ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Chattanooga - Hamilton County Public Library

Chattanooga, Tennessee

An Interview With

SUMMERFIELD KEY JOHNSTON

By

Norman Bradley

July 6, 1984

PREFACE

This manuscript is a transcript of an interview conducted for the Oral History Project of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Library. The purpose of the project is to capture the first-hand accounts of the social history of the Chattanooga area in the twentieth century.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that the transcript reflects the patterns of the spoken, rather than the written, word. The information is presented as it was recalled by the interviewee at the occasion of the interview and has been edited only for clarity.

Use of the tape and transcript is administered under the same rules and regulations as other materials in the Local History Department. Literary rights to the tape and transcript are held by the library and permission for duplication or use in publication must be obtained from the Director of Libraries.

Two indexes have been prepared for locating specific information from either the transcript or the tape. The page index to the transcript is located at the end of this volume. A meter count number has been given in the left margin of the text for locating a section on the tape. It should be noted that this number will vary depending on the equipment used.

Funding for this project was provided by local foundations and organizations, including the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, the Chattanooga Area Historical Association, and the National Society of Colonial Dames, Chattanooga Committee. The project was sponsored and administered by the library.

CHATTANOOGA - HAMILTON COUNTY BICENTENNIAL LIBRARY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Date July 6, 1984

1. Full name (include maiden name and married name, where applies):

   Summerfield Key Johnston

2. Current address and phone number:

   214 West Brow Road 615/821-4402
   Lookout Mountain, TN 37350

3. Date and Place of Birth:

   May 16, 1900 Chattanooga, TN

4. Mother's maiden name: Place of Birth:

   Margaret Elizabeth Key Chattanooga, TN

5. Father's name: Place of Birth:

   James Francis Johnston Cleveland, TN

6. Spouse's name:

   Anita Lynch Johnston (Present)

   Katherine Jackson Johnston (Deceased)

7. Children's names and addresses (if possible). Indicate daughters married names:

   Summerfield K. Johnston, Jr.
   600 Krystal Building
   Chattanooga, TN 37402

(OHP FORM F)

INTRODUCTION

Summerfield Key Johnston, lawyer, businessman, and gentleman farmer, is a native of Chattanooga and heir to family ties with a number of the region's prominent families. He was born here in the first year of the new century, the son of James Francis Johnston, who, among his other interests, organized the first bottling company franchised by Coca-Cola. The younger Johnston familiarly known as "Skey" attended Baylor School and the University of Virginia before receiving his law degree from Harvard. The profession held little interest for him, however, and after a brief practice he turned to business.

He retained part of the family's farm properties near Cleveland known as Bendabout, widely known as a site for its production of polo ponies, a sport he followed avidly.

The interview with him was recorded at his Lookout Mountain home [214 West Brow Road] on July 6, 1984, by Norman Bradley for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Library's Oral History Project.

Bradley: Well, Mr. Johnston, let's just start at the first and talk a little bit about your background here in this area. Are you a native of Chattanooga?

Johnston: Native of Chattanooga, born in Chattanooga, raised in Chattanooga.

Bradley: What part of the city? Where was your family living at that point?

Johnston: Living at 505 Walnut Street, right across the street from the [Theodore G.] Montagues and right close to Cadek's Music.

Bradley: Oh, yes, the conservatory.

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: Yes, Cadek's.

Johnston: 030 Cadek's Conservatory. The Montagues had a big place over there, had several acres in the yard, big garden and a livery stable, and a horse stable and everything.

Bradley: Your father, what was his name?

Johnston: James Francis [Johnston].

Bradley: James Francis. Was he a lawyer or a merchant, a professional man?

Johnston: He was not a professional, he was a businessman.

Bradley: And where had he come from?

Johnston: He came from Cleveland, Tennessee.

Bradley: Well now, your name, <u>your</u> name, Summerfield Key, is the name of a younger brother to [David McKendree] D. M. Key, is that --

Johnston: No, no, no. I was named for my [maternal] grandfather.

Bradley: Summerfield Key --

Johnston: Period.

Bradley: Well now, wasn't he a younger brother of D. M. Key?

Johnston: I believe he was; yes, I think he was some younger than D. M. was.

Bradley: Yes. Well now, then you are a distant cousin to Cartter Patten.

Johnston: Yes, Cartter Patten's mother [Sarah Key Patten] and my mother [Margaret Elizabeth Key] were first cousins.

Bradley: I see. Well, I just wanted to get the family --

Johnston: See, D. M. Key was her father and Summerfield Key was my mother's father.

Bradley: Yes, I see. Did your father have a farm in Cleveland or property up there, or was he in business?

040

Johnston: He had a farm. He was born on the farm that I now own up there.

Bradley: Is that Bendabout?

Johnston: Yes, that's the old --

Bradley: The old name of the property?

Johnston: Tuckers came in and settled that place; my grandmother [Sarah] was a Tucker. She married a -- well let's see, she was married twice; I can't think of the name the first time she married. By golly, my brain's not working, my memory's going back on me.

Bradley: (laughter) That's a common fault, I'm afraid, for all of us.

Johnston: My mother was a Key and my father was a Johnston, that's all you need to know.

Bradley: What year was the year of your birth?

Johnston: The same year as the century started in May.

Bradley: May of 1900.

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: Well then, at this point in time you're just over eighty-four.

Johnston: That's exactly right, and if I get to be a hundred I'll be just the age of the century.

055

Bradley: Well, I don't doubt that you will. Tell me a little bit about Chattanooga as you recall it from your early years. What sort of boyhood did you spend?

Johnston: I had a very pleasant boyhood at 505 Walnut Street, up there -- do you know where the Bijou Theater used to be? [601 Walnut]

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: Right up on top of the hill near the Cadek Conservatory. I had a very pleasant time, I didn't have many neighbors to play with, though. Felix Miller lived next door to me. He moved there some years after I'd lived there. By teen age, I was a teenager, he moved there, his mother moved in there. He lived
063 there until he married, then he moved up on Missionary Ridge.

Bradley: You didn't have many close neighbors of your age?

Johnston: No, very few, if any. So that was the reason I didn't have many close friends in the neighborhood there.

Bradley: Where did you go to school?

Johnston: Miss Duval, you've heard of Miss Duval.*

Bradley: Uh-huh, oh yes, yes indeed. Now her school was a little bit further out from the city, a little bit further toward what would now be the university, wasn't it?

Johnston: No, her school was on [427] High Street.

Bradley: On High?

Johnston: Yes, just about two blocks from my house.

Bradley: I see. Was it an elementary school?

Johnston: Yes, just the first school; I've forgotten, I guess they went
070 up to the sixth grade.

Bradley: Where did you go from there?

Johnston: I went to Baylor. Baylor was down on Palmetto Street then.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: And I stayed there until I graduated.

Bradley: Do you know the year Baylor was founded?

* Miss Duval's English and French School was run by Rosalie and Diana Duval.

Johnston: No, I don't; it was founded, I guess, when I was very young.
076 I don't think it was founded before I was born.

Bradley: Then it was a relatively new school; I mean, it hadn't been in existence long when you started.

Johnston: Well, I imagine, a pretty good while.* See, Professor [John Roy] Baylor was the head of it; he was a fine old gentleman, an old Virginia aristocrat and a good teacher. But it was just a small school, wasn't anything nearly as good as McCallie was, didn't have the backing of the McCallie people. And then finally a group -- Cartter Lupton was in this thing -- got together and created a pretty good school, put some money in it. He got some good teachers and built a good building.

Bradley: This was still on Palmetto.

Johnston: It was on Palmetto until they moved off and built another school.

