

Buckhead Heritage Society & Atlanta History Center

Oral History Project

Interview with Herbert Alan Elsas

In the offices of the Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia

March 25, 2024

Interviewer: James Ottley

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JAMES OTTLEY | 00:00:06:

On camera. Today is Monday, March 25th, 2024. My name is James Ottley. I'm a volunteer with Buckhead Heritage and with me also with Buckhead Heritage are Judith Vanderver and Andrea Bennett. Also here in the room is Sue Verhoeff, Director of Oral History and Genealogy at the Atlanta History Center. We're here today to record the oral history of Mr. Alan Elsas, who was a longtime Buckhead resident and a true Atlanta native. We're honored to have you here with us, Mr. Elsas, and we thank you for participating in this project. To begin with, would you please state your full name and date of birth?

HERBERT ALAN ELSAS | 00:00:45:

My full name is Herbert Alan, A- L-A-N Elsas. My date of birth is July 29th, 1940.

OTTLEY | 00:00:58:

Fantastic. Well, again, thanks so much for being with us here today. Let's go ahead and just start at the very beginning. I understand you were born in the original Piedmont Hospital. Is that the case?

ELSAS | 00:01:10:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

OTTLEY | 00:01:11:

Where was that located?

ELSAS | 00:01:12:

Downtown.

OTTLEY | 00:01:13:

All right. All right.

ELSAS | 00:01:15:

They tell me sort of like near where Leftfield was of the Atlanta Stadium.

OTTLEY | 00:01:21:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:01:23:

Actually, I went back there when I had to have my appendix out at about age 11 or 12, and the same old Piedmont was still there.

OTTLEY | 00:01:32:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:01:33:

If I was more of a historian, I could tell you exactly what street it was, but it was downtown.

OTTLEY | 00:01:42:

So do you have any recollections of going to the new Piedmont Hospital when it was built at the new location?

ELSAS | 00:01:50:

Well, the two happiest occasions were when our two sons were born there.

OTTLEY | 00:01:54:

Okay. Fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:01:56:

That's great. Charlie and Alan Jr. And Charlie. Alan Jr. is 52, so you do the math. He was born in 1974.

OTTLEY | 00:02:11:

We're not going to put you on the spot.

ELSAS | 00:02:11:

Yeah, 1970 something. And his younger brother, Charlie, is 48, and he was born there also.

OTTLEY | 00:02:19:

That's fantastic. That's great.

ELSAS | 00:02:21:

And then Charlie's kids were born there. So we went back three more times for three grandkids there. And I've actually, I was on the board, Piedmont Hospital board back specifically in the time that the new building was being built.

OTTLEY | 00:02:38:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:02:38:

So I got to see all of that put together. It was exciting. And this sounds silly, but listen to them, pick out the colors for different and the diagram and the description of that huge lobby.

OTTLEY | 00:02:53:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:02:53:

That was a big deal.

OTTLEY | 00:02:54:

I bet it was.

ELSAS | 00:02:55:

And the building is spectacular in my opinion.

OTTLEY | 00:02:58:

Indeed. Indeed. Well, hey, going back to your birth year, when they brought you home from the hospital, where was your first home? Where did your parents bring you home to?

ELSAS | 00:03:12:

Brighton Road.

OTTLEY | 00:03:13:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:03:13:

Brighton Road. Mother and dad. Dad was... Well, he was a full partner then at Sutherland. Sutherland started out Sutherland Tuttle in Brennan and then when Albert Tuttle was called to the bench, became Sutherland Asbel and Brennan. Okay. And they mother and dad had rented a house on Brighton Road. I've been told that it became the Rooker House, Bill Rooker's House.

OTTLEY | 00:03:38:

Okay. Now, is that -- what we're talking over in the Brookwood Hills?

ELSAS | 00:03:41:

Brookwood Hills, right off of Peachtree.

OTTLEY | 00:03:44:

Yeah. Okay. So-

ELSAS | 00:03:46:

Can I go?

OTTLEY | 00:03:47:

Please.

ELSAS | 00:03:48:

I think when I was three or four months old, we moved to our new house on Paces Ferry Road, which was in the country.

OTTLEY | 00:03:57:

That was my next question. Tell us about some memories there. How did they pick that property? How did y'all end up there?

ELSAS | 00:04:10:

Well, my family had something called the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill.

OTTLEY | 00:04:15:

That was another one of my questions.

ELSAS | 00:04:17:

Well-

OTTLEY | 00:04:17:

Fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:04:19:

But my dad's father passed away when my dad was at Harvard Law School, and he opted not to go to work for the mill, even though he had lots of cousins that were at the mill.

OTTLEY | 00:04:32:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:04:33:

And I could be happy to backtrack on that.

OTTLEY | 00:04:35:

Yeah. I mean, we're here. We're there. Let's go ahead and talk about that.

ELSAS | 00:04:38:

But let me just tell you about 3510 Paces Ferry Road, which we moved to. And see, if I was born in July of 40', this would've been in the fall of 1940.

OTTLEY | 00:04:51

All right.

ELSAS | 00:04:54:

I can't remember clearly that far back. I can probably start remembering real things probably when I was four or five, which would've been 44' Or 45'. But all of the roads around us were dirt roads.

OTTLEY | 00:05:07:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:05:07:

Paces Ferry was paved because it went to the Chattahoochee and Paces Ferry.

OTTLEY | 00:05:16:

Right.

ELSAS | 00:05:16:

Paces Ferry was there, which would then take you to Vinings and then to Marietta.

OTTLEY | 00:05:21:

Okay. But the steel bridge, obviously, that was built, that was there at that time.

ELSAS | 00:05:26:

Yes.

OTTLEY | 00:05:26:

That was built in early 1900 or so.

ELSAS | 00:05:28:

Yes, Hermes Bridge. Yep.

OTTLEY | 00:05:29:

Right, so that road was paved, but the other road-

ELSAS | 00:05:33:

I'm pretty sure now. I'm pretty sure that Nancy Creek and I suspect West Paces was paved, at least from Buckhead to where we were.

OTTLEY | 00:05:45:

How many acres did you have?

ELSAS | 00:05:47:

Twenty. My dad bought wwenty acres in 1939.

OTTLEY | 00:05:51:

Fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:05:52:

I won't tell you the price because it'll be ... Well, it ain't close to what your family did at Lenox Square.

OTTLEY | 00:06:00:

Indeed. So do you have any ... I want to go back to the Fulton Cotton Bag and Cotton Mill, but just while we're on the subject of your young childhood or boyhood, that area, do you have any stories that you remember? I mean, it sounds like it was a heavily wooded area. It was like being in the country. What was a day in the life like? Maybe one ... Tell us a day in the summer when you had the whole day to go play in the woods and then give us another day.

ELSAS | 00:06:28:

That's all we did.

OTTLEY | 00:06:30:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:06:30:

Was playing the woods. Literally, all we did. And I went to little of it, so I have to start when I say seven or eight years old. My best friend, Tony Askew, who lived around the corner on Nancy Creek, he would come over and we would go out into the woods and we'd build--

OTTLEY | 00:06:49:

BB guns?

ELSAS | 00:06:49:

Oh sure

OTTLEY | 00:06:50:

Things like that. Any hunting or just ...

ELSAS | 00:06:55:

Dad set up a little-- We were on the sort of a halfway up a hill down at the bottom of the hill was this sort of a valley. And my dad sat up when he got back from the war, he set up a little trap, skeet trap thrower.

OTTLEY | 00:07:14:

Neat.

ELSAS | 00:07:15:

So I learned to shoot a four-- I didn't shoot anything more than a 410.

OTTLEY | 00:07:19:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 00:07:21:

But mother shot. They wound up that skeet thrower and let them fly and practice shooting skeet down there.

OTTLEY | 00:07:30:

And probably in those days, nobody was complaining about ...

ELSAS | 00:07:33:

There wasn't anybody around.

OTTLEY | 00:07:34:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:07:35:

Literally, nobody on either side of us.

OTTLEY | 00:07:38:

Was there a pond back on the property?

ELSAS | 00:07:40:

Well, that came a little bit later.

OTTLEY | 00:07:43:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:07:45:

When my dad went off to the war in 1942, didn't come back till late 45. We had a victory. I do remember this. We had a victory garden down there in that flat area of the valley there.

OTTLEY | 00:07:59:

And let me just, for our listeners at home, as we say, where exactly was this property? If you're coming up from O.K. Cafe, kind of guide us to where this property was or is.

ELSAS | 00:08:12:

Okay. Let's just say you do start at O.K. Cafe. You go west on West Paces Ferry.

OTTLEY | 00:08:19:

Okay. Under the highway.

ELSAS | 00:08:20:

Under the highway. The first intersection is Pace Ferry.

