

Buckhead Heritage Society

Oral History Project

Interview with Robert Langdon Foreman, Jr.

January 12, 2013

Interviewer: Chad Wright

CHAD WRIGHT: This is an interview with Robert Langdon Foreman Jr., formerly Robert Langdon Foreman the IIIrd, at his residence at 1019 Oak Moss Drive in Lawrenceville, Georgia. He is a native Atlantan, Buckheadian, and attorney. This interview is being conducted on January 12, 2013, at his residence. The interviewer is Chad Wright representing the Buckhead Heritage Society of Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Foreman, thank you for accepting to do this and being a part of this interview. I think the first question brings to bear, why the change from the IIIrd to Junior?

ROBERT FOREMAN: Well, because my grandfather died. I was the IIIrd because my grandfather and father, grandfather was Robert L. Foreman. He was the first one. My father was Robert L. Foreman, Jr., and I was Robert Foreman the IIIrd. Then my grandfather died in, around 1941 or so. Then my father started using Robert L. Foreman. So when I started practicing law in 1949 I felt like Robert L. Foreman III was a little uppity, a little high-fetched. So I took Junior. He was Robert L. Foreman then, so there was no mix-up. So when my son, Robert, was born, since all the others had gone away, I named him the IIIrd.

WRIGHT: The IIIrd. Does that create any confusion in genealogical research or any legal issues?

FOREMAN: No, I don't think so. No.

WRIGHT: And what brought, can you give a little bit of background on what brought your family, how far back do they go in Buckhead and the Atlanta area, and what brought them to Buckhead?

FOREMAN: Well, they go further back in Gwinnett County. My great-great-great-grandfather came down from Virginia to Gwinnett County in 1821 and created the community eventually that became part of a prominent city in Gwinnett County. It was his grandson, Evan P. Howell, my great-grandfather, that moved to Atlanta and had his grist mill, as we've talked about. He later became mayor of Atlanta in 1904, and owned the *Atlanta Constitution*.

WRIGHT: Are there any stories that you know, oral histories, from the Howells, on that side, in terms of any good stories about the mill and its operation, any Civil War stories? Was he in the Confederate army?

FOREMAN: Yes, he was a captain in the Confederate army. And there is a memorial that sits in front of Piedmont Hospital on Peachtree. It's covered with trees, and so you can't see it from Peachtree, at least not very well. But you can go up in there. It's about the Battle of Atlanta, Battle of Peachtree Creek, which the Confederacy won and then lost in the Battle of Atlanta. I don't know of many stories. I think my great-grandfather was a hero type, and the Historical Society has the letters that he wrote to my great-grandmother. And there are stories that I am sure you are familiar with, where he, because of the lack of paper, he wrote on one side, he wrote, well, on one side of the letter, and he turned it up sideways and wrote crossways because there wasn't enough paper to say everything. I think all of those letters are at the Historical Society in Atlanta. On the other side of my family, and speaking of the Civil War, my grandmother, Laulie Ray Shedden, had a lot of old furniture which she felt like was valuable, and I suppose it was.

And she was an important part of the Trinity Methodist Church that's down near City Hall in Atlanta. And they allowed her to put her furniture in the basement of Trinity Church when Sherman came through, so it was all saved.

WRIGHT: She was able to retrieve it after the war?

FOREMAN: Oh, yeah. And the Historical Society has at least a small sofa that Mother gave to it.

WRIGHT: And were the Sheddens, how long were they in Atlanta? Had they been there a while?

FOREMAN: Well, my great-grandmother's family started, in terms of my knowledge, with E. E. Rawson, who was another great-grandfather. And he was a city councilman. And Rawson Street, which is now either totally or partially gone, was named after him. And his house, I forget the name of it, the Cascades or something like that, was over on Rawson Street. And so I think I'm a fifth generation Atlantan from his side, from that side.

WRIGHT: And from the Howell side, Effie Howell Foreman would have been your grandmother?

FOREMAN: My grandmother, correct.

WRIGHT: And she married your granddad, R. L. Foreman.

FOREMAN: Right.

WRIGHT: And they had R. L. Foreman, their son, who you just described certainly as your dad, and you would have been a junior at first and that's shifted around. He was born in 1898?

FOREMAN: Correct.

WRIGHT: And his nickname was Trot. Can you tell us how he got that nickname?

FOREMAN: Yes. You will remember, I am sure, that Charles Dickens wrote a novel called *David Copperfield*. David Copperfield had an aunt named Betsey Trotwood. David Copperfield was supposed to be a girl when he was born instead of a boy. And his aunt, Betsey Trotwood, who had money and influence and so on, always called him Betsey Trotwood, even though he turned out to be a boy. Well, my father was supposed to be a girl. But when he was born a boy, some friend of my grandmother's sent her a telegram, or a wire I think they called it in those days, and said, "Congratulations on the birth of Betsey Trotwood." And from that he was called Trot for the rest of his life.

WRIGHT: And what did, where did Trot live? Where were you born? Tell me a little bit about your dad and what he did and how he really got established in Atlanta and Buckhead.

FOREMAN: Okay. Well, Daddy and his family, he had three brothers, lived in various places, two of which may be of interest. One place he lived was between 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> streets. 1038 Peachtree was the address, and it was later, it later became the House of Music. You may remember it that way. Robert, my son, remembers it that way. It's now a parking lot. Another place they lived was at 23, what was the name of that street. Kimball. 23 Kimball Street was, which is, well, Kimball Street is now Ponce de Leon Avenue. This is between Peachtree and West Peachtree. And if you could go to the stage door of the Fox Theatre, that's where the house was. I think it burned later on. I don't believe my grandfather set the fire, but it did burn.

