

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 67

FOR THE CITY OF ACWORTH, GEORGIA

INTERVIEW WITH C. OLAN MC CRAY

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

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Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 67
Interview with C. Olan McCray
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott
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The City of Acworth paid for the transcription of this oral history, selected the interviewee, and arranged for the interview to be conducted. Amy Lowry, the City's liaison to the preservation commission, also participated.

THOMAS SCOTT: Mr. McCray, I wonder if we could start with you telling us when you were born and where you were born?

OLAN McCRAY: I was born in Cherokee-Cobb County, on the line. I don't know exactly which side of the line. The house that I lived in sat right on the line. That's where the golf course is on Acworth-Cherokee Road.

AMY LOWRY: Centennial Golf Course?

OM: I guess that's it.

TS: I'm not familiar with that golf course. But at any rate, it's right in the northwest part of Cobb and not too far away from here.

OM: Well, the golf course touches Cobb County, and then the rest of it's in Cherokee. That's where I was born at August 15, 1921.

TS: Was that a farm at that time?

OM: My grandfather owned all that property there where the golf course is.

TS: So you grew up on a farm.

OM: Well, at the beginning of my life we moved a lot to different places. My dad left farming and went to the cotton mills to work. He helped build the Acworth Mills which was Clark Thread Company, and now it's, what's the name of the printing. . . ?

AL: Seiz.

OM: Seiz Printing Company. He helped do the construction work on that building.

TS: So he helped do the construction work on the plant?

OM: Yes. On the building.

TS: For the mill?

OM: For the mill and then he went to work inside the mill. He worked there up till in his seventies just before Coats & Clark bought the Acworth Mills. I went to work there when I was fourteen years old.

TS: Is that right? So that would be around 1935.

OM: Yes. But before that, when we left the farm out there we lived in several places here in Acworth. The first place I can remember we lived was where the Jones Tire Shop sits here on Main Street. There was a high hill above the railroad . . .

TS: Jones Tire Shop.

OM: Jones Tire Shop. And there was a Mr. Stokley, a realtor. He had a store here. He was the one who was in charge of the house. The house belonged to a black man in Atlanta. We never saw him. He just came up and helped Mr. Stokley.

TS: But Mr. Stokley was the realtor or whatever--the agent?

OM: The agent.

TS: Did you know who the man was who actually owned the house?

OM: I can't remember. If we did I don't remember ever meeting him or hearing anything about him except they just told us he was a black man and owned some property here in town.

TS: That's interesting.

OM: And we lived there when 41 Highway was paved through here; it was a dirt road when we moved there. And then after that we moved into the mill village. The house still sits on, I guess it's, what's the name of the street right in front of Day's Chevrolet?

AL: Albany?

OM: Thomasville Drive. That's where we lived. Right now it has a sign on it, Housekeepers. That's where we lived up until I was eight years old.

TS: The house that you lived in has a sign on it now.

OM: It was a sign on it now.

AL: Maid My Day Housekeepers.

OM: "Maid My Day", that's it. And at that time there wasn't any school in Acworth except for Acworth School over here. My sister was four years older than me, and she started to school at Acworth. In the meantime, they built Eli Whitney School, which now stands on the north end. And in the building of that school Cobb County or the State--I don't remember what was in charge at that time--they started us going to school at five years old. We went in a two-room house there in the mill village, and Ms. Rachel Harper was the teacher. Her residence is where Ms. Noland is out at the end of the street here.

TS: Where Ms. Noland is out at the end of . . .

OM: Right beside . . .

AL: On Carnes Street?

OM: Carnes Street.

AL: Right beside the dentist down here.

TS: So that's where your teacher lived.

OM: That was Mr. Stokley's daughter.

TS: I see. Is it the same house? Is the house still standing that she lived in?

OM: Yes. Been restored in the last year or two years, beautiful.

TS: So this is at that Eli Whitney School? Is that the only school you attended here?

OM: Yes, sir. We moved from that two room house over there . . . there was a church, Shady Grove Church sitting right where the time saver has been removed from, it sat right there on the bank. And they needed this house in the village for one of the workers to move in; so they moved us in this church until they finished Eli Whitney and then we moved to Eli Whitney School.

TS: So the school actually opened in a house, then moved to Shady Grove Church--Baptist Church?

OM: Yes, sir. It was a universal church at that time.

TS: Oh, was it Universalist?

OM: I think that's what they called it, Community Universal Church, I believe was the name of it. Because it was used by all denominations.

TS: Oh, oh, not Universalist but for everybody.

OM: Yes. And then we went to school there and then we moved down to Eli Whitney. At that time the school had gotten so large that they needed a second teacher so Ms. Louise Pitner, which was Ms. Louise Corley at that time . . .

TS: Before she got married. She was a Corley before she married a Pitner.

OM: Yes. And she still resides here, her and her daughter.

TS: She still lives here?

OM: Yes. And there was three rooms down there at that school house; they moved Ms. Rachel out of this church down to that school house and then they put Ms. Corley in the back room and then Ms. Kemp was a substitute teacher in the third room or different . . .

TS: K-E-M-P?

OM: Yes. And her family, some of them's still here. Willie B. Kemp, the druggist.

TS: Willie B.?

OM: Willie B. Her husband's brother. She was just a temporary teacher when someone would be out or if she'd have extra classes.

TS: Okay, now who was Willie B.?

OM: Willie B. was just related to her. He still resides here and had a business here, Acworth Pharmacy was his business for years.

TS: I see. So you had three teachers in the school.

OM: My brother was four years younger than me; he went to Ms. Kemp, I went to Ms. Corley, and my sister went to, she used the name . . . her first name, Miss Rachel. At that time, she was married to James McEver, and then after he passed away she married Otis Harper. She lived up till two or three years ago right here in this big house we were talking about on the corner.

TS: Now, McEver, is that M-c-E-V-E-R?

OM: I believe it is. Well, McEver Road, that's their home place.

TS: So how many grades did you have in that school?

OM: I believe it was up to the seventh grade. Because my sister had to come back down there and stay and then she started at Acworth School after that.

TS: Okay. And of course Acworth School went through high school.

OM: Yes. But I think eleventh grade was high school. We didn't have twelfth grade best I can remember. Which any of that didn't interest me because I didn't . . . [chuckle]

TS: Okay, but you had three teachers and seven grades. How did that work?

OM: First, second, and third was in one room; fifth, sixth and seventh was in one room; and eighth, ninth and eleventh, they had . . .

TS: So the Eli Whitney School went through eleventh?

OM: No, it went through seventh, I believe. I can't remember exactly that.

TS: But each teacher had more than one grade.

OM: Oh, yes. And what of us that could, we had a little place that we sat in the school room and some of us that wanted to, and wasn't involved in something else, we'd listen at the other classes. Before the year was out we'd get to move up a class, because we'd learned and our teacher would give us the chance to take the test to see if we would qualify.

TS: So you might be able to skip a grade?

OM: You could skip a half a grade and then at the end of the term you could go on to the next grade.

TS: Did you ever do that, skipping?

OM: No, sir. I didn't get to do that. I had other things on my mind. [chuckle]

TS: I see. Now, were all the students in the Eli Whitney School from the families that worked in the mill?

OM: Most of them was.

TS: But not all?

OM: Not all. The president of the mill, Mr. John Pope was superintendent of the school down there at the time.

TS: Pope?

OM: P-O-P-E. And his family is still here. Mary Sue Gibson, that's his granddaughter.

TS: Mary Sue Gibson is. . . ?

