

April 2020 transcription

JENNIFER BLOMQUIST: All right, so this is Jennifer Blomqvist and Bob Joyner; and Bob is a longtime resident of DeKalb County. So, Bob, let's hear your DeKalb County—let's hear your story.

BOB JOYNER: OK. The story started in Savannah in May of 1941. My mom would tell you that she was pregnant with me when Dad's work took him and her to Savannah. I was born in Telfair Woman's Hospital. The building's still there; it's now a senior center. We moved back to Atlanta when I was five months old, I was told. Lived in DeKalb County from '87 to '90 and then from '95 until today. Grew up on the southwest side of Atlanta, been to three schools in my life—Ben Hill Elementary, Southwest High School, and "North Avenue Trade School"—some people call it Georgia Tech. My career was fifty-plus years in computer information technology, Army National Guard veteran from the '60s, and that's about it chronologically.

Ben Hill Elementary was in Ben Hill, Georgia, which is just outside the Perimeter on State Route—Georgia 166, in the Greenbriar Mall area. Southwest High School is now, I believe, Benjamin Mays Middle School on Sewell Road, if that has not been renamed. On the corner of Sewell Road and Lyndhurst Drive in southwest Atlanta. Of course, Georgia Tech is where it has always been.

MS. BLOMQUIST: And you went to Georgia Tech, you said, before or after it was called Georgia Tech? [Mr. Joyner had jokingly referred to Georgia Institute of Technology by its local nickname, "North Avenue Trade School."]

MR. JOYNER: No, originally it was the Georgia School of Technology. WGST radio station—"W" because it's a radio station east of the Mississippi, Georgia School of Technology—WGST. At one time WGST was a fifty-watt radio station by the Georgia Tech electrical engineering students when it originally got its license. And then later it became an independent radio station and still is, for that matter. But it was originally Georgia School of Technology. Then it became Georgia Institute of Technology. And somewhere along the line, I don't remember the dates, it became a full university with many colleges. And, of course, the history of Georgia Tech could be looked up just about anywhere.

MS. BLOMQUIST: So what years were you at Georgia Tech?

MR. JOYNER: Started ten days out of high school. I graduated from high school and started summer quarter in 1959, was a full-time student until '62, ran out of money, started working on campus in a Georgia Highway Department research lab—later, these days, Georgia Department of Transportation, DOT. Got into computers that way. Went to night school. Eventually went to work for AAFES—that's acronym for Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

They run the Army PXes and the Air Force BXes all over the world. You're a government employee, but you're not paid with tax dollars. It's a self-supporting institution. And they transferred me to Texas, so in 1966 moved to a suburb, or outside a suburb, of Dallas called Lancaster, Texas. Not [pronounced] "Lan-CAS-ter," it's [pronounced] "LANK-aster"—happen to be spelled the same way. But it's like "Hew-ston" and "How-ston" [Houston].

MS. BLOMQUIST, *laughing*: So they'll correct you if you go to "Lan-cas-ter."

MR. JOYNER: They will.

MS. BLOMQUIST, *laughing*: OK.

MR. JOYNER: And I lived out there from '66 to '70. My daughter was born there. moved back to Atlanta, worked for C&S [Citizens and Southern] Bank for two and a half years and then Computer Management, Incorporated, for twelve years, I guess. Let's see, after that moved to Management Science of America, which became Dun and Bradstreet Software. Left there and went to Phoenix Consulting, Inc., commonly known as PCI; from there to Equifax, and from Equifax to IBM, and retired from IBM at age sixty-nine.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Would you want to talk a little bit about your mom and dad, your brother, and, like, your parents and what they did, and your brother, and where he went to school, and that kind of—part of your history?

MR. JOYNER: My dad was a native of Atlanta. My grandfather, as an eight-year-old, he and his family moved from Columbia, South Carolina, to Atlanta. I think my great-grandfather, as the family story goes, he was a hotel manager across the street from the South Carolina state capitol until it burnt to the ground. And so he came to Atlanta along with my then eight-year-old grandfather. An interesting aside, which will have meaning a little further along in the story, my grandfather later worked for the Postal Telegraph Company. You probably never heard of it. It was a competitor to Western Union Telegraph Company. And there's a plaque in the family Bible or a certificate that—they held an annual competition, and one year he was the second-fastest receiver in teletype and the third-fastest sender in the entire, nationwide Postal Telegraph Company. So they asked him to go to Kansas City, Kansas, temporarily for six months to teach telegraphy, teach telegraphing. There he met and married Gladys Scott and moved her to Atlanta, Georgia; and those were my paternal grandparents. They had one son, Robert Joyner, Sr., my father, who went to—really don't know where he went to elementary school; somewhere on the southwest side of Atlanta. He went to Boys' High School and then Georgia Tech.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Yeah, we have some Boys' High School yearbooks here. I'll have to look your dad up, see if—

MR. JOYNER: I'll like to see the yearbooks if you can find him.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Is it in Stone Mountain or Decatur? I think there was--

MR. JOYNER: This was on North Avenue, literally across the street from Georgia Tech.

