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Charles M. Clayton

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PROFESSOR CLAYTON [Recording begins mid-sentence.]: . . . you may, L.L.B. They say, as the man made a speech once said that a man who had those tails, dual degrees, on his name wasn't any better than anybody else. He said it was a little more tail, but no more pig, you see? [audience laughter] [inaudible] . . . and he worked for them.

I went to public schools in Clayton, Alabama, and I went to Stignall [spelling?] School in Montgomery, Alabama. I went to Morehouse in 1914 and graduated with a degree of A.B. I went to Columbia University summer school in June 1920 New York City, and there I took the junior high school and senior high school, which were in vogue at that time. Then I went to Atlanta University in 1936 and [inaudible; audio drops briefly] and got my master's degree in education. They said I could take it in sociology; but since I was teaching, they would give it to me in education. Then I went to John Marshall [law school] University in 1944—September 30, 1944—that's the law school here and took what we called the Georgia law. Because I had taken the LaSalle Extension University course for four years and got an L.L.B., but I couldn't pass the Georgia Bar [exam], because I didn't know—Georgia is a code state, you see? And of course, the university taught me the common law, so I had to go to John Marshall University here, just here in Atlanta, and they taught me the statutes. Georgia is a statute state. So you get the Georgia Code and study it from A to Z. And I did that, because I had tried to pass the bar three times and failed, see? But after I went out to John Marshall Law School and took the Georgia Code that year, I came back [snaps fingers] and passed like that [audience laughter]. And then I went into practice with the late [inaudible—could be Jerry Walden? spelling?] and the late Bill Herndon, and both have passed, and [both names inaudible]. All have passed; I'm the only one that's living.

At the same time then, they wanted me to teach school; and they got me to be principal of a Baptist institute run by the Atlanta Baptist Missionary Association [an? and?] association of [inaudible] Baptist. I ran that school for sixteen years, then night school. It was the only one that colored people had that they could go to. Of course, they could go to high school there in Atlanta, but they were run by the private schools; wasn't no public high schools for coloreds, see? The public high schools were for whites. It was very hard for a colored person at that time. And it was hard for their parents to have to send children with streetcar fare and then tuition to Clark or Spelman or Morehouse, Morris Brown, or Atlanta University, their private high schools—because they all had them then. That's the only way you could get prepared for college. And then, in 1932, they needed a principal out here in Decatur at the elementary school, which is the only one that they had. And so they--I accepted that job after being recommended to it by a great man, Mr. Scott Candler, who was then mayor of Decatur. I had some dealings with him in law and land, and he liked what I did. He said, "We'd like to have a man like you—literally—in Decatur," see? Mr. Scott Candler, Sr., a very fine man. I never saw a finer man. One point and I'll tell you about it later on, just as fine as he is.

My achievements are many. I'm a member of [inaudible] Hughes-Spalding Pavilion in Atlanta—I'm a member of that board. I think Mr. Thomas is on that board and also some other people from Decatur, and Judge Davis is on that board—former Judge Davis. And if you go to Hughes-Spalding, you'll see a plaque on the wall there with our names there, as trustees. Of course, that has been taken over now by Grady Hospital, because it cost too much money to run it, and we couldn't do it, so we had to turn it over to Grady. I'm a member of Wheat Street Baptist Church and a deacon there and a trustee for about fifty years. I'm legal advisor and charter member and incorporator of the Decatur Colored Civic League. That's an organization we have here, and the colored people have raised, and we're supposed to have, \$17,000 in the bank now here at Decatur Federal, see? It's money that colored people raised and it's put there to be used for some good cause for the colored people of Decatur and

DeKalb County. But we haven't been able yet to find anything that we could invest that money in safely, see? And every institution that we try to get, it takes money to keep it running. We have money now enough to buy the institution, but we don't have money to operate it. So we're just letting that money stay there in the bank until we find out some way what to do with it. Of course, I know what I'd like to do with it, but I don't know [inaudible] or not. You'd have to go to court and talk and see. I'd like to take that \$17,000 and divide it up among these colleges in Atlanta if they wanted to. That's what I'd want to do, but I'm just one person. So that's something we had to get to. I am a member of the Butler Street YMCA and, of course, I told you before about—just a minute ago—about trying to build a place—a colored high school in Decatur for colored people.

Now, Ms.—Ms. Caroline Clark—she's a very fine woman; I met her. James Mackay here, some of the greatest men out here that I've met and have come in contact with. My memory is not so good now, because, you know, loss of memory and bad eyesight are two of the infirmities of old age. Since I'll be ninety-three if I live to see July, I can say I'm an old man. [laughter] Yet the Lord lets me walk around, and I can talk and I can see. And somebody broke into my office about a month ago and stole my glasses! [Mr. Mackay, seated next to Professor Clark, reaches into his jacket pocket, retrieves his own glasses, and offers them to Professor Clark; laughter. Professor Clark waves them away and continues.] No, I only use them for reading fine print. I don't need them otherwise, see? [inaudible] So I went to Sears Roebuck and asked the man to give me an exact duplicate; and he's supposed to do that, but he's taking so long, I don't know what. He said, "I have to look through the files." Of course, that's been a long time ago—it's been about twenty years ago [laughter].

