

Buckhead Heritage Society

Oral History Project

Interview with Charlotte Walker

October 7, 2013

Interviewer: James Ottley

JAMES OTTLEY: This is an interview with Charlotte Walker of 671 Valley Green Road in Brookhaven. She is a fourth generation native Atlantan who taught 28 years at the Lovett School. This interview is being conducted on October 7, 2013, at her residence. The interviewer is myself, James Ottley, and we'll go ahead and get started. Thank you so much for speaking with us. It's definitely an honor to get to spend some time with you and to get some of your memories on tape. You've seen some of the questions, some of the ideas and topics we wanted to touch on, but just go ahead and start from the beginning. What is your full name and what was your maiden name?

CHARLOTTE WALKER: Thank you, James, and thanks for coming. I've been excited since you first mentioned it. My maiden name was Charlotte Hill Little, and I grew up, really, in Morningside on Pelham Road. But when I married, in 1955, we moved to Collier Road. That was not my first experience in Buckhead, because I had relatives who lived in Buckhead.

OTTLEY: How old were you when you moved to Collier?

WALKER: When I did what?

OTTLEY: When you moved to Collier Road?

WALKER: I was married, so it was, in 1955 is when I married, and that's when we moved to Collier Road. I lived in three places, and this is really north Buckhead, rather than Brookhaven, this is north Buckhead. But I lived on Collier Road, and I've lived on Lenox Road, and then on Valley Green, so I've had three different residences in the Buckhead area. But I'm thinking about my first memories about Buckhead are just really joyful memories because my father's uncle, J.R. Little, and my Aunt Bert, Uncle Jim and Aunt Bert, lived in a wonderful old house that was built around the turn of the century, I think around 1908. And it was on Peachtree Road, and next door to the Lucas House. The memories of that were so wonderful because Mr. J.R. was president of the family firm that my father was in. So we called him Mr. J.R., and we called all the different sons and grandsons, all in the business all went by initials. So he was Mr. J.R., James Reeves Little. Well, he liked to get the family together. That was very important to him. So he would gather us together on this front, wonderful front porch of that house there on Peachtree Road.

OTTLEY: And was it south of the Lucas House?

WALKER: Yes, south of the Lucas House. The house next door. There's a big yellow apartment house there now.<sup>1</sup> They tore that old, that house down, which I was very sorry to see go. But that house, to me, it was sort of a quiet elegance. It was white and had a big porch across the front, and we would go and sit on that porch and it was just a peaceful, beautiful setting, with oaks and magnolias in the yard. And next door was the Lucas House. Now that was an entirely different

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: The yellow building (2500 Peachtree Road) is adjacent to the north. A brick apartment complex tower now stands on property adjacent to the south, which was the location of the Little house to which Ms. Walker is referring.

set-up. It was very formal, had a wrought iron fence across the front. It was just the antithesis of Uncle Jim and Aunt Bert's house next door. But I had an impression even as a little child, I could go down the driveway to Uncle Jim's house, and I knew Aunt Bert would meet me at the door with a cup of milk and a cookie or a cup of tea. I didn't have that feeling about the Lucas House. They were so formal and it was just a different thing. Right there together you had the contrast. So that was my earliest memory of going into Buckhead, was going to the J.R. Little house.

OTTLEY: And how old, at what age and what year, do you think that would have been?

WALKER: Well, I guess I started going there as an infant, because I was born here in Atlanta, and we would go on all the birthdays and when any of the family had birthdays. And then were some other family members, the Meriwethers. The Littles had two children, Perryman Little, and he always lived in Buckhead and then there was Elizabeth, and she married Happy Merriwether, and they lived on Rivers Road. So there was a lot of visiting around in Buckhead among the relatives.

But I wanted to tell you another memory I had, early memory, about that house. Mr. J.R. passed away. Now he was very active in civic affairs and so was Aunt Bert. She was president of the Atlanta Woman's Club at one time. Well, when he passed away there was such a large gathering of people, because they knew so many people in Atlanta. I remember they gathered on that porch that day. They all came to pay their respects. And back in those days it was not unusual for a person to lie in state in their house. And so Uncle Jim was lying in state in that house. When you'd go in the house there was a foyer, large foyer, and the breezeway. Of course, old houses then had because of the air circulation. And on the right side was a dining room, and then the butler's pantry and then the kitchen. On the left side was the living room, and behind that was the

library. And so Uncle Jim was lying in state there in the library. And so Aunt Bert had us all gather together after all the guests and visitors left, and we all sat at this long table in the dining room. And I remember Aunt Bert said, it's very important that this family get together, because it's the last time we'll gather with Jim with us. So I remember that so vividly, because I thought, what dignity there is in this.

That house, to me, was grand on the inside. It was more understated on the outside, but the inside had a mahogany staircase going off of that foyer. It must have been at least eight feet wide. It was wide and it was mahogany and it was hand-carved. The railings and the posts were hand-carved. And it went up and then made a sharp right turn to the right. So that was really, my oldest memory of Buckhead is that house.

OTTLEY: What was Peachtree Road like at that time? I mean, how many cars, in the course of an hour on a Sunday afternoon, how many cars would you see go by?

WALKER: It was busy, very busy.

OTTLEY: It was busy at that time.

WALKER: Right. And, see, they, the Presbyterian church was there at that time, the Covenant Presbyterian Church, and the St. Philip's, up on the hill, was there too. Now I don't remember the Catholic church or the Methodist church being there in the '30s. I'm talking about the '30s. I don't remember any churches there except the Covenant Presbyterian Church and up on the hill was . . .

OTTLEY: Do you have any memory of a iron overpass that was built at West Wesley and Peachtree Road, that was in place, or an underpass, just right up where you're talking about, right at the junction there where the Cathedral is.

WALKER: I know where you're talking about, because it's right where the church, it's the corner where the church is.

OTTLEY: That's right.

