WILLIAM BREEN
2012.3.53

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: "Remember."

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

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

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

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

MR. ROBERTSON: It's Clark.

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

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

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

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

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: 1868

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

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

MR. BREEN: The Fultons had been there 101 years, I think. They moved there in 1888, if I'm correct. I'll check with Caroline on the dates. I'm not very good about those. But anyway, when I grew up there, the driveway was a big, circular thing in front of the house. The magnolias were just as big then, I think, as they are now—at

least I thought they were. I remember one time my brother became ambitious and climbed too high and couldn't get back down; he actually was paralyzed with fright. I couldn't go up to get him; I was too small. And the net result was my uncle and my father being called home from work during midday to rescue my brother out of this tall magnolia tree [*audience laughter*]. That front yard was where I was first given a handful of salt and told if I could get salt on the tail of a bird, it'd be tame. I tried valiantly for a day and a half, but I finally realized the moral wasn't really just to catch the bird.

That was a strange place compared to today's standards. I literally recall being in the front yard with a young black man in a white jacket tending me when I was two or three or four, somewhere in that range, being kept by him. They were a family of blacks who had some relationship with the family who had previously lived on the property. I've never seen anything written about that, but I've heard it all from my mother. I'm sure there were slaves and things of that sort. However, we were way past that stage, and nobody believed that. And the people that I knew were Susie and Eddie Mae, and they were servants at the house.

The house was a big four-room [bedroom?] place with two chimneys, two stories, eight fireplaces altogether plus one in the kitchen. The kitchen is removed from the house about twelve feet. There's been a porch added to join the two. But I remember being in the kitchen with a fire in the stove and people sitting around, making what we called "my-naize" (mayonnaise). I called it "my-naize" for many, many years till I was corrected sometime along the way that it was supposed to be "mayonnaise." But they made it the old-fashioned way, with eggs and olive oil and the things you put in it and beat very hard. And it seems to me it was better than what I can buy at the store today.

I also remember on the south side of the house, the southeast corner was the parlor or the living room; the southwest room was the dining room. I can recall many happy Thanksgiving dinners there, huge drumsticks. And the great event was to get the drumstick and sneak out and be gone for the rest of the meal while everybody else talked.

The house was remodeled once before my time. And during the time that Thomas Fulton owned it, I believe my father was responsible for the design of the rather elegant formal garden, which was constructed in the rear of the house. When I

was young, there were little privy [privet?] hedges, carefully pruned, kept, and pansies. The color was lovely [inaudible] grass. There was a sunken garden, a rock garden providing a change in elevation to a walkway down the side.

In the backyard, down at the bottom, there is a stream. A spring rises somewhere south of College Avenue, behind the old Smith Hardware Store. That stream has run continuously since I was a child. The backyard was a field of sage grass with one apple tree I remember eating many apples from. Now it's full of sixty- and seventy-foot oak trees. They outgrew me [rest of sentence inaudible]. It's a beautiful area. There are a good many magnolias in the back also. The spring—I suppose the Avarys [sic] built the house—may have done [inaudible] a very well-crafted rock arch built over it. The rock is where the spring rises, and we spent many hours playing there, catching snakes and turtles and trying to divert the water.

You also know this family Sams, the Sams family. Her father, "old Mr. Sams" is all I ever knew, lived on the corner of Avery Street and College Avenue. He would walk. He had a long, white beard. He'd walk with his huge collie. I can remember walking up and down Avery Street with him or walking up with him, down sometimes. And he would tell me about the people that used to gather at the spring. I don't really know what for. There were picnics and sings, things of that sort. The house back then was owned by Dr. Avary [sic], who built it, as I said. Dr. Haygood of the Methodist Convention bought it from Dr. Avery [sic]. And I suppose the Sams[es] had something to do with Dr. Haygood's profession; I'm not sure. But he claimed that there were thousands of people that would gather there. That was difficult for me to imagine. Incidentally, Dr. Avary, who built the house, is supposedly the person for whom Avery Street was named. But when they did it, they changed the spelling from A-V-A-R-Y to A-V-E-R-Y. I have never known the reason for that change, whether it was an accident, a mistake, or some other purpose that I don't know about [*voice trails off*].

