Gentlemen--It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to come before your group so that we might get to know each other a little better. However, I should like to think that almost all of you voted for me, which should carry with it the implication that we already are reasonably well acquainted. I know that in this room there are assembled many of the community's leaders, and I recognize the value of strong civic leadership in fostering good government. You know that you have in me a public servant pledged to fair representation for the public at large in the general interest of the overall community....but let's draw the lines a little more distinctly so that you will have a perfectly clear picture of me and my job, as I see it.

First of all, I think you all will agree that I am not too old.....and you did agree (at the Polls) that I am not too young. Half of the members of the Board of Aldermen are under the age of 55, and I am certain I am correct in stating that each of you voted for some candidates in both groups.....and I think it is well that a few younger men were elected to the Board, just as I think it was important that a few older men were returned, and I predict that the community at large will profit by this mixture.

It is true that I don't claim to be a master politician.....but I do not come to this office completely inexperienced in the ways of politics and governmental service, for I have worked with a number of political candidates, have served in numerous governmental agencies, was an elected member of the Atlanta City Executive Committee for 8 years and even got some real "grass roots" practical political experience serving for a term on the City Council of Mt. Park, Georgia. (Mt. Park, incidentally, is not quite so large as Atlanta, but the job did have some parallel responsibilities. Being an incorporated city, as is Atlanta, it has its own taxes, police force, street paving, sanitary problems, et cetera, and we enjoyed one of the pleasures limited to small cities, whereby the council meetings were of the town hall type where the general public participated equally with the councilmen in all debate.)
I am sorry to say I am not what is referred to as an intellectual, but it might be just as well as they don't usually get elected....but, I am not without a sound educational background, which includes Bachelor of Commercial Science and Bachelor of Law degrees, the training for which should be beneficial to me in the conduct of city business.

Also, I am not a polished public speaker, yet I have no hesitancy in appearing before any group to make a formal presentation or impromptu remarks to reveal my position on any question, and I feel public officials have an obligation to make themselves available for such purposes.

So exactly what do I have to offer....simply a sincere dedication to the principles of good government, with a grateful confidence that I have the ability to play an important role in furthering this process, in this city that I love, through an interest in her people from all walks of life. This is neither more nor less than I promised during the campaign, and I was pleased that thousands agreed that we could use a little more of these ingredients in the operation of our government. I have never injected myself into any situation where I was satisfied with the status quo....although I have found few areas where improvements couldn't be made....but, this does not imply that I am undertaking the duties of my office with the thought that our entire government is an "urban renewal project" and should be demolished and started over. Quite the contrary, I feel that, comparatively speaking, we have had very good government with many excellent elected office holders, as well as many outstanding administrative department heads. Yet I do feel there is room for improvement, and I shall seek out these areas....and, in every deliberation I shall attempt to represent all people equally.....whether residents of the north side or south side, whether white or negro, whether businessman or laborer.....with an eye to efficient management of your tax dollars, ever demanding 100% adherence to honesty both to and beyond the letter of the law.
The 17 Aldermen you elected will adopt and administer laws affecting a million people....yes, including the 500,000 living outside the corporate limits who, too, definitely are affected because they are concerned with the economic conditions inside the city limits which are directly affected by the type of local government you enjoy. These men were elected in a city-wide race, therefore, they must be interested in the entire city and the rights of all her people (and, incidentally, this does not mean only the so-called "home owner" tax payers, as there is actually no such thing as a non-tax-paying resident for you can be sure that the many thousands who don't own their homes are paying taxes for the landlords in their monthly rental payments). In my opinion you have a fine Board of Aldermen, as well as an excellent Mayor, taking office in January, and I am looking forward to working with them. 

During the weeks since the election, I—along with the other newly elected members of the Board—have been attending briefing sessions, during all of which we have experienced a pleasant, cooperative attitude on the part of the senior members of the Board. Some of the older members, in fact, have gone out of their way to counsel the new men....and, I hope that the general public, too, will offer full support to all of the elected officials regardless of whether they supported them in the primary elections. If you recognize the fact that only five to six per cent of Atlanta's million actually elected this government, you can readily see that your public officials should have the benefit of a continuous pulse-reading of the impartial community leadership, lest they be misguided by small special-interest pressure groups.

This is a wonderful city, and it can point with pride to many progressive accomplishments, but in my mind we are only on the threshold of greatness and I predict accelerated improvement in the years ahead. To start with immediately,
I think your elected officials contracted with the voters in September to begin planning for a rapid transit program, to do everything possible to speed completion of our expressway system, to promote development of a new auditorium, music hall and sports stadium and to conscientiously lend aid to continued peaceful race relations. But, keep in mind that they can't please all of the people all of the time. For every 100 who want a stop light erected so they can get in and out of their subdivision with greater safety, another 100 want it eliminated to ease traffic flow—and both groups might be right. And, accept the fact that we can't get something for nothing, and I think it is a sign of maturity on the part of the voters that not a single candidate running on such a platform was elected.....so be ready and willing to pay more taxes for the increased services and facilities demanded.

An informed civic leadership, with the aid of a courageous press, builds community interest in good government resulting in platforms for progress. You will find you have selected a capable leader in Ivan Allen, Jr., to steer this jet powered package through the maze of ever present petty problems .....to greatness heretofore unknown. True, Mayor Hartsfield has done an outstanding job for this city, but this in no way should detract from the faith you should place in Mayor Allen. It has been said that there would never be another Roosevelt, but now Truman is being recorded as one of our greats in his own right, and I predict the Allen reign will be a strong and progressive one in which all of us will take pride. It will be my job as President of the Board of Aldermen, basically, to conduct the meetings of the Board, to which, incidentally, all of you are invited to observe at any time.....but I shall have the further duty of representing the City and Mayor Allen officially on various occasions, which I will be only too glad to do.
So now you have a little better insight into my thinking regarding the government to which you have elected me. If I had introduced myself, I would have said simply that here is a man who has three loves—his family, his profession and his community. I would like to think I could introduce all of you in like manner, and certainly you must already recognize your love for your family....and, if you are to provide for them as they deserve, you best love your daily work.....but, as to your community, I hope your love here has not been dormant, for you can play an important part, and I can assure you that without a healthy community you will find it difficult to succeed financially, which in turn will affect your domestic happiness.

I contend there is only a very fine line separating civic work and political service, and I long have felt that business leaders should accept their responsibilities in official positions the same as they do in volunteer work. No one accuses the chairman of the Community Chest of taking the job for personal gain, and the public has no fear of graft, so isn't it only right that men of the same caliber should offer for public office? However, as there aren't enough elective positions for all of us at one time, do your part in the meantime in the civic world, for certainly they are very kindred fields....and, in fact, if it were not for the volunteers many more services would have to be provided by government at tax payers' expense. So your opportunities are as great as mine for serving our community, and I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.