

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
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Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk  
1984 October 22

RICHARD RUSK: Interview with Dean Rusk on his boyhood days in Atlanta. A lot of these questions and material is based on Franklin [Miller] Garrett's book called *Atlanta and Its Environs*. What are your first memories of events in Atlanta, not necessarily your boyhood or childhood but the very first things you remember as far as the public events of Atlanta are concerned.

DEAN RUSK: I think probably the coming of World War I, the fact that a number of my cousins went off to the service in the Army or the Navy. Of course, during the war we had that huge fire on the north side of town, destroyed about a third of the city. From where we lived we could clearly see that smoke and sense some of the excitement and confusion to that period. Rumors were going around that a German plane had been seen and dropped a bomb over the city to start the fire, which was nonsense of course. But I wasn't, as a small boy, caught up very much in the events of the city of Atlanta. That was fairly well removed from our lives out there in West End. But I think those were the two things that occurred while I was a small boy living there.

RICHARD RUSK: The section, West End in Atlanta--just some general characteristics of West End. Again, a lot of this you have already given me.

DEAN RUSK: In those days, West End was a very modest little community about two miles from downtown. Stores were one and two story. There were no high-rises at all made up of single family homes. There were one or two apartment houses on Gordon Street. There was a little movie house where we kids could go for a nickel. That was in the days of silent pictures and they had a player piano there to play music that was reasonably related to the theme of the movie. But West End was a considerable trading area for farmers who lived out west of Atlanta and there was a good deal of house-to-house selling in those days. The farmers would load up their wagons with vegetables and fruits and drive them in and just peddle up and down the streets like later ice cream carts did. And you would go out and buy what you needed right off the farmer's wagon. Then the Jewel Tea Company had wagons that came around through residential areas selling tea and coffee. That was always a little exciting because when we were ready to buy a pound of coffee off the Jewel Tea wagon, we knew there was a stick of peppermint candy in a pound of coffee and we always looked forward to that--but, it was pretty relaxed and laid back. Up on Peter Street nearer town from where we lived, there was a very substantial farmers' market where the farmers would come in with their wagons, have their horses taken care of. There was a big farmers' vegetable market up there and farmers came in and gathered and gossiped with each other. But even downtown Atlanta in those days had very few really high buildings, or buildings like the [Joel] Hurt building and the [Asa G.] Candler Building. They might have been twelve or fifteen stories high, but no really tall buildings. In some respects it was sort of like a grown-up country store kind of environment. It was about two miles into town from where we lived on Whitehall Street.

RICHARD RUSK: Could you think back and describe the attitudes between different classes of people in Atlanta, between middle class and upper class towards lower classes of people there? And are they similar to attitudes today that we have or were they different back in those times? Were they a little bit harsher perhaps?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we lived along the railroad track in West End on Whitehall Street which was the dividing line between the poor white residential area and the poor black residential area. And these were just two different worlds. The black shacks that the blacks lived in right across the railroad were really in terrible condition. They had no playgrounds, no free space, or anything of that sort. And I learned, I think very early, although I didn't phrase it in these terms, that the black in this country lives in two worlds. The one world is the one in which there are white people present; there is another world where the blacks are all by themselves. Ralph [Johnson] Bunche used to later talk to me about this. When I was delivery boy for Mr. Leatherwood's little grocery store, one of my jobs was to go down into the black neighborhood there and take orders and then come back and fill my little red wagon with what they had ordered and deliver it to them. There were times when I would come along and people I wanted to see would be sitting on the porch talking in their own group and I would be asked just to sit on the step until they got through talking about something. And I could hear the kinds of things blacks said to each other when there were no whites around. They didn't consider me a white. I was just a little delivery boy. And that gave me a pretty strong impression of these two different worlds. There are a good many whites over the years who have said, "Well, we understand the blacks. We have lived with them all of our lives." And I think that is pretty much phony because white people never penetrate that world where the blacks are all by themselves, so they just don't--

RICHARD RUSK: And vice versa.

DEAN RUSK: And perhaps vice versa. But I don't recall much crime in those circumstances. We white and black kids back and forth across the railroad track would play together after school and on weekends without any problems, except that about once a month we would choose up sides and play cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers--

RICHARD RUSK: Yes, you have told us about the childhood games. What about, in general, the attitudes, the relations with the way Atlantans felt towards the lower classes of people?

DEAN RUSK: Well, among the whites there were still social distinctions that were very real.

RICHARD RUSK: More so than today?

DEAN RUSK: I think so. You see, in those days, although West End might have been described by some people as a sort of well-to-do neighborhood, that is only a relative term. There were no real mansions; there were no really rich people out there. It was middle class. There were some comfortable houses, but nothing like one you would find on the north side or out on Ponce de Leon Avenue and places like that. I have teased some of my friends in Atlanta by reminding them that it took me forty years to get from Whitehall Street to an invitation to the Piedmont Driving Club.

RICHARD RUSK: I see all kinds of references to the Piedmont Driving Club.

DEAN RUSK: It was and is an elite club there.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have any contacts with it at all back in those days?

DEAN RUSK: No. Well, when I went to Boys High School some of my best friends were from the north side of town, whose families were members of the Piedmont Driving Club. And we got along fine at school, and they accepted me as a friend, and we worked together on a lot of things, but socially, we did not get over to the Piedmont Driving Club for the dances and tennis tournaments and things like that. But the general environment in the society there in West End was anti-black, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-foreign. It was really the attitudes of yeoman farmers, Protestants, clerical workers, less distinguished professional people: lawyers and doctors and people like that. But there were a good many strong feelings about these outside groups--things I heard about Catholics when I was a boy would curl your hair.

RICHARD RUSK: And the same way with Jewish people.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, right. Although there was no discrimination in the schools among the kids towards Jewish classmates in the elementary or high school. We had a number of Jewish children there.

RICHARD RUSK: It was more abstract than it was personal.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I remember one would occasionally hear some resentment over the fact that the Jewish children got a double dip on holidays because they not only got all the Christian holidays, they got all the Jewish holidays, and we thought that was a little unfair. But it was very much of a modest income, white, Protestant community. And in those days that set the pattern of people's attitudes. Word went around that the priest had the privilege of spending the first night with the bride after a marriage. That's an old, old medieval thing that's been going around for a long time.

DEAN RUSK: The Catholic Church in West End was just across the street from the church I attended, the West End Presbyterian Church. And it always appeared to be dark because where we had our services they had already had their masses early in the morning and there was nobody around. We never saw anybody stirring around there. It was almost like a haunted house. We would always speculate about what might be going on inside this place. I think in my own family these sentiments were not particularly pronounced because my father was an educated man. He did a lot of reading, so we didn't get caught up in a lot of these prejudices that were a general part of the community in those days. But I must say as kids we were pretty stirred up by this film *The Birth of a Nation* when it came in.

RICHARD RUSK: I saw a lot of evidence of that. So you did see *Birth of a Nation*?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes, as a child when it first came out.

RICHARD RUSK: How old were you when you saw it?

DEAN RUSK: Must have been eight, or ten, or something like that. When the Ku Klux riders began to ride to the tune of "Dixie," that was very exciting. You see, there was a heavy pall resting over much of the South as a residue from the Reconstruction days that followed the Civil War, and we still had some of the attitudes of a defeated people, some of the artificial pride that is generated by people whose side lost. And mainly we just took for granted that Robert E. [Edward] Lee's forces got so tired winning battles they finally lost the war. We were all very proud of Robert E. Lee. Both of my grandfathers had been in the Civil War. So that was still very much a part of the things that kids talked about with each other.