OM: Mr. Pope's granddaughter. And most of them, there might have been one or two that made the transfer from a school somewhere to finish out a term. I don't recall how they did that, but I can remember some of them that didn't live in the mill village that went to school there. Very few of them are still living that went to school there.

TS: Was the Eli Whitney School created by the mill? Did they put up the money to build the building?

OM: I think they built the building and Cobb County . . . or maybe the state, Cobb County wasn't in the schools at the time, I don't believe; I believe the state paid the teachers, because I'd heard Ms. Pitner and Ms. Harper talk about they'd go three and four months without a check. The county wouldn't pay them. It was whenever they wanted to, I guess. They didn't make much money.

TS: Well, it's still true that most teacher's salaries come from the state and then there's a county supplement hopefully.

OM: But the mill kept up the school and all that, the employees did that.

TS: Was it a good school, do you think?

OM: I think it was the best. [laughter] I didn't attend school but four years, and then I went to work in the cotton mill. We moved from the mill village out to where the golf course is again, right above it on Woodstock-Cherokee Road. We moved out there when I was nine years old, and when I was fourteen I went to work in the cotton mill. My father was second to the superintendent of the cotton mill at that time. I went in the mill and went to work at that time. You had to work six weeks for nothing till you got the experience before you could hold down a job. And when my six-week tenure was out they put me to sweeping the floors; I learned to sweep the floors. [laughter] And then when there was an opening in the mill you could move from the floor sweeper on over. But that's where they had to start you at, most everybody swept floors in the cotton mill.

TS: Okay, so you started to school when you were five and you were through with school by the time you were nine.

OM: Well, through my part of it; my dad tried to get me to go on through school. I just went through fourth grade, that's as far as I went.

TS: By that time you had moved back out to the farm.

OM: That's when we moved back out somewhere. I guess it was, I may have my dates mixed up, but it's somewhere around '36 or '37 when we moved back to the farm.

TS: Oh, okay, so in '37--you were born in '21--so you would have been fifteen or sixteen years old.

OM: Sixteen years old. But I went to work in the cotton mill when I was fourteen. I changed my age, I stepped it back one year . . .

TS: Told them that you were fifteen?

OM: I told them I was fifteen and they let me go to work in the mill. You couldn't work there unless you was fifteen. I couldn't work for my dad because he wouldn't tell a story for me, and I went to work for the superintendent in the other department of the mill telling them I was fifteen years old.

TS: Well, now, there's a few missing years here it seems like.

OM: Yes, I can't get them all exactly without sitting down and working them out. There's just two or three years.

TS: Well, let me just ask you: did you work anywhere before you worked in the mill?

OM: There was a farm where Dunn Shopping Center is down here on the right, where Sav-a-lot is.

AL: It's South Acworth Shopping Center.

OM: There was a huge farm there, and they let us children work there back when they had a big potato farm. They plowed those potatoes, and they'd give us children five cents an hour to pick up those potatoes. If you worked hard . . . if you didn't work hard you didn't get to work but the one day and you didn't get to come back.

TS: Whose farm was it?

OM: I believe it was either Mr. Tippins or Mr. Nations, I don't remember which one. They both lived in that area.

TS: Tippins or Nations.

OM: Frank Nations or Roy Tippins, Sr. I don't remember which one it was, but they both lived in that area. All of that behind Day's Chevrolet all the way back to Park Street was a farm. And the only two houses that was down there was the one at the corner of Rockdale, I don't know what the name of the street, I can't think of it, it comes in

there by the Park Street Baptist Church. What's the name of that street?

AL: Is that Robinson?

OM: It's over on the next street. Gibson or something like that. Rayburn or Gibson one, I don't know which.

AL: Rayburn comes into Park, it's at the back.

TS: Rayburn?

OM: Rayburn Street. And it's still Rayburn Street.

TS: How do you spell Rayburn?

OM: R-A-Y-B-U-R-N. And that house there was where Mr. Tippins lived. Then the one directly behind Day's Chevrolet that was there--it's been moved out behind Day's Chevrolet now--but Mr. Tippins lived in that house right there on the corner. And that was where we lived over in the mill village, right, that was directly in front of it. And where Day's Chevrolet is now down to in front of Eli Whitney School, I think, and that's where the Acworth ballpark was. My dad played ball there. He was a pitcher in the cotton mill ball team. They went everywhere, and they'd ride in an old flatbed truck on Saturdays and go to different places and play different mills that had teams. That's the way they traveled.

TS: Did they have a good team?

OM: Oh, they had a good team. They didn't get trophies back then but they did get a plaque.

TS: Did you ever play on the team?

OM: No, I never did get to play. I was too young for that.

TS: Now, your father was superintendent of the whole mill?

OM: He was what they called the boss weaver; that was just over the weave room, superintendent over the weave room.

TS: Right. How did he learn to be a weaver?

OM: Well, you spend six weeks in that mill . . .

TS: Learned on the job.

OM: Learned on the job. I don't know whether he got paid for training or he got to go to work just because he'd been in the construction of the building. Now, there had been a thread mill there before they put the weave room on, and he went to work in this weave room when he helped get through building it.

TS: So when you said that he was involved in the construction, was it the original mill?

OM: No, it was the weave room which was the larger half of the mill. And they made a cloth. They called it tobacco cloth. It was a thin net like a screen. They carried it out west or wherever they had the big tobacco farms, and they put it over the tobacco to keep bugs from damaging it.

TS: And that was a major product?

OM: Yes, and just before the War or during the war they went to make a heavy sheeting they called Osnaburg. It was made out of such a cheap cotton that it wouldn't bleach; it was a yellow-like. But those people from the mill village used it for shirts and dresses and whatever, whatever mothers could make out of it.

TS: So everybody wore a lot of yellow clothes.

OM: Yes, well, it was a dark white I guess you'd call it.

TS: But then they dyed it.

OM: They dyed it with oak bark. It would give it a light red tint. Then they used walnut leaves to give it a brown tint and different things that way. Poke berries, they'd boil them and get a purple color out of them.

TS: What kind of berries?

OM: Poke salad, have you ever heard of poke salad?

TS: Sure.

OM: Well, that's the berries off of it. I still have some of the cloth.

TS: Do you? Okay, now when you went in at about age fourteen, you said you couldn't work with your father because you were really under age even though you were claiming to have been fifteen. So which department did you go in?

OM: I went in the cloth room under Mr. Peterson. Reverend Peterson was the . . .

TS: Reverend Peterson?

OM: Yes, he was the pastor of several little churches around here.

TS: But he didn't know how old you really were.

OM: Well, he didn't ask. [laughter] He knew we had to work so . . .

TS: Yes, right. So I guess it was pretty common back then for a minister to not make enough money from his churches to support himself; so he worked during the week and preached on Sunday, I guess.

OM: And that's pretty well common around here now.

TS: Is it really?

OM: A few of our churches have full time pastors, but most of them work at different place and pastor small churches.

TS: You said you started out working for nothing for six weeks and then they gave you a broom at that point.

OM: Two brooms. You swept with two brooms.

TS: You swept with two brooms?

OM: Two brooms, one in each hand and pushed.

TS: Oh really?

OM: All that was on the floor was dust and lint off the cotton, so those brooms would just pick it up. You didn't sweep like you would with a house broom. You just pushed it.

TS: You're just pushing the lint?

OM: And the lint would help, would pick up what lint was in front of it.

TS: Right.

OM: When you got at the end of an aisle you emptied that in a barrel and come back to the other one and you had a barrel on the other end that you would . . .

