

July 1999

BETTY ASBURY, *standing before an audience*: I'm Betty Asbury, and I'm on the board of the DeKalb Historical Society and have worked on this "I Remember Hour." We have one more speaker to come. Fannie Mae Jett I hope's going to walk in that door any minute. But I think, since it's already a little more than ten minutes have passed, that we probably should go on and get going. I also know that Dr. Degenhardt--is that the correct--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Degenhardt

BA: --is also going to be back; he wants to join us. He's the pastor of this lovely church.

One of the people who was showing me around said that they had heard that this is the highest point in DeKalb County, other than Stone Mountain. Does anybody know whether that's a fact? They said they'd heard it.

BOYCE CREEL: No, not really.

BA: Not really?

BC: The elevation at the runway at Peachtree-DeKalb Airport is 1,002 feet, and we're a little higher than that. And it hasn't really been established which is the highest point. Some think it's down at Clairmont and North Druid Hills.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off camera*: I tell you the tallest place I've seen, and I've been here all my life, is right where Clairmont runs into Peachtree Road. You can stop right there and see half of Stone Mountain, down there--

[*Several audience members talk inaudibly among themselves.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: We're at the highest--we're one of the highest--

BA: Well, we know we're at one of the highest points, anyway. And I hope that this woman's going to be a high point on the history of Doraville. I know I've got a lot to learn. I live over in Druid Hills and have known very, very little of Doraville. So, I'm looking forward to this morning and enjoyed what I've learned so far. I think most of you know Boyce Creel. He's going to be our main speaker first, and then we'll--I hope Fannie Mae's going to come in that door, and we'll hear from her, too. Because most of grew up at a time when we didn't know a whole lot about the different communities. And I know that Doraville has changed tremendously, just from the few times that I've talked to Boyce Creel.

So, I want to thank Howard Worley so much for doing a videotape. I want all of you to know that we've got flyers on the back table about the DeKalb Historical Society. If you join, you'll get a newsletter that'll tell you about the interesting things that it does. There's one circulating. And there's also a history about our DeKalb County history back there, too, that brings it up to 1900. And that's a glorious history and worth knowing about.

The "I Remember Hours" are all videotaped and are in the Archives over at the Old Courthouse, [*To DHS staff member*] and do they need to call first, Greg?

GREG [*last name unknown*]: Yes

BA: If you'll call first, you can set up a time to go in and see them. And there are--*[to GREG]* how many are there now?

GREG: 130

BA: 130 videotapes of old-timers in DeKalb County! So, you could go by and look at the list of what's there and then watch the people you know or the people who'd be talking about things that you'd be interested in. And I want to introduce Sue Ellen Owens, who is our director, [*to SUE ELLEN OWENS*] and you're going to be our moderator, aren't you?

SUE ELLEN OWENS, *from audience*: I think we're just going to let Boyce go.

BA, *laughing*: OK

SEO: I doubt that Boyce needs a moderator.

BA, *to BOYCE CREEL*: We're just going to let you go while we're watching out for --*[Voice trails off.]*

BOYCE CREEL, *seated at desk*: Last fall I got a call from the Historical Society, and they had me recommended. They said they wanted to speak to somebody that knew a little about Doraville, and said, "Well, I know about as little as anybody" [*audience laughter*], "but I would be glad to speak with you." And we got together eventually, and my part of the program was just to be a--be one of the participants. But now, I find out I'm supposed to be one of the speakers; and a speaker I am not. I would like to share a few things with you that most of you know more about than I do. But I'd still like to make an effort to share some of these things with you.

Back in the 1700s Georgia looked like this over here. [*Points to map.*] This was the Indian trails, but in 1932 they put the map system over the Indian trails, so you can't really tell much about the Indian trails, but that's what this small map is. And if

you want to look at it later, why, feel free to look at it. And I'm going to take that down now and get it out of the way. [*Map is removed; BA turns to face audience.*]

In the late 1700s, in the 1700s, the settlers worked out treaties with the Indians for their land that they worked. And then in 1821 the twenty-six Indian tribes' chiefs met at Indian Springs, and they ceded or relinquished or gave up their rights to the Indian land. And the state of Georgia took it over at that point. This part here was all Creek Indian territory, and that land ran from the Chattahoochee to the Ocmulgee River. That was the size of it, a pretty good size. And this land was known as Henry County at that point, most of it was Henry County. And December 9<sup>th</sup> of 1882 [sic] the Georgia Legislature established DeKalb County, which is this, of course. And then they established the county seat at a place called Decatur in 1822.

