Buckhead Heritage Society

Oral History Project

Interview with Mason and Susan Lowance

May 19, 2015

Interviewers: Chad Wright and Ivan Allen IV

CHAD WRIGHT: This is an interview with Mason and Susan Lowance of 2637 Peachtree Road of Atlanta, Georgia. The interview is being conducted on May 19, 2015, at their residence. The interviewers are Chad Wright and Ivan Allen, representing the Buckhead Heritage Society, Atlanta, Georgia. Formalities. Well, give a little bit of background in terms of, it's great having you to interview as a couple, at least I think it's going to be fun to have the two perspectives of how you all met and both of your perspectives of Buckhead and you growing up here and raising family here and interacting in the society and everything that's going on, and the changes that have happened. Give just a little bit of quick background about when you were born, where you lived initially in Buckhead, and sort of your first memories, how about that.

MASON LOWANCE: You go ahead.

SUSAN LOWANCE: Well, I actually am part of Atlanta's current history in that my father was with a large corporation, Southern Bell, so I've lived here three times, and gone to three different schools. Washington Seminary was the last one, and then Westminster took over from there, and Mason can tell that story. But I grew up here and we were known as "pinks" at Washington Seminary. That was our sort of code name. And we had a wonderful, I would say, typical southern upbringing. We wore white gloves on special occasions and to church, would not appear without them. We cared very much about what our external social behavior was. Therefore we did a lot of teasing and laughing behind the scenes that would not be recorded by our parents because they were looking after us all the time. But we had a good time. It was the bobby-sox generation. And I would guess that, I would say it was an idyllic time. It was a time when people could walk on the sidewalks, play freely, make friends, ride the public transportation system.

MASON: You walked to school from Ansley Park.

SUSAN: I did. We did live in Ansley Park at one time and I could walk to Spring Street School for a couple of years that we were there.

MASON: When she was a little girl.

SUSAN: Little girl, elementary school. And then later when I moved back I didn't walk to school. I was in a car group. But it was a wonderful, easy, trouble-free time. I guess the only tension when I was growing up was the occasional air raid. And my father was an air raid warden for our street. I remember that this was pre-Salk vaccine, so that we had to stay at home

in the summertime or go visit grandparents or something that was controlled like that, but it was the only time when our behavior was really constrained in any significant way.

CHAD: What street was that, that used the air raid warning?

SUSAN: Flagler Avenue in Ansley Park.

IVAN: What was the responsibility of the air raid warden?

SUSAN: I think what happened, if there was an air raid, and there were, everyone turned their lights off, and the air raid wardens would go out and walk up and down the street. And this was just a way to watch the sky and to tell people also to turn out their lights if their lights weren't out. It was a fairly benign type of protection, but it was participating in World War II. And I remember it as a child. It was something that was dramatic and out of the ordinary. I also remember when there would be certain friends that would come down with polio before the vaccine was available. So those were the sort of big threats in our larger world. But for the most part, we were safe, we were free, and we grew up having a very healthy, wonderful family-centered teenage life, as time went on. I would say that Mason and I had that in common, and when we met later in life we had these memories to share, very similar childhoods.

MASON: Tell them how we met.

SUSAN: Is this a good time?

CHAD: Sure.

SUSAN: This is a great leap forward, you see.

CHAD: Okay. Now you went to Westminster, and did you go to Westminster also?

MASON: She went to Washington Seminary—

SUSAN: I went to Washington Seminary just before Dr. Pressley started Westminster. And Mason was in the earliest class to graduate, I think. And what happened was, is that we were virtually raised in a boys' school and a girls' school. So we did not really get together. I'm a couple of years older than Mason, and so we really didn't get together until later. And that later came when I was part of the Atlanta Art Association group that took the trip in 1962. And I was part of the actual tour, not just the transportation, of that group. And when we got to London, Mrs. Lowance, whom I knew, was a friend of mine, and she and I had talked about, oh, when the group gets to London we'll all get together for dinner. Mason was a student at Oxford at the time, and he came up to join the group. So we had Mrs. Lowance and her party of people and friends who'd been traveling around the world and happened to be in London at the same time the Atlanta Art Association was. And Mason came up from Oxford. And I was very young for the group. The group was mostly my parents' age. I was there because I saw it as a way to get my feelings and sea-legs in Europe and find out if I could survive without knowing a foreign language. At any rate, I was there with the group. Mason came up, and we sat at a table by ourselves because no one really wanted us to talk. What did we have in common with our parents' level? And we thought that too. So that's how we got together and met.

MASON: Then there was the crash.

CHAD: Well, you knew each other before that chance encounter—

MASON: No.

SUSAN: We didn't know each other. I knew his family.

MASON: She knew my family. She grew up with Caroline Mason, who was eventually—

SUSAN: We traveled with Mrs. Lowance.

MASON: She was eventually in the wedding. Jean and Lion Mason were good friends of my parents. They were all traveling together. And so when I went down there to visit and have dinner with them, get a free dinner, they were all there, all those people who died on that crash were in that room, having this big meal in a sort of conference room area. That's when I met Susan for the first time. But Jean Mason and Lion Mason were there, and they were friends of my parents. And so was Caroline, who was Susan's age and was in our wedding the next year. But now that's too much personal information. Her interview with the Art Association is on record over there. They have a whole program, took a whole afternoon with Jack Spalding and people, Aubrey Morris, people who had been in Paris with Mayor Allen right after the crash. She participated in that panel.

CHAD: We'll steer clear of that today.

MASON: Yes. I think you're going to have enough of that over there in the Art Association. Now, may I tell about the football?

CHAD: Sure.

IVAN: We want to hear about you, where you grew up and where you went to school.

MASON: Well, I grew up here from the get-go. I went to Miss Bloodworth's and I went to E. Rivers, the old E. Rivers. Here is my second grade class right here, a picture of all, I'll give you a copy of this. I have several. We've got everybody, Harold Martin, the journalist's son, Crawford Barnett, Henry Howell, Sy Strickler, Bud Callier, Howard Fisch, Jack Rooker, Paul Yost, across that row.

SUSAN: Isn't that a wonderful group.

MASON: There are several people here I don't know, but I know Harold McCart and Tony Player, a fellow named Bob Rader here. Laurence McCullough. Most of these people are still in Atlanta. Stevie Stevenson, Dewey Nabors, over here is Billy "the Goat" Bowers.

CHAD: How did he get that name?

MASON: The goat. Billy.

CHAD: Billy Goat. I got you.

MASON: And Charles Seller right there. Carter Davis, then here I am. Courtney Ansley, Carol Martin, Henry Moog, that's all on that row. Then we go to the girls here. Please notice that there are thirty-one boys and twelve girls.

CHAD: That's why you had to go to Oxford to find your wife.

MASON: There's something wrong with that picture. This is Ann McClain, Dorothy Orme. You know Dorothy Orme. And Cornelia Johnson. And down here Fran Crossett, and Judy Brantley and Barbara Butler. Now, Judy Brantley died May 1, 2015, so we went to the funeral at St. Philip's, and all these people were there. They still remember her, and, you know, this is a very tight little group. If I had to cite anything that's different about Atlanta now, beside from the simple size of everything, is that Atlanta is a much more transient community now than it was back then. And when I first knew you, you were a little kid, it was still a very cohesive community. I mean, most of the working people, men in the families that is, would go downtown to work. Now people go, if they go down that far, they go to Midtown. Tread's office is in Midtown. Charlie Hurt's office is in Midtown. Very few of them are as far down as Davison's, the old Davison's, which is no longer there. Anyway, there are certain—I went to E. Rivers. I watched it burn to the ground.

CHAD: Tell us a little bit about that.

MASON: Well, I was in the third grade, and the story is that the janitor was using a blow torch to clear hornets' nests out of the eaves. And, of course, the school was granite. The picture right there is made of our second grade class in front of a granite wall. But there was wood trim everywhere. And there was wood, the floors were all wood. None of it was fireproof. So the school went up. And we were driven by our parents as third graders down there to watch it burn. And we stood over there where Miss Bloodworth's is, where we had gone to kindergarten, and watched the school burn to the ground. And it was a great experience of relief.

SUSAN: Everyone's dream.

IVAN: The story I heard was that the fire hoses couldn't reach it.

MASON: I don't remember that. It did burn.

SUSAN: Sounds reasonable.

MASON: But E. Rivers today was just, of course, remodeled. It's a beautiful new building. I've been all over it. It's state of the art. They have a computer lab over there bigger than their cafeteria with, you know, forty or fifty desktop computers for students to learn how to use. Everybody's got a laptop. It's a very, very fine school. We were marshalled out to different schools. Your dad, right there, and Tread Davis and some others went to R. L. Hope for the fourth grade. And Henry Howell, who's in that picture, and I and some others, Charles Long, who lived on West Wesley, went to Morris Brandon, which was a school that had been completed about a year later by Henry Howell's father, who was an architect. And he worked out of the Rhodes-Haverty Building downtown, that tri-cornered building that I went to a couple of times to see him at work. And that school is still here. It's one of the best public schools in the city. Morris Brandon. You probably know that. And people move into the Morris Brandon school district and pay high premiums for their starter homes so their little kids can go to Morris

Brandon. Henry and I and Charles Long and some others were there for four years. Fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh grades. Three of those years we had the same teacher. A woman named Lois McMichael, who was wonderful. She taught fifty-two kids in our class. That was the size of her class. Fifty-two kids.

CHAD: So, that's not the entire grade, that's just the class.

MASON: That's our class.

CHAD: I was going to ask, that picture you said was second grade there, was that the entire grade or is that just your class?

MASON: No, that's just our class.

CHAD: That's just your class.

MASON: But those people worked. Those teachers back in those days really worked. It's different now.

CHAD: In what way?

MASON: Well, you share the burden. People are more specialized, so you have people teaching chemistry and somebody else teaches math. These people taught everything. History, math, you name it, they taught it. And they changed the subject during the day. They had a long day, 7:30 to 3:30 or 4. And then I'm sure they had some preparation.

CHAD: And did you walk to school, to E. Rivers?

MASON: You tell that one.

SUSAN: A wonderful story. We were going to Judy Brantley's funeral, and I was meeting some people that I didn't recognize or hadn't known before, when I met this wonderful man, who said that he'd gone to Morris Brandon with Mason.

MASON: Barry Graham.

SUSAN: Barry Graham. And he said, you know—

MASON: He lives here still.

SUSAN: —I was on the school patrol, helping the kids cross to school, and I always wondered why it was that Mason was late for school every morning, because he lived across the street. That is so funny, because he is still late for practically everywhere he goes.

CHAD: So were you on Peachtree Battle, or were you on Peachtree?

MASON: No, I was on, this is not going to E. Rivers, this is going to Morris Brandon. I was on Howell Mill.

CHAD: And what was the address?

MASON: The address was 877 West Wesley, and it was, literally the side of the house was on the Howell Mill side, and then it faced onto West Wesley. It's still there. It's one of the prettiest house sites in the city.

CHAD: It's white

SUSAN: Yes, it is.