WRIGHT: And was your, speaking of the Fox Theatre, was your dad, tell us a little bit about the history of the Fox and your family's association with the theater.

FOREMAN: Well, as you know, the Fox was built in 1929, was opened in 1929. I believe my mother and father went to the opening of the Fox. And I think they were given a gigantic poster which Robert, my son, found in a trunk in our house on West Paces Ferry and contributed to the Fox. And it was, let's see, it showed the dancers who were in the opening stages of the Fox. I don't think, other than my grandfather, well, my father living there in the house, and their going to the opening. But they started taking me there when I was young. And Rawson, my brother, wasn't born until I was thirteen, so I was an only child for part of my life. But they took me there and I became fascinated with the pipe organ. And so, well, let's see. Then my son, Robert, when he was a teenager, he began working as a stagehand at the Fox. And he said, "Daddy, there's a man at the Fox that I think you would like. His name is Joe Patten. And he loves the pipe organ and he loves the Fox Theatre." So he took me down there, this was in about 1969 I'd say, and introduced me to Joe Patten. That's P-A-T-T-E-N. You know about him. And we became fast friends. He had, in 1963, rehabilitated the pipe organ, which was unplayable. He rewired it and did everything necessary so that by 1963, actually the weekend that President Kennedy was shot, was supposed to be the re-dedication of the pipe organ, the first night. They put it off a week because of Kennedy's death. But—

WRIGHT: What's the name of it? It has a name, hasn't it?

FOREMAN: Yeah. The "Mighty Mo." It's a Moller, M-O-L-L-E-R is the trade name, and it's been nicknamed the "Mighty Mo." And ever since then Joe Patten and later people he appointed have taken care of the pipe organ and kept it in perfect shape. So through Joe Patten, Joe Patten was one of the three of four people without whom there wouldn't be the Fox Theatre. He and Beauchamp Carr and, Pat, can't remember Pat's last name right now but I'll think of it. And Arthur Montgomery, people like that got together in 1974 when the owners of the Fox had

agreed to sell it, not to sell the Fox, to sell the land. The sellers were to tear down the Fox and sell the bare land to Southern Bell. And the community rose up, let's say, and with the help or leadership of those four or five people and others, the Fox was saved. And in 1978 I was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Fox and served until this year as a trustee.

WRIGHT: And, tell us a little bit about Joe. He has an apartment in the Fox, correct?

FOREMAN: Yes.

WRIGHT: And they tried to evict him recently.

FOREMAN. Yes. In about 1980 the board of trustees, of which I was one, felt— well, let me say this. Ben Massell, Jr., not the one who built all the buildings, but his son, made an anonymous gift of \$400,000 to save the Fox. He was a trustee. He suggested Joe Patten—Joe Patten was a bachelor—he suggested that part of the Shrine space, nothing to do with the operation of the theater, be leased to Joe Patten as an apartment. It was used previously as office space by the Shriners and warehouse space. There were a lot of storage areas. We went up there and looked around and so on. But the roof was leaking and so on. It wasn't of any use to the operation of the theater. So Ben Massell and Arthur Montgomery suggested that it be leased to Joe Patten, who was interested in, he was interested in leasing it. And so, in 1980 a lease was signed with Joe Patten where he paid, he agreed to spend \$50,000 or more in renovating the space. It was not livable. As I say, the roof was leaking and it was, it had been years before office space for the Shriners. So he, he had it redone, with the help of Rick Flinn. I don't know whether you know Rick Flinn. But he's, he's important in the history of Atlanta. He's a, I'd say, designer and he was at the beginning, after the saving of the Fox. He was the reno-, he was in charge of its renovations to the extent—they didn't have any money—but to the extent it could renovate, he

was the one who, for instance, found the way the stained glass windows and the doors ought to be, or had been in the original. He helped turn the Fox back into what it was originally. So, he helped Joe fashion the, it's about 3,000 square feet, it faces on Ponce de Leon. And so, Joe spent the \$50,000, spent actually about \$80,000 I think, to fix it up into his apartment. And the lease provided he was able to live there for the rest of his life. In what I think was a major mistake, Woody White, who in 2009 was president of the Fox, decided that for reasons we still don't know, they wanted that space, Joe's apartment space. So they undertook to get him out. [pause] Let's see. I'm trying to think of the name of the lawyer who defended Joe and won the case eventually. Joe was, is being allowed to stay there until his death.

WRIGHT: I think your son sent a picture of you walking behind Joe during some of that. Is that true?

FOREMAN: Yes, that's right. Here's a picture of [pause], this is Joe and me in front of the arcade. He's a very nice, very nice fella. And when the Fox was saved he became, in effect for a while he was the manager and so on. We didn't have any money. We'd spent all the money to save the Fox. And Joe became technical director and continued to be that until he retired in 2002.

WRIGHT: So tell us a little bit about, let's see, your dad after Kimball Street—

FOREMAN: Kimball.

WRIGHT: Kimball. When did he marry and move to Buckhead? What brought the Foremans to Buckhead?

FOREMAN: Well, I don't know where—Mother and Daddy were married in 1925. I was born in 1926. I think we lived on Lombardy Way originally. But I don't know that for sure. I think

Daddy rented an apartment and we lived there. My first memories are 106 Huntington Road, and Robert got the name. He put Avenue. It's Road. 106 Huntington Road. And we lived there until I was eight years old.

WRIGHT: That's in Brookwood Hills, correct?

FOREMAN: Yes, that's in Brookwood Hills.

WRIGHT: Were you all the original owner of that house?

