

Oral History 4425 Adairsville Project

Anna Sullivan Interview

Conducted by Sarah Earnest, Conner Buckley and James Newberry

Location: San Souci Women's Club, Adairsville, Georgia

October 12, 2016

Transcribed by Sarah Earnest and Conner Buckley

Full Transcript

Interviewer CB: My name's Conner Buckley, and I'm here with Sarah Earnest. We are here interviewing Anna Sullivan. Today's date is October 12, 2016. We are at the location of Sans Souci Women's Club in Adairsville, Georgia.

Interviewer SE: If you could just please state your full name and when and where you were born.

Sullivan: My full name is Anna Viola Shaw Sullivan and I was born April 9, 1960, in Floyd County. I was born at Floyd Medical-. It's Floyd Medical Center now, but it was Floyd Hospital at the time. Growing up, we didn't have physicians here, so we either went to Calhoun, Cartersville, or Rome for healthcare, and a lot of people went to Rome for the hospitals there.

Interviewer SE: What did you parents do for a living?

Sullivan: My mother was a full-time parent, and she took care of my 2 sisters, my brother, and me along with my grandparents and my great-aunt. My father was a forester with Hiwassee Land Company in Calhoun, and also we lived on family property that my great-uncle had purchased, and then my father had purchased from his estate. My dad had Black Angus cows and a garden-. A big giant garden that we hated to spend time in in the summer, but we appreciated it in the winter.

Interviewer SE: Why did your mother move to Adairsville? I know that you said she wasn't originally from Adairsville.

Sullivan: No, my mother was born in South Georgia, in Brunswick, and lived there. Then her father got a job with ARCO in Texas working with the oil industry. They moved out there, and that's where she grew up, but she still had family here in Georgia, some of them were here in Adairsville. After she had graduated from North Texas State University, she got a teaching job and came to Adairsville.

Interviewer SE: What was life like growing up in Adairsville for you as a kid? What was that like?

Sullivan: Well, I didn't live in town, so our family was out on a farm. We still had dirt roads, that beautiful fine red clay. A car went by, it would be this cloud of dust that would come rolling up the hill towards the house. We lived across the road from my father's parents. I knew my father's family, my mother's mom and dad. My mother was an only child, and my grandparents would come from Texas to visit us at Christmas time. We would go there in the summer or they would come to us in the summer. It was a small town, so people we went to church with, we went to school with, we bought groceries with them. You saw the people all the time that you lived with and that you were friends with. That was good and bad, I guess. You kind of knew a lot about everybody.

Interviewer SE: How long was your father's family in this area?

Sullivan: They came to northwest Georgia in the 1800's, like mid 1800's. I'm not sure exactly when they came to Adairsville proper, but they had come to Dalton first and then moved here. It was my great-uncle and his wife, Charlie and Jewell Shaw, who lived here in Adairsville. He actually was the county tax commissioner, and he had taken over that job after my great-great-grandfather, who was the tax commissioner, died. My Uncle Charlie took over that job and started doing that job. They knew a lot of people in Bartow County, lots of families.

Interviewer SE: What would you do for fun as a kid? Did you ever come in town?

Sullivan: Oh yeah. We spent a lot of just time out in-. There were a lot of woods around us, and so we spent a lot of time outside playing. In the summertime, that's where you wanted to be was outside, and most of the time barefoot. When we came into town, my mom would come in on Fridays and get groceries. She would drop us off in this building, because this was the public library at the time. The Sans Souci Club had started as a women's social club, but part of what they did was that they encouraged, we would say literacy today, but they encouraged reading and they encouraged a lending library. This was one of my favorite places, because I was that kid that was, if I had a stack of books in the summertime, and I could take a book and go outside somewhere and be left alone and read all day, I was happy. This was kind of my place. Ms. Elrod was the librarian, and this room that we're sitting in was filled predominantly with children's books, different levels, obviously. Then the room in there was the grownup books. I think Ms. Elrod's desk was back over here near the door. Eventually, I worked my way through all the kid

books. I think I read every biography that she had. It was just huge when she let me start reading out of the grownup books section. She was just a lovely person. She loved to see kids come in. They did the summer reading program where you would have a sheet and you'd fill out every book you read, and you'd get gold stars or something. I don't think we ever got any big huge prize, but you'd get gold stars. It was always a challenge to see how many books you could read during the summer. If you could fill up more than one of those little pamphlets that they gave us, that was a big deal. My mom was probably glad because it probably kept us out of trouble.

Interviewer SE: What do you remember about the train depot growing up?