MASON: It's a relatively small house. People look at it, I remember I was riding with Ivan the III, your friend's father here, and Ivan, Jr., the mayor, in 1965, I think. I was back here. And we came up Howell Mill from downtown and had to stop at the light there. And Ivan Jr. looked across and he saw that house. And it's got this huge yard. A pie-shaped lot. It's a wedge-shaped lot I guess you'd say. And the house sits on the back on the point of the wedge. It's about an acre and a half, almost two acres. And he looked at it and he said, "You know, that's one of the prettiest house sites in the city."

SUSAN: And it is.

MASON: And it is. But it was a three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath house.

CHAD: Did your parents build it?

MASON: They bought it in the process of it being built, from Clem Ford, who was an architect and builder. They bought it and we moved into it in—

CHAD: What year was that?

MASON: 1940. And I spent, they had spent ten years of their married life, from '30 to '40, in the Ponce de Leon Apartments in a two-bedroom apartment. Young people don't do that these days. They don't tolerate that kind of thing. They've gotta have swimming pools and—

SUSAN: Now, now.

MASON: —and all that kind of thing. Air conditioning. And they lived in the Ponce de Leon Apartments for ten years. It was during the Depression. And then my father went off to the, he was in the Army Reserves as a doctor. And he bought that house for cash. He had watched too many people go down the toilet because they were bankrupt during the Depression. So he was not going to move 'til he had enough to pay cash for the house. And they moved in there in 1940 and sold it in 1968, twenty-eight years later. But we grew up in that house, David and I. And we had, during the war, not only a vegetable garden that my mother tended in the back, with help. She had, people down here in the south had servants all over the place. We had a yard man who did a tremendous amount of work around there. We had a cow for about six months.

SUSAN: During the war.

MASON: During the war. Milk. We had chickens, ducks, and all manner of food that came literally from—

CHAD: And that was brought on through the war effort. You didn't have those before—it wasn't your dad's intent to buy that house and have a yard full of livestock.

MASON: Oh, no, no, no.

SUSAN: They also had an air raid shelter in the basement.

MASON: He had grown up on a farm. Dad grew up on a farm in Virginia. And so he was well-equipped to deal with the cows and the chickens. Anyway, as little children, it was an incredible exposure to a different life style from the one we would eventually know. We stayed in that same house all the years I was at Westminster and my brother was at Westminster.

IVAN: Was your dad practicing at Piedmont Hospital at that time?

MASON: No, he was practicing, he was chief of staff at St. Joseph's. And Georgia Baptist, both. And he went, he had hospital privileges I guess you'd say, he had a lot of colleagues at Piedmont, but he was busy, very busy. And he formed the Lowance Clinic. Now, what is that? The Lowance Clinic is a corporation, like anything else. And he, I want to tell about him just for a minute. Dad went out on his own. He practiced first with Howell Davidson from 1930 to 1940. And in 1940 he formed the Lowance Clinic and he was in the W. W. Orr Building for about fourteen years. And in that building he had four doctors: Edgar Dunstan, Eugenia Jones, smart move, first clinic in the city where he had a female practitioner, because all the women wanted to go have her be their doctor. He had Edgar Dunstan, I think I mentioned him. And [unintelligible] was later. Hayward Hill was there. Anyway, there were about four of them.

CHAD: It's similar to the teachers back then. It was truly general practice.

MASON: It was a very general practice. He sub-specialized in allergy and immunology. And now, today, out at Emory University Medical School, there's the Lowance Center, which has forty people there, doctors, working in immunology and allergy research. This is research. A lot of these people are M.D.-Ph.Ds. So anyway, I want to complete this about Dad, because he did an amazing thing. He formed this clinic and they got too big for the second floor of the W. W. Orr Doctor's Building. So he bought a land lot, a piece of property with a house on it that they had to raze. It was two lots actually, at Fifth Street and—

SUSAN: Between the Peachtrees.

MASON: Between the two Peachtrees. On Fifth Street. And there's a little side street there. I forget the name of it. It's not Fifth, but that's where you enter the property from. Well, they tore the building down, and they built this Georgian building. They put out to bids a number of, they had four or five people, architects, bidding on this building. And my mother wanted a Georgian brick building with a scroll over the door and all that. So they turned down this wonderful plan of glass and steel, sort of a Bauhaus design by a young Georgia Tech graduate named John Portman. And had they selected John Portman that building might still be up, because the one they put up has been torn down. There's a parking garage there now, actually, at this site. Dad formed this clinic and he kept expanding it. He started out with these four doctors that moved over there from W. W. Orr Building in 1954, and eventually he had eleven. And fourteen or fifteen nurses and other staff. There were about thirty of them over there, total, working in this thing. And it sounds like an exaggeration but in fact it was one of the largest private clinics in the country, and certainly one of the largest in the southeast, second only to Ochsner down there in New Orleans. Now, why is this important? Because Dad had as his patients the mayor, your

granddaddy, and Hartsfield and, what's the man's name, Hal Dumas, who was head of BellSouth, and then became eventually president of AT&T. A whole bunch of these guys. Ed Smith, Jim Robinson from the banks, all these guys were their patients. So he set up an HMO. And it was one of the first HMOs in the country. In 1956, *Newsweek* did, in their medical section, a whole article on this HMO. He had, it sounds like peanuts today, you pay this for lunch, but for a hundred and fifty dollars a year he would give any of these executives carte blanche treatment. They had their own radiology lab. They had their own blood lab downstairs in the lower level. And he could give you a complete workup in a couple of hours, with all the documentation and everything else. He had a Xerox machine. They were one of the first where all this was done. And the point being, that these executives took full advantage of this, and they just programmed it into their expenses. So he had a really marvelous medical machine going there. And all of his doctors had privileges at the different hospitals around Atlanta, and they took care of their patients and they made house calls, right up to the bitter end. That was the source of his, he had gone to Emory as a, he went to W&L for two years, then he went to Emory as an undergraduate. Graduated in 1922 and began medical training at Emory before they used rubber gloves in surgery. That's the truth. That's the truth. And he was lucky enough to get my brother to go in there with him for a little while. And then at 75 or 80 years old—he died at age 84 in 1984. He was born in 1900. The clinic was still in that same building but they called it by a different name. He had retired and they called it Colony Clinic. But during those years he had Ben Spearman, he's dead now, but he was a doctor that worked with him. Bob Lathem, you probably know him, don't you? He worked with Papa. Who were some of the other young people?

SUSAN: Well, your brother for a little bit.

MASON: David was there with him for a while. Anyway, I talked too much about Dad. I thought he—

CHAD: What was his name?

MASON: Dr. Mason Lowance, Sr. And at Emory right now there's a Chair, the Mason I. Lowance Chair of Immunology and Allergy.

IVAN: Medical care at that time was still highly segregated in Atlanta.

MASON: Not in his clinic. He had two waiting rooms there. The segregated, I guess you'd say. But he had a little waiting room for people who were going into the radiology lab or into the blood lab. And he had black patients. I taught at Morehouse from 1964 to 1967, and thanks to your father, Ivan the III, I had lunch a couple of times with Martin Luther King, Jr., during that time. He was on the Morehouse faculty. And probably three, no more than that, of the people I taught with became patients at Lowance Clinic. That's true.

CHAD: How many patients do you think they had at a peak? If you had to fathom a guess.

MASON: At a peak? I just don't know.

SUSAN: That would be hard to guess.

MASON: It would be really hard to guess. I think they had four or five thousand. It was a lot. And they worked like dogs. Dad was in the office at 7:30. He saw his first patient at 8 and he would see sometimes as many as thirty people a day. I don't understand how. I don't have that kind of energy. But he loved it. And he only did one other thing. He played golf. Wednesday afternoon they were closed, and Sunday, of course, all day they were closed. And he had two golf foursomes, one Wednesday afternoon and one Sunday morning. No, he did not attend church. I do not remember a single time that he went to church with my mother, who was the teacher of the Adult Sunday School Class at Second Ponce de Leon Baptist for forty years. So they had a [phone rings] Might just let that ring. It's going to go on a while though.

CHAD: That's okay. So you mentioned 1940 when you moved into the house, did he, what did he do for the war effort? You mentioned, Susan alluded to—

MASON: Fort McPherson. He was too old for the war. Dad was in World War I. He was an infantryman in World War I, but he never went to France. He was on a ship about a third of the way across the Atlantic, troop ship, when the Armistice was declared in 1918. And he came back and went to W&L. I should point out, Dad was a self-made man. He was totally on his own after high school, and he paid his own way through college by working at odd jobs, and through medical school, same thing. And so when he came back, he went to W&L on a scholarship. And then he went to Emory, and they gave him a job in the dining hall, and he did that for his last two years and four years of medical school. He went to the Cleveland Clinic, a very well-known clinic, for his internship and residency, for part of it, but he was also at Grady a lot of the time.

Anyway, my mother, just to focus on her for a minute. She was one of the founders of the Atlanta Symphony. I remember as a kid being dragged to the Atlanta Symphony in the Auditorium before the Woodruff Center. And they'd have the circus in there sometimes during the day, and then the Symphony at night. And they put these platforms down, and you could still smell things, with the circus being there. And they'd have the straw and so on. And then they'd put these platforms down, and these little hard wood seats that they would put there in a row, five or six at a time. And that's where Henry Sopkin, who was the conductor of the Symphony from about 1945 on, became the conductor. And he was a friend of my mother's. She was on the board and one of the founding directors of the Symphony. You can go down there and see on their board a record of all the people. It's in a sort of aluminum—

SUSAN: At the Woodruff Arts Center

MASON: At the Woodruff Arts Center. She and Charles Yates and one or two other people went up to Cleveland in 1968 right after we left here and hired a young man named Robert Shaw to come to Atlanta and be the conductor of the Atlanta Symphony. And Shaw had recently been divorced, and she had a little dinner and invited as a companion for her guest, Robert Shaw, Caroline Sauls, who was her god-daughter. And they married the following year. So that's been a very good relationship. And anyway—

SUSAN: And your mother was later a Woman of the Year in Arts in Atlanta.

MASON: She was. She was Woman of the Year in the Arts. For my part, I went off to college to room with Ivan III and Tread Davis at Princeton. And we hooked up with another man from Connecticut named John Wallace, who was another roommate of ours for the next three years.

And we had a really good relationship with all those guys. There were about ten of us by the end of it.

CHAD: You went to Princeton.

MASON: Went to Princeton, right. Dr. Pressly wedged us into Princeton somehow. And then we went our separate ways. John and Tread went to the Harvard Law School, and I went over to England and went to Oxford and got my masters in English literature over there. Now to come back to Atlanta, don't you want to hear about the Tech games?

CHAD: Oh, yeah, come on back.

MASON: Is that okay?

IVAN: Absolutely.