WALKER: I don't remember that. I remember we called that Dead Man's Curve, for some reason, that sharp curve. And that was always a lot of, seemed like a lot of traffic through there, but I don't remember an overpass or an underpass there.

OTTLEY: OK. Just curious. I've heard there was one there at one point, but . . .

WALKER: There very well, I think it was there before the '30s, because I don't have any memory before the '30s.

OTTLEY: I gotcha. You mentioned living on Lenox Road.

WALKER: Lived on Lenox Road, now where, we lived in the Lenox Forest Apartments, is where I lived there.

OTTLEY: And about where are those or were those?

WALKER: It was, really we backed up to the railroad. And, of course, MARTA wasn't going through there then, but the railroad was very busy. There was a lot of railroad traffic through there. But Lenox, that was an interesting thing that happened. The change in Peachtree Road was to develop Lenox Square. And when I was a child that was one of my favorite drives, to go down

Peachtree. And Mr. John K. Ottley's big estate was there on that corner. And we would, you could drive down Lenox, you could see his horses and his paddock down there. That was really very picturesque. That was sold to the Noble family. And they built, I think, one of the first, if not the first, malls. And it was open. And it had every kind of store imaginable in there. In fact, one of the stores was Colonial grocery store. And it was not nearly as upscale as it is now. But it was really a gathering place. I think that more than anything else changed Peachtree Road, because there was so many homes in there and not much commercial development along Peachtree, except at the junction of West Paces Ferry and Peachtree. That was always a commercial—but that was where it stopped. There was not much, it was all just beautiful homes until you, and then when they took down the Ottley estate and built that mall, then we really began to see the commercial moving in.

OTTLEY: You wouldn't happen to have any pictures of that house, would you?

WALKER: I may. I have my father's albums, that I have not gone through very well. But I can do that and see . . .

OTTLEY: No one seems to be able to pull out a picture. There are no pictures of that estate house.

WALKER: I am really surprised that there are not. I can remember it very well.

OTTLEY: What did it look like?

WALKER: It was a two-story house. It sat below the street, but not nearly as deep as it is now. It was just a slight, and you entered it, you could enter the one side from Lenox and you could enter another side from Peachtree. It was a rambling, it was not a farmhouse, but it was like the

J.R. Little home. It was, it had quiet elegance about it. It wasn't built, I think, by a person who was trying to make a statement architecturally. It was just a lovely homey-looking home.

OTTLEY: A Tudor home?

WALKER: I would call it more of a, almost a prairie home to me. I think it had some gables but it also had a porch. And it had, I think it had a dirt driveway. I don't recall that it had a whole lot of plantings and all in front of it. It was more natural looking. But that was the, I think, that is what changed the personality of Peachtree Road, was the building of that mall.

OTTLEY: What about the property that Phipps Plaza is now on? Can you describe that to us?

WALKER: Oh, my goodness. That was the most gorgeous home. That was one of the most beautiful homes in Atlanta. And it sat way back, and from the, it just was so picturesque to look back. It sat way, way back from the street. Probably as far back as where the loop comes behind Phipps Plaza. It sat that far back. And it had white columns. It was not, it was more of a—it wasn't a colonial, it was more of a, well, I guess you would call it a Fredericksburg kind of home. But it was one of my favorites, because of the, the presentation of it was just so beautiful to see that.

But, James, I want to tell you about another memory I had about Buckhead and Peachtree Road and the intersection of West Paces Ferry and Peachtree Road and Roswell. My mother always bought shoes for us at a shoe store at the corner of Peachtree Road and West Paces Ferry. We were there one day and the shoe salesman said, we're going to have something special coming in this week, so you should come back and see what it is. Well, I was about five, I guess, and so I didn't understand. I thought it was going to be a parade. Well, when we got there, there were lots and lots of people. They had blocked West Paces Ferry Road. They had blocked Roswell and

Peachtree all around. But they had left Peachtree Road south open. But the crowds were gathering sort of in a semi-circle. And so when we got there I was so little I was standing on the front row of this crowd.

OTTLEY: Do you remember about what year would this have been?

WALKER: This was probably about 1935. This big truck drove up and it had a flatbed back. And the shoe store man came out of the shoe store with a megaphone. And they had a ladder there, and he climbed up the ladder and stood on the back of that truck. And he said, oh, I see our special guest coming now. And so we all looked down Peachtree, and a long black car came up and parked behind this flatbed truck. And he said, welcome our guest, Mr. Robert Wardlaw. And do you know who I'm talking about?

OTTLEY: I'm afraid I don't, but I'm looking forward to finding out.

WALKER: Well, it was very interesting. Now remember this is a shoe store that is sponsoring this man. So the doors open and the first thing I saw was this big black high-topped shoe came out and went on the floor, the concrete. And then another one came out. And then this cane. My dad was six feet. This cane was as tall as my dad. And then this head came out of the car, and it was a brown Stetson hat. And then this man stood up, and he went up, up, up. He was eight feet, nine inches tall. He was the tallest man in the world. And he had on a brown suit and had on a tie and a dress shirt. And his Stetson hat. He was a giant. And, see, I was little. I thought giants were Jack and the Beanstalk and Goliath. And he was the kindest, he had on little glasses. Well, what was so fascinating about it, he turned and just lifted his foot up and stepped up on the back of this truck. And of course when he stood up there that gave about four and a half feet more to his height. He was just enormous. And, of course, they wanted him to talk about his shoes. I don't



remember much about that. But what I do remember, people asked him questions. And one of the questions was, Mr. Wardlaw, what kind of house do you live in? And he said, I live in my mother's home, and I stand on the drive and I can wash the windows of the second floor. And then he said, I'm going to play a game with you. And he took a silver dollar out of his pocket and he put it on his shoulder. And he said, any of you fellas think you can jump up and get that silver dollar you can have it. Well, several of the boys jumped but they couldn't get it. So finally he just took it and tossed it out into the crowd. Buckhead responded to him. They were proud that he had, the biggest shoes in the world were walking Buckhead streets that day. Unfortunately, as he got older, I think he was about twenty then. As he got older his size got too much for his strength, and he had to go into braces. And one of the braces rubbed a blister on his ankle and he got blood poisoning. But I think he's still in the Book of Records as the tallest man. And he did come to Buckhead.