Sullivan: I would think about that a lot, because we did not go in the train depot. I do remember at one point there were some businesses in there, I think an insurance company was in there. It was not until I was older that I think some of us really even thought about it had any historical significance, but when Mr. Penfield started working to try to protect it and save it and preserve it, that's what really I think made people more conscious of the value of keeping it.

Interviewer JN: Who was Mr. Penfield?

Sullivan: He was a former mayor in Adairsville, and his wife, Pansy Penfield, was very well known. They were very active in wanting to preserve what we had here.

Interviewer SE: What do you remember about this stores facing the train tracks? Have they changed? Or stayed the same?

Sullivan: Oh they've definitely changed. When I was a child, we had a Five-and-Dime on the corner. There was Culberson's, like a hardware and feed store. There was a pharmacy, and Doc Mason was the pharmacist there. There were little dress shops and other shops just all along Main Street. After the interstate was finished, things just kind of drained out of downtown. It was hard to keep businesses here. The city hall was not where it is now, so the bank moved out closer to the interstate, the post office moved closer to the interstate. So a lot of the reason for people to come downtown moved. It kind of languished for a while. It started to look really sad and deserted. Then over the years, various individuals in town saw the value of trying to encourage growth and trying to keep businesses here. It's been an up and down process. It's hard when there's no-. We're not a county seat, so we don't have a courthouse where people to have to come here for whatever legal means. They go to Cartersville for that. Trying to figure out what is that one thing

that will bring people to downtown and get them to continue coming back, that's been hard.

Interviewer CB: Was there any hangouts there for growing up that you hung out at?

Sullivan: Actually, I was looking at Facebook today. It wasn't really downtown. We had a Dairy King down at the corner of 41 and 140. It was just a hamburger place. It wasn't Dairy Queen, it was Dairy King. I really don't remember when that disappeared, but I remember that being the place where teenagers would go hang out. One of the people had posted a picture on Facebook, and she was talking about how many kids in Adairsville could get a job there. There was no-. That was it as far as a fast food restaurant; there was no McDonald's or Wendy's. We didn't even have a traffic light. We had a flashing yellow light down at the intersection of 41 and 140. It was kind of a big deal. We got a traffic light. Now we've got several, so it's-. Now we're working with the modern times, I guess.

Interviewer JN: You talked about those community efforts to revitalize this railroad section. Can you speak specifically to some of those efforts that you know of?

Sullivan: I know that one of the big things was getting the downtown revitalization grant. I believe Evan King was mayor at that point when that happened. That made a huge difference, because it really-. What you see now, we didn't have the little gazebo and some of the really charming things that are there. The rock walls weren't there. There was more utilitarian feel to it. Some of the more artistic types of things that had been added have come along later to enhance what we already had. There have been lots of people over time-. Linda Bass was very active in it. Rose McCraney was very active. She is a former member of the Sans Souci Club. Susan Hobson Gilmore has been active in those efforts, Mary Carreathers. We've had a plethora of people, Joyce Culberson. Lots of people have been very involved in trying to figure out what we need to do and what can preserve the town.

Interviewer SE: Kind of switching direction, talking about the schools, what was it like starting out at a school that had kids in 12th grade when you're in 1st grade?

Sullivan: It was actually kind of cool. If you think football players are heroes now, football players were really the heroes in-. As a kid, you were around older kids, so you're a 1st grader-. Elementary kids, you know, we didn't go hang out with adult kids or anything, but we saw them all the time. People like Diane Mitchell or Johnny Gulledge, names that people would remember, you would see them and they were ahead of you. You would kind of look at what they were doing growing up. That was almost like having a template for

yourself. Diane Mitchell was a basketball player and she was probably one of the first girls that I really saw as someone that I thought of as a role model, because she was doing something that I thought was great. People recognized her in the school for that. There were different ones that you would recognize because they would win awards or they were speakers or class leaders. So as a kid, it was kind of a big deal to be able to see older siblings of your friends, too. It was a big deal. You could see other people in the community, and they were far enough ahead of you that when you're 16 or 17, you probably don't recognize how much a 6-year-old is going to look up to you. They were the big kids. We would have discussions at home about the big kids at school and what the big kids were doing. I don't know if everybody did, but we did in our family, and how well they were doing. It was a big deal when Johnny Gullede went to college on a football scholarship. Those were big things.

Interviewer SE: How was it growing up with the same students in your class every year? Was that a good thing?