MASON: Well, when David and I were young, and I mean really young, he was 12 and I was 14, about that age I guess was the earliest, we got jobs which consisted of a free ticket to the Georgia Tech football games if we would usher. And all we had to do was learn where the seats were and our row, that kind of thing. So we'd go every Saturday. My mother would drive us down there. My father never went to a game. He was at the hospital all the time. But we did go to Thanksgiving Day games, which were freshmen games. And we were too young to know the difference. We'd go to Dodd Field, Grant Field at that time, and watch these Thanksgiving Day games, then go home and have Thanksgiving dinner. And Dad took us there. It was a big treat to go with our father to these games. And we got interested in ushering and we did it. And we worshiped that wonderful late or early, mid-1950s Tech football team. It consisted of Larry Morris, Number 55, the center, who gave the snap to Wade Mitchell, Number 11, the quarterback, who would hand it off now and then to Dick Madison, who was one of the fullbacks, or to Johnny Hunsinger, who was a fullback also. He started out as Number 10, freshman and sophomore years, but Bobby Dodd didn't like a low number like that for a fullback, so he made him number 42 for his junior and senior years. And then Ed Gossage was a right tackle. And Ed Gossage later taught us at Westminster, taught math. And Franklin Brooks was the right guard, number 60. He was All-Southeastern Conference. Larry Morris was not only All-Southeastern Conference, he was All-American second team. But I've saved the best for the last. There was Carl Vereen, who was the left tackle. Now, you've got to understand, I play golf with a lot of these guys now. And back in those days, they were idols. They were somebody you worshiped from afar. So some grateful patient gave my father three tickets to the Sugar Bowl in 1955, -4. You know, New Year's Day 1955. So off we went, the three of us, my mother was not invited. We went and stayed in the St. Charles Hotel.

CHAD: Did you take the train down?

MASON: I don't remember how we got there. I guess we did take the train. But we were staying in the St. Charles Hotel. And I remember this as though it were yesterday. There's my brother's picture right over there. That hangs at Piedmont Hospital in the transplant unit that he founded. He later went to Columbia Medical School after winning the Brittain Award at Emory, which is for their top senior I guess. And then he went to Columbia. He taught at the University of Virginia Medical School for a couple of years and then he came back here. But David was with

me in the elevator, and the elevator, we were going down to breakfast, and the elevator stopped at one of the other floors. And on the elevator came Wade Mitchell and Leon Hardeman and Billy Teas. Do these names mean anything to you?

CHAD: Sure.

MASON: And they got out. Nobody talked in the elevator. You didn't dare talk to your "god." And so they got down to the bottom. This was before the game. And we were going to breakfast. And I felt this pull on my coat. And David said, "Mason, we've just been breathing air with Wade Mitchell."

[Laughter]

MASON: And they are now very close friends, those two, David and Wade. Anyway, Wade doesn't like for me to tell these stories. As he put it, "Mason, you can tell that story all you want, but today nobody knows who you're talking about and they don't give a damn." He said that to me over at the party the other day. You remember I told that. I stood up and told that whole thing at the party. Those were great years. And part of the reason was that Dr. Pressly was ensuring that we got a good education, which by the way was very fragmented at first. Our first year of Westminster, and here's the picture—

CHAD: Why don't we dive into that a little bit, just talk about the formation of Westminster, his guidance, and—

MASON: You want to do that?

SUSAN: No, no, the other picture. Oh, I'm sorry. It was premature.

MASON: This is the picture of the first class to go all the way through Westminster. And you want me to name anybody, or is that too much?

CHAD: Sure, go ahead. What year would that have been?

MASON: That's Tread Davis, Mason, who are these guys, I don't remember. Howard Fisch, Henry Howell, Jack Rooker in the suspenders, Eric Henderson, John Cooledge, Laurence McCullough, Fay Pierce, Howard Warren. Here's McCullough again. Harry Thompson, Spencer Allen, Sy Strickler, Jim Fonville, Ed Neely. He died in a plane crash, you might remember. He was a good pilot but he had a landing gear problem. "B" Wardlaw, Frank Maier, and Ivan Allen, your dad, right there.

CHAD: So a lot, I heard similar names from what you spoke of at E. Rivers. A lot of—

MASON: Right. Same people. We went to different schools. R. L. Hope and then over to, I went to Morris Brandon. But we all wound up here. Now, where is here? It was a terrible building. It belonged to the Napsonian School, which was merged with Washington Seminary to make Westminster. But it was all girls.

CHAD: Is it in the current location where the campus is now or is it somewhere else?

MASON: No. It was on Ponce de Leon Avenue. I went by there just a little while ago, driving back out. And it was down there in this decrepit building. You talk about luxuries today. That E. Rivers School is centrally air conditioned, centrally heated, all those computers. We were lucky to have blackboards. I mean, this building dates back to the early part of the 20th century.

CHAD: And what year would its inception have been?

MASON: 1951. We started the school. And we went through all—now the second year, we were at the North Avenue Presbyterian Church. So we went to school in a church building for the ninth grade. And it was only in the middle of our third year, sophomore year, that we moved to the new Westminster campus, and there was only one building. Well, there were two buildings I guess. There was a girls school and a boys school. But there was no Pressly Hall, that great big one now that has the auditorium and so on.

IVAN: So it was a real leap of faith by your parents to send you to a fledgling school like this.

MASON: That's a really good point.

SUSAN: It is a good point, and—

MASON: That's an excellent point. Did everybody hear what Ivan said? Say it again.

IVAN: I mean, it was an un- tested, un-founded product that you all were kind of cutting your teeth on.

MASON: Well, we were untested and unfound products too.

CHAD: What was the driving force behind the creation?

MASON: Bill Pressly. And Louise Allen. And Fritz Orr.

SUSAN: There was a vacuum for high schools, private education—

MASON: We were all going off to school.

SUSAN: —for boys. You either went to a military school or you went to the public high school.

MASON: Or you went to Woodberry or Episcopal. I was enrolled at Episcopal.

SUSAN: Staying in Atlanta there was a vacuum.

MASON: They had me enrolled to go away at ninth grade to Episcopal. And I think parents, it's true of parents today, nobody wants to dump their kids into a boarding school that early. So sometimes, and we sent ours to Andover at the tenth grade, but not before that. And it was an hour away. We were there every time there was a rowing event or musical event, in the case of our older daughter, we would go to it. But you can't do that if you're in Atlanta and you're at Episcopal High and there's no interstate highway. And that was, the parents wanted this school. What they didn't want to do is jeopardize their children's chances of getting a good education. So, enter Bill Pressly.

SUSAN: Remember how ambitious Atlanta was at that time. The leadership of Atlanta had gotten together in a loose, it was actually a formal organization called Forward Atlanta. And Mayor Allen was very much a part of all of this. And the leading corporations and banks, to really do something to make Atlanta attractive for people from other, corporations from other parts of the country. And they knew that those executives would not move here if they didn't have major league baseball, fine private schools, good streets, and so forth. So they, there was a concerted community effort to remedy this problem. And Dr. Pressly had a known track record at McCallie. He was interested in creating this new enterprise. So it was a coming together of Atlanta in a new stage of growth with very, very strong leadership.

MASON: Well, we're fast forwarding to the present almost to talk about these things. But Bill Pressly—and don't let anybody underestimate the influence of Louise Allen in moving this city forward. Your grandfather was the mayor, and politically he saved this country. There's never been a real race riot in this city. Not even when King was assassinated. And he lived here. There was no race riot. Boston exploded, Watts exploded, others, Detroit was leveled, you know, at that time, in April of 1968. But Atlanta had a long history of cooperation between Mayor Allen and Benjamin Mays, who was not only the president of Morehouse but he was the chairman of the Atlanta school committee. And so he did a lot of busing, but it wasn't of the students. It was busing of teachers and budgets. They worked out a deal. And I was one of the teachers. I taught at the Booker T. Washington High School part-time before the years I was teaching at Emory. I'd gotten my masters at Oxford and I was teaching. You know, instead of teaching at Northside or North Fulton I was sent over there. And there was a lot of that kind of stuff that they were doing. It was still very segregated. There's no question about that. But Mayor Allen kept the lid on. But I want to talk about his wife, Louise Allen. Behind the scenes, you ask what brought Westminster into being? Fritz Orr donated a hundred and eighty-five acres at cost. Which was something like $100 an acre at the time he sold it to the trustees. He was a trustee himself. It was basically a gift. And Louise Allen raised a lot of money for the early part of the school. And then Bill Pressly. When we were here in that building, which was, you know, less than an acre, the whole thing. Our football field was the meadow, where you had your wedding reception. That's where we played football, and we played basketball—

CHAD: Where was that? Would that have been Piedmont—

MASON: No, no. This was, we got a bus. They, Pressly made good use of Chevrolet vans, the old-style vans that held about six or eight people. And they combed the city. The teachers were drivers, except for one time when Eric Henderson and Trent Davis thought they would experiment around with a loose set of keys they found, and drove one of these vans into the wall down at this Napsonian School where we were. We were all in the eighth grade at the time.

CHAD: Would that have been the first expulsion from Westminster? First detention, maybe?

MASON: I don't believe that they came, that it was revealed what they had done or who had done it. I don't think anybody reported them. We were all sitting in the back of the thing, and one of 'em—

CHAD: —the statute of limitations.

MASON: —cranked the thing up. Anyway, the teachers were doing everything. They were coaches, teachers. That's true today at a lot of prep schools. If you're in a place like Andover or Exeter or Episcopal or Woodberry, the teachers are also dorm masters. And I did that one year at the Punahou School after college before I went over to England. And let me tell you, there has never been a year like that. I worked. Everybody thought, oh, yeah, out in Hawaii, what a good— I went to the beach nine times in a year and two months. I was in charge of the dorm with one other guy. We had a small dorm of fifty kids from the outer islands. And I taught seven fifty-minute classes a day, plus lunch duty, plus three sports to coach—football, basketball, baseball—and then dorm duty and dinner at six, and then study hall.

IVAN: Back to Westminster for a minute. Was it a day school at this time?

MASON: It was only a day school. They did have—

SUSAN: They had boarders, didn't they?

MASON: No, they had, they had, it was the same format as Punahou. It was not a boarding school. They had about thirty or forty kids who lived in our eighth grade year over at Washington Seminary. Tommy Bates lived at Washington Seminary for a year, I remember. He was our quarterback.

CHAD: So they would commute from, they'd drive 'em from the Seminary over to the new campus?

SUSAN: Hm-hmm.

IVAN: What would you and Susan be doing for pleasure or fun when you're not in school at this time?

MASON: What were we doing for pleasure or fun?

IVAN: What would a Friday or Saturday night look like?

SUSAN: The social life of high school students, what was it like?

MASON: We'd go to the Fox Theatre. Tread got his driver's license somewhere in there. He was about six months older than we. We'd go to the Fox Theatre. And I would hold hands with Claiborne Smith. That was the thing. And then we'd go to the Varsity and get some food and go home. That was it.

IVAN: Was there anything in Buckhead at the time that captured your attention?

SUSAN: Oh, yes.

MASON: Wender and Roberts. And Jim Salle's Record Shop was up there. Jacob's Drug Store, on the corner there, between Roswell and Peachtree.

SUSAN: That pie-shaped—

MASON: That pie-shaped wedge. I don't know what's in there now. I deplore the fact that Gucci and Tiffany and all these upscale stores are coming in here. Buckhead Hardware. And I worked Christmases at Gay's Men's Store, selling ties and shirts at Christmastime, while I was at Westminster. It was a good, those were good years.

