

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES E. (MACK) HENDERSON

CONDUCTED AND EDITED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 94

TUESDAY, 9 MAY 2017

Kennesaw State University holds legal title and all literary property rights, including copyright, to this oral history. It is not to be reproduced without permission from the director of the Kennesaw State University Oral History Project.

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 94  
Interview with James E. (Mack) Henderson  
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott  
Tuesday, 9 May 2017  
Location: Henderson home, Marietta, Georgia

TS: Mr. Henderson, why don't you begin by talking about your background, where you grew up, and where you went to school, and a few things of that sort?

MH: I grew up in West End on the southwest side of Atlanta on a street called Pineview Terrace right down from the Cascade Road/Beecher Street intersection, and I went to E. L. Connally [Elementary] School. He had formerly had been one of the leaders in the Atlanta community in education. It was a two-room schoolhouse at that time, and then later it became a very nice brick building that was built when I was in the second and third grade. I don't remember the year, but I stayed there until I was old enough to go to Catholic school. I went to St. Anthony's Parochial School up on Gordon Street [now Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard] next to Howell Park. At St. Anthony [of Padua] Church I served as an altar boy and was also in Pack 9 in Cub Scouts and later in [Boy Scouts] Troop 83.

I had an enjoyable childhood there. Of course, we were Depression children. We lived there all the way through part of high school. I went to Marist from the ninth grade and graduated there. I went into the service the next morning after we had graduation and left on a train to go down to Macon and go into the Navy, hopefully to be a Navy corpsman, which I did achieve. And then I came back to go to school. I started off at Emory and decided I wanted to go to a smaller school because that's what I had been used to. I transferred to Oglethorpe where Dr. Philip Weltner [1944-1953] and Dr. George Seward [1964-1965] were two of the presidents. Philip Weltner's son Charles was later a United States congressman. Charles Longstreet Weltner was in a class ahead of me when we lived on the campus there on Peachtree Road. I graduated from there in 1952 and went on to work for what was then Southern Bell, which was a subsidiary of AT&T.

TS: Let me back up and ask you a few questions. First, you told me an interesting story on the phone yesterday about your name and how you got your name and the trouble you got into at one of your Catholic schools over your name. Could you talk about that?

MH: I'd be glad to. I was always known as Mack Henderson because both of my grandfathers had the nickname of Mack. My paternal grandfather was Edwin Center Henderson. He was named after a doctor down in Henry County in Flippen, Georgia. Oddly enough, Dr. Scott, his marriage license is in the name of Mack when he married Mildred Penelope Pattillo. He was a foreman with the railroad back in those days. My mother's last name was McGlone, and she was Gertrude Margaret McGlone. My father was Ralph Pattillo Henderson, and he carried his mother's maiden name. He was a World War I veteran and was gassed by mustard gas in France. He served in four or five major battles. I'm not sure about all of those.

My father named me after each one of my grandfathers, James Edwin. But he said his nickname is, and he will be known as, Mack after both of his grandfathers. One spelled it Mac and the other Mack, and we carried the four letters. So in grammar school at E. L. Connally I was known as Mack Henderson. When I went to parochial school I was known as Mack Henderson. Then one of the good nuns asked me when I was first there what my name was, and I said, "Mack Henderson." She said, "We don't have any Saint Mack." I said, "What?" She said, "What is your baptismal name?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "Well, you go home and find out." My father was non-Catholic, and it did not help his feelings at all. He said, "I'll talk to them." I said, "No, Daddy, I'll just . . . ." And then he told me the story of my baptismal name that I just told you. So I went back and told them my baptismal name was James Edwin. And the nun said, "Oh, you're Saint James then." I said, "No, I'm just Mack."

I didn't get along too well, but then when I went to Marist I was also known as Mack, but officially I was known as James Edwin. All the priests and everybody called me Mack, but my diploma was in the name of James E. But I signed all my documents as Mack Henderson. In the Navy I was known as Jim. I did get into some difficulty because they checked us hospital corpsmen for some reason, and they lost my trail of James Edwin because everything was in the name of Mack, all my records. I was called in and asked by an officer what was my real name. I had to tell him that my high school records and elementary school and parochial school records were all Mack Henderson. That was the story of it, but I had my hands slapped a few times.

TS: You also told me yesterday that you had trouble signing checks for the county when you were county manager.

MH: That was here. I went in as Mack Henderson because I'd been president of the Chamber as Mack Henderson and in Kiwanis and all the other things that I'd been doing for civic purposes as part of my job at Bell. So they came running in there one day from personnel and accounting and said, "Mr. Henderson, you've been signing these federal documents as Mack Henderson, and your official name is James Edwin Henderson or James E." I said, "Oh my Lord, what are we going to do?" She said, "Well, we can handle the executive memos and all this. We just need to get it corrected on some of the official hirings that you have done as county manager."

Somehow or another, Judge [G. Conley] Ingram and Judge [Irma] Glover got in on it. They came over the next day and said, "Mack, you've got to sign all this stuff, and we're going to notarize it and all so that it's taken care of. The first thing we're going to do is rewrite your contract because they keep pulling you out and pulling you out." I had told them I would give them six weeks free service and then I would be leaving. I said, "Okay, judge, you all write the contract." He said, "How much do you want?" I said, "I don't care. You all decide what to pay." He said, "Well, what if we give you half of what the [previous] county manager was making?" [Patrick G.] Pat Salerno [county manager, 1987-1989] was making \$164,000. I said, "Well, \$80,000 would be a good figure because I'm leaving [soon] because we are going to do some traveling." So that's

the way I started out with the county, and it led to a lot of things. It was a blessing for me because I proved myself because I cleaned up a lot of things that had previously happened.

TS: We'll return to what you did as county manager in a little while. I just wanted to get that story in about your name. Let's go back to why you started in the first grade in a public school rather than a parochial school.

MH: Well, we were three miles from St. Anthony's. We had the streetcar three blocks away from our home on Pineview, and it ended just beyond the intersection of Cascade Road and Beecher Street. So when I was old enough to ride my bicycle, I road my bicycle to school and back.