FOREMAN: No. No, it was already there. I don't know who Daddy bought it from, but it was there. Brookwood Hills was founded in the early '20s, I think, by Mr. Burdett. Anyway, we lived there until my grandfather Shedden died. And that left my grandmother in a big house at 1279 Peachtree Street, which is right across the street from the Woodruff Arts Center now. And so I think to help take care of her, although she wasn't an invalid, but she just lived in a great big house with nobody else, we moved into her house and lived there until 1939, when we moved to 200 West Paces Ferry Road. The post office later made us change the number to 216. And we lived there until my father died and mother went into a nursing home. In 19-, in 1950, well, I was gone during a lot of the '40s. Rawson was born in '39. But to finish that up, we stayed there until Mother and Daddy in effect died, and Mother went into a nursing home.

WRIGHT: And that house is directly across the street from Harmony Grove Cemetery, right?

FOREMAN: No, it's adjacent.

WRIGHT: Adjacent to it.

FOREMAN: Harmony Grove Cemetery is at the corner of Chatham Road and West Paces Ferry. And we were next door to it going west.

WRIGHT: What are your memories of the cemetery?

FOREMAN: Well, it was always very quiet. It was a good neighbor. I would go over there and wander around and so on, but I don't believe there were any burials there when I lived there. As I said, I was gone starting in about 1942 or -3, at school, and then I married, so. But I would come home for vacations. It was my residence. I don't believe there were any burials there while I lived there. In the early years I think there was one, and I think Rawson may have told Robert about this, and he's probably told you. I think somebody was buried after I left in the '50s or '60s.

WRIGHT: Do you remember at all in terms of—was it overgrown while you were living there?

FOREMAN: Yes. It was not taken care of. Daddy investigated it, and as I told Mr. Wright, Wright Mitchell, his conclusion was that it was the Sims family cemetery, of the barber named Sims in Buckhead.

WRIGHT: Any remembrance or could you tell of any foundation of where the church stood?

We've had a hard time figuring where the church stood.

FOREMAN: I think the church stood where our house was.

WRIGHT: Where your house was.

FOREMAN: Yeah.

WRIGHT: Okay. What makes you think that?

FOREMAN: It's always been said that.

WRIGHT: Interesting. And you lived in 200 West Paces Ferry until when?

FOREMAN: Well, I went off to the Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut, in about 1941 or -2. And I went to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1944. In 1947 I went and I was in the navy while I was at the University of North Carolina. 1947 I went to Harvard Law School, finished in '49 and started practicing law. In 1950 I married Elizabeth Hitz, Robert's mother, and we moved away.

WRIGHT: What did your father do? What did Trot do?

FOREMAN: He was an agent for the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company and later became general agent for the state of Georgia, as his father had been.

WRIGHT: And do you remember why he moved, did they build the house on Paces Ferry or did they buy the house?

FOREMAN: No. They built it. No, no. They bought it.

WRIGHT: Bought it.

FOREMAN: Yeah.

WRIGHT: And why the move to Buckhead, what was the driving force?

FOREMAN: Well, it happened at the time of Rawson's birth, but the house on Peachtree had plenty of room for him and everybody else. I don't know what the reasoning was. I think it was Rawson's birth, would be my guess.

WRIGHT: What are your memories of Buckhead when you moved up there? When you told your neighbors on Peachtree that you were moving to Paces Ferry what was the—

FOREMAN: Well, most of my friends were already out there. The Woodruffs, Bruce Woodruff, not the, not Bob Woodruff, had built a house on Habersham. Billy Huger had a house on Valley Road. Was that your—

WRIGHT: Keep going.

FOREMAN: And so a good many of my mother and daddy's friends had moved out. My Aunt Harriet had married Henry Grady, but their house was on Peachtree where, Peachtree at about 25<sup>th</sup> Street, 25<sup>th</sup> Street. They had moved to Wesley Road. So I suppose there was a general movement of my family and friends. And a lot of the Howell family lived out there. The saying in the family was that E., that Evan P. Howell owned all the land from Northside Drive to the Chattahoochee River. Now, whether that was true, I don't know. But one of his daughters lives at the corner of Northside Drive and Peachtree Battle. Another of his daughters lived about a block away. His son lived, his grandson lived up on the hill on Wesley, West Wesley. So a lot of the Howells were out there. But they, the Howells had nothing to do with the house that Daddy bought.

WRIGHT: Did you all get together with the Howells? The Gradys? Were you all a pretty close-knit family?

FOREMAN: Yes, yes. With the Gradys particularly. Daddy was a good friend of Major Clark Howell, who was Evan P. Howell's grandson and worked at the *Constitution*. We were close, and the Howells, several members of the Howell family, also had houses in Highlands, North Carolina. You know about Highlands. My grandfather, Robert L. Foreman, built his house, and I think it was the first Howell house up there, in 1920. He was married to Effie Howell. And her name, as just an aside, was Effie Park Howell. And my grandfather created an area in the valley

below his house in Highlands, on land he owned, which had a waterfall and a flat place, and named it Effie Bog, for her. And it's still there. It's now owned by the Highlands Biological Foundation. Okay. So, but my grandfather built the house in 1920. My great-aunt Rosalie Howell, who was my grandmother's sister, built her house in about 1930. And the later wife of Clark Howell, her brother and my grandfather, grandmother's brother, Margaret Cannon Carr, built a chalet about that time. I don't know when she built it. But, and then, Ida, who was another of my grandmother's sisters, had a house just down the hill from the chalet. So we had Aunt Ros, Aunt Ida, and Uncle Clark, three houses, on the Country Club side of Highlands. My grandfather's house, grandfather Foreman's house, was on the far side, the Horse Cove side of Highlands.

WRIGHT: Now were there Atlantans already up there or was this sort of a pioneer move by the Howells?

