

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
INTERVIEW WITH JODIE LEON HILL  
CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT  
for the  
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KSU Oral History Series, No. 80  
Interview with Jodie Leon Hill  
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott  
November 11, 20, and 25, 2008  
Location: Mr. Hill's home in Marietta, Georgia

**Interview # 1: Tuesday, 11 November 2008**

TS: Mr. Hill, why don't we start as we usually do with our interviews in asking you to talk about where you were born and when you were born and where you grew up?

JH: Well, my full name is Jodie Leon Hill. I was born and raised in Bartow County, born on November 5, 1919.

TS: What part of Bartow County was it?

JH: I guess you'd say the southeastern part—my father was a small-time farmer as most of them were at the time—just outside of the city of Cartersville some five miles. Actually, he was a tenant farmer. He died the week I was five years old. So I don't remember too much about him, but what I do know was good.

TS: I was trying to think where five miles east would be.

JH: Well, it was a community known as Center. Still, the community is known as Center. There was a church and school there. My father was a deacon in the church; it was a Baptist Church.

TS: Was it called the Center Baptist Church?

JH: Center Baptist Church. He was a deacon there and also, as they called them back then, rather than choir leaders, he was a song leader. He would lead the singing. He was also on the school board of the little school there. My older brothers and sisters went to school there.

TS: Was the school at the church?

JH: Yes, it was a small school, just an elementary school.

TS: Was it one-room or two?

JH: I think there were two different schools; one room and then a two-room school, I believe, is the way it was.

TS: Was it actually in the church or on the church property?

JH: It was on the church property. The school is not there anymore, but . . . .

TS: Is the church still there?

JH: The original part of it is still there and built around too. There's a cemetery there in back of the church. It's still known as Center Baptist Church—a small church, but it's active. My father was very active there, both in the school and the church.

TS: That part of the county, I was trying to think, I know the Etowah Indian Mounds are on the dividing line between Upper Piedmont red clay and, to the west, you would have more of the Limestone Valley.

JH: This would be more northeast of the . . .

TS: So this would be just old Georgia clay just like all of Cobb County.

JH: Well, the property where the church is located is right near the Allatoona Dam itself, just north side of the lake and the dam.

TS: So where your father farmed—is that part of what was flooded by the lake?

JH: A good part of it was, yes. Later, my parents and my grandparents went to the Macedonia Church, which was near the Center community, and there was also a church and school there. Actually, my mother went to school there in Macedonia. My great-grandfather was the teacher. Now this was a one-room school, and he taught there for fifty years. He was a minister, a preacher, and he was also the pastor of the church for fifty years, Macedonia Church. Now, the backwater of the Allatoona Lake did come up to and covered the lower part of the cemetery. We knew it was going to be up to our family gravesite, or possibly cover it, so we were advised to move the graves. We did that, so just before it was flooded, I had the remains removed to Oak [Hill] Cemetery in Cartersville where they're all buried now. My grandparents though are still buried at the Macedonia Cemetery. It's still a very active cemetery. It didn't cover as much land as they first thought. Now they have extended the area, and it's rather a large country cemetery now. It is well kept, and they have an Abernathy reunion at the cemetery every year. They have a covered building for that purpose.

TS: Your mother was an Abernathy?

JH: Yes, my mother was an Abernathy. Actually, her grandparents and great grandparents settled the Macedonia community. As you may have heard already, the Macedonia community was actually settled by the Abernathy family.

TS: From the very beginning?

JH: Yes, from the very beginning. My grandfather—that's my mother's father—had a land grant, as they all did—a very small amount of land. I believe they were all forty acres.

TS: So that was the gold lottery?

JH: Yes. So he built a log cabin on that forty acres, and I have a picture of the cabin. They went back there some time long before they built the lake and had pictures made in front of the unoccupied old cabin—but the cabin was there at the time.

TS: What was the name of the teacher/preacher Abernathy ancestor—your grandfather?

JH: My grandfather was Hosea [pronounced ho-zee]. Some, I believe, would pronounce it ho-zay.

TS: Like Hosea the prophet in the Bible.

JH: Yes.

TS: So Hosea Abernathy and what was your mother's name?

JH: Her name was Ludie.

TS: What about your father?

JH: My father was William Thomas Hill. His people migrated from England. The Hill family are British people.

TS: I understand that your mother had a spinal problem?

JH: Yes.

TS: Was she disabled?

JH: She was disabled. Well, when I say disabled, she raised a family of ten children, five boys and five girls, me being next to the youngest. They're all deceased now. I'm the last one living. My oldest sister [Edith] and the one who lived the longest died about three or four months ago at age ninety-six. Left me only alone.

TS: That's a lot of children in a hurry. You're eighty-nine, and if the oldest sister was ninety-six and there's ten children, you're mother must have been having a child about one a year.

JH: No, not really—an average of about one every two years. She was 43 when the last one was born. That's the way the farmers did back then. They wanted one a year if they could produce them because of the farming. If you'll think about it, this was long before the machinery was put into use on the farm, and it was all done by mule and by hand. The children were the slaves. Actually, they did most of the work. This was very

common for large families. As a matter of fact, my wife, who is just deceased four years ago, was also from a family of ten. There's only one left in her family.

TS: Also from Bartow County?

JH: No, they were from Forsyth County. They had a farm though, and he was a veterinarian—the only one in the county, her daddy was.

TS: What was his name?

JH: His name was Taylor Pirkle.

TS: What was your wife's name?

JH: Blanche.

TS: He was a vet. You say he was the only one in the county?

JH: Only veterinarian in the county.

TS: Wow, so he had plenty of business.

JH: Well, there were only about 2,500 people in Forsyth County in his early years, and so he also had a grocery store (meat market) and a rather large farm.

TS: You may have been too young to know, but did your father own his own mule?

JH: No.

TS: He rented the mule?

JH: I'm sure at times. He wasn't on that farm all of his life, but the last several years and when he died he was there. I'll tell you this. A large part of the acreage in that area, and much of it now covered by the lake, was owned by one man by the name of Bob Leachman. So it was Leachman Farms. At one time he had in his family around 5,000 acres. He farmed as much of this as possible by tenant farmers. He furnished all the mules and the equipment and the houses. They were furnished. This was very customary—the owner would furnish the house and even furnish them whatever else they might need during the year until payday. Most of it was cotton. They did raise corn. Bob Leachman was also in the mining business, and you know, I'm sure, about Bartow County . . .

TS: There are a lot of minerals there.

JH: There are more minerals in Bartow County than any county in the United States. As I recall correctly, there's ninety-eight minerals—not all mined of course—in that county.

TS: What kind of mines did Leachman have?

JH: Well, he had more than one, but most all of it was iron ore. I believe all of his mining was above ground, not underground mining, although he did do some ochre. If I'm not mistaken they still do a little mining of ochre and two or three other minerals. In my early life, I can remember the days when they mined in a big, big way. Much of it was underground, and they used those little dinkeys, engines, you know. It was very common. They had those tracks all around through the county where it would lead to the ore and then would be moved to the nearest furnace. There are still about three or four of the old furnaces standing.

TS: Like Cooper Furnaces?

JH: Yes, Cooper is one of them. As a matter of fact, the Cooper's Furnace was the nearest one, I guess, to our house. Going way on back to the Civil War there's a town there at Cooper's, about 2,500 people.

TS: Right. That's under the lake now, isn't it?

JH: Yes. That was Etowah.

TS: I've heard about that.

JH: It was quite a village with a bank, two or three churches or more, and schools, and a cemetery—a big cemetery. I'm sure most of the cemetery is still above water on a little island.

TS: Did your father work in the mines in the wintertime when he wasn't growing things?

JH: I'm glad you asked that question. Yes, he was well-versed in the mining also. He was a superintendent was his title of the charcoal mines. They called them mines. Why they did, I don't know. You know the process I'm sure, of producing charcoal from pine trees. All of that was burned in teepee-like heaps above ground with mud or clay to make the right temperatures to burn the wood to produce charcoal. He did that in the winter months. Most all the farmers that were with big families had to make a little extra money because sometimes their crops were not good at all—the cotton—so they had to rely on some other type of work. So he did a lot of that mining.

TS: Was the rent 50 percent of what he grew?

JH: I think in this case it was 40 percent. Some of them, I guess, [paid] 50 percent. It depended on how long the tenant had been there, how much he produced, how well he was liked, and how profitable he was.

TS: Well, particularly, somebody who was a superintendent in the wintertime for the charcoal business...

JH: Yes. And some of the younger boys, that's why they didn't go to school after the age of thirteen or fourteen. In the winter they would haul the minerals from the mining site into Cartersville, which was, here again, from five to ten miles. This was before they had too many of these little engines and they were mining that way. They would carry this iron ore into Cartersville where it would be loaded onto the side tracks of the cars there. They had quite a few of those side tracks there in the north end of Cartersville. That was a very common site to see a lot of the open cars. Think of this, having to do all of that by hand, with shovels, off of the wagon and up over the high beds of the rail cars.

TS: That was a lot of work.

JH: That was a lot of work and little pay.

TS: Right. I guess mule-drawn wagons?

JH: Mule-drawn wagons, yes.

TS: Wow.

JH: They had quite a few mules. Now, our farm joined the owner's house place and was near enough to the large barn. Those barns were built for mules, not for machines. As a matter of fact, the barn that I have up In the Valley is a mule barn, built for mules. That's all they had to farm with, that and just the manpower.

TS: How many acres did you have?

JH: I don't know for sure. That would be a guess.

TS: What happened after your father died, to the farm and so on?

JH: As the children became of age, they finish their elementary school, and very few of them went beyond that in earlier days. So they would leave home, go to work, public works. Those that could find work in Cartersville and Bartow County would do so, but others would go into the larger cities and whatever they could find to do. The older ones would go to work first, and that would cut the man power down at home for farming. They would soon marry off and on their own, and this just dwindled down to the last ones. When my father died there were, I believe, still six at home—then soon after that only four. Back then, they had no age limit [for child labor]. Later on, I remember when they had a labor law introduced, and it was supposed to have been implemented for age fourteen. So my older brothers and sisters went to work at age fourteen. They had some textile works there in Cartersville.

TS: The ATCO Mill?

JH: Yes. And some of this, in my father's very early years of farming, was even before Goodyear.

TS: Goodyear became ATCO, didn't it?

JH: It was American Textile plant prior to Goodyear, and that's how it got its name, ATCO—American Textile Company—and they sold to Goodyear. It changed hands and names in 1929. Immediately after my father died, the children couldn't carry on the farm, so we had to move into the big city of Cartersville. The older ones would work in the textile mills. We had a knitting mill there in Cartersville proper, and that's where they first started working.

TS: What was the name?

JH: Cartersville Knitting Mill. It later changed names a couple of times. I don't know for sure now what it is, but it was Cartersville Knitting Mill.

TS: Where was it located?

JH: I believe it's still in operation; if not, it was a very short while ago. The nearest way to tell you from Cartersville would be going north on Gilmer Street to the end of Gilmer Street and then just two or three blocks to the left over there. It was built, and they had their spur tracks and railroads for shipping. They had a good operation there, and I remember in our family, one of my sisters went to work at age thirteen, the others not quite that early. She was large for her age, and she had just finished school at Center. Of course, she had to do a little bit of fibbing when she went to work and say she was fourteen. Anyway, that's how it's supposed to be, fourteen years old. So she went to work there at fourteen.

TS: What was her name?

JH: Her name was Edith, and that's the one, incidentally, that lived the longest. She was ninety-six and just died.

TS: So the oldest one went to work real early.

JH: Yes. That could have something to do with her longevity.

TS: Well, it didn't hurt her any, did it?

JH: No. And she was always the healthiest one—very seldom was sick; never lost a tooth.

TS: That had to be some lean years though for your mother and family.



JH: It was. And I recall, we all went to work, little sideline jobs. I first went to work at nine years old, only one day a week on Saturday at a small restaurant. I would keep the floors swept. We made our own ice cream, and I would see about the ice cream business in the back going on. I would do those kinds of things. I didn't do this but a short while, but I recall those days, and for fifty cents on Saturday.

TS: You worked all day Saturday?

JH: I remember doing it at least two or three months or something like that, but my point is there were little jobs. I'd step up with age and take on more responsibility. I had more jobs. I was even making a dollar a day when I was fourteen. But I stepped on up. I know this sounds strange to you and probably unbelievable, but that's the way it was back then.

TS: My first job was at age 9, although I was just the assistant to my brother who had a paper route.

JH: Well, I did that also for a short while at age 10, there again maybe three months. We lived for a short while in ATCO. It was a village.

TS: Yes, it's a really attractive village.

JH: It was very much so. You wouldn't believe it without seeing it. It was the most immaculate place, far more than Cartersville itself, except for maybe just a few blocks here and there. It had to be in perfect shape and was. Otherwise you wouldn't live there.

TS: The ATCO company demanded it?

JH: They did. As a matter of fact, they were responsible and paid for the upkeep of all of the lawns, shrubbery, and the painting of the houses. The houses had to be painted every other year. We had our own water. We didn't use Cartersville or city water. ATCO was just outside the city limits of Cartersville at the time, but now at present it's inside the city limits, but it was outside Cartersville in the county. It was a little city of its own because we had our own post office there at ATCO. But the company furnished the water, drilled its own wells, and at that time we thought that was unheard of, but 300-foot deep wells. We had good, cold water all the time. Anyway, it was throughout the village, and there was no charge for the water. Electricity was furnished by the company, but we paid for it, the whole amount of twenty-five cents per room per month. So if you had four rooms, and that's what we had for a while, four rooms, a dollar a month.

TS: That had to look like real progress, because you wouldn't have had electricity out in the country in that time, would you?

JH: No. Of course, when we first moved into the city of Cartersville, before moving into ATCO itself, we had electricity and plumbing.

TS: Did you go to a school provided by the mill when you were living in the village?

JH: Yes, I did. That was just about my schooling. I don't have a formal education. As I said, I went to work early and had a full-time job for my first year at age sixteen in the mill at night. I don't believe I worked a full year, maybe ten months, but it was at night. I went to school most of the first year. After I finished a little grammar school, I worked some and didn't go to school for a year or two. Then at sixteen—and that was as early as I could go to work in the mill—I got a job inside the mill itself at age sixteen. It was just on the week of my birthday.

TS: What was your job?