TS: I see. And the parochial school was connected with the church.

MH: Yes, sir. I was an acolyte and then an altar boy. You had to learn your Latin prayers at the altar, which I can still recite from memory because, thanks be to God, I have a good memory.

TS: That's a long time before Vatican II [Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, which permitted the use of vernacular languages for most of the liturgy during the celebration of the Mass].

MH: Long time before Vatican II. The *Confiteor* was probably the most lengthy prayer that we had, the confession [*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti . . . I confess to almighty God*]. If we weren't doing it correctly, after the Mass the priest would get you behind the sanctuary, and you would recite directly to him exactly how the prayer was to be said. Discipline was something that I learned early on. My father was quite a disciplinarian, and it paid off for me many times over both in business and otherwise.

TS: Sure. You were telling me earlier too before we started the tape about how good an education you got at Marist and how much they were sticklers for grammar then.

MH: Oh, the priests were hell fire and damnation, if you want to put it that way. If you wrote a theme, and you have a punctuational error, under the two priests we had, Father [Vincent P.] Brennan and Father Hageman, you could not [get away with it]. I can give you a copy of [the grammar text]. It started with direct address, parenthetical expressions, and words in apposition, and right on through.

TS: So, you got through Marist in 1946. World War II was over, but the draft was still in effect.

MH: We had signed up. Chet Austin and I were buddies oddly enough.

TS: Oh, really? You knew Chet Austin back then?

MH: No, I did not know Chet back then. We learned about one another when I came here. [Mr. Austin's business partner] Al [A. L. Burruss] was in the legislature, and he told me, "He's the boss while I'm away." So we became blood brothers.

My father would not sign up for me when I was seventeen. So I said, "Well, I'll have to graduate from high school, so I can sign my own papers." That was the bargain I made with my father. I signed up sometime during the recruitment in 1945. I graduated on one day from Marist at the Atlanta Women's Club over here where we had our graduations in those days, and I caught a troop train down to Macon, was sworn in, and then went to Bainbridge, Maryland, for my boot camp and later my training for corpsmanship.

TS: You would have been there in the summertime, I guess, at Bainbridge.

MH: That's correct.

TS: I've heard some tales about how cold it could get in the wintertime there.

MH: I was actually in corps school in the wintertime, but that was the time too when we had some bad turkey at Thanksgiving. [Journalist and commentator] Walter Winchell back in those days knew about it because one of his sons had gone through boot camp there. It was very rigorous. He said, "Hitler had his [concentration] camps, but America has its Bainbridge." The hospital was full of ptomaine poisoning patients that got it from the turkeys.

TS: So, you were stationed at Newport [Rhode Island] Naval Hospital?

MH: I stayed at Newport Naval and went up through the ranks being a ward nurse and all that and then into the scrub room and being a scrub nurse and later, my final year of my two-year enrollment, working for Dr. Bo Murray, who was an ear, nose, and throat specialist. We were right next to the U.S. Naval War College where we did a lot of work. I think one of the worst scrubs I had was when there was a full captain that was towing a vessel that had broken down at sea. They were coming into Newport, and they were towing it. Somehow an accident happened when they broke the towline. A piece of lead took out his eye. He had threatened me when I went in to give him his premedication and all that we were not to enucleate his eye. He wanted to be a career officer. So we did have to enucleate it.

I told Dr. Murray, "I told him that we would try." He said, "Corpsman, I can't save this eye." He called me Jim back then. He said, "Jim, I can't save it. It will go in and ruin the other eye. It will collapse it." So the two of us took a pretty bad chewing out by him when we had to tell him it was enucleated. The rest of the time we had the privilege of seeing some real [heroes]. I think one of the finest men I ever met was Admiral [Chester W.] Nimitz. He was getting out, and I gave him his hearing and eye tests. When I gave him his ear test, I kept asking, "Admiral, you don't hear that?" He said, "Corpsman, come here. Have you ever stood next to an eighteen incher when it somehow went off?" I said, "No, sir." He said, "I've even been behind them when they went off. And it will

deafen you.” He said, “No excuses; it was my fault. I shouldn’t have been too close.” He was one of my favorite admirals. They’ve written lots of books on him.

S: Fantastic. Then you go to Oglethorpe, and you told why you went there. I heard a paper last year [by Paul Stephen Hudson] on Thornwell Jacobs, the president of Oglethorpe from 1915 to 1943. He reopened Oglethorpe in the Atlanta area.

MH: It put him in debt, so I’m told by Dr. Philip Weltner, who was Jasper [Dorsey’s] father-in-law. He started the medical school at Oglethorpe. Under the leadership of Thornwell Jacobs, they had been a pretty good school for a while. Dr. Weltner and Charles Weltner, one of his three sons, went over to South Carolina dressed in overalls because they carried the cash money over to buy the school out of bankruptcy. Dr. Weltner was a fine attorney and during the Talmadge rein took Oglethorpe out of bankruptcy. It had some great professors: Dr. George Seward, who was a Princeton graduate and a real fine person; Dr. Stanley Doggert who taught philosophy; and then Dr. Arthur Cohen whom I worked for as a lab assistant and assisted him on his cancer research. He got his grants from the National Cancer Institute. Then there was a Wendell Brown and then a man that worked on the A-bomb, Dr. Roy Gosslin. He was from Tennessee and was a very prominent physics professor. One of the [examples of] discipline is Charles Weltner who resigned his congressmanship because he could not support a certain governor that we had here in Georgia who had a restaurant [the Pickrick] on Hemphill.

TS: Right. Lester Maddox in the ’66 campaign, I believe. [Weltner refused to sign a Georgia Democratic Party loyalty oath that pledged Democratic candidates to support the entire ticket].

MH: That is correct. I played Joe Mack on you there. [Editor’s note: The interviewer told Mr. Henderson before we started that when he interviewed Rep. Joe Mack Wilson a number of years earlier, Rep. Wilson shaped some of his answers to tell the interviewer what he thought he wanted to hear.] I thought, “I will tempt him like Joe Mack.” But I can’t read you because you’re putting the questions to me very well, sir [laughs].

