

**2012.3.128**  
**GLENWOOD SCHOOL**  
**FEBRUARY 28, 2002**

*Recording opens with white script on black background reading, "I Remember Hour," Glenwood [sic] School, Decatur, Georgia 2/28/2002," as a cello plays in the background. The scene changes to a school auditorium, where a panel of speakers is seated before an audience, and Sue Ellen Owens stands at the podium.*

SUE ELLEN OWENS: As part of the hundred-year celebration of the City of Decatur School System, which was last year, we have continued into this year to celebrate the history of the school system; and one of our goals is to do an "I Remember Hour" at each of the schools and cover the schools that no longer exist, except in the memories and hearts of many people. Our first "I Remember Hour" for the City of Decatur School System is at Glennwood Elementary School, which is where we find ourselves today. We are very pleased to have a panel which is composed of a principal, a teacher, and two [former] students of different decades within the school system. The idea behind the "I Remember Hour" for the DeKalb Historical Society is to capture people's stories of a place. It's not a factual history here, but it's a story of what made a place and what made the institution, in this case Glennwood Elementary School.

I'm Sue Ellen Owens, and I'm the director of the DeKalb Historical Society; and I'll be asking the questions today. And if we have time, we'll let the audience ask some questions as well. The first thing I'm going to do is ask each panelist to introduce themselves so that that will be clear on our tape. And if you'll just introduce yourself, what your role was at Glennwood, and when you were here—when you were associated with Glennwood.

FIRST PANELIST, JUANITA NEAL: I'm Juanita Neal. I came to this school in the 1940s and taught for four years. Of course, you know that was during the war. I came to a school where the teachers were all seasoned and very capable and very loved and respected by the community. So it was a little hard for me at first, but it turned out to be just fine. And I guess I would have continued here, but I had to go home to look after my mother during the war, because I had two brothers and a husband overseas. It was a wonderful time for me, and it has been a wonderful time fifty-five years later, when some of my students look me up; and we have just had a wonderful time since then. I'm so proud of them; they have turned out so well. [*Passes microphone to next panelist.*]

SECOND PANELIST, JOYCE PARRIS: I'm Joyce Parris, and I came as a fourth-grade teacher to Glennwood in 1956, the first year that Dr. Vee Simmons was principal here. And I was a teacher until 1964 and was named principal in 1964 and retired as principal of

Glennwood in 1986—many, many years and many, many happy memories. [*Passes microphone to third panelist.*]

THIRD PANELIST, VELLA MARIE BEHM COWAN: I'm Vella Marie Behm Cowan. I came here before some of you knew A from B, because I came here in the mid-'20s. I was in the fourth grade—no, fifth and sixth grade. Mrs. T. N. Fulton was our principal, and Mrs. Harber was my fifth-grade teacher. How different school was then from the way it is now! I have two pictures back there on the back table of my fifth and sixth grades, taken on your side wall-- somebody said this [the auditorium] used to be the side wall; we didn't have an auditorium— before, we'd go down in the playroom--playground. Those were good years, and they were strict years; but we knew how to behave. And we had good teachers and a good principal, and we enjoyed it. [*Passes microphone to fourth panelist.*]

FOURTH PANELIST, BETTY THOMPSON WORLEY: I'm Betty Thompson Worley, and I came to Glennwood all of my grammar school years. And that was in the '40s that we--during the war, and Mrs. [Juanita] Neal was my sixth-grade teacher. Our days at Glennwood were a time when Decatur was a small Americana [sic] town, and we all walked to school. And almost everywhere we went our lives revolved around our families, our church, and our community and our school, of course. Our teachers played a great role in our education and in our future. They helped us to build our minds and character.

I'd like to share with you some thoughts about one of my class's favorite teachers, Juanita Neal. From our early school days, we have many memories, some not so good, most of them very fond--among our fondest from our sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Neal. She gave much of herself as a teacher, from which we gained more than from books. She was our confidante and our friend, and we played in the snow. And we thank her and salute her for all she's meant to us.

MS. NEAL, *softly, off-camera*: Thank you

MS. OWENS: I should have put you two [Mrs. Neal and Ms. Worley] together—put you at one end of the table from the other. The first thing I'd like to do is—let's just think about the building. And we'll start with you, Betty; since you've got the microphone. Let's just keep it down at your end, and then we'll pass it back this way. What do you remember about the building that you don't find today? What were some of your memories about the building itself?

MS. WORLEY: Well, I know the auditorium was where the library is, and I don't think this [the current auditorium] was here. And I know we had—we called it the lunchroom--in the basement. And our classrooms were very different. I mean, we had different kinds of chairs. And we had cloakrooms back then, where we hung our coats, and I don't know--it was really a

happy time, and playing in the playground. You know, marching in and out. We just enjoyed it very much.

MS. OWENS: Pass that microphone along?

MS. COWAN, *taking the microphone*: As I walked into the building today, I was so impressed with the clean floors. I don't know what they're made out of; but we used to have wooden, oiled floors, if I remember. And they oiled them every other day; and I think they kind of smelled like oil, too. And I was trying to—I didn't go into the classroom this afternoon. I'm sure this is the first time I've been here in Glennwood School in umpteen years. But I was thinking about the classrooms; and I was trying to think, if we misbehave in class—which we didn't dare do then—I think the only discipline was to put a chair out in the hall outside the classroom. Somebody had to sit out there for a few minutes till they could get their mind going straight to mind the teacher. But I don't remember anybody misbehaving in school those days; it just wasn't done. Lots of happy memories—Ms. Fulton was a wonderful principal, lived down on South Candler and had a daughter, Henrietta. And this--we didn't have an auditorium, as I recall; we just had the classrooms. And we went from here to Decatur Junior High on McDonough Street and then Decatur High School. So we just had the sixth grade; we didn't have a kindergarten here, either, that I can remember. *Passes microphone to Joyce Parris*.

MS. PARRIS: Some of the happiest memories I have during the years that I was at Glennwood were seeing the many, many physical improvements that were made to this building, thanks to [former school superintendent] Dr. Carl Renfroe, who is with us today. Dr. Renfroe was a real visionary, and he did lots of updating of the buildings with Sheetrock and fluorescent lighting and the tile floors and the desks that were screwed to the floor until some of the students unscrewed them [*audience laughter*] were finally removed. And we sold those desks, I think, for what, five dollars apiece, Dr. Renfroe? And then that was during the time I was here was when we first got chair desks. I think the structure of the building is still—I mean, I think—we already had the auditorium. And we didn't have kindergarten then, but the room here or outside the auditorium was the first-grade classroom. But—and new windows, we got new windows. So even though Glennwood's the last on the Decatur circuit to get renovated next year—I'm glad to know it's coming up—the oldest building to be the last one completed, I do think that the maintenance of the building was great. And I think we have Dr. Simmons and Dr. Renfroe to thank for this and a wonderful, supportive board of education. *Passes microphone to Juanita Neal*.

VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE, *unidentified (possibly Dr. Renfroe), off-camera, addressing Joyce Parris*: [Beginning of comment inaudible] driving [inaudible] street named after

you. [Refers to Joyce Parris Drive, the circular driveway in front of Glennwood School, named in honor of Ms. Parris.] [*Audience laughter*]

MS. NEAL: When I was here, we didn't have the circle [Joyce Parris Drive] in the front, either; the lawn went all the way out to the street. And that's where the picture was taken of the Jeeps the children bought during the war. And they came out from Fort Mac[Pherson] and rode some of the children around—around the block. But it was a wonderful time, because they brought their pennies and their nickels and dimes, and we bought bonds; and those four Jeeps were bought with the bonds.

