

G. Carey Hayes, Jr.
(Recorded interview 6/26/2000)

I was born in Hartwell, Georgia, August 30, 1921. Both my wife Nelle and I were born there in 1921.

My father was a lawyer and served as court stenographer for the 10th Judicial Circuit. He traveled a circuit of five counties. In January, February, March he would travel to all of the circuits and start again in September. It was interesting as I grew up listening to what the trials were all about.

Daddy was a very conservative Democrat and my mother was a very liberal Democrat, or worse. They would argue about the cases. I enjoyed it. Daddy didn't like to practice law. He just did not like to represent people he didn't think were innocent. The innocent ones were hard to find. He did some legal work, however, and later became a magistrate. He didn't think much of law schools and didn't want me to go to law school. He always talked about the difference between illegal and immoral. I thought about that a lot in the Clinton years.

The Depression brought tough times. That's all there was to it. Working people worked for nothing. A friend of mine, Edgar Adams, quit school in the fourth grade because he had to work in a textile plant for 10 cents an hour so his family could eat. I don't know how the blacks survived. Whatever they did was for practically nothing. They worked menial jobs. That's all there were.

A lot of people were going under. I heard a woman recently call into C-Span. She said, "I am 80 years old. I grew up when people were starving to death." She said, "I am going to vote Democratic." That is what people did. They were in terrible shape.

My mama was the first home demonstration agent in the state of Georgia. That was back in the '20s. She could drive a Model T Ford. I would ride with her all over the county on the old muddy roads. She would go to the schools and teach people how to can their produce so they would have something to eat in the wintertime. That helped people keep from starving to death.

By the time we got out of high school you could see Hitler getting ready to overrun Europe. We knew war was coming. I got in three years of college before Pearl Harbor. There was a Navy program where you could sign up until you got your degree and then you would get a commission. It wasn't that simple. They sent me to school at Columbia University for four months and I lived in a Johns Hopkins dormitory. Then I got a commission.

We went out to the Navy yard and saw ships that had just been brought in from Pearl Harbor. They looked just terrible – blown apart.

After I got my diploma at the Navy school, I came back to Hartwell and Nelle and I were married. I then went to Annapolis for six months for communication training. Then they sent me to the West Coast to the USS *Raleigh* where I stayed for the rest of the war. The *Raleigh* was a light cruiser.

There were 10 light cruisers like the *Raleigh*. They were built right after World War I and were scouts for the big battle ships. They carried two small seaplanes. They were fast. I was never in a situation in which the planes were used in action but we did keep them going all of the time.

I was assistant communication officer on the *Raleigh*. There were four of us in that group. We basically served on the bridge as watch officers and did communications on the side. I had a signal crew of 20 men under me and we usually had two or three other cruisers in formation. My men would signal and use flashing light to communicate with the other ships.

When I first joined the ship we went to the Aleutian Islands and bombarded Adak that had been occupied by the Japanese as a diversionary tactic to the campaign at Midway Island. We bombarded for two days not knowing the base was abandoned. We shelled Paramashiro in the Kurile Islands which was Japanese territory. The poor people on the beach thought it was an aircraft attack. They would fire anti-aircraft rounds up in the air. They never did find out we were at sea.

We then went back to the States and on down to Panama where we stayed until near the end of the war. We cruised up-and-down the west coast of South America – all the way down to Chile. We tried to get them to let us go around the Horn but they wouldn't do it. We would go to Panama, wait there for three months, then go down the coast and come back and wait three months.

I heard recently the Japanese had developed 10 huge submarines capable of carrying small bombers and were planning to blow up the Panama Canal. That was what we were down there to stop. We didn't know that at the time.

Near the end of the war, about the time the Germans surrendered, they moved us to Annapolis to take midshipmen on six-week cruises. We had a Marine colonel in charge of a ship for disciplinary purposes, 20 instructors and all these wild kids halfway through midshipmen's school. The war was over and all they wanted to do was get out of the Navy.

I went to Savannah after I got out of the service. I worked there for a newspaper for a year. Wilton Hall had the only newspaper in South Carolina trying to keep Harry Truman on the ballot. Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats were trying to take Truman off of the ballot. I came to Anderson and worked for Hall to help keep the place honest.

I had been in a Navy reserve unit in Savannah and resigned from the unit when we came up to Anderson. One week later the Korean War started. My whole unit was shipped out of Savannah. I missed it by two weeks. I didn't get recalled but all of my friends did. They got very

upset that I was skipping out. We didn't want to go back to war. We just got that darned war over with.

When I came to Anderson I was covering politics. There was just one political party – Democrats. Every two years there would be a series of stump speeches all around the county including all 72 school districts. Each candidate for each office had two or three minutes to talk. They sent me to Pendleton to cover the first one after I had come to Anderson. I sat on the front row and Congressman John C. Taylor got in front of me and waved his finger down my throat for 20 minutes. I thought, "What in the world have I gotten in to?"

Taylor owned half the newspaper and building where the paper was printed but he never got in the paper until it was time to renew the lease. Then, all of a sudden, the *Anderson Independent and Anderson Daily Mail* publisher Wilton Hall would have his picture on the front page or a picture of his stockyard or something otherwise nice about John C. Taylor. That lasted until they got a new lease signed.