Bradley: Out where it is now, in that location.

Johnston: Yes. I'm not just exactly sure, I can't figure out exactly where it is now, but it's out from the city limits I think.

Bradley: Yes, out toward the foot of Signal [Mountain].

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: As long as you were in it, it was on Palmetto Street.

Johnston: It was on Palmetto Street, it had a big study hall and a few
090 little classrooms around, and upstairs they had some classrooms.

Bradley: Skey, tell me about the discipline in those days. Was it pretty strict?

Johnston: Well, what they did then -- they still do it to a certain extent -- they hired young boys right out of college for teaching. Now, they had two or three good teachers, professional teachers trained to be teachers, but by and large they hired young men out of college, wanted to teach two or three years and then go into some kind of work.

* Baylor was founded in 1893, in the McCallie House at the corner of McCallie and Lindsay Streets. In 1899 the school moved to the corner of Vine and Palmetto.

(Johnston): They had some very good ones; [Dr. Alexander] Alex Guerry was one, he became interested in the school, and [Philip B.] Phil Whitaker was another one. They had some good men, but ordinarily they just got a fellow with no teaching experience. Later they got good men, good professional teachers.

Bradley: It was always for boys, it was never --

Johnston: I think, as a matter of fact, Mrs. [Julia] Baylor had some girls out there; maybe Professor Baylor had some girls -- as a girl school. There might have been some coeds in there at that time, but there were no coeds as long as I was up there. * It was on Palmetto Street just above -- between Vine and Oak Street.

Bradley: Uh-huh. That later became the first location for Girls' Preparatory School, didn't it? ** Do you remember?

Johnston: No, it didn't. They thought about it, but it's exactly as it was when I was out there. They got a foundation down there, never was built on, and the old brick building that was Baylor School.

Bradley: Is that right?

Johnston: I don't think they ever moved that school.

Bradley: I see.

Johnston: They might have, I don't know about that. But I mean it's not there, it's not that same place.

Bradley: Well, what about athletics?

Johnston: They had athletics, they had -- it was a small school, and they didn't have very much wealth behind it, but they had some good players. They had [Theodore] Teddy Hill and [Robert W.] Bob Hill -- oh, they had some good athletes there. And they turned out a pretty good basketball team, pretty good baseball team, and sometimes a pretty good football team. Let's see if I can try and think of some of those players. The Hill boys made a great reputation out there, both Ted and Bob went there. And, of course, the thing was to beat McCallie.

* Baylor was coeducational from 1894-1912.

** GPS purchased the old Baylor School site in 1915 which was the second location for GPS.

Bradley: Yes, as it remains today.

Johnston: Yes, that's right, they still want to beat McCallie.

Bradley: Wasn't one of the McCallies, I don't know which one -- didn't he teach at Baylor for a while, do you remember?

Johnston: McCallie?

Bradley: One of the McCallies.

Johnston: I don't know, he must have, I don't remember.

Bradley: It seems to me I have read that one of the McCallie brothers was an early teacher. *

Johnston: If he was, it was before I went there; he wasn't teaching when I was there. If he did, I don't remember it.

Bradley: And then you went -- where did you go, to UVA, University of Virginia?

Johnston: University of Virginia, yes; in 1918 I went there.

Bradley: Well, I presume the war interrupted your --

Johnston: No, as a matter of fact -- it doesn't sound very patriotic -- I had just turned eighteen, my birthday was in the spring, and they formed what they called a Students' Army Training Corps. Of course, I could have enlisted; I hadn't gotten around to enlisting, but they took all the boys coming out of prep school and put them in colleges in Students' Army Training Corps, and they were under military discipline. And they got young lieutenants to train them. Then they would take them out of these university situations and put them in training camps.

Students' Army Training Corps, they called it, and as the openings developed and the kids became a little older, they'd take them out and send them off to the training camps, take them out of school or school units. As a matter of fact, you enlisted in the army when you went there.

Bradley: You were in the army.

Johnston: Yes, under military control. Then when the war was over, they released us just like they do anybody. I was just seventeen

* No McCallie is listed in the faculty listing for Baylor.

(Johnston): at that time. But Baylor did like a great many other schools; they got the teachers right out of colleges without much experience. Now, McCallie got that family of teachers, and they had a good start on that because there was enough McCallies to make a school themselves.

Bradley: (laughter) Almost to form the student body.

Johnston: That's right. But they're all fine teachers and they made a fine school. And Baylor, when they got the money behind them, made a fine school, too. But they were having a little hard time when I first went there, they didn't have a very big student body. I don't know whether you remember -- there had been some foundations for houses built out there on Palmetto and they're still there, never have been used. GPS is still out there, isn't it?

Bradley: No, GPS moved north of the river [200 Barton Avenue].

150

Johnston: That's right, I mean they were there until they moved over.

Bradley: Yes, I think so, I think that was in that general area.

Johnston: I believe Baylor moved and GPS moved -- they had a house on [106] Oak Street, and this was an improvement for them, so they moved out there and took Baylor's facilities.

Bradley: I believe that's correct.

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: At the time you were going to Baylor it was not a military school.

Johnston: No, it was never a military school until the war.* Then they put them in uniform, and they stayed in uniform. Some people think that's a good thing and some people think it's not; I don't know, I have no particular feeling about it.

158

Bradley: Then, after your college days, you went to Harvard.

Johnston: Yes, Harvard Law School.

Bradley: What turned your interest to the law rather than business?

Johnston: My father turned my interest to the law, in going to law

* Became a military school in 1917.

(Johnston): school. Back in those days you did what your father told you to do, and he says, "You've graduated from University of Virginia; you can go up to Harvard Law School." I said, "Yes, sir."

When I came out of Harvard Law School [he said], "Now, you can start practicing law." I said, "Whose firm?" "Mr. [James] J. B. Sizer, I've already made arrangements for you." So, I had a very happy association with the Sizers and worked there for a while. I didn't want to be a lawyer, so when my father died, I just gave it up.

Bradley: And then did you move into the family business?

Johnston: Well, what they were -- actually, my father was the first Coca-Cola bottler in Chattanooga, and he sold that. Although he retained some Coca-Cola interest, he wasn't particularly anxious for me to go in the Coca-Cola business. We still have an interest in some part of the Coca-Cola bottling business. He really wanted me to practice law; but, actually, I didn't want to practice law. It probably saved my clients a lot of headaches.

Bradley: (laughter) Well, how many years, in that period, were you in the law office?

Johnston: Three years. What I did mainly -- I never tried a lawsuit -- I'd go with him and help him, but I spent my time working up the evidence and getting statements from people. The first thing you do if something happens -- have an accident in an automobile -- I run me out a pad and get all the details. Then I'd type it up and then when they came to trial, they had that information.

Bradley: Who was in that firm then, Skey, Mr. Sizer?

Johnston: Sizer, Chambliss, and somebody else -- who was it?* Chambliss was Mr. Sizer's son-in-law, if you remember. Burnet Sizer [J. B.'s son] was my boss, he was a smart boy; he had a keen mind. Let's see, there was somebody else in that firm. John Chambliss, Burnet Sizer, Mr. Sizer, I guess that's all. I think there was another one, the name doesn't come to me right now.

Bradley: Well, after you left the practice of law, then did you pick

* Johnston worked for the law firm of Sizer, Chambliss and Sizer from 1926-1928.

(Bradley): up in the business world? What sort of business, aside from the Coca-Cola?

Johnston: Well, I had got into several things. Of course, my father had other things which I was interested in. I never settled down into any one job after that; I just sort of did as I pleased. That's not a great record, but I --

Bradley: (laughter) It must have been an enjoyable one.