RICHARD RUSK: I suppose it was necessary to invent the glory and the chivalry of the Old Confederacy to cope with those wounds and pain of having lost.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, particularly since the Civil War was followed by that period of Reconstruction. Had Abraham Lincoln lived and worked with Robert E. Lee on the reconciliation of the North and South, the whole history of the South, I think, may have been different.

RICHARD RUSK: You think so? You have enough respect for the power of government and leadership to think that that section of history

DEAN RUSK: The Influence of those two people, don't want to sound too southern here, but at the end of the Civil War, northern radicals took over the Congress and insisted upon all sorts of punitive measures against the South. And that left a residue of bitterness that lasted a long time. It was not really until World War I that that began to ease up some. But it was not really until World War II that it disappeared.

RICHARD RUSK: What about *Birth of a Nation*?

DEAN RUSK: That film made a tremendous impact in the South when it was first produced and stirred everybody up, stirred old memories. No, it created quite a sensation when it was shown.

RICHARD RUSK: Now this cross that came out of the hills of Scotland--you mean to say that the Ku Klux Klan's famous symbol is derived from Scotland? The burning cross?

DEAN RUSK: It is possible. The original Ku Klux Klan was a more respectable and well-thought-of organization than it came later to be when it was organized by a bunch of racketeers. But it was the South's response to military government and a good many of the abuses that occurred during military government during the Reconstruction period. Oh, I think in those early days the Ku Klux Klan had a lot of popular support.

RICHARD RUSK: Old family or good friends, relatives ever have any strong dealings with them back in your time?

DEAN RUSK: I never knew any relatives who were members of the Ku Klux Klan. Of course, it was very secret in those days, because riding with them was a crime. But later on, we had a boarder in our home. Forgot his name now and what he did, but I suspect that he was a member of the group that lynched Leo [M.] Frank because he was out that day and night and when he came home he had what he claimed was a piece of the rope that they had used to hang Leo Frank.

RICHARD RUSK: They never did catch those twenty-five fellows. There was a whole crowd of them and they never were prosecuted. Do you remember his name?

DEAN RUSK: No, no. We occasionally had a boarder just to help make ends meet. We had a number of cousins who boarded with us at times from Cherokee County.

RICHARD RUSK: That ticket for *Birth of a Nation* was two bucks a shot. Are you trying to tell me that back in those days that was an enormous sum of money?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, we saw it in our little neighborhood theater: kids for a nickel. It was a rather crude silent picture in terms of technique but it made its point and stirred up everybody.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have the feeling at the time that it was kind of a naughty movie, that it did bring out some prejudice? Because apparently the North reacted pretty strongly to it.

DEAN RUSK: No, no. The mood of the community was all with *Birth of a Nation*.

RICHARD RUSK: Got a question about these class distinctions in Atlanta. Now the fact that the Rusk brothers and sisters worked so hard due to the influence of your folks and the education that you had to move on in life and move on to different things, would part of that have been an incentive to climb out of that class that you folks found yourselves in when your dad [Robert Hugh Rusk] first moved out of Cherokee County? Obviously you had to start from scratch there in West End.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we were Scotch-Irish, and on my mother's [Frances Elizabeth Clotfelter] side German and Scotch. But we were not members of the old families of Atlanta. There was kind of an automatic elite in Atlanta based upon some of the old pre-war families, and we were not that. But we knew we were what people called "good stock": It's Scotch-Irish stock, and we were proud. We were poor, but if anybody else had called us poor we would have socked them. Again, in my family there was a kind of recognition that my father had gone to college and we read widely. And we were, in that respect, perhaps a cut above some of our neighbors in the place where we lived.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you a little embarrassed by that part of town where you lived?

DEAN RUSK: I was never embarrassed by it. You see, from the very beginning in Cherokee County and in Atlanta, we were poor to the point where I had to wait two years until my father felt that he could spend two dollars for a bicycle tire to put on our bicycle, and we finally got one at Christmas time. But our house was always impeccably clean and mother always had flowers

around somewhere. Every Monday we would scour down the floors in our house. I remember that because when you wash pine floors, on Tuesdays there would be splinters. But there was no lack of pride and a recognition of the importance of keeping clean. Our clothes were clean, the house was clean, it was tidy, the yard was kept clean. On Whitehall Street we had some grass on the front lawn, and that was kept cut and the backyard was kept raked.

RICHARD RUSK: Were your neighbors living the same way, or did they let things slide a bit?

DEAN RUSK: Pretty much. We had a little bit more of a yard than some of them had, but we didn't feel there was anything much to be ashamed of.

RICHARD RUSK: And as such, you wouldn't have felt that compelling need to lift yourselves out of poverty or anything? Your ambitions came from other sources?

DEAN RUSK: No, we had this--passion for education was more of a factor. Of course, we had ambition because it was--a great many families that each generation would do a little better than the previous generation. You would keep moving up in terms of income and professional standing and things like that. I mentioned earlier that there was very little crime where we lived out at West End. Don't know why or anything like that. I am not enough of a sociologist to figure it out. But we left our doors open; we didn't lock them; things weren't stolen, didn't have a drink of alcohol until I got to Oxford at the age of twenty-two. I never heard of narcotics in those days. It was just absolutely beyond the pale. So, crime was of an incidental sort, coming more out of high spirits and things like that than out of any systematic desire to commit crimes as such.

RICHARD RUSK: Every American city has spawned its exotic, quaint characters in any given neighborhood. I see references to some people there who were known for their eccentric ways: [William Jasper] Franklin the Goat Man, for example, and some others. Did you have any neighborhood types around there that were so pegged that you recall?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't remember anything of that sort. From that point of view suppose life where we lived was fairly dull in the sense that there was nothing to excite the news media or anything like that. Suppose if we could look at it now a lot of things would be quaint and unusual. Just the business of my going with my uncle in his wagon to Fort McPherson from his farm just a few miles west of West End to pick up the slop from the army kitchens to take back to feed the hogs. That sort of thing doesn't happen these days. But we were very simple in our standards when time came in school to put on a play or a pageant or something like that. Our costumes were homemade by our mothers. I remember Mother made me a costume once to play the role of an ear of corn. But we just made do with what we had; we didn't go fancy on all sorts of costly things, we did it the easy and cheap way. But on the other hand it gave full room for the imagination to play, and I think that that was very much of a plus when I was growing up. So much was built upon imagination.

RICHARD RUSK: Were the roads there in your end of Atlanta?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the street in front of our house, Whitehall Street, was paved with cobblestones. And that at least kept the wagon wheels from cutting deep ruts in the roads,

although, unfortunately, you couldn't skate on it and it was a little bumpy for automobiles. But as soon as you got beyond the cobblestones it was dirt: dirt roads. They gradually sort of put gravel on it and things like that, but you get a mile or so away from West End and you were on dirt roads.

RICHARD RUSK: The crossroads at West End were also out of cobblestone?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, cobblestone.

RICHARD RUSK: When did you get your first macadam road? I guess it would be concrete first, huh?

