

AL 84

Interviewee: Mary Barron

Interviewer: Keith McIntyre

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M: First off, I would like to thank you for agreeing to this interview. I would like to start off with what caused you to become interested in preservation.

B: Well, Keith, I think the first thing that got me going in preservation was that I had a large family. I went out looking for a house, and I looked in different neighborhoods and I looked at different kinds of architecture and different styles of living. One realtor in town was smart enough to show me an older house, and I just sort of fell in love with this older house. It happened to be in northeast Gainesville, in the Duck Pond area, and is the house in which we live now. So we bought the house and we started working on it and restoring it.

I think when you get into a project like this you become more and more interested in houses around you, and then in other older houses. This house is not all that old. It was built in 1928. But it does have some historical significance to Gainesville since it was the home of the president of the University of Florida in earlier times.

In addition to the getting interested in houses and architectural styles and so forth, I also became concerned with the preservation of the neighborhood and of neighborhoods similar to ours in Gainesville. At the time we bought the house there was a transition of people moving westward in Gainesville. They were leaving this area. At one time it had been the place to live because most of the University of Florida faculty and businessmen of Gainesville had homes around the Duck Pond area.

There is a tendency in towns where you have this exodus from a certain section for the property values to come down, and for business to come in, and for more homes-occupancy licenses to be issued in that neighborhood and so forth. So the people living and staying in areas like this, if they really want to stay, have to get actively involved in zoning and other issues that come up before the city that could do poorly for the neighborhood.

M: Where did you move from when you came to Gainesville, and what kind of environment had you been living in before?

B: My husband was a medical student in Gainesville when I met him. He was with the first graduating class at the University of Florida College of Medicine in 1960. So we lived in some student housing and we lived in some small apartments, and then as our family increased, we moved to one of Gainesville's northeast subdivisions – Carroll Estates – which is still an active subdivision on the other

side of Fifteenth Avenue. We outgrew our dwelling place, and in the process of living in a subdivision environment I did find that I really did not like a neighborhood where all the houses look just alike and everybody knows the business of everybody else. I used to go out in the morning and try to pick out a set of kids that were mine, and there were twenty-five kids in the yard. I had all tow-heads, except one, and I would pick four tow-heads and one brunette to take somewhere, and hope that I had the right ones. I think those kinds of things influenced me to want a larger house, and a house that had its own characteristics.

At the end of my husband's residency we spent two years in Washington, D.C. While there, I looked at some of the older homes in Washington and got a feel for our heritage and history, the Smithsonian and antiques.

M: What year was this?

B: We graduated in 1960. By the time my husband had finished his residency program and did a couple of years in fellowship, I think we went up to the National Institute of Health, which is near Washington, D.C. That was probably in 1968, and we came back here in 1969.

M: So it was a really activist period. People were becoming actively involved in government, with the war protests and everything else.

B: Right, we saw a tent city in Washington.

M: Do you think this activism had rubbed off on you?

B: Well, I think that is a good question because I am sure it did. I have always been that way a little bit. I was a little bit older than most of the activists. I went there with four children, and had my fifth while I was in Washington. So, I guess when I got involved in the preservation movement, and stood firm on some of the zoning issues on this side of town, everything I was doing I would say was on the scale of being a protestor.

M: I have noticed that movement from the 1960s has not only affected the younger generations, but the older generations as well. That they can stand up and make a difference.

B: Oh yes. People stand up. The environmentalists are doing it now very strongly in some of the northern cities where they are having pollution problems. There is still a lot of it lingering.

M: It was 1970 when you bought the house?

B: We bought this house in 1969.

M: Was there a movement started to document northeast Gainesville?

B: Right. At the time that I came back to Gainesville in about 1969, I was a member of the Junior Welfare League here. Now it is called the Junior League of Gainesville. One of the speakers at the Junior League was Professor Blair Reeves. He came and presented a slide show on historic houses. It was very enlightening because I did not realize that there was so much in Gainesville that was historic. They talked a little bit that time about beginning to document Gainesville buildings. I think I was either the first or second person to be the preservation chairman for the Junior League, and that person was to help get a group of the Junior Leaguers together and to see that they were trained well enough to measure and research houses. We actually did some of the Florida Site plan sheets, and were involved in the documentation process.

M: So the Junior League was the first community force that became interested in preservation?

B: I do not think they were the first. I think HGI [Historic Gainesville, Incorporated] was already started at that time, and I think HGI was looking for volunteers. I was also working with HGI at the time. I wore two hats that were for preservation. But if I remember correctly HGI had already started, and had already sought funds from the city and the county to begin a documentation and inventory. The League fit in as one of the groups of people going out. We had people from the county and from different, smaller cities in the county, and Gainesville working on the project.

M: So Historic Gainesville was not created to document Gainesville, as such?

B: Historic Gainesville was originally created as a neighborhood organization fighting for the neighborhood's life.

M: What was the situation there?

B: Well, I think the first big issue that HGI took on, and the reason that people got together was I think there was a charter. Originally, there was just a meeting and I remember people like Ben Pickard and Sam Gowan and some of the other people who I knew from the neighborhood, got together at somebody's house and talked. A gentleman wanted to cross Second Street and rezone a piece of property that was zoned residential to commercial. That was upsetting because the commercial/residential line had historically been set at Second Street. We agreed among ourselves, though I think no one ever drew it on a piece of paper,

that that was going to be the line. We did not want anything commercial to cross Second Street.

M: And you realized that there was no power behind everyone just getting together and saying we agree to do this?

B: That is right. So they all began to talk about this particular issue, and then it seems like in the next two or three years we formed the HGI. I think Sam Gowan was the motivating, cohesive force behind getting all the people together. I really knew Ben Pickard better than Sam, and I think I was conned into being the first secretary of HGI. [Laughter] I could not even take minutes, but I was enthusiastic. I realized that we had to do something.

M: This was after you had moved into this house?

B: I had just been in the house maybe a year. This issue came up really quickly.

M: From what I understand, there was a road they had planned to run through here?

B: That is what I was alluding to. There were three or four issues that surfaced within the next year to three years. One of them was to make an east/west truck route out of the area around the Duck Pond. I am not kidding, this is for real. No one believes this now. That was resolved by members of HGI presenting alternate plans to the city commission. They were trying to relieve traffic from the post office area, so the alternate route presented and finally taken was the widening of Southeast Second Avenue.

In the process of doing that we did lose a couple of buildings. I look at that now in retrospect because I know the Oddfellows' Home was in the way, and part of that had already been destroyed. But there were several buildings that came down, though I do not think it had the destructive force of going through the northeast Duck Pond area the truck route would have had.

M: Had the Thomas Center controversy taken place by this time?

B: No, the Thomas Center was a little bit later. The Thomas Center project and saving Kirby-Smith School were kind of close together chronologically. It is hard to remember when you sit down and talk about it. I think they were really close in time, though. HGI was involved with the saving of the Thomas Center. Sam Gowan probably told you that we took an option to buy it and then held on to it until we could come up with a plan and with funds.

M: What was it like for the group to get together and bicker over whether they were going to buy the option and put the risk into it?

B: I do not think there was ever any bickering.

M: It was really enthusiastic, then?

B: I think it was all very enthusiastic. First of all I think that we all thought Sam was a little crazy when he originally had the idea that "We will buy it!" Here was this fledgling organization with hardly any funds at all, but it is that kind of person who motivates and sparks and keeps people going. As it turned out, it was a very realistic kind of thing. There was also the cooperation of the gentleman who owned the place to take a \$300 binder on a \$300,000 deal. [Laughter] But I think the timing was good because there was federal money available for people who came up with ideas. Anyways, it all worked out well.