JH: My job was sweeping in the spinning room. They started all of the men off at very menial jobs until they learned to operate a machine. I didn't stay that long; my stay was a very short stay. I knew that wasn't for me, and I wasn't going to be in too long, but I did that, and it was too much for me.

TS: To go to school in the daytime and go to work at night?

JH: Yes, entirely too much. My health wasn't the best. But I tried. After I'd get off in the mornings from my work at 6:30, I'd go home and have breakfast and clean up in time to catch the school bus. I'd catch the school bus then into Cassville High School. So I went there just in stages, but I didn't finish high school. I couldn't. It dropped down to me and my older sister and my younger brother [Milton]—I'm next to the youngest—and he wasn't quite old enough to go to work in the mill. Then my second oldest sister to me married and left and that only left one sister. Then she married and left, and that was about the end of our family. My mother then went to live with my oldest sister and her family, and I got married early at nineteen. So I went to work there in the mill for hardly a year and worked at night at age sixteen. As a matter of fact, I was working there when they started social security, the first week of it.

TS: I was going to say, at age sixteen, you were right in the middle of the Great Depression so you probably had . . .

JH: I remember the CCC. That's why I can tell you so much as you want to talk about the Depression, I can talk about that, because I experienced the full blow of it.

TS: I guess you did.

JH: It started in '29. We didn't have the income, even though there were jobs. In the year of '29 after the market crash, you know, everything went to pot.

TS: That's right before your tenth birthday that that happened.

JH: That's right. So that's why soon after that I was doing all kind of little odd jobs. You can name it, I did it.

TS: I know you have some carpentry skills and a whole lot of other skills that you acquired over the years.

JH: I did all kind of little things, even like at ten years old I told you about working in a little restaurant. I can't think in order what I did, but I did just a little bit of everything.

TS: You say you went to school briefly in the Mill village school and then you went to Cassville High School for a year?

JH: Yes.

TS: You must not have gotten much sleep while you were doing that.

JH: I didn't at all. I didn't do that hardly a year. It was far too much. After leaving Goodyear, I worked for awhile in the Cartersville Foundry and Machine Shop. The reason how I got into that line—my oldest brother-in-law had been there. He was the supervisor of the foundry. I did a little bit of work there, enough to learn a trade. There were several little jobs in-between. During this time, at about age fourteen, is when I began to get into various other lines of work. I started learning to play the fiddle. It just came natural I guess, because I didn't have any training, but I did do pretty well with that as a part-timer. I even had at age sixteen my own radio program in Rome. We didn't have a radio station in Cartersville or even Marietta. The nearest radio station was Atlanta and Rome. I started in Rome with my own radio show there once a week.

TS: What was the name of the show?

JH: The name of the show was "Jodie Hill and His Midnight Ramblers." It was a country band. I got into playing with some well-known people. But I made a little bit of extra money doing that, you see. Then, at age eighteen, I connected with a well-known small band. The manager and organizer of the band was Leroy Abernathy. There again, my mother's name, Abernathy, he was my first cousin. He was really a professional, and he was really into music. He wrote a lot of music, a lot of gospel hymns, and played all over. So we had a band and played together all over the country for one year, mostly colleges, schools, things of that sort. This was before television, you know. We played radio, and there again we played in different cities.

TS: Did you play mainly gospel music or country music?

JH: No, that was his line—writing gospel and playing it. We played some gospel, but it was country and some semi-classical, but what a lot of people would call country music back then.

TS: Who were some of the famous people that you got to know?

JH: This was later on, but some maybe that you would know. It was just short stays except for Leroy. Now Leroy, he just died about eight years ago, and we appeared in Atlanta just before he died. They have this country music awards every year and have for many, many years. Governor Zell Miller had a lot to do with it starting up. Anyway, I did some there. I appeared with Leroy; if you asked for some names . . .

TS: I just wondered if you knew Fiddlin' John Carson [1868-1949]?

JH: Yes, I did. I knew Fiddlin' John Carson and his daughter, Kate, but I never played with him anywhere. I followed him on the stage one time in the Municipal Auditorium in Atlanta, but I never actually played with him. They had an annual fiddlers' convention, and that's where it all started, in this auditorium. That was the biggest thing we had in the State at that time. That place was filled. I could name several of the others: Gid [James Gideon] Tanner [1885-1960], Clayton McMichen [1900-1970]. I have recordings here, I didn't do any of that myself—I did two or three—but I have some of the records here, old recordings now. There was Low Stokes, he was one of the great fiddlers—but then I did play with who was the champion fiddler at the time—I played with him several times—that was Arthur Smith [b. 1921] at the Grand Ol' Opry. I played there as a guest once with Eddy Arnold [Richard Edward Arnold, 1918-2008], you know that name.

TS: Oh, sure.

JH: After I went into the insurance business, I got to know Eddy pretty well. He and I were the same age, just a few months' difference. I have his picture in there with me on one of our little get-togethers.

TS: Well, we'll pick up on the insurance business and those connections a little bit later on in the interview maybe. Let's go back, and you had mentioned earlier in the interview that your father was the song leader at Center Baptist Church. I was wondering how much that church background maybe influenced your music later on. You said you picked up fiddling on your own, but I'm just wondering if that singing background paid off later on?

JH: I don't know if that had anything to do with it. I have his fiddle, which was given to him when he was just a young boy. It was an old one then. He learned to play on that fiddle, and, as I understand from those that remember him, played well. I have his fiddle here now. I have just had it mounted into a shadow box. It's going to be on the wall of one of my daughter's new houses. They'll be moving into it in April. It's just finished, and it's a very, very old fiddle. I have it in glass, and I'd like for you to see it. I started collecting fiddles back then when I would run across a good one and needed some repair. I was pretty good at that. I had quite a number of them. I've given them away. I never sold them, but I gave several away, mostly to museums. I gave three away to museums in the last year or two.

TS: How did you acquire your fiddles?

JH: I picked up several of my fiddles during my lifetime just by knowing a little about them and knowing about the wood they're made of. When I'd run across one some place in an estate sale, I would look it over mighty carefully. Sometimes, we'd run across a very nice new one for a small amount of money where it only needed some repair. I was able to do most of that. I have one of the two first fiddles that I ever bought. It was an old, used one, and I bought and paid five dollars for it because it was all scratched up. The paint was bad, but it was in good shape. The wood was not damaged, and I stripped it myself and refinished it, which I guess I shouldn't have done. I wanted it because I wanted to make a beauty piece out of it, but you shouldn't take the original finish off of a fiddle. But that was learning. It turned out to be a nice instrument with a little bit of value on it, and yet I paid nothing for it. So a few I picked up like that. I don't have a lot of money in any of them, but over seventy-five years—I got my first one at age fourteen—so I've had one of these for seventy-five years. I've used that fiddle on radio and some TV shows, but I played the old fiddle that I mentioned just to show on local TV.

TS: Did you ever learn to read music?

JH: No.

TS: In the church that you grew up in did they have shape note music?

JH: They had all of that, but that was before my time, although I have seen and heard it played. My mother could read shape notes in her time. Although she stopped playing before I was born [due to her disability], in her teen years she played an accordion and played well. She could read music. My father played the fiddle, and he interested his oldest child, my oldest sister, in the organ, the old, old, peddle organ. He bought an organ for her, and she took lessons, and then she became the church organist. Now that's the old pedal organ; they didn't have electricity in the church.

TS: There's one at the Marietta Museum of History.

JH: I have one that belonged to my uncle. He married in 1898, and he bought this one new the year he was married. It's about 110 years old. It's still playable, a good one, and the case is a solid black walnut and in good shape. She was the only one in the family among the children that played well.

TS: Was it a musical family?

JH: Not really. My younger brother followed me and played some. Then an older brother played a banjo. I have one just like he had, not the one that he played, but an old, old, five string banjo.

TS: What's the name of that brother?

JH: His name was Oda—we always pronounced it O-die, but it's Oda.

TS: What about your youngest brother?

JH: He played a little on three or four different instruments—guitar and fiddle.

TS: What was his name?

JH: Milton. He died about twenty-two years ago of a heart attack. He was pretty good on three or four different instruments.

TS: I know a little bit about black gospel music, and it's got a Georgia root to it. People like Thomas Dorsey, for instance. The white gospel music—how would you describe it? When you were growing up, did you hear both white gospel and black gospel or just white?

JH: Mostly white. Of course, we heard some of both.

TS: How would you compare the two?

JH: I never did get into the gospel music very much. Just, of course, by ear, memory. I could just hear those tunes, the simple tunes, and hear one played over two or three times and play it or pick it up immediately to play with someone, not having heard it.

TS: When you were growing up did you know who the Carter family was?

JH: Yes, I knew about the Carter family. There are many others that you might name that I knew. Clayton McMichen was Georgia's best fiddler ever, and he was the fiddling champion of the Southeastern one year and of Georgia several years. He was a cousin of one of my brother-in-law's, McMichen, and I have some of his recordings here also. He went on to do well. His father was a music teacher, and they lived in a little community, Allatoona, where the lake is now. At the time there was a school and all that in Allatoona, a school and a church. His father went on to Atlanta to teach music there, but Clayton learned from him and then went on to take advanced courses and organized his own band. He went to Cincinnati and with a very lucrative contract for those days played on that station for some six or eight years at least. I remember listening to him on the radio—that's all we had then—and I met him. I was on the stage with him. I didn't play with him, but he's one of them that I met. I met some of the greats. I met the greatest violinist in the world at the time—David Rubinoff [1897-1986]. He had the first Stradivarius that I ever saw, and I handled it. He's been dead quite a few years, but he made a number of movies and some of them were with Alice Faye. They were musicals, you know.

TS: So you met him after you got out to California?

JH: No, I met him the year after I got out of service in 1946 in Cartersville. He came to Cartersville, and how they managed to get him there—of course, they had to guarantee

him a minimum fee to come and play in that school auditorium. But he did. The woman's club managed to do it. It was done as all invitation with tickets, and the place was a sell out. But, anyway, I got to meet him, and he allowed me to handle the Stradivarius. He was telling me, and he thought it was a big thing, that he had it insured for \$100,000. Gosh, I thought that was something back then.

TS: I guess so.

JH: But now there is one Stradivarius that two or three years sold for \$23,000,000. It's in a lockbox there in London bank now. There are now probably six or eight of those fiddles that are over a million dollars.

TS: I guess where I was really going with my question is how you learned music and got interested. You mentioned having a radio for instance, so you heard a lot of music on the radio?

JH: Oh, yes.

TS: Were there a lot of performers that came through Cartersville?

JH: Yes. They'd come through there, and that was their way of making a living, touring.

TS: So you had plenty of chances to go hear them. Did people play on their back porches?

JH: Yes. We had musicians everywhere, but they just played for their own entertainment and family's entertainment and neighbors. They come around and sit on the porch in the late summer.

TS: I guess I should have said the front porch probably.

JH: Oh yes, the front porch. Well, they could sit on the back porch too if it overflowed and sometimes did. But that was very common to get two or three musicians to start in the summertime, and you'd have an audience to sit and listen. Of course, you didn't have anything else to do much. If you were interested in it, you would advance yourself by just repeating, just repetitiously, over, and over, and over again, all the time. But I would say more than 90 percent of all country musicians were self-taught, getting back to the Carter family. This is jumping, but while in the insurance business and located in Nashville, I was there for some several years, and I met quite a number of the well known musicians there and wrote insurance for them, for the whole group, group policies, and even up to some of them that are still playing or just recently died, like Minnie Pearl [Sarah Colley Cannon, 1912-1996]. My assistant wrote a \$2,000,000 policy on her, and the company rejected it. I didn't like it, but she had a heart condition, and she didn't know it. They rejected her, but I knew her and met her three or four other occasions. I have some pictures in here of us. I'm saying I did this—my men, I had a number of them. One of my favorite people that I've ever known to meet was Billy Graham

[William Franklin Graham, Jr., b. 1918]. One of my men wrote a policy for him way back in 1947, I believe it was.

TS: When he was just getting started.

JH: He was just getting started. It was a \$100,000 policy, which was a big policy then, but we made an orphanage in North Carolina beneficiary. He's still living, and they're still waiting. I could go into it later on. I didn't know him all that well, but I knew him. But some of the others I could get into like Eddy Arnold—for a number of years I knew him. He just died last May. I was on the committee on the board that was searching for a new talent for commercials. I was there in Nashville. I tossed in Eddy Arnold. We contacted him and consulted him, and I've got pictures with him doing the tape. That was way on back several years ago. I knew him, and he flew with me once to Nassau. We were having a company convention. We had a company airplane. I used the airplane a lot as long as we had others go, not as a single person. But he was going over there to speak, so he went along with me and we talked.

TS: That's great. To wind up about your youth, let me ask a general question or two. Was there a big gap between people that didn't have much money and worked at the ATCO plant and the wealthy people in Cartersville or were you unaware of class differences?

JH: There are always some class [differences], even today. There was some of that, but I never did feel it in my life and time. I just always associated with the run of the mill people. As we go along, I could give you the names of some well-known people, many of whom were employed by me. We'll get away from the music side into the business world.

TS: But growing up, at least as far as you were concerned, there weren't big differences between people.

JH: Well, it had to do mostly with the individual. There were somewhat class differences, but I never did give that too much thought, I never did have that feeling. I felt that I was just one of them.

TS: Okay. I just wondered because different people have different personalities.

JH: Yes, and some people are maybe born with an inferiority complex to some degree insofar as getting on the level of other people, but I never did have that feeling.

TS: All right. Are there any stories about when you were growing up that we haven't covered that you'd like to tell—about your parents or your brothers and sisters or anything?

JH: I can't think of anything just right off.

TS: Just wanted to make sure we weren't leaving anything major out. You were born in 1919, and so you'd be twenty years old in 1939. That's right when World War II started



in Europe. Of course, we didn't enter until December of '41. I guess you'd be about twenty-two by that time. I know you went into the military in World War II. Why don't you talk about that a little bit?

JH: I believe there was a place where I left off when I was in my early working years, after this little connection with the band traveling for a year or so and then got married at nineteen years old. After that, and working, again, for a short time in this family operated foundry machine shop that I mentioned earlier, I went to Atlanta to work in a foundry there because of my little experience and I could get a little more money in Atlanta, so that was the purpose of moving. But after working there in the foundry for just a few weeks, I decided that wasn't for me. That was just entirely too dirty, and I just didn't like that at all. I saw better things, and it so happened that a young man talked with me with an insurance company and suggested that I could get in the insurance business and asked me the question, "Why not?"