MS. BLOMQUIST: OK. All right, well, maybe we don't have that one. I think Decatur had a boys' high school, and Stone Mountain—

MR. JOYNER: Well, the high schools were segregated by sex. Then he ended up working for U.S. Treasury, chased bootleggers for a living—lot of interesting stories, second-hand, there. In 1937 he was working for Goodyear Rubber Company. And as a small child, I pictured my father's profession as going from door to door selling leather men's belts because I'd heard he was a belt salesman. But what he sold were the huge machine belts used in factories. And once a year he would spend three or four months wandering around the Southwest, calling on Goodyear customers and their factories. Well, one day in 1937 he helped a young lady who had been bruised and battered in a car wreck off of an intercity bus in the middle of the night in Oklahoma City, told her that a Southern gentleman couldn't leave a lady in her condition on the side of the road, and could he accompany her anywhere? And so he walked her a couple of blocks to her apartment. She was an emergency room nurse. Before he said good night, he asked her out on a date, and she said, "Yes." And ten days later, on their third date, he asked her to marry him. She said, "Yes," and had to tell the doctor she was engaged to thanks but no thanks. They got married in the courthouse in Oklahoma City, and he went on his routes around the Southwest, and she went back to work being a nurse. And then one day she got a telegram that said, "Pack your bag and go to the Oklahoma [City] train station. There's a ticket waiting for you, and I'll join you when the train stops in Little Rock, Arkansas; and we'll go home to Atlanta." And they did. So my grandfather met a young lady on short notice in Kansas City and brought her to Atlanta, and my father did the same thing, except an Oklahoman.

My mother's people were all wheat farmers in the state of Oklahoma. My maternal grandfather, as an eighteen-year-old, and my great-grandfather, they came down from a farm in Kansas and homesteaded in Oklahoma on the Arapaho Land Rush in the early 1890s. They staked out a claim. You had to live on it for either two or three years. Could be in a tent, but you had to live on it. You had to produce crops. Might just be a vegetable garden that you lived off of, but you had to produce crops. And after you had lived on it two or three years—I don't know which—you could then buy the land for twenty-five cents an acre. And so you bought what's known as a quarter-section—that was 160 acres. A section, is one square mile, 640 acres. There are four quarter-sections in a section. In the state of Oklahoma, at least as of a

few years ago, they're called "century farms"; but they are original homesteads from whatever homesteading opening it was—"land rush," they called it—that are still in the same family and are still a working farm, and a member of the original family lives on the property. And as of ten, fifteen years ago at least, there were only eighteen in the whole state of Oklahoma that meet those criteria; and our family farm, the Slaght family farm, is one of them.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Is that right?

MR. JOYNER: There's a historical marker out on the road that says it's one of the Centennial Farms.

MS. BLOMQUIST: That's amazing.

MR. JOYNER: And now the daughter—I guess she's retired now—the daughter of a first cousin lives in the farmhouse that my mother was born on [sic]. She was a nurse in Oklahoma City. Okeene, Oklahoma, is ninety miles from Oklahoma City. And she works her shift for whatever week it is in Oklahoma City, and lives in an apartment—or she did; I think she's fully retired now—and then came back to the farm for her weekends.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Oh, my goodness.

MR. JOYNER: And my first cousin farmed the original homestead. He is the—one, two, three, fourth generation to farm that land. And his grandson, the sixth generation doesn't live on it, but he does farm it.

MS. BLOMQUIST: So what do they farm? What's the crop?

MR. JOYNER: It's primarily winter wheat. Most American wheat is winter wheat. It's planted in the fall and harvested in the spring, and then during the summer it—you let the land rest or plant some other crop. My grandfather and my uncle would often plant oats to help feed the cows and any other crop that was cattle fodder to feed the dairy cows, hay, whatever. I worked my four high school summers on my uncle's wheat farm in—outside Okeene, Oklahoma; so that would be summers of '55, '56, '57, and '58. As a—the first time I did that as a twelve-year-old, my seven-year-old brother in tow, Mom and Dad put us on the train, and we rode the train to Memphis, got off the train, waited five to six hours at the Memphis train station, and got on the train to Oklahoma City, and there a relative would pick us up. And each summer either we'd ride the train one way or the other, going out or coming back, and for the other end of that Mom and Dad would drive to Oklahoma, which was our annual family vacation, it was always going to Oklahoma so we could always see Mom's relatives. We rarely went anywhere else for a vacation as I was growing up—maybe a long weekend to the beach or the mountains. But the two-week vacation was always to Oklahoma.

