

PRESENTATION BY

MRS. DOUGLAS McCURDY

MRS. McCURDY: I remember the year 1939 because it was the city of Stone Mountain's hundredth birthday. On that day, December 21st, *DeKalb New Era* had a special edition—an anniversary edition—and I have some copies over there on the table, if you would like to see them. They are laminated; that's why they're preserved so well. And there's one copy that isn't laminated, and it does give some prices. The next week's edition of *The Beacon—The Stone Mountain Beacon*—ads from Cofer Brothers is over there, and I think pineapple was eleven cents a can [laughter], and there's some chocolates over there, I think they were five cents a bag—don't know just how many it had in it.

Marion Guess was the newly elected mayor; he's here with us today. And my husband, Douglas McCurdy, was president of the Progressive Club. The citizens decided to celebrate with a "Clean Up and Spruce Up" celebration. Many loads of trash were hauled away to Old Joe's Gulley. I don't know how many of you remember where Old Joe's Gulley was, but there are some beautiful houses on it now. The sidewalks were cleaned and swept, and many of the merchants replaced their metal awnings with some new, striped, colorful awnings. And you can see in the picture what a difference that made. An orchestra was engaged—Marion knows who that orchestra was. He married a Stone Mountain girl, Mary Wells—Hempson [spelling?]. And he had a fine orchestra that played at the Fox Theater, I think—upstairs for the Shriners, I believe, to dance. Everything was set for a nice celebration, with the gymnasium decorated; and the only problem was that everyone was so tired after doing so much work and cleaning up the city, we scarcely gave ourselves time to rest to go to the dance. And there was not too much activity going on, because you could tell that everyone was just worn out. And we had before asked the orchestra, I remember once before asking the orchestra to play an extra hour. But when

twelve o'clock came, no one said a word to the orchestra about playing some more, and we all went home for a night's sleep.

In 1940 everything seemed to be looking up. We'd gone through the Depression, and DeKalb County's Census showed 80,703 inhabitants with 16,536 living in Decatur. There were just 1,800 in Stone Mountain. We had lost a great many during the Depression, and our main thing that we had people come work, of course, was the granite works. And other things had come—cement block and other things that didn't weigh quite as much as granite for building materials—had come into being. And the stone cutters had to leave and go somewhere else to find work. So our little city lost some of its inhabitants.

"The war in Europe was red-hot." I'm quoting Mr. Franklin Garrett now. [Not clear which portion of presentation is quoted from Mr. Garrett.] And I remember that the mood of the country was that we would not get into war, no matter what. We'd been through World War I, and that was just enough. We had started an uphill climb, and no one was in any mood at all to go into another war. I remember 1941, especially December 7. It was a beautiful Sunday. It was a clear fall day. Douglas and Kingsley Weatherly had gone horseback riding; and our daughter, Nita Rae, age ten, and son, Douglas Junior, age nine, were reading the funnies, and I was reading the Sunday paper. Everything seemed so calm and so peaceful. And the radio was on, and the attack on Pearl Harbor was so realistic that it frightened the children and frightened me, too. We could hardly wait for Douglas and Kingsley to come home because I didn't really know how to handle this terrible news. As soon as we heard the horses, we ran out to tell them that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. And—how many of you all remember that afternoon and remember hearing it on the radio? [conversation sounds from the audience] It was just one of the most frightening things and the worst thing because it sounded so real. And all of you probably remember what you were doing and where you were on that day.

As I have said before, the mood of the country was in avoid war at any cost; but on December 8 President Roosevelt delivered a speech to Congress. He called it the day of infamy. And President Roosevelt was able to mobilize the patriotism of this country, and we were soon in a full-scale global war, stretching across two oceans. I remember the feeling I had, and I'm sure you had, too, that everyone must do everything they could for the war effort.