We did not do so well on the Kirby-Smith thing. That was another whole deal. If someone asked me where I got the energy to get going and the steam to get going on the houses that I have restored, it is probably all leftover, built-up frustration about losing Kirby-Smith as a school. I spent the majority of my day working for about three years to keep that school open.

M: What happened there?

B: Well, it was an unusual situation, and we will never know all the inside facts. Almost from the beginning of the time that my kids started attending Kirby-Smith, and they all went to school there at one time or another, there were little rumblings and innuendos and people saying, "That school, that school!" It was kind of put down as a school. I think that there was an administrative plan, and I do not know if the school board was included. I think that the administration of the school was working through the school board, and had in mind that the school was not fit to be a public school. Their ultimate plan was to close the school as soon as they could convince enough people on the school board to do it.

M: Why do you think they did that? Was it because it was an old building and everything was geared toward modernization?

B: Well there was a trend, and we are just getting over that trend in the good old U.S.A., that old is bad and new is good, and that progress is demolition and new buildings. I think we are just now getting to where our young people who come out of school with engineering degrees and architecture degrees and other degrees are starting to look at potential in an old building rather than that it is in the way, and let's zap it out.

M: Gainesville seems to have had a really bad case of that at one time.

B: It obviously did.

M: It tried to be the modern city of Florida by wiping out the old courthouse.

B: Oh, they had some fantastic plans. One of the plans I saw when I first bought this house was the Harry Merritt Plan for downtown Gainesville which was zapping out everything in the near downtown area that even resembled housing. A superhighway inner loop, as close as I can figure out, was going to be near the Duck Pond.

M: It would be like Orlando.

B: I used to live in Orlando. I think something else that has had an effect on me was to go back to my hometown. It was a lovely little town at one time. I saw what urbanization without good planning and without retaining enough of the tradition of the past does to a city. It will blow your mind.

M: So you bought the Tigert House, I guess they call it?

B: Yes, the Tigert House, in 1969.

M: A few blocks down the road is the Thomas Center, and I have seen the pictures of the place. I was not here at the time, but it was in really bad shape. What made you decide to buy a piece of property and invest your money here when things were looking bad?

B: Well, in addition to all these other things I have told you about my background, I have always enjoyed taking something and making something better out of it. I knew when I saw this house that it was a good bargain for the amount of square feet. I really did not attach much significance to its history or anything of that type because I was not into preservation at that time. I bought it because it was a good buy. I had always done a lot of painting. I have an art background. But, I knew that the potential was here. Construction-wise this house was better put together and less expensive per square foot than anything I had seen in Gainesville. Because people were moving out, the real estate prices were down at the time.

My mother and my family just thought I had flipped out. My husband was supportive because he thought it was a good idea. He knew we could do something with the house eventually. We did not have the money to do it all right away, but it was a do-it-yourself kind of project.

M: I do not want to be really bold, but Dr. Proctor always tells us, "It is your job as an

interviewer," and you do not have to answer if you do not want, but what was the price range of the house?

B: You want to know what it cost, don't you?

M: Yes.

B: Well, I will tell you this. This house, now that I have restored the garage, has about 6,000 square feet of air conditioned and heated living space in it, and I think we bought the house for less than \$40,000. We have put a lot of time and energy into restoring the house and enhancing its value and so forth. On the real estate market today it would probably sell for close to \$200,000.

M: Well, that was a great deal. What exactly needed to be done with it after you got hold of it?

B: I knew enough about houses, and I do not know where I got that, but basically I knew that it was mostly cosmetics. It was dismal looking and the walls were sort of an off-beige color and there were little cracks in the ceiling. The floors had been allowed to get real dark, almost black because of all the layers of stuff. The university had rented this house for about thirty or forty years. Every year they had painters from the university use cheap paint to paint the house, and they had painted about twenty layers of paint on all the woodwork. It had cracked, and dirt had gotten in the cracks.

M: Were there any structural problems?

B: There was very little about the house that was structurally wrong.

M: Just elbow grease?

B: It was stripping paint, and then painting. One summer we used almost thirty gallons of paint stripper to strip all the paint off the baseboards and the decorative trim in the house. We sanded the floors, repaired plaster, painted, wallpapered, and decorated. I am still working on the house. An old house is never finished.

M: When did you join HGI?

B: Well, I was at the founding meeting. I cannot remember the exact date, but it must have been sometime in 1971. It was really a neighborhood group, but almost from the outset we realized that we needed to be countywide, especially when we started talking about taking on a project with all the documentation of the buildings, inventorying and so forth. We spread our scope of interest

immediately to include the county. Our biggest battles were doing things concerning the northeast neighborhood. That was our first target problem.

M: When did the historic district decision come down? What was involved in that?

B: Well, it was not really a decision. I think that on the outset when we started doing the inventories, we realized that there was an area north of University Avenue that probably contained the largest number of old structures that still had the potential for being saved and salvaged. I guess that was probably one of the first areas that we had to save from demolition. There was a greater possibility there than anywhere else of the expansion of the downtown and the knocking down of buildings.

I do not know exactly, again, the chronological order, but I know we did the inventory, and then we started talking about the national register. Do we put all these houses on the national register, or pick them individually, or do we go for a district and pick an area? Then we would lay out all these maps and floor plans to see where a natural line would be. As it turned out, the Boulevard was a really nice natural line. It not only acts as a natural area for the district, but it is also a nice green space. So that worked out. I think Northeast First Street, which is the west border, was more or less picked because to go over one more street would get into heavy commercialism on Main Street, and that was sort of illogical. Plus there is a nice green space right there too, that runs down Northeast First. South University Avenue and the downtown commercial buildings sort of form their own little nucleus in characteristics. So that turned out to be a good place to stop. As far as district, I think all of us had in mind that the district would be expanded eventually. That probably will happen, or we will have other districts.

M: Who specifically presented this stuff to Tallahassee?

B: Well, I do not really know per se. I know that there were five or six people who worked on this thing all the way through. But that time, there had been about five presidents of HGI, and they were all still active, and they all still are. It was Sam Gowan, Sara Drylie, myself, Elsie Harrison, and Jane Hires.

M: When were you president of Historic Gainesville?

B: That has been so long ago that I really cannot remember, but I think it might have been in 1973 or 1974.

M: When was the historic district declared?

B: The district was established in 1979 or 1980. It took a long time to get that done. We sent files in on all the houses, and then we had to go back and

photograph them. That was done in the later part of the ten years of HGI's existence.

M: So what was involved in your job as president of HGI?

B: Well, one of our biggest projects has been and still is the promotion of the Thomas Center, and the Thomas Center Endowment Fund, and putting on the spring pilgrimage. HGI has always taken the lion's share in that, I think. For the latter, we have provided the food booths and so forth. One year kind of fades into the next, but we have always had one or two other projects that we have worked on in any one year.

I think there were probably several zoning things that have come up which we worked on. I cannot remember when I was president. I think we were starting to work on our defense of Kirby-Smith, but I am not sure about that. The year I was president, we were still documenting buildings and doing things like that.

M: It must have been great to see that come true.

B: It sure was after all those years. The second thing that has been really great to see come true was the preservation ordinance because that takes the burden off of individual groups, and it is now a city concern to keep our historic buildings intact.

M: I assume there was no ordinance when all this began in the 1970s.

B: I think it was a neighborhood conservation board for a couple of years. We came up with an ordinance, but it was not acceptable. It was too far out. The more recent committee has done a far better job.