I cannot begin to tell you that which I recollect without first mentioning the names of some great persons, which I've already done. As I said, Mr. Scott Candler, Mr. Frank Thomas [two names, inaudible], and then some great colored people we had here: Deacon [inaudible]—we have a park

named after him, Ebster Park, down here in Decatur. And I will say about Mr. Candler, he was a man who [inaudible] me to become a citizen of Decatur, Georgia, in DeKalb County, in 1932. When this principalship was vacant, he recommended me to the City Board of Educators of Decatur [inaudible], and the board took me on his recommendation. And also [inaudible—could be Sheriff or Sharon] McCurdy recommended me at that time.

When I accepted this principalship at Herring Street School in 1932, segregation was still in force and in [inaudible]. And when I came to Decatur to teach, there was no high school for blacks only, only an eighth-grade school. But I want to give honor to the late Mrs. William Schley Howard; I guess some of you know her, a great, great person. She permitted me to add on, [inaudible] the Board of Education, a grade each year, after they finished the eighth grade, till we got a four-year accredited high school. I could add on one grade each year. But my first problem was when I come to get my teachers accredited, because we had teachers in there teaching that didn't have no certificates at all, see? There was three or four—didn't have any, just teaching, went to school a little while and stopped. And the first job was to demand every teacher to get certification from the state capital, see, to teach in a certified school. And, of course, I had two teachers rebel; Mr. [Thurston?] dismissed them and told them that I didn't dismiss them, that he did it, because he knew that they'd get mad at me, and they were mad at me [laughter]. But they had to be properly certified before the school could be accredited, see? So the Board of Education stuck with me right then.

After I got my curriculum all built up and [inaudible] and how I wanted and put it before the board, I had another problem coming up, and that was this. Of course, I set up the K-6-6 system, which means the kindergarten, and then a six-grade elementary school, and the other six grades would be a junior high school and a senior high school. We called it for short K-6-6, that's what we called it at Columbia University. And we put that in there. Well, anyway, after I got it all set up and I thought was

straight, I had the strong kick coming from the chairman of the City Board of Education. He came and told me and said, "Listen, [inaudible] what you've got teaching those children—those black children down there." I said, "What is that, Mr. Chairman?" He said, "You got a whole lot of high aims and Latin and that stuff there. You don't need all that there. They need some industrial training." Well, that were a problem. And I had to run to Mr. Robert L. Cousins, who was the head of the State Department, Negro Division of Negro Education [inaudible] to help me with it. And he went there and told this Board of Education—this chairman, I won't call his name—that the school could not be accredited unless that curriculum stayed in there. And that curriculum he said was the correct one. And he said, "It's better than some you got there for your white schools now." [inaudible] Because I studied, and I put in what I studied in that school. In that way, I got that through.

And after I got that through and I thought I was sailing along nicely, I had another important thing. I had a colored fellow come to me—well, I might say he was a [inaudible] rabble-rouser. We have white rabble-rousers, and we have black rabble-rousers [laughter]. Well, he was a rabble-rouser. He came to me, and he said to me, "Now, let me tell you one thing." I said, "What is it?" I won't call his name [laughter]. He said, "As soon as we get together and [points to self] kill all the black Negroes that we have like you around here, our race will be better off." [laughter] Here I am, I'm trying to help him, and he's [inaudible]. The white people never said nothing [inaudible] about getting things for Negroes. But I looked at him, and I told him, I said, "You don't know what you're talking about." And it wasn't six months before he had to come back to me to get a judge to keep from sending him to prison for stealing sales tax on a little business deal, state sales tax. Now I had to go down to get the judge down there at the courthouse in Atlanta to let him pay the money back on probation. I told the judge, "It was error of [points to his head] his head [points to his chest] and not of his heart." [laughter] I said, "He just didn't know." And the judge gave him a chance to pay that money off on probation and come out of prison, and he's working now, and he comes around now and shakes my hand. But I told him, "You don't forget