This part of the building was not here; we just had the main part of the building when I was here. And, as you said, there were oiled floors and such as that. But we did have a wonderful time. We had festivals, where we taught the children folk dancing that went along with our social studies and such as that. And we just—it was just a glorious time. [*Looks back toward Ms. Owens.*]

MS. OWENS: OK, you've already alluded to the community that was Decatur and what it was like—I think, a little bit about walking to school and that sort of thing. We can start right back here with Juanita [Neal]. What I'm going to try to do is do it that way, so you'll be passing it [the microphone], and we won't be jumping it around. So I'll start with Ms. Neal, our schoolteacher. Tell me just a little bit about the community, the city that was Decatur, the place where Glennwood was located, your story about meeting your students for a Coca-Cola on Fridays. Tell us a little bit about that. And then I'll ask each of you to kind of remember the community as it was.

MS. NEAL: On Friday afternoon it was my custom—we didn't have a car—to walk up to Decatur, and there was a drugstore on the corner, right in the center of town. And on the way I picked up students; so by the time we got to the drugstore, we had just a whole tableful. And we had a good time, having our Coca-Cola and relaxing for a few minutes. And then I went on down, two doors down, to the grocery store; and there I met my husband when he came home from work, and we bought our groceries. And each of us took a sack of groceries; and if we had ten cents left over, we had an ice cream cone and ate it on the way home with our groceries in the other sack. And we had a streetcar. [*To Ms. Owens*] Has anyone mentioned that?

MS. OWENS: No. Tell us about that.

MS. NEAL: It cost five cents to ride it, and it stopped right out across from the school. And I think we should have kept it, for many reasons. But it was just wonderful to get on the little streetcar and ride all the way to town for five cents.

MS. OWENS: Did that have something to do with your picking this school when you came [inaudible]?

MS. NEAL: Yes, when I came to Atlanta—when I married and came to Atlanta, I had just taught one year up at Chickamauga. And I was offered a job up in Fulton County, but I had no car and could not get to the school. Then I was offered the job here, and I had to move out here. There was no place to live, so we moved into the [Candler?] hotel for a few months until we found the apartment down on the corner of Glenndale. And it was at that apartment that these children came when we had the heavy snow—I think about eleven inches—and we built a huge snowman in the yard. Everybody enjoyed it. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. PARRIS: I think one of the most exciting things about the children in the community is I was here long enough to teach—to have the children of the children whom I had taught, and that says something about the stability of the Glennwood community. As several of you have said, you know, the children at that point in time, back in the late '50s, '60s, on into I guess '70s, even early '80s, walked to school. And it was just a very, very close-knit community and exciting for me. Because of longevity, I got to keep up with families for many, many, many years. Then, of course, during the years that I was here was when Beacon School was closed, and we had the children from the Beacon community during that time. And that was when we had some children who came by bus. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Cowan.*]

MS. COWAN: Talking about Decatur just brings back so many wonderful memories. You could get up at twelve o'clock at night, a woman or anybody, walk around Decatur as safe as you wanted to be. You didn't have to worry about a thing. Nobody ever locked their doors. We always walked to school. Of course, I lived down Clairemont on Erie Avenue, where the Great Lakes were; and we always walked to school. In fact, very few people thought about riding to school. And we didn't have this little turn-around out here in front of the building, because we didn't need it; nobody ever had a car to bring over here. [*Audience laughter*]  
Walking was the rigor [sic] of the day, you know. But Decatur was a wonderful place to grow up. It was a real community. [*To Juanita Neal*] And you mentioned going to the drugstore up there in Decatur. That was Elkins's drugstore. And Dr. and Mrs. Elkins, you know, lived here in town. And then the grocery store next door was the Weeks [spelling?] grocery store. And then we had Bailey's shoe shop down there from there. So that's old Decatur sure enough way back then. [*Laughter*] But—I was trying to think if we had any other drugstores. I remember when the jail was right there on McDonough Street; and when we had to walk down to junior high and senior high, we passed the jail. But, of course, nobody was scared of the jail. Nobody was

going to bother us. And you could almost see the prisoners hanging out of the windows. But that didn't bother us, either; we went on down to junior high and senior high.

But Decatur—oh, and the streetcar. That reminded me. It was a nickel—*[Looks to her right for confirmation from another panel member]* wasn't that a nickel to come out here? And it turned around right in front of the school. And I think if you got off too early, up closer to Atlanta, it was ten cents, wasn't it? Something about that; I vaguely remember that. But a nickel was it. And, of course, practically everybody rode the streetcar then at that time. *[Passes microphone to Ms. Worley.]*

MS. WORLEY: Well, in walking to school, I remember some of us ran and maybe got into little skirmishes on the way. And one time I threw a rock at a boy when he found my secret note, and he marched me right in front of my daddy when I walked in the door at home and just told on me really good. *[Laughter]* But it was a blessing.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE, POSSIBLY FROM ANOTHER PANEL MEMBER, *off-camera*: Did you throw any more rocks? *[Laughter]*

MS. WORLEY, *laughing*: No. And I really wasn't that violent, it just happened. And I don't think the rock was very big, anyway. And I don't remember sitting in that chair out in the hall, but I think I got cornered in the cloakroom one day for something I'd said or shouldn't have said, I think it was. But anyway, Decatur was just, I think it was a blessed time in our country. And a lot of the children now, they know what school buses are. And we just had a real blessed time.

MS. OWENS: All right, my next question is going to be—I'm going to try to get to some—as many questions as I can, because I have a whole lot of them, because I want to get a good picture. The next thing I was curious about were like what were some of the rules, what was the discipline, what were things that you just knew? What were the teachers like, looking from the education standpoint, at that point?

MS. WORLEY: Well, there was a lot of, of course, writing on the blackboard. And, of course, we had our assignments. And it seems to me that we always did homework, and our teacher was very—teachers, all of them were very thorough, I thought. Of course, some of us didn't pay that much attention at some times. But it was, I felt like it was really instructive. And—of course, we didn't have a library then. But had our books, and, you know, we did have our studies. I remember lining up in the lunchroom to get our lunches or—we mostly carried our lunch and bought some ice cream or something like that.

MS. OWENS: So you brought your lunch, generally. *[Ms. Worley nods.]* OK. *[Ms. Worley passes the microphone to Ms. Cowan.]*

MS. COWAN: As far as the teachers teaching, all they had to do was look at us, and we'd jump to do the right thing. [*Laughter*] There was no—they didn't have any trouble making us get the lessons or learn the lesson or anything else. If we had homework, we didn't dare think of anything else but bring it on time and getting it done. I don't know, but we just thought those teachers were little gods, you know. We just looked up to them so; and if they said, "Boo," we jumped and did whatever they told us to do. I don't remember too much about the homework. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. PARRIS: I think one of the highlights of my years working in Decatur as a teacher and a principal was because of the terrific support that I felt from the—not only the faculty, all the teachers and support staff, but from the parents and from the board of education. I always felt a great sense of pride in being able to say to people, "Decatur is a traditional school system, where children are expected to have high standards, and they are expected to learn, and they are expected to behave." Even through our years of transition I think we held fast to those goals. And from the time I first came in the '50s until I left, I felt never anything but pride that I had been so privileged to be a part of this team. And I think historically Decatur has lots to be proud of. I would put the overall values and the discipline and the zeal for excellence up against anything in education that I've ever known about. I was very proud of it.

MS. OWENS: While you're—just to go back to that, just for the record, the superintendents while you were teaching and principal and some of the board members, can you—would you state that, so we'll have that officially?

MS. PARRIS: Mr. Amsler, Mr. O. L. Amsler, was superintendent when I came in '56, then Dr. Renfroe, and then Dr. Simmons. And—oh, the board members were Mr. Whitenour [*spelling?*] and Mr. Trotti and [*Addresses audience member*] Walt—Walt Drake, you were on the board, weren't you? [*Mr. Drake inaudibly answers in the negative, off-camera.*] You were on the commission. Pat Sherlock [*spelling?*], Mr. Adams, [*Responding to a prompt from the audience*], oh, Mr. Candler, Scott Candler, [*Responding to a prompt from the audience*], Roy Blount. I had Roy Blount's child [*Possibly Roy Blount, Jr., who became a well-known humorist.*] in my first class. But the terrific thing about the appointed board was that those people did what they did because they loved Decatur just as good as I loved Decatur. And you always just felt such total support for doing—trying to do a job well but also for providing the best possible education for children.