TS: That's before World War II then?

JH: Yes. But it was just the January before the December of that year, so about a year.

TS: January of '41.

JH: Yes. He wasn't long selling me because I was going to make more money to begin with in training than I would on my old job. I went to see his boss, and they were very hesitant about employing me because I had just turned twenty-one. They had never employed anyone as a sales person in the field at age twenty-one. They tried to keep it a minimum of twenty-five for men because of the bonding situation. You had to go under a bonding company, and back then it was a big thing. So he didn't think that they would go along with me at all. They had never hired anyone twenty-one years old. I put my best foot forward and sold him on what I thought I could do, and he gave me the opportunity on a three-month trial basis and started me out in training with more money than I was making. I did so well I was among the leaders in the office force in Atlanta. There were forty sales people in that office. I was among the top in three months, so I was in from there on.

TS: I guess so. What was the company?

JH: That was the Life & Casualty Insurance Company at that time in Nashville, Tennessee.

TS: Oh, so the one that you're going to work for for a long time.

JH: For many, many years, for forty-odd years.

TS: So this is their Atlanta office?

JH: This was the Atlanta office. The office was in the Hurt Building downtown; it's still there, the building. I was on the twelfth floor.

TS: Oh, yes. The Georgia Humanities Council is in the Hurt Building. That's one of the offices in there.

JH: Yes. Later the Navy took that building—I believe it was the Navy—after I went in the service. After I got out we were in the Mortgage Guarantee Building. So I worked there in Atlanta in the sales force for most of a year. I did so well they offered me a promotion if I would move to Albany, Georgia. My title then would be a special agent over a regular agent. Bear in mind, by that time I was only twenty-two, hardly twenty-two. I was the youngest agent at the time I went to work at twenty-one.

TS: Were you selling homeowner's policies or fire insurance?

JH: Everything.

TS: All kinds.

JH: But mostly life and accident. Of course, mortgage policies and homeowners.

TS: But mainly life insurance.

JH: Yes, basically life insurance and pension plans, annuities, and that kind of stuff. So I went to Albany. We were there hardly a year on that job until I was drafted in the service, so I came back through Fort McPherson in Atlanta into the Army. My training was at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. It was in combat engineers, but it was actually infantry training, six months of infantry training, but I was in the Third Army.

TS: What was it—Fort Leonard Wood?

JH: Fort Leonard Wood. It was named after General Leonard Wood. He was a hero in World War I. I met his son.

TS: He was in the Spanish-American War too.

JH: I believe that's right. I did so many, many things that would be a first in my life, a step up. But this crossed my mind about Leonard Wood. He had a son, Leonard Wood, Jr. We were in field training. I was there six months, through the winter months, rough months in the Ozarks. In our rifle training we were having to do a certain position at target shooting. I did it in a position that my sergeant could hardly believe it. I was quite an acrobat. It so happened that General Wood was walking the field, and he asked him to come over and observe me shooting that target. I did for the General. I could show you. I was sitting, crossing my legs and both elbows resting on the ground with my rifle, over my knees, and I always hit my target. In my last training on the range, I was a sharp shooter—I was number three in the battalion and won the little jackpot.

TS: Did you do a lot of hunting growing up?

JH: Not a lot, a little, yes, rabbits, squirrels. You see them around here in the yard now everywhere; back then you had to go out and hunt them in the woods. I did a little bit of that, but this was an entirely different, heavy piece, until I don't think that my little bit of hunting was any help.

TS: Was this an M-1?

JH: It was an M-1. Now we started the first few rounds, the first day or two of target practice with an old Springfield. That was the World War I rifle. That would really kick your shoulder. Then we had to fire three times from that Springfield rifle, I can't think now what they called them, anyway, something like they fired out of a Bazooka, like a rocket, so it was really a blow, it bruised your shoulder. It actually bruised all of you.

TS: So almost like a rocket launcher?

JH: It was like that, but it was off a Springfield. I never did have to use that in battle, just in training.

TS: I guess you were glad you didn't have to.

JH: Yes.

TS: So you go through basic training and infantry training and then they put you in combat engineering?

JH: No, we were in combat engineering from the very beginning.

TS: I see. That's what you were designated to do.

JH: Yes, designated to do. We were the 293<sup>rd</sup> combat engineer battalion. After that six months, about a week at home, and then on our way to—well, we had to go to Hoboken, New Jersey, and then to England, and we got over there in April, in England.

TS: April of '44?

JH: Yes, from April to June, then we made the Normandy invasion in June of '44. You can imagine without going into any of that what that was all about. You've seen it filmed, and that was no easy thing, but we went on through. Of course, you had some rough spots. As you may or may not be aware of, the combat engineers had to have the infantry training because we were so often in front of the infantry altogether. The infantry would follow us, and we would clear the way for many, many reasons, like bridges and clearing the mine fields for them to come through and making crosses so they could come across and get their equipment to come across. We were up front.

TS: So you were building bridges.

JH: That's one of many things; building bridges of many kinds, expedient bridges made out of rope where you'd be done in the dark, most all the time, without any light. But much of it was like pontoon bridges, putting the boats end to end together and so we could have them ready to have vehicles to cross in an hours' time in some cases, you know.

TS: There must have been a high casualty rate.

JH: It was sometimes and sometimes it wasn't; sometimes we were not detected in making our crossing. We were so quiet with it and so smooth. And they may not have been that close up to us at that particular time. It varied. And your different streams and crossings, some of them were just creeks and others rivers. But we did that. Then, jumping up to the Battle of the Bulge—that was the roughest part of the War. We were in that; I was in that from the first day through, but it was only six weeks, thank goodness, six weeks of battle both day and night.

TS: That was enough.

JH: That was enough. All of it was below zero during that six weeks. It was twelve and fifteen degrees below zero and no cover most of the time, just out in it. So that six weeks was the roughest part of all the War. I didn't tell you this, but I was in the Third Army with General Patton's headquarters. He was put in some of the toughest and roughest positions and assignments with his men than any of the others because they knew he'd do it. He was a mean son of a gun.

TS: I understand that you took some German prisoners or helped to do so at one point.

JH: There were times you'd take them, and you wouldn't be right up on them, you'd be scattered. Sometimes you'd take German prisoners, and there'd only be a half a dozen. Again, there'd be a large number and by a large number of us, so that varied. I was never up close in range with a large number. Maybe we would have a couple or three times a whole platoon—capture that many. But in our case, most of the time, it was fewer than that because we would be scouting and up front and doing these things so they could come through. Well, we wouldn't encounter too many at one time.

TS: Right, I guess not. Well, so you served throughout all the way to Berlin at the end of the War?

JH: I didn't get into Berlin myself, but I got near. I've got some pictures of that I could show you. The first injury that I had, and the only one, really, of any size was about just a few days before the War was declared over. We were trying to get a quick span on a bridge. See, as the Germans would retreat, they would blow out a span of a bridge to slow us up. So we'd have to get some I-beams and things across that right fast to gain on them. That was one of my assignments, my squad, was doing that. I happen to have a picture of that one time. One of the men behind me, after I was hurt, made the picture and gave me one of the prints.

TS: How did you get hurt?

JH: I had the truck backed up to the opening where the bridge—one span was blown out, a short span, maybe twenty feet or something like that, and trying to get steel I-beams across that to set up a quick bridge across it. The end of one of the I-beams fell across parts of my foot—12-inch steel I-beam, so that held me up some; that's why I didn't go on up into Germany. But I went on up through Belgium and was prepared to board a ship—we were to go to Japan—see, the War was still going on there. By being injured and being onboard ready to go to Japan, I got to come home. We came straight on in, back to the States.

TS: I guess you were happy to hear the news about the dropping of the A-bomb.

JH: That was something you could hardly believe; you just couldn't imagine a thing like that happening. Yes, I remember that. Of course, of Roosevelt's death—that was big news.

TS: I guess so. So you get home in '45, and maybe that's a good place for us to stop for today then. I'm going to turn it off at this time. Thank you very much for the interview today.

## **Interview # 2: Thursday, 20 November 2008**

TS: Mr. Hill, last time we got through World War II, and you got home from World War II. I thought maybe we could pick up at that point again. Do you go immediately back to work for Life & Casualty when you come back home?

JH: Yes. My seniority continued on; during the time I was in the service the company gave me credits, retirement credits and so forth during my time in service, which was two and a half years or a little better.

TS: That's great to have that count for your retirement.

JH: Yes.

TS: I guess you were in Albany before you went into service; did you go back there?

JH: I was living in Albany when I was drafted for service. I, of course, went through Fort McPherson for my induction and then from there to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for my training. I believe we mentioned that earlier.

TS: Yes, we talked about that.

JH: Yes. Six months of basic training there, infantry training, but actually it was training for the combat engineers also. I was in the engineers, the Third Army, 293<sup>rd</sup> Combat Engineers.

TS: We talked about that in the last interview about going overseas and being involved in Europe, and then you got injured, and you were on a ship. . .

JH: Yes, going to the Pacific for the activities there. It ended while we were heading out for home aboard the ship. I got to come home a little bit early.

TS: So the ship just turned around in the water?

JH: Yes, we were headed in that direction kind of, anyway, so we just made it on back to the States. Then just the usual process of getting out of the service.

TS: You got out immediately once you got back?

JH: Well, of course, it was over in 1945; I don't remember the date.

TS: Well, August was when the A-bombs fell on Japan, and early September was when they surrendered, I think.

JH: All right, I was discharged then it must have been October or so. Then I got out of service back through Fort McPherson coming back.

TS: What was your rank when you got out?

JH: I was a corporal.

TS: Okay. So you went back through Fort McPherson. Then did you live in Atlanta after that?

JH: I had a choice of going back to Albany where I left off or start in Atlanta where I began my career with the company in Atlanta. So I did start back in Atlanta. I was in Atlanta for probably six months or so. Then through another little promotion I was transferred to Marietta. I also had a little branch office in Cartersville. I began then with the two little offices.

TS: Did you open up the office in Marietta or was it already in existence?

JH: I established the office in Marietta, yes.

TS: Then you had a branch office in Cartersville?

JH: Yes.

TS: Okay. You came to Marietta at a time when this area had really changed because of the Bell Aircraft plant during World War II, but by the time you got here the Bell plant was closed down. Were people still moving in in large numbers or was it pretty stagnant?

JH: There was still a lot of activity going on here, yes. I was offered a promotion if I would move to California and open up the state. We didn't operate in the state of California at the time. So I went out there to open up Southern California in 1955, August of '55.

TS: So you'd been in Marietta until then?

JH: I stayed in Marietta until I went to California.

TS: So you were in Marietta for nine or ten years I guess—that period where Lockheed would have come into Marietta in those years. Lockheed came in in '51.

JH: [I] was in California for two and a half years in Anaheim, Orange County. I assisted in opening up a couple more offices during my short time in California. I led the company in record during those two full years and was promoted then from one of the smaller districts to the second largest district with the company, which was located in Nashville, Tennessee. I was in that office for one year replacing a man that had been manager there for forty years in that office. He had done quite well, but I must say I broke all records during my first year there, a better record than was ever made during the forty years, which caused another elevation or promotion with the company, still located in Nashville, Tennessee. I was promoted then to vice president of the southeastern division, which

consisted of Florida and Georgia, the two states. At that time, I was located in the home office in Nashville, the headquarters for Life & Casualty. From there, I had twenty district offices under my jurisdiction in Florida and Georgia. I had 507 agents at that time, which was one of the larger divisions of the company. I came back to Marietta from Nashville. It was at my request that I come back here and make my headquarters in Marietta near my home. I had planned to retire early at fifty-five, so I was all set for that. So I moved back here.

TS: Were you still vice president for Florida?

JH: During all that time. I came back here and lost that title, but I raised my income about three times. I knew by moving back here in this area, and that was a time then when the Bell Bomber plant had changed hands.

TS: It would have been Lockheed by that time.

JH: Lockheed. It was Lockheed by that time. They were going strong, and I knew the market was great here and also in Atlanta. So I chose to take the Marietta office and the two Atlanta offices under my jurisdiction. All the time I was VP, I was salaried plus an annual bonus, but with my new arrangement, I wanted to make more money. With these three offices, I made about three times as much money as I did because of the contract I was under. I had the three offices at that time, the main office in Marietta and one office in Buckhead and the other one in East Point.

TS: You said you retired at age fifty-five?

JH: That was my plan; I didn't retire at age fifty-five. I stayed on as regional area manager under a different contract, but at that time I still had 75 agents and three district offices. I believe it was seven or eight sub-branch offices under those offices. That's where I stayed until retirement age.

TS: How old were you when you retired?

JH: Because I was doing so well money-wise, I stayed until I was sixty-five.

TS: According to my arithmetic, you would have been sixty-five in 1984.

JH: I would have been sixty-five in November of '84. But they asked me to stay on through March of the following year to help set up for the new manager.

TS: So you stayed until 1985.

JH: Right.



TS: All right, then I guess our basic chronology is after World War II you were in Atlanta for six months, then you go to Marietta with a branch in Cartersville where you're starting the offices here . . .

JH: But I resided in Marietta and the main office in Marietta. I stayed here for close to ten years, then went out to California for two and a half years, and then went to the Nashville office for about a year, and then in 1959 got promoted to vice president of the southeastern division for three years, and then came back to Marietta in 1964.

TS: Lockheed was really booming in '64. They had the C-141 contract and in 1965 they got the C-5 contract.

JH: I should have jotted all this down for you; I have it in my little office in there.

TS: We can always fill in the exact dates later on, but that's a pretty good chronology, I think. I want to talk about all these stages; why don't we just take them in order? When you're in the Marietta office in the late 1940s and early 1950s this area is really, really growing. What kind of policies were you writing and who would you be writing them for?

JH: Well, we wrote life, accident, health, we had the full and complete line of insurance.

TS: So you're writing a lot of individual life insurance policies.

JH: Individual but also group.

TS: Any particular groups, like any major companies or whatever in that stage?

JH: Well, most of them were small to medium size groups; of course, we would occasionally have a very large group.

TS: You weren't doing them for Lockheed?

JH: No. I can't remember the exact time—I do have all of this down in my office—but we merged with the American General out of Houston, Texas, but we didn't lose our identity, Life & Casualty. I still worked under the name of Life & Casualty until I retired. Some time after I retired, our company was bought by AIG.

TS: So it lost its identity at that time, I guess.

JH: Well, we still have our identity with American General.

