

RBRL OHD 008

The Oral History Documentary Series

Thomas Watson Brown

Thomas Watson Brown Interviewed by Bill Shipp

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SHIPP: Good morning. I'm Bill Shipp. Today it is August 8th, 2006. We're at the home of Tom Watson Brown in Marietta, Georgia. Ivy Grove is the name of his estate. And he is one of the great historic figures of our time, and comes from one of the important, significant families in Georgia history. Thanks, Tom, for letting us interview you today. This is going to be --

BROWN: Oh, I look forward. Good.

SHIPP: So let's jump right into the interview. You know, both sides of your family, your great great grandfather, Thomas E. Watson, your grandfather, J.J. Brown, and your father, Walter J. Brown, were deeply involved in local, national, and state politics. Well did you -- Obviously you grew up surrounded by politics, hearing politics all the time. Tell us a little about that and how that shaped the man you are today.

BROWN: All right. Tom Watson was the big Populist leader of Southern populism, which reached its peak in 1896, at which time he was the vice presidential nominee on the ticket. And he was very powerful within the state because he had a big following. And he was very articulate and very well read. I often refer to him as the last intellectual to hold statewide office in Georgia, meaning most recent and last. Ultimately he was elected to the Senate in 1920, and died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Washington, D.C., in two years. On my father's side, J.J. Brown was Commissioner of Agriculture in Georgia for ten years. It was a two-year term, so he got elected five consecutive times. And the Commissioner of Agriculture, as you know, was the biggest employer in the state. So he had a big

following and kind of a built-in machine. He was a Populist also, although he often stayed nominally a Democrat. And he was a devoted follower of Tom Watson. He thought Tom Watson had hung the moon. He and his wife, my grandmother, were born in 1865. So they came up through tough times. No one had any money, and they didn't have the ability to go to school. He developed an extensive vocabulary by reading the dictionary on the train and memorizing the words. He had trouble putting them together correctly, but he succeeded in that way. He was also a big man. He was reputedly the strongest man in northeast Georgia. He got into an altercation with the village blacksmith and beat the hell out of him. And, oh, a number of other people had stories of his strength. He weighed about 275, six-foot -- maybe six-foot-one, and was also a good speaker, good public speaker. Ultimately, he got to where he was more interested in building up a farm in South Georgia and didn't pay attention to his politics. And Eugene Talmadge defeated him for Commissioner of Agriculture in 1926. But there are some stories about -- remind me. We'll come back to that. There are some stories about that race.

SHIPP: Well, tell us about your dad, Walter J. Brown --

BROWN: That's what I'm coming to.

SHIPP: -- who was one of the pioneers in television.

BROWN: OK. My father was born in Bowman, Georgia, where his father, J.J., was mayor, little town north of Elberton. He was the youngest of several children that J.J. had. And he grew up in a political atmosphere and soaked it up. He could also -- he was interested in mechanics. So he learned how to drive at an early age. And there weren't many people who did. So he would often drive his father and my great grandfather around, in 1912 and that kind of thing. He drove them back and forth from

Thomson to Augusta when the federal government was trying to convict Tom Watson of sending obscene material through the mail. The material was in Latin and, naturally, had a very limited audience. And it was in his writings as an illustrative purpose, regarding Roman Catholic confessionals. He went to Atlanta when his father was elected Commissioner of Agriculture. And he went to Tech High and then to Georgia Tech, for a year. And didn't like it much and dropped out, married my mother about this time. And they eloped. And she had inherited a good bit of property from her grandfather. And so they sort of managed that for a while, in Thomson, and put out a weekly newspaper, which was not successful. And he went to -- he got an offer to go to Washington as a Washington correspondent for a paper, again a weekly. And then he expanded that into becoming a correspondent for a string of newspapers in South Carolina, who were interested, obviously, in agriculture. And so he stayed there. And my mother joined him. And they bought a house in Foxhall Village, which is there in Washington. And I came along in 1933. So I went to grammar school there for a couple years. And then, about 1940, my father was talked into coming to Spartanburg, South Carolina, and taking over a radio station. James F. Byrnes, who was his mentor, had a quarter interest. Donald Russell, who was a younger partner of Byrnes, had a quarter interest. My father's future father-in-law had a quarter interest. And he was to get a quarter interest. So he took a deep breath and took the plunge. And we moved to Spartanburg. And he stayed there and built up the radio station, and in a pretty reasonable order. And World War II came along. I can remember Pearl Harbor day vividly. We were out riding around in the country in my father's Chrysler automobile. And the news started coming over the radio. So we turned around and raced back to town. And my father had a couple of boxes of the world maps that he was to use as a promo for the Esso Reporter, which was a nightly news program. So, being one to turn things his way, he started advertising with stickers in the window, which was downtown, and sold them for 25 cents or a dollar apiece. And it was an instant sellout. And no one had ever heard of Pearl Harbor. Hardly anybody knew where the Hawaiian Islands were, et

cetera. He continued to run the station there until about 1943. James F. Byrnes, his mentor, and whom he really looked up to, had been -- By this time, he had moved over and become Director of War Mobilization and, in effect, was Franklin Roosevelt's domestic president. Roosevelt wanted to devote all his time to the war and foreign affairs, so he turned it all over to Byrnes. Byrnes had been very successful in the Senate. And so he was a good choice because he could get things through Congress and the Senate that few other people could. So he sent for my father to come up and be his press relations, which my father was delighted to do. And we moved back to Washington. He stayed with Byrnes through 1946. And they had moved over to the State Department under Harry Truman. And then Byrnes and Truman fell out, and they moved back to Spartanburg.

SHIPP: Well, let me ask you. Did your dad's association with Byrnes and his work with Byrnes, how did that shape your politics, and how did that shape your feelings about the South and about the nation?

BROWN: It had a very strong influence. Byrnes was one of the ten most brilliant people I've known in my life. He just had an incredible knowledge of how to handle people and was very, very bright and articulate. He had grown up in Charleston, South Carolina. His wife was a widow. I mean, his mother was a widow. And he was more or less self-taught, and became a court reporter, and in that capacity taught himself law, and became a lawyer and then a very successful politician. The Byrneses had no children, and my mother had died when I was two. So they made a couple of offers to adopt me, which my father turned down. But they remained interested in me, and so I had many contacts with Byrnes over the year and some wonderful conversations, some of which I participated in, others of which I was just privy to Lucius Clay, when he and my father and assorted other people would be gathered to plan things. He enjoyed his time in the White House very much. They were in the East Wing. In those halcyon days there wasn't hardly any security. And I would often ride the streetcar down from school

and go into the White House, the East Wing, to visit with them. And the police just sort of gave you a vague wave, did not check your belongings. And so I went in and enjoyed myself, keep my mouth shut and just listening. One of the people -- It was a small office. It was Byrnes, Russell, his younger partner and protégé, Ben Cohen, who was a brilliant guy, Harvard Law School grad -- and he was part of the famous Corcoran and Cohen team, which had been responsible for drafting a great amount of the New Deal legislation. And in addition, they had General Lucius Clay, who, as you know, was from Marietta, as their liaison with the military. He was also very brilliant and had that reputation within the Army, that he really knew ...

