

DUB BROWN, Mayor of Chamblee

Recording begins in the midst of JAMES MACKAY's opening remarks to the audience. MAYOR BROWN is seated next to him.

MR. MACKAY: . . . videocassette recordings of the most interesting people we could find in the county, and we have not asked them to prepare a paper or a speech but to simply talk about their recollections of their life in this county. Judge Bond Almand delivered one of our most interesting talks; and he called it "People, Places, and Events." And most every speaker has talked about personalities that have stood out in their minds and places and happenings and so forth. One I would mention is Uncle Calvin McElroy, who told me that as a little boy he went down to [name of location inaudible—could be something like "Founts"?], it was then—or Cross Keys, which would that have been? Or Brookhaven? [*Looks to MR. BROWN for confirmation.*]

MAYOR BROWN: Cross Keys.

MR. MACKAY, *continuing*: --at Cross Keys, and remembered their firing off the cannon when the South seceded and all of the big excitement of that. So we are sort of linked up to the history of our country by learning about the history of our county.

And I want to acknowledge the presence of Commissioner Jim Cone and to heartily express my—I thought it was the most important vote that we've had in a number of years as to what kind of county we're going to have. I was disappointed in the size of the vote, but I would have been terribly cast down if it had failed. Jim Cone, who shares this building with us here, has been one of our most stalwart supporters. [*To MAYOR BROWN*] So, Mayor, we're glad to have you. [*To DeKalb Historical Society member in audience, off-camera*] And after we finish here, will we be going into the—

DHS AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Yes, for refreshments.

MR. MACKAY: --courtroom for some refreshments. [*To MAYOR BROWN*] You are going to have your full time if you can hold out for sixty minutes. We got some eyewitnesses [*points to audience member ANDREW ROBERTSON, off-camera*]—Andy Young [inaudible]--

ANDREW ROBERTSON: Young Andy

MR. MACKAY: Andy Robertson

Brief inaudible exchange, inaudible over audience laughter

MR. MACKAY [*Continuing, directing his remarks to MAYOR BROWN*] But Andy Robertson's our number-one eyewitness. He sometimes will jump up and dispute you, so don't get alarmed, OK? [MAYOR BROWN *nods.*] But you've been sitting on the city council, so you're used to that sort of thing. We welcome you down here, and the camera's on you, and just relax, and we're going to enjoy hearing from you [*sits himself in audience, off-camera*].

MAYOR BROWN: Well, I think I'll just sit right here and tell you something about—what I know about the North DeKalb area and Chamblee. I go back about sixty-two years plus, and I was born in the Atlanta area close to where the MARTA station is on Piedmont Road. We drove the cows--when I was just a baby, two years old, my family decided to move north to the dairy section of the county and establish a farm; and we were on what's now Buford Highway. We had approximately a hundred acres there at the dairy farm, and my dad developed the thing completely with his two—my two older brothers. But, like I say, when I was two years old, they rounded the cows up, and they had the other dairy barn built, and we drove the cows from that location through little trails and small roads to the new site and the pasture and got started.

My mother—the memorial [sic] thing that happened during that thing, she was carrying me and driving the milk truck and had a little fender-bender, hit some kind of old automobile—I don't even remember what year model it was. But they was concerned about me, because I was sitting in her lap when she had the accident. I got between her and the steering wheel [*laughs*]. But anyway, from that time on, it was a time of animals and farming and schooling and things in the North DeKalb area. We had—Shallowford, of course, got its name from the small creek that crossed, and you had to drive through it when the—when you went down Shallow Ford. It's fairly close to [Interstate Highway] 85 now. Well, it's in a culvert now. But back then, I can remember, as a young boy we would park the trucks in the middle of the creek, and we had a big broom and kind of a mop thing, and we washed our trucks—our milk trucks—in [*inaudible over audience laughter*]. Water was a precious thing then, you know, and we got all of our water from wells, and we protected water pretty well.

But I remember when I was probably about ten or twelve years old, I learned to drive by pulling the farm truck [*inaudible*] the alfalfa field gathering hay. My older brothers were throwing the hay on the truck, and I remember I'd have to strain and everything to get down under the steering wheel to get to the clutches, you know, and then pull it out. But it didn't take long till I got to moving around on the road with the

trucks and the tractors and things of that nature. And it was a real hardworking boyhood that I had. My dad required a lot of work from all his boys. I had two sisters and two brothers, and we were all active on the dairy farm. We had—I think they mentioned somewhere that they had at one time thirty-three dairies within almost walking distance of each other in the North DeKalb area. Of course, we furnished all the milk for the Atlanta area [SEE ALSO 2012.3.25 . [R.L. Mathis family, Dairying Oct 1986](#) for accounts of other dairy farms, especially in the South DeKalb area].