DEAN RUSK: I think that they put macadam on tar over these cobblestones just before we left West End. And, of course, that was a big day. But we had sidewalks, but again made up of slabs of concrete, maybe a foot and a half across. And the cracks between the slabs meant that roller skating was kind of difficult because it was not really smooth like the later all-concrete sidewalks came to be. There were a lot of trees around and that helped. In our backyard we had two huge cottonwood trees which were great for climbing and for building tree houses and things like that.

RICHARD RUSK: How big was your yard in general? What about the density of that in West End?

DEAN RUSK: Well, our lot must have been seventy-five feet across and one hundred fifty feet deep, or something like that. We had one of the larger lots on that particular block. And then there was an alley which ran alongside of our house and then made an "L" turn and went over to cut into the next street, which was used by delivery trucks bringing in coal and things like that. There was a rear access as well as a street access to our place, and we used that alley for a lot of things. In the corner of the alley we would dig forts, and all sorts of things figured greatly in our playing procedures.

RICHARD RUSK: I noticed in the *Cherokee Advance* and also this book that back in those days there was an awful lot of reference in the media, newspapers, advertisements for different cough syrups and tonics and various things. And at the same time you'd see lots of obituaries of young children who had died. I guess the real appeal for ads and that type of medicine was trying to do something for the sickness that did exist, particularly the young children, when in fact medical science had not been developed and you really didn't know what things were caused by and how to care for the young and care for yourselves.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we had a good many simple remedies in terms of medicine. This was long before modern drugs: penicillin and things like that. We took a lot of calomel and castor oil and Epsom salts. There were a good many tonics.

RICHARD RUSK: I guess there was just a lot of what we would call today ignorance about what caused diseases. Was there a definite relationship established between sanitary conditions and getting sick?

DEAN RUSK: We had begun to understand that. There was an appreciation of the germ theory of disease, but the remedies were not all that effective. If we had a sore throat, my father would maybe put some soda in a little bit of sorghum syrup and heat it up on the top of a kerosene lamp and it got all foamy, and we would take that by spoon and that would tend to ease our sore throat. Sometimes these rumors are not all that unscientific. During the flu epidemic that came along during World War I, which was really a very serious one, we all wore bags of asafetida around our necks. Now, actually that had a little scientific base to it because asafetida smells so bad that you stayed away from each other. You kept your distance from each other. So that helped restrain the spread of the flu. But there were such things as seven-year itch and occasionally there were mites or lice to have to think about and get cleaned up on. Bedbugs were always a problem. We had to keep cleaning out the mattresses and featherbeds and things like that to get rid of these bedbugs.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have screens on your windows back then?

DEAN RUSK: No, not on Whitehall Street. We did later but not there, nor in Cherokee County. But we made double use of flyswatters. We had kind of cloth screens that we would spread over food and things like that to keep the flies away. By the time I got to Atlanta, automobiles were not all that unusual. You would see a good many of them. One of our Sunday afternoon activities--Sunday being a day when we were not allowed to do very much--we could sit on the grass out in front of our place and make a list of the different makes of cars that drove by our house. We would keep scores on these things.

RICHARD RUSK: Steam-driven and gas-driven?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. But we had a great variety of automobiles in those days that you don't have any more, like Winston, and the Poetry of Motion, they called it, and Stutz Bearcat, and the Austin. We learned to recognize all these makes of cars--the Rio, the Franklin. But they gradually consolidated into the larger units--the Nash, lots of different makes of cars.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever ride on a steam car?

DEAN RUSK: No.

RICHARD RUSK: Dueling tradition in the old American South and the last instance of it in Atlanta in 1889. Go ahead, Pop.

DEAN RUSK: Well, dueling had passed away before I was born, but feuding had not disappeared. Up in Cherokee County we were in the foothills and on the edge of the feuding country. And one of my father's brothers, one of my uncles, got into a feuding situation with a nearby family. There was really bad blood between these two families and my uncle was going over toward Woodstock in horse and buggy and coming toward him to a very narrow bridge across a little creek there came the other fellow. And they just stopped on each side of the little stream and each got out and started shooting each other, and my uncle killed the other fellow. But they didn't even take him down to Canton for a trial. The unwritten law was very much a real thing in those days.

There was still a good deal of that southern tradition of chivalry around in those days: insults to your women folk, and things like that. I remember when I was in the second grade of school, I fought all afternoon once with another guy because he had called out to a girl that I thought well of, "You're just like a cash register, it takes money to open your drawers." That was a deep insult and I took him on and we fought all afternoon.

My father had a revolver in the house, and in Cherokee County he had a shotgun. But he had the revolver because there was a time when he was a kind of a police officer or something, and he used this. But I remember his getting it out only once the whole time in my life. There seemed to be a prowler outside of our house one night in the alley and he wasn't sure who it was. So he got his pistol and went out to look round to see who was prowling around the house. We were all pretty scared inside the house there because we didn't know what might happen. Firearms up in Cherokee County you hunted rabbits and things like that, but they were never a big deal with us.

RICHARD RUSK: I was reading an Atlanta history about Henry [Woodfin] Grady.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were voices in the South in those days looking toward the future and trying to put the past behind us and get a fresh start. Henry Grady was one of the best known of those voices. You might be interested to know that when my father was at Davidson, each student had to present a senior oration before graduation. And my father's senior orations was very much along the lines of Henry Grady's approach. Now that was in 1894, long before he was married and I was born.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever see a copy of his speech?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, it's around somewhere. My sister Margaret [Rusk] had it and it is in one of these boxes somewhere, or Parks [Rusk] may have it. We had a good deal of singing in our family. My father was a pretty good tenor. My mother was a nice alto, and we children sang a lot; church songs, folk songs. Spirituals, things like that. We had an old piano, but nobody really knew how to play it very well. But my father played a violin, and he had done that in college a bit. I remember when the first phonographs came in. That was a great invention as far as we were concerned. The records were cylinders and you had this horn sticking up like you could see the Victor advertisements. We had a fair amount of music that way. It was not very technically efficient, but we could listen to [Enrico] Caruso and all sorts of people.

One of my regrets is that I never learned to play a musical instrument, when I was in high school. Four of us boys in my church decided that we would like to put together a barbershop quartet and we went to a music teacher to see if she would help us. She listened to us and said we didn't have a quartet because we were all baritones--we didn't have a tenor and we didn't have a bass. So we forgot about that.

The first house we moved into in Atlanta was on Fifth Street--long since overrun by Georgia Tech. But even there, in what seemed to be almost the middle of the city, we still had an outdoor privy. Well, the stench of that tank truck was hard to describe. When the tank truck would come around, my mother would get the shovel by the fireplace and put some raw cotton on it and set it

on fire, and we would sit around that shovel smelling the burning cotton rather than the tank truck. But both my older brothers had typhoid fever while we were living there. For some reason I escaped it, but both of them had it and had a very tough time with it. But then when we moved to Whitehall Street in West End there was a flush toilet and this was really a miracle from our point of view. I remember that we kids would slip in and pull the chain just to see it happen, just to see it flush. That was really something. We had never seen anything like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about the emergence of a black lower and middle class coming out of slavery and able to prosper in the times--

DEAN RUSK: We didn't see much of that in West End where I lived, but downtown in Atlanta we could see it. For example, the Herndon's Barbershop, right there at Five Points in Atlanta was one of the most elegant barbershops you ever saw in your life. And this was owned and run by blacks. And the bluebloods of Atlanta would go in there to get shaves and haircuts, get your suit pressed, get your shoes shined, manicure if you wanted it. And he died a very wealthy man. His barbershop was a great tradition in Atlanta for a very long time. But black businessmen did not really begin to make their dent until substantially later.