SHIPP: Let's talk about you for a second. Let's jump.

BROWN: OK.

SHIPP: You spent time in Thomson, and then you went off to Princeton. Tell us a little about your time in Thomson. Were you aware of all these great, great events occurring in the country? And also tell us how you happened to go to Princeton, and then Harvard, I think, after you were in the Army.

BROWN: We really didn't get heavy into Thomson -- as I say, my mother had passed away -- until 1944, when my father bought the other half of Tom Watson's estate from my cousin, who was the same age as my mother, and they'd been raised together as -- even though they were first cousins, they'd been largely raised by Tom Watson and his wife, Georgia. That was in 1944. And we spent an increasingly large amount of time there. And in a short order, my father got his father, J.J., and his wife to move to Thomson and take over the management of the farms. So I spent a lot of time with J.J., whom I absolutely loved. He was just a wonderful guy, and, obviously, a big, strapping figure, as I've

indicated. I was pretty aware of World War II, in Washington, but I was fairly unaware of politics and whatnot, other than -- a lot of times I'd be with my grandfather Brown, and people would come over to touch me or to shake my hand, as a small boy, because that was a direct tie to Tom Watson, who still had this enormous and very emotional, if you will, following. So I soaked up a lot of stories and lore about both families, at that time. And at the conclusion of World War II, and the move back to Spartanburg, where my father was going to continue to run his radio station, the headmaster of the school I was going to, St. Albans, prevailed upon my father to leave me behind in boarding school there, which was not a good decision. And I didn't much like it. The school was not as good as it is now, so I'd have been just as well off going to public school in Thomson or Spartanburg. So I was in St. Albans for one year as a day student and six-and-a-half-years as a boarding student, all-male school, very restrictive. So I missed out on a good hunk of my life as a teenager by being restricted like that.

SHIPP: But you made up for this later, right?

BROWN: I tried to! [Laughter] I was very shy and inarticulate. I could not speak in front of a group of people. And it took me a long time to get past that. Ultimately it was my experiences in the Army. And now, as you know, if a microphone goes by in front of me, I'll grab it and --

SHIPP: Absolutely!

BROWN: -- (laughs) give people my views and so forth and so on, without much hesitation.

SHIPP: Well, with that in view and that in mind, let's jump around a little bit.

BROWN: OK.

SHIPP: You wound up working for Strom Thurmond --

BROWN: That's right.

SHIPP: -- and what I think is one of the most memorable and a unique campaign in American history. Nothing has ever happened like the write-in campaign to Strom Thurmond. Talk about that some.

BROWN: OK. Back up for a just a minute. I had graduated from Princeton --

SHIPP: Right.

BROWN: -- 1954.

SHIPP: We'll get back to that but --

BROWN: Oh, OK.

SHIPP: All right.

BROWN: And I was marking time to go in the Army. In that period of time, we all went in the Army or the Navy or something, without any question about it. So you kind of blocked out a couple years in

your planning, if you had any. And I didn't have any. But I wanted to do that. I tried to get in the Marines first, as a volunteer, and they, after pepping me up, and I was already pepped up because I was largely Southern, and it was gung ho and all of that, they said, "Oh, by the way, I notice you're wearing glasses." And I said, "That's right." And he said, "Well, what is your vision?" I said, "20/400. But it's correctable to 20/20." And he said, "I don't think we would be interested in you as an officer, after all, but we sure would love to have you." Well, even with my dense mind, that registered pretty fast. I said, "No thanks." [Laughs]

SHIPP: Well, the cannon fodder. [Laughs]

BROWN: That's right. And so while I was waiting to be drafted, a series of events happened in South Carolina that created the situation that you're referring to. Burnet Maybank, who was the senior Senator of South Carolina, died unexpectedly. And he was the nominee of the state Democratic Party, but the primary hadn't been held yet. So there was a great deal of speculation about who was going to be the nominee. And ultimately, Edgar Brown -- no relation, but I knew him -- who was chairman of the Executive Committee of the state Democratic Party, had himself elected and printed on the ballot. Well, a lot of people were outraged by this, because here was a guy trying to grab six years in the Senate without really facing an election. A lot of people didn't like him. And his nickname was Satchel Brown, again, no relation. His nickname was Satchel Brown because, in 1938, he ran as a third candidate in the primary against Cottonhead Smith. And the textile owners were willing to go with Cottonhead Smith and rather liked him. So they raised a fund to bribe Brown out of the race. And they delivered \$38,000 to him in a Gladstone bag, and slipped it to him in the movies in Columbia, South Carolina. And Brown grabbed the satchel and went down to the coast and started drinking and didn't bother to tell his campaign workers that he was out, nor did he pay them, which caused quite a furor,

and hence his nickname. Anyhow, Thurmond, who was very ambitious, had lost his race for the Senate in 1950, after he'd finished his term as Governor. And he seized on this opportunity, 1954, and decided he would run for the Senate, sort of in protest against Edgar Brown. But also, he was much more appealing and attractive and was much younger. But he'd have to run as a write-in candidate. Byrnes, who at that time was Governor of South Carolina, kept counseling him. Byrnes first tried to get Donald Russell, his protégé, to run, and Russell was now President of the University of South Carolina, and he just didn't have the fire in his belly for that kind of a thing. So he stayed there. And Byrnes had some reluctance about Thurmond, but he ultimately -- He was determined to get somebody in that race against Brown and to defeat him. Thurmond had already started campaigning, you know, house-to-house, person-to-person kind of thing. And Byrnes told him what he must do, as a central issue, his campaign, would be, if he won, promise that he'd come back to South Carolina in two years and enter the primary in a full, normal way, for the rest of that Senate term. Well, Thurmond's idea was, "To hell with that. If I can get elected as a write-in candidate, I ought to be able to serve eight years," or as a theoretical. And but ultimately, wise heads prevailed upon him, and that became a central issue in the campaign. The campaign -- His staff consisted of his young wife, Jean, who had all the humor and all the personality that Thurmond did not have, and very charming, a secretary, Dorothy Hope, who was from Columbia, and me. And that was the entire staff. I lived in a suite in the Columbia Hotel, with Thurmond and his wife. Obviously, there were a number of rooms there. And I was sort of a general gopher. I did whatever they told me to do, which often included going over -- I'd get a phone call, and said, "Governor Byrnes would like to see you." So I'd get myself together and go over to see him, and sit in his office, in the Governor's Suite there. And the conversation would be something like: "Well, Tom, how are your folks?" I'd say, "Fine," you know. "How's the campaign going? Are you finding it interesting?" "Oh, yes, very interesting. Doing all kind of things, and I think we're making real progress." "Well, that's fine. And what are you going to do now, when you --