OTTLEY: Where did he live?

WALKER: I think he was from Ohio. It was just an anomaly. And back in those days they didn't know how tall a person might get. They didn't know how to photograph the bone or anything. So they said he was still growing. So, eight-feet-nine.

OTTLEY: That's amazing. What a neat memory.

WALKER: Well, it was just so unique. And I really, I guess I never forgot that because I . . . but I think one of your questions of famous people that I had known, and this is more of a landmark, than a famous person. I didn't really know this person. At one time Briarcliff Road was not paved beyond the Seaboard Railroad. Briarcliff when it crossed North Decatur went down a hill and then up another hill. And when it got to the railroad it was a dirt road from there on out. I

don't know how far it went at that time. But at the intersection of Briarcliff and North Druid Hills, which was also a dirt road, I had an aunt and an uncle on my mother's side that lived down North Druid Hills Road on the left. They had a, he was a practicing lawyer but he liked to do just small farming. And he had some cows and some chickens. And I would spend the weekends lots of times there. And the earliest, I went several times, but I remember one time, the first time I did this, he had butter and eggs, but he only had one customer, because he was not in the dairy business. He just had one customer. Well, I remember the first time it happened. We got in his car and we came out of his driveway and turned right down the road. And we crossed Briarcliff Road. Then there was a farmhouse that sat up on the left on a little rise, probably about three hundred yards from the intersection of these two roads. And this farmhouse sat up there. And he said, well, we've got to make our delivery. And as we turn in this driveway he said, Oh, there's Miss Tullie waiting for us.

OTTLEY: Oh, come on.

WALKER: And it was. Miss Tullie Smith came out. And he didn't, my uncle carried the eggs, and he let us children carry the butter up to her. And she was so gracious and she'd always wave at us. And she knew my cousins by name. I don't think she ever knew who I was. But she was so gracious. And that Tullie Smith House looks very much like it looks now. I thought it was bigger than it looks now. Of course, I was a child. But now, it was not in pristine condition, because it was on a dirt road, and her dirt driveway. And it was a working farmhouse.

OTTLEY: How much acreage was it on?

WALKER: I think she had, she sat probably, she probably sat a hundred and maybe 150 feet from the road. And there were other, she had other houses around that I think were hers. Because

I think she had a working farm there at one time. And I think there was a barn, there were several other houses.

OTTLEY: How old would she have been at that point?

WALKER: Well, let me see. I would imagine, of course it was hard for me to judge at that time. Maybe forty-five or fifty. She was a mature lady. She wasn't a young lady. She was a mature lady. But then I think I would have been more conscious of looking if I known that was going to be a landmark, a Buckhead landmark.

OTTLEY: That's something else. It really is. What about, do you remember when Peachtree Battle was developed and kind of what that area looked like when you were younger?

WALKER: That was already very much there when I was little. And that was one of our favorite drives, was to drive Peachtree Battle over to Northside Drive. Northside Drive had very few homes on it.

OTTLEY: I was actually talking about the shopping center, Peachtree Battle Shopping Center.

WALKER: Oh, no, there was, when I was little there was nothing there. The only shopping area really was right there at the junction of West Paces Ferry and—and those stores were small. And that area where the park is, there were stores in that. There was no cut-through there. It was just projected out there. And if you wanted to go from, if you were going south on Roswell and you wanted to go to, you had to come around and make a left turn. And I think it was much, much later that they put that cut-through through there.

OTTLEY: I remember my own mother talking about a fruit stand or fruit store or vegetable, some type of store maybe that was on. . .

WALKER: I think so, and I remember, it seemed like that corner, that they had sometimes people, I believe, it was in that point, I believe there was, and there was a filling station in there too. My uncle, one of my uncles, had a car place on Irby. But it was to repair engines and he had a place there.

OTTLEY: What was the name of that establishment, or do you remember?

WALKER: I think it went by his name. His name was Trussell, T-R-U-S-S-E-L-L. Lindsay Trussell was his name. And I remember going there. He had all sort of exotic cars there that he worked on.

OTTLEY: Such as?

WALKER: Pierce Arrow and LaSalle. And Franklin. And deSoto. I mean, all these strange names you don't hear—there was a time when America had lots and lots of automobiles. And he liked, he was a Tech graduate in mechanical engineering, so he enjoyed that. So that was another real early memory of that commercial area, that I had.

OTTLEY: That's neat. So you went to work at Lovett School.

WALKER: Right.

OTTLEY: How did you come to seek employment there? How did that come about? And was it at little Lovett? Was it at the—

WALKER: Oh, yes. I started at little Lovett.

OTTLEY: Can you tell us a little about that?

WALKER: Yes. Oh, that was a wonderful experience. I went on the faculty because I knew Dr. Royal Stephens. And he was a friend of my father's. And they were, I think at that time they were thinking about building the big school. But they still had little Lovett.

OTTLEY: And tell us about where that was.

WALKER: Do you know where Margaret Mitchell Elementary School, it was in that area, but if you went down Moore's Mill and you turned right onto West Wesley, it probably was maybe a mile on the right. And I have a lot of pictures of that. And the, it looked like an old white house.

OTTLEY: And it was set way back.

WALKER: It was set way back. And the drive went up and around and the setting was just beautiful for children because it was very woodsy and had a creek that went through it. And back in those days children had more freedom. We didn't even have a fenced yard. And that house had so much personality.

OTTLEY: Did it start out as a house? Was it a house originally or was it built as a school?

WALKER: I think it was built for a school. I don't know the details on that. But I rather think it was built for Mrs. Lovett, because when she had her school in her home down in midtown, the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta was, wanted to help her. She was not Episcopalian but somehow the school wanted to provide a place for her that, where she'd have more room. And so that's where it all started. And I think it might have gone to third or fourth grade. It wasn't just a preschool in the beginning. After they built the new school they just made that the preschool.