And then, of course, the dairy business got like other businesses. It got to the point where they wanted to combine and improve, so then they started the dairy cooperatives; and they more or less put the dairy business out of business in the North DeKalb area. But by then land was being developed for other purposes. Of course, when I graduated from high school--we'd always lived on the farm, and things started happening, you know, and family changed around and sold our dairy farm. And we moved over into the city part of Chamblee; and, of course, it was kind of row houses, you know. And I finished high school when I was living there right across from where the city hall is now in the old part of Chamblee.

And I was living there when I was inducted into the navy; I went into the navy in World War II. I was what they called a Selective Volunteer for service. They—I had my choice of whether to go into the army or navy or marine corps or whatever. And I don't know, I guess they—the fellow that was promoting navy was more impressive, and I took the navy; and I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the navy. I served—I think it was two years and about nine months during World War II. And, of course, I was real active. I was in the amphibious force, and we carried the First Division in on Normandy; and I had occasion to speak to the Eighth Air Force Historical Society about all [inaudible] on Normandy Beach.

But, anyway, after that I came back home. And I was a little [un]decided as to what I wanted to do. I didn't have a career, I didn't have an education other than what I'd gotten in the service, and in the meantime I had gotten married. And my bride was right with me all the time during service. [*Pointing toward audience and smiling*] She's still with me today [*audience laughter*]. But I decided that I wanted to stay with mechanics; I was a diesel mechanic in the navy, and I was in charge of the engine room on an LTI. And so I took that experience and went to work for Delta Airlines, with their training program; and I wanted to be an A & E mechanic. I was enrolled into the on-the-job training school there for that purpose. And while I was working there, I got

interested in airplanes and started learning to fly. Of course, my brother and I and two other Chamblee boys got together and bought a airplane and leased it to Johnson Aircraft out there at the airport close to Delta, where I was working. And we all four of us got commercial licenses in that one airplane. And, of course, it was a pretty good move, because when we got through with our training through the GI Bill, it paid for our airplane; so we thoroughly enjoyed that.

Well, in the meantime, Delta had decided to go on strike; and I had been working there about six months, and the strike heated up, you know. And my dad had always been real against unions, you know. And I guess I had formed that same opinion about unions. They tried to make me join the union out there and, of course, other mechanics as well. Anyway, we resisted, you know. I remember the last day I worked the people that were promoting the union had filled my toolbox—I had a brand-new Snap-On Tool box about as tall as I was, and I was real proud of it. And they came in there and put about fifty gallons of grease in and filled up all the drawers level with it [*laughs*]. And that was about the last straw. So I went in—a fellow named G. J. Dye [spelling?—some of you may know him—in charge of the overhaul part of the airline. I went into his office and told him I was quitting over there. So I loaded my toolbox up and brought it back to Chamblee, and that same day I walked into my brother's place of business. He had bought a service station on the railroad, right in the old part of Chamblee; and so before I left there that night, I had made a deal with him to buy a half interest in his business. So we stayed in business there for thirteen years.

Of course, we--at that time the dairy business was all just about gone; there was only about two or three dairies left, Irvindale and W. O. Pierce and Tuggle's. And all of our old friends were gradually getting out of the dairy business. My brother and I stayed in business there—well, I've been in business—the same business ever since. I'm still operating Brown Auto Service on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard there. But we started a wrecker service, and we were very busy with DeKalb County, city of Chamblee, and city of Doraville until I became a council member. But [*inaudible*] and I, when we came back and got into the service station business, I was living with my mother to start with. And she encouraged me to buy land down on Hart's Mill Road—back then it was Sexton Road. It was an unpaved road, it was in the suburbs of Chamblee, you know; it wasn't even in the city. And so we went down to look at it. He [*the unidentified seller*] wanted to sell me forty acres of land—and that's one I should

have bought [*audience laughter*]. I felt that I couldn't afford to obligate myself with that much debt, so I bought [inaudible] seven acres. We went in there and picked us out a lot and built us a little small house, and [inaudible] children were born while we were there.

We started—I had gone through Chamblee School. It was grammar school and high school when I first started there, went from first grade through the eleventh. And I graduated, you know, all the way through the school. I don't know how much education I collected while I was there, because I was working hard all the time. My brother and I had--during the war, prior to my going into the service, we were delivering [*Atlanta*] *Constitution* papers to the naval air station and Lawson General Hospital and also the surrounding areas around Chamblee. We'd get up every morning about two or three o'clock and get the papers and deliver them, and I'd go back to school, you know, and go home and rest awhile, and then [*laughs*] start it all over again.