OTTLEY | 00:08:24:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 00:08:25:

And probably four tenths of a mile, say, on the left. There weren't any houses. The only thing that was there was old, you'd go past Old Plantation Road, which was a gravel road back in those days, and then the next piece of property was ours.

OTTLEY | 00:08:47:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:08:49:

There wasn't any -- I don't think anybody was between West Paces and our house, and there were very few houses. Ben Smith's house was up at the very top of the hill there on Paces Ferry.

OTTLEY | 00:09:08:

Now, were there any-- I mean, did people have cabins or anything? I mean, you talked about it was the country. I mean, do people have any kind of recreational cabins or anything like that?

ELSAS | 00:09:21:

Not on Paces Ferry. There were, and we not discovered this, but we knew this. On Nancy Creek, Nancy Creek Road that runs parallel, surprisingly runs parallel to Paces Ferry.

OTTLEY | 00:09:35:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:09:36:

There were summer cottages, little wooden, not little, but clabbered two, three bedroom getaway houses for people that lived in the city.

OTTLEY | 00:09:47:

That's really neat.

ELSAS | 00:09:48:

And these are all two acre lots. And there was-

OTTLEY | 00:09:51:

Hard to believe, isn't it? That just back then, that area was kind of a getaway or a-

ELSAS | 00:09:58:

Well, but our--

OTTLEY | 00:09:58:

--vacation area.

ELSAS | 00:09:59:

A guy that I became extremely close friends with, a guy named Jerry Goldsmith.

OTTLEY | 00:10:04:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:10:04:

And Jerry married Barbara Butler whose property was adjacent to the back of my dad's property.

OTTLEY | 00:10:12:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:10:13:

And she had her riding rink and her stable.

OTTLEY | 00:10:16:

That's neat.

ELSAS | 00:10:16:

And her house actually faced Nancy Creek Road.

OTTLEY | 00:10:21:

Okay. I don't want to jump ahead, but since you had talked about the Fritz Orr Camp that you attended, which is, if we're just kind of talking geography, that was pretty near your house.

ELSAS | 00:10:32:

It wasn't that far.

OTTLEY | 00:10:33:

Wasn't that far and--

ELSAS | 00:10:35:

We walked. I mean, I could walk it, just go straight down over ... Well, actually you go through the woods, end up on Old Plantation, walk down Old Plantation.

OTTLEY | 00:10:45:

And there it was

ELSAS | 00:10:45:

And well, you got to take a right on West Paces and then a left on ... It's right there was Fritz Orrs Camp.

OTTLEY | 00:10:53:

Now, did the Fritz Orr camp, I want to talk about your time there and some of the activities there, but did it encompass all of what we know as the Westminster campus now or was it just limited to the part over on the western side of Nancy Creek? You're saying no?

ELSAS | 00:11:17:

It was all the Fritz Orr camp.

OTTLEY | 00:11:19:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:11:20:

And the reason I was into riding in those days, and they had a nice little riding operation there. A woman named Ellie Wood Keith from Charlottesville would bring her horses down during the summer.

OTTLEY | 00:11:30:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:11:31:

And all of where Westminster is today were horse trails--

OTTLEY | 00:11:38:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:11:39:

--where we would go. And that quarry, you know where that quarry is when you come in the driveway, we would go up and down that quarry on horses. That was a little bit scary.

OTTLEY | 00:11:52:

Okay, does that back up to I- 75 at this time?

ELSAS | 00:11:54:

Yeah. Well, it does now. But I mean, I- 75 was a hell of a long way about it in those days.

OTTLEY | 00:12:00:

Yeah. I want to thank you. This is exactly why we do this. I don't know that a lot of people knew that the Westminster School's campus was part of the Fritz Orr, the whole campus was. I think people know the front, but this is exactly why we're here. So I just want to say-

ELSAS | 00:12:19:

Well, I don't mean to be facetious, but all they got to do is look at history because they know that Fritz and some of the big guns of Atlanta decided they were going to build a school there.

OTTLEY | 00:12:28:

There you go.

ELSAS | 00:12:29:

And they were going to call it Westminster.

OTTLEY | 00:12:31:

All right. Well, let's ... Okay. We're still on Fritz Orr. You said there was a lot of horseback riding opportunities there.

ELSAS | 00:12:39:

That was summertime. That was summer. Fritz had a full fledged athletic program after school, athletic program. The grammar schools that were nearby were Morris Brandon and E. Rivers, and they had kids my age. And I went to Little Lovett, which was back in those days, West Wesley. But I got to know all of these other guys my age. And Fritz had a program for the little guys. It was strictly a boys camp.

OTTLEY | 00:13:16:

What were the ages that he would take? You're going to get to it.

ELSAS | 00:13:21:

Well, the Mites, M-I-T-E-S. The Mites were six and seven.

OTTLEY | 00:13:26:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:13:27:

The Midgets were eight and nine. And the Giants were 10, 11, and 12. And he had them divided into three different age groups. And we played every sport that was available, football, basketball, baseball, wrestling. During the summer, even had wrestling and boxing. And swimming in the summer.

OTTLEY | 00:13:53:

Okay. So there was a swimming pool there at the time or?

ELSAS | 00:13:55:

Same pool.

OTTLEY | 00:13:56:

Same pool. Okay. Very good.

ELSAS | 00:13:58:

Same pool.

OTTLEY | 00:13:58:

Were there any cabins there or was there any overnight?

ELSAS | 00:14:02:

You know the answer.

OTTLEY | 00:14:03:

Yes, well I know there are cabins there now, but I--

ELSAS | 00:14:05:

When I was probably five, maybe even six. I got shipped off for two months in the summer to go into—I spent many a summer in one of those cabins.

OTTLEY | 00:14:20:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:14:20:

It was fabulous. It was just great fun.

OTTLEY | 00:14:23:

That's fantastic. There's a lot of people--

ELSAS | 00:14:24:

A lot of guys that were my age, they got from all over the south actually that went to that camp.

OTTLEY | 00:14:30:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:14:32:

Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee.

OTTLEY | 00:14:35:

Well, I think a lot of people knew it or thought it was just a day camp, so thanks for clearing that up.

ELSAS | 00:14:40:

No, it was an overnight camp. That's great. I was starting way back. And the cabins are still there. Those literally the same cabins.

OTTLEY | 00:14:47:

Same cabins. That's fantastic. Did y'all ever do any fishing, either say fishing in Nancy Creek or playing in Nancy Creek either as kids or as part of the camp activities?

ELSAS | 00:15:02:

Funny you should ask that. Because when my dad got back from the war, I told you that flat area behind our house, he decided we needed a pond.

OTTLEY | 00:15:13:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:15:14:

And there was a stream that started up in the woods. It was a pretty good, nice running stream.

OTTLEY | 00:15:20:

A stream that would have probably flowed in there

ELSAS | 00:15:22:

From right across all the properties, that whole flat area, and we built the victory garden off of it, but he damned up that stream, created a pond.

OTTLEY | 00:15:37:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:15:38:

We called it the mud hole.

OTTLEY | 00:15:40:

All right.

ELSAS | 00:15:40:

And so if he came back in 45', that pond was probably finished by 47' or eight.

OTTLEY | 00:15:51:

Okay. Very neat.

ELSAS | 00:15:53:

And he did this too. He put a cement collar around it so that wouldn't get muddy. And it just so happened that they had a lower part that was grated that was maybe two or three feet deep. And my mother, and then we drained during the springtime, we'd drain it so that that flat area, this flat short area, shallow area, that mother would have trucks of sand.

OTTLEY | 00:16:30:

Okay, little beach there.

ELSAS | 00:16:30:

So we had our own sandy shallow area. That was truly amazing. To--

OTTLEY | 00:16:37:

That's neat.

ELSAS | 00:16:37:

--have a swimming hole like that. Needless to say, I had a lot of friends during the summertime.

OTTLEY | 00:16:43:

Id bet you did. All right. Well, we've talked about, you mentioned Little Lovett, and will you expand on that? Any memories that you have or could share with us from going to Little Lovett and the building itself and Mrs. Lovett and favorite teachers and things like that?

ELSAS | 00:16:58:

I'm big into Little Lovett.

OTTLEY | 00:17:01:

That's great, I love it.

ELSAS | 00:17:03:

Meredith Cole, the new head, is going to make a big deal of their hundredth anniversary,

OTTLEY | 00:17:10:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:17:11:

Which is in 2026.

OTTLEY | 00:17:12:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:17:13:

And Fontaine Yearly, Draper and I, and Norris Broyles, who lives down the hall from me at Peachtree Hills, who's in his mid '90s. He went to Little Lovett.