MS. OWENS: And it's good to mention those names, because some folks--that brings back memories and thoughts of the people that really set a standard for quality education. OK, [*to Ms. Neal*] your turn. [*Ms. Parris passes the microphone to Ms. Neal.*]

MS. NEAL: Mr. Lamar Ferguson was the superintendent when I was here. And, of course, everyone knows the principal who was here at the time that I was here.

MS. OWENS: We do?

MS. NEAL: A great person—I can't recall her name right now, but her— [*Several people, off-camera, suggest the name of Ms. Carreker.*] Ms. Carreker. She was a great person in Decatur and in the First Baptist Church as well. And, of course, our dining room at the First Baptist Church is named for her. And I was very fond of her, and I loved the way she taught us what she wanted us to know without fussing at us. And, of course, as the youngest teacher in the school, I know I must have done a lot of things wrong. But one time in particular, one of the mothers, Mrs. Thomas, who lived over here, came to my door and knocked on the door and said, "Ms. Carreker would like to see you in the office, and I'm going to keep your children." So she went in the room, and I went in the office. And Ms. Carreker said, "I want you to write me a letter." And I couldn't understand why, but I did write her—write the letter that she wanted and many letters after that, too. [*Scattered laughter.*] So if she wanted to know what you were teaching in English, she came in and would say, "Go into my office and write a letter, and I'm going to teach your English class today." That happened pretty often. But she was wonderful. I don't think she ever said an unkind word to me. And her husband was just as dear to my family, too, because he helped my brother when he taught his first year at Georgia Tech. So she has-- that family has been dear to me for all my life.

MS. OWENS: Would you share what you told me earlier about how you got your subject matter? You talked about how you knew what to do in music and how you knew what to do in math.

MS. NEAL: We weren't off on Saturday; we had to go to meetings. And Ms. Ruby White Brown was the music instructor. She taught us every Saturday what she wanted us to teach all the children the next week. So did the math supervisor and so on. They were really working people, and many of our lesson plans came directly from them. But we didn't seem to complain about it, as somebody might do today; but we just thought that was part of our job. And we were told that the reason they did this was because they wanted all the schools in Decatur to be together in what they were teaching, so that if a child moved from one school to another, he was not handicapped in any way. And I thought that was a pretty good idea.

MS. OWENS: Great. Let's talk a little bit about students from the principal's standpoint and the teacher's standpoint. Do you have a favorite student or a student story or something from your memories? [*Addressing Ms. Cowan and Ms. Worley*] And then you guys, when we



get to you, talk about some of your classmates that perhaps you have fond stories of or good memories.

MS. NEAL: All my children were my favorites.

MS. OWENS: Good answer. [*Laughter*] Good teacher answer!

MS. NEAL: I had one child that was very dear to me and was a great care to me. It was little Andy Partee, who had had polio. And, you know, that was a big scare during the '40s. And he was badly paralyzed, but he was allowed to come back to school. And he was a child that wanted to learn and was very intelligent, but his mother had to caution me, because, she says, "I don't want you to give him any extra attention." But he demanded extra attention, and she had me put him on the back row, which I did. But if he wanted to say something to me, and I wasn't ready to listen, he just got up and hopped on those desks up to my desk and stood there. And I would have to make him go back and sit down and raise his hand, and that was the hardest thing in the world I had to do. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. OWENS: If you feel like the question puts you on the spot, you don't have to answer. [*She and Ms. Parris laugh.*] Joyce probably has parents sitting in this room.

MS. PARRIS: No, I was just thinking about how the year we had a tragedy that turned into an inspiration to me as a teacher. We had two sixth-grade classes, and the other—I was teaching sixth grade at that time—and the other teacher died a very sudden and untimely death at a very early age, and that was when Dr. Simmons was principal here. And I remember the day she came in my room, and I ended up at the end of that day with instead of twenty-one children, I had thirty-nine. And we put the two classes together. And that was the day of home visits. We always visited in every home during the first, I think, six weeks of school. And it was a really nice tradition back in those days. And the parents—you all remember, they knew you were coming and so on. But that was an inspiration to me in my career that I shall never forget, because those children knew that we were kind of between a rock and a hard place. And we kept thirty-nine for that whole year. And I believe, of my years at Glennwood, that was the best year I ever had. And I think it was not only were the children good and the parents supportive, because they were concerned about what was going to happen. But it was so rewarding to see children know that you had—everybody was sort of rallying to the cause.

[TAPE SKIPS: Not clear whether this is an intentional edit or a malfunction of equipment. It is possible that some discussion was edited out for reasons of, e.g., privacy or other concerns.]

MS. COWAN: You were asking about classmates, and I have pictures back there of my fifth and sixth grade, and those people that are still living were [are?] just my dearest friends.

And, of course, we all walked to school together and never thought—we were to meet at the corner—Myrt Madison and I met at the corner on Clairemont at, I think, five minutes of eight or something. We'd walk over here. But what shocked me, the pictures show that we only had about nineteen or twenty in those two grades—each grade, the fifth and sixth grade. And we only had about six boys. I don't know what the girls finally did. There were just no men around [inaudible] [Laughter]. But those days we didn't—we weren't interested in that at all. But the girls are very—some of them are still very dear friends of mine. And I'm just so proud to have been with them, and we had a wonderful time together. [*Passes the microphone to Ms. Worley.*]

MS. WORLEY: Well, in our school years we had quite a swell of patriotism on account of World War II, and we collected scrap metal, and we bought war stamps, and we were just—and, of course, our country's going through that now, and a lot of the youth today are really coming into that. But we just really—it was part of our life. And I know I took our bathroom scales to weigh the scrap iron, and they broke. [Laughter] And I guess I got scolded for that, but it was all good for the cause. And it was just a grand time.

MS. OWENS: A couple of folks have alluded to parents' involvement; but I'd like for the two of you, as students, to talk about your parents' involvement, what you recall about that, or parents' involvement in the school in general. And as principals and teachers, what were the things that parents did that perhaps were different or the same in terms of supporting the school and being present?

MS. WORLEY: Well, we had grade mothers, and we had a carnival. And my mother was a grade mother, and I know a lot of the parents were, you know, helped in full force with that. And they were just—all of them seemed to be concerned, and most of them were stay-at-home mothers. Some parents did—mothers did work. But we had a lot of activities, and they, you know, helped us with our programs that we had, like costumes and dancing and the May pole dance, and—

MS. OWENS: The May pole dance. Tell us about the May pole dance. [*Some laughter and conversation, off-microphone, among panelists.*] OK, well, we can wait till we get to you—we'll get your version of the May pole dance, your version of the May pole Dance-- [*General laughter*]

MS. WORLEY: Well, I just remember it was a really fun time, and, you know, we had to practice, and it was just a lots of fun.