TS: So, you got a good education at Oglethorpe. What did you major in?

MH: My degree was in advanced biology and physiology. I applied to Duke and Vanderbilt. I wasn’t accepted, so I interviewed and I was one of six that was hired for the Southern Bell system.

TS: Were you thinking about going to medical school?

MH: I didn’t get accepted.

TS: But you wanted to go?

MH: I thought, “I’ve got to get a job because . . . .”

TS: You're telling me you did not make all A's in school?

MH: That is correct. I made all A's in chemistry and those things. I had difficulty with my math, particularly differential equations. I failed it. But I didn't consider it a failure because I had such good grades in my English and all due to preparation I'd had in parochial school at Marist. It helps when you are meeting people. That's something that I guess maybe I'm too critical of others. We Southerners had to be gracious in manners and those things. A quick story on that on Kennesaw when I was invited to be on the board [of trustees of the foundation]; there was a gentleman who was the salt of the earth, named Parks Rusk, who was Dean Rusk's brother. When the father took the boys down to stay with their grandmother, Parks was coming back, and Dean was very quiet because when the mother was giving birth they spent time away from home. The father said, "Dean, you've been mighty quiet. What's the problem, son?" He said, "Well, Papa, I'm trying to figure out how you divide a pie in equal parts when there are now five of us." But Parks was a very genuine person. Of course, we had some other great ones in Otis A. Brumby, Jr., who was head of the paper [Marietta Daily Journal] then, and we had Fred D. Bentley Sr. and W. Howard Ector and W. Wyman Pilcher Jr., who selected [as the foundation representative on the search committee] Dr. Horace [W.] Sturgis's replacement in Dr. Betty [L.] Siegel.

TS: I had a 1976 date that you joined the foundation.

JH: That's correct.

TS: You've mentioned some fine people. We might want to talk about some of them. Let's hold off on your memories of the foundation for a little. I want to get back to that, but let's talk first about your work Southern Bell. What year did you start there?

JH: I went to work in '52. For one year we were hired at \$275.00 a month. If we completed it we would get \$300.00 a month right off after a year's service, \$3,600.00.

TS: Thirty-six hundred dollars a year?

MH: Right. The first raise we got after going through various departments and writing about what we learned when we went through installation and pole digging and accounting and sales.

TS: You had to learn everything about the company?

MH: And engineering; we went through all of those. There were six of us that were hired. We were dispersed, and three of us were left here in Atlanta, and then the others were sent to other states.

TS: What were you hired to do?

MH: The six of us were primarily hired for the commercial department under a man by the name of Lane Hubbard, who was a good friend of Mr. Jasper Dorsey. His parents knew them and knew all the Russells and the Georges and the Nunns and all that crowd [families of Senators Richard Russell, Walter George, and Sam Nunn]. We had our duties, and one of them was your P.R. [public relations]. You had to take care of your newspaper articles. You had to take care of anything that came up. We had to do the collections for the bills and the long distance was there and also traffic. One of the people went into the traffic department because we had at that time some six thousand operators [in the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Building in Atlanta] at 51 Ivy Street [now named Peachtree Center Avenue] because all of that was cord, plugging in back then before you went DDD [Direct Distance Dialing].

TS: Right.

MH: I've seen everything go and then everything come back to microwave. An interesting experience was when they built that central office at Robinson Road in the late 1970s when I was there. That's when I learned a lot about the county and franchises and getting easements and those things because those people were still on two- and four-party lines. The county manager's job—I guess I'd been groomed for that on my management skills and having to meet politicians and get franchises like in Austell and Rome and all the little towns around. In fact, Ringgold and Fort Oglethorpe had quite a confusion because the borderline went down the middle of the street.

TS: So you were thirty-seven years, I think, at BellSouth.

MH: I had thirty-seven years at BellSouth.

TS: I guess you kept getting promoted up in the corporation.

MH: Yes, we finally got this to an A-town, and I got a nice raise then. I worked my way up to where I was generally one of the senior managers in the Atlanta metropolitan area known as the Atlanta Division. There was one in Macon, and those were the only two divisions that we had around the state.

TS: So you were living at this time in DeKalb County?

MH: I was living in Dunwoody. I knew they couldn't pay my moving expenses [to Cobb County]. It was only twelve miles.

TS: This was '74 that you come to Marietta?

MH: It was in November or December, Tom; I don't quite remember. I've already earned my fortieth anniversary as a Kiwanian because Dan Reed was in Rotary. Rotary Clubs were the hierarchy of the world, but they can have only one from a business as the senior person. I don't know whether that's been amended now or not according to their bylaws.



But I couldn't join [Marietta] Rotary where I'd been vice president and then went through the chairs there.

TS: Right; in Dunwoody?

MH: That was in DeKalb County, in Chamblee.

TS: Tell me about Jasper Dorsey.

MH: Jasper was a very bright man and a very good leader. He left you alone to do your job. He expected you to keep all your results up to par. You knew if you got a call from him that you had to handle it promptly. I think one of the finest of all our presidents that I served under was Mr. Ben Gilmer. He was later president of AT&T. If he got a phone call, he would find out somehow or another through his secretary or whatever, and he would call you on your private line. One day I answered the phone and heard "Henderson? Mack?" "Yeah." "This is Ben Gilmer." "Yes, sir!" He said, "Wait a minute. What's this yes, sir?" I said, "Boss, you're the boss." He said, "I just had a call from a lady, and she says she's poor as a church mouse. I told her she could pay \$5.00 a week and you would handle it. If you have any trouble, you call me." I said, "It will be handled."

I got to know him because every Christmas I would send one of my girls over there because he repeatedly would call me and say, "I've got a friend with Capital City Club that needs this or that." I would send him some kind of Christmas gift that I would get made in Auburn colors of burnt orange and blue. But he called me and said, "I'm going to come over there and sit at your desk one day. You've got the prettiest ladies in this place." I said, "If you come over here, you sneak over here." But another thing, sitting on the various bank boards that I served on and other things, one of the nicest people that I knew was [former Kennesaw State dean of the Coles College Timothy S.] Tim Mescon. We were on the Bank South board when they were bought. He was later president down at Columbus State University. I correspond regularly with him. His daddy [Mike Mescon] was a heck of a teacher. He was a man that I used to read regularly.