The people started--more settlers began to come in, and they wanted to take advantage of this cheap land. So, they acquired this land, most of them, by the Land Lottery. We've all heard of the Land Lottery. That was a plot land which was 202½ acres, which I'm going to show you in a little while how much that land really is. And it sold for nineteen dollars for the 202½ acres, which was a little less than ten cents an acre.

Religion was a vital part to the families, and churches were started about that time. The oldest church we have is the old Nancy Creek Baptist Church down at Chamblee. I don't know when it was organized. But in 1826 the Methodists organized the Prospect Methodist Church down at the corner of what we know as North Peachtree and Peachtree Road today. Then in 1836 the founder of this church organized and settled down next door to the Prospect Church and called it Prosperity. And the two churches used the same building; the building was there already at some time. A man named Tom Stewart owned the property, and they shared that building. And then in 1875 the two congregations of the Baptist Church--Olive Grove and Corinth--organized in 1875, somewhere around Old Stone Mountain Road and Shallowford Road. Shallowford Road at that point was a road that runs up by Prosperity Cemetery known as Crescent Drive today, was the old Shallowford Road that they all talk about. And then in 1847 Winters Chapel Church was organized over north of the Hightower Trail. And then in the late '70s Mount Carmel was organized. And then the Zion Church in Chamblee, which was down near Eastman Kodak today, that industrial area, they were

organized down there. And then in 1950 [sic] our local First Baptist Church was organized.

In 1881 the Corinth, Prospect, and all of the churches there, they all shared buildings within a stone's throw of each other. The Baptist church had moved over down to Hutchison [spelling?] Springs, which is down about where U.S. Envelope is today. Of course, the Presbyterian church was across the street, where the cemetery is, and the Methodist church was down the street. And back then, about the only preaching they had was these "circuit riders," or preachers that shared several churches; and whichever church was fortunate enough to have a preacher, that's where the people went. It didn't matter which church it was, they all participated in each other's service. And at some point, they began a fifth-Sunday service, where they would meet at one particular church, and one of the preachers would preach at the visiting church; and that practice went on until the early 1940s here. The Methodist, the Prospect, as we knew it, the Baptist Church, and us would have a fifth-Sunday service at one of the other churches. And Prospect Church, which later changed to First Baptist, they moved over to Chamblee-Dunwoody, where they are now, in 1967. And, of course, Prosperity Church moved to this present location in 1882 and changed the name from Prosperity Church to the Doraville Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1890. Winters Chapel remained the same, right where they started out. And the Corinth--Cornith, or whatever--they located down across the MARTA station in 1920 and later became known as the First Baptist Church of Chamblee. Mount Carmel, of course, is located over across Peachtree Industrial with the Zion Baptist Church. And the Doraville Baptist is where it started out.

On December 12, 1823, Decatur was chartered as a city, and it went from the depot half a mile or a mile, whichever it was; and Roswell was chartered in 1854. At that time they were in Cherokee County and remained in Cherokee County until 1881, when they changed to Cobb County. And from Cobb County they went to Milton County in 1890. And then in 1932, as a result of the bankruptcy of old Campbell County, I believe, the county seat of Fairburn and Milton County, which is the county seat of Alpharetta, went bankrupt, and Fulton took over those two counties, and that's the reason that Fulton is such a long county, is for that merger of the old--the two counties that merged.

1835 Emory University and Oglethorpe University was founded. And the war came along--the big war in 1864. And as you know, Sherman was pretty careless with a torch. And it's said he burned Atlanta in the fall of '64 and had 60,000 soldiers that spread out over a period of sixty miles and just, of course, utter destruction when he left. And this church, incidentally, sent fourteen sons to the war; only eight returned, according to church history.