" I said, "Well, I'm going to go in the Army." He said, "Well, when you get out of the Army, what are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know. Don't have any plans." He says, "Well, you ought to go to law school, become a lawyer." Well, I thought that was pretty good advice. And as I'd get up to go he'd say, "Oh, by the way, Mrs. Byrnes asked me to give you this." This was obviously in case we were being overheard or anything. And he'd reach into the bottom drawer of his desk and pull out a big stack of cash and give it to me. Well, I knew that was a campaign contribution. So I took it and --

SHIPP: To Mr. Thurmond.

BROWN: Yeah.

SHIPP: Right.

BROWN: So I took it and would make a deposit and everything. And Byrnes kept doing that through the campaign, collecting money from various people who were friends or supplicants or what have you, of his. Well, the campaign started going full bore. And Brown took the low road and wouldn't campaign and tried to stay hidden. As I say, he wasn't particularly attractive, and he was in his 60's. And Thurmond was very vigorous and covered the state, which, it being a small state, that wasn't too hard to do. And he was definitely a one-man campaign engine, all over the place. My job, as I said, was general gopher, in addition to which I ran a bank of Robotypers. That was an early machine in the way of automatic typewriters, I guess. And there was a bank of them against the wall. And I'd type in the name and address from the list of, you know, barbershop owners or newspaper editors or what have you and punch the button, and it would start a process where it put the letter typescript on the letter. And while it was doing that, I'd be doing the next typewriter and type in the name and address. And

while it was doing that, I'd go to the third one. And I think we had four. And by the time I'd finished with the fourth one, the first one was about done. So we pulled out the letter and got ready for another one. The Robo typewriter seemed to work on some kind of vacuum tube process. And the tube would pull the striking part of the typewriter down. And so you got the originals. But you got the same message done over and over again, to work on these lists, which was important at that time. And I must have been working 12, 15 hours a day. As I say, I stayed there. And Thurmond would come in from a vigorous day of campaigning, and he'd get me, and he'd want to run around the block, you know, conditioning. He was a real health nut. And I -- "Unh unh," I just begged off of all that. So he'd go out and run by himself, teetotaler all the way, so that wasn't much fun.

SHIPP: What were the mechanics of a write-in campaign, and how did that --?

BROWN: I'm coming to that, as they say. And so the campaign got going full bore. The write-in campaign functioned just like is indicated by its title. You had printed ballots with the nominee of the Democratic state party. They didn't have a Republican party. And it was, as they say, tantamount to election. It was just automatic. So to write in, there is a place to write in candidates. You had to get the ballot and carefully write in the name of the person you wanted to run for that office and submit it back again. Most places had paper ballots. Some of the bigger cities, Columbia, Spartanburg, Greenville, had machines. And with the machine, if you didn't pull down the lever, you had to turn up a little lid over an open space and write in that who it was who you were doing for. When the election night came around, everybody realized it was going to be a landslide for Thurmond, partly because wherever these machines were you could hear clang, clang, clang of people opening that slot, writing it in, and letting the lid come back down on it.

SHIPP: Well, you told me in the past it didn't make any difference what they wrote. It didn't make any difference --

BROWN: Well, that's right.

SHIPP: -- whether the spelling was correct or anything.

BROWN: That's right. Now you remember the feud was ongoing because Thurmond had run as a presidential candidate in 1948 on the States' Rights ticket, which split the Democratic ticket. Henry Wallace ran on the other side, as sort of a neo-communist ticket. But it put Truman in an impossible situation. Only Tom Dewey could have blown that election. It was just -- Everything. Well, when Thurmond, who was the Governor of South Carolina, came to the inauguration and went by, Truman turned his back to him on the reviewing stand, with the obvious implication. And he was definitely against him all the rest of the time. When this election got started, Truman and his people were trying to get money over to the Edgar Brown campaign and otherwise wouldn't comment particularly, although everybody knew where he stood. But he was definitely of a no comment on this thing, knowing it would just inflame the people of South Carolina, who cordially detested Truman. So an enterprising reporter for The Greenville News, Frank Vandeventer, logically and sensibly, called up one night. And he couldn't get Truman, of course, but he got Major General Harry Vaughn, who was on Truman's staff and was later indicted for corruption, a lot of corruption around Truman. He, himself, was not, but a lot of people around him were taking 5 and 10 percent and all that kind of thing, for contracts or patronage. And he said, "Well, now, General Vaughn, how do you see this campaign? How are you and the President feeling about this?" And Vaughn, who had had a couple of drinks by now -- which, obviously, Vandeventer had carefully timed his phone call -- said, "Oh, we're not

worried about that race. There's not enough people in South Carolina who know how to read and write to make a difference." Man that was just the thing we needed! And so we had about a jillion pencils printed up with, "Show Harry you can write," on the pencil and distributed them all over the state. And that became very popular. They asked the Secretary of State, "Well, now, how are you going to handle these write-in votes?" you know, said, "Thurmond is kind of a funny name. A lot of people may not know how to spell it." He said, "We'll take anything that sounds like it, Thurmand, M-A-N, Turmond, anything like that. The only thing we won't accept is Truman." And so, anyway, as a result of all of these things, it was a landslide for Thurmond. People were really outraged what Edgar Brown was trying to do. And Thurmond had run a very clever campaign. Byrnes insisted that Thurmond retain the firm of Hamby and Graham, which was a PR firm, advertising, who had been involved in successful elections before. It was two ladies in Columbia, Dolly Hamby, who was a champion tennis player, and Graham, who was her partner. They also lived together. And I was very impressed -- spent most of my time of them with Hamby. I was very impressed with her. She was very bright, had good sense, and knew what was to do. And television had just come in. So I spent a certain amount of time driving around at night delivering tapes, or reels, where they were in those days, to different television stations so they could go on the air after that.

SHIPP: But that feat has never been repeated. And how do you think--?

BROWN: Oh, no! Never bef--

SHIPP: The feat of someone being elected statewide, write-in has never been repeated.

