

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH M. BOBBIE BAILEY

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Interview with M. Bobbie Bailey  
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott  
Edited by Susan F. Batungbacal; indexed by Thomas A. Scott  
Thursday, 12 July 2007  
Location: Dr. Bailey's office, Tucker, Georgia

TS: Ms. Bailey, or I should say Dr. Bailey . . . .

BB: Or you can call me Bobbie, whatever you want to.

TS: Thank you. Let me just begin, if I could, by asking you where you grew up and a little about your background, your early years.

BB: Since I was eight, I've been in Atlanta, Georgia, so I grew up in Atlanta. I still live here.

TS: You weren't born in Atlanta?

BB: No, I was born in Alabama and moved to Georgia, I think, when I was about five or six years old.

TS: What did your parents do?

BB: My father was a farmer and my mother was a homemaker. She stayed home and took care of the children.

TS: Right, sure. So when you came to Atlanta did he get a job when he came here?

BB: Well, he was a farmer and moved first to LaGrange, Georgia, and went to work for Callaway Mills. Then the union started to organize Callaway Mills and my father was a supervisor there.

TS: Oh, this is like in the 1930s then?

BB: Yes. They shut the mill down, of course. They locked everybody out while they were trying to organize, and so my father decided that he did not want to go through that struggle. He moved us to Hamilton, Georgia, I believe first. There was a project that President Roosevelt put into being because there were so many families out of work and homeless.

TS: Oh, one of those model farms?

BB: President Roosevelt selected Pine Mountain Valley where he cut off five acres of land and build a small home on it. When the workers finished it the family could move in and

they farmed the land. I'm not sure, but I think it was ten years, and then it became their land. That was to help support them, and that was under President Roosevelt. My father moved there, and he was a carpenter also, so he went to work for that government project. I think they called it WPA [Works Progress Administration], and he was a foreman on these little homes that were being constructed. We didn't live there; we lived in Hamilton, Georgia. They had to have everything complete, and these families would be there with everything they have on a little truck waiting to move in. He was an inspector, and he had to make sure everything was done in the house. It had an outside john—no inside toilet.

TS: A privy and a well.

BB: The home had to have a well and there were people that dug the wells—they were well diggers. This home was ready to be moved in, but they had not certified the well to check for water. So my father felt for the family and said, "Put me in the bucket and let me down, and I'll inspect the well." Just as they put him in the bucket and started down, the rope broke, and he fell eighty feet with no water, so he was crippled for life, very badly. He had to go through the process of the pins in both hips and legs and a cast from his waist down. It took a couple of years, or more, in and out of the hospital. There was no physical therapy back then for anyone, so my mother worked his legs daily. They had these steel pins. They finally took the pins out as he healed better, but he certainly couldn't walk. But she kept his legs moving every day and did what you'd call therapy, I guess. Anyway, he got to where he could sit in a wheelchair and walk on crutches and swing his feet. Then our home burned, and we lost everything we had. There were eight children. So then a family there let us have a little, small house to live in temporarily. School was almost out, and I think my father wanted to keep us in school there. His brother-in-law had a business in Atlanta where you move people. They called it transfer companies back then. I think I remember seeing Arden Transfer on the truck. So he asked them to come move him to Atlanta and find a place for us to live, and he would drive a truck and hire some men.

TS: He could drive a truck?

BB: He could drive, but used his crutches and his hand to push his knee down to use the brake. That's when we came to Atlanta, and we grew up in Atlanta. He eventually came to where he could walk with a very heavy limp without crutches and then braces and back to crutches and back to a wheelchair, so it wasn't an easy life for him, but he never complained. He kept us all together and wouldn't let anyone separate us, so we had a great family, and we survived.

TS: When you were talking about leaving the Callaway Mills it wasn't clear. You said he wasn't happy about what was happening? It sounds like maybe he sympathized with the workers.

- BB: No, he didn't want to be a part of it. He was a very honorable man, and they were doing a lot of fighting. They shut the mill down for safety, I think. He didn't want to be a part of it anyway, and so he said, "I'm a farmer; I'll go back to farming." I think that's what he told us later on. So he moved us out to another little town.
- TS: So it wasn't so much that he sympathized with the workers, as he didn't want to do what he thought was unethical that management was doing?
- BB: Well, he was a supervisor, and he had good rapport with them. I think that's probably why I'm pretty well the same way today. I'm a management person. I believe in treating employees right, and then you don't have to have a union.
- TS: Well, that was, if I remember correctly, in 1934-35 when [Governor Eugene] Gene Talmadge intervened and rounded up some of the militant workers and strike organizers to break the strike.
- BB: No, I don't remember any of that. We were very young, and we were a very close family. Back then we didn't have a telephone, and we communicated by mail. So my father, like I said, was a farmer by trade, and he said he could make a living and feel honorable about it.
- TS: After he got to Atlanta was he able to work when he came here?
- BB: He did with the transfer company for a long time. Then there was a gentleman in Atlanta who was a city supervisor. He lived a couple of doors from us, and he knew my father had been a farmer. He had a little farm out in Austell, Georgia. He had land on the river. He talked my father into taking us out there and farming. We finished that project that my father started and then came back to Atlanta. By that time some of us were able to work. We were young, but there were no labor laws at that time. After school my sisters and I and my brothers worked. We helped the family, and then as we grew older, of course, we took care of our parents. The greatest pleasure in my life was to take care of them, both of them.
- TS: What high school did you go to?
- BB: I finished the eleventh grade, and then I went to night school at Central Night School and finished the twelfth grade there. I went to night school, and I got a job working during the day.
- TS: Where did you work?
- BB: I worked at a company called Orr Refrigeration on Highland Avenue, making fifty cents and hour, twenty dollars a week, but it helped my family. From that I'm where I am today. I won essay awards and all kinds of things [in school], but when you're in a family situation like that you have to do what's necessary. My family came first, and

working long hours, if it took that, came first, and helping my family. That's what I did. My sister did the same thing. My oldest brother had married, so he couldn't help. But I spent my time thinking about taking care of my family, doing what I could to take care of my family and brother and sisters because I was number three. There were five younger than me to be taken care of, so that's what I did.

