

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Clay Manley Interview

Conducted by Adina Langer

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Transcribed by Cami Kottke

Born in Tennessee in 1935, Clay Manley spent his childhood moving throughout the southeast. His father was a supervisor for the Blair Construction company which took government contracts, first as a part of the New Deal and then as a result of wartime production. After graduating from Mercer University, Manley attended Union Theological Seminary in New York and became a Baptist minister in Georgia. He recorded his oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in June 2019.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Today is June 11th, 2019. My name is Adina Langer, and I am the curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. I am here at Sturgis Library with Clay Manley. Could you please state your name?

Clay Manley: William Clay Manley.

Interviewer: And please tell me when and where you were born.?

Clay Manley: Milan (spelled it out loud) Tennessee (remark about how other people pronounced it) in 1935.

Interviewer: And what were your parents' names?

Clay Manley: James Tyree Manley and Dallas Thorton Manley.

Interviewer: And what did they – what were their occupations? What did your father do for a living?

Clay Manley: Father was a construction, was in a construction company and my mother was, my mother never worked outside the home. After my father died she started doing some in home things but was never really successful, never really good at it. [could make out a few words but lots of mumbling]. She was a housewife.

Interviewer: She was a housewife. Did you have any siblings?

Clay Manley: Yes. James Tyree Junior is 8 years older than I, passed away about 4 years ago. Ruth Manley Durton, my sister and she died about 9 years ago.

Interviewer: And what's your earliest family memory? What do you remember about growing up with your siblings?

Clay Manley: The thing that is the motivating factor in my early years was my fathers' job. He was in the construction business. In the middle of the times we were together we were awkward mainly because he was not successful at what he was doing. But that had meant he had to travel a lot because of World War II coming on. And so forth. His traveling included the whole family, everyone went together and consequently my earliest experiences have to do with how that have to relate to, for instance what I remember clearly, [can't make out]. When I was five years old, we lived in Panama City, Florida, Dad was building something, I don't know what -- and the whole town was in an uproar because a Japanese, uh a German U-boat had been spotted just off the shore. When that word got around, everyone assumed the Germans will be invading in the next 30 minutes. And it, that was a general excitement and that tied into the fact of us living in Panama City. But there were other experiences like that that are clear. Christmas, when I was five actually just turning six actually, we were living in Decatur, Georgia, for the time being and it was Christmas time and everyone was opening presents and stuff and one of the presents I was given was a set of roller skates and I put them on and everyone was gathered around to see Clay learn ha and I fell on my fanny in about two seconds, I sat down and took them off, laid them to the side and never picked them up again. Hahah. Everybody in the family said "Clay you have to learn." Right. I reached over and picked up a ball and handed it to daddy and said "let's go play catch." Hahaha. (Clears throat at the end)

Interviewer: So you mentioned you that had to move around a lot. Did you live sometimes in cities and sometimes in the country or was it mostly urban areas?

Clay Manley: Mostly urban areas the businesses that they buildings were involved with in the 30s, were almost all in small towns. They got some contracts from the federal government about building post offices. And uh of course they were in little towns scattered around the southeast. And uh, so that was in the 30s and when we got to the 40s, we were in World War II and that was another whole different set, a whole set of dogs as the saying goes. [Note: At times there was some mumbling and uh's so they were omitted]

Interviewer: Sure. Thinking about the 30s right now, did you have a sense for how the Depression was affecting the business or how it affected your family?

Clay Manley: *Deep breath* It really, It really. I was too young, to know the difference. I was born in 1935. Uh so the last part of WWII was caught up my, in me being diaper trained. But uh the end of, WWII started 1941-42 through there. I never, my parents never let the anger or angst of the German Army and all that stuff. That was an occasion where, I gather it was mother. All though I don't know that. I assume it was mother who tried to make sure the pain of the situation did not bleed to the children, for us being frightened and that sort of thing. I never felt that. The only thing close to that was the moving from one place to another. To let you know how much that is involved, my sister, who is older than I. She went to 26 schools before she graduated. That is about 2 schools a year for 12 years. (Mumbling) Survived as far as the school is concerned. That dominates all kinds of things that a family can and cannot, needs to do. The strong leader being my Mother and uh surfacing in this type of atmosphere. Mother never had a stick of furniture. She rented uh (inaudible) Mother. There were so many things that were ruled out if you were only going to be here till next week or a month. So I don't think of, as far as we were concerned or I was concerned since I was the youngest of the group. I did not have that type of