When I came back out of the service and getting married and being in business and everything, I didn't really get to go back to school like I should have done. But I got involved in different city clubs and Masonic Order and those kind of things in Chamblee. I was a charter member of the North DeKalb Lions Club. I'm one of two [charter members] that's still in the club today--in fact, thirty-four years of perfect attendance with them. But I've seen the area go from the rural farm town to the highly developed area that we've created now. Of course, the thing that really got me started into politics approximately twenty-four or -five years ago was the fact that I lived on a dirt road. It was dusty, and we had no running water—we had a well. I couldn't get anybody to listen to me about paving the roads or running water [pipes and access] out there or doing anything. So I got busy and got a petition up. They had built Sexton Woods at that time, and I ran the petition around through Sexton Woods and got enough signatures to get the city of Chamblee to annex us. So we got into the city then; and things started happening, you know. We got pavement and city water and most of the services.

And we lived in that little house for ten or twelve years, I guess. And then we moved over onto the next lot to it and built us another house. We're still living in that house today. We had the rest of the acreage that was back of our house—was just a old—well, it used to be an old hog lot, really, where they raised hogs back when I was a kid; and there was a colored fellow there that did that. And so, within the last three or

four years, we've sold that extra acreage in back of there. They're building now fifty houses on fourteen acres in back of us. Just to show you how the area's building up, those houses are selling for approximately a quarter of a million dollars. And they're on small lots; they're building four to the acre—four houses per the acre. We wouldn't have thought about building any kind of house back when we was coming along on anything less than an acre [*laughs*].

I guess the thing that has really impressed me about the area is the fact that it was able to change—you know, we went from the farming area to the highly industrialized area. Scott Candler and William Long, you know, was born along in the same era and was developing Chamblee and all of North DeKalb and was—I still say that we got more done under him [Scott Candler] than [inaudible—sounds like we've got done since. He had the final say-so on everything [inaudible; voice trails off]. But we've seen—in fact, when they first started developing Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, they had all those tractor companies, you know, out there: John Deere and Allis-Chalmers and just all of them at one time there. They've gone from that now; they're losing the last one. Just within the last few months they've sold their property and moving out to Gwinnett.

It's been an interesting development as far as Chamblee is concerned. I've thoroughly enjoyed being mayor out there. I've been [inaudible] with everything that's happened. Most of the same people are still around, you know, have been there all the years—the Pierces, Hydes. I guess that the next development is going to be a little more hard to comprehend—or it will be for me, because it's going to be redevelopment. Now, we've developed all of Chamblee's territory approximately a hundred percent; and anything we do now, after this—these last few houses that are being built in back of me now is almost the last of the houses that got land to build on. So they're going to be tearing down the houses that are on the larger lots and either putting commercial developments or venture housing to accommodate more people.

But I guess Chamblee High School would be another thing that I need to get into. Back when I first started Chamblee [sic] High School in first grade, M. E. and Harold Smith were there; and they were fresh out of college, and they were really doing a good job. And I guess if the kids could have that kind of influence in their lives today, we'd have a lot less trouble with these drugs and problems we're having with our young kids. I remember him just coming up on a daily basis and having some contact with me about some thing, you know, all the way from first grade all the way

through the eleventh. Of course, we went through—my last year, during my senior year, our school burned; and he had to change and make all kind of arrangements. And we started holding classes in the old Lawson Hospital barracks building, and it was a real challenge, I guess, for the kids there. But when they had our graduation, we went down to Oglethorpe College and graduated in their auditorium. I've always laughed and told people that I graduated from Oglethorpe College [*audience laughter*]. Well, I did, but it was from high school.

But my particular class in high school—my graduating class from high school—have not had a reunion. Most of the classes have had one. And we've got—we only had about fifty--approximately fifty students graduating in my class from Chamblee--up to this point. Now, four or five of us are really trying to have a reunion to get some of the old classmates back together, but up to this point we haven't got them together. My sister, who is two years older than me, just recently had her reunion from high school, and they're—she really enjoyed getting together with everybody; and most of them were still alive and doing well. Harold Smith, I see him on a regular basis. He and I belong to the Senior Golfers Association together. Of course, he's a good bit older than I am, but he still hits the golf ball. He and Paul Pierce, one of the old dairymen, and we've just kind of gone the whole route. We're just kind of finishing up here and enjoying ourselves with a little golf.