After I lived there, I entered the first grade there. I can remember the first day I went to the first grade. I allowed my mother to walk as far as Avery Street. That was through the backyard, crossing the creek, and up to Avery Street. There I insisted that she leave me, that I could make it down the hill the rest of the way downhill to Winnona Drive. She must have. That's about as far as I can remember on the first day of school. They didn't teach me anything that day [*Mr. Breen and audience laugh*].

Sometime during the summer after the first grade, or may be the early year of the second grade, I'm not certain, we moved into a house on Avery Street at Winnona Drive. We rented; it was owned by Mr. H. E. Short, who ran the sporting goods store and owned it in downtown Atlanta at Pryor and Auburn Avenue. I later worked summers in the model airplane department, made a vast fortune selling to all my hobbyist friends. We were there around two years, and my mother and father built the house on the back of the Fulton property. It was a 250-foot lot deeded to them, and the house that's there was designed by my father and largely built by my father and my cousin, Jimmy Horton. They were both rather skilled artisans and did a pretty good job on it in many ways. It was unusually sturdy.

That was the homeplace of me until I went away to college. The years there were pretty good in Decatur. We lived in a very wonderful neighborhood. There were people like Rollins—H. A. Rollins, Sassnet [spelling?] Gardener [Gardner?], the Curtis Thompsons, the Alvin Moores, Philip Davisons—that's Davis--D-A-V-I-S [as distinguished from Davidson]. Dr. Davison was a history professor at Agnes Scott College. His son, Philip, and myself had access to the campus. We went over—he had a cousin of some sort or an aunt, Ms. McDougall [spelling?], and she was a nice old lady. I never knew her well; but she let us into her office and into the biology department, where we could see an actual human skeleton hanging. At our age we thought that was weird—it was wild.

Alvin Moore died when we were young, and that was a shock. We didn't know anybody that had [inaudible] that time. Mr. Rollins had three boys. Shortly after Alvin Moore died, I believe, the older son was accidentally shot. A group of boys had been out rabbit hunting, and they came back and were in the Gardeners' [Gardners'?] garage cleaning a.22 rifle when it accidentally went off and killed him, the older Rollins boy. And that was another memory that I can't erase.

The person who held the gun was Connor [spelling?] Thompson, and he went away for a trip for a while, and nothing was ever done and pretty well accepted as a tragedy that it really was for all of the neighborhood. Connor now incidentally is a highly successful architect in Valdosta, Georgia. He is a man of distinguished—gave distinguished service in the SeaBees in the Navy during World War II. Very competent person. He was several years ahead of me at Georgia Tech in the school of architecture, but he was there after the war while I was; and I became acquainted with

him then. His talents in watercolor painting were extraordinary, and I've often wondered why he went into the business world instead of becoming an artist. He was very unusually talented. His mother, Annabelle [spelling? Could be Annie Belle] Thompson—Ridley, she did paint a lot during her life, mostly in oils; but I don't think she ever had quite the talent that Connor had.

The Milton Scotts lived down the street. His younger—next to youngest--daughter, Nellie, was my age and great friend. O. L. Amsler moved into the neighborhood during our high school years, I think, at the bottom of the hill on Winnona Drive. They built a house on the site set below the sewer line on the street, so they built a bridge from the front door out to the street and ran the sewer line under the bridge. The bridge has been replaced once or twice I can recall. The current owners had the bridge replaced, and the outside of the house changed in its appearance. And my son, Alan [spelling?] Breen, who is in the construction business, did the work. And I must say it's a great improvement to the house. He did that, he did a great addition to each of his sisters' houses. And I asked him, after the first three jobs, I said, "Now, when you run out of sisters and neighbors, what are you going to do for business?" He ran out; now he's struggling trying to find a job [*audience laughter*]. There are a lot of people in the business of building.