Sullivan: You go through those years where you have a crush on someone. If you have done the unfortunate thing of either sending him a note, like kids do in class, later on when you're a senior or even after you've graduated from college, you kind of think, "I hope they don't remember that." The good part was that there are people now that I see in town when I'm shopping, or that when I go to a football game, and my kids are there, their kids, or their grandkids, if they got married really early-. We started our family late. My children are around them, and we know those families. I think that a lot of what we're founded on or a lot of what we try to teach our children is that it's important that when people need help in this community, that's something that you do. I grew up in the era where if someone died, people brought food to the house, and someone would come. When my Grandpa Johnson died, my mother and I were talking about this today, I was probably around 5th grade. I know some of our friends came out and helped to clean the house. My grandparents were visiting us from Texas when he died. It was right after Christmas. People came and helped to clean the house. They brought food and they took care of our family. That was a big deal.

Interviewer SE: You mentioned that everyone knows everyone, especially in the schools. Did that ever affect the teacher/student relationship in a good way?

Sullivan: I think so, I guess it depends on who you are or your family as to whether or not that would be good. If you have siblings-. Dot Hobson taught my older sister, who's two years older than me, me, my younger sister who's three years younger, and my younger brother who's six years younger. So by the time one teacher has taught every kid in a family, they're pretty well

acquainted with that family. If the majority of the kids are troublemakers, or the majority of the kids like to make funny comments in the back of the room, then I could see where that could set an expectation, but I never felt like my teachers thought of me as a clone of my sisters or my brother. They all knew my family. They could tease you. They certainly, if-. How you conducted yourself at school would have an impact on your siblings. There's those conversations you have after the bus lets you out at the end of the driveway, "I'm telling mom." "Well if you won't tell mom, what can we do so you won't tell mom." My sister and I had some of those conversations. She likes to remind me about that. I think it was good. Judy James taught my older sister and me in home ec. I'm pretty sure that Linda Bass had all four of us in French, because French was our foreign language for college admission. We did college prep courses. We didn't have AP classes or some of these other classes. It was just college prep. Two years of foreign language in high school was still required. Mrs. Bass was our French teacher.

Interviewer SE: How involved were you in school or extracurricular activities?

Sullivan: We were pretty involved. My older sister and I, in particular, but we all were involved in different things. My older sister was in band-. One of the big things we did was 4-H. We spent a lot of weeks during the summers at different 4-H camps. We competed in 4-H competitions. My sister, my older sister, went on and majored in home economics which, I guess, is called family and consumer sciences now, because she was involved in 4-H, and that was something that she wanted to do. I was active in basketball. My younger sister was in band. My younger brother played football. Then there were lots of other clubs within the school. When it's a small school, there are a lot of opportunities to do a lot of things. I think that's still true now. The kids that are involved tend to be, in a lot of cases, highly involved. They have diverse interests, and you get a chance to really have hands on. It's hard to just show up and just be a place holder when it's a small school, because in order to get stuff done, you've got to step up.

Interviewer SE: Was there any person in Adairsville that helped you further your education?

Sullivan: Oh yeah. Lots and lots of people. Every single teacher that I had. I had Mrs. Varner in 1st grade, and I had-. Because of circumstances, we started off with Ms. Grubbs, and then we had Mrs. Painter and Miss West who came in as substitutes. Ms. Grubbs was the Methodist minister's wife and when he was assigned to another church, she had to leave partway through the year. Miss West taught us Spanish in 2nd grade. At 56 years old, I still remember some of the Spanish that she taught us in 2nd grade. Miss McKibben-. We had wonderful teachers that because we were small, I think, they were able to

spend time with us. Our classes weren't always small. I can remember having classes with 36, 38, 42 kids in them, but I do think that there was kind of a different attitude maybe in the classes. We had kids who were wise guys, but you know what? I don't think we had any big huge behavior problems. There were a lot of people. Malachi Carnes was my basketball coach all the way through high school. He played such a big role in encouraging me. I wasn't really the most confident kid. He really worked hard to help boost my confidence in my ability in basketball. I think it probably pained him that I didn't have the killer instinct that he would've liked for me to have, but if it hadn't been for his encouragement, I probably wouldn't have played. Judy James's husband, Richard James, was my first basketball coach in middle school. The fact that he let me on the team and was patient enough with me was a good thing. Coach Carnes was-. He had children in the school, but he played such a big part for me in encouraging me and helping me to look outside of where I was He was my star teacher and really played a big part in helping me get my scholarship and move on to other things.

Interviewer JN: Were you attending school here during integration?

Sullivan: I started school fifty years ago this fall in 1966. At that point, the county was not fully integrated. We still had a blacks only high school, which is just right up the road here, Noble Hill Academy still existed. The classes that I went to school with had already been integrated. So Charlotte Curtis and Pam McConnell and other people were in school with me and it was no big deal, to me at least. They were another kid. I never really knew anything differently. We did not start integrate-. We started integration a lot later than I had realized. I was part of a class last year that looked at some of the history of different parts of Bartow County and when we toured at Noble Hill, I was really surprised to realize that we still were not fully integrated when I started school. It was a couple years into my education before that happened. As a child, I guess I wasn't really aware of it being anything else and I never had really thought about it.