One of the other things that was impressive when I was a kid: they had started to develop Buford Highway. A fellow named Shorty Phillips and E. T. Chester had mules. And, of course, they had a big area that they kept the mules in; and then they would lease them to the state to build that Buford Highway area. They'd pull along dirt with the drag pans, you know, and flip them over. It was amazing how slow it went. But I remember one year—one summer there when they were pulling right by our dairy, when they was pulling right through the middle of our dairy farm. I put me up a little slab concession stand down there and sold R. C. Colas and Moon Pies [*laughs*], and I really enjoyed that summer, because I got to know all those workers, you know, who was coming and going there every day. In the finishing stages of Buford Highway then they started using dump trucks and machinery, you know; and the mules kind of disappeared. It was a pretty impressive thing to see them. They would drive those mules all the way from where they kept them at night over off of Chamblee-Tucker Road over to Buford Highway in a group and then single them out and harness them up. The other thing that I remember about Buford Highway is that after they got

through grading and started to—the hard surface, you know, coming along, I was into bicycles, and there was a number of kids from Chamblee High School that were riding bicycles back and forth to school. And we would get to going on that hard surface, you know, and go off into the ditch and up on those side banks [*laughs*], and we would really enjoy trying to out-maneuver on those bicycles. It was—I guess it was some good years of boyhood going through that.

The residue from World War I was in the area. You know, when we were growing up, our farm was on that old Camp Gordon area. And, of course, we had the septic tanks from the Camp Gordon development. It was down next to the creek on the lower edge of our farm. It was really off of our property, but it was kind of connected. And I remember as a boy we could catch some of the biggest bream out of those septic tanks you've ever seen in your life [*audience laughter*]. You'd just be [*inaudible*; gestures catching fish in his hands] in your hands, you know. There was four or five of us kids that would get together and go down there and fish, you know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Did you eat them? [*Audience laughter*]

MR. BROWN: I guess we did. I don't remember [*audience laughter*]. We didn't know any better [*laughs*].

But we had—I was raised up to do a lot of outdoor things like hunting and fishing and going outdoors. I remember I had an old bird dog that I grew up with, more or less. His name was Joe, and he was a big dog. He was a mixture, I'd say; he wasn't a thoroughbred of any kind. I remember the first birds I that ever killed was over him. The relationship that I had with that dog put me through life. I mean, I still remember those days. After that time I raised two other bird dogs and trained them completely myself. I had many hours of good relationship with those two dogs. I got—I used to think I could hit birds pretty good, but I guess I never really could [*laughs*]; but I thoroughly enjoyed bird hunting. And later on we got an archery club going in the area, and we used to hunt deer with bow and arrow. We'd go up to the North Georgia mountains and camp for a week. My outdoor life has never gotten away from me [*inaudible*], and my son and grandson are enjoying it now. Background has been good.

Another thing that I wanted to kind of mention is Nancy Creek Primitive Baptist Church. Used to, when I was a kid, the trolleys were running from Atlanta out to—all the way up to the overhead ridge; and then they'd fill them, cut it back, and turn it around at Oglethorpe. They had a section there [*inaudible*] the Nancy Creek [Primitive

Baptist] Church that was not paved. It was always a real slick place, you know, in rainy weather. And they had a little lake out there close to the railroad in front of the old church that they used to baptize in. I remember as a kid going by there and watching them baptize from the road banks. Now, some of the oldest graves, I think, in the whole north side [of DeKalb County] was in that Primitive Baptist church [yard]. And, of course, when MARTA come through there just recently, they moved all of those graves from the left side of the railroad to the other side. And there's no graves at all—when the railroad came through the area, it split that churchyard in half; and half the graves are on one side and half on the other. Of course, there was a big problem with MARTA because they had to do away with those graves to get that right-of-way through. The Lowe Glass Company, which has been in business in Chamblee for many years now, they bought that property from the church, from Nancy Creek Primitive Baptist Church. They want to develop it, commercial property. But that's kind of a passing of an era. When they closed that crossing, there's no access to the back side, so it's [inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mayor, how long has the city hall been built?

MR. BROWN: Well, 1954 is when we built the city hall where it is now. But it was located in an old building further down the railroad prior to that time, and we were chartered—the city was chartered—in 1908. But we've been a community for many years prior to that, before the charter. Doraville went ahead and chartered their city, you know, about the same time Chamblee and Doraville got started. We were both railroad towns, and the charter for Doraville is well over 150 years old now. The city of Chamblee's only about seventy-eight. But it was primarily a railroad—people, you know, and the development. We had one we called the “Buck's Track” [spelling?]; it ran from Chamblee up to Roswell.

Chamblee in the beginning was named Lower Roswell; and it kept getting confused with the city of Roswell, and so they decided that they'd change the name and select a new name for it. And to do that they took on anybody that had an interesting name who worked for the railroad or had anything to do with the community was dropped into a hat. And there was one colored fellow there named Chamblee that was working for the railroad [*audience laughter*], and his name was the one that got pulled out of the hat.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Now that you're mayor, does your conscience ever hurt you about giving the city of Chamblee all that trouble about paving your road and that water? [*audience laughter*]

MR. BROWN, *laughing*: Not really, because they still give me that same problem [inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: I know; that's what I meant, you get it now, I know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: What's your population of Chamblee now?