feeling at all. One of the things that shows how different it was in the late 1940s, 43 and 44. The US Airforce wanted to practice the bombing raids, that were flying over at night, and uh they set up a game. Where uh after it got dark the bomber planes would come roaring over in formation and all of us children get out to the grass in the front yard and lay down and look up and look up and make a guess. The point of the game was to train the men of the, what you call it, spotlights. The game was you hear the noise over here and you take your spotlight and aim it up and try catch him and if the light catches onto the guy, we decided he was shot and was out of the game and he had to fall away. Well it was a game, we would cheer at the one falling away, although they were training for the possibility of Atlanta being a bomb site. It never registered with us, any of the children. The adults made it a point to not traumatize us. Anyway, I didn't mean to take up your time. It shows a part of what it meant to be a part of their uh Panama City was an interesting thing. For instance because of the Japanese submarine was so close, they thought the lights from city would attract the submarine to where the town was. Cause they were out in the deep water. Uh and that was one of the ways they helped that. They passed a resolution in Panama City government, to make everybody who had an automobile to take black tape and tape the top half of their headlights. So the lights would be directed down and might police help from being identified. Here we thought it was funny, to look at all this. And didn't feel intimidated by it.

Interviewer: So you mention your parents shielded you a little bit from what was going on. Do you ever remember listening to the radio or seeing newspapers with coverage of the beginning of the war?

Clay: No, that would have been in the 40s. But, uh my father was almost illiterate in some ways. He went to school for three years of schooling in a country school in Georgia. But, he made it a point to take a newspaper wherever we happened to stop. Our scheduled activity at the house was in the afternoon, everybody's grades are grades were done and after supper, daddy cleared the table and took the plans from work and laid them on the table so he could study them for the next day. (mumbling) Uh so he was more well-read under normal circumstances.

Interviewer: What was his role at the construction company?

Clay: He was a superintendent. Uh (mumbling) I'll give you a number in a minute that will be hard for you to believe. Uh this was in 1944, the war was going to a close but the military was still being geared up like they were going to be invaded next week. Uh so that was a thing to be delt with. (mumbling) Uh the place they worked was so large, they were building a training camp, they were there in the spring of the year looking at the pastures in the area and the general said I'm going to have 10,000 men here in October. And they were looking at the grass and stuff, I'm going to have 10,000 men here in October. You be ready for them. They took the plans of the operation and divided it into sections so that there were 12 sections that were ran by different superintendents. My father was one of those 12. But that was okay because he was a superintendent at other jobs for the last 10 years. So, that was okay. The thing that was, make it all come home, is the people running the whole operation were trying their best to get it done by fall when all the guys would be getting off the trains. My father had one of the groups, sections, and there was a time, (unable to catch what he said) when daddy had 1000 carpenters working under him for his section. Everything had to, there was no such thing as concrete blocks, it was

all framed in wood. So he had to have carpenters and they couldn't have any electricity for drills so everything was done by hand. If they wanted to get as much stuff as they could, they had to get, really had to get people to attack the job as much as possible. One of the numbers, good friend of ours a family friend, was Mr. Durton, and he was a superintendent just like daddy was. They got into a contest to see who could mix the most concrete in a days time. Which is (mumbling), I'm a better hand than you are because (mumbling). Uh when I knew Mr. Durton years later, he said he was still upset about it because he didn't win. Daddy won by five yards of concrete (mumbling). But that five yards was added to the total amount. That day Daddy's crew poured 960 yards of concrete done by hand. Which is absolutely hysterical because (mumbling). Think of having to mix that kind of concrete what you had to do. Now days you have a truck, put that stuff in a truck and by the time you get there it's mixed. They had to build wooden tray boxes, floored out one foot (mumbled) bin, with shovels and hoes and mixed the sand, and the concrete and gravel by hand. 960 yards haha. Which just seems bizarre to me. How do you cope with that?

Interviewer: That's amazing.

Clay: My father did and he (not sure what word he used here) enjoyed it.

Interviewer: Do you remember what training camp they were building?