Interviewer JN: Were there other areas outside of the school where you were conscious of any divisions based on the color of people's skin?

Sullivan: Not really. The church that we attended was all white. I know that we were divided, but my parents never kept us from going to school or doing things with other people. I guess if they had other opinions about it, we never really were aware of it.

Interviewer SE: Overall, how would you say that growing up in Adairsville affected your education later on in life throughout college?

Sullivan: When you grow up in a smaller town and you get to college, it is a whole different world. I realized that there were some things that we just hadn't had that other people-. Different textbooks, different experiences. I don't think that was unusual, because in Georgia, it was pretty diverse. I think the more urban areas had, obviously, bigger schools and more resources and some of the smaller schools didn't. We were, Bartow still is, a very rural county, so it takes a long time to move the needle with that. Yeah, I was a little intimidated when I went to college, when I started talking to other people and they had had different experiences in their classes, much more advanced chemistry and things like that. Because we were small, your teacher allotment is based on the number of kids you have, so we didn't have a lot of advanced level, things like that.

Interviewer SE: What is one of your fondest memories of being in then Adairsville school system?

Sullivan: I think that is just, that's a hard, hard thing. One of my fondest memories is just having the friends that I did, being around the kids that I did. I always felt like the kids in my class were really nice people. Were we nice to each other all the time? No, because we were kids. Even years later after I got out, someone said something to me about-. They apologized because they said, "You know, I used to tease you a lot and I really felt bad about it." When they said it, it was kind of shocking because I didn't remember that at all. It was never done in a mean way. It was just kids being kids. My best friend was Gwen Worthington and I had had a really close friend, Angie Barrett, whose father was the pastor at Adairsville Baptist Church. They moved away right before we started middle school. Her father was a chaplain in the army and they moved to Germany. It was kind of devastating to lose my best friend and there was a gap in there where I was kind of at loose ends, and then Gwen started coming to Adairsville and for whatever reason, we kind of hit it off. She just had this great laugh and she was just a great person to hang around. When we graduated, I was valedictorian and she was salutatorian. We kind of pushed each other academically. She was phenomenal in math and probably could have done anything that she wanted to do smarts-wise. She stayed home after we graduated and started working in a law firm and got training as a paralegal and has had a great career. We actually are still Facebook friends and she has a son who's about the age of my youngest. I guess we kind of lurk and kind of keep up with each other through Facebook. We haven't had any big reunion or anything like that, but she was really a great friend to me all the way through high school.

Interviewer JN: Can you tell us about the school building itself? You showed us a picture of the Adairsville School.

Sullivan: Yeah. When I started first grade, the section that I started in had been built probably around 1955 and that was the first, second, and third grades were there. Then there was a bigger section that when you came out of the first grade section, you would go up these big stone steps and there was a little temporary trailer that Mrs. Marion Lacy was one of the first grade teachers, so she was in that trailer. You go up the stairs and that would take you into the section where the fourth and fifth grades were. That building had these really dark painted wooden floors and plaster walls. They looked kind of like these. [Points to wall behind her.] Big windows. Over the course of time, I guess the part that I went to in first grade was built first, and then a portion of the older building was torn down and that's where they put more of the high school classes, and it was kind of built into the hill that the old school side was on. Eventually, the oldest section that was right in the middle was torn down and then they did it in phases so that when my older sister graduated in '76, we had a new auditorium. Then a couple years later, let's see, '74-. My last three years of high school, we had the new gymnasium. See, I remember that because I played basketball and it was disturbing because it didn't smell like the old gym. The old gym smelled like popcorn and tennis shoes and basketball leather. The new one just smelled like a new building and it was just the weirdest experience to play in there, even after years later, it still had not acquired that-. I don't know if everybody would've liked the smell, but to me, that was like the best.

Interviewer JN: Did it affect your play?

Sullivan: No, but we did switch from-. The first half, when I played seventh, eight, and ninth grade, girls played by different rules than boys. The boys played five on five, girls played six on six. You had two guards who stayed at one end, and two forwards who stayed at one end, and then two rovers who ran the length of the court. So at any one time, only four members of your team could be on a half court. Right before my sophomore year is when they switched over and girls started playing five on five and we went to more boy's rules. We didn't have smaller basketballs at the time, so we still played with the big basketball. That was a big switch in those days. I remember having conversation with Linda Bass because she had played basketball and I think she told me that when she played, it was three on three and the rules were completely different, so I'm glad I came along when I did. I was a rover, so it was easier, I think, to transition into that five on five than it might've been for some of the other kids.