MS. OWENS: Just kind of cracks me up, because I haven't heard "May pole dance" in quite a while. But I remember doing the May pole dance as a girl-- [*laughs*]

MS. WORLEY: And we did have plays, you know, and we would act out certain things. And, of course, the mothers had to be involved to help us with the costumes and whatever we did. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Cowan.*]

MS. COWAN: And as I recall, Mother always came to PTA meeting. I don't remember about the class mothers. But the words "stay-at-home mom" never existed. Every mom stayed home. No mom was working [outside the home] in those days, and you lived on what your husband brought home, what the dad brought home. So that was out of the question. But I know mother was always there. We always felt mother's strength behind us in school and supporting us and the teacher and the principal and so forth. So I don't remember any active, particular thing that she did; but I know she was always back of us and came to PTA. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. PARRIS: I think the participation from parents was probably one of the highlights for me in many ways, not only the usual kinds of things, such as the grade mothers, who helped so much with, you know, the parties and the field trips and things of that nature, but we were very blessed at Glennwood to have three well-known people who have added so much in the world of art, and Rosemary Stiefel, who is an artist, and Amelia James, who herself went to Glennwood. Amelia is a portrait painter now, graduated from Decatur High School—she was Amelia Manning James. And Marie Mealor, who many of you know, Bill's wife, Marie, who had the shop [The Final Touch] in Decatur. Those three parents did wonders for our school in terms of an art appreciation and art collection that we had, some of which is still in the building. In the front hall there's one of Amelia James's portraits that she did of three Glennwood children. And that may seem like a little bit to you in terms of the big facet of education, but cultural arts at our school was just one of—next to reading, writing, and arithmetic, was the thing. And we gleaned so much from these people, who knew so much more than most of us knew and who were willing to give the time and effort and—I mean, they would come into the building, and they would take all of the paintings, and they would rearrange them over an afternoon, so that they would be in different locations for the children's benefit. And that was a real big highlight for us. [*Passes the microphone to Ms. Neal.*]

MS. NEAL: I think the parents were the most dedicated of all parents that I have taught, and I think it was the visiting in the home that did a lot of that and that neighborhood atmosphere. And you just can't find things like that today. And I hope that someday we will get back to the neighborhood schools, where we can get our pride and joy back and our spirit. That's one of the main things. But, yes, I did teach the May pole dance right here at this school. [*Laughter*] And I'll tell you a funny story about—[*Turns to another panelist*] was it Herndon

Morgan? [Answer inaudible]—that stayed at home. He told his mother he was ill the day of the May pole dance, because he just wasn't going to do the May pole dance, and he wasn't going to tell me he wasn't going to do it. So he stayed at home. His mother made him stay in bed all day, so decided that it was better to dance the May pole dance, but he was one of those children that you can't help but forget—can't remember—have to remember.

MS. OWENS: Would the two of you comment just a little bit about the home visits, because I'm rather fascinated by that. As a teacher I missed the home visits.

MS. NEAL: We had to make home visits twice a year—once in the fall, in the first six weeks, and then again in the spring. So we knew all the parents. Quite often we were invited for dinner, and my husband quite often went with me. And these children, when we met after fifty-five years, were surprised that I could remember their parents. But I had lots of reason to remember the parents. And I can't—and when somebody said "discipline," I started to say, "What did you say?" Because there was just no such thing as discipline [in terms of punishment] here at Glennwood School. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. OWENS: Just one other follow-up with the home visit. Then did you write up a report, or was this just a casual thing, the principal needed to know you'd made your visits? [*Off-microphone comments, inaudible, from Ms. Neal.*]

MS. PARRIS: I don't remember writing it up. I may have forgotten, because if it could be written up, I'm sure Dr. Simmons would have had us write it up. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: I'm sure, too.

MS. PARRIS: I think it just really gave you an overall picture of the child's home and family; and, of course, at this particular school, I think we had a real diversified population, I mean, even from back in the '50s. You know, we had children from all walks of life. And it does give you a lot of insight and about siblings and that kind of thing.

MS. OWENS: What were—you've painted a wonderful picture of Glennwood. What were challenging? What were things that challenged you as the principal during your time at Glennwood?

MS. PARRIS: I think probably the goals that I set for myself and that I expected of my teachers, and that being that all children can learn and that we should constantly keep reaching to be the best that you can possibly be.

MS. OWENS: Who were some of the teachers?

MS. PARRIS: [*Points to off-camera audience member.*] Betty Matthews, who took over as principal when I left. And Mary Farmer was here and Anna Kandrac [spelling?]. Many of the teachers that I had might have been the wives of people in Columbia [Theological] Seminary or

Emory Theology School [Candler School of Theology] or med school. Elizabeth Newsome was Decatur person, whom some of you know. And--I'm kind of a blank, there were so many. [*Ms. Owens makes an inaudible comment, and several inaudible comments, off microphone, come from audience.*] Ruth Wilson, Rhoda Joyner [spelling? Could be Joiner]—one of my best—and Gloria Lewis, who later went to Gwinnett and retired last year as principal in Gwinnett County. Karen Davenport at Decatur High School.

MS. OWENS: And many of those became principals. You mentioned Betty became principal. Gloria was at Westchester, is that right? Was she principal at Westchester?

MS. PARRIS: Gloria. Uh-huh.

MS. OWENS: And then Karen went to—was principal at Oakhurst.

MS. PARRIS: Jeannette McClure, who was in the gifted program, was one of my teachers. And a lot of good ones!

MS. OWENS: Lot of good ones. Those are names that bring back lots of good memories and names that are still very vibrant and involved in our community. I'd like to make sure we know what grades were here in the school during the times that you were here. I think a couple may have already mentioned that. But when you were principal, Joyce, what were the—

MS. PARRIS: I have to stop and think.

MS. OWENS: When you were a teacher, and then you were principal, how did that vary?

MS. PARRIS: When I was a teacher, it was [classroom grades] one through seven. And then they built Decatur High School, and we were one through eight. Is that right?

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: When the north building burned down.

MS. PARRIS: Yeah, when the north building burned, we were one through eight.

MS. OWENS: Can you attach a year to that? Because I don't remember right off the top of my head when the building burned. Seven--?

MS. PARRIS: No, it wasn't that long, because I was teaching.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I was still principal [inaudible].

MS. PARRIS: It was in—I think the early '60s.

MS. OWENS: Sixties?

MS. PARRIS: Uh-huh. Because I took over Glennwood in '64, the fall of '64. And I taught the eighth grade when it was here. And then we moved fifth and sixth grade in the

'60s—late '60s—to Beacon. So we had one through four. Oh! Was that a good year! For—I don't remember. I'm sorry I don't remember how long we just had one through four.

MS. OWENS: About two years, wasn't it? About two? [*Responding to off-camera audience member*] Four years? I just remember two, the two I was there.

MS. PARRIS: And, what, then Renfroe was built?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: [Nineteen] seventy-two.

MS. PARRIS: Seventy-two? And what'd we have?

MS. OWENS: Seventh and eighth grade there.

MS. PARRIS: Was it seventh and eighth?

MS. OWENS: At Renfroe.

MS. PARRIS: Yeah, and then we had one through six, wasn't it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Half-time kindergarten

MS. PARRIS: Oh, and kindergarten.

MS. OWENS: Half-time. And then while you were principal, did it go to full-time kindergarten?

MS. PARRIS: Mm-hm

MS. OWENS: OK. Do you remember the [class] grades when you were here?

MS. COWAN, *taking the microphone*: I sure do.

MS. OWENS: Good!

MS. COWAN: We didn't have any kindergarten over here that I recall that early, and I only recall exactly six grades. Because when we got out of the sixth grade here at Glennwood, we went to Decatur Junior High, and it was on McDonough Street. And, of course, those were segregated days, and the black schools were behind the Decatur Junior and Senior High. We went six, seven, and eight—no, seven, eight, and nine in junior high and then ten, eleven, and twelve in senior high over there on McDonough Street. And we always went, you know, we went to school on Saturdays and had Mondays off. I guess everybody knows that, though. That was different.

MS. OWENS: We'll let you comment about that in a moment. What about—

MS. WORLEY, *taking the microphone*: Well, we had one through seven; and then in high school we had four years [sic].

MS. OWENS: Eight through twelve

MS. WORLEY: So it was twelve years altogether.

MS. OWENS: You want to--

MS. WORLEY, *responding to inaudible off-camera comments from audience; shaking head*: No, eleven. I mean—excuse me.

MS. OWENS: Eleven. OK. All right.

MS. WORLEY: So there wasn't the middle school when I was there.

MS. OWENS: There was no middle school, right. Let's pass it down here [to Ms. Neal]. Let's see, when she was teaching, should be about the same as your--

MS. NEAL: We had [grades] one through seven. And Ruth Thomas was the seventh-grade teacher when I was here, and she was the younger sister of Mrs. Sessions, who was one of the principals in Decatur. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris.*]

MS. OWENS: That's one of those things that brings back lots of memories. We talked about Ms. Sessions at the superintendent's program as well. What were the important things that were taught, subject-wise and otherwise, to students when you were teaching here at Glennwood?