Clay: I do not.

Interviewer: (trying to interject to ask question).

Clay: I do not. It was in Illinois. But I'm not sure. If my brother was still alive, he'd remember. He worked with him. Uh I don't know the name of the place.

Interviewer: What is the name of the construction company?

Clay: Blair Construction Company. He, Blair was almost retired with (mumbling). His son was Fornell, and he decided to create his own company. So in 1931, he formed the Blair Construction Company and the headquarters were in Decatur, Georgia, but that's who it was. Blair Construction Company out of Montgomery, Alabama, and Decatur, Georgia.

Interviewer: So when you were driving, moving place to place, did your family own a car?

Clay: Yes. They were willing to spend money on what they needed. That's a part of war expenses to keep. Dad got a car before anyone else did, in whatever little town they were in. Uh the, let's see. What was I going to say? [Blanking]

Interviewer: We were talking about the car.

Clay: Yeah

Interviewer: Driving around in the car [Clay was talking over Adina, so this is what I believe I heard]

Clay: Yeah one that will catch your eye. In 1939, Daddy paid cash for a Buick Sedan Automobile. Cause number one he needed a car and number two he enjoyed having a big nice one and number three he got some pay help from the government for “this is a war effort type thing” So we always had a drivable good car. When they first got married they used a train everything was train, load the boxes of stuff. But pretty quickly they got a car and stayed with it.

Interviewer: Do you remember rationing? Did gas rationing affect your family at all?

Clay: Yes, it was not the price involved. It was the fact that it was a war effort and you can't just get all the gas out of the tank. They issued stamps, the government did, and each stamp was worth so many gallons of gas a month. The stamp was only good for a month and so you got two or three stamps that would be like 10-15 gallons, I don't know the detail. But um, (mumbling) it was pretty strictly upheld because it was a war effort. [laugh] and uh I was trying to think of (long pause), I'm sorry I was letting my mind wander.

Interviewer: We were talking about rationing.

Interviewer/Clay: Were talking over one another here, interviewer was trying to jog Clay's memory.

Clay: Bingo. What I wanted to tell you was uh we were a very close family and our parents, grandparents that was all of a piece. And uh they, it was so much, it could create problems. In the middle of this, my grandmother, my father's mother, passed away and that devastated my father. It was a major crisis. The news had come by telephone in the evening, and immediately Daddy said “we've got to go home and see what's going on and see what help we can be.” That was, so Daddy had other stuff going on (lots of mumbling), so he told James, who was just old enough to have his license, my brother James. He turned to him (mumbling) money. Daddy said James go get some gas, we're going to Alabama tonight. (Mumbling), stamps (mumbling). Go get some gas. In a little while he came back with a car with gas in it. Asked him “well what happened?” He had gone to the local fillin' station down in Bouldin, Georgia. He went to the local fillin' station, explained the circumstance, Granny just died and we had needed to go back home for the uh the gasoline attendant said, “Okay I'll take care of it now, with a couple of these stamps and when you get back, after the funeral we'll settle it up. We'll make it work.” James came back fast (mumbling) mother (mumbling) gasoline stamps so we can go. Daddy never flinched about that, he just assumed somebody was going to take care of that (lots of laughter) Quit worrying about it and do something else. But that kind of thing was strictly enforced enough where you could make things different.

Interviewer: Do you remember how it affected food? Do you remember what you ate?

Clay: Do I remember what?

Interviewer: Do you remember what you ate during the war?

Clay: Food. Not much. It didn't, it wasn't, Daddy was, they were making enough money, he was making enough that they could buy groceries and pretty much eat what they wanted to and uh and it was, we didn't, if it was a factor in mother buying groceries I never knew anything about that. As far as I was concerned, it was all there and wonderful and that was it.

*** In the background you can hear someone saying "he has a story about sugar."

Interviewer: So um your wife just mentioned you had a good story about sugar. That you might want to tell..