MR. BROWN: Chamblee, at last census, was twelve thousand; but it's dropped considerably since then. Of course, most of you know that we've got some development going on in Chamblee now called "Atlanta Chinatown." They bought the old Woody Malone property. He was the mayor before me, and he had approximately five acres of land. He was on the old Camp Gordon property. Anyway, after Woody died, his widow sold the property to the Chinese people; and they've got the foundation laid now and coming out of the ground. And they're going to have an enclosed mall of approximately twenty-five to thirty merchants, and it'll be all Chinese, and they'll cater to the Chinese community. They've bought Jade Village apartments right across the street from it, and they're—a lot of them live there, those Chinese. They're a good citizen, they seem to be people that like to do right, you know—hard workers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mayor, was the school system [in Chamblee] always the county system, or was it a city system?

MR. BROWN: It was always county. Yeah, we were never controlled by the city, as far as the schools [were concerned].

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Well, now, with the increase of property value, has your digest increased sufficiently that it takes care of your service needs?

MR. BROWN: Yes, sir. We're at—our tax base now is at five mills, in the rate. And it's been that way for approximately twenty years.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Well, you're talking about these houses behind you there that are selling for \$250,000; and, of course, that's a tremendous paper increase on the tax digest.

MR. BROWN: Yes, it is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: And I was just wondering if the service that you give—the service from your digest without the trouble of it—

MR. BROWN: The increase in the value of the property out there has more than—

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: But now one other question: When you said that you finally got the Chamblee water—city water. Was that county—were they buying from the county at that time?

MR. BROWN: Yes. No, it was county water. The county's always maintained the water system. They took over the old county waterworks system and the sewer system as well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Yeah. The county waterworks as we know it only came into being in 1942.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, that's right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: And so I just wondered—

MR. BROWN: We were operating on a well [inaudible]. Some of you may remember Gus Hudgins [spelling?].

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Yeah

MR. BROWN: He—the well was in the vicinity of his house, and he looked after the well. And then we had our own system up till the county—

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Yeah

MR. BROWN: --works came in. But that old tower—we had an old tower there, and that was one of the things that I could put down in my books [*laughs*]. I pulled that tower down with a wrecker [*audience laughter*]. My brother and I had bought a new wrecker. It was a ton-and-a-half truck, and it was about the biggest wrecker they had around at that time. And, of course, I was young enough not to be scared of anything. I climbed up there and put a cable around that thing. We took as many bolts loose as we could, you know. And then we got off and watched it fall [*laughs*].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mayor, what can you tell us about the airport?

MR. BROWN: Well, when I first knew about the airport, Vin Pierce [spelling?], who operated Pierce Oil Company for many years, was a flier. He had gotten interested in airplanes, and he bought an old—I think it was an old Waco airplane. And he got over there with a machine and started clearing off a landing spot, and it was right close to the W. H. Purcell Dairy. And on Sunday afternoons everybody would gather over there and take rides, you know, and ride the airplanes. And, of course, when the war started, they came in there and started fixing—making the naval air station. Of course,

everything's gone from that. We're getting a thousand-foot extension—there's a long runway over there now, and—

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: You're getting it the hard way, though [*audience laughter*].

MR. BROWN: It didn't come easy!

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Was the airport an original part of Fort [sic] Gordon up there? Was it Gordon?

MR. BROWN: Yes, it was. All of that's [inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: In World War II, when they came in and developed the airport, then they already had the land?

MR. BROWN: No, they had sold the old Camp Gordon property to Sawtell [spelling?], a fellow named Sawtell and—well, there was about three different buyers that had bought at auction all of that property that they sold from World War I. And then they turned around and sold it back to the government to develop the Lawson Hospital and the naval air station.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Where was the hospital located?

MR. BROWN: The hospital was out adjacent to—was in between the airport and Buford Highway, and—where the Internal Revenue is now; and the CDC unit is over there. But they came in and tore all those old buildings down, you know, and scattered them all over North Georgia. They moved them out of there when they tore up the old Lawson Hospital. We've got one of the buildings now in the city of Chamblee being used as a community building in back of City Hall. We're looking forward to the day we can tear it down and build a new one. In fact, it's the same place where we are moving the old swimming pool now. We had a swimming pool in there for over twenty-five years, and we're tearing it down now, with Jim's help; and we're going to level it out and get prepared to build a community building there sometime in the near future.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Back when there were, you say, thirty-eight dairies around there, each one of them trying to deliver milk in Decatur and everywhere they could get a customer—

MR. BROWN: Yes. Well, it was a highly competitive—

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Milk trucks--I remember a lot of milk trucks around [*laughs*].