OTTLEY | 00:17:24:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:17:24:

And the older Little Lovett that was downtown on Myrtle Street.

OTTLEY | 00:17:28:

I wanted you to mention that.

ELSAS | 00:17:30:

So anyway, he's excited to be on our centennial committee.

OTTLEY | 00:17:34:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:17:35:

But I started there. My mother was a great-- and parents were both highly educated, mother being a Phi Beta Kappa from Wellesley and dad being Harvard and Harvard Law School and all that good stuff.

OTTLEY | 00:17:50:

Gotcha.

ELSAS | 00:17:52:

They believed in a progressive education. So my older brother went there.

OTTLEY | 00:18:00:

Tell us your older brother's name.

ELSAS | 00:18:02:

Well, let me tell you this. Can I tell you about Skip?

OTTLEY | 00:18:04:

Please.

ELSAS | 00:18:06:

My mother, my mother who was a pack rat, and I just discovered this was we were pushing stuff together to move to Peachtree Hills just last month and the last one. I discovered a letter written in 1940 from Mrs. Lovett and this beautiful script that she had heard that we, meaning mother and dad, had a three-year-old son and they would love for him to come to Lovett School at age four. I guess that letter was written in April of 1940. And in August of 1940, this letter came back, or maybe it might have been July, said, "We are delighted that your son is going to be in the kindergarten." See, it started in the kindergarten, and it went through the seventh grade.

OTTLEY | 00:19:15:

And was the whole Little Lovett housed at that-

ELSAS | 00:19:18:

It was out on West Wesley at that point.

OTTLEY | 00:19:20:

Tell us a little bit about the grounds and the building and things like that. Maybe even, if you can remember the inside of the building, what was it like?

ELSAS | 00:19:30:

It's when you go back to it and you see these classrooms that are maybe, I don't know, 10 by 10, say.

OTTLEY | 00:19:39:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:19:40:

They look awfully tiny with these little chairs, but it went kindergarten through seventh grade.

OTTLEY | 00:19:53:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:19:56:

I can't tell you how many classrooms there were, but it was a nice little country school house. It had one larger room, which was an auditorium. Had a wonderful playground in the back. My favorite subject was recess.

OTTLEY | 00:20:20:

Yeah. Okay.

ELSAS | 00:20:22:

Said for me. So we played, we had Wild and Willy kickball games and stuff like that during recess.

OTTLEY | 00:20:30:

And the school was located, again, you were kind of headed out West Wesley and you crossed over Moore's Mill, correct? Before you got to the current Westminster campus, would you say it was on the right maybe?

ELSAS | 00:20:46:

I bet the better landmark would be is if you went down Nancy Creek, West Wesley, turned left on West Wesley.

OTTLEY | 00:20:57:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:20:57:

Go up the hill, go be past what is now the back of Westminster, go up to the top of the hill. Margaret Mitchell would be right there on the left.

OTTLEY | 00:21:09:

All right.

ELSAS | 00:21:10:

Probably one block, whatever direction that would be, South-East.

OTTLEY | 00:21:16:

Something like that. Yeah. Okay.

ELSAS | 00:21:18:

Is where it was, but on West Wesley Road itself.

OTTLEY | 00:21:22:

And now that property probably backs up to I- 75, I believe, if I'm not mistaken.

ELSAS | 00:21:26:

Well, there are two roads in there. One is called Westminster Close.

OTTLEY | 00:21:32:

Ah okay.

ELSAS | 00:21:33:

And it might have been on Westminster Close or the next one, and I can't remember the name of it, and they all do back up to I- 75.

OTTLEY | 00:21:41:

Gotcha. Well, great. So Little Lovett. And then you went to Westminster after attending Little Lovett. Little Lovett, you said went to the seventh grade at that time? Tell us some memories about going to-- What year would that have been, first of all, and tell us some memories.

ELSAS | 00:21:57:

I graduated from Little Lovett, I and eight other kids.

OTTLEY | 00:22:04:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:22:04:

We had nine kids in my class.

OTTLEY | 00:22:06:

Come on!

ELSAS | 00:22:06:

Yeah. And-

OTTLEY | 00:22:09:

That definitely gives you an idea of the size of the school if there were eight or nine kids in your-

ELSAS | 00:22:14:

In the graduating class. Yeah, that's about what they had in each class.

OTTLEY | 00:22:18:

Okay. And actually, before we go on, so Ms. Lovett was obviously, she was there actively involved. Did she teach classes at the school or was she more of an administrator?

ELSAS | 00:22:31:

I think she was more of an administrator.

OTTLEY | 00:22:33:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:22:33:

They had good teachers.

OTTLEY | 00:22:34:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:22:35:

Can I brag on my brother?

OTTLEY | 00:22:37:

Please. And if you remember any of your teachers, brag on them too.

ELSAS | 00:22:40:

Ms. Force. I remember my seventh grade English teacher's name, Ms. Force.

OTTLEY | 00:22:45:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:22:45:

What a great name for a teacher.

OTTLEY | 00:22:46:

No doubt.

ELSAS | 00:22:47:

And she was one. John Brewster, Mrs. Brewster. John Brewster's mother was a teacher there. Okay. Ed Croft, the Croft family. Their mother taught music there.

OTTLEY | 00:23:03:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:23:03:

Irene Croft. The mother's club was a big deal. The mother's club is what made things happen there.

OTTLEY | 00:23:14:

Gotcha.

ELSAS | 00:23:15:

And my mother, as I said, saved everything in her packet of Lovett memorabilia. She was president of the mother's club my seventh grade year. Okay. Mrs. Lovett expected the kids to write thank you notes to various members of the mother's club who paid for the new, whatever the new-

OTTLEY | 00:23:43:

Playground equipment?

ELSAS | 00:23:43:

Playground equipment.

OTTLEY | 00:23:44:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:23:45:

And she's got this really neat little ... Penmanship was not script, but block letters. What do you call that?

OTTLEY | 00:23:57:

Yeah, not cursive.

ELSAS | 00:23:58:

No, not cursive. Just regular writing, that kind of writing.

OTTLEY | 00:24:04:

All right. Very neat.

ELSAS | 00:24:06:

Can I brag on my brother? Absolutely. We definitely want to get him. Incredible.

OTTLEY | 00:24:10:

Please! Absolutely, we definitely want to get him.

ELSAS | 00:24:11:

Three years older than me. Louis Jacob Elsas II, known as Skippy, Skip. Went to Little Lovett. Best school to go to after that was Marist. Went to Marist. Skipped the eighth grade at Marist. Immediately went into the-- Well, he was there a month or so and they said, "You're ahead of us." So ninth grade at Marist, went directly from ... Well, not directly, went from Marist to Andover, Andover to Harvard. Virginia Medical School. But what he did more importantly, and I know this gets away from old.

OTTLEY | 00:24:54:

No keep at it. Keep at it

ELSAS | 00:24:56:

He got interested in genetics and was familiar with a professor at Yale Med School, who was the leader in genetic studies. And he did his internship and residency with that gentleman whose name escapes me right now. But Emory heard about that, and knowing that we're an Atlanta family and suspecting that Skip would probably want to come back to Atlanta, which he did. They suggested that he open a genetics department, create a genetics department at Emory Med School, which he did.

OTTLEY | 00:25:36:

That's fantastic. Thank you for sharing that.

ELSAS | 00:25:39:

Well, he was a pretty neat guy. Sadly, he died about 15 years ago with prostate cancer, but he was a pretty incredible guy.

OTTLEY | 00:25:46:

That's neat. I want to get back talking about him when we talk about Oakland as well.

ELSAS | 00:25:52:

Yep

OTTLEY | 00:25:52:

And we're zigzagging a little bit. I hope that's okay. You mentioned Atlanta and family and we've talked about the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill. Do you want to talk a little bit about that? Just kind of your family's background?

ELSAS | 00:26:06:

Sure.

OTTLEY | 00:26:06:

Okay. Tell us what you know.

ELSAS | 00:26:10:

Great-grandfather, Jacob.

OTTLEY | 00:26:12:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:26:13:

German immigrant. Ludwigsburg, Germany.

OTTLEY | 00:26:16:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:26:17:

Went from Ludwigsborg to New York to Cincinnati in 1856.

OTTLEY | 00:26:23:

Okay, wow.

ELSAS | 00:26:24:

At 16 years old.

OTTLEY | 00:26:26:

Come on!

ELSAS | 00:26:29:

There was a German community in Cincinnati, big German community. Went there, I guess the Civil War broke out. I guess you'd say finished his education in Cincinnati. The Civil War broke out. And like a lot of younger people did, but he would have been in his early 20s at this point, 1861, 62. Somebody has told us, and I'm not sure I believe it, that he was actually drafted into the Union Army... So he was in what I would say was in the Supply Corps, which meant that he was a peddler, that he put pots and pans and all that kind of stuff that soldiers would use and followed them around and sold them stuff off his back.