Otis Brumby used to kid me about reading all the things on management. In the *Wall Street Journal* was a guy by the name of Peter [F.] Drucker [described by the *WSJ* in his obituary on November 11, 2005, as "the father of modern management for his numerous books and articles."] In fact, he wrote some major books on management. Jean, my wife of all these years, is a history buff just like myself. I read a lot of them. I love my sports books as well, but I'm a fan of Teddy Roosevelt and the admirals and the various generals that we've had in war years.

TS: You told the story before we started the tape that you didn't want to come to Cobb County. Did the phone company tell you to come here?

MH: Mr. Dorsey told me, "Mack, I've got to have you up there. Your paycheck is going to be there. I want you to go there and straighten the place out." I said, "Well, I don't want

you sending anybody with me because I'm going to meet them on my grounds." And that was the way I did it. I went around and met each one of [the community leaders]. I did get a list from [county commission chairman] Ernest Barrett, [funeral home owner] Bill Bullard, and [state representative] Al Burruss. Then I went to see Otis [Brumby]. I told Otis, "If we get in trouble on anything, one of our installers or construction or if we're in an automobile accident, I'll come to you and tell you about it, straight up and down, whatever it is." I said, "And I can promise you we'll handle it."

One of the odd things when I was county manager I saw some things that were going on, and we didn't have a legal department. I said, "That isn't good." I started it in the courtroom. You talk about some good judges; we've had some good female judges and still have some in the State Court as well as the Superior Court. Lo and behold, I was in [Judge] Dorothy Robinson's courtroom, sitting in the very back row. All of a sudden, she heard the case, finished it, dismissed everybody, and said, "Mr. Henderson, I would appreciate if you would approach the bench." I looked around and said, "Yes, your honor." I thought, "She knows me from St. Joseph [Catholic Church, Marietta] because she was Catholic and her husband Ed was." So I walked down there, and I said, "Yes, your honor, what did I do?" She said, "I want to know why you're sitting in my courtroom?" I said, "Isn't this a public place? To be truthful with you and just between you and me, I'm thinking about forming my own legal department. I don't like the way I'm getting billed for some of these things that are going through." She said, "Forget I ever asked you the question [laughs]." I said, "No, that's history." We used to kid about it in the back of church when I'd see her. In fact, she has a book of mine on Justice [Byron R.] "Whizzer" White [U. S. Supreme Court, 1962-1993]. Which was a heck of a book. In fact, [KSU Dean of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences] George [H.] Beggs read that book.

TS: Is that right?

MH: He sure did.

TS: That was a John F. Kennedy appointment to the Supreme Court, if I remember correctly.

MH: And he was the guy who had to do the investigation of Kennedy. He saw that he was out of bounds. And he told Jack that too. I'll tell you another thing that he did. He couldn't stand the press. It went all the way back—it's in the book—to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, I think it was called, for the lesser schools, not the NCAA. It was at Madison Square Garden. He was asked, "Why do you dislike the press so?" And he used some profane words and said it right to them what he thought of the press and what was their parentage and ancestry.

TS: Okay.

MH: The stories that I learned, there is so much history in those things, and how to get things done without it being illegal or wrong. Not with malice of forethought would I ever do anything. Now, I'm impulsive, and you don't ever use the word can't. Those managers

learned that right off when I had a meeting with them and served them coffee and biscuits and sausage from the prisoners out there—I asked the sheriff to arrange that. Then I was told by the auditors when we did an internal audit . . . .

When we brought the legal department in, I asked Fred Bentley Sr. to be the one. Then I was the one who dismissed him and put Fred Jr. in there. I got some legal advice from several confidential people in Marietta that were good lawyers that I will never reveal their names. They helped me make the decision because I didn't know enough about it. One good story is we did some illegal things, I guess, but we corrected them in executive sessions. I was running [the county] like I was running my business. If I had trouble with something an employee wouldn't install, I called his manager or his supervisor, and I would say, "You all come in here. I want to talk to you. What the hell happened out here with this residence or this business?"

I had one particular individual, and I said, "Let me see the three-, five-, and seven-year program." He said, "We don't have one." I said, "What do you mean, you don't have one? Where are you going to get the money if you have to build a police precinct or a fire station somewhere, or the school board sends something over? How are you going to account for that?" "Well, we'll find it somewhere." I said, "No, we're not doing that." I said, "We're going to get a Double A [credit] rating. We don't need a Triple A. That's a waste of money." So, sure enough, he said, "Well, I can't do it." I called him by name, and I said, "If you can't do it, I'll find somebody who can." He said, "Would you give me three weeks?" I said, "Yes. I'll tell you a secret. You've got some accountants that will help you with your capitalization, the number of police cars, number of trucks, number of furniture and fixtures. You've got some folks out there that are from large accounting firms." Back then it was popular for some of those people to smoke pot. So, one day I was walking into the office and he said, "We've already finished that furniture and fixtures capitalization. And I tell you what boss. Not only this . . . ." I said, "What did you learn?" He said, "I looked over his shoulder, and he was making out his income tax on his lunch hour and getting it printed out so he could turn it in. He's earning a six-figure amount!" I said, "I guess it was done right, don't you reckon? What's wrong with it?" He said, "I promised I wouldn't tell [laughs]."

TS: Tell the story about how you became county manager because I know that Pat Salerno was not popular with at least three of the five members of the commission. So I guess he was dismissed, and that's where you came in.

MH: Salerno was dismissed one night [September 26, 1989] under the [county commission chairman Philip L.] Secrist administration. Harriet [L. Smith] was there and Harvey [D.] Paschal and Thea [J.] Powell and Emmett Burton.

TS: [Recorders turned off for several minutes for Mr. Henderson to tell some funny stories off the record]. The question that you had started to answer was how you got the job as county manager.

