

Tate, Georgia Black History Collection
Scott McClure Interview
Conducted by James Newberry
June 23, 2021

Full Transcript

Interviewer: So, this is James Newberry and I'm here with Dr. Scott McClure on June 23rd, 2021, at the Kennesaw State University Center. And I appreciate you sitting down with me.

McClure: Not a problem.

Interviewer: Making a trip from Rome.

McClure: Yes. No problem.

Interviewer: Do you agree to this interview?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: All right. I appreciate it.

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: So, could you tell me your full name?

McClure: Full name is Carey Scott McClure.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

McClure: My birthday is 6/11/66, June 11th. Yep.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

McClure: I was actually born in Canton, Georgia at R.T. Jones Memorial, which I think it's changed names since then because when I came through, they had stopped delivering babies there in Jasper. Because most of, my sister and a lot of other relatives they were actually born in Jasper.

Interviewer: Because there was a hospital there in town.

McClure: Yes, there was a hospital there.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up in Pickens county?

McClure: I grew up in the city of Jasper. It was right down the street from the city jail. Walking distance to the elementary school that I attended. A matter of fact, I could stand on my front porch and see the back of the library of our school.

Interviewer: What was the street?

McClure: It was more main street.

Interviewer: So, you were on main street?

McClure: It was on main street. And then we moved I think I was about 12 years old to Birch street, which was still in the city, but it was closed, is called the Woodbridge Inn there in Jasper it was down in that area.

Interviewer: Was it a sort of mixed area or a predominantly Black area, white area?

McClure: It was mixed. It had a good mix. We were probably six Black families that lived in that area. So, it was a good mix.

Interviewer: What kind of house did you live in?

McClure: We lived in a, my dad built a three-bedroom regular wood framed house, two bath, garage carport with a lot of, it was a wooded lot. So, it had a small yard, but a lot of woods around us. That's what my dad liked.

Interviewer: And what were your parents' names?

McClure: My dad's name was Robert McClure and my mom's name was Kaylan McClure.

Interviewer: What was her maiden name?

McClure: She was a Mackey. Her main name was Mackey.

Interviewer: And what did your dad do for a living?

McClure: My dad worked for Lucky Aircraft. He was there for 35, 37 years. He retired from there, and then he did a lot of odd jobs there in town in Jasper. He would clean the drug store, the local drug store he had there was back in that time, it was called Rexall drug store, and then Jasper drug store. He also worked for the funeral home there in Jasper. At the time it was called Chapman funeral home, but now it's a Roper funeral home. So, he continued to work there as well. He worked for Lawson Chevrolet, just did a lot of little side jobs.

Interviewer: Do you know what he did at Lucky?

McClure: He was a trainer in his last few years there. He worked in management as a trainer.

Interviewer: And how did he go to work? Just drive a car or?

McClure: Well, it started out even before I was born. We had one vehicle and my mom would take him sometimes to Canton to meet some other guys that worked there at Canton, and then they would commute on to Marietta. Sometimes we would even drive all the way down. And you have to remember, this was before interstate 575. So, we were coming out of old highway five. We would leave and sometimes we would meet him at the intersection of highway 41 and highway five there, Marietta. He would get to ride that far, we'd pick him up, or she would drop him off there. So as time progressed, more people in the Jasper Tate area started working at Lucky. So, there was a guy that purchased the 15-passenger van and they started commuting from Jasper all the way to the Lucky. It was about, he had about 15 riders.

Interviewer: So, do you know how long that trip was before the interstate?

McClure: It was good hour and a half hour, hour, 35 minutes I remember because as a child you didn't pay much of attention, but I can recall it taken quite a while because my mom would get off her job at 3:30 and we would try to make it to pick up my dad by at least five o'clock.

Interviewer: So, do you have a sense, was he contend to make that trip? Would he have preferred a little closer? Do you know?

McClure: He was pretty much content, but then we tried to move closer in the area because I remember one time looking at a house in Woodstock and it just at the time it just didn't fit with what he was really wanting to do. And at the same time that we were looking there, more people were being employed, so he had more opportunities to drive or to carpool with some of the other guys in the area.

Interviewer: I see. And do you remember 575 coming in? Do you remember that?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: What sort of hubbub fanfare was there and had to change people's, there's the obvious, like it made it quicker.

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was there any change that you recall related to 575 being?

McClure: I can just remember some of the older people in the community thing look out here you're coming to Atlanta because they knew that things were about to change. They knew that the interstate was about to bring a lot of growth to the area and some of them were just set in their ways, they weren't really looking forward to it, but I think that once it happened, they saw it as a blessing rather than a curse.

Interviewer: And what did your mom do for a living?

McClure: My mom worked in manufacturing most of her life. She worked for a company that dyed yarn for carpet because in the Jasper area, Dalton area, there were a lot of carpet mills during that time. So, they supplied the carpet mills with the yard. Then she worked for a company called H.D. Lee. It made the Lee jeans. It was located there in Jasper. Then she worked for a company that is called the Jasper shoe plant. They made the Converse back way back when the Chuck Taylor's, that was their biggest product that they produced. So needless to say, I had a lot of Lee jeans and a lot of Chuck Taylor's wear.

