

Ira B. Melton on Pine Lake
1993
2012.3.63

Recording opens in a room where several people are seated facing Suellen Mears (director of the DeKalb Historical Society) and Ira B. Melton, speaker, at the front of the room. Ms. Mears speaks to the audience, trying to talk over the conversation among audience members. The echo in the room and the placement of the microphone make it sometimes difficult to understand speakers clearly.

MS. MEARS: Let's go ahead and get started, if that's OK with everybody, so we can go home and have dinner. [*Exchanges a few words with an audience member, laughing.*] You've already had your dinner? Or supper or whatever you call it. [*Audience gradually quiets down.*] Well, welcome. I'm Suellen Mears, and I'm the director of the Historical Society [inaudible]. This is month number four. [*Directs attention to a person off-camera.*] And Alice over here is our newsletter person, and I think Alice is trying to bring me along. I don't know whether she's run out of patience yet or not, but I'm [inaudible]. One of the things we're doing with the "I Remember Hour," which is--the significance of the "I Remember Hour" is that we tape. [*Addresses one of the audience members.*] Now, I understand that you've done one of these for us before? Great. It's a taped history, a verbal oral history of our county, so anybody can come in and watch it and enjoy it. And what we're trying to do this year, in '93, is go out into the municipalities. It's normally held at the [Old] Courthouse in downtown Decatur. What we chose to do for this year was to move out into the municipalities and get a little bit of the history of those places on-site. And so Mayor Copeland was really gracious to say—in fact, he was the first person who called me to say he would like to do that for us when I sent letters out. So then it became his responsibility to find a speaker, and he told me he knew exactly who he wanted. Actually, he wanted two. We only got one of them to agree, so, you know. The other one says she doesn't speak, but maybe we'll get her to answer a question or two. But Ira Melton was the one that he thought would be the best one to bring us the history—the oral history of what he remembers about Pine Lake. It's supposed to be real informal, as most of you know, and just give us a little bit about—so that those of us who don't know [inaudible], and those of us who do know can remember and reminisce. And he told me he was only going to talk fifteen minutes, so I'll probably end up talking longer than he does. [*Addressing Mr. Melton*] Welcome, and thank you. [*Sits in the audience, off-camera, as Mr. Melton walks to the center front of the room to audience applause.*]

IRA B. MELTON: [Inaudible word or two] I'm glad to be here, and I'm glad to see that the Historical Society is here and friends and neighbors. This is Pine Lake. Anything that I say will be something the way I remember it. So if you go to the documents [inaudible], it might be a little different. But this is my version.

You're sitting in the only private city by charter—private city—that there is in the state of Georgia. Of course, all that was knocked out in 1954 with civil rights. But if you read the old deeds, they say that Pine Lake could be sold only to the Caucasian race only. That's right in the deed. "Private" is that the city owns a one-foot strip along this eighty acres. And that's the reason that we don't have any roads going out. The only way you get in Pine Lake is you're invited in. And there's only three roads coming in. And you have to go out the same way you came in. So there's no other side road, and there's no roads on the back. And that's the reason that we call it a private city.

Now, I moved here August 8, 1941, [*points to a window, off-camera*] in that second house down there [inaudible] twenty. And we had one child. I had bought some lots here in 1937. The only way that you get into Pine Lake is that all the facilities was built for the property owners. And later we changed it to "residents," because they'd fuss, you know, if people had some rental houses in. But that's the only way that you can use any facilities, and that's true today. If you want to go swimming or play tennis or use any of the facilities, see some of us, and we'll invite you, give you a card, and [inaudible name—may be "Sam"? or "someone"?—likely intended as a joke] will let you in the gate. [*Audience laughter*]

In the early '30s Carl Schaub came down here from Kentucky. And he bought this eighty acres, and he got Gus [Fergus] Sams, which a lot of y'all remember [first name unclear—"Augustus"?] Sams in Decatur, to go down with him and handle the labor work, and they called it the Pine Woods Company Incorporated. And they built the streets on this side first and this club house. They had a little club house on the other side, not very big. And they subdivided these lots, 20 by 100; every lot in Pine Lake is 20 by 100—twenty feet wide and a hundred feet deep. Of course, there was no restrictions, county or city. You build anything you want, dig your own septic tank or whatever. We had two wells when I was [first] here--of course, it was all dirt roads, nothing but electricity, that was all we had. And we had two wells. One was here at the club house, and [*points out window*] the other was up at [inaudible—could be "top of the" or "Poplar"?] spring. You'd go there to pump your water, or you could get it out of the lake, one of the two. So they divided those lots into--and Carl helped achieve our purpose out here. It was twenty years before we knew what his name was. It was Remembrance. Fergus, he brought him here as chief construction worker and to do everything, and to be the chief of police and to