TS: All right. So you still sell American General, the company does, as a subsidiary of AIG?

JH: We didn't write Life & Casualty policies, as such, here in this area; it was American General until we were bought by AIG. At that time it was all under AIG, but that was after I retired.

TS: So if you sold a life insurance policy it would be American General on the letterhead?

JH: Yes.

TS: Why did they pick you to go out to California to open the office there and why did you want to go?

JH: Well, because of my record I was chosen for it. I was one of the leading managers with the entire company. Of course, they only promoted their leaders.

TS: So they came to you and said . . .

JH: Yes, they came to me on several tries before I would agree to go, but I did go. I'd never been across the Mississippi River, so it was all new to me, the area, and what I was to do. But I went out and started out by opening one office in Anaheim in California, Orange County, and just grew from there. We later opened up to six offices by the time I was transferred back to Nashville, as I mentioned before, to a larger office.

TS: Well, '55 is about when Disneyland was opening out there.

JH: Well, I went out there at the same time Disneyland was opening up. I bought a house that was just under construction within a mile or so of Disneyland and while it was opening. Also there were several other things happening during that same time, within a period of less than six months. I'm trying to think of the name of the little church where they started [Garden Grove Community Church]; they later developed and opened up the Crystal Cathedral.

TS: Is that Schuller?

JH: Yes, Robert [H.] Schuller. He started out there in a drive-in theatre [the Orange Drive-in Theatre]. He came to California to start this church, but his first experience was through a drive-in theater. So to hear his sermons you just drive up there in your car. Anyway, later he went on to build the cathedral.

TS: The Crystal Cathedral.

JH: I have been back three times to visit, my wife and I, to visit, like the Easter services and then a Christmas service. Like I said, they were opening up Disneyland, and I had the experience of writing a policy on the original Mickey Mouse.

TS: You wrote a policy on Mickey Mouse?

JH: Yes, and I had a picture of it. I have it somewhere around here, or a magazine, but this Mickey Mouse actually worked for Disneyland for fifty years. He celebrated his fifty

years with the company. It was quite a number of years back, but they had quite a celebration for him down at Disney World down in Florida.

TS: So you sold him an insurance policy.

JH: Yes.

TS: How about that. That's great.

JH: I wrote some policies on other well-known people. One was on a champion swimmer in the Olympics.

TS: Esther Williams?

JH: Esther Williams. On her two children—she had two children.

TS: You wrote them life insurance policies?

JH: Yes, and also I wrote a policy on her sister Dorothy whose career was high paid modeling in New York. She married a Nashville man—this was right after I moved back to Nashville. She married an Oldsmobile distributor there, and she had a new baby. I went out to write a policy on the new baby and while I was there wrote mortgage insurance. Anyway, I had experiences over a period of years with various ones that you would know about. I just can't think right now.

TS: Well, we can add to it.

JH: In Nashville there were many of them. I was well acquainted with Eddy Arnold and wrote insurance on him, and then Porter Wagner and his group—wrote a group on his band, and Minnie Pearl and Roy Acuff, just many of those people.

TS: You wrote a policy on the band?

JH: Yes, on Porter Wagner. He had a band. We could write, back then, on as small as five people. Of course, he had more than that. He had a lot of backups. I don't remember the exact number, but he had twelve or fifteen in his band, singers and all.

TS: I think you said in the last interview about Eddy Arnold that you flew down to the Bahamas with him?

JH: Down to the Bahamas, yes. That was, I don't remember the year, Tom.

TS: What was he like?

JH: Well, he was a real nice sort of fellow, easy to get acquainted with for strangers, and he was just a country boy. He came up in Tennessee. When he started his career, he started

with the Grand Ol' Opry. He was known as Eddy Arnold, Tennessee Plowboy. He actually appeared, to begin with, the first few times, actually, in overalls. At that time, this is going way on back in the Grand Ol' Opry, going back to when I first got acquainted with him, and then knew him later on. But this was back when I was a very young teenager, about eighteen, well, about the same time Eddy Arnold started—we're within a year of the same age. But back then the Grand Ol' Opry would send a few of their stars out to various places like Chattanooga and whatnot to appear for publicity and practice. I was in Chattanooga there with a little country music band, just appearing there for one or two nights, and Eddy Arnold was there. I played back up music to his singing. Eddy Arnold was the most wealthy of all the Grand Ol' Opry stars at that time. He had a manager that was very smart, and he bought a lot of land up and down that river where they later built Grand Ol' Opry. That was years and years later.

TS: On the Cumberland River?

JH: Yes. One of the men that worked under me was a golfing buddy of his. Through him I learned that Eddy Arnold had a wealth at that time of over \$150 million, and that was way on back. I'm sure he became a billionaire.

TS: I guess it was a big advantage that you had had your own band when you were dealing with country music stars and Hollywood stars. Did you talk about music when you got together with them?

JH: Oh, yes.

TS: Or the early days of playing on the road?

JH: Oh, yes. There were some very old stars. I played the fiddle, and back then they'd have fiddlers' conventions. I would appear in every one of those I'd get a chance in Georgia and around. I played in one; I hadn't planned it; I just happened to be through there, Asheville, North Carolina. I didn't even have my fiddle with me, but Arthur Smith, a well-known fiddle player, a national champion—the man that I was with, Leroy Abernathy, was a great pianist at the time—he wanted me to play in that fiddlers' contest. He managed to work his way in and get me in there, and it was right downtown Asheville, open air, summertime. They agreed that I could enter the contest, and I borrowed Arthur Smith's fiddle to play against him. I won third prize. It wasn't much, but back then \$25.00 was a lot of money. It was something like that. That fiddle that he played and that I played is there now in the museum in Nashville, Country Music Hall.

TS: That's great. Well, I grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee.

JH: You knew a lot of them.

TS: Well, the Cas Walker Show on television he had a lot of those performers. I remember Loretta Lynn when she was real young was on there, and I can't remember who all else.

JH: Loretta Lynn, now, she didn't grow up in Knoxville. But Dolly Parton was with Porter Wagner.

TS: I was thinking that when you mentioned Porter Wagner if you knew Dolly too.

JH: Well, I didn't know her, but I've seen her.

TS: How did you happen to write a policy for Minnie Pearl?

JH: Well, there again, I lived in Nashville, and our company owned the radio station there where she was appearing. I had an office in the building where she would come in often there. I met several of them just that way. Yes, there are a lot of those old-timers.

TS: What was Minnie Pearl like?

JH: Well, Minnie Pearl was a very well-educated young lady. She wasn't like she appeared on the show. She was well versed and a well-mannered lady when she was not on stage.

TS: She had the hat with the sales tag on it all the time.

JH: Yes. I have pictures in there in my office with her.

TS: Leroy Abernathy, you're relatives were Abernathys, weren't they?

JH: Yes.

TS: Were you related to him?

JH: Yes. He had a band, and I had a small band, and just through coincidence we decided to merge and played together. I played with him. From there it was his band more than mine because he was well-known. We played together for one year.

TS: How were you related?

JH: It was my mother's first cousin, so I guess he would have been my second cousin.

TS: Okay.

JH: His father was a music teacher, and Leroy taught music himself, as well as writing music. He wrote a lot of hymns; in his early days it was mostly hymns, gospel.

TS: Once you started moving up in the insurance business, did you ever perform any more after that?

JH: Very little.

TS: Just pulled the fiddle out on occasion for yourself?

JH: Yes.

TS: You stayed in Nashville for six or seven years, I guess, and I think you said the other day you had seven vice presidents in the company, so you were one of the seven?

JH: One of the seven.

TS: The other day, you mentioned that you met Eisenhower somehow or other didn't you?

JH: Well, when I say I met him, he came through this little field hospital that I was in with an injury, and this was within just a few days of boarding the ship going to the Pacific. He came through the little hospital, as he did many, many hospitals, but it was just that type of meeting. I saw him another time or two, but he just came through the little barracks we were in—just a few of us in there. It was a small area.

TS: Did he speak to you?

JH: He spoke to each one of us.

TS: What did he say?

JH: Well, just, you know . . .

TS: How are you?

JH: Yes. Of course, I saw General Patton several times because I was in his headquarters.

TS: When you were talking the other day about Churchill's nephew and opening up an office in England, did that come after the War ended?

JH: Yes. It was after the War ended.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about your connection with opening the English agency?

JH: I wasn't connected with that. By that time I was living back here in Marietta, but we had training sessions in Nashville. He was living there in Nashville, and it was just casual meetings with him. But there in this training session we had to get up on stage before the many and do a practice sales to him and then him to me, vice versa. But he did it with others; it wasn't just me alone. He made it clear to all of them, never to call him by his real title, Lord Churchill. He had that title of course, as many, many of them did.

TS: So he didn't want to be called lord?

JH: No. His name was Charles.

TS: So you called him Charles?

JH: Yes, he wanted everybody to call him Charles.

TS: You come back to Marietta in 1964. Did you move into this house when you came back?

JH: Yes, I moved into this house. It was under construction. I had to wait for completion before moving in, and that was in June of '64.

TS: So you've been in this house now for forty-four years.

JH: Quite awhile. I'm so used to it, I just didn't want to move.

TS: I can understand that. Where did you live in Marietta the previous time that you were working here?

JH: Well, I lived in two or three different places. I'd built one home and was planning to move into it when I agreed to go to California. I've actually owned four or five different houses in Marietta.

TS: Is that right? What location were they in?

JH: Well, this is east Cobb, so we're just anywhere in the eastern part; we just call it East Cobb.

TS: But there wasn't much to East Cobb back in the '50's was there?

JH: No, all of this was just pine trees out here. This was one of, certainly, the first fifty houses in the entire area built.

TS: This house was one of the first fifty around here?

JH: Yes.

TS: I moved here in '68—four years after you returned to Marietta—and I kind of remember this area around Wheeler High School. It had developed pretty much by the early 1970s.

JH: It was developing pretty fast and was beginning to in '64. A fellow I knew quite well, he's dead now, but he built this house up here on the corner and lived in it. He built several of these houses. Then another builder would start in and different ones. Maybe one builder would come in and build a half dozen or a dozen houses, and that's kind of the way it was back then.

TS: So not one big builder. Not like Tom Cousins doing Indian Hills, I guess.

JH: That's right.

TS: It was more just a whole bunch of different people, different styles and everything.

JH: As a matter of fact, I did own a house in Indian Hills, Indian Trail; I didn't live in it, but I owned it.

TS: Did you see much of a difference in this area between the time you left in '55 and the time you came back in '64?

JH: Oh, gosh, yes. There was a big difference. Of course, you know, I can remember on back, even back in the 1930s, this whole county and Marietta in the 1930s, so it's hard for me to single one time and section, but I remember when they had streetcars running in from Atlanta into Marietta Square and they'd circle the square and back thru Smyrna and Bolton and then to Atlanta.

TS: Did you ever ride the streetcar?

JH: Oh, yes. I recall when I first rode it, and that would have been in the early 1930s, 1933, 1934, 1935, ten cents.

TS: The streetcar continued until about the end of 1946, I think, and then went out of business. A lot of people are still sad that they ever stopped running that route.

JH: It should not have been closed, it should have been opened, of course, updated, but kept that property, and it would have really been an asset to this whole county.

TS: This area was changing; what about Cartersville? Did you see as much of a change there?

JH: Not as fast, but a big change. I had many years living in Bartow, Cobb, and, of course, Fulton—we lived in Atlanta while working there.

TS: I understand that you had some other businesses besides the insurance business that you were engaged in too on the side, that you owned some properties. I wonder if you'd talk about that a little bit.

JH: I don't think any of that is really important, Tom; I can name some of them right fast, but I don't know, when you say properties, just land and a house, and rental stuff.

TS: Okay.

JH: I owned a farm in Paulding County. Then, pretty much the same time, I bought a farm in Cherokee County, a larger farm, where I had planned to build and retire. My wife decided that she wouldn't go along moving in the country. But I kept it for quite some time, and it was quite a place. It wasn't a huge place, but it was about 170 acres. It



would be big now. One corner of the property joined the Reinhardt College in Waleska, so that was interesting. I didn't live in it. I moved a log cabin—this could be of a little interest to you—I moved a log house, a pretty good size house that was located up above Blairsville. It was really back in the mountains off the main road. It hadn't been used for anything other than just storage and used as a barn. I bought it for nothing, really, and had it moved to this land that I bought in Cherokee County and reassembled it. It is still there, and I re-erected it on a slope and built a basement in it, so it is actually a three-story log house. It's quite a nice place now on something like a twelve acre lake on the place. I did it just to have a fishpond for myself and then later retire on it. I didn't get around to that. I also owned a nice place in Paulding County—house and lake.

TS: But you've always been interested in preservation, it sounds like.

JH: Right.

TS: Is the Waleska property near Lake Arrowhead, where you had your farm?

JH: Yes, it was. Just go past Reinhardt for just a short distance to Arrowhead. My property was back this side, just a short distance. Do you know where the main general store is that is the town of Waleska? I was just about a mile from there.

TS: You were a partner in a foundry at one time, weren't you?

JH: Yes, that foundry I told you about during my early teenage days, working a little bit in a foundry that belonged to my oldest brother-in-law. Then my next older brother came into it, and it was a partnership between the two. Then my younger brother came into it later, and he owned and ran the machine shop. We had a foundry and a machine shop. At one time, like it is right now for that business, it was slack time in business, and they needed some cash flow. So I purchased one-quarter interest in it and then later one-third—a third interest in a foundry and a machine shop. I was never involved in the machine work, but my younger brother was a master mechanic, certified and all that. He ran the shop.

TS: Which brother was that?

JH: My younger brother, Milton, he's been dead twenty-five years, but he was quite a master mechanic. Bartow County is a mining county; there were a lot of mines. We did all the work for the mines: poured the castings, made the big gear wheels and all that stuff, and then my brother sent our foundry pieces into the machine shop where the machine finished work. We shipped machinery to several places in Tennessee where they did mining. Yes, I was in that for some time. I didn't get rich at it, but they did all right. Then Union Carbide moved into Cartersville, and they had a machinist that came with them from some other state. Something happened to him. Anyway, they hired my younger brother to take charge of the machine shop, and that was a pretty big thing. Then he decided to sell our smaller operation. Union Carbide was pretty big back then.

TS: Mr. Hill, I've been wondering about why you went into the insurance business in the first place.