My work as volunteer of Red Cross doubled. Home service was an important part of Red Cross, and I have some good friends here from Red Cross. I had no idea they were coming, but they can really tell us a lot more than I can. But this was one of the volunteer work that I was doing that I really felt very, very close to at this time. The military families had their problems, and our home service problems doubled, too. One of Red Cross's duties was to help the servicemen obtain hardship discharge. I remember one soldier whose family needed him so much that Red Cross did everything they could to get him home. His mother was critically ill, his two-year-old son was a heart patient, his wife was expecting another child. How could they take a man like that and send him overseas? Yet the Army needed him, too. So which could we decide who needed him worse? The baby was born, and when the six-year-old sister had measles in the home, the doctor—who was Dr. Willis McCurdy—didn't want this baby to be sent into a home where there were measles. He felt it was just too risky to do that. So the Red Cross arranged for the baby to be kept in the hospital. Willis was also anxious that the baby have his mother's milk. So the mother was so willing, and so carefully pumped her breasts and got the milk. And one of the Red Cross workers, Ms. Stacy, and myself alternately carried the milk to the hospital to feed the baby. Of course, the baby did well, and we did this for two weeks. The baby grew and developed beautifully. The nurses got so attached, they dreaded to see him go.

The servicemen would be anxious about their families. That was another duty that we had. We think about us here being anxious about the servicemen, but the servicemen were also anxious about

their families. So that was another thing; the Red Cross volunteers would visit the family and write to the serviceman and tell him what they had found. Sometimes parents just didn't write. Sometimes they just didn't really know how to go about doing a lot of the things that they were called on to do in that period. This was a new experience for them.

The phrase "victory garden"—how many remember that? [murmuring among audience members] That gave a new meaning to hard work. John had—I remember John, who worked for us. John was raised on a farm, and he knew how to make things grow; so we had a tremendous garden. I carried peas, beans, tomatoes, and vegetables to make soup mixture to the DeKalb cannery, which was one of the most popular places anywhere. You had to make an appointment to get in line to go and can your products. DeKalb gardeners were doing their part to ease the food shortage. That showed when you went to the cannery and saw how many people were canning their own food.

We couldn't get gas to cut the grass at that time. Would you believe that? I hope it doesn't ever come again. But we had a tremendous acreage there where grass grew whether there was a war on or not. So we decided that we would get some cattle and put out in the front yard and let the cattle graze on the grass. That furnished us with some beef, too. Home freezers were not available at the time--in fact, no appliances. If your appliance gave out, you were in bad luck, because there were very few new things at that time to buy, anything that was made of metal. A refrigeration plant was built in Decatur, and there you could have your beef prepared, and you could rent a drawer put your beef—meat--in the drawer.

American Women Volunteer Service was organized, and I was given the job of delivering stamps—sugar stamps and gasoline stamps and meat stamps to DeKalb County schools, where we all had to obtain them, standing in line again to obtain our stamps. Miss Tullie Smith and I divided the county to deliver the stamps: she had the north half, and I had the south. We called ourselves "Mutt

and Jeff,” and you who knew and remember Miss Tullie knew how tall and how large she was. We really had a lot of fun together, but I wonder if I would be brave enough to start out with my automobile trunk full of something that was more precious than money—those stamps. I could have been held up and taken in these days.

The businesswomen of Stone Mountain Woman’s Club opened their own USO and entertained the soldiers who rode the streetcar to see Stone Mountain for the first time or to climb it. They served lemonade or coffee, sandwiches, and cookies and talked to the soldiers. And we had some romance that developed among—[to woman in audience] we had two, Alice? Two, I believe, marriages. The red one and—anyway. Some of the husbands of the girls who were serving as hostesses, of course, their husbands and loved ones were in the war, and they were doing their part to really entertain the other soldiers that were left here in Stone Mountain. They were going through Fort Mac; and some of them, of course, had been to Lawson General Hospital and just hadn’t gotten over, maybe, a sprained ankle or a pulled ligament somewhere. So the Stone Mountain Woman’s Club, then, entertained soldiers from Fort MacPherson, Lawson General Hospital, or Camp Gordon, alternately. I remember we were having them at my home, and we expected twenty-five or thirty from Fort MacPherson; but Lawson General called, and they had some that wanted to come, too—about twenty-five or thirty. Well, we didn’t have that much food prepared, and there was no quick stores like Starvin’ Marvin or any of those to go to. And the grocery men didn’t think of such a thing, I don’t believe, in those days, opening their store on Sunday. But Mr. Hewitt [spelling?], who had a grocery store in Stone Mountain and had a son, Sam, in the service, opened his door and gave us what we needed. Then anyone who had cake left from Sunday dinner or pie left from Sunday dinner brought it over, and we soon got enough together to feed all the soldiers. That time, there was one of the boys that had pulled a—had trouble with his knee, and his buddy brought him in on piggyback. And he was so glad to get there and be there, and everybody waited on him, of course. Later—he was from Michigan—and later, after the war was over, he came