MH: I had been told by [former state representative W. T.] Travis Duke that he wanted me to go to a couple of meetings. I had been on the First National Bank board with Travis and Barbara [E.] Williams and Chet Austin and Howard Ector and Julian LeCraw, whose father [Roy LeCraw] was at one time a mayor of Atlanta [1941-1942, before resigning to serve in the U. S. Army in World War II]. Anyway, [I was approached by] Porterfield and Duke . . .

TS: Porterfield from Smyrna?

MH: Right [former Smyrna mayor John Porterfield] and [Harvey] Paschal. And who was the fourth one? I can't recall, Tom, but it was somebody that I knew well. I was out there planting tomatoes in my big garden that I had, and I said, "What in the world are you guys doing out here?" They said, "Well, we fired the county manager, and we want you to come work there and manage the county." So we went out on the screen porch. [We were working on] a three-year project, redoing that house and putting it in livable shape. But they got to talking. Maybe it was one of the judges. It could have been Conley [Ingram] or perhaps [Judge Thomas E.] Tom Cauthorn. Anyway, they said, "We want you to come up." I said, "I don't know anything about government. Not the first thing!" They said, "Well, would you come up there and just keep the mail going until we can advertise for a county manager?" I said, "Yes, I'll do that. I'll come for six weeks."

TS: So was [county commission chairman] Phil Secrist in the background in all of this?

MH: Oh, if I'm not mistaken I think Phil was with them. They had the [commission] meeting [when Salerno was fired] on Tuesday, and it was like Wednesday or Thursday that they came. Apparently, they went into executive session and said, "We're going to see if Mack will do us a favor." I retired in June of 1989, and I went up there in September of '89. Anita Poole was the secretary and had been for Jim Miller [the first county manager in 1983]. Miller and [state representative Johnny] Isakson were the writers of the county manager system. It has since been divvied up different ways, and I don't know what all the responsibilities were for [David] Hankerson [county manager 1993-2017]. When I left, I left them two names, his being one and the other being Roswell Story.

TS: Oh, yes, I remember Roswell Story.

MH: So I said, "I'll come up there and stay for six weeks and organize it. Then I'm leaving because I promised [my wife] Jean we're going to travel. We want to go to Alaska and the West Coast and places like that." So they said, "Okay." When I went up there, I said, "Ms. Poole, I've always had good secretaries, and I dictate and I use a Dictaphone or you can take shorthand, whichever you choose. But I don't want to be locked in here. I see that in-basket in there, and it's packed." She said, "Well, Mr. Henderson, I would appreciate it if you would read up on water and sewage first on some things we need there right away."

TS: How about that?

MH: Harry Ingram was with the water department and a former commissioner at one time and founding president of the Kiwanis Club at Lost Mountain. Anyway, I said, “Okay, I don’t want to see anybody.” So sure enough, I sat in there and read up on stuff, and then I went out there and asked her some more stuff. Then I brought a briefcase full of stuff home every night. Jean finally said, “You’re killing yourself reading all this stuff till the wee hours of the morning and then getting up. If [cardiologist] Dr. [Gregory L.] Simone finds out about it, you’re going to be in trouble.” I said, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll be all right.” Lo and behold, I had a meeting with all of the [department heads] and I said, “I want to hear what each of you has as a problem. Come in and tell me, and I’ll take notice.” So they did and we went right on through. That was when I asked for the three-, five-, and seven-year plans.

I also had a difficulty. All of them were really cooperative, but I had seven assistants reporting to me. I said, “I don’t need that many. I need two people. If we can’t cover it with two, then too bad. We’ll start out cutting.” That was one of the first things we did when I took over a new office. We got along with that and got things started. Then I asked one day in a manager’s meeting, because I was going to have to go for a tax increase, and I didn’t want to do it in my administration—I said, “I want you all to tell me everything we can do and how we can get around this thing.” There was an article written in the Marietta paper about that, and sure enough we got around it and didn’t have to have the tax increase. I gave all of them credit for doing their job and doing it in a way that they knew. But in that question I said, “I want you to be mindful of this. Who are these taxpayers that we collect from?” Well, it was unanimous. “They’re taxpayers. They have to pay their taxes. They owe it.” I said, “No, you’ve got it all wrong. They are *customers*. I want you all to be nice to them. You respect them, no matter what they are asking.” And Hankerson has really followed through with that. For example, a water pipe broke, and we didn’t know it. One of my neighbors called me and told me. They came out here and just surveyed everything. I said, “Boy, this is quick service.” It was on my property and I had to pay for it, but they bargained with me, saying I could pay them the same price the county paid. Fortunately it was found the next day. It was about half of what they’d charge us for it, what they buy wholesale.

TS: Right, for the water that was wasted?

MH: Yes.

TS: So, what was Hankerson at that time? He’d gone beyond storm water management to direct the Community Development Department hadn’t he?

MH: He has a degree in agronomy and knows a lot about hydrology. He owns a bunch of land down in Burke County. His [adopted] father [an uncle that reared him] lived to a ripe old age, but his parents and adopted parents had owned somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand acres. I know he was really loyal to his [adopted] mother just like Strick [Winston Strickland] was who had the restaurant. That’s where I met a lot of people.

TS: At Strick's?

MH: Yes, at Strick's. Joe Mack told me to go down there. Joe Mack and I did a lot of things. He helped Jean out in the antique business. [We met for lunch] on different occasions. We went in the old City Café [on the Square]. That was where they [the county leaders] used to meet. The first meeting I went to with him was just like this interview: "Where you were born, and what are your beliefs?" The county manager is not an easy task. You have to be life-skilled in parliamentary procedures even though the legal department is supposed to do that. Following Fred Bentley Jr., we got a very fine lady [Dorothy Bishop] to take over. I think it has paid off in the cost of things. We've had some good [people]. I think the sheriffs have always been good. We have a good police department, and there were no serious scandals or anything. The ambassador [to the United Nations], the Good Reverend from Atlanta and former mayor [Andrew Young] used to say that Cobb County was the jewel in the crown of metro Atlanta.

