

Buckhead Heritage Society
Oral History Project
Interview with Henry Grady

October 9, 2011

Interviewers: Chad Wright and James Ottley

CHAD WRIGHT: This is an interview with Henry Grady of Atlanta, Georgia, a native Atlantan, banker, and great-grandson of the great writer Henry Grady. This interview is being conducted on October 9, 2011, at his residence on Carlton Drive adjacent to Chastain Park. The interviewer is Chad Wright representing the Buckhead Heritage Society, Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Grady, thanks for having us in your house today and welcoming us.

HENRY GRADY: You're welcome.

WRIGHT: Give us a little bit of background about where you were born, when you were born, and where you grew up.

GRADY: I was born here in Atlanta in 1930 and I grew up in Atlanta as well.

WRIGHT: What part of Atlanta?

GRADY: Well, for the first seven years I lived with my grandparents. Those were the years of the Depression. It was not unusual for families to double up. And so, my mother and father and I lived with my Grady grandparents in their home on Peachtree and 25th Street. There's a shopping center at that location now. In 19—, well, before 1937, Montgomery Ward began accumulating all the property from the railroad tracks to Huntington Road on Peachtree. Our house was right in the middle. My grandfather had told people several times that he did not want to sell the house. But finally he decided he would just name a price that was so astronomical they would go away. Well, they needed that property, the acreage, and so he sold the property and he had to tell his wife, my grandmother. And she said, "Well, you've sold our home, so now you'll have to go find us another place to live." So he did. She had no hand in it whatsoever. My father and mother and me, we went around and looked at lots of homes on the northside and couldn't find any that suited, big enough to accommodate us and that suited us. So they went and bought two lots on West Wesley Road, a block off Peachtree, and built a two-family home on that property. And so I lived there from 1937 on 'til the time I got married in 1961. But many of those years I was away at school. I wasn't actually in Atlanta at that time.

OTTLEY: So that house started out as a duplex.

GRADY: Yes, that's right.

WRIGHT: Is that the house at the corner of Rivers Road and West Wesley?

GRADY: Yes, it is.

WRIGHT: By duplex, who lived in the other half?

GRADY: The younger Grady family lived on the left-hand side. It was a two-story proposition. And the Grady, Sr., family lived on the right-hand side. It was two stories as well.

WRIGHT: And when did the house, when did your parents sell the house?

GRADY: My parents never sold the house. They never sold the house. What happened was, my grandparents died during World War II. Housing was in short supply at that time, and so their apartment was leased to several different people. First the Colquitt, people named Colquitt, then to a Mrs. Zinnser and then, I believe she was the last one to live on that side. And then my brother, Robert, and his family moved into the apartment on the right-hand side. My mother and father were still living then. They passed away, and I inherited the other half, their half, and I rented it for several years. Finally my brother died, no, before my brother's death we got a contract. It took a long time to get a contract. It was such a specialized kind of house. And they were building new buildings at the corner of West Wesley and Peachtree, and so the road was full of construction trucks, and at some points the road was totally closed off. You couldn't get to Peachtree. You had to turn right on Rivers Road, go down that way. Finally that all passed and we did sell it. That was in 1996.

WRIGHT: 1996. And did someone buy it as a rental, do you think? Or have they renovated it as a single family?

GRADY: No, no. The family that bought it, the man that bought it is a local homebuilder, and his mother was living up on Peachtree at Peachtree House. And so he and his family took the left-hand side. The apartments were a little larger, and his mother lived on the right-hand side. And he did some good construction and renovation to the house. So it continued to be a two-family house. And since her death, he has three daughters if I remember correctly, and they've expanded it, just used the whole house as it was without changing the structure.

WRIGHT: Do you remember who the architect, I know this has been a long while back, but do you remember who the architect was on the house?

GRADY: Yes, Cooper and Cooper.

WRIGHT: Cooper and Cooper. I've always wondered about that house, because it looks like it potentially could have been a duplex, but I never knew if it was or not. That's interesting. Well, growing up on West Wesley, what were some of your memories of it as a child or young adolescent? Where did you go to elementary school?

GRADY: Oh, I went to E. Rivers School. I could ride my bicycle down Rivers Road to Peachtree Battle and up to the school. Now that was a downhill, that was a downhill ride most of the way. And so coming home was all uphill. And sometimes I'd come up Rivers Road but often I'd come up Peachtree. And, you know, no problem. The traffic was not so heavy that you couldn't ride on the sidewalk or get out in the street. And I had two good friends who lived on Peachtree, Gary Stradling and Charles King. Both of them went to E. Rivers with me. And later the three of us went away to prep school together. Gary lives in New York, and Charles still lives here.

WRIGHT: You still keep in touch?

GRADY: Oh, yes.

WRIGHT: And was Charles King any relation to the King that developed, or that King Road is named for?

GRADY: No, but he was kin to the King of King and Spalding, who started the law firm.

WRIGHT: That's significant. So would that have been his dad?

GRADY: It was his grandfather.

WRIGHT: His grandfather. Any good stories of mischief or anything in and around Peachtree, or—.

GRADY: I can't think of any mischief particularly that we got into. But there was a stream that went down behind his house and went down along Rivers Road on the Peachtree side, which would have be the east side of Rivers Road. And we enjoyed getting down there in the spring, like boys will do, playing in the mud, finding frogs, all that kind of thing. My mother didn't think much of me playing in the creek. But we did, and enjoyed that together. Charles, particularly Charles King and I.

