

MODERATOR: Good afternoon. I'm happy to welcome you on this kind of blustery afternoon. We're delighted to have Dr. Davison Philips as our speaker today. His association with Decatur, as I understand it, goes back to 1940; so, it'll be almost a half-century. He's going to speak to us today about three or four different topics related to the many institutions in the areas he's been involved with, some of his memory of what life was like in Decatur one or two years ago. Dr. Philips. [*Audience applause*]

J. DAVISON PHILIPS: Somebody just asked me if I started on time. I said, "Yes, I start on time, but I don't ever finish on time" [*audience laughter*]. And so, I'm just going to plunge in and talk about some things that I remember about Decatur. But first let me say I'm delighted to see so many of you who have been a part of the history of my life and have meant a lot to me and a lot to this community. And I could not say enough about the way in which I think many of you have helped to shape this place and our history together.

I'm supposed to talk about the things that I remember about Decatur. And I'm glad that I was asked to do this while I can still remember, you know [*audience laughter*]. I mean the city and things like that. I'm going to start right at the beginning with my association with Decatur. I came to Columbia Seminary in the fall of 1940. I had grown up in Tallahassee, Florida. By the way, I'm a little self-conscious about talking about myself. They always used to tell us at Columbia that we were to talk about God and not about ourselves, and the two are not synonymous [*audience laughter*]. Now, that was a wonderful comment. But the only way that I can deal with the topic "I Remember" is to be personal about it; so, I hope I will be properly humble in that process. But I had grown up in Tallahassee, Florida. We had moved there from Louisiana, where I was born, because my father moved his business there and bought some land; we planted trees on it.

I had expected to go to the University of Florida and study law. I graduated from high school, which you could do in those days, because of various ways in [*tape skips*] sometimes in eleventh grade, sometimes they'd put you forward. I started school early because I had a brother a year older than I, who unfortunately died within a couple of years after we started school. And my mother thought he would be lonely in the first grade. There were only ten people in the first grade in that little school, so he might have been lonely at that; so, she sent me along, at age five. And I don't recommend it to anybody. I got out of high school the same month that I had my sixteenth birthday and out of Hampden-Sydney College up in Virginia on the twentieth birthday that May, and then Columbia Seminary on my twenty-third. The thing about coming to Decatur, I believe, was really, I must say very reverently the call of God and the will of God, for me [*inaudible—"calls"? "cause"?*]. And I planned to be a lawyer and take pre-law. I

think the only call to law I had was my grandfather, for whom I'm named; was a lawyer in Alabama. And he offered me all his law books. They were all Alabama law books [*audience laughter*], but that was about all the logic behind all of this.

I felt in a youth conference, a church youth conference, a real pull about the ministry; because a retired minister preached a very powerful vespers sermon on had you ever considered that you may be called into the ministry. And to make a long story short, I felt that call. My minister said, "You ought to go to that church [*inaudible—sounds like "college" or "Collie" or "colleague"?*]. And I started out to visit, a part of the graduation [*inaudible—sounds like "36"?*] as we took a trip to Washington with my family. And we were going to three and then four different Presbyterian colleges, and first was Hampden-Sydney. Beautiful June afternoon, balmy. The president and the dean actually showed us around half the day, didn't have anything to do. You didn't even meet them, you know, sometimes, until you graduated in today's large institutions. But I signed up there.

While I was there, a person told me—a minister told me he thought Columbia Seminary was an excellent seminary, and I considered it. And besides, it was much closer to Tallahassee than the one in Virginia or in Louisville or Austin, Texas. That's sort of the way sometimes ministers get directed around, is through circumstances. It was a very warm September day—I don't know exactly what day it was—but I came up. I had a car which survived the trip from Tallahassee up here without breaking down, which was providential, too, I would say, and asked here around the Square where Columbia Seminary was, and they sent me down Columbia Drive. It was paved as far as Columbia Seminary is now. The pavement stopped just beyond Columbia Presbyterian Church. Kirk Road was not paved. There were two buildings out there. There were no paved sidewalks or driveways or anything like that. But there were about five faculty people. There were fifty-four students.