FOREMAN: Oh, no. I think Atlantans had been coming, I think Highlands was founded in, let's say, 1875, something like that. It was cool most of the time, particularly in the summer. And it was sort of a plateau about 4,000 feet high. And, let's see, a lot of people from Charleston were there. A lot of the early Highlands people were from Charleston. A lot of them were from New Orleans. But there were a lot of Atlantans at the Country Club.

WRIGHT: And speaking of the Howells, on my way in to your house today, you showed me a grist mill stone at your front door.

FOREMAN: Yes.

WRIGHT: And you said that that is one of the—tell us a little bit about that.

FOREMAN: That's a mill stone from my great-grandfather Evan P. Howell's grist mill. When he came out of the Civil War he had no money and there was nothing. Mr. Sherman had left nothing of the city of Atlanta except my grandmother's furniture in the basement of the Trinity Methodist Church. So even though—well, so his first occupation was to operate a grist mill and a saw mill at the intersection of Howell Mill Road and Peachtree Battle, I would say. It's that area there. I don't think, know that there's anything left of it. He did that for a while. Then he moved to Sandersville and he became a lawyer. Moved to Sandersville, practiced law there. Then he came back to Atlanta and bought the *Atlanta Constitution*. And that was his, that was his life's work until he died. And as I mentioned to you, he was mayor of Atlanta in 1904. And there is a building that is, has since been turned into a building for the homeless over near Rawson Street. It's a great big building. You can see it from the expressway, at least you used to be able to. And it's now, I don't know its name, Gate House or something of that sort. But that was built during his tenure as mayor.

WRIGHT: And the other—you said another one of the grist mill stones, where is that?

FOREMAN: It's owned by my brother, Rawson. And I don't know where he has it. He now lives at Canterbury Court. I don't know whether Canterbury Court would allow him to place a mill stone. He may have taken it to his house in Highlands or given it to one of his daughters. I don't know.

WRIGHT: Well, tell us a little bit about your childhood and your association with Buckhead.

Where did you go to elementary school?

FOREMAN: I went to Spring Street School, which was two or three blocks from my grandmother's house on Peachtree. And halfway through the sixth grade was when we moved to

Paces Ferry, West Paces Ferry, and I transferred to E. Rivers at that time. E. Rivers was in the county, and to go there my father had to pay tuition for me. But a lot of my friends were already at E. Rivers. So I finished at E. Rivers. I went to North Fulton for two years. And then I went to the Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut, for three years. And I loved, I loved E. Rivers. This was before it burned down and the current E. Rivers was built. And, of course, North Fulton is no longer there. The building is there.

WRIGHT: What did the school look like before it burned down? How big was it?

FOREMAN: Well, I don't know how to estimate that. It had three floors. It was made of stone, and I think the central portion of the current E. Rivers would be where it was. It didn't extend down the hill. The flat place in back of it along the creek was our playground. But there were no buildings there. I think there are buildings there now. And if I could include something I had forgotten, speaking of Buckhead, across the street from E. Rivers is a small building that was built or used by E. Rivers, the man for whom the school was named. And I think it was used as his office. But when I came along, when I was about five years old, a lady named Mrs. Bloodworth, I think she rented the school, I don't know anything about the legal arrangements, but she conducted a kindergarten there. And it was very popular with Buckhead young people. And I went there when I was five years old.

WRIGHT: What do you remember about her and the school? Do you have any memories?

FOREMAN: Yeah, yeah, it was wonderful, and I became a close friend of Bruce Woodruff, who was her grandson. Her daughter, Mary Hill Woodruff, Bruce's mother, helped her run the kindergarten. And in later years, when Billy Huger and I were friends, Mrs. Bloodworth or Mary

Hill Woodruff, asked us to come—Billy Huger played the accordion, and I played the guitar—and play and sing for the then current students of the kindergarten, and we did.

WRIGHT: How many children were in the kindergarten?

FOREMAN: I'd say probably thirty.

WRIGHT: And it was private? It wasn't part of the public system, was it?

FOREMAN: No, no.

WRIGHT: Speaking of your musical talents I understand you play a number of instruments, and at one point you were part of an ensemble of Buckhead.

FOREMAN: Yes. I don't know whether that's worth mentioning or not but since Rawson mentioned it to you, [sound of walking]—this is a picture of the Junior Georgians about 1941 or so.

WRIGHT: Tell us a little bit about the Junior Georgians. Who was in it, and how was it formed?

FOREMAN: One of our mothers had the idea. I think it was probably Sarah Huger, who was Billy Huger's mother. Billy Huger was one of my good friends. He played the accordion as I've just told you. And she, since several of us played musical instruments, she said, why don't we form an orchestra. And she hired a fella named Perry Bechtel who is standing in front of it there, who was a music teacher. He taught guitar and mandolin and probably other things. He was known as the man with ten thousand fingers because he was such a good guitar player, and made a record, an RCA Victor record. So what we would do is meet at her house, at the Hugers' house. They had a great big house on Valley Road, and part of it was a wing where Billy's, one of Billy's grandmothers, lived. But she was very seldom there. It was a big room. Her living room

had a piano in it, and big enough to hold this crowd. And so we formed a band. In this biographical sketch for you Robert calls it a “society dance band.” I don’t think that’s accurate. We didn’t play for dances and things of that sort. We played really for our own amusement. We played at the Driving Club for some crowd, that’s, that was that picture. We stayed at the old folks’ home, which is now the school in Chastain Park. I don’t remember the name of the school.

WRIGHT: Sutton? Is it Sutton? Or, no, Galloway.

FOREMAN: Galloway. The Galloway School.

WRIGHT: That used to be an old folks’ home.