Relics were a matter of some interest to us. In Cherokee County the relics that we were interested in were Indian arrowheads and things like that. We found a good many of those. But when we moved to Atlanta the relics were Civil War relics--spent bullets and things like that. As a matter of fact, after I married your mother and we paid our first visit to my family in Atlanta, the first thing my father did was to take her out in back and show her some Civil War trenches behind our house. She was a Yankee, you see.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there a strong interest in the past--for example, your forefathers up there in Cherokee County and prior to that--back in those times? I know Margaret expressed terrific interest later on that. Did you have a real curiosity about your immediate forefathers?

DEAN RUSK: In those days, when the family would gather, uncles or aunts coming to visit, or you go visit them, or that sort of thing, the older people would sit around on the porch and just exchange stories that had been passed down mouth to mouth from one generation to the next. So there was a lot of that kind of talk around. But that was all part of it.

RICHARD RUSK: That tradition is kind of breaking down. My next question would be the fact that you left Georgia, went to Davidson, Oxford, never went back South until fifty or sixty years had gone by. Guess you were pretty unusual as far as the Rusks were concerned in Georgia and for families in the South at that time. The tradition would be to stay pretty close to home, I suppose.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I stayed out of school for two years between high school and college and worked in a little law office in Atlanta, Augustus [H.] Roan's law office. But then in 1927, I went off to Davidson and I didn't really come back to Georgia to live until 1970. So during all those years I would come home to visit occasionally for two or three days at a time, but I spent most of my time in Washington, D. C. and California, New York and places like that. But always found, and still do, that when I would come back home, it didn't take me but an hour or two to become a

Georgian again, in accent and in things you talked about and were interested in. And I never felt any estrangement with my country cousins in Cherokee County. And I must say, your mother has always been exactly the same person with my country cousins as she was with princes and potentates and presidents. She was just always herself. No, I lost touch with a good many friends and people, relatives, that sort of thing, because I was away for so long, but it's really quite extraordinary to see how quickly things revert to normal when you get back to see them and talk with them. You get around them a little bit and it was just as though you had never been away.

RICHARD RUSK: Back in the old pictures of those times, I see men dressed in top hats and coats, very formal it seems, most of the time.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that's true. You would dress that way when you'd go to Sunday School and church and for any kind of official gathering of any sort, including family picnics and things of that sort. In between times, when you were just out playing, you wore whatever you wanted to. But typically in the summertime, of course, in those days all the kids went barefooted from the first of May. The first of May was generally the date that going barefooted started.

RICHARD RUSK: Traveling downtown from West End, for example, to do some shopping you would put on your coat and top hat if you were of a certain age? That kind of formality.

DEAN RUSK: Well, the grown men usually wore hats. We kids didn't, but the men folk did. If my father went downtown for something he would wear a coat and hat. We didn't really know much about things called sport shirts in those days or t-shirts and things like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Fireworks in the times in which they were used--

DEAN RUSK: Well, we typically had fireworks for the Fourth of July and New Year, and often on Christmas. They were legal in those days and [there were] various sizes of firecrackers, of course a lot of sparklers and rockets and things of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: The biggest one we had as a kid was what they called an ash can, which was about two inches long and cylindrical. Now did you have anything bigger than that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yeah. And sometimes we would use a big firecracker to launch something into the air: put in in one end of the tube or a cardboard tube of some sort, light the bottom and see how far you could shoot something through the air. We made a lot of toys in those days: wagons, dolls, scooters. You would find an old skate somewhere and you would make yourself a scooter that you propelled with one foot on the scooter and using one foot as a propeller. But you see, we tried to make do with what we had because we didn't have any money to buy these things, and so we'd make a lot of things. We were constantly whittling and hammering and putting things together and making all sorts of things.

RICHARD RUSK: What about prohibition?

DEAN RUSK: I am sure that in Cherokee County a good many people, including perhaps some kinfolk of mine, had little stills out in the woods somewhere, but I never saw any of them. And

as say, I never had a drink of alcoholic liquor until I got to Oxford at the age of twenty-two. So we were pretty law-abiding, straight kind of people in those days. The injunctions of the Bible were serious to us and we didn't fool around very much.

RICHARD RUSK: What about the open air open classroom concept at Lee Street School and the fact that it was a normal school as well for elementary school teachers.

DEAN RUSK: A fair amount of experimentation went on there for the benefit of these teacher candidates. Of course since it was a teacher training school, we had--

RICHARD RUSK: You must have had a lot of class room aides.

DEAN RUSK: We not only had very select teachers for our own classroom on a regular basis, but we had these teacher candidates around to help out on all sorts of projects. So it was really very good. It was a very good experience. Do you remember I mentioned the streetlamps? The street lamps were gas in those days and at certain times of the day; the lamplighter would come along and light the things. This was done by hand.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he have a little torch or something? A burning torch?

DEAN RUSK: He'd have a flame on the end of a long stick that he'd--but we moved from that into arc lights.

RICHARD RUSK: While you were there you made that transition?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And then you got to the modern, incandescent kind of lights.

RICHARD RUSK: Bicycles. Did you Rusk kids have your own bikes and get around quite a bit with those?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, we always had one bike. Once in a while something might happen and we would pick up a second one in a trade or something, but we always had a bike. The bike we had was one that we were proud of because it was a very thin-wheeled bike that was a racing bike. Of course, that was something special for us to be riding a round with the other kids with a racing bike. Both with bicycles and automobiles in those days you always had around with you some tire patch to do your own patching if you got a puncture because all those horse wagons and buggies and things like that get running around, nails would drop out of their shoes and then you'd pick them up in your tire. But we were expert and we had our own pump to pump air. If you went by automobile, say from Atlanta up to Cherokee County or down to Conyers, you just assumed you would have at least one flat tire on the trip. So everybody knew how to fix their own tires and had pumps to pump with.

On Whitehall Street, we started out there without any electricity in the house. We had flush toilets and running water, no hot water unless we boiled it ourselves. But our lighting was from kerosene lamps--I washed thousands of chimneys of kerosene lamps to get the soot off of them for the next day -or by throwing some pine knots into the fireplace. But then I got a job at the

Western Electric Supply Company, about a block away on Whitehall Street, as an office boy. And while I was there I discovered that I could buy electric fixtures and materials for factory price. And so on that basis, we wired our house on Whitehall Street for electricity and for the first time had electric lights: not many appliances, but at least we had the lights. We also could run an electric fan.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you the first house in your block to wire up like that?

DEAN RUSK: Probably. That happened only because we could get it so cheaply at factory prices. My father did the wiring himself.

RICHARD RUSK: Just ran all the wires exposed, I suppose. What kind of voltage did you have going through your lines back in those days?

DEAN RUSK: 110 volts, but the wiring had a good insulation on it. Some of it was run through cables up through the walls to cut back on the possibility of fire.

