

JULIA DYAR 18 June 2003

MIKE MONCUS: This is Mike Moncus conducting an oral history interview for the Troup County Archives. Today's date is June 18th, 2003 and I am interviewing Julia Dyar at the Troup County Archives. The time is 1:28 pm. Mrs. Dyar would you tell us something about your family, your full name, your parents and your birth information?

JULIA DYAR: Well I'm a fifth generation Troup Countian. My father's great-grandfather came to LaGrange in the early 1820s; they settled between here and West Point, on the West Point Road. They built a home in 1832, which is still standing; it's the old Traylor place, between here and West Point, about four miles from West Point actually. Daddy grew up in the Long Cane community and Gabbettville; it was later called Gabbettville. He was one of a large family. His oldest brother was Clerk of Court for Troup County for many, many years. So my roots, my Traylor roots are here. My father was James Edward Traylor and he was the co-owner of Fincher-Traylor Motor Company, which was a Ford company here in LaGrange. My mother was Gladys Marchman from the eastern part of Georgia; her parents were pioneer settlers in Hancock and Greene Counties. She came to LaGrange to teach school. She met Daddy and of course they married. He had four children by his first wife, who had died and then mother just had me, just one child, but our family has always been very close. We've never felt bad about the step situation. My brothers and sister were my only brothers and sisters and they'll always be that way to me. One of my brothers, Frank Traylor, Sr., was a county commissioner, chairman of the county commission at one time here in Troup County. All of us have felt a strong loyalty to LaGrange and Troup County. I was born here of course at Dunson Hospital, May 2nd, 1925.

MIKE MONCUS: You mentioned your father's business as an auto business, would you tell us a little more about the business and if any other of your family members were involved in that business?

JULIA DYAR: Actually Mr. Herman Fincher and Daddy were co-owners and as far as I know there were no other of his brothers that were involved in that particular business. They were in business until the depression and at the time of the depression, Ford Motor Company made it necessary for their dealers to buy cars, when they couldn't sell them. Because of that, it made it very difficult during those years and this is the reason that we actually moved away from LaGrange. When I was ten years old, we left LaGrange. Because my father was an expert with figures, that was his forte, he went to work for the Settlement Administration during Roosevelt's term of office. We lived in various towns in Georgia during my high school years. All those times we still were very much connected to LaGrange, because his roots were here and his family was here, his brothers and sisters. We would visit LaGrange frequently. My two brothers actually lived in LaGrange. After they were adults, they formed a construction company, Traylor Construction Company.

MIKE MONCUS: You mentioned your brother Frank, were there any other brothers or sisters?

JULIA DYAR: I had two brothers, two sisters. Frank and Ed went into the construction company. My sister Tallaluh lives in Statesboro, North Carolina; my sister Anne married a newspaper editor in Fitzgerald, Georgia, that's how I met my husband.

MIKE MONCUS: Let's focus on LaGrange now and the fact that you moved away. When did you move away?

JULIA DYAR: We moved away in 1935, but before that time, I have some memories of things that happened when I was a child. One of which, I was six years old in December 1931, when we had a tremendous fire on Main Street. Our home was on South Lewis Street, which is very close to Main Street. My father put me on his shoulders and we walked from the house to see the fire, not getting too close, but being able to observe and it was quite a conflagration. Then in 1933 when I was eight, we had a cotton parade in LaGrange and this was a unique thing, I think. I don't know that they had it every year, but I remember that specific year, because our class at school was told that we were to be in a parade and that everything we were to wear had to be made of cotton. It was quite a challenge for Mother because she had to come up with some shoes that I could use and I was in bare feet. I remember she got me some canvas shoes that were cotton and I remember walking right down Main Street in the cotton parade that year. I also remember when I was in second grade, my teacher had the whole class go out to a cotton field on North Greenwood Street, about where the Episcopal Church is now, maybe a little farther out, and we picked cotton. It was the first time I'd ever picked cotton in my life and probably the last, but they made us realize the importance of cotton in the textile industry to the economy of LaGrange, even at an early age.

