Recording begins after the presentation has already begun. The speaker has not been introduced but appears to be Robert (Bobby) Burgess. The speaker wears a law enforcement uniform.

BOBBY BURGESS: He came here out of South Carolina and settled in the Wesley Chapel area. And Jonathan had fourteen children, which they had big families back then. And I don't know where all of them went, or what all of them did, but I do know that H. H. Burgess, who was the clerk of the court, was his son. And H. H. Burgess was elected clerk of the Superior Court after he served in the Civil War. They are all buried at the Wesley Chapel Cemetery: Jonathan, his wife, and H. H. and some of the children.

H. H. had many children, too, but three particular sons that I'm going to talk about—one would have been my grandfather, Henry Burgess, who lived on the Covington Highway near Panola Road, in the old house that's still there. It's sitting right on the road now, because the road has been widened so much. And it's about to fall in, incidentally, too, because the property has gone business, and it's a shame, but progress has taken it all over, and all our history and all our heritage, too. But my grandfather lived there, and he raised a big family, mostly girls and school teachers. They raised Ben and Theron. Theron is my father, and Ben was his brother, who was the clerk of the court also. Now, H. H. had a son named Ben Franklin Burgess, who you know as clerk of the court when H. H. died in office. H. H., who was Henry Burgess, was clerk of the court for fourteen years; and he died in office.

And then Ben F. was appointed, I think, at that time, and Judge Peeler and Judge Bell or Mrs. Bailey or some of you people can help me out with this, but I think that, at that time, the Ordinary would appoint someone to serve the unexpired term. And I believe when H. H. died in office, his son worked for him, so he appointed him to serve the unexpired term. But a gentleman named Freeman at that time in the old political days went out on a campaign against the person that was most--really my great-grandfather, H. H., he ran against him on the campaign that it was time for a change, that the Burgesses had been in the office long enough. And he won. And it was two-year terms. And in about four months, he called Ben Franklin Burgess back and said, "If you don't come up here and take this thing and run this job, which is not the political job I thought it was, I'll give it back to you, and I won't run against you again" [*audience laughter*]. So, he gave him the office back, and he didn't ever run again.

Now, that explains to you H. H. and then his son, Ben; but now Ben had a son named Hugh, who practiced law here in Decatur for many, many, many years. His second wife—Hugh's second wife—was very active in this Historical Society. They live right up here on Clairemont Road. And I think she did a lot to try to decorate the courthouse and things like that, and she

could afford it, and her name was Marie. That was his second wife. But he didn't want to work in the courthouse. He didn't want anything to do with that, because it didn't pay enough money, and he was a very accomplished attorney.

So, his father wanted to carry on the tradition in the courthouse, so he hired his two nephews, and that was Theron and Ben. They lived on Covington Highway, as I said, Panola Road, they were raised there. And they came to Decatur and attended business school, and my Uncle Ben attended law school in Atlanta. And then Ben F. died after thirty years in office, with the only break in there—that four or five months in the early 1900s, when Mr. Freeman beat him and gave it back to him. And then Ben died in office in 1970, and my father had been the chief deputy clerk of the Superior Court for many years, and he was appointed then by the Ordinary again of the county to serve the unexpired term—no, not to serve the unexpired term; to serve after a special election. And they held a special election, and he ran without opposition, and he ran without opposition the whole time.

So, I guess you'd say my family were politicians. I don't know if that's good or bad [*audience laughter*], but anyway, they were. And you might wonder why I never followed in their footsteps. Well, Chief Justice—one of our Supreme Court justices—Richard Bell back there, I tell you, he kind of watched me through my early boyhood, and he probably would have never thought I'd become a police officer. He probably thought I would have been in jail [*audience laughter*]. I was kind of a wild kid at Avondale High School. I was an only child and attended the Avondale High School, and from there I never really thought about getting into politics or anything at the courthouse. But I have some memories of this place. And as I stand here and was talking to Judge Bell and Judge Peeler a while ago, I'm [inaudible] in my police career, where I tried cases right here in this room. And when I say I tried cases, I would be a witness for the county; because it hadn't been that many years [inaudible] that this was the courthouse. I remember distinctly coming in here in front of Judge Hoolie Hubert and [inaudible phrase] every time I had to come back in this room and testify, because Judge Hoolie Hubert knew the law, but he didn't have a lot of personality [inaudible] [*audience laughter*]. And he would get with you right quick.

In my early boyhood days, we—I never lived outside of three miles from the courthouse in my entire life, and that is true today. I was sixty-one March the 22nd, and I've been with the county now thirty-five years. And I was born on Rockbridge Road, and at the corner of Rockbridge Road was the first Avondale High School, a little two-story building that had a big pipe for a fire escape, because I used to go over there and play. And then they built a new school, a brick school, on up just out of Avondale. It used to be Old Stone Mountain Road; it's

now North Clarendon. And it stayed there until it burned, and then they moved into the new school, which is over near Belvedere. My mother, my father, myself, my wife, and all of our children went to Avondale High School; and that's unusual in a family. And we loved every minute of it.