It was one of four Southern Presbyterian Seminaries. Its claim to fame was that it was old. It had started up in South Carolina in 1828. It moved here in 1927 from Columbia. It almost died up there. The South was developing, but Georgia, as such, when it began, had just begun in this part of Georgia. Now, Washington and Savannah, places like that in Georgia, had begun. But here in Decatur, I think there may have been four or five hundred people, they still had some Indians here, there were still some—those of you who know the history of the 1800s, when Decatur really started and before Atlanta got going, it was a little crossroads. The wagons came and crossed here, supply wagons and so forth, and it began to really mushroom, because the area to be settled drew a lot of people into this part of Georgia this way. They developed the land lots, and you could get so many acres, and it was like the *Reader's Digest* sweepstakes—

you drew for what part you're going to get. Only in that raffle—sweepstakes—everybody got something; everybody got a piece of land. It wasn't one out of 250 million winning something, you know. They then lined up on the Alcovy River, over here between us and Augusta and Washington, Georgia, and all of that. And they had their wagons, and it was a very shallow river. And when the time came, they shot off shotguns, and it was the wildest stampede across that river and into this part of the world, looking for land, beginning to farm. Almost exclusively farming and raising some cattle, horses, things like that. And as they came along, they had brought the Presbyterian church with them.

The first Presbyterian church in this part of the world was up at Lawrenceville, Fairview Church. But the same minister who started that used to ride down here to Decatur. He found seven people—four women and three men—all of whom wanted to be a part of the church, and he organized a church around them. He would come at night; he preached up there Sunday morning. He rode a horse down here. And in his diary Dr. John S. Wilson said that he went through lightning and thunderstorms. And one night in a storm like we had last night his horse was frightened, threw him off, broke up some bones, and might have killed him. But those are some great people in my book, that they came without any support and without knowing where they were coming. Many of the people who settled here came from other parts of the world. My grandfather was born, was two years old after his parents had come from Scotland to settle in the South, went on to Alabama eventually. But that's the way I remember the history of how this all came to be.

By 1927—and by the way, I'll tell you one thing: Some of you Presbyterians remember when we celebrated the 150th birthday in Decatur Presbyterian Church. We had a rather large associate pastor named Rowe [sp?] Callaway. We talked Rowe into putting on a frock-tail coat and preaching one of John S. Wilson's sermons. We assured him it was better than any sermon he had ever written or ever preached [*audience laughter*] and it'd be a great day for him. And he rode a horse a couple of blocks, [inaudible] Dr. Wilson down Church Street there. And one of the television stations came out to televise this great event, and they thought it'd be nice to get a picture of the enactment of John S. Wilson. When Rowe got down there riding the horse—the horse was edgy, people were there, children were there and everything—he got down on the other side of the horse. And I said to him, “You didn't get your full minute on television.” All we could see was the horse when we looked at him that night. And he said to us, “Well, this outfit I rented was too small. When I got up on the horse, I split the seat of my trousers” [*audience laughter*]. Anyway, when you think about all of those people, I think of them with great gratitude,

and I just want to say that my memories—others labored, and I have entered into their labors. And I am greatly indebted to the history of this place.

Back in September 1940 the war in Europe was just beginning. We could finish up with the radio news at night after the day was nearly ended and hear Winston Churchill on almost every broadcast talking about the crisis that they were facing. And I don't know what speeches we heard, you know. You could imagine you heard the "blood, sweat, and tears and toil" speech, and he would speak of Adolph Hitler as "that Nazi" and make that sound like the most evil person in the world. We could also hear Hitler, but we didn't know any German; you could just get a scrap of it. But I must tell you that we were rather removed from all of those earth-shaking things. And I say that with a great sense of remorse. That was over there, and we were over here, and the immediate thing, all of it getting through the commitments which we had then and the work we were doing, that was our concern. The Depression was not yet ending, and we heard all those war stories of the graduates who said, "I graduated in 1933, and no one in our class had a call"--there'd be about ten or fifteen of them—"no one in our class had a call." But if it was a call, all they could offer us was a house to live in and the promise to bring us some vegetables out of their gardens. There was no money promised to us. Occasionally there would be money given to the church, and they'd just take the collection plate to some of these people. And they survived that way during those days. And in the town like this and in the city, it was not that bad; but that was the way that it was in most of Georgia and outside the cities.