through Georgia and looked my house up and came by and told me how much he appreciated that particular Sunday night and how homesick he was. Even tears came into his eyes then to think about how homesick he was with his knee hurt and his mom not there to take care of him.

We all remember the blackout drills and the Civil Defense. Marion said that Civil Defense brought people together and did more than anything else and showed how people could cooperate. Many of you could tell what you remember about this period, and none would be the same, because we all had different experiences, and all would be different.

Nineteen forty-five brought a great change; VE Day, May 9th, brought an end to the conflict in Europe. The Pacific war came to an end with VJ Day on August 14th. Between the end of World War II and today we have seen many changes, and that story will be told by someone else. Now, if there's anyone who would like to have any real memories, I hope you'll just stand up and tell them.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: How do you remember all of those details?
[inaudible] Do you keep a diary?

MRS. McCURDY: No, I didn't keep a diary. There's so many things that really made such an impression on me that, when Dorothy [Guess] asked me to do this, I began to think—I thought I would have to go to others and find out what they remembered, because I was like you, I thought, "Well, I can't remember," you know. But I found out, when I started writing it down on paper, that I really could remember the things that happened.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Inaudible] all of those things I remember so clearly, but I don't think I could have spoken [inaudible].

MRS. McCURDY: Somebody—some of you men, I know, remember so much more of this period. [To Hugh Howell]: Mr. Howell, I know you do.

MR. HOWELL [from audience]: Couldn't add a word to the good words that you've said.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I remember something. I was in school at the time, and I remember Cofer Brothers—I was living in Tucker—and there was an old man that came in one day. He had some sugar stamps, and he went over to the cook's counter to get some sugar, and he said, "I really don't need it. I'm gonna be filling up the boy with possum." [laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: During the war I was supervisor of the Southeastern Red Cross blood bank in Atlanta. And Mrs. [May Patterson] Abreu, whose home has been open lately for the Decorators Showplace [sic—means Show House?] was the volunteer director of the Red Cross blood bank for the whole Southeast, which is rather interesting, I think. And then I married and came to Stone Mountain in December of '44. And you were talking about entertaining the soldiers—that first Christmas, the house was running over with soldiers that we were entertaining through that same group in Stone Mountain.

MRS. McCURDY: Yes, we went to different homes in Stone Mountain.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: And at that time being the doctor in that area was not excused by the government of the war effort—to go to war. So they kept him at home because he was necessary, but they sent him a hundred draftees every single day to examine and send on to the war. That was a busy time.

MRS. McCURDY: It was a busy time for those who had—my husband was exempt because he had to keep the cars that we had here at home running, and he had to do that, and I can speak for him and for Willis, I think that they would have rather been in the service, because they felt it so keenly.