After my father came to work for his uncle, who was the clerk of the court, at eighteen years old, it was a fee system. It didn't pay any salary—nobody made any salaries [inaudible]. Maybe that's one of the reasons Mr. Freeman gave it back to him; it wasn't as much money as he thought it would be. It was a fee system then. And my dad lived with his father down on Covington Highway, and it was dirt. And my father's basic job was driving my great-uncles to Ponce de Leon Ballpark to watch the Crackers play baseball. That was the biggest job he had when he was eighteen years old, working for the clerk. Of course, Ben was a little older, and he'd do some of the work; but my dad handled the car. And he told me just today, when he found out I was coming up here, that one of the biggest things that got him in trouble was driving his Uncle Ben's car down home, slipping off and going back home to Lithonia, driving down that dirt road, getting the car all muddy and all, [inaudible] up some of those ruts and gravel and everything. But the clerk then, the one my father used to for, Ben F.—Ben Franklin Burgess was the name—he liked to drive, so my father drove him everywhere he went.

My mother was a Coile. Her name was Doris Coile. She had many brothers, five or which served in World War II, when I was a youngster. And most of them are deceased at this time, and my mother is deceased at this time. She lived to seventy-four and unfortunately was stricken with Alzheimer's, and we had four years then. My father is still living on--off Carter Road. We never lived within four houses from the time I was born--down on Clairemont, down on Rockbridge Road. I was born, and we came to Decatur; Dad was working in Decatur, so we got a duplex right down on Clairemont, one block off. And we thought we were really in hog heaven when we got a rental house out on East College Avenue. But we really weren't in hog heaven, because that was called "No Man's Land." And the reason it was called "No Man's Land," nobody wanted it. Decatur wouldn't have it, and Avondale wouldn't have it [*audience laughter*]. And there were some nice homes in there, but then there were a lot of little small homes. And our entertainment was that we were backed up to the Georgia Railroad on one side and the Stone Mountain streetcar on the other. So, you'd sit on the bank in back of the house and watch the trains go by with the hobos riding between the cars, throw rocks at them, or if you go around in the front and watch [inaudible] on the Stone Mountain streetcar going between Atlanta and Stone Mountain.

And those were days I really cherish, and the courthouse was open then on Saturday—they worked a half a day. And I would come up to meet my dad at twelve o'clock and get some money so I could go over to the DeKalb Theater or the Decatur Theater or down to Mr. Bailey's shoe store or over to Wright's ice cream parlor or Lyle's [spelling?] ten-cent store or go and hang out at the blacksmith's shop, which was right here where the courthouse is now. There was an old colored gentleman over there that shod horses and all. Everbody'd bring them in on Saturday, because they didn't work on Saturday. He'd work all into the night on Saturdays shodding [sic] the horses. Watched streetcars circle the block and sit down there and listen to the oratory on the cannon. I'd sit on the cannon and wait for Dad to get out. There wasn't any air-conditioning in this building. They'd just leave all these windows open. And you could hear Mr. Roy Leathers, who was solicitor general back then, and all the rest of them screaming at the top of their voice in the many, many cases that they were trying. They tried everything here.

There wasn't a—I might stand corrected by the distinguished judges, but there wasn't a state court, as such, then. The Superior Court tried everything, from bootlegging to murder. And I remember all the offices were here. It brought back a lot of memories to me today, the nostalgia of it, and I get right teary-eyed sometimes when I think about the many memories of this little building. And I would never, never want to see anything happen to it. This is--was number three. In my memory of what my people have told me, the first two burned at different times; and then this one was erected. And I do remember that at one time, it had an end on it right here just like the end on it over on this side, but later on some remodeling closed this end.

But it was very interesting, and there was a lot of cases that were important at that time. A lot of things were going on. I remember one particular case that drew a lot of attention in the county. It was a lady—I think it was a woman—this was a woman who was murdered out at Avondale, and they had a big trial here, and all the big lawyers. And I know my Uncle Hugh was always grinning about making a lot of money [inaudible—could be "having" or "helping"?] to strike the jury. Anyway, the defendant was acquitted, but that was one of the cases I remember particularly that went on in that time. They tried a particular individual—I don't want to get into any name-calling, because there might be some relatives in the room [*audience laughter*]. We kind of get in hot water name-calling.