Clay: (clearing his throat) Umm not only was gasoline rationed, but sugar was rationed as well and I don't really know how (mumbling) whether it was stamps (mumbling). I'm not sure how that worked but it was a very real thing that uh my father was extremely stern in some ways. But in some ways he was extremely careful to try to keep the strain, of what was going on, away from the children. So, okay sugar is rationed. So we gotta get some sugar. At Daddy's suggestion the five people, three kids and two adults, would take the sugar that came in a 5 pound bag for the month or whatever and they would pour equal amounts of sugar in in glass jars. Everybody gets the same, including the three children. So now there are five people and five jars, if for instance mother would want to bake a pie, then they would have to go (stutter) each five and everyone chips in get enough sugar to.. The whole idea of that was funny because Daddy would try, he would always get out his first because he always drank coffee and well he'd get out of sugar because he for coffee. Come to me or James or Ruth and beg, what can we do to swap even here, and I considered that a marvelous experience of how Daddy was playing a game with the kids (stuttering). And uh that was uh a major clue for me to be so excited to hear Daddy begging and pleading and carrying on ridiculously about getting enough to go around. In any case I imagine (couldn't hear the last word).

Interviewer: In your family, what role did religion play? Did..

Clay: Super, super religion and religion is spelled Dallas, D-A-L-L-A-S. (Clears throat). She grew up in a Methodist home in Alabama, the same one everyone else had. She was baptized Methodist Church, not only baptized but participated as much as she could there. I think I grown and moved around all over, where ever uh Mother continued to reaffirm religion as a part of her life and a part of everyone elses' as well. Uh that was, it was a strong enough emotion that Mother was drawn with it, that not too deep into the marriage, JT, my father, got religion and uh was baptized in Key West, Florida by the way, which we happened to be in at the time. Uh there's no way I can explain to you the dimension of her influence. My older brother, well my father quit drinking booze after he got religion. Friends and family got religion because of Mother. Uh they were such a spectacular part of what they believed in. uh and Mother was a key to that. We went to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday morning for years and never missed a time. She she, there was never a question of what we were doin'. We all knew what we were doin'. The influence was so strong that my brother, who is eight years older than I, to become a minister and now looking back, James understood surely at least a major part, if not all the motivation they had was caught up in mothers understanding of what the faith really meant. 20 years later, I did the same thing. I did it from a different kind of motivation but it was

strong enough, just the same. Uh in any case, yes. It was a strong, strong influence as far as Dallas was concerned.

Interviewer: Did you know anyone of a different faith? Was that, In your family did you talk about other religions or was it just Methodism?

Clay: It was caught up in the community in where we lived. The churches that were in that community, which is closest (mumbling) now. I can honestly say that our lives were so full of plans and programs and stuff to do at the church that, it was not that we had negative feelings about uh other denominations and so forth but they were considered, as far as we were concerned, just probably foreigners more than likely. Hahaha but we don't know that for sure but we would have never been there anyway. Um and uh it was not until I had gotten to college that all things came apart and umm I began to understand there is a wider world out there than I knew anything about. So at the end of my college experience I went to New York City, Theresai and I, we'd only been married a year and I went to the seminary [he said something else here, but I couldn't catch it], the largest seminary in New York City, if you're not a member of a church, that means nothin to you particularly, but uh Union was the strongest academic institution in the whole United States. They were considered too genuine scholars of the age uh and the school that they represented was right on the [got confused here too, I believe he said it two times], Yale uh had another kind of these churches. Yale and Union were the two mark (?) places in the United States as far as academic concerns them and that's exactly where I went to school. Uh and enjoyed it immensely, was the most innovating three years of my life no question about it and uh so much so that Theresai was also affected by it and attended some classes. Uh it was a very special place and if you're making notes about "what influenced Clay," what influenced Clay was Union Seminary and uh we can talk about it sometime. Anyways, that's the case.

Interviewer: Yeah, well before we get to your education, that point, thinking about your childhood and this close-knit community that you lived in, did you ever interact with people of different races?

Clay: No.

Interviewer: It was all white?