I have a younger brother—had a younger brother, Jimmy, five years younger than me. We were the only two kids of the marriage. And he went to Ben Hill Elementary, started high school as an eighth-grader, we didn't have junior high in Atlanta at the time, at Marist, which then was an all-boys' purely military school right downtown. [Note: Although the school was military, it was founded by the Roman Catholic order of the Society of Mary, also known as the Marist Brothers.] The [former] Marist [School] campus is now a surface parking lot behind Sun Trust Plaza next to the Catholic Church there [then Ivy Street, now Peachtree Center Avenue, downtown Atlanta]. [The former Sun Trust building is now owned by Georgia State University and used for faculty offices, classrooms, and other university-related functions.] It [the school] didn't move to where it is now [Ashford-Dunwoody Road, Brookhaven], the modern campus, until—gosh, I don't remember. Have to look it up. [The school relocated in 1962 to 3790 Ashford- Dunwoody Road.] But Jim went to school there for one year, and then my father was transferred to Washington, D.C., to be coordinator of all special agents for the U. S. Treasury and assistant director of the school for treasury agents.

In those days there were really no law enforcement degrees yet available; so if you applied to become a special agent--Treasury, FBI, Secret Service, any of the rest—you either had to have an accounting degree or a law degree. And because my father didn't have either, as I was growing up, in addition to being an active member of the U. S. Army Reserves, he went to law school at night to get a law degree. Woodrow Wilson's School of Law—can't remember the full name. Woodrow Wilson's something. [Woodrow Wilson College of Law; ceased operation in 1987.]

MS. BLOMQUIST: School of Law?

MR. JOYNER: School of Law, which had a campus here in Atlanta, was named after the former president.

MS. BLOMQUIST: It was downtown? Is that right?

MR. JOYNER: Mm-hm. But Dad went there and got his law degree. He said he didn't feel like he could be the director of a school that required a law degree or an accounting degree without having one himself, so he went back to school and got one. And they lived in D.C., except for during the Berlin crisis, when his reserve unit, which met at the Pentagon, was activated. And they went to Washington state for a year, to Fort Lewis [now Fort Lewis-McChord], Washington, Mom, Dad, and my brother. I was a student at Georgia Tech, so I just kept on going to school. And [they] lived out there for a year, and they came back to D.C. And in '65 Dad had had enough of Washington, D.C., so he requested a transfer to a field office; and they sent him to Jacksonville [Florida]. But at that point in time that's when his malignant brain

tumor came to light, so he never really worked in Jacksonville. But they lived down there when the brain tumor was found by exploratory surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. That was before MRIs and CAT scans. They gave him six months to live, but he lived eighteen months. He had his full faculties almost the whole time, but he died in Jacksonville and was buried in the family plot in East Point, Georgia.

My brother volunteered—lied about his age and volunteered for the U.S. Army six months early. Told Mom and Dad at family dinner—supper in Virginia, “Oh, by the way, tomorrow morning at 10 o’clock I need to be in Baltimore.”

“What for?”

“I’m going in the Army.”

“You’re not old enough to go in the Army.”

“Well, yeah.”

So Dad put on his lieutenant colonel’s uniform and took him to Baltimore the next morning and straightened out his date of birth and signed the necessary paperwork for him to go into the Army. He served two and a half tours in the U.S. Army as a volunteer. He was a military policeman, crew chief on a helicopter like his big brother, and ended up in Germany and then one day got mad at the U.S. Army for reasons he never shared and went AWOL to Sweden and married a Swedish girl. Got amnesty from the U.S. government in the mid-seventies when all the draft-dodgers and people that ran away to Canada, etc., got amnesty. And drove tractor-trailers from Sweden to Saudi Arabia and back for twenty-plus years. Had terminal wanderlust. Had to be outside, had to be going. Married a Swedish girl, had two wonderful kids—my Swedish kids now, since he died in a plane crash in Sweden in May of 1990. So I have—Robin’s my niece, and Rick is my nephew. They’re both dual citizens—U.S. and Swedish. And Rick and his wife worked in the United States. Nineteen—twenty—in 2006 and [200]7 they were in Jacksonville. Their daughter was born in Jacksonville. In 2008 and half of 2009 they were in Oklahoma City. The rest of 2009 and 2010 they were in Chicago, and then they ended up going back to Sweden, where they now live.

My brother was a character [inaudible]. He literally had an IQ that was off the scale on the high end and was constantly flunking out of school because he just wasn’t interested. A counselor in the high school in Arlington, Virginia, finally found his hot button. He said, “Jimmy, if you keep failing, I’m going to have to hold you back a year.” And the next day he went to making straight As; and he’d make straight As until he’d pull his average up to a high C, and then he’d go back to failing. And when it dropped to a D, he’d start making straight As again; but he never graduated from high school, since he volunteered to be in the army by lying about

his age by six months and did get his GED in the U.S. Army. Probably the most well-read person I've ever known and could discourse on any subject you wanted to discuss. Just had an insatiable curiosity that was scratched usually by reading in the days before the Internet. But one of those characters. Never in serious trouble but always in trouble.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Mm-hm. Speaking of trouble, do you have any—I feel like there are so many, but do you have any one story or two stories about your dad's work in the Treasury and chasing bootleggers that you mentioned earlier?

MR. JOYNER: Yep.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Do you have any that kind of stand out in your memory?