MS. NEAL, *taking back microphone*: I don't think we were ever allowed to think anything was too hard to try, and I guess that's one reason that it was such a good school, because we were willing to try. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Parris*]

MS. PARRIS: Manners. [*Laughter*] No, we did spend a lot of time on how you treat other people and manners. And during the years that there was such a thrust—this was later from when I was teaching—on standards of excellence in terms of, you know, when we talked—started talking so much about test scores and the like. I think we really, really tried very hard to keep raising the standards so that really all children hopefully were going to learn to read. And I know particularly in first grade when Betty was teaching first grade and the few years before that, we really went back to the old, old more or less, I guess, eclectic approach, where we memorized Dolch lists and we did this, and we did everything in addition to the regular reading program. And I think it really paid off.

MS. OWENS: I think so, too. What was important in your schooling? Did your parents emphasize anything more than another thing to you when you were coming up here to do your homework—your assignments?

MS. COWAN, *taking microphone*: The parents?

MS. OWENS: Yeah, or you. What was important to you to learn? Everything, or did you have some favorite topic, subject?

MS. COWAN: I didn't dare have a favorite. I had to everything. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: You had to do it all?

MS. COWAN: We all did!

MS. OWENS: Did you get all “S”es?

MS. COWAN: Hm?

MS. OWENS: Did you get “S”es?

MS. COWAN: Were “S”es—I thought it was 80, 90, or something like that.

MS. OWENS: OK

MS. COWAN: As and Bs or something, I don’t remember about that. But, you know, it was so long ago, I—as far as our parents, I always felt very much—they felt very much a part of—except that the fathers never did come to PTA that I recall. I never saw that. But I always knew Mother was right behind us. And I had a brother and sister, who I think came over here, too. And so we must have learned something over here, because we—my brother finished [Georgia] Tech with a master’s, and my sister finished Emory, and I finished Agnes Scott. So I guess we got through all right.

MS. PARRIS: Got a good background.

MS. OWENS: Got a good overall background.

MS. WORLEY, *taking microphone*: Well, I think we just—the emphasis really wasn’t on any one subject. I think it was—I know all the way through grammar school it was—we just studied everything, and it was important for us to complete our homework. And sometimes it was done under Mother’s supervision, but, I mean it was more or less like teaching at that point. And—

MS. OWENS: What was the grading system? I’m curious to know if there were changes in the grading system as the years—

MS. WORLEY: Our grades were “S”es. [S: satisfactory; I: improving; N; needs improvement; U: unsatisfactory]

MS. OWENS: OK, “S”es and Ns? You just made all “S”es, right?

MS. WORLEY: “U” was unsatisfactory.

MS. OWENS: Right. [*To Ms. Cowan*] And you think it was 80s and not numerals—numbers—[sic]?

MS. COWAN: I think 90 or above was an A, A-, or A+. And then 80s were Bs, seems to me.

MS. OWENS: Joyce, what about your time? Did it change?

MS. PARRIS, *taking microphone*: I think we started—when I was first here, we had “S”es and Ns. And that was short-lived. That was short-lived, I think. [*Responding to comment from audience*] Oh, yeah. And then we went through the era of comments. Now, that was



something else, where the quarterly report was comments, which had to be objective, hopefully, and really told you something, too.

MS. OWENS: Constructive

MS. PARRIS: Constructive, and not that your child was not just a real nice child. That doesn't tell you anything.

MS. OWENS: "Plays well with others." [*Laughter*]

MS. PARRIS, *seemingly addressing an audience member or members*: I don't—did we have numerical—I don't remember—I don't remember numerical. But after comments I think we went to ABCs, didn't we? I believe. [*Inaudible comments from the audience, which Ms. Parris responds to.*] Yeah, that was first—the "S"es, and then comments, and then ABCs. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Neal.*]

MS. OWENS: And then ABCs, but no numbers.

MS. NEAL: I think they've covered that.

MS. OWENS: You think they've got all those? That's what you remember? [*Ms. Neal nods.*] And how hard was it to determine what those students got?

MS. NEAL: Well, I don't think it was hard, because by the time you had taught the child for a few months, you knew the child's capabilities, and I don't think you judged a child according to another child. It was according to what his ability was and what he had done to reach that. So I don't think that that was any problem for most of us.

MS. OWENS: One of the things I'm curious about, were there other resources that were here to support you in the educational endeavor of teaching, like the library or anything else that you might think of that you used as resources for your students? And move the mike so we can make sure we get your lovely voice.

MS. NEAL: We didn't have the library when I was here, so we didn't have that resource. But we did have the resource of people at the city hall that did a great deal toward helping us. As I said, our Saturday classes for the teachers were just as important as the weekday classes for the children. And that's the main thing that I remember about that.

MS. OWENS: When you refer to the city hall, are you talking about the library that was at the city hall? Because a lot of folks aren't aware that's where our first library was.

MS. NEAL: Of course, we had the public library that all of us used.

MS. OWENS: Right. Joyce?

MS. PARRIS: I think the resources—of course, during the time I was here, there was great growth in the library and on into the media center, and, you know, visual arts really grew during those years. When I was first here, we had a small library and no librarians. And, you

know, that was assigned to teachers to help with and so on. But I thought we had really good resources, in terms of—like, one of my greatest recollections of Decatur was Linda Moore, who did the music program on a resource basis. And we had—even though we didn't have enough to go around, we still had good, skilled people who worked in the art and music areas and P.E. And for a long number of years now I think the media centers and the--long before computer technology had grown tremendously in Decatur. And, you know, the accreditation by the Southern Association [of Colleges and Schools "SACS"], Decatur being one of the, what, first five school systems—public schools in the state of Georgia to get Southern Association accreditation, really with the backing of the city and the board of education really boosted a lot of our already good standards to meet the criteria that was required, library and other resources being part of that.

MS. OWENS: That may not be one that's necessarily the best question for those ladies [who are former students and not former teachers at Glennwood]. Field trips. Just real quick. We're going to wrap up here, because we've been having you at this for a while. Let's see if anybody out there has a question. Remember any field trips? Did you get to do field trips? Because I know we've gone through no field trips to field trips to back to no field trips. Do you remember as a class going anywhere particularly fun or educational?

MS. COWAN, *taking microphone*: No, I don't recall, when I was here, having field trips. But I'd like to get back to that idea of the library over there at city hall--

MS. OWENS: OK

MS. COWAN: --because Maud Burrus started that, and I worked with her. And that was a hundred years ago, I guess. It was upstairs in the city hall. And it was a good resource place. I think—I don't know whether we had that *Book of Knowledge* when I was a child in my home. I don't remember if we had it when I was here at Glennwood. But we always went home [sic] and looked in the *Book of Knowledge* to find out what we were supposed to answer. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: What you were supposed to know

MS. WORLEY, *taking microphone*: Well, I remember going on field trips, but I can't recall where they were right now. [*Laughs*]

MS. OWENS, *to off-camera audience member*: You remember one?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: We went and got on the train at the [Decatur] depot, rode to Lithonia on the train. And I don't remember what grade that was in, but I had totally forgotten about it till you mentioned it.

MS. OWENS: Just every now and then I think there's a field trip that really stands out.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: We went to Stone Mountain, I think, one time.

MS. OWENS: As a class? [*Audience member's response inaudible.*] Now, Joyce, your kids probably took a lots of field trips. I would think that was an era when field trips were a big deal, and we really worked to try to get students on field trips.

MS. PARRIS: Yeah, we did, and we tried really hard to make this a meaningful and well-planned—I was reminded of the exhibit they had at the High Museum when we took the whole school, however many busloads that was, to the China exhibit. And that was just a real exciting time. And I remember Martha Moore did so much to help us prepare the children, you know, for that trip. But we had a good number of field trips.

