Earle McGee Rice

(Recorded interview August 12, 2000)

I was born in Anderson on April 25, 1920. I became an octogenarian two to three months ago. The name Earle McGee Rice comes from three families: the Earle family on my mother's side, the McGee family on my father's side, and the Rice of course was my father's name.

My father was Leon Leftwhich Rice. He was from Belton. My mother was Sarah Wilhite Rice whose home was right across from the old bus station on North Main Street. My father was one of six Rice boys and three Rice girls. All six of the Rice boys finished Furman. Two of the three Rice girls finished GWC (which later merged and became a part of Furman University) and the other sister went to Converse.

My great-great-great-grandfather Hezekiah Rice sold about 1/4 of the land on which the city of Anderson now is located and Amaziah Rice, who was a brother of his, was one of, if not the first, preacher of the First Baptist Church in Anderson. My mother was from the Earle family of Pendleton. General John Baliss Earle was one of my ancestors. I am not sure which generation it was. My mother was born in Pendleton in 1890. My father's birth date was in 1885.

My great-grandfather was Dr. Phillip Abney Wilhite. He built the white column home which still stands on the southwestern corner of River and McDuffie streets. He was the accidental discoverer of ether as an anesthetic. He was a medical student under Dr. Crawford Long over in Georgia sometime around 1840. They had ether but had no practical use for it. The medical students would have what they called ether parties or ether frolics and would take the ether, sniff it, and get a little high. A bunch of the medical students were out on an ether frolic one time and caught a little black boy, held him down and poured the ether to him until he was completely out. They thought he was dead and everybody rode off on their horses except my great-grandfather who stayed and found in awhile that the little boy came back around, regained consciousness and was no worse for the wear. He told Dr. Crawford Long what had happened and Dr. Long conceived the idea of using ether as an anesthetic. He used it to operate on a lady out in an open field the following year. There was a dispute between Dr. Crawford Long and a Dr. Morton, I believe of Philadelphia, as to who was the first physician to use ether as an anesthetic. I think Dr. Morton got the credit for it but it was in dispute. This accidental discovery of ether by my great-grandfather was recognized at a convention in New Orleans of the predecessor of the American Medical Association.

My grandfather was Dr. Joseph Oliver Wilhite. His home was across North Main Street from the old bus station. He was a medical doctor and practiced in Anderson until his death in 1925. He was one of the instigators or prime movers of the Anderson Hospital and was a general practitioner. My mother told me that when he would go out to see a patient, he would ride in a horse and buggy and in his later years, a T model Ford. More often than not he was paid in eggs or produce or farm products rather than in cash. This was more or less the standard in those days in a recovering South from the blight of the War between the States.

I was 5 years old when my grandfather, Dr. J. O. Wilhite, died and the only recollection really that I have of him talking to me was once when he was sitting in a rocking chair on his front porch there on Main Street. He looked at me and said, "Sonny, it looks like you washed your face and I don't believe the dog's going to recognize you."

My mother was Sarah Wilhite Rice. The Wilhite name, I think, originated in Germany. It has a number of different spellings, Wilhoit, Wilheit. I think my distant ancestors probably came from Germany on my mother's side and from Wales on my father's side. The name Rice was originally Aprhys. Ap is like Mc in Scotland or von in German. They dropped the Ap and it became Rhys and then later it was changed to the phonetic sound of R-i-c-e. I noticed that one of the ladies in England who was in some kind of a fracas with some of the Royal family still bears her name Rhys.

My father was the only lawyer out of six boys. One brother was a surgeon. One brother founded Blair Mills in Belton, Blair Rice. He went up North and learned how to make toweling. He came back to Belton and set up with one loom and from that one loom Blair Mills became quite an industry. Max, another brother, the youngest brother, was wounded in World War I, came home and went into business with Uncle Blair in Blair Mills and they operated very successfully until shortly after World War II. Uncle Rex Rice was a merchant in Greenville and Uncle Clarence was a farmer in Hartwell, Georgia. Uncle Clarence had a very large farm out of Hartwell.

My grandfather Joel Towers Rice had an oil mill. (Incidentally, all of the men on my father's side had Biblical names. You had Joel, Hezekiah and Amasiah. Apparently they used the Bible for all of the names. Enoch also was brother to my grandfather.) Grandfather Rice never had any college training. He saw to it that all of his children were college graduates. He was a very successful merchant in Belton, very highly regarded in the community and just a wonderful sort of a fellow. He died in 1940 at the age of 91.

Daddy used to tell the story of playing baseball as a small boy in Belton. They made their own baseballs. They would wrap string around a hard center and use that as their ball. When he went to Furman he made the baseball team and his senior year was captain of the team. He batted 500 and was a right-handed first baseman which is kind of a rarity. You always want a southpaw for first base. He went on to the University of Virginia Law School and was captain of the baseball team there. The only game they lost during his senior year at the University of Virginia was to the Carlisle Indians. They were very, very outstanding Indian athletes of the day. After graduation, he was offered a professional baseball contract and I think it was Connie Mac who offered him a job with the Pittsburgh team. They said they would farm him out for one year and then bring him into the big leagues. He talked to his father about it and he said, "No, you better come home and practice law." So he did.