One thing about that seminary is some remarkable faculty. A few of them, I wouldn't say were the greatest teachers I've ever had, but they certainly were the greatest characters. I must begin with J. McDowell Richards. He was the first Rhodes Scholar from the South, along with Bill Stubbs from Emory University. They went together the same year. You had to have a sport, excel in athletics. Dr. Richards's sport was baseball; he loved baseball. When he retired, one of the gifts was to send him to the World Series. And he was very frugal. He had run the seminary on very little money, and he was very embarrassed. He said, "When Evelyn and I go up there, we see the World Series and be over. Let's sell these tickets and buy a color television, and I could watch the World Series every year when it comes along" [*audience laughter*]. And so, we did that for him. We took him to the Braves, saw a game where the Braves won in the tenth inning. Eddie Mathews hit a homerun. They won 2-1 over--a great pitcher that I can't remember, so I can't include his name in my talk. I'll think of it in a minute, but in any event, he was, I think, the most remarkable minister I have ever known—you or Mr. Philips or Mr. Long or Mr. Love or Mr. Wilkinson. He had one staff member full-time, Miss Virginia Harrison, who was the bursar, who was the bookkeeper, who was his stenographer—and his letters were usually two full

pages; he hadn't been to the business school where you write two sentences and get it over with. He traveled a lot. He managed the seminary on very little money during all the Depression.

There were times when they thought it would go under. But the five people who brought it to Atlanta chose this place out here as its location. First of all, John Bulow Campbell, whose foundation—the anonymous foundation—has meant so much to so many institutions in this part of the world. He was an elder at Central [Presbyterian] Church. He was an elder here at Decatur Church. Junius Scott was on this committee of five. Dr. McGaughey [spelling?], pastor at Decatur was on the committee of five. Dr. J. [rest of name inaudible] of First Presbyterian Church was on that committee. And there was another minister who, at that time, moved shortly after he was appointed; so, there were really four. And the student body had dwindled. The area around it was not really supporting it, either with students, faculty, or money. But in any event, it came here; but oh, it was a struggle. It was a real struggle. And without that leadership, I think it would not have survived during the summer.

Whenever you want to know of a minority religious group, try the Presbyterians and Episcopalians, you know, because they're small in number. There are more Baptists in Georgia than there are in the whole United States. Presbyterians, think about that. The whole United States. At any rate, the way in which it has gone and impacted my life was in Dr. Richards. He had a great pastoral spirit toward us, and he was such a scholar that he showed us that if you wanted to be a worthy servant of God, you had to be a true scholar and use your mind and discipline. And he took us to all kinds of ecumenical meetings and things of that kind. He is the person who said to our graduating class in 1943, "You cannot go to graduate school," which I wanted to do and which several of the class wanted to do. "You can't do that. You either go take a pastorate, or you into the chaplaincy." And the Navy took us, and I served for three years in the Navy, primarily in the Great Lakes and on Guam.

While I was at Columbia Seminary there were others: Dr. Green, James Richmond Green. Dr. Green chopped wood every afternoon, very systematic man, very—outlined [?] theology, taught preaching. His way of teaching preaching was to give us Peter's sermon in the second book of Acts and say, "Outline it, and then preach like that." Even Dr. Green didn't do that every time when he preached, by the way. But he chopped wood; he supplied wood to all the faculty and all the people who wanted it. He'd put it out in the front yard. You could come by and pick it up. That was his exercise. If you'd mentioned golf, tennis to him, he would have thought somehow you were not very Christian, you know—that was too much fun. So, he chopped wood all the time.

Dr. Kerr, another really [sic] scholar, I mean an egghead kind of scholar, taught Hebrew and Old Testament. And he was very gentle with his students. And some of them took advantage of it. For example, one person was convinced that this was all a waste of time. He was one of these people that has a messianic mission to save the lost. And he missed his Hebrew test. And Dr. Kerr saw him at coffee one morning and very quietly said, "Mr. So-and-so, I'm not sure that I have your exam paper. Have I lost it somewhere?"

"No, I didn't take it."

"Why didn't you take it?"

"How can I spend my time on my Hebrew exam when there are people in Atlanta going to hell, and they need [inaudible] down there preaching somewhere on a street corner."

And Dr. Kerr said, "I don't believe that God feels the same way about it as you do, Mr. So-and-so. You got to take that exam" [*audience laughter*].

One time I was fortunate enough to have an old beat-up car. And it was a Chevrolet that had a rumble seat to it. I finally traded up while I was in seminary, and it would break down and all that sort of thing the first year I had it. I stopped along Columbia Drive one day, and Dr. Kerr was there, walking home. He always walked. He rarely got in an automobile. I never remember seeing him drive the automobile. But he was walking home, and he was somewhat intimidated by Mrs. Kerr. She would send him out to walk. She kept him moving [*audience laughter*]. But she outlived him, and she never walked. I said, "Dr. Kerr, I'd be glad to take you to the seminary."