I'll backtrack just a little, but one of the things that stands out in my memory was Columbia Seminary. I suppose I was in elementary school when these trips took place, but camping out became really a pastime. I suppose the [Boy/Cub] Scouts had something to do with that. The seminary had great big trees—woods, we called them—between Kirk Road and Inman Drive. During that time they blasted around the creek that ran through those woods and created a bed for a lake to fill it up; so there was a lake there for a while. I call it a lake—probably we'd call it a pond today. Today there are apartments and residences all in that area, but back then there were no houses there. Lots of trees and woods, and we would plan camping trips for the weekends on Friday nights. My mother would force me to go telephone Dr. [Samuel] Cartledge [former president of Columbia Seminary] [voice trails off; end of sentence inaudible]. Those were terrible [inaudible—could be "moments" or "emotions"]. It somehow frightened me. I didn't have the whatever it took to feel comfortable calling a man that I held on a pedestal quite so high. I'd call Dr. Cartledge and tell him we wanted to sleep in his woods that night, and he would be very gracious.

He said, "Well, who is this?"

I'd tell him I was Bill Breen.

He'd say, "Well, are you going to be careful?"

I said yes.

He said, "Well, I think it'll be all right."

I said, "Would you tell my mother that?"

And he said, "Oh, yes."

So he'd tell my mother, and we'd go sleep in the woods. We'd take a tent, we'd dig a hole, put some potatoes—put some corn in the bottom of the hole, and then put rock and dirt back on it, and build a fire. And I remember getting out those ears of corn; seemed to me they were pretty good. It sounds pretty good even today. There was a pond there with some big boulders, outcroppings of rock. It was a wonderful time. There was a Boy Scout hut at the bottom of the "J" formed by Winnona Drive. The Boy Scout hut was moved there, so I seem to recall, but I don't remember the moving of it nor from whence it came. It was located in what was the front yard or is the front yard of the second house. And the Friday nights there it was a pretty rough-and-tumble play area. That was a happy period in my life.

Perhaps earlier than that we played [roller]skate hockey in front of Winnona Park School. For recreation during the summer the city would bring sawhorses over and block off the street for a three- or four-hundred-foot block. We cut trees out of the woods for hockey sticks, take a tin can and beat it back and forth. And that all went very well and was very exciting. We decided we'd try bicycling one time, but that lasted pretty short-term because several arms got broken by the first week [rest of sentence inaudible; *Mr. Breen and the audience chuckle*].

We used to take bicycle rides. Can you imagine riding a bicycle out on Candler Road past the WSB towers, McAfee Road, on Saturday with no one to watch you or take care of you? But we'd go, pack a lunch, throw it over our back in an army knapsack that had been used by somebody in World War I, canteens, frying pans—we all had a complete set of equipment. Somebody had gotten those from the army. I'm sure they had dipped them in old pot metal, because whenever we tried to cook eggs in them, there would be this silvery aluminum kind of metal come up off the eggs. I don't know how much of it I ate. Guess I'll find out someday from the autopsy. [*Audience laughter*] We'd ride out to McAfee Mill. Great days in the summer. We didn't know of

any recreation center or any recreation department or any structured recreational programs. We did what we wanted to, but environs were so safe, so little threat to our safety that it was of no concern to our parents apparently.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Where were the WSB towers at that time?

MR. BREEN: At the corner of Glenwood [Road] and South [sic] Candler [Road; South Candler Road becomes Candler Road after it crosses Memorial Drive heading north], near the northeast corner. Back of the road, behind the little shopping center that cuts off diagonally.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible question or comment]

MR. BREEN: We didn't go that direction. I remember they were there, though. Quite incredible. My grandmother was, as you might imagine from the earlier comments, some twenty years younger than my grandfather. And, of course, he died before she, and she was left to tend to the children. She went back to school and got a degree teaching, was principal at Glennwood School, and after that went to the Georgia Legislature and passed Juvenile Court law. She became the juvenile officer in DeKalb County. Really, the juveniles [juvenile offenders] back then were really wonderful kids who were either from broken homes or from impoverished homes. The juvenile officer had the job of finding foster-parent homes for these children. So she found a family who could take care of one more child or two more children, and she'd find the appropriate children and try to place them, with some discretion [inaudible] their backgrounds and training.