MS. OWENS, *to Ms. Neal*: Did you take your students on any field trips other than Coca-Cola at the drugstore on Fridays? [*Laughter*] Was that the main one? [*Barely audible comment or question comes from audience member, apparently addressing Ms. Neal, regarding "school of the air."*] School of the air? To sing?

MS. NEAL: Which one?

MS. OWENS: The "school of the air." She says you took a group to sing?

MS. NEAL: Oh, yes.

MS. OWENS: Tell us about that.

MS. NEAL: Well, it wasn't a field trip.

MS. OWENS: Well, but, hey, tell us about that anyway. We'll count it as one. It sounds good.

MS. NEAL: There is the picture on the back table about the children at Glennwood that were in the chorus. The second-grade teacher played the piano for us, and we were asked by Mrs. Brown to take this group to the state meet, and that's where the picture was taken. And we had one song that everyone had to sing—every group, but then you could choose the second song. And I chose a lullaby out of a Girl Scout book that had been one of my favorites that was in two parts. And some of the schools had not had any two-part singing, and so that was a sort of novelty. And we got a Number Two—they were judging one, two, and three, and we got a Number Two. So I thought that was pretty good for a teacher that didn't know any more about music than I knew. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: A May pole dance and music. I'm very impressed with your abilities here. You had to do it all.

[VIDEOTAPE SKIPS: When it resumes, former school superintendent Carl Renfroe, seated in the audience, is in the process of telling the story of the origins of the circular driveway in front of Glennwood School. His story is difficult to hear, since he has no microphone.]

DR. RENFROE: . . . couldn't stop traffic. And you did that here, and you did it at Oakhurst [Elementary School]. Two lanes at Oakhurst, people drive over there in the afternoon to get their kids, it'd block traffic for thirty minutes. Especially in a little bit of rain. And you had to do the same thing over there where it would help the traffic. Now, the trouble was, there was some big oak trees out there. And when you dig up a tree that's sixty years old, it's got a big mess there. We had three of those things. And how in the world are you going to get them out? Where are you going to put them? Finally Mr. Amsler said, "Carl, I got a farm out here about ten miles, and there's a little ravine in it, and if you can get somebody to haul these things, you can dump them in my ravine on my farm ten miles away. And we got rid of them, and we cut this [the circular driveway] in here, really to help the traffic up and down the street, same thing [inaudible] Oakhurst.

MS. OWENS: Was that a controversy of the day, or did everybody just adapt to it fine? You start cutting down trees today, you know, people get upset.

DR. RENFROE: Any time you help traffic—

MS. OWENS: They were happy.

DR. RENFROE: --you could blow up the moon. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: Now, look—

DR. RENFROE: We stopped traffic fifteen minutes. Four or five cars, one you get them out, three or four more blocking traffic. One at a time, let them out, two or three minutes, two or three minutes, now you multiply that by five or six? You got a traffic jam.

MS. OWENS: If people want to see what that's like today, they can go to the [Decatur First] Methodist Kindergarten at noon when the parents are—[*Laughter*] you can't go right on Sycamore.

DR. RENFROE: That's why you have [the circular driveway in front of Glennwood Elementary School.]

MS. OWENS: But look what we learned today. You see, I didn't know why we had that circular drive in front of the school, and now we've learned. Does anybody out here have a question that you would like to ask?

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *not facing camera, without microphone*: I want to know if any of the students [inaudible], well, maybe all four of you, if any of you remember the fire escape on the back of the building. Could you share that with us?

MS. OWENS: About the fire escape?

MS. PARRIS, *passing microphone to Ms. Worley*: That was my room.

MS. WORLEY: Well, I just remember—I know we did a lot of marching, going in and out, in and out, at different—you know, we had the fire drills. And I don't know if there were any incidents that I recall, but maybe you do.

MS. OWENS, *to Ms. Parris*: That was your room, is that what you said?

MS. PARRIS: We didn't use the fire escape, but it was outside of my room there. [*Dr. Renfroe makes an inaudible comment from the audience.*] There was a slide that came down. And when the wind was real ferocious, like it was yesterday, those doors would try to pop open. And it really worried me about being a hazard.

MS. OWENS: I bet. Dr. Renfroe, you told me something about that block up there in the wall. Would you share it with the group that may not know?

DR. RENFROE, *from audience, facing camera, but without microphone*: [First part of response inaudible; he is apparently saying that there used to be a film projection room on the other side of the wall.] . . . moving pictures out of there, and then the fire people came along and said, "That's a dangerous situation. Suppose you have a fire on the ground floor underneath, those people would break their neck if they jump out." I had to get one of these extendable—

MS. OWENS: Ladders. Collapsible--like a collapsible—

DR. RENFROE: Also I put one in my house, because we were sleeping upstairs; and it was three stories down to the ground in the back [rest of the sentence inaudible]. But we had that [collapsible/extendable ladder] tied loosely, where if you have a fire, you could snap that, roll that big ladder out, and you could climb down it. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS: And you had to make sure it stayed up there, so students couldn't be [inaudible] up there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER, *off-camera*: Bolted to the floor.

MS. OWENS: Bolted to the floor.

DR. RENFROE: And the big problem came when the fire people told us the doors had to open out, not in.

MS. OWENS: Oh.

DR. RENFROE: If you can open them in, and the crowd's against it, you can stand there and smother. And [inaudible name—sounds like it could be "Guy Rutland"?] was [school board] chairman when we got into that. We had to make all sorts of changes. Over at Winnona [Park Elementary School], for example, we had to go in the auditorium, take a window out in the middle, put a platform out there where we could, for emergency, if you have a group in the auditorium when a fire came, you could push that door open and get out there. And the long

hall, we had to put barriers in there that would keep flames from going sixty feet down the hall and burning up everybody. We stopped the possibility of flames, and we did this all over town. I jokingly said at my old church, before we built the new one, the [Decatur First] Methodist church here, they [the doors in the old church building] open inside, and I used to joke and said, “If you’re in school, we want you to go to heaven. Hope you won’t get caught in it [the school fire]. But it doesn’t matter in the church! You’re going to heaven, anyway.” [*Laughter, which renders Dr. Renfroe’s subsequent remark inaudible.*]

MS. OWENS, *laughing*: So you don’t have to have a way out!

DR. RENFROE: [The church] was an old building and still had—old enough, the church, they still open—

MS. OWENS: Open out?

DR. RENFROE: Yeah

MS. OWENS: Anybody else—Walt?

WALTER DRAKE, *from audience*: I’d like to make a comment about the Joyce Parris era. She may be mad at me for even telling the story. I’m sure she remembers. Back when my children were over here, in the ’70s and early ’80s, Joyce was principal at that time. It was a very active time in the school and a tremendous parental involvement for the neighborhood. Plus they were busing in students from the housing projects at that point, and Joyce made a real effort to get a lot of those parents involved. And so this room would be packed for PTA meetings, and husbands did come back in those days to PTA. But the thing that I want to [*inaudible*] about Joyce was that, after they’d done away with home visits by that time—I don’t ever recall having a home visit—but they did—Joyce did make an effort to know every single parent, get to know every single background of everyone. So if there was a special need or something that needed attention, she knew every student in this school, and she knew them by name. And back then, when the students came to school in the morning, they’d all assemble out front, stayed out front until the doors opened. Unless it was really cold or pouring rain, they assembled out front. And then they would—Ms. Parris would come out at eight o’clock and clap her hands or just give a look [*laughter*], and everybody, all the children would line up, and they would march in. And they would pass Ms. Parris, and they would say, “Good morning, Ms. Parris.” And she would say, “Good morning, Mr. So-and-So” or “So-and-So.” She knew every student by name, and the parents used to always refer to this school as Ms. Parris’s Finishing School [*laughter*]. That’s [*inaudible*] or not, but it’s a compliment, and that’s the way we felt, because she mentioned earlier the emphasis on manners. There was a great deal of that, and

those students were expected to say, “Yes, ma’am, Ms. Parris,” and to be polite at all times. It was a good era for this school.