Interviewer: Yeah, it was a benefit.

McClure: It was a benefit, yeah.

Interviewer: And how long did she work in manufacturing? At what point did she retire?

McClure: She did that for, she was probably in her late forties because she started having some health issues, health concerns, congestive heart failure. And she got to the point to where she had to come out of working just because of disability, so.

Interviewer: And in the area where you were growing up there are behind the Woodbridge and that's very close to downtown. Did you have any family members in the area you were living?

McClure: No family members in that particular area, but they were on the side of the west side of town. Had grandfather and uncles that lived there on south Richard street. I believe it was a name, but it was close to downtown as well.

Interviewer: And your grandfather, was this your mom's father or your dad's father?

McClure: He was my dad's father.

Interviewer: So how long had your family been in Pickens county? Do you know?

McClure: My dad said that they had been there quite a while, 1870s, somewhere around in there. On my dad's side, they were the McClure's and then they were related to a family it was called Patton. That was an older family that was in that area. Then my mom, she moved in with her dad and other siblings from LaFayette, Alabama, which is I think maybe just south of Birmingham, and they moved into the Tate area. So, a lot of my mom's family lived in the Tate area.

Interviewer: Do you know what brought your dad's family to the area? Do you know why they came to Pickens county?

McClure: I'm not real sure.

Interviewer: Your mom's?

McClure: My mom, I think just better opportunity. My cousin, my granddaddy, on my mom's side, he worked for Georgia Marble company. So, there was a lot of migrants they moved into that area to work at Georgia Marble. So, a lot of the men in that area, Tate in Jasper worked at Georgia Marble.

Interviewer: What was your mom's dad's name?

McClure: His name was white.

Interviewer: His last name?

McClure: Mackey.

Interviewer: And do you know what he did exactly at the company?

McClure: I'm not sure, but I just recall him talking about working in the Marble quarry. So, he really didn't go into a lot of details during that time. And then I was young, so I probably didn't talk to him much about it.

Interviewer: And where did they live in Tate?

McClure: They lived in an area is called Smokey Hollow. That's where my understanding was the guy that owned Georgia Marble, his name was Sam Tate. And he had built a lot of houses in that area called Smokey Hollow where a lot of the employees lived, their families. There was a church there that was provided, Mt. Calvary Baptist church. So, I just recall going through the area and there were houses on both sides of the road some were even up on like embankments, those type of homes. I don't recall any of them having indoor restrooms, indoor bathrooms, so.

Interviewer: Outhouses?

McClure: Yeah. No one had, I'm trying to think they may have had indoor plumbing, but not bathroom.

Interviewer: So, this is the '70's?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So, say for example, you're visiting your grandfather Mackey and you need to use the restroom it would be in an outhouse?

McClure: Well, he actually lived with us in Jasper. So, during the time that he was around, he lived with us in Jasper.

Interviewer: Okay. And the houses in Smokey Hollow, what did they look like?

McClure: They were like open concept. You may have had a big family room and then a little small kitchen area. And I remember most of the bedroom areas were large. You just had several different beds in that particular room, just based on how big your family was.

Interviewer: So, tell me about attending church there. You attended Mt. Calvary?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: And what are your earliest memories there at Mt. Calvary?

McClure: Just remember going there, we only met once a month because at that time we only had worship service on the third Sunday of every month. We would have Sunday school would start around 10 and then our morning worship would start around 11. And then once a year we'd have a revival that went from Monday to Friday. And then in the month of June, we would have VBS that would last from Monday to Friday also. So, it was pretty small congregation, but the thing that made that area unique was there was a church in Jasper. It was, name just slipped me. Then Mt. Calvary intake and then about three, four miles further down the road, there was a Pilgrim Baptist church. So basically, everyone went to the same church because the church in Jasper only met on first Sundays. The one at Tate again was third Sunday, then the one in Nelson met on fourth Sunday. So, there was an opportunity to go to church at least three times out of the month.

Interviewer: So, you would meet at Jasper then you would, y'all did this?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: Each one. And I know Calvary is Baptist and these other two were Baptist?

McClure: The other two were Baptist.

Interviewer: Okay. And then there was another church there that was AME or Methodist, Miracle Fellowship I believe?

McClure: It was more of a Pentecostal. It's a Pentecostal church.

Interviewer: So, Mt. Calvary and the others, talk to me about the services. What sort of mode of service, was it more traditional or what was it?

McClure: It was more of a traditional type service type worship. We had deacons that would lead what would call devotion service that was at the beginning of service. They would just sing songs, whether it was a spiritual or a hymn and then they would pray and then they would turn it over to the pastor and that time he would call the service to order to worship. And then I remember choir would sing at least two to three songs, then they did a song out of hymn books, or they were spiritual that they would sing and remembering taking up the offering of course. And then he would preach, the pastor would come and preach. And usually, we would get out of service around one in the

afternoon. So, it was pretty full day. And back then there was no mall to go to. So, it was not like you had to get out and be in a hurry to go anywhere. There's very few restaurants that were open on Sunday. So, you're going to get a good home cooked meal that day.