run the city for him. So he brought him down here, and they was building [inaudible] lots. Lots were from \$39.50 to \$79.50—that's for a twenty-foot lot. Now you have to have four of them to build a house on [rest of sentence inaudible]. But back then you could build anything you wanted and more or less camp out, because the only thing we had was Pine Lake and had Mooney's Lake. Some of y'all are old enough to remember Mooney's Lake at the corner of Lindbergh and Piedmont, where that shopping center is [Broadview Plaza, at the time of this recording]. And that was the only two private lakes, places that you could go—Mooney and Charles, it was not private. Pine Lake you had to own a lot, and you could bring guests. Stein Steel Company owned lots, and on the Fourth of July they used to bring big trucks full of people. They'd bring a pump. We'd have two or three thousand people here at that time.

They built the lake. They dug the lake out with a little steam shovel [inaudible], use their hands. They built the lake, and they put pumps over there in Snapfinger Creek to pump the water. They pumped forty days and forty nights, and it didn't raise it a inch. Alec [last name inaudible—could be Tucker or Tuttle?] come in here from Florida, and Alec was a builder--in fact, he built those two houses right here—and an engineer. Before he got here, though, they decided they'd go about 1800 feet up to the creek, you know, to get a fall to run water and put a pipe in, and it stopped up in thirty days, full of sand. No water. So Alec got the idea that he couldn't get an instrument, and he built a wooden flume, like a sluice, like a [unclear—could be gold or coal?] mine, and went up there and put the water in the lake. And that's the way they did it, that it got in it. We still use that same thing. We have to rebuild it every once in a while, because it's out of wood [*voice trails off*]. So that's the way we got the water in the lake.

Fergus was down here. And, of course, his wife and daughter was back in Kentucky in Louisville and mainly up in the city. And Fergus was police up there, city policeman, so [*voice trails off*]. Carl told him, said, "Fergus, we got to build a house [inaudible]. You got to have a house in Pine Lake [inaudible] some of these lots." [*Points away from audience, toward Pine Lake.*] And he said, "Go over there on Pine Drive, that's the first street over, about three houses up, and build a house."

He [Fergus] said, "What kind?"

And he [Carl Schaub] says, "I don't care. Just build a house." [*Audience laughter*]

Fergus took all the people over there, you know, [inaudible] and all that was here, and he built a house. And he says, "All right, Mr. Schaub, I got you ready."

He [Schaub] said, "[First several words inaudible] that's y'all's house. I'm giving it to you."

Well, Mary Fergus told me—she was guarded—when she first came, she got here in the middle of the night. And she [inaudible] and she rode a train, and it was about eleven or twelve o'clock when they got in, and she couldn't see much. But when she saw the city the next day, she said, "If it had been in the daylight, I'd have got back on that train." [*Mr. Melton and audience laugh.*] [First few words inaudible] stayed there long.

Fergus made a good chief. He had a way with him. Everybody was friends in Pine Lake. When we moved here in '41, there was only twenty-six houses that people stayed in year-round. The rest of them were just summer camps. Fergus had the only phone. [He had a] jar over there that you had to put a dime in. Everybody had to go to his house to use the phone. That was the only phone here. He was the chief of police. And, of course, the clubhouse right here was the center of attraction. There was a card game going on out there. I forgot whether it was canasta; but men and women, they played all the time here, every day and every night. When you got home at night and ate your supper, you just come on up to the clubhouse. We had a jukebox [inaudible phrase] the cakewalk or something. Everybody got together.

And the children, a lot of them, were raised up under Chief [Fergus]. And he was a boss. He called all the meetings of the teenagers. And he had certain times that he'd call them. And he [inaudible—"did" or "didn't"?] let the parents come, and he'd talk to them. As long as a he lived, we never had any trouble with the young people, very little crime. Before the city was incorporated, we had some people drown. But they were swimming without a lifeguard. That's the only problem we ever had. This is—[*points*] that's Snapfinger Creek, up, comes right through Pine Lake, and it was a Indian campground here. Some of the Crows—a lot of the Crows—people that had a [inaudible] there and all, they used to come over here and go down there and pick up arrowheads. In fact, some of them—one told me the other day he still had some of the relics he got here from Pine Lake [inaudible]. I've thought about that. In my family history [inaudible], my great-great grandpa bought all the land from Indian Creek to the South River back in the 1800s, 1700s. And I thought, well, I live on property, some of the land that he owned at that time.