MR. BROWN: We all had specific routes that we ran daily. We had to get the milk fresh every day, you know. And we would deliver it before daylight every morning.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You all were milking them?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, we milked them by hand. Had to milk them twice a day, you know, in the morning and afternoon.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Sundays and holidays, too [*audience laughter*].

MR. BROWN: Right. And they [*inaudible*].

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You never get a break.

MR. BROWN: You know, I—a lot of people say, well, you know, it must have been mighty hard work and all that; but I don't remember really doing—the work being hard or anything. It's just something we accepted, you know; we had to do it. It had to be done before you could go to school or anything else, you know, so [*voice trails off*]. It was a way of life with us. [*Laughs in response to inaudible comment by off-camera audience member.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mayor, when was Chamblee High School built?

MR. BROWN: Well, I can't remember the exact dates. I know my brother, who's ten years older than I am, started there; and I think he was probably about the third or fourth class to start there after they built the school. They started in a fairly small building and kept developing. They built about three different times, but adding to it, increased the size. Of course, we've built, I guess, one of the most modern schools in the area. We've got a full-time [*sic*] Olympic swimming pool there, enclosed, indoors. We've got the—North DeKalb Stadium is there. And, of course, I saw in the paper here recently where they're going to maybe abandon that school. And I just—I hope that they don't ever do that. The school's approximately seventy years old now, and it's got a pretty strong history behind it. But it's going to be kind of a sad day if they do ever close it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Would you tell us a bit more about [*says* "Boston"; probably means "Lawson"] Hospital—how big it got and how long it existed?

MR. BROWN: Well, it started in about 1940, you know, being developed. Of course, at one time, they had soldiers coming in there from all over the world, you know, as far as the battle zones were concerned. And I don't know exactly how many they had there. I know that they had approximately a hundred buildings, you know, that housed the hospital. The doctors were all service-connected, you know; they were

in the service. There's people that come through my office almost on a—well, every year during summer that were there connected with Lawson Hospital and come back to see me so they can tell what it was all about; and there's nothing there really that they could see anymore. So it's all gone.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: We have had calls downstairs [offices of the DeKalb Historical Society] from people in New York and so forth, wanting to know—they want to get back to Lawson and visit, and they want everything from our files that we can send them.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: When did it close? After World War II?

MR. BROWN: Well, yes, it—I guess it was pretty well closed when I came back out of the service in 1945, wasn't it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Well, I know you said something about it getting redeveloped in 1940, but it was about 1930, wasn't it, when it was really--

MR. BROWN: Well, it was after—

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: It started [inaudible; AUDIENCE MEMBER and MR. BROWN are speaking simultaneously].

MR. BROWN: --[inaudible]. It was a real crash building program. I remember when they started building it, they really rushed everything up and built it in a hurry.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: It was the largest general hospital in America.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, at one time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: It was America's largest hospital at one time. And if I—my memory's correct, they started [inaudible] in late '45; and in the middle of '46 it was just about done. And that's the way what I remember about it.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Strictly a military hospital?

MR. BROWN, *nodding*: Army

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: It was an army general hospital.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: They said it was one of the two where the most seriously wounded were sent, and I have heard servicemen say that if you were serving in Guadalcanal or some place and you knew that you were going to Lawson, you knew you were pretty badly hurt.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: My wife was a Gray Lady there, and during the Battle of the Bulge, that last after Normandy Landing, she said they were flying these serious casualty cases in there every day within twenty-four hours after they were wounded [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah. They were coming in on a daily basis, you know. And I remember them landing at the naval air station, you know, and meeting planes with the ambulances, bringing them in. But I went through that hospital every day just before I went into the service, you know, delivering papers, and I had regular customers, you know, that were bedridden and had missing limbs and those kind of things. But the thing that impressed me most about the hospital was the mental wards; they had about four buildings there devoted to mental patients. Of course, we didn't have access to those; we'd just go to the front office and leave the papers with the nurses. But the war really took its toll, you know, with some of those fellows.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I think Clark Harrison spent a good bit of time [inaudible; voice trails off].

MR. BROWN, *nodding in agreement*: Yes. [Remaining comments inaudible, spoken simultaneously with AUDIENCE MEMBER's]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I know it was before your time, but do you know if Peachtree Industrial Boulevard was there first, or Buford Highway?

MR. BROWN: Buford Highway was there first.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Oh. The first main road came through there, and Peachtree was extended over?

MR. BROWN: Peachtree Industrial didn't come until the late '30s—'38, I guess—'37 or '38. It was started about the time the war was really going, and then the full development didn't come until after the war was over. Tractor places and General Motors, some of those things were being built about that time.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: What's the status of MARTA now [inaudible]?