OTTLEY: Oh, really. So it still operated as the preschool.

WALKER: It did. When I went there in 19--, I started substitute teaching over there about 1969. I didn't go on the faculty then because my children were students there. So after the little one finished I went on the faculty. And they didn't regard preschool teachers. It was called the nursery school. It was not even called a preschool. It was a nursery school. And, of course, the teachers at Lovett in the upper grades, they thought we were just baby-sitters. So we were not even considered faculty. And Dr. Stephens, though, we petitioned that and we did move up and became part of the professional staff. That was quite wonderful.

OTTLEY: Do you remember about when the, when they moved the preschool to what would have been the new building up on the top of the hill, from the little Lovett, when they kind of abandoned that building and then maybe sold it or whatnot.

WALKER: Exactly.

OTTLEY: Do you remember about when that happened? 1967?

WALKER: Oh, I remember exactly when. '71 and '72, we were at the West Wesley School. In '73 we moved to the big school. And it's gone through so many changes too. But that was a, that was, for us, that gave a little preschool, I mean it was abandoned. But they had the faculty help us plan the preschool. And it's gone now. The preschool now is where they have. . .

OTTLEY: Maintenance. The physical plant.

WALKER: I have never been able to go back. I just—it was such a special place.

OTTLEY: I remember it was. It really was.

WALKER: Yes, you were a student at the new school preschool. And, but there was one thing about, I think I could say that about Buckhead too. The personality may have changed, but the

character never changed. And the personality in Buckhead remained, I mean the character remained there, the integrity of it.

OTTLEY: Do you remember anything about the property where, before they built the school, the big school, the Lovett School? Obviously it was a pretty large piece of property that was there, undeveloped. Do you know if that was somebody's home or was it just undeveloped land?

WALKER: As far as I ever saw, it was undeveloped. There were not any big homes along there, along the river. And Vinings wasn't even there. That was all developed later.

OTTLEY: I think the bridge, the single lane bridge was the main, the only crossing up until '70 or something like that.

WALKER: It was. And then the, to cross, if you got there you had to wait for somebody else to get through before you could go. That was rural in a way. That was all thought to be rural.

OTTLEY: Any memories of the, of Franklin's Tropical Gardens or Robinson's Tropical Gardens across the . . .

WALKER: They went dancing there. That was quite a place for fraternities to have their spring dances.

OTTLEY: Is that right.

WALKER: Robinson's Tropical Gardens.

OTTLEY: Which is now, for the sake of the camera, Canoe Restaurant.

WALKER: Yes, that's where it was, right there on the river. And, oh, it was a wonderful place. Very scenic. I remember that well. Robinson's Tropical Gardens. I hadn't thought about that in a long time.

OTTLEY: Did it exist at the same time as the Lovett School, or was it shut down by that time?

WALKER: I think it was gone. I don't remember. Now it may have been there when little Lovett was there, but I don't think it was there, I think it had already met its demise before they started the building there. And for a long time there was nothing there. It was just grassy and woody.

OTTLEY: I'm told there was a race track, actually a dirt race track across the street actually from there, from Robinson's Gardens. But I think that was back in the '30s.

WALKER: There very well could have been. I don't remember that much traffic on the river even. I don't remember people rafting on the river back in those days.

OTTLEY: What about, there are some pictures of little, a little boat. I mean, it probably would seat twenty revelers but I think was maybe connected with Robinson's Tropical Gardens that would maybe go up and down the river a little bit there. Do you have any recollection of that?

WALKER: I never saw that. Didn't know about that. I wouldn't be surprised. It was always a river that, I guess because it was not navigable it was always a recreational river.

OTTLEY: Right. You said people didn't raft down it, but did people take picnics out to the river from Buckhead or did they ever use it as kind of a place for respite or anything like that?

WALKER: There was a lot of picnicking, and that was something even on up as it went across, um, Roswell Road on up that way, there were not planned picnic areas, but there were enough



shoals along the edge that people could get down to the river. And we had several picnics on the river. Not at that particular point, but more toward Roswell, the Roswell area.

OTTLEY: So that might have been a destination place for people in Buckhead?

WALKER: I think so. The river has always been thought of as “our river.” We never had any hesitation. It was never policed. Maybe you had to have a fishing license. I don’t remember seeing people fish there. And some people would go out and swim in the river. But the river was, I didn’t remember rafting until about 19--, probably 1970. That became a real sport, and there were people, in fact, the people who lived across the street from us had a rafting service there. That became a big thing, to raft at the river. And their place was right there at the back where the Lovett School is. That was their place for their rafting.

OTTLEY: Very neat. Do you remember when you would drive out to Lovett down Paces Ferry, do you remember, Franklin Garrett, apparently his property, he lived on, at the time it was probably sixty acres or so at the corner of Paces Ferry right where it crosses Nancy Creek there. And I’m told he had a train car or a trolley car or something like that that was, or maybe a caboose even, that was right on the river where he would sit. I don’t know how he got it there in the first place. Do you remember anything about that?

WALKER: Yes, and in fact the Lovett School got that caboose.

OTTLEY: Is that where that caboose came from, from Franklin Garrett?

WALKER: Right. And that caboose sat on our play-yard for years and years and years. Then it got to be a hazard. It sat right on the edge of the creek.

OTTLEY: You mean at Lovett?

WALKER: At Lovett.

OTTLEY: I remember it at Lovett. I just didn't remember. . . .

WALKER: I understood that had come off of Mr. Garrett's property, but I don't know. You don't know what's legend and what's true. It was a caboose.

OTTLEY: I remember it. I remember when it showed up on the playground. We were absolutely thrilled.