M: When was the first ordinance drafted?

B: Somebody from the law school worked on that and that must have been 1976 or 1977.

M: The one that was passed was the first one?

B: This is the first one to be passed. No, this ordinance was really a different type of ordinance than the first things that we were talking about. We were looking at other cities, and I cannot remember what cities we studied, but there was a group of about seven people in that. They came up with a plan, but it was not a practical or realistic plan. This is a good one they have come up with now.

M: This historic ordinance is the first one that was accepted by the commission?

B: Right. It was accepted by the city commission.

M: What are the major points of this new ordinance?

B: I think one of the major things of the new ordinance is the formation of and additional board which will sit on the plan board of the city. This board will review plans on anything that will affect the architectural heritage of the city of Gainesville, which includes demolitions, requests for demolition permits, and extensive remodeling of houses within recognized districts. I think that is the basic thing.

M: Who are the people on this board? Are these really political appointments?

B: No. These are people who have volunteered and are selected. They were appointed by the city commission. The ordinance has laid out qualifications for the members.

M: So how did your involvement in the Bailey House come about?

B: Well, the Bailey House is one of my most recent projects. I had an antique shop downtown in one of the older buildings, where the Melting Pot is right now. We started collecting antiques at that time for our house, too. At that time, I started my own restoration company and [end of tape] I got to restore it.

M: I had seen the Bailey House, and I thought it had been a nursing home for several years.

B: No.

M: What was the situation there when you first came upon it?

B: The Bailey house was a private residence and was lived in by members of the Bailey family or descendants until the late 1940s or early 1950s. Then Mr. J. Pierce Smith bought the property and lived there for awhile. He then sold the property to Mr. Bush who turned it into a retirement home. It was not really a nursing home, though it gave the appearance of one.

M: It was just a retirement home.

B: For all practical purposes. It was what you call an adult congregate living facility, an ACLF, and that is what it is now. I think Mr. Bush did his work there in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and had it for about twelve years.

M: So he had it on the market for sale?

B: Well, he had to on the market for sale and Damien Young and his wife bought it, and they had it about three years. Then they sold it to us. I remember when it came on the market the first time it was a lot less expensive than it was when we purchased it. But the complex, at that time, did not contain half the structures that it does now because we moved other houses there and we have added to the complex. I have restored four houses that were either on adjacent properties, or that were moved there, in addition to the Bailey House. I think the Bailey House kind of included two interests: my husband's interest in geriatrics and care for the elderly, and my interest in restoration. It kind of all came together.

M: This is a good point, since we have not included him in here.

B: I know. We should. [Laughter]

M: We need your husband's name.

B: Mark.

M: Exactly what role has he been playing in all of this?

B: Well, my husband is Mark Barrow and I gave you a little bit of background. I told you we both attended the University of Florida, met on blind dates, married, and stayed in Gainesville, except for the two years that we went together to Washington. Mark started us out in looking at antiques and older things, which we did before we bought this house. He is from northwest Florida. He is a Florida boy, born and raised in Crestview, near Pensacola. When he was young, he started collecting jugs.

M: Moonshine jugs?

B: Moonshine jugs. I will show you the jugs in the kitchen when we get through. We would go out looking in antique shops and he would look at jugs, and I started looking at furniture and other things. That sort of got us going on the antiques. The antique shop that I had was more his idea than mine. But I enjoyed restoring that building and getting ready for the antique shop. The people who have moved in there now have done very little to the exterior. It is still more or less the way we had it. So, in addition to medicine, he has had five or six other things going.

M: I do not see how he has time for it. Most doctors have to work.

B: He has enjoyed doing the documentation and the history of the Bailey House. He knows more about the Bailey family than the Bailey family does. He corresponds with the descendants of the Baileys, and has already located a lot of the original furniture that was there.

M: Original furniture?

B: He knows where it is and has managed to come up with a few pieces that we have restored and have put in the house.

M: Does he call these relatives to find out about the furniture that was in the house?

B: He writes letters, calls, and reads. There was a thesis done on the furnishings in that house when everything was still there. We have done a lot of research on that at the P.K. Yonge Library.

M: Is this an art history thesis?

B: I think the girl who did the documentation of the furniture was the decorator, I believe.

M: This was before you got hold of the house?

B: The Bailey House was one of the first houses in this area for which HABS [Historic American Buildings Survey] drawings were done. That was in about 1956. Blair Reeves took students over there and they did HABS drawings.

M: So, it was a recognized house and someone got to document it?

B: Yes, but it has not really ever been recognized. Mark has got some clippings from the *Gainesville Sun* on special occasions like the bicentennial. They went over there and took pictures of the house. It has been a Gainesville landmark, but it has not been recognized, and it has not been open to the public until now.

M: It also faces the wrong way, doesn't it?

B: It does. We laugh about that. I have moved about five houses now, so I laugh about turning it toward the street. But the truth is that the street used to wind around the house. Oakline Drive went in front of the house. So it faced the original street, but the street was never asphalted, thank goodness. I think it is one of the nicest vistas left in Gainesville. You have a view of the way things were when you stand on the front porch of the Bailey House and look north. That is until you get to where the fence is, which is quite a few yards away, you are looking at a nice old vista of Gainesville. So I purposely have never put any

structures in that front part, and I hope nobody ever will.

M: What was involved with the Bailey House as far as structural restoration?

B: Well, the Bailey House had heavy problems and we still have not done all we want to do to the Bailey House. We are doing it as cash flow will permit. The biggest restoration on the Bailey House has been on the front porch, the parlor, and the bedrooms downstairs. There have been additions over the years that have housed people, and that would be hard to take off to get back to the original structure. But it is a fantastic structure. When we started doing things we found the original horse-hair plaster, and I restored it according to specifications.

M: You are restoring horse-hair plaster?

B: Yes [laughter]. A lot of times when people restore a house, they knock off the plaster, take out the lath and put drywall up. But we restored the plaster, and it took us about six weeks to restore one room.

M: Why would you choose to do that instead of knocking it out and putting up drywall?

B: Because of our sense of history. You start looking at what is there.

M: You want an accurate reproduction?

B: Yes.

M: You are not just concerned with the outside, viable structure, but you are concerned with the preservation of the past.

B: Yes, that is right.

M: That is very interesting because there are a lot of houses that go up that are built say in a colonial design, and the whole thing is...

B: Pseudo-colonial.

M: Yes. Let's go back in time again to where the Thomas Center/Kirby-Smith controversy was going on. When did you decide to form your own private company? How did that come about?

B: Well, we opened the antique shop in 1976.

M: Where was that located?

B: We opened the Fourth of July, 1976. [Laughter] It was located in the old Gainesville Tabernacle Church, which is 418 East University Avenue, which is now the Melting Pot.

M: On the 200th anniversary of the nation, you opened it up?

B: Yes.

M: That must have been a special occasion.

B: Well, it was because we spent almost two years in getting things together. We went all over the country to get things together, and I spent about six months restoring the building.

M: How did you come across that building?

B: One of the realtors who was a friend of ours had been out looking. I was not really hot on having an antique shop, though my husband was. He found the building, and I restored it.

M: He had collected too many antiques. [Laughter] He tried to get rid of them?