what you said to me a long time ago.” I said, “I don’t forget it.” And then he said, another thing he said, “We [inaudible] don’t want you, you’re a hat-in-hand Negro.” See? A “hat-in-hand” Negro. Well, I took that up with President John Hope [?] of Morehouse College when I was getting an education, and I said, “What I’m running into, I’ve got some colored people who say I’m a ‘hat-in-hand’ Negro and I’m playing Uncle Tom, and they don’t like that.” I said, “What I’m going to do about that?” He said, “Let me tell you something.” He said, “The hat-in-hand Negro and the Uncle Tom, as they call it, got things back here in these times for us that you couldn’t get otherwise, see? So you go ahead and just do like you’re doing.” So I got some good help there, see? And I did use Booker T. Washington’s philosophy. You know Booker T. Washington—you’ve read about him. He said this: In [inaudible] community, any time [inaudible] colored man [inaudible], had one white man that he could go to get him to help him out to get anything that was worthwhile. And that if you get some white man down there that’s against it, you could get that white man to go talk to him and get him off you, and get it straight. And that thing worked—that philosophy worked! That’s the way it was going, and I thank the Lord for that.

[Interference; inaudible] straight and got the teachers all certified. All the teachers who weren’t certified and didn’t have their certificates would have to go the extension school for summer school and get certified if they wanted to keep their job, and they were all doing it, and they did that, see? With the help of Dr. Robert L. Cousins and this great woman, the late Mrs. William Schley Howard, who was a great woman. And then again, I had another problem. Dr. McCain of Agnes Scott College helped us out down there, helped me out with what I was doing. I couldn’t find a colored teacher who was qualified to teach art, and I had to have somebody down there to teach art in order to make the accreditation, to get the school accredited. So he had his teacher, head of the art department at Agnes Scott, to send some white teacher down there and teach our colored children art until I was able to find a qualified colored teacher to take the job—which was about two years, and I thank him for that, Dr. McCain of Agnes Scott College. And I got help everywhere from white people, and I like that about white people.

And I want to say this to you now, I like white people. They've never done nothing to me, they've always helped me, and I've always gotten along with them. Of course, when I was a little boy, I know, once a man worked me in Clayton, Alabama, he got me to carry a package to his home, and I did, and I come back, and he didn't pay me. So at least two or three days after, I raised my hand and asked him—I say, "Mr."-- his name was [inaudible], I said, "Where's my nickel? You didn't pay me my nickel." And I said it sort of rough, you know, I wasn't nice about it, just like a little adolescent boy would do. And he took his foot and kicked me. [inaudible] But that evening when he got ready to go home, he had to go through the alley. My boys and I followed him, and when he turned to go in the alley, we threw a bottle of rocks at him. Now, we didn't try to hit him, but we threw it at him, see? We let him know that I didn't like anybody kicking me. So the next day, when I walked by his printing office—I think he printed *The Clayton Courier*, paper—he said, "Charlie?" I said, "What is it?" He said, "Here's your nickel." [laughter] See, he paid me. I thought he was going to take me in the store and give me a whooping, like they did colored people then. They'd take--if colored people did anything, they'd take them to the store and [inaudible] and beat them up and send them on back to the farm to work. And finally—that's why we got [inaudible—sounds like "peonies"], you know, you could get them to work and never did pay them, just keep working them [inaudible]. So I come along with that sort of thing. So I'm just telling you what I ran up against when I came along, but I got along all right. And let me say this, as I—I don't know if I'm over time—[Mr. Mackay checks his watch and says, "You're in good shape."]

Well, when you get in the district [inaudible], and I had that Simon Pure High School. Simon Pure High School, and it was accredited, and its teachers got to be accredited—certified, pardon me. And then you've got to have the proper curriculum, of course, for four years and [inaudible] high school accredited. And Dr. Cousins helped me do that. But I had the help of Mrs. Schley Howard, a very fine woman. Made that Board of Education do what some of them didn't want to do. I had one superintendent who lost his job. She had him fired from that because he didn't want me to have my

closing exercises in the white auditorium over there. He didn't want me to have it. So Mrs. Howard saw to it that we [inaudible], because we had a big school—big thing of it—and it just wasn't big enough down there for the teachers, see? And, of course, when I knew anything, he came to see me one day and said, "You know one thing, [inaudible]?" And I said, "What is it?" And he said, "I'm not going to be over here next year." I said, "What's your trouble?" And he told me that he heard that Mrs. Howard was getting him off the board. And I said, "Well, I didn't have nothing to do with that, because I've got my hands full here." [laughter] But anyway, that's the way it happened.

I have one more, and I'll get to this, and I'll get on with the conclusion. Remember this [inaudible], if I had to speak to you, I would say, "Intelligence knows no race." Intelligence knows no race. Get that. [audible from audience: "That's true."] To prove that, in education we have Booker T. Washington, and we have George Washington Carver. I mean, what one man can do—white man can do, a black man can do. And what a black man can do, a white man can do. And it's what Abraham Lincoln said, when God created man, He created them all equal. He didn't give one more sense than the other, one race, see? But he always had some in each race that had as much sense as the other. So I pull up George Washington Carver, the great scientist—the man with the peanuts, you know—and then Booker T. Washington, and then, we have some more great people that show that we're up in education, and we're up in character, and [inaudible] some wealth. Only trouble is, now, we need a little more wealth, and we also need to know politics. We know politics, now.