CHAD: Did Buckhead have a sense of community—

MASON: Oh, yeah.

CHAD: —even though it seemed like everybody worked downtown or went to church—

MASON: But they lived out here.

CHAD: They lived out here. So in shopping and community-wise, did it have a sense of a smaller town almost like a suburb of Atlanta?

MASON: Well, there were a lot of factors that made that possible. It was very safe. I took, I've been a clarinet player all my, since I was in, early years, and I went to Auburn Avenue for my music lessons with a fella named Wagner, Robert Wagner. His brother was named Lenny Wagner, and he was in the Second Ponce de Leon Church with us. And I'd go at eleven years old, with my clarinet under one arm, and, you know, no wallet or anything. Fifty cents for, twenty-five cents for the bus fare. I would go down there and nobody ever bothered me. It was not, you couldn't do that today. And I don't mean black-white either. I'm talking about molestation. And that was just not something anybody worried about. So I would go down there and that's as close to downtown as I ever got except to go to my father's office, which was on Pine Street and Peachtree, W. W. Orr Medical Building. And we'd now and then go down there and go to dinner with him afterwards or something. But, no, it was a total community here.

CHAD: Was Buckhead walkable? Would most people walk into the town or would people—

MASON: Bicycles. I've taken a bicycle—there was a gas station, a Gulf gas station, up there where that High Fi store is now. And Davis was the guy's name who owned it. And he was a World War II veteran. Gruff man, smoked a lot. And I remember going up there and going to the grocery store and standing in line during the War for my mother, with our little ration cards, to get meat. It was a total community. And you'd see everybody you'd seen in church. David and I and our mother went to church, because my father played golf. And we went to church. And we'd then see some of these people in the grocery store or wherever.

IVAN: Well, that's a long ride from the corner of Howell Mill and West Wesley on your bicycle.

MASON: Well, I didn't do that very often. But I did go to Henry Howell's a lot in grammar school. I did not know your father 'til fourth grade, when he moved over to Morris Brandon from R. L. Hope. And for some reason I guess he moved back to R. L. Hope after that. But he was in our fourth grade class at Morris Brandon. And Henry was a good friend from Miss Bloodworth's years. And Henry lived at 601 Peachtree Battle Avenue, at the corner of Arden and Peachtree Battle. His daughter lives there now, Helen Wray. Beautiful house, with incredible furnishings. It's got a—

IVAN: That's got to be one of the oldest homes in Buckhead, wouldn't you suspect?

MASON: Well, no, it's not one of the oldest. It was built in the 1930s by Mr. Howell, who was an architect. He'd done Morris Brandon, don't forget. Later he did Morris Brandon. But he lived in Europe for a long time. And he brought a ceiling over from Florence, Italy. And that's the living room ceiling in that house. And it's got Menaboni murals on the walls. It's got marble floors in the foyer. It's a gorgeous, classic home. It's in Bill Mitchell's book. Bill Mitchell's in this picture.

SUSAN: But, you know, Ivan may have a point. Because a lot of houses in that area of Buckhead were built after 1930. Like your house was built in 1940.

MASON: '40, yeah. But my house was not a classic house.

SUSAN: But Henry's house was built before that, wasn't it?

MASON: And the Neel Reid house. There are a lot of Neel Reid houses around.

SUSAN: Yes, that's true.

MASON: Tread Davis lived in one, grew up in one, on Habersham at Cherokee. If you go down Cherokee and drive straight across Habersham you'll run right into Tread Davis's house. Now that raises one more thing, brings to mind. Tread Davis and I were raised by parents who were extremely concerned about our learning the work ethic. Tread and I both mowed our families' lawns. And Tread, I just talked to him the other day about this. It was a long time before the Davises would buy a power mower. So he was pushing one of those reel mowers. I had a power—nothing was self-propelled. But from age twelve until age eighteen when I went off to college, I was totally responsible for our lawn at 877. And there's a hill there. Go look. They've got it covered with pine straw now. But I used to mow that hill with the mower up above me, and it would, you know, it was tough work. And it was hot. You had to do it once a week. Anyway, you were asking about the Howells. That house is a gorgeous house. And, yes, Ivan, it probably is one of the oldest, it's certainly one of the classic houses. It's older that Tread's Neel Reid house on Habersham I think. Could be wrong about that. But there are, of course, some antebellum homes around here, that go back to the Civil War era, and they pre-date all those Neel Reid houses in the 1930s. For instance, go down West Paces Ferry.

SUSAN: Well, he was working, Neel Reid was working in the twenties and the early thirties, and Wright Mitchell's home was a Neel Reid home, I believe.

MASON: It is.

SUSAN: And I don't know which year it was built, but about this time.

MASON: Wright Mitchell's home is a Neel Reid home. Now, before we leave Westminster, I've got to bring this picture. Can you see the picture there? Well, I've talked enough about Georgia Tech and Wade Mitchell. I want to talk now about three honorable mention All-Mid-South football players that are in this picture.

CHAD: Were you all the Wildcats?

MASON: We were the Wildcats.

CHAD: So it never changed mascots.

MASON: This is before they started playing sports in this wimpy league they play now. We played Baylor, we played McCallie, we played Riverside. We played Darlington. We had a tough schedule. And in this picture are Tread Davis at right tackle, right next to my brother David Lowance, who was only a sophomore. There's Jack Rooker here who was the center and our team captain, and then I'm there at left guard. Three honorable mention All-Mid-South legends.

SUSAN: Legends!

MASON: Let the record show. We were legends. I think there must have been a mailing error somewhere. Not one of us got a college scholarship to play football.

SUSAN: Did you play in college?

MASON: But I played very little, one year, in college till I realized how small I was. The man I played behind in college weighed 237 pounds. He was from Pennsylvania. And that, I played a total of twenty minutes in twelve games my freshman year. That's not very much. The biggest problem I had in football in college was not freezing to death at Dartmouth when we didn't have jackets. Those were, long before we had those heaters that they have now, out by the game, you know? They have heaters. We didn't have even jackets. We had to take blankets out of the dormitories where we were sleeping and cover ourselves with those during the game. Because it was cold. We played Dartmouth Thanksgiving weekend.

CHAD: Now, when you guys would go up to Chattanooga and play Baylor or McCallie—

MASON: Wonderful.

CHAD: Would you spend the night? Would you take the train, take a bus? You'd spend the night?

MASON: Oh, we'd spend the night, sometimes in a hotel. Pressly knew what he was doing. He set the thing in motion, and the money somehow came. Again, your grandmother, Louise Allen, she had a lot to do with getting us off to the right start. But we stayed in motels mostly.

CHAD: How many students were in that first graduating class? By the time you were a senior, how many students were there?

MASON: Maybe thirty.

CHAD: And what was your [to Susan] perception of the Westminster boys at the time?

SUSAN: By then—

MASON: They were all younger than she was.

SUSAN: That's right. Because by the time the school got started I was away at college. There's that age difference with us. So I was somewhere else while all this was going on.

MASON: She was dating Tech and Emory people—

SUSAN: Because there were no boys at home—

MASON: —when she was a high school student.

SUSAN: This was the vacuum I'm talking about.

IVAN: Well, maybe we should jump forward to now you've met and you're engaged to be married and you have a choice to make as to where you want to live. Was it going to be Atlanta all along?

SUSAN: That was Mason's choice.

MASON: Well, you didn't have a choice in that.

SUSAN: You didn't have a choice. You went where the work was.

MASON: You go where the job is.

CHAD: And you were a professor?

MASON: Well, I got my Ph.D. at Emory. After the Masters at Oxford, I got the Ph.D. at Emory. And then I went off to the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. We could have gone to Wesleyan in Connecticut or SMU in Dallas, but we chose the University of Massachusetts because it was growing so fast. There was a lot of money going into the school. And the location, don't forget that.

SUSAN: And your specialty.

MASON: And my specialty is Early America. But Susan got into the Yale School of Management. I was teaching at Yale, just one year. And she went into the Yale School of Management during that time and got her MBA. And I commuted back to, we lived in New Haven. And I commuted back to Amherst, which was ninety miles. It's doable. You have a teaching schedule in the afternoons, then you can be home for dinner, like that.

CHAD: Now, Susan, let's go back. Were there a lot of women getting an MBA at Yale at the time or were you a pioneer?

SUSAN: Well, somewhat of a pioneer. But I think it was probably easier for me to do that in the context of an academic community where there was a lot of pressure. This would be in the eighties, the seventies and eighties, and there was, you know, a lot of pressure for women to do something. And the children were older, and when we were in New Haven, I looked around. We went there for Mason. He had taken a position at the National Humanities Institute. He was doing some research there. So I decided to audit some courses in the law school. And about that time they were starting a business school at Yale. It was in its second year. So we thought, we are so close, and the children were so happy in the school that they were in in New Haven, that we decided to stay another two years. And I got my MBA at Yale. And it was, I would think it would have been unusual had I been in the south. It was not unusual living in New England, for me to be doing what I did.

MASON: Part of it is that people don't realize, my students at the University in Amherst don't realize how close everything is up there and how far apart they are here. I'll give you one example. I do this every semester and I'll do it again next fall. I ask 'em, when I'm driving to Atlanta from Amherst, which we did many times. Twenty-two years, our first twenty-two years there we drove here fifteen times. I said, what portion of the trip have I completed when I get to Greensboro, North Carolina, where we would spend the night. And people would say, oh, you're home. You know, just a couple more hours and you're in Atlanta, and blah, blah, blah. It's fifty percent. Fifty percent of the trip is Virginia, north. The rest of it's driving around these great distances here. And if we had been at Duke and Atlanta instead of New Haven and Yale and Amherst, I couldn't have done it. An eighty-three mile trip on an interstate is not difficult. A lot of people commute that kind of distance. Susan then got a job at Smith as the founding director of the Smith Management Program for Women. It's a certification program. It doesn't offer a degree. And while she was there she attended a lot of conferences. And at one of these conferences one of the deans at MIT asked her at an elevator one time, while they were getting on the elevator, if she would consider coming to MIT. And the rest is history. And there again, the distances. We had twelve years of commuting back and forth. That's ninety miles between Boston and where I was. But I got a job teaching Thursday nights in the Harvard Extension School. I did that for twenty-two years. And I taught in their summer school. It was fairly easy because of the geography. It was not a big deal.

CHAD: When you guys were up there, obviously we're in your residence here in Atlanta, how long did it take before you kind of came back to your roots a little bit and re-establish?

MASON: Good question. That's an excellent question. We bought this condo in 19—, no, in 2002. Prior to that time we spent an awful lot of time as the guests of Margaret Allen and Ivan Allen over at their house on Northside Drive. One time we were there three weeks. And I remember Margaret said, "Enough already!"

SUSAN: You know, we stayed, Mason is perfect at keeping up with his friends. He's a great letter writer, and the ties have been strong. That group that went off to Princeton together, I think, has stayed in touch. They even live within one block of each other today, in this, what we call our "bubble" here on Peachtree. So they've been in touch through the years. And we've stayed in touch with the children pretty well, I think. And there was a period in the late nineties and early two thousands when the older generation, we began to become ill and dying off. We were in Atlanta a lot. And one of his cousins said to him, "You know, I know a place at Peachtree House where you could stay, and if you bought it—

MASON: She's a Norman realtor.