B: Yes. It was beyond our limits to house all of our antiques. Anyhow, I went out on a call to appraise some antiques at the Oliver Austin house, and he had his house up for sale, and I kept saying, "I really like your house better than the antiques." He said, "Why don't you buy it?" I said, "What would I do with it?" I really did not know what I would do with it. But I kept looking at the house, with the beautiful tin ceilings in the dining room, and he had a beautiful garden with nice flowers and camellias and azaleas. He was really into horticulture. So we talked about it a little bit, and I decided to buy the house. I had lived in this neighborhood and was appalled at what was happening to some of the older buildings closer to downtown. Slumlords were buying them or had been buying them, and were renting them out "as is," and sometimes in terrible condition, to students. They were just using the houses, and not adding anything to the neighborhood. So I decided that I would try my hand at being a landlady, not a slumlord. So I went over there to work, mostly with family help at the start. Then I found a painter and we found a carpenter, and we fixed up the house somewhat, and divided it into two apartments. I had a terrible time getting financing support because the banks had not heard of restoration, or the preservation movement in Gainesville. So I finally convinced some people that I was not a bad risk, and that I would take care of this house. The main thing was to convince them that there was a market for nicer housing within the older areas of Gainesville. I put an ad in the paper, and I had leased both of those

apartments before I even put the ad in the paper. They had seen us over there working, came over to look, and were impressed. I then started buying more houses, and went on to buy quite a few houses to restore them, one at a time.

M: About how long does it take to go through one of those large houses?

B: Well, the house from which we moved on University Avenue to Second, that I ended up putting in the backyard of the first house that I had bought, was a house next to the Episcopal Church that was going to be destroyed. They had decided that they could not keep it up anymore. They would have rather had a parking lot. Anyhow, that house took nine months to restore.

M: How did you get a hold of that house?

B: I bought it for one dollar.

M: One dollar? [Laughter]

B: I was president of HGI that year. I do not really remember, but I think it might have been the year before. We first tried to talk the church into keeping the house and restoring it. One of their members was a contractor and he had gone through the house and decided it was going to cost \$225,000. Where they got this figure to restore the house, I do not know. That kind of discouraged the church, too, and they were convinced it was going to either have to be torn down or moved. No one came forth to take it, and then I realized that I had room on the back of a lot that I had just bought, my first house, the Oliver Austin House, for another house. I finagled a little bit and got a set-back ordinance or variance. So we just started working on it, and it took about two months to go through the mechanisms of getting everything lined up for the move. Then we moved it down University Avenue and Second, [laughter] and into place.

M: Was that a big production?

B: Yes, it was. But I had a really good crew. By that time, from working on the Austin House, I had found a carpenter who later got a contractor's license, and since that time has done about five or six first-class restorations in Gainesville. I found another young man who was very energetic, who was willing to do the restoration and the paint jobs the way I wanted them done, which was stripping them down to the beginning and starting over. There were four or five other people, and various and sundry subcontractors.

M: What was your first project besides your house here?

B: The Bell Family Store was the next building. It was my antique shop downtown,

which was made out of an old deserted church building which was almost condemned.

M: Almost condemned?

B: It was in bad shape.

M: You just picked it up on the market and decided to see what you could do with it?

B: Right. Then I started to rent the houses, and went right from one to the other. I quit in the summertime, and relaxed a little bit, and then got geared up to do another one.

M: Were these houses named?

B: We named them after the original owners.

M: Can you give me of list of them?

B: Well, I will do them in order. The Swearingen Austin House was first. It is the one I told you about which I bought when I went to look at antiques, and ended up buying the house. Swearingen was one of Gainesville's early founding families. He was in the hardware business. The next one was the Hodge House. I am not sure how these were done, but I restored, I believe, the Hodges House next. Then I went over to the Dean House on Northeast Fourth Avenue. The Deans are also one the early families.

M: We were at the list of the houses you were converting for apartments, the second one.

B: Oh, into apartments? Then I will stop to explain something. I have not gone to the ultimate limit of restoration on all the houses that I have acquired. In other words, it has to work economically. It has to be a financially-feasible project or I will not get into it. On a couple of the houses that I have acquired, I have just restored the inside for apartments. But I did not have the cash flow to do the new roofs and paint jobs. One of the properties I own right now I have done a really bad thing. I have just done a front facade because it made the neighborhood look a little bit nicer. I did not have the money to do anything else. Eventually I will go back and restore it properly. But it does take money and time and energy and thought to do them right. It is better not to do them at all than to milk them up and put them back on the market.

Anyhow, I acquired the Dean House, and that is five apartments. Most of the places I have bought have very nice yards and lend themselves to being first

class. My husband takes an active part in doing the yard. He see to it that we put in sprinkling systems, and he plants things and sees that they are fertilized and taken care of. That is his department. But let's see, I did one house across the street from the Hodges House on Southeast Second Avenue. I was about two-thirds of the way through when the house burned to the ground.

M: You are kidding?

B: No, I am not kidding.

M: When was that?

B: Must have been in 1980.

M: You were working on it?

B: It was the Jernigan House, and it was really a super house. I think it was originally a small cottage that was added to until it was a two-story. But it was a house from the turn of the century. I think that the original cottage that was inside the house was probably much earlier.

M: So how did the fire happen?

B: I had a crew in there working, and I was doing two jobs at the time so I was not paying as much attention to detail as I should have been. The fellow who had been leasing the house before I started restoring it had left the gas on, and did not have the gas disconnected. I had not turned it on, but I knew it was on because it was warm when you walked in there. The people who were working in there were enjoying it. It was right in the dead of winter. They would have the heater on all day. It was on a thermostat so it was turing off and on. I think somebody left a can of paint on one of the floor radiators, or maybe a dropcloth, who knows. When the heat was turned on by the thermostat, something caught fire, and it was gone in about twenty minutes, flat to the ground. The only thing that was left was the facade, from which I saved the columns to restore a summer place of mine in Fort Walton. I knocked out a bunch of walls there to make a great room and put columns between that.

M: That is really nice.

B: So I reused the columns.

M: Instant tax break, huh?

B: It is a heavy one. Unfortunately, the house was not insured as a two-thirds

restored house. It was insured just for the purchase price.

M: That was too bad. So how many houses total have you done that you use for apartments?

B: I have done about six for apartments.

M: All in town here?

B: Yes. I have done about four or five more in connection with the Bailey House, including the Bailey House. The youngest house that I have restored is the house that I did for my summer home in Fort Walton. It was built in about 1940 or 1942. I was a concrete block house, and that was a totally new experience. We ran out of mortar and all that good kind of stuff. It is on the bay on a big piece of land. I have been going there for twenty years, and it was getting in really bad shape. So I took my crew up there one summer. We took turns having vacations [laughter] and getting things done. We had a good time. It took about three months to finish.

M: In these apartments, how do you work out the kitchens? Obviously, the house originally only had one kitchen.

B: Well, a lot of the houses I did had already been converted to apartments. They just were not done tastefully. The Padgett Apartments at the south end of the Boulevard on Northeast Sixth Street had been converted into apartment in the 1930s. It was built in 1904, converted to apartments in the 1930s, and used to house the wives of people who were based at Camp Blanding. They would stay in Gainesville. They did not want to be stuck out in Camp Blanding. So the wives would come to Gainesville and the men would come into town during the weekends.

M: This is during the Second World War?

B: Yes.

M: I notice that you try to restore with historical accuracy, historical remnants, and a sense of history. So when they install a kitchen in a house like this, do they knock out holes in the ceiling and run the exhaust pipe out through the roof?

B: No, it is the same old thing. If you spend a lot of thought and time on how to make these things work, they can be done so that they are aesthetically pleasing without messing up the character of the house. When I go into a house that has already been restored into apartments, I spend about one-third of the time taking out all the garbage that people have done, such as drop ceilings and jalousie

doors. I have warehouses full of jalousie windows and jalousie doors. If you walk into an old apartment that has been restored to an old house, you still get the feel of the old house, and the sense of whatever it is that you get with an old house – the wooden floors, and high ceilings and so forth. You should be able to do that and if somebody had really messed up, then the whole thing has to be redone.