FOREMAN: It was an old folks, the Fulton County old folks’ home. We played for them. And I think we played at North Fulton. We would just play whenever we were invited or wanted to. But a lot of my good friends were in that band. Bruce Woodruff played the piano, the grandson of Mrs. Bloodworth, who had the kindergarten. Billy Huger. And if you want to, you want to go over those people right now?

WRIGHT: Sure. Why don’t you just look at it and tell us who was in there and a little bit about ‘em.

FOREMAN: Okay. I think it’s fair to say they all lived in Buckhead.

WRIGHT: Okay.

FOREMAN: There was Edwin Lochridge, who later became a doctor. Ridley Nichol, who lived in Brookhaven. He played the violin. Tommy Thompson, Homer Thompson. You’ve probably dealt with him. He played the bass fiddle. Bruce Woodruff played the piano. A fella named Kennedy Gammage, who lived between Buckhead, he lived on, between Buckhead and

Brookhaven, he played the clarinet. Tom Schneider, who lives in Sandy Springs now, lived in Buckhead then. He played the drums. Bernard Neal, who lived in Ansley Park when we were children, when we were Cub Scouts. Then he moved out to 1585 West Paces Ferry Road, which is way the hell out there. It's beyond Northside Drive. So you could consider that Buckhead. Buckhead has gotten bigger over the years. When I was little, Buckhead was just the intersection of Peachtree and West Paces Ferry Road. And I'm sure you've read the book, recent book, about Buckhead. The tragedy of that book is that it doesn't show Miller's Service Station. Miller's Service Station was the center of Buckhead. Now we had Wender & Roberts and all of that, and so on. But the center of Buckhead was Miller's Service Station.

WRIGHT: Tell us about Miller's. Would you stop by?

FOREMAN: Yeah, that's where we'd buy the gas. He did repairs to cars and so on. But it was just the center of Buckhead. And I don't know that there was a Mr. Miller. I suppose there was. I never knew him. But whenever I was old enough to drive, I always bought my oil and gas there. It was just the center.

WRIGHT: Going back to the band there, as well, was it the mothers? How did you all come together? I imagine at that age, was it like pulling teeth to get a bunch of boys together in a band, or was it something you guys really came together as a group? Did the boys drive it or did the parents kind of drive it?

FOREMAN: I think a parent established it, but once we did it, we would pay \$10 each Sunday, each of us would pay \$10 each Sunday and—I left out Sandy Pottinger. He's dead now. And Charlie Wood, he's dead now. Pottinger played the trumpet. Charlie Wood played the clarinet. I think that's everybody. And [pause]—

WRIGHT: So how often did you guys practice?

FOREMAN: I'd say, one Sunday a month would be my guess. I don't think it was every Sunday. It couldn't have been every Sunday.

WRIGHT: How often did you perform?

FOREMAN: Whenever there was an occasion.

WRIGHT: What songs, what was in the repertoire?

FOREMAN: Well, I suppose I ought to tell you about my song first. "There's a Tavern in the Town"—that was, I was the vocalist, that's the one I sang. I didn't sing all. That was fun. We had "Fairy Boat Serenade." Well, I don't think I can come up with any more. Oh, "Pagan Love Song." These were all '40s songs. Well, "Tavern in the Town" was eternal, but the rest were current '40s songs. And they were arranged by Perry Bechtel, who was our leader.

WRIGHT: And what was Perry's background? What did he do full-time?

FOREMAN: He was a music teacher, full-time.

WRIGHT: At North Fulton, or—

FOREMAN: No, downtown, at Ritter Music Company, which was on, let's see, Edgewood Avenue, I believe. No, Auburn Avenue.

WRIGHT: And how long were the Junior Georgians a force on the music scene in Buckhead?

FOREMAN: They weren't that, they weren't ever that! I'd say a couple of years. What happened was, Huger and Schneider, for instance, and Neal went off to prep school, and then next year I

went off to prep school, so I think a lot of the members went off to prep school, or went somewhere else. So I think two years would be about it.

WRIGHT: Tell us a little bit about your professional career. You mentioned you went to Harvard Law, and you returned and you're a lawyer in Atlanta.

FOREMAN: Yes.

WRIGHT: Tell us a little about the firm you were with and what you practiced.

FOREMAN: Okay. I started with the firm of Bird and Howell. F. M. "Buster" Bird and his son, his [pause] brother-in-law, Arthur Howell, had a small firm of four people. Newton Craig was one and I was the fourth. So in 1949 I started practicing law with them. We developed a practice and had a nice practice with a lot of Buckhead people as clients and so on. And my, my part was the general practice of law. In 1959 we merged with the firm of Jones, of Jones, Williams and Dorsey. The Jones was Bob Jones, the golfer. It was named for his father, who was the first Williams in the firm. But Bob Jones was still alive and became our partner. The Williams was Ralph Williams, Sr., who became our partner. And the firm became Jones, Bird, Williams and Howell. And it stayed that way for a year or two, and then Ralph Williams died. And it became Jones, Bird and Howell. And it stayed that way until 1982 when we merged with the firm of Alston, Miller and Gaines, and the firm became Alston and Bird. And it remains that to this day.

WRIGHT: And when did you retire from practicing?

FOREMAN: '91. 1991 after forty-two years.

WRIGHT: And where did you raise your family in Buckhead?

FOREMAN: When we were married, when Elizabeth and I were married, we lived at 2056 Peachtree, which is at the corner of Muscogee. Then when Robert was born, we moved to 45 Lakeland Drive, which is right in Buckhead. And then, let's see, when Alexa, my daughter, was born—let me, I had three children. Robert, Alexa and Jim. Jim died in 1988, but Alexa's still alive. She is a researcher and assistant producer for Turner Classic Movies. Movies has been her life. She's worked for Turner Classic Movies for, I believe, more than twenty years. And her function, I think her main function, is, you know, Robert Osborne, who gives the talks, she makes sure that he tells the truth. And she, I was looking at a picture of her a while ago, but she's not here because her picture frame is not the right color. I think when she was born we moved to Dellwood Drive, which is off of Collier Road, and then—

WRIGHT: Where did your kids go to school?