MIKE MONCUS: You mentioned that you lived on South Lewis Street. Can you identify the house for us where you lived?

JULIA DYAR: Well the house was torn down after I returned to LaGrange in 1978. Mother's rock garden is now a parking lot between Bull Street and South Lewis Street. Our tennis court was where the Southern Bell building is. My parents had built us a tennis court. We had lots of children on that street at the time I grew up and they'd always seem to congregate in our yard, because we had a joggling board, a see-saw and we had a tennis court. In the back, we had an old barn and that barn contained the fuselage of an airplane that had been wrecked and taken apart, but no wings were on the fuselage, but the fuselage was in our garage. Both of my big brothers were always airplane enthusiasts. We would get in that airplane and just pretend we were flying it, even though it had no wings. We had a wonderful time growing up, because there were so many children around us and our parents were very good about just letting us do things like that. I had a dollhouse, my sister Anne and I had a dollhouse. You name it we had it.

MIKE MONCUS: You mentioned in your elementary school, one of your teachers, and the parade, and a field trip where you actually picked cotton. Tell us about the

elementary school you attended and maybe even this teacher if you can remember and some of your friends in that class if you can recall.

JULIA DYAR: I do. Harwell Avenue School and this was old Harwell Avenue School. There was one built later across the street, this was the old one. Miss Tuggle was my second grade teacher. She was a dear and an old time LaGrange person that always lived here. She lived in one of the old Greek Revival houses on Vernon Street. Frequently Miss Tuggle would forget something and she, I don't know why, but she always sent me to get it and I loved going in that old Greek Revival house. I would go and get it for her. All of our teachers at that time were career teachers, they were marvelous teachers and they seemed to love children and conveyed it well. We had a good time growing up here.

MIKE MONCUS: Do you recall some friends in your class that may still be here in LaGrange or may have had full lives here in LaGrange?

JULIA DYAR: They're not here, but two of my closest girl friends were Mary Callaway, who lived on Gordon Street and later moved to Albany, Georgia and Dot Taylor who lived on Vernon Street. Dot was one of a number of children. In fact, their family had about the same age children as our family had. And she and I were the closest friends growing up. She was in my wedding and she became a missionary. We roomed together one year at LaGrange College because she moved up on "The Hill" when I came back home to go to college, so that we could room together our junior years. She transferred to Mercer because she was going to be a missionary and she was a Baptist and she wanted to finish at a Baptist college. I guess I ought to mention some of the boys. Buck Birdsong turned out to be a judge, A.W. Birdsong. My first cousin Grady Traylor has come back here and retired after a career in oil business. He lives here now. There were many of us Billy Mann, Buddy Mann, Joe Daniel, a good many people, some of them still live here.

MIKE MONCUS: So you moved away at what age?

JULIA DYAR: Ten.

MIKE MONCUS: Ten, and what grade were you in?

JULIA DYAR: I was going into the fifth grade.

MIKE MONCUS: Continue your education, at least where you graduated from high school and so on if you would for us.

JULIA DYAR: I attended several different high schools; I was in the twelfth grade, Middle Girl's High School in Macon when my father found that we needed to relocate. So I went from a twelfth grade situation to a school that only had eleven grades. You can imagine I coasted most of the rest of the year except for French that was a challenge to me. I graduated from Greensboro High School, in Greensboro, Georgia.

MIKE MONCUS: Any other important instance that you can remember up to ten years old in LaGrange other than the cotton parade and any incidences or things that happened in the community that you remember in those early years?