It's a different place than when I grew up with the streetcars and the trackless trolleys and all and all the nice theaters. The growth here is just [remarkable]. I don't think people that come here from other parts and even most of the politicians give enough credit to [our former leaders]. There's a reason we've been able to expand. It was in the dark of night that the Barrett administration and some folks like Bill Kinney and Walter Kelly and some of those people put that thirty-six-inch main around the fifty-two miles that circled Cobb County. You had to put in a pumping station occasionally just like we did when we built the golf course, then the Sutton Plant and those. I worry all the time about Roswell and the creek plant, that pumping station. And then the water coming out of the Chattahoochee and the trash and stuff—I don't know what we're going to do in our world of people throwing things out on the highway. They're just reckless and unmannered. I don't think you ever recall seeing the horse and buggy people tossing stuff out even to the point of throwing out your trash bag. I'm tempted sometimes to pick up some of this stuff and taking it up there to McDonald's or Burger King or any one of them. You don't very often see any Chick-Fil-A's because Truett Cathy was a good Christian man.

TS: So you started without a contract for the county.

MH: Oh, yes.

TS: Did you ever have a contract?

MH: They finally wrote one for me. They gave it to me. Then finally Mr. [Bill] Byrne and I did not hit it off because Paschal was running against him.

TS: Paschal was running against . . .

MH: Byrne.

TS: Against Byrne, right [in 1992].

MH: And, of course, he had the advantage of the Atkins family. There's not a finer lady in the world than Babe. She did a lot of civic work in this county. She married him.

TS: Babe Atkins-Byrne.

MH: I think the worst thing that we've had [in Cobb County] is the [charges against a former Superior Court administrator charged with multiple sexual encounters with women he hired as interns in the court system]. I mean, I was not satisfied with that quite candidly. See, we were exposed to women. I was the only man in that office [at Southern Bell] when I came right out of college, and I was 23 or 24 years old. There were fifty-six women in that office. Anytime any one of those ladies came up to my office I stood up. She sat in that chair across from my desk. It was the same way at the county. In fact, there were a couple of people who came from other departments that would come around to show me something. I said, "You can give that to Ms. Poole, and she'll show me what I need to know." It's not being rude. It's just being polite and courteous and respectful. I think we're going to have a good man in [U. S. Supreme Court Justice Neal] Gorsuch. I certainly hope so.

TS: He seems likeable.

MH: I think he's a little bit direct, more so than [Justice Antonin] Scalia. [He is similar in that respect to [Georgia Supreme Court Chief] Justice [P. Harris] Hines. Harris is a fraternity brother, and Harris and [his wife] Helen are just genuine folks. In fact, they bought some different antiques from Jean, and we became best friends. He was another one of the men that I respected a whole heck of a lot, not because there was a social connection there through the fraternity and all. It was because he calls it like it is. In fact he read *The Man Who Once Was Whizzer White: [A Portrait of Justice Byron R. White by Dennis Hutchinson (Free Press 1998)]*.

I think [James A.] Micky Blackwell [executive vice president of Lockheed Martin's aeronautical systems business area prior to his retirement in February 2000] is another good person in this community that I have great respect for. He's a good Christian man and does a great deal of work. That's a good book if you've never read it, *When Two or More Are Gathered . . . in Prayer: [How Praying Together Can Change Our World by James "Micky" Blackwell (United Writers Press 2009)]*. He and his wife [Billie] teach Sunday school.

TS: Okay. Tell me a little more about your relationship with Bill Byrne. You didn't get along with him because he thought you were supporting his opponent?

MH: That's a hard question to answer quite candidly. I was respectful and have continued to be respectful of Bill. But part of his personality and mine don't walk to the same beat. That's about it. I'm crazy about his wife. That whole family are good people. [Current Cobb County commission chairman] Mr. [Mike] Boyce came up here and met me and wanted me to support him. I told him, "I'm a [Tim] Lee supporter. I've supported him all along." I said, "When I handshake with a man that's a bond. I can't change it." I had

a [Tim Lee] sign up there. I don't change once I've made a commitment. It's just in my blood.

TS: Do you feel like talking for just a few minutes about the KSU Foundation?

MH: I'll be glad to. We have two [scholarships] up there [the G. G. Scholarship that is financial need based and the Jean H. Henderson Scholarship that is merit based]. The first one, Fred Bentley, Sr. helped me start. I started it with \$500.00 and then added to it. One of the greatest rewards you have is getting to meet those people.

TS: For the scholarships?

MH: The scholarship recipients. The second one is in Jean's name. It has been very rewarding reading the letters we get from them. When they have meetings at night, Jean and I just do not drive at night because of night blindness and then our age too. Jean is a couple of years behind me. I had polio in 1954 when we just had a six-month-old baby in our marriage. Then too I guess the beating I took athletically. I was pretty athletic, playing ball and running track. But I can't say enough good things about the [KSU] Foundation. [Former KSU president] Dr. [Daniel S.] Papp was a fraternity brother of mine. I don't know whether you realize it, but he used to have to carry the headgear and shoulder pads for [former U. S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry M.] Hank Paulson when he was a freshman and Hank was a year ahead of him on the football team [at Dartmouth College] and also a fraternity brother. I'm happy to also say that my first granddaughter is now at Goldman Sachs [where Paulson had been chairman and chief executive officer].

TS: How about that? Great!

MH: Right here in Atlanta.

TS: Great! Who recruited you for the Foundation at Kennesaw?

MH: Golly, Dr. Scott, you're really pushing my mind.

TS: Of course, this would be back in 1976 when you joined the board. We were just becoming a four-year school at that time.

MH: Yes. I think it was primarily Wyman because I would take part of my money that I got when I was on the bank board and put it towards my scholarship program for my mother and father. I didn't start Jean's until later. I just can't say enough good things about it. I think we had some good professors up there. You can't imagine some of the things that were done when I was county manager and also president of the [Cobb] Chamber [of Commerce 1984] with that Chamber building being built and some things that were done when Kennesaw State was being developed. There were contract issues, but the work was completed.

TS: Well, you were Cobb Citizen of the Year in 1985. How did that come about?