TS: Well, you make it sound so simple that you started from there and you're where you are now.

BB: No, it wasn't simple, but I dedicated myself to work and learned everything I could when I took the job. I was very mechanically inclined, thanks to a gift when I was born. My brother was very gifted in mechanics, and so I was able to do things that the men were doing in the company that the women didn't do as far as working the plant. It's a small plant. I learned, and I moved up to the parts counter. I had a great capacity of remembering all the part numbers and everything. Then they sold that company, and I went with the brother [in 1948] down the street to a company [on Elizabeth Street]. He named it Our-Way Machine Shop. I worked for them. I was a mechanic, bookkeeper, just about everything. I was put into management, and I shared in the profits. I brought business into the company, and we did a great job. Then in 1960 I was still running that company, but I started my own company [Our-Way, Inc.] in 1960 in Atlanta. I built that company to just about a full city block down there. In 1978 I moved out here [to Tucker, Georgia], bought seventeen acres, and moved my company out. I still ran Mr. Orr's company, downtown, because I was in partnership with him.

TS: So you say you moved out to this exact location in '78?

BB: Yes. I built this building [Our-Way Building] first and then one next-door and then one across the street. I was the world's largest compressor remanufacturer of refrigeration and air conditioning compressors.

TS: You said you just had a natural aptitude toward mechanics; did you have any particular training or anybody that helped you?

BB: No.

TS: I would imagine you ran into a great deal of prejudice early on.

BB: Well, no, not really, and I can honestly say that. I've been invited to speak at these "women's lib" meetings, and I just can't do it because I can't tell them what they want to hear, that I had been discriminated against, because I had not been discriminated against.

TS: That's really interesting in itself.

BB: Well, I guess, mechanically, I was equal to the people that needed work done and needed compressors done. I knew that, and they didn't look at me as male/female. They just said, "She can do it." I've been in a man's world all my life, even when I took my first job doing compressors in a small shop. But nowadays it's not uncommon for women to be in the mechanical room or doing mechanical drawing, flying airplanes, doing rivets on airplanes, et cetera, et cetera. I know I was different because I was dedicated to what I was doing. I never took off a lot of time or spent a lot of time vacations and doing other things. I was dedicated to do what I had to do to complete the job. When I took a contract I had to complete that contract, keep that contract up. I had GE [General Electric], Carrier Corporation, United Technology, Copeland Corporation, Dunham-Bush Corporation, York Corporation—I did work for all of them, and I never had a problem. They were all very respectful, and they treated me very nice. I'd go to seminars, and they'd always make sure I was in early—the men would—because they were friends and business associates. They'd make sure I got in hotels after dinner safe and sound, and they'd go out and do what they wanted to do, but they were always protective of me in a very nice way. They always had the utmost respect for me.

TS: Were your parents supportive of your going in a mechanical direction and starting your own business and so on?

BB: Well, when you come from a family like mine you welcome any method of employment, I guess, that's honest and that's a safe place to work. They were always there for me. Some of them did their thing. My sister Audrey got married. She moved to Detroit, and she was an executive at Ford Motor Company. Then my brother-in-law graduated from Tech, and he went with General Motors and designed the diesel engines. In 1960, I think it was, I called and asked them if they wanted to come to Atlanta to work for me. That was a difficult choice to leave General Motor and Ford Motors to come to Atlanta to a small company, but I had just acquired this new contract. My company was taking something that was broken and fixing it and bringing it up to the latest specs. My brother-in-law had an engineering degree in design, and his first job at General Motors was to find out why parts failed on diesel engines, so it worked real well for us for him to come with us, too.

TS: I guess we ought to get some names. Your brother-in-law, what's his name?

BB: Jack Morgan.

TS: And your father?

BB: My father was Elbert Bailey. My mother was Mary Bailey.

TS: I think you said your sister was Audrey?

BB: Audrey, yes.

TS: So you're growing a business all these years.

BB: My youngest brother came to work for me as a supervisor. One brother was in the service, and he got out of the service and came to work as a plant manager.

TS: So the whole family came to work.

BB: Yes, my baby sister, when she got old enough, came to work as a secretary. It was a wonderful, wonderful organization because we all were on the same page, and that's unheard of.

TS: It is indeed. Well, now, I understand very early on, and this is directly relevant to Kennesaw, that you got interested in softball.

BB: In the late 1960s I started sponsoring a softball team, and that was called the Lorelei Ladies. They traveled all over the southeast. They played with a city league and then a southeastern league. They were very good.

TS: Would this be like a professional team?

BB: Well, you could have called them professionals, but there was no such thing as professional women's sports back then. They didn't consider women being able to do much of anything other than stay home, work in an office or something like that, maybe a few other things. But this gentleman, Hollie Lough was the regional manager of Hertz Corporation, and I was a friend of his. He was the one that started the Lorelei Ladies. The way he started was he had the Hertz bowling team. We were over on the northwest side of town, Hemphill, in that area. They had young girls playing basketball. For the young girls to play in a league, they had to have a shirt with a number on it because in basketball they had to know whoever fouls out or whatever. The city director of sports went to ask Hollie if she could have his bowling shirts because these young girls didn't have any shirts and they couldn't afford to buy any. They were very good athletically, but they couldn't get in the league because of the lack of the uniform shirts. So he decided to let them have the jerseys that the guys wore, but he said, "Take Hertz off the back."