"I'll ride a little way with you. Let me out a block before we get there. I don't want Mrs. Kerr to know I've ridden [inaudible]" [*audience laughter*].

By the way, we would walk up to the square and the drug store over there on Sycamore, you'd get a pint of ice cream, strawberry ice cream—good ice cream—after we'd been playing softball or something, get it for a dime, and sit there on the curb, no traffic up and down, and eat that ice cream. I saw him up there, and I said, "Dr. Kerr, come have some coffee with us." And he went in one of the drug stores that had coffee as well as the Coca-Cola machine and everything. And he said, "Oh, I love coffee. But, you know, I have a problem. Mrs. Kerr does not approve of my drinking coffee. But you know the best thing about coffee? She can't smell it on your breath" [*audience laughter*].

All in all, they were not only interesting people, but really they did a lot for me. And in their own way they had to teach a whole lot of things, but they did well. Out of the nineteen, one of them died early with a heart valve problem that could so easily have been fixed. He was the son of Brazilian missionaries, and he died in Brazil [rest of sentence inaudible]. One of the most

brilliant students, who graduated from Vanderbilt, had an emotional illness all his life. And after the first three or four years, he spent the rest of his life in an institution up in Tennessee, a source of great grief to us. Three of us wound up in seminaries. Of the nineteen, John Lee is known as one of the top Reform theologians alive today. His books are read everywhere and even taught in some Roman Catholic institutions as a good example of Reform theology and is a Calvin scholar. One in Due West, South Carolina, where the ARPs [?] are and always made As everywhere. He even took a course in preaching at Erskine Seminary his senior year in college, because he already knew that Dr. Green never gave an A to anybody in his preaching course, because no seminary student ever deserved an A in a preaching course. You might get it ten years out. And so, he made straight As while he was at Columbia and really very bright. Will Ormond has just retired teaching Bible out here out of that group. Most were pastors in Presbyterian sects, but you can tell I have good memories of those days. And while I'm at it, I will say that after coming back to Decatur Presbyterian Church, I served on the board out there, two different sets of terms for about twelve years and resigned from the board when, in November of 1975, they called me to be president. That was a remarkable thing, because they certainly knew me, and my election was good news to some and bad news to others [*audience laughter*]. But to move six blocks was like moving to a whole 'nother world. I'll talk a little bit more about that.

I want to say something about Decatur Church. I've already mentioned its beginning. When I came to it, Dr. Hugh Bradley had just retired as pastor, having built the present sanctuary. That's a tremendous accomplishment. He had developed, in that process, Dr. James Ross McCain's assistant. I'll say more about Dr. McCain and Agnes Scott, but Dr. McCain was one of the true leaders of that session. There are others whom you all would know—the Scotts and Scott Candler and some of the younger people in the church. But Dr. McCain would get up on a Candler Sunday, and he called the children up to take an apple and again talked about tithing to them. He said, "Now, God has given you everything you have. This apple represents that. And this is one-tenth of it." He cut that out. He said, "Now, hold that for a minute. All of this you can use, but God wants you to give that part of it. Isn't that a wonderful bargain? You get nine-tenths, and you give one-tenth of it to the church for God to use." And I'm telling you, he would get a hundred percent tithing out of that, including a lot of adults, before he got through with it. He had a great influence in that church as the Clerk of Session. He was elected Moderator of the General Assembly, as was Dr. Wallace Alston, who, though a minister, his family were members, his son Wallace, Jr., was ordained there—he's now pastor up in Princeton, New Jersey, at Princeton-Nassau Presbyterian Church. He certainly helped me

tremendously. Used to invite me to lunch; tried to do it almost every week, I couldn't do it. The menu never changed. He had a cook. Mrs. McCain had been ill for some time, and she died early on, and Dr. McCain lived alone. There were many attempts to remarry him [inaudible phrase] [*audience laughter*], but kept on going the way he was. But it would be fried chicken, there would be green beans, there would be mashed potatoes, there would be vanilla ice cream with strawberries on the top for dessert, and you could have iced tea or coffee. But there were some serious discussions about the future of the church and the mission of the church and go back to what his faith meant to him, and I treasure that.