WRIGHT: Any stories from elementary school, any favorite teachers at E. Rivers?

GRADY: Yes, the fifth grade teacher, Miss Sutton, probably was one of my favorites. Then the seventh grade teacher, Ms. Perriman was also a fan. And she would play softball with the boys. We thought that was just wonderful for a teacher. And a lot of times the bell would ring, the recess was supposed to be over, and we were still at a crucial point in the game, so she would play on, she'd let us finish the game. We enjoyed that.

OTTLEY: Were you there when the building burned down?

GRADY: No, I wasn't, but I was in town. I happened to be in town. And by that time I was old enough to drive a car. And I was in Buckhead, in the heart of Buckhead, and so I wondered what all that smoke and ringing of bells was and I went down there, and so I was present when the school was burning. But I wasn't a student there at that time.

WRIGHT: What year was that? Roughly.

GRADY: Oh, my. I would guess about 1965, maybe.¹

WRIGHT: I think it might have been prior to that. My mother attended E. Rivers and I think was, remembered the fire. I could be wrong.

GRADY: Yes, I'm sure she did.

WRIGHT: Did they ever find the cause of it?

¹ E. Rivers Elementary School burned down in 1948.

GRADY: Yes, the janitor was, they had wide overhanging eaves, and so bees would get up under the eaves. And so he had like a sponge on a long stick. He would put it up there, and the smoke was supposed to get the bees out. And it did. But in the meanwhile he set the building on fire.

WRIGHT: Were the fire escapes kind of unique? I remember my mother saying there were fire escapes that had these slides, or something like that, and they always liked to, loved the fire drills because you got to slide out of the school down to the—could you tell us about that?

GRADY: Well, they were enclosed. It was like being in a tube. Which at first was a little scary for a young kid. But as you say they would even go to the trouble of waxing the slide so that you could get on down ‘em. That was a lot of fun.

WRIGHT: Do you remember the trolley at all on Peachtree?

GRADY: The trolley? Well, now, trolley suggests to me streetcar.

WRIGHT: Correct. Streetcar.

GRADY: And the streetcar, the one came out Peachtree and stopped at Pershing Point. The other one came out West Peachtree and then it joined, West Peachtree joined Peachtree there at that area, and it continued. Yes, it came on by, it came on out Peachtree and went by our house when we were living there on Peachtree, and continued out to Oglethorpe [University]. And that was the end of the line.

WRIGHT: And did you ride it as a kid or young man?

GRADY: I remember my father taking me on the streetcar on one of its last runs that it made. That’s the only occasion that I recall. The streetcars were replaced by something called trackless trolleys. The trackless trolley was much like a bus. Had rubber tires. But it had two antennas that stuck up in the back and went up to wires. I guess one wire was positive and the other one was negative. I don’t know. Anyway, that went up to two wires so that it could move from the curb out into the middle of the street. And I remember riding that downtown and into Buckhead, in both directions, for many years. We had those all during World War II so we rode the bus a lot.

WRIGHT: What were your memories of Buckhead back in the, when you first moved in the ‘30s and ‘40s? How was the life and what was the life? Did you feel detached from the city? Did you feel like you were in your own enclave?

GRADY: In the 1930s, you see, I was probably only about seven years old. So I wasn’t doing a lot of independent riding on the streetcar. Buckhead, yes, I felt like Buckhead was very much detached. An enclave within itself. At some point, probably when I was at E. Rivers in grammar school, my mother decided that I really needed to take dancing lessons. And so I would frequently, I was living on West Wesley Road by that time and I would ride my bicycle to Buckhead and go to Margaret Bryan’s Dancing School.

WRIGHT: And where was that?

GRADY: Well, it was in the building at the corner of West Paces Ferry Road and Peachtree, where it divides, where Roswell Road goes off this way and where Peachtree goes that way. It was a building on the corner, on the second floor. The building’s still there.

WRIGHT: And did you, was it for ballroom dancing?

GRADY: It was for ballroom, yes, it was for ballroom dancing.

WRIGHT: Did you put that to good use ever?

GRADY: Oh, yes, I did. I enjoyed that very much. I didn't enjoy it much at the time. I had a very wooly pair of pants that I usually wore to the dancing lessons. And so I dreamed up the idea of wearing my pajama bottoms under the wooly pants. And so on one or two occasions when I was going to dancing school, I had the pants, you see, you rolled up your pants so they wouldn't get caught in the [bicycle] chain. And my pajama bottoms fell down and got caught in the chain. And so I had a very difficult time getting myself loose from the bicycle.

WRIGHT: Was it a cold day? Is that why you had your pajama bottoms on?

GRADY: Oh, yes. I'm sure it was a cold day. I wouldn't be wearing heavy wool pants in warm weather.

WRIGHT: And where did you go to high school?

GRADY: Well, I went to North Fulton High School for about a year and a half. And then my father had been trying to get me into Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts, where I went with Charles King and Gary Stradling, who I mentioned earlier. They were my friends. They were already there. There was no place for me at the beginning of the year, so I went in the middle of the year.

WRIGHT: How was that transition?

GRADY: Very easy.