MS. OWENS: Ultimate compliment

MS. PARRIS: Thank you.

MS. OWENS, *acknowledging another question*: Yes

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I remember walking to school. One of my fond memories is Bennie Wilkins [former Decatur police chief] and Sam and Johnny walking us across the street. We got to know a lot of the policemen. And that was an awful--

MS. OWENS: Commander Wilkins.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. And I’ve got his signature on my [school] patrol card, and—

MS. OWENS: Patrols! [*To the panel members*] Did you have patrols when you were in school? The sixth-grade patrol?

MS. WORLEY: Yes, I think we did.

MS. OWENS: Think you did? Joyce, was that—do they still have patrols today? They still have them? [*Several audience members nod.*]

MS. PARRIS: Yes, we had patrols.

MS. OWENS: You had patrols?

MS. PARRIS: We did.

MS. OWENS: Yeah. I just didn’t know if they still had them, because when I drive by, I don’t see them out in front of the school, and I didn’t know if they were still—if they still had the safety patrol? [*Audience member responds to Ms. Owens’s question, off-camera and off-microphone, barely audible, explaining that the school has “helpers” but not patrols.*] The patrols? Is the lady still—the lady, the very friendly lady that waves every morning to me when I’m going to work? Yeah, I just knew I hadn’t seen the patrols lately, going to work, so I wondered. [*Same audience member explains that student helpers open car doors for arriving students, but the school no longer has official patrols.*] OK. All right. OK. [*Ms. Owens acknowledges another audience member’s question*]: Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *prefacing his question with an inaudible comment*: What are the most memorable PTA-type things that occurred back in the decades past, the things that were most memorable for the teachers and the students?

MS. OWENS: Ms. Neal, you want to start with that? You remember PTA? Any particular activity that was outstanding? [*Ms. Worley starts to answer, without the microphone.*] Let’s pass that down, because we want to make sure we get recorded.

MS. WORLEY, *taking the microphone*: I remember we had a Halloween carnival, and we decorated, and we had a lot of activity going on, similar—I guess they do it still today. I don't know. But I remember my mother brought a Gypsy fortune teller [*laughs*] for one of the activities. And we just had—it was just all-out. And, of course, the May pole dance. I don't remember if the parents came to that, or if we just did that with ourselves. They did?

MS. OWENS: I think you should start the May pole dance again. [*Laughter*] [*To Ms. Cowan*] What about you? You remember anything specific with PTA, parent involvement, any activity, carnival, festival—

MS. COWAN: When I was here?

MS. OWENS: Mm-hm

MS. NEAL: Well, we all had the May Day festival.

MS. OWENS: We're going to get to you.

MS. COWAN: No, I don't.

MS. OWENS: You don't? OK. Joyce?

MS. PARRIS: I just remember that, whenever we had children involved as part of the [PTA] program what a wonderful [parent] turnout we had. And with our spring program and our Christmas—holiday—program it was usually—that was in coordination with the regular PTA meeting. [*Passes microphone to Ms. Neal.*]

MS. NEAL: Well, we always had the spring festival. That was when we had the May Day dance—May pole dance. And then we had other dances, too. When we were studying Great Britain, we would have dances from there, from the old English carols and all. And when we were studying Scotland, we did--put on our kilts and did that, and Ireland, the Highland fling, and so on. We had really a great program every spring.

MS. OWENS: Wow. Anyone else out there have a question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The most memorable thing I—and I think it's so applicable to today—we went into the auditorium on December the eighth after Pearl Harbor, and they had all the children listen to President Roosevelt declare war. And then I remember in that auditorium every Thanksgiving every child brought a can of something, and we marched throughout, every child singing, [*sings*] "Come, ye thankful people, come." We sang it over and over till every child—

MS. OWENS: Got their—put their can in.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: --put their can down in it.

MS. OWENS: [*Inaudible, acknowledges question from another audience member.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have a morning assembly—



MS. OWENS: Oh, do you?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *apparently a teacher or administrator currently working at Glennwood*: --where we all assemble in here and talk about the character trait for the week, and we have our own quiet reflection, and we pledge to the flag. We recognize children with birthdays. I read a poem; sometimes the children read the poem, sometimes I do. This month we talked about Black history every morning. Next month we'll talk about women's history every morning. And so we have—it's probably a ten- or fifteen-minute assembly, depending on how many different things we have to talk about. We talk about who's reading and moving ahead toward their goal of what they want to finish writing [inaudible]. We have an everyday assembly.

MS. OWENS: Wow. Do they come in and sit together as classes, is that—

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We do. We sit in rows, as classes. And then the teachers and paraprofessionals all come in. It's sort of a way for us to build community.

MS. OWENS: Yeah, I like that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *responding to question, likely about current enrollment*: About 175 right now.

PANEL MEMBER (*unclear which*): Women's history.

MS. OWENS: Women's history—that's a big update, isn't it? And Black history as well. [Acknowledging audience question]: Yeah

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My fondest memory is a large PTA function in 1988, the school celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. And for an entire year the PTA, other parents, people who had come to Glennwood, organized a Sunday afternoon social; and we had over three thousand people come through the auditorium that day. And Virginia Vaughn did the most wonderful art display all over this room of photographs and pictures from the first seventy-five years, and I think that was the most touching thing I can remember—event.

MS. OWENS: Mm-hm. And Rosemary Stiefel, that you mentioned, giving so much. The students did that artwork in honor of that event. You remember that, the patchwork piece? It's wonderful.

MS. PARRIS: It's hanging in my bedroom.

MS. OWENS: I've got one, too. It's not hanging in my bedroom, but I do have it. [Acknowledges another question.]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We didn't have kindergarten, but most everyone went to Miss Bassett's Kindergarten on Sycamore Street. When I went to Miss Bassett's, it was further down than by the Methodist Church, where it was at a later time. It was almost down where the park

is, you know, [inaudible] MARTA. And most everybody from all over Decatur went to Miss Bassett's Kindergarten.

MS. OWENS: And I would imagine most of those people went to the churches—the big-steeped churches close by. Is that pretty accurate? Most of the people that came to school walked, went to one of the nearby churches—Decatur Pres or the Methodist or the Baptist? Maybe a couple of Episcopalians in there? Yes, Dr. Renfroe?

DR. RENFROE: I think we ought to stress the value of small schools. One of the funniest comics I ever saw on TV was this person who was in New York and was determined to be friendly. He spoke, he scared them. He spoke, they stumbled. He spoke, and he went on for twenty minutes. They were not accustomed to anybody being so. But I saw years ago where Marietta had a high school with 1,950 people in it, and they had to start serving lunches at 10:30. I said, "The principal hardly knows the teachers." I say that about DeKalb County. They hire six or eight hundred teachers a year. The superintendent hardly knows the principals. He doesn't know any of the teachers. When we used to meet, for our first meeting, we could put 225 in the library and talk, and I used to say jokingly and meaning[ful]ly, "Take a look at everybody. You're going to be in different schools. You won't remember their names. But if you run into another person from another school in the grocery store, at last you'll know you're a member of Decatur schools and go up and speak and be friendly. You're not going to be friendly with people you don't know. And I think Decatur has the outstanding record of that. It impresses me that several years ago in an academic contest the group from the middle school won first place in the whole state academically. The closest contest with them was a little group way up in north Decatur—north DeKalb—all white people, and we beat them. Last week in the paper they gave the name of a lady—I can't think of her name. She's in my church; my wife knows her well. She was selected as the outstanding person in the state of Georgia in her area.

MS. OWENS: Penny? Penny Ratliffe? [Social studies teacher at Renfroe Middle School]

DR. RENFROE: When we get this type of recognition, I think we ought to—again, you're meaningful only to your friends. You walk down the street in Atlanta, you pass seventy-five people and don't know any of them. There's no warmth there. You'll never see them again. If you did, you don't know whether you like them or not. And you've got to know people. And we have the biggest advantage of any school system in the metropolitan area. We're small enough to know each other and to think of the better parts of the personalities, and there's plenty of goodness there. And that has been our great blessing, really, that we are small enough to know each other.