MR. JOYNER: Number one, I guess, is my lifelong interest in automobiles and racing, because I learned to drive in a hotrod Ford that my dad had built, because he said the government wouldn't give him any car that would catch anything. So we had a 19—our family car was a 1951 Ford that Dad had put a hot-rodded '53 Mercury engine in it, and that's what I learned to drive in. Dad often left for work in disguises. He worked undercover a lot, not just on bootleggers, also on illicit gambling. The U.S. government doesn't care if you gamble. If you run a gambling operation, even though it was illegal in Georgia, they [the U.S. government] didn't care if you ran a gambling operation, but they cared a whole lot if you didn't pay taxes on your winnings. And so that was how they would go after them. So dad worked with what was known in the '50s as the "Bug" racket. It was a betting process, a numbers racket it was also called. So he did most of his undercover work when working on that.

However, I remember, in early elementary school, accompanying my mother and brother to a north Georgia county jail where my father was in jail as a driver for a bootlegger. He did that undercover and found out the head bootlegger was the local sheriff, and that's how they built the case against him.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Oh my goodness.

MR. JOYNER: So we went and visited Dad in jail.

MS. BLOMQUIST, *laughing*: To keep up appearances.

MR. JOYNER: More than once in my life I've been told we're going to do this in the next ten minutes to two hours or whatever it was, and a couple of ground rules laid down about what the story was, and then Dad couldn't tell me or any of our family anything else about it. But he'd tell us when he could, which generally meant after they made the case. And as a kid I didn't realize it, but more than once when we would go out to eat as a family to whatever restaurant--the Crossroads Restaurant was a famous seafood place in town, which was one of them I do remember going to—he was really there observing somebody they were investigating. And it

was a family dinner, yes. Yes, Dad and Mom paid for it, but he was working while we were there. My father was kind of like Wild Bill Hickok; he never sat anywhere in a public space, like a restaurant or anything like that, except in a corner with his back to the wall so he could see the whole room. And I grew up loving to—and still love to—just watch people, see what they're doing. And I attribute some of that to growing up that way.

My father had a real story that he said happened to him once, and then he had a story—they are my two favorite bootleg-related stories. Dad said, you know, despite Eliot Ness and etc.—and yes, he did know Eliot Ness, met him at least once—bootlegging really, except for car crashes really wasn't as violent as the movies and all portray it. And his story that he said happened to him once is that he was up in a north Georgia town in the middle of the week, walking down the street, and he ran into the known bootlegger. And they got to talking, and they asked each other, "How's the wife?" and "How's the kids?" and "What's going on?" and etc. And then they said, "OK, see you later." And so Dad asked the bootlegger, said, "I asked him, 'You hauling this weekend?'"

The bootlegger said, "Yes, you chasing?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll see you then!" [*Ms. Blomqvist laughs.*]

Because, he said, if you caught them, you know, any--they'd go to court, and he said any bootlegger worth his salt would go out in the vegetable patch behind the house and dig up the Prince Albert [tobacco] can and get the money out to pay the fine. And there was not a whole lot of jail time and seriously not a whole lot of violence. My dad said he was always very glad that he never had to shoot at anybody in his entire career. He said he waved his gun around more than once to get attention but that he never had to shoot; and, like most law enforcement officers, he was always armed.

The other story he said he couldn't say for sure if it was true, but the atmosphere was such at the time that it could be true. And he said supposedly in the late 1940s a local sheriff and a federal agent—special agent with the U.S., used to be—it's now Alcohol Tobacco Tax [sic] and Firearms, but back then it was Alcohol and Tobacco Tax [sic]. And again, the federal government didn't care if you made alcohol, just that you should pay your taxes on the profits you made by selling the alcohol. And that's how they captured Al Capone. That's what put Al Capone in prison for was tax evasion, but anyway—except for Prohibition times, of course. But supposedly this sheriff and federal agent were chasing a bootlegger on a cold, rainy night in the middle of the winter up in eastern Tennessee, and they were running him pretty close, but then they slid off into a ditch to the left side—the mountain side—of the road and got stuck in a ditch.



Had they gone off the right, they'd have tumbled down into a valley, and something bad probably would have happened.

But they were thoroughly stuck in the middle of the night, no radios in cars in those days, and they're bemoaning their luck. They're going to be stuck out here for hours. Of course, this was a lonely highway. It'd probably be daybreak before anybody drives along to give them any help or anything, and they're outside the car in the dark, bitching and moaning, and they hear a car. They said, "Oh! A car's coming!" And so they hear it coming up the mountain from down below. They were running downhill at the time they got stuck. And they see a set of tail lights backed around a curve, and they could just see the tail lights. And they heard the engine shut off and heard a door open. And out of the dark came a voice that said, "You fellows OK?"

"Yeah."

"What happened?"

"Oh, we ran off in the bar ditch, and we're stuck."

"Nobody's hurt?"

"No."

"Is your car drivable?"

"Well, we think so."

"If I pull you out of the ditch, will you give me my quarter-mile lead back?"