WALKER: I'll tell you another interesting thing too about Lovett, when I was at little Lovett. Carolyn Hatcher was a teacher at Lovett, and then she went on under, the mayor invited her to come and join his staff. And he, Mayor Andrew Young, he made her head of the Parks Department. Well, we were just beginning to have what we called a Spring Fling, and all the Buckhead families, of course everybody connected with Buckhead was invited. And Carolyn called me one day and she said, Miss Charlotte, would you like to have a very special treat for your Spring Fling? And I said, well, we would, what is it? And she said, would you like to have Starlet the Elephant? And I said, well, that would be wonderful. And it was a baby elephant. And so she sent that, got that elephant. It had never been out of the zoo. She put that elephant on a truck. Now the preschool was up a woodsy lane, up on a hill overlooking the main campus. Well, that elephant came in that car. Of course, the parents were all there, so the highway, they had a hard time getting the truck through those cars. So they had to park the truck down at the bottom of the hill and walk the little elephant up to the preschool. Well, the cars were moving, and the trainers, I think, got nervous about that. So after the elephant visited with the children and all, it was just the most fun time, the trainer asked, I was director of the preschool, and they said, is there some way we can go down where we can park the trailer down in front of the big school by

the pond. Is there some way we can get down there without going through all that car traffic. And I said, well, as a matter of fact, you can go through the woods. And there was a trail that went around the side of the school and down, crossed a bridge, and then up and over to the soccer field and then finally to the upper school. Well, they said, oh, well, that'll be good. We won't be in the traffic. So they took that little elephant—and she wasn't little. She wasn't full grown, but she was a big animal.

OTTLEY: And her name was Starlet?

WALKER: Her name was Starlet. I think it was Starlet O'Hara. So they took her down this trail. Well, this little elephant, she had never been out in the woods. She was reaching up and pulling vines and just having the time of her life. Got down to that bridge and she stomped across that little bridge across that creek, and then we got to the soccer field. And it was fenced. And so the trainer said, I just think she needs to run. And so they opened the gate and they turned her loose. And she started running. And she ran all the way across that soccer field. Of course, it was fenced in. She couldn't get out. That, I know that was the happiest moment of that elephant's life. Because she was totally free out there. She ran the whole length of that soccer field. Well, what was really funny to me, I followed them down there to make sure they got off the campus and everything. When we got to the pond, all these students, a lot of them had really nice cars. Porsches and all these nice cars parked around the pond. That little elephant went up to the pond and dipped her trunk into that pond. It was muddy. She sprayed, she sprayed all those cars. And the students in the upper school were looking out the window. And it was the first time, and I guess the only time, an elephant came to Lovett School.

OTTLEY: That is a great story. It's so great to get it on video too.

WALKER: I've got pictures of that.

OTTLEY: We probably need to do this again and get all these pictures. So that probably was a highlight of your, one of your highlights of your time at Lovett. On a topic that's, was a tragedy for our city and our area, do you remember, and I hate to bring up something so negative, but it is history, do you remember the missing and murdered children that happened in Atlanta, do you remember that or could you talk anything about that and maybe at Lovett School, how that was—

WALKER: That was certainly troubling. I think that's when Lovett became very conscious of safety. And we fenced in our yards and we were very worried about that. That was certainly an Atlanta tragedy. There was another tragedy too, and it's the only really sad tragedy that I sort of witnessed. Didn't really witness the tragedy but I felt close to it. And that was June the third, 1962.

OTTLEY: Orly.

WALKER: That was something. And I guess when a tragedy strikes you remember so many details about where you were when you heard it. I was in church because it was the Sunday my infant son was baptized. At the end of the service during the last—

OTTLEY: What church?

WALKER: Morningside Presbyterian. And at the end, during the last hymn someone came up and spoke to the minister. When the hymn was finished, he said, before I say the benediction I have something very sad to tell you. And he said, the chartered plane has crashed in Paris, and it was Atlanta residents. Well, we couldn't find out any more about it. We went outside, and people

got their car radios trying to find out something. We didn't know very much until late that afternoon. Someone called us and told us that the newspapers were dropping, were getting Extras out, and they were dropping in different places around the city. And they were dropping one bundle at Blackburn and Roswell Road and Piedmont. Well, by that time it was getting late in the evening. The street lights were just beginning to come on. So we got in the car and went up there. The truck had not arrived. Well, while we were standing there—there were a lot of people, well over a hundred people were gathered, Buckhead people, were gathered in that area. The truck drove up and the man got out of the newspaper truck and he dropped several bundles of, they were tied with rope, of these Extras. And he just cut the ropes. Everybody went up and just got one. What was so, I think, memorable about it to me, that particular moment, people came up and got their Extras, but they didn't leave. They stood under the street light, some of 'em with flashlights, and read it. Because it was the first time we were ever going to see the names of the people that were on the plane. And that gathering, and we stood there and read it too, and you could hear the crowd murmur, and you'd hear somebody speak out. It was more or less shared grief. I think that's why people didn't leave, because there was some comfort in being there. And we knew one lady, one family listed. But even if you didn't know them personally you recognized the name. Because these were people who were the volunteers and the civic people and people that contributed so much to the, not just Buckhead, they had contributed so much to Atlanta. So that was my, one of my really sad moments.

I have a better memory of that than I do the missing children. That was tragic and fearful. And so complicated because they never were really, seemed like the public was never really sure who actually did it, because the man that they arrested was pleading so hard to be released. So that was a troubling time too.

OTTLEY: I'm trying to relate this to Buckhead and maybe through the course of your response we can relate it, but when the Loew's Grand Theatre burned, do you have a recollection of that? That would have been '75, '76?

WALKER: Oh, I remember that, but I also remember the Loew's Grand when it was decorated like Tara. And I went and stood on the steps of the Fox Theatre and watched the Tara, not the Tara, but the *Gone With the Wind* personalities drive up in front of the Georgian Terrace.

OTTLEY: Is that right.