TS: What was the air like inside the mill? It must have been . . .

OM: Hot, hot. Summer and winter it was hot, because the machinery in there. Each weave loom in the cotton mill had an electric motor on it, and that would heat up the mill. Large motors overhead where they didn't have the single motors would heat up

the mill. They'd run off of belts, maybe a hundred looms run off of one motor. It was quite an operation to what you have today.

TS: Well, I guess there's a big difference today that you go in a mill and there's so few workers compared to the old days. I was thinking too about the air, there must have been a lot of lint in the atmosphere.

OM: There was. That's what they call the lung disease now. There's very few people still living with it, but a lot of lung disease from inhaling that lint. And I have hearing damage now from the noise in the mill. I worked in the mill nine years, and then I left the mill and went to Atlanta and worked in a mill, Exposition cotton mill. And I left there and came back to Acworth and went to work in Cherokee Mills, there where the old flour mill is across the street. Rothchild Mill was the name of it.

TS: You worked over there?

OM: Yes, I worked over there.

TS: What is called Mill Ruins now?

OM: Yeah. [chuckle] But in my young, young days now, when we was out on the farm, my granddaddy had mules and wagons-- we were sharecroppers--my granddaddy would haul wheat to this mill that they talk about down here and had it ground.

TS: The mill next to the railroad tracks.

OM: Yes, the Ruins.

TS: It was a grist mill.

OM: Well, the grist mill was in that little building out back this side of there. That was the grist mill, and the flour mill was in the big, two-story building. But that's the best I can remember. All I can remember is about riding on the wagon when he'd bring the wheat.

TS: So they brought the wheat in, and you had a grist mill there. Now, what operated the machines?

OM: I couldn't tell you on that; I don't have memory of that. I'm sure it was an engine of some kind.

TS: It had to be. It couldn't have a water wheel, did it?

OM: No, there wasn't anything there for that. But I'm sure it was some type of engine. They could have been operated by boilers, because the boilers are partly still in the

big mill.

TS: Right. Well, on your farm, what crops did you grow?

OM: Corn and cotton and hay.

TS: And how much rent did you pay?

OM: It was sharecroppers.

TS: Where people had thirds and fourths.

OM: That's the way it was, but I don't remember, I believe it was a fourth of the corn and a third of the cotton if we had it. And the sharecroppers had to have assistance from the landowner to buy their groceries which they'd come here to the store, it was Awtrey's and Hattaway's, I can't remember the other one, there was another big grocery store here.

TS: They had three of them?

OM: It was Clark, Jackie Clark.

TS: So you had Awtrey's and Hattaway's.

OM: Yes, Hattaway, Orlando Hattaway. And Clark.

TS: Now, when you say that the landlord had to provide assistance . . .

OM: He had to sign a note with them at the store where you could go in and buy groceries to run them through the crop time. And out here, and my dad talked about the year that I was born there was a drought and everybody lost their crop and my granddaddy came with him out to Awtrey's and signed a note with him for twenty-five dollars to buy groceries.

TS: Your grandfather.

OM: My grandfather signed the note with my dad that he was a sharecropper for my granddaddy. The drought hit and my granddaddy came out and cut off the credit, because he didn't think there was any way . . . and that's when Dad went to work in construction and got. . . . And that's hearsay from Dad; I don't remember any of that. That was the year that I was born.

TS: Well, there are some really awful years in the '20s and '30s.

OM: They say it was bad. We never did have two good years farming.

TS: Did you ever have the boll weevil problem?

OM: We didn't but I'd hear Dad talk about it.

TS: So farming really wasn't a way to get ahead in the world.

OM: Well, the landowners got ahead, they got ahead.

TS: Okay so you start out pushing a broom in the mill but I bet you didn't push the broom for nine years so. . . .

OM: No, I did very well in the mill; I learned to weave. I learned--we called it lay up warps--huge beams of thread that you put on the loom, and then you had to tie it in to the previous role that was in there and let it start weaving.

TS: That's called lay up warps?

OM: Lay up warps, that's all it was ever named. It was a job of laying up warps.

TS: What's the warp?

OM: That's that huge role of thread. Yes, and then when that run off you'd put another role of thread and it'd make cloth. And then I went from that to loom mechanic which was the next to the highest thing, well, it was the first thing below the boss weaver.

TS: So the loom mechanic is the person who keeps them in operation and keeps them repaired.

OM: That's right, the mechanic. A lot of mills called them mill wrights. And that's where we called them loom fixers.

TS: [chuckle] So obviously you're just learning these kind of tasks on the job watching other people do them; is that the way?

OM: Yes, maybe you would, while your job wasn't too busy you would help out the man that was doing the job, and he'd show you what to do. You didn't have any idle time.

TS: How many hours did you work a day?

OM: Best I can remember it was ten hours up until during the War and then they changed it to eight hours. My mother and dad worked in the cotton mill, and they worked twelve hours a day. Mother made ten cents an hour, and Dad made twenty-two dollars a week as superintendent of the mill.

TS: Twenty-two dollars a week as superintendent.

OM: Twenty-two twenty is what he made. I don't know what that figured.

TS: I guess superintendents didn't get paid by the hour.

OM: No, he just got . . .

TS: A fixed salary.

OM: I guess they figured it by the month, and that's the way it came out; I don't know how they figured it.

TS: So you're father's making twenty-two dollars, \$22.20, and your mother's making ten cents an hour.

OM: She was working in the cloth room sewing cloth.

TS: Was it ten hours a day, six days a week?

OM: Yes.

TS: So that's . . .

OM: No, on Saturday you just worked till noon.

TS: Till noon. So that's five hours. So she's making \$5.50 a week, I guess and then you're working there too.

OM: Well, not at that time, because that was before. That was just before I went, that's while I was trying to go to school.

TS: So how long did your mother work in the mill? Till she started having children or beyond that?

OM: Well, it was while we were going to school.

TS: Until you actually went to work in the mill your mother did.

OM: No, we moved from there. She quit before we moved, and I didn't go to work in there till we moved out. It was, I can't get that straight; it was '36 or '37 when we moved, and I had been out of school a year or two running the streets and Dad wasn't going to put up with that. [chuckle]

TS: So you become the loom fixer . . .

OM: Then I went to Exposition Mills in Atlanta and they was making duck.

TS: Duck?

OM: Duck cloth for tents for the army. They had army contracts, and I stayed there till the War was over.

TS: Is that spelled D-u-c-k?

OM: D-u-c-k.

TS: Why did they call it duck cloth?

OM: I couldn't tell you.

TS: [chuckle]

OM: Don't y'all know? Y'all supposed to be seamstresses. It's just a heavy cloth like they made tents out of, and then they'd treat it and then it's water proofed and very strong. You couldn't tear it it was so strong.

TS: Where was the plant in Atlanta? Where was it located?

OM: Right at the beginning of Marietta Street. I moved from here--I got married in '41, I guess--and we moved down there in a two-room house there in the mill village on Echo Street and I stayed there . . .

TS: E-c-h-o-l?

OM: E-c-h-o, I guess.

TS: It is Echo.

OM: All right, if you saw in the paper last year where they rescued that man on the burning building where the . . .

TS: Cabbage Town?