When I was fifteen, she let me drive her all over this county in my efforts to learn how to drive an automobile. I look back on it and think what a courageous woman she was. But I can recall driving to Doraville on dirt roads. Go out Candler, that was paved and turned to gravel, and I don't remember the rest of the route. But when we were not very far away, we were on dirt. [Inaudible] roads up that way, red roads everywhere else. I learned about sliding on red roads at a very early stage in my driving career.

The summer activities for the children in the foster homes were pretty dull. She dreamed up the idea of sending them to a camp every summer for two weeks and work two summers under her guidance [inaudible] work those two summers. [Unclear if the foster children or Mr. Breen or both were working under her guidance at the camp.

Partial clarification is provided a few sentences later.] She had a friend who owned a mountain between Highlands and Clayton, North Carolina. There was--there were camp facilities at the top of the mountain. And for two summers we went with all the juveniles, my brother and I. We spent two, two-and-a-half weeks up there. It's a heavenly area. I know it was a wonderful improvement to the idea of general life for the children.

Decatur Boys' High was a great place, where Ruby Crawford, Mrs. Culver, Mr. Culver [teachers]—I can remember chalk hitting the chalkboard right beside me and breaking, scaring the flipping daylights out of me, Mr. Culver snarling across the room, "Boy, that's wrong! You know better than that," while I was trying to work a math problem on the board for him. It made an impression on you about your homework. Somebody brought in an excuse one day, and Mr. Culver said, "Mr. Douglas says, 'Please excuse John Douglas.'" I believe that's the way it was. Or maybe at the bottom of the letter, it was signed "Mr. Douglas," and that was the giveaway. Mr. Culver looked at it, and he knew immediately that it was fake.

The boy said, "How do you know that?"

He said his daddy had never signed his name with a "Mr." in front of it in all his life. [*Audience laughter*]

World War II was well underway in 1943. The navy and the army came around here to test people in high school. Lots of us took the navy test and joined the [inaudible] they called it. It turned out they sent us to college. It was a great godsend. That's the way I spent most of World War II.

Looking back over Decatur I can remember in those early days when I was in elementary school, which we called grammar school, a child had [inaudible] back then. The sidewalks on Saturday afternoons would be so filled with people that we'd have to dodge and walk out in the gutter. The cars were parked at an angle all the way around the courthouse square—back then there were four sides to it--and all up and down Sycamore Street and Ponce de Leon. The whole county was focused on Decatur. Saturdays people came to do their shopping; there were no other shopping centers. There were two movie houses that I can recall. There were at least three automobile showrooms, several automobile garages. There was a pool—I mean a bowling hall on the West Court Square, a hardware store on the south corner of West Court Square. There was a drugstore in the Masonic Temple building; a dentist had his office

upstairs, I think about where I've got my office right now. It may be that I'm just reliving some of that pain. [*Audience laughs*] It's terrible [inaudible] practice.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Is that Dr. Alsobrook?

MR. BREEN: That was Dr. Alsobrook. And he'd take me downstairs after working on my teeth and buy me an ice cream cone. I guess he wanted to be sure he had some more business.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Was that a Walgreen drugstore?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Leary

MR. BREEN: No, sir. Leary's drugstore.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: What?

MR. BREEN: Leary. L-E-A-R-Y, I believe.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Yeah

MR. BREEN: Thank you, that's right. [*Acknowledges another person in the audience who also supplied the name of the drugstore owner*.]

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible]

MR. BREEN: Tatum Rexall drugstore came to locate in the Watkins Building, a store or two away [inaudible]. I live on Winnona Drive today. I lived on the corner of it, actually facing Avery Street, from 1933 or 4 to '36. When I lived there then, when it rained, the water would rush down gullies on either side of the street. It was paved with gravel only. And we'd go out and dam up the gutters and gullies and play in the mud and whatnot. We did live in St. Simons for ten months, eleven months, perhaps. But the rest of the time we lived in Decatur.

My wife went to Winnona Park School, I went to Winnona Park School, and all four of our children went to Winnona Park School. I knew my wife when she moved in from Lithonia and lived on Avery Street right across, one house removed, sort of diagonally across from where I lived on Avery Street. She was four years younger than I was; and, of course, I didn't pay much attention to her back then.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Was Nellie Burgess principal when you were there?