MH: I'll never know, quite frankly. I'm as honest as I can be about that, and it was a high honor. Several of my friends at church had said, "Boy, you are really walking in high cotton." But it was through the help of everybody. Joe Mack, I got him over there to talk to the Chamber, and he made friends with us. I had quail brought up from one of the managers in Albany so that we could have a quail breakfast one morning. I got all that cooked. Different little things; I guess, quite truthfully, I was sincerely surprised. The [Mack Henderson] Public Service Award [created by the Cobb Chamber and given annually to an individual who embodies the philanthropic legacy of Mr. Henderson] is one that I was dumbfounded by.

And the [Jean and Mack Henderson] Women's Center [at Kennestone Hospital]—I fought John Williams like a Trojan warrior against that. I said, "It should be [named] after several different doctors. Of course, I served on that [WellStar Health System] board [and was chairman of the WellStar Foundation in 1999]. I think one of the saddest moments of being on that board was when two of us fought very hard to have a children's room out there, one room instead of it all being dedicated to rehab at the cancer home out at Cobb Hospital. You've got a cancer wing out there. Jean was on that board. I was on the board when Dr. Richard [B.] Hubbard was the administrator out there. He later became the chief executive officer at Piedmont Hospital.

Richard Hammonds was the one who founded Cobb Hospital because he was a big friend of Jimmy Carter. Al Burruss was involved in that because he flew Jimmy all around the state. That was when Chet [Austin] was really running the chicken plant [Tip Top Poultry, Inc.] There's another human being that didn't get all the credit. There needs to be a correction on [my Biographical File] because we were co-founders of Leadership Cobb. I didn't found it. That was both of us. The real principals in that were Jack Wilson who has recently had a stroke, Jim Rhoden, and Ms. Stephens. In fact, Jack gave a talk to the First Monday Breakfast on that.

TS: How long were you on the Kennestone Hospital board?

MH: Eighteen years, I think. I became emeritus on the [KSU] Foundation [Board of Trustees] maybe in 1998. It was after I got out of the county because I was county manager from September 1989 to March of 1993.

TS: Well, I'm about out of questions. Is there anything you'd like to add?

MH: No, I think I've bored you with all this stuff.

TS: Not at all!

MH: I think I'm abundantly proud of Senator Johnny Isakson, whom we all need to pray for. Joe Mack cornered me on the street, and he said, "Doggone you, Mack Henderson, I ought to just whip you right here! If you had told me how good that silver-tongued devil Isakson was I would have him as a Democrat!" I said, "Well, Joe Mack, he is clever

[laughs].” He called me to congratulate me [as county manager], and I said, “I’m proud to represent part of what you founded, you and Jim Miller.” I had to continually tell Barbara, “Barbara, I’m not going to change a thing; settle down.” I said, “Some of these professionals think that they’ve got to have somebody to hand them their coffee and their donuts or whatever, but I don’t travel that route.”

Life is tough but Jean and I have had a happy marriage and a good one. I think it’s taught us that it’s the love that matters and believing in people and seeing the good in the others. It bothers me because I don’t in any way intend to brag about any of it. In fact, I told you when I got Citizen of the Year I was just as surprised as anybody. I felt like there was something going on that I didn’t know because [Phil] Sanders was the Cobb Chamber president, and I was never quite surprised to find out what they did. I guess when I think about my background and what my parents and grandparents did for me, they had strong beliefs in family. Both of them had families of nine each, and we had four. Then the thing that bothered Jean and I more than anything else is the senseless killing of our granddaughter [Natalie Henderson] over in Roswell [in August 2016].

TS: Oh, yes. That was awful.

MH: Hopefully this thing’s going to come to trial, and that’s all I can say about that. It’s been eight months. [Editor’s note: The accused was sentenced to life in prison on May 17, 2017, after pleading guilty but mentally ill]. Yes, we had five granddaughters and one grandson, and he will have to carry on the Henderson name. We lost a child at age eight after he’d been up to Minnesota. There’s a place that is a gift to the people of the world.

TS: Are you talking about the Mayo Clinic?

MH: Yes. And you know they have a mini-clinic down in Florida. I think that’s one of the things that if Dr. [Robert A.] Lipson [CEO and president of WellStar Health System, 2001-2006] had lived, he had in his bonnet to do. He was a very good man. Dr. [Gregory] Simone [WellStar CEO, 2007-2010] was a very good man. Tom Hill [former president and CEO of Cobb Hospital] and Bernie Brown [Kennestone administrator, 1971-2001] were also remarkable. Back in those days Bernie had to kind of rule the roost at Kennestone because they had the only hospital before Cobb came into being. But see, we were in the growing stages! Just think. When you look at how big Smyrna is now and look at Powder Springs and look at what they’re getting ready to do out there. If you read the Marietta Daily Journal and see some of the historical pictures and how the Marietta Square has changed. That was another job that I enjoyed, and Joe Mack [Wilson] and all of us were in that, when I was chairman of the Downtown Marietta Development Authority [DMDA]. The only person that gave us any trouble—it wasn’t [Philip] Goldstein and it wasn’t [Frank] Leiter—it was Milton Saul [Saul’s Department Store].

TS: He gave you trouble?

- MH: Milton gave me a lot of trouble, but it was honest. He would say it was hurting his business and all when we had to tear up the sidewalks [for a DMDA beautification project].
- TS: Oh, when you were doing the renovation?
- MH: When we were digging all that stuff up, we found that each one of the corners had a cistern on it.
- TS: How about that!
- MH: You would water your horses or your mules [in the old days on the Square].
- TS: You're talking about way back [in the late 1970s and 1980s] when the Downtown Marietta Development Authority was trying to beautify the downtown because of the competition with Cumberland Mall. [Editor's note: The DMDA used federal grants and a large gift from the Marietta Board of Lights & Water to improve the area around the Square by putting all electrical wiring underground, upgrading sewer lines and storage drains, installing pebble concrete and brick walkways and granite curbing, and placing granite planters and old-fashioned street lamps along the sidewalks].
- MH: That's right. We learned a lot of things about Shillings on the Square—how Schilling's Hardware Store had been there. And then too about Leiter's across the street [on the west side of the square], and the Kennesaw House and the Depot. I tell you quite candidly only the Bell system could tell you anything if you go back that far. How many drinks I bought right there in the Depot for different ones when we were trying to get some things done. There was nothing under the table or no money passed. It was on a basis of being a good citizen.
- TS: I think just putting the electrical wiring underground instead of having those wires up exposed did a lot to improve the looks of the downtown.
- MH: There's another thing that Jack Wilson did. He was the one in charge of getting all that and how it was beautified, and John Williams was one that did some of the initial work in renovating the Square. I mean, some of the rewards that these people fuss about just don't gee-haw with me. But as I say in my prayers, I'm thankful, Lord, that you let me pass through this way.
- TS: Well, maybe that's a good way to end the interview.