But anyway, when I went with the police department in 1957, I really didn't go there to stay. I had developed this idea that I wanted to study law at night, and of all things, I wanted to work for the prosecutors. Mr. Bell wouldn't have agreed with that at the time when he was refereeing basketball in all the schools, and I was creating all the disturbance without having to be a good lawyer or good cop either one. But anyway, I did go with the police department in

1957. Over there was about sixty officers, and it had just moved from Decatur out on to the old prison camp—which brings about another interesting story.

You know, for many, many years, Mr. Scott Candler had been the lone county commissioner here—and almost a god to everybody in DeKalb County. In fact, we always said over at the police patch that we used to rather have the person with the sickle—the guy with the sickle was Mr. Candler, cleaning out the Kraft Cheese [Kraft cheese facility built in DeKalb County] [*audience laughter*], cutting all the grass down. Anyway, Mr. Wheat Williams at that time ran against Mr. Scott Candler, and I never will forget the campaign slogan, "Scott Free." [Inaudible sentence that ends with "Scott Free."] But anyway, to tell this story, I heard my father tell it, and I'm sure a lot of you've heard that industry was just beginning to come to town. There wasn't much industry then, because there was agriculture and dairy farming and some of the businesses like the Bailey's shoe store for many years and things of that nature. But they said these big executives came down, and over on Scott's farm they met Mr. Candler over there on a dirt road, driving an old Lincoln automobile. It was pretty raggedy, and he never would get him a new car, they said, because he was so tight. These officials asked him about building and what the county could do for them if they built Kraft Cheese and what he could do about paving the road and water and sewerage and that kind of thing. And so, he told them about what he thought, and they said, "Well, you go back to your board or your people that help you make decisions and let us know, and we'll enter into a contract." Mr. Candler got a tablet out of the car and wrote down everything he could do for them on the trunk of the car and handed it to them. They were quite amazed, because they'd never seen anybody with that much power that could promise them water and a paved road and all those things.

Well, when I went up to the police department, I started in the Traffic Division. At that time, in the '50s, we had about twelve Harley-Davidson motorcycles. And I always give Mr. Bell—Justice Bell—credit for my career because I rode a motorcycle, and every time I'd come up here and see my dad and everything, I'd have on the boots and britches and the leather jacket and the sunglasses. And Mr. Bell stopped me one day right out there by the cannon. He asked me when I was going to grow up and get off that motorcycle and try to do something, and did I want to get into the Detective Department. And I told him I surely did, and I thought that would be good. And so, he talked to the Detective Commander at that time; and I ended up going into the Detective Department, where, at that time, I worked on a lot of cases that came before him and Judge Peeler, Judge Hugley, and all those and worked Burglary for a long time and General Theft and then started working Homicide. And I remember some cases, and my memory goes back to when [Interstate] 85 was being built. And we had a particular murder case

that was very difficult to solve, and 85 was being built. And this was up around Chamblee and Doraville. Like I said, we won't get into name-calling. [*Recording skips*.] He murdered his wife. [Inaudible sentence] We knew basically what was happening, but we couldn't find the body. And anyway, the rain came—

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera, interrupting*: I've got to go. I'm in a meeting at six o'clock in Marietta, but I want to hear it. Want to keep it to the truth [*audience laughter*].

BB: He wants to keep me honest.

UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: Parents are watching now.

BB: OK, well, I have the utmost respect for both of you. But anyway, this was a horrible murder case, and this man apparently killed his wife before, and we were looking for the body everywhere and didn't find it, and she was missing. And 85 had not been built, but they'd graded it and built it up with dirt to try to make it as level as they could. And he threw his wife over the side of 85 into one of those ravines and covered her up. So, when the rains came—heavy rain—her leg became exposed, and the surveyor found her, and we recovered the body. We got the Venetian blind cord, and we put the Venetian blind cord back into the residence where it was. We had the fight where it had already happened, but we couldn't find the cord. And we convicted him of murder, and got him the electric chair. That was just one of the cases.

Of course, the death penalty was handed out very freely back then. Might have been better off if it was handed out very freely now, but we won't get into all that, because I'm sure that one of these days, historically, down the line, somebody'll look at this film that they're making, and they'll say, "Chief Burgess was a redneck [*audience laughter*] and wanted to electrocute everybody!" That's not really the truth, but I do think that we're living today in a society that is too liberal with the criminal element, and that being based on my many years—thirty-five years—of watching what used to happen and what's happening today.

I want to tell you in a few minutes a little bit about a little history that I wrote. And I've really got to watch my time, because when I start talking about the things that I remember—and I thought y'all would never invite me up here to talk, because I like to talk. I tell my kids, my grandkids, a little fib. I'm always talking about wars and things that happen and when I used to walk on Sycamore and play in all the magnolia trees and listen to the court, and I tell them that I was reincarnated, and that I was with General Lee at Appomattox when he surrendered [*audience laughter*]. And then I go ahead and color it on up, saying that I was a captain, that I had a yellow sash like General Lee, and then my Uncle Beauregard Burgess was there, too. So, I really play that thing up, you know, and get my grandbabies—I got three granddaughters, and I

get their eyes all this big about being reincarnated, fighting Civil War. They're in grammar school.