OTTLEY | 00:27:30:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:27:32:

Civil War was over.

OTTLEY | 00:27:33:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:27:33:

He got permission to go, and he was in Nashville at that point.

OTTLEY | 00:27:37:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:27:38:

Got permission to move to Cartersville. Today, if you went to Cartersville and mentioned Jacob Elses, the Bartow County folks up there would say, "Oh, we know about him."

OTTLEY | 00:27:51:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:27:52:

He opened a very successful dry good store and funded the first national, first bank of Cartersville when it was built.

OTTLEY | 00:28:02:

Yeah. But obviously he made his way to Atlanta.

ELSAS | 00:28:04:

And then he just said the grass is greener in Atlanta.

OTTLEY | 00:28:08:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:28:09:

So he made his way to Atlanta in 1871.

OTTLEY | 00:28:13:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:28:16:

And May, a gentleman named May, Elsas May and Company started a bag company, Burlap Bag Company.

OTTLEY | 00:28:27:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:28:28:

And what we learned later was his family, Jacob's family and Ludwigsburg were actually textile people. There was a mill in Ludwigsburg that they ran.

OTTLEY | 00:28:42:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:28:43:

The Germans took it over when the war, but that's another whole story.

OTTLEY | 00:28:48:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:28:48:

But that's where he kind of learned the trade.

OTTLEY | 00:28:52:

All right.

ELSAS | 00:28:55:

He had six sons, two daughters, was a true German, whatever, Hessian.

OTTLEY | 00:29:04:

Okay, right.

ELSAS | 00:29:05:

He expected each of his sons to work for the mill, and each of his son-in-laws to work for the mill.

OTTLEY | 00:29:12:

So he started the mill and the bag company, around what, in the mid 1870s or early 1870s you'd say?

ELSAS | 00:29:21:

Late 1870s.

OTTLEY | 00:29:22:

And this would have been on the property that we all know.

ELSAS | 00:29:25:

Yeah, he bought that property, and this has been documented.

OTTLEY | 00:29:30:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:29:30:

He bought the property where it is now from I.M. Kimball.

OTTLEY | 00:29:36:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:29:36:

You know the Kimball house?

OTTLEY | 00:29:38:

Kimball House!

ELSAS | 00:29:38:

Yeah. Mr. Kimball had that tract of land and Jacob, I don't know what that deal was, but he acquired it. And the main reason was because it had running water on it.

OTTLEY | 00:29:53:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:29:54:

In the mill because the engines that were going to run the looms, that were going to generate the power to run the looms needed water, needed heat and then water. And I'll brag on the company a little bit. By late 1800, about 1890 to 1910, it was the largest employer in the state.

OTTLEY | 00:30:23:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:30:25:

Yeah, I think they had something like 5,000 looms running off this huge generator that they had there. Is that right? And there's a big study going on right now at Georgia Tech about all. As a matter of fact, there's an exhibit at the Price Gilbert Museum at Tech about just that and about him founding Georgia Tech.

OTTLEY | 00:30:48:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:30:48:

There's a little bit of an aside.

OTTLEY | 00:30:50:

Yeah, no.

ELSAS | 00:30:50:

It's a great story.

OTTLEY | 00:30:51:

It's just down the street from Buckhead, so tell it

ELSAS | 00:30:54:

No. In the late 1880s, Jacob said, "This is silly." And we're having to send our unfinished materials to the Northeast to have them finished because they're textile institutes. There are textile educational institutions up there that know how to do it. We need one like that in Atlanta.

OTTLEY | 00:31:25:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:31:26:

And so literally Georgia Tech's first name was called the Georgia Institute of Textile Engineering, funded by my great-grandfather.

OTTLEY | 00:31:36:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:31:37:

It was called the French School because a guy out of Chicago named French said, and Jacob kept his things about himself, sort of quiet. Georgia Tech people will say, "Oh, Textile School of Engineering was called the French School."

OTTLEY | 00:31:55:

Interesting.

ELSAS | 00:31:55:

And it was, but the funding was from old Jake.

OTTLEY | 00:31:59:

That is fantastic. Thank you for sharing that.

ELSAS | 00:32:02:

I'm proud of it.

OTTLEY | 00:32:03:

You should be. And then I want to get to Oakland in a little bit. Like I said, we're kind of zigzagging back and forth here. I hope that's all right. Talk about Westminster just a little bit. You went to high school there.

ELSAS | 00:32:15:

Loved it.

OTTLEY | 00:32:16:

Loved it?

ELSAS | 00:32:17:

I loved my years at Westminster. Had a zillion friends. Played football. We had a pretty good football team.

OTTLEY | 00:32:24:

Okay. When you were there--

ELSAS | 00:32:26:

All my best friends for 25, 30 years were on the football team with

OTTLEY | 00:32:30:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 00:32:31:

Had a nationally ranked swimming team.

OTTLEY | 00:32:34:

Okay. Wow. When you were there, obviously, I mean, not some of the newer buildings, but I mean, were some of the buildings that people know as kind of the main historical buildings there on the Westminster campus, had they all been built by that time or was just--

ELSAS | 00:32:53:

There were two--

OTTLEY | 00:32:55:

Go ahead.

ELSAS | 00:32:57:

Two classroom buildings.

OTTLEY | 00:32:59:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:33:00:

And one large Quonset Hut type of building.

OTTLEY | 00:33:04:

Okay. Was Presley Hall

ELSAS | 00:33:05:

There was the boys—Presley Hall was a dream at that point.

OTTLEY | 00:33:10:

Okay, that's why I'm asking.

ELSAS | 00:33:12:

And I was in the first group that moved, that was housed initially at NAPS in the North Avenue Presbyterian. That's where Westminster was back in 52', 53'. And then-

OTTLEY | 00:33:30:

So just so I'm clear, just so we're clear, when you went to Westminster, you did not go just down the street to the, well, I'm going to call it the new campus. You were going to school in downtown Atlanta at North Avenue.

ELSAS | 00:33:45:

Ponce de Leon.

OTTLEY | 00:33:46:

Oh.

ELSAS | 00:33:46:

N.A.P.S.

OTTLEY | 00:33:47:

At N.A.P.S., okay.

ELSAS | 00:33:47:

North Avenue.

OTTLEY | 00:33:49:

Okay. And how big--

ELSAS | 00:33:50:

But only for-- we started there early spring. The boys' school building and the girls' school buildings were finished.

OTTLEY | 00:34:04:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:34:05:

Now this is kind of fun.

OTTLEY | 00:34:07:

Okay, yeah.

ELSAS | 00:34:08:

The way you got to Westminster is-

OTTLEY | 00:34:10:

I was hoping you'd cover this!

ELSAS | 00:34:11:

In those days, you would go up Howell Mill. I- 75 was being built. Had to go across. It created some caravan of cars that they would stop the- Bulldozers. Bulldozers and stuff, building the highway so that parents could get across the I- 75 under construction, and then get to Westminster.

OTTLEY | 00:34:40:

And a lot of people don't know that. Try to describe, if you can, and it's hard now that they've redone the campus and the loop and whatnot, but where was the entrance to Westminster when you went? You had to go across 75-

ELSAS | 00:34:55:

I'm going to back it up a little bit, so get an idea. West Paces Ferry Hospital on Howell Mill, just at the north end ... Yeah, no, the south end, West Pace's. That would have been the road that would take you across the highway, 75 construction, and into what would become the Westminster campus. Where that point is today, okay? I mentioned the quarry.

OTTLEY | 00:35:31:

Yes, I remember that.

ELSAS | 00:35:32:

It was just right next to the quarry. So if you were today, if you were to come in at West Paces, go in, go up the hill, it would be immediately to the left, right there. And there was just one road and it took you

down. The boys' school was down the hill. The girls' school was up here, and then there was a small kind of a Quonset hut that was the gym, had a basketball court.

OTTLEY | 00:36:05:

And those were the only buildings? Were there any roads around the campus or trails? I mean, what were some of your memories of the campus?

ELSAS | 00:36:17:

Football field was right where it is today, but it was rocks and red clay.

OTTLEY | 00:36:25:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:36:25:

And if you had a football game, the parents sat on the hill there.

OTTLEY | 00:36:33:

Okay. No stands?

ELSAS | 00:36:35:

No stands, no lights. It was country. I mean, it wasn't country. It was very basic.

OTTLEY | 00:36:43:

Yeah, at that time. Do you have any memories of, say, favorite teachers that you had?

ELSAS | 00:36:49:

Well, this is kind of fun for me.

OTTLEY | 00:36:52:

Sure.