Interviewer: So, you come back to the house, and then would your parents start cooking then, or was something ready?

McClure: Oh yeah, it was already ready. My mom she was old school, either the night before, or she'd get up early that Sunday morning. Only thing she would have to cook maybe it would be a corn bread or something.

Interviewer: And what was the meat and what sort of effort?

McClure: Usually it was the old fateful chicken. Sometimes it would be roast beef. We always had some kind of vegetable, whether it was green beans, cabbage the tanner greens, the collard greens. I was not really that fond of vegetables at that time. I was more just the meat and bread.

Interviewer: So, do your parents keep a garden or did they go to the grocery store or supermarket?

McClure: My dad had a garden over his dad's house, the one that lived in Jasper. His dad lived in Jasper so he had a garden in his backyard that he would plant every year. And it was kind of community garden as well because whatever he would grow if he had an abundance, he shared with everyone in the community. And that's the way it was. Other people in the community had gardens as well. And there was a lot of sharing going on. During that time someone may have an abundance of corn and maybe it was nothing to show up at home and have either corn or tomato sitting on your porch where someone had dropped it off because they had more than they could eat.

Interviewer: At Mt. Calvary, can you tell me the pastor or pastors when you were there as a kid? Do you know their names?

McClure: The pastor that baptized me, his name was Sam Davie, and he lived in the Atlanta area. And I'm pretty sure he was by vocational, but I'm not sure what he did other than pastoring in our church. Then there was a Reverend Reynolds that was there, and during that time really didn't change pastors that often. And by the time Reynolds left, I had graduated from high school. So, I moved on.

Interviewer: And the revival you said was five days. I have my ideas of revival from my own family history, from things I've read, what was it over the course of five days? What happened?

McClure: They would have a guest minister that would come, and he would either stay with maybe someone in the church or he would drive, commute back and forth from a lot of times, he's from the Atlanta area may have been from Cartersville, just different areas of Georgia or the state. And we would just again, our deacons would start the worship service. They would have the devotion prayer. Then you'd either have Mt. Calvary choir

would sing, or maybe they would invite a church from Canton, Jasper or wherever to come and they would provide music for that night. And then the guest evangelists would preach, and I just remember usually it's about 9, 9:30 at night when we would leave those services.

Interviewer: It's full day?

McClure: Yeah. Well, it started around 7:00, 7:30.

Interviewer: So, do you remember other sort of prominent members of the church deacons or the community there in Tate?

McClure: Yeah. They were a lot of deacon's; mothers, we call them, the mothers of the church. They were the elderly women. We had I remember there was one her name was miss, her name just slipped my mind, but Justin, his family, they were real prominent in the church because his grandmother, Ms. Francis Davis, I remember her, she was a real vital part of his church there. Jackie Green, she was another lady that was important role there. Emmett Moore, he was one of deacons or the elders of the church there. Beck Howell, of course my dad, he was a deacon there in the later years as well.

Interviewer: And what about the Preston and Truman Roach?

McClure: Yeah. Because my dad actually then maybe 10 years formed the group with Preston and Truman. [crosstalk 00:21:08].

Interviewer: And would they sing just there or other places?

McClure: They sang there at the church and then other places as well. They became pretty popular, but then when they were hitting their doing their singing, I remember there was a lot of places they would sing like on during the holidays, nursing homes. I even think that there's a particular time when they may have sang for it was a local station in Ellijay. They were a part of that, and they were actually singing for those guys as well. So, they were being televised in the area.

Interviewer: Are we going beyond the church?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: What about Willie Mae Weaver?

McClure: Yeah. She was a big pillar in the community. I wish she was still alive. She had so much history and I'm not sure what happened to it. She knew a lot. She was a walking dictionary. She had all the history.

Interviewer: Do you remember Olin Collins?

McClure: He owned a little store there in what we call the Hollow, Smokey Hollow. He had a little store that he ran. I remember that store having Cokes, cookies and candy and he would have Cokes, a variety of different soft drinks for kids. Sometimes he would have various types of meat that he would store there, sometimes vegetables. Just a lot of different things.

Interviewer: So, this was when you were a kid?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you remember how late that went on? In your teenage years, how long did he live?

McClure: I can remember had to be late seventies, probably when I remember him not being there. And then someone else took over that establishment and they really didn't do too much with it other than sometimes we'd have, I would hear him talk about having block parties or dances in that area, so they would use it for that, so.

Interviewer: So that was pretty late that was still open?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, tell me, let's transition to your school years. Did you attend the Head Start there in Tate?

McClure: Yes. I started out at Head Start there.

Interviewer: What age were you?