OM: No, Cabbage Town was Fulton Bag and Cotton. Exposition was on this end of the city. Anyway, the fireman went up there. They were taking this man that was up on scaffolding and couldn't get off, and he brought him down. That's where I lived right under where he was up on that tower. And there was rows of two-room houses on the street. I could sit at my breakfast table and pass food to the people that lived in the next house. [chuckle] It was very small, just wall paste between them, which we didn't have much to pass through. [chuckle]

TS: In Acworth, was it a true mill village where you said you had your stores were in town you went to . .

OM: We had a company store down, right in front of where Day's Chevrolet is. Where the Time Saver was across the street, the company store there. And you went there and bought groceries, and they'd take it out of your paycheck at the mill.

TS: Okay.

OM: Back then they didn't trust anyone for coming back and paying I don't guess, because they'd take it out of your check before you got it. I still have some of the stubs; they gave you a little envelope with what you had made and what they'd taken out at the store. I still have some of them at home that I salvaged from that.

TS: How would you describe the people who worked in the mill?

OM: Wonderful people, just poor, honest people most of them. They were very good people.

TS: Which were the churches that they would have gone to?

OM: Well, this community church we was talking about, most of the mill people there, they changed. There come a big religious blast through here in the '30s, '31 and '32 and '33, right in the hard part of the Depression. People got religion real fast around here, I guess.

TS: The Depression contributed?

OM: I think it did. And they changed the name of this church to Shady Grove. Now, Shady Grove is up on, I don't know, is it on Carruth Street? You go around Carruth Street, and it's on the left after you go through there, I don't know.

TS: Carruth Street?

OM: And then the Baptist Church here and the Methodist, Christian. That's where the people back up here--we was poor trash and we lived in the mill village. We didn't get to come to the churches up here. [chuckle]

TS: I was wondering about that, whether mill people would have gone to the Presbyterian or Methodist.

OM: Very few of them. Now, Mr. and Mrs. Mason that owned the Acworth Mill and their families and their supervisors, the higher-up supervisors went to some of the churches.

TS: Right. Was what became Shady Grove, was that built by the mill? Did they pay to

build that church?

OM: It was there when I moved, when I got old enough to go to Sunday School. I can remember . . .

TS: So that's where you went.

OM: I went to Sunday School, and we had a doctor here by the name of Dr. Bailey, and he taught Sunday School there. We'd carry our pennies and put them in the plate when they'd pass it around. One little boy, a friend of mine, he's passed away now, they passed the plate by him, and he reached over in it. His sister said, "You can't do that!" He said, "Well, I just got one." [laughter]

TS: Did the mill provide a doctor or a nurse for the people that worked in the mill?

OM: No, we had to use Dr. Terry, Dr. Bailey and Dr. Burtz and Dr. Humphries there in town.

TS: Terry and Bailey and Humphries and Burtz?

OM: It's his home place right here, this big two-story house right behind here is Dr. Burtz home place.

TS: Behind city hall?

AL: The I-house that Fowlers owned.

OM: Yes, Jack Fowler's home.

AL: They bricked it.

OM: And Dr. Bailey's office was where the leaded glass place here, doors and glass on the front street.

AL: Right here on Main Street?

OM: Yes. That's where Dr. Bailey's office was, and Dr. Terry's office was this one right up here on, not the corner but the next over right here.

AL: The next one over where Dr. Cobble's office was?

OM: No, it's this one between Dr. Cobble's and this street out this way. It faced Lemon Street.

AL: Okay, where these two tall blue buildings are now?

OM: Yes. And then Dr. Reed, the dentist was in the end building upstairs.

TS: Dr. Reed?

OM: And our telephone exchange was upstairs.

TS: There's a lot of Terrys that are buried out in the Mars Hill Church Cemetery.

OM: I don't believe they're related to our doctor here. There's a group of Terrys here that I've known all my life, and they wasn't related to Dr. Terry; he came here from somewhere else, I guess. And Dr. Bailey, this is his home place right here where the Maxwells lived.

TS: Dr. Bailey where the Maxwells lived?

AL: On Dallas Street.

TS: On Dallas Street. Okay, how did you get into Atlanta? How did you get the job in Atlanta?

OM: They gave me a choice of going to the army or going to work in defense work. That was a defense plant down there and I was a 4-fer, because I have just one arm that I use. Nobody knows it much but . . .

TS: What happened to your arm? Was that an accident in the mill?

OM: The playground at Shady Grove church. They had some park slides there like children use. I fell off of it and damaged that arm. Dad walked from down there where we live. Dr. Terry's home was right here where the . . . we had the hotel on the corner, then we had the Davenport home and then Dr. Terry's home. It was on that vacant lot there behind Battles.

AL: On Lemon Street.

OM: No, it was at Lemon to come on around behind the . . .

AL: Oh, it was behind Battles. So where the alley is now behind Battles.

OM: Yes, where they've just cleaned off those big trees on that lot, that was Dr. Terry's. It was one Sunday morning, and he walked up there. I was crying and hurting, I can remember that, I wasn't three or four years old, I don't remember when that was. Dr. Terry got mad, because I was crying and said, "Just take him home." So Dad carried me back home without him doing anything--he wrapped it up with [something]--but long after dark Dad brought me back up there and he'd taken a piece of cardboard

and he cut a "V" like a square and he put it around my arm and wrapped it up and that's all was ever done to my arm and then when it came out it came out just about like that.

TS: Hm. Sounds like gross incompetence.

OM: I tried to keep it hid all the time and nobody knew it much. It handicapped me some, but I made it.

TS: I guess so. Did you ever think about working at the Bell Aircraft plant?

OM: I went down there and worked eighteen months.

TS: Oh you did? So how long did you work in the mill in Atlanta?

OM: About three months or four. And then they closed the part down, their contract run out in the division I was in. They transferred us back to Bell Aircraft and I stayed down there until the War was over.

TS: I see. What did you do at Bell?

OM: Installed the wheel wells on the B-29, the doors that close when you pull the wheels up, the landing gear, those doors close and that was my job.

TS: You did the doors?

OM: The installation of the doors that close them in. And I was getting sixty-five cents an hour at Exposition Mill. I came back up and they gave me sixty-eight cents an hour.

TS: Not much difference, was it?

OM: At Bell Aircraft. And then in eighteen months I made supervisor and went to \$1.05 an hour and that was big money. [chuckle]

TS: I always thought that Bell paid so much more than anybody else.

OM: They did, but nobody else was paying anything.

TS: But actually sixty-five, that wasn't too bad in a cotton mill.

OM: That was top wages.

TS: Right. So sixty-eight cents when you started . . .

OM: See, that was training, Bell Aircraft had a training program, and they paid you sixty-

eight cents. Then you got a nickel raise, and then I went to the night shift and got another nickel raise.

TS: You got more if you worked at night?

OM: Yes, if you worked third shift you got about a nickel more an hour.

TS: What, did the third shift start at eleven o'clock?

OM: Yes, it started at eleven. I worked many a night, I'd go in there at eleven o'clock and not do a thing but sit there on my tool box, because they didn't have materials to work with. Maybe the next morning the materials would come in, and they'd come around, "We got to have extra help today; who'll work over?" And then I'd work a half a shift over in the morning to make up the time.

TS: Where did you do your training for Bell? Was that in the plant?

OM: There at the plant; they had a school there at the plant. And then they had some buildings out on Fairground Street there in Marietta where they did some training, this old barrack building out on . . .

TS: Where were you living when you were working at Bell?

OM: This big two-story house right behind here.

TS: Even when you were working in Atlanta at the mill did you still live here in Acworth?

OM: Lived here and drove back and forth. My dad was supervisor down there.

TS: Oh really?

OM: Yes. He come down there and got a job.