I could talk a lot about other people in the church. Some of you will know that in 1954, when I came, it was the only church in a way. Well, Emory had started, and Memorial Drive had away started, but you could receive 250 members a year for a while. Bit by bit, that church gave itself away by starting new churches all over South DeKalb, some of which no longer exist, and some of which, out here to the north of us, have flourished and has done some time by starting Sunday school in the afternoon, but more toward the end by being in partnership with the Presbytery in the beginning. At that time during that ten-year period, they counted up fifty-four people in fulltime Christian service—some overseas as missionaries, some as ministers, some as directors of Christian of education, some as campus pastors, and all of that. It was a church that had a great tradition of benevolence giving. You know, for a long time it was half-and-half. I don't think that's possible to do today, what with the cost of operating the church. But it supported many very remarkable, significant benevolent causes.

Decatur Presbyterian Church, through the different periods there—there were about twenty-one years, about three different chapters in it. And when I first went there, lots of marriages, lots of babies. If I'm not mistaken, Richard and Naomi Bell, Judge Bell and Naomi, was the first wedding I had, shortly after I came. [*To the Bells in the audience*] When were you married? July.

[UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*]: You married them on their anniversary.

JDP: Naomi, when were you married? [*audience laughter*] When was your anniversary date?

JUDGE BELL, *off-camera*: August the 14th, 1954

JDP: I had been there less than a month. [First name inaudible] Jackson was in that group, too. Anyway, Richard was running for office, and I don't know whether the reception at the wedding got him elected or not, but it didn't hurt. And I tell you [rest of comment inaudible]. But through those different chapters that we had, we had a lot of young families—three, four, to five children sometimes. And as the years have grown older, and the congregation's grown

older, but you have seen people, in order to get a house for a reasonable sum, keep moving out into Gwinnett and DeKalb and all around, and the demographics have changed. And Decatur has changed, and it really needed to. My own feeling is, unless you have some of this development around the square--you know, one of these buildings will provide taxes for one hundred homes in Decatur, the equivalent of it, anyway. You know, they don't get garbage service either, usually. And by having this development, the school system has been preserved. And I want to talk about that school system in a minute. But in the whole process of moving through those different chapters, the same thing happened to the Methodists, the Christian Church, the Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church—Holy Trinity, and in those days, it literally was a city of homes and churches. Sunday night services were very alive—no television, no football games, and no second homes. And young people had practically nothing else to do but come to the church, and there still are in these churches strong youth groups. I know about that from my granddaughters. At the same time, you have to live your life in chapters. You can't go back and rewrite, but you learn from all of that that there are a lot of great, nameless saints that never make the papers and never make the church history books who have faithfully served God and have preserved that church like a river of life touching everything that it can reach.

I want to talk about Agnes Scott College. Agnes Scott College was begun, as you know, just had its hundredth birthday, when George Bucher Scott came to Dr. McGaughey [spelling?] and said, "The Lord has prospered me, and I do not want it to harden my heart. I want to make a gift to some good cause." And for whatever reason, the development of a college for women—it's hard for us to realize how few places would take women for a college education at that time, and how to do that was a big thing. And a lot of colleges weren't in existence then that are here today. Emory had to move up from Oxford after that time. In any event it has had a long and distinguished history. Dr. McCain, Dr. Alston, Dr. Perry, and President Smith [sic; means Schmidt] have all carried it forward, sometimes in different ways, but carried it forward from strength to strength. Dr. Alston was a remarkable scholar and minister. He really had a great mind, well furnished, well disciplined, a man for all seasons. He was [inaudible—sounds like "padre"?] for the General Assembly and honored by all the educational institutions. And he was a great friend of mine and a tower of strength. And my relationship with him was primarily through the college and being on the board. I chaired the executive committee of the board for him. I had the great privilege of serving thirty years as a trustee over there, which should not be repeating, may I say. I think they ought to turn aboard over, and certainly in those days they needed to have far more women on the board, their own graduates, than people like me. But it was a great pleasure, and I cannot go anywhere and preach in the United States today in a

large church, and I can almost assure you that someone will come up and say, "I used to go to Dec Pres when I was at Agnes Scott." And that's Pittsburgh, that's St. Louis, that's out in Texas. That's overseas. By coincidence we sat in the theater, Kay and I did, in London one night, and the young lady in front of us put her hand up on the back of the thing, and there's an Agnes Scott ring. So, there she was. It's a small, small world for a small institution. But it certainly has great distinction and scholarship in education. And I appreciate the opportunity of knowing the students, but most of all the faculty and the staff. Bertie Bond is one of them, Kate is one of them. All of these people who I knew over there, and some of them I knew at the church, just until you take that out of here or Columbia Seminary out of here, I wonder what Decatur would be like. I really do. I hate to say it, but I'm not going to name what I think it would be like, but it would be certainly impoverished, as it were.