Anyway, I did do a history, which I typed myself, and I researched myself, and it's crude, and I murdered the English language, and it has more typos in it than you'll ever find anywhere; but if you'll read it—I made you all copies of it—if you'll read it, it's not in great depth, but it's some highlights of the DeKalb County Police Department and where we've come so far. And we've come a long way. And I got ahead of myself a while ago, when I was starting to tell you about Mr. Candler and when Mr. Williams, who had beat him, and I want to go back to that. I digress to that for this reason: our police headquarters was moved from Decatur in the old DeKalb County building, where it originally was the jailhouse, to the prison camp on Memorial Drive. It's an old building out there. Now, we call it the [inaudible—could be "Alamo"?], and it was built by prison labor out of creek rock and creek sand and cement. And we had--the county kept their own prisoners there. We had a lot of incorrigible prisoners out there, and there was a lot of history out there. But the way we got out there, when Mr. Williams beat Mr. Candler, in the '50s, middle-'50's, and he was then the lone commissioner for only a couple of years, because he said if we would have a multiple commission, he would step down, which he did, he kept his word.

But we had a prisoner escape—two prisoners escaped, which we shouldn't have. And those prisoners escaped from what we called the chain gang camp. We called it that, but it was a regular prison. And it had [inaudible phrase]—it had the whole bit, even when I went there policing—towers on the corner. But these two prisoners escaped and stole a truck, and they ran over a school girl—a little grammar school girl and killed her, going into Atlanta, and then they ran over an Atlanta police officer on a motorcycle and killed him. So, Mr. Williams was contacted by the state and told that if he did not get rid of the warden, the state was going to come and get all our prisoners, that we wouldn't have anybody to work on the streets or do anything else. Mr. Williams, in his wisdom, said, "Come and get 'em." So, they did. The state came out with state trucks and emptied the prison farm. We had no prisoners and have had no prisoners since—well, felony prisoners, I'll say, except those that are in the jail.

But at that time, out there on Memorial Drive—and, of course, naturally there was no [Interstate] 285—that was called the "chain gang curve," it was a bad curve right before you get to Rockbridge, many wrecks there. They raised their own cattle there, they raised their own food, and they were self-contained out there with the prison. And we had a lot of things happen—many, many things happened. We had an escape and killed people. I remember two particular brothers that I heard my father and them talk about—they were Theron (like my father

was) and James Cranston. And they was working at the Snapfinger Creek, because the water was overflowing the road, and they killed a guard there with a shovel. And I had every bit of that information out of that prison camp. When I went down there in the ‘50s and stored it in the basement, because we were pushed for room, in boxes. And I had all the pictures of all the prisoners and a lot of reports on the activities of the old police department when it was in Decatur and everywhere. And there was a steam boiler there, and that steam boiler went bad and flooded that basement and ruined it all. We lost so much history, and so there was nothing that could be saved. It was absolutely destroyed. And so that lost all of that.

But anyway, I did this history, and I made you all copies. [*Throughout the rest of the presentation, BB refers to the various stories and photographs in these handouts*.] And as I said, please excuse the way it’s done. In its first phase, you’ll see what the police department—and I can practically name them all--I won’t burden you with that at this time. But this is a late ’20s picture, and there’s two officers in this picture, that two of our officers that was killed in the line of duty, which I preserved this newspaper I got from my father, and this was on Friday, August 12, 1927. And this was two officers: Doc Phillips and Louie Henderson. And Louie Henderson was an Indian, and it doesn’t take much looking to see the features. And back then the biggest thing the police did after working very few murders and things of that nature, but a lot of burglaries and thefts and driving the [inaudible] around and helping to fix potholes in the roads. The biggest thing we did then was chase liquor cars, because out Clairmont Road and all out through there to the north side, was where all the corn liquor came into DeKalb, and, of course, through the Lithonia area, too, through Avondale and that way. But anyway, we never knew what happened to those two officers. They were killed on Briarcliff Road, and they were driving a Lincoln convertible, if you can believe that the police would be driving a Lincoln convertible. And my father told me then that a lot of other people, too, over the years, that that created quite a stew, because of the police driving an expensive Lincoln convertible back then. The idea was that they couldn’t—the other cars were not fast enough to catch the bootleggers and catch the [inaudible] liquor that was coming into the county. Sometimes it’d come in two or three cars in a row, wagon-train style.