MR. BROWN: MARTA is basically finished as far as construction and everything. They've already run one of the trains into the station and tested everything. They've got the proper clearances [inaudible] the train and those kind of things. And the ribbon-cutting is set for December the 19th. They should be running passengers prior to that time, to some extent.

MR. MACKAY, *off-camera*: Tell us your thoughts about traffic, because some of us remember with you how pleasant it was to not ever be in a traffic jam. And what do you feel--that we're beyond capacity now, and if you do, what we're going to do about it?

MR. BROWN: Well, it's interesting that I've just gotten through with a meeting with the ARC--Atlanta Regional Commission; we had a meeting out at the Ramada Airport Hotel, and we were talking about some of these same things. And you know, the Atlanta Regional Commission is trying to plan for the future, you know, into the 1990s and the 2000s. And even the 400 extension, you know, that they've had so much controversy about, is still not within our grasp; and I don't think that they'll ever build it, really. It's just--things have gotten so congested that if they did build it, it would be inadequate at this point. I don't see any real relief. The only relief I see is the outer perimeter: move some of the businesses we've got out further and create a little more parking and a little more access.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Do you think MARTA rail will help?

MR. BROWN: I think it's going to help, but it's a little bit too little too late, and--it should be going into Gwinnett at this point, you know, to relieve the traffic, really. The least little thing that happens on the expressways now, it's just got the whole thing snafued, and it's--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Didn't Gwinnett fight having MARTA?

MR. BROWN: It's--they're still resisting. They think that they can develop their own system. I think most people understand, and I think the people that are in control--I know Lillian Webb is the commission chairman up there now, and she understands that they should have gone with MARTA to start with and got to really move people a little faster. It's a bottleneck. Jimmy Carter Boulevard from there on north now is just a complete standstill in certain hours.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Mayor, you talk about going down to the airport down there, south Atlanta, I guess you're talking about. When you was a kid, how often did y'all go to Atlanta?

MR. BROWN, *laughing and shaking his head*: I tell you, I don't know what the answer to the problem-- One of the things is, you get on the expressways, and every car you see's got one person in them. That's, you know--with four lines of traffic, they're all going the same way, looks to me like there'd be some way they could get together and ride together or something, reduce the number of cars.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: They could share MARTA.

MR. BROWN *laughs and nods in agreement*.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: What about employment of-- What do the studies show about the number of people that live in the city limits and go out each day, outside the limits?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, well, I think—I've tried to evaluate that situation as far as Chamblee's concerned; and I think that the majority of the people that live in Chamblee live or work within three or four miles of their home, because there's adequate jobs there, and it's—they don't have to travel all the way across Atlanta to get to their job.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: They may not be in the city limits of Atlanta—uh, Chamblee, but there in that region.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, right in that area. That's right.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: I saw some ads about the concentration of antiques.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes, we've—oh, well, over the last few years we've become a centralization of the antique dealers for the area. I hear—most of you, if you've been listening to the radio--110—they're going to have an auction at Great Gatsby. I guess you've heard it on the radio. Anyway, that's located on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, and it's—they've taken an old tractor warehouse and remodeled it, and they've got about—I guess they've got about fifty or sixty dealers in that one building. And about once every month or once every month-and-a-half or two months they'll have a big auction. And they'll advertise it all over the Southeast, and people will fly in DeKalb-Peachtree [Airport] to attend that thing.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: Talk a little bit more about the relationship of the people that live within the limits of the city of Chamblee to the airport. We know the extensions that [inaudible] beyond, away from Chamblee.

MR. BROWN: Right. You know, of course, the approach zone going into the airport and surrounding the airport is out over the residential area, as you know; and it's an impact. Most of the people knew that, though, when they bought their homes, and they know about it. And a good many of the local residents right there are employed on the airport. There's approximately five hundred employees now that's working on the airport with the different airfare [sic] companies. Epps Air Service I know just recently had a groundbreaking for another fixed-base operator to go on the airport, and that'll be the third one for DeKalb-Peachtree. And they'll employ probably

about sixty to seventy people when they get going. Of course, we've had construction inside the city limits of Chamblee on the airport's property that's--I guess twenty million dollars would be a conservative figure for the amount of development added to the airport in the last five or six years.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: How long did you fly?

MR. BROWN: I flew for about ten years.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: And what kinds of flying did you do? Recreational flying?

MR. BROWN: It was just recreational flying. I never did get my wife where she was—where she felt safe with me [*laughs along with audience*]. But I had, I think, about two thousand hours all-told.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You may have covered this, but there was a little hospital in Chamblee at one time. Have you already talked about that?