WRIGHT: You had friends up there.

GRADY: I had friends there. And made more friends. I really enjoyed my years there very much. We did a Gilbert and Sullivan show every year that I was there. And I participated in all of those during the years I was there.

WRIGHT: What brought you back to Atlanta?

GRADY: Well, after being in New England for three and a half years, I wanted to come back to the south to go to college, and so I went to Washington & Lee University, which is in Lexington, Virginia. And I was only in Atlanta for holidays, Christmas holiday, or summertime, holidays and the summertime.

WRIGHT: What did you study at Washington & Lee?

GRADY: I majored in French.

WRIGHT: And when you got out of school what did you do? Did you go to France?

GRADY: No, the Korean War was on at that time. And I had been a member of a Navy Reserves unit in Fishersville, Virginia, which is about halfway between Lexington and Charlottesville.

There were a lot of college students in that unit. And so, I was trying to change from that unit to another unit down in Roanoke, Virginia. And so I was not attending regularly, and I got a notice from the Navy that I was being called to active duty. And so my father, who had been down in Florida, came up, and we went to see the commanding officer and he said, "No, they're not going to take one of my boys." And he called Norfolk and got the order changed, so that I could continue and finish my education at W&L. But, I had to go immediately to active duty when school was completed. I went to the ROC, Reserved Officer Candidate School, which you do in the summertime. And I had done one summer after my junior year at college and another summer after my senior year. I went to duty in Norfolk, Virginia, on the USS Missouri. I had requested a large ship in the Atlantic. And it was about the biggest ship the Navy had at that time.

WRIGHT: And a very historic ship.

GRADY: A very historic ship.

WRIGHT: It was where they signed the, the Japanese surrender.

GRADY: Yes, the Japanese surrendered at the end of World War II. The peace was signed on the decks of that ship. There was a plaque in the deck, a silver plaque in the deck, marking the spot. And we had silver stanchions that we brought out when we having visitors. And we had lots of visitors. The ship was showing the flag, and so we went to many ports and had thousands of people coming on board. When we did that we put up the stanchions, we polished up the silver plaque, we cleaned the decks beautifully. Everything looked great. That was the kind of life that I lived when I was on active duty. It was, greeting people. I never had the opportunity to navigate the ship or to hold the wheel or anything like that when we were underway, because my administrative duties were heavy. And in addition to that they really didn't want me on the bridge.

WRIGHT: What was your rank?

GRADY: I was an ensign, which is the lowest officers' rank. And I became a lieutenant j.g. while I was on board. But I was always the first one to have watch when we hit shore, because I had not had watch while these other young guys were all busy navigating the ship, learning how to plot your course, and shoot the stars, all this sort of thing. Keep the ship on course. I never had that opportunity. So I always felt like I was a little bit deprived. I was not really a line officer, because they're supposed to know how to do that. Now I can tell you all about the personnel rules and regulations. The personnel officer maintained all the enlisted men's records, and the captain's office maintained all the officers' records. And in addition to that, in the administrative department we had to master [unintelligible]. We had a police force; it varied, but five or six men most of the time. We had a print shop where they had the type and the racks and they set up, all the type was set by hand. All those people were under my administration. Plus I was the assistant to the executive officer of the ship, and he liked to work. He was trying to become captain at that time, and so he was anxious to put in as much time as he could on the bridge of the ship, which he did in the daytime. Then at night he had administrative duties to attend to. And so we would try to set out for him all the records that we thought he would need and frequently he would send his Marine guard to find me in the middle of the night, because he didn't have the file on Smith, I had put out the file on Jones, and other things that he needed.

WRIGHT: So it was a goodwill mission typically on the Missouri then.

GRADY: Yes. Very much so. And one of the officers that I met early in my tour of duty on the Missouri was transferred to Washington, DC. And as he was leaving he said to me, I want you to have some shore duty. And so he fulfilled that, and in 19-- , let's see, '54, I believe it was I was transferred. The ship in the meanwhile had gone to Bremerton, Washington, to be decommissioned for the first time. And so as a number of men that you had on board ship decreased, the need for officers decreased too. And so it reached the point when they didn't need me anymore. So I had a little leave time and came to Atlanta, and then reported for duty in Washington, DC. I had about eight or nine months in Washington.

WRIGHT: You mentioned your father, and I forgot to ask a little bit earlier, what did your dad do?