But anyway, if you turn it to the first page, you’ll see the police department. As I said, two of those are two of the officers who were killed. Now, I also brought with me today what I thought was interesting is a picture of the first DeKalb County police officers that were killed, and it’s not as much a uniform as it is a suit. And his name was John Wesley Webb. And he was killed on March 16, 1919, and he and his partner were checking a car that was in the woods at the underpass on Ponce de Leon. All that was wooded area then. The railroad went over, and

this car was there. And when they were checking this car and searching this car, a person named Black—R. R. Black—shot and killed John Wesley Webb. Now, there's always been some confusion about who John Wesley Webb worked for, because we didn't have a police chief, and the act had only been created in 1914 for counties to have county police. And I do have the act in here in 1914, where our legislature passed the county [inaudible] for police officers. The sheriff allegedly did all the policing then, what was done. And, of course, you had your cities—you had some of your small cities and that city department; but you didn't have the county police. Some said that Webb worked as a county policeman with no chief and the only one out of the Solicitor's office. The sheriff's department wants to say he was a sheriff's deputy, and I want to say he was the first police officer killed in the line of duty. So, we'll just all be happy to say it's all true. But Black was chased into Detroit, and he was caught in Detroit, Michigan, and brought back here and tried. The Webbs were out of Lithonia.

Then the second police officer that was killed in the line of duty was on April 6, 1925, and his name was Samuel P. Gentry. And as I said, the big thing then was hauling whiskey. Now, he came in behind a load of whiskey traveling from Avondale toward Decatur on East College Avenue at Sams Crossing. I'm sure many of you know where Sams Crossing was. Sams Crossing was named Sams Crossing because Mr. Sams owned a big estate right there, and that's where you cross the railroad. I did it a trillion times coming up here to meet my daddy walking. And they named it Sams Crossing. There was a community there of laborers that worked for him, a Black community; and it was called Sams Alley. And today it's right there at the MARTA station, except it's a paved road out through there that goes back into Columbia Drive. But the railroad crossed right there, the Georgia Railroad did, and that's the way it got its name. But anyway, Gentry chased this car, and a person named Bell riding on that load of liquor, hauling for somebody else, jumped out of the car and ran behind a signboard, and Gentry ran behind that signboard and was shot and killed. I've already told you about the third and the fourth that was killed together, and that was W. H. "Doc" Scott Phillips and L. S. "Louie" Henderson. And they were driving a Lincoln touring car, and that information about this particular big load of liquor that was coming in at that time, and that was their job, and they wanted to catch that car and confiscate that liquor and do what was necessary with it. And the story goes that in those days the bootleggers would fix a pipe that ran out of the car and fill it full of burnt motor oil with the pipe and run it into the engine manifold. And they would turn a valve and let this oil run into the hot manifold of that motor, and then it would blow smoke out the back, and you couldn't see. And another trick that they did, they would have a keg of roofing tacks, and they would throw out the roofing tacks to wreck the police cars that were in pursuit.

Or they would have a decoy car and then come down in a caravan out of the North Georgia mountains, coming Clairmont, as I said, or come over through Stone Mountain through Tucker and around, and then have what they call block cars. And those block cars could only be convicted for their driving habit or whatever it was. They couldn't be convicted for the actual bootlegging, because there wouldn't be any liquor on there. And they would try to block out the police, or they would try to run and make the police chase them, and the real load of whiskey would go all the way through. And it would go into East Atlanta, Kirkwood, downtown Atlanta, and those places.

Now, the fifth police officer killed in the line of duty was run over and killed on the Covington Highway at Snapfinger Creek, working a wreck, turned his back on the track. His name was Charles [middle name inaudible] Phillips. And then after that we had two more. That's when the police used to ride partners. Pretty tough back then, and they had a lot of territory to cover, and they rode partners. And these two were killed—no, I beg your pardon, I'm wrong. I got ahead of myself. The sixth one that was killed was Edward Cecil Garrison. He was killed on a motorcycle, the only officer we've ever had killed in DeKalb County on a motorcycle. Back in those old days, Covington Highway being as rough as it was, he was killed in the real bad turn right after you cross Memorial Drive—we call it the "Midway section" now. It's on the righthand side, there's just a little market there. And that's called Midway, and he was killed there.

Now, Charles Willis Wright was the seventh officer, and he, too, was killed chasing whiskey. And that, too, was on Briarcliff Road. We had two others, which you'll find in there, Charles Nix and Wilbur Johnson. These are two that were partners, and they were hit on Redan Road by a drunk driver, and they were killed instantly. And then we had the one that was most controversial, which was James Lonnie Mize. That's after the county--later on the county and Oglethorpe Apartments had been built, and they had a warrant for an individual that lived in those apartments. And the fellow was a very personable fellow, and they went up with their warrant to serve it on him. His name was Fields, I believe was his name, yes, Fields. This was in 1954. And the two county police officers went up to serve this warrant on Fields, and Fields told them that it was a mistake and that he didn't have any transportation to get back to his wife all the way back in the Brookhaven area, and would one of them please drive his car. And so foolishly and compassionately they believed him, and he was riding in the car, and he snatched the pistol out that belonged—they were talking all the way—snatched the pistol out belonging to Mize, shot and killed Mize. And the officer following in his car [inaudible phrase] later on, Lieutenant Davis, walked up; he shot him several times. He almost didn't live.