He came to Anderson in 1907. The first year he made $900, most of which came from handling his father's business affairs. During these days, Daddy continued his baseball playing. He played with semipro teams and textile teams. He played with Ty Cobb and Shoeless Joe

Jackson for several years and said Ty Cobb was one of the dirtiest ball players he ever saw play. He sharpened his spikes so he could steal bases. He would come running in with his spikes up and the baseman would get out the way.

Shoeless Joe Jackson, after the Black Sox scandal of 1918-1919, came back to Greenville. He played with Daddy and against Daddy. Shoeless Joe Jackson on a number of occasions made up a list of the best baseball players he had ever played with or against. He always put my father on first base which was quite a compliment to a man who never played professional ball. During his later years Shoeless Joe ran a liquor store in Greenville. My father would go by on trips to Greenville just to speak to him.

My childhood days were during the Depression. I lived at 724 West Whitner Street. I lived next door to G. Collin Sullivan, who was mayor of Anderson and quite a prominent lawyer. Mr. Will Stringer, whom we always called Cousin Will because he was a first cousin to my father (they had a common grandfather) lived where Cary Doyle's office is now. The Stringers later sold their house to Flossie Cochran and then in later years Cary Doyle bought it for his office. Judge George Prince was two doors from us on West Whitner Street and Mr. George Evans, who ran the drugstore on the corner of Main and West Whitner Streets, Evans Pharmacy, lived right across the street.

We never suffered for anything during the Depression but we never had many luxuries of life. Our home is still standing over there. It has been improved in a number of ways. We had only one bathroom for my mother, father and four children. We had one car which sometimes presented a problem when my two older brothers or my sister needed a car for something and Daddy, of course, needed it for business. But we lived well considering what some of our neighbors had to live on. Many of them lost their jobs. I have heard my father say that on West Whitner Street, which of course goes on out beyond town and becomes Highway 24, you could go all the way on Highway 24 to the Anderson County line and every farm on that road was in foreclosure at one time during the Depression.

We lived well, never were hungry, had presentable clothes; we all went to church regularly. Daddy took the whole family to the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. All six of us went in our old Plymouth automobile to Chicago. We were members of the country club which was a little rarity among a lot of the neighbors. We always had a place to swim. We lived well and we never suffered for anything. But we didn't have any extras.

We had indoor plumbing and electricity. As a small boy I used to be impressed by the "honey wagons." Honey wagons instead of honey had caustic lye (a disinfectant that also kept down the flies) which was put in the privy's one-holers (or two-holers if you were fortunate). There were many of those; most were in the black community. The honey wagons were on parade all the time.

We had a telephone. Our original telephone number was 1024. Mr. John Hood, who was the father of attorneys John Hood, Jr. and Walter Hood, had the telephone number 1. It was the old upright telephone and you would speak to central. You gave central your number and when

you called a number she might say, "I am sorry he has gone up the street, he will be back in a little while." Very friendly sort of arrangement. Much better than the dial system.

Of course we had no television. We were one of the few families in our neighborhood who even had a radio in the early '20s. I had an uncle, Frank Wilhite, my mother's younger brother, who worked for Westinghouse and we got a radio. There were only two stations we could get, WLW and some other station, KDKA, I think.

Some of our entertainment was done by Chatauqua. The Chatauqua Organization came all around the country and in tents would present a kind of predecessor to vaudeville. They had "Punch & Judy" shows. They had lecturers. They had musical groups, vocalists. All kind of things you would have found in vaudeville – comedians. I remember that the Chatauqua tent on one occasion was set in that vacant lot between Granddaddy Wilhite's house and the Calhoun Hotel. Alex Neely had a building in there in later years. But there was vacant land except for one little building on the corner and there was a filling station next to it at that time. Chatauqua was popular. It traveled all over the country. Marshall Fant, Sr. worked for them a couple of years.

Another time they had a Chatauqua tent down across from Judson Minyard's place on South Main Street. Incidentally, my father introduced William Jennings Bryan in Asheville at a Chatauqua gathering where he spoke. I don't know the year.

The Anderson Fair was always at Cater's Park. It was where the old YMCA building is between Fant and Greenville Streets. It extended for a couple of hundred yards to the north. They had fences all around the park. Every year Anderson Fair was there and they had rides and shows and all of the farmers displayed their wares, the ladies their flowers and cooking and so forth. It was a big deal. Of course you could get a hot dog for a nickel and drinks for a nickel. A "three-center" was a drink that was popular in the height of the Depression.

Anderson was divided into seven wards. The only fire truck they had when I was a small boy had solid rubber tires – not pneumatic, just solid rubber tires. That old fire truck parked down in the fire department's building and you could tell which ward the fire was in by the ringing of the bell. We were in Ward 4, which went out West Market and West Whitner Streets and if the bell rang four times we knew the old fire truck would be coming out that way.

The police department at that time had only one car, an open touring car. My recollection of the police department was centered around a very popular policeman called Baz Hilliard. He had a number of children, three of them played football at Furman during my days. Baz was a character. Everybody loved him.

We had no traffic lights at all on Main Street or anywhere else. If there came a traffic situation, Baz would get out in the street with a pole that had Stop and Go and rotate the sign. Baz on one occasion met a drunk who was staggering down Earle Street, coming into Main Street. The story is told that Baz met him when he got almost to Main Street. Baz said, "Joe, now you turn around and go home because you may go down there on Main Street and run into a policeman." So Joe turned around and went home. Old Baz didn't think about putting him in jail.