Clay: It was all white. Uh from my perspective as a child growing up, teenage years, it was not that we downplayed or hated Black people, as far as I could tell. It never crossed my mind. They were just folks. They were Black and we didn't play with them but that's okay. They weren't in that community though. There were no Black families that lived in that community at the time. Uh and uh if they did, I didn't know anything about it. Uh there was no question about it. [prolonged pause] Being (mumbling) alert of "are these people, the same as we are, thinking about Black folks" and that would never crossed my mothers mind. She was as far as I know, she was willing to help, or a Black family needing help, she would go to see about helping them. Daddy was not, he wasn't a segregationist, that's a given but he was not at all difficult to be with. My father died in 1960, of a heart attack and the little church, the little fellowship church that we always gone to church, where we had the funeral.. And before the funeral started three car loads of Black people got out and came in, seated and was a part of the service. Uh there are many

places where that would not have been tolerated but the Black people that worked for Daddy liked him, respected him, he died.. he gave them that respect. There's a level at which we would say we are all segregationists but I don't think (mumbling) kids, it wasn't a big deal. But uh, and there are places in the south that would be, tremendous responsibility. That was not the case where I grew up. That would have been like saying we're Episcopalians, gracious or some sort of thing. Hahaha. Did you know that the Christian people are likely, they have a service where they have wine and stuff and that wine isn't grape juice. Its real wine and they pass it around and (mumbling) that's not true cause God wouldn't bless him to drink (I'm not sure what he says here, sounds like pussy). Uh we all know that. But uh, in any case no we were, I was getting out of school, going to college, uh even had a clue that that was the case.

Interviewer: You know that your father's company hired African American people, do you know if that was the case before the war or after the?

Clay: I do not know, for sure. But I know that they were not hired as carpenters, trades people. They were mixing concrete, (mumbling) the bottom of the ladder. Uh when the war was over, daddy got a job at a power company here in Atlanta, down the river and uh pretty soon after he got there he was promoted, uh head of construction and maintenance in the whole facility. Uh had a large group of folks, most of them, most people working for him were Black. Uh and uh the feelings about all of that were positive. It was (mumbling) as far as I know, a structured society that uh was structured for darn sure but positive elements that made it more tolerable. Uh until the time came when Martin Luther King started his revolution, get that thing taken care of. By the way, I'm sure my father thought very little or nothing of Martin Luther King. Haha he considered (mumbling) difference in any case.

Interviewer: So before we get to that period, do you remember the war? You would have been about 10, um.

Clay: 46 was when the war ended. Uh other than general cheering uhh no. We were (mumbling) the house was rampant like the kind of where you go to town and uh uh stand around and yell and sing we're free and that stuff. And people were scattered too far to make that work so the celebration was very real but limited. Uh because of that, there wasn't enough people to uh (mumbling).

Interviewer: How did the end of the war affect your fathers work?

Clay: Fired. They, I don't really remember the day to be honest with you but at some time, I believe it was in '46 when the Japanese surrendered uh the ah, I'm trying to think of [Long pause].

Interviewer: we were talking about how your father lost his job.

Clay: Yeah I'm sorry, it's hard to keep my train of thought going. Uh yes, he was (mumbling a few words) shake hands and say thank you so much, goodbye. Uh Daddy started looking for another job but this was right after the war when the people were closing down. The war was over so we don't need the help. Fortunately my father's cousin, I think he was a cousin, worked

for Georgia Power but was an official with the company. Uh he was in charge of production for the state of Georgia. Uh we had a nice brick home by the by the uh... the whole situation was very much, whole lot better than starting all over. Now as a matter of fact so he went to Robert and asked him for a job, kin folks known each other long, sure can come to work here. They started him at the bottom of the ladder. Uh they uh Daddy started working at the coal pile, they had a pile of coal to crush to generate electricity but coal had to lots of it in a hurry uh they had to have most of the time they had to burn 24 train cargos of coal a day. And so it would take (mumbling) everything takes its own story but quick story about that though. Georgia Power had built in a shower room. Everybody who worked in on the coal pile was at the end of the day black all over because of the coal dust so they would go down to the shower room uh (mumbling) everybody could shower and put on take the clothes they had and take them home and have them washed and uh that was part. The funny part of it is and and you all (says something about this part not having to be in the film) Daddy was working at the power company and he just started, he, James and I were talking one day about the job. James was asking Daddy about how things are going, if he was going to make it alright and Daddy picked up on it and said "well it was okay but there was so many people in that one shower room that I had to wash four asses before I got to mine." Hahaha.

Interviewer: That's funny.

Clay: Which we considered enough said, we understand that. [lots of laughing].

Interviewer: So you mentioned that you got to live in a brick home. Do you know if it was public housing in Atlanta? Did you live in Atlanta?