JULIA DYAR: I'd say primarily the things I remember here were family connected and always feeling such a wonderful sense of loving this place. I always loved LaGrange, not just the people here or not just the family situation, but I always loved LaGrange. The College, even in my early age, I'd forgotten about that, was a big influence on me. One of my good friends in school was Jean Thompson, whose father was president of LaGrange College. And I visited Jean frequently, on the campus and we would run through the dormitories and have a little bit of time, up there and people were always kind to us. And we would frequently asked to be in May Day programs as children. I remember being in the Maypole dance many times and having to have special little costumes made.

MIKE MONCUS: Before you moved away where did you attend church?

JULIA DYAR: Before we moved away I was a Methodist and I grew up in the Methodist Church.

MIKE MONCUS: Let's focus now on your return to LaGrange. At what age did you return to LaGrange?

JULIA DYAR: I would have been seventeen.

MIKE MONCUS: And you returned to attend college?

JULIA DYAR: Yes I did.

MIKE MONCUS: Now did your family move back here or you just came to...

JULIA DYAR: No I wanted to come here, I loved LaGrange. I was offered a scholarship and so I came back to LaGrange College thinking that I was going to transfer in two years. I had planned to go to Emory and learn political science. After two years at LaGrange College during World War II, there was such a protected, wonderful situation up there, when the world was going to heck around us, losing friends to death and that kind of thing and so I wouldn't of changed after my first two years there. I was in a little group that eight of us girls were just inseparable. So I did not want to go anywhere else after that so I finished LaGrange. I finished in French.

MIKE MONCUS: So you majored in French?

JULIA DYAR: With minors in History and Psychology.

MIKE MONCUS: What were your plans in using your majors?

JULIA DYAR: Teaching. I remember most of us at that time when we took a subject to major in, we were thinking in terms of becoming teachers.

MIKE MONCUS: Did you teach?

JULIA DYAR: I taught a year and a half.

MIKE MONCUS: Where was that?

JULIA DYAR: I taught first in Jackson, Georgia and I couldn't find a French opening there. I taught History there and English, but my second year, Dot Taylor, the same friend I was talking about was a church secretary in Dalton at First Baptist Church up there. Dot knew that they were looking for a French teacher and so she told the superintendent about me. My second year I was able to get a position in French, but in the meantime, I had met my husband and so I only taught from September through December.

MIKE MONCUS: Since you mentioned meeting your husband, would you go ahead and tell us about your marriage and your children and your immediate family?

JULIA DYAR: Hubert and I met seven years before we started dating. My sister's husband was an editor of the Fitzgerald Enterprise and Hubert's parents, he was a third generation native of northeastern Georgia, and he had just finished at the University of Georgia. I was told that I had to meet his grandmother because she was a matriarch of the Georgia Press Association.

MIKE MONCUS: What was her name?

JULIA DYAR: Mrs. Laura Doyle Dyar. My roommate in college that year had been Martha Norwood, whose father was president of the press association. Martha was going to transfer to Georgia because she wanted to major in Journalism. So that summer she insisted I go to a press convention with her and I just happened to meet Hubert. We would see each other twice a year at the press meetings, the Press Institute in the winter and the Press Convention in the summer. Finally we got around to dating and of course we married after about a year of really going together.

MIKE MONCUS: And what year was that?

JULIA DYAR: 1948. He was 22 and he was the youngest editor at the time of a local newspaper in the state of Georgia, The Western Record. Quickly I forgot about teaching, but I always loved writing. So I got involved with the papers.

MIKE MONCUS: So you lived in Royston?

JULIA DYAR: For ten years.

MIKE MONCUS: And Royston is a famous town for...

JULIA DYAR: Ty Cobb's hometown! We saw Ty frequently though.

MIKE MONCUS: I was familiar with Royston also because of Franklin Springs and Immanuel College, there.

JULIA DYAR: Yes it's a wonderful school there, and a wonderful printing house.

MIKE MONCUS: Did you have children?

JULIA DYAR: No, unfortunately, but I say when somebody asks me that, I always say that I have six wonderful nieces and nephews, four of whom I still have, two are deceased. I'm a great aunt to ten and a great-great aunt to six. I think people remember me as Aunt Bootsie more than they do anything else.