FOREMAN: Robert went to E. Rivers. The others, the other two went to Westminster. Robert went to the Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut. He then went to the University of North Carolina. Then he went to work for Research Atlanta, then he went to Oglethorpe. Alexa went to Hollins, in Roanoke, Virginia. Jim went to Washington & Lee in Virginia, Lexington.

WRIGHT: How have you seen Buckhead change through the years?

FOREMAN: Well, as I mentioned, it's gotten great big. It was really, when I was little, I think it was really just the intersection of Peachtree and West Paces Ferry, and East Paces Ferry on the other side. It went probably two or three blocks on either side of that intersection. Now, it's hard to say. We're probably in Buckhead out here in Lawrenceville. It's gotten bigger and bigger. I don't know about better, but it's gotten bigger. And so—

WRIGHT: Do you have any fond memories of Buckhead, anything that stands out in terms of the favorite place you ate, or theater, or—

FOREMAN: Well, Wender & Roberts was a good place to get Coca-Colas. The Buckhead Theatre, we went there every Saturday, and loved it.

WRIGHT: What were some of the shows that you saw there? Do you remember?

FOREMAN: No, I don't remember any of the movies. But they had serials, which were generally westerns or police serials. So you would see one episode one Saturday, the next episode the following Saturday, so you wanted to go back. I think in general we went every Saturday.

WRIGHT: Would you walk up there from your house?

FOREMAN: No. I guess we would drive. Probably one of us, at least one of us had a car and would pick up the others. And speaking of walking up there, in my father's later years, after we moved out there and he retired, he retired when he was about 60, so that would have been about 1960. As far as I can tell you, every morning, or every day after that, he would walk to Buckhead and back, from our house. And I don't believe there were any sidewalks. I think he had to walk on people's grass and so on. But over the years a lot of people would say, Yes, I remember your father walking to Buckhead.

WRIGHT: His office was there?

FOREMAN: No. No, this was after he retired. No, he just, for exercise would do it. And as Robert has told you, he was crippled. He got polio when he was a little boy. And so he was crippled all of his life. But it never stopped him.

WRIGHT: When did he pass away?

FOREMAN: He died in about 1978.

WRIGHT: Tell us a little about the Paupers?

FOREMAN: Okay.

WRIGHT: What are the Paupers?

FOREMAN: The Atlanta Paupers Club was created in about 1949 or '50. After I graduated from law school, my father and mother gave me a trip to Europe in the summer of 1949. And while I was gone, the other Paupers, and I'll name 'em for you in a minute, went to see Daddy and said, "Trot, we're gonna buy a boat. And we know that Bob," or I was called Bobby then, "Bobby would want to be with us. So, if you'll give us his hundred and fifty dollars, we can go ahead and buy the boat." And they did. And boats are expensive, as you know. There's maintenance, there's gasoline, things like that. But, one of the most expensive parts is you always want a bigger boat. And we went through that syndrome. Anyway, what we did was to, well, because it took all of our money is why we called ourselves the Paupers. And let me name 'em for you, so you—I'm sure Robert has already done that. Tom Schneider, Bernard Neal, and I are the only three that are left. Jack Cram, and that's one correction I want you to make in the stuff Robert gave you. His name is C-R-A-M, not C-R-A-double M. Bruce Woodruff, Billy Huger, and [pause] John Yop. He was not in the band, but he lived in Buckhead as well. Let's see, is that eight? I don't think you've been counting, so, Bernard, Billy, Bruce, Yop, me, Jack Cram, Tom Schneider, I mentioned him. I think I've mentioned 'em all.

WRIGHT: What would you guys do when you got together?

FOREMAN: Well, what we did, what formed the organization was buying the boat. And we leased from Georgia Power Company a lot at Lake, not Burton, but—

WRIGHT: Rabun?

FOREMAN: Rabun. And built a dock for the boat. And there was a fella named Roy, what was, not Roy Hull. Roy Hull was a racing driver. Anyway, there was a man up there who ran a place where you could store your boats. And he would fix 'em and put gas in 'em and so on. And shortly after that the Schneiders, Tom Schneider's mother and father, bought a place with a boathouse and a house. So what we would do is we would go, we bought the boat from McKee Nunnally, who lived in Buckhead. John Yop's brother-in-law. And then we took it to Lakemont and stored it at the Schneiders or at Roy, I'm sorry I can't remember. I'm bad at remembering names now. Anyway.

WRIGHT: Was it a ski boat?

FOREMAN: It was an in-board, and we all learned to ski behind it. And pretty soon we bought a more expensive boat, and then a more expensive boat. And then, that went on for two or three years, and that was a lot of fun. We enjoyed it. But we called ourselves the Atlanta Paupers Club because it took all of our money. You know, we were just beginning life. We were, you know, I had just started practicing law, they had just started whatever. Norman Coolidge was another one who was in it. And so we would go to Lakemont on the weekends and water ski and ride around the lake and enjoy the boat. And we called ourselves the Paupers Club. And there were eight of us as I told you. Graham moved away. He didn't stay in Atlanta very long. He was an engineer and he got jobs around the country. But the rest of us stayed here. Gradually what happened was, I got a house in Highlands, so I started going up there. Huger stayed a Pauper. Schneider stayed,

and they got a bigger, even bigger boat. But we would all go up there from time to time, no matter who owned the boat, and use it. And we would stay at the Schneiders. The Schneiders' activity, Schneiders' grouping, was two or three cabins, so there were places for us to stay. And the boathouse had a deck above it where we would have parties, beer parties and whatnot. That's how the Paupers started and we continued. When the first one of us died, Billy Huger died in 1988, the remaining Paupers started having lunch once a month, together, and we still do that. Those of us who are left.