Fant's Book Store was on West Whitner Street. It was an institution. When Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic in 1927, we had very few people who had a radio, and the papers came out a day late with news. The first that I knew Lindy had landed in Paris was painted on Fant's Book Store's glass front in Bon Ami. I don't know whether they still make Bon Ami or not but it is a white powder that you can make white paint out of. Across Fant's Book Store's front window (I was in the second grade) I saw a sign that said Lindy Lands In Paris and that was the first I knew of it.

It was about that time that a flying circus came to Anderson and the star of the flying circus was Buffalo Bill's daughter. I think her name was Mabel Cody. She was a wing walker. The flying circus was using the Flying Jennys from World War I. They had no tail wheels, they had a ski for the tail wheel. The airport was where Lakeside Middle School is now. It was called Byrum's Field because Byrum's junkyard was at the corner. It was the only level spot in the area. It was not paved, just a dirt field. The flying circus used that as its headquarters.

The planes would come flying over with Mabel standing on the top wing holding onto straps. She would walk up-and-down the wing and do all kind of tricks. When the flying circus was over they made an offer to let children fly with the pilot for a penny a pound. My brother Joe and I were there with my father and Joe, I guess, weighed 140 pounds and I weighed 60. For $2 they said they would take me and Joe up. It was just about dusk and we took off in the back cockpit of this old Flying Jenny.

Reciprocating engines throw flame out the exhaust and here was flame coming right by us in the open cockpit. I thought we were on fire all the way around the field. I was scared to death. But that was my first flight and it gave me a taste for the flying that I did in later years.

One other flying experience the Anderson area had was a visit by Amelia Earhart. This was not too long before her final flight over the Pacific in which she was lost. She was in what was called an autogiro. It had a revolving blade on top and a regular airplane engine. I don't think there are any more of those in existence now. She flew in to a spot that is near where the Sports and Recreation Complex is, out north west of Anderson. I did not go out at the time but John Gates did go and was there when she landed. She was only on the ground for a short time and took off and left.

I remember when the Calhoun Hotel was built because my grandfather's house was almost next to it. There was only a big vacant lot between my grandfather Wilhite's house and the Calhoun Hotel. The Calhoun was built in 1925. That's the year my grandfather died. I remember one of the first things they did to advertise the hotel was to have a fellow called "The Human Fly" climb up the side of the hotel. He climbed up without any assistance and got to about the first story above the marquee and fell back down to the marquee. Everybody gasped and thought he was dead. I think they had put a mattress down there for him to land on. He got up and proceeded to climb up. He went to the top of the hotel, rode a bicycle along the rim of the hotel and put a chair on the corner of the edge of the top of the hotel. He stood on the chair, may

have stood on his head, I don't recall. It scared the people to death. Everybody knew he was going to fall but of course he didn't except for that first fall I think was staged.

I met boxing champion Jack Dempsey in the hotel sometime in the '30s and shook his hand.

I went to West Market Street grammar school which had at that time first through the seventh grades. West Market School was built in 1895. My mother was in the first class at West Market Street School and the principal was Elliot Crayton McCants for whom the middle school is now named. One matter of interest was that my first grade teacher was Mrs. Zula Sharpe who was quite an accomplished musician and piano teacher. This was in 1926 and she had taught my father in Belton in 1891 as his first grade teacher. It was very singular that we both had the same first grade teacher. She was just out of college when she went to Belton to be a teacher.

From West Market Street School I went to old Boys High. They had the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh grades then. We did not have any twelfth grade at that time. Mr. John Thompson was principal. My homeroom teacher was Professor Avery Hunt who was a gentlemen's gentleman. He was the father of Dr. John Hunt. John inherited a lot of his characteristics. Mr. Avery Hunt was a wonderful teacher. I had the pleasure in later years of speaking at his retirement ceremony. I paid tribute to him for all that he had meant to me as a freshman at Boys High.

Miss Lucia Hudgens was the only female teacher at Boys High and a delightful woman. In later years I had the opportunity to present an award to her for the Civitan Club, I believe it was. She was my eighth grade teacher at old Boys High for typing. Miss Lucia had the habit of walking down to the principal's office between classes. At the end of the 10 minutes the bell would ring and Miss Lucia would come running down the hall to her classroom at the end of the hall. I conceived the idea of playing a trick on Miss Lucia. I went down to the drugstore and got a nickel's worth of quinine and a nickel pack of lifesavers. I took a soda straw and dipped the soda straw in water and then in the quinine and laced the inside of the lifesavers with the quinine until they wouldn't take anymore. Now I don't know if you have ever tasted quinine, but it would draw your mouth up it was so strong. I got those mints and laced them with the quinine and stood at the door to her classroom. The bell rang and she came running down the hall to come into the classroom. I said, "Miss Lucia, would you like a lifesaver?" "Oh, yes." She grabbed one and threw it in her mouth and shut the door. I went to the back and hid down behind my typewriter. In about five seconds she jumped straight up and went out the door holding her mouth. She came back in about five minutes and said, "Mr. Rice I would like to see you after class." The dear lady, when everybody was gone, she looked me in the eye and said, "You are a devil, but I love you." And she laughed very heartily.