Interviewer JN: How many people attended the games?

Sullivan: You know, it's hard to say numbers because the little gym, enough people came that it felt full when people were there and the noise would really be tough. When we moved into the newer gym, it was bigger and so it took more people to fill it up. The whole feel was different to switch from the older school to the bigger school. It wasn't just the smell. It was beautiful and we had showers that were nice showers and very nice dressing rooms and everything. For us, it was kind of luxurious to have something like that and I guess now, it wouldn't be considered quite so nice. It doesn't exist now. All of those buildings-. Over the years, a new high school was built, it's been there for twelve years now. When that new high school was finished, what had been the middle school and high school became just the middle school. In order for it to just become the middle high school, they had to build a new elementary school, which is the elementary school that's down on Hall Station Road now. Still walking distance to downtown, really, but it was kind of a big shift. Now we have-. Y'all were laughing because I said, "Yeah, we had kind of a big class." There was seventy-eight in my graduating class and I think this past year, we had just over three hundred in the graduating class. For us, that's big class. I think one or both of y'all said, "Yeah, we had a thousand in my graduating class." It's kind of like, we don't even have a thousand in one high school yet. We will, probably some day. Being in a school even that size changes the dynamic. In a class of a thousand kids, it's easier to get lost. In a class of seventy-eight, it's a lot harder to get lost. People kind of tend to know what you're doing.

Interviewer SE: With all these new schools that have been coming up, has it changed the way the community interacts with one another?

Sullivan: I think it's changed the way people think about the schools. When they moved-. The new high school, and we now have a new middle school, both of those things are not so terribly far from downtown, but I think that moving out was just another symbol to a lot of people that things were leaving downtown. So part of the goal with building the new elementary school that's now on the drawing table is that it's going to be located back on that site. We thought it doesn't make sense to not utilize property that we already have, but it was really a bigger deal to make sure that we continue that heritage of having the school kind of in the heart of the downtown. It feels like that's the place where it ought to be.

Interviewer CB: When will that new elementary school be built?

Sullivan: We're supposed to break ground this year on it. November, December is kind of our target date for the ground breaking. It'll take us a while to get it built. Probably in 2018 is when they'll move into it, so I'm very excited about that.

Interviewer SE: What would you consider your role to be in the community?

Sullivan: You know, you had said that you would ask me that question before and I don't know. I'm a citizen in this community. It means something to me to be here and to be a part of it. We have a lot of people who have moved here from other places. My husband is one of them. My husband is from Massachusetts. I jokingly call him a tiger transplant because you're someone who, you've moved into the community. But we're a better community and a stronger community because a lot of the people who've moved here, moved here because they saw something of value in having a small town and wanting to be involved in that small town. Being a member of the Sans Souci Club, for example, it's really strange that people that I looked up to as teachers are now my-. I still can't think of myself as their peer, but we're colleagues and we're working together to take care of this community. So maybe a caretaker would be a good way to think of it. I don't want us to stop change entirely because I can see the benefit of a lot of the change that's happened. I also want to be sure that we preserve the good memories and the good parts of being here.

Interviewer SE: Speaking about the transplants, as you said, have those members of the community been treated any differently for moving in or are they accepted?

Sullivan: Probably a little bit of both and probably if you-. Like with my husband, because we're married, he was talking to me one day and we had gone out, we were running errands one Saturday. And we went down to the Ace Hardware and first of all, my children refuse to go grocery with me at Food Lion because they say, "Mom, you talk to everybody," so they just hate it because it takes a long time to buy groceries. Well, I knew how they felt because we went to Ace Hardware and Robert was talking to everybody. I was like, "How do you know him? Who's that?" Because we came here as a family connection and he started the business, he's a doctor. So he sees a lot of people and knows a lot of people, I don't talk to him about his patients because there are privacy laws. A lot of the time, I don't even know that someone knows him until they bring it up. If you just go out with him socially, it's amazing how many people he knows and he's only lived here since 1998. He came back and forth, but we built our house in 2001, so he's made a lot of progress over time. We have a lot of people like that. Patricia Easton moved here and she's the person who painted all the banners that are downtown. She's a wonderful artist. There are a lot of people who are

transplants, but who are transplants and came here because they love this town. I think that the people who move here and love this town, I think that they're accepted with open arms and that they-. We appreciate the fact that other people see the same things that we see.

Interviewer SE: What made you want to run for the Board of Education?