WRIGHT: Where do you guys eat? Same place every time?

FOREMAN: We now eat at the Piedmont Driving Club.

WRIGHT: What was it like moving out to Paces Ferry at that time, back in the '40s and '50s? Can you describe what Paces Ferry, the feel of the street was, compared to now? Did you interact with the neighbors? What was the social fabric like in the neighborhood?

FOREMAN: Okay. Well, there weren't many houses between our house and Buckhead. The Manghams, Sam Mangham, was there<sup>1</sup>, and, you know it's now the History Center. The center of it being Swan House on Andrews. But there weren't many houses. What's now the Cherokee Club was the home of John Grant, who, well, he, let's see, the original John Grant built it. It was occupied when we lived on Paces Ferry, by Frank Owens and his wife, Anne Owens, who was a good friend of Mother's. And they had the children, Frank Owens, Jr., Dodie and Ann, were their three children. And they eventually sold it to the Cherokee Club. So that was a large part of across the street from us. The interesting part I think was, across the street from us and back

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<sup>1</sup> The Manghams lived at 138 West Paces Ferry Road.

down the hill, were black families living. And my brother as he was growing up was friends with some of the black children that lived back there.

WRIGHT: So this would have been on the north side of Paces Ferry?

FOREMAN: Yes.

WRIGHT: Back down where Valley Road is, kind of back there?

FOREMAN: No, no, not that far. Just across from, just across West Paces Ferry. And there are now houses there. This would be the backyard of those houses. And Jack Cram, the one I mentioned, his house is still there. His old house. And it was diagonally across the street from us.

WRIGHT: What were the houses in the African-American community there, what were the houses like?

FOREMAN: I can't tell you that. I don't know. Rawson would be able to. I was not home. Well, I don't, let me say it this way. I didn't have any association with the black families over there. I don't know why, maybe they weren't there, and, of course, I went off to school, so I wasn't there. But Rawson, my brother, did. There were houses on the south side of West Paces Ferry, going out, including the Rushton house, I'm sure you're familiar with that, that had the peacocks. Those, those, except for the Rushton house, which was big, were single family dwellings. On the other side, down to Habersham, were single family dwellings. I don't think any of those would be considered by you to be mansions. Now, the Grant house would be considered to be a mansion. Mrs. Thornton's house, which was at the west end of the Cherokee Club, would be considered, I think. I don't think, between us and Buckhead, I don't believe any of those would

be considered mansions. Of course, the Swan House was on Andrews, so it didn't face on Buckhead.

WRIGHT: Do you remember, were the neighbors pretty friendly? Would you get together with them on holidays or was it pretty, families stayed together?

FOREMAN: No. No, I don't think so. Not unless you already knew them, as we knew the Crams. We knew the Schneiders, a different Schneider from them, who lived next door to us. Mother and Daddy knew them. And whenever somebody would move into the neighborhood, Mother would bake some gingerbread and put it in their mailbox as a sign of friendship. The mansions, after you pass Habersham, there were a lot of big houses out there. But, let's see, Mother was very friendly with Mrs.[pause], well, the house that's at the corner of Tuxedo and West Paces Ferry. Not the Robinson house, but the one on, the other house, where the senator lived. I don't know whether he still lives there or not. But before that it was a doctor. I'm sorry I'm so poor on names. But he lived there with his wife. His wife was a good friend of Mother's. I think, I don't know that we made any intimate friendships there. Bruce Woodruff lived around on Habersham. We already knew him. The Hugers lived on Valley Road, we knew them.

WRIGHT: Was it pretty, was it a good neighborhood feel? Was the traffic pretty light coming down Paces Ferry?

FOREMAN: Light. Light. I think at the time, in 1939 it was considered way out. I know the Hugers on Valley Road were always considered to be way out, until things started building up. I think by then I had moved away.

WRIGHT: Well, any other things you can think of to share with us, in terms of stories or events that might paint a picture of Buckhead and what life was like growing up there? [pause] Any funny stories, childhood stories, mischievous stories, scandalous stories?

FOREMAN: West Paces Ferry Road was much smaller then. It may have been, it may still be only two lanes, but it was not the traffic center, traffic byway that it is now. You know, now at our house it would be very difficult to cross the street because of the traffic. It wasn't that way then. It was a relatively rural area, not, you know, with that many houses I don't suppose it could be called rural. But it was a much smaller type of community. But it was very pleasant, and as I've said, the cemetery was a very good neighbor, no noise.

WRIGHT: So there's a gap between the graves, between Paces Ferry, there's probably about fifty yards maybe between the Paces Ferry Road to your first grave. So that whole area up in the front side of the cemetery, just to your knowledge, that was always just—

FOREMAN: Bushes.

WRIGHT: Empty space.

FOREMAN: Bushes, yeah. You say there no graves, and in that front area, I'm not sure it went back as far as fifty yards, but there was nothing along Paces Ferry. So it was back maybe twenty-five yards.

WRIGHT: Twenty-five yards. I'm bad with distances.

FOREMAN: But there were a good many graves there. This recent book has a picture of what I'm—

WRIGHT: I think Robert was saying that he and his sister and brother made a movie at one point in the cemetery, eight-millimeter.

