

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 24

INTERVIEW WITH HUGH LEWIS GROGAN, JR.

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT AND JEFFREY B. GRABLE

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Location: Library, Kennesaw State College

A native of Marietta, Mr. Grogan in 1977 became the first black person ever elected to the Marietta City Council. Previously, he led a successful effort to sue the city, forcing Marietta to reapportion its wards. Mr. Grogan has been a community activist for many years.

- TS: I would like to begin, Mr. Grogan, by asking you when you were born and where you were born.
- HG: I was born January 12, 1937, in the City of Marietta in Cobb County, Georgia.
- TS: Did you go to the schools in Marietta?
- HG: I attended all public schools: Lemon Street Elementary School and I graduated from Lemon Street High School.
- TS: After you graduated from high school, did you have any further education after that?
- HG: Yes, after that I attended Morehouse College for a couple of years; and then from there I attended St. Johns University in New York City and City College for additional credit. I graduated from the Manhattan Medical School in 1959 where I received a certificate or diploma in medical technology.
- TS: I see. So, if I can get my dates straight, you were born in '37 and then you stayed about eighteen years maybe and graduated from high school, which would have been about 1955. Is that right?
- HG: Correct.
- TS: Did you live in a dormitory when you went to Morehouse?
- HG: Yes, I did.
- TS: So you left Marietta in 1955 and spent two years in Atlanta. Then you went on to New York. When did you come back?
- HG: I came back in 1970. I guess my heart was always in Marietta, because I came back here two or three times a year for the whole time I was away.
- TS: Please tell me about Lemon Street High School and Lemon Street Elementary School when you were attending school

there. What memories of teachers or classmates or facilities stand out in your mind?

HG: Lemon Street played one of the most important roles in getting my life together. Mrs. Louella Patterson, who is an educator who I think taught my father and my mother and other members of my family for about fifty years, was very, very influential on my life during the elementary school era. She was very strict and disciplined in the areas of reading, writing and arithmetic. Her motto was, "You should not stray away from hard work." We studied hard and always had homework. She said that would make us into good Americans.

TS: Who was the principal of the high school?

HG: The principal of the high school was Mr. M.J. Woods. He was the first principal we had. Originally the school was called Perkinson High School and then it changed over to Lemon Street High School. I think he was very influential to me because he identified some academic excellence in us. At that time, many of us were interested in sports; but, he thought I had a little more going academically and he continually encouraged me to get involved at the academic level.

My first ambition was to become a medical doctor. I think that was probably from his influence and from my father's before he died in 1953. I think Mr. Woods and Mr. S.R. Ruff, who was the football coach and later principal of Lemon Street, were both influential. Now, Mr. Ruff is the principal of the largest high school in Chattanooga. He was very strict with the discipline, but he was fair.

TS: Do you know any reason for the name change from "Perkinson" to "Lemon Street" High School?

HG: It is basically hearsay. I think in the early 1940's Dr. [W.H.] Perkinson was a superintendent of schools. He was very influential in getting the school built. At that time we got a new school bus, and the kids were really happy about it. Right after his death his family said that they didn't want him remembered that way with kids acting like that. Later there was a political decision to change the name back to Lemon Street High School. There already was a Lemon Street Elementary.

TS: Did you have any feelings that the facilities were adequate or inadequate? Did you feel you were getting a quality education or was there a shortage of library books, for instance?

HG: There were two things going on with us. We knew we were at a disadvantage. But we had a lot of quality teachers; so some good things were pumped into our heads. One of the teachers used to say, "When you start late in a race, you must run twice as fast." Although we knew we had inadequate books because of all the names in the books or because the books were worn out....

TS: You mean you got "hand-me-down" books from Marietta High School?

HG: Yes, we got "hand-me-down" books from Marietta High School, as well as sports equipment. The cliché was, "Do the best you can with what you've got, until you can do better." We believed a better day was coming.

Although we felt materialistically inadequate, the motivation for an education was very, very high. In those days they didn't believe in social promotion. If you didn't get an academic background, you stayed in that grade. You might have been fifteen years old in the third grade. Most of the students were highly motivated, and we didn't dwell on the materialistic inequity. We knew we couldn't do anything about it; so we accepted it at face value. I think that from the discipline and the high motivation we were able to make up the difference.

TS: The date you graduated from high school was just about the time the twelfth grade was added in Georgia schools. Did you graduate from twelfth grade?

HG: Yes, I graduated from the second twelfth grade class, which was exciting.

TS: You must have been a junior or a senior when the Brown v. Board of Education suit was decided by the Supreme Court.

HG: I know it had no immediate impact, but did everyone get excited when the case was heard?

HG: We were all excited. I was talking to my son, who goes to Marietta High School now. There is a wall around Northcutt Stadium, and at that time we used to go watch the other teams play. The blacks used to have to sit on that wall, and often they would run us off from there. One of the things I said at that time was, "Maybe, one of these days, we'll be able to come over here and play on this field." That didn't come to pass before I graduated. Now, sitting on that wall is sort of privileged. Even in 1954 we had a pretty good NAACP in Marietta and Cobb County; so we were aware of what was going on.

TS: Who was in charge here in Cobb County?

HG: Reverend [J.W.] Cook from the Zion Baptist Church was the leader of the NAACP in the early 1950's.

TS: What sort of things were they doing?