TS: Did he ever work at Bell?

OM: No, he never worked anywhere but cotton mills all his life.

TS: So you drove to work every night.

OM: Every morning. At the mill down there I worked the day shift, but down at Bell Aircraft they had a Greyhound bus that came here.

TS: Into Acworth?

OM: Came up and went to Calhoun and then one of the workers got paid to drive the bus, got extra. Then he carried it home with him and then he'd come back the next shift and pick us up along the road and carry us into work. The next morning he'd bring us back.

TS: So you rode the bus then.

OM: Yes. There wasn't any gas. We didn't have any cars to ride in.

TS: What was the route to the mill? You didn't have U.S. 41 completed at that time, at this point.

OM: Highway 293 was 41 then. We drove from here straight in, which was it, Marietta Street and Brady Street. That was the name of the street that the mill was on and the bus passed right by there.

TS: Well, now, you worked at Bell for eighteen months so that would have been, let's see, I guess you started there shortly after the plant opened?

OM: It was the last year and a half of the plant's operation.

TS: Okay. So you worked till the plant closed.

OM: Yes, I was there the day they closed the plant down.

TS: How did that go, by the way? I've heard different stories about that closing and the reaction of the workers and what-have-you.

OM: Oh, after the surrender at the end of the War they called us all in there and made the announcement, the president of the plant, "Don't worry about it, this plant's going to keep operating right on, everybody'll have a job." Everybody was so happy that it was over with, next day they called us in and started handing out dismissal slips. [laughter] Might not have been the next day but it was the next week when they started handing out slips.

TS: Right. How did the workers take it?

OM: Oh, most of us was so happy it was over we didn't care, really. We wasn't interested in the job then.

TS: Yes.

OM: And there was so many boys killed in the War that there was a lot of jobs open out here; you could get a job if you wanted one.

TS: I think that's one of the most remarkable stories about how a plant can lay off 28,000 workers almost overnight, but you don't really have a major unemployment problem. I guess there was a minor unemployment problem, but it seems like everybody was able to find a job somewhere.

OM: And that's when I come back up here and went to work at Cherokee Mills. That's when Bell laid off. And I got fired there. [chuckle]

TS: How did you get fired?

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OM: I don't know exactly; the boss and I never did see eye to eye, because I'd been in supervision and he was in supervision. He had just got back out of service, and he was awfully nervous and hard to work for. He asked me to get up and go to work, and I kept sitting there. He came back and told me to come by the office and get my money, and that was the end of my time at Cherokee Mills. And then I went to Dr. Durham--was in this big building across the street here, the one they tore the top out of now. It's Durham Brothers Drug Store which is, right now, Lacey's Drug Store.

TS: The same location?

OM: No, it's on the corner up here. It stayed there a long time; now it's moved up here on the corner. I went to Dr. Durham--he was the mayor of Acworth--and I told him I was fixing to start training for the government to be a plumber. He said, "Oh, then you'll starve to death in Acworth."

TS: As a plumber?

OM: As a plumber. There wasn't any plumbing in here, just very few houses. And that was the ones right in this area. The city limits at that time was one mile from the depot here. He said, "There's not enough plumbing here to keep you busy." I stayed in business, I don't know how many years, and I never was out of work.

TS: So you didn't take his advice.

OM: No, I just went ahead. The hardware was up here and I went up to hardware, and I bought seventeen dollars worth of tools on credit to go into plumbing business with and start taking training.

TS: Where did you go for your training?

OM: These buildings that I was talking about that they sent some of us from Bell Aircraft

out there on Fairground Street. They had classes there, and the government paid for them if you worked at the defense plant.

TS: Was this on Fairground about where Larry Bell Park is?

OM: Somewhere right in there, yes. I believe it's where the Marietta Journal is right now.

TS: Oh, okay.

OM: I believe that's where it's at. It's changed a lot down there, and I can't remember.

TS: Right. So this is a government program.

OM: Yes. I'd taken my training to do plumbing, and then there was a man here that was in the electrical business. He and I combined our business. He taught me to do electrical work, and I taught him what I had learned to do plumbing, and we stayed together five years.

TS: Who was that?

OM: DeWitt Pruitt. And his son is still a plumber here in Acworth. My son is a plumber here, and my son is operating the only business in Acworth owned by the original people. There's not another business here that's been here, well, we're the oldest, I guess you can say that with the original people operating it.

TS: So this is about '46 that you opened up your business?

OM: '45, '46. It was hard to get materials; you couldn't get materials.

TS: For a few years after the War?

OM: Yes. No one had hot water heaters. They had little laundry heaters that you put coal in, and it had a tank behind it . . .

TS: What kind of heater?

OM: Little coal, laundry heater, it was about this big square.

TS: Laundry?

OM: Laundry heater. It had a coil in it, and it was hooked up to this tank. You put coal in there and build you a fire. It circulated that water, and you had hot water for your baths and kitchen.

TS: Never heard of that. So that was pretty common in Acworth?

OM: Yes, well, that was all they had most anywhere. My grandparents lived in Cherokee County, Canton, Georgia, and they had that type.

TS: When did hot water heaters come in?

OM: It wasn't but just a year or two after the War that they started having electrical water heaters, gas . . . Now down in Atlanta, they had natural gas down there, [so] they had gas water heaters. But they was on the same order as the coal heater was.

TS: Right. So you stayed in the plumbing business until you retired then?

OM: No, I went from plumbing business to being the justice of the peace.

TS: Okay. So you got out of plumbing at that time?

OM: And while I was running my electrical business--I did plumbing, electrical and heating--and while I was doing that I went to work for the county. I ran my business and did inspections with the county, because there wasn't too much building going on. I could go down half a day for the county. That's when Herbert McCollum hired me.

TS: You said that was late '50s?

OM: It was about '60, I guess, because I got this leg broken in '54. It was a year or two after I got my leg broken.

TS: How'd you do that?

OM: Riding a horse and it fell on me.

TS: So you went to work for the county as an inspector, plumbing inspector?

OM: Plumbing, electrical and heating. I'm the only person that they've ever had down there that I know of that did all three inspections.

TS: But you say that there was so little going on that it wasn't full time?

OM: It wasn't full time. I'd never been in a building larger than a two-story building at that time, and they were just beginning to build some of those. That's when they had to start hiring more inspectors, because there'd be as many apartments in one building as there was in the whole county in a month or something like that.

TS: Where was your office? Is it the old courthouse?

OM: Right beside the old courthouse. There was a metal building right behind it. There was an office there. Then we moved from there to where the Savings and Loan building--I don't know what's in that Savings and Loan building now right behind the courthouse over . . .

TS: On Lawrence Street?

OM: Yes, Lawrence Street, this huge one right on the corner of the Square. You know, the bank building is what the county has now; this was on the other corner.

TS: The other corner. Oh.

OM: Yes, it was on the other corner down there.

TS: Actually on the Square?

OM: Yes. One time while we was there this lady had a dispossesory warrant served on her. She had done something to the property, and there was a squabble where they had to come into the office and try to settle it. The chief inspector ruled against her, and she walked out the door. Right at that time they were hollering, Bomb scare, bomb scare at every little thing. She got so mad that she reached down and picked up a rock and threw it through this big plate glass. People run out the back doors, jumped out windows, [chuckle]. They thought the building had blowed up.

TS: Who was the chief inspector?

OM: Clyde Glore.

TS: From the Glores down in the Mableton area?

OM: That's one of them. And he's the one that recommended me to Herbert McCollum.