MIKE MONCUS: Now, let's focus again on your return to LaGrange. I guess the second time, the second return. What brought you here that time? Now you came back the other time to attend college and graduated. What brought you back to LaGrange and where have you been since?

JULIA DYAR: We left Royston left so Hubert could accept a position at the State Capitol as secretary of the Georgia Literature Commission, which was a commission appointed by the governors to fight pornography in Georgia. Hubert gave twenty years of his life doing that. It wasn't an easy task because most people misunderstood the fact that the first amendment should not protect pornography. He felt that very strongly as a newspaperman and so I was asked to go to work for the Georgia Press Association, which was the central organization of all the papers in the state. We had connections with them, having been in the newspaper business. I worked for the press association for twenty years before I came home, fourteen years as assistant manager and six years as manager. I loved my work, but after Hubert's death in 1973, I realized that Atlanta was not a place for me. It just wasn't a safe place for me, even though I loved my work. My brothers, Frank and Ed, were very anxious for me to try to get back home and my roots were here. I think they thought it was better to be back where they could look after me, but I stayed up there five years to make them realize that I could look after myself. I moved back home in 1978 as public relations director at LaGrange College, a job which I held for fifteen years until I retired in 1993.

MIKE MONCUS: Through the time that you were public relations director, tell us about some of the major growths and accomplishments on The Hill.

JULIA DYAR: Fantastic. When I had been a student here we had six buildings, and as you know now, it's over twenty. I was able to write this story about the acquisition of the Callaway campus, when Callaway Foundation gave the college all of the land, which included the auditorium, the natatorium and all that material out there. I was also here when we opened the art building, the Lamar Dodd Art Center. I was not here for the

opening of the Price Drama Building, but that was just before I came back home. We had so many wonderful things happen on The Hill. We had the dedication of the Callaway Student Center while I was here. We saw curriculum changes, here. We saw the advance of so many young people in LaGrange who were teachers being able to come back and get their Master's Degree. We saw the introduction of the Business Administration and Master of Business Administration programs. We saw a continuation of the policemen in LaGrange being able to come down and get that degree. It was a two-year degree, but so many of the police force took that course and they got their academic side as well. I'm sure that many would say that that added a lot to the police force of LaGrange. Night school advanced, summer school advanced. We had wonderful presidents at the college.

MIKE MONCUS: Talk about the presidents with whom you worked.

JULIA DYAR: Well I came when Dr. Hagood was the president, but he was only president about a year. Dr. Walter Murphy came in 1980, and of course Dr. Murphy was there the entire time that I was working for the college and a prince of a person, wonderful pastor, himself and he also has that side. But he brought a unity I think too and certainly a vision to the campus. Of course, I'm fixing to mention Dr. Gulley, but he came after I retired.

MIKE MONCUS: A great deal of growth has occurred on The Hill in the past few years, what are your feelings on the recent growth?

JULIA DYAR: I think it's marvelous, I think that what he's trying to do now is to make Georgia and the southeast realize what we have at LaGrange College. It isn't just a nominal plant, but you can certainly see that when you go up and see the buildings and all the things that we have for students nowadays. It also has a following that you don't get at a lot of small schools. We have strong Christian values placed on people who graduate. I think that's one of the things that's always made The Hill a different place. I love them opening up the street, letting us come in to the college from Broad Street and Vernon Street, that was a neat thing.

MIKE MONCUS: I apologize for dwelling so much on the college, but being from a family with eight college graduates from LaGrange College, that are still surviving, as well as my own children who have graduated from there, I'm very interested in the college. You've been very active in the Troup County Historical Society. Talk a little bit about the historical society and the gains the society has made through the years and some of the more interesting projects with which you've worked with the historical society.