HG: The NAACP has always been actively involved in the quality of education. Appropriation of funds to our schools, so that we could have first rate material, was important. They were able to lobby with the Board of Education to bring in a Chemistry laboratory and microscopes in the Biology lab. We also got in a new library in 1954 or '55. So the quality of education has always been the number one priority or at least it was at that time.

TS: What about the leadership of the black community at that time? I'm sure that ministers such as Reverend Cook were important. What about others, such as businessmen?

HG: The black business district at that time was on Lawrence Street, up to East Park Square. We had several stores and restaurants and a few doctors.

TS: Before that the white community had been active.

The men who were actively involved in soapbox politics were the ones the people would come to to discuss black votes. The "Black Mayor of Marietta" was Mr. "Shine" Fowler, that's A.S. Fowler, who owned a restaurant and several small businesses. Mr. Jeff Robinson was a deacon at the Cole Street Baptist Church [and] was actively involved. Mr. Zuett Thompson was a large landlord and so was J.J. Johnson. They were involved, too.

TS: Why did you decide to go to Morehouse?

HG: I got a scholarship. When I graduated in 1955 I had an offer for about fifteen scholarships; most of them were academic. My father died in 1953; so I decided to go to Morehouse, because it was close by and I wanted to continue to support my Mom. I had three brothers and a sister.

TS: When you went to New York you got a degree which put you in hospitals doing exactly what?

HG: I was on the kidney transplant team at Mt. Sinai Hospital for twelve years. I was very happy to be involved with the initial artificial kidney. I worked with Dr. Kiel and Dr. Sherman Cuthbert who were pioneers in the development of the artificial kidney in the early years. It soon became the center of focus in America for

dialysis and kidney transplant.

TS: Did those years in New York have any influence on your political views?

HG: Definitely. One of my aunts was a precinct captain for the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, who I think was one of the most exciting black legislators of this century. We lived right next door to the Abyssinia Baptist Church, which I attended at that time. She was also a member of the Roosevelt Democratic Club, which dealt very heavily in ward politics. It gave me an idea of what the whole political scene was about.

I had some general insight because my father was actively involved. I always knew when it was election time because every registered voter in the household had to vote. As I review the record of Black precincts in Marietta, I find that they always had a good voter turnout. I think it is because of the family influence. This was crystallized when I got to New York because my aunt taught me the "in's and out's" of ward politics up to the county, state and national levels.

TS: Before 1955 the white primary had been knocked down, but I suppose there was still a literacy test. Was there?

HG: I can remember, just as clear as yesterday, the first time I registered to vote. It was on Washington Avenue where Jimmy the Greek's restaurant is now. The county had an office there then. The registrar took out a very large book, which was the Constitution of the State of Georgia, and had me read a whole page. That was the first time I had ever had the opportunity to see the thing. I think he was surprised that I could read it all. There were about five of us and he asked the others if they could do the same thing. They said, "Yes," and he registered us all.

TS: They didn't ask you what it meant? They just had you read it?

HG: That's right.

TS: Was there a feeling that election officials made it more difficult for blacks to pass the literacy tests than for whites?

HG: Yes, in 1946 the blacks in Cobb really voted in numbers for the first time because the white primary had been knocked out. There is a book called The Pictorial History of the Blacks in America by Rodgers which has a

picture on page 309 of the blacks in 1946 going, in line, all the way around the courthouse to vote. I was influenced by that book when my aunt showed it to me in New York.

TS: The Marietta courthouse?

HG: Yes. From that time on I think that's when blacks became active. In the early 1950's we had the first black to run for City Council since Reconstruction, basically from the influence of the heavy registration efforts of 1946 and 1947.

TS: Who was that person?

HG: The person to run in 1954 was named John Blackman. We called him Bertie Lewis Blackman. He ran in City Council Ward 5. He was defeated by [75] votes. The person who defeated him was Red Atherton. [Ed. note: the Blackman election was actually in 1961].

There were some odd stories told about the election. At that time there were still two separate polling places. The whites voted at one and the blacks at the other. They had white poll watchers at the black polling places, but no black poll watchers at the white polling places. They had communication backwards and forwards. I've been told it was four o'clock in the morning before the final vote tally was in. That was a very exciting election. Two city councilmen resigned; so it meant two places were open. That probably was the highest voter turnout ever for Ward 5, until my election.

There were some distinguished people running then: Mr. Atherton [and] Mr. [Claude] Anderson, who owned the furniture company and who later served on the Marietta Housing Authority. [Luther Burton and Bayard Cole] were also candidates. This was before the runoff was devised. This was purely a popular vote. If they would have had a runoff, things might have been different at that time. [Ed. note: According to the Marietta Daily Journal, June 29, 1961, the final results were Atherton, 375; Blackman, 300; Anderson, 252; Burton, 76; Cole, 25; and one write-in vote for former councilman Guy Powell].

TS: By 1970, when you returned, there were some pretty significant changes. The schools had been integrated for three years. I'm sure from New York you were aware of the changes taking place in the schools. Did you have anything to do with that?

HG: Yes, I was very interested when I came home, to see some

changes which could have been accelerated. At the time I was concerned that there was a tremendous number of dropouts. The Marietta School System did not integrate until 1967, which was a very good year because the Lemon Street High School was state champion and the Marietta High School was a state champion in football. Everyone had high expectations that we would have the best football team in Georgia. A lot of the students went over; and they did have a fine team in 1968; but a lot of the kids felt they got a bad break. Many felt that there wasn't a true and equitable process at that time. That stimulated me to get involved.