GRADY: I'm proud of my father, by the way. He went to Georgia Tech. He came out, he started Georgia Tech at age 15. He graduated at age 18, when most people are just starting college. It was an accelerated program for World War I. And so he went into the army on graduation and was stationed at Fortress Monroe, which is in Virginia on the coast. And they had these guns that came up out of the pits, like this. And, you know, you have to figure out a lot of things when you're firing big guns. You have to figure out what's the wind speed. How much power should we put in. What kind of projectiles shall we shoot this time. Plus you have to see something out there that you're firing at. And you have to figure out distance. Well, this was long before the days of computers. But graduates of Georgia Tech knew how to use one of these slide rules. So I feel like that's why he was selected for that job. So he was in the army and then when World War I was over he came back, and he worked first for what was then known as the Trust Company of Georgia, now known as SunTrust. People at that time, right after World War I, as after World War II, the war had been largely financed through the sale of bonds. Many, individuals bought \$25 bonds and \$50 bonds and \$100 bonds. And so when the men came back from the war, they were ready to cash those bonds in and buy cars and buy homes and buy furniture and all that sort of thing. So they needed somebody that could slip those slides in a hurry and figure that interest so they could pay 'em on the spot. So he did that for maybe a year or two. A group was forming a company called Robinson Humphrey Company. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Humphrey were real people. And some of the young men at what was then known as Trust Company went over there. He was one of those. An early partner in that company that sold stocks and bonds. It wasn't long until he put his engineering education to good effect. And people were moving from the farms into the small towns that were all over Georgia. And he would go to those small towns and he would say to them, Now, people have been getting their water out of wells, and these wells are not clean water. And what you really need to do is have a municipal water system. And so we'll go around and we'll ask the people, what do you think, do you want to be part of a municipal water system? And they would often say yes. Sometimes they would quite vehemently say no. And then they'd go back a year or so and they'd change their mind. Anyway, he would go through this procedure of selling the local officials on having a water system. And then he would hire attorneys. They only had two bond attorneys in Atlanta at that time. And he knew both of them well. He'd hire them, and they would prepare the necessary legal documents. And then the bonds would be printed in New York. And they would round up all the commissioners, water people, and the bond attorneys, and they'd all go to New York. And they'd sign these bonds by hand. And they had these multiple, machines with multiple pens, and

you could be sitting here signing and there'd be eight or ten pens that would be out here working on the actual bonds, which, of course, were beautiful. They had gold borders, and they had elaborate printing [phone rings]. I had an opportunity to do that years later myself. So he did that, and then he would return to Robinson Humphrey Company, and once the bonds were available he would then sell them, mostly to banks in Georgia and Florida.

WRIGHT: So he manufactured sales.

GRADY: He did. Today it takes a whole roomful of people just to accomplish parts of this, not just one man.

WRIGHT: And when did he retire from Robinson Humphrey?

GRADY: I think he retired in 1964.

WRIGHT: Now you were telling us earlier a little bit, outside the interview, as far as your, obviously you're named for a great Atlantan. Tell me again how you guys have, your lineage classifies the junior, senior, thirds and fourths. Because you technically are the fourth, but explain to me a little bit about your great-grandfather.

GRADY: My great-grandfather died at age 39, in 1850. No, excuse me. He was born in 1850. He died in 18 . . . '89.

WRIGHT: '89.

GRADY: So, of course, I never knew him. He was Henry Grady the first, and he had two children, Henry and Augusta, and a third child named William. Well, now, William attended, as we say, attended the University of Georgia, and then he worked with his brother on a newspaper in Rome, Georgia. That paper went bankrupt, unfortunately. It was not a financial success. Meanwhile, his older brother had gotten to know some officials, and they obtained a job for William as an Indian agent. And William went out west. That's the end of William. We don't know whether he was killed by the Indians, whether he married a squaw, or something else happened to him. But he just went off the radar screen.

WRIGHT: Wow.

GRADY: So Henry Grady, the editor, the first Henry Grady, had one son, whose name was also Henry. And he had a career with the Southern Engraving Company, which made all the plates for the *Constitution*, the morning newspaper.

WRIGHT: And your great-grandfather, Henry Woodfin Grady, which would have been the first, was the editor of the *Atlanta Journal*. It was the *Constitution* at the time though.

GRADY: That's right. It was just the morning paper.

WRIGHT: So his son had an engraving company that helped support the operations of—

GRADY: The paper. He also had a job during the Depression years. You remember I said earlier that we had grown up with them. And while other people were suffering, we had it pretty good. Because everybody had a nickel in their pocket to go buy a paper to see if there were any jobs

available. And so he was the, he was one of the founders of the Atlanta Rotary Club. He and Ivan Allen, Sr., went to Chicago, I believe it was, and brought Rotary back to Atlanta. Then, he had only one child, who was Henry Grady the third. By that time, Henry Grady the first had died. And so my grandfather, who had been using Henry Grady, Jr., moved up to being Henry Grady and dropped the Jr. My father came along and picked up the Jr. and he became Henry Grady, Jr. So when I was born, I was the third in the line, and so I was named Henry Grady III. Now my father has died, and I have moved up to be Henry Grady. Dropped the Jr. But my son, he'd been baptized, he'd been named and baptized as Henry Grady III, and that's the name he uses to this day.

WRIGHT: So he's got your old name.

GRADY: He's got my old name.

WRIGHT: And you would have, you technically would have been the fourth. He technically would have been the fifth.

GRADY: That's right.

WRIGHT: But because you guys dropped one—

GRADY: That's right. And he has no sons. He has three wonderful daughters.

WRIGHT: OK. Fantastic. When you graduated from Washington & Lee, and after the Navy, what brought you back to Atlanta, and where did you settle?

GRADY: I was fortunate to have a job all lined up here in Atlanta with a bank that was then called the Fulton National Bank. The bank changed names to be Bank of the South, then BankSouth, and it remained with that name for many years, until about 1967, I guess it was. They merged with NationsBank, and NationsBank merged into Bank of America. So the bank ended up being part of Bank of America.

OTTLEY: Where was the Buckhead branch located when you went to work for them?