JH: Yes, well, Tom, I'd never thought about ever going back into the insurance business up until this time. As I mentioned before, I was working in a foundry. I had a little experience in the foundry, having had the foundry and machine shop in our family, and anyway, it's a very, very dirty job. I decided to leave that line of work. I gave up my job in Atlanta. Within a week I was talking with my insurance agent, one that I had previously purchased insurance from, and he seemed to be doing mighty good with a white shirt and suit. He encouraged me to go talk to his manager in downtown Atlanta. I did, and—see, this was in January of '41, and I had just turned twenty-one—right off the manager said, "We don't hire sales people under age twenty-five," because of the bonding situation back then, you know. So I sold this manager on giving me a chance—just a three-month chance—at the job. He agreed since he had an opening. I did quite well from the very beginning, and at the end of three months I was one of his top sales people. He had forty salesmen at that time, and I believe I was at about number five during that first three months. I impressed him so much in my sales ability, he said, "Let's go on and finish this year." Among the forty agents, I'm not 100 percent sure but I was among the top five or six that year. Most all the sales people had much more formal education than I had, plus the fact that they had some age on me and a lot of experience. That impressed him very much, and it continued on into the second year, and I was doing so well they wanted to promote me and send me to Albany, Georgia as a special agent title, a little bit of a step up. So I did. I moved to Albany with my new title and at that time it was salary plus commissions. I stayed on that job for a year or so until I was drafted into the service.

TS: But you're saying that the real reason you went into the insurance business is that you wanted to wear a white shirt?

JH: I wanted to be dressed up, and I was among the top dressers, I really was. But I had a lot of experiences and did so well, I was, as I said, one of the top in sales.

TS: Could you talk a little bit about what it takes to be successful in the insurance business? You obviously have been so successful from the beginning; what qualities do you think you had that made you a good insurance man?

JH: Well, first of all, Tom, you've got to want to, whatever, be determined. You must have determination and know what you want and then figure out and decide how you're going to get there. In my first months I would watch closely the most experienced men and the men that made the better records always, and do what he was doing, but try to do it a little bit better and do a little more of it. For example, most all of them back then would work five days a week. So I worked six days a week; I worked on Saturdays and they didn't.

TS: I would think that would make a big difference because a lot of people aren't available Monday through Friday; they're working themselves.

JH: That's true. I worked on Saturday, sometimes, until late Saturday, until people would get off from their jobs and would be home with their billfolds.

TS: Oh, they got paid on Friday.

JH: Yes. Those things are a must in any line of work. It's know what you want and then be determined to reach it and try to do just a little bit more than the other successful ones. Select and pick out and know the successful ones and learn how they accomplish what they did and then try to do just a little bit more. I did that. I would work on almost every Saturday. That would make up the difference. And I would make late calls. I would make appointments as late as 9:00 o'clock and go in the homes. I would catch up and be ahead of all the others by doing a little bit more. I think those are the main reasons that I was successful. We were always in campaigns and contests and whatnot, and I would try to be one of the winners. I wanted to be top dog.

TS: After you got to the position where you were supervising others, were you able to take some of these same attributes? I guess, you still kept working hard.

JH: I taught the same things that I was doing plus the things that I saw in the other successful people. Of course, nothing will replace hard work. It took a lot of hard work and a lot of reading, a lot of studying. Every training session offered I would take it. I was somewhat in school, continued education, I'll say, from age twenty-one, until sixty-five. I was in training courses right up until my retirement.

TS: Training courses that the company offered?

JH: Well, not always. They would most often pay for some of the training courses, but various sales courses such as Dale Carnegie, I took all of their courses. As a matter of fact, I hired the vice president of Dale Carnegie for that area because that's how good I was—he was teaching me how to sell, and I sold him to come to work for us. He did, and in a year's time he was made vice president with our company and doing quite well.

TS: Was this when you were out in California?

JH: This was in Nashville. But to answer your question, it's pretty hard without going into long, long stories, but you've got to just want to do it and do more than the others that are doing well. One other thing: I wanted to be in management, so all this time I mentioned about my sales experience at direct selling, I was always thinking I wanted my boss's job. And I wanted to be among the top producers and the top salaried people on my level. But what I liked to do back then was sell people; I was good at selecting people, good honest people, people we could depend on, rely on, honest people, people that I felt like wanted to do the same thing that I was doing; people that I felt like would want my job. So I was a master at recruiting people. I'd say that was the real reason of my success. It all depended on management—not on what you do, but what you can get others to do.

TS: When you say recruited people?

JH: Well, employed people, hired people. Selecting people that are already working and doing good on other jobs, maybe, not like myself at that time. I changed jobs. Not quite satisfied with what they were doing, how much they were making, but they're potential. I talked with them: What are your chances of success? What are your chances of making X number of dollars five years from now? Where do you want to be when you retire? And so forth. Just delve into these questions until I could get close to that man and find out what he wanted in life and let him know about the green pastures. It was no problem. I recruited some well known people back then.

TS: Recruited from other parts of the company or other businesses?

JH: No, I didn't hire other experienced people necessarily, but people in other lines of business and in all walks of life. I employed in my time, several hundred people, pastors, I guess, in small churches—they were not making any money, but usually those people were pretty good sales people. But there were many others. You'd want to talk with someone that wanted to get there and people that could sell. You wanted to get those that were already pretty successful, but they wanted more.

TS: That's an interesting thought, the pastors, because they have to have a gift for gab to be successful preachers.

JH: Let me tell you, when I went to California, I didn't know anybody. I had to hire a secretary, a cashier to handle my money and everything in the office. So where did I go? First of all, I was told, in a long session with the president of our company before going out there, driving out there—I drove a brand new Packard, the highest priced Packard made back then; it was a sporty—I drove to California by myself, new territory and all that. But he told me, "You go out there,"—you wouldn't appreciate this, but back then your automobile that you drove, the clothes you wore, and the many things made a big difference in applying for jobs. It doesn't seem to be that way anymore. Let me tell you a little experience. The first morning I went into work in the office in the Hurt Building in downtown Atlanta, it was the first part of February when I actually went to work. It was cold, sleeting. I went in the office, and had a topcoat on and all, but I didn't have a hat. The manager noticed that, walking in to go to work the first morning. He said, as I was starting out the door, "Jodie, where's your hat? You're forgetting your hat." "No, I didn't wear a hat." He said, "Do you have a hat?" "Yeah, I have a hat." I'd wear it on Sunday to church and all that; didn't feel fully dressed without a hat back then. He said, "Well, go back home and get your hat before you go to work." He sent one of his men with me back to the house to get my hat. So that stayed with me for a long, long time. I was always then considered one of the best-dressed men with the company. My wife and I were named the best dressed couple in New Orleans one year at a convention, and there were over 2,000 people there. That was true two or three years here since we retired and we went to the senior citizen's center. I did play the fiddle a few times, like at the senior citizen's center, but they had a day for dressing at this senior citizen's place in Smyrna, and couples were to be dressed. Blanche and I won hands down the best dressed couple

in that senior citizen's group. I have a picture of the two of us here somewhere. But dress meant a lot back then, but not any more. If you've got it, you've got it. But back then appearance. You know these last several years, and I did have a few million dollars, I had as a matter of fact, several million dollars until this stock market took about twelve or fourteen of them away from me, and they took over eight million this year away from me.

TS: It'll come back, don't you think?

JH: No, not mine, because where half of it was is gone. The largest company in the world is bankrupt. I got a document in today's mail, I haven't opened it—I didn't want to open it before we talked because I know what it is. No more dividends to be paid.

TS: You probably had AIG stock, didn't you?

JH: Well, see, that's the company that bought our company so I had no choice. I've lost several million dollars in the last few years, but prior to all of this, I didn't in any way in a boastful way let them know that I had—people in my family don't know that I ever had fifteen or eighteen million dollars. They wouldn't have thought it at all because I never talked about it.

TS: Well, and you don't live that lifestyle.

JH: I never lived it. If I had that kind of money why would I be living in a \$300,000 or \$400,000 house, whatever it is. I could be living in a million dollar house. Let me give you a one-liner that I used in my training of men from day one—every man I would train, if they were working under me—I'd say, "You've heard this old saying about live within your means; that's common to hear that." I said, "Forget about that; it's not living within your means. I want you to live below your means. Live below your means."

TS: Right. Then you can save.

JH: You're safe in many ways, and then you're not showing off. But live below your means, and you're always in good shape. I did that. The president of our company, within the first year I was with the company, in his office he sat with me talking, I was doing so well as a young man just starting, and I asked him some questions, and he was telling me some things. He tossed that out to me. He said, "Just always live below your means." If you're making \$1,000 a month, live on \$900 anyway; you can do it." I always tossed that in my training course and mentioned it several times. I have a few people—two of them are here in Cobb County and there are two in Cherokee County—that are millionaires. Of course, that's not much now, but millionaires. Two of them were making less than \$100 a week when I employed them, and they're millionaires now, more than that. They heard me say that a dozen times. Live below your means.

TS: I think you've mentioned . . .

JH: But I got off of what I was saying.

TS: No, you've mentioned three or four things that are real keys, I think: you have to care about what you're doing; you've got to work very hard at it; show respect for your clients by dressing well; and live below your means.

JH: That's some of the things. There are just lots and lots of things.

TS: My first dean at Kennesaw, dean for a number of years, George Beggs, used to have that same philosophy about clothes. He said he expected us to dress when we went into the classroom the way we did when we came for our job interview.

JH: Never less than that.

TS: Exactly.

JH: And mannerisms. So many men and women too would smoke back then, and a lot of men would smoke pipes and all that stuff. They didn't have enough manners; they'd walk right up to the door with a cigar in their mouth and things like that; I didn't do those kinds of things. So I was known as a well mannered young man.

TS: That's all in showing respect for the people that you're dealing with, don't you think?

JH: Yes.

TS: And I was thinking earlier that maybe one of the qualities that the pastors would have, in addition to speaking ability, was they'd been counseling people for years, so maybe they had more of a sense of caring for their clients.

JH: That got me back to what I mentioned about the pastors, what I started to say. This president was telling me about the many things to do to go about getting established. They were paying me well for it, but he said, one of the many things I remember, "You're looking for good men" (women too, but men back then for the sales end of it). You didn't know anybody, you're just calling on strangers. "Go up to my banker first, the president of the bank." The president of my company contacted him that I was to contact him, and I was going to set up my company account with him. I put up a good amount to begin with, but it was going to grow, and there was going to be a lot of money in there, be a big account for him one day, and for him to look out for me, I was still just a young man, and [he told the bank president to] help me get started, and he did. One of the other things that he told me to do is call on every pastor of the churches, doesn't matter about the denomination, and call on them not to employ them necessarily—there are some on different levels you can employ, others you couldn't—but go to them and ask the pastor, "You know a lot of young men; you've got a big congregation; you know a lot of people; and you probably know someone in your congregation that's out of a job that you know would be a good man and a dependable man or someone you know you're close to that you feel like is not doing as well as he could be doing. Would you give me a

name or two, and if you are not quite ready, will you think about it and call me back?” Or, “I’m coming back on (so and so) and check with you.” You’d be surprised how many of them would tell me, they’d give me stories about, “This is a fine young man. I married that couple.”

TS: So that’s how you recruited?

JH: Yes. That was one of many ways, but I got good people that way.

TS: That’s ingenious, that’s great.

JH: I would teach some of my salesmen who didn’t mind working at night, longer hours, to stop by the police stations back then—they operate differently now—and talk with them, just conversation. You’ll find that there are one or two there probably that doesn’t like that night job, and he’s got the qualities of what you’re looking for, and sell him on going into our business. Or, if he’s one that maybe you could sell him insurance on himself and wife and so forth; he’s not contacted on much at home. So I’d get all these key factors and build them in and teach them to these men. There’s a lot of ways of doing it, but just always follow the track of the more successful people and try to do a little bit better than they were doing.

TS: Sounds like good advice.

JH: I worked a lot of long hours that other people wouldn’t work. But in all my years, if it were totaled up, I’m sure I’d be listed among the top 10 percent of my forty years, all the sales managers.

TS: You were telling a story earlier, and we didn’t get it on the tape, but it was about your father dying without any life insurance and how that may have affected your decision to go into the insurance business. It must have been a terrific burden on your family. Could you talk a little bit about that?

JH: Right. This is what beckoned me, I guess, to go into the business. I didn’t know that I could get into the life insurance business because of my age, but I did, and I told you that story.

TS: It’s really interesting that already at age twenty-one you already have a life insurance policy.

JH: Yes, at nineteen I had life.

TS: You must have learned a lesson that I don’t want to make the same mistake my father did.

JH: Actually that’s what it’s really all about. When I found out I had an opportunity to get in the insurance business, all that was flashing in my mind; my daddy died without any

insurance. Had he had an adequate amount of insurance, or insurance at all, it would have been so much easier, if not on any of the children, on my mother. It would have been a different life for me. I wouldn't have to be doing this dirty work [in the foundry] here. But here's an opportunity now for me.

TS: Right.

JH: It made it easy—I told the story quite often and differently as it came to me—but I helped sell a lot of insurance with that story. Telling that story to my agents in their training, and they'd get out and tell the story.

TS: About you father?

JH: Yes. And then they would pick up on other stories and how important it was to tell some of these human life experiences, stories.

TS: I think this may be a good place to stop for today. If it's all right with you, I'd like to do at least one more interview where maybe we can talk about your interest in the Corra Harris house and how that came about and about your philanthropies in general and your hobbies and your travel too. We've devoted this session to your business career. Let's talk next time about what you've done in the community.

JH: Yes, I'd like to mention some of the things such as the many things I was in as a Mason; I don't think I've . . .

TS: No, we haven't talked about that.

JH: I was a Mason and all branches of Masonry including Shriners. You have to go through all of them to become a Shriner, so I'm still a Shriner. I had my fifty-year pin a long time ago, but so I was in all that. I was also active in the Eastern Star, but you had to be a Mason to be an Eastern Star—you know about the Eastern Star?

TS: That's for women isn't it?

JH: Women cannot open a session without having two Masons, men officers in the lodge. I was a worthy patron—that was the top of the two officers—off and on for several terms. I had fifty years in that, Eastern Star officer. Getting back to things in my line of work, I finished LUTC, that's the Life Underwriters Training Council.

TS: When we do the interview the next time, we can pick up on that and your gift to KSU of In the Valley and your passion for the writings of Corra Mae White Harris.