The area struggled. They didn't recover much; they just struggled like everybody else. And in 1884--in 1871 they built the railroad, and in the spring, they ran an incursion train into Duluth, and in the fall, they opened the railroad in 1871. Incidentally, that's when Doraville was chartered, 1871. And the story goes that the reason Doraville was chartered, we had a young [inaudible--Presbyterian?] preacher came through here and really preached fire and brimstone. And he got the people so riled up that they decided they could do better to eliminate two saloons they had, that they organized a city. So, they organized the--Doraville was chartered in 1871, half a mile from the depot; and they got rid of the saloons by charging them \$500 apiece for their licenses to operate the saloons. So, they didn't last very long after that.

In 1884 is when my crowd came to town. Grandpa Stewart came from Anderson County, South Carolina, 1884, and moved his family down in 1884 and bought the farm in 1884. [*Points to map and other documents.*] This is the original deed to the farm, and he bought this tract of land right here. We're right here today. The deed calls for a Mr. John [inaudible middle name--could be "Calvin"?] McElroy--I'm sure you'll hear more from him a little later. He paid \$1,500 for it. And the deed reads--the legal description says, "The 18<sup>th</sup> District of Georgia, the lower--the south half of Land Lot 311." That's the total description on this deed. And you can look at it afterward if you want to. That's the strange thing about the deed: it was not recorded until 1923, because the courthouse had burned in about 1900 [sic] and destroyed all of the records, and they had to have all the old deeds re-recorded. And, of course, that was the second courthouse fire, the first being around 1844.

1890 we really had a blow, about 1890. They wanted to run a railroad from Doraville to Roswell, and the Flowers family, which controlled much of the land in this area, didn't want it to come through their land. The same situation on the Peachtree Road bridge up here--it makes a--the road makes a bend, and the Flowers didn't want it to go through their land, so it didn't go. So, the railroad went to Chamblee, which was

know as Roswell Junction at that point. And it ran from Chamblee--followed pretty much Chamblee-Dunwoody Road. It's still part of an old trestle down at Dr. Fisher's place across from First Baptist Church. And they called it Buck, Buck Line. Had one engineer, Ike Rogers; he ran it from 1890 to 1925. They hauled whatever cargo they had, passengers. Schoolchildren rode it to Roswell, spent the week, and came back home on weekends. It never crossed the river; it stopped at the Chattahoochee River.

That was the first railroad, and then folks really--things really built up around Chamblee as a result of that. And then in October 1895 the president came to town, President and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt came to town. And they switched his presidential car over to the Buck, and they had their big hoorah about the president being in the town. And, of course, the train transported him to the river. And Mrs. Roosevelt's mother was a resident there, and they brought her over to Bulloch Hall, I believe it is, is where they met the president.

And things went on until the war came along in 1917. And as we know it as old Camp Gordon--we've got a map here of old Camp Gordon. [*Retrieves poster board with maps and other documents attached and is assisted by BA.*] We'll turn it right around-- [*to BA*] turn that around, please. It is said that--we won't go into about how Camp Gordon was located in Chamblee--that's a story all in itself, involving a lot of people. But at any rate, in just a matter of three or four months, they changed all this farmland into living quarters for the soldiers there, and they trained the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division, which had a total of about 80,000 people overall. The most famous of those soldiers was Sergeant Alvin York. And my people told me that up Peachtree Road the soldiers marched to Norcross up on Norcross-Tucker Road to the rifle range. They'd march up there and then take their rifle practice and then come back to, march back to Camp Gordon.

And when they closed--after the war, they closed Camp Gordon, and they auctioned it off. [*Points to display.*] This is the advertisement for the auction at Camp Gordon. And they sold it off in parcels. And I think part of it--well, it runs basically from our cemetery down to Oglethorpe University here, and then right across to Dresden Drive. Up here it ran across, and it just cut the upper end of this land lot that my grandfather had; went over and cut over to Mr. Dave Chesnut's almost. It almost [*unclear--occluded? included?*] him in my chart. It went on down about Peachtree Creek. And that was what happened to old Camp Gordon.