Johnston: Well, it was, and, of course, I had a farm to look after, and
198 I got a lot of enjoyment out of farming. Not much money in it.

Bradley: You swapped over from law to business -- it must have been about mid-twenties.

Johnston: Let's see, I came out of school at twenty-five. I graduated from law school in '25 and then I stayed in Sizer's firm -- not as a partner, a trial lawyer or anything, but just worked up the evidence for them and got the information and took Burnet Sizer around. He's a great guy, do you know him?

Bradley: Yes, I did.

Johnston: He was my boss and I worked with him on cases, mostly doing leg work.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: I really had no great desire to be a lawyer, though, I'll tell you that.

Bradley: In that period from late twenties and early thirties there must have been a period of pretty healthy growth.

Johnston: It was, business was good. You could get a job. Young men coming out of college and law school -- I could have gotten a job. I stayed at Sizer's three years; I wasn't any particular help to them, except getting up the information. They didn't pay me much and I didn't deserve much. But they are
218 fine people to work for. Burnet was as smart as a whip; of course, his father was one of the smartest lawyers in town. And John Chambliss is one of the greatest characters I ever knew.

Bradley: (laughter) Judge Alexander [W.] Chambliss, John's father, was never in the firm was he? *

Johnston: I don't know, he wasn't when I was there; he was on the bench.

Bradley: The bench, even then.

Johnston: Yes, he was put on the bench shortly after I went over there. He was a fine man, though.

Bradley: State Supreme Court, yes.

Johnston: Yes, a smart man and very fine fellow.

Bradley: You and Mr. John Chambliss were roughly contemporaries.

225

Johnston: Yes, we buddied around together. He was interested in things -- he liked the farm, he liked the out-of-doors; he was a smart lawyer, though. Mr. Sizer was one of the smartest men that's ever been in Chattanooga; he was so smart I was scared of him.

Bradley: (laughter) Did he have any particular field of law that he concentrated on?

Johnston: No, he'd do anything. I didn't know enough about his business; I imagine he -- represented a lot of businesses, I know, had a lot of firms. But he was just naturally a brilliant lawyer.

Bradley: One thing I started to ask you. In this particular era when the growth of business was good and business was expanding, what were some of the firms or businesses here in Chattanooga that came into being along about that time? Do you remember some of them?

Johnston: No, I can't remember the new ones; I remember the old ones, but I don't remember new ones coming in.

Bradley: Which were the largest of the old ones?

Johnston: Well, you say, in merchandise Lovemans was large, and of course Miller Brothers was tremendous. They had the backing of a wealthy family, Miller Brothers did, and they had a good store.

245

Lovemans had a good store too.

The law firm first consisted of J. B. Sizer and Alexander W. Chambliss. It later included their sons Burnet Sizer and John A. Chambliss. Alexander W. Chambliss was appointed to the State Supreme Court in 1923.

Bradley: They came down from Knoxville, didn't they?

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: The Millers.

Johnston: Wait a minute, the Millers?

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: No, G. H. Miller owned Miller Brothers store.

Bradley: Yes, but were they not from Knoxville originally, up in East Tennessee? Perhaps not.

Johnston: I don't think so.*

Bradley: The Moores at Lovemans, I know they were from East Tennessee.

Johnston: They came from Rockwood or somewhere, didn't they?

Bradley: Well, you know, originally from Jellico, wasn't it?

Johnston: Yes, I believe you're right.

Bradley: That was where the Moores lived.

Johnston: They were merchants up there somewhere though, weren't they?

255
Bradley: Yes, upper East Tennessee.** What about the insurance companies, Skey? Were you interested in any of them?

Johnston: Well, the firm I worked for, Sizer, Chambliss, and Sizer, represented the Provident [Insurance Company].

Bradley: The Provident?

Johnston: And John Chambliss was a pretty big man in the Provident. I

* Gus H. Miller, from Bellbuckle, Tennessee, and his brother, opened the New York Racket Store in 1889. The store moved to Market Street in 1893 and was renamed Miller Brothers.

** David B. Loveman, of Atlanta, Georgia, and brother, Herman, opened the New Orleans Store in 1875. The D. B. Loveman Co. was bought by Thomas & Moore Dry Goods in 1932. Richard L. Moore, of Jellico, became president of the new Lovemans, Inc.

(Johnston): think he was one of the founders of it.*

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: And he was their lawyer, and of course old man Sizer, Mr. Sizer,
260 was, too.

Bradley: Volunteer Life was founded somewhere along in that era, wasn't it?

Johnston: No, the Volunteer was founded before that. The Volunteer -- Mr. Z. C. Patten, I think, founded that, didn't he?

Bradley: Yes, he was one of them.

Johnston: I think it was a good many years ago. See, they built the Volunteer Building, didn't they?

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: That's been there a long time.

Bradley: Twenty-four, maybe; I don't know.

Johnston: I think it was before that [built 1917].

Bradley: Was it?

Johnston: Yes, because I came here in '25 and started being familiar with what was going on in the city, and they were already going pretty strong.

Bradley: Interstate, too, came along in that general time span. [1909]

Johnston: Yes. I was trying to think when the Volunteer came along way back there [founded 1903]. See, I started in '25; I don't
275 think anything particular happened after '25.

Bradley: (laughter) You don't mean your coming back home put a damper on things.

Johnston: Stopped it in its tracks, I think. No, but '25 is the year I came out, and that's when I became familiar with what was going on in the city of Chattanooga.

Bradley: What drew your father into the Coca-Cola?

* Alexander W. Chambliss was one of the founders of Provident in 1887.

Johnston: Well, that's an interesting thing. There was a man in Atlanta
285 that had this drink, and Mr. [Benjamin F.] Ben Thomas went down and looked at it and he says, "You've got something here." He got them to call it Coca-Cola, and he started advertising it; he's the man responsible for the Coca-Cola business, more than any of those fellows in Atlanta. They just stood there and watched him do it. Yes, Ben Thomas.

Bradley: Was he a lawyer or was he a businessman?

Johnston: He was a businessman; but he was a lawyer, actually, too. But he was in the Coca-Cola business.

Bradley: Was it friendship of your father with him, or what --

Johnston: Well, let me get Mr. Ben Thomas kind of straightened out here. I may be getting him confused with somebody else. Ben Thomas, a great friend of my father, and I see him as tied in with Coca-Cola some way or other.

Bradley: Yes, well, he was, I know, one of the big figures here in Coca-Cola.

Johnston: What was the name of that, Coca-Cola Thomas, wasn't it? *

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: Yes, he was in that; that was a franchise situation.

Bradley: Yes. That was the syrup, wasn't it?
300
Johnston: Yes. It had a certain territory that you could use to sell the syrup in.

Bradley: And your father was interested in the bottling company.

Johnston: He was head of this Coca-Cola Bottling Company in Chattanooga, and he sold it out -- I can't remember when, I think it was about '25 [1924], somewhere along there -- sold it out to the [Crawford] Johnsons in Birmingham.

But Ben Thomas is the man that went down to Atlanta and told those fellows what they had, and he organized the Thomas Company -- you know, the Thomas Company.

* Mr. Thomas founded the Coca-Cola Bottling Company in 1899 which later became known as Coca-Cola Bottling Company (Thomas) Inc.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: Now, my father had stock in the Thomas Company which he passed on to my mother and she passed on to me. And then they gave stock in the Coca-Cola Company in lieu of Thomas --

Bradley: I see. Well, the bottling company here had interests in bottling companies elsewhere, didn't they? Did they not have one down in Mississippi somewhere, Greenville or --

Johnston: Well, my father was interested in one in -- it wasn't Greenville, name me some more little towns there.