McClure: I was probably four then, I don't remember getting a bus there. I think pretty sure my mom may have driven me there or we, or rode with someone. But I don't remember getting on the bus at that age going to Tate because it was in Tate there.

Interviewer: And were there classes, or was it more like daycare? How did that take place?

McClure: It was pretty much there were classes because I remember we learned as far as the ABCs, we did art, art was a big thing back then. Did a little social studies lesson and of course we had play time and I remember eating lunch there.

Interviewer: So that was a brand-new building at that point. And it had replaced the former school.

McClure: Yeah. I think it was Tri-City and that's where a lot of the Blacks or the majority or I guess all the Blacks went there to Tri-City.

Interviewer: So your sister who's older than you, how much older?

McClure: She's nine years older than me.

Interviewer: Okay. So she I know she had been in Tri-City and then gone to the white school during integration, right?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And what was that process like for her? Do you know?

McClure: She was in the second grade, I believe, when the school integrated. That's when she started going to Jasper elementary. And I really at that time she would talk about of course name calling, a lot of stairs, but I just recall even growing up, my mom told her that she was never inferior that she was just as good as anyone else and not to ever feel less than. So, she got a lot of encouragement from my mom, from my parents during that time as well. And so did I, as I started school as well.

Interviewer: So was it something that even though this was happening before you were born, did they, just recent history, you're just a few years past it. Was there still talk about, was it something that came up?

McClure: Yeah, it was even when I started school there was always that time when most of the classrooms, I may have been the only Black student in there and you're talking out of 20 kids you have one Black student in there. So, it came up at times, but race during that time was I just don't recall it being a huge issue because we were all pretty much on the same level. Now that I look back, we didn't have that much, but we had just as much as anyone else in the neighborhood. So really, it was just more about surviving from that aspect rather than race.

Interviewer: Did you notice people who even if it was not many of them or a few of them that had more money than other people?

McClure: There's some certain people in town that did, and their kids came to school, but they didn't hold it over your head or anything like that. We just knew because we had a couple of congressmen that lived in Jasper in our town. Some of the business owners that owned them car lights, things of that nature. But like I said, it was pretty much the playing field is pretty level.

Interviewer: And other than school and maybe the occasional occurrence there, were there any other experiences of like more open racism that you encountered?

McClure: I can remember as a child, there was a time when the word would get out that on Saturday the Klan is coming through and the Klan's going to be in town. And this was before we moved from the house I started growing up in, which was in the city of Jasper in town there. And I can remember as a little boy standing there on the sidewalk and actually seeing the Klan parade through the area, they were making a U-turn. So, they go back through town and just standing there liking and all, but at that particular time being young, it really didn't resonate as to what was taking place, what was going on. But I can just recall the Blacks in the area on that particular day, if they knew when they

were coming, they would stay out of harm's way. I just happened to be outside playing that day.

Interviewer: Did you talk to your parents about it? Did they say anything about it?

McClure: They did. And they said, "That's why we told you to stay in the house, we told you they were coming, so."

Interviewer: Did they have like advice or suggestions for when you went to school or when you went to, did you go to a white friend's house? Did they talk about anything like that?

McClure: I went to white friend's house. I had a lot of white friends, a lot of I can remember it was probably eighth grade when I started sleeping over at friend's house, but it was never an issue with their parents. We're all were pretty close. And that's one thing about being in that town in Jasper and Tate. It was a kind of close knit. We knew that there was a difference, but we just found a way to get along with each other, we tolerate each other. Even in school there was an occasional, you know, fights, but it was not anything that really was going to get any press, you could say.

Interviewer: Let's say you, I mean, how often did you leave, travel somewhere, Atlanta, somewhere else? How many times did you make trips out? Was that common?

McClure: Yeah, that was common because we had, my mom, she had, there was 13 of them in the family and majority of them lived on in Tate, but some live in Dahlonega, some lived in Rome, Carrollton. So, we were maybe at least once a month we would travel to see some of her sisters or brothers or other family members, that was the thing, pack up on either Saturday or Sunday. Yeah.

Interviewer: And did you notice, did anything strike you that this place is different because of this reason or that reason then than Jasper?

McClure: Well, we just knew just from talking to the elders that Ellijay, there was no Blacks in Ellijay. There was a one family my dad told me about they were the Roberts, they were in Ellijay that particular time. They lived right across the city limits somewhere in that area from between Jasper and Ellijay. But their kids had to come to school in Jasper because the schools in Ellijay were not integrated. So, they provided transportation for those kids to have to come all the way to Jasper to go to school. But we just knew there were certain areas that we shouldn't go to. There was Ellijay, Dawsonville. My mom had a sister and her family lived in Dahlonega. We knew it was okay to go to Dahlonega. There were just my dad always made sure that we knew where to go and be on the safe side.

Interviewer: I don't want to press you hard, but what was your expectation like if you had gone there? Was it just, yeah, just avoid that or did you expect that you would be confronted or just an unsafe place?