MR. BREEN: No, she was when my children were there. She was a wonderful principal and a wonderful lady. Mrs.—I'll think of her name in a minute. After this program's over, it'll come to me in a flash, I'm sure. The principal I had was another good one, though. I'm not sure what kinds of stories you people would like to hear.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Somebody had a question here a minute ago. [Inaudible comment]

Mr. Breen acknowledges an audience member with a question.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Yes, what was McAfee's Mill?

MR. BREEN: When I went there, it was a great, broad, flat rock exposed with a very healthy stream running across it. And up from where we'd camp and build a fire, cook hotdogs, was a big mill. It had been a dam, water—

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: A grist mill?

MR. BREEN: Grist mill, right.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: How far out [inaudible]?

MR. BREEN: Well, you went out Candler to McAfee Road, which is still there. Turn to the east, and you'll—I guess about a mile or three-quarters of a mile up McAfee Road and see the stream. It's all subdivision now, and the houses back up to the stream. I don't know the name of the stream. But it was a beautiful part of the county.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible question.] *Mr. Breen shakes his head in response.*

MR. BREEN: Way out. Way outside Candler, past Glenwood.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Wasn't there a recreation swimming pool in one of those backyards on Avery Street?

MR. BREEN: Well, I skipped all that. When I grew up in the house on Avery Street, the Pendergrass place was next door, except the Pendergrasses had gone. I was told that that used to be the Decatur Athletic Club. But when I lived there, the swimming pool was still in the backyard. And the current owners were kind enough to keep the pool filled during the spring and the summer, mostly for their own use, but the neighborhood children got special privileges. And many's the summer morning at 5:30—daylight, whenever it was, sneak out and go swimming. All day long, it seems. We had a lot of earaches back in those days, too.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: *Asks questions about a public swimming pool on Glenwood, most of it inaudible.*

MR. BREEN: I may have been once or twice.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible question and perhaps a comment] Dr. Charles Cunningham?

MR. BREEN: Dr. Charles Cunningham? Lived on South Candler Street. His wife was a diabetic, I believe. He took wonderful care of her. He was a doctor here in Decatur. I can't recall where his office was. [Inaudible comment].

Several people respond, comments inaudible, and point in the direction of Dr. Cunningham's former office location at or near 235 East Ponce de Leon Avenue. Mr. Breen nods.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: How did you decide to become an architect?

MR. BREEN: My father studied architecture at Georgia Tech. He finished his junior year, married my mother—that's an interesting story. My Aunt Sara [Sarah?], whom I mentioned earlier, had graduated from Agnes Scott and, in order to get a job teaching in the Atlanta school system, they had to have two years' experience out of state. She went to Florida--Pensacola, Florida, had a job offer there. And she was teaching school there; and riding the train back one summer, she encountered my father, who was a freshman at Georgia Tech. She—I'm not sure how, but anyway introduced him to her family and my mother, and they were married and lived, as I told you earlier, lived upstairs in the Fulton place. When I was born—I was born at Emory Hospital, and came across the bill one time some months ago something like the total services $47.20.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: And he married—is it Betty Matthews?

MR. BREEN: I married Betty Matthews. Dr. L. P. Matthews was her father. He had his offices in the Trust Building.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: When did she graduate from high school?

MR. BREEN: Betty? Well, she was born in 1930. She's four years younger than I am. And so I guess she graduated in 1947 or '48.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: She was in school with my daughter.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: How did you and your wife get interested in each other. You weren't interested in her when you were a child, but—

MR. BREEN: Well, I knew her then, and when I came back from navy service and was at Georgia Tech, I'm not sure how I happened to come across her, but I remember asking for a date. It finished me off. [*Audience laughter*]

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Can you tell us something about the one-man commissioner, Mr. Candler—Scott Candler?