I remember, as a child, that you couldn't walk around during the school day without someone in the Police Department approaching you to find out why you weren't in school. When I came back there were large groups of kids, both black and white, who had dropped out of school. This encouraged me to take a look at what was happening at that time. From that I was interested in developing the Black Youth Action Council. This was one of our top priorities--education--motivating kids to go back to school, motivating kids to return home.

We had a lot of kids who did quite well in school and made out well in other communities. We found from talking to those folks at class reunions and family reunions that there was not an opening in the job market here. Basically, the only opening in the job market around here was Lockheed Aircraft. Many of the folks with specific skills and strategies stayed in other communities as a result.

I use this scenario to describe it. If you have a bank account with \$100 in it and you keep taking money from it without making any deposits, you'll eventually have nothing--zero. That's how I felt about all of the talent leaving Marietta and dispersing it in other areas around the country. We wanted a high grade community, and that is why I began to get actively involved--especially from a humanitarian point of view. I had a Christian religious background with a lot of self pride. That was a big motivation for doing things, in that process, just because things were right. We confronted the authorities who could change things, but didn't because of philosophical indifference. One time a friend of mine told me that I wouldn't be able to do anything by talking to folks on a one-to-one basis. He said that I needed to get into electoral politics and that folks would recognize me as the voice of leadership from the black community. That's why I got involved. That person was Maynard Jackson.

I'd like to inject this, because my academic background is a little strange. When we were in the tenth grade we took a comprehensive examination offered by the Ford Foundation for all black students. The top fifty kids in the state were given the opportunity to go on into college from the tenth grade. That's when I went to Morehouse. I left Lemon Street in 1953; but then my father died; and I had to come back to help out with my mother. When I graduated in 1955 I went back to Morehouse for a while.

TS: I think Mr. Jackson was one of those to go from the tenth grade.

HG: That's right. They took all of us into the same dormitory. We were really young, and they wanted to see if we were mature enough to mix with the others socially. We all became very good friends at that time. As you know, he ran against Herman Talmadge [for the U.S. Senate in 1968]. That's when he told me this.

TS: I'm trying to do some mental figuring. That must have been about 1968? That was about the time I came here.

HG: That's right.

TS: A lot of people thought an ideal solution to the integration problem would have been to close down Lemon Street High School and send everybody to Marietta High School. How did you feel about this, when it became the solution that was implemented?

HG: I had mixed emotions about closing down all of the black schools. One of the uniquenesses about Marietta was that the schools were perfectly situated to be neighborhood schools. I thought the integration would have been more effective if the kids were sent to the schools in their own neighborhoods, so that uniformity would have been maintained. A lot of white kids had been passing black schools on their way to school, and it was the same with black kids. I think that if the idea of "neighborhood" would have been maintained I would have been more pleased. There was a concept of morality and dignity--love--because Lemon Street brought together all of the higher elements of our community. Erasing that made for some very mixed feelings.

At the time I didn't think there would be much shock. But now I think there was too much shock. The dropout rate for the integration period was too high. I think it is because there was no orientation period of "let's get

together." You know, there were so many of us coming from one side of town to the other side that it made for a real culture shock in moving from one geographic area to the other. I thought the PTA's could have gotten together to discuss this one. During the summer they could have had tours of the school. When the black kids got there many of them were just wandering around in the halls. Marietta High School was three or four times larger than Lemon Street. It was a big shock.

They did use Lemon Street Elementary School, because of pressure from the black community. The integration went smoothly, but the political air changed. After three or four years they closed Lemon Street Elementary School. I thought it would have been a natural situation for kids to see how each other functioned in a natural surrounding.

I still think it was fantastic how the integration was acquired. As you know, 1967 was a long time after the decision was handed down; but there has always been a uniqueness about Marietta. The blacks and the whites have always gotten along fairly well. When we were kids on Saturday and Sunday mornings we used to play at Lemon Street field before our parents got up. We'd choose up sides for baseball, softball or football games and we picked guys because we thought they would be the best players.

TS: Integrated ball teams?

HG: Yes. But by the time we thought our parents were up we all eased back to our own areas.

TS: Where was the Lemon Street field?

HG: It was on Lemon Street; but we had a creek on Cole Street which divided Lemon Street, Cole Street, and Roosevelt Circle. At that time Roosevelt Circle was a white subdivision which had been built for Bell Aircraft. It was just across the street; so the white kids would come across to play. They'd ease back across the creek before their parents got up. I remember getting a lot of whippings for playing with those kids.

JG: How many children went to the Lemon Street High School?

HG: There were 33 to graduate when I did in 1953. I think at the highest, there were 600 kids in the high school, as compared to several thousand at Marietta High.

JG: Were there several classes in each grade, such as were

there more than just one class of fourth graders?

HG: No. As a matter of fact, there was a population explosion. I can't remember the year, but I remember that from the first through the fifth grades there must have been four or five sections of the first grade and so on, up until the fifth or sixth grade. But when you got to the sixth and seventh grades there was a new concept. Lemon Street High School was the only black high school in Cobb County. The kids from Acworth, Powder Springs, Smyrna were all bused to Lemon Street. That goes back to the early '40's. At that time Cobb County was pretty much a rural community; so at the harvest time or planting time many of the black kids had to help on the farm. Before we got the twelfth grade, you could only go the seventh or eighth grade in Marietta; and then you'd have to go the last two or three years of high school at Washington High in Atlanta. At that time it was all right to only get through the seventh or eighth grade and then to go get a job and help out. Then, when you got in the eighth grade you were in high school.