MS. OWENS: Right. Well, I think that this is a good example to me. I thought about that when Ms. Neal came in with her students, and you get this testimony from this many years past of a teacher that students remember. And I think that's the prototype, that's the model, that's the epitome of what the school system is.

MS. NEAL: They remember the Highland fling. [*Laughter*]

MS. OWENS, *laughing*: See? You've got all these great memories. All right, well, what I'd like to do is ask—I'll ask two more questions, and we're going to be finished with the formal part, and then we can visit, and you guys can ask any questions you want to. One thing I'd like to ask is what do you consider your greatest accomplishment as a teacher, a principal, a student, and then I'm going to ask you, while you're thinking about that, the last thing we're going to do is I'm going to come back, and I'm going to ask you to give me one word that summarizes Glennwood School to you. That's the English teacher in me. I love vocabulary, so you have to come up with a good vocabulary word. So, as a teacher, what did you consider your greatest accomplishment? And speak into the mike, thanks.

MS. NEAL: I think having a part in the lives of these children that I have met after fifty-five years is great. In fact, I can start with A, and we have a architect. And we can go way on down to V, and we had a veterinarian and lawyers all in between. And to think that I had a part in the lives of these boys and girls has made me very happy. And what was that second thing?

MS. OWENS: I'm going to get back to it. But be thinking about a word—one word.

MS. PARRIS: I think probably the greatest accomplishment that I feel is that maybe I had some small part at a period in the history of this school that helped to make Glennwood the best school in Decatur.

MS. OWENS: A challenging time

MS. COWAN: We had a happy time when we were here, and it was a very simple way to grow up and to learn. And I think that the people I remember in my classes have done well and enjoyed the background that they got here years and years ago.

MS. OWENS: Years and years ago

MS. COWAN: And Decatur was the most wonderful place to grow up. You could just—as I've said, it was a wonderful little village.

MS. WORLEY, *to Ms. Cowan*: Well, you've just about said it all. I only can emphasize that from my background. And I think it's applicable to all that's shared in the years we went to school.

MS. OWENS: I'm going to come back to you in just a minute for that word, but I want to share a story with you in closing. And Walt [Drake], you may have been there this day, but at

Rotary recently, we had a wonderful speaker on the Southern Center for Ethics that's at Columbia Seminary. And the name was very familiar to me. I do our bulletin, and I have to get everything ready for the program, and I thought, "I know this name." So I went up—I always go up and welcome the speaker to our Rotary Club, which is at the Old Courthouse. And I was looking at him, and he was looking at me, and I said—I actually didn't say anything; Bob Rutland said, "John went to school--grew up in Glennwood. He went to school at Glennwood, and then he graduated from Decatur High School, and he's now back living in Glennwood, and he has five children, so they must be over here."

Well, I said to him, I looked straight in his eyes, and I said, "You went to Beacon."

And he said, "Miss Payne," because that was my name then. I've had several names, but that was my name [*laughter*] then.

I said, "John!"

And he said, "Yes."

John Knapp was the student, and John Knapp went all through the Decatur system. And here he was, doing this incredible presentation on ethics and lauding, I believe, his education in Decatur and the community that was Decatur and was somebody who has come back to Decatur, as has my own daughter. After twelve years of being in other places, she's bought a house in Decatur and is in public education with Head Start, actually. So that's the essence to me of Glennwood Elementary and the school system of Decatur. That's the epitome of what it represents; it is that home town for people. And it's where—twenty years [*later*] you run into a student that remembers you [*laughs*] or thirty years or however many years you run into students that remember you, and you remember your students, because, Dr. Renfroe, it is that small system. And you do get to know your students one-on-one.

DR. RENFROE, *from the audience*: I've got one more thing I want to say.

MS. OWENS: Can it be short?

DR. RENFROE: Yep

MS. OWENS: OK

DR. RENFROE: I had my three children come her to school and three of my grandchildren. My youngest grandchild, Brent [*last name inaudible, possibly "Cobb"?*]—

AUDIENCE MEMBER seated behind Dr. Renfroe, perhaps a former or current principal, *interrupting*: I taught Brent in the first grade--

DR. RENFROE, *interrupting*: She taught him in the first grade--

AUDIENCE MEMBER seated behind Dr. Renfroe: --and I hired him as a teacher.

DR. RENFROE: She was his principal. He tried to get a job in Decatur, and they were all closed out. She hired him in Rockdale County. The funny thing about it, in one day of teaching, he got this typewritten page this big. There was an old-timer down there, had been there twenty-five years, that sat after school the first day and talked to him: "What's your background?" "What's your background?" "What's your background?" And Brent rattled off a bit and said he'd gone over to the Woodlands [Glennwood?], and the English teacher there, he said, "Do you know her?" "Yes! She is the reason I am teaching." And he wrote up a solid page. He got more published in print from an old-timer who had been down there for twenty-five years than the average person would get in ten years of teaching. It pays to know people. [Laughter] [Turns to the teacher/principal seated behind him.] And she was the one that knew Brent. He knew her from the first grade on up. Now, one true thing—this is so funny—[rises]

MS. OWENS: Uh-oh. You're standing up. [Laughs]

DR. RENFROE: [First part of sentence inaudible] my youngest baby came over here—we just lived two blocks and a half away—she got afraid and snuck out the door and ran home. I don't know how my wife got on to it that she was there. I reckon one of the neighbors called and all. And they went and got her and brought her back over here. And the first-grade teacher was brilliant. She didn't fuss at Sue, for [it was] Sue's first day in school and scared to death. She said, "Honey, Sue, don't do that again. I can't run this class without you." [Laughter] And she never [rest of sentence inaudible]. [Laughter] [Dr. Renfroe sits down.]

MS. OWENS: Well, as we close out, I think another good example of what Decatur is the fact that in this room we have three superintendents. Dr. [Carl] Renfroe is with us, Dr. [Vee] Simmons, and Dr. [Ida] Love. So I think that is a real testament to what the school system represents. So thank you all for being here. And we're going to do the last-minute word— [Recognizing a question from Walter Drake in the audience] yes, Walt.

MR. DRAKE: You didn't tell the whole story about that young man [likely referring to John Knapp] [inaudible phrase] spoke that day. He got up to speak. He mentioned, he said, "Now, [inaudible phrase], I was so glad to see one of my former English teachers. The only thing I can't figure out is why I'm older than she is." [Laughter]

MS. OWENS: Oh, I love that part, and that's now on tape. Right, George? Well, I'll tell you what I did. That very afternoon I went and wrote a check to his organization, so he got a new member.

[Turns to the panel members] Ladies, as we close out, what's one word that you think is the essence of Glennwood for you and your memories and what it represents? And any one of

you can start. Just say it loudly. You want to start? [*Microphone is passed back and forth between panelists, then given to Ms. Worley.*]

MS. OWENS: Not a sentence, just a word

MS. WORLEY: That's hard—

MS. OWENS: I know!

MS. WORLEY: --to say just one word.

MS. OWENS: I was a hard teacher. Anybody have one?

MS. WORLEY: Well, I would just say "cherish."

MS. OWENS: Cherish. OK.

MS. COWAN: Simplistic. I wish I had a dictionary; I'd find out exactly what that means, but it says to me good things. Simplistic, sort of a way of living. [May mean "simplicity."]

MS. OWENS: Look up the word--*The Book of Knowledge*.

MS. PARRIS: Excellence

MS. NEAL: I'd like to use "ongoing," because I think all of this today has shown me what Glenwood was in the beginning, what it's always been, and what it always will be.

MS. OWENS: And what an excellent way to stop. Thank you very much. Wonderful!  
[*Applause*]

END OF RECORDING