WALKER: I would have been six. And I stood on that step and I remember Clark Gable. They drove up in convertibles. And Clark Gable got out, and he stood up on that balcony there at the Georgian Terrace, and he said, "I heard that Atlanta only had about two hundred and fifty thousand people. I'm amazed because I've seen a million on the highway coming in from the airport." I don't know why you would remember something like that. They were all there. Hattie McDaniel, all of 'em were there on that terrace. And that was a big thing. And so they had the premiere at the Loew's Grand Theater. And they had columns across the front. Oh, that was big. And I had met, I didn't really meet Margaret Mitchell, but she lived on Peachtree Road, and I drove, I rode the bus—

OTTLEY: Whereabouts on Peachtree?

WALKER: She lived, let's see. If you know where the Christian Science Church is, well, the High Museum. If you were standing on the steps of the High Museum and looked down to the left, about halfway up that block was their home. But she wasn't living there when I saw her. She was actually living on a little street off of Tenth Street. And that, you know, that's where the Margaret Mitchell House is now.

OTTLEY: The “Rat House” I think is how she referred to it, at the time.

WALKER: Well, that’s where she was living. And she would get on the bus that I was riding. I would ride the bus down Peachtree. And I would get off at Whitehall and Peachtree, then I’d walk up to get the Girls’ High streetcar up at Rich’s. She would get on the bus. And she’d always have on a little cloche hat. She was a tiny little lady. She got on, and she always sat, she got on and she’d sit on that side seat. She’d put her token, money in, and it would ding. She would wait for that and then she’d go sit. And she’d sit very quietly. You could hear a pin drop when she would get on. There was that much respect for her. Of course, she had already written *Gone With the Wind*. It was only about three years after that she was killed. But I, I just, that was exciting to me.

OTTLEY: When would that have been?

WALKER: She was killed in ’49. So that would have probably been about, I was in high school, so it must have been about a year before she was killed, maybe ’46.

OTTLEY: So just hitting on the burning of the Loew’s Grand, any specific memories of that or just hearing on the news?

WALKER: I remember when it burned. It was, and I think we all regretted so much because it was a landmark because of *Gone With the Wind*. But it was not a really nice theater on the inside. It was crowded. I was surprised that they had it there and didn’t have it at the Fox. Even as a child I thought why are they having it here. I went to see it, didn’t go to the premiere, but I went to see it about a week later, we went. And I had been in the Fox, it was such a marvelous, it was so marvelous. And that Loew’s Grand Theatre, the balcony was almost straight up. And it was a small theater. One of the reasons it was small, they had a doctor’s office was in there. And my,

my family doctor had his office and when you went to his office you didn't go through the main place where you bought your ticket, but you went down some stairs and you went over the theater. And I think that's why it was so crowded, because his office was on the front, see, and that balcony went up, and the offices, I think that's why it was so steep. It was a strange place for a doctor's office.

OTTLEY: That is strange. I know they had medical offices in the basement of Lenox, and dental offices in the basement of Lenox for years.

WALKER: It's odd they tuck these offices. . .well, his name was McDaniel. And actually, Perryman Little, my father's cousin, it was a friend of his. That's how we happened to be going to him, because he and Perryman were friends. And so we started going to Dr. McDaniel. But I think he had already retired maybe when the, when it burned.

OTTLEY: You mentioned, and this just kind of came to me, you talked about seeing when Clark Gable said, I've seen a million people on the highway. What was it like when, you know, they cut 75 through and re-routed Howell Mill? What was the feeling in Buckhead when that happened? What was it like knowing that 285, I mean like 85, how did that, do you have any memories of that?

WALKER: Yes, and I'll tell you what I think really saved Buckhead. They elevated it, for the most part. You went over West Wesley. You went over North Stratford. And that's the difference between 75 and 400. I don't recall that 75 was objected to so much because I think the way it was done and lifting it up, you were not really aware. You could go down West Wesley and go under. You didn't see it. And noise rises so you really didn't hear it. Now what we went through here with 400, was entirely different. And this was sort of, we're in north Buckhead.



We're sort of on the periphery of main Buckhead. But we are Buckhead. And so when they put 400 through, we fought it. I fought it. I, with my parents, had fought 485 going through Morningside. They won the battle but they lost their house. It was never put through but all the houses were ruined. Here they started tearing the houses down. On North Stratford and that area in there off of Wieuca. Those houses went down. And we aligned ourselves with the Sierra Club to try to fight it. And the DOT would come out and we would have meetings all around Buckhead. Especially north Buckhead where it was going to have its greatest impact. And they were so indifferent toward us. They said, oh, we're going to make it more beautiful. We're going to put azaleas. We're going to line it with beautiful—well, what was so bad for my particular area is that they put eighteen lanes across the street from me behind those houses, for the toll booths. It was nine lanes on each side, and these tremendous lights. And we lost our night sky. I at one time could look up and see the big dipper from my porch, but, see, that went in. But the main problem was, it was sunken, so you could see it and you could hear it. And it was different from 75. Made a big difference.

OTTLEY: Interesting. Well, selfishly, can you tell me a little bit about, you mentioned your, I think you said great-uncle, was it J.R. Little, was your—

WALKER: J.R. Little, James Reeves Little. He was married to Roberta Perryman. And she was from Alabama. And they married. And my uncle Jim, there were several brothers together in business.

OTTLEY: I'd love to hear about that business. Did he start that the business, Dougherty, Redwine and Company?

WALKER: They did. Well, they were actually in partnership with the Doughertys and the Redwines. With the Doughertys and the Littles and the Redwines. Two of my uncles—and I didn't know the Doughertys or the Redwines. They started about the turn of the century. They organized that. They were the largest wholesale distributors in the south. There were a few others. They were on Pryor Street. And they were the block south, one block south, of the court house, on Pryor Street. But they started that business, and the other brother that was with them was Mr. George William Little. And they called him Mr. G.W. And my father had lost his parents very young. His mother very young. So he had lived with the G.W. Littles. And Mr. G.W., before he joined the firm, he was not one of the original Littles. Mr. J.R. was one of the original Littles. Mr. G.W. was a friend of Mr. Candler. And when Mr. Candler—

OTTLEY: This would have been Asa, Sr. Asa Griggs Candler, Sr.