SUSAN: "You're coming so often that maybe you ought to think about that, and then perhaps you would stay there for the winter when you got ready to retire." So it's been an evolving thing. But all of it's been based on the fact that our friendships have been so strong. We've vacationed with these friends. We've never really been separated.

MASON: Margaret and Ivan, Ivan's mother and father, came to Nantucket one summer. Well, they actually came to Amherst. You remember that? Was it 1994? Was that when it was? And they came to our place in Amherst, and I remember we had a ferry to catch to Nantucket at 11. So we all got up at seven o'clock. It's about a two-hour trip. Except that there was a, what you

call in the south a “gully-washer.” Remember that? We drove two cars down to Woods Hole and left one there. And all piled into this ferry in torrential rain and went across to Nantucket. And we had a nice vacation there. It was a good vacation with the Allens.

CHAD: So you guys have a, probably a pretty good perspective as to being away long enough so that the gradual changes aren’t really perceived, so you’re coming back and seeing pretty, I imagine, pretty big shifts in Buckhead.

SUSAN: Huge shifts.

CHAD: What would you say—

SUSAN: Traffic. It’s overwhelmingly different every time we come. It’s just amazing what has happened to the traffic here. But at the same time I would say I’m amazed at how beautiful the city itself has become, because the new buildings that go up are architectural wonders with beautiful capping at the tops of these buildings. It makes the skyline unique and lovely. And then the protection of trees and the re-planting of them as you lose them. It more than offsets the traffic problem. But the traffic is a big deal.

CHAD: In Buckhead, now, building-wise, it’s probably starting to rival what downtown was when you guys were—

SUSAN: Oh, yes, I would say that’s true.

MASON: Well, I just will not drive past Lenox. I won’t even go to Lenox if I can avoid it. You know, to go out there, I don’t shop or anything when I’m here. I come here to see friends and play golf, which you by the way can’t do—they’ve just opened the golf course in Amherst, because it’s too, it’s been three feet of snow on the ground. It’s now melted, it’s soggy, and they don’t want people tearing up the course until it’s ready. So you start playing golf up there mid-May. When our daughter Susan was born, May 25, 1967, there was a six-inch snowfall on the ground up there.

IVAN: You mentioned Lenox. In both you and your wife’s lifetime, you’ve seen Lenox Mall come out of the ground.

SUSAN: That’s right.

IVAN: What was that like?

SUSAN: You’re absolutely right.

MASON: Can I tell about my mother?

SUSAN: Yes, that’s a good story.

MASON: She, my mother came out of Oklahoma. She was from a little town called Hoganville, Oklahoma. And she met my father here when he was treating her for indigestion or something. Her brother and sister-in-law lived here, and so she had come down here from New York on her way back to Oklahoma and met my father and they married a year later. But Ed Noble was one of the people that she knew as a child in Oklahoma. Now who is Ed Noble? Ed Noble is now the

head of the Noble Foundation, N-O-B-L-E, and he is the son of Lloyd Noble, who was a very successful oil man in Oklahoma. And by that I mean, you know—

IVAN: A lot of zeroes.

SUSAN: Traded on the stock exchange. An established company.

MASON: Lot of zeroes. My mother was at one time at OU, where she went to college as a music major, pinned to a man who eventually became the CEO of Shell Oil America. I've always teased her about missing out on that one. She always fired back and said, "Well, you wouldn't be here." Anyway, this fella Noble went to Kansas City, not too far from Oklahoma City, to set up a shopping center. He was twenty-six years old. And he came, while he was there, some pressure was put on him to make payments to the various corrupt city fathers who wanted recognition for their cooperation, I'll put it that way. So he got on the train and came—everybody went by train back then. Came here, and spent a weekend with my parents, whom he had known forever. And, "Kathleen, I just don't think I want to go to Kansas City. I'd rather, you all are known here, I know you, let's drive around and see if we can find something." So they started driving around Buckhead. This was in 1949, '48, something like that. They got over to, where is it? Lenox, the corner of Lenox and Peachtree.

SUSAN: Mrs. Ottley's home.

MASON: And my mother said, "Oh, this is a woman I know really well." Mrs. Ottley, John and Dudley Ottley's mother. And Ed Noble, you know, with a lot of zeroes, as you said, that's your remark not mine, said, "Well, let's set up a meeting. I'd like to meet her." And he set up, my mother called her and they went over there, talked to her in her living room, I think. I think that's where they met, in the house. And a year later they clear-cut this property and—

IVAN: How about that.

SUSAN: Isn't that interesting?

MASON: And Ed Noble was an amazing guy. He got, you know, he doesn't like pressure from unions and things like that. And he got into negotiations about building Lenox Square and he had some concrete problems. I'm not sure of the details but it had something to do with a union wanting to control the cost of the concrete. Do you know about this?

IVAN: No, but just as a sidebar, the Ottley descendants are also on our board, so we've gotten a lot of perspective from their side as to how Lenox mall came out of the ground. I've never heard that story.

MASON: Well, I don't know how much of my story is true—

SUSAN: This is a good point, though, to bring—

MASON: That is an extremely—ask it with 'em. Ask 'em. Play the thing and ask 'em how much of that's accurate. It may not be entirely accurate.

SUSAN: Well, it's Ed Noble's story more than the Ottleys' story.

MASON: But Ed Noble, I've always admired him.

CHAD: So you were finishing on the concrete.

MASON: Right. He was having, they were trying to fix the price of the concrete. Something like that. So Ed Noble, he's twenty-eight years old, twenty-seven years old. This is right after, they hadn't even poured the foundation yet. And he found a company in South Carolina that would do it for less, a lot less. And I don't know if you're aware of this, but if you go down behind Lenox Square there's a railroad there. And he ferried the concrete in on that railroad to build, or a lot of it anyway, to build Lenox Square. And said, you know, sorry, boys. And he brought it in from South Carolina. And if, it's a two-way street. I think he puts his revenue stream in a bank in Tulsa, I believe, which is partly owned by the Noble Foundation or the Noble family. The point being, he was part of an early group that nationalized this city. Turned it into a national enterprise. Another one was Rankin Smith. Now this was your grand-dad. And they got together with Carl Sanders one time when they were talking about making this a sports city and having a nationally ranked football team and so on like that. And this was the Falcons—

IVAN: Where did Rankin, he wouldn't be your contemporary but your father's, where did he grow up?

MASON: I have no idea. But he, it's the same kind of thing with Ed Noble. Apparently they had a meeting one day and your dad set up the meeting, your grand-dad rather. And he, and Ed Noble, not Ed Noble, he's not involved in this at all. Rankin Smith was presented the option of buying the Falcons franchise for nine million dollars. And he said, "Well, gentlemen, that's an awful lot of money. How long do I have to think about it? I'd like to think about this for a little while." And apparently somebody looked at his watch, and he says, "about thirty minutes." And that is how the Falcons came to Atlanta. And another person we haven't talked about, and should, was a good friend of mine named Bartow Morgan, who has two sons that are living here now. Bartow's passed on.

CHAD: They're in Gwinnett, aren't they?

MASON: They live in Gwinnett.

CHAD: Founded BrandBank.

MASON: Right. BrandBank and Brand Morgan, and young Bartow. Well, Bartow was the president, as a high school junior, of something called the Theta Kappa Omega fraternity. It was a high school fraternity. This is the downside of the Buckhead years, but you need to hear it all. The fraternity was extremely important to us.

CHAD: And this was—

MASON: We're seventh grade.

CHAD: This was diverse through schools, right? It wasn't school-specific but the fraternity—

MASON: No, no, no. A lot of these kids went to Westminster, a lot of 'em went to Northside, and a lot more of 'em went to North Fulton.

CHAD: That's what I mean. It was inclusive of many different schools. It wasn't just at one school.

MASON: Many different schools. Well, it didn't last long. We suffered the ordeals, your dad and I and Tread and Eric Henderson. They had initiation, which was a horrible experience. They drove us in cars, none of us drove, out to a sawmill near Marietta, and stripped us down to our underwear and poured oil all over us, and beat us with belts until we wrestled with each other in the sawdust and got covered in all this stuff. Then they got in their cars and drove off. We had to get home. That's twenty-five miles. And nobody's going to pick up a bunch of greasy—. So we managed to hitchhike our way back. And then after that you have a year where you have to go to Sunday afternoon meetings at different people's homes, and the poor mothers would sit there and watch their own sons being beat with these belts during that year. And they were pretty tough on us sometimes. Then you'd have something at the end called "beating out." And "beating out" was a night when you went to somebody's, you know, an attic home or something like that. Hugh Dobbins over on Dellwood is where we went. No, Woodward Way. We went over there for this. And we, they got to do as much beating on us as they wanted to do. And there were some notorious characters that I will not name, because they are on my black list forever, who participated in that beating. And Dr. Pressly got wind of all this. We were in the eighth grade at Westminster. We had survived the initiation and the year of Sunday meetings, and now we're going into ninth grade. So he phones up Bartow and had him come over to the office.

CHAD: How old is Bartow?

MASON: Bartow is a senior at Northside. And Bartow is a wonderful businessman, excellent businessman, and diplomat. Dr. Pressly talked to him and listened to him. It lasted an hour or so. And he said, "Well now, Mr. Morgan"—he called him Mr. Morgan—"here's how it is. My boys are gonna have a choice. They can either remain in the ninth grade at our new campus at Westminster or they can belong to TKO. But they can't do both."

IVAN: I've never heard that story.

MASON: And that was the end of TKO.

IVAN: I've never heard that.

MASON: That was the end of TKO. And it was probably a good thing, because there was a lot of sadism and—there was some bonding that went on between the older guys and the younger guys. But there was a lot of use of the belt that was totally inappropriate for that age group. And it was distracting. How can you focus on studying if you're faced with "beating out" that Friday night?

CHAD: I can't imagine seniors taking on eighth graders like that. That seems—

MASON: Well, if you know anything about the British school system, you'll understand better. You know, there's a, it grew out of that, actually. Well, the high school fraternities here grew out of college fraternities. But the whole thing has to do with people having to go through an initiation rite, which every organization has. The Ku Klux Klan has that. The Mafia has that. And it's not necessarily a good thing. An initiation rite can be perverted into something that's really not very good. I look back on that. I could have done without the TKO scene.

CHAD: How predominant were the fraternities at the time in Buckhead? I mean, was it something that most guys belonged to? And how many fraternities were there?

MASON: I don't know.

CHAD: Were there sororities for the women?

SUSAN: Yes, there were, as a matter of fact.

CHAD: Tell us a little about that.

SUSAN: We didn't do anything like that. There was nothing. The initiation might have been something like swallowing a raw egg with your eyes blindfolded, but that's as rough as it got. What it was, was more teenage girls, who's in and who's out. It was much more, that's the way women operate. It's who's in and who's out.