Now, that history stops right there, but the killings don't stop right there. We have had quite a number of our officers since 1954 killed in the line of duty. Most of those are going to be through gunshot, some of them through car wrecks and other things till we [inaudible]. I don't want to say specifically, because—I think the number's about twenty-two now—that we're up to. Some very, very good young officers. On in there you'll see some pictures that I just did the best that I could with. But there's one of the cases there where the police officers were digging up a skeleton. This is Oscar Bell Rowell and his son. If you can see that picture, it's beautiful, because it's snowing, and the snow is real deep. You know, a long time ago, we used to have some pretty good snow up here, and the climate in this area has really changed since I was a boy, because I remember some nice ones. And I later interviewed him. He was the oldest living DeKalb County police officer when I interviewed him in Lilburn, Georgia.

Now, the picture here is Walt Carroll [spelling?]. It was taken in 1925, and he's sitting right there. And if you'll look real close, you'll see the columns on the courthouse. He's sitting on the only motorcycle that the county had at that time. Now, back then when they decided that they got tired of it all, they just closed it up and went rabbit-hunting. So that's what happened here. I don't think anybody was working, because they're all sitting here [inaudible], and all the rabbits they shot, and there's all the police force on the rabbit hunt. Again, that's Mr. Rowell--Mr. Oscar Bell Rowell--he's deceased now—and Walt Carroll [spelling?], motorcycle officer; you can see his boots. They're just relaxing, and they're leaning up against the column right out here at the courthouse.

Now, this is the Lincoln. That lady and the dog is Sheriff Jake Hall's wife. Sheriff Jake Hall was the sheriff here for many, many years. And I knew him well, because I used to slip around and try to go with his granddaughter, Marguerite. It was an old, red-brick building. It would be located on the corner of McDonough, right close to the street, where the Callaway Building is now. After that, you remember, they built the DeKalb County building to house the police and the jail, and in their wisdom tore it down and built the Callaway Building and will probably tear it down next. Anyway, we tore down a good building; we built another one. But the jail was there, and Mrs. Hall—the county police worked out of there along with the sheriff, Sheriff Hall. And this was the Lincoln that the two were killed in, which drew quite a bit of criticism.

The rest of those are not [inaudible]. I thought it was interesting that, if you'll notice these old cars that [inaudible phrase] that I got—that looks like about a '33, '32,'33 Ford there, and I think that's the same Chevrolet; it looks like about an A Model Ford. They wrecked then, it was just a little bit different. The roads was dirt, most of them, and they—all of them got pulled into Decatur then, because right down across from the high school was the county tow lot. And but

you didn't get much towed. You'd have many complaints that because there wasn't much to tow. Most of it they just pulled out of the road.

But these are some more, and these are some accidents. There's a bicycle, and you can see what a telephone pole did to this one. Now, this is Oscar Bell Rowell. He was seventy-three years old at the time I interviewed Oscar Bell Rowell. Might want to let it—are we completely out of time?

OFF-CAMERA RESPONSE: No, sir. Take—

BB: Well, must have been talking an hour already. This is Oscar Bell Rowell. This man was a champion. I [inaudible—sounds like "found"?] him. He was seventy-three years old when—I think I interviewed him in '64. And he'd become a DeKalb County police officer. And he had been involved in so many, many things that I just sat fascinated on his front porch and tried to write it in quotes, and what I couldn't quote, I would paraphrase it. And I tried to put it down just like he said. And if you don't read anything in this whole history, please read the story of the good ol' days, which follows in the things he told me.

He lived up in Brookhaven, and when he policed, Clairmont was dirt. There was no way to get to Decatur in bad weather, so he had to come through Peachtree into Morningside to get to the courthouse. And the police department was in the basement now, where the Extension Service is. And they had no radios. So, the police officers carried the car home, whatever it might be, dropped their partner off—whoever lived the furthest kept the car. And when they had to go to work, he'd go by and pick up his partner. On their regular shift they'd circle the courthouse, and if the light was on, they had a call, and they'd come in. Other than that, people'd sit on the side of the road waiting for them to come by. That was the way you got police. Some people had telephones, yes, and some people could phone, but not [inaudible]—in the Belmont area and the Wesley Chapel area and [inaudible name], and places they couldn't afford it. Maybe right here in the city, yes. But Rowell was involved in so many, many, many things. He told me in the middle of the night that it was nothing then for somebody to start knocking on his door to want him to settle a dispute between a man and a woman or some domestic situation or something.