TS: I bet they had to take them up quite a bit.

BB: Yes, they could do that, but when they started to take the Hertz off it was embroidered, and it would tear the shirt. They didn't tell Hollie that but they went ahead and joined the league with the Hertz on it. He was an avid sports fan, and he'd read the paper one morning, "Hertz gets beat 50-10." Next week, same thing, "Hertz gets beat." About the third time, he said, "Hertz doesn't have a team." But he knew where it came from, the girl's basketball team. So he called the athletic director down there and told her, "You've got to take Hertz off those shirts." She explained to him that it tears the shirts, and you can't do it." She said, "You're an avid sportsman, and you love sports, and these girls

really know how to play basketball. They're one of the best in the city, but they need a coach, so why don't you come coach them?" So he did. They were named Sports Arena Blues. Even after high school, they became the most famous team in the southeast. They traveled playing basketball.

Then the ladies said they want something to do in the summertime, and so he started the Lorelei Ladies Softball team. He had that quite awhile before I met him and before I got involved in sponsoring the girls. You didn't have anything in schools for girls back then. When I was going to school we had one softball bat and one ball. You had to have your own glove, and you had to make your own uniform. We had to learn to sew. We had to make our own shorts. Boys could play football. Now basketball is better, but football was big then. The school system never did anything for girls back then. They still don't do a lot for young women. But, anyway, it's much better. So I started with that, and they were national champions and making names everywhere, and they have more trophies than you can put in this room.

Mr. Lough became ill, and he made me promise on his deathbed that I would keep his softball team. They were number one softball in the southeast. I promised I'd keep his softball team going. He said, "I'm leaving money in my estate to help do that." Well, about a week before he passed away, his friend talked him into letting him manage the estate and taking it away from C&S Bank at that time. That was the wrong thing to do. Until Hollie passed away we didn't see any money from the estate, and he [the friend] had just about done away with the estate by that time. But I had money left, and I thought about Kennesaw. I called and talked to Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel to see if she would do softball, and she said, yes, so I started giving money to Kennesaw State University.

TS: So you approached Kennesaw before Kennesaw approached you then?

BB: Yes. So then you can see that's where the growth went up there. I gave them that.

TS: Bailey Field is really nice.

BB: Yes. It's putting something back, particularly with the women, but the men use it too. So that's how I got involved with Kennesaw. Then Dr. Siegel and I became good friends. We're still best friends. So I have just been doing as much as I could for Kennesaw because I felt very close to Dr. Siegel and what she was doing. She has done a tremendous job with Kennesaw. To see what she's done in bringing the enrollment to where it is today. She's still my friend, very best friend.

TS: She came and talked to one of my classes several weeks ago.

BB: She's just amazing. She came from a coal miner background, and, I guess, some of us put more energy into what we want to do and set our goals. I could do that because I was single. If I had been married I couldn't have accomplished what I did because my family comes first. I've seen so many marriages where the wives say, "You can't do that



because we need the money.” Or the husband, “Well, you can’t do that; we’re going to my mother’s for Thanksgiving.” I didn’t have time for that. My family was going to be taken care of, and I didn’t want anybody telling me or suggesting that I shouldn’t do something or that I should do something else for somebody else or the other family. I don’t think I could have accomplished as much in the field I was in, traveling and doing what I was doing, if I had children and was tied down. It was a wonderful time. I don’t regret a day I’ve done this. In fact, I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it, and I was creating something and continuing to see it grow.

Several years ago when I sold my company [2001] they were pushing me to go to Mexico, and I couldn’t see losing these jobs and going to Mexico. So I sold my company to United Technologies and kept all the jobs here in Atlanta, right here in DeKalb County.

TS: When you say go to Mexico, they were encouraging you to . . . .

BB: Remanufacture in Mexico. And they have since. We transferred over 400 people over there [from Our-Way], and they’re down to about 250 because they’re buying parts, outsourcing from China, and sending them to other places. Therefore they don’t need the people that they did then. It’s still a nice automatic operation and everything, but my people transferred over with full benefits. If I had gone to Mexico they would have just had to take their retirement or benefits where they were at that point, and that would have been tough for them.

TS: Whom did you sell it to?

BB: United Technologies. United Technologies owns Carrier Corporation, Otis Elevator Company, and other companies.

TS: So you sold that part of your business, and what are you doing now?

BB: I have my own building company where I build homes, and I have my own real estate company. Then I’m busy doing a lot of charity work in different areas.

TS: How many employees do you have now?

BB: Well, my construction people have superintendents, but we bring people on as we need them. We have six here. I just sold this building here [the Our-Way Building] to Mr. Corn with Corn Upholstery Company. He was in Tucker here and very well known. The building suited him. The building across the street I still own. I have it leased to the state, and they bring here all of the equipment that they surplus. I have a three or four acre parking lot down there for my employees, and they put their equipment on that. Then they sell it off. In the building up here they sell the office equipment in, computers and things that they surplus. They sell that to non-profit organizations. So that’s a big business for them. They make good profit off of that, I think. When I say profit, I guess

it is profits, but they're paying the overhead on everything they do. They make good money doing that because otherwise they'd just be selling it a piece at a time. It is used equipment, so you're never getting enough for it. You're giving it away; office desk, things like that. But when you have the group of them and several pieces and lots of automobiles and trucks at times, the people come in, and they buy them in lots. So it goes fast and they do a big job. They were on Marietta Street in town on the way on out. People were climbing over the fence and stealing parts off the vehicles. It was just a very bad location. They were there for a number of years, and so they're very happy over here, and I'm happy too [laughter].

TS: I guess so. How many employees did you have at the peak?

BB: Oh, 500.