Arthur Fort taught Latin. He had been a boxer in college and enjoyed wearing short sleeved shirts and showing his biceps to the students. A story was told that he threw a football player out the window when he sassed him. Everybody was scared to death of him. We called him "Shimmy" Fort because he would be in the minstrels that we had at old Boys High. I was in

a bunch of those too. Shimmy Fort did a shimmy dance in one of the minstrels and gained that nickname.

At the beginning of the year he made some comment about nobody ever remembering April Fool any more and that kind of registered in my mind. My brother Joe was at the Naval Academy at that time and they had a magazine called *The Log* which had a bunch of jokes in it. I cut out a few of those jokes and put them in my Latin book. On April 1, Fort was calling on students to read a sentence and it was almost the end of the hour – just a few minutes to go. I hadn't studied my lesson at all. I couldn't have told you anything about it.

About three or four minutes before the class was over, he said, "Mr. Rice, read the next sentence." I looked at it and I not only couldn't read the sentence, I couldn't read the first word of the sentence. I looked and here was this joke from *The Log*. I gripped the sides of the desk and said, "Caesar's Army performed their most famous battles when they were underfed and when all the conditions were adverse. Even when sick, they threw up fortifications."

I dropped my head and there was complete silence. I could see him going for that paddle or whatever. I was scared to look up. After what seemed like an hour, he said, "Mr. Rice." I said, "Yes Sir." He said, "What tense is April Fool in that sentence?" I was the happiest man at Boys High.

I did play an awful lot of practical jokes on teachers and Sunday school teachers and my father, who didn't appreciate them at all. I enjoyed life.

"Frog" Reames used the paddle. All he said was, "Assume the position," and that meant leaning over 90 degrees. He could swing that paddle like Babe Ruth could swing a ball bat. I didn't have it too many times and he kind of softened up on me. I only weighed about 130-pounds soaking wet. I wasn't very large. I did ask for it, I got it, and I deserved it.

I was on the staff of the *Yellow Jacket*, the school paper. The teachers refused to let us put in some articles that we wanted to print. So Alvin Fleishman and I, along with Francis Bailes Johnson and a few others, conceived the idea of putting out our own newspaper called *The Stinger*. I have a copy of it at home now. We went around to the businesses and solicited money for a high school newspaper and raised $10 or $15 we needed to print that one edition.

We got together at the Bailes house, Francis Bailes Johnson's home next to where Steve Krause has his office now (207 East Calhoun Street). We put together this paper with all kind of jokes and funny things about the professors and everything. Just before the end of school I went up to Professor Reames' office. He was in charge. I think John Thompson was still there but Frog was assistant principal. I went up with all these newspapers and told Mr. Reames I wanted to pass them out to the students. He looked at one and said, "No you will not! You are not going to put that thing out in the school!" So we went out beyond the school grounds and passed them out to the whole school. That made him mad as the devil but there wasn't much he could do off the school grounds. That was our retaliation for their censoring our school paper.

I finished Boys High in 1937 a few days after the Hindenburg disaster. I was debating whether or not to go to Furman or to Clemson. I wanted either to be an architect or a lawyer. I had attended court a number of times and was very interested in court proceedings. I wanted to go to Clemson because Joe, my older brother who finished the Naval Academy before me, had gone to Clemson for one year to prepare for his Naval Academy career. I wanted the military. Clemson was all military at that time, ROTC. I finally conceived the idea of going to what was then called CMTC, Civilians Military Training Camp, at Charleston. Jimmy Barton and I went together. I was 17 and he was, I think, 16. We went on the bus down to the campsite out of Charleston and had one month of the most rigorous military training two little raw recruits ever had. I decided since I had the military training I would have gotten at Clemson I would go on to Furman and try to take pre-law.

I got in Furman without any trouble because my uncle was president of Furman. Dr. Ben Geer had married my father's oldest sister, Rena Rice. Dr. Geer was a wonderful person. He was president for two years while I was at Furman. My first year at Furman my room, board, tuition and everything, cost my father $400. That's a changed ballgame now.

During those days at Furman, the United States started training pilots. They found out the Germans were training fighter pilots. Under the Geneva Convention the Germans were not allowed to have training ships that weighed more than 1,000 pounds. The Germans invented the Jungmeister plane which was just under 1,000 pounds. They were training fighter pilots like mad. Our Defense Department conceived the idea of training pilots in this country. To make a long story short, for $50 I got 50 hours of flying time, 60 hours of ground school, $10,000 of life insurance and a pilot's license. I flew out of the old Greenville Airport with a bunch of my friends. We soloed the small aircraft. The plane that I soloed in had 39 horsepower – the same as the original Volkswagen Bug, I think. After I got my pilot's license in 1938 flying time cost $7 an hour. I couldn't have paid $7 to fly for an hour if my life depended on it. I didn't get to fly anymore except one time a friend of mine said he would pay for the hour's flying if I would take him up. I took him up and scared him to death.

In May of 1941, I graduated from Furman. I had a scholarship to Duke Law School based primarily on my older brother's record at Duke Law School. I had a B+ average at Furman and I guess I deserved the scholarship. At that time, of course, the war clouds were looming and the draft board would not let you go to graduate school for more than one year. They would then draft you. I thought it would be better doing my military service before I started law school rather than have it interrupted. So I volunteered for what was called "flying cadets" in the old Army Air Corps. It was a division of the Army, not a separate branch. It came up from the Signal Corps, of all things. I volunteered as a flying cadet about six months before Pearl Harbor.