WALKER: Asa, Sr. Yes, he was the granddaddy of all the Coca-Colas. He and my Uncle Will, we called him Mr. G.W., were friends. And so I think Mr. G.W. had already sort of gotten into the family business, but Mr. Candler asked him to manage the Coca-Cola Company in Baltimore. And so he moved to Baltimore with his family, and my father moved with them, because his own family had been scattered when his mother died. And Mr. G.W. was up there until, I guess until the Woodruffs bought it. And then he came back and worked at Dougherty, Redwine. And when Mr. J.W., G.W., J.W. died, Mr. G.W. was president. And then they each one moved up. Unfortunately, none of the grandsons wanted to go into the business. The sons did.

OTTLEY: I thought Perryman, well, he was a son, I guess.

WALKER: He was a son. But none of the grandsons. My brother went into law, and Mr. G.W.'s son went into medicine. Sam Little went into medicine. Perryman, young Perryman, went into the military. So the family constellation kind of was terminated as far as the business was concerned. And they sold to a New York firm. And it was quite a sad thing. But one thing you might find interesting.

OTTLEY: When did that sale occur?

WALKER: That sale occurred about, I would say, late '60s or 1970, somewhere along. No, I take that back. Early '60s. Probably around '62 or '63.

OTTLEY: And they sold it for, did they sell it for a profit? Was it a healthy, going concern at the time?

WALKER: Oh, I think so. And the New York firm, they did not have any connections in the south. And so they asked my father to come back. They changed the name. But they asked my father if he would come back as a consultant for the firm. And so he did. But he only lasted there about a year and a half. Because he said, they don't do business like we do. He said, I don't want any more to do it. Well, one of the things that Mr. G.W., Mr. J.R. did, rather, he loved gatherings, and he liked to get everybody together. And so, at the corner of Wieuca Road and Roswell, there was the big Wieuca Inn on that corner. That's where the Fresh Market is now, that area, that shopping area there. There was a big inn, the Wieuca Inn. And every summer Mr. J.R. would have a barbecue for us. And we would go, and they would roast pigs out there in that, on that . . . .

OTTLEY: Who owned that property?

WALKER: The Wieuca Inn. It was their property. I don't think it was an inn, in that they had residents or sleeping quarters. It was a restaurant. But we never ate in the restaurant because Mr. J.R. wanted to have that barbecue out there in the summertime. Roswell Road at that point was dirt, from there to Roswell.

OTTLEY: Do you remember anything about, you know, the Blue Heron, where that kind of nature preserve it now, kind of across from the, Post Apartments used to be, I think it was a Hastings, there was a Pike's Nursery that was there. Across the street is that nature preserve now.

WALKER: It was never developed. That was very . . . .

OTTLEY: You don't remember there being a mill? That would have been long ago.

WALKER: No, the mill was on Wieuca. There was a mill on Wieuca Road. Right at the bridge there was an old mill. Now, I never saw the mill in operation. There was a big mill wheel there. Just where the falls are. And I think the flues were there. And there was a big, but it was not operating when I was a child. But that was one of our favorite drives, was to drive down Wieuca. And then that cut-through to Chastain Park wasn't there yet, when I was little. That wasn't there. The West Wieuca Road was not there. And then you'd get up to the Wieuca dead-end into Roswell Road, and that's where that big Wieuca Inn was located. But if you wanted to go to Roswell—and, see, Perryman Little had a house at Morgan Falls. You had to go on the dirt road up there. And if it rained you had a mighty hard time on that dirt road. And the, that whole section in there, the forest was so dense that the trees met at the top. And that was one of the, watching Buckhead change, and watching north Atlanta change, that was hard to see. But it was growing. We couldn't help it. They needed the space, and people were moving in. Speaking of the population of Atlanta, there was an apartment building, and I think they still may do this.

There was an apartment building down on the right after you passed the Piedmont Hospital and Collier Road.

OTTLEY: The Darlington I think is what you're speaking of.

WALKER: The Darlington is the name of it. Mayor Hartsfield wanted so much for Atlanta to have a million people. It was struggling around 250 [thousand] or something like that. He wanted it to have a million. But it was, then they were stretching out, not necessarily within the city limits, but in the environments, he wanted a million people. So it was one of the first neon signs in Atlanta. He had this neon sign put up there in front of the Darlington to record, and I think they may still do it, I don't know.

OTTLEY: They do.

WALKER: The last time I was by there it was still going. And, of course, it passed a million. I don't know if he lived to see the million mark or not. But that was his ambition. In fact, he was one of our neighbors when I was a child. He lived down the street from me. On Pelham Road.

OTTLEY: Well, I feel like we've covered a lot tonight, this evening. Is there anything else you think we haven't touched on?

WALKER: Well, I don't want to take too much of your time. I hope we've covered all you were interested in. You had asked about some famous people. And I guess as I told you, I had met Diane Bish, too. She's the organist. I met her at a reception. There were always people coming into the Atlanta History Center. Wonderful, that was a wonderful addition. I hated to see the

residence—and that, I’m going to tell you one more story about that residence.<sup>2</sup> We didn’t call it the Swan House. We called it the Nunnally home. When I was, oh, it’s not been that many years ago, my niece and nephew had lived in Saudi Arabia, and they came to Atlanta to visit me. They were moving back from Saudi Arabia, so they came to visit. And they said, we want to, would really love to see something of Atlanta. They would be here only for a short time because they were going on to another place. So we drove downtown so they could see how that looked. And I said well, I want to show you some of the Buckhead houses, because it’s so beautiful out there. So they said ok. So we drove down West Paces Ferry and we drove around, and then went down Blackland. And I parked in front of the Nunnally home. And I tried to tell them as much as I knew about the Nunnallys. What was so interesting, a tour bus came up and parked on the other side. We were parked on the right side looking up at the home. We were parked there. While I was trying to tell them about the Nunnallys I said, I think now there is a prince that lives there. And they said, oh, that’s interesting. And I said I don’t know him, I’ve never met him, I’ve just heard that it’s a prince now and not the Nunnallys anymore. So about that time this car came down the driveway from the home. And as it turned left onto Blackland it stopped and this man driving it looked over there and he waved, and my nephew waved, and they jumped out, and it was the prince. And they had known each other in Saudi Arabia because my nephew had helped, he was the engineer on the Royal Residence.