We have all kinds of things at Pine Lake. We have the Pine Lake Civic Club, Woman's Club, Garden Club, Lion's Club, and people—we never had anybody real important—well, I guess did have one or two. We've had the Japanese people that owned the Wisteria Gardens. And their house was right down there at the corner of Magnolia and Lakeshore. And I think, when the war started, Wayne, they were the first ones they put in jail [internment camp], wasn't they?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, presumably “Wayne,” *off-camera*: Yeah, they locked them up, yeah. [Inaudible comment, simultaneous with Mr. Melton’s comment.]

MR. MELTON: And the house burned down—the house burned down before they—*[individual laughter from the audience]*—excuse me—*[Points to someone in audience]* The house burned down. And then we had one lady of royal birth, a German. Her name was Matilda [spelling? Could be Mathilde or Mathilda or Matilde] May. She lived in the second house. And so she was in Germany, and she married May that owned the May’s Lumber, that was the biggest lumber [sic] in the United States. And he was Jewish. And when she married him—they [her family?] tried to get her not to marry him—they disinherited her over there. And she owned a villa in Mannheim. In fact, I went by to see it when I was in the war, World War II. But the Storm Troopers had took it over, I couldn’t even get into it. But I did tell her about it. She wanted me to look at it. But when she married him and left [Mannheim], they packed her trunks, and all the jewels she brought out and the fur coats and stuff like that, she brought with her. And they told her she could never come back. So that was [voice trails off].

[To himself] Who else did we have? *[To the audience]* Oh, and we had one rich man live in Pine Lake. *[Audience laughter]* W. E. Dodge [inaudible phrase—could be spelling out a name?] lived on the back side of the lake, and he was a real card. He didn’t work except for himself, because he had a pretty good start. His daddy left him the Austell Building, which is where *The Atlanta Journal* is. And he left him four acres in the middle of West End and 140-something houses—rental houses. So *[laughing, obscuring a few words]* petty good. At Christmas he carried everybody in the community Christmas presents. I didn’t know him. We moved there, and we had an eight-month-, nine-month-old son. And about daylight somebody was knocking on the door. And he said, “I’m W. E. Dodge.” No, he knocked on the window. And we raised it, and he said, “I brought a present to Butch Melton that was our treat.” And we didn’t know him from Adam’s housecat, but you don’t ask.

Mr. Fred York, home to [sic] York Exterminating Company, still running, he come down here from the north and was headed for Florida, and he stopped in Pine Lake, bought him a summer house down there or either he rented, and he liked it. He says, [inaudible] sixty-four years old then [inaudible], he started smelling business! *[Audience and Mr. Melton laugh.]* And he wasn’t in that business [inaudible].

I don’t know. That’s about all I know about Pine Lake. Of course, I could tell you more for another week *[recording skips]* about all the streets except Clubhouse Drive are thirty-foot driveways. Club is a forty-foot driveway. All of them paved twenty feet except Club, and it’s paved thirty feet. Scott Candler helped us get the water and the sewers and the paving done.

Scott Candler, the commissioner. He helped us with all of that. All streets on this side, except Spring and Club, are named after trees, except Lakeshore, you know, at that end. On the other side, all of them except Ridge are named after flowers. Spruce does run all the way through on that side. That's the longest street in the city, Spruce. But that's what they named them after. Now, they done this work, they done this side first. And then they developed it up the back side. But everything here has been—I've raised five children here. It's the best place, I think, still [inaudible]. We've always had good police protection. And we've got families in here [inaudible] and our present chief. They ride the lake, day and night, at all times. So it's safe. We have very little crime in this city, less than any other city that I know of.

The present mayor and [sounds like "counselate"?] and the staff and the police and all of them is doing a nice job. I compliment them on the way that they're cleaning up the city, the way that they keep it and the way that they run it. We don't have financial problems in the city. We can't run over the budget. We have to [inaudible] city of Atlanta [rest of sentence inaudible]. So we've been very fortunate in that all the way back. Does anybody have any questions?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Where do the children go to school?