McClure: Yeah, it was just that expectation was there that you could be confronted, just be aware that this would happen. But you have to keep in mind that in school we were going to those areas to compete like football, basketball, baseball, whatever the case may have been, but the expectation was there. And my dad always made sure that we understood, and we knew that and even the elders in the community for our safety.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So, for big community events like the July 4th event, that's a really big tradition in Pickens. Is that something that your family took part in?

McClure: Yeah. It was always a big thing because they would block downtown Jasper and they would have carnival rides there. So, we all would go and participate in that. They'd have a big barbecue somewhere and then at night they would have a big dance, but we always look forward to that because we knew what was going to happen the 4th of July.

Interviewer: So, you were at Head Start and then you went to Jasper elementary?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And do you recall any teachers or anyone that taught there?

McClure: I remember when I started at Jasper, I started in kindergarten there. My kindergarten teachers were real nice. Miss Satterfield and I see I'm going to remember these teachers. I just remember Miss Satterfield being a teacher there. Mr. Weeks was the principal, Jim Weeks, he was our principal. And I just remember there was only one Black teacher Miss Powell that was at Jasper. She taught first grade and I had her for first grade and she was the only teacher that called me by my first name. I go by Scott, but Carey is my first name. And there was a debate. She told me, I said, "My name is Scott." She didn't know. She said, "Your momma named you Carey. And that's what I'm going to call you." So, she was the only teacher that ever called me that, but the other teachers that we had like Miss Shope, Miss Griffeth, that was one of the teachers. Mr. Evans had a lot of male teachers back then as well, but they never treated me or anyone else any different. The expectation was to get the best out of us to learn, to grow. They wanted to see us do well.

Interviewer: And how many grades in the elementary school?

McClure: We went from kindergarten to seventh grade.

Interviewer: Okay. So directly there to high school?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, no junior high or middle school?

McClure: No. Because then once we graduated or we left seventh grade, then that's when we went to the high school. And so, we started high school in the eighth grade

Interviewer: And at high school, what kind of student were you?

McClure: I was an average student. I could have been above average, but I didn't push myself because school was always easy to me, but I just did not apply myself that well. I was a B student, maybe get occasional C, but the rest of the time is A's and B's so, but I ended up being a B student and science and social studies was my strongest subjects. So, I always excelled at those.

Interviewer: What were your parents' approach to your school life, report cards?

McClure: That I would finish that I would do better. Because my mom knew I was a better student than what my grades often displayed. She said, "You're not even trying, you're just going through the motions." They were both real big on education, quitting was never an option at any point in time. My junior year I had reached all my credit hours for high school and going into my senior year I got bored with school because really there was nothing for me to do. I played football, so that was good for me. But probably about a month after we started my senior year, I told my mom, I said, "I need to change, I need to do something." So, I ended up going to the technical school that's there. I think they've renamed it now. It's mountain side or something, but I ended up doing kind of like a dual enrollment. So, I went to the tech school and took up electronics.

Interviewer: Did you expect to go to college?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: And so, this was something to do that senior year, get maybe some early credits?

McClure: Yeah. To survive, to keep from dropping out potentially because I was just so fed up with high school by then.

Interviewer: Did you have classmates who were dropping out?

McClure: Yes. We had had some that our junior year that they lived in the rural area of Jasper like Ludville out in that area, Hill City. And for whatever reason they just dropped off the scene, but always in our family like I said, my mom and dad, the expectation was get an education at all costs, whatever it takes, you're going to get an education. So, I did the technical school and took up electronics and that was good for me because it was challenging. So, I was not bored. So, I would go to technical school all day and then I would go to the high school for football and for other sports.

Interviewer: So, you were completely occupied, you had set along all day?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, tell me about your graduation and what you did after high school.

McClure: We graduated that was, I had a big whopping 129 of us, I think. It was a big class. Huge class. So, there was about 129 that also graduated and believe it or not it was only two Blacks in my graduating class. Me and one other guy who's since deceased now.

Interviewer: No girls?

McClure: No girls.

Interviewer: Wow. Do you have the sense of the class before you and the class after you went, there were more Black students?

McClure: It wasn't much more if any because thinking the class after me may have had four or five, but my particular class on that, there was only two of them. So that was different. People would look at my yearbook and they're like, "Where are the Blacks?" I was like, "Well, it is what it is, it's just the day in time we were living in, so." But it wasn't a big thing, no one really called it out or no one ever questioned it. It was just happening. Just the way it was. So well, I remember we graduated on a Friday night on the football field.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you know, I'm going to ask you about such a small number. Were...Do you know of people leaving Pickens county for Marietta or Atlanta or other places at any time moving for more opportunity? Your dad went to Lucky to work every day. Were there others who just moved closer? So, the number of Black residents sort of dwindled next to the number of white residence?

McClure: During that particular time, it didn't happen. It wasn't a mad migration. It probably started in the '80's. I graduated in 84, so it probably started later '80's when opportunities started becoming available, people started leaving the area. People would, as a kids graduated from the high school there then they would see no reason to stay, and they would just move on.

Interviewer: Do you know to what places? Do you know where they went?