JULIA DYAR: I was a member of the Troup County Historical Society when it was called the Oakfuskee Historical Society, that was when I lived in Atlanta because I always felt my roots were here were very strong. I was a member of the organization even before I came home. After I came home, I was privileged to serve as president of the Historical Society the year that the Archives was opened, the year it was dedicated

and given to us. Of course this was one of the major things that we've been so proud of because it gave us an opportunity to help preserve the records of Troup County's past and also the former functions that the city and county governments did in keeping their records. We've also, through the years, done other things. We've done tours of homes; we've entertained the Georgia Trust on two different occasions. There are a lot of people from all over the state singling out LaGrange, not only for the Archives itself, but to see the homes and meet the people and to feel the strength and support that LaGrange gives to preservation. I am presently serving on the LaGrange Preservation Commission, this is my second term and those are appointed by the city. This gives us an opportunity to at least review any changes that are going to be made to buildings that are in historic districts. When we see something that is going to be destroyed, if there is any way in the world that we can help them try to adapt that. If it's a building that's worth it, if it has integrity, historical integrity, we really support keeping that and we try to go that way. Right now we are in the process of working on a museum and that is something that's going to be really big, I hope.

MIKE MONCUS: What's the status of that project?

JULIA DYAR: I'm not on that committee, but I have been close to it, because I always read everything I can find on it. They are presently raising money to do the things that need to be done to the building

MIKE MONCUS: I certainly look forward to that.

JULIA DYAR: I do too. It's going to give us a new dimension because we're managing also, instead of just records, we'll be able to have items that need to be preserved.

MIKE MONCUS: I am aware from the LaGrange Daily News and I look forward to that every week, that you perform a service for them and would you tell us something about that and a little about your research in preparation for the articles that you supply to them?

JULIA DYAR: In 1993, when I retired from the college, for six months I rested, and I needed it. At the end of six months I was climbing the wall because I've had a job all my life, since I was 22 years old and I was 68 at the time. So I have decided I would go down and talk to my good friend Glen Long, who was publisher of the paper, and ask him if he needed a proofreader or somebody who would just come in every now and then and smell the news ink. Glen immediately said, "I'd like you to write a column." and I said, "Glen I don't want to do that, I want to enjoy what I'm doing, I don't want to have to think about whether or not what I'd write would be interesting to people." And I said I just don't think I could do a regular column." He said, "Well you think about it and come back." So I gave it some thought and I had seen in other newspapers that they sometimes had articles that were connected with the past, taken from old newspapers. So I went back to Glen and said, "What my doing a historical column based on old stories in the paper?" So we thought about it and I decided to take one from 100 years ago, 75 years ago, 50 years ago and 25 years ago and break it down and once a week in a four week

month do a column and he thought that was a great idea. I started that in December of 1993 not dreaming that ten years later I'd still be doing it. I write *Memoried Glances* and I enjoy it more than people who read it do, I'm sure, because I'm the one who prepares it. I go to the Archives for my 100 and 75 year columns and I go to the newspaper morgue for the 50 and 25 year columns. I get all my material from old newspapers by month, by year.

MIKE MONCUS: What criteria do you use in choosing the information that you are using in your column.

JULIA DYAR: Good question, I try to find something if I can, first of all that's written with flair or with interest or something that definitely relates to the history of Troup County and LaGrange. Sometimes even to the state of Georgia or to the nation. What I find, it's something that everyone relates too. I try to be generic in a way. I try to choose families a lot of times whose names still exist here as descendants, these are for the older columns. I hope that they are something that people will want to read.

MIKE MONCUS: I love it.

JULIA DYAR: You're kind; I appreciate that. I love doing it.

MIKE MONCUS: You have lived in LaGrange, you've been away from LaGrange, you returned and away and returned and I'm sure that each time as you returned you've seen great changes in LaGrange. Recall some of the changes you saw when returning. You can do this in any historical...