MR. MELTON: Ma'am?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Where do the children go to school?

MR. MELTON: When we first moved here, our children—three of them--went to Clarkston. Clarkston was a grammar school and a high school, the old one. So they went to that. Then we built Allgood School. It was supposed to be named Pine Lake School, but Conrad Allgood's daddy, Dr. Allgood, gave land to build it on, so that's the reason that's Allgood Road and Allgood School. And the rest of them went there. Since then, now they go to—

VOICES FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Rockbridge

MR. MELTON: Ms. Bailey's [spelling? Could be "Baylor's"?] a teacher at Rockbridge, which is two blocks down and to the left. That's where the children go to grammar school.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Still go to Clarkston—

MR. MELTON: Yeah, but they still go to Clarkston to high school.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: As of this year some of them will go to Stone Mountain, too.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I don't think [inaudible] Stone Mountain [inaudible] Pine Lake.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Oh. OK.

[Several people talk at the same time, rendering individual comments difficult to understand.]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Some go to Rockbridge but live in Pine Lake and go to Clarkston to school. But all five of ours graduated from Clarkston High School. And I had to put so many through school. Both of our grandchildren and all, they live in this—right close, they were raised right close.

MR. MELTON: In 1948 we built Pine Lake Baptist Church, that's in the city. And, of course, the people inside the city got together and built it. We thought we were going to build it down here--this chapel; we had a chapel. But it was interdenominational. And everything in the city says that if it was not used for the purpose that it was first designated for, then it reverted back to Carl Schaub and his heirs and assigns forever. So we couldn't do that, so we had to build a church. So we gave that up. We was going to have to give it to him. But the city made a deal with them. [Beginning of sentence inaudible] now reverts to the city because Mr. [inaudible] did, [inaudible] did, and all of them. So now anything reverts to the city. So if we don't use the lake [inaudible], it reverts to the city. They can do anything they want to—tennis courts, [inaudible phrase] recreational thing. But it is a unique [thing]. They have tried for years and years, everybody has, to run roads in the side of it, back of it, to make it a thoroughfare, but it's still [inaudible phrase] the city. Our church is [inaudible]; it's still there. We built it in 1948. It still has a great influence on the young people and some of us old people in this community. So we're real fortunate to have it. We're glad to have you all out today. And—what? [Stops to acknowledge comment or question from the audience.]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Where did you move from when you moved here?

MR. MELTON: Decatur

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, presumably Mr. Melton's wife*: We were newlyweds [*laughs*]. I was seventeen, and he was nineteen.

MR. MELTON: [Inaudible comment]. [*Pointing*] This was the first house I ever [inaudible—could be “owned,” but sounds like something else]. [First part of sentence inaudible] first house [inaudible] twenty by twenty for twelve hundred dollars, and—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, presumably Mr. Melton's wife*: [*Interrupting*] Nine dollars a month.

MR. MELTON: --and [inaudible] Jim Battle, notes about nine dollars a month, I think. So I had a hard time paying it.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Well, the developer built the lake first. And then sold off the lots.

MR. MELTON: Carl Schaub, that's right. He called it the Pine Woods Company. Now, in 1935, when they incorporated into a city—you know, got a city council and all, Ben Burgess and Augustus Sams got the charter. *[Audience member is talking simultaneously with Mr. Melton; unclear if she is conversing directly with Mr. Melton or with another audience member. Conversation is not loud enough to record clearly.]* And if you read the Pine Lake charter, the original, and Decatur [’s charter], it’s the same thing *[rest of sentence inaudible]*. See, we were the only city, and I guess Decatur was the only city there was in the county, that has laws that you have to keep the grass cut, that you can’t park cars in the front of your house, and a lot of little things like that. We had all that before anybody else did. So I’m sure that Ben [Burgess] and Gus [Sams] copied a lot of that from the city of Decatur on it.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I. B., when was you mayor of Pine Lake? I’ve been trying to remember—

MR. MELTON: Oh, we don’t mention that. *[Audience laughter]* *[Inaudible audience comment]*

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: I’d like to hear about that.