ANDY ROBERTSON: Mrs. McCurdy, this doesn't have anything to do with the period that we're talking about, but here's a connection for you: In 1922 Decatur High School had its first real football

team. And we had a pretty good little team. But we were critiquing the situation, and we decided we needed a real fast back and a great, big, strong tackle. And somebody said, "Well, down here at Clarkston, there's a boy that runs so fast that he doesn't take a gun when he goes rabbit-hunting. He runs along and picks them up." [laughter] They said, "That's Hal Hentzler [sp?]. Now, if we could get Hal," and then they said, "down in Stone Mountain there's a man so tough that he won't eat looking in the mirror—afraid he'd scare himself." They said, "That's Bill McCurdy." [laughter] So we got those two boys, and it made quite a bit of difference in Decatur High School football. [laughter]

SARAH FURSE: I had a baby born during the war, and my husband was stationed in Washington for the first year. And it was pretty tough sledding, finding enough money to take care of four children. I couldn't make payment on the house—I think it was just forty-three dollars a month, but I didn't have the money to pay it, so I went to Mr. Blount at First National Bank, and I said, "Mr. Blount, I'll mortgage the [inaudible] children if you'll lend me that money." Because FHA—I called and asked if they'd wait till at least my husband went overseas, because it wouldn't be a problem [inaudible]. And they said, "No, you have to pay it." So I said, "Mr. Blount, I have to pay this." So he said, "How much do you need?" And I said, "Well, I'm behind one, so I'm going to have to make two payments, so I'll have to get at least a hundred dollars to [inaudible] the interest [inaudible]." So he said, "Well, you can mortgage the children [inaudible] for a hundred dollars." [laughter] [inaudible] for a hundred dollars, and I got the debt off my back. And so then I was having this baby, and I didn't have any money to go to a private doctor, so I went all the way to Fort MacPherson. So I didn't have any transportation where we were on Scott Boulevard, and then it was dirt—it was clay road. And there was no bus running down there. And the only one was Druid Hills or the Decatur streetcar. So I had to walk from over there near Fernbank Science Center all the way to this Decatur streetcar or walk to Druid Hills and catch the bus and get off at Rich's and then get another bus to Fort MacPherson to see the doctor. I did that for the whole nine months. And so I would take the children with me when I could, and it was just great because we could

go to the commissary and get something that we couldn't get anywhere outside, so it was a real treat; but it was a long trip all the way out there.

MRS. McCURDY: I'm sure it was.

SARAH FURSE: And so then I called—I didn't have any car, because when [inaudible] said, "Stay out of the car." [Inaudible] was approaching sixteen, and I would have just died if something had happened [inaudible] car when I started driving. So I didn't have any car, and so I called and asked Fort MacPherson if they would send an ambulance for me when I delivered. So they said they would. But these little old, you know, privates, who were probably from Alabama or somewhere else, and they didn't know anything about Decatur. I lived on Chelsea Drive. There was a Chelsea Circle, so they went all the way around Emory—stupid—Chelsea Circle, and I was ready for the hospital before they got there. [laughter] And so they went right down Ponce de Leon, stopped at every stoplight; and I said, "Well, now, if you boys don't stop stopping at these stoplights, you're going to have to deliver this baby right here." Well, you should have seen them—they went ninety miles an hour! [laughter] [Inaudible] Sunday morning—because always things happen, the car breaks down or a baby coming—always on Sunday morning. [Inaudible] hated this rambling hospital out at Fort Mac. And so they grabbed me up on this stretcher and ran the door, but it said, "Wet paint. Do not touch." So they grabbed me and ran all the way around the other end, and there was no doctor on duty. And so they dropped me—one ran in one direction, and one ran in the other. And I just barely made it. But those boys were scared to death. [Inaudible]

MRS. McCURDY: I'm sure. I'm sure they were. [Addressing audience]: I wonder—Dorothy, I wondered if it wouldn't be wise to have everyone introduced themselves?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think it would be very nice.

MRS. McCURDY: We'd like to have for the record how many came. I would really like to have for the record. So let's start here and go right on—

SARAH FURSE: Well, I'm Sarah Furse—Mrs. Stephen Furse.

MRS. McCURDY: I thought we'd—that'd be just fine. Well, we'll just start here and just go all the way down.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES:

"I'm Agnes Davis from Avondale."