ELSAS | 00:36:55:

When the boys' school was being rehabbed about five or six years ago now, one of the Emily Henry, who's now the head of development over there, said, "We're going to redo all of the boys' school classrooms totally and we want to name a classroom after you. "

OTTLEY | 00:37:18:

Oh, no way.

ELSAS | 00:37:19:

And after I got off the floor, I said, "You know ... I wasn't a star student. Anywhere even close, are you sure you want to do that? " This

OTTLEY | 00:37:30:

Wasn't the detention room was it?

ELSAS | 00:37:32:

That's right. And she said, "Yes, we really do. " And of course I then said, "Well, how much?" It was very reasonable, and they gave me three years.

OTTLEY | 00:37:43:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:37:44:

But I'm taking this back to my favorite teacher.

OTTLEY | 00:37:47:

Your favorite teacher.

ELSAS | 00:37:47:

So they named a classroom after me, which I still think it's a hoot. And they asked me who my favorite teacher was, and it was Emmett Wright. I loved history, and he was head of the history department.

OTTLEY | 00:38:01:

Okay

ELSAS | 00:38:05:

And I don't know when he left Westminster, but he then became something of a big deal at Episcopal High School.

OTTLEY | 00:38:11:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:38:12:

And his son today, Jimmy, this is kind of fun. He's passed away. Emmett passed away a few years ago, but when his son heard that I had dedicated a classroom to his dad, he wrote me the sweetest note. The son is head of the Jefferson Scholars at the University of Virginia, Jimmy Wright.

OTTLEY | 00:38:35:

Interesting. That's neat. Do you remember when they built Presley Hall? Were you there when that occurred?

ELSAS | 00:38:46:

No it was probably was under construction. My crowd graduated in 58'. Okay?

OTTLEY | 00:38:51:

Alright.

ELSAS | 00:38:51:

It was probably on the drawing boards and I honestly don't remember.

OTTLEY | 00:38:55:

So what was there in between the two buildings?

ELSAS | 00:38:58:

Something we called the Hut.

OTTLEY | 00:38:59:

The Hut.

ELSAS | 00:39:00:

The Hut was double wide.

OTTLEY | 00:39:05:

Come on.

ELSAS | 00:39:06:

Where the boys and the girls met after school.

OTTLEY | 00:39:10:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:39:11:

And Peter Parker's mother, who happened to be Fritz Orr's sister, ran the hut.

OTTLEY | 00:39:16:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:39:18:

So that was kind of fun.

OTTLEY | 00:39:20:

That's great. You talked about your work life, talked about being at Robinson Humphreys at one point during your career. And I believe they, for a long time, maybe still are at the Atlanta Financial Center, also kind of a Buckhead landmark there. Where was it before?

ELSAS | 00:39:45:

Rhodes Avenue Building. Of course.

OTTLEY | 00:39:47:

Okay. All right. Okay. And-

ELSAS | 00:39:51:

I went to Vanderbilt, Columbia Business School, hired right out of Columbia Business School by Sandy Yearly.

OTTLEY | 00:40:01:

Okay

ELSAS | 00:40:01:

Bless the man. Trained at Goldman Sachs for a year. They said, "You can stay in New York." I loved New York.

OTTLEY | 00:40:10:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:40:11:

Bachelor, trained at Goldman Sachs, then came back to Robinson Humphrey.

OTTLEY | 00:40:16:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:40:18:

They had ... I'll go over this quicker. They had promised me that I would be in institutional sales. It was pretty obvious to most everybody around with no experience and a young guy that I probably wasn't qualified for that.

OTTLEY | 00:40:32:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:40:33:

But I figured I owed them some money for having trained me. So I stayed two years and became a retail producer. Then Tom Martin, who had run the investments for the life of Georgia, Peggy Sheffield's husband, Sheffield. Thomas, her husband. He opened an office for a firm called Eastern Union Securities. It was a powerhouse firm, and he offered me a job as an institutional salesman, which I jumped on. So I stayed there. Then I went to Drexel and then they wanted to open an office in Miami. My state was the state of Florida. They wanted to open an office over around me in Miami. And it was the year we got married, which is 1970. And I said, "Ain't no way." So Drexel Burnham offered me a job to run their institutional department, which was really exciting because a guy named Mike Milken, junk bond king ran that bond operation. That was really exciting.

OTTLEY | 00:41:40:

Gotcha.

ELSAS | 00:41:41:

And then a couple of years later, the institutional business got real, real competitive. And Tom Escher, who at this point was sort of the head of recruiting and sales at Robinson Humphrey said, "You belong back over here."

OTTLEY | 00:42:07:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:42:08:

So I went back.

OTTLEY | 00:42:09:

I got you.

ELSAS | 00:42:10:

And the rest is history. It's a great run. And then my son, Charlie, has my book.

OTTLEY | 00:42:16:

That's great. So I guess, but going back, do you remember moving to the Atlanta Financial Center and being in Buckhead at that time?

ELSAS | 00:42:24:

Absolutely.

OTTLEY | 00:42:25:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 00:42:27:

It's much smaller than it is today.

OTTLEY | 00:42:29:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:42:29:

I think it only consisted of two flat buildings.

OTTLEY | 00:42:32:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:42:33:

I can't remember the number, but you went in that parking area, flat parking area.

OTTLEY | 00:42:38:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:42:40:

And

OTTLEY | 00:42:41:

Did you know-

ELSAS | 00:42:42:

It was considered ... That was a nice setup because it had a wooded area right outside and you could go at lunchtime, sit outside there.

OTTLEY | 00:42:52:

Okay. Did you know when you moved into that building that there was going to be a highway put underneath it? Or was that even kind of the scuttlebutt?

ELSAS | 00:43:01:

Yeah, I think you did. But see, that was-- The first buildings for that complex were closer to Buckhead itself than that MARTA station that was further, that would be south.

OTTLEY | 00:43:25:

Okay. Yeah.

ELSAS | 00:43:26:

That big fancy hotel was not there then.

OTTLEY | 00:43:31:

Right, right. And maybe it's not that big of a story or to talk about, but just the thought of moving into a building and knowing that at some point they were going to put a highway under it and there was no-

ELSAS | 00:43:45:

Highway wasn't under our building.

OTTLEY | 00:43:47:

Okay. Okay.

ELSAS | 00:43:53:

That would be 400, wouldn't it be 400?

OTTLEY | 00:43:55:

That's right.

ELSAS | 00:43:57:

Probably 400 was already on the drawing boards.

OTTLEY | 00:44:00:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:44:02:

But the expansion north of Piedmont Center hadn't happened at that point.

OTTLEY | 00:44:09:

Okay. Okay.

ELSAS | 00:44:11:

And I don't remember when that all fell together. It's kind of neat though, because they named it the Justice Martin Tunnel.

OTTLEY | 00:44:19:

Well, I was going to ask you about that. Did you know Justice?

ELSAS | 00:44:23:

I knew him well. The guy was amazing, and just an incredible individual.

OTTLEY | 00:44:30:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:44:30:

Incredible salesman.

OTTLEY | 00:44:32:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:44:34:

So took Atlanta companies like Rich's, Genuine Parts, Delta Airlines, took those stock ideas to England and sold-

OTTLEY | 00:44:50:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:44:50:

--large quantities of those stocks to the Brits.

OTTLEY | 00:44:54:

Is that right? Interesting. Interesting. Let's see. Well, we were talking about your brother Skippy and the-- I want to talk a little bit about the Oakland Foundation and how that came about and what Oakland Cemetery was like before y'all came

ELSAS | 00:45:18:

Up with the idea. Well, the mill, first thing that happened was the mill went out of business, and I try to get my decades right. Probably the '70s went totally out of business in the '70s.

OTTLEY | 00:45:37:

Did your family still own it at that time?

ELSAS | 00:45:39:

No, they had sold it. And that's another story because when my dad came back from the war and saw how poorly it was being run by the family, the current family members, he put together the people that were willing, family members that thought they probably wanted to sell their stock, which they did to a

company Allied Products out of Chicago. And he knew that-I've gotten off track here, but what the family had not done was to do the research that they sort of about the future of the textile business. They should have recognized, it's easy for me to say today, clearly that synthetic fibers were what were going to take over that industry, the Burlingtons and so forth. And the last usable product that Fulton made, as I understand it, was that made rough tents for the army in the Korean War. And that's basically the last-

OTTLEY | 00:46:51:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:46:52:

--usable product they made.

OTTLEY | 00:46:54:

Tents for the for the army?

ELSAS | 00:46:55:

For the army.

OTTLEY | 00:46:57:

Is that right?

ELSAS | 00:46:57:

Or the Marines, whoever, but it was that kind of fabric.