GRADY: Well, the Buckhead branch was located at the corner of Peachtree and Buckhead Avenue. And that bank was started by Schley Thompson and Helen Thompson. Helen Thompson was a descendant of the Pace family. Helen Pace Thompson was her name, and she was the daughter—you know Paces Ferry? There was really a man named Pace, who had the ferry that crossed the Chattahoochee River. And she was his daughter, I guess, maybe his granddaughter. And she was a charmer. And she loved all the ladies, and all the ladies loved her. And she would make things, little doo-dads, and the women were so charmed that they would come and put money in. A lot of the women in Buckhead had money. They needed a bank to put it in. She was just their favorite. And she would come and just charm the ladies, and the men, too, because she would make loans at very reasonable rates. She was charming to the men as well as to the ladies. But the ladies had money to deposit into the bank. The men often had some money to deposit. But they often were the businessmen around Buckhead, who needed loans to run their businesses. And she was very good at that too. She would get out on foot in Buckhead and call on these various businesses that were—drugstores, clothing stores, variety stores, lumber yards, all sorts of things. She was really the salesman for this bank. In the 1930s, during

the Depression, the 1930s, their condition was somewhat less than perfect and so at that time they joined what was then known as the Fulton National Bank. And they had, I think, the first branch of any bank in Buckhead.

WRIGHT: So the Thompsons started it, before they merged in after the Depression.

GRADY: That's right.

WRIGHT: And do you remember, did she talk at all about her granddad or dad, any stories about the family or the ferry?

GRADY: No, she talked about 'em but it was only years later. I was in the trust department of the bank most of those years. And she very kindly named the bank as the trustee under her will, and her husband did too. He became ill and was in a retirement home for some time. And—

WRIGHT: Did she still live on the family land at that point? Do you remember where their house was?

GRADY: No, she didn't live on the family land. She lived on Shadowlawn Avenue in Buckhead. But when she died we came to find that, sure enough, she did own some of the property that was, he had bought, Mr. Pace had bought property on both sides of the Chattahoochee River in Cobb County as well as some in Fulton County. And he had built houses, or at least one house, on the Fulton County property, and she still owned that.

WRIGHT: Do you remember where that was?

GRADY: Well, I remember where, I remember where Paces Ferry Road crossed the Chattahoochee River, which is where Lovett School is now constructed. And the house was on the Fulton County side, probably right there on that very property where Lovett School is today. And you know there's still an iron bridge across the Chattahoochee River there. That was the way you got from one side to the other for many years. I had friends who had a home on West Peachtree Street, and they had a summer home on top of a high hill, what's the name of that subdivision out there on the Cobb County side, the [unintelligible] or something like that. And that's where their home was. It was on that very property.

WRIGHT: Beautiful view.

GRADY: Yes, it was. And it was good to be up on a high hill because they had a lot of flooding in those days, and still do to some extent.

WRIGHT: And you remember going out there and visiting, seeing the house?

GRADY: At least once. Maybe several times.

WRIGHT: And what was, was it a one-lane road, Paces Ferry, at the time, more or less?

GRADY: No, Paces Ferry Road was a two-lane road. It was paved too, which was a definite advantage.

OTTLEY: Was that the main thing that was out there, Vinings was, was it summer homes? Who lived out there? Why would one go to Vinings?

GRADY: Vinings was a separate community. You're talking about Buckhead being an individual place. Vinings really was an individual place. But it had a railroad. It has, the railroad is still there today. And the railroad, it was a railroad community. And people had farms around there. They brought the produce to the tracks, to the railroad station there. The station is still there too. And people commuted a little bit. I don't ever very much. But maybe when they were going to their summer home or something like that, they might take the railroad. I believe that the road was not paved after you crossed the river on Paces Ferry. As I remember it was a dirt road that led off, winding up to the top of the hill where the Vinings community was. And there were houses there, still there.

WRIGHT: That's interesting. And what was your role at the bank?

GRADY: I was a trust officer at the bank and administered estates and trusts and various property management accounts for individuals.

WRIGHT: And as far as the history of the bank and in Buckhead, and banking in Buckhead, what were some of the trends or people, did the clientele change over time, or what was some of your societal witnessing along the way?

GRADY: Well, yes, it was a smaller community and people perhaps knew each other better than in later years. I'm sorry I can't give you too much, because I had four years away in prep school and another four years away at college. And those years, when I might have been more at liberty, shall we say, to *be* in Buckhead and to have a good time in Buckhead, I just wasn't here. I can't give you too much about that.

WRIGHT: As far as being a trust officer, who were some of your better clients that you remember back in the day, companies or individuals?

GRADY: Yes, mostly individuals, mostly ladies. I had a lot of, hundreds, really, of different people over the years. I wouldn't place one above another. I enjoyed them all. Maybe that's an overstatement. But to this day I have people come up to me and say, you handled my father's estate, or my uncle, my brother, or some relative. And they wouldn't do that if they were too displeased.

WRIGHT: That's a good point. And did you marry? Any kids? Obviously you've mentioned you've got Henry the third.

GRADY: He's my only natural child. I was first married to Tila Farrell. We were married in 1960. She had some health problems at the time, which she disclosed to me. And she was a lovely, petite thing, and I was in love, and we got married. Her doctor had advised us because of her health that if we were going to have children, we should do so. We were married in '61, and in '62 Henry was born. We just didn't hesitate too long. He was born the next year. Those were happy years. She lived until 1973. After her death, Henry, we had bought a home in Collier Hills, on Graystone Road in Collier Hills.