In the Padgett House, there were some bathrooms that had been stuck in the nice big rooms of the house, and they were jammed right next to a fireplace. There would be a wall on one side of the fireplace, and then the door to a bathroom. The bathroom would project out into the room. Well, obviously these things had to be pulled out, if you have any taste at all. A lot of it is just a good sense of balance. It takes good taste and common sense; you do not have to be an architect to do that.

M: You must have awful problems with codes and things like that.

B: Well, I have not really had awful problems. I was the first to do some nice jobs with these old buildings and to do some of the restoration jobs in Gainesville. There were codes, and there still are things that are more for remodeling or new construction than for restoration, and there are again, some common sense things. I always get in a lot of trouble because I always ask, "Why?", if someone tells me that I have to do something, and it does not make sense. This is getting back to the 1960s, the rebellious 1960s, right? But if something makes sense, and it's for health, safety, and welfare of the tenants, or the protection of the neighborhood, then I do not question it, I do it. But if it is something that has been on the books, and it is just there because someone said that it should be there, or it applies and makes sense in application to new construction, but not for restoration, then I will question it.

M: Do you have any examples?

B: The people working for the city know that I do that so they are kind of used to it. I questioned things like when I had to put in parking for the Hodges House, the Blue House, and Swearingen-Austin House. I had to do a parking facility for the total of eight apartments. There is code that requires one and one-half parking spaces for every bedroom, and even though you know that some of the students are going to have one car and others have a bike, you still go ahead and do it. I realized that, but what I did want to fight was the black asphalt parking lot. I did not want a black asphalt modern parking lot between two nice historic buildings. So, I just kept thinking about other things that could be done. I had saved a lot of bricks from other places, and I had a pile of bricks and so I started designing a parking lot that would be more aesthetically pleasing that was made out of brick and concrete. So we put together a really nice looking parking lot and little

pathways running between the houses. I also put in a couple of fountains with circles of brick around them, and I got all through and then I realized that I had not marked the parking spaces. I did not want to mark the parking spaces with lines on these beautiful bricks that were hand laid. I had put them all down so neatly.

So I got a very narrow brush and white paint and marked them off with the very narrow brush, and made very narrow lines. I got a little note from the fellow that came to do the final inspection that my parking spaces were inadequately marked, and that I was to make them four inches wide or something like that. I said there is no reason for that if you can see it. There really was no reason for that, so I said you just show me where it says that in the book, and it did not say.

It just said in the book that they had to be marked; it did not say four inches wide. So I won that one, but I lost a lot of others. There are a lot of things that aesthetically do not look good to do to old buildings that they made you do.

M: They have codes on the size of lots that say how far a building has to be from a sidewalk.

B: The setback ordinance was another one that I got into when I wanted to move the Hodges House, which is a big house, admittedly, to the backyard of the Swearingen-Austin House. The setback ordinance was, I think, twenty-five or thirty feet for that neighborhood. So what I did was I got my measuring tape and I went up and down the block measuring the existing houses from the turn of the century, and the average was eighteen. I was asking for twenty. So I made a note of that, and I went before the board of adjusting and I explained that was an old building and was in-keeping with the rest of the neighborhood, and it was going to look good there and it was being saved. It was going to be demolished if it was somewhere else, and if I was going to move it back that far, I was going to miss on the setback ordinance from the back of the lot.

As time went on, they realized that I was trying to do nice things for the neighborhood, and they became more and more lenient about things.

M: They saw property prices start going back up –

B: – and more tax money. If you take a vacant lot, and a house that is going to be torn down, and make it into four apartments, you are increasing the tax base and doing good things for a neighborhood. Since I have finished two houses in that neighborhood, there have been six other houses within a block that have been restored by individuals. They have nothing to do with me.

M: Are they owner-occupied?

B: Yes.

M: Speaking of the individuals, we had done an interview with Buff Gordon and Sally Dickinson, and they have been going to Fernandina and looking at two houses.

B: Yes, I want them to do something in Gainesville, but they say the property values are too high in Gainesville.

M: They are also going to Ocala looking for property values.

B: They are also around Lake City, I think.

M: We were wondering, in the class group, about local competition in this kind of thing.

B: I am so excited to see other people doing the same thing. I felt for a while like I was sort of pioneering, and maybe I was not doing the right thing, and that it was going to be a financial disaster or something really bad could happen, but things just have gone so well. There is a proven market now for nicer housing in the northeast and southeast, and anytime I see somebody start, I do not think about it as competition. I think about it as being great.

Now, there is a problem, and that is, the more of this that is done, the higher the real estate values will go, but that is a double-edged sword.

So, I do not really think anybody thinks about it as competition; we are just glad to see the movement going on. When we first started doing this, part of our motivation was to get it going so that our neighborhood would improve and things would look better over here for the older houses. I do not know if you have talked to Katy Morgan, but she is really going at it. She has got two or three done, and two or three to do yet. She bought the empty lot where my house burned down, and moved that house on University Avenue there.

M: Were you involved in the Robb House?

B: Not much, though my husband was. Mark was the president. Hi Mark. Were you president when they started working on purchasing it, and when they first started talking about it? Or was your predecessor president of the Alachua County Medical Society? Who was he? Orvin Jenkins.

M: He did the actual work?

B: Well, one of the relatives in town, Margaret Shonbrun, a writer for the *Gaineville Sun*, had been calling us and calling other people. She knew we were interested in preserving older houses. She asked, "What shall we do? This

house is going to rot; it is about to fall down; it is in terrible shape." One of the propositions that came up was the thought of making it into a hall or a museum. What else was talked about Mark, besides the idea of a museum there?

There were several things. She had a bunch of ideas which she wrote about in her article. One of them was to get doctors involved. So, Mark presented it to the board of directors of the organization, and they, with some figures we had already moved at that point in time, we had already moved the Hodges House, so we knew the house could be picked up and moved and relocated. They talked about a place for it and they decided upon the site where it is settled now, across from the First Presbyterian Church. It is just amazing that there are about 400 doctors who belong to the society, and everybody thought it was a good idea. There was very little dissension, and it turned out to be a good project.

M: So it is a museum now?

B: It is the office for the Alachua County Medical Society, and in addition there is a small museum in the back. Some of the rooms were restored. The parlor was restored and the little office where Dr. Robb had her office. There were two Dr. Robbs, both of them physicians.

M: Going back to the Bailey House, did you ever have any kind of a plan for moving any of the rest of the structures?

B: That is just sort of evolved, too. The Bailey House was set up for about twenty-two residents. It was sort of in a never, never world of being an efficient operation. We knew we needed to expand the facilities. For instance, the kitchen was right in the middle of that nice old building. The kitchen was also the laundry room and it was also the sitting room, and the parlor, and everything else. They had utilized what should have been the parlor as a bedroom. There was no dining room. So, we moved the kitchen, and then we increased the capacity of the place by bringing in another house. We moved a house in that had been in the student ghetto. It was a house that one of Mark's friends had owned. It was going to be torn down for apartment houses, and we put it on the back part of the house so it would not infringe on that nice old historic vista.