OTTLEY | 00:47:00:

Korean conflict. Interesting. All right.

ELSAS | 00:47:03:

But let me tell you about Oakland. Can I do that?

OTTLEY | 00:47:05:

Because--.

ELSAS | 00:47:05:

I'm going to brag on my brother again.

OTTLEY | 00:47:07:

I want you to.

ELSAS | 00:47:09:

So it turned-- so what happened as that part of town fell into disrepair, I'll call it. Cabbage town was the mill village. Okay. It was inhabited by even-- well, it started out when the mill was in its prime. North Georgia folks found a better life working in a textile mill, even as rough as that was than scratching out a living on the rocky slopes of Rabun County or wherever. However, when the mill went out of business,

there wasn't a whole lot for them to do. But anyway, that's off track too. Within a couple of generations, they'd intermarried a lot.

OTTLEY | 00:48:00:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:48:02:

My brother was a geneticist. One of his quote "labs" was citizens of Cabbagetown who had developed genetic situations, and so he kind of used that as a place to do research. In the process, right next door is Oakland Cemetery. Oakland Cemetery just gotten totally dilapidated. All the tombstones were broken. There's grass--

OTTLEY | 00:48:37:

Weeds growing up?

ELSAS | 00:48:38:

Weeds growing up is a total mess. And I was interested in that part of it. And of course, we have that mausoleum there that my great-grandfather had built. And so it was ... I'll give Skip credit for having the impetus for it, but I was right on his coattails. We need to do something for Oakland Cemetery. So we created what's called a Historic Oakland Foundation. And there were some significant Atlantans that were interested in that, just that.

OTTLEY | 00:49:21:

Who would some of those people be?

ELSAS | 00:49:23:

Frank Garrett. Franklin Garrett, Louise Allen. Louise Allen was really sort of the ... She's a wonderful lady.

OTTLEY | 00:49:32:

And she was Ivan, she was-

ELSAS | 00:49:36:

She was Ivan's wife.

OTTLEY | 00:49:37:

Okay. The mayor.

ELSAS | 00:49:38:

This was before Orlee. So she was the wife of Ivan Allen.

OTTLEY | 00:49:44:

The mayor at the time or former mayor.

ELSAS | 00:49:49:

And I'd have to go back and review, but the other names you'd recognize. And they just saw that this place was in total disrepair and there's no reason that something good couldn't be done there. So we created the Historic Oakland Foundation, and it sputtered along there for 20 plus years. Oh, boy. Now I'm on the spot.

OTTLEY | 00:50:15:

When did David Moore come along to-

ELSAS | 00:50:18:

Fair amount later.

OTTLEY | 00:50:19:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 00:50:20:

He was a big, big help to make-- retired banker. He knew a lot of ... Of course, his dad being Vyrlyn Moore. They knew everybody in town. And David, very capable himself. And he helped put that place on the ground, made it happen. And various activities were developed there that helped fund it.

OTTLEY | 00:50:53:

Sure.

ELSAS | 00:50:54:

One being the Halloween program they put on, which creates about ... it funds about half of the budget.

OTTLEY | 00:51:02:

Wow.

ELSAS | 00:51:03:

And for many, many years, it was just volunteers out there.

OTTLEY | 00:51:08:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:51:08:

But now it's run by a guy named, not a guy, a gentleman named Richard Harford, who's a dynamo.

OTTLEY | 00:51:15:

That's great. That's great.

ELSAS | 00:51:16:

So I mean, it's a money-- I've been involved in it the whole way. This past year with Richard and the other current people that are on his team, we finally-- it's a city park. It's the oldest public park in Atlanta, 1854.

OTTLEY | 00:51:38:

Wow.

ELSAS | 00:51:40:

The city had done nothing, literally nothing for it until about two years ago. They finally woke up and you don't remember what disrepair the roads were in and the water system there had just totally gone kaput.

OTTLEY | 00:51:56:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:51:57:

The city put about \$12 million into it. We're in the process right now.

OTTLEY | 00:52:03:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:52:03:

So within about three or four months now, all the roads will be paved. All of the water system will be working.

OTTLEY | 00:52:10:

Okay, that great.

ELSAS | 00:52:11:

And it'll ... Number one, it will support itself because there are enough activities "Sunday in the park," "Run like Hell," the Halloween thing.

OTTLEY | 00:52:25:

Right.

ELSAS | 00:52:27:

There's some others. I can't ... David came up, a cute name where different bands play on a Sunday afternoon.

OTTLEY | 00:52:41:

All right.

ELSAS | 00:52:41:

So that's all I can think about

OTTLEY | 00:52:43:

Yeah, no, that's great.

ELSAS | 00:52:47:

I'm going to take that one step further though.

OTTLEY | 00:52:49:

Please.

ELSAS | 00:52:50:

We redid – this was before the city came. We raised the funds internally to redo the bell tower, which was totally-- I don't know how many hundred thousand dollars it took, redid it. And now we're in the process and it's about halfway completed. There's going to be a visitor center just on the outside of it that's going to cost us about \$5 million and it's going to be spectacular.

OTTLEY | 00:53:18:

That's awesome. That's great. Still on talking about your brother and Buckhead, was the Charlie Cup? You mentioned something about that at Bitsy Grant Tennis Center.

ELSAS | 00:53:32:

How are we doing on time?

OTTLEY | 00:53:37:

You had talked about the Bitsy Grant

ELSAS | 00:53:39:

What a staple of--

OTTLEY | 00:53:41:

Buckhead.

ELSAS | 00:53:42:

Back in the day.

OTTLEY | 00:53:43:

Yeah so what day would that have been? Back in the day, when would that have been? And what is it, the Charlie Cup?

ELSAS | 00:53:52:

There was a active group of young adults that played tennis over there.

OTTLEY | 00:54:03:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:54:04:

And this would have been-

OTTLEY | 00:54:06:

1960s or '50s?

ELSAS | 00:54:07:

Well, let me think. We got married, probably late '60s till Charlie left town, which is-- no, he went for a few more years after that. Well, I'll tell you who brought Judy's cousin, Elizabeth Brooks.

OTTLEY | 00:54:26:

Okay.

ELSAS | 00:54:28:

All right. Got me started on that. Catherine's brother, Charlie Ellis, who was a real Bon Vivant kind of guy, still a bachelor at age 84, was always at Bitsy Grant. Good tennis player, but a social player. And I guess his and mine and most of ours best games were mixed doubles. So we had a very active mixed doubles group. And Charlie established, just for the fun of it, a tournament that went all summer long. And it became named the Charlie Cup.

OTTLEY | 00:55:11:

Right. Okay.

ELSAS | 00:55:12:

And it started probably-- and this is all headquartered centered at Bitsy Grant. And this was Bitsy Grant from 25, 30 years ago when Bitsy Grant was very nice facility, run by the city, a lot of activities, not what it became when the city sort of let it fall into disrepair. The tournament was kind of an unusual format. There were a lot of really good players, good lady players. I mean, good guy players too, but the ones that were really unusual, I mean, state and nationally ranked women players played there. And they liked playing against each other mostly, but Charlie brought them the idea, let's start a tournament where you ladies will play with the worst men. You'll team up with the worst men, and the best men will pair up with the worst ladies, so it'll balance everything out. And it was hugely popular. And the teams got matched up, announced, and there was a Calcutta at the beginning of the season. And a good player with an average guy, a good woman's player with an average guy would probably be the favorite, because these really good girls could cover the whole court, and they would just tell the guy "just go hang out in the alley and I'm going to take it over."

OTTLEY | 00:57:02:

That was great.

ELSAS | 00:57:02:

It was great fun.

OTTLEY | 00:57:04:

That was the Charlie Cup

ELSAS | 00:57:04:

That was called the Charlie Cup. And Charlie has it back in Savannah. There was a cup that was in the corner, Reese, Frank Reese found this loving cup, and he called it the Charlie Cup, and the winners, and he had it for that sort of-

OTTLEY | 00:57:24:

Cash prize too, or just--?

ELSAS | 00:57:26:

Absolutely.

OTTLEY | 00:57:27:

Lots of cash?

ELSAS | 00:57:28:

Because of the cash—ah, a couple hundred dollars.

OTTLEY | 00:57:32:

Back in the '70s, that was-

ELSAS | 00:57:33:

But a lot of beer consumed too.

OTTLEY | 00:57:36:

Indeed, indeed. That's great. Let me ask you--

ELSAS | 00:57:39:

And it went all summer. It probably started in May, because it was a full draw, probably, I don't think it was 120, probably 64 teams played. There's a lot of players.