He told me one story that I have to laugh about this. This woman knocked on his door one night and insisted that Mr. Rowell, who was a police officer and a community person, tell that man that was with her that that was her [sic] baby she was carrying [*audience laughter*]—got him right in the middle of that type situation. And then another night, he said that they came and knocked on his door and told him the pharmacy was being burglarized at Brookhaven. You remember what Brookhaven—I know you do, that's the extreme north end of the county. Well,

it's not the extreme, because Dunwoody is the extreme end. But Brookhaven was a city at one time. It was the city of North Atlanta, and they gave up their charter, because [inaudible], and they gave it back to the county, and we policed it. But at any rate, Mr. Rowell went up by himself because the place was being burglarized and went into the drugstore, and the burglar was in there, and there was a shootout, and he shot and killed one of the perpetrators and arrested the other one and [inaudible] carried him to Decatur. It was in *The Atlanta Constitution* on February 13, 1927. It's unfortunate that you can't read this, but I do have the original of this.

So, he told that story and he told the story of everything that he did. At that time, we had many, many streetcars. We had rapid transit back then and just didn't know it. And it was a good way to travel. It was a real good way to travel. Of course, it couldn't handle the volume of people today, but you could ride the streetcar from Atlanta at the state capitol all the way out and around this very square for a nickel. And this was North Decatur. And you could ride South Decatur, which was right on down by Agnes Scott and right on by the depot and stop at Sams Crossing, pull in the spur track, for a dime. Now the reason that you could do that was because they got some kind of contract with them that they couldn't circle the square unless Decatur set the price. I don't know about that contract—I think they went out of business with that contract still in effect. You might know, Mr. Bailey, I don't. But it was a nickel. And then you head to Stone Mountain.

Now, the South Decatur would jump off down there—no, the—yeah, I think it was South Decatur. This was North Decatur. It would pull off on the spur track [inaudible—could be "at Sams Crossing"?] and let the main Stone Mountain car through. The Stone Mountain car would carry you all the way to the foot of the mountain, and it came right to Avondale. When you go through Avondale today, if you'll look at a little building they kind of have there on the right, that's a replica of the car stop. It used to stop and cross the road and go down behind—it would be right beside the new city hall and right beside the Georgia Railroad, go all the way to Stone Mountain, right through Clarkston, lickety-split. And when it got to the end of the line, there was no place to turn around; you didn't have to. The motorman would just get his little iron thing that's set on there, and he'd walk to the other end and set it on there, and they'd flip all the seats back in the opposite direction, and it would head back the other way, go back to Atlanta.

So, I loved it. I rode out to Stone Mountain all the time, and I rode down to Atlanta, and [inaudible] and myself, we'd decide to skip school every now and then and go down to Atlanta and go to the movies all day. And we'd go to Atlanta and transfer, go out to Lakewood to the fair. I know everybody remembers the Southeastern World's [sic] Fair. We don't have anything like

that anymore. But you'd go out there and take a dollar, and you would've thought you went to Disney World. It was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

I could talk about all of this till I was blue in the face and bore you and go on and on and on and on. But today this county is tremendous. It's beyond belief. The places that I've played is industrial parks. The places where our dairies were are shopping centers. The places where my grandfather farmed are all commercial. The roads have all been widened till you can't recognize them. The streetcars are gone forever, but I tell you where there is one. If you want to see one, and you're like me, and it's nostalgia, if you go down and get on the other end of College Avenue, which is Avondale Road, and start back into the city, right after you pass the American Legion Club on the right, coming back to Decatur, there'll be some apartments right on the right; and right on the left there's a house in Avondale with a streetcar in the back yard [*laughter*]. It's rusted down, the windows are out of it, but it's sitting there. I don't know how he got it. And Avondale tried to get it moved, and he's probably like me—I wouldn't move it for nothing. And he built his brick wall to try to hide it, but it doesn't hide it very well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: I know where one is.

BB: Where?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: In Korea [*audience laughter*].

BB: Oh, is that right?

AUDIENCE MEMBER, *off-camera*: [Inaudible] Pierce, Iowa.

BB: It was a great way to travel, and it'll make you so hungry when you're traveling, because they had all these signs up at the top—beautiful pictures of hotdogs, Cokes all frosty, onions on them, hamburgers, little guy wearing a little hat, you know, to serve.