Bradley: Greenwood?

Johnston: Greenwood, Greenwood is the one, that's right, yes.

Bradley: They're not too far apart.

Johnston: That's right; I think they're in the same county. But in that time what they were doing, they were selling rights for territory, and then you'd sell the bottlers, or the bottler would buy the territory.

Bradley: By the time you actually got into the business world, you never did have any direct association with the bottling company your father had.

Johnston: No, no.

Bradley: I see.

Johnston: Actually I had some connection with a bottling company, what was it? A little bottling company down in [LaFayette] Georgia -- what's the name of that bottling company? I can't say, but that's the only one I ever had any dealings with.

Bradley: I see.

Johnston: That's funny I can't think of that name. Well, it'll come to me after you're gone.

Bradley: (laughter) Well, you can call me and tell me. Skey, I want to ask you about the farm up near Cleveland, up in that area. Did you run it as a producing farm?

Johnston: Well, after a fashion. I never did do much actual farming. I mean, I just had the farm and we raised this, that, and the other. I mean, I didn't get out and make contacts and sell produce or sell corn, wheat or anything. You just lived on it and farmed it.

(Johnston): That came from my grandmother; she came over here from North Carolina way back in 18 and something, I've forgotten, 1820 something. She came to this place and she admired this place where the farm is now and where the house is. They asked if she could buy it; it belonged to the Indians. They said, "Yes, you can buy it; we'll sell it to you at a reasonable price" -- they had the price all down there. "But there is one condition: there's a grave right here to little Christopher Columbus something" -- whatever the Indian name was -- "and he's buried right here. You have to promise you'll maintain that grave as long as you own this farm."

Bradley: Is that right?

Johnston: Yes, that little grave's right there; we took care of it. See, the Indians lived there when my family first moved in; they bought this place from the Indians.

Bradley: Is it on a river or --

Johnston: It's on Candies Creek, the headwaters of Candies Creek, which empties into the Tennessee.

Bradley: Is that where it got its name, Bendabout?

Johnston: No, it got its name -- when it gets over into my side of the new farm where my father was born -- see, this is where I lived before, where his mother lived. The creek goes through there -- called Candies Creek; it's just like this, it bends and bends and bends and bends; that's where it got its name, Bendabout.

Bradley: What creek is this?

Johnston: Candies Creek, the creek is known as Candies Creek; I just call where it comes through my place Bendabout.

Bradley: How do you spell that creek? C-A-N-D-Y, Candy?

Johnston: C-A-N-D- -- no, it's not, it's Candis, C-A-N-D-I-S, I think.

Bradley: Oh, Candis, I see. That probably was a family name then, from way back somewhere.

Johnston: I don't know. The creek is -- where the place gets its name is -- Candies Creek starts down in, almost at the Georgia line and comes and empties into the Tennessee River, not far from my house.

Bradley: The farm has been known for a long time for producing horses and having horses on it.

Johnston: Yes, we started out -- when I started out, thanks to Summerfield, my son, who is running it now -- we had cattle, we sold cattle. We had some mothers and calves and all that, but that's too complicated, so we just took to buying steers every year and running them on the farm and letting them eat the grass down. That's the most economical way to run a farm. But horses -- we have raised some horses. I had Arab horses for a while, raised Arab horses.

Bradley: What turned your interest to that?

Johnston: Polo ponies. The Arab's a fine beautiful little animal; he can't play polo and you can't work him very hard and you can't ride him -- mostly mean as the devil. So when we went to playing polo, we got rid of everything except the polo ponies. Now, we've got rid of them.

Bradley: Did you play? Where did you pick up polo? Where did you start playing polo?

Johnston: Well, I watched it in Florida, and [Fort] Oglethorpe had a fine polo team then. I used to play with them; they'd come up and play with us. And that's where I got interested; I never did have many ponies, but we had enough to have a game. They'd come up and play with us; we'd go down to Oglethorpe and play with them.

Bradley: Were there other teams in the area?

Johnston: No. There was one -- there was some in Memphis. I think Memphis came over and played with us. As a matter of fact, Memphis came over -- we didn't have any ponies -- but Memphis came over and played last week up at the farm.

Bradley: Is that right?

Johnston: Yes, played on our polo field. I don't play anymore, but I think my son and grandson played with them. But we don't try to keep a whole bunch of ponies anymore. It takes about six ponies for each player to play regularly.

Bradley: You said you got polo ponies; what breed are they? Is that a special breed that has been developed for --

Johnston: Well now, what makes a polo pony is just an ordinary well-bred horse, in the race horse, what do you call them?

Bradley: Thoroughbred.

Johnston: Thoroughbred, that's what I'm trying to say; there are

(Johnston): thoroughbreds and half-bred that make polo ponies. Now, a
422 thoroughbred is pretty hot for a polo player; a good high-goal player can play a thoroughbred, but most of them are too hot for the average player, so they play a lot of half-bred [which comes from] some sort of a good mare and a thoroughbred stallion.

Bradley: They have to have a lot of stamina I know, and quick turning --

Johnston: Yes, a lot of stamina and speed and maneuverability, yes, to be able to -- they have to do what you want. You can do certain things and they'll respond to it, you see. That just takes practice with the horse, and man, too.

Bradley: In keeping up your polo stables to the extent that you did, did you have contact with players or teams from other parts of the country?

Johnston: Memphis used to come up there; they came and played up there the other day, although we didn't play with them. They brought their horses though and played up on my field.

Bradley: Is that right?

Johnston: Yes. That shows interest, I think, they like the game; they brought all their ponies over, we didn't have but one pony for them to play. But they played -- that's been about two weeks ago; they played on my field, and had a pretty good crowd.

Bradley: When Oglethorpe was at its height in mid-twenties or so, they had a lot of interest in polo out there.

Johnston: Yes, they did, people used to go out there and watch them.

Bradley: When that was a cavalry post.

Johnston: They came up and played with us a whole lot. I mean, they were a lot better than we were, and maybe we'd divide up some and play some of their horses. And Memphis came up there the other
450 day -- I haven't played for a good many years -- they brought all the players and just put on an exhibition night, all their players. They had some good players. But we used to play Memphis every year; they'd come over and play us.

Bradley: Who were some of the people that played up at your place? Were they local people primarily?

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: Who were some of them?

Johnston: Most of them were boys that worked on the farm.

Bradley: Is that right?

Johnston: We had one boy that worked there, he was one of the best I ever saw; he was just naturally a good horseman and an expert polo player. But Memphis would come over every year and we'd have some kind of a little match of sorts. My son started playing and he played; I didn't play much; and now his son's playing. They play in Florida some now. Polo is a lot of fun; it's not much fun to watch; it's fun to play, though.

Bradley: Particularly if you like to ride.

Johnston: Yes, if you've got a good pony it's a pleasure though, it really is. They just take these aims and these signals and things and just go right through them just like they were born and gone to school all their life just doing that.

Bradley: Skey, thinking back in your years right after you got out of college and for the next ten or fifteen years, who were some of the strong business figures here in Chattanooga?

Johnston: Of course you know the Luptons, they were strong, the Thomases. Are you talking about business or --

Bradley: Any --

Johnston: Felix Miller was a strong man in business.

Bradley: Was Mr. James still active when you were --

Johnston: Wesley James?

Bradley: W. E. James, yes, isn't that his name? *

Johnston: W. E. was the old man. Yes, he was pretty active, but he was sort of playing out. I can't think -- what was the James interest back in those days?