Clay: No, no we were in a community a fellowship community uh outside, between Smyrna and Atlanta and there was ah ah a little woman, nurse who was in the community and had a house and uh we worked out of a rental thing with her but we always worked on the basis of rental houses, rental lots, rental apartment type thing. Which was a part of the thing I owe much up to making my mother nuts, she never had any of that. The only thing that came close was a Christmas tree, but no furniture was ours. It was always somebody else's.

Interviewer: So what do you remember about your early schooling? You would have been 10 years old when the war was over, did you get to stay in one school district at that point? Since your dad worked at Georgia Power?

Clay: No, uh we were uh it was not, we didn't, I'm trying to find a way to put this. Uh say that again.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

Clay: Yeah I went to school at what is now, what was then (mumbling) between Smyrna and Atlanta. Uh we had been there twice before, jobs in Marietta during the war. And we had worked out (mumbling) an arrangement with Ms. Jane, the lady that owned this house that we were renting from her, 'cause she was going to live in Florida for awhile. That lasted about a year and then got another job and pulled away from, that happened three times. And uh the power plant (I

think that's what he said) in Marietta uh where they (mumbling) big enough deal where it require that type of (mumbling) over a long period of time, three different times doing the same thing, working at the power plant. I was in, I was five years old in Decatur, Georgia we lived there, and it school, it was coming up school time. Mother went to the principle and said "I know he's only five but he's a very bright boy and we have to move so often that it would be helpful to us, if we could go ahead and catch a step up and maybe let him start 1st grade at age five, instead of age 12." And then the principal, mother finally convinced the principle that that was a good thing to do at the time. Pretty soon we had to leave to go somewhere else, and in the process uh managed to do okay in terms of letting lessons. But to show you how absolutely childish and and embarrassingly simple it is, when we came back the second time, same school, second year teacher. They came in, the nurse, the teacher told all the pupils, "you remember Clay he was here last year for awhile and Clay's back with us again and uh" that was all fine. One of the teachers said "let's see where, how you're standing, and and your books, can you count to 100." And I was, thank goodness it was something I knew so I could say one, two, three, four and do that. Do you realize that was 1st, 2nd grade. I was considered one of the brighter students because I know, the numerals. Today they learn these at two years old, at a real bad day it's one. Haha I've got grandchildren that will be in embarrassed to know that there was such thing as granddaddy being, feeling like he was smart cause he could count to 100 in a class of 20 but. We went back and forth on that until the 4th grade, and the 4th grade was the last time we, (mumbling) resigned from the company. Felt at the time, where we were now, the community we were in was the place for us to stay. Mother and Daddy sat down with Ruth, bought a little bitty house and uh that lasted about 15 years.

Interviewer: And where was that?

Clay: Where? That was the little house in (mumbling), and Smyrna. We always came back there because mother liked the fellowship (not sure what he said here, maybe community) church and uh kept there, we kept coming back there, when we came back the third time we were looking for a place to buy, if we could find one. Uh and we wanted it to be in the fellowship community because mother liked the preacher and mother liked other people in the church.

Interviewer: Just about track of time, you mentioned your fathers' construction company worked on the Bell Bomber plant, is that correct?

Clay: No. I'm sorry. Uh the company, the construction company dealt with contracts, federal government contracts doing planes or anything else as far as I am concerned. And uh that's what they were doing, coming in working at that plant but that didn't have anything to do with any other things going on as far as I'm concerned.

Interviewer: Oh sure, I was just curious if they were helping to build the plant, to build the runways or if any of the contracts were around that structure.

Clay: Oh yes they were uh the contracts deliberately worded to get the job done and as quick as possible. Uh so it was that kind of motivation uh.

Interviewer: Sure.

Clay: As best as I can do.

Interviewer: And the only other question I had about the war in particular is about the president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Do you remember whether your parents were fans of FDR or how your family felt about the president?

Clay: As far as I know, it was, it was never really a large part of the conversation. Uh we were uh very much involved in enjoyed talking about FDR. And uh Daddy mentioned one time, when we were talking about this in general, uh Daddy said "well I can tell you now, if it hadn't been for FDR, it would have been a war in our country." He said, "I'm not going to go through town, and go by a bakery and see a loaf of bread and can't buy it because I don't have any money and my child is hungry and hungry and needs, desperately needs help." Daddy said "if that were the case, it would not even cross my mind not to go ahead (mumbling) and get a loaf of bread." Uh it never got to that but it was uh, (mumbling) daddy was convinced that uh the war, not the war but the uh people, uh the jobs that were working. Uh. [He was trying to find his words here]

Interviewer: The Depression or the loss of jobs?