MR. MELTON: Well, I stayed twenty-one years on the council and two terms as mayor. And I got three *[inaudible; may be “whole” or “hundred”?]* dollars a month *[inaudible—could be “in” or “and”]* cussing. No cash flow problems whatsoever. *[Audience laughter]* So I enjoyed every minute of it. I think every person ought to have to spend time in some civic organizations, on the council, or something to see the other side of things. You know, we fuss—I do, I’m fussing at the government now, you know, the national government, *[inaudible]* said I’m *[inaudible]* years too late, but I guess that’s right, too. But they—people ought to have to— they—or want to—and want to serve on this thing to get it. It’ll get you to know a lot of people. It’ll get you to understand how people feel *[inaudible]*. Any more questions? I promised I wouldn’t stay but fifteen minutes, but *[inaudible]*—

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: You can keep going. You don’t have to go home.

MR. MELTON: I thank you all for coming. I enjoyed it, and come back to see us.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Tell that little story about the city owning a boundary—

MR. MELTON: The city is approximately eighty acres. The lake’s about fifteen. Thirteen to fifteen—I’ve forgotten. But the city owns a one-foot strip around the whole thing. That means if you cross—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, interrupting and speaking simultaneously with Mr. Melton*: In other words, *[inaudible]* a walled city.

MR. MELTON: --if we's in China, we'd be a walled city.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Walled city.

MR. MELTON: Now, we have, on the back side, all the way down [inaudible] backs up to the K-Mart's on Memorial Drive over there. On that we have a fence, you know, that goes. And the fence comes up some this side [*points*], comes up some this side [*points*]. As money's available, I imagine that we'll have a fence [inaudible].

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Did the city build that fence, or they have that [inaudible]--

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [*Interrupting*] It was planned that way in order to—

[*Several people talk at once; no individual comments are clear.*]

MR. MELTON: [First part of comment inaudible] because of the state of Georgia by charter. Anything else?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Mr. Melton, as I go to Rockbridge every day, going and coming, there's a police officer parked over there. I appreciate it.

MR. MELTON, *pointing to off-camera audience member*: That's him right there.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Well, I do, because there's a lot of traffic that comes from another street. It comes in—and children are walking from Pine Lake to Rockbridge, and it makes me feel real safe that they're [the police officers] there most every day.

MR. MELTON: Well, you see, they're there but also in here. But suppose you come in here and rob somebody's house or shot at him or something, and you were running to come out. And you can't go out that—the only way you can come out is up on that—Who's going to see him first, and who's going to take care of it? They come running out of there screaming and hollering. He knows it. Also, you know, they're connected to the 911 [emergency number]. [Point of clarification: Mr. Melton refers to this as “nine-eleven.” The recording was made in 1993 and so predates the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack often referred to simply as “9-11.”] So they call 911 [inaudible]. He knows what's going on [*snaps fingers*] as quick as you call.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Are there any black people that live in Pine Lake?

MR. MELTON: Well, there is now. We have a few. We have a some that comes in the apartments. There's one—I believe there's one person that owns a house. But we have a few here.

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: Apartments? Did you say apartments?

MR. MELTON: Yes, we—

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: When did the apartments come?

MR. MELTON: Well, that was a mistake. I'd rather not talk about it.

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: It's part of the history.

MR. MELTON: The apartments came about 1950. And we built—let's see, [inaudible] about a hundred units? Not that many; it's about fifty units, I guess, of apartments.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Inaudible] about seventy.

MR. MELTON: About fifty. They're all on the back side. But that was a mistake. And we had—we had some more people that wanted to do that [inaudible]. You see, most of these houses were built as shacks or either torn down and rebuilt. So that seemed like a good idea to some people was to tear that down and build a nice apartment house there. But that's not what you want. No city needs that, because it causes trouble. What we want is homeowners and families. And that's what we have, mostly. You can walk up and down the street [inaudible] anybody in Pine Lake, day or night.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Those days are gone forever.

MR. MELTON: Any other questions? Yes, sir, Bob.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I've known you for twenty-three years, and guess I learned some things that I didn't know. I was born in [inaudible], Georgia, and moved down to Buckhead area, really over there, LaVista [Lindbergh? LaVista changes its street name at Cheshire Bridge.] and Piedmont about a block from Mooney's Lake.

MR. MELTON: Mooney's Lake, yeah.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: And one thing about that lake is they had a [inaudible] in the water. And you got up there and slide down the chute and fall off.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [*Laughing*] Shoot the chute. Yeah, I didn't go down because I can't swim. I lived in Pine Lake fifty-two years, and I still can't swim.

MR. MELTON, *looking at his watch*: OK, it's time to—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: This ancestor you spoke of was Archibald Melton.

MR. MELTON: Archibald, and the Cherokee Indians called him [inaudible].