Bradley: Signal Mountain.

* Bradley and Johnston are referring to C. E. James, local entrepreneur, who began the development of the Signal Mountain area around 1911. His Signal Mountain Inn was opened in 1913 and the town of Signal Mountain was chartered in 1919. He built a road up the mountain that was to become Taft Highway.

Johnston: Yes, they developed it, that's right, that's right.

Bradley: And the street railway company [Signal Mountain Railway] I think.

Johnston: Yes, going up -- that's the thing. I remember the day they blew that cliff off, do you remember that?

Bradley: No, that was before my time. I didn't come here until the forties.

Johnston: I'll tell you, that created a lot of dust and excitement. Yes, I remember that everybody was standing back at a safe distance waiting for them to blow it, and they blew it off, too. That had to do with the track going up.

Bradley: He built the W Road didn't he?

Johnston: Well, the W Road was there a long time, and when Signal was developed, of course they developed a fine highway [the Taft
503 Highway] up there to get the people up there, and people started living over there all year-round. But W was mostly going into Summertown, and that part of the ridge. My grandmother's cabin is still there, I think, over in Summertown; I haven't been up there in a long time. We used to go up there every summer.

Bradley: How long did you stay usually?

Johnston: Well, I didn't stay long because we used to live at the farm, and I'd come down and stay with my grandmother maybe two or three days at a time. We went to the farm just as soon as I got out of school, and stayed until time to go back to school. Meantime I'd visit her on Walden's Ridge.

Bradley: You say your grandmother, was this your mother's --

Johnston: Mother.

Bradley: Your mother's mother [Mary Divine Key].

Johnston: She was a Key. Back in those days, though, in Summertown, they didn't have any elaborate houses; they just had these little cabins and little houses.

Bradley: It was strictly a summer residence.

Johnston: Yes, strictly summer. The winter residents didn't start up
520 there until they opened up over there on the Brow, you know, at -- what's the name of that place over there? You know what I'm talking about.

Bradley: Yes, sure -- well, the name escapes me.

Johnston: See, they built the hotel over there, started all that interest in it.

Bradley: I believe Mr. James was instrumental in building that hotel [Signal Mountain Inn], wasn't he?

Johnston: Yes, I think he was. I was trying to think, though, what year
530 they opened that up. My grandmother was still living there when they opened up all that property over there on the Brow. What do you call that place? I can't think of the name.

Bradley: Walden's --

Johnston: No, Walden's was back where she lived, Walden's Ridge, and then --

Bradley: Well, just Signal Mountain.

Johnston: Signal Mountain, that's what it is.

Bradley: Yes, just the town of Signal Mountain, yes. I was trying to remember one of the community names up there.

Johnston: Yes, I was too, that's what I was trying to do; Signal Mountain is what I'm thinking of, though. See, they opened that road up there, do you remember that?

Bradley: This was the Dixie Highway, wasn't it?

Johnston: No, it was only maybe part of the Dixie Highway. They shot that bluff off over there and ran that road [Taft Highway] right under that bluff and came right up to Signal; that's when they opened Signal Mountain.

Bradley: Opened -- really began.
548
Johnston: Yes, and people started building houses over there.

Bradley: Yes. Were you interested in Lookout Mountain at that point? Did you have a --

Johnston: No, I was not interested in Lookout Mountain until I moved up here, that was in -- gosh, I can't think when. That's awful what I can't -- I can't even remember how many years I've lived here, probably twenty years I think. We moved over here -- I think I had a little house up here on the hill then, and then I bought this property and we built this house.

Bradley: Would it have been in the forties?

Johnston: I believe it was before that.

Bradley: Before. Late thirties.

Johnston: I go by the fact that my son was young when we moved up here. Of course, he didn't like to live up here; he wanted to live at the farm.

Bradley: (laughter) His interest has been in the farm.

Johnston: Yes, mostly. He's got the whole thing now; he can worry with it himself.

Bradley: We were talking about some of the strong figures. You mentioned, of course, the Luptons and the Pattens, too.

Johnston: And Probascos.

Bradley: And the Probascos.

Johnston: And the Pattens, that's right. Let me see, who were some of the others? You picked me on an afternoon when my mind's not working. It's not working very often anyway; you have to catch me quickly. Let's see -- Chapins. Hamilton National Bank, Mr. -- who was president of the Hamilton National Bank? [Thomas Ross Preston]

Bradley: Oh, Mr. --

Johnston: Preston -- no, not Preston -- Preston was one of the big men.

Bradley: Yes. Whitakers?

Johnston: No, no. That's too bad, the way you caught my mind perfectly blank. The Hamilton Bank was the Millers and the -- who were the other big stockholders down there?

Bradley: They were formed when I came here, so I can't say.

Johnston: Felix Miller and T. H. -- *

Bradley: Preston.

Johnston: Preston -- were the big Hamilton people. And Scott Probasco --

* Hamilton National Bank was founded in 1905 with T. R. Preston as President and G. H. Miller as Vice President.

Bradley: And Mr. Chapin --

Johnston: And Mr. Chapin, and I think Mr. Lupton, Mr. Cartter Lupton, were interested in the American Trust.*

Bradley: American, yes, they were the two major banks.

Johnston: That's right. What was the name of that other bank?

Bradley: Pioneer?

610

Johnston: Yes, they were a later bank. But there was another bank about that same time.

Bradley: Oh, Chattanooga --

Johnston: Savings.

Bradley: Savings.

Johnston: Yes, they were a good bank, too.

Bradley: It's still called the Chattanooga Bank Building.

Johnston: Yes, that's right. I was trying to think [of] some of the businesses. Let's see, what did we have going on? We had

620 the -- what manufacturing was pretty strong then?

Bradley: Well, of course, the Whelands --

Johnston: Oh, the Wheland's -- an old timer -- yes the Wheland's. [The Wheland Co.]

Bradley: And the Combustion [Engineering Co., Inc.] had -- I don't know when it came in.

Johnston: They were later, I think.

Bradley: And the tank and boiler company --

Johnston: What's the name of that company? Chattanooga Boiler [and Tank Co.]?

* In 1912, American Trust and Banking Co. was organized with H. S. Probasco as President and E. Y. Chapin, Vice President. No Lupton was listed as an officer or founder of this bank.

Bradley: Yes, one of them. And a lot of textile.

Johnston: Yes, textile mills, yes.

Bradley: Textile mills were important.

Johnston: 635 The textile mills were largely around in these little towns, though, the --

Bradley: Yes, sort of on the edge. Was that primarily because of labor?

Johnston: No, they just got good people to work out there; it might have had something to do with labor, but they went out in these smaller towns and trained people and got some nice business out there.

Bradley: 645 I think -- let me change the tape here just a moment.

End Tape 1, Side 1
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Bradley: 008 We were talking about some of the businesses that were established or were going in that period. You were saying many of the textile mills were in smaller towns.

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: And of course the glass company [Chattanooga Glass Co.] -- I don't know when it came in here.

Johnston: I think it came in when the soft drinks got popular, I believe that's when it developed. Now, I don't know exactly when that was [incorporated 1901], but it's been later than you think.

Bradley: Yes. Didn't it make bottles for the Coca-Cola company?

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: I mean for the Coca-Cola bottlers.

Johnston: They had a lot of soft drink business out there.

Bradley: 018 Yes. Chattanooga has had a particularly diversified economy over the years.

Johnston: Yes.

Bradley: Of course some of the processes have sort of gone out of usefulness; I mean the cast iron -- the foundries --

Johnston: Yes, you don't hear much about them anymore.