Clay: Yeah uh, they were uh the jobs were there. I'm trying to uh. Talk to me more.

Interviewer: Sure, your father was convinced that the president prevented there from being some kind of conflict in the United States over jobs or money.

Clay: No, as far as I know that was not involved at all or anything close to that. Uh Daddy had an opinion about all stuff going on but uh certainly not, if it was discussed at the job. I don't think that's the case.

Interviewer: Sure. Um did you have any family members who were serving in the military?

Clay: During the...

Interviewer: During the war.

Clay: During the war, we did not have uh uh we did not have, I'm trying to think if we had any. Umm the church, members of the military. I don't, it's not close to mind if that's an indication. Uh everybody, folks like Daddy were exempted from the war because they were considered too valuable to (mumbling) to stay here and do construction work and all that other stuff. So, that uh daddy thought something, I heard him mention something about the possibility that he ought to sign up. But uh, that was all, it was just a comment.

Interviewer: So where did you end up graduating from high school?

Clay: Graduating?

Interviewer: high school.

Clay: Fitzhugh Lee, Fitzhugh was a confederate general uh who I've never heard of until I went to their school but that was the name they had drawn from. Uh Fitzhugh Lee and uh that was uh a major step, I thought it was very nice and all that stuff.

Interviewer: So what were your hopes and dreams for the future when you were a young man, when you graduated from high school?

Clay: What I mentioned a moment ago, is my decision uh I went to high school, graduated from high school, went to Georgia Tech for two years but decided that was not for me uh not a good fit for me in school. So I transferred from there to Mercer and actually finished there. Motivating factor of going to Mercer was the fact that they had a Christianity department and I was looking for education that included that uh and I was moving toward uh becoming a minister myself. That happened later on when I was a senior at Mercer. But nonetheless, that was the case. So, and so up until 16, 17 years old I had no real ambition. I thought (mumbling) staying with Daddy and work with him but the war finished up and went to job that was available.

Interviewer: Do you remember when um, you met your wife?

Clay: Where did I? Mercer. She was a year ahead of me, she was much smarter than most of the students there including me. Uh she was a member, president of two organizations including (something) student union um, which was a campus-wide organization. Uh I guess, I guess the only thing that uh really counted however was in the midst of that time, in my life, I wanted and needed strength and perseverance, affection. So that I knew (mumbling words together) almost president of the (something) student union myself. But, that was, and it was. I'll say it in another way, she was uh I got the feeling in the end and have the feeling now that in spite of me, I felt a need that she filled and uh also there was, she was sexually attracted to me but I won't talk about that.

Interviewer: And what's her name?

Clay: Theresai, T-H-E-R-E-S-A-I and like I said I wouldn't want to embarrass you to talk about the sexual things but uh you should interviewer her later on and ask her about it. If she'll be honest with you it will uh, but never mind go ahead.

Interviewer: (laughing) So, she followed you to Seminary when you went to Seminary.

Clay: Yeah, but we got married before then. We got married the year after I graduated and uh graduated from Mercer and uh yes, we moved together to Union Seminary and lived toward there.

Interviewer: And what was your first job after Seminary?

Clay: First job?

Interviewer: Mhm.

Clay: Uh I had a job, I had difficulty finding a job as far as the minister is concerned. Uh that, I will talk about that some at your leisure but um truth of the matter is initially coming out of Union Seminary, um did not prepare me for, or did not prepare my associates from experience at Union Seminary. So that I got job working for Georgia Power Company because I couldn't get a job preaching anywhere else. And uh that lasted for six months and at the end of that time, uh through my brothers influence, I got a job as pastor at Woodstock Baptist Church in '63 and that was the, and I was there for five years and that was uh experience uh as best I could work it out.

Interviewer: And were your, did you have children at that time?

Clay: Pardon?

Interviewer: Did you have children at that time?