MR. BROWN: Well, Dr. [Alfred] Mendenhall, you know, he was our original doctor, I guess. Well, Dr. Watkins was our first doctor that I have any memory of. He was located on [inaudible street name—sounds something like “Avett” or “Ayer”?] Circle there, and he lived in the only log house that was left about four or five years ago. And when they tore it down, I got one of the logs out and carried it home with me [*laughs*]. But he was just kind of a circuit doctor that would make the house calls and do the things. And then, of course, after he kind of gave his practice up, Dr. Mendenhall came in there as a new doctor and opened up a clinic there on Chamblee-Dunwoody Road at Peachtree; and he stayed there for many, many years. And, of course, after he'd been there a few years, he started bringing other doctors in with him; and at one time he had four doctors in the little clinic. And we remodeled that old clinic and made the Chamblee Library out of it, you know, when we moved the library from Chamblee Plaza to the old clinic. It was kind of a big move, and they were doing a big business there. And now, then, we've got another location for the new regional library that's going to be built on Clairmont Road. They'll be moving out of the old clinic [library] and into the new one [library] in a couple of years.

AUDIENCE MEMBER [possibly Andy Robertson], *off-camera*: Way back yonder, say, about forty or fifty years ago, when the people from Chamblee would go to town—go to Atlanta on the train, I mean, we had a lot [inaudible phrase].

MR. BROWN: I remember Mr. Hyde [spelling?]. He used to work for the railroad as a night watchman. And every afternoon about four o'clock the train would stop at

the depot and pick him up and carry him to work. And when he'd get off work the next morning [inaudible], you'd see him stepping off that train and going back home. But they did—they had commuter service where you could catch the train at certain hours and go to Atlanta and come back.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: You've got a very strong church life in Chamblee, haven't you?

MR. BROWN: Yes, I have.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: I mean, a number of denominations and—

MR. BROWN: Well, the main churches there are the First Baptist Church and the First Methodist Church. And, of course, we've got several that's come in since then. Harrell Grove Baptist Church is one of the oldest churches, but it's outside the city. We do have several different denominations now. We've got a Unitarian Church there now, just—the old [inaudible, sounds like "Flower land"?] property, where Dr. Fisher used to live.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: Is that inside the city limits?

MR. BROWN: No, it's just outside.

MR. MACKAY *off-camera*: I visited there as a teenager.

MR. BROWN: You probably remember Mr. Patterson—talked with a Scottish accent [*laughs*]. His widow still lives right close by there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: You mentioned Sexton Woods. Isn't there a Sexton Woods Baptist Church?

MR. BROWN: Yes, there is. That's outside the city, too. It's over on Donaldson Drive and Johnson Ferry.

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: You also mentioned the Tuggle dairy. I take it that it had a different location than at the corner of North Druid Hills Road and Briarlake—Briarcliff?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, now that's—different Tuggles. Yeah, there were a lot of Tuggle dairies back then. But this one, this particular dairy, was on Clairmont, right close to where—well, the Williams Seafood Place [in or near the 2900 block of Clairmont Road] is right across the road there, Williams Seafood.

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: Was it all the same family?

MR. BROWN: Yes, uh-huh. Yeah, they were all brothers and cousins.

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: C. C. Tuggle was one [inaudible, as MR. BROWN speaks at the same time].

MR. BROWN, interrupting: Yeah. He's the one—he's [inaudible].

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: Some of those dairymen put their pastures together and did right well when they built some of those shopping centers.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah, they sure did.

AUDIENCE MEMBER *off-camera*: Like Wash [inaudible; could be "Ivey" or "Riley" or something similar]. You—[voice trails off].

MR. MACKAY: We are delighted that MR. BROWN is here. After I got to thinking about it, we should have done you like we did the Hastings. We had Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, and the interplay between them was outstanding [*audience laughter*]. And we may schedule another meeting and have you take half of the act. But, Mayor, you brought us exactly the kind of thing that we want to get on tape up there. This has been an outstanding account of how the community in which you grew up has changed and changed and changed and changed. It's sort of breathtaking, isn't it?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, when you look back, it is.

MR. MACKAY: If you realize it's accelerating change, and it's moved this far in this number of years, you wonder what's going to happen between now and even the year 2000. *To MR. BROWN*: Do you have any other members of your family other than Mrs. Brown here?

MR. BROWN: Not here.

MR. MACKAY: Well, we want to get Mrs. Brown to come into the Old Courtroom with us here. We have some refreshments; we want to invite all of you to come in there and speak with them. And let's give MAYOR BROWN [voice trails off] [*MR. MACKAY and audience applaud.*] If y'all will come on ahead, we-- *Recording ends.*

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by CS