CHAD: What was the name of the sorority? Or the names of the sororities? Do you remember?

SUSAN: Goodness, what were they? I can't remember what they were. I remember that we had pins that we wore. Not only for the sororities but for the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee sort of service club. And it was something that you would have two or three or four that you would wear. And there were, I think there were four or five of the sororities. And you joined when you were a sophomore.

MASON: All of these things, in the high school—

SUSAN: But it was nothing like this. Nothing like this.

MASON: All of things were based on—

SUSAN: Maybe psychologically more cruel. Maybe we should have beat on each other a little more and be nicer.

MASON: Well, teenagers are horrible to each other. Teenagers of any school—

SUSAN: I don't remember that as being a prominent part of the experience.

MASON: What we're grateful for in our New England experience, and I have to honestly say I think the south is far more social this way. Let me give you one numerical example that makes the case. The University of Massachusetts has an awful lot of, not an awful lot but maybe fifteen percent, maybe twenty percent, first generation college students. That's not the case at Chapel Hill or even at Georgia, which is our rival school, you might say. Or Emory. Eight percent of the students, of 30,000 students at U.Mass. are Greek, belong to Greek societies. You can turn that number around at Georgia, at Athens. It's like eighty to ninety percent are in Greek organizations. The distraction that social life on a campus provides, while good, especially at the college level where you belong to a group and you have those brothers forever—my brother David over there in that picture, is a Phi Delta Theta from Emory with Bill Tanner in Gwinnett County, who's been one of our lawyers for years. And they are very, very close. That's the good side. The bad side is, that some people get horribly hurt by this process. And I, in forty-eight

years at the University of Massachusetts, I've never been aware of any of that hurting anybody, because nobody takes it seriously.

IVAN: I did not know till today that there were high school fraternities and sororities in Atlanta when you all were growing up.

MASON: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And that "beating out" night was especially hard on several people, you know, that got called back. And I and your father were two of 'em. We got called in for extra special treatment. And I've always resented those guys for having done that. You know, they didn't need to be like that. But, everybody, our parents were supportive. I remember when Shelby Mackie, who was our next door neighbor, called my mother and asked if—I was a seventh grader—if they could rush me for the TKO fraternity, she was beside herself one night at dinner. Told my father about it, and he didn't say anything. But he clearly, he didn't belong to one when he was at Emory. He didn't have the money. So he was sort of opposed to all this kind of thing. I don't think it was 100 percent negative. It's just that Westminster was a lot better.

IVAN: And you think, or what I'm hearing you say, is that Pressly's mandate shut the whole system down citywide.

MASON: Well, I don't know about that.

SUSAN: I don't know about that.

MASON: I don't know about that. But it shut it down for everybody in this picture at Westminster. There wasn't anybody in that picture that wound up, nobody on that football team was in a high school fraternity. We were, Jack, myself, Ivan, Billy Bowers, Richard Hull, Paul McCoy, we were all in TKO. As eighth graders. But it was all over in ninth grade. This is senior year. And senior year all you cared about was College Boards and getting into college. I mean, that's what Pressly—

SUSAN: Dr. Pressly changed the culture of the town.

MASON: He did. He changed, for one thing, people like, you know, one of my good friends here now is Bill Dixon. Now Bill Dixon was older than I am. He's about eighty-one now. And he went off to school. He was from Virginia to begin with. But he went to Episcopal High School. He didn't live at home. He was gone. And so did his older brother. They all went to Episcopal High School. Oscar Davis went off to either Episcopal or Woodberry, I don't remember. He's from Atlanta. But all these guys who were just a few years older than we are, went away. And then enter Pressly. And this dumpy little school here, where he started this thing, and your mother's raising, your grandmother raising the money, and Fritz Orr doing the land, there are some pictures in the old Westminster annuals of all three of these original leaders. And they formed—and McCain, is that his name, the president of Agnes Scott?

SUSAN: James Ross McCain.

MASON: He was one of the trustees. And they started a new thing here.

SUSAN: Remember what was going on at the same time. Brown vs. Board of Education.

CHAD: I was going to ask how desegregation affected—

MASON: It did. Very much.

SUSAN: And so it really launched private education in Atlanta. There were always some private schools, but nothing to the extent—Lovett, Pace, Westminster. There were some at the elementary school level that cropped up as well. This was a proliferation of private education in response to that.

MASON: There's no question that the Brown vs. Board decision had a lot to do with the formation and the building up of Lovett and Westminster particularly. Pace, which was, you know, in an old house over there on West Paces Ferry. But keep this in mind. The segregation of the schools all over the country, we get a lot of bad press down here. You know, rednecks and this kind of thing. The Texas biking murders last week, that kind of thing. A lot of bad press. Atlanta formally desegregated its schools when Ivan Allen, Jr., and Benjamin Mays worked out some plans to transfer money from Northside to other schools, you know. I don't know how much, I don't know when or how. But it avoided busing a lot of students. So the integration didn't take place in the way that Brown vs. Board envisioned it. But by 1965, when I came back here to teach over at Morehouse, there was a good bit of this interchange. There were joint programs with Emory and Morehouse and Spelman and so on. People could tell you, these were called consortiums, where you could take courses at any of these schools. And black studies was going big-time out at Morehouse. Emory didn't even know how to spell it. But they learned pretty fast, and there was some interaction that way. What people forget, they think New England is so enlightened and that all of it happens there first. Boston had segregated schools until they were forced by federal mandate in 1974—I had been there seven years at that time—to integrate the Boston schools. And when they did integrate the schools, they moved, by busing, they moved students who were nine years old, third grade, from Roxbury, which was a very segregated black community in part, as part of Boston, over to the south end. And they drove this series of buses. I think there were two or three of 'em. Yellow buses. Filled them with these little nine-year-old kids, and they pulled a truck across one street near the school after the buses stopped in front of the school. And another truck across the street behind it, the side street, blocking their exit. Got the kids out of the bus, buses, two or three, got the kids out of the buses, now these little nine year old kids, they're getting trauma—they're all black, and they're in the south end, which is largely Irish. And they turned the buses over, poured gasoline on 'em and lit 'em on fire.

SUSAN: It was a terrible thing.

MASON: Walter Cronkite covered this. Somebody tipped him off. And he had a CBS news crew there in a building, and it was on the evening news for fifteen minutes, with, you know, Boston exploding. The cradle of liberty is having this horrible reaction to the integration order by a judge named Garrity, who is a federal judge in the Boston, New England area. Well, Atlanta avoided stuff like that, except they had one in 1905. You know, there was a race riot then.[1] But in the 1960s, even when King was assassinated, somehow this city managed to survive that.

[1] Mason Lowance is referring to the 1906 race riot.

And I want to come back, if you don't mind, a little bit more, to your question about Buckhead as a community. What you all should be grateful for, you should get down on your knees every day and pray to the good Lord for having given you a stable community here, which is changing rapidly. But Buckhead is a bubble. It's been called a bubble by half a dozen people since I've been here for two weeks. It is definitely a bubble. And in that respect it's limiting. But Amherst, Massachusetts is the most transient place I've ever lived in in my life. People come and go every four years. The population, we have twenty-five thousand regular residents, and over thirty thousand students with Amherst College, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Hampshire, and the University of Massachusetts. And every four years that population changes. When people retire at my university, very few of them stay there. I mean, you can count on one hand. They either move to be near their kids or they move to Florida, or to a better climate. But almost nobody stays. In other words, it's a totally transient community. That is not the case here. Almost everybody in this picture lives in Atlanta. And tomorrow's Wednesday, this group of Westminster eighth graders is having its monthly lunch.

SUSAN: Listen to this. Isn't this wonderful?

MASON: Fifteen people out of the thirty that are there will show up.

IVAN: Maybe we need to get an open mike at one of those monthly meetings and just ask—

MASON: Want to come tomorrow?

IVAN: —ask 'em to reminisce about what it was like growing up.

SUSAN: Oh, what a good idea.

MASON: It's going to be at Lapin. Well, it's going to be down at Lapin.

SUSAN: Because it really is unusual to have, in this transient world, such a stable group of people. It's really wonderful.

MASON: That's really why we will move back here. I don't particularly like the traffic and the congestion and certainly not the Gucci culture that has evolved in this city since we left. You know, Amherst is a lot different. You've been there and spent some time there with us.

SUSAN: But our friends are still here, and it's just wonderful.

MASON: This is where we will come January to June in the future. And it's not because of this building or the architecture of the houses, or any of that stuff. It's because these people that I grew up with are here, still. If you went to Amherst now as my kid—my daughter Margaret went to school there with Uma Thurman in the eighth and ninth grade. Uma Thurman doesn't know where Amherst is. She couldn't find it with two hands and a flash light. You know, she's gone. She's out in Hollywood somewhere. People move on. Why? Because twenty-five hundred out of the, twenty-five thousand, more than ten percent of the population have Ph.D.'s and they teach. You cannot pass a professorship along to a child. You can make 'em a director of the Ivan Allen Company. Or you can give 'em an associate's position in your own law firm.

SUSAN: Also Atlanta is a place of opportunity for anybody. This is somewhere you can move and really make a life here. It's always had that.

MASON: You can get rich here if you try.

CHAD: Well, I mean, it's pretty remarkable the bonds, and you, Susan, as well, you have some great friends still here—

SUSAN: Oh, yes.

MASON: She's a trustee of Agnes Scott.

SUSAN: Yes, I can tell a story that's very similar to Mason's.

MASON: Tell it.

SUSAN: No, no, I don't want to do that now, but just say it is a parallel life. When we ran into each other in 1962, we had so much in common we could just start up at another level and talk about what was on our mind that day, because all the rest was in common. It was very interesting.

CHAD: So, you went to Washington Seminary all the way through—

SUSAN: High school. I graduated there.

MASON: She told me all about it at that lunch, dinner. She told me all about how exciting it was when they brought electricity to Washington Seminary.

SUSAN: No, but, the big excitement for us on graduation was knowing that there would never be another May Day or a graduation because the expressway was being built and was going to slice—that's where they sliced off all that land, just did away with it.

CHAD: Where was it exactly located?

SUSAN: Oh, goodness, I can't even believe—

MASON: Right opposite the Mohney [sp?] building.

SUSAN: Do you know where the—

MASON: At Brookwood.

SUSAN: —Retail Credit is? The Brookwood Station? You would see Brookwood Station and you would look over the expressway. Then there was a great giant concrete wall there eventually, and that's where Washington Seminary was. That very first land lot. And it was, have you ever seen pictures of it?

CHAD: I don't think I have.

SUSAN: It's a great, southern columns, the whole nine yards, sitting up off of the street. A gigantic southern colonial home.

CHAD: So was it off of Peachtree? Or was it off of—

SUSAN: It was all on Peachtree.

MASON: Well, here's a good example, to come back to your point earlier about Henry Howell's house being one of the oldest. That building was a lot older than Henry Howell's house.

SUSAN: Yes, it was.

MASON: That building was, dates from the 1860s and -70s, Reconstruction era.