OTTLEY: That is something else.

WALKER: And so we all got out of the car. And the prince was hugging us. And here this tour bus [laughs] got to see that. And so the prince said, can you, I’m on an appointment. He was

---

<sup>2</sup> Editor’s note: As evidenced later in the transcript, Ms. Walker does not mean the Swan House, but is actually referring to a residence on Blackland Road.

driving his own car. He said, I've got an appointment, could, and I would like to invite you. He said, can you come back tomorrow. And they couldn't because they were leaving. But I thought my goodness, there all at once we had the home, we had the tour bus, and we had the prince. You couldn't have programmed it.

OTTLEY: Absolutely. You couldn't have planned it. That's a wonderful story.

WALKER: Well, and the people on the bus after he pulled off said, who, was that the prince, was that the prince? And my nephew, he said, and he knew his name and everything, said, yes, that's the prince.

OTTLEY: For some reason it seems like Faisal or something. Prince Faisal.

WALKER: I think it was. There were several of them. And I think he was actually a nephew to the king. I don't think he was the son. But he was one, as I remember, wasn't he?

OTTLEY: I don't recall.

WALKER: And I don't know really where he went after he left Atlanta.

OTTLEY: It's interesting that he landed in Atlanta.

WALKER: Of course, that home has been on the tour of homes, the . . .

OTTLEY: And it was the Nunnally home, and they were a big Coca-Cola family. Is that right?

WALKER: Actually, there were two Nunnally families and now in my old age I have forgotten which one they were. There was the Nunnally candy family, and there was the Nunnally overall family. And I think they might have been the Candler, I mean the candy family. See, most everybody had Coca-Cola stock. That was, if you had any extra change, you bought Coca-Cola

stock. So, who could say that they were not connected to Coca-Cola. But I think he was actually either in the clothing or the candy. And of course the Inman home was another famous. . . .

OTTLEY: The Swan House.

WALKER: The Swan House was another famous, and I think I said Swan House and I meant Nunnally. It was the Nunnally home that we parked in front of, not the Swan House. The Swan House was probably the most picturesque of all the homes. And it was the setting . . . in fact, James, whenever I travel in a big city and have an opportunity I like to go and see the residential areas. And I had an opportunity to go to Los Angeles. And one of the things we did there, they took the ladies on a ladies' tour. And they took us to the movie studios and we saw movies produced. And then they took us out to Beverly Hills. And I was an adult then, I was grown and married. But they drove us around Beverly Hills. And the homes were gorgeous. It was the movie star homes. But I looked at 'em and I thought, they're not as beautiful as Buckhead. These were gorgeous homes. And the more I thought about it, I think the reason is the setting. They were fairly close to the street. They maybe had a fifty foot distance between them. Elegant homes. Well, what made Buckhead so distinctive to me was the setting. These gracious, long yards, and the plantings, and it was just—and so many people that have come here, friends of ours from other places said they had never seen anything quite as beautiful and gracious as Buckhead.

OTTLEY: Do you remember, and I should get the name right here, but I believe it was, is Woodhaven, is that correct, the name of the estate where the Governor's Mansion now is?

WALKER: Where it is now. Yes, now that was the home of Maddox. Yes, that was Maddox. That was an English Tudor. And it was, had lots and lots of oak trees. It was one of the most



densely foliated, and then the tornado came through and took that all out. It was just, they were lucky to have saved any of those trees. But I bet they lost twenty big oaks out of that front yard when it went through. It came through my neighborhood, too, and took, a tree fell across my property too. I remember that coming through that morning. We were getting ready to go to school, and I had the radio on. And it gave a warning. And then I heard it. And I, we have a downstairs area, and I said, children—John was not up, my son was not up. And Catherine and I got downstairs, and then the thing fell. And I knew it had fallen on that end, and I was so afraid, but John was—it took the, part of the house off and the gutters and broke the window, but he was not hurt.

OTTLEY: That would have been '73 or '74.

WALKER: Right. That was, yes, it was that one that went through and took out so much in Hanover West, and I think that Cross Creek, that property was heavily damaged. And then it came across West Paces Ferry and took out so much, just a swath through there. But Buckhead always had a way of coming back.

OTTLEY: Bouncing back. That's great.

WALKER: Right.

OTTLEY: Well, thank you so much. Like I said, I think we've covered a lot, and . . .

WALKER: Maybe more than you ever wanted!

OTTLEY: No, it was perfect. But I don't want to cut us off too soon if there is something else you want to say.

WALKER: No, I guess the last thing I'd like to say I think is Buckhead changed, and its personality has changed. It doesn't, there's not the formality that I once thought of Buckhead. It's more informal now. But the character never changed. The integrity was always, they were able to keep that. And I give a lot of credit to Sam Massell and the Buckhead Heritage group. I mean, you all have made a point to preserve its history. And as I had said earlier too, I hope every community in Atlanta—Ansley Park is such an aristocratic area, Morningside, and the Highland area. I hope every section in Atlanta has some sort of organization that will save the history. Because this is a wonderful city. We've got great things to remember. But we have such an influx of people from other parts of the country and the world, that don't know it. The only way they will know it is to do things like you're doing.

OTTLEY: That's right. Or picking up a handy copy of *Atlanta History For Cocktail Parties*.

WALKER: And thank you.

OTTLEY: Thank you so much.