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: OK. When did they go to Cobb County?

MR. MELTON: After they left DeKalb. They left here and went to Cobb.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Do you know when?

MR. MELTON: I got all those records at home.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, presumably Mrs. Melton*: He's got a family history from a hundred years—two hundred years.

MR. MELTON: Anything else?

MS. MEARS, *from audience, off-camera*: Well, yeah. I'm not going to let you sit down. This is too much fun. What—like business, the business district—what kind of businesses are allowed--

MR. MELTON: In Pine Lake the first two hundred feet, which is the first block on Rockbridge—see, Pine Lake spills over. It don't run just like Rockbridge; it spills over. That boat works is on it, and the—well, I don't guess any of the post office but the front part of the post office—was in Pine Lake. But it's zoned, after it was incorporated, it's zoned the first 200 feet from Rockbridge, which is from Rockbridge to Poplar, is business. [Inaudible sentence] See, our church is on business property, and Al's store, and [inaudible] local businesses [inaudible]. Most of them still have houses on them, because people live there, and they won't sell them. But sooner or later, I guess [inaudible]. But that's the only place that's sold. Anything else [inaudible] a beauty parlor or some [inaudible]—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Interrupting] [First part of sentence inaudible; she and Mr. Melton are speaking at the same time.] We've got [inaudible] stores on both corners up there and the post office.

MR. MELTON, *continuing through interruption*: --and your house would be, you know, you'd get a permit [inaudible]. But all business—

MS. MEARS: What was it like when you came? What [inaudible] business [inaudible]?

MR. MELTON: There was a grocery store—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Interrupting] [Sounds like "Bill's" or "Phil's"] Grocery Store.

MS. MEARS: A grocery store and a beer store.

MR. MELTON: That's right.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: That was before the church came.

MS. MEARS: Before the Baptist church.

MR. MELTON: Oh, yeah!

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: A grocery store and what did we have?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Beer store

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I didn't ever see a beer store. [Audience laughter] I didn't know we had one. [Several people laugh and/or speak at once; no single comment is clear.]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: We didn't have a beer store when I grew up. We had a grocery store and a post office. She--the woman who owned the grocery store run the post office.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Oh, yeah. She ran everything.

MR. MELTON: Anything else?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: The surrounding territory was not developed at all. It was just farm houses.

MR. MELTON, *perhaps answering an otherwise inaudible question from the audience*. [Inaudible] thirty-dollar-an-acre land. That's what this was.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Farm houses, but they weren't anything else—there wasn't anything else when you—

MR. MELTON: No, no nothing was here. [Inaudible name] dairy was down the street. [Inaudible phrase] Ingle's and all down there. The rest of it was just—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Just farmland.

MR. MELTON: Yes. All of this area was.

MS. MEARS, *off-camera*: So the trolley [inaudible]—was there trolley connection out in this direction?

MR. MELTON: No, ma'am. [*Several people, including Mr. Melton, attempt to speak.*]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Excuse me, but we bought a station wagon, and every Friday he would take us to Decatur to the grocery store and deliver our groceries back home. But then the insurance and all got so high until a lot of women got [inaudible]. We pooled it, and we had to go to Avondale to the grocery store. And anywhere we wanted to go, we had to go to Avondale or Decatur.

MS. MEARS: When we were in Clarkston last time, they were talking about going to Decatur or Avondale and the wait before they got [inaudible].

MR. MELTON: I guess they came here before they got to them.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: And really [inaudible] Pine Lake.

MR. MELTON: Oh, in the early '30s—let's see, I bought lots here in '37. It was incorporated into a city in '35, so it must have been [inaudible]—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: You've got it written down somewhere.

MR. MELTON: --'31 to '32, somewhere along there. It was right in the middle of the Depression.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: That's right. In the heart of the Depression.

MR. MELTON: And I think I paid thirty dollars an acre then.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Ira, you were [inaudible] when they bought the American Legion club up at Avondale, weren't you?

MR. MELTON: Yeah, but we ain't got time to talk about it. [*Audience laughter*]

MS. MEARS: Sure we do! We've got time. [Rest of comments inaudible] [*Several people make inaudible comments amid the laughter.*] Well, what's the most exciting thing that ever happened here in Pine Lake?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, apparently Mrs. Melton*: My five children were born. [*Audience laughter*]

MS. MEARS: Your five children?

MR. MELTON: Exciting?