Finally, Decatur High School. Our children—we lived on 344 South Candler Street, and Winnona School is behind it. The church built a manse there when we came in 1954. Our oldest had just finished the first grade in Thomasville, Georgia. The two youngest went to the kindergarten at Decatur Church and then went through the first grade, went through that, and went through high school. While our oldest was at Decatur High School was when integration came to the high school. And I think it came, not easily, but with far more integrity than even the city of Atlanta schools did, because there were [sic] a lot of planning ahead, and some volunteered for desegregation, so that it would not be faced with a suit, which would surely come a few months later. But in any event, they got along well, they enjoyed it. I think that, in addition to the usual PTAs and everything—unlike most ministers, they used to invite me. You know, in those days, they'd invite you to come speak in chapel and all of that, and I did that. And I could only do it because Jimmy said to me, "Whatever you do, don't mention my name up there!" [*audience laughter*] And Mr. Amsler got up and said, "We're glad to have the father of one of our finest young students with us. Stand up, Jimmy!" he said [*audience laughter*]. Anyway, he doesn't seem to be so embarrassed about it now--he's beyond being about thirteen or fourteen.

I think you really have to understand Decatur at one of those football games on Friday night. If it's nice and cool, not like today, but a little bit warmer than this and clear, they're playing Avondale, and there're all those thousands of people there—I mean, 12,000 people there. The thing I remember most was the year after Decatur won 7-6 over Avondale over there in "Death Valley" at Avondale, first time Avondale had ever been defeated in that stadium, seven to six, rain. If they had won the *Reader's Digest* sweepstakes, they couldn't have been happier about that. It takes so little make young people happy sometimes. And it made the

Avondale students sad. What if you went to high school with Avondale students or Decatur High students or Druid Hills students and all that? I really think that if you can reconcile young people in high school on a Sunday morning at Sunday school from fifteen different high schools during football season, you can reconcile the Catholics, the Protestants, and Jews, anybody. Some of them just wouldn't come to Sunday school that morning. But you'll have to admit that it's sort of a community, almost a religious kind of thing, those football games and [rest of sentence inaudible].

They all went to college, and they all did fine. They got good educations, and our three granddaughters are in the same pattern now with [inaudible] school, Decatur High. Decatur High's a vastly different place and doesn't have as many students and all of that as it used to have. But one of them's a sophomore, one of them's a junior, and they'll be going back soon. And I think that it means something when families stay in this place and support public education. We probably could have started some private schools; couldn't have supported them. But through the good times and bad, I think that's been a contribution to the quality of life that people have stayed. And the public schools are such big part of this community.

Now, how am I going to stop? I should have stopped already here. Let me say a word about the people who have shaped the government of this place, come back to Decatur once more. I think the community has been really blessed with the high quality of commissioners and school people and others who have worked in the community in things like PTA and all these other things and the churches, and that's important. And friends, you can get a hold of community issues when you've only got 20,000 people or whatever it is. If you've got 400,000 like Atlanta, or if it were all of DeKalb County, it's a vastly different political challenge, in my judgment. Our government, while it's expensive to stay small, I think that the fact that there have been all kinds of leadership—and maybe it's because I knew them all; there were three members of Decatur Church on the board of education in addition to one seminary person when desegregation came. And that has continued, too, here. Same thing about the mayor. One of the elders no longer here, Wally Ansley, gave me the toughest assignment I think I ever had, and that was to bring together for the first time—this was years ago—the thing he was going to call the Mayor's Advisory Committee, half Black and half white. And we had to meet once a month, and we were breaking new ground. And with all that was going on and scheduled and responsibility here and everywhere, I didn't enjoy going and hanging out all those Tuesday nights. You know, I'd almost rather go to a session meeting [inaudible] [*audience laughter*], and they were tough. But in any event, I look back on it, and I believe it was one way that people like me made a contribution at a very real time of getting people talking together and relating

together and planning together and seeing that after all, what do we all want? We want better schools, we want [inaudible] community, we want opportunities for cultural life, and we want our children to be challenged, you know, with all these things, and be able to make a living and to do it. And while we are involved in DeKalb County and in Atlanta and in all sorts of places, and I've been serving for eighteen months at First Presbyterian Church in Atlanta—which, by the way, John S. Wilson went over there and founded there, too, after Atlanta grew up around the railroad. I just have to say that I think that the key to everything is to have informed and active people to participate. And what I say about Decatur I say about Avondale, I say about all the other communities in this county, because we have a chance to make a difference and not to be the problem but be the solution. So, I think that's enough about that. Let me ask my wife, what have I left out? Where is she? [*Inaudible voice from back of room, off-camera.*]