I went to Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. All the air bases were called fields at that time. We had six weeks of preflight training and military drill and I was in pretty good condition because I had gone to the CMTC training and knew military fairly well although a number of the pilots had finished three years of Clemson with ROTC training and were ahead of me. We had about six to eight weeks at Maxwell Field and then we were taken to Greenville Aviation School in Ocala, Florida, for pre-flight training in a PT-13 which was a biplane that

looked like a dressed up model of the old Flying Jenny of World War I but it was much faster, much safer and much better built. I was the first to solo at Greenville Aviation School because I had had flying training before.

We had been there for about a month before our first payday. The checks finally came in. We were paid on Friday and nearly all of the fellows went out and bought the latest thing in civilian clothes. They brought them back to the school quarters at the Greenville Aviation School on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning and on Sunday morning Pearl Harbor was attacked. They never got to wear those civilian clothes unless it was in later years. They had spent all their money on clothes they couldn't use.

At that point the Army Air Corps accelerated training, doubled up on flying time and instructions, and everything. What would normally have been a one-year course of flying training we finished on May 20, 1942. We finished in six months instead of a year's training. When I graduated on May 20th, I got my wings and my second lieutenant's commission.

Jack Alexander, who died recently, and had a career in the Air Force up to the rank of colonel was in the graduating class with me. It was just a coincidence. We had not been in flight training elsewhere together. He was married on the day we graduated. I saw his wife recently, Margie Saylors Alexander. She was the daughter of Doc Saylors, sister to Ken Saylors.

Immediately after graduation we were put on orders to fly to North Africa and fly P-39s – one of the hottest fighter planes at that time – against Rommel's troops and the Germans who occupied North Africa. We were the hottest pilots in the world. You are never any better than graduation day when you are in flight training. Our training had been directed to fighter flying with all the gunnery and everything, the radio training and all the rest of it. We were on orders to go and we were the happiest bunch you ever saw.

Two days later they cancelled our orders and sent us back to Montgomery for the first flying instructors' school. Talk about dejection. The fellows were just completely frustrated. They had looked forward so much to flying the P-39s and going to North Africa and being a real part of the war. Here we had to wind up learning to be instructors. They brought us back to Maxwell Field and we spent about six weeks in training.

One of the instructors at the instructors' school was Louis Griffin from Anderson who died a couple of years ago. He retired as a general in the Air Force. Louis was on Colonel Kinard's staff at Maxwell Field. After graduation from the flying instructors' school, I was sent with several others to Napier Field in Dothan, Alabama – an advanced, single engine flying school training potential fighter pilots. There I got stuck for about three years. I did everything I could to try to get out but I think they felt if the atom bomb didn't work they were going send me overseas. Otherwise, they were going to make me train fighter pilots.

I graduated from the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I went through the wartime version which took about four months. It ordinarily took two years

but, there again, they had condensed it for wartime purposes. That was one of the great privileges I had as a captain in the Army Air Corps.

I returned to Napier Field in Dothan, Alabama, and became a squadron commander over about 10 flying instructors. Later on I became an assistant group commander with about six groups under the group headquarters. Just before the V.J. Day, I became an air inspector – kind of an inspector of all flying operations on the base. I never got overseas. I did have one unique honor.

We trained in aerial gunnery in which a plane would drag a target which looked like a tennis net although it was about twice as big. The mesh in it was covered with cloth or something and you would fire your machine guns at the target. The rounds of ammunition for the four different planes were painted different colors, red, blue, green and white. When the round went through that net it would leave a circle of paint. When we would fly back to the field (we were then on auxiliary fields out of Eglin Field) we would count the holes by color and see how many rounds we had put in it. On a normal mission, the tow target plane which pulled the tow target, would fly up-and-down the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. The planes would come in and fire at around a 30-degree angle and then pull off and the tow plane would turn around. You would come back and fire the other way until you had fired 100 rounds. They would take the target back to the field and count the shots that had pierced the target. For some reason they decided to cut the target in half and double your count on your scores. So if you had 50 holes in the target with your red paint on it you had 100 percent. I was leading a flight and doing some practice shooting myself and wound up putting all 100 rounds through the target. That gave me a score of 200 percent. I was the only pilot who ever shot 200 percent on aerial gunnery.

I enjoyed flying training and making fighter pilots out of British, Australian, American and Canadian pilots. We taught not only with the tow targets but we had cameras that would show the route that the fighter plane was taking and whether or not the pilot was using good judgement in the lead that he was making. We had a hard time teaching the British boys how to lead a moving target because practically none of the British boys had ever driven a car or ever fired a gun. American boys had been dove hunting or something and knew a little bit about lead. We conceived the idea of teaching skeet shooting to give them the principle of lead. I guess I shot a million rounds of skeet ammunition showing them how to lead a target and that's the reason I am wearing hearing aids now. We didn't even put cotton in our ears when we were firing the shotguns. Of course the nerve damage to the ear was just terrible. It didn't show up in me until years later but I have a very bad hearing deficiency now. The skeet shooting did help and the boys learned to lead the target. It was a good training device.