JG: Did the kids who lived outside of the Marietta System have to pay to go to the Lemon Street School?

HG: No, there was an agreement between the Cobb County School System and the Marietta School System to subcontract that. In the earlier days the Marietta School System was the school system. The Cobb County System was a step child.

JG: What about your teachers? Were they white or black?

HG: All of my teachers were black, from the first grade through the twelfth.

JG: I know that you didn't go through integration, but do you know if any black teachers came over to Marietta High School to teach?

HG: That was something in which the NAACP was actively involved. When they integrated the schools, over fifty percent of black teachers lost their jobs. At first they kept the black teachers within the system, but many high school teachers became elementary school teachers. But some of the teachers who went over to Marietta High School are still there. We lost mostly the high school teachers. Elementary grade teachers were treated more equitably.

TS: When did you make your first race for the City Council?

- HG: I first tested the water in 1973.
- TS: This was in a period before the districts were apportioned the way you wanted them to be. What percentage of black voters were in your ward? Has that always been Ward 5?
- HG: They call it "The Grogan Plan." At that time Wards 4, 5 and 6 were the key wards for black participation, because of the way the lines were drawn. There were more blacks in Ward 6 than in any other of the city wards.

Right after Mr. Derry Holmes ran in the late '50's--he lost by a very small margin--the lines were changed. There were more blacks taken out of Ward 6 and put into Ward 5. When you looked at the map of the wards, the districts didn't make too much sense at that time, although there were enough blacks in Ward 6 that if all the blacks went out it would have been a very tight race, because of white voter apathy and low turnout. I guess the political powers at that time felt they couldn't take a chance on this. So they diluted the blacks a little more.

When I ran in 1973, I wanted to see what percentage of turnout would come out for the race. We had an increase from about 30 or 40 percent to 75 percent turnout. I felt if we could get all of the folks who were geographically together, we could change that whole attitude.

One of the things that I was concerned about was the way the boundaries were drawn. Wards 4, 5 and 6, Lemon Street, Page Street and Cole Street, a distance of about a block, were like a pie. My grandmother lived on one side of the street, and they were in Ward 5. If you went up that same street about a block, you were in Ward 4. We all were within a stone's throw of each other, but we were geographically removed.

But they key issue was malapportionment. For instance, [in] Ward 4, they had 890 people; and in Ward 5 they had 2000 people. There were several wards with less than 1000 people, while one ward had 3000.

- TS: That certainly was out of the line of one man, one vote. Which ward were you in?

HG: I was in Ward 5.

- TS: Who did you run against in 1973?

HG: I ran against the incumbent, who was Robert "Bo" Read. He was a Lockheed employee. There was also a retired Lieutenant Colonel by the name of Lloyd Drake.

TS: I remember those years, and I was in your ward. In fact, I think I voted for you in 1973. Where was the polling place for Ward 5 at that time?

HG: That is one of the things in the reapportionment suit. The polling places jumped around a lot back then. The polling place was on Page Street near U.S. 41, which was in another ward at that time.

TS: Where was the polling place located?

HG: In the public facilities of Marietta.

TS: After that election, where "Bo" Read was reelected, you had reason to be upset over the apportionment of the districts. What action did you take on it?

HG: There were two schools of thought at that time. The Nixon Administration was in, and there was not a strong feeling for civil rights. Although the Voting Rights Act was established in [1965], there were no teeth in it. We had very good grounds under the Voting Rights Act to file a petition, but we decided to go the constitutional route instead. We wanted to test the one man, one vote concept; so we sued under the constitutional malapportionment of the wards. Then we brought in some of the civil rights laws. We believed that we might never get an answer on the federal laws; so I wanted to show that it was a constitutional right that had been violated -- the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

TS: You sued in federal court? Is that where the case begins?

HG: At that time the initial attorney was Howard Moore. Elizabeth Renscroft also. At that time Howard Moore was defending Angela Davis; so he spent more time on the west coast. Don Edwards was a young attorney who had just finished Howard University Law School. He got together with Elizabeth Renscroft, and he handled the case. It's very interesting. He was one of the youngest attorneys to ever practice before the Supreme Court. He handled the case for the three and one-half years that we litigated.

TS: Was this a suit that was brought by the NAACP?

HG: Yes, it was funded by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

JG: Who, precisely, did you sue?

HG: We sued the City of Marietta and each council person individually.

JG: These attorneys were not Atlantans or from this area were they?

HG: We initially had to present our case to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York City. I did all of the research from the archives. We presented it, and they felt that it was a case that didn't need any more research. They presented us with a list of attorneys from across the country who were available. I picked several who were popular at the time. All of them were very articulate in Civil Rights, as well as constitutional law. We were getting in high cotton when we came from a constitutional law point of view.

JG: Did this go through District Court in Atlanta?

HG: Yes, it is historically significant to me because many people have indicated that Judge Charles Moye, Jr. has not made a favorable decision since that time. He's very much an arch-conservative, appointed by Nixon; and it took him three years to hand down a decision.

JG: What finally was the decision?

HG: The verdict was that the constitutional rights of the black citizens of Marietta had been abridged by the fact that the malapportionment had taken place for reasons other than natural geographical boundaries.

JG: This was a class action suit?

HG: Yes, we sued on behalf of the present citizenry and those whose constitutional rights had been violated in the past.

JG: Did Marietta appeal the decision or did they go ahead and implement the decision?

HG: They did not appeal, because we caught them with their pants down. They didn't have a very good defense either. We were able to present the case from a constitutional point of view which was hard to defend against.