McClure: Mostly in Atlanta, Marietta. That's where I remember a lot of them moving to. It's very rare that you hear someone moving out of state from that area.

Interviewer: Was it any family members or just friends of y'all's?

McClure: A little bit of both.

Interviewer: Did your parents stay in Pickens?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Are they living?

McClure: No. They are both deceased.

Interviewer: Okay. So, they stayed there until they passed away?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And let's move on to college. Where did you start?

McClure: I started out in college in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. It's a college named Chowan college and I played football there for two years.

Interviewer: Was that why you chose to go? Was it football?

McClure: Yeah. It was kind of football opened the door for me. So, I chose that school. It's about an eight-hour drive, a little eight-hour commute. So, I only came home like Christmas, maybe spring break, rest of the time I would stay there. Thanksgiving, I stayed in the dorm, in the infirmary there because we had to get out of the dorm. So, what I did after that first year, I made friends with a guy from Greensboro, North Carolina. So, I went home with him for Thanksgiving. And for maybe the long weekend or something.

Interviewer: What was the change like going from Pickens to is Chowan in a big city or how big is Murfreesboro?

McClure: Murfreesboro is a small town, probably about the size of a Rome, maybe less than that. Maybe about 50,000 or maybe less. It's right on the coast. So, it was real close to Virginia Beach. It was kind of tucked away in the corner up there in North Carolina. Our football team, it was a junior college starting out, now it's a four-year school, but starting out when I was there, it was a junior college. So, we played a lot of other small colleges of that notable size.

Interviewer: It's a Baptist college?

McClure: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, what was the environment like? Was it more conservative or were you able to be a college student?

McClure: You were able to be a college student. [laughs] Even though it was Baptist, was it a dry campus? No. Unfortunately not in practice. And I remember my first class I had was called keyboarding typing. So here I am, a big football player sitting in a keyboarding class at eight o'clock in the morning, you're in a typewriter. So, I had to take, that was one of my classes. And because it was Baptist when you had to take religion classes. So, I had to take intro to old Testament and new Testament. There may have been a theology class we had to take or church history. The class that we had to take is basically required of every student that went there. We had to go to chapel.

Interviewer: Regularly?

McClure: No. Every Wednesday we had to go to chapel.

Interviewer: Was it mostly white or, or mixed?

McClure: It was mixed. And that was the first time I had been exposed to students who looked like me. It had many students at that particular time. So according to them, they could tell that I was at a predominantly white school.

Interviewer: That you had been?

McClure: Yeah, that I had been. Yeah.

Interviewer: Why?

McClure: I think it was just maybe the way I talk, representing myself. They could tell.

Interviewer: What did they say?

McClure: "Hey though, you went to all white schools, but you don't understand what we're talking about or dealing with." And I really hadn't, really hadn't crossed my mind that there was a difference like that, but yeah, I could see what they were saying to some point, to some space.

Interviewer: Did you associate more with your Black classmates or were you just friends with everybody?

McClure: I was friends with everyone. It was a lot of my teammates of course we were good friends, a lot of my teammates, but then I did have some friends outside of being teammates because I was pretty versatile in the music also. I can relate to Black music. I love all different forms, all different genres of music. So that with the Black friends, they're like, "How do you know that song." It's like, "Well, you got to remember." Because in Jasper, we grew up country music a lot, so.

Interviewer: Why? And so, in Jasper, was it purely country or were there other genres?

McClure: There were other genres as well because we picked up nicely rock out of Atlanta. Then of course, we had the country station as they say. So, to me it was a good balance, well rounded because I knew a little bit of everything.

Interviewer: Well, you got an associate's degree there?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: And then what did you do after completing that degree?

McClure: Once I completed that degree, I came home. That summer was going to transfer to Tennessee state. And then I had a car accident while I was during that summer. And that kind of the doctor told me I couldn't play football anymore. So, because I was going to Tennessee state to play football, continue to play football. So, when I told my mom

what the doctor said, she said, oh, well, she said, "You're going to complete your education. You're going to finish school." So, at that time I applied at Georgia Southern, and Berry and I was accepted to both, but I chose to go to Berry because I'd been away from home, that eight hour commute. And then when I found out Georgia Southern was another six hours, I'm thinking now, really don't want to put my parents through that again and wouldn't be too cool. So, I ended up going to Berry and that proved to be the best choice for me.

Interviewer: Why is that?

McClure: Berry is such a small school with a good tradition the morals and values that are taught there, the work study program that's there. Berry was good, has a good foundation that was laying for me and then, because who would have known few years later, I would be starting to become a minister, called to be a minister. So, it was good to be there at Berry for that as well.

Interviewer: Where did that calling come from?

McClure: Well, there was a lot of people in the community. A lot of older people that saw it at a young age. Because I had, I was not squeaky clean, but I didn't really follow the crowd. Kids were going in to do something that I knew it was bad, I kind of drifted away, I'd go home. And then being raised in the church there and having such strong parents that were in the faith spend a lot of time doing various things in the church. So, I was being called on to read scripture or to pray or to recite Bible verses or to help some capacity in the church. So, a lot of them, a couple of them said, you're going to be a preacher one day. And I'm like, "Yeah, right. Sure. Okay."