Bradley: Because they don't use their products much anymore.

Johnston: Chattanooga had a pretty good hold on that business for awhile, I think.

Bradley: Yes, they did. Well, they still make brake drums, and castings like that, but by and large the state of the art has passed them by.

Johnston: That's right, Chattanooga has always had a little bit of in-
030 dustry it didn't think it had; I mean, had things that you'd be surprised because they were in Chattanooga.

Bradley: Someone said that we are now one of the major capitals for making saddles.

Johnston: Yes, the Chattanooga Saddle Company. What's the name? Not Chattanooga but -- oh, the leather people -- anyway, that's where they make saddles and ship them all over the world.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: You can get some of the finest western saddles down there you can get anywhere in the world.

Bradley: That's right. There are at least two or three companies which make saddles here now and bridles of course, I mean harness. I heard the other day that one of the major imports from Britain into Chattanooga was the metal, the bits, and also the buckles.

Johnston: It went on the bridles, yes, that's right. They've had a good business for a long time in -- all kind of leather business. What's the name of that family that owns that business?

Bradley: You embarrass me -- I'll think of it in a moment.

Johnston: They had some German artists that came over to work -- come over and started that thing. They came in here and started all kind of leather goods way back yonder.

Bradley: It was the Scholze Tannery*, and they had a tremendous leath-
050 er business generally.

* The Scholze Tannery was started by Robert Scholze in 1873, located on St. Elmo Avenue. The Southern Saddlery Company was a subsidiary plant of the tannery, at South Broad and St. Elmo Avenue.

Johnston: Didn't they have a big plant down on the river bank somewhere?

Bradley: Yes, from South Broad all the way to the river, really I think, didn't they? Now, I think the plants making saddles have been moved elsewhere; I don't think they are there anymore.

Johnston: They've had a pretty good saddle business. You know there's so much interest in riding horses. I mean, I don't know but what maybe there's just about as many saddles sold as there used to be, because people drove buggies -- but this horse riding is a pretty popular thing now.

Bradley: Which brings up something: in your youthful days did you-all have buggies?

Johnston: Oh, yes, we had carriages.

Bradley: Carriages?

Johnston: Yes. We had a two-horse carriage and one-horse carriage, and
060 everybody had a buggy. All doctors had buggies then.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: And then they had hitching posts and "upping block"; you had a big rock out there you stepped into the buggy on.

Bradley: When your mother went calling, what did she use, the carriage?

Johnston: She had a carriage, a two-horse one.

Bradley: And was it enclosed?

Johnston: Yes, they had a summer and a winter carriage. Yes, it was enclosed and they just shut it up like a little house, you know.

Bradley: And did you keep your horses there on -- you had a stable there at the house, I guess.

Johnston: No, the stable was down near the other part of town somewhere, I don't know; it was somewhere near the Coca-Cola Bottling
070 plant. And then my aunt, Mrs. Mayfield, who lived with us then, she had a nice riding horse. Then they had a buggy horse and a carriage horse.

Bradley: Do you recall the change-over to the automobiles?

Johnston: I wasn't much impressed with it; I mean, automobiles were pretty well going when I came along. I remember the first automobile we had was a Buick where you got in the back. Did you
075 ever see one of those?

Bradley: Yes, the back seat was divided wasn't it?

Johnston: Yes, they had to take it, then you opened up and put the seat down and everybody sat on it, that's right. Buggies, everybody rode them; all doctors and businessmen drove a buggy and hitched the horse up somewhere, and then at noon put them in a livery stable and worked at the office. They had a hack going up Walden's Ridge, do you remember that? A couple of mules drew that thing up there.

Bradley: How long did it take you, do you remember?

Johnston: It must have taken two hours, maybe longer than that.

Bradley: It must have.

Johnston: They'd go up the "W" [Road] and have to stop about every hundred yards and let the mules breathe; "blow," they call it.

Bradley: Going up the W would be a strain on any team.

Johnston: Yes, I think so; it was a strain on automobiles. We used to have this little narrow thing [ed: curve], start around, you'd have to back up and come around again.

Bradley: Do you remember any sort of movement for good highways, good roads?

Johnston: Oh, they've had that highway association for years; that's the main thing, everybody wanted good highways. I think they were just talking about the old highways, too; they weren't talking about the state -- what do you call them?

Bradley: Interstates.

Johnston: Interstates.

Bradley: Yes, that's right, they were talking about just roads between here and Atlanta for instance.

Johnston: And good roads, good roads; everybody had them a good road association.

Bradley: I think one of the ones that aroused most interest here was
095 called the Dixie Highway Association.

Johnston: Yes, they worked all over the South.

Bradley: That's right. Chattanooga was a point on it, and it went to Atlanta and to Florida, didn't it?

Johnston: Yes, I think.

Bradley: And from here up to Cincinnati.

Johnston: They had all that area to work in, and the motto was "good road," everything "good road." Of course, they've got everything down to concrete now; you don't have to bother about
100 the good road problem.

Bradley: Except the other people who are on it sometimes.

Johnston: Yes, that's right, that's right. It's amazing how much they've connected the cities up lately; I mean, the last few years [compared to] what it used to be.

Bradley: Oh, the interstate system is really a marvel.

Johnston: It is, they've done a good job on that.

Bradley: Skey, when you were coming along, what about amusements, picture shows, and that sort of thing?

Johnston: They had picture shows, and that was a pretty good thing for teenagers and kids and everybody; they were good, decent shows and very amusing. Of course, that was before they synchronized the music and conversation; they didn't have the talkies, they just had --

Bradley: The silent, the old silent movies.

Johnston: Yes, that's right. And they changed every week, got new things in there, and they were all decent films, too. I mean, they didn't have any -- no question about it, you could send a child to any movie he wanted to go to.

Bradley: Do you remember road companies' plays coming here, that sort of thing?

Johnston: Yes, we used to have a lot of them at the Bijou. Every week
116 a play would come in there.

Bradley: Was this at the Bijou?

Johnston: At the Bijou, and what was the name of that other theater?

Bradley: Well, I can't remember.

Johnston: But the Bijou was the first and only for a long time.

Bradley: Yes, that was up where the --

Johnston: That's on Sixth and Walnut.

Bradley: Yes, where the Justice Building is now, I mean the courthouse.

Johnston: Well, it sat right over there, right on the corner from the courthouse.

Bradley: Yes, that's right.

Johnston: But the Bijou was the first theater in Chattanooga that I remember. They had legitimate shows there.

Bradley: Did you go a lot?

Johnston: Not until I got a good deal older. But they had -- you don't see it anymore -- they had these shows that'd come through and stay awhile and then move on out; maybe they'd stay one night.

Bradley: The traveling companies.

Johnston: The traveling companies, what do you call that? I can't think of it.

Bradley: Old stock theaters, I guess.

Johnston: Yes, that's right. I can remember when the Bijou was built, about 1908 or '10 or somewhere along there. [1906]

Bradley: I was about to say 1910, I guess, somewhere along in there. When you got to be a teenager and going out in that sense, did they have places to dance?

Johnston: What they had, we had, in Chattanooga was very fortunate; we had Miss Inez Hyder* who taught us dancing, and so we'd go over there. The girls were good dancers; the boys tried to learn, and learned something I guess. Everybody gave little dances at their houses. Sometimes a lady would have a big party and have it at the Patten Hotel and entertain with music and dancing, or the Read House or somewhere like that. But they all had big times going dancing; boys weren't much

* Miss Inez Hyder held classes in the Hotel Patten.

(Johnston): dancers, but the girls were all good dancers -- they loved to dance. That ballroom is just the same at the Patten as it always was, I guess.