After the war--after World War I--of course, we struggled like they did everywhere else. And things were pretty good, but they were still--they were still bad. DeKalb at that point was mainly a agricultural area. We had about thirty-five dairies in north DeKalb County, two hundred overall in the county itself; so, you can see what a big agricultural county it was. One dairy was located in downtown Chamblee, where the city hall is, which was started out as Guernsey Farms, and wound up being Irvindale Dairies. This was in the early '40s, still there in the early '40s, in right back of where the city hall is. And the streets down there are now named Irvindale, still Irvindale Drive and whatnot. And we had--our nearest dairy was over across from General Motors, operated by Frank Maloney and his family, and that was about 1940, before everybody went into the war.

And a big day happened in 1940. August 30, President FDR gave approval of \$1,750,000 for the construction of the DeKalb County Waterworks, which was known at that time as the WPA [sic]. And, of course, that was a beginning of the new DeKalb County. And we all knew at that point we were headed for war, and they built pipelines from Louisiana up the coast to get the oil up some way besides going by boat to be attacked by submarines, and they opened Plantation Pipelines, I think, in '41. And then in 1940 they sold the property that never sold out of Camp Gordon; was purchased by DeKalb County. And they built the Atlanta Naval Air Station and leased it to the Navy Department. And after the war, when the Navy vacated the property and moved to Dobbins, then DeKalb County took it back over, and that's our Peachtree-DeKalb Airport today.

You know, of course, we all remember the war years. The war was declared December the 7th. We all remember the terrible fire at Chamblee High School the next night, December the 8<sup>th</sup>. And during the war, of course, everybody had to sacrifice. And Doraville just never did prosper into a real prosperous business section. General Motors came along, of course. That was a big thing and Peachtree Industrial with all the development around that.

And, of course, we know what it is today, but when you speak about Doraville-- [*Refers to map behind him.*] this is a map of 1915. It still listed the property owners on the land. Up here, it has--you see Spruills all over this area. Doraville was all this area here. Doraville was built on the old Peachtree Indian trail. Peachtree Road is the old Peachtree Indian trail, which, incidentally, used to cross the railroad down at Lowell's

[spelling?] Crossing. It didn't go like it is now. And nowhere under Peachtree Road does water flow. *[Points]* That's the ridge, and when it gets to Peachtree Creek, the ended down at Peachtree Creek. And the Hightower Trail came around the north end of the county, and there's a map over here--the present county map still shows the Hightower Trail, which ran from the backside of Stone Mountain to Kennesaw Mountain, I believe, is where that one went.

And that's really about all I'm going to say about that, but one thing I'd like to clear up: In the Doraville history Ed Pelfrey makes remarks about Dr. Ed Flowers keeping his records on backs of envelopes and whatever, and I'd like to give you the rest of the story on that. He did keep some records on the back of envelopes. He took his inventory, which they had to do every month, on whatever they had, which was just a matter of local record. This happened to be on the back of a Buckhead Theatre ad for 1938. Admission was twenty cents at the time. And they talked about Dr. Flowers burning envelopes and things for fuel. Well, people didn't know Dr. Flowers. He's one we would call a very conservative man. He didn't waste anything. And the postmaster that came after him--well, actually, when it finally got out of the Flowers family--told me that Dr. Flowers was so conservative that he bought Coca-Cola by the 24-bottle case for eighty cents and would take one of his hot Coca-Colas out to Mr. Ford Mundy's icebox and swap a hot one for a cold one *[audience laughter]*. So, with that, I'm going to turn it over *[inaudible]*.

BA: Good! Well, Ms. Jett has come in. Fannie Mae Jett, come on up. We want to hear what you're going to tell us. *[FMJ makes her way to the front of the room.]*

SUE ELLEN OWENS, *from audience, to BC*: While she's coming up, you said something about the pipeline stopped when something else--

BC: The pipeline?

SEO: *[Inaudible]* the Plantation Pipeline--

BC: *[Audience comments and conversation are partially audible in the background throughout.]* Yeah, the Plantation Pipeline. *[Inaudible]* around Shreveport and Baton Rouge, I think, *[inaudible]* Baton Rouge, through Doraville, and they built the terminal here. Shell and Standard were the distributing points at that point. And then they went on to Greensboro and then points north. That was really one of the first industries that came to our part of DeKalb County. Incidentally, on the old post office



thing, I have the old post office records that you people might want to view up here before you go.

