Good morning. I'm Michael Camp, political papers archivist at the University of West Georgia. Today is Monday, February 11, 2019. We're here at the West Georgia Museum of Tallapoosa in Tallapoosa, Georgia to interview local taxidermist Bud Jones. Mr. Jones, thanks for being here this morning.

I am delighted to be here.

Good. Why don't we begin at the beginning? Can you talk about your early life in Tallapoosa? Growing up in the town? Your early memories of being here.

Well, when I was growing up in Tallapoosa we had no Interstate 20, and in my early years, Tallapoosa had no paved roads in the city except Highway 78. We didn't have television. We had radio. I remember my daddy listening to the Lone Ranger and stuff like that on radio.

Things were a lot different in Tallapoosa then. We had a lot of local businesses, local people had local business but they're all gone now. Since we didn't have I-20, the trucks and all of the things that traveled the highway had to come through Tallapoosa. And so business was thriving for a little small town.

It was a small placid town, but we had some action. There were always local bootleggers that had their stills and things like that. I remember a few policemen that had trouble with some of the citizens, the local drunks. There was always something going on in Tallapoosa that, like I said, we had the bootleggers and a lot of that was going on.

It's just that we didn't keep up with the world like it is today if you know what I mean because we didn't have cellphones, we didn't have iPods, and all that crap. We didn't have television.

What we did for entertainment in those days was mostly from the church or the schools. I remember in high school before our classes got started every morning the teachers would read from the Bible. They'd read a little from the Bible. We would have local pastors come in and speak in our auditorium to the whole
school. Now, of course, that's against the law more or less. Things like that.

Bud Jones: 00:03:34 I could tell you about some of the businesses we had. We had on one side of Head Avenue, which was the main street through Tallapoosa, we had a Virgil Smith's jewelry store, we had Waldrop's drug store, we had the dentist office, which was in an upstairs room, and the dentist was ... Before my mother could take any of us to the dentist she had to call to make sure he was sober because he took a snort every once in a while. Then we had a hardware store on that side and we had Benny Field's barber shop. They're all gone.

Bud Jones: 00:04:24 Then on the other side we had Hildebrand's Drug Store and we had West Barber Shop. We had the Grand Theater. Then we had Isaac Mitnick's store where they sold dry goods, things like that. Then on the end we had the Tallapoosa Journal office, and the Tallapoosa Journal is extinct today.

Bud Jones: 00:04:52 All of those are gone. When Kmart and Walmart came in, the little business just kind of fizzled out. They're gone now.

Michael Camp: 00:05:11 What was it like to be walking around downtown when all the stores were open and people were kind of out? How did it feel different than it does now?

Bud Jones: 00:05:22 We knew each other. You know, you could walk downtown Tallapoosa and most of the people I knew. Also, I remember as a boy when the farmers came to town on Saturday they had their horses, mules, and wagons, and they'd come into town and we had watering troughs for the horses.

Bud Jones: 00:05:47 Everybody knew anybody. My daddy was the local fire chief. Whenever the fire alarm went off, the siren, everybody would get up ... I won't say everybody, but most of the people got up and went to see where the fire was. Of course, wouldn't dare do that today. All of those things.

Bud Jones: 00:06:19 People were more friendly. You knew everybody. At Christmas, everybody said "Merry Christmas." People nowadays, they don't want to say "Merry Christmas." If somebody was sick people helped to maybe financially take care of them. It was just a spirit like that in a little town that I miss a lot of that today.

Michael Camp: 00:06:52 Yeah. When you were growing up you had some experiences with hunting.
Bud Jones: 00:06:57 Oh, yes.

Michael Camp: 00:06:58 What was your hunting experience like as a young child?

Bud Jones: 00:07:00 Well, you see, back then we didn't have any deer around here. We didn't have wild turkeys. They came later when the wild turkeys were planted in our country by our local game warden Max Crook. The deer more or less worked in from Alabama who had a lot of deer. Then we had our own deer propagation program from the state of Georgia.

Bud Jones: 00:07:30 So what we had was rabbits and squirrels and possum hunting. My daddy had a pack of beagle hounds. Every Saturday during the winter we went rabbit hunting. Back then we ate rabbits. I mean, we ate rabbits and we ate squirrels.