RICHARD RUSK: As your mother and dad began to get these electrical appliances over the years, it must have cut down on the housework for your mother. As a matter of fact, that was one of the reasons you moved from Cherokee County to Atlanta, to try to escape the backbreaking--

DEAN RUSK: That's right. That little farm in Cherokee County was a backbreaker for my father and it was a real killer for my mother. She had to work so hard to keep things going up there. And so my father moved to come to Atlanta as much for my mother's sake as for anything else.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about piano playing for the silent movies

DEAN RUSK: Yes, in some of the movies they would simply put on rolls of music that would be reasonably consistent with the theme of the movie. But occasionally they would have a live piano player there following the movie and playing whatever music seemed to him to be appropriate.

RICHARD RUSK: The Atlanta race riot in 1906. Precipitating factors were the demagoguery of [Thomas E.] Tom Watson and also some alleged assaults of black men made upon white women, for instances--

DEAN RUSK: Even the rumor of an attack by a black man on a white woman would really set everything on fire, and there were some real rebel rousers in those days. We had a congressman in Atlanta when I was in high school named [William David] Willie D. Upshaw. He was lame, he moved around on a crutch. But he was a rebel rouser of the old school. If there was any prejudice around he knew where it was and how to make use of it. It was not until later that we began to get a few statesmen to Washington like Richard [Brevard] Russell [Jr.] and Walter [Franklin] George.

There were a lot of people, particularly in the churches, who did not fall victim to all these extreme prejudices, who took a very calm, dispassionate view of such things as the Leo Frank case involving, allegedly, Mary Phagan. So there was more normality and decency around that found public expression through politicians and people like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Of course the media back in those days would be the same as the media today. They would tend to sensationalize. Leo Frank was killed in 1913. You would have been a four-year-old boy. You mentioned that you might have had a boarder that participated in that--

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, that came later. The actual lynching of Leo Frank came later than 1913.

RICHARD RUSK: A couple of years later anyway: 1915. August 1915.

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Tell me about the Leo Frank incident back in Atlanta in 1915 where a Jewish superintendent of labor was convicted of murder and later lynched by a mob. You said earlier that possibly a boarder in your house may have participated in that mob action. He brought home a little chunk of rope one night.

DEAN RUSK: He brought home a chunk of the rope which he claimed was a part of the rope that had been used to hang Leo Frank.

RICHARD RUSK: That's about as far as your recollections of--

DEAN RUSK: Except there was a lot of talk. It was a very exciting subject around Atlanta for a brief period--

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: --in Atlanta largely through my brother Parks who was, among other things, a cub reporter for the Atlanta Constitution. He covered the police beat, and he would come home and tell us things that were happening, and he kept us informed about interesting things going on around town. But then when I was in high school I got a much stronger sense of Atlanta as a city because my high school was right in the middle of town and there were boys there from all parts of the city, and we talked a lot at school. And I had jobs that gave me some impressions of Atlanta. For example, I worked at the [Walter O.] Foote and Marvin H. Davies Printing Plant as an office boy. I had to leave that job because, even under the child labor laws in those days in Georgia, which were not very much, they decided that I was too young to be wandering around among all those heavy paper cutting machines and printing presses and things like that, so they decided it was too dangerous for me.

When I was about fourteen I answered an ad in the Atlanta paper for an office boy. I went to the office there on about the second floor of the Flatiron Building on Peachtree Street and they hired me. But I found myself working for something called the Knights of the Mystic Kingdom which

was an offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan. They would go out and recruit members, charging them ten dollars for membership on an anti-black, anti- Jewish, anti-Catholic program. Then the organizers would keep about eight dollars of that and leave two dollars in the organization. But they had me running errands all over town, carrying packages all over town. And one day I discovered that I was carrying boot leg liquor, so I figured that job was not for me. And so I quit that particular job. One of the recipients made some comment to me about it once, and that was that.

I had an uncle who had a large number of bales of cotton. I forget now which one it was. Cotton went to twenty-something cents a pound and he wouldn't sell. He was going to hold it 'til the price went to forty cents a pound. Instead it dropped, and he finally had to sell it at eight or nine cents a pound.

This Southeastern Fair, which was held in Atlanta every year, was a great event for us. We kids always went to the Southeastern Fair. There you had not only all the agricultural exhibits, but the midway with all the games and things like that, plus all the rides: the Ferris wheel, the shoot- to- shoot and all sort of things. That was always a great adventure to go to the Southeastern Fair. We kids thoroughly enjoyed that. It didn't cost all that much. There was a lot to see.

RICHARD RUSK: The question is, did the earlier Ku Klux Klan group that formed in the 1870s or 1880s have any useful function there in the South?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the first KKK, at least, helped resist Reconstruction. The military government that--

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: --bigotry and race and religious hatred for profit, was the dominant theme in the revived KKK in later years.

I have told you about the Wren's Nest which was the children's library in my day. It was the home of Joel Chandler Harris, the author of the Uncle Remus stories. These days you are not supposed to talk about Uncle Remus, and there has been a cultural censorship, in effect, in knocking Uncle Remus stories out the window. I don't, myself, like to see that kind of revision of the real world. When I was growing up Uncle Remus stories were there. They were enjoyed; they developed a friendly attitude toward blacks among children. And in any event, I don't think we ought to try to erase parts of our genuine history. As you know, the Georgia football marching band does not play Dixie because there are a good many blacks in the band and there are many in the student body, and they don't like to have Dixie played. As it began there's a problem there, it seems to me, of cultural censorship. It is ironic that the Georgia football song is the Battle Hymn of the Republic which was the northern marching song during the Civil War.

But no SEC [Southeastern Conference] marching band now plays Dixie, except at the University of Mississippi where Dixie has always been their football fighting song.

RICHARD RUSK: Did I ever tell you about the incident when I was at training camp in the Marine Corps between our Syracuse tank battalion [New York] and the group we were training next to, which was from Birmingham, Alabama? And every morning we ran up the stars and stripes, and every morning those fellows ran up the Rebel flag. One night a couple of our black fellows got a little angry with that and went over there and took their flag down and stomped it into the ground there. And we had a terrific rumble between two battalions of marines over the Civil War that was fought a hundred and twenty years ago. I was on guard duty at that time.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think--I'm sure that's disappearing very rapidly. When I was Secretary of State I visited Davidson College. And my old fraternity, Kappa Alpha Fraternity, asked me to come over to the house for lunch or something. And when I got over there they had only a Confederate flag flying out in front of the house. And I said, "Now wait a minute fellows. Fun is fun, but I am Secretary of State of the United States, and you will either have to put up a United States flag there or take that flag down." Since they didn't have a United States flag, they took the flag down. Now, a lot of that is prankishness and that sort of thing. It is not serious.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever get involved with or witness any violence between Yankees and Rebels over the Civil War fought a hundred years ago?

DEAN RUSK: No. A lot of this was what, in another circle, you'd call "tea table conversation." These are things that people said and you were sort of expected to go along with it as part of the mythology of the community in which you lived. But it wasn't taken seriously.

RICHARD RUSK: About World War I, and the armistice after World War I, and celebrations in Atlanta in 1918. Go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: Well we bought all the war propaganda in World War I: the Huns and all their atrocities and things like that. We celebrated the end of World War I--Armistice Day--with a lot of whoop-de-do. And shortly after the end of the war, General [John Joseph] "Black Jack" Pershing, who had commanded our forces in World War I, came to Fort McPherson, and that brought him right past Lee Street School. And we were all out there lining the streets with American flags and we gave him a great welcome. One of my teachers that I remember--

RICHARD RUSK: Students turned out for it, huh?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, all of us turned out. Sure. The whole school turned out with American flags and so forth. And my classroom teacher, I remember her telling us afterwards, "He looked at me and smiled." And she was so proud of that. General Pershing was a great hero in those days, very good looking, stern of visage. He was quite a fellow.