SUSAN: It looked like it was from *Gone with the Wind.* It was that traditional looking. And then there were some very, some sheds out in the back which were the academic buildings, and the gym, and then there was, oh, probably ten acres behind that that was used for May Day and field sports such as there were, and graduation.

CHAD: Explain May Day. What happened on May Day?

SUSAN: Oh, well, there was all, the most important thing was the May Court, of course. And there was a May Queen, and then there was a Court of people who—and then there was a lot of wandering around in white and pink dresses with hoop skirts that Mrs. Buffington, sort of the one dress-maker, would do, metal hoops around for this. We all looked like Scarlet O'Hara as we went out. And we had, you know, pastel for May Day and white for graduation. And then there were, you know, sort of gymnastic games such as there were, and some of the gym teachers would go to New York and watch the Rockettes to get their routines, and come back and teach—

MASON: You've got to be kidding.

SUSAN: No.

MASON: That is sick!

SUSAN: So, it was—athletics was not a big deal. We had basketball for the tall girls, and we had tennis, I think, but I don't think very much of it.

IVAN: I'm surprised to hear you had basketball. I thought none of those women's team sports came along till Title IX.

SUSAN: No, no, we had girls' basketball. We had a gym with basketball. Yes.

CHAD: Who would you all play?

SUSAN: Each other.

CHAD: But you all didn't play other high schools.

SUSAN: No, we did not. It was part of gym. And there was a sign up over the door to the gym that said, "A poor workman blames his tools." That's as close as I got to the gym. I didn't spend a lot of time there. And then we studied.

MASON: She was a cheerleader at Vanderbilt, however.

SUSAN: It was a very traditional school. A very good school. We had some excellent teachers.

CHAD: Was it private?

SUSAN: Yes, it was. And some of the teachers, like Mrs. Gilchrist and Mademoiselle Groleau, went over to teach at Westminster. So I was there when the blending started. And I never really, I never went to Westminster though many of the teachers that I had had gone on to Westminster. I went on to Vanderbilt for two years and then transferred to Agnes Scott later.

MASON: One thing Henry Howell would never forgive me for if we let you all get away—is this picking up, can you hear it?

CHAD: It is.

MASON: One thing Henry Howell would never forgive me for is if I neglected to mention the veterans that taught us at Westminster. Now Susan mentioned Mademoiselle Groleau. She was born in the 1880s. And she was my French teacher and Tread Davis's, along with Claire Hanner, Laurie Ford and some other Westminster girls. We had to go up to the girls' school to have our French course, and she was a superb language teacher. You couldn't speak English in the class. But down at the boys' school, where we had our other classes, all of 'em, we had three veterans that I will cite quickly. Sumner Williams. Do you remember him at all? Sumner Williams left teaching eventually to found a camp in North Carolina called High Rocks. He was an outdoorsy type guy. Hiking, a lot of that stuff. Sumner Williams flew a B-24 for four years, three or four years, out of Foggia, Italy, on bombing runs over German territory. He made the Polesti Raid in 1942 over Romania. That's where that was. Big oil field there. Very important to the Nazis. And Sumner Williams was the bomber pilot. And he flew I don't know how many missions. Twenty or twenty-five missions. They usually let 'em go home after twenty-five. He was a math teacher.

Another math teacher named Paul Koshewa, living down here, down the street, 92 years old now, was a navigator on B-24s, flying out of Foggia, Italy. And he was—neither one of those guys, I've talked to both of 'em a lot now, since, they never even spoke about it when they were at Westminster. They didn't know each other had been in the service, because those veterans came home, they were trying to forget it. But Koshewa only had six missions, because the plane got shot up pretty badly and his leg got shot up. And he spent the rest of the war in a hospital somewhere, I think in England.

And then finally, the third man, this person you do remember. David Lauderdale? Taught English, taught Shakespeare, and other books. David Lauderdale was an infantryman. I mean, corporal maybe. Three stripe sergeant at most. And he landed at Normandy after the first wave in 1944. And he marched all the way to Belgium. And he said to me once, long after we'd graduated, "I know the woods around Bastogne like the palm of my hand." He was at the Battle of the Bulge. These guys never spoke to us about it. They drove the vans and took us, ferried us back. A B-24 bomber pilot, Sumner Williams, ferrying Henry Howell and me along Howell Mill Road out to the new campus, and we had no idea he was a decorated pilot from the Second World War. You don't get that much anymore.

IVAN: Well, that speaks to Pressly's acumen, to know what kind of individual he wanted on his staff.

MASON: That's absolutely right.

SUSAN: Ivan, you're exactly right. You keep—

IVAN: I knew that Pressly was a major impact in both of your lives. Anyone else that you'd care to lift up?

MASON: My wife.

IVAN: Maybe a generation older than you.

MASON: Well, your parents, your grandparents.

IVAN: Anybody else—

MASON: Your grandparents—

SUSAN: Do you mean at the schools?

IVAN: No, just anybody else who was a real force in your life as a young boy or young girl.

MASON: Well, Mrs. Howell and your mother, grandmother, Louise Allen, that's where I would spend my weekends. When you do sleep-overs, when you're a little kid. I would spend them over there at the Allens' place, in high school mostly. And at the Howell place in grammar school. And how did we get there? Nobody had to drive us. We got on our old Schwinn bicycles and rode three, four or five miles to get wherever we wanted to go. Today, you folks have got to have a BMW to get there, isn't that right?

IVAN: Or take Uber.

SUSAN: Take Uber.

MASON: I noticed you're still driving your—

SUSAN: I wonder if anyone does that to go to school.

MASON: Is that a company car out there?

IVAN: No, but it's paid for.

MASON: That blue thing. What is that, a Nissan?

IVAN: That's made by a company that no longer exists. That's a GMC Saturn.

MASON: A Saturn?

SUSAN: Oh, a Saturn.

IVAN: The company doesn't even exist anymore.

SUSAN: It doesn't. But that was a General Motors enterprise, wasn't it.

MASON: I would like to add that one thing that differentiates our children's experience—now mind you I never went to a boarding school until I went to college. One thing that differentiates the three years our kids spent at Andover from our years at Westminster is the difference between any community day school, like St. Louis Country Day School or Westminster or Lovett. There's a pressure from the parents that the faculty and the administration, except for Pressly, who was immune to all this, feels. I mean, they really, you can't avoid it. If a child goes home at night and says "Mr. Lowance was awful to me in class," Pressly's going to find out about it at eight o'clock the next morning and that teacher's going to be brought in to answer up. In addition, every student at Westminster, almost all of 'em, have personal cars. And I taught at Westminster, which was a great experience, for a semester in 2004. I was a William Pressly Fellow or whatever they call that position. They give it away each year in the second semester to somebody they want to have around for a while. And the, there's a huge difference between the faculty parking lot and the student parking lot at Westminster. The difference is the difference between the Lexus and the BMWs, sometimes the occasional Porsche. You see the point. You don't have that at Andover. At Andover nobody is allowed a car. And they've got, it's the same size school as Westminster, 1600. But they do nine through twelve. They don't do K-8 at all. Now. Here's the point. It takes a lot of courage and a lot of strength for a headmaster and an administration and faculty to keep those pressures from building up in the school. Like the time Pressly closed down TKO. That was an elitist organization. As you've said, it was Northside, North Fulton and Westminster. He was not going to have this group of eighth graders be subjected to this elitism. We would go to school with our fraternity pins on. That's about a fourth of the class. He wasn't going to have it. And they don't have that at Andover at all. There are cliques. And we found out about it later. They come from Greenwich, you know, out of 400 seniors at Andover, maybe thirty of 'em come from Greenwich. And they all grew up in private schools and went to the country clubs and this kind of thing. It's not that it isn't there. It's that nobody is really aware of it, because the leaders of the class are not necessarily the wealthiest kids in the school. They may be scholarship kids. We have it—excuse me, one last thing. We have it at Westminster too. Taylor Branch was discovered by Emmett Wright playing baseball at Grady, I think. He was brought over to Westminster as a scholarship student if he would play baseball. He did not come from northwest Atlanta. He's the only Pulitzer Prize winner Westminster's ever had. And he wrote the three-volume study called *The King Years.* You know, three different volumes about that. And he is a major academic in the world today.

SUSAN: Well, the point I'm making is the one he's making, which is, because he was able to go to Westminster with Dr. Pressly and this reinvented educational level for Atlanta, you introduce not social pressure but achievement pressure and competition.

MASON: There was a lot of that.

SUSAN: There was none of that at Washington Seminary. At Washington Seminary the competition was more about who was going to be May Queen than who was going to be an academic or a leader. That was not present at all. And probably a third to a half of our class went to junior colleges. They were preparing for a different kind of life.

CHAD: I would imagine for you, I mean, to conjecture that you would tell them that in thirty years you'd have an MBA from Yale, they'd probably—

SUSAN: It would be, I still am the marvel of my class. They do look at me, when we get together, and say, “You’re the only one.” But that’s not the truth about the achievement level of some of the people in my class, because they entered the world and did what they did later too. It’s just that at Washington Seminary we weren’t doing it.

CHAD: So Washington Cemetery was razed for the interstate. Did it merge with Westminster?

MASON: Yeah. The Napsonian School on Ponce de Leon, when we were there—

SUSAN: Seminary, not cemetery.

CHAD: Seminary. I thought I said seminary but I said cemetery, yeah.

SUSAN: It was razed. It was in the same position as Brookwood Station on the other side. It was land. I think a motel has been there and other kind of changing, I don’t know what’s there today. But it was there.

MASON: Where I was able to merge with Northside and North Fulton fully was first at Morris Brandon. I went to school with a lot of students like Crawford Barnett and Charles Long, who went to Northside. Crawford eventually went off to Taft, to a boarding school, but he went to Northside for a couple of years. And I went to, I dated Eleanor Smith, who eventually married Jimmy Orr from the University of Georgia. Excellent football player, who played for the Baltimore Colts. You know that name, I guess. And Pat Riddle, who was Pat Kennedy at the time. They were all in my class. But that was because we’d been in a public school before Westminster. Now the point I’m trying to make is that there were other institutions in this community which we haven’t even discussed and I don’t want to keep you too much longer, but I do have this to say. A prominent institution in my life, long before Westminster, was the Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church.

SUSAN: It was the First Presbyterian Church for me. Huge.

MASON: And I went there three times every Sunday. My mother taught the Sunday School class so we—

IVAN: Was it located where it is today?

MASON: Yes. And Mrs. John Cooledge, you know who John Cooledge is. He’s in this picture, she was our third grade Sunday School teacher. Then we went on up to different teachers. But that was a real melting pot. Because Northside, North Fulton and Westminster and Grady and other places, people came from all over the place to go to the Second Ponce de Leon church, which was run by a trustee of Westminster named Monroe Swilley. And Monroe Swilley was very prominent. He was the minister there about the same length of time that Pressly was head of Westminster. And between Monroe Swilley and Allison Williams founding Trinity Church, another big institution, and Pressly founding Westminster, those three were the prominent cultural—

SUSAN: And First Presbyterian. He was *the* Sunday School teacher for First Presbyterian.

MASON: Who was? Pressly?

SUSAN: Dr. Pressly.