And now that we know politics, we're voting, we're registered voters. And with these registered voters, we're getting some places that we didn't have way back yonder. And the man who gave his life, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I believe, for it, because of Ms. Rosa Parks, who was willing to sit down on the street car in Montgomery, Alabama. And they made her get up and told her to stand up because the white man had to sit down, and she wouldn't get up, so they locked her up. And he led the

Montgomery boycott—forget what year, you’d have to look it up—I’ll see if I’ve got it on paper here somewhere—led the Montgomery boycott, which brought about the civil rights law that we have now invoked. That makes all of us equal, like Abraham Lincoln said: God created all men equal, they’re all equal now. And we can get anything we want if we work for it. And that’s what one famous white man in North Carolina said—I don’t know what his name is—“If you black folks want what we got, you got to work for it.” And he said another thing, “You got to take it.” I say, “How we going to take it?” You got to register and vote and take it. So now we’re registered and vote, and we’re taking it. We’re taking some of it.

See, we’ve got black men in Congress, got black mayors all over the country—who ever thought of that? And Mr. Truman, a great president, he said years ago that in thirty years we’re going to have a black Negro president. We’re going to have a Negro president—that’s what Mr. Truman said. And I’m seeing that. Because now, did you know that the colored population of votes this country is the balance of power? And the Democrat or Republican Party, if they can swing that Negro vote, they will stay in power. And we’ve got the thing, but we must register and vote and keep voting every year. Every year vote every time there’s an election to keep your stuff on the record. That way, we can get these things that we say that we want and we need. And one thing I like about [inaudible], if I had things my way, I don’t think I could turn loose and give it to anybody right away, because it was too hard to get. I might run out and do the same thing. But since now, we can get some of it, we are happy about it. And my advice is to our group—and sorry there are not more of you here—is to keep registering and vote. That is where you’re going to get your rights. And try to earn some money. You got to get some wealth, see? But with this vote, you can get anything you want, you know that? And these black votes in this country now is the balance of power for president every year, is the Negro vote. And Republicans and Democrats fuss every year trying to get the Negro vote. But now you stay with the party that will help you get what you want. Now, if you have to switch to the Democrats, like I did, it’s all right. I was a

Republican once, because the Republicans freed us; but that's all they did—they turned us loose and ["forgot us"? unclear]. [laughter] So the Democrats are giving us something. If you turn a man loose with nothing, he'll starve. But anyway, you see the situation.

And with this I want to conclude. There was one great black man, who's dead and gone now, I wish he was here—Honorable Philip Weltner, who was a great man, chancellor of the University of Georgia for years. He is the man who helped me to get on to where I am. He is the one that told me to be a lawyer. He is the one that helped me all the way. And if you—and I'm saying this for the [inaudible] colored group—have anything you want to do, there's always one black man around to help you do it if you can do it. If you do, go to him and talk. But now your main [inaudible] is to keep registering and vote—that's the power. And as that great white politician said, what you want, you got to take it. Because if white people are ruling, they're not going to turn it loose. And as an old colored man said once, "You want things? Don't you do nothing, son, to make the Anglo-Saxon mad. [inaudible]" And then I told another white man, who was telling me that I was a Negro and should stay in my place, I said, "Listen, I was born free, just like you. I don't know nothing about slavery; it's a fairy tale to me. I don't know nothing about it. It's a fairy tale. I was born free—twenty-four years before [sic—means "after"?] Abraham Lincoln signed it, and I don't know what you're talking about. [inaudible] Now I thank God that I've lived to see this day and time that all type of segregation is eliminated in the passing of the 1968 civil rights law by the work and efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

And in conclusion I must say that we have come a long way, but we still have a long ways to go to get everything we're going to get in our great American democracy, in the greatest country and democracy in this world. And I want to say to you to work hard and work with the white people and don't work against them, and you let them know that you're working with them, they'll work with you. And then you'll always have one white man to look out for you if need that. He can make that other

white man behave. And that's what I like, because one colored man can't make this colored man behave—we're not like that. [laughter] Now I have [inaudible] We're all Americans. As Ms. Rosa Parks said, if we're all Americans, then we're not black folks and just white folks—we're all Americans. Now, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said that—that was the great man who brought us through the Depression and was re-elected president several times, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And he said that, that he thinks of the people of the United States as Americans. He didn't think of them as white people, he didn't think of them as black people, he thought of us all as Americans. And that's what we must say.