OTTLEY | 00:57:54:

There's a lot of players, indeed. Well, if we could go back in time a little bit here, do you have any recollection, this is going back to your childhood days, living on Paces Ferry, 40s, early 50s. There was, I understand, a dirt racetrack out on the other side of the Chattahoochee River across from Robinson's Tropical Gardens, which I want to ask you about as well. Just over the bridge, right as you go into Vinings, do you have any recollection of that, a dirt racetrack that would have been there?

ELSAS | 00:58:33:

No, not at all because what I thought you were going to ask about was the dirt racetrack that was further down Howell Mill.

OTTLEY | 00:58:40:

Well, let's hear about that one.

ELSAS | 00:58:40:

I never knew that.

OTTLEY | 00:58:45:

Well tell us about that.

ELSAS | 00:58:45:

Bert Adams, this Bert Adams Boy Scout camp is where Vinings is now. And then there was a fire tower on the top where it's overlooked, I think it's called.

OTTLEY | 00:58:58:

Okay. Where at Mount Wilkinson?

ELSAS | 00:59:00:

Very top of that mountain. There was a fire lookout tower up there.

ELSAS | 00:59:08:

And if you were a courageous young teenage boy and you had your driver's license-

OTTLEY | 00:59:16:

That's great.

ELSAS | 00:59:17:

You tried to sneak up there, but never very successful.

OTTLEY | 00:59:21:

Well, tell us about the dirt racetrack that you were familiar with.

ELSAS | 00:59:26:

Okay. Well, here again, it's when I was a lateish teenager. I can't-- Howell Mill, go down Howell Mill, go past the waterworks, go past what that used to, that area where the meat packers were, right there by the railroad track, stayed going south on Howell Mill, take an immediate view They're off to the right and that road has a name that I just can't think of, and there was a racetrack there. I mean they were true stock car race.

OTTLEY | 01:00:15:

So this isn't something you as a teenager could go out and drive on?

ELSAS | 01:00:19:

No, no, no, no. We were about as opposite of being young hoods as you can imagine.

OTTLEY | 01:00:31:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:00:32:

But a couple of us would get together and put on some t-shirts and jeans and go.

OTTLEY | 01:00:38:

Head out--

ELSAS | 01:00:39:

Down and hope some young bucks wouldn't beat us up and watch the--

OTTLEY | 01:00:45:

That's great.

ELSAS | 01:00:47:

It was funny. It was loud. It was really loud. I remember that.

OTTLEY | 01:00:51:

We'll have to--

ELSAS | 01:00:52:

And of course there was Lakewood.

OTTLEY | 01:00:53:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 01:00:54:

Lakewood had that racetrack too. I went down there a few times.

OTTLEY | 01:01:01:

Also kind of landmarks that aren't there anymore. I think we've talked about or at least chatted about maybe on Facebook is the ski slope, the ski area that was in Vinings. I know we're outside of Buckhead, but it's just a little bit outside of Buckhead. Tell us about that. Did you ever ski there?

ELSAS | 01:01:19:

But that was past my youth. I probably believe it was late 70's, early 80's when that thing was built.

OTTLEY | 01:01:28:

Okay. Well, tell us about it.

ELSAS | 01:01:29:

I guess skiing was becoming more and more popular. And if you're in Atlanta, you'd go up to north if you wanted to-- you could ski in North Carolina, what? Sugar Mountain and that other place that was right next to it.

OTTLEY | 01:01:49:

But this place was in Vinings right?

ELSAS | 01:01:50:

It was in Vinings. And it was a plastic ... It was a plastic hill.

OTTLEY | 01:01:57:

Kind of behind where Home Depot is now. Is that about right?

ELSAS | 01:02:01:

Yeah, I think so. Right in that general area.

OTTLEY | 01:02:05:

Alright

ELSAS | 01:02:05:

I think it was beyond—yeah that's right. It would've been north of the Vinings mountain there in the tower.

OTTLEY | 01:02:16:

So did you go and ski there?

ELSAS | 01:02:19:

I did it a few times. Yeah.

OTTLEY | 01:02:20:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:02:21:

But see, I liked skiing, was big into it. And anytime I could, I would go up to North Carolina if there was snow. And then-- actually, my wife and I sort of got together over both of our love of skiing and we started going to Colorado.

OTTLEY | 01:02:47:

I got you.

ELSAS | 01:02:48:

I had a good job.

OTTLEY | 01:02:50:

A few steps up from the Vinings.

ELSAS | 01:02:51:

Yeah. Yeah. But that Vinings thing though, I think as I recall, it was a rolling carpet and it was on some kind of these big wheels and it rolled. And you would put these as dangerous as could be, you'd put on the skis. And they had these chunks of plastic that looked kind of like snowball. Did you ever do that?

OTTLEY | 01:03:18:

I've seen pictures of it.

ELSAS | 01:03:19:

I looked like snow and, God help you if your ski got caught on one of those because you'd do a face plant. It was a carpet thing.

OTTLEY | 01:03:31:

Were there some adult beverages to be had up at the bar or something?

ELSAS | 01:03:36:

I bet there were.

OTTLEY | 01:03:37:

Okay. All right. I didn't know if you had any stories about that.

ELSAS | 01:03:40:

No, I wasn't that much of a drinker.

OTTLEY | 01:03:43:

No I just meant that--

ELSAS | 01:03:43:

But I wasn't afraid to take a drink.

OTTLEY | 01:03:46:

Yeah. Okay. I just heard that maybe the demise of the place might have been because the bar maybe was, they get people liquored up so much and then they go down to the treacherous slope and-

ELSAS | 01:03:59:

Yeah, I don't know about that.

OTTLEY | 01:04:01:

Okay, alright. You're the one being interviewed, not me.

ELSAS | 01:04:03:

Better sense eventually prevailed and people said, let's take a Delta to Denver and go skiing.

OTTLEY | 01:04:12:

Yeah, probably so. Well, let's see. I've just got a couple more here and then I want to ask you if there's anything that you'd like to cover that we haven't. But just in general, and I guess maybe 1950s, 60s, what was Buckhead like? I mean, in terms of ... I mean, what was one of your favorite ... Did you go to Harrison's? Was the favorite?

ELSAS | 01:04:38:

That's later. I mean, I thought you wanted an early Buckhead.

OTTLEY | 01:04:41:

Let's hear it then. You tell me. Tell us some early memories of it.

ELSAS | 01:04:44:

A couple of early Buckhead's, right here, I grew up on Paces Ferry Road. There was one barbershop right in the middle, and it was on East Paces Ferry. It was right on the right. As you cross Peachtree, it was right on the right. I can't remember the guy's name, but it was the one barbershop.

OTTLEY | 01:05:02:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:05:02:

So I probably, every week or two on Saturday morning, Mother would trek me up there. And there was, I don't know if it was Wender & Roberts was there in those days, but there was a drugstore right around back on Peachtree. And that might have been Wender & Roberts or it might have been something else

OTTLEY | 01:05:24:

Alright

ELSAS | 01:05:25:

Because I keep thinking that Wender & Roberts was actually where the point is for Peachtree and-

OTTLEY | 01:05:31:

Roswell.

ELSAS | 01:05:32:

--and Roswell, yeah, right in there. But you'd go back in there and look at the comic books and get chased off by the boss. And then the other thing though that was fun is we were, I don't know, probably seventh, sixth-- we were not in high school, probably sixth and seventh grade. It was safe. I mean, mother would take us up, drop me and a buddy off and we'd get on the bus and we'd go downtown and go to the Fox or go to the Roxy or to the Rialto

OTTLEY | 01:06:08:

Okay, and ride the bus back?

ELSAS | 01:06:09:

Ride the bus back, stop at the Krystal, have a bunch of Krystals at 12 cents a piece.

OTTLEY | 01:06:19:

Sure, sure.

ELSAS | 01:06:20:

And she would tell us when we needed to be back and we were, and we'd drive home.

OTTLEY | 01:06:30:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 01:06:31:

Well, also though, I had a really good friend, Tony Askew, who lived right off of Peachtree Battle. So sometimes he'd say he spent the night with me on a Friday night and we would go down and take the bus down there and see the movie and come back. And there was, of course, a bus stop where the Peachtree Battle Shopping Center is. And his house was right at the intersection of Rivers and Habersham, that

house way up the hill, next door to the Askew's. We used to ride our flexis down there as kids. We would ride the street in that.

OTTLEY | 01:07:09:

Talking about dangerous, no helmets.

ELSAS | 01:07:09:

We're lucky we get killed.

OTTLEY | 01:07:11:

Right.

ELSAS | 01:07:12:

But anyway, we used to hop off there. And so then we could just walk back to the Askew's house.

OTTLEY | 01:07:19:

That's cool. What about West Paces Ferry Shopping Center? That would've been near your house. Do you remember when it was built? Do you remember what was the early days? Do you remember when O.K. Cafe was a gas station?