Interviewer: And it doesn't seem like a lot of children's sort of think that when you were young.

McClure: I was sitting in a classroom one day and said, "I think I would be a preacher when I get older." That's the furthest thing from my thought, from my mind, but at Berry, I really didn't think that much about it either during that particular time.

Interviewer: What were you studying?

McClure: I was an industrial technology major, so it was more like industrial manufacturing. So, I did a lot of drafting, design. There I was an art minor, so I did painting, things like that. Because at Berry, that particular time you had to have a major and a minor. So, I knew math was one of my weaknesses, so I didn't go the business route because I knew I couldn't make it in account. I didn't even try; I didn't even attempt it. So, I chose to be an art minor, so my minor was in art because I can do pencil drawings pretty good. So, I was able to survive being an art minor. So that was good. I graduated in '89 from Berry, but I'd met my wife in the process during that time. And we got married in November of '89 and then I graduated in that December of '89.

Interviewer: And what did you do after graduation?

McClure: And after that I just searched around for jobs. Did little odd jobs here and there. And probably '92 is when I started working for a Japanese company in Rome. And it was a new company that just moved in. They made parts for a heavy equipment machinery like the excavators, wheel loader, forklift. They were steel manufacturing. So, I worked for them for about 24 years.

Interviewer: What did you do?

McClure: I was a manufacturing supervisor with them. Started out working in the shipping department and then just worked my way up.

Interviewer: Do you think you would have stayed in Rome if you hadn't gotten that job? Were you already like, "I like this place, I'll look for a job here."?

McClure: Well, I've been coming to Rome all my life because my mom had a brother who lived there. And one thing about Rome, it had that small town atmosphere like Jasper, it was bigger than Jasper, but still knew people. You could still walk down the street or going to a restaurant or something. And you'd actually know people. People wouldn't know you; they had that family atmosphere. And I tried to find jobs outside of Rome, but nothing ever really turned up. And my wife, she was working there though, a bank. So, she's pretty much established there because she went to work right out of high school. So, at that time, she'd been there about five years, four years at that bank. So, we were looking at that and things were going well with her on her job. But I was just looking for something to manufacturing. So that came about because at that particular time Rome had, GE was a big manufacturer there in Rome. They had a couple textile companies there, but during that time, no one was really hiring. So then shortly after I graduated, GE moved to Mexico, so they shut that place down. So, it was good I didn't get a job.

Interviewer: And then when did you go to seminary?

McClure: Went to seminary. Let's see, that was in, I started there in '92, probably '95 because between 92 and 95, I was wrestling with my calling to minister to preach. And I finally accepted that, answered that calling and started preaching at the church that I'm pastoring now, my wife's home church. So, she was already a member there and her mother's a member, their sister, their families. So, it was '95 when I started seminary, and I'd work full-time go to seminary, full-time. That was every Monday and Tuesday night from six to 9:30, 10 o'clock. So, it was full-time. And then we started having kids. We were probably married about eight years before we started having a family.

Interviewer: So, they are grown children then now?

McClure: We have two there though, just we have one that she'll be graduating in May and then one that graduated from here [Kennesaw State University]. So, then I signed as a senior.

Interviewer: And the church that you're still pastor?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: So that's been gosh, almost 25 years.

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: How would you compare it to Mt. Calvary?

McClure: It's much like Mt. Calvary. It's traditional, a lot about a worship style is about the same. We got the deacons that start out devotion, choirs that clean. So, it's basically the same format that I'm accustomed to, that I grew up with. And it's by the same scale as far as people and say it's a family church as well like Mt. Calvary. Well, much like Mt. Calvary. Everyone at Mt. Calvary for the most part or intertwine, they were related some kind of way. So that's why a lot of people have really had to move away from the area because they're cousins.

Interviewer: Everybody's always checking up on you.

McClure: Yeah. So, at Flatrock, same way. Everyone in that church is pretty much related to each other some way. Because it was sitting in an area also that was a predominantly Black area of Rome back in the days, because, so that church is about 151, 2 years old started in 1870.

Interviewer: So, it has quite a history?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Or was it started by people who've been enslaved?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: So how long do you think you will continue to be passed for there? It's a quarter of a century now.

McClure: Yeah. I'm looking at let's see, I'm 55 now.

Interviewer: You are young, is that something that you would continue doing as long as you're able?

McClure: I think so. My wife and I, we talked about it and then as long as they still have a desire then we'll be there far as that goes.

Interviewer: And you've traveled pretty widely, right?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what reason for traveling?