Now, I just noticed in the paper the other day—yesterday's paper—that Ms. Rosa Parks, the lady who brought about all this, they had a write-up about her in the paper here, if you buy yesterday's paper—here, the 26th, and read it, "Rosa Parks Has Her Day in Alaska." She's a native of Alaska. See, she went to Alaska to live afterward—she's living there now. [consulting newspaper] And she had been—certain things—up there-- I guess I could read it— [Mr. Mackay: "Plenty of time."] All right. I'll tell you what she's doing up there in Alaska, she's still fighting, same cause as when she refused to get up and give her seat to that what man on the bus in Montgomery, that started all this. She says—[inaudible first name] McCoy [?] said this: [reads from newspaper] "Two schoolmates in Alabama 66 years ago had gone to Alaska, and the entire state officially joined the celebration. Mahala Ashley and Rosa McCauley met each other a long time ago at the Montgomery Industrial High School in Montgomery, Alabama. Miss Ashley married, becoming [inaudible] Dickerson, became a lawyer, and moved to Anchorage twenty-four years ago. She invited her old friend from the Old South to see the New North in Anchorage, Alaska. Rosa McCauley was married, becoming Rosa Parks"—see, that's the woman on the streetcar. "She worked for quite a while as a seamstress at a department store back in Montgomery. One day—it was December 1, 1955—she was coming home from work on the bus, when the driver made her get up and give her seat to a white man. She refused, and she was arrested." [Looks up from paper] And you know what happened thereafter; that caused the Montgomery bus boycott. [Back to

paper] “And it was a turning point in the troubled racial history of the United States, leading to the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation of all the country’s public facilities.” [Looks up from paper, showing it to audience] And that’s the streetcar incident—that’s the write-up in the [Atlanta] *Constitution*, the 25th, Wednesday. “So when Rosa Parks, who is now sixty-nine years old, was in Alaska for the first time last Sunday, the day was officially declared Rosa Parks Day by Governor J. S. Hammond.” [Looks up--to audience] That’s the governor of the state of Alaska. “His proclamation was presented to Ms. Parks during the [inaudible] service at the New Hope Baptist Church. There were about seven hundred people inside the pleasant, modern church, almost everyone black. That’s quite a few, when you consider there are only nine thousand black people, including military personnel, in all of the huge state of Alaska. ‘God [inaudible] of our silent tears,’ the choir and congregation sang. ‘God has brought us this far on the way,’ Rosa said to her friend. Mahala Dickerson, noting that Ms. Parks had a [inaudible], ‘You don’t have to do anything. Your life is full.’ But Rosa Parks, a fragile little woman with long, gray braids wrapped around her head, disagreed. ‘People ask me why I did not get up and give my seat and avoid all this trouble,’ she said. ‘And I often ask myself how I managed to endure that constant—all this constant humiliation for as long as I did.’ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Anchorage presented the winners of the citywide high school essay contest that it had sponsored and to commemorate Rosa Parks Day.” [aside] That’s in Alaska. [back to paper] “‘Why do we refer to ourselves as black Americans and as white Americans?’ said the winner, Ray Williams, who is a white man, and the congregation answered, ‘Amen.’” [aside] He said we’re all Americans. There’s no white Americans and no black Americans. We’re all Americans, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt said. And he was a white man, this Ray Williams. He said we are all Americans. [back to paper] “‘Amen,’ said the people. Some of them had caught their breath when the young man stood up to speak.” [aside] Ray Williams is white, see? That was a white man said that. So a white man was doing good after all. And we can’t do without them. [back to paper] “The second-place winner,

[inaudible] a black, her mother and father later moved to Alaska in 1967, more than ten years after her mother and her mother's [inaudible] refused to ride the buses of Montgomery because of the arrest of a black woman then they'd never met. 'For me as a black it is different now,' Miss Bach [spelling?] read from her essay. 'Each new day is a silent celebration. Every time you go to the school of your choice, you sit in the seat of your choice on the bus; we owe this to civil rights movements of the past. Civil rights then,' she continued, 'forged the development of a dream. Civil rights now is a challenge to keep that dream alive and make it a constant reality.'" [back to audience, putting down paper] Amen. That's what Rosa Parks said. [applause from audience] That concludes the speech I had for you. There's a lot more I could say, but I don't want to burden you. And I don't want to say anything to irritate whites or blacks. I want to get along with people. And I do get along with people. Thank you.

MR. MACKAY: Well, I think we have the time—and there's nobody here except for people who wanted to be here to see you and to hear from you.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: All right.