I was rather displeased with the defense the City of Marietta chose to use. It was mostly a character assassination of me, calling me a troublemaker and an activist. They did not deal specifically with the

inequity of the law. That was the only thing they had in their defense, other than stalling. By that time they were about \$20,000 in the red, so they didn't want to spend any more money. It became a public issue. That is one of the good things I can say about the Marietta Journal. They said, "Why can't they change the wards, because they have been talking about it for a long time?" They raised the constitutional issue to the public. But no previous administration had ever changed the boundaries. It was becoming an issue of spending too much money on a case they were going to lose.

TS: These boundaries were drawn in the late '50's and had not been changed until your case?

HG: No, for example, Morgan Thomas was on the City Council of Marietta. His mother-in-law died. Her house was on one side of town; he lived on the other. One Saturday morning the City Council got together and changed the boundaries, because Mr. Thomas was going to move and it would be better for him because of a family situation. He moved, and they moved the lines to follow him. I was able to prove that by showing the old telephone directories.

The lines were moved another time, after the second black ran in the early '60's. The line was moved more to dilute the vote than to make the population of the wards equally distributed.

TS: We need to note that we have an interview with Morgan Thomas and his version of what took place is available. Let me ask this. With the Civil Rights Act of 1965 there is a provision that says that any time there is a change in any election law in Georgia, the Justice Department is supposed to review it to see if the purpose of the law is to dilute black voting strength. Did changes take place and the Justice Department simply overlooked them?

HG: A very good question. We showed 139 changes between 1965 and that time in which the City of Marietta had not submitted a single submission to the Justice Department. They are sophisticated today thanks to me. We got a tape on all of the Cobb County cities, and none of them had ever submitted anything to the Justice Department about changes. They just ignored the law.

TS: I wonder if that was a general practice throughout the south?

HG: Definitely.

TS: The Justice Department didn't keep an eye on it to stop it?

HG: Correct. The Review Clearance Board was cut back tremendously by the Nixon Administration; so they had three or four people overlooking the voting law changes for the whole country. It was an impossible task. When I went to the Justice Department I saw rooms and rooms full of records they could not get to. I saw several boxes of briefs they had not reviewed at all.

JG: How were the lines finally drawn? Did the Justice Department do it or was the judge involved?

HG: I drew the lines with the technical assistance of the Voter Education Project which had computer tape of the census. That's really the key to doing it, although it may not look right. You have to make sure that the people are equally distributed through all seven wards, that there are no crossing boundaries, and that you use natural or existing landmarks as boundaries.

Because of the historical housing patterns of the area, the blacks were always together. We used imaginary lines until we were able to show the highest percentage of blacks in one ward. We had to do this without showing reverse discrimination. We couldn't do the same thing to them that they were doing to us.

TS: What percentage of the voters in the 5th Ward were black, after you drew the lines?

HG: We came up with 64 percent.

JG: All in all, what sort of percentage of the Marietta electorate did blacks represent?

HG: Well, when we did this the population of Marietta was in the low '20's. We are about one third of that; so I would say there are 7 or 8000 blacks in Marietta.

TS: When did you have a decision handed down on your suit?

HG: It was in 1975.

TS: So you geared up again to run in 1977? Did you go up against "Bo" Read again or had he been changed out of that district?

HG: There was a gentleman's agreement that we wouldn't put several of the councilmen living in the same ward; so some of them decided not to run again in 1977.

TS: So Mr. Read did not run again, and there was no incumbent from Ward 5. What were the issues you raised in 1977?

HG: My platform was to increase the amount of communication between the government and the citizenry. I lobbied strongly for all of the federal funds that were available. Before then there had been an attitude that there were restrictions on the federal funds that were available to the city. I felt that there should be representation from all segments of the community on the Council. At the same time I was elected, the first woman was elected. I felt those were significant turnarounds.

We needed new leadership at that time. We made a massive voter registration drive. Everyone who was crawling, walking or rolling and 18 years old was signed up to vote. It uplifted the level of political participation. It showed we could fight City Hall, and it upgraded all the citizenry of Marietta.

TS: You were elected in 1977. Did you actually take office on the first day of 1978?

HG: I think it was January 10, 1978.

TS: When City Council organized itself that year, which committees were you placed on?

HG: There was sort of a lottery. You had to select three committees that you would like to work on. One of the things that I was interested in was the Education Committee. I was appointed chairman of the Education Liaison Committee. I served on the Finance Committee because I wanted to be able to take a look at how the financial flow of the city was going. The other area I was interested in was housing. So I was placed on the Beautification Committee.

TS: Who was the Mayor at that time?

HG: The Mayor was J. Dana Eastham. He was elected the same year, 1977.

TS: He was coming in for his second term at that time?

HG: Right.

TS: Does the Mayor actually make the appointments or does the City Council as a body make the appointments?

HG: The Mayor makes the selection with the consent of the Council.

TS: The Education Committee--was that something that you were particularly interested in?

HG: Yes, I was particularly interested in the Education Committee. One of the pet projects that I was interested in was, as I mentioned earlier in the interview, we had had a tremendous amount of dropout within the community. There was a large segment within the adult population within our community that I thought had shown interest that if there was some type of formal mechanism within the community that they would participate in. One of the things that I was interested in was the community school concept.