WRIGHT: Do you remember the address?

GRADY: 1912 Graystone Road. And I had never dreamed I'd live in that house more than about five years. It was convenient to downtown, it was convenient to our church and to my parents

who were still living at that time. It was a good place and so we lived on there. Well, after Tila died, we continued to live there, just two guys, you know, growing up.

WRIGHT: How old was he when she passed?

GRADY: Ten years old. That was good because he was going to Westminster School and there were other people in the neighborhood, and so the carpools, the ladies could drive 'em in the morning, most mornings, when I needed to be at work. And then I would pick up later in the day, especially later when the boys started playing baseball. They had played soccer and then he moved into baseball. And I would pick 'em up maybe seven o'clock in the evening, which was fine for me. And so we had good years, living together in Collier Hills. Took me ten years to find another wife. And it was, I think it's, the Good Lord has plans. And she had been married, was divorced, and I was right there on the scene. We got married in 1981. My mother had lived on. My mother had died in 1980, she died.

WRIGHT: And what was her name, your new wife?

GRADY: Her name was Harriett, H-A-R-R-I-E-T-T, Shedden, S-H-E-D-D-E-N. She and her family had lived in a home on Peachtree Street right across from the High Museum. As you may know, the High Museum is named for Mrs. High, who lived in a home right there on the corner of, I guess that's 15th Street. And she donated her home to start the first art center, shall we say, art center in Atlanta, which is another wonderful story. She and Mr. J. J. Haverty were friends. And Mr. Haverty had traveled in Europe and had collected art. And a good deal through his influence a group of men started an art group in Atlanta. And they needed a home for their paintings. And Mrs. High was interested in art, very much interested in art, and she gave her home as the first art museum in Atlanta. Well, I digress. My mother lived across the street with her mother and father. Her father was Robert Shedden. And his father had died when he was about 15 years old. And he went to work for the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York and became the president's secretary. In those days if a president of an insurance company, who was usually a man, went traveling across the country, he still needed to stay in touch with his agencies and the home office. And this was done by letter. He didn't have time to write the letters, so he had a male secretary. You couldn't have a female secretary, you had a male secretary that traveled with him. Mr. Shedden was his male secretary. Then a few years later they said, well, now, we're going to open an office way down there in the south in Atlanta, Georgia. And who shall we send down there to be the manager? They said, well, here's a bright young man over here, Robert Shedden. So we'll send him. And so he came to Atlanta. His wife was from Raymond, Georgia, which is a community out from Newnan. And that was Mrs. Shedden's family farm. She and her mother lived there together. Mr. Shedden took an interest in the farm and in the community. Carol and I have been down there just recently for a celebration. They have restored the old schoolhouse. And Mr. and Mrs. Shedden gave the land for the schoolhouse, money toward the building of the schoolhouse. The school was used as a community school for years. Then the county had a school and so they insisted that all the children come to the county school. Coweta County. So then the schoolhouse was used as a community center. And that went on for a while. Then it fell into disuse, and it has only recently been restored. It's now being used as a community center again. So Mr. Shedden prospered as the general agent for Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York. And he had three children, Mary, and my mother Harriett, and their brother William.

WRIGHT: Well, you said mother. You meant wife, correct?

GRADY: His wife? His wife's name was Laulie Shedden, Laulie Ray Shedden. And he had three daughters. They had three daughters. My father—

OTTLEY: There might have been some confusion as to, Henrietta was your mother?

GRADY: Harriett was my mother.

OTTLEY: Harriett was your mother. There might have been some confusion a little bit prior to this. It was almost like you were describing your wife Carol's family, but just for correction, you were describing your mother's family.

GRADY: Yes.

WRIGHT: Okay.

GRADY: My mother's family.

WRIGHT: I gotcha. And so she met Henry, Harriett met Henry along the way.

GRADY: He did. He was courting the older sister, Mary. And Mary married a man named Robert Foreman, Jr., who was known as "Trot". Because he had had polio at a young age and one of his legs was shorter than the other. He walked with a limp. So they called him Trot. Everybody called him Trot. You might think under those circumstances that there'd be some animosity, but there was none. And so my father instead of marrying the oldest daughter dropped down and married the next daughter, Harriett. The four of them traveled together, they played bridge together, they lived near each other and were great friends for all the rest of their lives.

WRIGHT: And your wife, so you got remarried in 1983 to—

GRADY: Carol.

WRIGHT: Carol.

GRADY: I think it was '81 but that's close enough.

WRIGHT: '81.

GRADY: And she too is a native Atlantan.

WRIGHT: What's her maiden name?

GRADY: Chambers. Carol Chambers. Her father was Robert Chambers, and he was—another story. He went to the University of Georgia and was always a big Bulldog fan. One day as a student he was out on the highway thumbing a ride to Atlanta, and this traveling salesman stopped and picked him up and they got to be friends. The man said to him, if you ever need a job, come and work for the Sloan Paper Company, which he was president of. His last name was Mr. Wells. Mr. Wells was president of Sloan Paper Company. So sure enough, after Robert graduated from college he was looking for a job and he did go to Sloan Paper Company. He

started in the stock room and became a salesman and worked his way up and became president of the company and later chairman of the board.