### Interview # 3: Tuesday, 25 November 2008

TS: Mr. Hill, after we finished last week, you were telling me a great story about your relationship with a governor of Tennessee named [Earl] Buford Ellington and a story about duck hunting. I wonder if we could pick up with that story today.

JH: Yes. I thought the story was a little unusual and worthwhile telling, at least to me. I used to duck hunt a lot while living in Nashville and hunted other game also, but we had a little group that would get together and hunt ducks every year at Reelfoot Lake. We had guides there to take us out in the lake, row boats, to the blinds, and we usually had three days to hunt and a limit on the hunting. In this particular group, there were some of my close friends with the company, the Life & Casualty, at the time. Two or three others were outsiders, one of them being a retired governor of the State of Tennessee, Buford Ellington [1959-63 and 1967-71]. He was a well-known figure in politics. Anyway, we were on this trip to Reelfoot Lake, and we were there the first night getting prepared to go out the next morning for our hunt. We were in this catfish restaurant having dinner, and we had a phone call for Buford Ellington. So he answered the call, of course, and came back to the table and told us he was so sorry he was going to have to leave the next day and not be able to finish the hunt with us. He said, "I can't give you the details of it, but the phone call was from the President." The President at that time was [Lyndon Baines] Johnson. He asked him to come to Washington the next day for a meeting, which he did. Of course, we learned that the meeting was to offer him the position as [Director of the Office of Emergency Planning, sworn in 4 March 1965]. He accepted the position and finished out his term there with Johnson. You may know that Johnson was rather a big-mouth, a loud-mouth kind of person, and he'd make his personal phone calls. He made a lot of them at night and would call people and talk with them and not have it go through anyone else. That was true in this case. He placed the call to Buford Ellington and talked with him personally. I thought that was a little unusual to be on a hunting trip and have the President of the United States to call a person in our little party and offer him this position.

TS: I would say. You would expect the call, when you answered the phone, it would be the secretary on the line or something.

JH: Right. That's one of the things that made it so unusual. But he was noted for that, making his calls late at night and in person.

TS: Was that the only time you went hunting with Buford Ellington or was he a regular in your group?

JH: He was off and on but most every year. One year we had another governor that went with us, and this was while he was in office—Frank [Goad] Clement [governor from 1953-59 and 1963-67]. He gave the keynote address to the [1956 Democratic National] Convention.

TS: Yes, I remember that.

JH: He was a very popular person, well liked, and he was a very close friend to the president of our company. That was Guilford Dudley, Jr. [president of Life & Casualty Insurance Company, 1952-69] who, incidentally, was given the position while President Nixon was in of ambassador to Denmark [1969-71]. He accepted it and moved to Denmark and lived there for three years. I thought that was a little unusual too, having another one of the men in my party in command.

TS: Sounds like your company was pretty well politically connected.

JH: It was, and Guilford Dudley was head of the Republican Party for the State of Tennessee for quite a number of years and contributed in many ways, even quite a bit of personal money.

TS: Buford Ellington was a Democrat though.

JH: Buford Ellington was, yes.

TS: Of course, everybody . . .

JH: This call had nothing to do with Buford Ellington; it was a direct call, the relationship with Nixon and my boss, Guilford Dudley, who was a Republican. Of course, Ellington was a Democrat.

TS: Of course, all the governors were Democrats back then [until the election of Winfield Dunn in 1970].

JH: Most of them were, certainly in the South.

TS: I visited Reelfoot Lake many times over the years; that's up in that northwest corner near the Mississippi River, and it was created out of an earthquake in the early 1800s.

JH: Yes, it was. It was in 1812. Well, my boss being a Republican and me a stout Democrat in those years, we always would kid each other about it, but he was quite a politician.

TS: That was good for the company, I guess.

JH: It was.

TS: I wanted to ask you about some of your community service type things and maybe a good lead in question to that would be that a lot of corporations have a philosophy of giving back to the community. I was just wondering if that was true in the insurance business, whether it was part of the company policy at Life & Casualty; did they encourage you to be involved in community activities while you were working for them?

JH: Not a great deal of encouragement, no.

TS: So what you did you did on your own.

JH: We did on our own.

TS: I know that you were telling me the other day that you got involved quite early in the Masons.

JH: Yes. I believe it was in 1946. Anyway, I have my fifty-year pin with the Masons and I went through the other branches of the Masons and, of course, I'm a Shriner of fifty years. I did spend time in those years, not in my last few years, but spent a lot of time and held various offices. I belonged to all branches of it; and the Eastern Star, I spent quite a bit of time with, and I have fifty years service with that also.

TS: What would you do with the Eastern Star?

JH: Well, this was a ladies' auxiliary, a branch of the Masons. There were not many men members in the Eastern Star. There were only two offices in the Eastern Star to be filled by men. One was worthy patron, which I was. It was a two year period and then out and then you could go back in again for two years. During that time the women spent a lot of time in packaging stuff for the underprivileged people. We would make a big thing for the needy families during many seasons, particularly Christmas. We did quite a bit of that. Of course, this was years back when you didn't have many organizations to do things. But we would go out and take our cars and pick-up trucks and deliver all this stuff around in the country and the rural areas. Anyway, I spent fifty years with that and many other things, like the Kiwanis, Elks Club, things of that sort.

TS: What was the Life Underwriters Training Council?

JH: That was an organization made up of all the various companies that were licensed and operated within each city. You had your state level and on down to the branches level.

TS: So you were pretty active in that weren't you?

JH: I was active in all those branches, but it's been so many years back now, remember, I just can't remember all the things that we did.

TS: Has woodworking been a lifetime pursuit? I know you do some really excellent craftsmanship. Is this something that you picked up as a child or is there somewhere along the line that you really got interested in woodworking?

JH: Yes, I had quite an interest woodworking. I never had any real training in it, just self-taught, but I believe I mentioned earlier in the family we had a machine shop, foundry. I began to learn a little bit about woodworking in the shop. But I just enjoyed piddling with wood and building things, even built wooden toys that we'd give to children. I'd

built things and have up until four or five years ago, and would give to people as souvenirs up until now.

TS: Well, you're holding in your hand a walking stick.

JH: Yes, of course, it's a cedar tree, this particular one, but I saw this growing on the side of the road with honeysuckle vines. So that's what made the indentation that's all around. There was a vine, the way it grew.

TS: Okay, so you didn't groove that?

JH: No.

TS: I thought you may have grooved it out like that.

JH: No, but I do have some that I have grooved out. I have cut walking sticks for hikers and maybe do some carving on them. I have several here that I could show you. I would go around through the woods on the farms that I had and select them and would mark them with red tape in the off season to cut and then go back and cut them and cure them and then make hiking sticks and give them to people. I have to toss this in. As of last week I had a man, a realtor in Cartersville, call me and ask me if I would give him one of those sticks that he knew I made. I have given these sticks to both men and women for years and years, both walking sticks and walking canes. But I've made a lot of small toolboxes and lamps. I made many small stools that could be used for many things, but many of them were given to people with small children to stand on in the bathroom to brush their teeth and whatnot. I would spend time on them and build them, as I would say, precision built and give them away. Of course, I could name many, many things: pencil holders, candle sticks—there's a couple of small ones right there that you see in the corner—all sizes and lengths. One year I made over 100 sets, no two alike, and would give them to people right up until here again just a few weeks ago I gave some away. There are just dozens of different items that I would make out of wood just for the pleasure of it and to give to people—one of a kind that could not be bought in the store so they placed a lot of value on them. That's just a few of the many things that I've made.

TS: Have you made any furniture?

JH: I've made a few pieces of furniture, not large pieces, but a few pieces of furniture.

TS: So you've always had a woodworking skill.

JH: I've had a knack for that, yes.

TS: That's great. I understand you're a gardener too.

JH: I've always gardened some, even this past year. I only grew some tomatoes and peppers out here. I don't have much space now, but I had tomatoes here, and we picked some

tomatoes on my birthday. I managed to keep a couple or three vines. I would cover them when the weather got so cold to save them from freezing, but that's one of the things I would look forward to is saving a few of the vines and pick my last tomatoes on my birthday. I kept some this time until the first of December. I always grew enough to furnish my neighbors tomatoes. I'm speaking of my home gardening here now. I did some gardening on a larger scale on my farm, I call it the country place, in a larger way, although I won't take credit for doing it all myself; I had some help up there. But I did it just for the pleasure of giving them to people, giving them fresh vegetables.

TS: Which farm are you talking about?

JH: Well, this last one was the Corra Harris, In the Valley.

TS: So you grew tomatoes up there?

JH: Oh yes, I grew tomatoes. I had a rather large garden spot, three different ones. One year I completely covered one of the gardens with nothing but sunflowers, and that was a beautiful site. They were not in rows; they were just out by the thousands. It made a pretty site. But I would raise, there again, tomatoes in a big way and would give them to our garden club members and anyone else up there. I never did any of it for profit. It was just gifts for people. One year—this was in the yard, my backyard now where I'm presently living—I grew some tomatoes that shocked me. I didn't really realize they were going to be so large. I grew tomatoes that were all a little over two pounds a piece. I would take those to the office and give them to the girls and surprise and shock people. Of course, now, it's rather common for this giant size tomato, I guess you see it that large, but I thought that was unusual, at least for me, to grow two-pound tomatoes.

TS: Was it a special kind of seed?

JH: No, I didn't know, it just so happened. That's only one year that I had them that large, but we would weigh them and people wouldn't believe it—some two and a quarter pounds. I got a lot of pleasure out of growing those things for people.

TS: What kind of fertilizer did you use?

JH: Well, I just used whatever they would recommend at the nursery.

TS: What all did you grow besides tomatoes?

JH: I'd grow some cucumbers and, of course, peppers, both sweet and hot peppers. I grew some corn, not in a big way, but a couple of rows down the garden; just several different kind of vegetables.

TS: Right. I understand that you have an interest in antiques also.

JH: That was my number one hobby. Most of the work on the antiques was done in my wood shop, my hobby shop, where I did other kind of woodwork. I would collect antiques, some of them in rather poor shape and condition, but it was a thrill to me to put them back in good condition. For people that had antiques that needed repair work done, I would do repair work on them for my pleasure and their pleasure. I got a lot out of that. I have done a lot of that kind of work. I have several pieces throughout this house, if you have time to go through and see it. There would be several pieces in here. Those two large lamps—see that lamp to your right—it's made out of wagon hubs. So I made lamps out of them. There's a lamp on the far corner sitting on top of my wine cabinet—I took a lot of pleasure in building a wine cabinet—made out of brass, bronze mailboxes.

TS: That makes sense, the mailbox. I was thinking you had . . .

JH: All mailboxes. Of course, each one is filled with a bottle of wine. I'm not a wine drinker. It's just there for show. On top, you'll see a wooden basket with all the corks I've saved for over fifty years. So I have a couple of gallons of those corks. But the lamp—I take a lot of pride in showing—I picked up the base of the lamp in a junk shop probably sixty-five years ago for two or three dollars. I didn't know really what it was when I bought it, but I had an eye for building something out of it and learned that it was a lubricator off of a steam engine. I visualized a lamp base out of it. So I made that lamp out of the lubricator from a steam engine. I don't know just how old that would be, but that would probably be back 125 years or so. But there are many other pieces around.

TS: It looks like there's a butter churn over there.

JH: That is. And that is a rather old churn. That one is probably pre-Civil War, and it's made of white pine. I have had it for sixty-five years. I got it from a sale in Tennessee. The man I bought it from, he knew that it had been in his family on back for another forty or fifty years. So it's rather old. I reworked it. I've rebuilt several of those churns. I have some downstairs that are made of different material. That one has turned out to be a good one. You notice I made a magazine rack there out of a toolbox—on the floor.

TS: It does look like a toolbox.

JH: It is, and that is a very old one. It has some little pockets on the inside for various tools. But this coffee table you see here, I made that out of a walnut tree that was grown on the Corra Harris property. That's true with the framing and the cabinet around the mailboxes over in the far corner, that's part of the tree, black walnut. As you can see what I made out of the coffee table. I made it to fit that tray, which was a printer's tray. After my wife died three and a half years ago, I used some of her old costume jewelry to fill all the slots there to give it some color and uniqueness. That's quite an old tray. But the frame that I put the tray in I built out of walnut wood.

TS: It looks like there's like a shoeshine stand over there, the part you put your foot on, at any rate.

JH: Yes, that's for repairing shoes, a cobbler's. I have a full set of those tools in the basement, cobbler's tools for making shoes, every tool that's needed for making shoes and all other leather things such as would have to do with cattle or horses like the bridles and all that stuff. Anyway, I have all the tools for making them.

TS: Did you ever try to make any shoes?

JH: No, I never tried to make any shoes, but I will say that was one of the many things I did as a young teenager coming up. I would half sole shoes for people out of scrap leather that we could find. I had those cobbler stools or stands that I would make them on. I would do that among many other things when I was just thirteen, fifteen years old, along in there. That was just one of several things that I did for a little cash.

TS: Well, it sounds like maybe your love of antiques is part a love of history and part a love of the arts: you like beautiful things, don't you?

JH: I do. I enjoy not only just the wood work, but I enjoy just the feel of various types of wood and to recognize the many types and kinds of wood and what to do with various kinds of wood. I have quite a number of pieces in the basement, enough to fill a small museum. I'd like for you to see them before you leave.

TS: I'd love to. I think we mentioned in the first interview that you had made some fiddles along the way, haven't you?

JH: No, I never made any fiddles.

TS: Oh, I guess that you have just repaired them?

JH: I would repair them. I would find one maybe that needed repair that was for sale. I would pick it up very cheaply and repair it. I could show you two or three that I have here that I've had since I was a teenager that I bought for probably five or six or seven dollars a piece.

TS: That's a good hobby to have, I think. When did you start doing all your travels? I know you've gone to a lot of different places in the world.

JH: Well, of course, I did some travel as I mentioned in the earlier interview, with the little band. We traveled around over the country for just one year, the States I'm talking about, but then after getting in the insurance business we started having travel points where we were holding conventions. Some of my first travel abroad, of course, was during my time in service during the War. That's the part I didn't really care for.

TS: No. That was your first time to leave the country, I guess.

JH: That was the first time to be outside the country. But since then we've traveled, my wife and I together—she was with me on more than half of all those trips—we would travel to I believe it was sixty-three different countries and some of them more than once.

TS: What are some of the places that you've been to?