After V.E. Day and V.J. Day I applied for a discharge. I was offered a regular commission. It was very tempting because what I was making with flight pay was many times as much as I ever thought I would make. I had a wife and one child and I needed it. But something made me go back to law school. I was discharged at Fort Gordon on Friday and started law school at Duke on Monday.

Duke Law School had an accelerated program, a two-year program there against the normal three-year program at that time. Duke Law School was combined with Wake Forest Law School which had to close its school and move over to Duke for economy reasons during the war. Upon my graduation about one-fourth of the class got Wake Forest diplomas and three-fourths got Duke diplomas.

After five semesters at Duke I took the South Carolina Bar Exam. You had to take it at that time, regardless of whether or not you finished law school. During a 10-day period, I had all of my fifth semester examinations at Duke and three solid days of Bar exams in Columbia. I was a little weak. Fortunately I did pass the Bar exam. Mr. John Hood was one of the examiners and I credited him with letting me by. So I was ready to practice. I could have quit law school then and started practicing but I wanted a diploma so I stayed on and did the sixth semester. During the sixth semester I took taxation under my brother Leon Rice, Jr. who was teaching part-time out of Winston-Salem at the Duke campus.

I got out of Duke Law School on Friday and went to the courtroom on Monday morning and was appointed to represent a black fellow by the name of Johnnie Estrich for rape. My first case and it made the newspapers. I successfully defended because I found out that after the incident happened the boy had given the girl $5. Mr. Paul Earle was the employer of the girl who allegedly was raped. He participated in the trial with Rufus Fant and tried to railroad that boy into prison for his life. Mr. Paul Earle got mad at me for defending that boy and especially for freeing him. In later years he came around and was a good friend.

That's how I got back home and started practicing law. My father was still practicing, of course, and we practiced together for about 20 years from 1947 to 1966 when he died.

Daddy had a very successful record as a trial lawyer. He did not have a secretary until later years when my oldest brother joined him for a year or two before he went to Washington with the Bureau of Internal Revenue. I joined him in 1947. His old office was in the Anderson Building which had the offices of Watkins & Prince, Tom Allen, Bob Balentine, Dr. Herbert Harris, Rufus Hill, Al Zeigler, Alex Neely and a number of others. It was the lawyers' building of Anderson. The Bleckley building had a good many lawyers too.

We had some outstanding orators. Anicus Dagnell was probably one of the best known orators at the Anderson Bar. Mr. Claude Earl was outstanding. John and Walter Hood were gentlemen attorneys. I had the highest regard for them. Mr. Frank Watkins and Mr. Sam Prince were outstanding attorneys.

Sam Prince went to the South Carolina Law School during my last semester at Duke and so was not active in the Bar when I returned to Anderson although I had known him for many years when I was a young boy. He went there as dean of the South Carolina Law School and that was the first time he had ever been in a law school. He studied law under someone at the local bar as was true also of Francis Fant and Alex Neely who had one year of law school. But Sam Prince was one of the most outstanding lawyers I think that we had.

We had T.S. Banister, Sloan Banister. Bob Ballentine was quite a character. He was Bud Grisso's father-in-law and brought Bud here. The only young people at the Anderson Bar when I came in the fall of 1947 were Harper and Charles Welborn who at that time were operating as Welborn & Welborn out of the Bleckley building. That didn't last very long. They agreed to disagree and split up. Bill Watkins I guess would have been the next oldest and the other lawyers were either in their '60s or '70s at the time that I came back.

Curren Cooley was at the Bar, Leon Harris, Rufus Fant. I am sure that I am missing some obvious ones. Judge Greene, George Benjamin Greene, was our resident judge. We only had, as I recall, 15 circuit judges. One for each of the 15 judicial districts. Judge Greene was a delightful old gentleman. He was on the bench only a short time during my practice in Anderson but I always had the highest regard for him.

H. Campbell Miller, known as "Red" Miller, was quite a character. Unfortunately liquor got the best of him. He would have been a brilliant lawyer and actually was. He was one of the best lawyers on pleadings at the Anderson Bar in my opinion. He would ask me to do a little research for him. Of course it was a pro bono sort of situation, but I was so flattered that he would want me to do research for him that I would do any kind of research he needed. I spent a lot of time doing that. To try and compensate me for this service he always called me "The Oracle," which was certainly not deserved. That is the only thing he ever called me, "The Oracle." He was probably the most interesting character that I recall from the Anderson Bar.

Judge Pruitt, after his election as circuit judge in 1950, had hearings in his office on Saturday mornings. On one Saturday morning the office was filled with lawyers and with smoke and Red was arguing very vociferously a point in favor of his client. Judge Pruitt summarily rejected his arguments and found for the other side. Red Miller stormed out of the room and I followed him to try to console him a little bit. We got outside and he said (I can't use the language that he used) after a bunch of expletives and cusswords, "That Judge Pruitt is like a blankety, blankety hoot owl. The more light you put in his eyes the blinder he gets." Then he paused a minute and said, "But you know, whoever heard of the lightening of genius striking in the Pruitt family anyhow." There were a number of stories about Red Miller that were a little on the risqué side that I can't tell.

In talking about Red Miller, there is one story I can tell that happened. His wife was a very active member of the Episcopal Church. She was a saint if you ever saw one. As the story went, and it was supposedly a true story, Red came home one night and was in his cups as he usually was, almost beyond going. He came in and fell across the bed. His wife found him there and kneeled beside the bed and began to pray. She said, "Oh, Dear Lord, please take care of my poor drunk husband." Red reared up in the bed and said, "Hell, don't tell him I'm drunk, tell him I'm sick."