ELSAS | 01:07:34:

Oh, sure. Gentry. That was Mr. Gentry.

OTTLEY | 01:07:36:

Well, let's hear about it. Tell us about it.

ELSAS | 01:07:40:

Yeah.

OTTLEY | 01:07:40:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:07:41:

Aubrey Gentry.

OTTLEY | 01:07:42:

Alright

ELSAS | 01:07:42:

I'm guessing that was a Shell station.

OTTLEY | 01:07:46:

It was a shell?

ELSAS | 01:07:47:

And then there were three gas stations there. There was Mr. Gentry's.

OTTLEY | 01:07:51:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:07:52:

Then there was one directly across the street where that dentist across from O.K. Cafe.

OTTLEY | 01:07:58:

Right.

ELSAS | 01:07:59:

And then-

OTTLEY | 01:08:00:

And I'm going to ask you specifically--

ELSAS | 01:08:00:

--one more where that shell-- Barfields..

OTTLEY | 01:08:04:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:08:04:

Mr. Barfield was right across the way.

OTTLEY | 01:08:07:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:08:08:

No, actually I'm wrong. Gentry, way back when, you probably don't know this, Howell Mill came straight through and became Paces Ferry Road.

OTTLEY | 01:08:21:

Right.

ELSAS | 01:08:22:

And Gentry's was down there at the corner of West Pace.

OTTLEY | 01:08:27:

So on that specific topic, do you remember buildings facing Howell Mill as opposed to Northside Parkway? Because there were some buildings there, as I understand it, that faced on that Howell Mill before they tore it up for 75. Do you remember any of those buildings like Barfields or they would've been down from Barfields, I guess?

ELSAS | 01:08:49:

Barfields was on north side. Gentry's was on what was then Howell Mill at the corner of Howell Mill and West Paces Ferry just before Howell Mill became Paces Ferry. Howell Mill literally became Paces Ferry.

OTTLEY | 01:09:07:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:09:07:

You with me?

OTTLEY | 01:09:08:

I am with you.

ELSAS | 01:09:09:

And Gentry's was -- and that was the filling station we used.

OTTLEY | 01:09:12:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:09:14:

But Barfields was actually on Northside. And my dad was always convinced that Barfield watered down his gas. So we went to Gentry's. And Mr. Gentry was like a family member. The guy was great.

OTTLEY | 01:09:31:

That's great. Well, Alan, is there anything that you'd like to talk about or stories or memories that have come to mind that-

ELSAS | 01:09:41:

This has been fun.

OTTLEY | 01:09:42:

It has been fun. It has been fun. I'm so thankful that you were amenable to being interviewed. Anything we didn't cover that you'd like to cover or any

ELSAS | 01:09:51:

Memories- how about my beautiful wife?

OTTLEY | 01:09:52:

Please do. Please tell us about it.

ELSAS | 01:09:54:

Catherine. My bride, Catherine, we've been married 53 years now.

OTTLEY | 01:09:58:

That's fantastic.

ELSAS | 01:09:59:

She's from Savannah.

OTTLEY | 01:10:00:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:10:02:

Beautiful. There's a young lady and beautiful isn't not quite so young lady.

OTTLEY | 01:10:07:

And we want to get her in to do an interview too at some point.

ELSAS | 01:10:10:

She'd be good.

OTTLEY | 01:10:11:

That'd be great.

ELSAS | 01:10:12:

That'd be fun. Well, she's old Savannah. She's got a lot of Savannah stories. Two kids, three grandkids.

OTTLEY | 01:10:23:

Where was your first house? Where was your first ... When y'all were married?

ELSAS | 01:10:27:

Eastwood Valley.

OTTLEY | 01:10:28:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 01:10:31:

Bought it in 1970. Got married in 1970. I was fairly successful by then financially. So we bought our first house on Eastwood Valley for \$48,000. It's a neat little house, neat little frame house. And then I'm glad you asked me this because it's kind of for me, a fun story.

OTTLEY | 01:10:56:

Where would you go to dinner? When y'all would go to dinner, for example, when you were first married and lived on Eastwood Valley, where was the popular local place to go get dinner? Peros wouldn't have been there.

ELSAS | 01:11:07:

It was Gigi's. Remember? But I'm not sure-- was that Gigi's? I think it might have been Gigi's in those days. And my parents used to love to take our kids to that little shrimp, what do they call that? Shrimp

place that's up on toward Marietta. I do remember this though as a young kid growing up on Paces Ferry Road. This is a little ... This will probably get edited out.

OTTLEY | 01:11:43:

Okay. Well-

ELSAS | 01:11:44:

On Thursdays was the Maid's day off.

OTTLEY | 01:11:49:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:11:50:

And so everybody went to Hart's

OTTLEY | 01:11:53:

Okay

ELSAS | 01:11:53:

On Peachtree.

OTTLEY | 01:11:54:

All right. Where was that located? About. Do you remember?

ELSAS | 01:11:58:

Remember where Central Chevrolet was?

OTTLEY | 01:12:01:

Absolutely.

ELSAS | 01:12:01:

That's where Harts was. Okay.

OTTLEY | 01:12:03:

So that's about where ... Okay. Well,

ELSAS | 01:12:06:

Central- It would be like two full blocks from where Sears was on Peachtree.

OTTLEY | 01:12:12:

All right. So the Peach Shopping Center. I think, is where that is now.

ELSAS | 01:12:16:

Yeah, that's about where it was. But you'd have to put on your coat and tie as a little guy.

OTTLEY | 01:12:23:

And how did you spell H-A-R-T?

ELSAS | 01:12:25:

H-A-R-T-S, Harts. And mother dad to see all their friends there because the maids weren't on that day.

OTTLEY | 01:12:32:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:12:33:

That's funny. It'll get edited, I'm sure.

OTTLEY | 01:12:36:

No worries.

ELSAS | 01:12:41:

What else? I've had a great life.

OTTLEY | 01:12:46:

That's fantastic. Well, Alan, thank you so much again for participating.

ELSAS | 01:12:54:

You know where to send the check [laughs].

OTTLEY | 01:12:56:

Yeah.

ELSAS | 01:12:58:

How did you meet Catherine?

OTTLEY | 01:13:00:

Yeah. How did you meet Catherine?

ELSAS | 01:13:04:

She's going to want to edit this. Do you remember the bar on Peachtree called The Lions Head?

OTTLEY | 01:13:12:

I'm not sure I do, but where was it?

ELSAS | 01:13:13:

Well, it's where ... It's right across from the current Piedmont Hospital where the Chick-fil-A is. She picked me up in that bar.

OTTLEY | 01:13:30:

That's a wrap [laughs].

ELSAS | 01:13:34:

We met there. I was buddies with her older brother, Charlie.

OTTLEY | 01:13:37:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:13:37:

There's a big colonial homes social scene.

OTTLEY | 01:13:40:

Neat.

ELSAS | 01:13:41:

And she lived ... They both ... Her older brother lived in Colonial Homes. She lived in Colonial Homes. I lived on Pharr. I was a fancy guy. I had my own apartment on Pharr Road.

OTTLEY | 01:13:51:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:13:52:

But it was a pretty active social life. And I was 30. She was 27. To be honest with you, by the time I hit 30, if I met the right lady and she was dumb enough to accept, I was going to marry her.

OTTLEY | 01:14:13:

Well, you brought up the social scene. Did y'all ever make it out to, what was it, River?

ELSAS | 01:14:20:

River Bend?

OTTLEY | 01:14:21:

Thank you. Yeah. Yeah?

ELSAS | 01:14:24:

That was a scary ... No, I never went to that place. I need to watch what I say here.

OTTLEY | 01:14:32:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:14:32:

That was a pretty wild and wooly single scene.

OTTLEY | 01:14:34:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:14:35:

And then probably I suspect a fair number of not singles scene.

OTTLEY | 01:14:39:

Okay.

ELSAS | 01:14:40:

But I think there's a lot of activity out there.

OTTLEY | 01:14:44:

Okay. All right.

ELSAS | 01:14:47:

I've actually never did fiddle with that. My social scene.

OTTLEY | 01:14:52:

Or - at least that's the story we're sticking to, right?

ELSAS | 01:14:53:

Well, no. Colonial Homes was- Was the scene. ... was sort of the home of the Charlie Cup. A lot of Charlie Cup players lived there and a lot of very active. And today you would see very attractive people live there.

OTTLEY | 01:15:09:

That's great. Well, very good.

ELSAS | 01:15:13:

Thank you. Thank you. I'm flattered that you guys would do this. I thank you very much.

OTTLEY | 01:15:20:

We're really glad that you did. Thanks again.

ELSAS | 01:15:23:

Thank you so much.