MASON: Dr. Pressly was the men's Sunday School teacher.

SUSAN: The church is an important part of the childhood of both of us, but I would say for almost anyone growing up in Atlanta.

MASON: That's not the case in New England.

SUSAN: Not at all.

IVAN: That's not the case for our generation.

SUSAN: And your generation. That's true, Ivan.

MASON: David, Jr., does not go to church or attend church.

SUSAN: It's not true for our girls who live in New York and Cambridge. It's just, this is when you go to hockey practice.

CHAD: Right. It's an interesting change. But you felt that most, aside from your dad playing golf on Sundays, but it seemed like the majority of the children anyway in Buckhead were going to church on Sunday.

MASON: That was de rigueur. You did that.

SUSAN: Let me tell you what that does. It means that you grow up knowing the Bible, because you go to Vacation Bible School, you go to Sunday School. You grow up knowing how to preside at a youth group. You become, because it's a rotating responsibility. You learn a lot.

IVAN: I like Mason's point about, that that really creates cross-pollination between the schools that's not in place today.

MASON: Well, one of the people I've seen since I've been here, this trip, was over here the other day with my brother David for lunch. Tom Archibald, who became an All-SEC linebacker at Vanderbilt, he was North Fulton. And his friend, who was not a football player, a very successful real estate person here. You would probably recognize his name, Tom Body. You know that name? Well, Tom Body and I—I've been to Second Ponce de Leon twice since I've been here just for old times' sake. And I'll sit back there with Barbara Butler, who's—where is that picture?

SUSAN: She's in the picture.

MASON: She's in that picture. There's Barbara Butler right there. She and Jerry Goldsmith are pillars of the Second Ponce de Leon church. That's her husband. And Tom Body is on the Session there too. These are major players who did not go to Westminster. And that's—I think Pressly nipped in the bud that TKO thing, which was not bad just because of the sadism that went on with the beating. But it was bad because of the elitism. You know, you've got, at some point you have to stop, you know, siphoning yourself off into a corner with only people like yourself. And that's one of the big drawbacks of too much wealth filtering down at too early an

age. You all didn't do that. You had a car, your dad had a car. I had a car that was $600. It was a used car. And I remember when your dad got a Ford Fairlane or something like that. And Tread had a used car. You get my point. We all, it was very different back then, when we were young. Very different from the much more moneyed and non-egalitarian social structure that you see here now. And I think that Pressly had a lot to do, not with creating an egalitarian school. He once gave a public talk in which he said, we want to have an elitist school here. This was at Founder's Day 1977, when I was one of the speakers. But he said, we want it to be an academically elitist school and not an economically elitist school. That was the difference. And that's the whole shooting match at Andover. Now, how much has he succeeded? His endowment at Westminster this year is larger than Andover's. And Andover has to house and feed 2,000 people. Westminster doesn't have that. He's really put this school on the map. One last thing and I'm going to let you all go. When we graduated there were twenty-nine of us in our graduating class. And fourteen of those people, including myself and Tread and Ivan, had been urged to apply to Yale, as well as to Princeton. And the dean of the admissions at Yale sent Pressly a letter admitting all fourteen of us, out of twenty-nine. And he said, it's the only school in the nation from whom we have a 100 percent admissions rate this year. And that was the first ever graduating class, that group right there.

CHAD: That's remarkable.

MASON: First ever. The man was a genius.

CHAD: That was probably a precedent built at McCallie. They knew his character and the type of individuals that he could produce to be in the Ivy Leagues. They knew that he was going to replicate that at Northside [Westminster].

SUSAN: Remember, Dr. Pressly was married to Alice McCallie. And they had lived there and been there, done that. This was, both of them—

IVAN: I did not know that was her maiden name.

MASON: Well, he came here in 1951.

SUSAN: So, I mean, they were both committed to—

MASON: You know what he was doing up there at McCallie, when he came here? He was a housemaster. He was putting those boys to bed at night, reading 'em the Bible.

SUSAN: Truly he knew what he was doing.

CHAD: So he wasn't the headmaster at McCallie.

MASON: No.

SUSAN: That's why he was interested.

MASON: He wanted to get out.

SUSAN: She had a brother, and that's who was going to get the job. And so Dr. Pressly was looking around for something else to do, so to start a school was a marvelous thing.

IVAN: I never knew that story.

MASON: Your mother and some other people—

SUSAN: And that was told to us by Dr. Pressly.

MASON: It's just like—

IVAN: Alice McCallie—

SUSAN: McCallie—

IVAN: —had a brother who was next in line.

SUSAN: That's right.

CHAD: Interesting.

MASON: Your mother—

SUSAN: And so Dr. Pressly was looking around, because he was getting to be too big for McCallie, and he knew it.

MASON: Your mother was to Westminster what my mother was to the Symphony. My mother went off and hired Robert Shaw, brought him here and nurtured him. And your mother somehow contacted somebody she knew in Chattanooga. Was there anybody in the Baylor School or Girls Preparatory School, GPS, or in McCallie that might be a good candidate for this job. And I don't know the mechanism, but she was put in touch with Bill Pressly. And she went up to interview Bill Pressly and asked him, do you know anybody who might be interested in it? And he said—I think she didn't even have to go up there. It was a phone call. And he said, why, I would be very interested and I'll be there next, when can I see you tomorrow. He got in the car and came down here and the rest is history.

SUSAN: Isn't that a great story?

CHAD: It's an amazing story. I had no idea.

SUSAN: But it's, everything has to do with timing, doesn't it? Timing.

MASON: Well, now, before we leave I've got to ask you—

SUSAN: Let him turn off the camera before you change the subject.

CHAD: I do have one quick question. Being that I'm the sole Lovett representative here, was there much of a rivalry at the time when Westminster started?

MASON: I went to Lovett.

CHAD: You did?

MASON: When I was a little kid.

CHAD: You went to Little Lovett.

MASON: I went to Lovett at third grade I think, something like that.

CHAD: So was the rivalry immediate? Because obviously Lovett, with Little Lovett—

MASON: No, we didn't play Lovett. We were in the Mid-South. We were legends. [laughter]

SUSAN: We were legends!

MASON: We played men's sports.

CHAD: So what was the interaction then between Lovett and Westminster, what was your perception of it? There really wasn't any—

MASON: I went to Lovett after E. Rivers burned to the ground, for the second semester of my third grade year, and then I went to, maybe it was the whole year. It burned in September or October, so I think the rest of that year I was at Miss Fairlie's [sp?] at Lovett. She was the headmistress. And then I went to Morris Brandon for fourth grade on. And Lovett was history. It was out on, out West Wesley Road on some farm out there, as far as we—

CHAD: So in the minds of folks in Buckhead the positioning was that Westminster was, as you said, already striving to be sort of the elitist academic school and [unintelligible] another option.

MASON: That's what Pressly called it. Academic elitist institution.

SUSAN: I think he wanted it to be in the model of the New England preparatory schools.

MASON: Now Pressly did say something I don't agree with. If you go read a book by Gary Pomerantz called *From Peachtree to Sweet Auburn,* there's a lot of stuff about, you know, Ivan Allen's being major, the mayor rather, and Maynard Jackson being the mayor. It's about the shifting over from an essentially white city to an integrated city, and then to a—and by integrated I don't mean schools or even neighborhoods. I mean business. And the phrase, Hartsfield said this originally, "Atlanta is too busy to hate." You remember that? That phrase? But, Pomerantz quoted Pressly in there in a way that I thought was most unfortunate. But Pressly did say this, not just once, repeatedly. Somebody interviewing him said, maybe Pomerantz, I don't know, said, "Dr. Pressly, why did you send your first graduating class of boys off to the Ivy League?" And he didn't skip a beat. He said, "That's a simple one. Because I was convinced they would get a better education there than they would if they remained in the south." Well, that is not true. I've been teaching at a division of Harvard for twenty-two years, and I've been teaching at the University of Massachusetts, which is highly parochial. Those kids don't want to leave Massachusetts to get jobs. My first job was in Hawaii. It wasn't even a state. You see what I'm getting at. I think the best thing that could happen to any Ivy League student right now is to be shipped to the University of Texas for a semester or a year. And what they would learn real fast is that there are a lot of people out there a whole lot smarter than they are who didn't go to the Ivy League for school. And I'm sorry Pressly said what he did to Pomerantz that time, because it is simply not true. My brother went to Emory, and he did extremely well. He was a history major, got himself into Columbia Medical School, did very well in organic chemistry. I was pre-med at Princeton for two years and I flunked organic chemistry with an F. Now that's, I'm not

proud of that. I'm telling you some facts. There are people that you'd go to for medical treatment now. Carter Smith, the cardiologist. Sonny McCord, a neurologist. Dozens of 'em here in Atlanta, including my father and brother. And they got trained out here at Emory. It's a complete myth that you have to go off to someplace like Princeton to get a good education. And Pressly bought into that myth. But that's what motivated him. That's what—

SUSAN: He was building a school and wanted the reputation too, Mason. He wanted to burnish his reputation. He was a very good strategist.

IVAN: He was building a brand.

SUSAN: He was building a brand. You're right. And he did a great job.

MASON: Well, that first group, that little group here, eighth grade, you can count them. I think there's something like twenty-nine or thirty, maybe thirty-two. This isn't the be all and end all. I've just made my speech about the Ivy League. It's got some serious limitations, but it's also got some good things too. Now when he was building that brand, twenty-nine kids went through his four years, five years. First class to go all the way through. Fourteen admits at Yale. Six at Princeton and two at Harvard. That's pretty good.

IVAN: That's a great story.

CHAD: Too bad for the other five.

MASON: But you know who the most successful, economically successful person in our class has been? He went to the University of Georgia. And he just gave a $200-million dormitory building over there in honor of his mother, who was the daughter of a professor at Georgia, which is much older than Princeton.

IVAN: Who is this?

MASON: Jack Rooker.

CHAD: What did he do?

MASON: Jack Rooker? He has built Gwinnett County.

SUSAN: He is a builder.

MASON: You can't drive on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard or I-85 or any of those places out there that you don't ride right by more than one building built by Jack Rooker.

IVAN: Now I know that he raised his kids on West Andrews. Is that where he grew up?

MASON: Yeah.

SUSAN: No, he didn't. He grew up on Westover.

MASON: On Westover, I'm sorry.

IVAN: We may need to get him on our list. But—

MASON: To interview?

IVAN: Yeah.

SUSAN: He might be a great point of view, because he is tied, he's one of the people who's grown up here and has participated in the economic growth, not just of Atlanta but the greater Atlanta.

MASON: I want to show you the book we did for our '56, Class of '56 Reunion, the 50th Reunion. I edited a book, I've got it in here, and Jack Rooker wrote up the whole football story for the entire three years.

IVAN: I'd like to see it. If you don't mind I might take it with me and look it over.

MASON: Well, how am I going to get it back?

IVAN: Well, I know where you live and I'll see you soon.

MASON: I don't know—can I trust you, Ivan?

CHAD: I'll go ahead and wrap this up.

SUSAN: Wrap it up.

CHAD: Thank you, guys, very much. This has been extremely interesting.