"Kathleen [Katherine?] Goren [Gorin?], Decatur"

"Hazel Rutland from Decatur"

"Perry [Berry? Barry?] Mock [Mark?] from Decatur"

"Dorothy Guess from Stone Mountain"

"Emily Guess from Decatur"

Male audience member, marked speech impediment; name unclear. First name sounds like "Aaron"; last name inaudible; from Stone Mountain.

"Jessie Brumby from Atlanta" [female]

First name inaudible, speaker introducing himself simultaneously with another audience member; "Sprayberry, 218 East Trinity Place, Decatur"

"Era [sp? Pronounced "Ee-rah"] Loin [sp?] from Stone Mountain"

"Grace Tuggle from Stone Mountain"

“Alice McCurdy from Stone Mountain”

MRS. McCURDY, gesturing to audience member: Sarah [last name inaudible—sounds like “Luther” or “Luger” or “Luker”]

Female audience member; first name sounds like “Andy”; last name Lewis or Louis; from “just outside Decatur”

Female audience member; first name inaudible; last name sounds like “Reedy” or “McGreedy”; from DeKalb County

“Mary Phillips”

“Andy Robertson, and I’m not going to say ‘Stone Mountain.’ I’m from Decatur.” [laughter]

Male audience member; first name inaudible; last name sounds somewhat like “Strickland”; “and I’m from Decatur, too.”

“I’m [sounds like “Valerie” or “Vallee”?] Thompson; I’m from Decatur.”

Male audience member; first name inaudible possibly “Curtis”; last name Thompson; “from Decatur.”

“I’m Louise Rankin of Lithonia and Decatur.”

“I’m Sarah Furse.”

Identity unclear; male audience member: “I played around in North Africa awhile already.”
[laughter]

“Georgia Nance, Decatur”

“Alice Clark, Avondale”

“Did you want to know where we were at this period of time?”

MRS. McCURDY: Yes.

“I’m [inaudible first name—sounds like “Clyde”] Stanley, and I was from Dunn, North Carolina, at that time. And I work at the Red Cross also.” [female]

MRS. McCURDY: Well, good.

MS. STANLEY: And I live in Decatur now.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: And Clyde’s [spelling?] immediate past president of the Decatur Woman’s Club.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was living in Decatur at that time. I’m in Avondale now.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I did work on [inaudible]. I worked--went out to Lawson Hospital once a week and helped out there.

“My name’s Harris Bulloch [Bullock?], and I lived in Howardston [unclear—sounds like “Howerton,” but unable to locate city by this name in Kentucky] at the start of the war. Wound up in the Pacific. I was invited here today by Admiral Hugh Howell, and I’ve enjoyed it very much. And I [inaudible] some of those things.”

MRS. McCURDY: Well, we’re very glad to have you.

“I’m Hugh Howell, Jr., and, of course, I was in Kentucky during that period of time.”

“I’m Bryan [Brian?] [last name inaudible; starts with K or C; could be Kerr?], and I’m the guest also of Admiral Howell. I was in St. Pete, Florida; my dad was in the Bulge at that time. I have my offices here in Decatur now.”

“My name’s Tom Adams. I’m here in Decatur, and I wasn’t born until ’49.” [laughter]

MRS. McCURDY: I was waiting for somebody to say they were not in Decatur.”

“I’m Winnie Horn [sp?]. I live in Stone Mountain now, but we lived in Jacksonville, Florida then. And the day—V.J.—when the Japanese—Pearl Harbor—we went to a rodeo. And when we got home, we found out about it. Only rodeo I’ve ever been to.” [laughter]

“I’m Charles Horn [sp?]. I was at the same rodeo.” [laughter] “I served in the Navy during the war.”

MRS. McCURDY: [inaudible] from Stone Mountain.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I served in the Navy, too, for two years.

MRS. McCURDY: Did you!