Sullivan: Temporary insanity, probably. I had actually been-. We planned to move back here with our family. We looked at our options. Robert and I knew we wanted to be close to family. His family was all up in Massachusetts and we kind of ruled that out because we just like it here. By coming back here, we wanted our children to be a part of the community and I already knew that the best way to be a part of the community was to be in school, get to know people, form friendships, have relationships with people, understand what it means to live somewhere, I mean really live somewhere. The downside of that is that people know a lot about you, which is good and bad. The good news is they know a lot about you, so if your family is hurting or something is going on, people can help you cope with that or help take care of you in ways that just being anonymous somewhere else, you will never have that emotional support. As my children went to school, I felt very welcome in the schools. I would volunteer and help in the classrooms. I got to know the teachers that were teaching my children. I don't hang out with their teachers, but I feel comfortable knowing them and my children are friends with children of teachers and they go back and forth to our houses. I think that's been a good thing. There had kind of been this mantra for a long time about failing schools and how terrible schools are. I'm still not sure I really understand where a lot of that has come from, but that was not my experience. I was sitting outside the elementary school one day and I was hearing this rant on the radio about these terrible schools and I just thought, "That's not the world I live in." The people that I knew and know are people who went into education because they wanted to help children learn and they have a passion for it and they love it and it makes them happy to see kids doing well. So when a position came open on the School Board, we had someone who didn't finish his four year term. There was one year left on that term, and a friend of mine called me up and said, "You know, you should think about applying for that." I said, "No, no, no. I'm not going to do that. I'm not a politician. I'm not cut out for that." A couple more people saw me in the store and talked to me and said, "You know, you should really think about that." So I did. We had to-. There was a process that was laid out in the paper, and I called the voting board to make sure that I was filling out all the paperwork and doing everything, all the affidavits and things that you do when you run for public office. That year, I had to run a political campaign for the four-year term. Plus, I had to run a political campaign simultaneously

for the one year term that I was serving but had to finish because the voters had to elect me to that position. State law says that you can appoint someone, but you also have to have an election. So you have to be certified by the voters to do that. I had never done anything like that. I had never volunteered with a political campaign. I think that I was very lucky that I did as well as I did. The person who was running, we weren't running mates, he was also running for the same position, was someone who had attended school in Adairsville and had previously served on the school board, and had had a couple of terms of gap between the time that he had served. It was a huge thing to me that we not attack each other because he is an amazing story himself. He's a self-starting entrepreneurial guy and he had a really compelling story. We've have conversations since. I consider him not a best buddy, but he is a colleague and someone who I have a lot of respect for. I think that's partly because we both went to the same school and we both kind of know what this community's like. Probably a lot of insanity, because I just didn't know what I was getting into. You're naïve when you're running for political office and that's probably a good thing. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I love being on the school board. I want to see us have really good schools. I don't know why that makes me cry.

Interviewer JN: I think that's a good sign.

Sullivan: I think it's so important for our children in this community to get the best education they can. Bartow County has a lot of families who live just above the poverty line, if not at the poverty line and Adairsville has a lot of kids the same way. I just remember that as we were growing up, there were kids who never considered going to college. They never considered doing anything other than going to work in the textile mills. That's not a terrible thing. Having a job like that that's secure, that allows you to take care of your family is a good thing, but there are really smart kids here and for this community to thrive and grow, we need for all of our kids to be able to have the same opportunities that other kids do. Our kids are not less able or less talented, but sometimes they don't always realize the opportunities that are out there. I think that if we can help them to do that, then it creates a better life for them and I think that's what my job is, is to try to find those opportunities and create ways for them to have those opportunities, and to be able to have a better life.

Interviewer SE: What do you think it is about Adairsville specifically that has allowed it to survive throughout the years when other small towns haven't?

Sullivan: You know, a lot of people will probably-. If you don't live in Adairsville you might poo-poo this, but I just think that Adairsville has a very unusual quality. It is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. We have our

challenges just like any other community, but I do think that there is this sense of real community here. The idea that my destiny is linked to my neighbor's destiny, which is linked to the next sub-division over. When I was a kid, there were not lot of sub-divisions around us, and now it's mind boggling the number of communities that are all a part of Adairsville. Not necessarily within the city limit proper, but kind of in the surrounding area that all consider themselves part of the community. It's just a very unique quality. Things probably move a little bit slower, it's not unusual to see people with their car pulled over having a conversation with somebody who's out in their yard. And it's not unusual to see women in the grocery store with their cart of groceries off to the side and talking. I think those are good things. I think it reminds us that the reason you live in a community is because we are social creatures and we need connection to other people. I do think you can have as much or as little of that by your own design when you live in a smaller town.