JH: Well, naturally we went to Europe. When I lived in California, we traveled to Mexico. And [we traveled to] some of the islands, but then to Canada and then moved on out to England. Of course, my first trip there was during my first two or three years in the service. We went to England and Ireland, Scotland and while in service, of course, to France.

TS: Did you ever have any desire to go back as a visitor to those places where you fought?

JH: I never had a real desire. Some people have had a desire to go back, and, of course, I have been back, but I didn't go back for that purpose. It was just on travels. I moved around over France, for example, during the War, then going back on three or four tours to the main cities. But [I had] no real desire to go back to the battlefields. I never cared about that. There are some men that have been back maybe one time and that's their only experience they had of the War just going to one country, France or whatever, but I didn't particularly care to even talk about the War, and I didn't do it, I didn't talk about it. I have two daughters, and I don't believe either one of them has ever asked me half a dozen questions about my War experience. They knew I didn't want to talk about it. So I didn't talk much about that. I didn't mind answering questions, but I wasn't one that wanted to dwell on some parts of it at all. Everyone had different experiences. Even in the same area, the same battle area, the experience would be altogether different. But if you get to talking about it you think about it too much. They never asked me questions about it, and I've never talked about it. But the Normandy Invasion, I think we've put all this on there, of course, was through France and Luxemburg, Belgium, Germany. Then going back, I've been back then on tours, and a visit and that was quite a different visit; those visits were different. In going back, I would include Italy, been there three times, and, every country over there on the Continent I've visited. Then, getting away from the War area experience, I have visited China and visited Australia, New Zealand and some of the islands. I can't think of some of them right off, but the reason I have sixty-three in my mind, some three or four years ago I was asked that question, and I couldn't remember how many, and I've jotted them down in there somewhere. I came up with sixty-three different countries. Of course, many of them were small. I've been three or four times to Ireland and, of course, England several times.

TS: Do you have ancestral roots in Ireland; is that why you go there?

JH: I had ancestral roots in England and, I guess, you could put the three together, England and Ireland and Scotland. I don't know that that was the purpose that I went back there. I just wanted to go.

TS: Where's your favorite place to go to?



JH: I've been asked that question, too, many times, but I don't know that I could answer that as a favorite place, and I doubt if anyone else has ever given you a favorite place unless it's someone who's only been to three or four places. But if you go to so many places, I think it may be the experience in a certain country would bring out some pleasant thoughts and memories, but I don't know. If I were going to leave this country to live in another country, I believe I would select Ireland.

TS: Why is that?

JH: I don't know why except for the peacefulness. It seems so peaceful and quiet, and it's not overly inhabited with people. You have the country atmosphere and the fields and the farming, and there's something about that that I like. I think I'd like a place like that rather than Paris, Honolulu or some place like that.

TS: Does Ireland kind of remind you of what Bartow County was like when you were born there?

JH: I believe it does.

TS: What's your least favorite place that you've been?

JH: Well, I don't particularly care for France, Paris in particular. To give you a real good reason, one doesn't pop up in my mind.

TS: But it's the opposite of Ireland, I guess.

JH: It wasn't necessarily from the War experience that I had because I didn't have many real unpleasant experiences right in Paris proper. As you know from history yourself, you know that we didn't have a hard time taking Paris going through there. There were just a few snipers there that fired on us, but there was no real battle in Paris proper. I didn't particularly respect and appreciate the French people as much most all the others. Now, I can't say that would be true of all the people there. I felt very sorry for them during the War about their living conditions and so forth. I would always share my food and what I could gather and give to those kids in the field. So I felt sorry for them. But the way that we were treated going all the way back to World War I—we saved them during World War I from Germany and the amount of money that this country spent on them. It was in the form of loans, and they have never repayed those loans, and I knew that then. Now, they still haven't paid them. And they just didn't treat the Americans right in many ways, so I guess I had a little less respect for them than many of the other countries.

TS: What do you think of the Germans?

JH: That's a horse of a different color, of course. I considered the German people actually the smartest of all the people, race. They were very brilliant. In going back and reading about them, and I know you have, the many things that they built, came up and invented,

and good things—the machinery and the many things that they made. Of course, it's changed now, but in the early years you have to give the Germans a lot of credit; they are smart people—although we despised them for wanting to start the Wars and all of that, but they were very brilliant people, and I give them a lot of due respect.

TS: You mentioned going to China. Have you been to any other Communist countries?

JH: In going to China, of course, it was still a police state back in the late 1970s when it just opened up.

TS: Oh, you got there that early?

JH: See, it wasn't open to tourists at all, a few in '76, after Richard Nixon was President—a few, and it began to take on a different face. I was there in '78, so it was still run the old Communist way.

TS: Didn't Jimmy Carter sign a treaty that established formal diplomatic relations with China in about 1978?

JH: Well, it did some by opening up to tourists, but Nixon was the one, you know, that really opened up China.

TS: Oh, yes. Absolutely!

JH: The truth I guess will never be known, but the first big loan—[Assistant for National Security Affairs and, later, Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger and that bunch—said they [the Chinese] took boxes and baskets of gold. They would take nothing else, but they did a big pay off. We'll never know the extent of it, but that's how we got it started with the big pay off. Of course, Kissinger was a master at negotiating. Of course, he was German, you know [born in Germany in 1923; emigrated to the U.S. in 1938]. But anyway, I was in Russia twice. The first time, there again, it was a full police state at that time. We were there in '78 the first time. It was policed by the military. The military completely covered the streets almost in their uniforms. The next time I went back it had been westernized somewhat and was different.

TS: When would that have been?

JH: The next time was back in the early 1990s.

TS: Okay, so after the Soviet Union fell was when you went back.

JH: Yes, that's what I'm saying. The first time was strictly a police state; the next time it had westernized quite a bit and everything was pretty much open. I enjoyed both trips. I think I was very fortunate to have made the first trip when I did to see the big difference and the change, quite a change. On those trips I get in tossing out names of countries, one of them was to Iceland. Then on another we went to Italy, but they just keep on

spreading it out and going to a lot of islands. It would be hard to answer your question earlier about which country I liked the best; I just don't know. You like them for different reasons. Even the French had some good, so there were good things about them all and some things that you didn't particularly like. It had a lot to do with what part of the country you visited. There's parts of France that were all right in the southern part in the agricultural area of it where you met farmers, small villagers, visited with those people, but Paris is one of the worst of all the cities we visited. I guess in all the major countries that we visited we visited one or more major cities. The countryside was so different from the cities. All of them had good and all of them had bad; wouldn't you like to see them all good?

TS: But you liked the rural areas wherever you went?

JH: Yes. It was something that I'm very proud that I did was travel and travel at different times and different seasons, sometimes the same country; different seasons made it seem different altogether.

TS: I guess so. Well, why don't we change our focus now and let me ask you: you were born in 1919 if I remember correctly, and Corra Mae White Harris [1869-1935] was still writing her books at that time. When were you first aware that there was a prominent writer named Corra Harris in your neighborhood?

JH: Well, I knew about her from my early teenage years, but I wouldn't say by any means that I was a follower of hers or gave her all that much thought or attention. Now, my mother was a fan of hers. Through her talking about something she had read about Corra Harris and this, that and the other, I heard about her and I was aware of her presence in the county and knew that she was a writer, but I didn't place a lot of importance on it because the people, as a whole, in Bartow County didn't actually give her all the credit she was due. You didn't hear a lot of talk about her. Of course, if you follow me, we're going back in the pre-television days, and it was in just the early radio days. Not everyone even had a radio, so we didn't know so much about her. But you'd hear these stories, and then the picture came along; that's what called my attention to her.

TS: Oh, *I'd Climb the Highest Mountain* [with Susan Hayward and William Lundigan]?

JH: Right.

TS: That came out right after World War II, didn't it?

JH: Well, yes, it came out in 1951. I saw the movie. From there on I appreciated her more and then read a little bit about her here and there, but not in a big way. I wasn't really all that much a follower of hers. It's just that I knew she did some great things, and thinking back, I knew that our county, Bartow County, did not do much for her.

TS: Did your mother buy her books?

JH: I don't remember about the books, but she would read what she could. I don't recall her ever buying a hardback book. I don't guess she could afford it. She read the newspaper columns, and that's where it all came about. Of course, she read magazine columns; she [Corra Harris] would write for three or four national magazines. So naturally we would get one occasionally. But when she started writing a column for the *Atlanta Journal* three times a week, my mother read every one of those. She thought so much of Corra; she was a follower of Corra. She didn't necessarily say much about her husband [Lundy Howard Harris (1858-1910)], and her husband wasn't really all that much thought of.

TS: Of course, he'd been dead a long time.

JH: He'd been dead a long time, but the story was there all along, he was right there in our county, committed suicide—the fact that he committed suicide by taking drugs and drinking, and there he was supposed to be a great church leader. So there was both good and bad about the family.

TS: So Lundy was a Methodist minister and was taking drugs and alcohol?

JH: Yes. But just right off most people would think, young people right off, well, everybody knew that. But they didn't; all that was kept quiet. Corra knew about it, but she kept it quiet, and it wasn't written about anywhere until after his death.

TS: Right, which was like 1910?

JH: Right.

TS: So by the time you're coming along everybody knows the gossip.

JH: Yes.

TS: Did your mother ever meet Corra Harris?

JH: Yes, they met. I never met her, but I saw her downtown Cartersville—people went downtown on Saturday. People would point her out. People would always group around her talking, and they'd say, "That's Corra Harris." Of course, I then learned more about her after the movie. I must say, when the place—actually it never did go on the market for sale officially –

TS: Are you talking about after she died?

JH: Yes.

TS: Which would have been '35.

JH: I thought we were building up to....

TS: We are. So she died in '35. She had this farm, In the Valley.

JH: [When Lundy died] she didn't have the farm, and she had never seen the valley or the house. They lived in Nashville, Tennessee, for ten years. Lundy was on the board of the Methodist church [Methodist Episcopal Church, South]. See, the Methodist church was headquartered in Nashville, so he was there on the board. He was Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education. That's why they moved there. He didn't have a job; he was just doing a little church work over at Rockmart at that time. They lived there one year. Corra had a sister living in Rockmart who married Corra Harris's husband's brother [Al Harris]. So they married brothers, and they were both Methodist ministers. They were quite different in one way; the one that her sister married never drank or took drugs.

TS: Totally conventional?

JH: Yes.

TS: Was the sister named Faith?

JH: Her sister was named Hope [Hope White Harris].

TS: So Faith [Faith Harris Leech, 1887-1919] was the daughter.

JH: Faith was the daughter. Hope had some children. I know she had three, if not four boys. Corra would refer to them quite often, one of them in particular. Only one of them [Al] was her favorite. The others she didn't place that much importance on. But they were living in Nashville for ten years. During that time he would get on a little binge every once in awhile. They gave him notice he would have to straighten up or lose his job. Well, it was coming to an end, and the church sent him to this farm, some people they knew, a Methodist family. They made a deal to keep him for a few days, so he could recuperate and see if they could get him straightened up. During that time is when he died, while visiting this family—which was just about a mile from the Valley home, the cabin; but he didn't go to the valley; he didn't know anything about that. Corra never visited him while he was there. He was only there two or three weeks or something like that while visiting the [Clarence] Anthony family.

TS: The first time he'd ever been there?

JH: The first time he had ever been there. And there's no record in any way that he ever set foot on that Valley farm, no way.

TS: So how did she get down here?

JH: By train from Nashville, Tennessee. He committed suicide. She made plans to send the body back to where he went to school, graduated at the Emory College in Oxford. It was a four-year college. That's where he graduated from college.

TS: When he would have graduated from college there wasn't an Emory in Atlanta.

JH: No, no. Emory was in Oxford. There's so much about this. Not many people know that he had so much to do with opening up or bringing Emory to Atlanta from Oxford while he was on the Board of Education in Nashville.

TS: Lundy did?

JH: Yes. He was on the board in Nashville. While he was there and he went to school down there, he wanted to get that to a different location. He had some terrible feelings, I guess, about the place. I won't go into it, but he had a lot of problems down there. He was drinking and women, some black women. Anyway, he was sent to Emory, the old Oxford cemetery to be buried. I've been there to the grave and took pictures. While they lived in Oxford and he was teaching there, he taught there for about ten years. They had bought a house there and lived there during that time. After he got into trouble again and left and went to Texas, another brother was out there living in Texas. Well, Corra was now alone there. Lundy was gone. So not knowing what to do, she went to visit and stay with her sister in Rockmart. She was there getting established in a little teaching position there in the church school where her sister's husband taught. Long story short: he got back from his visit in Texas back to his brother's house in Rockmart. He also got a job there at this academy. The academy is still there in Rockmart. While he was there the Board of Education in Nashville offered him this position, so they moved to Nashville. There's where they spent ten years of their lives and with their one child that lived, Faith. She was there for a short while, but most of that time she was at another place. Maybe it's not important, but she was sent to Cuthbert, Georgia. She had a relative there, but, anyway, she sent the girl there while she was getting things straightened out. So while they were there in Rockmart the church headquarters offered him this position if they would move to Nashville, as Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education. So that's why she was there at the time that he committed suicide. So he was buried in the old Oxford cemetery with the two babies that were born while they lived at Oxford. One of the babies was stillborn, and then the other one lived to be about eighteen months old.

TS: So Lundy commits suicide . . .

JH: We're trying to get Corra back to the Valley.

TS: Right, how does she get to the Valley?

JH: Right. She always wanted to make a trip to Europe. So after he was buried she made a trip, along with the daughter, to Europe by way of England. She was established in England with these publishers who had published some of her books there.

TS: She was already writing novels before he committed suicide?

JH: Oh gosh, yes.

TS: So she's already famous in her own right.

JH: Right, on a national basis through these leading magazines. She made this trip, and the girl was dissatisfied, and she came home early from Europe. But all that time there, Corra was thinking about Lundy and where he lived when he committed suicide. She wanted to see the place and meet the people he was staying with. So, after she came back from the trip that was her first stop back to visit. While visiting there, she came upon this log cabin, which was about a mile and a half away, still unoccupied, but was built by a Cherokee Indian many, many years before, [according to] legend. As she walked up this dirt road to see this log cabin on the hill, she said, "I'm going to buy that place, and I'm going to live in it the rest of my life. My funeral is going to be in this cabin." One thing led to another. She located the owner, and she did purchase. And looking over that valley, she said, "I'll not only buy the house and live in the house. I'm going to buy the whole valley." It was so scenic looking over the valley. [Editor's note: The purchase is reported in the 26 January 1913 edition of the *Atlanta Constitution*, p. A12.]