Then we bought a piece of property that was adjacent to the Bailey House that faces on Northwest Fourth Street. An old house was sitting on the lot, which we had no use for. We wanted to build some new housing for the elderly over there, so we picked it up and moved it. We actually moved two more structures into the complex. Then we restored what had once been the garage or the servants quarters of a house, into smaller units. We have also acquired two other pieces of property that are connecting to, that had Victorian,

turn-of-the-century homes on them. One has been restored. My last project that I finished was restoring what we call Bailey Hall, which is a day care center for the elderly. Now I am starting to work on one next door to it. The complex is almost completed. The only thing we look forward to in the future is putting new housing for the elderly over there. It is a big lot.

M: So you plan on keeping it going just as it is, as far as housing for the elderly?

B: We will not change the usage of the property. It is a very viable use for historic properties to go in this direction. I have suggested it at some conferences in which people talk about what you do with some of these old buildings. One of the things is to look toward meeting the housing needs for the elderly. They have an old school building in Jacksonville which has been turned into housing for the elderly.

M: What do you find out from the archeologists?

B: Well, Lucy Wayne did it, and I think she was expecting to find more than she found. But it was interesting. They found artifacts dating to the time when the house was built, but they did not find the big stockpiles that they thought they would find. They never did find the main duct that they were looking for, the oldest one or whatever. They found a relatively recent refuse pile, but they did not find the gold that Major Bailey had hidden.

M: Buried in the Civil War?

B: [Laughter] Mark says we will find it yet. We let them dig before we moved the buildings, so they really hit all the places they wanted to hit.

M: That brings us pretty much up to the present. You mentioned working with the Florida Trust. When did you start becoming involved on more than a local level?

B: Well, there was a gentleman who teaches preservation law, Roy Hunt of the University of Florida College of Law. I took his place on the board of directors two to three years ago. The biggest project that I have worked on with the Florida Trust has been some private property in Fort Lauderdale. We put in a proposal to the state, and it has been accepted, with some contingencies. It looks like the Florida Trust is going to acquire the property.

M: Do you like working with the state agency compared to the local situation? What are the differences?

B: It has been interesting because I have met many preservationists from other parts of the state. We have had good annual meetings with workshops. Did you get to go to the one in Jacksonville last year?

M: No, I did not.

B: Well, we have had exceptionally good meetings where they have made presentations for outstanding preservation efforts throughout the state. I have learned a lot, though I get a little frustrated sometimes because, again, I am an activist and I do not like to wait a long time for things to happen. That has probably had a lot of influence on me becoming active and actively doing restoration work rather than just being in organizations. I do not like to sit at tables and talk a long time. I like to get out and do something and see what I have done when I get through. With the state organizations, there is a lot of talking and I get very impatient because I want to see things happen in a relatively short period of time.

M: How long have you been involved with that?

B: With the Florida Trust, almost three years. My term is up and I am planning to get back into local preservation.

M: What is left for Gainesville in preservation now?

B: A whole lot is still going for Gainesville. Gainesville is just scratching the surface. If you went around and looked at the properly restored buildings, and by properly restored buildings, I mean people who are using the guidelines set up by the Department of the Interior for good restoration, there are not fifteen that have been done in Gainesville. For every commercial project that has been done, there are still twenty-five that are standing that could be done. By commercial, I do not mean just retail stores, I mean apartment houses, etc.

M: Do we have some preservation charlatans?

B: I am not going to even talk about that. We will skip that subject and go to the next one.

M: Why do you always skip that subject?

B: Because that is one of the things that does bother me. It bothers me if I see people buying properties and not restoring them. They just slap paint on them, speculate, plan to resell, and call me and say, "I have got this restored building that I would like to sell you." Then you go to look at it, and it is super tacky, and they have white-washed it and planted a couple of trees in the yard. There are people who are just one step about being slum lords. They really are not aiding preservation because they are just doing minimal work. They try to get into the swing of having nice apartments, but they do not put out the bucks or the time or

the energy that it takes to get them to that stage.

M: What does the preservation ordinance do to stop these people?

B: No. I think the preservation ordinance will make people think twice before they tear down a piece of property. The thing that you are going to have to watch about preservation is that, and Sam Gowan talked about this years ago, all of your ordinances have to coincide and work together. If you have a parking ordinance that says you have got to have eight parking places to restore a building, then you are going to have to buy two houses and tear one down to get those parking places. So, we are going to have to look at all of our ordinances. I do not think that the preservation ordinance is set up to do that. But I think the preservation ordinance is set up to make people put just a little more thought into what they do before they do it.

It is the same thing with someone taking a nice old building downtown and painting it purple. People are going to look at the building. It had got to fit into the pattern and contribute to the overall character of downtown. If people do not have it themselves, it is going to take other people with the thought and the taste and the knowledge to make the decisions to make suggestions to people that it would be nicer if you did this and this and this, and besides, if you do it this way, you will get the tax breaks that go with doing it properly. I see some people spending as much money as I to do it properly, and they do not do the job that they should have because they either hired the wrong people to do it, or they did not have enough knowledge of what they were doing to do it right.

M: How hard is it to keep up these older buildings?

B: That is a good question. There is not a lot written about it. Until you get into it and have a historic building that you have restored, and two or three years have passed and it starts looking like it needs things, do you start thinking about it. If people plan to have historic property, when they are doing their feasibility study--and they should always do a feasibility study before you get into a project--they should tie in a yearly maintenance budget.

M: What kind of things do you use in that breakdown?

B: Maintenance-wise, I think probably the biggest problem in Florida is painting and mildew. To restore the building properly, you have to take care of all the rotten wood, and rebuilt the sub-structures that need to be rebuilt, and of course you have to use treated wood on your exterior. Do not laugh, I still see restoration jobs in Gainesville where untreated wood is being used, and I know that porch is going to rot in two years.

I think painting is probably one of the biggest, most prevalent problems. And I have done through all degrees I have gone all the way from a hundred miles and done the stripping and used all good paint products and had them applied properly, but we still have a problem in Florida with mildew and a lot of rain and dampness. I think a building that looks its best in Florida is going to have to be checked every year for areas where the paint has popped, and you will have to do touch-up work. I guess our oldest project is probably going on four years old. We have gone over it almost every year, cleaned the building, and done scraping and touch-up work.

M: Surely, you do not take care of all the buildings personally?

B: Well, I do take care of them in the fact that I keep looking at them. I do not always do it myself, but I will have one of my workers who worked on it originally spend a couple of days cleaning with power cleaners and doing touch-up. I think that will keep expenditures to a minimum.

M: There is also the problem of preservation, and that you are a landlord with all these tenants.

B: I started off doing my own landlording, and it was sort of nice because I got to pick the people who moved into the places that I have worked on so hard. I screened them. They did not all to like antiques, but a lot of them did. It really was thrilling to see somebody come into an apartment, and arrange it in a really nice, tasteful way, using the spaces we had created. But that was just too much, because at that particular time I also still had my antique shop, and I was doing other restoration projects. It became impossible to do all that. Now my son is in charge of the apartments. The Bailey House is run by an administrator and staff, so I just kind of oversee there, too.

M: What is the management structure of the Bailey House? Do you have some sort of a board and a director?

B: Well, the Bailey House is a private endeavor, and its owned by my husband and myself. We have an administrator and a full staff of twenty-three people working twenty-four hour shifts. We have a recreational therapist and a couple of consultants from the university and from Santa Fe. It is a big operation. We have a license for fifty people, and presently have I think forty-three plus four or five day care residents coming in just for the day.

M: That is interesting. Here you are involved with the health care through preservation and with revenue for the city, and beautification of neighborhoods.