Interviewer SE: How has living in Adairsville impacted your kids' lives?

Sullivan: Other than the fact that they hate to go grocery shopping? [Laughs] Every one of my kids is so different. My oldest son was able to be involved in band and music lessons. My second oldest son kind of found his place of belonging in JROTC [The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps] and kind of that group of kids, as well as, I think every sport. I think he tried every sport in the school, with exception to maybe baseball, I think is the only one that maybe he didn't try. He did everything else. My daughter is coming along the same way, doing a lot of different things, and my youngest, the same. I think the ability to be involved in a lot of different things and it's small enough that they can try things and if they don't really want to pursue it, they don't have to, but there's enough variety that they can each find their own place and foster their own talents. Even though the school is bigger, they still know their teachers and their teachers know them and recognize them in the halls, and I think that's a good thing.

Interviewer SE: What does being a part of this community mean to you today?

Sullivan: See, that might me cry again too. Everything. [Pause] I think I was a lucky kid. You know, my parents gave me a good start. There were a lot of people who were directly involved in helping me grow up. And thank goodness people like Linda Bass and Judy James could just kind of go, "They'll get over it." Having people involved in your life and who are willing to give you opportunities and who really see you. And I think that's the biggest thing, is that as a kid, I go back to this idea of not being anonymous. As a kid, I'm sure I was kind of a weird kid, [Laughs] but I felt like my teachers saw me

and that my pastor at the church saw me as a person. I wasn't just another kid. I think that because our classes were smaller, I think that, at least from my perspective, I had a sense of self from being here and being a part of it. It was the thing that was probably the biggest gift for me and it was the gift that I want my kids to have. It's the thing that I want to pass on to other kids in schools now because I think, I know, that we have kids that feel like they don't really exist and I think that when adults take the time to spend time and talk to kids and really see them-. I know that they're acting out or doing bad things or whatever. But if kids can have that sense that there is someone that they can connect with, I think it makes a difference for them as they're growing up. I think that we have that a lot here. I think that if you talk to people, when you go in the restaurants here and you go into the stores here, people will look at you. They look you in the face, they look you in the eye, and they'll talk to you. It's pretty easy to strike up a conversation if you really want to strike up a conversation. People will talk to you. I'm just not sure that exists everywhere. I think that's a huge, huge advantage to being here.

Interviewer SE: Well, that's about all I have. Do you have anything else?

Interviewer CB: I would just like to go back to your-. You had an important meeting yesterday while being on the board.

Sullivan: Yes, I did.

Interviewer CB: I would just like for you to talk about that and explain that to us, especially with the taxes and the senior citizens.

Sullivan: Yes. Well, that naïve part about being on the school board, I think you assume that everybody agrees that education is important. You rapidly realize that not everybody agrees, but I think that in this community, because we were hit so hard in the recession and it's taken a long time economically for us to come back, I think that Bartow County is kind of on that brink of explosive growth that Cobb and Cherokee went through several years ago. We kind of know what's coming, and there are a lot of opinions about growth, both ways. Some of it's good and some of it's bad, but the school system has had historic cuts. The state has never fully funded education and in particular over the last several years, some pretty big cuts have been made in education. Where that effects the local school board is that if we're not being funded at the state level, our job on the school board is to figure out how we make it work. And that has involved having to make some hard decisions about cutting programs, having to make decisions about letting people go from jobs. In my case, the sad part about that is that you know the people that are being let go and you know what impact that has on their lives

and their families. We've tried as much as possible to not have mass cuts and things like that. We have a superintendent that has done a very difficult job and a very good job in trying to balance so that positions that have been not filled-. We do more plus. A part of the growth is that as the economy is starting to come back, property values have been reassessed and for a lot of people, they're not at that point economically themselves, but the properties have been reassessed, and so we have people who are on fixed incomes and we have people who are doing very well. They would be able to pay their taxes without any issues. When the property values are reassessed, that means they get a bigger tax bill. The portion on your tax bill that says "county taxes" and then "school tax", and people have seen that amount go up because their property values have been reassessed. To make up for the state cuts that we had, we had to raise the millage rate, which was something that had not been done in twenty years, so that was a shock to people. Then all of the counties around us have done away with senior citizens paying taxes for schools, and for us, we haven't done that. We have a partial tax abatement for senior citizens, but over the last maybe year and a half, two years, there's been a growing number of people in Bartow County who want to see a much larger tax abatement and a much larger-. Some people, I think probably last night, the vast majority of people in the room would like to see a one hundred percent tax abatement. At age sixty-five or sixty-two, they would like to pay no more taxes. For me, I believe that some of our young families and new professionals are in just as precarious a financial situation as some of our senior citizens and if that tax burden, somehow, some way, we have to have a working balanced budget. For a long time, we operated in the red. We've worked really hard to try to get back to a balanced budget. For our younger families, if they have to bear a greater burden in taxes, that's going to make things harder for them. The decision that's being-. The question that's being pushed out there right now is, can we figure out how to answer that question and create some tax abatement that could help people who truly, in some cases, are truly in need. Health care costs are huge and there were some hard stories last night from people. I think-. What I don't want to see happen is for this to become a grandmothers against grandkids kind of fight, and it felt like it was moving in that direction last night. It's an auditorium full of people who were very vocal. In a couple cases, but not all cases, not very kind in their comments. I have a whole other opinion on why we've gotten to the point in this country about why it's so hard for us to have a real dialogue about common issues. I think this is one of those issues that's highly emotional. It has a huge impact both on the children and the school system, so the future of the community, as well as for the senior citizens who, in many cases, have had no children in the school system for years. I know that for me growing up, there were people who were paying taxes into the school system that helped me get an education and they had not had