WRIGHT: How about that.

GRADY: And so, his wife's name was Anna, Anna Chambers. Wonderful people. And when I came along, they were living in a house on Wood Valley that had a wonderful swimming pool in the back. We all enjoyed being there in the swimming pool. And Bob and I would get out there around the swimming pool and we would drink beer. And I had been told by my wife and by her mother, do *not* get into political arguments or political conversations with Mr. Chambers because he gets too excited. He gets angry, he gets mad. So we would sit around the swimming pool and what would we talk about? Politics. And I think he enjoyed it in spite of all the warnings, the dire warnings.

WRIGHT: I think if your politics are in agreement, it's an easier conversation than if they're—

GRADY: Oh, no, we were not. I was much too liberal for his taste. He was, I would say, arch conservative, arch conservative. He wasn't just conservative. He was reactionary. So far back. And I was in favor of things like Social Security and Medicare when it came along. Why, this was anathema to him. Such liberal policies as that. But anyway we got along well in spite of our differences.

WRIGHT: Do you remember the address on Wood Valley, by chance?

GRADY: No, I don't. But it was the first house as you come off of Cobb Parkway. It was the first house on the right. And he and Anna lived there until he died, and Anna continued to live there for several years after his death. By that time the real estate market here had gone south and so we still, my wife and his sister were executors of their mother's estate. And they have, still have that property over there. It has been rented for several years.

WRIGHT: And when the real estate went south, that would have been in the early '80s?

GRADY: Yes, I guess so.

WRIGHT: Now, as far as your hobbies go, are you part of the Men's Garden Club?

GRADY: Yes. I am. The Buckhead Men's Garden Club.

WRIGHT: Tell me a little bit about the Buckhead Men's Garden Club and how long you've been involved, and what all you guys do.

GRADY: Well, I became involved right after I retired in 1997 or -8, -8 maybe, somewhere along in there. The first, well, there was a group of men who enjoyed gardening, and their first location was on the campus of the Atlanta History Center. And there were houses along the Paces Ferry Road frontage of that property. And one of those houses had a small greenhouse attached to it. That was the first place. Then the History Center needed that property.

WRIGHT: What year would that have been, when it started, do you remember, roughly?

GRADY: In the 1970s, no, it had to be after that, in the 1980s sometime. So they looked for a location, and Lovett School was just getting started at that time. I don't know what that date was, but that kind of ties it in. And they had a lease with Lovett School. And they built a very nice greenhouse on the property of Lovett School. One of their members had died and left the club some money, so they had enough money in their pocket to build that greenhouse. It was a very nice large greenhouse and had property, land around it where they had gardens out of doors.

OTTLEY: Do you remember where on the campus that would have been?

GRADY: It was on a hill up above where the football stadium is.

WRIGHT: Near the tennis courts.

GRADY: Tennis courts are up there. It adjoined the tennis courts. I don't know what's using it now. But they came to us and said, we need this property for school purposes and you'll have to get out. But our lease had a policy that the school had to pay us for any improvements we had made to the property and so they had to pay us for this wonderful greenhouse and the watering system and all these wonderful plants that we had put in the ground. So we had a pocketful of money at that point. And I was, had just joined the club and I was a member of the club then. We wanted, we really wanted a location in Buckhead, since that was our name. We found that the property in Buckhead was too expensive. We just didn't have enough money to buy a tract of land that was big enough to accommodate a greenhouse. There was one, there was a location out on the road to Bolton, and that was available. We could afford it. But we said, no, we really didn't want to be in Bolton, we wanted to be in Buckhead. That property has since been developed. My daughter lives in that general area, and the property is beautifully developed. It would be nice to have a greenhouse out there now. But nevertheless, we again went back to the Atlanta History Center and through the help of Mrs. Louise Allen, who was on the board, and she was the wife of the mayor, Ivan Allen, Jr., and she was very helpful to us. And we secured a spot on the campus of the Atlanta History Center. One of our members, Mack McLendon, had a contact with Emory University. He had a contact with the University of Georgia too. That's another story. But he had a contact with Emory University, and they were about to build a wonderful new two-story greenhouse on top of a parking deck. And they no longer needed their smaller green house on the land, you know where the old station is, on the railroad tracks through the Emory campus?

WRIGHT: I do.

GRADY: Well, it was right up the hill from the station, not far from the station. Anyway, that's where their greenhouse was. So they agreed to sell it to us for a very small amount provided it would be taken down and taken away, which we did at our expense. That went into storage about two years. Then in the meanwhile, I think I became president of the club, and I worked with, what was that man's name? West, Sam West. Sam West was a graduate of Georgia Tech and had a heating and air conditioning business here. So Sam, we had the plans, Emory had given us the plans, so we had the plans, but we had to construct a base for this aluminum top to sit upon. It had to be those dimensions. The Atlanta History Center had a director of contracting, and so he worked with us and the greenhouse is partially the result of their help. And so they said, well, we want a third of the greenhouse and you take two-thirds, which we did.

WRIGHT: How many members are in the group?

GRADY: We have had as many as a couple of hundred members. But today I think 50. We probably have 50 members.

WRIGHT: How often do you get together?

GRADY: Well, we still, we have this greenhouse on the campus of the Atlanta History Center. And we usually have a group that meets there every Saturday provided there's no Georgia Tech football game or the Bulldogs playing in Athens. But other than that, we have meetings at night.