B: They all just sort of intertwined. Well, for instance, if we find ourselves getting involved with every spring pilgrimage. Mark's sort of taken up where I have left

off with historic Gainesville, and gone beyond that now. He is doing all the material for the archives; he is really into the history. I was sort of burned out on the organizational part when he picked up on that, and he has gone way beyond what I ever did with it. He was president of HGI last year.

It has been an educating experience because you meet people from the university and people from town, and I feel like I now know just about everybody.

You also get very involved with politics because you find that when you attend zoning meetings and these controversial issues come up, the most effective way to get these things going in the direction that you want them to go, is to get people to run for office, and support them, and to get the voters out. I am usually standing on the corner with somebody's plaque in my hand for every election. I have done the same thing on the school board. Of course, Kirby-Smith is no longer there because I have personally seen to it but, we have a good school board now, and most of our people are sympathetic now, I do not think Kirby-Smith would be closed today.

M: Since you have come we have seen a complete turnaround in the governmental attitude toward preservation in Gainesville.

B: Oh, absolutely. I do not think it was a turnaround; I think it was more of an educational process, and I think these things all take time. I think Gainesville was about ten years behind in its preservation program of educating the residents, the landlords, the homeowners, and the city commission.

M: Gainesville had problems with the downtown dying like other towns.

B: It is a typical U.S.A. syndrome.

M: It seems to be turning around here.

B: Slowly, but surely. My theory about downtown Gainesville has always been to restore the areas around downtown, to improve your housing around downtown Gainesville, to get people living in nice places, to get rid of your slums around the core of the city, and then those people will want nice places to eat downtown, and they will want to go to the movies downtown, and they will want to go downtown, and the downtown will gradually improve. Some of them do not work in that area, but its the new sort of in-thing to walk or bicycle. They are not going to bicycle to the Gainesville Mall or the Oaks Mall. They would like a nice shop downtown. I would not be a bit surprised if we get back to the proprietors living over their shops, and we begin to have nice little grocery stores and things again in that area.

There is a lack of good zoning. We need one more step somewhere between

downtown and the residential areas. We need a half-commercial, half-residential area. I bet five people in Gainesville over the last four years have called me and said, "I would like to have a nice tea room. Where can I put it? We do not have a zone for it anywhere."

M: You are kidding.

B: No, we really don't. If you are not on University Avenue, or real close, there is nothing like that, and we still need work on that.

M: Have you heard about these proposals for Fifth Avenue preservation projects over in that area?

B: Yes. There are some nice older homes in the Fifth Avenue section. I get uptight about that because I see so much money being poured in, but I do not really see the results. I know that they have surveyed the area and they know there are places worthy of being restored, but I do not know how the mechanisms work. All of a sudden somebody who does not know anything about restoration has got government grant money, and they paint the house purple and gold and chartreuse, and put in treated wood on the porches, and the place looks like a slum again in the next year. So there has got to be a total program, and there has got to be people with good taste, and good craftsmen have to do these jobs. Some of these remodeling agencies that end up with these jobs do atrocious work. It is getting us nowhere. Their answer to that is well if that does not work, then we will just tear it down and construct this Phil Emmer-type brick building, which is not in congress with the historic houses. There can be a happy medium, but it takes some good planning and good sense and good direction, and I have not seem any of that over there.

M: What do you think is going to become of the student ghetto situation?

B: Well, I think that probably will take care of itself, eventually, just by the sheer fact that increased student population needs for housing, closer to town, and people in general wanting to be closer to town, are going to make the property more valuable than the old houses, and they will be zapped out. There will be new housing put over there eventually. A nice apartment complex is going to go on the lot where the house that we bought and moved was located. The problem there again, is that some residents have lived in nice little houses in those neighborhoods for years, and it is not fair for them to have two high-rises on either side of them. It is really a very complex problem.

M: Do you foresee high-rise condo-type apartments going in there?

B: I think that probably, ultimately, yes, unless they can form and are forming

neighborhood organizations and making grand and glorious stands like we did here. Maybe there will be some alternative to that. I have not really studied it, so I do not know that much about it.

M: Have you ever addressed any of the preservation problems on the University of Florida campus, like with Floyd Hall?

B: Yes, you had better believe it. The character and tradition of this university is based upon those buildings. It would be a terrible mistake not to restore those buildings and utilize them.

M: Do you ever get a feeling that the university administration does not really care?

B: They do not feel that way because they have not been educated to think along those lines. They are still thinking along the lines of the windowless wonders of the world like the Zimmer building, which will eventually probably have to be totally redone if they can put windows in there. They have not really done a lot of good judgment calls on the architecture. I walked through the architecture building the day I gave a lecture and saw the vast cracks in the concrete. Given what has happened there, and for the same amount of money, a very nice building could have been put there. So, there are some poor judgment calls.

M: When they take a design for a building, do you think that they go to the college of building design here, where professionals who are teaching tomorrow's professionals are located? Do you think they go to them to get them through?

B: You are making a statement. You are supposed to be asking questions. It is true, though. I totally agree with you. I know what some of that is. Again, it is politics.

M: They go out and get an outside firm and get them a contract.

B: Consequently we have some very unattractive buildings on campus. But, on the other hand, there have been some very nice things done to the University Auditorium. It is probably one of the nicest examples of restorations. It was not really adaptive restoration, it was just restoration and the expansion of an existing facility.

M: Yet I have heard second-hand that one of the administrators says that is one of the worst things we ever did.

B: Well, then he does not have good taste or good judgment. He would have done like the school board and the old city commission--just zap them out.

M: You seem to think that education of the public is the main thing.

B: Well, education of the public to the point that they understand the benefits to the community of preservation in general today, and for years to come. There is the idea that Gainesville has not really got anything old. We get this when we go to Massachusetts and see the 1670s buildings, and we say, "Well, we have got the oldest house in Gainesville, which is the Bailey house, which is 1854." But, you have got to look ahead, and if the buildings we have today are not maintained and preserved, then the people 200 years down the road in Gainesville are going to wonder what happened to their earlier buildings.

M: Have you had a chance to go to Europe yet?

B: Yes, I went last summer, and it was grand and glorious.

M: Have you been to Rome?

B: Yes.

M: Have you seen the government buildings they made out of the Roman temples?

B: Yes.

M: That is something else.

B: Yes. It is. On the other hand, I also spent a good deal of the summer taking the National Trust Tour of England. I did not take the tour; I just joined the National Trust and did my own little self-guided tour. But that gives you some idea of the pride the English people have. They have about 400 properties within England, and the people from the little communities where these little houses are located, volunteer their time on Sunday afternoon to be the guides and the docents. I think that sense of history and so forth is beginning to develop.

M: There is a larger sense of history there, and there is a lot more of it than there is in America.

B: But it had to start somewhere. Whether it is a medieval castle or an 1850s house, there has got to be a starting point. If we erase everything from say, up to our 1940s-1950s houses, then we are not being accurate for the years to come when people look at the architecture. There will be nothing left.

M: It is a part of the human legacy...

B: Yes. In one of the brochures I read somewhere, a preservationist said a city

without old houses is like a man without his memory.

M: To bring your career up-to-date, what do you see for yourself?

B: You call it a career? I do not ever get paid; I cannot even get salaried.

M: Well, pay is not necessarily a must. Let's not put a money value on everything. What do you foresee in the future for yourself? What do you want to pursue?

B: I really do not know. I probably will not be able to totally stay out of it. There are other things I would like to do. I have got my family, three in colors, two in high school, and I have time to do things. My husband would like me to start painting a little bit, not walls, but photographs and pictures and things. I would like to do that. I used to do a lot of ceramics, but I have not done any for years. There are other things I would like to do, but the truth of the matter is, that if I see an endangered old house somewhere, and I know it has potential, then I will probably bite again. It is sort of contagious. It is sort of like Frito Lay ads, "I betcha can't eat just one."