TS: I see. So you did that for how many years?

OM: I believe it was about seven years that I worked for the county.

TS: So to mid-'60s.

OM: And then I ran for coroner of the county.

TS: What year was that?

OM: '62. It was somewhere in there when Ernest Barrett was running, I don't know . . .

TS: He got elected in '64.

OM: Okay, that's the year that it was.

TS: That you ran for coroner.

OM: I ran for coroner against a blind man.

TS: [chuckle]

OM: We had a strong political division, I guess you'd call it, or party. This old man had been coroner for fifty years, and he was disabled. He couldn't go and he had to sit on cases where there's a suspicious death or something. He couldn't see, and they had to tell him everything to do. I thought it was a good chance for me. There was another man. His name was King, and he was my age. We run, and I was down at the courthouse. You used to go in the courthouse, and they had one table. They'd sit there and counted the votes. And the head of elections--before the election--he said, "Olan, you shouldn't have run against Mr. Barfield." I said, "Well, I thought we ought to have better representation than that." I did. He said, "You'll never get elected." I said, "Okay, I'll still try." So we did. They counted the votes that night. The population had grown till they couldn't get them all counted during the one night. So at one o'clock they closed up the polls, and we all went home. When they closed up the polls I was way ahead of the other two candidates. And the next day when they went back to count them I never was ahead of anybody.

TS: You think they stuffed the ballot box during the night?

OM: I hope they didn't but . . .

TS: What was the political machine that was in power in the county at that time?

OM: Democrat.

TS: Well, I mean, everybody was a Democrat.

OM: Yeah, everybody was a Democrat, but that was the power machine. It was that little group there in the city of Marietta.

TS: The people that ran the Democratic party?

OM: Right, the Democratic party.

TS: Who would have been the head of it at that time? You look like you don't want to say.

OM: I'd rather not say that, because he has too close of ties here in Acworth.

TS: Oh.

OM: He was a good friend of mine, or I thought he was.

TS: You were doing well when they closed up the ballots.

OM: I was several hundred votes ahead of the other two.

TS: But mysteriously the next morning you were behind.

OM: The next morning I was behind and never did get ahead.

TS: So Barfield stayed in.

OM: Barfield stayed in. He died in office a year or so after that.

TS: Do we still have a county coroner?

OM: Medical examiner.

TS: So somewhere along the line we stopped electing coroners.

OM: That's the last election. There was fifteen people running at the next election for coroner in Cobb County when Mr. Barfield died. Then after that they never did, they got a bill passed to use the medical examiner.

TS: Now, when did you get elected justice of the peace?

OM: '74, I guess, '72 or '74, I can't remember that.

TS: So what are you doing between the time that you're an inspector for the county and the time that you got elected justice of the peace? Did you just go back to your business?

OM: My business. I had a boy working for me that had been with me for fifteen, sixteen years. He was running my business, and I just played back and forth. But then the controversy came up, because I was inspecting my own jobs. I could see where they had a conflict with that.

TS: Sure. Inspecting the jobs that your company had done.

OM: And that-a-way you got more jobs, because you're better known. There was some controversy came up to it. Ernest Barrett came to me and said, "Olan, you might ought to step out, because . . .". I didn't have any objection to that.

TS: Make a lot more money running your plumbing.

OM: Well, I never did make any money running my plumbing.

TS: Really? Well, the amount of construction was increasing all the time, I guess, in this part of the county.

OM: Up until ten year ago, fifteen year ago, there wasn't a house in Acworth that I hadn't done work in.

TS: Is that right?

OM: I had done plumbing, electrical, and there wasn't any heating back then--they had the old coal furnaces. I didn't do any of that. And stokers that stoked the coal in it. But there wasn't a house in Acworth that I hadn't done some type of work.

TS: Now, when does your son take over running the business?

OM: He went to work at Lockheed, and he worked there till they had their first big layoff. I don't remember what year that was.

TS: '70s?

OM: Somewhere in there and he come to work with me.

TS: Right. They had some hard years in the '70s.

OM: That's when they had the big layoff, and he was in that. And then he quit me and went back to Lockheed--they called him back--and then the next layoff they got him again, and he said he wasn't going back any more.

TS: I think Lockheed reached its peak about '68, you know, right at the height of the Vietnam War, and then started going down after that.

OM: That's about when the . . .

TS: We hadn't talked about your family; how many children do you have?

OM: I have three children: one girl and two boys.

TS: And one son is in the business with you; what about the other one?

OM: He is working at Western Electric. It was and now when they broke down Southern Bell, Mama Bell they called it, they split Lusent. That's one of the largest cable manufacturers for . . . when he went to work there he started off making copper wire. Then he went to plastic and fiberglass, and then he went to fiber, and now they may go on to something else.

TS: What's his name?

OM: Raymond.

TS: Raymond. And Olan, Jr. is in the business?

OM: No, it's not Olan, Jr.

TS: There's not an Olan, Jr.

OM: It's Moose that's in the business.

TS: Moose?

OM: His name's L.B. [chuckle]

TS: I thought there was an Olan, Jr. for some reason.

OM: No, there's no Olan, Jr. His name is Leman Brian and in school--he's six foot, seven inches tall--and right now he weighs three hundred pounds. In high school they named him Moose, and he's carried it ever since. That's on the side of the plumbing truck now. McCray Plumbing Company, Moose McCray, owner.

TS: Lema, L-e-a-m-o-n-d?

OM: No, it's L-E-M-A-N, like Lemon, we had an attorney here named Lemon.

TS: But you pronounced it . . .

OM: Le'mon (long e sound). We left the o out and put the a in.

TS: And then Brian, is there a "T" on it or is it just B-R-. . . ?

OM: Brian. And I have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

TS: What's your daughter's name?

OM: Helen. All three of my children graduated from high school and went to college. My daughter went out of college to teaching school. Raymond went to work, when he got out of the army--he went in the army and stayed two year--and then he went to work for Western Electric. He's still there. And Moose, he went to work for me, and he's still in the business. None of them's ever changed jobs; except Moose changed to Lockheed a couple of times.

TS: Why did you run for justice of the peace?

OM: I don't know. [chuckle] We didn't have one here, and I've been interested in it all my life, so I was constable here for years. And then I was in the bonding business. I stayed in bonding business here in the city for a long time. I was the first bondsman they ever had. And by the way, I'm the first licensed electrician and plumber they ever had in the city of Acworth. And the first full-time inspector they ever had.

TS: Is that right? Now, what years were you inspector for Acworth?

OM: We don't know when I started; I'm arguing one date and they're arguing another.

TS: What date do you argue?

OM: I've been out of it since '92, and I'd been there thirty years, so it was in '62.

TS: They think it started earlier?

OM: They lost--no, they say I didn't start . . .

TS: Didn't start that early?

OM: They lost the records somewhere. They don't have any records. We had some problems here one time, and we found a lot of our city records in an old mine shaft out here in the country.

TS: Mine shaft?

OM: Where they'd been hauled out there and thrown away. I've got some things that came out of that mine shaft.

TS: Well, now, it's the same situation in the city as for the county, wasn't it? If you were building everything in the place, you were inspecting your own work, weren't you?

OM: Yes. But Moose was doing the work then, and he was a different company, the same name but he . . .

TS: Oh, Moose did the work, and you're out of the company.

OM: I'm out of the company other than a stockholder.

TS: I see. So you're inspecting Moose.

OM: I was at that time, yeah.

TS: Did Moose usually do a pretty good job?