Bradley: I guess so, yes.

Johnston: The Read House came along later.

Bradley: The Read House was built in the mid-thirties, wasn't it? *

Johnston: Yes, yes.

Bradley: What about the Signal Mountain Inn and the Lookout Mountain [Hotel] -- what is now the college down here? [Covenant College]

Johnston: Well, I'll start out with Signal Mountain -- that was a great thing up there; they had dances up there, and they had people come there and spend the summer, and always some kind of entertainment going on up on the Signal Mountain Hotel. Then they had the Signal Mountain Golf Club up there where they had members and had parties -- I wasn't a member of it -- had parties over at the Signal Mountain Golf Club, and then of course the golf club up here. The one over at Riverview has been there for generations [Chattanooga Golf & Country Club]; I don't know how long it was there. It's a mighty good course, too.

Bradley: Yes, it is.

Johnston: I wasn't ever much of a golfer, but they've turned out some pretty good players out at Riverview.

Bradley: The golf and country club in Riverview must have been established in the early 1910's, somewhere along in there.

Johnston: I'd say it was before that [established 1896].

Bradley: Was it?

Johnston: Yes, I may be wrong. It's been there ever since I can remember. That's where people entertained and played golf, and they had a pretty large membership.

Bradley: Did you every come into contact, particularly, with the railroad people? Chattanooga's always been a --

* Originally built in 1872, rebuilt almost completely in 1926.

Johnston: Railroad center.

Bradley: Railroad town.

Johnston: No, I never did; the only ones I knew were the conductors on the trains, going back and forth.

Bradley: (laughter) Going back and forth.

Johnston: Yes, and then they had a local train that come up from Knoxville to Chattanooga that we rode coming in from the farm. Number 1 and 2 came down in the morning, they were 3 and 4 when they went back, and there was two more at night, maybe. They stopped right there at Tucker Springs, can you imagine that?

Bradley: Yes, yes.

Johnston: Of course, sometimes you had to flag a train. Then they had these little country hotels out in there. They had one at Tucker Springs and one down at Mineral Park; I think the Mineral Park is still there, and Lauderbach Springs. And people would go out and spend the summer at these little country hotels.

Bradley: Some of them were very famous for their food.

Johnston: Yes, that's right, you really got good food in nearly all of them; I don't think the accommodations were too good. I think Lauderbach Springs is still running; Tucker Springs folded up, and somebody bought it and tore it down plank by plank and hauled it off. (laughter)

Bradley: Well, Chattanooga has grown a great deal in the years since you've seen it.

Johnston: It certainly has. I remember when I'd go off to school and come back, it'd changed a good deal just in that short time.

Bradley: When you went off to the university for instance, how often did you get to come home?

Johnston: Well, you got home all summer, got home Christmas; I never came on spring vacation, I usually stayed up there. But, I was trying to think -- I went to Baylor on Palmetto Street. I can't remember when it moved out to -- I guess I was still out there when they moved out on the river. And GPS was on Oak Street, you remember that. And McCallie was always at McCallie, so we can't argue about that.

Bradley: Well, they've been three great institutions.

Johnston: Yes, they have. McCallie's got a great family tradition for teachers, so they've got some smart people out there. And Baylor's done a good job too; they sometimes got some boys fresh out of college, but they had a good bunch of teachers. GPS moved from Oak Street.

Bradley: You know it's across the river now, over there on the other side of the river.

Johnston: They've all moved out of town now.

Bradley: Well, GPS is still, I'd say, close enough to be counted.

200

Johnston: In a little house over there on Oak Street. Baylor was in a little house out on Palmetto Street, and McCallie was in a little house out on McCallie property. They had the best facilities because they had all that McCallie property to work with.

Bradley: That's always been McCallie property.

Johnston: Yes, still is, I guess. Those McCallies are natural born teachers, too. Let's see, they've always been there, haven't they?

Bradley: I think so. I don't think they've ever had -- the school has always been where it is now, right there on the slope of the ridge, and on that property. As a matter of fact, I think probably that lake, what they called McCallie Lake, has always been there and been part of the --

Johnston: I think they've built around that lake to a certain extent.

Bradley: Yes, I would imagine.

Johnston: McCallie has always been a great family, a smart family with all those teachers; they are natural born teachers, and they had a good school over there. Of course Baylor had a good school, too, but they didn't have facilities that McCallie had until they moved out there where they are now, and then they picked up. I think they've got a good school out there.

Bradley: Yes, yes, they have.

Johnston: And GPS --

218

Bradley: Miss [Eula] Jarnagin --

Johnston: Yes, what's the other one? Miss Jarnagin and Miss --

Bradley: Miss [Grace] McCallie.

Johnston: Yes, but that's not the one I'm thinking about.

Bradley: Duffy?

Johnston: Duffy, Miss [Tommie Payne] Duffy and Miss McCallie. I was trying to think where they moved to. They moved from one place to another before they moved out -- I think where they are now.

Bradley: I think they did, too. I think they had the -- if I remember correctly, they had the old Baylor location and then moved to --

Johnston: They did. When Baylor moved out there, they moved into Baylor.

Bradley: And then they moved into a house which had been -- which was built for some sort of labor organization which moved out. It was a brick building, and suitable for classes.

Johnston: School, yes.

Bradley: They were there for awhile I believe, and then from there out to where they are now.

Johnston: They've got a pretty good location there now.

Bradley: Oh, yes, beautiful, beautiful location.

Johnston: I can't picture them in my mind; I was out there the other day and I can't figure out what they look like.

Bradley: Well, all of their buildings out there have been built in the last forty years, so they are red brick, traditional buildings, and overlook the river.

Johnston: That's what I was coming to; they are kind of on a little bluff there.

Bradley: That's right, overlook the river and now they have playing fields from the top of the hill down in the level part.

Johnston: Are they anywhere near the [Chattanooga] Golf and Country Club?

Bradley: Yes, their northern boundary would come pretty close to the Golf and Country Club's southern boundary. They're not right up against each other, but they're close.

Johnston: I remember I was standing out there at the golf and country club looking down there one time. I could see their property.

Bradley: Yes, that's right, it's not too far. They're, of course, right along the river bank.

Johnston: They didn't get involved in the flood, did they?

Bradley: No (laughter), no. The only thing that they have close enough to the river to even be affected would be their track and field area, athletic field, which wouldn't be disastrous.

Johnston: That wouldn't bother them very long at a time. But Chattanooga's got three good schools; Baylor, McCallie, and GPS.

Bradley: What about the university here? Do you recall what sort of standing it had when you were coming along? I know you didn't go there.

Johnston: Well, when I came along the University of Chattanooga hadn't developed to any extent. They did a good job, I'm sure, and had some good teachers, and with what they had I guess they did some fine work. But of course after they started putting money in it, they are a fine institution now. They have everything you need in the way of education.

Bradley: It's hard to realize now that their enrollment is moving on up toward ten thousand.

Johnston: It is?

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: Good gracious alive, I remember when they had about five hundred.

Bradley: Five hundred (laughter).

Johnston: That's great, they've done a great job.

Bradley: Well, Skey, it's been a pleasure to talk with you.

Johnston: I wanted to ask you something, and it's skipped my mind. I had some important thing I wanted to ask you. What the devil was it?

When Baylor moved out of where they first went -- no -- yeah, where they first were, GPS went there didn't they?

Bradley: I think that's right, yes. I'm not sure about whether it was

(Bradley): the same building, or whether it was just the same site. But I believe they were on the old Baylor site.