children in the school system. We're kind of at this point now where, for me, I think it makes sense to have a well-educated population. For me, the idea of paying taxes makes sense to support the schools. The better educated we are, the better we can do, the better businesses we can bring in, which means we can bring the millage rate down, which means we actually all end up paying less taxes. We all do better if we're willing to support each other. I just think the economic situation that we've gone through has made that harder for people to appreciate. Last night was a really tough meeting. Sometimes, I guess the hardest part of being on the school board for me has been those times where it feels like the value of education is not recognized, where it starts to feel like you're in a bunker and no matter what you say and what you do, nobody really wants to hear it. We're doing better now in Bartow County Schools than we have in a long, long time, and that's in spite of budget cuts and in spite of some of the hits that we're continuing to take financially in the school system. I would like to be able to balance both. The people who live here and who have put a lot of their financial resources into educating the community, with those fourteen thousand kids that are currently in the school system, and who, frankly, won't do well if we don't offer a good, high quality education to them. It goes back to that whole issue of, you don't really realize what you don't have until you get outside and you start talking to other people and you realize, oh yeah, I'm going to have to work really hard now because other people have had opportunities that we didn't have. Closing that opportunity gap is big for me. I don't really know what's going to happen. I suspect that our legislative delegation will, one way or another, bring this to a vote. I think what made part of it hard last night is that there were people who thought, oh, we're going to have this town hall meeting and three of our five delegation were there. They said, "We'll get this done tonight." It's a longer process than that. All five have to be and they have to have a proposal and a resolution has to be presented, and then it has to be dealt with during the time that the state legislature is in session, January through March, and then it comes to a public vote. It's a really long process and there were people there who are really hurting now and who were really, truly angry and it's going to be a long process. That's the hard part of being on the school board, is trying to figure out when people I know, people that I see in the grocery store, my own parents. My dad's ninety-five, my mom's eighty-six, they're still paying school taxes and they haven't had kids in the school system in a long time. We all are living on, or a lot of people are living on less and costs have gone up. You have to figure out, how we are going to make a decision that's going to do right by everyone and be fair, and you know, you just know walking away that you are never going to make everybody happy, no matter what you decide. I wish, I understand that they're not going to be happy, but I wish that they would walk away and feel satisfied that we have tried our best to be as fair as possible. I'm not even sure after last night that a lot of people

in that room feel that way. Now that's Bartow County as a whole, it's not just Adairsville. There were dutiful people there, and when I looked out in that audience and you see people that you know and you care about, it's hard. You want to do the best thing, and you know you have to be King Solomon that come up with the best decision.

Interviewer CB: I think that's all the questions we have, but I think we both want to thank you for your time.

Interviewer SE: Yeah, thank you.

Sullivan: I'm sorry, you know I talk about this community and I just think it's just one of the best places, and obviously my husband does. I appreciate what we have here. Over time growing up and watching Town Center develop, and watching Barrett Parkway kind of explode, I think you kind of take a breath and you go, "ohh." You hope that's not going to happen here. You hope that you're ahead of progress and growth. You hope that you can preserve the good parts of the community. I think the big struggle is, especially when you're some place like where we are, it'd be easier to preserve it if you lived you know somewhere that was a little bit more isolated. The problem then is that you have the brain drain of your kids grow up and there's nothing there. We're kind of at that point where there's a lot here, but there's a lot surrounding us. There's a lot of value for our kids if we can have those opportunities, and have jobs, and have things that might go away for a little while. It'd be nice for them to go away, and then come back and bring all that back. All that experience and put it to work here, and continue to grow the community. To me that's really what it should be.