Bud Jones: 00:07:53 My daddy used to take ... If we killed an overly amount of rabbits there was a woman who lived across the street and she had I think five children and her husband was an alcoholic. They hardly ever had anything to eat and my daddy would take them rabbits to eat. In fact, one of the boys told me that was really what got them through, you know?

Bud Jones: 00:08:22 We went squirrel hunting. One of the joys of my life was rabbit hunting. Back then when I was in high school our field didn't have a lighted field. We played football in the afternoon. Friday nights were reserved for possum hunting.

Bud Jones: 00:08:46 You tell kids nowadays that we used to go possum hunting. Most of them don't even know what a possum is. I remember one night we went possum hunting ...

Bud Jones: 00:08:59 Well, before I get to that story, one night there was a lot of stirring going on in the house about two o'clock in the morning. My daddy got up and my mother got up and they woke us all up. Our neighbor's house across the street was on fire.

Bud Jones: 00:09:22 My daddy got out in the middle of the road with his shotgun and shot in the air three times, which in those days was the signal of distress. It woke up all the neighbors.

Bud Jones: 00:09:22 My daddy went into the burning house ... Back then nobody locked their doors. I mean, why lock your doors? He went upstairs and woke the people up and helped them get down the stairs. The husband carried a little baby in his arms and the little baby that he carried in his arms is our mayor today.
Bud Jones: Mm-hmm (affirmative). They got all of them out of the house safely but my daddy had smelled so much smoke that from then on he couldn't smell. Fast forward to my teenage years we went possum hunting one night.

Bud Jones: There was a man with us named Luke Allen. He had a new car and he picked us up in his new car and we put our possum dog in the trunk of his car. You know what the trunk of the car is. See, back then nobody knew what a trunk of a car was.

Bud Jones: The dog treed ... See, what you'd do you'd turn your dog loose and he would make a big circle and if he didn't pick up the scent of a possum he'd come back to us and we'd move onto another spot.

Bud Jones: Well, the dog treed about two or three possums and then he treed another. I remember my daddy said, "Boy, this is going to be a good night." We started to where the dog had treed and Luke Allen was in the front, I was second, my daddy was last. We were kind of single file going through the woods.

Bud Jones: Luke Allen turned around and he called my daddy. He said, "D.V. ..." My daddy's name was D.V. Jones. He said, "I believe that dog treed a polecat." Well, back then they called a skunk a polecat. Daddy said, "No. Lee ..." Lee was the dog. "Lee won't tree a skunk."

Bud Jones: Well, we got up there and we walked out into the area and it was kind of a little clear space. Lee had treed a skunk under some bushes. Luke Allen said, "D.V. he's treed a pole cat." Daddy said, "No." See, daddy couldn't smell, but we couldn't see very well. We shined our flashlight on it and the skunk let us have it. He sprayed us. It didn't come out in a stream like you would think but it was a fog.

Bud Jones: When my daddy's eyes started burning. He knew then that Lee had treed a skunk. I tried to throw up but I couldn't. I just gagged. It was terrible. When a dog trees a skunk they can't smelled for a while. We knew the possum hunting was over and so we started back to the car. When we got to the car Luke Allen says, "I'm in the doghouse now." Daddy said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I've got a new car," and we had to get into that car and old Lee into the trunk and go back home.
Bud Jones: 00:12:54 Well, his wife was I'm sure upset but when we got to our house and knocked on the door my mother came to the door and, of course, the odor nearly knocked her down. It was about thirty degrees. She made us undress on the front porch. I'm just thankful nobody came by.

Bud Jones: 00:13:22 I don't guess you've ever been sprayed by a skunk, but the odor is terrible. You can't get rid of it. We tried tomato juice and everything. My clothes were ruined. When I went to school the next Monday everybody kind of looked askance at me. You know?

Bud Jones: 00:13:44 Finally, after about two weeks, the odor went away. That was one possum hunt I'll never forget. Back then we didn't eat possums but a lot of people did. We gave them to people who ate possums and they would put them in a cage and feed them for about a week and let them get "cleaned out," they would say, and then they would skin them and eat them. That's probably the most exciting possum hunt I've ever been on.

Michael Camp: 00:14:17 Probably so. What was it like after growing up in Tallapoosa to go off to North Georgia College?