TS: Let's talk about your charitable work and maybe the ethic that you have. How did you get interested in giving back?

BB: Well, that wasn't hard to do. I've been there when we didn't have help. When we were burned out they let us have a small house to live in. Then they gave us some clothes because we got out with just the clothes on our backs. At school they gave us free lunch. They helped us when we were in trouble. My father was a very proud man. He was never on welfare, and he always found a way to work and make money. He sold Watkins products from his automobile. When he couldn't get out people would come to the car. He was always innovative in doing things to help us, and we were always together, knew we were loved, and never knew we were poor. We were in an area when most people were in the same situation we were in. We really didn't know we were poor. We were really rich in wealth because my mother and father had eight children, and we were all at that time very healthy. You can't ask for much more than that.

TS: What kind of causes have you supported over the years?

BB: Well, I guess, just about every cause. My sister and I raised money in DeKalb County for charities with a team of people that we put together to support the heart fund, DeKalb Medical, Children's Home, oh my goodness, Red Cross. We have all kinds of plaques and things for doing that. The main thing is doing something. We raised the last money with a team of people from DeKalb and Gwinnett County. We raised money—the money needed for the Atlanta Olympic Committee delegation to go to Tokyo for the [announcement of the awarding of the Olympics to Atlanta]. They couldn't have gone if we hadn't of raised the last money. So they came to DeKalb County and challenged us. We did it and we raised the last money they needed.

TS: Oh, you're talking about the Olympics in Atlanta in '96.

BB: Yes, here in Atlanta. They wined and dined all the representatives of the International Olympics.

TS: Oh, when they brought the big shots in?

BB: Right, they brought all the Olympic members in and they wine and dined them in Atlanta and Savannah. They flew them around in private planes. Billy Payne and the Atlanta committee spent a lot of money, but they were always broke. I mean they spent it as fast as they raised it. They came out to us finally. The visitors from the International Olympics committee said, "We've seen the corporate world and we've seen downtown." But they didn't take them into West End or any place over there because that wasn't the place to go. They didn't see "middle America." They said, "We want to see the other side. You've got the corporate world agreeing, but you don't have the Georgians. You don't have the mix." That's not exactly what they said, but that's what it meant. So they came here. We tied Gwinnett in with us—the chairperson of Gwinnett—and we started our own programs. Every time we did something they said, "You can't do that." They didn't have any money, and we'd have to pay for the t-shirts before we could sell them. Audrey and I said we would put a committee together to do a torch run here in DeKalb County and get all the corporate people involved to raise the money. They wanted to know our plan, and they said, "You can't do that." So we said, "We're going to sell t-shirts in Stone Mountain." They said, "Well, you can't do that; they won't let you do that." Well, they did let us do it, so finally I said to my sister, "We're going to make our own t-shirts."

TS: Good for you.

BB: We made our own t-shirts. We put the Olympic rings on the front and DeKalb and Gwinnett logos on the back, and we sold t-shirts like crazy. Ours were prettier than theirs. Then we tipped off our fund-raiser at the Hyatt over at Perimeter. We took the whole lobby. We took every ballroom they had, and we threw a big party. We brought the previous Olympians from Georgia, and we had them part of our team to come out and show for our celebration. We had our big program planned. We took the video that they had, and we said we'll add our Georgians into that. We paid people to get that done. We sent it to the head of the American Olympic Committee's office, and they approved it. We showed the video to the Olympic President. He got in town and we put the video in his room. They brought him in from the airport, and he watched that video, and he almost blew the hotel apart. He said, "You can't do this. You don't have the rights to do this. You didn't have the rights to add on to this." I said, "Yes sir, we did. We got a letter from your office." "You did not get a letter from us." "Yes we did, sir." I had to send all the way out to our office to get the letter to bring it out to the hotel. He was livid. We had all the international flags all over the top of the hotel. When they introduced him that night to speak, he took our t-shirt up and down the aisles and said, "Now, this is illegal," right in front of all of us. He turned that t-shirt around and threw it on the floor. Then he started his little speech. But they didn't turn that check down.

TS: I guess they didn't.

BB: No, they did not. And they went to Japan, and that's how they got there with that last money we had raised. But that's how we do; we do it for a cause, we didn't do it for Billy Payne, we didn't do it for the IOC, we did it because we were challenged for a cause and the people in DeKalb County, Manuel Maloof and Jim Miller and our team, we have a lot of ladies we put together—and men—and they believed in us. My sister and I put our names on it, and they know it was going to happen unless some disaster happens. So we've done that, and it's been a pleasure. We've done the Heart Fund and Red Cross. Crippled children and we did the children's home and my sister is on the board of a couple of the homes. I do it for a need and for people that need it. If they have a board that's working and doing something and they're participating . . . but if they have a board just for the names on it, I don't want on it, I don't want to be associated. There are so many of those. I just don't have time. I want to see something happen. I forgot this last thing we raised money on, there are so many things.

TS: By the way, what happened to your softball team?

BB: Well, it finally was fast-pitch and then the trend was going to slow-pitch when I went up to Kennesaw to see Dr. Siegel. I was getting out of it because I was not involved with slow-pitch. Kennesaw took it to fast-pitch and they still have the team, they're still going great. They're still probably the number one or two teams in the universities. They're doing a good job with it. And the KSU men's team is doing well too.

TS: Do you remember about what year that was? I know you came on the Foundation in '93.

BB: No. It was years before I did the building.

TS: I think '82 is when we started inter-collegiate athletics at Kennesaw. Betty Siegel came in '81 and then the next year we started athletics.

BB: It had to be right around there in the 1980s to 1990-'91. Sometime in the late 1980s, early 1990s, but I don't remember the exact date.

TS: How did you know about Betty Siegel? Had you heard her speak somewhere?