And they said, "Yes," and the bootlegger backed up the mountain, hooked up the chain, pulled them out of the ditch, they all shook hands and got in their cars. And the two officers sat there until he disappeared around the curve, and then they started chasing him again. My dad said, "I can't say that story's true, but I can say that the atmosphere was such that it could very well be true."

MS. BLOMQUIST: Very gentlemanly.

MR. JOYNER: I once attended in federal court downtown where the post office [Forsyth Street] used to be, once went to a trial with my father—or at least Dad was testifying. I had just never seen him in court, and I had, for whatever reason—maybe it was summer, and I was out of high school for the summer—so I went down and sat in court and watched my father testify. Several years later I applied for Senator Talmadge's appointment to the Air Force Academy; and the year that I did, I ended up being second of everyone that had applied. So I got a very nice letter from Senator Talmadge that said that I had placed second in the overall competition, which included an intelligence test, physical test, medical test, etc., by three-thousandths of a point by whatever system they used for scoring and since I was so close, that I was his first alternate. And if the guy that won declined the appointment, I would get it. Well, I later got a

letter that the number-one guy had not declined; he took it. So Senator Talmadge in that letter he told me that, since we were so close, if I wanted to be his appointee for the next year, he wouldn't even hold a competition; it was just mine. And so I sat down with the family and talked about it. And at that time I was approaching being a junior at Georgia Tech and was accepted into Air Force ROTC, advanced Air Force ROTC. And since the academies--at least then, I don't know about now—didn't accept any transfer credits, I would be looking at four more years if I took the appointment. So I, with my father's help, wrote him a nice letter declining his offer.

Well, later, in Washington, D.C., when visiting Mother and Dad between quarters at Tech when they were up there, Dad said, "We ought to—since you've never met him personally, maybe we ought to go visit Senator Talmadge in his office, and you can thank him." And I said, "Well, that's a good idea." So I went down to Dad's office at U.S. Treasury. We walked down the street to the Senate office and didn't have an appointment, just dropped in. And Dad just said, "Is the senator available?" and he was. We went in, and we were talking. He had his shoes off on his desk and had his pocket knife out, cutting off the inside front corner of the heels on his shoes. He said, "I just had them re-heeled today—resoled and re-heeled. And I always catch that corner of the heel on the cuffs on my suit pants, so I always cut the corner off." Well, I've done that ever since on any new pair of shoes. *[Laughs]*

But anyway, we were talking; and as the conversation went on and I thanked Senator Talmadge for offering the offer that I declined, he stopped and looked at my father and said, "Mr. Joyner, don't I know you from somewhere?"

Dad laughed and said, "Well, I believe the last time we were in the same room at the same time, Senator, I was testifying about a bootlegger that we captured on one of your—the forest on one of your farms, and you were sitting in the gallery."

And he says, "That's right! That's where I know you from! And you convicted him!"

And Dad said, "Yes, sir, I did."

But it wasn't that the senator was a bootlegger, it was just that a bootlegger was using some obscure corner of the senator's land to set his still up.

MS. BLOMQUIST: That's wild.

MR. JOYNER: My mother was, as I said, an ER nurse. She never worked full-time as a nurse in my lifetime, but she was always helping friends and families that needed nurses, whether in the hospital or, you know, in their homes. She was always a very caring person. Lived to be one month—two months shy of 103. Lost my dad at age fifty-three, and Mom kind of made the averages work out. But she—when Dad died, she went back to Oklahoma to live

with her widowed sister for “six months, until I get my feet on the ground.” Well, twenty-four years later I got her to move back to Atlanta, and then she lived the rest of her life here.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Did she move—is that when she moved to Stone Mountain? She started—when she came—

MR. JOYNER: That’s how Jan and I met. I rented a house from a friend, because I had talked Mother into moving back to Oklahoma—from Oklahoma. This was right after my brother had been killed in Sweden in a plane crash. And so it was either find her an apartment or find someplace big enough for both of us to live. And I just was at a professional meeting with a fellow employee at our company. We were at a monthly professional meeting one night, having dinner. And I asked him—they’d built a new house up in north Fulton County up by Crabapple. And I was asking Ray, “How’s the sale of the house in Stone Mountain coming?”

He said, “Golly, Pete, I just—you know, we’ve had it on the market now for nine months. We just haven’t had many people looking at it.”

And I said, “Well, have you ever thought about renting it?” This was just a dinner conversation.

And he said, “No, because renters never take care of a place. They don’t take care of the yard. They’ll tear it up. Are you interested?”

And I said, “Actually, that was a rhetorical question, but I might be.”

MS. BLOMQUIST: What year was this, Bob?

MR. JOYNER: Nineteen eighty-nine. No, 1990. And so I said, “Well, I might consider it.”

And he said, “Well, Ginny”—his wife—“is handling it, trying to rent the place, so I don’t have to take off from work or something. And you know Jenny. You’ve met her.”

I’d met her a few times. She was the wife of a guy I worked with. And so we talked and arranged for me to drive out over lunch one day and look at the house. And I looked at the house and thought about it for a little while and said, “I’ll get back to you.” And then I think we met at the house—I think we met at the house to look around twice, negotiated price and everything. And then I met her the third time to sign the lease.