MRS. PHILIPS, *off-camera*: Nothing

JDP: Let me tell you what I left out. One of the great things—let's see, in 1943, and in that summer, had a kind of relationship leading toward marriage, you know, engaged and yet not quite engaged, and having been set adrift, for the first time I was able to really enjoy the Agnes Scott students. I'd been so faithful and true during my first and second years, you know, never dated anybody. She was up in North Carolina and everything like that. But when I was a first-year student, an Agnes Scott student, who was vice-president of the Christian Association, and some of you have heard me say this before, going up to Dr. Richards—and with no dean of students or anything—and said, “We need a speaker for Christian Association.”

And he said, “Well, what do you want to talk about?”

“Why I believe in the existence of God.” I'd been in seminary for five weeks. And only a five-week seminary student would be [inaudible], “I can handle that” [*audience laughter*].

But when I came back in the fall two years later, she and I started going together. We married right after chaplain's training school. She graduated from Agnes Scott in '43, and there were a lot of that kind of thing--Peter Marshall had come to Columbia Seminary during the Depression, and he married Catherine [inaudible]. Would have been a lot of that, and a lot of Tech and Agnes Scott graduates out of that group up there. Not all of them [inaudible phrase] or happy, and some of them have broken up at this time; but ours has been good. And in the whole process of that kind of thing, I think all of that's [inaudible] the providence of God. So [inaudible] that happened.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE *off-camera*: Would you be kind enough to say something about [inaudible].

JDP: I'd be delighted to do that, because that's one of the great—really a lot of accomplishments of Decatur, I think the retirement home over here is—it's a small part of the whole needs of retirement people. It's a kind of [a part of? apartment?] for independent living. That's a good thing. But the Topple Hospital came about because Stan Topple, Jim's brother back here, went to medical school, [inaudible] College Medical School, and is still today a very, very fine surgeon specializing in rehabilitative surgery—hands, faces, things of that kind—and a devout Christian. He is still remembered by college and medical school students for that and the impact he made on them. And he went to the Board of World Missions in the Presbyterian Church and said, "Where in the planet—where in the world do you need a doctor like me?" And they looked around. He may have checked other organizations and other boards. And the decision was that a leper colony in South Korea—long before Korea was developed—it's really developing today miraculously, economically—down in the remote part, beautiful part of Korea—rugged mountains and seashore, everything.

But there had been a doctor, and so Koreans who worked with leprosy, Hansen's Disease—it may be a different kind of leprosy that they knew in Bible days; some of the researchers think it is. But it gradually takes away the nerves, the sight, the hands and face. And they were ostracized—put out, because they were contagious, they thought. Very slight contagion, but they were contagious. And there were twelve hundred in this little village out there. They had a little stone building. Stan went out there, and he met [name inaudible—could be Mia?], a very fine Scandinavian [inaudible], specialized in the eye specialty after they were married. They have some fine children. One of them is studying to be a doctor. Has she graduated yet, Jim?

JIM [*last name unknown*], *off-camera*: She's a senior.

JDP: Senior this year. Up in Chapel Hill, right? They lived in Suncheon and went out about ten miles there. He came home after his first furlough, and it was genius. He showed some slides—you all have seen them. But he began to show his congregation—who just appreciates [sic] that and loved him and thought he was great and everything—slides of operating in January in that stone building. No heat, no lights, no running water. He's got a pan with water, iced over. And when he needed water, he'd break the ice off, you know; and there'd be a slide of that. He opened up the abdomen—he wasn't operating on the hand, but he was doing something else to this person; and steam rose out of the abdomen in the slides. It'd have been great on video, I'm sure.