BA: And I think almost everybody here knows that you were with the post office, but not everybody. For how long?

BC: Well, the Doraville post office, I don't know when it was organized, really, but it was in the Flowers family from the 1900s, late 1800s. They started Rural Free Delivery here in 1903, and the Flowers [sic] had the post office until about 1940, when Clyde Spires was postmaster. And when Mr. Spires retired, of course, I got the job as postmaster and kept it until [name inaudible--sounds like "Ms. Lyon"?] took over, which was in 1966, but I continued to work at the post office on till 1977, retired in 1977.

*Meantime, FANNIE MAE JETT has made her way to the front and is seated next to BC. BA stands next to FMJ to introduce her as the next speaker.*

BA: Well, I want to introduce Ms. Fannie Mae Jett, who is a longtime resident of DeKalb County and the Doraville area. And she's been a leader in the African-American community and knows a lot about the church that Boyce mentioned, the organization of Mount Carmel. But we're just interested in anything you want to tell us.

FANNIE MAE JETT: Well, I will begin--

BA: But speak up, since you don't have a mic. You'll have to-- [*Voice trails off.*]

FMJ: I will begin with--first introduce myself. What I have done down through the years--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I can't hear nothing.

FMJ: Huh?

BA: They're having a hard time hearing you.

FMJ: You can't hear me?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You got a loud voice. Speak a little louder.

BA, *to audience member, off-camera*: You want to sit up closer?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Well, I don't know that I can hear, but I'll move.

FMJ: Yeah, come on up a little closer. [*Waits as audience member reseats himself.*] First, I am Fannie Mae Jett. I was born in Doraville, the seventh child of thirteen children, to the late John and Irene Gholston. I attended elementary school at Doraville Elementary School, which was in a church, and finished Chamblee High School. We had to walk from Doraville to Chamblee High School.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: What year was that?

FMJ: That was in 1940, I think. There was no school for the Black. The church, Mount Carmel, was found by George W. Gholston. He started the church in his home, and he started the school in his home. I don't know too much about that. But anyway, we had to--when we finished school in the church, we had to walk to Chamblee High School. That's where I finished Chamblee High School. I was a graduator from Booker T. Washington Evening School. That was in Atlanta, Georgia, and that was the only high school that the Black in this area of Doraville had to go. I had to transfer three buses to finish my high school education. There was no school for the Black. I attended, after that, community college; and I finished cosmetology school, worked thirteen years for Washington Memorial Cemetery, worked at GM plant ten years in the snack bar, volunteered thirteen years with DeKalb County Community Relations Commissioner Board. You was appointed on that board by the county commissioner, that's the way you sit on that board. The community leader from the Carver Hill neighborhood and Doraville and DeKalb County, I was a volunteer.

I am married to Ernest Jett, Sr., the mother of two children: Ernest, Jr., Fergine [spelling?] Wingfield [spelling?]. I have three grandchildren: Vee, Shana [spelling?], and "Junior," Ernest III. I have one son-in-law, Charles Wingfield, and one daughter-in-law, Patricia Jett.

In 19--I think it was--40, Jesse C. Norman, the late Jesse C. Norman, in 1960, in 1965, 1966, and 1967, in 1971, Jesse C. Norman, mayor, Gene Lively was vice mayor, and all the city councilmen were good to me. The city was able to begin to build a city hall, open the first library in the '50s. They had Doraville police, they had a community building, they had a health department, which was open to everybody. You could go there and get blood tests free. You could get your shots free. Adults and children, pregnant women go there. Everything was free. I went--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: What year was that?

FMJ: That was 1960, 1950. That was the year that Doraville first--as far as my working with them, volunteered with Doraville twenty-five years. As I came on the scene--[*To audience member*] I'll answer your question in just a moment, sir. Jesse C. Norman--no, I came to Doraville and expressed myself to what was going on in my community. The city of Doraville mayor, Jesse C. Norman, vice mayor, Gene Lively, and all the commissioners, I expressed myself to them, because it was bad things going on. We had nothing. And all the commissioners, along with the mayor and vice mayor,

opened up their arms and welcomed me into the city whichever way I wanted to work. And I said to them, "Just let me work free." And they did that.