RICHARD RUSK: We were comparing the jingoism and patriotism of Americans--World War I versus World War II.

DEAN RUSK: The attack of the Japanese on Pearl Harbor tended to draw the country together in large part and create a good deal of war fever and so forth. Then there were lots of people working on the production lines: all kinds of arms needed by the troops. We mobilized something like thirteen million people, although the last time I looked at the figures back in the late sixties, the desertion rate in World War II was higher than it was in Vietnam. But of course, in World War II deserters had many more places to run to than they had in Vietnam. But no, there was rationing, and there were movie stars selling war bonds in factories, there were troops marching through cities on parade. The Ninth Division put on a parade up In Seattle, Washington on one occasion, I remember. A lot more was done to stimulate the people to feel directly involved in World War II than we did in Vietnam. Now some of us who did our duty in World War II were pretty teed off about it because we thought that was a war which could have been prevented. The year in which I graduated from college, in 1931, the Japanese seized Manchuria. The impression was that Secretary of State Henry [Lewis] Stimson thought that was a very serious matter and that something ought to be done about it. But apparently President Herbert [Clark] Hoover pulled on his coattails. So Stimson finally was able to do no more than to declare the so-called Stimson Doctrine that we would not recognize any situation brought about by the illegal use of force. And my generation of students lived through the attack on Manchuria, the Spanish Civil War, [Benito] Mussolini's seizure of Ethiopia, and then [Adolf] Hitler's move into the Rhineland, into Austria, Czechoslovakia, and finally the attack on Poland. But the breakdown of collective security under the League of Nations and the isolation and indifference of the democracies of the period produced World War II in a larger measure, and so a good many of us were conscious of the fact that this was a war that did not have to happen.

RICHARD RUSK: My dad's comment that he felt that one of the main differences in the American people between these two world wars was the greater sense of unity and involvement in the second as opposed to the first.

DEAN RUSK: Fort McPherson was about two to three miles away. It was within what we considered easy walking distance in those days. The kids would go out there and we would look through the fence and see these German prisoners working. And we looked upon them as men from Mars and they were really spectacles to us. Then there were also some German prisoners over in the Candler warehouse, which was even closer to our house.

RICHARD RUSK: Were they released from prison to do work there?

DEAN RUSK: They were kept there under guard, but they worked. You see, you can work prisoners of war. We did some of that. But life was pretty good to them at Fort McPherson and the Candler warehouse as distinct from the prison camps in Europe. My father bought a new Ford automobile, a T model, for \$298 once.

RICHARD RUSK: I thought the beginning price of those was around \$600.

DEAN RUSK: No, they came down. At one point they were selling for--now I think there was added onto that some transportation costs to get them to Atlanta and that kind of thing. But that was the windshield price in those days.

RICHARD RUSK: How old were you when you learned to drive?

DEAN RUSK: I started driving when I was about ten years old. There wasn't any requirement for licenses in those days, but there wasn't much traffic. And when I was around, say, fourteen -- between twelve and fourteen -- I was state president of the Junior Christian Endeavor Society in the Presbyterian churches and I would drive all over the state: myself driving at fourteen. There were no license requirements. Of course you couldn't go very fast. I remember it was a very exciting moment when I first went forty miles an hour in an automobile. It was an open touring kind of car. My head was stuck out the side and the wind was whipping past. I remember I never thought any human being could move so fast. [The roads] were all dirt. If you were lucky they had been graveled. But you see the farm wagons with their loads would travel those same roads and would cut pretty deep ruts in them, and in rainy weather they got to be pretty uncomfortable to drive on. But gradually in the twenties and thirties macadam tar, and then in the thirties concrete pavement, came in.

If you were traveling in a horse and buggy or horse and surrey--Uncle Willie had a surrey--or horse and wagon, in the beginning you would have to get out and hold your horse while one of these early automobiles came by because it would scare the horses.

RICHARD RUSK: Did they have mufflers on those things?

DEAN RUSK: They had mufflers to a degree, but they still made a lot of racket. The mufflers weren't very good. And the thought was in those days that the muffler cut down on the power of the car. So if you wanted to get more power out of your car, you unhooked the muffler.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, some things don't change over the years. Was that the Model-T you first learned to drive?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Your brother Parks must have shown you the ropes.

DEAN RUSK: Of course the beauty of the Model-T was that you could keep it in repair yourself. You had the transmission, which was operated by three pedals: one for reverse, one for forward, and one for a brake. They were connected to the transmission by bands, and those bands wore out and you had to open those things up and replace your own bands ever so often. And we did that ourselves. There was no business about going to the shop for that. The mag needle was right there under the dashboard. We knew how to fix that. Everything we did, we did on our own. We almost never took the car into a garage to have anything fixed.

RICHARD RUSK: At age ten, how did you ever reach the pedals and see over top of the dash?

DEAN RUSK: Put a cushion behind you.

RICHARD RUSK: [William Ashley] Billy Sunday visited Atlanta, and the revival there attracted a total of 30,000 Atlantans--one of Atlanta's great emotional experiences.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Billy Sunday was a renowned evangelist known all over the country. He was very eloquent, dramatic in his preaching. He came to Atlanta when I was a small boy and I went to a special service that he held downtown for children. It was from that that I became interested in the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Because he had a table up there on the platform with him, and he had standing on this table at the beginning of this service ten colored vases. These were long, tall vases that people had in those days to put long-stemmed flowers in. Then he told a story about a little boy who did this, and did that, and did the other thing, played hooky from Sunday School, and told a lie to his parents, and did all sorts of things. And after he got through telling the story, Billy Sunday took a hammer and went over to this table of vases and went right through the Ten Commandments. Every one of the Commandments that this little boy had broken that day; he took his hammer and smashed that vase. But there was one vase left standing: the seventh vase. So I had to go home and found out what the Seventh Commandment was all about. He was a powerful preacher in those days.

RICHARD RUSK: What was his religion, do you know?

DEAN RUSK: He was Protestant. I don't know whether he was denominational. If I had to guess, I would guess he might have been Baptist, but I can't be sure of that. But people really turned out for him. He was the Billy Graham of our day, but much more dramatic and oratorical.

I also went once, with my father I think it was, to hear William Jennings Bryan. He came to Atlanta and gave his famous "man or a monkey" speech about evolution.

RICHARD RUSK: Prior to the Scopes trials?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I remember the way he closed his speech. He said, "They call me an ignoramus." Then he started listing all of his honorary degrees. He had dozens of them. When he got through with them he said, "Now I challenge any son of an ape to match degrees with me." And we loved it. We just roared.

RICHARD RUSK: Speaking of evolution, at what point in your own life did you begin to question the biblical story of creation?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I became familiar with the theory of evolution in high school and studied it again in college. Actually you know, if you think of the rhetorical account in the book of Genesis as metaphoric, it follows the sequence in general about the creation that evolution teaches. So if you give some rhetorical evaluation to the way it was actually put into the Bible by those who wrote those book, there is not all that much of a discrepancy between the account in the Bible and the theory of evolution. Now it is rather silly for people to follow Bishop [Brandram Boileau] Ussher's dating of the creation of the earth at 4000 B. C. or something like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, there must be a way of making the connections. Your brother Roger--

DEAN RUSK: Yes, he has done a good deal of work on scientific explanation of the accounts of the Bible--come up with some pretty interesting ideas.