So while we were there, and we signed the lease and all and were getting ready to leave, she said, “May I ask you a personal question?”

I said, “Ginny, you can ask me anything as long as you won’t be upset if I choose not to answer.”

And she said, “OK. Are you seeing anyone?”

I said, “No.”

She said, "Are you looking?"

And I said, "No, I've never looked. I just kind of figure it happens."

And she says, "Well, I have a friend who feels that way. May I mention you to her?"

And I said, "Yes." Now, that was the second time we met there.

The third time we met to sign the lease, she said, "Well, I've mentioned you to my friend, Janis Kilgore, and she said I could give you her number."

And so I went to rent a house, and I found a wife. So I called her, and we went out for Chinese dinner on our first date, and we dated for five years, and we've been married for twenty-four now.

MS. BLOMQUIST: And you've lived in DeKalb County—you and Jan have lived in DeKalb the whole time?

MR. JOYNER: [First few words inaudible] Yes. Well, I was—almost [inaudible]

MS. BLOMQUIST: Sort of? Yeah.

MR. JOYNER: I was living in an apartment with a friend in Decatur and lived there '88 through '90. And so that was DeKalb County. I had a Decatur mailing address. And then it was out off of Toco Hills [sic], walking distance to Toco Hills [sic] shopping center. So lived there then, rented the house in Stone Mountain. And I lived in that house for five years. And Jan had a condominium over by Emory. And then when we married in '95, we looked for a house. The Stone Mountain house was in—by one-quarter of a mile—was in Gwinnett County. Because you pass the DeKalb—the Gwinnett and DeKalb County line on Old Rosser Road, drove one-quarter of a mile, and that's where the house was, in Gwinnett. From probably November of '89—no, November of '90 until January of—well, November of '89 until the summer of '95, when Jan and I got married and bought the house, summer, fall, I lived in Gwinnett County and then bought the house in what is now Dunwoody. It was unincorporated DeKalb when we bought the house, because Dunwoody now is just a little over ten years old. And the area was known as Dunwoody since forever. But we bought the house in August of '95 and have been living in DeKalb County ever since.

MS. BLOMQUIST: And how long has your neighborhood been having the Halloween—we just finished Halloween last week. So I was thinking about you and your neighborhood and how they have that Halloween. Talk about that.

MR. JOYNER: That was our twenty-fifth Halloween, because we moved in in August; and then, you know, October '95 was our first one. And so we now have had twenty-five of them. There are sixty houses on our dead-end cul-de-sac street. Zoning-wise we're one zoning rule bigger than what's called cluster homes. Our lots are slightly bigger than cluster-

home lots. And so there's sixty homes on the dead-end street and a little side street and one way in and out of the neighborhood. And they were—when we moved in, they were already had been celebrating Halloween big time so much that they were already hiring off-duty DeKalb County policemen. For the last ten years we've hired off-duty Dunwoody City policemen. But for sixty homes, we, according to the various estimates from the off-duty policemen and heaven-knows-what, we average four to five thousand trick-or-treaters between six p.m. and nine p.m. on Halloween. We never reschedule it. It's always Halloween evening, despite the weather, despite school maybe being in session the next day and everything. We don't slide it, because it's just too difficult. It's—there—you know, it's mostly Victorian homes. And at one time I think a hundred percent of them have seriously decorated. It's now down. I suspect there were at least maybe as high as fifteen out of the sixty that didn't participate this year. But we've always been very lucky. We have the off-duty policemen, we have neighbors—we take turns volunteering to patrol the neighborhood, wearing lit vests and things like this. Primarily we find lost parents. A kid never gets lost; the parents get lost.

Two years ago we did have a unique one. When Halloween was all over, and after nine o'clock, when we herded everybody out of the neighborhood, we had a leftover kid. And actually he'd been left over earlier, and he was lost. And so we always—anything “found” during Halloween we take up to the entrance where the barricades are and the policemen are. In this case the ladies took turns sitting with him. But when everybody was out of the neighborhood, we still had a kid that didn't belong there. He was about six—five or six, and we asked his sister's name, and he told his sister's first name. He wasn't sure about his last name. Asked his mother's name, and that was “Mama.” And asked what they looked like so we could try to find them while people were still there. “My sister's dressed as a princess, and my mom's a pirate.” [*Ms. Blomqvist laughs.*] So that didn't help a lot with a few thousand people in costume. But so we ended up that the Dunwoody police took him and said, “We'll keep him at headquarters for a few hours, and then, if nobody turns up, we'll have to call child services to come get him.” Well, it seems that a large family in two cars—many members of a family, a new family—they drove him down from Gainesville. People come from a long way to see Halloween in our neighborhood. And when they all got back to the two cars, each one thought this particular little boy was in the other car. And it wasn't until they got home and missed him that they turned around and rode back to Atlanta and came into the neighborhood, and some were asking around. And we said, “Well, the police took him.” So they went over and claimed him. They [the police] didn't file any charges; the police realized that it was just, you know, an accident. Somebody lost track of one.