Clay: Yes, we tried not to uh and had absolutely no success at trying not to. And managed to have two children while we were in New York. And came back, to Woodstock and two years later, had another child. Every single child that we have, we tried not to have. No success at all with it. I told her it was her fault and she said some nasty things about me for saying that but in life in general. Uh but in any case, yes.

Interviewer: And how were your children's lives? How were they the most different than yours growing up?

Clay: (mumbling) how were my children different than me?

Interviewer: Yeah, what were the biggest differences that you noticed in terms of what their lives were like as yours when you were a child?

Clay: Part of the time it was about moving. It eliminates an awful lot of stuff going on because of that. Uh the uh general thing that came out of them growing up years, number one all three of them are smart. Not uh not just smart but smart. Haha umm they, that makes a lot of difference. They're not having to struggle through school, they're as a matter of fact, doing pretty well without it. One (mumbling) SAT's they're ran about 1300 out of Nancy, Catharine. I'll tell ya a quick story. We were uh had a good friend of ours getting a PhD in psychology at Georgia State, she came and said she wanted to test our children uh to learn how to give the test, a test they were trying to teach, so she came over one Sunday afternoon and uh to our house and they uh played games. She would get out block games, as far as they were concerned they were just playing. As far as she was concerned, she was giving them an IQ test. So that was a bit of background. The youngest child, Catharine was, in many many ways seemed to feel inferior. She never was strong in her life experiences. They are, and one of the saddest of my life, is we were unable to make much headway with that. Uh Catharine uh still feels the same way. She has a hard time starting new things and uh one day we were sitting at the dinner table, all of us, and uh they were, she, Catharine was complaining about the fact that when they went to school, all of the students, the other children uh knew who she was because they knew who Steven and Nancy were. And uh Steven was the drum major for the band for a couple years and uh Nancy (mumbling). Catharine was complaining about it, and aggravated that she gets compared to

somebody else and they're so much smarter than she was and how in the world were you supposed to think how great she had blah blah blah. I stopped her, I said Catharine do you remember the last time Gale was over here and y'all were playing dominos on the floor? She said yeeesss and I said do you know what you were doing then? Because you weren't just playing for us, you were getting an IQ test because all three of you were tested for IQ's and uh I know how much each one of you got on the test. She was appalled, drained color out of her face oh my lord, he's fixing to tell me how bad I am and he's going to compare me negatively with, and she said no and I said you are the brightest child I have. Your IQ was 140. Steven was a little less, Catharine.. Nancy's was a little bit less, but all three of my kids are exceptionally bright. Nancy graduated from high school, decided to go school in New York school, so she went to Bryn Mawr, graduated with a BA from Bryn Mawr and transferred to uh MIT (wife chimed in to help). Got a four year degree, four year degree in uh biology uh with uh a background, went to Utah and spent four years in the Biology department at the University of Utah because of the progress they were making out there. Uh Steven is now the head of (mumbling) the Highway Department in the uh state of Virginia uh,

[Wife was mentioning highway patrol, but that is all I could hear]

Clay: in any case. The biggest thing we learned, I think I learned our three kids is different (mumbling) I looked on us as being bright but not uh anything special and I don't think that way about my children now. Not only bright are but special, specially bright. And uh well adjusted to where we lived. One 'nother quick one before I let you go. We have three children, five grandchildren. And we have never had a cross word between any of us, all our life. I never heard a single cross word from any of our children about anything at any time in the whole 50 years that we've been married. That's special. And that's, not, it's not there because of anything we were particularly doing, but as much as them coping with the word and enjoying doing it. We get together 2-3 times a year to laughter and jokes and playing, and enjoying each other uh in a very very special way.

Interviewer: So, what's the most important thing, students should take away from learning about your story, learning about your life?

Clay: Be open. Don't be, don't be hesitant about new things and new ideas. I learned that from Steven and uh Nancy. You don't get a six year PhD from MIT and uh laugh it off, that takes commitment but it is somebody branching out in a new direction. So, yes that's one of the things I'd say.

Interviewer: That's great, is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to talk about today?

Clay: I don't think so, I have several little minor details that I was prepared to pick up with, but uh but I don't think they were anything special, it was just my muse wandering.

Interviewer: Sure, well thank you so much for sharing your story and we really appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

Clay: Thank you for inviting me, it's been a delight.