When I came back home in the fall of 1947 the gentlemen who had been city recorder, City Judge Robinson, died and they needed a city recorder. Mr. Jess Sherard, who was mayor at the time, was holding court in the chief of police's office. They asked me if I would consider

being city recorder. I was very flattered and could certainly use the $50 a month the job paid to go on my mortgage payments. So I was city recorder for one to one and a half years.

When I was offered the job as city recorder I went down to see how court was being held and Mr. Jess Sherard was holding court in Chief Burdens' office, which was about 10 feet wide and 20 feet long. They marched in about 12 or 15 men out of the jail who were there for public drunkenness and lined them up against the wall opposite Mr. Sherard's desk in the Chief's office. He said, "Alright, I want each one of you that is guilty to take one step forward." All 15 would take one step forward. He found them guilty and they marched back to the cell. I told Mr. Sherard that if I was going to be recorder I was going to hold court in that nice courtroom that they had upstairs and were not using. I wanted people who came in to go before the court to have some semblance of justice.

Chief Burden kept the docket book. In the center of the book traffic violations or parking meter violations were listed by license number only and they would call off a license number from the book. I would look to see if anybody responded. If they didn't, I would say, "Guilty," and Chief Burden would write it in the book. One day we went through 30 or 40 of those license plate, parking meter violations and after court was over Chief Burden turned to me and said "Judge Rice, I just want you to know that that number 28964 was your car and this one at the bottom 26985, that's my car." Carey Hayes was with the *Anderson Independent & Daily Mail* at that time, a cub reporter, and he thought that was hilarious – that a judge had sentenced himself in his own court. So he wrote an article for the paper, "Local Judge Sentences Self in Court," and it got a lot of laughs from the local people. Somebody in Arkansas sent me a clipping from a paper out there. The Associated Press had picked up the story from the Anderson paper and it was printed in Arkansas. Judge Earle Rice of the city's recorder court in Anderson, South Carolina, had convicted himself in his own court.

Senator J. B. Pruitt at that time was in line for judgeship of the circuit court. Rufus Fant was running against him and Rufus thought he had the election under control because he had been writing legislation for years for all of the members of the legislature. Senator Pruitt had a lot more clout than Rufus realized and got the judge's job. When he got the judge's job, there had been in existence a jurisdiction known as the Court of Special Magistrate. Ernest B. Castles was special magistrate. Ernest, as was the case with Red Miller, liked his liquor and a number of times he had to be reprimanded by Senator Pruitt who had appointed him. Finally it got to the place where Senator Pruitt told Castles, "I want you to write me a letter of resignation and the next time you get drunk I am going to accept it." At that point, Castles just resigned. He knew he couldn't live up to it.

Judge Pruitt came to me and said, "Would you consider taking over that court?" I said, "Well Judge, I don't like the designation of special magistrate." He said, "Well, we will change the name to county judge." I said, "I think that would lend a little more dignity to it." So Senator Pruitt got with his senator friends and put through legislation to change the name to county court. The jurisdiction at that time was $1,000 on the civil side and certain criminal offenses on the criminal side which took a great deal of the burden off of the circuit court. A thousand dollars would cover 95 percent of the automobile damage that was done at that time. Many of the cases I

tried as county judge fell into that category, damaged automobiles that had to be repaired. The criminal court was designed to take off of the circuit court a lot of the cases that wasted time of the court, like nonsupport, driving under the influence and minor cases.

When he changed it, I had at that time not been practicing two years so Judge Pruitt said, "Let's put your father in the job until your two years have run." So Daddy served as county judge for six months and then when my two years came around I took over. I operated with a six-man jury. No women were on juries in those days. I had a court stenographer and used the main courtroom when it was not in use for other trials. I tried to add some dignity to the court. We did an awful lot of trial work, both criminal and civil.

We had no family court at that time and I heard about 90 percent of the divorce cases by reference from the circuit court. Divorce came in about 1950 and Judge Pruitt would refer practically all of the divorce cases to me as special referee. So for 10 or 12 years, I heard nearly all of the divorce cases in Anderson County as hearing judge. And rarely, if ever, was I reversed when I made my report of special referee to the circuit court.

South Carolina had no absolute divorce until 1950 and prior to that time the only way you could get a divorce if you were a South Carolinian was to go to Georgia and get what was known then as a suitcase divorce. You rented a room in Hartwell or somewhere in Georgia and left some clothes over there and pretended to establish a residence in Georgia. I forget whether it was six months or a year of residence. At the end of that time you could file for divorce in Georgia and usually go uncontested. You would get a decree of divorce in Georgia and then come back home. Or you could go to Reno, Nevada, and get a divorce. I don't think Reno had any residence requirement. You had to be there for the hearing but I believe that was the only requirement. That was the only divorce law we had prior to 1950.

Then the legislature appointed a youth guidance counselor, which was a children's court set up that they dumped on me. I had to hold all of the trials involving juveniles or children. I was doing the domestic relations cases, the children's cases, automobile wrecks and certain other cases. It was almost a full-time job. I was allowed to do some practice in other courts but very limited because of the pressure and the increase of the cases that were dumped on me.