MS. BLOMQUIST: A real-life *Home Alone* scenario, right? Wow.

MR. JOYNER, *laughing*: Exactly. It was! But, yeah, it may eventually wind down. But it was—two corner houses this year, one couple in one of them had been in the house for six weeks, and the other couple had been in the house for two weeks. And they both decorated like crazy and participated, so, you know, we've had—we've gone from—in twenty-four years from a neighborhood full of kids to no kids to a bazillion kids again. Just the natural change.

MS. BLOMQUIST: We're at almost—we're at forty-five minutes. I wanted to ask you if you—you obviously have a lot of experience working with helicopters—airplanes, too?

MR. JOYNER: Yes. And I have a commercial pilot's license.

MS. BLOMQUIST: Yes. One story that stands out for me is your experience meeting an astronaut. Will you tell that story?

MR. JOYNER: That was funny. I was going to—this was September of 1970. We actually had moved back—my first wife, my daughter, who was just a little over a year old, and I had actually moved back to Atlanta when I'd gone to work for C&S Bank. But I had to go back to Dallas to finish closing out our house there. And for many months I had, through AOPA—Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association—it's many people who are involved in private flying and all, and some airline crews are members of AOPA—and, through a program they had, for a very nominal fee, you could go through the U.S. Air Force's high-altitude training course. It's a day-long course—high-altitude chamber and the whole bit. And the particular course I'd signed up for at the time, since I was living in Texas, was at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth. And so I didn't want to lose that opportunity—it only cost me twenty dollars. But—so I was back out there to help close out the house, and the family was now back here in the Atlanta area. And—remind me to tell you the telephone story.

MS. BLOMQUIST: OK

MR. JOYNER: And so I went back out there and took the Saturday to go to Carswell Air Force Base and take the course. Well, the people there, we were all pilots—private pilots, well, general aviation pilots of all different levels of certificates; and we teamed up. Nobody—no two people in the class knew anybody in the class until we came. So, just luck of the draw, I teamed up with a medical doctor from California who had come to Fort Worth to take the course because he was moving up in the—into a high-performance aircraft, which could fly high enough that he had to have to worry about having an oxygen system. And, being a doctor, he wanted to have the training. And so we're going through the course—I could talk hours on that course; it was fun. But anyway, we broke for lunch, and we just got to talking. We were wandering around Carswell Air Force Base. And I said, "Well, talking to you earlier

today on breaks and all, I realized that you've never been in the military. So have you ever been on an Air Force base before? Or have you ever been in military flight operations before?"

And he said, "No."

And I said, "Would you be interested in going over to the tower and see what it's like?"

"You can do that?"

I said, "Sure, let's go!"

So we walked over there. And as we were walking up to the control tower at Carswell Air Force Base, which is a building from probably from before World War II, but definitely at least from World War II, if not older. In the typical military base, U.S. at least, a nice, small lawn out front with chains linked between poles and painted white—everything is [pristine; pronounces it "prizin-tine"] to keep you off the grass, laying on the grass as we're approaching is a man in a white flight suit. He's laying on the grass on his back, he has a transistor radio playing country-Western music, his flight helmet bag, which is holding his flight helmet, he's using for a pillow, and he's reading a paperback Zane Grey Wild West novel. Well, as I get a little closer--as we get a little closer, I recognize a NASA patch on his shoulder. And then when we get close enough that I can read his nametag, I stopped and walked up to the fence and said, "Excuse me, sir." And he looked up at me, and I said, "I realize that you probably get these kind of interruptions at least fifty times a day, but may I shake your hand?"

Very gracious, very nice, jumped up, talked to us, said he has to fly often so he can continue to get flight pay. So he flew in from Houston and was waiting for Mom and Dad to pick him up so he could have some of Mom's home-cooking for lunch before he flew back to Houston. And that was Alan Bean, the fourth man to walk on the moon. So, yes, I did meet a moon-walker, who died in just the past year or two. But very nice, very gracious.

The telephone story. Okeene, Oklahoma, ninety miles northwest of Oklahoma City in wheat country, where the family farm is. My grandfather—my mother's father—was one of the original investors in a company called Pioneer Telephone. Basically what they did is they put the hand-crank telephone system in for the town of Okeene and the surrounding farms. Didn't connect anywhere when they first put it in; it was just they were being very modern. And on the wall, the hand-crank, the whole bit. Well, the telephone number—they were party lines with many families on each phone line—and so the telephone on the wall of the homeplace was—its ring—because I don't know if you've ever been on a party line; but if you've been on a party line, you don't just get "Ring, ring, ring." You get a pattern of rings, so you'll know if it's a call for your house and not call for your neighbor's house, because when the ring signal comes down the line to ring the bell on the telephone, it rings in every house that's on the party line.