MR. BREEN: Well, all you'll get out of me is a highly prejudiced view. I knew his son intimately. He lived [inaudible] Candler. I remember being in the backyard one day with Scotty, Jr., my age. And Mr. Candler came back, and there was a marble column. I don't know to this day where it came from, but it was lying on the ground behind the formal gardens that Mr. Candler had. They were beautiful gardens. The man he had hired was named Roy somebody, who kept them gorgeous. But the column had gotten old and grimy and dirty. He [Mr. Candler] said, "I'll give you two boys a dollar apiece if you'll clean that column." We thought we had us a winner until we got out the brushes and started working on it. [*Laughs*] We gave up after about an hour. I said, "That's a hopeless task." He foxed us.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible]

MR. BREEN: We made no headway at all. Didn't have the proper equipment. They kept a pony in the back. I learned to fear horses trying to learn [inaudible] to ride it. [Inaudible comment.] I would be frightened, and I fell off once or twice. To this day I stay away from horses. [Inaudible comment]

VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Comments inaudible, something about a landing field]

MR. BREEN: I don't recall what you're referring to in that area as an airport. But what I do recall, going out Sycamore Drive and seeing somebody flying an old Jenny biplane and landing in the pasture.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: That's what I thought.

MR. BREEN: I don't know exactly where it was now.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: That was [unclear; sounds like "Donald Tuggle"]. It was there across the street from where Decatur Heights Baptist Church is now.

MR. BREEN, *nodding*: [Comment inaudible.] That's flat land. That's [inaudible] back then. [*Audience members, off-camera, make several simultaneous, inaudible comments*.]

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I don't think it was there. Automobile people—it used to be Tuggle Ford [inaudible].

MR. BREEN: [Inaudible] Beaudry [Ford].

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Tell us a little modern history about Decatur and MARTA.

MR. BREEN: Decatur and MARTA?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: You were sort of around that, weren't you?

MR. BREEN: In 1959 and '60—well, let's see, 1959, Robin Harris was on the city commission. I was on an automobile trip with Robin somewhere, and he was talking about Urban Renewal and how he was opposed to it. I had just come out of architectural school and was very much impressed with the idea that planning large areas under one central planning skill or authority or whatever was likely to produce a far better environment than letting helter-skelter private enterprise develop it. So I was in favor of Urban Renewal. Robin saw it and was bored with the city commission after one term. He, I think, baited me and led me on. I got up my nerve and ran for city commission. And what kept me interested in the city commission as long as I can think of were the planning efforts by the city. The Urban Renewal was, of course, a great deal of that. At the time and just to show you how fallible we were—I was party to it—part of the master plan we had presented to us and we adopted included the closing of West Court Square. I'm not sure I would take part in that again, having seen twenty, twenty-five years or whatever this has come since then.

We did have a master plan for downtown Decatur--it fell by the wayside, as so many did--which made it into a pedestrian place principally, with simple, two-lane streets. When MARTA came, the initial plan was--and the commission I served on agreed to--was to keep Sycamore Street open the whole way through, with two lanes of traffic, and have access to the MARTA station through kiosks, little islands where you go down stairs or—to the train track below. The engineers did not want to do it that way because of the storm drainage elevation down near the police station now, you know, the Water Street area. In order to be at the level that would serve the kiosks, to keep the thing at that particular level, they had to do something about the storm drainage that interfered with the angle that they approached the station. And they were going to have to divert the storm water with pumps to move it under and back up continually. They told us and argued strongly that there was a million-dollar difference in cost to do it that way. We held to our guns; I might say I was a leader in that. That was the plan. But city commissions do not have historians on them; so what one

commission knows and learns the hard way, the next commission does not know and has to relearn. Maybe that's the way it's all supposed to be. But to make a long story short, later the engineers persuaded the commissioners that it would be much more economical to build the station there, this close to the surface. If we'd had it below, the street would have been deeper.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Well, didn't they--MARTA originally plan to have a station over on College Avenue instead of in Decatur?

MR.BREEN: There were several of us who worked many long hours trying to persuade MARTA and the citizenry and everybody we could that, if we did that, that the new building would happen over there [and] would sort of split Decatur and have the center of activity away from the city hall and the courthouse and the center of the town. I'm not so sure that was so wise now. I should have let it happen over there close to my house and then raise the value of my property. [*Laughter*] But I worked hard to get it back here.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: That was really a mistake to put the station in downtown Decatur, wasn't it?