BROWN: Neither before nor subsequently. Some people may have tried, but they've never done very

well. Anyway, that's sort of the story of that campaign. And we won, which was very satisfactory. I was of that age where you tended to get somewhat emotional about political campaigns. So I was very pleased with all that. I did not go to Washington with Thurmond because my draft number was finally coming up. And I went to Fort Jackson instead and spent my time in basic training, until I got pneumonia, and went to the hospital, where I damn near died. But after about six months I was back in basic training again. Along that way, I had been pegged, based on the IQ test or whatever that we took in the Army, as, you know, being high-ranked in their scoring. So I was interviewed by the CIC -- that's the Counter Intelligence Corps, of military intelligence -- to join them. Well, I didn't know exactly what it was, but once they said, "Well, you wear civilian clothes, and we give you a car," that sounded pretty good to me. So I signed up for that, went to Fort Holabird, and graduated from there and was sent to North Carolina, which was a curious place. Half the class went to Japan. And we were afraid they'd get sent to Korea. The other half went around the country. And that was a very good experience for me, the Army.

SHIPP: You went to Harvard on the GI Bill. Is that right?

BROWN: That's correct. I doubt that my father would have paid for me to go to Harvard Law School. And I had aced the LSAT test, one of my better accomplishments, so I knew I could get in any law school in the country. And I went to Harvard because it had the reputation of being the best. And I had seen the campus up there once, and I thought it was like a college ought to be -- university ought to be. And so I entered Harvard Law School. And the Byrnes' had told my father, "Don't worry. If he graduates from Harvard Law School, no one will ever ask him what his grades were or how smart he is. They just assume you're smart." Byrnes had previously advised my father -- My father was sort of rebelling against my choice to go to Princeton, as Princeton had a reputation of being the northernmost

Southern school. And that was appealing to me. I was going to major in history, liberal arts. And at that time Byrnes had told him -- Because the Headmaster was pushing hard to get me to go to Haverford. The pitch there was it was an excellent school -- which it was -- and small, and it was a Quaker school, had come from a Quaker background, which the Watson's were. They were also from Quaker background. And so that had a certain amount of appeal. And so my father asked Byrnes what he ought to do, and Byrnes said, "Walter, if he goes to Haverford, he's going to have to explain to people for his entire life where Haverford is and what it is. If he goes to Princeton, won't get any questions." So that helped tip the scale, and off we went.

SHIPP: Well, you had that interim between Princeton and Harvard, and you went into the military. How did the military affect your thinking and the rest of your life? It made you into a strict disciplinarian. Would you say that's true?

BROWN: No, not at all. I had (laughs) a lot of fun in the Army. You forget the tough times, how miserable it was camping out in the field and all like that. My experiences were, putting that aside, that the food was pretty good, the weapons and the clothing were excellent, and I had a series of various adventures. Having been to boarding school for six years, I knew how to survive in an institutionalized setup, sort of like an old con in the prison system. So I could get around and do some things and think of some things where you could have fun and not get caught. And so we -- I particularly enjoyed Fort Holabird, where we were going to school. And we were always on KP, me and my buddies. So we played some games on them and -- "Well, you can't do this. You can't do that." It was hard work because it was a regimental mess, so that meant a lot of things going on. I think our best achievement was my friend Langler, who became a florist in the eastern shore of Maryland -- that's where he was from -- He and I had become great buddies. He was a Colgate graduate. And so we were on KP one

day, and the mess sergeant said, "Now, Brown, you and Langler, I want you to go down to the basement at noon and bring up all the bread and put it on this table here," says, "Do you have that? Do you got it?" And I said, "Well, I think so, Sarge. Can we go over it one more time?" So we went over it one more time. And Langler says, "The whole wheat and the white both?" He said, "God damn it! I told you all we want all the bread!" And that was my queue to chime in. I said, "Sliced and unsliced?" And he says, "All the bread! [You men thinking?] --" Well, we asked a couple more questions. And finally he just said, "You goddamn stupid college guys. I'm going to get a guy who knows how to do it." Well, here was some poor guy off at the side who was a volunteer for the Army, an RA. And so he got recruited, and we were sent off somewhere and didn't have to fool with it. Well, stunts like that, and I kind of enjoy.

SHIPP: Well, now that you've described your exceptional military career --

BROWN: (laughs)

SHIPP: And then you went to Harvard. Then you came to Atlanta to practice law. Tell us about that decision and what happened then.

BROWN: Well, I knew I wanted to come south. And I was pretty sure I wanted to come to Atlanta because it was a big city. It was about a half a million people then, a little less. And I was single, and Atlanta was a great place to be single. And so it seemed the thing for me to do. I arrived in Atlanta, didn't have a job, and heard about an opening with Judge Hooper, who was a federal judge, Frank A. Hooper. And so I went over and interviewed there. And he hired me. And I spent a year there, which gave me exposure to law firms around town. At the conclusion of that year I had received several

offers and decided, because I was always looking for smart people, enjoyed their company and everything, that I'd go with Charlie Weltner, and his law firm. Well, he was very bright and good sense of humor. And so we had a good time.

SHIPP: Weltner was a former Congressman and later Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court.

BROWN: Later Congressman. I had no sooner arrived at the firm -- and I was going to be assigned to him as his associate and get into all these different things -- than he suddenly left to run for Congress. And it was an upstream battle. He was running against James C. Davis, who had a lot of seniority. But Weltner won and went to Washington as Congressman. And then he came home because he didn't want to run on the statewide ticket with Lester Maddox. And he practiced law for a while in Atlanta and got appointed to the Superior Court. And then later he was appointed to the Supreme Court. And then was elected several times. Well, not -- Bright fellow, interesting. He was a descendant of T.R.R. Cobb, who was a great legal scholar in Georgia in the prewar period and had written the Georgia Code, the definitive work on slavery --

SHIPP: But back to your career, after a while you were practicing law one of your big clients became whatever was Rapid Transit at the time.

BROWN: That's right.

SHIPP: And, in fact, you had a brief but very high-ranking career in mass transit, running bus companies and all that. Tell us about that.

BROWN: MARTA had acquired the Atlanta Transit Company, which it was required to do under federal law to get federal financing. And the requirement was you had to pay the private owners for the value of their assets, as opposed to the going concern value, which would have been zero because they were a money-loser. So we paid \$13 million and got the company, which was primarily a bus company. Bill Maynard was the President then. Somerville, who really was the architect of all this, had died. And Maynard went to the Chairman of the MARTA board, who was Roy Blount, Sr., from Decatur, and said, "Look, I know you all are about to appoint Jesse Hill to be Chairman of the bus company," which was now a wholly-owned sub--

SHIPP: Jesse Hill was an African-American leader in the community.

BROWN: That's right. Big hitter, very bright.