BB: I think so, but I can't remember exactly. I knew that they had a softball team and that somehow I knew about it. I was reading in the paper that she was doing a great job at Kennesaw. I called her up and made an appointment, and then I gave them the money out of that trust until it was all gone. Then by that time I was well involved helping doing other things with them. That's how it happened.

TS: Okay. So you started out using that trust fund to support the softball program at Kennesaw?

BB: At Kennesaw, and adding to it because I wanted to put it somewhere I thought tied in to Hollie Lough. I didn't just want to give it to a charity.

TS: It wasn't long after you went on the Foundation that they won a national championship, first of two, I guess.

BB: I was reluctant to go on the Foundation because I don't have a lot of time and I didn't want to be on a board, a committee unless I can contribute. But then I was involved in the plans of the building [for the Bobbie Bailey Athletic Complex]. They kept me involved in that, and the people at Kennesaw did a good job on that. She had a great team.

TS: So you started using that fund and then, of course, Bailey field [the softball field] is named for you now, and the Bobbie Bailey Athletic Complex that houses softball and baseball opened during the 2003-04 academic year.

BB: Well, they needed that. They challenged me with it, and so I said fine. Also, I had two brothers die with cancer and I was heavily involved with DeKalb Medical, giving them the Imaging Center and I've done a lot of things with other areas around because it just helped me. And now Betty talked me into naming the performance hall.

TS: Well, why don't we talk about that? I understand you've got a long-standing interest in music, and I assume that ties in with the performance hall, but could you talk about that?

BB: Well, I'm not musically inclined. I don't play a piano, and I don't sing, but I had an opportunity with someone at the church I was attending that wanted to be a recording artist. I thought I can do that. So I took the challenge on and hired a producer because I didn't know anything about it and started producing artists.

TS: Which church was that?

BB: First Christian Church on Briarcliff Road.

TS: Could you describe your philosophy of giving?

BB: I see a need and think I can do something about it. I came from a poor family, but we made something out of our lives. I'm proud of my father and my mother who had eight children. My oldest brother was killed and I took three of his children when they were ten, eleven and twelve. So it isn't that I haven't raised children. I raised them until they were eighteen and then they went off to the Marines. So I've had a full-rounded life—a little mix of this, that and everything. You take care of your own.

TS: It's a remarkable story.

BB: My brother and I were like twins. I learned when I was three years old I couldn't climb a tree and he could. Then they put overalls on me and I could climb trees. My father never knew the difference; he let me climb anything. But when my sister wanted to climb he

said, “You can’t; you’re a girl.” So I was a tomboy. I was my brother’s shadow. He was a very gifted mechanic. I’d help him; I’d hand him tools. I learned tools from him. “Hand me this, hand me that.” We went everywhere together. When he was working before he got married, if he went on dates, I went on dates with him. We just had fun back then. He was killed when his children were three, four and five.

TS: What happened to him?

BB: It was an explosion. His two daughters were seven and nine, but I got the children when they were ten, eleven and twelve. Their mother couldn’t take care of them, so they went to my mother—their grandmother—but she had just had open-heart surgery so she couldn’t handle it. My older brother took them first and found out that his wife had cancer. They had two boys, and it was just too nerve-wracking for her. So then I took them. All my other brothers and sisters had children, but, of course, I didn’t. It made a big change in my life, but I managed it. I was traveling a lot to New York and everywhere, but I had a housekeeper that stayed at the house and helped me raise them. I’ve had a life like most people have. It’s just I’ve been very successful in what I was doing. My biggest asset on the top of my list is my family. I couldn’t have done it without them. They worked with me later on, but I’m talking about the love and understanding that we had as a family. I was never lonely. We talk every day and we know where everyone is now. If I’m out of town, we don’t talk everyday, but we’re real close. It’s just, “Hi, how you doing?” “Fine, I’m okay.” “See you later.” Most families don’t do that. But I’m real proud of them, and I’m proud of my mom and dad, and for him not to give us up. [When he was injured] his family came to take a child each, and my dad wouldn’t let one of us go. You learn a lot from that. That taught us a lesson. He didn’t have to tell you, you take care of your brothers and sisters. We wouldn’t have known each other if my dad had said yes, he’s giving us up, even though he was in a cast from his waist down. I just count my blessings. I’ve got twenty-seven nieces and nephews, forty-one great-nieces and nephews, and I would like to say they’re all wonderful. They all get in a little trouble once in awhile, but I’m saying as far as manners, spirit and love and patience, they see you today, they’re forty years old, they’d say, “Yes sir, no sir.” It’s just wonderful to have that. That comes from my dad and mom.

TS: What was your impression of Kennesaw when you started getting involved?

BB: Well, of course, I didn’t take time to think about the academics up there. I saw the campus and it was growing fast. I could see what Dr. Siegel was doing and where she was coming from, and I could see that it was going much further and was going to be a tremendous university with her. What a leader! Things did happen and you can see where it is today. She was just dynamic. You had to feel good when you were around her. You couldn’t feel down. She was just bubbling over, and still is. I was doing the same thing in another way. My employees were like, not students, but they were close to me as family, and I was always part of their lives. If anybody had a baby I’d get the picture, and I’d have to stop to see the picture on the assembly line. We had more parties

than anybody. So my life kind of parallels what she did, but only in a different way. Hers was student-oriented, and mine was employee-oriented with families. I think about the employees now. One of my managers, about two weeks ago, came up and hugged me, and he said, "I love you, but I hate you." I said, "Oh, what is this?" He said, "I hate you for selling [the company]. It's never been the same." They were all a part of the family. I think Dr. Papp has got a big challenge, but I think he's up to it, and I think he'll do a good job.