The time I served as Education Committee chairman I think we upgraded the level of education to a higher level in the City of Marietta. We were able to bring in the comprehensive high school. It gave the student the opportunity to go in various directions. If he did not want to pursue things academically, he had a choice of developing in the technology field or he could develop in the trade field--drafting, carpentry, brick masonry. We had computer programming, and then the liberal arts were dealt with on a higher level. We built a new library. The capacity I think increased about threefold. Plus all the video media that one could be exposed to. It has a very good selection of tapes of the Marietta Journal from the first day. That was part of the research in which kids could get involved, and so I was very happy with the progress of the educational system. We did all of that without increasing the tax digest, which was very unique.

TS: Did you have federal matching funds to help with this or how did you finance it?

HG: It was a combination of avenues that we pursued. We were able to favorably get a bond issue passed during that time. From that, we were able to get federal matching funds as well as state funds to take on such a big project.

JG: Does the Marietta City Council appoint the School Board or are they elected?

HG: That was one of the exciting things, too, because the chairman of the present board was my appointment, Mr. Maloney. What I did was try to, for the first time, have an equitable selection process. Before, the majority of the time, I felt, it was a political appointment. What we did. . . I set up a series of interviews. The person had to submit a resume, and we interviewed each of the candidates on a one-on-one basis before we made the final

selection. The four years I served on Council we used this technique. The technique has been integrated in the City of Marietta, and this is part of the process that is being done now. We go through an application process and interview to try to get the highest quality people who were concerned about what the needs of the kids were to them.

JG: Is Mr. Maloney the Superintendent of Schools?

HG: No, Mr. Maloney is the Chairman of the Board of Education.

JG: Did you hire a new superintendent also?

HG: Yes, we also hired a new superintendent [Dr. Roy Nichols] who had an excellent background, who we felt was very sensitive to all the needs of the community and who had a very favorable concept of community schools.

JG: Were you instrumental in establishing the "Right to Read" program?

HG: The "Right to Read" program was one of my pet projects. During the time I served on the Council, we were designated as a Distinguished School System in the state of Georgia with the "Right to Read" program.

TS: In hiring Dr. Nichols, what was the relationship between the Council and the School Board in making that decision? Was the final decision in the hands of the City Council or the School Board?

HG: The final decision of hiring Dr. Nichols was with the School Board. But we let it be known in no uncertain terms the quality of person we were looking for. We reviewed all the superintendent's selection process. We looked at them and looked at the background. We felt that this was the first time in almost a quarter of a century that we had a chance to select a new superintendent, and we definitely had the financial resources to hire the best that we could get. So that was our goal. We knew that we were going to be placing a person in this position that would have some type of longevity, who had some real progressive educational techniques. We wanted to see that the school system in Marietta still remained the finest.

TS: What is the racial composition of the school board now? Is it proportional to the population?

HG: Basically. We have five school board members and we have

one black on the school board.

TS: So you're really underrepresented, aren't you? Two in five would be closer to the population of Marietta.

HG: Yes.

TS: But these appointments--a recommendation is made by the Education Committee to the whole City Council?

HG: Yes, then the Council votes on the selection process. But we would have gone through the total process of the interview and all the Council members would be invited to the interviews. In fact, it was probably one of the best procedures we had to have the Council present in the early stage to be able to match up the information which they had gotten from various resumes.

TS: How many wards are there now in Marietta?

HG: There are seven wards.

TS: So there is no relationship between the ward lines and the members of the school board.

HG: Well, that was one of the points we tried to get into--maybe have a person within each district as a representative on the school board. But that never came to pass.

The various committees that we have are the Planning Commission, the Zoning Appeal Board--we appoint them basically from the geographical boundary. One of the other changes that we were able to make was the Board of Lights and Water. It was a three man board. It has been expanded now, so they can get a representative from each of the wards--basically each of the wards. But there was another niche added--we have two members that are not residents of the City of Marietta but are customers, because we have the incorporated limit and we have what we call the Marietta Division.

Then the state legislature divided off into geographical boundaries. So that has been one of the issues that has been brought to the forefront that many of the residents had indicated that they were supporting the Marietta School System but philosophically disagree. I think you are paying for a service, and it is not a privilege of selecting the board members. But we were able to compromise and have two other people added to that board. So the people in the unincorporated section would have a process of serving on the Board of Lights and Water. I

would also like to bring out that I am the only black who has ever served on the Board of Lights and Water also.

TS: We were talking a little bit earlier about the comprehensive high school at Marietta. You were also involved in the community school program, I believe.

HG: Yes.

TS: Will you explain exactly what the community school program is, and what your role was with that?

HG: When we looked at our budget, we saw that we were spending a large amount of money. If you looked at the time students occupied the school building, it was far less than our budget reflected. The concept that I thought was since you have the school and then the staff and you had all of the resources there, when you cut the lights out at three or four o'clock until the next day, you just had an empty school house. You still had your heating system and everything. There were people who were interested in continuing their education because of whatever during their lifetime that they had to stop. But they're still making a living. So they would be very happy to participate in any program that would be on a Saturday and also in the afternoon.

The Cobb County School System has had a very successful community school system. I had always said that if they can do it, we can do it, too. I think we owe the citizenry of Marietta this same opportunity. I wanted [the school to] do some things not only academically, but to improve ourselves in general. You can have grooming-- young ladies learning how to groom themselves. [You can have persons] going back to knit or cook, learning new reading techniques, photograph, home computers, some of the things you would not have an opportunity to do in the regular working day. In fact, there was a slot amount of time that was available that we could utilize and then not have to build new facilities, because we had old facilities there.