Johnston: I think they had the old Baylor building, because I think if they were going to put in the money that they'd put it like they did than put it somewhere else.

Bradley: Yes, it would have certainly been suited for school work.

Johnston: Well now, you're an old-timer, give me some more news on something.

Bradley: Well, I wish I was as much of an old-timer as you are, but we moved here in 1942, so we are really -- compared with you, we are kind of newcomers. It's good to talk to you, Skey.

Johnston: I'll tell you one thing I can remember, I remember the night the -- what was it? The courthouse --

Bradley: The courthouse burned.

Johnston: The courthouse burned, yes.

Bradley: 1912 wasn't it?

Johnston: Somewhere along there [May 7, 1910]; I remember I was a kid, I was taking a bath, and all this light lit down there [and thought] "What the Sam hill, it must be daylight." I came down there and the courthouse --

Bradley: Let's see, you would have been only a block or two.

Johnston: A block on the other side of the street.

Bradley: Yes, that's right, only a block. Well, you must have felt the heat.

Johnston: Yes, I certainly felt the glare anyway.

Bradley: What about the fire [after which] they erected the monument to the firemen?

Johnston: That was a fireman that saved -- it was a man named [Samuel M.] Patton who was a bachelor, and he lived in an apartment house or some type of thing, and he was burning up in there. I think -- I may not have this story exactly right. But anyhow, these firemen [Henry Iler, William Peak] went in there to save him and they were burned up, too. Now, that's the way I have it; that may not be exactly right, but that's pretty much the way it was. They put up this [monument] over there at Fountain Square.

Bradley: Fountain Square, yes.

Johnston: They put up this fountain with this fireman's figure [Fireman's Fountain]. I think that was the reason for it.

Bradley: Do you remember that there was a bad flood about 1912, was it?

Johnston: I don't remember anything before the '17 flood.

308

Bradley: '17, I'm sorry.

Johnston: And that was a lulu bird. That was one of the best they ever had; they might have had them before, but I don't know. It seems to me that this is a little different flood. Having the water already there in that lake [Chickamauga Lake] would have made a bigger flood than this coming down that river the way it was before. Do you know whether it's made any difference or not?

Bradley: Well, they say it reduces the high water like -- they say the 1917 flood, for instance, would have been reduced had the dam --

Johnston: Been there?

Bradley: You know, if the dam had been there; if the system had been in effect, it would have been reduced ten or twelve feet. So that would have lowered it. It still would have been a flood, yes.

Johnston: Yes, in other words they had reserve --

Bradley: Reserve capacity.

Johnston: Capacity, yes.

Bradley: To hold that water. And it doesn't come as high on Chatta-
325 nooga as it would have. They can't keep high water out of certain areas and places where people do have houses. But it's not as great as it was.

Johnston: No, it doesn't wash them away. I remember [in] '17, I went up to Cleveland and it kept raining and kept raining. I came back, I thought I'd go on home [to] Chattanooga, and I couldn't get back inside.

Bradley: (laughter) Well, were you in town at all? Do you recall anything about where the water was?

Johnston: Well, it was all over the flood plain, it covered nearly

(Johnston): everything that wouldn't have some elevation, it just covered the whole place. But that thing came down -- a lot of water fell in a short time there that day.

Bradley: They say that the 1917 flood was one of the really bad ones.

Johnston: I always thought it was the worst, but they say there was one way back that was worse than that. Of course, I think the conditions were different.

Bradley: Oh yes, oh yes. It was in something like 1867, or somewhere way back.

Johnston: Yes, way back in there, yes. And then there were people living in little flat places that maybe they don't live now. That '17 was no slouch though, I'd say that. I can't remember -- I remember I had been up to Cleveland and I started back. I'd go along one street and try to get in there and the water was going down there. I've forgotten how I got into town, but I finally did, maneuvered around and got into town.

Bradley: Of course, your home was up high enough to have no problem --

Johnston: Yes, I had no problem. If I got to my home I'd be safe.

Bradley: But Market Street and --

Johnston: Broad Street --

Bradley: Would have been --

Johnston: Well, it got in the Read House; they say it got in the basement of the Read House. Now, they had a worse flood than that, I can't remember when it was; it really got up to the Read House and in the first floor, I think.

Bradley: Yes. I think they say that was the level reached by the 1867 flood.

Johnston: Yes, I think that's right, that was the highest of all. It was the thing that happened now, when they had the flood in '17, it wasn't as bad as it was that first recorded here -- what contributed to that a whole lot was the snow melting; I believe that first bad flood was the snow added its weight to the rain.

Bradley: Do you ever remember the Tennessee River freezing over here?

Johnston: Yes, I do. I'm going to say this and I may be wrong; I may

(Johnston): have imagined it, I may have dreamed it, but it seems to me I remember people walking across the Tennessee River. I have this vision -- I saw a man standing out there on the river, which I wouldn't have got out there for anything, because when you got there it would suck you down. Now, I could be wrong about that.

Bradley: No, I think that it has occurred, and I didn't know whether it was within your memory or not.

Johnston: This didn't happen in my memory, or either it might have, but the thing they talked about a whole lot was a man driving a team of horses across there. He had a lot of nerve I think. Because horses would break through there if anything would -- tromping down.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: The Tennessee River empties to the Mississippi where? Oh, it empties into the Ohio.

Bradley: Ohio, up above -- well, it's in the extreme northeast [sic: northwest] corner of Tennessee.

Johnston: Going back to the north.

Bradley: It [the Tennessee] goes into the Ohio, and the Ohio goes right on down to the Tennessee [sic: Mississippi], not too far away.

Johnston: I was just thinking, in '17 the water just came; they didn't have any reservoir to hold any of it back. Now, do you think that reservoir helps hold it back or not?

Bradley: Well, the whole series of them, you know -- I mean they've got, I think, maybe a dozen or maybe sixteen reservoirs now, and they are able to control to a degree that they don't let any one of them get too full.

Johnston: Well, have we had any kind of a flood that amounted to anything since we had it?

Bradley: Well, in '69 there was a flood that did a lot of damage in Brainerd, if you remember.

Johnston: Yes, I remember that.

Bradley: It was March 19th, they called it the St. Patrick's Day flood.*

Johnston: Yes. What year was that?

Bradley: '69 I think, about fifteen years ago.

Johnston: Yes, that's about right.

Bradley: Then they had some high water this spring, but they have now developed a system of -- well, the Chattanooga Creek and the creeks out there in Brainerd -- Chickamauga Creek coming in through there, they widened it and put dikes up and made it so that the water has a way to get through.

Johnston: Yes, it sort of circles out to get through.

Bradley: Yes, so the floods are not nearly as bad now.

Johnston: That '17 one was the worst I ever saw. Now, they say there's been one worse than that. They didn't have any dams at all, and it [river] narrows there coming into Chattanooga.

Bradley: Yes.

Johnston: And it just spreads out. I think it was over that island. But that '17 was the roughest winter I ever saw from the standpoint of snow, ice, and everything else. Of course, the snow in the mountains had a contributing part in that too.

Bradley: Had to, surely -- melting snow.

Johnston: Well, we've had a lot of things happen in Chattanooga.

Bradley: It's a great town.

Johnston: I really is. You know they talked like the flood was going to ruin Chattanooga. I don't think it's hurt Chattanooga.

Bradley: It really is a great town. Skey, thanks a million.

* The 1969 flood occurred in February; the 1973 Brainerd flood was in March and is referred to as the St. Patrick's Day flood.

Johnston: Well, don't leave me now, I'm trying to think how to work up something else you know something about.
427

End Tape 1, Side 2
END OF INTERVIEW

INDEX