The music—my mother could play by ear, but we never had a piano, and so she couldn't play. When I got started in the music business I didn't start it because I can sing, I can't. And I didn't start it because I wanted to sing. But I got involved in helping artists get their royalties, and right off I knew what I had to do. I knew I had to have an attorney. In 1972, when I first started in it, I went to Joel Katz, who is the attorney in music. At first he walked me through it. He said, "You're crazy; you want to do what?" I told him. I had just met him, and he said, "You know what you're getting into?" I said, "No, but you're going to have to help me." So first I had to have the contract with the artist, and I had to have a contract with everything. He guided me through that and told me what I had to do. I did the Platters' 35th Anniversary TV show, and then I did their 35th anniversary album. I did some things for artists like that. And I put a studio in my home, but that was not the thing to do.

TS: You would have musicians in there all the time, I guess.

BB: Well, it's not the musicians so much, but its groupies. So I did away with that. I was only doing that because I had my own producer, and they were writing music. So that was okay, and that's a fun thing to do. Then Joel and I went into the movie business together. We all did a lot of things when I stop and think about it. But doing what I did gave me the opportunity to do other things that I would like to do. Then I started building homes, and I liked that because I like things going together. But I couldn't be competitive because I always put too much into it. The builders would complain, "You can't do this." When I was building in a big subdivision, "You're doing this and you can't." But it wasn't my primary income, and so I could do things. My first little project was a cabin up at Pine Lake. The girls on the softball team and I built that thing from ground up and had fun with it. Then I had a little couple come along who got married, and they wanted to buy it. They didn't have any money. I didn't know them; they just came out of the woodwork. But I said, "Well, I would want somebody to give my brother a chance," so I sold it to them, nothing down. They just started paying some payments and, of course, they did a good job and they paid it off later on. So I think help people and see the potential in them and let them see some of their potential; I haven't missed anything. I think it just comes back to me two-fold.

TS: What do you think makes a good foundation trustee? What kind of qualities or attributes do you think you need to be a good trustee for a foundation like KSU Foundation?

BB: Well, first of all, if you're going to be a trustee, you know they need money, that's the first thing. Surely, trustees should be successful in whatever field they're in—it can be as alumni or whatever. I think they should be dedicated, but also I think they should support it financially. A lot of people like to get rewarded by saying they're on some foundation or on some board, and I don't want to be that. I am not as involved as I should be right now on the KSU Foundation because I told them that I had some priorities that I had to take care of. I have missed some meetings, and I don't feel good about doing that. But trustees should be honest and dedicated, and they should want to reap the benefits of the fruits that they're sowing so that they can feel good about what they've invested their time in.

Audrey does the same thing as I do with her money. She does it for the hospitals and children's care and things. We kind of move it around and she does things for families. But we're business people and what we want to see, we want them to have an endowment to last. We don't want to put money into something that doesn't have an endowment. If they're broke now they're going to be broke after they spend what you give them. So we do more challenging in putting the money there. A board ought to be ready to rise to that occasion. Right now the ballet doesn't have any money and they're not using live music; they're using recorded music. The union wouldn't give an inch apparently, and I don't know the whole story. My sister does because she's involved with it more than I am. So I have some of these musicians who know me because of the music company, and they say, "Bobbie, do you know that the ballet is not using musicians?" I said, "Yes." "Well, give me Betty Siegel's number. I know you know her, give me her number, she's on that board." I said, "What do you want it for?" "Well, we want to call her." I said, "Let me explain something." I'm sitting with my sister, and she has a million dollar challenge out to the Ballet right now for an endowment fund. "Go help raise that money for that million dollars and use the interest income off of it to help do what you want to do." I've had four or five call me recently, and I say the same thing. If that board doesn't raise that money they ought to get off the board. If I'm on a board like that and I don't participate and get up and help raise money, just throw me off. So they've got that million-dollar grant. She just did a three-quarter million-dollar grant to families that keep these children in their homes for their organizations and they had \$500,000.00. I topped it off, and so now they've got their endowment fund, they've got it matched. She said three-quarter of a million, now they've raise their own money, they raised three-quarter of a million. They've got a million and a half, so they're using that money for seed. We all should be as dedicated to the cause of whatever university or whatever board we get on. There are some fun boards. You just go and laugh, and they've got money. That's okay, but I don't know many out there. But, still, we should be dedicated to reach that goal.

TS: Are there any directions you would like to see the KSU Foundation going that maybe it's not going now?

BB: No. I've missed the last two or three meetings because I'm involved on something that's going to revolutionize the way we detect strokes and heart attacks. I'm spending my time trying to get that through FDA with a Russian scientist here. Dr. Siegel is even invested



in it. It's going to hit pretty soon. I've been involved in trying to do that, and I've been remiss. I feel like they've got enough people on board at Kennesaw. I don't know what they give, but when Dr. Siegel or Dr. Papp invites somebody on I hope they have a challenge for them. And I'm sure they must. I don't feel so good that I've missed some meetings. I get to every one that I can, but right now I'm involved with the Biotech Grace Labs to revolutionize some health problems here. I've been in it now two years, and everything is working really well. Our lab is at DeKalb Medical, our production office over in DeKalb, and we're going to start shipping the test kits overseas while we're waiting on FDA approval. We take a sample of your blood and tell you whether you're subject to a stroke or heart attack. We think everybody should have it. We think every ball player should have it. Bayer [Corporation] put a lot of money into it up front with us. In fact I'm supposed to go to Russia in September to a big meeting over there, and Duke [University] is involved, Stanford [University] is involved, every major university that has a neurology department is on board with us; Mayo [Clinic] down in Florida, all of those are consulting. We just can't wait till we get this done. We're following Dr. Siegel's health, we're following my health, we're following Joel Siegel's and she'll tell you, "Don't fly, you need to cool it," and things like that. This is going to be really big. I don't know anything about medicine; fortunately I haven't lost anybody [in my family] to stroke or heart attack. There's been cancer, but I've made sure that DeKalb has the equipment that they can find that. I've just got a lot going.