FOREMAN: I don't know about that. But a friend of ours, a friend of Daddy's had a movie camera, and he would let us use it, so I wouldn't be surprised about that. And we have pictures of Robert, no, of Rawson as a little boy, on West Paces Ferry. Movie pictures taken by this friend of Daddy's.

WRIGHT: Were you, at North Fulton, did you play in the band at North Fulton? Since you were musically inclined.

FOREMAN: Yes. The military band, yeah.

WRIGHT: And what would, the military band, would you guys perform at the football games, or—

FOREMAN: I think we did. Yeah, I think we did. The music teacher was Warren Jackson, who was a professor, well, I don't think we called him that. A teacher, at North Fulton. And he taught me clarinet and saxophone. And he was the way you got into the band. If he thought you could play then he would approve your being in the band. The band was a military band when I was there. We wore uniforms.

WRIGHT: How many band members were there?

FOREMAN: I'd say thirty.

WRIGHT: Now, is he the Warren Jackson of Warren T. Jackson, the elementary school in Buckhead?

FOREMAN: I'm sure so. Yes. And a sidelight, you could say, is he had a son named Warren Jackson, who was for a while one of the office managers of Jones, Bird and Howell. And you may not want to mention it but he later committed suicide, I think. Not while he was with us, and I hope not because of us.

WRIGHT: Well, anything else you can think of to share with us?

FOREMAN: Well, let's see. Robert said that my grandfather Robert, along with senator Ivan Allen, formed the Rotary Club. Did he tell you that?

WRIGHT: Um-um.

FOREMAN: I told you about the Community Chest, didn't I?

WRIGHT: No.

FOREMAN: I didn't? Okay. I thought I did. Maybe, well, I've just been talking to Robert. He called to make sure I had brushed my teeth. Let me start again. I think I've told you this, but when I was president of the Community Chest of Atlanta it was, one of the things we were doing, we were trying to bring the Red Cross into the fund drive so the Community Chest would not have a separate drive from the Red Cross. We were never successful at that, but in connection, and about that time, United Way, a national organization of community chests, was forming. So in connection with that, I was president of the Community Chest, and we wanted the support of Ivan Allen, the former mayor. So I went to see him at his office at Ivan Allen Company. And in his office, great big office, there were bookshelves with books that looked like corporate minute books. And he said, Before we begin, Bob, I want to show you something. He went up and pulled down a book. And in it he showed me notes that his father had made in I

believe 1916, when he, Senator Allen, and my grandfather, Robert Foreman, and about six other people, got together because there were too many fundraising drives in Atlanta. And they said we needed one organization, to have one drive. And they formed something called United Charities or something. That was the father of the Community Chest. So, I didn't remember about those two starting the Rotary Club in Atlanta, but I know that they started the, what was the beginnings of the Community Chest. And my father was president of the Community Chest, as I was. And a couple of other things that don't relate to [phone rings; answers]. Excuse me. Hello? Nobody there. To go back to my career, this doesn't relate exactly to Buckhead, but later on I was president of the Atlanta Bar Association. President of the Community Chest, as I told you. President of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. And chairman of Economic Opportunity Atlanta. That was an organization, a national organization, a community action agency. And Boisfeuillet Jones was chairman of it at the time I was appointed to it, and he later asked me to be chairman of it. And I was chairman of it until President Nixon started cutting down on activities of that sort. Anything good President Nixon would start cutting down on, in my opinion. So, those are just other things that I did.

WRIGHT: Was Buckhead a pretty generous group of folks at the time in terms of support of Atlanta and the city?

FOREMAN: Yes. Always have been. Yeah.

WRIGHT: And the Arts Center, that was developed, did you play a role in that at all?

FOREMAN: No, I don't think so.

WRIGHT: What was your favorite restaurant as a kid? A quick few last questions.

FOREMAN: You won't appreciate this, but, let's see if I can think of the name of it. There was a restaurant that was diagonally across the street from Davison-Paxon's. You know Davison-Paxon became Macy's. You know that building?

WRIGHT: Downtown?

FOREMAN: Yeah. There was a restaurant diagonally across from that, upstairs. And Daddy and Mother used to take me there on Saturdays. Daddy would work for a while on Saturdays. In those days all organizations like law firms worked a half a day on Saturday. And let's see, what was it called? Anyway, they had, it was a restaurant, but they would fix me olive sandwiches. I love green olives. And they would fix me green olive sandwiches. In terms of when I was—that was when I was a boy. There was a wonderful restaurant on Peachtree in a stone house that is about opposite where Sheridan Drive comes in. It was a family home of a family. It's long since gone out of business, but that was an excellent restaurant. Always loved the Varsity. You may laugh at that, but the Varsity has always been one of my favorites. Still is. And my wife, occasionally, for our anniversary, will take me to the Varsity. She doesn't care for it, but she will do it as a special, maybe a birthday treat.

WRIGHT: How about in Buckhead, any, did your family after church go anywhere?

FOREMAN: We would go, in the early years when, after Robert was born we would go to Mother and Daddy's to lunch on Sunday. And then that got to be too much, so we would go to various restaurants, but we would vary the restaurants and not always go to one. Daddy liked to choose different restaurants so we could try 'em out. I'm sure I'm missing what you want.

WRIGHT: That's fine. As a musician, do you remember the Buckhead symphony at all? Does that ring a bell?

FOREMAN: No. Well, I've heard of it, but I don't know anything about it.

WRIGHT: Well, I think that is a very thorough interview, and we appreciate your time and thoughts and reflections on Buckhead and Atlanta and growing up and your family history and its contributions to the city and the neighborhood.

FOREMAN: Well, I appreciate your calling on me to give my recollections and I'm sorry I can't recollect more.

WRIGHT: I think you've done quite well. Thank you.