OM: Sometimes. [laughter] He was like the rest of us. He would get by with what he could.

TS: So you sometimes had to cite him for not having . . .

OM: I treated him just like I did anyone else. I never had a complaint while I was here about showing any favoritism.

TS: What did Moose think about it?

OM: Well, he didn't go too much for it. One time we had a lady that lived right on the corner up here across the street from Mr. Fowler, and she was having a plumber out of town to come in and do her work. I saw him and stopped and told him he had to have a business license. She came to the city hall complaining about it. She said that I made the statement to her if I'd let my son do the work that he wouldn't have to buy a license. They didn't believe that, because they never did make any issue of it. They knew that wasn't so. Because he wouldn't have had to buy a license, he was already licensed. If I had said that it wouldn't have made any difference, but I didn't make that statement.

TS: Well, now, justice of the peace side, you actually go to court; where was the courthouse?

OM: This little building right here on the corner; not the corner building but the one beside of it.

AL: The blue ones?

OM: These two buildings up here . . .

AL: Yes.

OM: Where Dr. McCall and Dr. Terry were.

AL: The little ones facing Lemon Street.

TS: The blue buildings?

AL: Up on Lemon Street.

TS: Oh.

OM: Facing Lemon Street. And then they changed that in the later years, and we went to the county courthouse; we had offices in the annex building in the rear.

TS: I see. What kind of cases were you hearing?

OM: Well, anytime you issue a warrant you're supposed to have a commitment hearing, regardless of what the charge was. I've had to make my hearing on everything: murder on down. And I was working with the traffic court judge. They called him magistrate but he was strictly traffic court. He had to have commitment hearings for anyone that was arrested overnight. I would go down in the morning at seven o'clock, and they had wrote up everyone that had been arrested from the day before. They'd bring him up before me, and I'd have to set bond for him. We got paid per head. That's what changed the job to elected magistrate. We was on the fee system. And I could see where it made the difference. We had sixteen justices of the peace in the county, and none of them wanted to go to the county and stay. I bought me a van, and I parked it out in the back of the office. I slept there at night. If they needed me I'd go and hold court. I've held murder cases, rape, thefts and then we'd set bond on them. A lot of times you'd have a hearing, and if the plaintiff--the one who is getting arrested--was complaining about it, they could ask for a hearing. You could have the hearing and decide whether there was cause for the warrant or not, dismiss it or let it go on through. That's actually what the justice of the peace was supposed to do, but they got too big for that.

TS: Well, I guess the justice of the peace system made more sense when transportation was poor and people were . . .

OM: Well, every little district, this was a fifty-first militia district. Every little district in the county had a justice of the peace and a constable. You got four dollars for issuing a warrant, four dollars for commitment hearing and two dollars for setting the bond. Dispossessory warrant, which they said we was taking too much money for that, we got fifteen dollars for that, and now then it costs you sixty-five dollars to get this dispossessory warrant. You have to go down to the county and get it.

TS: Well, now, when did you become a bail bondsman?

OM: Well, I guess in '49.

TS: That early?

OM: Yes. I started out I bought property, and I had property and didn't have to put up any bond. Well, he said it didn't require a bond or anything. Well, they said you didn't require a bond or anything, that you signed a bond and your property would be responsible for. I don't remember how many years I was bondsman; I'd have to go back and look at some of my records to see. Then I was special deputy sheriff for ten years.

TS: Who was the sheriff at that time?

OM: Kermit Sanders.

TS: Oh, yes.

OM: Fine man. We got a fine man now, but Kermit was one of the old wool hat crowd. I had my plumbing shop in the basement of this building over here.

AL: Masonic Lodge?

OM: I don't know how many years I was in there. Rent was so high I couldn't stay there. I paid fifteen dollars a year rent, and I couldn't afford that. [laughter] Couldn't afford to stay there any longer.

TS: Were you a Mason?

OM: Yes.

TS: When did you join the Masons?

OM: In 1946. I've taken every degree in masonry, the Scottish Rite, all the way to the Shriner. And last week I joined the Eastern Star [laughter] for my wife, so she'd have someone to go with her. She didn't have anyone to go with at night, and she was afraid to go by herself.

TS: So they let you join the Eastern Star?

OM: The Eastern Star lodge cannot open without a Mason being present, and they will let Masons join, but that's the only reason for the Masons being in the Eastern Stars.

TS: Where is the Eastern Star lodge?

OM: In the Masonic building over on McLain Circle. We're in the process of expanding our building; we bought, after this one fell we bought the old church building, and it's too small for us.

TS: Are there a lot of Masons in this area?

OM: Yes sir. There's quite a few. Our lodge is something like 265 members here and Powder Springs has a lodge, Kennesaw, Marietta, Smyrna, all those little places. Emerson, they all have a lodge hall.

TS: How many acres do you own in the city now?

OM: Most of its building lots; I have about thirty acres where I live.

TS: That's what I meant, where you live. About thirty acres there? And you were saying before we got started about all the different animals. Why don't you talk about that? What all do you have on your thirty acres?

OM: Well, I have donkeys, mules, ponies, sheep, goats, pigs, rabbits, turkeys, guineas, peacocks, geese, chickens. I believe that's about all I have there.

AL: Tell them about the peacock and--was it a turkey or a guinea? The eggs that you showed that was a cross between the two?

OM: Oh, it was a cross between a peacock and a guinea.

AL: Peacock and a guinea.

OM: They said that has never happened. I have something unusual now that I don't know the answer to it. You know the hen, the female, lays the egg and sits on them till the babies hatch. I've got two male turkeys that have run the females off and sitting on their eggs. [laughter] No one I've mentioned it to . . . it's happening right now. I've got two of them in the pen; they've run the mamas off, and they're sitting on the eggs. If they hatch out I don't know if they're going to be good mamas or good daddies. [laughter]

TS: Well, have you been living at the same place out there for a number of years?

OM: Thirty-six years.

TS: Thirty-six years. You've had that thirty acres since then?

OM: Well, no, I bought six acres there to begin with, and then I've expanded. There was a vacant property would come up for sale, and I'd buy a piece of property.

TS: So are you kind of grandfathered in that you can have all these animals? You're within the city limits aren't you?

OM: Yes, sir, I am. Back several years back I saw this coming, and I got a zoo license.

TS: A zoo license?

OM: Petting zoo license and that's all that's . . .

TS: I see. So you let school kids in there.

OM: Any one who wants to come. We've had lots of groups come.

AL: He's the only licensed zoo in the city.

TS: I bet. [laughter]

OM: And it won't be long, they'll get me out one way or the other. They've had several complaints filed against me. We happened to have a complaint filed here a few years ago about it. One of the councilmen lived in that area, and he got a petition up against me. I still have the petition; so I can prove what I'm fixing to say on that. He carried it through the neighborhood and got them all to sign. Well, no one had ever complained to me about it. I started questioning around and, "I didn't sign that," "I didn't sign that. I didn't sign that." "That's not my signature." I got two pages of it, and I carried it to a handwriting expert. One man had signed every one of their names. [laughter] So I still have the petition. It's amazing what you'll do in politics.

TS: What would you say are some of the bigger changes that have taken place in Acworth during your lifetime?

OM: Other than the population growth?

TS: Well, that's a start.

OM: I don't know of too many except expansion of the city.

TS: What about the coming of Acworth Beach and the flooding of all that land that became Allatoona?

OM: Well, they started buying that property in '46, 47, '48. They opened the lake in '50 or '51; I don't know just which. People wanted to sell property.

TS: Did they?