The other thing was that it would help to improve the communication between the student and the parent. At least the parent would have an opportunity to see exactly what's going on during the day with the kids and what the facilities are and what a bond issue is. Because many times we vote on bonds, and we don't really know what's going on. Then we give the opportunity for parents to get into the school system and see what we're doing. So that is the reason I was very happy we were able to eventually get the community school concept.

TS: You were talking a little bit earlier about being on the Beautification Committee because of your interest in housing. Will you explain what exactly you were involved in on this committee?

HG: On [Street], Building, and Beautification, there was a tremendous amount of federal funds between '77 and '81 on housing rehab. As a matter of fact, the Community Development funds. . . the City of Marietta got about \$5 to \$6,000,000 during that period of time. Number One, it would go hand in hand with economical development. The downtown revitalization was in the process of coming up again. So to have an equal proportion of residential and commercial type of upgrading within the community--if we could show an overall upgrading of the community, we were able to get funds for the community for the commercial section and that was to develop jobs. For an example, as the liaison person between the Marietta Housing Authority and the City Council, we were able to relocate folks who were living in public housing on the 120 loop on Clay Street, move them out, tear down all of the old, dilapidated apartments, and develop them into an industrial park.

TS: Did you support that?

HG: Yes, definitely. I led the march in getting that done.

TS: Because the housing was substandard?

HG: The housing was substandard, and they were built as a temporary housing facility in the early years for the Bell Bomber plant.

TS: This is Marietta Place?

HG: Marietta Place.

TS: Were there new public housing units going up to accommodate all of those people while old facilities were being torn down?

HG: Definitely. We worked out a program. Number One, as you know, the new Marietta Place was built. Through attrition, as folk moved out, were able to relocate. It took about two and one-half to three years to relocate the folk [as they dispersed] all around the world. So we were able to get them out and then make an agreement with the housing authority for the land, redevelop the land with the favorable utilities, and then solicit the business community, because it is right there on the 120 loop which is accessible to I-75 and also accessible to

the railway. We had a tax incentive program at that time. Then from that there were low cost loans that would develop. By large businesses coming in we were able to develop jobs for folk. That was the most important thing. The other was we had a large amount of substandard housing within the inner city. We built 30 new houses between '78 and '81, and we spent about \$3.5 million in rehabbing over several hundred houses within the whole city. I was interested primarily in Ward 5, but it was a program that was wonderful for all of the folk in the City of Marietta.

TS: Now when you say you built thirty new houses between '78 and '81, are these private residences--single-family houses?

HG: Single-family houses. What we were able to do was to go in and see that these were substandard housing. We cleared the records for any problems that they had as far as mortgages were concerned. We were able to sign a contract with them that they would live in the house for "x" period of time. We tore the old house down and built a new house with federal funds.

TS: Are these the dollar houses that you were talking about?

HG: No, those are a different program.

TS: So they were sold to. . . .

HG: They were not sold.

TS: They still belonged to the city?

HG: What happened was, for example, if I own a house, and the Planning Department came and said it was substandard, we sat down and made an agreement with a ceiling of \$25,000. We worked out a contract with the contractor, who came and tore the house down, built a new house, and then he put the folk back in the new house. The only thing they had to do is to agree they would live in the house for ten years. No attachment. All they had to do was to pay their tax.

TS: I see. They already owned the property.

HG Right.

TS: So the city really just built them a house. It's kind of like homesteading in a way.

HG: Right.

- TS: The only requirement is that they stay there--they live in it. And then after ten years they can do what they please?
- HG: Correct.
- TS: We were talking before the interview started about dollar houses. Will you elaborate on what houses you can get for a dollar?
- HG: To get the new housing in what we were really trying to do was to put a band-aid over a tremendous wound. What had happened. . . through the years one of the negative aspects was urban renewal. Urban renewal was to remove slum and substandard housing and to rebuild the community. But the three stages of urban renewal that we had--and we talked about black businesses in the community--the only thing that urban renewal did was tear down the black businesses. [It] dislocated folk and never built anything. So from a historical perspective, I was trying to do what the objective of the program was. The urban renewal went to the Johnson Street areas, tore down all of the houses, [and] built public housing, but in the process of building public housing they did not build any private houses.
- So we had empty lots throughout that area. So what we did was identify the lots that the city owned. The reason that they City of Marietta owned them was because the Housing Authority owned them first. When the urban renewal program went out, the city took [over]. So we identified some houses where people were relocating. And we were going to move those houses to those empty lots that had been empty for the past ten years. They were just sitting there...[the city] was not getting any tax or anything. To try to make some amends with some of the residents who lived in that areas, we would get a poll of them who were still interested in living in the community to put their name in a hat. Then whoever pulls it out, they would bring up the house from substandard to standard and agree to live in it for "x" period of time. The only thing it would cost them would be a dollar.
- TS: That a great program so far as I'm concerned.
- HG: Right. Plus, we had fifteen to twenty lots that were not bringing any tax basis at all. But a house that costs \$25,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 with the new tax assessment would be bringing some more revenue potential to the city.
- TS: As I recall, there was some surplus land from Dobbins or

Lockheed near the Chiropractic College [Life College]--I think about 40 acres over there. Were those some of the acres you were interested in?

HG: Yes, I was interested in that area, but that was a little different as far as the streets and beautification thing. You know, we've been landlocked a lot with parks, and that was a grand opportunity at that time. The City of Marietta, the local Chiropractic College and several other private residents--people who lived there prior to the war--felt that they had a right to the property too. So the government wanted everyone to submit a proposal. So we wanted the City of Marietta. The Parks and Recreation Department surveyed and said it would make an ideal place for a park to put tracks in there, [a] picnic area for the handicapped, and various other facilities.

