off-camera*]: We certainly appreciate your coming here. [*Audience applause*] If you'd mind [sic] sticking around here a few minutes, there may be some people here that may have some questions to ask you. Does anybody have any questions?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I was a student of yours at the junior high school, Mr. Williams. And I remember in chapel one day you told us that we were pronouncing the word "syrup" ["*surrup"*] wrong, that actually it was supposed to be "sirrup." Have you ever changed your ideas about that? [*Audience laughter; Mr. Williams laughs*.]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: That was right, "sirrup."

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You made a talk in chapel one day, and I don't know how it came up. But you said that here in Georgia we pronounced the word "surrup" wrong, that it was supposed to be "sirrup." "Sirrup" and not "surrup." Have you changed your idea on that?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: It's "sirrup."

MR. WILLIAMS, *laughing*: Well, I don't eat syrup ["*sirrup"*], so . . . . [*Audience laughter*]

"MR. CHAIRMAN" [*unidentified, off-camera*]: Any other questions?

MR. WILLIAMS *points to recognize audience member's question.*

SECOND UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mr. Williams, I'm [*inaudible*] interested in the history of Georgia. I was wondering if you knew the Great Seal in Georgia, if had come from the railroad or vice versa.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*possibly "Mr. Chairman," walking up to Mr. Williams, on-camera, and handing him a railroad engineer's or cap with an emblem on the front, which Mr. Williams examines*.]: Did the Great Seal come from the railroad company or did it—is it vice versa? Did the railroad company take it from Georgia?

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, I really don't know. Is he giving me this? [*Audience laughter*]

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*possibly "Mr. Chairman"*]: He's just giving you that to look at. [*Audience laughter*]

MR. WILLIAMS: Well, I really don't know.

SECOND UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: If it fits, he can have it.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER [*possibly "Mr. Chairman"*]: If it fits, you can have it.

MR. WILLIAMS, *trying on hat*: Oh, well, I might answer his question now. [*Audience laughter*] I'll wear it. Folks, let me say this, too. I haven't been to a doctor, with the exception—I've had diabetes for fifteen years, but I wouldn't know I have it. It doesn't bother me one particle. And I'll be ninety years old my next birthday. But outside of that, I haven't been to the doctor, I've never been to the hospital, I don't drink liquor—I've never taken one dram of liquor in my life. I don't smoke cigarettes—I've never smoked one in my life. I get out in my yard, and I've been cutting the grass and taking care of the lawn. I work about thirty minutes [or] an hour a day and quit. I do that to get a little exercise and keep moving around. I've outlived all of my brothers and my sisters; they're all dead. My wife is still living, thank you; and she has outlived all of her kinfolks. She hasn't a single relative here and neither have I, except I have one son; and I have two grandsons. I'm very proud of them. One of them goes to private school in Atlanta, and the other one went to Cornell University last year. They are very fine boys. They don't smoke, they don't drink, they don't go out for marijuana, they don't go out for all this foolishness, downright foolishness that you have to put up with among the young people, some of them.

And by the way, before I forget it, Mr. Chairman—I'm not on the--?

"MR. CHAIRMAN" [*unidentified, off-camera*]: You're still on the clock here. [*Audience laughter*]

MR. WILLIAMS: I just wanted to ask you. Some of you take *The Literary Digest*—[*Possibly he means* Reader's Digest*?*] I expect a number of you. I get the big-print edition because my eyes haven't been so good lately, and I can read the big print. And the last edition has an article—it's the last one in the book. I wish you'd read it. It'll do good. It's an analysis of what people are thinking and how far off we are, but it brings up the idea about the young people and about what we're trying to do. It's too long to talk about; but if you'll read that, you'll get some good out of it.

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