In 1940, I think when the GM plant came in, that's when trouble really, truly, began for my Black community. And Carver Hill, I mean, the first to really open their arms to me. There was nothing for the Black until I came to them. And Jesse C. Norman, as the mayor, and vice mayor Gene Lively, who is our present mayor, and the city councilmen felt kind of sad for me, because in my community, we, as I said, had nothing. My children was playing, and there was a dirt street, doing everything they could do. They didn't care where they lived or died. And also, everything that you could name it was going on in the community. But the city of Doraville took the neighborhood up in their arms and began to work with us, made us feel that we was somebody. I cannot really tell you all today what the city, Doraville, has meant to my community.

We--I think it was 1940--when General Motors came in, the developers began to come in. And the developers came in and wanted to take advantage of--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Excuse me, could I interrupt you just a minute?

FMJ: Yes

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: You said 1940?

FMJ: That's what I said, when General Motors--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, now, there's some--a little bit of something wrong there, because I returned from Charleston, South Carolina, in 1945, and I went to Charleston Navy Yard. We carried there to work in 1941 or '42 to work on the ships to get them to where they could haul food from Charleston, South Carolina, to England and the Channel, because Hitler had it blocked. So, your figures there, somewhere has got a little bit--because I returned from there in 1945--

FMJ: No, sir

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: The war was over in 1945.

FMJ: Well, I don't know anything about that, because--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Well, I do. I know--I'm not getting in no argument started, but I know what I did.

FMJ: That would be before my time--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: There wasn't no General Motors down there in 1940. No!

BA: I think Mr. Creel has the date.

BC: 1945

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Now! Now you're talking. I went to work for them, I went to work over there. I came out there to do some work in 1949, when I went to work over there. And they was opening up the plant. And I couldn't get no material.

FMJ: Well, where did they get the land from?

VARIOUS AUDIENCE MEMBERS, *off-camera*: From you all. From you people. They bought it.

FMJ: All right, just a moment.

BA: I think what you're saying is that maybe the date doesn't matter, but what happened was--that you lost your land.

[*Various off-camera comments, raised voices, interrupting FMJ*]

FMJ: [*To BA*] That's right. [*Trying to speak between interruptions from other audience members*] The thing--yeah, no, they didn't. And he was Black--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, Carlos Jones? No, he wasn't Black.

BA: Excuse me! Excuse me! Time out. The reason we do these "I Remember Hours" is to hear people's personal memories. And we put them on the tape, and then we'll have a question-and-answer time when corrections can be made. But remember, we are talking about a person's recollections, what they remember. And sometimes we all remember things a little differently, and that's what we're here to do, is how people remember. And *then* we'll have the time for questions and answers.

I took what Ms. Jett was saying "in the 1940s," that general period. And so, if we can leave that and not get in an argument at this point about that so she can continue, and then we'll have the questions and answers, OK? But everybody's memory is a tad different, and what we're doing today is listening to Mr. Creel and Ms. Jett and what they remember. [*To disruptive audience member*] We'll have one with you, too, OK?

*In the following exchange, audience members talk over each other, making others' comments and questions difficult to understand.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *standing next to FMJ--possibly Mr. Jett, her husband*: I'd like to [rest of sentence inaudible]

BA: Oh, she's your wife? You can [rest inaudible].

MR. JETT[?]: If she had asked me--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Talk a little louder!

MR. JETT[?]: If she had asked me, I would have told her the whole story. In 1946, when they started building General Motors--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera* Yeah! Now you're getting right.

MR. JETT[?]: The reason why, because I was in the military at that time. You're looking at a [inaudible--sounds like "nominee"?]--D-Day.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera* Yeah! I remember D-Day.

MR. JETT[?]: And I'm one of the first hires, practically started General Motors. And I know the history of General Motors and all that. When I came here, the plant was there. It was a building already, '46 we was still building; '47 they opened it up. Right?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera* Right

MR. JETT[?]: The first car they built, what year was that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera* 1947

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: 1947?! I went to work there before they started building the plant--building cars!