TS: It sounds like it. I imagine you're excited about the expansion of our nursing program and the New Health Sciences building.

BB: Absolutely. Then we want to work on epilepsy. Dr. [Svetlana A.] Dambinova over here has twenty-seven patents in Russia and she has it on Hodgkin's disease and all kinds of things, but you can't bring that medicine over here and treat over here.

TS: By the way, this is something I probably should have brought up earlier, but it sounded like a very interesting story about a P-38 in the ice in Greenland that you were involved in.

BB: You want to see the pictures? All down the hallway I've got pictures. Come on. Cut your machine off [pause].

I told them I would [help] if I could do the PR on it. They said they needed money, and they'd been up there two or three times. They had not found the plane because the ice cap had shifted a mile, and they didn't know it. They had coordinates from the Air Force. They had to keep griding away until they found it, but it was a mile away from where they originally landed.

TS: How did you get involved in that?

BB: Pat Epps had the rights, and he came over one day and told me about the story. I said, "That sounds pretty good." He said they were twenty-five or thirty feet under ice. In my

mind, I said, "That's no big deal." But when they finally found it after about four or five trips, it was 275 feet deep.

TS: Wow. That's a little more than twenty-five, isn't it?

BB: But anyway, they left here, and I said, "If I can do a book or something, I'll do the PR and I'll do it." He said, "Well, we have someone doing the PR that's been with us on two or three expeditions up there." So I said, "Fine." They got up to about Baltimore and stopped and got off the plane, and called me to say, "Send the money." So I sent the money, and then we did a coffee table book, with the whole story. I did that through New York. They kept trying to find it. Then we did find it, and they had to have tangible evidence or Iceland would not let them continue. How do you get tangible evidence 200-something feet down? You get a piece of the plane. So I built them a core drill and provided everything they needed to go down to the plane and record a piece of it. They brought it up, and they got their rights extended. That's when we went back again for the B-17. My brother-in-law figured out how many tons of ice and snow we had to move. He said, "The B-17's going to be crushed, and I'm pretty sure the P-38 will be too." He calculated all that. He was a genius at calculating all the weight. The B-17 was crushed, but we decided the P-38 might not be. It wasn't bad; you saw it [in the photos down the hall]. So we brought up the P-38, brought it back, and restored it. It flew its maiden voyage. It's been in air shows, and it went to London this week.

TS: It's remarkable that it can fly.

BB: Oh, it sounds so good. We had it here with a B-17 and had it here with the man that dropped the bomb on Japan, what's his name?

TS: Tibbets.

BB: Yes, Paul Tibbets. He was here. It was his eightieth birthday.

TS: I think we've covered just about everything that I wanted to cover.

BB: It's been a nice association with Kennesaw, very nice. I'm proud of the university, and I'm proud of Dr. Siegel. I'm sure Dr. Papp is going to do a great job and carry it even further. I'm looking forward to him doing that. They've got a good team up there, and that's what it takes, as you know.

TS: Well, thank you very much.

BB: You're welcome.

## APPENDIX

### M. Bobbie Bailey Biography July 6, 2007

The third of eight children, Bobbie Bailey remembers moving to Atlanta when she was ten years old. At age 12, Bailey tuned race cars, a skill she learned from shadowing her older brother, Leon, who was a master mechanic and maker of his own tools. He taught her about rods, pistons and rings. This is when she discovered she was mechanically gifted. This mechanical gift would shape the rest of her life.

At 15, Bailey was between junior high school and high school looking for summer work. The world was at war and Bailey was looking for something “essential” to the war effort. Too young for defense work, she answered an ad in the paper, “Refrigeration work, essential.” She went to work for the Orr Brothers working on burned-out refrigeration compressors. Bailey stayed on after the war, working full-time and attending night school.

Bailey decided she wanted something more for her family. She loved mechanics and working with her hands. In those days, Southern women had two choices – home or the textile mill. Determined to break that mold, she set out to build a better life for herself and her family.

In 1948, Bailey began a joint venture with one of the Orr Brothers to start the Our-Way Machine Shop on Elizabeth Street in Virginia-Highlands area. Bailey became CEO in 1952, when Orr retired. She organized a new company, Our-Way, Inc., specializing in remanufacturing of commercial refrigeration and air conditioning compressors.

In 1960, Bailey was awarded the contract from Copeland Corporation in Sidney, Ohio to remanufacture refrigeration compressors. In 1968, she was awarded the contract from Carlyle Compressor, manufacturers of Carrier air conditioners. Then in 1969, Dunham-Bush signed on with Our-Way to remanufacture refrigeration compressors. These partnerships lasted over 40 years. By 1978, Our-Way had outgrown the Elizabeth Street location and moved to an 800,000 square foot building in Tucker, Georgia. Our-Way became the world’s largest independent remanufacturer of commercial air conditioning and refrigeration compressors, employing over 350 people with annual sales topping \$45 million annually. In the Spring of 2001, Bailey bid farewell to Our-Way when she sold her business to Carrier Corporation, and with this sale, secured jobs for her loyal 350 + employees. Bailey served as CEO and sole owner of Our-Way for over 50 years.

In 1972, Bailey became a member of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS). Since that time she has served several terms as Chapter Governor of the Atlanta Chapter, served two terms as President of the Atlanta Chapter, and as a member of the Hall of Fame Election Committee, Membership Committee; Education Committee (Past President – 2001), Planning Committee, Vocal Tech Committee, Lowery Tribute Committee, Special

Projects Committee, the Mayor's Commission on the Atlanta Entertainment Industry Committee, and three terms as National Trustee. She has served on the National Finance Committee since 1996.