SHIPP: Right.

BROWN: And incredibly energetic. He never sat still for five minutes, and was always doing things. And Maynard said, "And I know that he'll be wanting to put in affirmative action or some such program. And my company is all-white, and these bus drivers won't stand for that." So there was some back and forth of what to do. And Allen Keeper, the general manager of MARTA, was to go on the Board, and Jesse Hill was to have been chairman. And so they kind of slid off that and made Jesse just an ordinary member of this three-man Board. And I became Chairman. And I wondered occasionally if that meant the MARTA board thought I was 50-50 in my racial makeup and would fit in nicely. But anyway, I got along good with Jesse Hill.

SHIPP: But you were chairman of the Atlanta Transit Company, is that right? --

BROWN: That's right.

SHIPP: -- which later morphed into MARTA. Right?

BROWN: That's right.

SHIPP: Yeah, you know, you're known far and wide for your historic perspective and the way you look at history. And you and I know that your great great grandfather, Tom Watson, was one of the all-time great populists, started the movement --

BROWN: Right.

SHIPP: -- started the movement. But yet, in Populist history, when you mention Tom Watson's name, you think of the Leo Frank case and the Mary Phagan murder. What's your take on his role in that? And, of course, the story was that he fanned the flames of Anti-Semitism that resulted in the untimely death of Mr. Frank.

BROWN: He was the best defense lawyer in the state and had made a small fortune practicing law. He only represented defendants and mostly in murder cases. And that was the biggest kind of practice at that time. And he'd been offered \$5,000 by the Frank defense. And he turned it down. And he'd been offered \$5,000 by the prosecution to be a special prosecutor.

SHIPP: And you might mention, the Frank defense -- Frank had been accused of the murder of Mary Phagan.

BROWN: Correct.

SHIPP: Right.

BROWN: In 1913.

SHIPP: Who was a child who worked in the Atlanta pencil factory. And Frank was the --

BROWN: Supervisor.

SHIPP: -- supervisor of the factory.

BROWN: She was a 12-year-old. And they found her body late Saturday night, early Sunday morning, in the basement. And she had been raped and strangled and was covered with coal dust and soot and had been dumped in the basement, near the furnace, the implication being, which the prosecution harped on in the trial, that the perpetrators were going to burn the body. Well, Tom Watson turned them both down and occupied himself with his newspapers and that kind of thing. So he wasn't involved in it. The case was appealed five times. Frank was convicted. The jury was out for a day. Middle-class jury, contrary to what you've read. And the evidence -- There had been a five-week trial, the then longest in Georgia history. The evidence -- I've read the transcript. The evidence against Frank was overwhelming, damning. He was convicted. And his case was appealed. Because

by this time the New York papers, and interest groups in New York and Chicago were raising money in a big way. Because they did not want to see Frank become the first Jewish man to be executed in America. And the appeals went twice to the U.S. Supreme Court, three times to the Georgia Supreme Court. In each instance, the conviction was upheld. There were no dissenting voices -- votes whatsoever asserting Frank's innocence. They accepted all that. And there were a couple of dissents on procedural grounds, but it was not of any great significance. After the last appeal was turned down, the Frank defense got a remittitur expedited, which meant it came back from the court and into the hands of the Governor for sentencing -- well, for review, from the pardoning standpoint. He had already been sentenced by the judge who presided over the trial, to death. Well, as that started, the great hullabaloo started because Tom Watson was responding to the Northern papers, who were accusing the South of all kind of bad things, and barbarians and all this and all that. And he was a great counter puncher, and a very good writer, very persuasive, a magnificent orator. So that went back and forth for a good while. In the meantime, the Pardon and Paroles Commission studied Frank's case. And the leader of the Cobb County delegation -- Mary Phagan had spent much of her growing years in Marietta; that's where her father was from -- had gone to the Governor, who was reviewing it, and said, "Listen, you can't sit on this case. You're a member of the defense firm." Which was true. It was a three-man law firm defending Frank, and Governor Slaton was an active member of the firm. Being Governor, back then, was not a full-time job. I'm not sure it is now. But that's another story. And there was a tremendous fee riding on it, supposed to be a \$250,000 fee, which in terms of 1915 dollars would be something staggering in today's dollars. And they told him, "You've got a conflict of interest here that's just outrageous. You can't consider the case." That delegation was led by Joseph Brown, Jr., known as Little Joe Brown, twice Governor of Georgia and the son of the Civil War Governor.

SHIPP: And your great great grandfather was commenting on these developments.

BROWN: All the time, responding to the Northern press. And people began to vilify him, and he would hit back and everything. And ultimately, Governor Slaton signed a commutation order. And the speculation was that, once he got to the state prison in Milledgeville, that there'd be an effort to spring him, Frank, and get him to New York, where it was anticipated the governor up there would refuse extradition, and he'd be all right. Well, on his way out of office -- Frank went out -- I mean, Slaton went out -- of office in two days. And as one of his final acts, he signed a commutation order. And that just outraged the citizenry of Georgia. And Tom Watson was particularly outraged and wrote all sorts of incendiary articles. And ultimately a group from Marietta -- or from Cobb County -- went down to Milledgeville and got a hold of Frank -- because there was no resistance from the guards or whatever -- drove him to the outskirts of Marietta, and lynched him, on Frey's Gin Road, which is just down the road a bit. And so there was a great hullabaloo about that. And Tom Watson praised the people who'd done the lynching, as, "There's still life in Georgia yet. There are some people that are incorruptible," et cetera, et cetera. And, in fact, it was a very substantial part of the Marietta community that had been in the planning and the execution of the execution.

SHIPP: A short answer. Do you believe that his role in the lynching of Leo Frank has been unfairly characterized.

BROWN: Yes. Because it starts with the premise, in most writings, that Frank was innocent and that he had been convicted by mobs out in the street and screaming, "Hang the Jew!" and all that kind of thing. None of that's true. I've read all the newspaper accounts.

SHIPP: But you would concede that he did fan the passions that were already building. He --

BROWN: Oh, yes! You know, after the trial. He didn't get into it until six months after the trial, and responding to Northern newspapers. And they went at it hammer and tongs, a while. And Tom Watson kept explaining that he was not anti-Semitic, that his tailor, dentist, et cetera, et cetera, were all Jewish, and he got along fine with them, but that here you had just an outrageous situation, in his mind, where Frank, and well-to-do members of the Jewish community, were trying to buy him off and get him free, which he was, obviously, violently opposed to. And it would be the natural thing that a Populist would latch onto. Here's a poor, working girl who is grabbed by the Manager, the well-to-do Manager, Superintendent. And she didn't have much in the way of defense and so forth and so on.