## INDEX

Atkins-Byrne, Babe, 14  
Atlanta Women's Club, 4  
Austin, Chet, 3-4, 11, 16

Bainbridge, Maryland, 4  
Barrett, Ernest, 9  
Beggs, George H., 9  
Bentley, Fred D. Jr., 10, 13  
Bentley, Fred D. Sr., 6, 10, 15  
Bishop, Dorothy, 13  
Blackwell, Billie, 14  
Blackwell, James A. "Micky," 14  
Boyce, Mike, 14  
Brennan, Father Vincent P., 3  
Brown, Bernard "Bernie," 17  
Brown, Wendell, 5  
Brumby, Otis A. Jr., 6, 8-9  
Bullard, Bill, 9  
Burruss, A. L. "Al," 4, 9, 16  
Burton, Emmett, 10  
Byrne, Bill, 13-14

Cathy, S. Truett, 13  
Cauthorn, Thomas E., 11  
City Café, Marietta, Georgia, 13  
Cobb Chamber of Commerce, 15-17  
    Cobb County Citizen of the Year Award, 15-17  
    Mack Henderson Public Service Award, 16  
    Leadership Cobb, 16  
Cohen, Arthur, 5  
Connally, E. L., 1  
Connally, E. L., Elementary School, Atlanta, 1-2

Doggert, Stanley, 5  
Dorsey, Jasper, 5, 7-8  
Downtown Marietta Development Authority, 17-18  
Drucker, Peter F., 8  
Duke, W. Travis, 11

Ector, W. Howard, 6, 11

George, Walter, 7  
Gilmer, Ben, 8  
Glover, Irma, 12

Gorsuch, Neal, 14  
Gosslin, Roy, 5

Hageman, Father, 3  
Hammonds, Richard, 16  
Henderson, Edwin Center, 1  
Henderson, Gertrude Margaret McGlone, 1  
Henderson, James E. "Mack"  
    Atlanta childhood, 1-3  
    U. S. Navy service, 1-4  
    College, 1, 5-6  
    Southern Bell career, 1, 5-8, 14  
    Family history and origin of name and nickname, 1-3, 17  
    County manager, 2-3, 9-16  
    Kennesaw State Foundation trustee, 6, 15-16  
    Move to Cobb County, 7-9  
    Civic club membership, 7-8  
    Children and grandchildren, 15, 17  
    President of Cobb Chamber of Commerce, 15  
    Cobb County Citizen of the Year, 15-17  
    Jean and Mack Henderson Women's Center, Kennestone, 16  
    Chairman of WellStar Foundation, 16  
    Co-founder of Leadership Cobb, 16  
    Chairman of Downtown Marietta Development Authority, 17  
Henderson, Jean Horton, 8, 11-17  
Henderson, Mildred Penelope Pattillo, 1  
Henderson, Natalie, 17  
Henderson, Ralph Pattillo, 1, 4  
Hill, Tom, 17  
Hines, Helen, 14  
Hines, P. Harris, 14  
Hubbard, Lane, 7  
Hubbard, Richard, 16

Ingram, G. Conley, 2, 11  
Ingram, Harry, 12  
Isakson, Johnny, 11, 16-17

Jacobs, Thornwell, 5

Kelly, Walter, Jr., 13  
Kinney, Bill Jr. (Melville William Kinney Jr.), 13

LeCraw, Julian, 11  
Lee, Tim, 14-15  
Leiter's Department Store, Marietta, GA, 18

Lipson, Robert A., 17

Maddox, Lester, 5

Marist School, Atlanta, 1-4, 6

Mayo Clinic, 17

McGlone, James, 2

Mescon, Michael "Mike," 8

Mescon, Timothy S., 8

Miller, Jim, 11, 17

Murray, Bo. 4

Newport (RI) Naval Hospital, 4

Nimitz, Chester, 4-5

Nunn, Sam, 7

Oglethorpe University, 1, 5

Papp, Daniel S., 15

Paschal, Harvey D., 10-11, 13

Paulson, Henry M. "Hank," 15

Pilcher, W. Wyman Jr., 6, 15

Poole, Anita, 11-12, 14

Porterfield, John, 11

Powell, Thea J., 10

Reed, Dan, 7

Rholen, Jim, 16

Robinson, Dorothy, 9

Rusk, Dean, 6

Rusk, Parks, 6

Russell, Richard, 7

Saint Anthony of Padua Catholic Church and School, Atlanta, 1-3

Salerno, Patrick G., 2, 10-11

Sanders, Phil, 17

Saul, Milton, 17-18

Scalia, Antonin, 14

Secrist, Philip L., 10-11

Seward, George, 1, 5

Shillings on the Square, Marietta, GA, 18

Siegel, Betty L., 6

Simone, Gregory L., 12, 17

Smith, Harriet L., 10

Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company, 1-3, 5-8, 14

Story, Roswell, 11

Strickland, Winston, 12-13

Sturgis, Horace W., 6

Tip Top Poultry, Inc., 16

U. S. Naval War College, Newport, RI, 4

WellStar Health System, 16-17

    WellStar Cobb Hospital, 16-17

    WellStar Kennestone Hospital, 16-17

Weltner, Charles Longstreet, 1, 5

Weltner, Philip, 1, 5

White, Byron R., 9, 14

Williams, Barbara E., 11

Williams, John, 16, 18

Wilson, Jack, 16, 18

Wilson, Joe Mack, 5, 13, 16-17

Winchell, Walter, 4

Young, Andrew, 13