MR. JETT[?]: A lot of people say 1947, the first car they made. They brought some old cars out, '47 model, and put them together. But they really started in 1948. The history in the book they have down at General Motors, it's wrong, because I told them it was wrong. The first car they dropped off there, because I was there, 1948 [*sits down in audience area*].

BA: Thank you very much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER who began argument, *off-camera*: No, you wasn't.

BA: OK, [*name inaudible--could be Benny?*]

[*Disruptive audience member makes inaudible comment.*]

MR JETT [?], *returning to stand next to FMJ*: Because I was sitting--I was there the first car they dropped. Them other cars that they dropped, the 19--they was old-model cars. The first car that General Motors really built was '48. [*Returns to seat*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: '48

BA: OK, [*inaudible audience member name*]--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I remember [*inaudible*]--

SEVERAL AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Shhh!

*Several inaudible comments*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Pontiac, 1948

BA: The thing we are not here to do is question anybody's integrity or somebody's memories.

FMJ: Whatever they say, whatever they do, it cannot remove what's in my heart. And I am speaking from my heart. That's what history is all about. And I am here to say where we come from and where we are today. I have the greatest respect for this city of Doraville, and the city of Doraville have played a important part all over Doraville, not just the Black community. I worked all over Doraville, and we all was treated the same. As I said, these gentlemen I named opened their arms and let me come in. And what is planted in my heart and in the heart of the other people who suffered, we appreciated it.

You take one of the oldest mothers in my community was Cynthia [last name inaudible--Coolard?]. She lived to get 100 years old. We had Lee Strickland, passed away at 88. This city and many others are going on--I can't even call their names. When they came to this city, some of them didn't have much money. They wasn't even getting three hundred dollars a month. This city opened the door at the recreation center and give me a chance to work with the federal government to share food such as cheese, butter, rice, honey, and many others. Doraville has really, really, really played a important part in all of our life. And I am grateful to the city. And I'm grateful that I can sit here with no hate, no malice, no jealousies, no nothing but love and respect in my heart to thank all the people that has been involved. And I would like to say DeKalb County, I worked twenty-five years with DeKalb County, along with Doraville. We had some serious problems, you all, problems you don't even know about. But when I came to the city, they didn't turn me down. They put their arms around me. And they put--

*[Off-camera AUDIENCE MEMBERS comments loud enough to be heard but not clearly understood.]*

FMJ: --their arms around me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Doesn't sound right to me.

FMJ: There was other people just like me. Some could not even buy their medicines. Some didn't have food. Some could not--was behind in their rent or light bill. They called the city, the city called me, because there are things that the city could not do; but they knew that I would do it. And sir, I have approximation [sic] from this City of Doraville. Nobody, nobody can take it away from me, because I earned it, and

the city gave it to me. And I am humble, thankful to God. And I also served in DeKalb County thirteen years on the County Commissioner Relations Board, and they, too, helped. We had bad drainage, we had--you could put cars in some of the drainage. Doraville come a long, long ways. And we have today some people running the city of Doraville that we all should be proud of. And they don't only look at the big, they look at everybody. And this I know. Many has gone on to the Great Beyond. But they did not forget this City of Doraville.

And I would like to say, if I said something to hurt any of you, I am sorry. But you cannot take what's in my heart. And I am grateful again to my mayor, who sits back there, and I calls his name "Mr. Good Mayor," and you are Mr. Good Mayor. And I thank all of you for listening to me. And I am leaving out of here as a happy, happy woman because there have been a great change, and there are some more changes are going to come. But this city saved my community, and I will never forget it. Thank you very much. *[Audience applause] [FMJ rises, and SOE comes up to her, shakes her hand, and speaks to her during applause. FMJ sits.]*

SOE: There may be some questions, and I have one, so I'm going to start out mine. And if you have some questions--I actually have one [voice trails off; inaudible]. But Boyce, earlier you mentioned the Chamblee fire, and you said, "We all know about the Chamblee High School fire." Well, in ten years, somebody watching this might not know.