When I was young in southwest Atlanta, we were on a party line here. We had dial phones, but it was still a party line. But anyway, for the Slaght farm, the ring was two shorts and a long. So if an incoming call was for the Slaght family, in the house and in all the other houses on that particular party line, you'd hear, "Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g. Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g." And how you accomplished that [calling] was how you turned the crank. So you'd go two cranks—two rapid cranks was a short ring. So you'd go, "Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g," if you were calling the Slaghts from another phone on the same party line. You'd pick up the receiver to see if anybody was talking; if nobody was talking, you could make a call. If somebody was talking, being courteous, you wouldn't try to make it—but we--you couldn't. It would just make noise on the line. Well, also, the flip side of that is that you never had a long conversation, because somebody else might need to use the phone. Well, anyway, it was two shorts and a long, was the Slaght ring.

Well, in Atlanta, we'd bought a house down in Fayette County, after moving back from Texas, and I needed to talk to my mother. Well, at the time Mother was living in southeast Oklahoma in Swink, but she had gone up to Okeene to visit relatives and sisters and brothers and everything. And I needed to talk to her about something. So I picked up the telephone in Fayette County and just dialed 0 for Operator. The operator came on, and back in those days it was still Southern Bell. "Southern Bell operator."

I said, "I'd like to make a station-to-station call to Oklahoma."

And she said, "Well, sir, you know, you can now direct-dial most places in the United States; and the rates are slightly less."

I said, "Yes, I know. But I'd appreciate it if you'd help me."

MS. BLOMQUIST: What year was that, do you think?

MR. JOYNER: Hm, we lived in that house from 19—late 1970 until late 1973. So it was in that range. And I said, "No, I know I can dial direct, but I would appreciate your help." Actually you couldn't dial direct to the phone system at Okeene. It was the next-to-last crank-phone system in the forty-eight states. One in Idaho lasted longer before it converted to more modern technology. So, since it was a crank system, you couldn't direct dial it. But I didn't tell her that.

And so she says, "And what number are you calling, please?"

And I gave her the area code and I said, "27R25."

"Sir?"

I said, "Trust me. It's area code"—whatever the area code it was—"27R25." That was known only to the operator in Oklahoma. Every house did have a unique number, but it was



numbers and letters. Since you didn't dial it, it didn't matter. So that was the system they'd come up with.

So she said, "OK." And so you heard her dial—before Touchtone.

And you hear a couple of rings, and then you hear, "Oklahoma City long distance"—a lady's voice.

And then she says, "I have a station-to-station call for"—she gave the area code—"27R25."

"Just a moment."

And you hear normal ringing, and somebody picks up, and the lady's voice says, "Okeene operator."

And the young lady here in Atlanta said, "I have a station-to-station call for"—area code—"27R25."

And she said, "Just a minute."

And you hear, "Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g. Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g. Ring, ring, r-i-n-n-n-g." Many of them.

And finally the Okeene operator comes back on the line and says, "They don't seem to be at home. Did you say this was long distance?"

"Yes, ma'am. Southern Bell long distance here."

"Bobby! Is that you?" [*Ms. Blomqvist laughs.*]

And I said, "Yes, Miss Mabel, it's me."

And she said, "You looking for your mama?"

And she said, "They're not at home. They're over at Maria's for dinner. You want me to ring them over there?"

And I said, "If you would, Miss Mabel."

The Atlanta operator said, "Can we do this?"

Miss Mable said, "Honey, on this system I can do anything I want."

MS. BLOMQVIST, *laughing*: So you knew the Okeene operator?

MR. JOYNER: I'd known her since I was a child. She was the only operator for the entire history of that phone system. When it was upgraded to modern equipment, she retired. And literally the switchboard was in the parlor of her house in town. And she slept on a cot at night in her parlor so in case there were emergency calls during the night, she could get up and hook up the plugs on the telephone.

MS. BLOMQVIST: Bless Miss Mabel.

MR. JOYNER: And when she realized it was from the Atlanta area, it could only be Bobby [*laughs*] looking for his mom. And I told my wife later, I said, "She probably could have told me what they were having for dinner," since she always listened in on calls. And my uncle, my Uncle Milo, bought--when they replaced it, came up with the standard dial, not Touchtone, yet, but dial telephones—he bought, he said a barn full. I have no idea how many he bought, but he bought a whole bunch of the old crank phones. And they're made out of oak or walnut—I mean, they're beautiful wood, and people painted them and everything, but you stain them. And he managed to sell quite a few of them. And now today I imagine it'd be worth even more.

MS. BLOMQUIST: What a treat to be able to see one of those.

MR. JOYNER: But DeKalb County—basically I lived in Decatur and Dunwoody, Dunwoody area, now incorporated as the city of Dunwoody. I jokingly say that we in Dunwoody upheld an old Southern tradition when we finally managed to get the city set up: we seceded from DeKalb County's and became Dunwoody. [*Both laugh.*]

MS. BLOMQUIST: With that, we'll stop the oral history. Thanks, Bob.

MR. JOYNER: You're welcome.

MS. BLOMQUIST: That's fantastic.

END OF RECORDING