Taylor voted against the first minimum wage bill and that ruined him. He didn't ever get elected to Congress again. He was subsequently elected as a state senator, however. Hall and Taylor always acted like they were terrible enemies but they weren't. They would politic when they wanted and people who got caught in the middle just got caught in the middle.

The sheriff election is what drew out the vote. We would get 50 percent of the total registered voters when it was a sheriff's race.

I remember when Erskine was elected sheriff. He defeated Clint McClain. Erskine had been out of the federal penitentiary two years. They got him for mistreatment of blacks. That was before I came to Anderson but he had been in prison for six years, I believe. He beat Clint McClain and served at least two terms, maybe three terms. Those were years of turmoil and civil rights were just perking up. During that time Kennedy was assassinated. Lyndon Johnson got the Civil Rights Act passed. Political turmoil was just the way it was.

When I came to the *Anderson Independent*, we considered the average subscriber had a fourth grade education. Thirty to 50 percent of the population was working in textiles. They just did what they were told – when they went to work, when they voted and everything else. If you could control the executives in the plants, you would get elected. People who were working just voted the way they were told. This is not a democratic state. It never has been a democratic state. This state was owned by the textile plants probably back to the 1870s, from right after the Civil War until they closed up in the late 1960s, or so. That destroyed the political base that had been running so long. It was a closed community.

When the blacks assumed status with the Civil Rights Act under Lyndon Johnson a tension was created that has never disappeared. That created a culture for the Republican Party. Reagan took advantage of it.

Francis Fant was named head of the County Board of Education. We had 72 school districts and he inspired the legislature to redraw the county into five school districts. People tried to kill Francis Fant. They tried to shoot him because he was taking away their little school district.

I think changing to five districts was one of the best things that happened for our schools. At that time the districts were fairly equal. The economic basis was practically the same. That has changed radically but that is where it was then. Fant was very proud of what he did. The district lines were straight lines. They did not go down roads. He didn't want the buses meeting each other travelling to different schools. We had roughly 20,000 kids listed for a kickback of revenues from the state. It took 5 years after we got these districts set up before we actually got up to 20,000 kids. They had been counting people twice in part of the system.

Homer Ford was the county Superintendent of Education. During the Korean War he wanted to be a colonel so he went back in service and his wife was elected to run the department for him. Everybody thought that was awful. She ran it until he got back and took over. By that time, Fant had changed the districts. Fant couldn't have done it if Homer Ford had been in town.

After Francis Fant got the five districts established, School District 5 was the main district to cover for news. Francis got tired of doing nothing at the county board so he went to School District 5 and became chairman there. That really was the thing that was most interesting for me to cover for the newspaper, to try to see what could be done in the schools when the community had a fourth grade education level. It was not just the blacks. It was everybody. It was discouraging writing for a newspaper everyday when nobody could read the blame stuff.

When I came to Anderson, the Strom Thurmond Dixiecrat movement was going on like crazy but the economic fight for South Carolina was Lake Hartwell. The Charleston paper was saying that if Congress voted enough money to build that thing it would bankrupt the country. The Greenville paper was fighting it tooth and toenail. Wilton Hall, Louie Morris in Hartwell, the Congressman Brown from Elberton (who was Daddy's close friend) and Congressman Bryan Dorn were the only people for it. Everybody else seemed to be fighting it.

The *Greenville News* didn't want any money spent unless it was on Donaldson Air Force Base. The *Charleston Courier* wanted that money to go to the Navy Yard in Charleston. Anything else was bad.

They used to claim there would never be enough development on Lake Hartwell to repay the loss of revenue from those gullies being taken over by the Federal government. I was involved in helping to generate public support locally for Hartwell Dam. Wilton Hall and Louie Morris would get together two or three times a week to call people in Congress and call all over the country to try and get the Corps of Engineers to build it. The Corps of Engineers wanted the job. They needed the job, but they were trying to stay undercover. They had to stay undercover, look nonpolitical.

That was the biggest thing going on for years. They had been fighting to get it approved long before I got out of the Navy. While I was in service, the Corps of Engineers was buying all the property. Duke Power was fighting it like crazy. They did not want that site where the dam would be located to fall into the government's hands because they were planning to put a plant there themselves.

When Duke built Lee Steam Plant it was the biggest single tax property in the county. They still run it when they need spot power. That was a big operation. Opposition of Duke to building Lake Hartwell was just something I could not understand except that they would never be able to control it if the federal government built it. That was the political fight of the times. The development of the lake was a lot more important than other things that happened.

Wilton Hall did not make a nickel off of Lake Hartwell and neither did Louie Morris. They just thought it was a grand economic opportunity.

Slim Hembree was editor of the paper and had me covering city council while Pete Glenn was mayor. One night there was an argument, I don't remember what the argument was, but it was obvious Pete was for whatever was going to be passed. I think it was passed by one vote. I wrote the story that Glenn voted for so and so and so and so. Well, they changed my copy and said he voted against it. That's when I started going to Greenville to look for a job. I just knew I needed to get out of that place.