MR. MACKAY: There are many questions that come to my mind, and one of them is how far you've been able to trace your roots or whether you've tried. To trace your roots.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Oh—*my* roots. I still haven't mentioned that, but I'll go over it. I didn't know where—how you would like it. Of course, that's a question of biology known as genetics. My parents—see, I was born free. But my parents—grandparents on my father's side were black. But my grandparents on my mother's side were Republican white men. They were in Eufala, Alabama, and ran a big dry goods store. My mother was, what we would say, a high mulatto, but I had nothing to do with that. [laughter from audience] But they—probably I inherited some—a little—everything that that white grandfather had. Because I've got [inaudible] on my mother's side and black on my father's side. My father could not read and write. He could just write his name, but he could not read. And my

mother's mother, she went as far as sixth grade. Well, she saw to it that I kept in school until I got old enough to go on and [inaudible] Mr. Philip Weltner, who told me the way to go. Chancellor Philip Weltner, he's dead now--you've heard of him—great man—he taught me law.

MR. MACKAY: Tell them about the way that Philip Weltner became acquainted with you and you with him. I think that's very interesting.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Now, the way he met me, I was representing my college, Morehouse, in debate, and he was a judge that night on the debate. We were debating Knoxville College, and he was the judge as to who would win. And he--after the debate was over—

MR. MACKAY: Tell them the subject of the debate.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: The subject of the debate was Resolved, that the United States should abandon the Monroe Doctrine. You know what the Monroe Doctrine is, now, don't you? [laughter from audience and Mr. Mackay] Do you know about the Monroe Doctrine? If not, just look it up in the library and see what the Monroe Doctrine is. [laughter] Yeah, you can do that yourself. It's like this, the Monroe Doctrine is as short as this, I believe, that any European nation that attempted to come and get a foothold in North America or South America [inaudible] continents would be considered by the United States as an unfriendly act, see? Get that now? And then George Washington said that we have nothing to do with European affairs; we only now deal with America—that is, North America and South America.

MR. MACKAY: Tell them what happened after the debate.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: After the debate? Well, I was in the debate, of course, that night. I'm sorry we lost. I was on the wrong side. [laughter] I said that the United States ought to abandon the Monroe Doctrine, because it kept us on the verge of war all the time. But I'm glad now that it went like it did, that we did not abandon it, that we still have it. And we're sorry--we hope we don't lose the

Panama Canal or nothing, because all of this is a strategic point of value to the United States. And right now, we see with what we've got going on: the British and the Argentines are fighting over the Falkland Islands. I hope—and Russia is backing up the Argentine people. We don't know what's going to come about. I hope it won't be a world war. I believe what the Lord says, that by peace, by peace and not by violence do we get what we want here on Earth. And I pray each night in my prayers that that fight down there will soon be over and settled in a peaceful way, if possible. And, of course, I don't know who is wrong or right. I don't know if England's right, I don't know if Argentina's right. I get to thinking about it; yet, when you think about it, the Lord always made race to rule. And he made your race rule—the Anglo-Saxons. Ever since 1066, I believe, when William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings, you've been ruling [sic]. [Anglo-Saxons were defeated at the Battle of Hastings.] And now I want you to keep ruling. Because if you don't rule right, God's going to raise Him up another nation to obey, and I hope it won't be Russia. [laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [To Mr. Mackay] Jimmy, could I say something about Professor Clayton that I don't think anybody else in this room can say?

MR. MACKAY: Tell us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As a very young man I succeeded Scott Candler as mayor, and he gave me a lot of advice, but the best advice he gave me, he says, "Things aren't perfect in this town, but the relationship between the black and the white community is the best of any county in the world, and the man that keeps it that way is Professor Clayton, and you stay close to Professor Clayton" when I had a problem. I served eight years on the Board of Education with Mrs. Schley Howard, and she knew what you were doing. She knew what you were doing [conferring between Mr. Mackay and Professor Clayton, perhaps confirming speaker's identity]. And you mentioned Mr. Robert L. Cousins, he and I

were classmates in college at Mercer University, and he and I are still very close friends, and he tells me, so you are not unappreciated in the white community, Professor Clayton.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Because if it hadn't been for the white community, I couldn't have built the schools.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, you had to work that going one grade at a time. That was Mrs. Schley Howard's idea. I know the superintendent that got fired—I know who he was.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON (laughing): Mr. Ferguson

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just think it's a wonderful thing that we could have you here today.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you. (Points to another audience member)

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Glad to be here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: In one of our talks, Mr. Clayton used to come by my office when I was with the Welfare Department, and we'd talk about the problems in the county. And there's one thing that you said to me, Mr. Clayton, that stuck in my mind—in fact, there's more than one. But you said—we were talking about the crime and the fact that the young people are getting so involved in crime and that at that time there was not one single gymnasium in DeKalb County for Negro youth. And you had talked to the school about it, and they said they agreed with you, that there ought to be, but they just didn't have the money. And you said, "It looks like we're spending our money backwards, don't it, Ms. Clark." And I sure did agree with you. And another thing you said to me, at that time it was very unusual for black people could be addressed as Mr. or Mrs. We all knew each other well, anyway, but you said—you told me about having taken the bar examination over and over and over, sort of practice work, and when you passed it, you said, "It doesn't matter to me whether I'm called 'mister,' because