OM: They wanted to sell their property. Two widowed ladies who owned this place where I live, they had a huge place there. They sold off within fifty foot of the door of my house to the government. The government would buy any amount they'd sell to make sure they got what they needed. Now they've got excess land that they don't need. It's kind of islanded in where they can't do much with it. They're selling a little of it along.

TS: Right. When did the mill close? Do you remember that?

OM: I don't remember the date of that.

TS: It was still opened when you came back here, wasn't it?

OM: Oh yes, it was opened, but they sold out immediately after the War to Coats & Clark, and they ran it for years. I'd say they run it something like twenty years or twenty-

five years. I don't remember because I wasn't connected in any way with it.

TS: I was just wondering about all the people that worked in the mill when it closed down; did they stay in the area?

OM: Most of them did. I'd say there was people came ten or twelve miles to work here. And I think they just drifted back out in their area and got jobs. But most of them, when the mill closed down the last time, they sold the people that worked there this village, sold the houses to them. They wouldn't sell them to anyone else. And I got two of those houses after they went to changing hands.

TS: That you rent out? Obviously since you don't have a mill there any more, who lives in those houses now?

OM: Retired people are in 90 percent of them that was employees. Some that's rental property. Mine's rental property. Most all of them are still connected with--some of their families lived in the mill.

TS: Are you in favor of the growth that we've had in this area?

OM: I like the old days, which I understand that time cannot stand still, but I liked it better the way it was. I walked out on the street and they called me by my name or I called them by their first name. Now they don't even know when they pass. There's some good people moving in here, but they're different from the old settlers that was here.

TS: What about the traffic?

OM: Oh, it's awful. We're the same way Atlanta is. It's just a little less. It's getting just as bad as Marietta and Atlanta is. I guess we have just about as many little accidents as they do in Marietta. The police is blowing their whistle all the time for an accident.

TS: Do you miss the passenger trains? Did you ever used to ride the trains?

OM: A lot. I miss the Greyhound buses. Trailway used to come through here, and we rode it.

TS: Well, I'm just about out of questions, I think. What did we miss that we should have talked about?

OM: Well, I don't know of anything up until that date that we've talked about.

AL: We didn't talk about his wife.

TS: Okay. Well, tell us all about your wife.

OM: Oh, Lord, that'd take a long time. [laughter]

TS: What year did you get married? You said you got married about '41?

OM: '41 I believe it was. December of '41. What year was War declared?

TS: Well, December of '41 was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

OM: Okay, we got married December.

TS: Right about that time.

OM: We got married the twentieth of December. We was planning on getting married.

TS: December 7 would have been a . . .

AL: It was a Sunday, wasn't it?

TS: Well, yeah, I guess it was the Sunday that the news spread so I guess it was a Sunday that they attacked us.

OM: We was sitting out here in front of the drug store--at that time they had an ice cream bar in there--and we was sitting in front of this drug store drinking a milk shake. We heard on the radio that they had bombed Pearl Harbor, and we was going to get married the twenty-fifth. We went ahead and got married, and I went and signed up to go in the service, because I knew I was going to have to go anyway, and they rejected me because of this arm.

TS: The twentieth was on Saturday.

OM: Yes, we got married on Saturday. And we moved in this house right in front of this school house over here at the old Tripp home place. We moved in there. The rent was awfully high for someone just making . . . my wife worked at the knitting mill and she was making seventeen dollars a week, and I was working down at the cotton mill and making twenty-five cents an hour. They charged us eight dollars a month rent, and they furnished us electricity and water and lights and telephone. We had a nice apartment there. But eight dollars was hard to part with back then.

TS: Well, so you got married in '41 and so you've been married almost sixty years.

OM: Always before a wedding anniversary I get out the calendar and figure out exactly when it was. [chuckle]

TS: Well, '41 . . . this year will be fifty-nine. You'll have a big celebration next year maybe.

OM: Well, I don't know. The way things are going I won't be living this time next year. My life's got kind of miserable.

TS: Well, so, did she stop working in the mill after you got married?

OM: Well, Moose was born the next February, not the one that came up but a year from then.

TS: February of '43.

OM: And she quit work a couple of months before he was born. Then she went back to work after he was born, and I did plumbing during the day and carried him with me on the job while she worked at night. I guess that's the reason he got stuck in plumbing. He grew up, slept in the seat of an old Dodge I had for a service truck, he slept in that during the day while I worked.

TS: That means Moose and I are the same age then. I was born in '43.

OM: We went down to the restaurant the other night, and his daughter was here from San Diego. We went down to the restaurant. The waitress told me and my wife, "Y'all get a senior citizens discount." Well, Moose spoke up and said, "Well, I do too." And she said, "You're not old enough. You can't tell me that. No way I'd believe that." And you should have seen the tip he left her after. [laughter] We kidded him all the way home about that, what a large tip you got from telling how young he was.

TS: Right. Well, there's been a lot of changes in the downtown area of Acworth with businesses . . .

OM: Complete change. I don't reckon we have any retail business on Main Street anywhere except Battles here. I can remember days when they had stores up on Main Street here like the one down on the corner was Najjars.

TS: N-a-j-j-a-r?

OM: Yes.

TS: They have one in Marietta.

OM: Well, that's the same group. And on the week before Christmas they would sell fire crackers and fireworks, and you couldn't walk down the street for fire crackers popping on the weekend. You'd see the crowd in town, and they'd throw things.

TS: Now, which building was Najjars in?

OM: In the corner building down here where the florist is, where the ivy shop is. Then we

had . . .

TS: What shop?

AL: Ivy shop on the corner of Dallas and Main.

OM: And then we had what we called the Jew store. The Freeman's opened up a building right there, I don't know. I guess it's that one where Eaton's used to be, I believe that's where it was.

TS: Was that a dry goods store?

OM: Dry goods. And then McMillan's was a dry goods store. It was on the corner where the big two-story building is, the old Allen building, which is the Armstrong building. There was two buildings where this--what's the name of this store that's just opened on Dallas Street right straight down here? Carnes Street and. . . ?

AL: It's the consignment shop. Kay Lynne's Consignment, right here on Dallas.

OM: All right, there was two buildings there. I bought the outside building where the street where they was going to make Carnes Street down through there. And I owned that building. Well, I traded that building for this other building that's there now. And then a Ms.--she was a McMillan--that was the old McMillan building all through there, and I bought that building from her for \$500.00 and exchanged it for that one that's there now. And then I sold it to Harrison Mercantile which is Battles.

TS: Harrison Mercantile?

OM: They opened up their grocery store there. Then George McMillan run it for them for years.

TS: Do you know him very well?

OM: Real well. I have some mementos that he passed on down to me from years. He ran this grocery store there and this McMillan business went out when Allen's come up--they come up sometime, had to be early '40s or late '30s, I don't remember. That was a Rogers grocery store there, and then Allen's bought it and opened it up as a five and ten cent store. And that's where most of the young people worked that went to high school over here and wanted a part-time job. They paid ten dollars a week.

AL: And then they took that building down, the building came down to put the road through?

OM: To put Carnes Street through they tore that building down. And then I bought the building where Joyce's Beauty Shop is. After I bought the building--back in them

days you didn't have a title run; you took a man at his word that you were buying the building. Well, after I bought the building, Mr. Tumlin was running the grocery store right next to it. He sent me a notice saying that I was going to have to start paying rent of twenty-five dollars a month because he owned fifteen inches inside of my building. I had to pay him half as I paid for the building for his fifteen inches.

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