Bud Jones: 00:14:24 Well, back then our high school was eleven years. Now it's twelve years. I was sixteen years old when I went off to college. I did not especially like to go off to college, but I did.

Bud Jones: 00:14:44 You know, I came from a little town where we weren't exposed to all of the things that went on in big towns. I went to North Georgia College, it's the University of North Georgia now and it's a military school.

Bud Jones: 00:15:02 You know, it was scary but I managed to get by. I received a major in biology. After the first two years I liked college a little bit more but I never was crazy about it.

Michael Camp: 00:15:24 Why was that?

Bud Jones: 00:15:25 Well, I liked to ramble in the woods and hunt and fish. That came to a stop. I played basketball in college and did that. I just never did like college that much but I got my degree.

Bud Jones: 00:15:46 Well, I remember after my freshman year I came home and told my daddy, I said, "Daddy, I'm not going back to college anymore." I said, "I'm going to get a job and work." He said, "The hell you are." He said, "You're going back to school" and I did.
Bud Jones: 00:16:05 Of course, today I guess if most kids told their daddy that he'd say, "Well, all right. We'll see what we can do" but back then I did what my mama and daddy said.

Michael Camp: 00:16:14 Yeah. How did your singing career get started?

Bud Jones: 00:16:20 Well, when I was I believe in the tenth or eleventh grade my mother and daddy gave me a Gene Autry guitar for Christmas. I remember I had an instruction book how to tune it and everything. I remember I learned two chords on the guitar. I sat around and played "Old Black Joe" on that guitar and about ran everybody crazy, but I learned gradually to do better.

Bud Jones: 00:17:00 When I went off to college, I had a friend there who was named Sam Parrish, and he was an excellent guitar player. He taught me a lot. I was always interested in folk songs.

Bud Jones: 00:17:19 When I went off ... Let's see. We had a camp in Atlanta called Fritz Orr Camp. It was a summer camp. I taught nature study there. I taught there for five summers. I took my guitar and I was very popular there because I was the only one that had a guitar, who could sing, and I sang folk songs.

Bud Jones: 00:17:47 One of the boys that was a counselor there, his daddy was a lawyer. He liked my singing and he signed me to a contract. He said, "I'm going to take you to New York and get you on with Capitol Records." Well, that suited me.

Bud Jones: 00:18:08 We got in his car with his wife and rode to Salisbury, North Carolina. His wife had some relatives there. In Salisbury, we got on the train. Well, I had only ridden on the train one time, and my daddy had taken me to Bremen, and he let me ride from Bremen back to Tallapoosa so I could say I'd ridden on the train.

Bud Jones: 00:18:37 We got on this train and my mother had bought some new underwear for me. One set of underwear I had I put on. It was white and had little red valentines all over. It was loud underwear. Of course, nobody could see it.

Bud Jones: 00:18:59 We got on this train and we had to sleep, of course, and they had these sleepers I guess you'd call them there on the top of the train. I finally got up in mine and had I guess about fifteen inches of space. At the time, I was 6'4" and weighed over two hundred pounds. That was tight going.

Bud Jones: 00:19:27 I finally got my pants off. About two o'clock in the morning I had to go to the bathroom. I couldn't get my pants back on, you
know? I slid the curtain back and I didn't see anybody. I got out in the aisle there with my loud underwear on and went to the restroom.

Bud Jones: 00:19:51 Well, when I came back here comes this lady down the aisle with a little boy and they were polite and they just grinned. I knew what they was grinning at, my loud underwear. Well, I got back up in the booth there and stayed there until the next morning. I finally got dressed.

Bud Jones: 00:20:06 We got to New York and we were in this hotel on the thirtieth floor. Well, you know, I never had been up in the air higher than one story more or less. We got to New York. This lawyer was very proper.

Bud Jones: 00:20:29 I got ahead of myself ... On our way to Salisbury, he told me, he said, "Now if you have to go to the bathroom you just say, 'I'd like to have a Coke.'" Well, I was nervous about the trip, you know? On the way to Salisbury, I must have had three or four Cokes. I guess he thought I was ... I don't know what he thought.

Bud Jones: 00:20:52 Anyway, we get up there on that thirtieth floor. I was the room where you enter it had a couch and they put me on that couch. Their bedroom was next and then the bathroom was on the other side of their bedroom.