I've been called 'mister' in the high places." [laughter] You said Judge—who was the judge that swore you in?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Judge Davis. He swore me in, he was supposed to have been a Negro-hater, but he [inaudible over laughter]—and he swore me in—

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He swore you in to the Georgia Bar?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Yes. [inaudible]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, you said, when you appeared before whoever it was, the judge [conferring between Professor Clayton and Mr. Mackay—inaudible], you said, "He stepped down off of his platform, and he took me by the hand, and he said, 'Mr. Clayton, I want to welcome you.'" So he [Professor Clayton] said, "I've been called 'mister' in the high places." [laughter]

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Well, I know that "mister" is just a handle. And there's nothing to it. The plain name is what [inaudible]. The plain name: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington--

MR. MACKAY: I still want to—

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: --Booker T. Washington. The plain name [inaudible]

MR. MACKAY: I just want you to finish up—you were a sophomore at Morehouse, on the debate team, debating Knoxville College, and one of the judges, Philip Weltner, said he wanted to see you. What did he tell you?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: He told me to study law [inaudible—perhaps repeating his statement].

MR. MACKAY: And what did you tell him?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: I didn't have the money. I wasn't able to do it.

MR. MACKAY: And what did he do?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: “Then you come to my office three times a week, and I’ll teach you law.” And so I went to his office for almost a year, three times a week, and he taught me the rubrics of common law until I was able to matriculate to LaSalle Extension University of Chicago, Illinois. And I took that course for one year. I think it cost something like a thousand dollars, twelve hundred dollars. And then, I took the bar [exam], and I couldn’t pass. And I went out here to John Marshall Law School that they had in Atlanta. It taught the Georgia Code, taught me one year out there, and then I passed. Georgia Code study—you just get that, study that code.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You used to talk, too, about how much Mr. Charlie McKinney, Sr.—you used to talk about how much Mr. Charles D. McKinney, Sr., had done for the schools and the board of education and helped you. Remember him?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Oh, yes, I remember him well because we had the run-in about the curriculum, you know? [laughter; some inaudible comments]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That doesn’t sound like him.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: You remember that. But Mrs. Howard and Mr. Cousins straightened him out.

MR. MACKAY: Listen, I want to ask you a partisan question. As a Methodist, do y’all ever have any disputes with the Baptist Church?

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: Oh, yes. [laughter] When we have fights in a conference—we settle them with a conference, and that’s where we have fights. We have a conference.

MR. MACKAY: Tell me—tell them—did you have a question, [Ruby? Ruth?]??

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I wanted to comment, because I know the kind of work you did in high school, because I learned things over there. I was beginning my high school teaching, and Mr. Ferguson, who was our principal--superintendent of the schools--said to our principal, [inaudible] Frances (Francis?) Smith, "I want you to send your teachers over to Professor Clayton's school to see the work his teachers are doing. Especially look at their bulletin boards and the work--displays that the children have done." So we went, and we visited back and forth several times during the four years--five years--that I was at the high school. His work--the work his teachers [inaudible, trails off].

MR. MACKAY: I think this is a fitting time, actually, our first year of the *I Remember Hour*, this is our first videotaping. We envision a library here in the Historical Society where people in future generations can look at people that were here and hear their account, and I don't think they'll ever have one more interesting or more inspiring than the one we've heard this afternoon. This is cosponsored by the Decatur-DeKalb Bar Association, and that's why [pointing to Professor Clayton] we bring lawyers in here from time to time--Julius McCurdy and Professor Clayton. And I want to invite you now, in September at 4:30 to come and hear Justice Bond Almand, who was born in Lithonia and lived here the first thirty years of his life and who is the retired Chief Justice of Georgia. So we're going to take the summer off, and we're going to be taping some people, like Mrs. Kemp over here. I wish you'd stand up, Mrs. Kemp. [NOTE: The camera pauses on a smiling blonde lady who is *not* Mrs. Kemp, who is glimpsed only briefly.] She's been keeping book on the [inaudible acronym] for fifty years, and I would like her to be taped at some time. And I want you, Mrs. Kemp, to suggest some people--not black or white, but just DeKalb County people that you've known that you think can give us this kind of information [indicates Professor Clayton], which is of such great interest, and we want to hear from you, and we want you to suggest people that you would like to hear from.

MRS. KEMP [from audience; camera remains on Mr. Mackay and Professor Clayton]: Well, there was a time--I will say that I was born here in Decatur--Decatur is my home—and reared here. And I know nearly all the people that—Decatur was a very small place, it was just a village. I was acquainted with all the white people, black folks, too. I remember when the first school was built—public school, in 1913, the first public school we had. We had a parochial school that was run by the Presbyterian Church. Reverend A. A. Wilson and all those went to that school. We paid five cents a week. [laughter] Just had two classrooms. His wife taught first, second, third, and fourth grade, and he went on from there. And there were a lot of times that we didn't even have that nickel a week to give.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON [laughing, shaking his head]: Yeah, that was hard.