I went to Pete Glenn and apologized for it and he didn't believe me. Pete was a good man. He hated me. He hated Wilton Hall.

I covered city council while Bill Johnston was mayor. Often there was a lot of discrepancy between what happened and what we put in the paper. It was not irresponsibility or misbehavior but just junk Bill Johnston wanted to run. I hated to cover it because of that. I just wrote it the way he said it.

What I would try to do was talk to Bill either a day before or two days after council meetings because trying to get it that night was just impossible.

Bill and Wilton would talk every morning and decide what to do and if it didn't happen it had to go in the paper anyhow. I know that sounds crazy but that's the way it operated a lot of times.

Hall wanted Bill Johnston to be happy. They helped each other out all they could.

There was a little green hut on the Square used by policemen patrolling downtown. One of the policemen who was supposed to be patrolling was found with a key to a store. They caught him flatfooted going into the store at night. When they shook him down he had a key for two more stores. I don't think we ever got that in the paper. Bill Johnston didn't want that in the paper.

Bill Johnston's brother was U.S. Senator Olin Johnston. I think he was the brains in the family, I am sure he was a lot smarter than Bill. They burned the wires everyday talking to each other.

They finally locked Wilton up in his house – the IRS. He wouldn't pay his taxes. He kept on the phone talking to Olin Johnston to keep the IRS off him and he couldn't do it. Olin went out to Houston to the cancer clinic and Wilton called him off a sick bed to try to get something done in Washington. Olin Johnston said, "Wilton Hall, why don't you pay your damned taxes?" I'm telling you, boy, that broke up a long friendship. Olin didn't last. He died in a few years, but that was the end of that friendship.

Bill Johnston was ambitious but that was about all. He ran for governor. He did not make a very engaging political figure state-wide. His English was not good and his command of a situation was very parochial, very parochial. But he could shake hands faster than anybody.

Bill was as good a mayor as we could have had in the '30s and '40s. He could remember names – a key to political success. He liked people. He would tell me when I would go by city hall, "I have got to go by the hospital." I would say, "Who is sick?" He would say, "I don't know, I am going to shake hands with everybody." Whether they had diphtheria, typhoid fever or whatever, he would go up there and speak to the people.

Bill was very proud of having paved many of the streets in Anderson. I think the Anderson Recreation Center he got built was a real good thing. He was roundly criticized for it. It was a source of constant racial pressure.

With the atmosphere created by the newspaper politics there couldn't be any leadership. A damper existed for a long time. It was vicious. It was a system. It was not democracy but it is what we had.

This state has never had any democracy. We have made wrong political moves ever since we fired on Fort Sumter. There have been a lot of bad mistakes. The hope is that with new people moving in, and we are getting lots of good people in all over the state, that better days will be ahead of us. I think the education level is really up a lot. You cannot change the thinking of a state from illiteracy to literacy in one generation. It takes at least three I think. It is improving.

I am in an old retired folks' Kiwanis Club. Over half of our people are Ohio or Connecticut people who went to Florida, got tired of the sand fleas and came here to the lake. I call them half-backs because the came halfway back to their former homes. They are wonderful for our community. They brought their money with them. They work for the Salvation Army and Meals on Wheels. They do all the community work you can think of. They are great guys. It would really be a loss to this community if we didn't have them here.

The liberal thrust of integration was from the northern states and Lyndon Johnson was pushing it. It needed to be done. But the first thing they did was to abandon the idea of small

local schools where the kids could walk to school and they put them on buses. I think that was bad. I think that started the thing off on the wrong foot. We should have built small schools but we didn't have any money and big schools were the cheapest way.

There has been a tremendous amount of improvement in black citizenship in the last 30 years. I don't know about south Los Angeles but I think it is true here. It is a peaceful community. There are blacks who live down the street from us. A black Santa Claus and the reindeer will be out in front of their place on Christmas. I thought that was great. They are good citizens. We appreciate them being here. But you can get into a fight over that in some places.

Our second daughter, Laura, is in Greensboro. Her husband, Stuart, is a wonderful guy. He is a psychologist and works with a group of psychologists. It is a big practice. There are about nine psychologists and four of them are black. Stuart doesn't want anybody knocking his friends. They are smart people. I am glad that sort of relationship can develop and create harmony.

I hope it is harmony. I believe it's harmony there and here too. It takes awhile. We still have a lot of animosity. Bob Cheatam takes me to our coffee gathering. I hear the rumble about the Confederate flag at the State House – "I will wipe out them blacks before they take that down." You know that is stupid but we've got to have more funerals, I reckon, to get to a better situation. My friends don't all agree with that but it is stupid to have the flag up there on the capital dome.

I think the Greenville economic people, the leaders of that community, decided they could not endure with white and black schools and they pushed this state into going along with integration. I think they are responsible for it. I think they did a beautiful job.

We went on a European tour. I guess it was during the Reagan times. It was a nice group of people. One of the most interesting people on it was from South Africa. This guy's son was dating a black woman and he said, "What am I going to do? How did South Carolina solve school integration without having a civil war?" We just got people to agree to it. He couldn't see how they would ever do that in South Africa. I am glad to see things picking up.