In 1983, while Our-Way received recognition as one of the "Top 100 Companies" in *Business Atlanta*, Bailey began to explore music and television. She produced records on her own RX-Melody and Southernaire labels. Her first RX-Melody release was an album commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the popular singing group, the Platters, and she produced the accompanying television special that was released by a Chicago syndicator. That same year, Bailey entered into a joint venture with entertainment attorney, Joel Katz in film and television productions. Today, Bailey and Katz are involved in a joint venture, Oryx Music Publishers.

Her growing interest in the entertainment industry inspired Bailey to start three more companies in 1987: Entertainment Resource Services – a mail order distribution company which sells music CD's, DVD's, videos and tapes; Bailey Design Company – a residential construction and remodeling company; and Southernaire Realty Company – a real estate holding company. Twenty years later, with Bailey at the helm, these companies are flourishing.

In 1989, Bailey began serving as President of Friends of Georgia Music Festival, Inc., an organization which sponsors the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. In that same year, Bailey began to serve as Executive Producer of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Awards Show which is televised live on Georgia Public Broadcasting.

As one of 12 founding members, Bailey has served as Chairman of Decatur First Bank since 2002.

Greenland Expedition Society launched seven expeditions to Greenland to recover the Lost Squadron. Bailey was one of the 12 original shareholders and investors in the Lost Squadron project. In 1989, Bailey and her crew at Our-Way designed, fabricated and packaged the probes, casing, drilling shaft and key hole saws that successfully retrieved pieces of the B-17 at 250 feet below the surface. These pieces provided the first tangible evidence of the aircraft. In 1990, Bailey and her Our-Way crew designed and fabricated the 1990 "Gopher" and its beam, hose and reels. It was used in the very first successful boring of the hole to the B-17—250 feet below the surface. In 1992, Bailey had to build a second "Gopher" that was used to successfully bore many holes so that the P-38 could be extracted from 265 feet of ice and brought to the surface. This "Super Gopher" is currently on display at the Lost Squadron Museum in Middlesboro, Kentucky. The successful rescue of the P-38, affectionately called "Glacier Girl," led to the book, *The Lost Squadron, A True Story*, by David Hayes published in 1994. In 2002, the History Channel aired "*Time Machine: The Hunt for the Lost Squadron*," a story of the 2002 flight of the P-38 fighter "Glacier Girl" which caps one of the most remarkable tales of aviation treasure hunting ever. In June 2007, "Glacier Girl" flew to Europe via Greenland to complete the mission started in 1942.

From 1960 to 1980, Bailey managed the Lorelei Ladies fast pitch softball team. This all-women's team played in New York, New Jersey, Texas and California, winning national

championships several years in a row. In 1991, her loyalty to women's sports led her to establish women's athletic scholarships at Kennesaw State University and to endow a new athletic facility named The Bailey Athletic Complex which was dedicated in 2005. Fittingly, Dr. Bailey was inducted into the KSU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2005.

Bailey's interest in and giving at KSU is not restricted to athletics. She is an avid supporter of the arts, and has established music scholarships to benefit aspiring artists at KSU. The University's new performance hall, scheduled for completion in the fall of 2007, will be known as the Dr. M. Bobbie Bailey and Family Performance Arts Center.

Dr. Bailey has served on the KSU Foundation Board of Trustees since 1993. The University acknowledged her many contributions by awarding her its Doctor of Humane Letters in 1998, the second honorary doctorate awarded in its history. In 2003 Dr. Bailey received the President's Award for exemplary service. She has been a loyal supporter of Kennesaw State University and a long-time friend of President Emeritus Betty Siegel for more than 15 years.

Dr. Bailey's involvement with Georgia State University began when a joint scholarship endowment was created in 1989 through a \$10,000 gift made by Bailey and the local Atlanta Recording Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS) in her honor. Additional gifts were made to the endowment by Dr. Bailey, and the scholarship's name was changed to The Bobbie Bailey Music Industry Scholarship in 1993. This award is made annually to a School of Music undergraduate student majoring in music industry who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement in a music industry concentration.

The School of Music created plans for a Media Center for its students in 2000. A generous gift from Dr. Bailey enabled the School to create the Bobbie Bailey Music Technology and Recording Classrooms in the Media Center. Students study the latest music software at eighteen computer/keyboard stations in the Bailey technology classroom and recording technology instruction is provided in seminars in the Bailey recording classroom. The dedication of the Media Center took place in 2002.

In 2003 through a generous gift from Dr. Bailey the Georgia State University established the Bobbie Bailey Professor in Music Industry to recognize her many achievements and contributions in this field. This professorship has enabled instructors and music industry students to travel to music industry conferences and provide support for seminars and program on campus as well as conducting research about the music industry in Georgia.

The generosity of Dr. Bailey is quite evident at Dekalb Medical in Decatur, Georgia, where the Mary and Elbert Bailey Family Emergency Waiting Room was dedicated in memory of her parents, the M. Bobbie Bailey and Audrey B. Morgan Diagnostic Imaging Center was dedicated in 2005 to further diagnostic cancer services through a state-of-the-art PET/CT scanner, and Dr. Bailey supported the clinical trials at Dekalb Medical Cancer Center.

Giving back to her community continues through the Bobbie Bailey Foundation which was established in 1993. Through this private foundation, sponsorships were made possible to the

Atlanta Chapters of American Heart Association; the Atlanta Chapter of the American Cancer Society; and in 2006 and 2007, the ABLE Trust of West Palm Beach, Florida.

Bailey has served on numerous boards and committees including the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Committee, Dekalb Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Bank of America Advisory Board and the Atlanta Union Mission.

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