TS: Was she attracted to it because of the picturesque nature of the place?

JH: She said she had feelings of his presence. She was so close to him.

TS: So this was a way to be close to him?

JH: This was a way of being close to him. So she bought the place. Of course, there were a lot of things right on after that—stages of getting it built, reconstructed. Then making other trips—she was on a trip a little later back in 1914 when they built the library while she was on this trip to Europe. She made more than one trip to Europe. She built it in stages; however, most of it was built in 1914, the additions.

TS: Right, and the library.

JH: Yes.

TS: When's the first time that you saw the property?

JH: The first time I actually saw the property? Well, I'd been through the property because the main road ran right through her property along through the valley. Actually, I had been through the valley there many times, but not knowing the connection with the land lines or how much of it she owned and whatnot. But the first time I became really interested in it, I learned that it was going to be put on the market for sale, so I went up and checked into it and found it to be true that they were going to put it on the market and that they had one prospect at that time. They thought that he was going to buy it. They were negotiating. But he was a nearby farmer, and he was raising chickens. He was going to tear the place down, just bulldoze the buildings down, all other than the library and the chapel, and build chicken houses. I just couldn't see that. I went out to see it, and when I saw the place and the condition of it—run down— I [thought] just about like

anyone else that it should be torn down. It was in such bad shape. On the other hand, I just could not see that with all of those things about her in my mind. No one else was interested in it. It had been there for many years, and no one had made any effort to restore it. I just wanted to do it to restore it, but I didn't know why or what I would do with it. I had no intentions of living there. I lived here in Marietta in this house. So I thought I'd just buy it and then decide where we'd go from there. I'm going to try to get it restored some way and for some purpose; I didn't know why.

TS: What year would this have been?

JH: This was in '95. Now that's when I started was in the latter part of '95, but I purchased it and closed the deal in January of '96.

TS: By that point it had been sixty years since she had died. What had happened to the property in those sixty years?

JH: There were three siblings that lived there in the little house all those years. It was tied up into her estate when she died, so the house was not occupied, remained there unoccupied for fifteen years. One of the girls was married by this time and lived there, she and her husband and their one child. Anyway, it was finally put on the market for sale. The money that she left for keeping the place up expired, just ran out, all the money. Her nephew was in charge of it and through a bank. So the money ran out. They just went through the money—thousands of dollars—two of the boys. Anyway, when this trust was broken, and it was going to be put on the market for sale, this lady that lived there all of her adult life purchased it. There again, long story, make a book: it was bought and paid for by the Coca-Cola stock that she owned. Corra Harris had encouraged her to buy Coca-Cola stock. She was such a close friend to Asa G. Candler who was the Coca-Cola magnet and more so his brother who was [Methodist] Bishop Warren [Akin] Candler. Anyway, from the stock she bought the farm and started selling pieces of it off, the land. But she had one child, one boy, and he had just married. So she gave or he purchased the main house for him and his bride to live in.

TS: What was her name?

JH: Pat.

TS: And the boy?

JH: Her boy's name is George Smith, and she either gave the house to him after she purchased it or allowed him to live in it. They sold most all the furniture and kept a little, but sold it off in an auction.

TS: Then they're the ones that sold the valley also, across the road?

JH: That's the one. He's still there. He kept a good part of it. He went on to live in the main house, he and his wife, and they kind of restored it, but then didn't want to live in it.



They wanted a new house. They moved into a house across the road—not the one he’s living in now, but a smaller house. He lived in that until later, when he had in his mind to build his own house on the other end of the property. Anyway, it was sold two or three times before I purchased it. Each time the people tried to restore it and use it as they saw fit, and each time made it worse. Actually there were three families living in the place when I purchased it—or existing.

TS: It’s a big, sprawling place, so there’s plenty of room for three families.

JH: Well, there was room, but it was neglected all that time, even roofs leaking everywhere and no effort to stop the leaks and keep the place up.

TS: Do you think they didn’t have the money or didn’t have the interest?

JH: Both.

TS: So you were able to buy the property in January of ’96 then. Since that time you have done a lot of work up there to try to bring it back to the way it was; was that your goal?

JH: That’s right. What I did, I believe I’ve used this illustration once before: restoring it, putting it back together, was like trying to put together scrambled eggs. It was in terrible, terrible shape. But we worked at it a little at a time until the present time.

TS: I know Dr. Wes [Wesley K.] Wicker [KSU Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the KSU Foundation] and others have taped you walking around the property. I’m sure a lot of those details are in there. Why don’t we talk about what made you decide to donate the property to Kennesaw State? How did that come about?

JH: I guess there are many, many reasons I wanted to do it. I wanted to put it in the hands of someone that would continue restoring it, as much as possible, as it was originally. It just came about in talking with KSU, Wes, I guess, and my nephew, Joe Frank Head [KSU Assistant Vice President and Dean of Enrollment Services], and they were telling me what all they would do with it or had in mind. That’s just what I wanted done. One thing led to another. It was just what I wanted to do, and so I made no effort from there on to sell it.

TS: So your wish—and I guess this is in the papers that you signed—is that you want Kennesaw to preserve it the way you’ve preserved it, maintain it.

JH: Continue it on as near as possible as it was when Corra died. If they did not, of course, it would revert back to my estate.

TS: Kennesaw’s excited about it because it’s got a lot of educational potential with taking classes of students up there.

JH: That's what excited me about it, the possibility of helping with as many as possible their education.

TS: Students can learn about preservation, and they can learn about literature.

JH: Yes. The more time you spend up there observing the buildings and the land, as it is, the more you fall in love with it. You don't want it disturbed; you want it to stay there. It's like it was when the Indian bought it and built, by hand, his cabin there. That was the part that I wanted preserved for sure. By doing it all it was that much better. I've given out this information I'm sure to Wes and to [retired KSU history professor J. B.] Tate—if not you sure want it in the records—that the house was built from timber off of that place, all the wood, and all the rocks. She had a rock quarry across the road, and there are many tons of rocks there. All the rocks came off the place and the timber except for some patching up I had to do. I had to get old lumber from other sites. I tore down several old, old buildings to get just a few good pieces of timber to restore it. I didn't want to use new stuff; I wanted to use lumber as old as the house, and I did.

TS: So all the buildings up there are from natural resources from the area then, timber and rock and what-have-you.

JH: Right. She wanted plumbing in her house and electricity. No other house in the area had electricity or plumbing in the house.

TS: That early, right.

JH: So that again tells you the lady was ahead of her time, really ahead of her time.

TS: Right. I know we visited a little Delco battery room there.

JH: That's right. That was the source of her power. She started out there with one generator and had some problems with a blackout one night with a big party of people there. So she put in a second generator, so there's supposed to be two generators in it now.

TS: You mentioned J. B. Tate a few minutes ago. The first that I was aware of your interest in donating the property was through him.

JH: I was involved in the first Bartow History Center. I helped with its establishment. I also helped to establish the [Reverend Samuel Porter] Jones Museum [Roselawn in Cartersville, Georgia] and others, so I did have interest in it. I was a member of the Etowah Valley Historical Society. I attended many, many meetings with them and helped in every way that I could their interest in restoring property. I helped support with funds the removal of the old Vaughn cabin that had been built of logs. It was a log house, big, massive trees, but it had been covered over on the outside and been boarded up for many, many, many years. Very few people even knew it was a log house. But we learned about it and learned about the owner of it and contacted them, and they were willing to donate it to the Historical Society, if they were interested in moving it and

preserving it. I made a trip up there to see the place with Guy Parmenter. It was their decision, not mine—I was just in on it—to move the place, the cabin to a new site. We were looking it over trying to decide whether to move it intact, in one piece, or take it down. After the decision to move it, they decided to take it apart to move it and move it to Red Top Mountain [State Park]. I helped with that, supported them on restoring it and putting it back together and mainly putting a new shake roof on it. I'm just thinking of a few of these things. You wanted to know why my interest in preservation. Well, it's always been in preservation, I've always been in preserving old things. That gets to my antiques, you know.

TS: Absolutely. So you're doing a lot of stuff then with the Etowah Valley Historical Society.

JH: Well, I wouldn't say a lot of stuff but I did what I could.

TS: Right. I guess the people that you knew that were interested in historic preservation were in the Etowah Valley Historical Society. So you had mentioned to them your concern about this property?

JH: Yes. They were interested in it, but they could not purchase it.

TS: I know your nephew Joe has been a president of the Etowah Valley Historical Society.

JH: He knew my interest in it from the very beginning and also in other small things too.

TS: You mentioned In the Valley to them that you were interested, and so they took it from there, is that the way it works?

JH: Well, yes, I talked with them about it. I wanted to find out their interest in it. They were interested, I guess, but they didn't have the funds.

TS: It would be far beyond their means.

JH: They said it was beyond their means. I believe they could have kept it and done something with it, but maybe not.

TS: You think so? Maybe they could have.

JH: J. B. Tate in particular was interested. He hated to see it destroyed also. So he made a trip or two with me up there to look the place over. Also another project that I would still like to see is an old [Methodist] church over at Van Wert.

TS: Oh yes, sure.

JH: Well, J. B. and I made a few trips over there, and we crawled under that church and around, inspecting the beams and everything else. My feelings were—what experience

I've had—that we could take that apart in three pieces and move it. It was good lumber; everything was worth saving. He was interested and excited, but we couldn't get enough help or support. The City of Rockmart owned it. It was not in use; it was just there. There's an old, old cemetery, such an interesting cemetery to visit too. The city owned it and through J. B. and me and maybe some others, Rockmart donated that to Sam Jones.

TS: Roselawn?

JH: Roselawn. I was interested in having it moved there and put on the site of Sam Jones on the back side of the property. It was an ideal place, the perfect place to move it and restore it because this was Sam Jones' first church to pastor, his first one. Then we could bring it back to his home, that big place, and then to have his first church there in the back yard. To me, that just should have been done and should be done yet. What's happened to it since, I don't know, but we got the title to it, to Roselawn, and that's what I wanted to do was to move it back there and have it restored. I agreed to pay one-half. I even had a contractor to give me a bid on the cost of moving it and putting it right back together. I was going to pay half of it if they would raise the other half. Then we'd go from there as fast as we could to get funds. Now, this was before I bought the Corra Harris place. But I was so interested in having Jones's church put back there. It never had the real painted glasses outside.

TS: I've seen pictures of it.

JH: It didn't have those in that church, but I could see it by restoring it, putting it back with those glasses in there, everything, and having weddings there. See, that would have been an ideal spot.

TS: So you're talking pre-1996 that you're doing this?

JH: Yes.

TS: I get e-mails occasionally from the Polk County Historical Society that somebody over there is still working to preserve the church.

JH: Well, there are many different things. I don't know if there is a historical society in Nashville, Tennessee, or not, but after we failed to move it, they became interested in it and moving it to Nashville, Tennessee. They wanted to locate it right near the Ryman Auditorium. That was built for Sam Jones, Ryman Auditorium, so they would have had his first church there. So this was one of my projects in my mind that never developed. J. B. Tate was also interested in it, and he was disappointed like me. But it's still standing there, and it would still be the thing to do if they could move it.

TS: I know my wife Kathy has been over there several times to look at that church.

JH: The boards are still good and the big timbers, the framework. Everything is in form and is still there. I wasn't a man of means, all that much money, but I offered and wanted them to take some interest in it.

TS: Sure. So they just dropped the ball on their half of it?

JH: And why I don't know because it didn't cost that much back then. Then I picked up with this project and didn't do any more. I gave over 107 pieces into the Bartow History Museum. I've given quite a few pieces since then and about that many pieces to Roselawn itself, but they gave most of it back to me after I bought the other place and they didn't have any need for it. But there are still several pieces in there that belong to me. We could have done that and could have done some other things that I would have liked to have seen carried out in Bartow County.

TS: Well, In the Valley is going to be a great project.

JH: This is a project that I hope they will recognize the view that I had all along. If they could understand the feelings that I had toward getting this all back together and carry it out.

TS: Well, that's part of the purpose for this oral history project with you and the taping that's been done with you up at In the Valley.

JH: You never know, at my age, I'll be ninety in [November] 2009, and I'm not going to be here always. I realize that. That's why I pushed this project as much as I did early, and we should have gotten on it earlier. I could have gotten a lot of this done before I had this health failure myself, and we could have done a lot more with it if we could have gotten started earlier on it.

TS: Well, we're really grateful at Kennesaw for what you've done.

JH: I want to see what they will do to it now. I'm tossing that in for this reason, and maybe I shouldn't even bring it up, but it's in my mind, and my two children, my girls, they understand where I come from. They want to do what I want to do about this project. But I have in mind if things go fairly well and the time comes and they're moving on there enough to please me, I want to do some more at my death, to be used for that.

TS: To be used for the property up there?

JH: Yes. Of course, if something happens to me sooner, we won't get it done, but if I can continue to live on another year or two before anything happens and KSU is moving along enough and as much in my interest as possible, I want a lot of this done so the children will appreciate all of this.

TS: Sure.

JH: Since I'm not leaving them the cash that I could have gotten for that property, I want them to see that it is being put to a good use—the things that I wanted to do to begin with.

TS: Well, it's a legacy. I think everybody at Kennesaw is excited about it, and everything that I've heard, everybody wants to do exactly what you want done up there. So we just have to make sure that that's what happens. I hope you're around for a great many more years to see it happen.

JH: I hope so, and I hope I can help some more on it, but there are some others who are friends of mine, and Joe [Head] knows about it a lot, that are in a position, if we get this thing moving along, to help in a big way.

TS: That would be great.

JH: But I don't want to be pushing them until we see something done.

TS: Sure. Well, we'll just have to make sure that things get done. There's going to be one class taught up there beginning in January that Jennifer Dickey is going to do with the Public history students. I know a bunch of the people in the sciences are interested in the environmental issues and are interested in what can be done too with classes to study the ecology of that area. I'm excited about the possibility of having conferences up there about history and literature and the culture of north Georgia. I can envision a conference on all these friends that Corra Harris had like Margaret Mitchell and Martha Berry and so on.

JH: Right. Tom, I talked with two ladies last night, friends of mine, and both of them knew Corra Harris, one of them quite well. I have visited with them. They were both members of my garden club which I would like to redo up there.

TS: Well, let's just end at this point, and I just want to thank you very much for this interview.

JH: Thank you.

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