WRIGHT: At the greenhouse, or—

GRADY: We have met at the greenhouse, but we are currently meeting in the Garden Room at Canterbury Court out on Peachtree Road. The name escapes me, but there was a man who was a member of the club and also instrumental in starting Canterbury Court. And so he said, I want a room in this retirement community for Buckhead Men's Garden Club to meet. And sure enough, they built a room on the lower level called the Garden Room. And we didn't know about this. But now [phone rings] that's where we meet. And we meet there generally on Thursday nights, subject to having enough people who can get there.

WRIGHT: Any link to William Monroe, Sr.? He was a famous garden designer here in Atlanta.

GRADY: Do I have any links to Bill Monroe? Yes, my mother and father used Bill Monroe when they moved into the house on West Wesley Road. He did the landscaping around that house. And then there was his son, also known as Bill Monroe, and I knew him too. He was in the landscape business as well.

WRIGHT: And do you remember any of Sr.'s other designs around the area? He did Chastain Park, he did your parents' house. Do you remember any other gardens that might be out there that no one knows is a Monroe, Sr., design?

GRADY: No, I'm afraid not. You'll have to go interview someone in the Monroe family [laughter] for that information.

WRIGHT: Where did you get your garden bug, do you think?

GRADY: Oh, from my mother. My mother. I enjoyed it from a fairly early age, as a teenager.

WRIGHT: Did she have a garden behind the house, on West Wesley?

GRADY: Yes, she did. It was a garden with flowers mostly although during World War II we tried to grow some, well, we tried to grow several different things. But the only thing that we really grew were radishes. I wanted to plant flowers, and at that time there was a nursery in Buckhead run by a man named Frank Smith.

OTTLEY: Where was that located?

GRADY: His place of business was on Buckhead Avenue. Do you know where the library is now? Well, it was on that property, right there. That's where Frank Smith had his nursery. And he later moved to a location on Roswell Road, where Pike's is today. Right there. And he ran his

nursery there for many years. And my mother would send me off to Frank Smith to pick up whatever I wanted to plant in the garden. And I would have to come back and plant it. At that point I probably would go off to school so somebody else would have to tend the garden.

WRIGHT: So the garden behind the house on West Wesley, how deep was that lot? It must have been a fairly deep lot.

GRADY: Very deep. It was a deep lot, but it was not usable for a garden very much. It was just the land close to the house that was a garden. It dropped off sharply into a ravine and then came up sharply on the other side. We kept that lot for many years and after my mother and father's death we sounded out the neighbors and found that nobody wanted us to use that property. It was nice, a buffer, and quiet. Since then a house, a nice house has been built on what looked like an impossible situation. You know, it's up on a hill, far down into a valley, but they've built a very nice house there.

WRIGHT: So you think the original Monroe, Sr., the area that he did design is still a part of the old house?

GRADY: Yes, just around the front and the immediate back of the house.

WRIGHT: Well, any other tidbits that you can, stories of Buckhead, how it's changed, how it hasn't changed, any good stories you've kind of thought of and filed away that you may want to share with us in closing?

GRADY: Well, I've loved living in Buckhead. It's been a wonderful place. I've seen it grow economically and spread out a whole lot. I remember my first wife, Taylor's grandfather was a man named Enrico Leide, and Enrico Leide was brought to Atlanta by a man named DeSales Harrison, for the opening of the first movie palace that they had in Atlanta. And then after the Fox Theatre was built, he became the conductor of the orchestra at the Fox Theatre. And in the 19--, the first movie palace was named the Howard, was called the Howard Theater. Then Mr. Leide started a student orchestra in Atlanta prior to World War I. And during that war the orchestra was disbanded. But that was really the beginning of the Atlanta Symphony. But since the orchestra was disbanded, it never got really started again. Henry Sopkin came along and started again. He used to have a student in orchestra, and that became the Atlanta Symphony. Nobody remembers Mr. Leide's part in that. He's lost in history.

WRIGHT: Do you ever remember a Buckhead Orchestra?

GRADY: Oh, that, well, that was what I started to say. I digressed. Yes. Mr. Leide had said to me that there was an open-air amphitheater behind, well, the bank branch was on the corner of Peachtree Road and Buckhead Avenue, and that was the area it was in. In the early days there was a tire store across the street from the bank. And this amphitheater was in behind the tire store. And so that would have been in the space between Peachtree and West Andrews Drive, somewhere back in there. And Mr. Leide led that orchestra in that amphitheater. And so that was, so I say, the classical music kind of orchestra that was back in there.

WRIGHT: Did you ever go?

GRADY: No. By the time I came along it had been torn down and there were homes back in there.

WRIGHT: Approximately what year do you think that might have been when they were performing? Was that before or after college?

GRADY: Oh, long before college. Well, I say that, yes, it was before then. It was probably in the 1920s.

WRIGHT: And you were born in 1930.

GRADY: 1930.

WRIGHT: Well, we appreciate your time this afternoon and your wealth of information.

GRADY: Well, thank you. It's been fun. I've enjoyed it very much.

WRIGHT: I feel like we've kind of scratched the surface. We could probably go on forever. But thank you very much for your time and memories.

GRADY: Happy I could do it.