One of the things I was interested in was. . . that used to be a predominantly black neighborhood [Jonesville] in the early years. Some of the grave sites were still remaining in the area. Plus the continuity of land was still the same as it was 75 years ago. So we were able to get the land over the objection of the Chiropractic College.

TS: I see. So it is a park--about a 40 acre park?

HG: Yes [Wildwood Park].

TS: Did you support downtown revitalization?

HG: Yes.

TS: Would you say a word or two about what was done in your years on the City Council in regard to that?

HG: At first it was a concept and idea that was developed by Red Atherton. He always had felt that Marietta was unique enough that it could hold its own even in the time that the shopping center spree really started. We are a unique city, centrally located near Kennesaw Mountain, the national battlefield. I think there are about two to three million people who visit that park every year. So being very closely in conjunction with that park, we thought that if we could restore the City of Marietta to the early years when it used to be crowded for Fridays and Saturdays for all who were coming in, we would not be like a lot of cities in the State of Georgia that would just dry up.

They had a good idea, but they didn't have any money. When the Community Development funds came, we had to be

able to present a proposal that would show that there would be economic development that would help the overall community. Although I was not too enthusiastic in many of the line item disbursement of funds, [I thought] that the concept was really good, because if some of the stores opened up and if they agreed to hire some of the people from the community, then that would help the unemployment, plus it would open up new opportunities for minority businesses. So we were able to get the funds based on the concept that we were to rebuild the inner city commercial along with rebuilding the houses. We wanted to just try to get the housing, but HUD was not too enthusiastic. They wanted a comprehensive program and not a specialized program. So they wanted downtown redevelopment. I wanted housing; and I wanted unemployment and economic development, so that the city would redevelop.

TS: Has the redevelopment in fact led to black or minority businesses and more jobs?

HG: I would say more minorities being employed, but the dream of more minority businesses within the inner city of Marietta has not come to pass.

TS: Why do you think that is so?

HG: Political, economic, probably competitiveness, just the state of the country--everybody really trying to survive.

TS: There used to be a thriving black business community in the downtown area, and it would be nice if it would come back again in the downtown area.

HG: I think it would be nice, but the [competition] is very sharp. The financial institutions' analyses of what marketing is all about. . . I think the attitudes of the institutions were not favorable in doing that. As a part of the NAACP we did a study. One of the subjects we did was what we call red lining. There were certain communities where the bank had an imaginary line, and the loan officer pulls out this drawing and looks. If you fall within a geographical line, unless you have proved a very strong point by being very sophisticated, the probability of getting funds is very limited.

One of my biggest complaints is that I think the only financial advancement we got is that we built about ten or twelve new black churches ranging from about \$150,000 to \$250,000. That's been just about the largest amount of money. The building of the new housing, the renovation of the housing, did bring in minority

contractors participating in the \$3 to \$4 million. So it worked out in that. But there had not been any substantial minority businesses, which we are still working on. It's about putting together a package. It's more about sophistication now than it has anything do with the heart. If I could get some people to think with the heart, we could make some inroads. But if it is on a strictly competitive basis, we thought that the long run was not good at all for us.

TS: You talked earlier about the loss of black teachers when the schools were integrated. It almost appears that the same thing happened to black businesses. Integration was really bad for black business ownership.

HG: Definitely, Definitely.

TS: So, in effect, a black businessman has to appeal now to white customers as well as black customers.

HG: Everybody.

TS: Yes, everybody. So that's what you're talking about--the competitiveness of the downtown area. Do you have any ideas about how it could be brought about? On public jobs where you have black contractors brought in because of the requirement of the law is one situation. But what could be done to encourage blacks to open up businesses? I'm sure there are plenty out there who are ready to jump at the opportunity.

HG: Well, it goes back to [whom] can participate in the decision-making process. The old cliché--if you don't say anything, then we assume that you are happy. That is what is really happening, I think. Everybody went to the table. They had their own agenda or hidden agenda. [Minorities were ignored] unless somebody said, "Hey, what about minority business?" Everybody is so interested in [his] own businesses or whatever. There has to be a stronger outreach in getting basically involved.

Communications--I think that that is one of the keys. I always find that I have assumed a lot of things, because I did not talk to a person or persons one-on-one or direct about an issue; but when we did sit down and talk that I was way out of line. From that we were able to come together with a good deal more in an amicable situation. I think that this is what is happening. We went through a period of everybody doing their own thing. We just forgot about people in general.

And I think we're coming back, you know, to the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. We went to such highly technological terminology in the various fields that we have a whole group of folk that graduated from high school that wouldn't even know their name if it jumped up on a computer in front of them. I think I'm alluding really to social promotion. I'm opposed really to that. But with the booming of the country and the attitude of the country, I think we let a whole generation slide through without taking a strong responsibility.

The breaking up of the family--family ties--has been a part of this whole thing. People being more highly mobilized now. And with integration, folk can go any place where they want to go. So they go where they want to go and don't worry about what is happening. But now we're finding out that people can't read and can't write and whatever. I'm hoping we're going back to basics--reading, writing and arithmetic. I think we will come out a lot better.

TS: Well, Mr. Grogan, we thank you very much for coming in today. It was most informative, and we appreciate it.

APPENDIX