SHIPP: 1970, your dad started the Watson-Brown Foundation, and you have been President and now Chairman. And your son, Tad, is heavily involved. Tell us about the Watson-Brown Foundation and what it does and what you see as its goal and what it hopes to achieve.

BROWN: First, about the only thing the foundation did was give scholarships. It had a relatively limited amount of assets. And the scholarships went to students in the area of the central Savannah River area, which would encompass Augusta and Greenwood -- and on the other side of the river -- and the little towns all around. When my father died, the chief beneficiary under his estate was the Foundation. So the Foundation picked up about 200 million. And since then, we have obviously increased the number of scholarships and increased the amount. Our current giving is \$3,000. It's not exclusive. So you can get HOPE or any other scholarship and still get this one too. Based on grades, if you fall below a B average, you're off the books. And economic need is one of the key factors in our awarding of these scholarships. In addition, we've underwritten a number of books, mainly on Southern history, and have sponsored and paid for various seminars around the country, in addition to

which they purchased the T.R.R. Cobb house from the state, moved it back to Athens -- and have refurbished it so it's like it was in the 1850's.

SHIPP: Including the paint job, right?

BROWN: Yeah, that's right.

SHIPP: And what color is that?

BROWN: Based on detective work and going down to the original paint, they found out the house was pink. Some of the neighbors objected strongly to it because they didn't think pink was very appealing, but my son, who runs a very good shop with the foundation, stuck to his guns. And later, Phinizy Spalding's widow -- he had taught at Georgia for a whole bunch of years, a history professor -- she came and said, "Listen, don't pay any attention to these people. This house was always pink. I can remember it. In addition to which, if you have any doubts, go look at the portrait of Lucy Cobb that's over there at the Lucy Cobb Institute." That was T.R.R.'s oldest daughter, who died, I think, at around age 12 or 13. And he set up the Institute in her memory. Sure enough, in that portrait she's in the foreground -- and it's a nice portrait and everything -- and over her shoulder you can see this house, and it's pink. And that was right there, all the time. So I think that's put an end to the complaining neighbors. Everything just wasn't white back then. It was a mark of distinction to have a blue house or a pink house or a green house and helped you in identification. We could use some of that now.

SHIPP: Let's talk about Tom Watson Brown for a second.

BROWN: OK.

SHIPP: You've been characterized as somewhat conservative. Do you think that is a fair characterization? And then how do you see yourself in the political spectrum, and what's your outlook on politics?

BROWN: Oh, I've never been allied to any particular party. I vote for the man, or, more often, vote against the man, and based on qualifications and what counts and that kind of thing. I come from a third-party background, the Populist Party, and the States' Rights Party. And so I don't have this automatic allegiance to the Democratic Party, or to the Republican Party. I'm conservative. I don't like change. I don't think it does much good. And usually it's change for the worse. I'm talking about in life in general and whatnot. And I guess I've always been conservative, although sometimes somewhat liberal in my politics. And I have certain leanings in that way. I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society for 25 years. And in relationship to that, I became a winner of the Martin Luther King prize, or award, for social justice. It's hanging on my wall, as we talk.

SHIPP: What is the Gallant Pelham Club?

BROWN: That's a club we set up in Harvard Law School. I used to meet with two other guys, who I just accidentally ran into, who were as interested in the war as I was. So we decided we'd meet for lunch one day a week and go through the war, battle by battle by battle, in chronological order. Which we did. We decided to expand the club. So we thought we might ought to have a couple more members. So we devised an entrance exam. Questions that I remember were, "Identify Zollicoffer," "Describe the fighting in Missouri in detail, 1861 to 1865." And things like that. So you can imagine

very few of the applicants passed. One did, who was from Illinois, in part because his wife made good sandwiches. And so it was the four of us, two Yankees, two Southerners, and whatnot. And we continued to meet like that. And put our picture in the Harvard yearbook, posing with Dean Roscoe Pound, who was a legendary figure. And they had pretty well kept him sequestered so that students wouldn't bother him and everything, but we got through and got him over for lunch, which irritated the Dean of the Law School no end. But then again, everything irritated him. And we started the rumor that Pound had been in the Civil War. And, in fact, he had been called out in the militia in the 1870's or -80's or something, when there was an Indian uprising. He was from Iowa, quite a fellow. And so we've kept that up. One of our members is deceased. But the other ones and I correspond frequently and whatnot and we've all been to Kelly's Ford, which was the scene of Pelham's death, several times. Pelham was referred to as the Gallant Pelham. He was a young officer from Alabama. And at the beginning of the battle of Fredericksburg, he had gone down to the left flank of the Union army with two guns and proceeded to shell them. And they kept shooting back at him, but they couldn't hit him. Finally they disabled one of his guns. But he kept this up with the other one for a couple of hours. Part of it was that it was a foggy day, and he'd get down in the bottoms, and they couldn't see him. That's where the fog, of course, hangs in. When all of this ended, and Jeb Stuart, his immediate superior, ordered him to leave, peremptorily ordered him -- Lee had been up on the heights, Robert E. Lee, observing all of this and says, "It is wonderful to see such heroism and gallantry in one so young." So that became Gallant Pelham.

SHIPP: But you remain active in Civil War preservation and history circles --

BROWN: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SHIPP: -- today and in making sure battlefields are preserved. Tell us something about that.

BROWN: Well, that's something I'm interested in. And what they need for Civil War preservation is money. So you help raise it for them. And I contribute to it and whatnot. And I've written a couple articles, over the years, on the Civil War. And it's of consuming interest. I was explaining before, I got started reading Civil War stuff when I was 11 years old, Robert Self Henry's Story of the Confederacy. And I've been a fan ever since. I have about 5,000 books in the house on the war. But that's just a tip of the iceberg. The writing and whatnot is unbelievable in extent, and it continues to be so. As I've explained before, it's kind of like Vietnam.

SHIPP: Well, let's do a little --

BROWN: Once you're in it --

SHIPP: -- footnote here. Tell us about your library. Tell us, beyond just the Civil War books -- tell us about the library you maintain in your home.

BROWN: OK. It's divided into a number of categories, classics up to 1914, modern history, the history of World War II, European history, current fiction, Southern fiction. And those are the main categories. The Civil War takes up most of the room behind us. And on one wall there's a column of books on Reconstruction. Next to it is a column of books on populism and Tom Watson. And at the far end of the -- facing it, is a big, big wall of Southern history, which covers all of the Southern states.

SHIPP: And you have a collection of Napoleonic biographies, right?