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I’d like to say something further about this. I was in the WACs during the war, so I missed all this on the home front. But hearing these ladies talk reminds me of what Charles Murphey Candler said when he made the dedicatory address when the Confederate monument was finished. He said someday he would like to see on the other side of the square a monument to the brave women who had been at home [laughter], who deserved it as much as the soldiers. [Murmuring and discussion among audience members]

[At this point, Mrs. McCurdy is completely out of camera range, interacting with the audience, whose members are also off-camera. Video consists only of furniture, flag, and framed picture on wall.]

MRS. McCURDY: It was something to stay at home, it really was. And we all worked. I don't think any of us [inaudible] here from Red Cross, and they could tell a lot. A lot of things, there's so many things. They worked in the Atlanta area.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: Mrs. McCurdy, when you were talking about the soldiers who came to see you, you didn't say anything about the Fort Gordon soldiers.

MRS. McCURDY: I did. Did I skip that? [Audience concurs that Mrs. McCurdy spoke about Fort Gordon soldiers earlier in the program.] We did say that we had them from Fort Gordon and General—

ANDREW ROBERTSON: He's confusing World War I and II, see. [laughter] Fort Gordon was out there in World War I. [Good-natured argument ensues off-camera for about two minutes, most of it inaudible because of simultaneous statements by several people and distance from microphone.]

MRS. McCURDY: [still off-camera] We're trying to decide about Camp Gordon—or Fort Gordon. But there really was such a place, and we really did have some [inaudible]. Now, who can straighten us out?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, I was mistaken—

ANDREW ROBERTSON: Camp Gordon was World War—it wasn't a fort, it was a camp—World War I. And on the old premises out there [inaudible], they built Lawson General Hospital. And now, Camp Gordon was moved down close to Augusta, but it's called Fort Gordon now. But Camp Gordon was in World War I, and I was old enough then to remember the soldiers riding up Clairemont Avenue on horses and tying them around the Square here in World War I and then getting on the streetcar and going to Atlanta. But there wasn't any Camp Gordon as far as I know there in World War II.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to say something about this. On the World War I Camp Gordon site out in Chamblee is a World War II Naval air station where they were training young fighter pilots to fly. What happened is their runway was just so long that when they brought in these jet airplanes and all, they couldn't extend the runway any, either way; so they had to move the Naval air station up to Marietta. But it was at the same location that he's talking about, at the old Camp Gordon from World War I.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have a lot of that in the archives, if anyone wants to read up on it. We have those records. [Inaudible background discussion among audience members]

MRS. McCURDY [? Can't be certain, because she's still off-camera]: I do remember that there were some people from that particular place, because they wanted to extend—or rather, to build a new airfield that would be long enough. We were on a flat area between our place and Tucker. And they considered that place, which is now the industrial park, because of the terrain of the land. And we even went out and looked at homes, I know, so that Camp Gordon or Fort Gordon does ring a bell with me that we did have such during World War II.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: I might add that before the Bell Bomber [sp?] plant was built up at Marietta, the same area you're talking about, right on out from Tucker—the flat area—the governor took a lot of sound, you know, borings of the ground and all like that—to determine whether that would be a suitable place to build the Bell Bomber plant, which was—it's now out on what's now Hugh Howell Road between Tucker and Smokerise. But they did a lot of sounding there. Who was the fellow who owned that?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: P. T. Burns [spelling?]. P. T. Burns owned that property. He said he wasn't going to sell [inaudible] but wasn't going to sell but an inch of it. [laughter]

MRS. McCURDY: [Inaudible] if we're finished—

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is Rick—he's not here? We want him to move the equipment over to the next room. I apologize for it being so warm in here, but if we have the air-conditioners on, we can't hear; but if we have the windows open, we can't hear. In just a few moments we'll adjourn to the Old Courtroom, where we'll have some refreshments. And I'll check on Rick and see if—

UNIDENTIFIED MALE AUDIENCE MEMBERS: There he is.

End of Mrs. McCurdy's presentation

THE NEXT PORTION OF THE VIDEO (ABOUT THREE MINUTES) SHOWS MRS. McCURDY AND HER AUDIENCE AT THE RECEPTION. AUDIO IS ON, BUT INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS ARE DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER.

Transcribed by CS