MRS. KEMP: But then, I've always been associated with the Presbyterian people--the Clanders, the Scotts and all, because Mr. Robert Scott opened a mission Sunday school in Decatur, which I attended up until I was grown, and they moved the mission school to out to Midway. Then prior to--I worked for the Presbyterian preacher out here in Decatur for thirty years. I went to work for Dr. McGahee [spelling?]. His sons were just fourteen and fifteen—I was only fourteen years old. People went to work early in those days.

And that was the time that I knew everybody that lived on Sycamore, Church Street, Candler Street, and everywhere, because Decatur was my home, and the only outlet we had when we were small was to go see the train come in from Augusta. [laughter] Every evening, especially on Sunday, that was our outlet. We would go there to the train. A man by the name of John [Carey? Cary? Kerry?] used to pick up the mail. I remember Mrs. Kirkpatrick; she was the postmistress down here at the post office. Everybody had to walk and get the mail. “Any mail for 320 Herring Street today?” or something like that for [Harper?]. So I got acquainted with all the people. And Decatur was more like a town that belonged to just certain families. It was just a small place. And it was easy for us to know everybody

because everybody gathered around the courthouse to buy vegetables, the horses and all, we'd come to town. And the stores stayed open until ten o'clock. That's where we would meet on a Saturday night. Everybody knew one another, the merchants and so on. Decatur is really my home. I used to know everybody from the courthouse to the end of Candler. Dr. Houston's house used to sit right where the Water Department is—right here, right uptown. Everybody lived right here uptown, Mr. Ramspeck and all those people, it would take me all day to call them—

MR. MACKAY: I want you to start taking notes, because we want to get you taped pretty soon.

MRS. KEMP: I really don't. And I used to go to Ms. Caroline Clark's house and play. She'd cut out paper dolls for me. [laughter]

MR. MACKAY [laughing]: She's been here since 1822. [general laughter]

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, LIKELY MRS. CLARK: 24! [laughter]

MRS. KEMP: Well, I'm not that old, but-- [more laughter] But I'd go to her house. She's always been so kind and everything. She'd cut out paper dolls for me. We just know one another.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, MAYBE MRS. CLARK: Lena [spelling?] knew Miss Mary Gay, too.

MR. MACKAY: Really.

MRS. KEMP: Decatur is growing now—[inaudible] expanding--

MRS. KEMP and PROFESSOR CLAYTON talk at the same time [neither strand of speech is completely audible]; MR. MACKAY asks PROFESSOR CLAYTON if there is something he wants to add.

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: We had a band. We built a band in that high school. And it cost about three thousand dollars to get the instruments and the, uh—

MR. MACKAY: Uniforms

PROFESSOR CLAYTON: --uniforms. Well, what did we do? Well, the PTA [inaudible] the colored people raised a thousand dollars. And I stated to Mr. Candler that we needed fifteen hundred more to go to Citizens Jewelry Company to get the band in uniforms. And he said, "All right." And we went to work, and in about two months, they had that fifteen hundred dollars handed to me, and I went over to the Citizens Jewelry Company and bought that two thousand five hundred dollars' worth of instruments for the school. And in one year we had that band—well, we had that band in less than one year. Because I went to Mrs. Howard—I think she had Mr. [inaudible], who was a teacher—I think he was principal at Boys' High—he was principal at that time—she had him lure me out to see Mr. Hunter at Washington High School and get his band man out there and get started, and come and build a band in our school. So we got him started to come out there and build that band. But I'm saying that Mrs. Howard used her influence to get that done. And we had a band going, and we had the band parading on the on the streets just like the white people did [laughter]. And that was a fine thing. That was a fine thing, only I had a little problem there, because I had—one day a man came to see me. I said, "What do you want?" He said he was some [inaudible—"somebody with the government"?]. I said, "What do you want with me?" He wanted to know what I was doing with the money I raised for the band. I said, "Listen. You go to the Citizens Jewelry Company over here on Broad and Mitchell Street—or Forsyth. And they'll tell you what I did." So he went there, and they told him that I had bought twenty-five hundred dollars' worth of instruments and uniforms from him and had paid him all the money. And he came back and called me up on the phone and told me that was all right. He said, "Somebody told me that you were doing away with the money." [laughter]

MR. MACKAY: Well, that's our sixty minutes, and I think it's better than CBS's *Sixty Minutes*. Stick around and have some apple juice and meet Professor Clayton. [applause]

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END OF RECORDING