BROWN: Oh, yes. Yeah, a whole wall of Napoleon. My great grandfather, who had tremendous influence on me, from the grave, you might say, had written a biography of Napoleon. It was very well received. And, indeed, I was still getting royalties from it in the 50's, as, you know, the heir, successor of that, and so that got me interested in Napoleon. And there have been more books written about Napoleon than anybody in history other than Jesus, more than Abraham Lincoln, who's in the running. But in Napoleon's case, there were books in all the different languages, English, French, German, and whatnot. So it was just untold. And he was an incredible historical figure. So it's -- They're still coming out. And, of course, with the Civil War, those books are still coming out, good quality stuff. You know, I'm not talking about just hack stuff. I got started collecting books from an early age. I never throw anything away. I wish I still had the old comic books. I had a big collection of comic books in World War II. And my stepmother got a hold of them and gave them the heave ho, which is just a shame. It would have been worthwhile to keep them in a closet somewhere. Like many other things, comic books were much better then than they are now. Sixty-four pages, full-color, no ads. And the diction and the spelling were perfect. So it was a good learning tool -- is my excuse for --

SHIPP: Well, as a book collector, beyond comic books, do you think scholarship is better now than it was 20 years ago, 30 years ago, or before the advent of the computer and Google? How would you rate scholarship today?

BROWN: I'd rate it higher, because it is much easier to get a hold of materials, which you can do through the Internet and all that kind of thing. And you can write a university, like Georgia, and say, "Please send me an index of what you have in your manuscript collections," and whatnot. And then you can pick something that looks like something you want. Before that you used to have to go around

in the summertime's, when school was out, and go to these libraries all around and ask people what they had and could you look at it and so forth, much more difficult and much more time-consuming. And I'd say, in general, the scholarship is better now. It's more balanced. And they follow the German traditions, which is everything has to have two factual or primary sources, any assertion of fact that you make.

SHIPP: Yet, it would seem to me we seem to uncover more frauds in scholarship today than we did 30 years ago. Is that because --

BROWN: Oh, yeah!

SHIPP: -- we have more tools to uncover fraud.

BROWN: Probably, probably. Although I don't think there was much fraud in the old days. Publishing wasn't as widespread as it is now. And I must say, the scholarship, the writing -- not scholarship -- the writing was much, much better in the first half of the century, the last century, than it has become since then. Some of the stuff you read, you begin looking for the verb in the sentence.

SHIPP: What do you attribute that -- the decline in writing skills?

BROWN: Probably the educational system. I think too much today is directed to working on the computer and simple answers to simple things. I don't know. That's my basic thought. But you used to be graded on writing, and you had to start writing at an early age.

SHIPP: Well, you were a TV mogul, and you came out of television, and Spartan Communications.

I want you to tell us about that. Do you think the advent of television has contributed to the decline of literacy?

BROWN: Yes. It takes up too much time, and it's not any, you know, icon or whatnot of literacy.

And people got much more out of reading a book than sitting there and watching various shows, which is sort of a form of escapism, I suppose. I definitely think that was a thing. Television has also led and continues to lead in what I would call the homogenization of America. You don't have distinct sectional differences any more, like the South, New England, the far West, the mountain states, et cetera. It's all one big blob, right now. And the nature of traveling around to get to different jobs in different parts of the country has also contributed to that. When I was young, families had lived in the same house for generations. And everybody knew everybody. And it was a whole different climate than today, when people are relatively in anonymity.

SHIPP: Let's qualify you as a critic of the TV age. Tell me about Spartan Communications and your role with that.

BROWN: Essentially, I did a good bit of legal work for the Spartan television station, starting in 1962. I'd gotten out of law school, and the station was involved in ongoing litigation. Then --

SHIPP: Tell us about Spartan. That's your family's company, right?

BROWN: That's right.

SHIPP: Right, all right, go ahead.

BROWN: And the family members owned over 50 percent, so it was definitely a family company. And so I was on the Board and continued as the lawyer for the company, enjoyed all that very much, used to go to the conventions annually, of the affiliates. The station was a CBS affiliate, which at that time was sort of the Tiffany's of television networks. And they'd have an affiliates' meeting once a year, either in Los Angeles, where you had access to Hollywood, or in New York. And I found those very interesting. And you got to meet all kind of people, live very sumptuously because the network was trying to stay on the good side with the affiliates so that the affiliates wouldn't demand more money to carry the shows in the fall. And so I enjoyed that. Then --

SHIPP: So how do you compare early television, not the technical part of it but the substantive part of it, the story, early television to today's television?

BROWN: Early television was much, much better. The stories were more thoughtful. You had real literature being portrayed. Today there's way too many channels. And it's become fragmented. And it becomes -- And it's not an uplifting, educational tool like it once was. It's sort of the opposite. And it is very fragmented. When my father got older, I became Chairman of the Board of Spartan and directed it on a program of expansion. So we bought several other companies, television companies, which was good. So that, when the company was sold, which we had to do under the terms of my father's will, it was worth a lot of money.

SHIPP: Speaking of being worth a lot of money, you also made what at the beginning was a relatively modest investment in the Atlanta Falcons --

BROWN: Oh, yeah.

SHIPP: -- which later blossomed and delivered you a handsome profit. But it also made you an expert on pro football.

BROWN: I suppose.

SHIPP: Tell us about the Atlanta Falcons.

BROWN: The Atlanta Falcons, the Smith family, Rankin Smith's family, owned it all. And the older son got into trouble. He was in the process of getting divorced twice at the same time, one wife being common law and the other one being legal. And those cost him a substantial amount of money. And the only way he had to raise money was to sell some stock. So we had the opportunity to buy some. And it was going for a million dollars a share. So we got six million, and John Imlay got six million, which made us the minority shareholders in the company. And I must say that Rankin Smith and his children, who were the other shareholders, couldn't have been nicer and more accommodating, which I don't know that I would have been if an outsider came into my company. And it's been very educational, because we traveled on the team football plane to different cities to watch different games, and you had an opportunity to get down on the field, and you went to practices and saw these guys, some of whom are so big you just couldn't believe it! And then to have ability on top of that is kind of mind-boggling. I like to watch them eat. Between the morning practice and the afternoon practice, they'd come to the team cafeteria. And the typical guy would take two steaks and a whole medley of potatoes and vegetables and whatnot, probably go back for a third steak, and then have two desserts --

and seemed to be still functioning. I think they all took a nap for half an hour before they went back on the practice field. But I found that very impressive. On the road we'd stay in the hotel with the team, which was always interesting. You got to know them all a little better. And in the morning of the game, what was in vogue then and, I guess, now is get away from the traditional breakfast that we used to have, which was steak, tea, maybe something else -- and now it was stay away from the meat and have nothing but carbohydrates. So you walked in, and here was this cafeteria line with all these ballplayers, scarfing up all this stuff, consisting of waffles, pancakes, French toast, plain toast, raisin toast, potatoes. Usually they didn't have grits.