McClure: When I worked for the Japanese company I went to Japan for some time because that's where our parent company he was at. We have a parent company there and our sister

companies were there. So, I went and visited those companies and toured around there. And then during the time that I was there, we had two startups in Mexico, had one in Reynosa. So, I went to Reynosa when we started that plant, that facility, then that one shut down. And then probably within a few years we opened up another company in Monterrey. So went to Monterrey for some time there. And so, we did that, most of my travel during that time was business, but then we've been on a lot of vacations cruises, so we've been around the Caribbean a lot.

Interviewer: So, to sort of finish up, I want to ask you some questions about Pickens county today. You live in Rome, I know your parents have passed as you said, but your sister still lives there.

McClure: Yeah, she's still there.

Interviewer: So, is it mostly her that brings you back when you go?

McClure: Yes. And my sister, she lived in this area for a long time. She lived in because when I was in elementary school, I remember once after she graduated, she stayed in Jasper about a year or two. Then she moved down to this area. So, she worked in this area a lot. She lived down here because it was always a big thing on the weekend to be able to come and stay with her, spend time down here with her in the big city at that time. So, and she moved back probably trying to remember. She would have to tell you when she moved back to Jasper, but because like I said, she lived down here for a long time.

Interviewer: And this is Karen McClure Benson?

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Because we've referenced her now multiple times. So how often do you return to Pickens today?

McClure: Well, my dad just recently died in November, so I would try to make it twice every couple months or so, or once a month, just depending on what was happening, what was going on, how he was doing or things of that nature. But like I said, that's what brings me back now. I just want to visit her, and I still have some other family members that lived there in Tate area.

Interviewer: Does your sister live in your parents' home?

McClure: No, she lives in her own home. Her and her husband purchased the home when they because they lived with my parents for a little while. And then they purchased their own home.

Interviewer: So, the area where your parents' home, is it still there?

McClure: Yes.

Interviewer: And are some of the other homes or are they all still there that little area where you grew up?

McClure: The house I grew up in is not there anymore. It's it was bought out by... there was a tire company that was back that it backed up to. So once my dad sold they moved out, they bought it from him and then they demolished the house so they could expand their tire business.

Interviewer: Aside from that, what's going on? What other changes have you seen in the area?

McClure: I've seen tremendous change in growth in Jasper. It went from two little grocery stores to Walmart, all the major chains and everything in there. Home Depot, Walmart all the fast-food chains because we only had, you had an option of what? Speed burger let's there. And I remember when the dairy queen came, so that was pretty much your only options other than there was a few mom-and-pop shops, downtown Jasper. But now, you got everything there.

Interviewer: Was that from your 70's and 80's, was that main street always occupied with businesses or were there times when it was dormant?

McClure: It's pretty much held its own, it's been able to hold his own because I remember there's always a couple of drug stores in town, furniture stores. The paper and The Progress was there in town. We had the banks, back in the day it was task go, which was dry goods, there was another store there, a couple of restaurants. And even before that, my dad used to tell me about, there was a hotel or motel on main street at one particular time.

Interviewer: So, with the big box stores now, the older folks were right about 575.

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's like the edge of the suburbs for Metro area.

McClure: Yeah. It started once that interstate opened up, it just started pushing its way because I remember in Tate and Jasper, we were thinking, we were going to Canton or something big because that was the next biggest city to us compared to being in the Jasper. So, because I remember now people are doing this online shopping. It's really nothing new because in Jasper, all we had was Sears, you got the Big Sears catalog and you flipped through it, and you order something out of Sears or Sears had a little pick-up store there in Jasper. So, they would deliver your items to that series pickup store and he'd go to there and pick it up.

Interviewer: So, kind of like a district, Amazon distribution?

McClure: Yeah. So, there's really nothing new.

Interviewer: Well before we finish up, are there any other stories of Pickens or your childhood that you'd like to share?

McClure: I think, and I know you mentioned one time about the log cabin?

Interviewer: Yes.

McClure: Yeah. I remember when they relocated that log cabin to where the elementary school was and there was a guy, he was the assistant principal, his name was Tom Quinton.

Interviewer: Talk about him.

McClure: He put in a lot of time there, he was if I ever had a BFF, it would have been Mr. Quinton because he just did a lot of time with. Because like I said, at that particular time, we didn't live that far from the school. So, a lot of times I would just walk through the woods to the school and Mr. Quinton was always there because he dealt with art. He painted pottery, just different things like that. So, I spend a lot of time with him just shadowing him and he was a wealth of knowledge. He was very well versed in those books about bear rabbit and bear fox, was it uncle Toms?

Interviewer: Uncle Remus?

McClure: Yeah. Uncle Remus. I remember he would come and read at our class. We always looked forward to him coming and reading to the class because he would always read one of those fables, one of those stories from bear flag, bear, and he would get in character.

Interviewer: I've heard some recordings of his voice. Is that sort of fake accent?

McClure: Yeah. And like I said, I just remember spending a lot of time with him afterschool as well. So not just during school, but even after school because he was the assistant principal. But I remember a lot of the stories that he would tell, and we just had a lot of good times with him.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that.

McClure: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, if there's nothing else, I think we'll conclude there.

McClure: All right.