BC: OK--

BA: So, would you tell us just a little bit about--

BC: --I'd be happy to. At that point in time, we had--the county had school districts, this was a part of North DeKalb School District. Mr. M.E. Smith was the superintendent of the North DeKalb School District. One of our local residents, Jay Chesnut [spelling?], was on the school board. I don't remember the other. But after the fire, the powers-that-be, Mr. Smith and the board and whoever, made arrangements with the federal government and the First Baptist Church of Chamblee to have school on the old Lawson Hospital property. And we met there--I was a student at that point--we met there at the old Lawson Hospital property on Hood Avenue across from the air station. They transported us by bus between classes. We went to the Chamblee Baptist Church, and there was one building that survived--two buildings survived the fire. What we called "the cottage," was where the home economics department was and the shop,

was spared. And those three buildings were what we had for classrooms. And they had to vote bonds, as I understand it, before they could rebuild. And as I remember, the bonds was \$240,000. Of course, I was so young, I didn't realize anything about what had to be done. And the first graduating class, I think, that graduated in the new high school was 1943. The '42 class graduated--used Oglethorpe University to graduate. I believe that's pretty much like it was.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So along with that--and I haven't lived here long enough to know--but the little that I have read--wasn't Chamblee the only school that was built during the war, because of the fire? Was there a--I know about the fire, but was there a special way that it started? Was there any significance or something--?

BC: Nobody knows how the fire really started. They think it started in the lab, but that morning, that afternoon, they called all the school together in the gymnasium, and we listened to the radio when President Roosevelt and Congress declared war on Japan. And the school burned that night, December the 8<sup>th</sup>, but they never did establish the cause of how it started.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I thought that was unusual during the war for any kind of non-defense building.

BC: Material was hard to come by. And it didn't start--the building, the construction didn't start for quite some time, as well as I remember.

Let me tell you--I want to tell you all about General Motors, if you would. During the construction of General Motors, they had a general contractor called Gust [verified spelling] K. Newberg, and the creek that went through Frank's dairy farm headed under the railroad down here, just a little bitty creek. And when they went in to build the plant, they just covered the creek over.

They asked the contractor, "Are you not going to--you're not going to pipe this water out?"

"No, we don't need to pipe this water out."

So, they paved over the creek, and about eighteen months or two years later, they had to dig the entire floor out of General Motors, where that creek was, and pipe it out and redo it.

FMJ: May I say something? General Motors [inaudible--could be "took"?] the Black man's land, as far as I know. That was my grandfather's property. And--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *interrupting, off-camera*: What was his name?



FMJ: --his name was Bartow Langford. Do you know him?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah, I did.

FMJ: And we--this was the first site that was--that they came on looking for. We are living on Carver Hill. That was where General Motors was supposed to be built. But it had so many holes and so much--the land was not smooth as where General Motors is now. And the reason I'm saying I know, my ancestors was involved into that property. And they came in there and bought the property, and they sold--they found us a place to go, and this property is where we are right now, Carver Hill.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Carver's Hill?

FMJ: Carver Hill

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *interrupting*: I remember when all that went on.

FMJ: Carver Hill was named after Booker T. Washington, I think.

*Several audience members comment*: George Washington Carver

FMJ: That's right. Right, of Tuskegee, Alabama. And that's where Carver Hill got its name.

SOE: How many residents were in Carver Hill?

FMJ: Oh, it was approximately about forty-five homes. OK, before it came to that, the founder of Greater Mount Carmel--I listened to what you said--the founder of Greater Mount Carmel was Reverend George Washington Gholston, which was my ancestor.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Washington what?

FMJ: Gholston [*Several voices repeat the last name.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I knew him.

FMJ: OK, George Washington Gholston owned one hundred acres of land here in DeKalb County.

[*Several audience members speak at once; difficult to hear any one individually.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: His place was right up on top of the hill from where--

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Fifteen or twenty acres was all he had.

FMJ: No, sir.

[*Several audience members speak at once; difficult to hear any one individually.*]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I knew him. He was the only man around here [inaudible].

*RECORDING IS BLANK FROM THIS POINT [58 MINUTES, 54.2 SECONDS] BUT CONTINUES WITH BLANK SCREEN AND NO AUDIO FOR of recording. 61 MINUTES, 13 SECONDS.*

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