SHIPP: They think it gave them more --

BROWN: Energy, I guess, was the --

SHIPP: -- a long --

BROWN: -- thought.

SHIPP: -- staying power and more energy.

BROWN: Yeah.

SHIPP: Well, what do you make of the new --? You sold out, and new ownership came in. And what do you make of Arthur Blank, the era of Arthur Blank?

BROWN: He's done wonders for them. He's very conscious of the fan base. And so he's been very accommodating to the fans. And it paid off, because his games have been selling out. And that's a big stadium, 70,000, 72,000 people. And you kind of had a feeling, with Rankin Smith, that he didn't much give a damn. And, of course, Rankin had a serious drinking problem, as we refer to it. And Blank does not. He doesn't drink. Blank probably enjoys a little too much trying to get down on the field and be part of the team. And you want to say, "Arthur, you are the owner. You're the CEO. You ought to stay above some of that."

SHIPP: Let's go back to the other sport, politics. You've given a lot of money, over the years --

BROWN: Mmm hmm.

SHIPP: -- to various political candidates. What do you look for in a political candidate that you contribute to, and what do you hope for?

BROWN: Honesty, both fiscal and in terms of not deceiving people in speeches and the like. Tell it like it is and as he sees it, or she. And stay with that. Been disappointed, more often than not. But it's still my goals, in choosing between candidates. Don't get involved in every race, just candidates that have some appeal to me. Or a candidate that I can't stand, so I give money to his opponent.

SHIPP: And that happens fairly frequently....

BROWN: Oh, yes! Yes, yes.

SHIPP: Beginning to wrap things up, what do you see as the legacy of Watson-Brown, the foundation and the family?

BROWN: The legacy of the foundation is educational, the underwriting of the publication of these books, putting on the seminars, and granting all these scholarships. We have an annual reunion of the scholarship holders over the years, which I think they seem to enjoy and which we find very interesting, to see what they've gone on and accomplished and achieved in life. I think the legacy of the family would be Southern, pro-Southern. Regarding the South -- is more sinned against than sinning. And also intellectual pursuits, the reading and writing of books. And I'd hope that that would continue to be the case.

SHIPP: Of all your accomplishments throughout your life, which ones are you most proud of?

BROWN: Finishing Princeton magna cum laude, majoring in history. Finishing first in my class at Fort Holabird. Acing the LSAT, legal aptitude test, by which I went 12 points over the 99.7-plus limit, which meant, when I got those results, I knew I could get in any law school in America, and which I did. And at Harvard, also something I'm proud of, I won the Ames Competition twice in a row. You had one in each term. And --

SHIPP: That was a moot court competition?

BROWN: It's a moot court competition involving the entire class. And to prevail in that meant that I did an extraordinary amount of work and analysis on the case in question and the arguments on both sides. I probably should have devoted that time to the regular courses, but it was very satisfying.

SHIPP: You've seen a lot of changes, in your 70-odd years on this planet. What do you think is the most profound change that you've seen in this country and region? And how do you feel about the future?

BROWN: Well, as I say, one profound change is the homogenization. Transportation is easy and readily available. So you're all over the world and all over the country. When I was growing up, I never had heard of anybody who'd been to Europe, much less other places. Did have an uncle that went to Alaska for some federal agency. And that was about as exotic as it was. People lived in the same town and county for generations and generations. And, as I say, the entire family was known back and forth. All that's gone. The television is sort of a common provider among people. They depend upon it for entertainment and unfortunately for a certain amount of education. And it's national rather than regional.

SHIPP: The decline in the newspapers, for instance, what do you think --?

BROWN: Oh, that's sad. My father, being a journalist, was big on newspapers and on Sunday would bring six home to go through Sunday afternoon, which delighted me as a small boy because they each had a separate comics section. And the comics were really great, back then. And later on it was different sports sections and the like. And you had different voices, dissent coming from different parts of the country and different viewpoints. Atlanta, for instance, in the teens of the last century, had three daily newspapers. Well, that meant they were in hot competition. And you had much better coverage of the news than today, where you have a monopoly, and it's just sort of blah. And that, unfortunately, has been the process all over the country, is my understanding. I don't know how many papers New

York used to have, but it was a lot. And now it's down to just two or three. And --

SHIPP: Are you op... I mean, and this is a final question. What's your assessment of the future? Are you optimistic, pessimistic? How do you think our society is headed? Where --?

BROWN: Pessimistic. I think we're headed into the tank, and that America, certainly as we know it and knew it, will not survive. And whether it continues to make it on the world level, I don't know. I'm not at all optimistic about that. I'm also pessimistic about what you might call the dumbing down of America. Fewer and fewer men, in particular, are finishing college, much less getting graduate degrees. We've lost out to the world in scientific and mathematical studies. And the other areas aren't particularly red hot either. So I'm very pessimistic about it.

SHIPP: Thank you, very much. We've enjoyed this conversation today with Tom Watson Brown, here at Ivy Grove in Marietta, covering a variety of topics. Thank you, Tom.

BROWN: You're more than welcome. I've enjoyed it.

Biographical Information

RBRL OHD 008

Thomas Watson Brown

b. January 28th, 1933

d. January 13th, 2007

Occupation:

Strom Thurmond 1954 Senatorial Campaign

Army Counter Intelligence Corps

Lawyer and Board Member for Spartan Communications

Charlie Weltner Law Firm

Chairman of Board for the Atlanta Transit Company

President and Chairman for the Walter-Brown Foundation

Member of the Board of Directors for the Atlanta Legal Aid Society

Minority Shareholder for the Atlanta Falcons

Subject Analysis

RBRL OHD 008

Thomas Watson Brown

- Anecdotes about Browns family and their involvement in Politics
- Southern Populism
- Anecdotes about Start of World War II
- Brown's Early Life
- Strom Thurmond's 1954 Senatorial Campaign in South Carolina
- Brown's time in the military and involvement in Counter Intelligence Corps
- Brown's time at Princeton and Harvard Law School
- Anecdotes about Brown's Career
- MARTA
- The murder of Mary Phagan
- The Watson-Brown Foundation
- Rehabilitation of the T.R.R. Cobb House.
- Brown's outlook on Politics
- Gallant Pelham Club
- Civil War Preservation
- Brown's Personal Library
- The effect of technology and the Internet on scholarship
- The decline of writing skills
- Television and the decline of literacy
- Brown's role at Spartan Communications
- The Atlanta Falcons and Brown's investment in them
- Brown's Political Contributions
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