RICHARD RUSK: --Current events teachings in Boys High--

DEAN RUSK: In high school we did not get into this current events business too much. We studied history, and in those days anything that was nearer than twenty-five years ago was not history. We didn't have these courses that sort of tried to stimulate your interest by talking about things that were in the newspaper every day. I still have some doubts about that kind of teaching because I suspect it is used in the theory that you somehow stimulate interest by going into things that are happening each day, but there is so little that you really know about a lot of that stuff. I am not sure how valuable it is--

[break in recording]

Just learning how their shoes are going to be able to solve the Middle Eastern problem--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about Pop's introduction to the airplane.

DEAN RUSK: My first airplane ride was across the channel from Paris to London. I had crossed the channel several times by boat and it was always stormy and was always seasick. So I decided to take this short flight from Paris over to London. It had about six passengers. It was a one-engine plane, and won't forget it because as we were over the channel the engine went off. And the pilot looked back at us and pointed downward with his hand and we all started getting green because we thought we were going into the drink. But then after he got down a few hundred feet over the water, he started his engine up again and went on into London. We asked him what was the trouble. He said, "Oh, that was nothing. There was a ship in trouble down there and I wanted you folks to have a chance to see it." But it sure scared us.

RICHARD RUSK: That wasn't an open cockpit type of plane? It was enclosed?

DEAN RUSK: No, It was a cabin, but only six passengers and a very small plane, and we bounced around a good deal. But I liked it better than going by boat when you crossed the channel. My experience was that the channel was always rough. So I didn't take that channel boat crossing anymore after that.

Then my next flight was when I was at Mills College. And the President of the College, Mrs. [Aurelia Henry] Reinhardt wanted me to go back to Chicago to attend an educational meeting of some sort. And I flew from Oakland to Chicago and it took about sixteen hours. We were in an old DC-3 plane. We made almost every stop one could think of, but we had to stop several times for fuel. And that was a pretty tedious affair. So passenger aviation at the beginnings was a pretty primitive business.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have any contacts with it at all in Atlanta? You must have had barnstorming pilots.

DEAN RUSK: No, I never took a flight when I was in Atlanta. I might say one thing about growing up in Atlanta. Those were the days when there were old-fashioned orators around: eloquent, persuasive, a great demand. For example, I remember two particularly. Superintendent of schools during my period was Mr. Willis A. Sutton. He was tall with a big shock of white hair. He was a great orator and was in great demand all over the city. And then when I was school page editor for the *Atlanta Journal* where I would go down once a week and get all the letters that had come in from kids who were correspondents from different grades of different schools around town. I would read these letters and edit them a little bit and paste them together to make up a school page. My desk doing that work was right under the rail where the city editor Harlee [W.] Branch [Jr.] sat. And just a few feet away were two very well-known sports writers. One was Morgan Blake. He was a great orator as well and was a famous teacher of a men's class at Sunday School at the Baptist Tabernacle there on Luckie Street. He was in great demand as an orator. And then right next to him was [Oscar] O. B. Keeler, who followed [Robert Tyre] Bobby Jones everywhere and kept everybody--

RICHARD RUSK: You didn't really have electronic amplification back in those days. So, if you had a speaker come to Atlanta, if you weren't up there in the first few rows of the crowd, you likely would not hear them.

DEAN RUSK: There were some speakers, though, who didn't need it. Morgan Blake didn't need it; Willis A. Sutton, William Jennings Bryan, Billy Sunday, they didn't need amplification. They had voices that would reach the crowd. Of course, that business about necessity for speaking loudly in those days was what took my father out of the ministry because he had a problem with his throat and he simply couldn't speak up and preachers were expected to speak up in those days.

RICHARD RUSK: His voice was so weak that if there were a crowd of people in the room, for example, they would all have to be quite silent in order for him to be heard.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, but when he spoke we all became silent. When he spoke it was for real, and he didn't banter around very much. But he had no trouble in terms of making himself understood. His voice was rather soft. I never heard him call my mother by any name. When he spoke without calling somebody's name, we knew he was talking to her. He would call us by our names. He would talk at meal time occasionally on various subjects. I still remember with the family there around the fireside, his reading the Psalms in Hebrew. And he would chant them in Hebrew, more or less like the original Psalms were written. And we were very much engrossed with that. He had studied Hebrew at the Theological Seminary and he had a Hebrew Bible there which we looked with great wonder at times.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Not many churches in those days could afford a full-time preacher, so preachers would move from church to church, maybe meeting in each church about once a month or something like that. So my father was that kind of a visiting preacher there for a time. But there was almost no income for preachers in those days. Typically, people in the congregation would bring in chickens or vegetables or fruit or something like that. So it was hard going.

RICHARD RUSK: When the preacher passed the plate, which I presume was traditional with most services there, was that his income, whatever was on that plate?

DEAN RUSK: At least that was where he got such cash income as he got. But the local church would usually keep some of that to keep the church in repair and that sort of thing.

[break in recording]

--before I was born.

RICHARD RUSK: I see. You did hear him preach one time when you were a kid?

DEAN RUSK: You see, in the Presbyterian Church preachers are called teaching elders, and the elders who were simply responsible for the governance of the church are called the ruling elders. He remained a teaching elder for the rest of his life.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about the transition from the horse-drawn fire wagons to the motor-driven wagons--

DEAN RUSK: We kids were a little sad about that because the horse-drawn fire trucks were very exciting and great fun. And also I spent a lot of time down at the firehouse on the corner watching them groom and train the horses and that sort of thing. So when they went to motors I sort of felt we had lost something.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about the train down at Whitehall Street in winter time and the need to get some coal for the stove--

DEAN RUSK: After World War I, there was a very severe coal shortage and the price of coal was out of our reach. So I and other kids there my age--seven or eight years old, that kind of thing--would watch for a coal train coming by and we would throw rocks at the men on the coal train and they would throw coal back at us. Well, the policeman on the beat was usually sitting there at the firehouse chewing the fat with the firemen and he saw all this and just laughed because he knew that we weren't trying to hit anybody. We were just trying to gather some coal. These days you would get out the police and the social workers and the juvenile authorities and everything else and make a big deal out of it. All we were doing was gathering some coal.

RICHARD RUSK: Did the train men know what you were doing?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think they did.

RICHARD RUSK: It was probably their way of trying to help out, in a way. It's the only way the company would let them.

DEAN RUSK: And of course these trains loaded with coal would occasionally drop off some coal along the way, simply rolling off the train. So when they would go by we would rush out and run along the railroad tracks picking up any pieces we could find.

RICHARD RUSK: What about welfare back in the early days of Atlanta and the fact that they had a much more primitive set-up then than we have now.

DEAN RUSK: Well, in a sense each church tended to take care of its own people. I remember there were two or three times I was, for example, given a suit of clothes by some member of the church who had an extra suit of clothes or someone had outgrown it. They would pass it around. Of course, as the third son in our family, I always had the hand-me-downs: very seldom got things that were new.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: --in 1918 was a very severe one, killed an awful lot of people. It was during that epidemic, as I told you the other day, that we wore the bags of asafetida around our necks. Strictly speaking, that probably didn't have any medical effect, but asafetida smelled so bad that when people were wearing those things, they tended to keep a distance from each other, and that helped to limit the spread of the flu. But it was bad smelling stuff.