But some of the elders and I just felt we got to do something better than that, give him something to work with; and the church did. Gene Bothwell, who was the architect for it, before

his death, before his last [inaudible], told me, I guess, a dozen times that the most satisfying thing he'd ever done was draw up the plans for that. None of the other buildings or churches could come anywhere close. And I feel that way about it. It was a significant thing that changed the world. Now, a Korean architect did change it and made the little roof be pointed—you know, the old myth was that the devils would not be able to locate it there because the roof would shoot them off like a ski jump somewhere [audience laughter]. This was a Christian [inaudible]—called it a hospital—and it today is, with all the ups and downs and the challenges, that's good Korean leadership to it, Stan's been back, and others have worked with it, but pretty much—with the public health thing—they've pretty much eliminated that disease as a threat in South Korea, and certainly the people [inaudible phrase].

In the time it was dedicated—'62 or '63—Kay's mother with us, she couldn't go, the church was going to send me over for the dedication, and Jimmy was already in college, and they were kind enough to send him along. I've always felt they wanted him to go and keep me out of trouble in Hong Kong and places like that [audience laughter]. But he didn't, because we got to Hong Kong—we had been to dinner on the grounds up in Taiwan and eaten only God-knows-what was out there—looked awful. And he was sick as everything on the flight down there to Hong Kong, and we got there, and we got in. And he slept off that. And he had promised Kay that he would not let me buy any more photographic equipment. I had a camera and all that. So, he said he did his best; but when he woke up from that illness and looked around, photographic equipment was spread all over the other bed [audience laughter].

It was a wonderful time of dedication, and it's fulfilled its purpose. It really has, it's fulfilled its mission beyond your wildest dreams. It's been added to by other gifts—Medical Benevolence Foundation [inaudible] Decatur. He had been supported while he was over there. But if ever—it's the most dramatic, changing situation that I know of, making a difference, that I've ever personally seen in an institution like that. I've seen some dramatic changes in people's lives, but to see it change in that part of the world and that problem by those people, the leadership [Voice trails off, inaudible].

They call it the Wilson Hospital—Rehabilitative Hospital. It is the [inaudible] of hospital until the day the people of Decatur Church die, that's what they say. It's the [Voice trails off, inaudible].

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: [Barely audible, asks if Stan is going somewhere.]

JDP, *to audience*: Where is Stan going this time? Isn't he going to Africa?

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Yes, Kenya

JDP: Kenya. He's going to Kenya. He practiced a while—one of the great challenges of missionaries, frankly, is when they send their children out of their very protected family atmosphere. Every one of those girls are musically talented, because they didn't watch television; they learned to play instruments and the families close together like that. And there have been a number who were not prepared for the pressures of the United States and the worst elements of our culture, and you just lost touch with them, the tie to the parents. And many people like Stan, and this may not have been the whole reason, but it was good that he could be here. They [inaudible] into college and going off and be with them, the four girls.

Let me tell you this one quick thing that we were coming back on the plane—we went around world, but I—when we got back and first Sunday we were at church, some people were talking to Jimmy after church, and I was standing near there. And one of them said, "What's your big impression?" Well, he picked Suncheon, were the Topple hospital is near. And when we first got there, there was a young Peace Corps man who came, a young college graduate, taught English in Suncheon. He'd been out there eighteen months and would go home soon after six more in Korea. And Jimmy said, "He said to me after dinner, when nobody else was around, 'When I came out here, the Peace Corps said, "Be careful about identifying with the missionaries. Sometimes they'll think that's what you are, and you're supposed to be sort of non-religious," just do good, I suppose.' Kind of a strange idea, I thought. But anyway, he said, 'These people kept inviting me up there to Sunday dinner and everything, and I was lonely as everything, and I started going. And I changed my mind. These are the greatest people you'd ever want to know.'" That sums up [rest inaudible].

If I said anything wrong, you Decaturites know [*audience laughter*] [rest inaudible]. I want to tell you about the man who was put out of the church for drinking at Decatur Presbyterian Church back in the days when you were called before the Session, you know. Fortunately, the minutes of the church burned when the Clerk of the Session's house burned over there [*audience laughter*], and some of the best parts are gone [*audience laughter*].

MODERATOR: If we don't have any more questions, we have a brief social period [inaudible] the presentation [rest inaudible].

JDP: I kind of really feel like I've let down so many people. And I've talked like a machine gun, too, but I really have been right excited about making this talk, because I have good memories. [*Audience applause*]

MODERATOR: Well, if you'll just go down our hallway here into the Superior Court Room. We'll have a brief social period and a chance to ask some more questions.

People exit.

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by CS