JULIA DYAR: Primarily I saw a tremendous change in the economy of this area because it had changed from totally textile, well I won't say totally textile, but certainly mostly textile, to diversified industry. The kind of diversified industry that was quality industry, that made it possible for the people that graduated from LaGrange College, for the people that graduated from here and were coming back home or wanted to, to find jobs, to find good jobs, to build a life. To me that was probably one of the greatest things that I saw.

I also saw cultural changes. LaGrange was always a city that had a culture, because the college always offered us art, music, educational speakers that would come here that were offered to the community. So it's always been a very cultured town, but I saw the growth of things like the symphony orchestra. I saw things like the two art museums; imagine two art museums like the Lamar Dodd Art Center, and the Chattahoochee Valley Art Museum in one town! I saw musical programs. Our churches have contributed so much to the quality of the musical programs here as well as just the musical artists that we brought in here to do lessons. It's amazing to me that quality of life that a town the size of LaGrange has. A lot of that was due to the gifts from the Foundation, the Callaway Foundations, but that wasn't totally it. It was just that this city is oriented towards culture and we've been so fortunate to have the Callaway Foundations plus that just natural appeal to culture.

MIKE MONCUS: That was one of the questions I going to ask, about the Callaway Foundation and the Callaway Educational Association and its contributions to the community as well as the Troup County Recreation Department for the youngsters and you already mentioned what happened to the Callaway Educational Association and their contributions to the college, but also to the Troup County recreational department. I agree with you it's a great era. Comment on the recreation commission and the accomplishments it's made from a person of your status's point of view.

JULIA DYAR: I was fortunate enough when I came back home to be on a long range planning committee at our church, First Baptist Church. I served on that committee with Mike Daniel. Whoever knew Mike Daniel knew what a glowing, vibrant personality he was and how much he believed in the recreation side of individuals as well as the religious side. I think that Mike impressed me as much or more than any young person I ever met. Not only with his spiritual side, but also how much he loved the young people, enough to give his life, really for recreation so I guess to relate to that we do so much for the recreational side here, but I guess I give Mike a lot credit having met him.

MIKE MONCUS: He was a phenomenal person, he certainly was. About civic organizations participation, are you involved?

JULIA DYAR: Not really, except that my daddy was a Rotarian and my brother was a Lion and I know how much the Kiwanis club, so many of the men's organizations and the women's help so much with that side. I did not join the Women's Club, because I worked and it was just difficult to do that; I did join the book club. [NOTE: Roundtable Book Club] I'm a member of the D.A.R. [Daughters of the American Revolution] I think that organizations really strengthen a town, not only in its work and its development.

MIKE MONCUS: You've done such a good job with the interview. Is there any other thing throughout your life here in LaGrange that you would like to tell the people who will view this interview in the future about?

JULIA DYAR: I would love to say what coming back home and being a member of First Baptist Church has meant to me. I'm very active in the church and my mother was a Baptist, but my father was a Methodist. But I came back home into a church that was just a large church on the square and you would think that perhaps it was not a friendly church. There is so much warmth and so much love at First Baptist Church in LaGrange that it's really surprising to find that in a large city church or a large church, but it is a church that reaches out and has done so much in the way of local missions. Some of the things that we do in our church and it's wonderful to be a part of that.

MIKE MONCUS: I like to close the interviews with giving the person I'm interviewing the opportunity to make some closing comments. Now I realize that you've just closed in talking about the church, but would you like to send a message to the people of the next century who might view this interview concerning your life here in LaGrange and so on?

JULIA DYAR: I would say that the greatest gift my parents gave me was the love for history and the appreciation of what their people, our ancestors have done for this area and I would like to think that all the parents who live in LaGrange now would be trying very hard to interest their children into finding out more, not only about their own past, but about the past of this whole area, because we have a terrific past. We have a wonderful tradition built here and I would love to see the young people here be proud of it and be part of it.

MIKE MONCUS: Thank you Julia Dyar.