And I remember this, and I don't ever forget these days, we didn't make much money, we never really owned our own homes until much later; we rented. And, as I said, we lived on Clairmont, Dad worked at the courthouse, then we lived [inaudible] on Rockbridge, then we moved to East College. And one time, when Daddy bought a house, we made a big move; we moved seven doors up the street. And so, he bought this house from the old county Ordinary at that time named Des Morris [spelling?]. He owned a home along in there. And we bought that home, and we stayed in that till my

brother was born. I had one brother—I'm an only child; he was accidentally killed in '56 in an accident with a Cushman motor scooter. You remember the little Cushman motor scooters? He was accidentally killed. Mr. Bailey, I'm sure you remember that. And I know you do, Andy, when Steve was killed. That was the only brother I had, and I really believe that that was probably the reason that my mother later developed such a serious heart condition and Alzheimer's, because she found him laying in the road, killed one night in Forrest Hills.

So, at any rate, I don't want to ever forget coming to this courthouse and hearing these trials and prosecuting cases here and working in all these offices. You know, the clerk's office was on—the eighty-seven years I'm talking about it—was right down, the last rooms on the left. That's where the clerk's office was, where all the displays are now, the Civil War soldiers and all that. That was the clerk's office. They had all the records, all the deeds, all the discharges, all your property records, adoptions, divorce, everything was here, right in this courthouse.

And it was a beautiful place. Decatur was so gorgeous. We had Uncle Tom's swimming pool down [rest inaudible due to audience laughter]. Yeah, and then you come up—it was nothing to walk. Wasn't any—I never rode a school bus in my life. I lived a mile and a half—I had to go down College Avenue, all the way through Avondale, [inaudible] the red light to Avondale Elementary. Same with—I walked every day. It was no buses for us. You had to live way out to get you a bus. I mean, you had to be in the boondocks if you was going to ride the bus. And we walked, and we loved it. And I walked up Sycamore so many times. And I drive down there now—I try to remember. It was just full of magnolia trees. And you know, magnolia trees don't have a lot of leaves. Have a lot of limbs, but don't have a lot of leaves, and when they do, they're a mess. But you climb all up in them, because the limbs were so far apart. And we broke down every magnolia—my friends and I—we broke down every magnolia tree between Sams Crossing and Decatur by climbing in them on Saturdays. And come in and sit on the cannon and get the money and go to the show and stay till dark and walk home. Nobody ever bothered you. I admit I got scared, because I lived further south, and they told me Mr. Sams would get you in his house and make a soldier out of you [*audience laughter*]. And Mr. Sams was rich, and he had all this community behind him—farms

and land, and he had this buggy, and he wouldn't associate with anybody. He'd ride in his buggy [inaudible], and everybody stood in awe of him. But I never went on his property, because I was scared Mr. Sams would make a soldier out of me. My mama told me that, anyway [*audience laughter*], because she didn't want me on Mr. Sams's property, especially in his orchards. It was some great times. We got a strong heritage. We got a beautiful county. It's changed so much until I don't recognize it, but it'll always be deep within my heart and deep within my family.

I want to mention one thing about the schools. You know, we had—right now we've 550,000 population, 269 square miles. You know, we were hewed out of Henry County. DeKalb County was taken from Henry about 1840 [sic], 1842 [sic]. And that's when they started with the elected officers and built the courthouse and so forth. But we had a school system in the county, and we had eight high schools. We had Chamblee, Tucker, Druid Hills, Clarkston, Avondale, Stone Mountain, Lithonia, Southwest DeKalb—I think that's eight [*audience confirmation*]. But anyway, we had eight high schools, and they had feeder schools, which was a couple of elementary—two to three elementaries—to each high school. And in the '40s, late '40s, none of those schools probably didn't have three hundred students. Graduating class would be forty-five or fifty. Didn't have enough boys to play eleven-man football; had to play six-man football.

Decatur—we looked up to Decatur, now, because Decatur was a big school. City of Decatur had Boys' High and Girls' High, and they had ROTC, they played eleven-man football, and they played all the big schools in Atlanta. We played out there in the country at Tucker every Friday night, two games on an eighty-yard field; that's the way you played six-man football. It was almost like basketball, except you had protection. And there was some real, real wonderful times. And you wouldn't know it now, because it's over a hundred schools and over a hundred thousand kids. And, like I said, 269 square miles and 550,000 population. The last count I had, 332,000 registered motor vehicles with all these expressways. See, I watched 85 built, and I watched 20 built, and I watched 285 built, 410. And I carried [inaudible—could be "a governor"?] on a motorcycle, which the state bought, to Stone Mountain Park. Before then, we went out, kids, and we climbed the mountain, hiked the mountain. The only thing big went on out there, the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross once a year. And I remember watching them

down on College Avenue when they come through Atlanta in a caravan to burn their crosses and so forth. And that was DeKalb. And here I am, and I'm going to stay here till I die. Thank you very much. [*Audience applause*]

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