MS. MEARS: Yeah. You mentioned two drownings, but—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I don't remember [rest of comment inaudible].

MR. MELTON: The only thing exciting that—other than the drowning—well, the most exciting thing [inaudible; mentions something about saving a story for later]. [*Audience laughter*]

VIDEOGRAPHER'S VOICE: I'll turn it up.

MR. MELTON: The most fun we had with the people in Pine Lake was the Emory students, girls and boys, decided to come out here and slip in swimming one night. And they had been out the Fourth of July, and I guess this was a week or two later. And Fergus was riding around the lake, and they parked all their cars up there, and they walked here. And it was about one o'clock in the morning while he was asleep. He called me, and they were in swimming. And most of them were skinny-dipping. [*Audience laughter*] And so he held one of the boys, held one of them, while the others went back to the thing to get money to put up bond. [*Audience laughter*]

We had a volunteer fire department [inaudible] [*pointing*] right there. [First part of sentence inaudible] water. Chief Haralson [spelling?], he was the fire chief. He taught the women how to drive the fire truck. Well, [inaudible] run the store [*points*] right there, but we lived right [*points*] here [inaudible]. [First part of sentence inaudible], he huffed and puffed up here, because somebody [inaudible]--whoever got here first got to drive the fire truck, because all you had to do was let the brakes off [*Audience laughter*], and it'd start to roll down that hill. [Inaudible] down the hill, we were sure it would start.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I never did get to drive that thing.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I got to drive it, but I never got to drive it to a fire. [*Laughter and inaudible comments from the audience.*]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: I had to find a babysitter before I could leave.

MS. MEARS: Are any of the children of the families that grew up here, have they come back?

MR. MELTON: Oh, yes, there's a lot of them have. There's [inaudible name—could be "Wayne McLeod"?] here [inaudible].

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Oh, yeah. I told you I knew who you are, [inaudible] McLeod.

MR. MELTON: All mine have moved out. They--you know how children are. They—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: They live close, though, most of our children live in this area.

MR. MELTON: They all lived in Pine Lake. And then they get rich, and they moved out of here. They call it "Poverty Flats" down here. [*Audience laughter.*] But they all live close [rest of sentence inaudible]. I have one son that lives in Virginia. But [inaudible phrase]. It's a very nice place [inaudible]. Come back when I'm around. We're going to clean it up this month.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Will he let us come in?

[*Mr. Melton and a few audience members exchange inaudible comments simultaneously.*]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Oh, we got guest cards now. We have so many guests [inaudible].

MR. MELTON: [Beginning of comment inaudible] using the facilities [inaudible]. You can ride around Pine Lake. That's free all the time here.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: All the time. Anybody can ride around Pine Lake. [Inaudible comments]

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: And most of your children except one live here in the area?

MR. MELTON: Ma'am?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: Your children, do most of them live around here?

MR. MELTON: I have five children. [*Several comments, mostly inaudible, are made simultaneously among those present.*] My oldest one died with cancer. The other four, two of them are preachers. One is a preacher in Virginia, the other one lives in DeKalb—in Gwinnett County, owns a marriage and [inaudible] counseling service. My daughter and her husband own Tucker [?] Auto Parts, and my youngest daughter is a schoolteacher at Stone Mountain High, has been since the day after she graduated [from college].

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: [Question inaudible, followed by several other inaudible comments from audience.]

MS. MEARS, *to off-camera audience member[s]*: You have some stories to tell?

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera*: His [Mr. Melton's] son was [inaudible]. He was my first playmate, because my father owned the farm that adjoined Pine Lake. And he always enjoyed coming over and meeting with all those people. I had five sisters and a brother. We had a lot of fond memories together.

MR. MELTON: All right. If that's all, we'll say goodbye [*Turns away from camera briefly as he makes additional inaudible comments*].

MS. MEARS: You did a great job.

MR. MELTON: Thank you. [*Audience applause*] [*Ms. Mears and Mr. Melton shake hands.*]

MS. MEARS, *addressing audience*: I would like all of you good folks to come and see our courthouse, because we're renovating [inaudible] finished. And if you haven't come to see it—

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE, *off-camera, interrupting*: He was born when the new courthouse was built. That was his [inaudible].

MS. MEARS, *replying to audience member*: Well, you need to come [inaudible]. [*Ms. Mears and the audience member continue to speak; their conversation is generally inaudible.*] [*Ms. Mears thanks the videographer.*]

END OF RECORDING