I was county judge from 1949 to 1963 and enjoyed the work very much but I wound up with two children in college or about to go to college and I had to get out of the job. It got into a political hustle and I was kind of glad it did. I didn't get involved in politics at all. I started practicing law full-time and trying to make a living to get my children through college.

Memories from another time

When I first met Mrs. Luta Frierson Keith she was in her 90s and was still playing piano at Central Presbyterian Church – 90 years of age and going strong. I had an occasion to do some legal work for her. I think I drew a will or something. She told me of happenings in her childhood. She was born I think in 1892. She was 6 years old when the courthouse was built. It

was I believe 1898 when the courthouse was finished. Her father, who was a lawyer, walked her all the way around the courthouse in 1898 upon its completion.

She said that Miss Nora Hubbard, who was a schoolteacher here, decided we should have a Confederate monument to honor the Confederate soldiers. This was around the turn of the century, maybe 1901 or 1902. Miss Nora got her children to bring pennies in and she raised a little bit of money to try to get started toward a Confederate memorial. Old Colonel Joseph Newton Brown, a lawyer, contributed most of the money when he saw what she was trying to do. It's identical to a Confederate Memorial, I think, in North Carolina.

The Confederate Memorial was installed and they had a heavy shroud over the monument. They had all the living Confederate veterans and their children start at the Opera House which was over on the south side of the Square. In its day I understand it was a very prominent opera house. The Confederate veterans and their children started there and walked all the way around the Square and then came up in front of the Confederate Memorial. She said that when they got there they had speeches by some of the dignitaries and then, because Nora Hubbard had conceived the idea and started the ball rolling to do this, they asked her to pull the shroud off the monument. She went up and pulled the shroud and nothing happened. She jerked on it and yanked on it and still nothing happened. Several men came over and tried to pull on it and nothing happened. They had to climb up the Confederate Memorial and pull the shroud off the top. Luta Keith was probably the only person still living then who could remember that because it was 90 years later.

She remembered the first streetcars. The Anderson Traction Company had streetcars that ran to North Anderson, to Anderson College and to the mill on the south side. She said men would stand on the corners where the streetcar would stop to pick up passengers to look because the ladies had to show their ankles when they stepped up on the step into the thing. Wouldn't she be astounded today if she could watch a little television.

She had so many interesting stories about life in Anderson then. She knew my great-grandfather, Dr. P.A. Wilhite, who built the white columned house. One terrible thing happened. Dr. Wilhite practiced medicine in Anderson. Sometime between the 1840s and 1910 he put some eye drops in his wife's eyes. She was Cora Turner Wilhite, my great-grandmother. She was blinded by the solution he put in her eyes. She was blind the rest of her life and Luta Keith told me that despite her blindness she still sewed nightgowns for Dr. Wilhite up until the time of her death.

As a small girl, Luta Keith and her friends used to walk up McDuffie Street and would meet my great-grandmother with her daughter who was Miss Mary Wilhite, a maiden lady who never married. They would be walking down the sidewalk and my great-grandmother would ask the children to come over to her. She would take her hands and feel their facial features and say, "Now I know how you look." That was her way of identifying the children.

Miss Luta gave me what is known as a "conserve dish" which belonged to my great-grandmother. That is the only relic that I have from that generation. It's cracked but it was used for putting conserves, which I think were like preserves. I value that very highly for that reason.

The white column house where my great-grandfather Dr. Phillip Abney Wilhite lived was built in the 1840s using slave labor. Some of the walls were, I heard, up to 15 feet in depth. The house across the street, to the north, the northwest corner of River Street and McDuffie, was built for my great, great Uncle Frank Wilhite, who was the prime mover on the Chiquola Hotel. The Frank Wilhite house is one of two or three houses in the state that have a Chippendale roof.

The Chiquola Hotel, oddly enough, was one of the best hotels in the state in its day. The Chiquola was a beautifully decorated hotel. They had banquets and dances and the accommodations were way ahead of their time even as late as the 1930s. Mr. Bob King, who ran the King's Inn in Highlands and also had the Jacaranda Hotel in Florida near the Singing Tower, was the one who ran the hotel. He is the father of Carroll Brown's wife, Mahalie King Brown. It was a beautiful hotel as late as the early 1930s but then it went into disrepair and really became an eyesore.

I talked with the last surviving Confederate soldier in the late 1930s. They called him Colonel Pickens. I am not sure of his first name, I think it was Robert. My father, who was a good friend of Colonel Pickens, saw to it that he was invited as a guest for the first flight of Eastern Airlines out of Anderson. Talking with Colonel Pickens was quite a thrill to me as a young boy. He told me of forage parties that they had to supply them with food because they had no logistical supplies in the War between the States. They lived off the land wherever they were and wherever they were fighting. He told some gruesome stories of how injuries were sustained. It was a pleasure to talk with a real veteran of what's now called the Civil War, but I think it was the most uncivil thing that ever happened.

My brother, Leon Rice, Jr., went to Duke Law School in 1933 and was a classmate of Dick Nixon who was at Duke Law School. During their senior year Leon talked Dick Nixon into running for president of the student Bar Association and Nixon was elected. Years later, around 1960, at one of the parties or banquets that they were having in Washington around inauguration time, Nixon introduced Leon as his first campaign manager. In later years, Leon didn't claim that relationship too much in view of developments.