RICHARD RUSK: Lot of deaths in your part of the neighborhood?

DEAN RUSK: I don't remember our losing close relatives or neighbors to the flu. But we wore something around our nose and mouth, tied behind our ears to cut down on the possibilities of contagion. But it was pretty primitive stuff. No shots or things like that.

Times were pretty rough after World War I but there was one bonus that my family made a lot of use of. That is the army had a lot of surplus food, canned food, to sell and it was very inexpensive. Since Atlanta had been a hub of a number of training camps, we had a lot of that food around and we bought a lot of canned roast beef hash that was very good and canned fruits and other things. And we got along pretty well by buying army surplus food.

RICHARD RUSK: The infestation of the boll weevil in 1920. They had moved from Texas into the east toward Mississippi and Georgia.

DEAN RUSK: The boll weevil was a great boon to those red clay hills of north Georgia because that was poor cotton country to start with and the cotton took the nutrients out of the soil at a great rate. And so you had to work like the dickens to keep the soil in condition to grow cotton. And it made no sense for those people because everything was done by hand. We didn't have tractors or anything of that sort. It was backbreaking work for very little return. The boll weevil forced those farmers to turn in other directions, to grow other crops and turn to chickens, fattening cattle and things of that sort. So they ought to erect a monument to the boll weevil in north Georgia.

RICHARD RUSK: What about the early beginnings of radio in Atlanta?

DEAN RUSK: Well, in our family we kids made our own little crystal set radio stations ourselves. You could wrap electric wires around an oatmeal box and get yourself a coil. And we had a little crystal, and you would scratch a cat's whisker wire over the crystal and pick up radio stations. We had earphones. We used to tune in on KDKA of Pittsburgh, which was one of the first strong radio stations in the country. I remember hearing the first broadcast of WSB in Atlanta. For a time there, if you could get anywhere near a telephone, you could call a certain telephone number and listen to KDKA in Pittsburgh. I remember growing up with radio. And WSB soon began to broadcast the Cracker baseball games and things like that. And they did it quite well because it was their habit that when our own team, the Cracker Team, got a hit, they would strike a gong: one gong for a single, two gongs for a double, three gongs for the triple, and four gongs for a home run. It was very exciting to listen to those gongs going on.

RICHARD RUSK: You grew up in a time of great technological change in this country. I am sure that all of these things were regarded as really marvelous new inventions. What among all the technology really stands out in terms of the wonder, the excitement that that particular invention may have created among people in general? I suppose the car would be right up there. Probably radio as well.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. I saw the beginnings of the automobile in terms of ordinary people. The radio was really quite exciting because it sort of had a sense of mystery about it. How on earth could you sit down and listen to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, just by scratching this little wire on that crystal? But the telephone also made an impact.

RICHARD RUSK: When was the telephone really established in a practical way for long distance calling?

DEAN RUSK: I would think it began just before World War I, but really didn't catch on and become widespread until after World War I. I don't remember that we ever called. Maybe it was because of the cost. I don't remember that we telephoned our kinfolk in Cherokee County, Georgia and in Rockdale County from Atlanta. And for a long time there on in Atlanta Whitehall Street we simply didn't have a telephone.

RICHARD RUSK: What about communication in the earlier days?

DEAN RUSK: A lot of it was by word of mouth. In Cherokee County there was postman of the Rural Free Delivery, RFD, Postal Service. He would move from farm to farm, and if you had a message for some of your neighbors a few miles down the road you could tell him and he would pass it on to them. Or if you wanted a lift into town to do a little shopping, you could ride in with the postman, stay with one of your kinfolk overnight, and then drive back with him the next day. You see, families saw a good deal more of each other than they came to in later years. They were visiting back and forth, and there was a good deal of communication simply by word of mouth.

When the Biltmore Hotel was built on West Peachtree Street, that was quite a striking place for Atlanta and looked upon as a luxurious hotel. My brother Parks was for a time the public

relations man for the Biltmore Hotel. It looks like a rather--well, they refitted it lately--but for a long time a pretty rundown old place. Couldn't keep up with the times.

During the Florida land boom, my father, who was a mail carrier and earning less than \$200 a month, nevertheless found a way to put five dollars a month into some land he had bought in Panama City, Florida. He said that he bought it as pecan acreage. Well, a good many years later he went down to visit this land that he had bought and found that half of it was under water. But after his death, a good many years later, my mother sold that acreage in Panama City, Florida for a very handsome amount and it came in very handy for her. But how in the world my father squeezed out five dollars a month to buy that acreage, will never know.

When my brother was publishing this little paper called *Atlanta Life*, a weekly--

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember the years for that, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't. He could tell you. But he had to spend a fair amount of his time selling ads. And he would sell ads for barter, in exchange for things. He used to tell the story--I don't know whether it is true or not--that he had one subscriber who wouldn't pay and he dunned him on it. He finally told--this was a farmer--and he told the fellow, "Bring me in some vegetables or fruits or anything." And he said, "Well, I just don't have any vegetables or fruits." And my brother, a little bit exasperated, said, "Well then, why don't you bring me in a load of corncocks?" And this fellow said, "Well, if I had corncocks, why do you think I would subscribe to your paper?" In those days, many people used corncocks for toilet paper.

Big league teams would come through for exhibition games and I saw Babe Ruth play once.

RICHARD RUSK: Let's see, would that have been for the old Yankees back then in those days or Boston Braves perhaps?

DEAN RUSK: Yankees. I don't want to leave the impression that because we were poor that everything was drab and dull. Life was very stimulating and exciting and happy. A lot of good humor around. I had a very happy childhood.

RICHARD RUSK: I must say I'd have to concur with your comment to me as we were leaving your neighborhood back there the other day that a good deal of what I've learned about Atlanta and Cherokee County and the rest of the story, whatever you had back there was every bit equal to or better than what we kids had at Scarsdale.

DEAN RUSK: There was so much to stimulate one's imagination. So every day was a fresh adventure, and it really was a very exciting and stimulating boyhood. I think I can honestly say that in my seventy-five years I have never had a dull moment, and I am grateful for that. There was always something interesting going on or interesting to do. And if you didn't have it at your fingertips, you would create it--figure out something interesting to do.

RICHARD RUSK: --my dad's first day at Lee Street School.

DEAN RUSK: I skipped first grade because I had learned to read and write at home. My mother had been a teacher, and my older brothers and sisters were all around. So I took a test to see whether I should be entering the second grade. I remember the test because the only thing I missed was the teacher asked me to spell "girl" and I spelled it "gal". She smiled and passed me on it. But my first day at school I won't forget, because nobody told me about the boys room. And in the middle of the school day I had to take a leak, and I didn't know what to do, so I just-- so there was a puddle under my desk. And the other kids started snickering and the teacher, bless her heart, brought me up to the front of the room and explained to the rest of the class that I had never been to school before and didn't know about such things (laughter) and not to worry about it.

RICHARD RUSK: (laughter) That would be embarrassing.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, that was very embarrassing to me. Nobody told me about the boy's room! (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: (laughter) I'll be durned.

END OF SIDE 2