MR. BREEN: Well, I'm not sure it was. That's sort of a subjective thing. Back when it was being decided, I was positive it was the proper thing to do. But you know how it is. You let a twenty-year period go by, you become a little bit wiser and not so sure about that.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Hindsight is always twenty-twenty.

MR. BREEN: That's right.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Who was the most unusual and unique person you can recall in your lifetime? Character, I guess. The most--

MR. BREEN: Character?

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Yeah, the biggest character. Yeah, right.

MR. BREEN: Well, no, I don't mean char-ACT-er, but I'd say Scott Candler, Sr. I think he was probably the greatest leader this part of the country has had. He was a courageous, sort of a brash fellow. He also had a number of good talents. He was blessed with a loud, energetic voice. He was not afraid of anything other than Georgia, Miss Georgia [his wife], who made him sit up straight most any time. [*Audience laughter*] And he also had something not every politician has; he had a lot of vision.

He could look ahead and see what was good for the community. And his self-confidence and ability to go ahead and take action and make decisions was a healthy thing. I admire and respect him very much. I think he has a grandson—he has two wonderful grandsons. He has one whom I think takes after him a little bit more, Clark Candler. I suspect we'll see some more of Clark in public service before it's all said and done. [*Acknowledges audience question*.] Yes.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible] your architectural endeavors, I'm particularly interested in knowing if you ever worked with Walton Peabody.

MR. BREEN: I knew Walton Peabody. I never worked with him. When I went to Georgia Tech, I had worked some with my father on things he brought home that he got me to do. I guess he was just trying to train me a little bit. But Georgia Tech was just moving out of the influence of the Beaux Arts School, which had to do with classical architecture, and into the influence of Bauhaus, the German influence, European influence; and that meant modern architecture, very basic. So most of our programs and studies and activities and learning how to design things were modern. Mies van der Rohe was our lord and master; whatever he said got printed hundreds of times and repeated thousands of times. We copied the best that we could.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: What took you to St. Simons, and where did you live down there?

MR. BREEN: When I was in college, I had partied down there with some friends, fraternity brothers, and I met an architect. He was a very nice person, and so he offered me a job. It sounded interesting, so I took my wife and one child and went down there on a stormy night and crossed that little old one-lane bridge and waited for the ship to go by and they closed it and we got across. We stayed in a motel the first night. And the next day in the bright sun we went out to look at the old house he had had, and he was going to let us stay in. My wife saw it, took one look at it, and burst into tears. I have to admit, it had run down a great deal since I remembered from a hilarious party night.

So we spent a week and a half and all of our money in the motel before we found another place to live, and she became pregnant again. The medical facilities on St. Simons—if you're not in a situation to need them, you don't think about them. But having lived here, especially with a father-in-law who was an ob/gyn, Emory, and

Crawford W. Long, boy, there was nothing down there. And we simply didn't feel too comfortable otherwise about it. And that sort of was the underlying reason for coming back up here. I wanted to be back in Atlanta. All my friends were designing, I thought, schools and big buildings. While I was down there, I worked on—for eleven months I worked on twenty-nine different houses—rich houses, Sea Island houses. But nevertheless, it was all [inaudible].

MODERATOR'S VOICE, *off-camera*: Well, thank you very much.

MR. BREEN: It's a pleasure. Thank you for having me.

ANDREW ROBERTSON *at first off-camera; then the camera pans to the his face*: Mr. Breen, since I've been maligned and slandered by the speaker, I feel I got a right to say this. I'm not going to retreat from what I said about scraping the bottom of the barrel [*Audience laughter*], but I am going to say that in view of the speaker today, after this, we'd better look closely and see if we can find any more things on the bottom of the barrel. [*Audience laughter*]

Camera pans back to Mr. Breen.

MR. BREEN: I'd like to be on tape that I appreciate Mr. Robertson's comments. [*Audience laughter*] Just wait till I'm up here again, and I'll tell him some more. [*Audience laughter*] [*Audience applause*]

MODERATOR'S VOICE, *off-camera*: We have cookies and juice, I believe, in the next room, the courtroom.

Those present chat among themselves and begin leaving the room.

Mr. Breen rises and shakes hands with the moderator.

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