M: Yes. [Laughter]

B: Right now I am going to spend most of my time on the Bailey House complex, and finish the buildings there. We really have not finished restoring the main Bailey House structure yet. I have only done, to completion, the hall and the parlor, to my satisfaction. I have painted and redecorated a couple of other rooms. There are some additions on the house that I would like to take off, and I would like to finish that project eventually.

M: Would you like to eventually move everyone out of that, and use it for bedrooms?

B: Yes, in the original house, we have quite a few residents. When we bought the house, there were quite a few residents in it. Some of the people who were there when we bought the house three years ago are still there. I have thoughts about doing other things with the main house, if we finish developing the entire property over there to potential, which would include doing some new restoration, new construction work, and new housing. There is a chance that we might be able to go back and do more to the old Bailey House, and maybe have fewer people there, and have it as an activity center or something like that. That would be nice.

M: Are you thinking of some compatible designs?

B: Yes. Mark would also like to see us have it open more to the public. He has dreams of putting in the original furniture if he can ever get it all back. But right

now it is a viable business, and there is not much we can do except keep it going. We need to get the cash flow to do anything.

M: How much property do you own?

B: Well, right now, we own all the way through from Sixth Street to Fourth Street, which was all part of the original Bailey property. The original Bailey was all the way to downtown. We own one very large empty lot, and have just bought two properties. There is a house in the middle. It is still owner occupied. We just closed last week on another house north of Bailey Hall. There is a total of about five acres in that whole square, if we end up squaring it off.

M: So there is a lot of room for expansion, and you have plenty of room to keep you busy?

B: Yes. I do not think we will move in any of the other older buildings. I think from now on it will be new construction.

M: I want to address the issue of burn out.

B: Oh, yes. How did you know about that? Can you tell by the gray hair, or the lines on the face?

M: [Laughter] Well, Sam Gowan was really into it and an active figure, and he is still interested.

B: Still interested, but he is not in a leader capacity.

M: Right. The people that are real gung-ho, but then someone else catches afire, and those people sit back and the other people can –

B: – watch them go. Yet, those people will all come forth if there is a really strong issue or something that needs to be done because we all basically have the same motivation, which is community oriented. After four years of going from house to house and dealing with subcontractors, and as far as the actual physical endurance is doing something I am not talking now about the organization, or getting in front of the city commission and making speeches, or something like that. I am talking about the actual mechanics. It is very time-consuming and thought-consuming. There is lots of stress, and stressful situations, especially if you are actually doing the physical work. I have always worked with my crews, and I usually got there before any of them did in the morning, and left after dark every night. When the time really got short, we would work six or seven day weeks at the very end to open up a place.

So, if I would have started when I was twenty instead of when I was forty-something, I might not have the physically burned out so fast. But, I really did get tired of it. I think things are becoming a little easier now because those of us who have gone before have made things a little bit smoother with the city and the banking industry. They were not anti-preservation; they just did not understand that it could be a financially feasible endeavor.

So, everything is getting a little bit smoother now, though anyone who is working with their crew is still working physically hard. And you are making heavy decisions all the time, and you are dealing with a lot of workmen-type people and you have to do the thinking for them. You have to tell them how to do it and sometimes you have to show them. You are also dealing with the people who have not done restoration work before, and they want to apply their same tools and methods that they use in new construction. You have to say, "No, you will have to go through here, and underneath this because we do not want to expose wiring, and we do not want to lower the ceilings, and we do not want the plumbing on the outside of the building." So you do a lot of thinking and decision-making. The big one is always the color of the house on the outside; that is always a big deal. [Laughter] But I think there are ways you can get around this. You can hire a contractor and just sit back and watch all these nice things happen, you can hire an architect, a contractor and then go see your finished project, maybe the end of three months, four months.

M: You have dozens more structures, and after a while, maybe enough is enough. Step back and let someone else have it.

B: Oh, absolutely. I believe that. I do not mind somebody else doing it if when it is finished, I go through and say this is really neat. But if somebody takes a nice old house and does not do a really nice job on it, I think, "Gee, I wish I had done that one."

M: You find yourself looking at old homes with a critical eye.

B: Yes. Fortunately, most of the people who have worked with me and for me are out now on their own. Mike Wagoner started as my only carpenter, and then worked as my head carpenter, and while he was working for me got his contractor's license. He is out doing super nice jobs for other people.

M: I think I have seen him at work.

B: We sort of evolved through this thing together. We have the same sort of tastes about things and problem solving. We usually come up with the same solution.

M: If you were going through school now, and there were preservation programs

available, could you foresee that as a professional line of interest?

B: Probably not. I think I have been more effective coming from a different background. I see a lot of preservationists who live in new houses, and they work as preservationist, but then come back and live a different lifestyle. I sort of live it and follow it right on through. Maybe that makes for a faster burn out that you are talking about, I do not know.

M: It makes for more dedication.

B: I used to come home from working on a building and he would begin to start talking about preservation, or a project, or a history room, and I really did not want to hear about it. I had been in the mess all day. But, I think we have such a neat home that I might have gone into architecture. I still cannot get over the fact that Gainesville has such poor new buildings. I think there has to be a happy medium somewhere. I wonder what happens to all of our good architects that graduate from the University of Florida. They have to go somewhere else.

M: Maybe they are not becoming architects.

B: Yes. But I am interested in preservation, and though I am a lay person I have picked up an awful lot. What I am saying is that I do not think it would be much of a challenge.

M: Do you think the federal or state governments should become involved?

B: I think that they should become involved in the education process, and that it is a part of our history. More of our history courses should be in preservation. I think they ought to promote the private sector going out and doing things. I think they ought to serve as an example when it comes to state university buildings and this kind of thing. But as far as just giving our money and grants and things like that, I think we are coming to a dead end on that. I think what we have to do now is to make these projects more feasible by giving tax benefits, by recognizing districts, and by using all the mechanisms they can in the background. I think the day of the free handout is over.

M: Do you think that owner occupied projects will begin to get tax breaks?

B: I think that is a real interesting question. It becomes a matter of economics. Why shouldn't somebody who is living in a historic house get a break on doing maintenance or upkeep of their house if someone who lives in a non-historic house doesn't? The answer to that might be because they are restoring a piece of our history. If I were sitting on a board trying to decide that, I would lean toward doing something for those people. Again, I think it could be in the form of

tax breaks.

M: What are some other incentives?

B: But then again, you need to follow criteria because you have to get the tax breaks from the federal government, and it wants you to follow strict guidelines. They judge what you have done and how you have done it, and they tell you what you can and cannot do – do not sand blast, do not do this, do not do that. Those people who want to get incentives that have been built-in for owner-occupied houses have to be willing to follow guidelines. They cannot put stucco over their wooden house, and then say they were restoring it.

M: Knowing the problems that you ran into and all the hassles, I always like to ask this question, would you do it again?

B: Oh, yes. I would do it again. I would do some things differently probably, but I think I probably would do it again. I think that there is a sense of satisfaction in seeing things get finished, and making a statement. I think every time I finish a building, and it is sitting there looking nice and being a nice house for a young couple somewhere in-between living in a scuzzy apartment and buying a nice home someday, there is a sense of satisfaction. I would do it again.

M: Well, I would like to thank you for your time and for the interview. I think it went really well.

[End of the interview]