Bud Jones: 00:21:13 Well, about two o'clock in the morning I had to go to the bathroom. Well, I said, "I don't want to go through their bedroom." I didn't know what I was going to do. I looked over there at the window and the window was open and the curtain was blowing. I went over and looked out the window, and it's thirty stories down. It was dark so I just let it fly out the window. You know?

Bud Jones: 00:21:40 I got back in bed and the next morning when I got up, about fifteen stories down, there was a bald headed man watering his flowers. I said to him, I said, "Well, you don't know it, buddy, but they got watered last night." You know, I was a country boy coming to town.

Bud Jones: 00:22:01 Well, the next day we went to the office of Capitol Records and the very first question he asked me, he said, "Do you belong to the musicians' union?" I said, "No, I don't." I didn't know what a musicians' union was and my lawyer evidently hadn't thought of that.
Bud Jones: 00:22:23 He said, "I can't talk to you." We went to New York for nothing. I'll never forget my trip to New York. I went out on the sidewalk and just walked down the sidewalk. I never had seen ... We rolled in a taxi one time and, brother, if you don't believe prayer works you ought to ride in a taxi in New York City. I prayed.

Bud Jones: 00:22:52 There was a lady walking down the street and she had a thing, a leash, but it was stiff like you were leading a dog. She was walking down the street with that leash but wasn't anything on the end of it. I stopped and just watched her go by. Well, nobody else stopped. Everybody else just walked by like it was a regular thing.

Bud Jones: 00:23:16 Stuff like that. I just never had seen the like of this New York City. We came back home. Of course, we didn't get to see that but then after that I auditioned for Freddy Miller's ... Freddy Miller had a popular show on channel 11 in Atlanta where it was for people trying out. You know, new musicians or any kind of performer.

Bud Jones: 00:23:56 I tried out on his program, and he liked me so much that I went over there every Sunday afternoon. That was when his program was. I performed every Sunday afternoon. I went with him on his trips to the different towns in Georgia where he auditioned people trying out to get on Freddy Miller's show. I was on television there a number of times.

Bud Jones: 00:24:27 Well, when I went in the Army they asked me what I did. I told them that I was a professional folk singer, which I got paid for some of my work so I said, "Well, I guess I'm a professional."

Bud Jones: 00:24:46 The old fella clapped his hands and he said, "Boy, that's good news." He put me together with ... I played the guitar. He put me with a fiddle player and a banjo player and Faron Young. Faron Young was a country singer who had just started out on Capitol Records.

Bud Jones: 00:25:13 We performed for the troops and it was three months before we took basic training because they had us performing. I was at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and that was where in the Southeast most of the young men came to get trained in the Army. Those boys were homesick and everything. They liked that country music. I sang country music then too to please everybody.

Bud Jones: 00:25:45 Then Faron Young one day he said, "I got a new song coming out on Capitol Records and I want you to hear it." He had his
guitar and he took me outside the tent and he sang a song called “Going Steady.” When it came out it went right out to the top of the records. The Army took him out of Fort Jackson and put him on a tour all over the United States.

Bud Jones: 00:26:12 I stayed at Fort Jackson. I ran a place ... I don't know what you’d call it. It was where the troops could come and play pool and just relax and do that. You know? We entertained there at our place.

Bud Jones: 00:26:41 About a month before I got out of the Army they took me off of that and let me just do a job of carrying the troops around, the new recruits, to get their haircuts and then I was discharged from the Army.

Bud Jones: 00:26:58 When I got out of the Army I sang on television a while. I remember one morning I got in about two o'clock and I had to get up at six o'clock to go to another performance somewhere. I just didn't like that. I liked the outdoors too much. I just kind of put a stop to my singing career. I was teaching school and got into taxidermy also. That's how my singing career got started.

Michael Camp: 00:27:30 How did you meet your wife Jackie?

Bud Jones: 00:27:34 Well, she called me one night and invited me to a party. We went to the party together. About the second date we had I picked her up one night. I had an old Plymouth station wagon. I told her not to get excited but my pet snake had got loose in my car somewhere and I couldn't find it.

Bud Jones: 00:28:00 Well, she turned about four different colors but she was brave and she got in the car and we had our date. I never did find the snake but we started courting. We courted two years. You know, that's a long courting. Nowadays two weeks is pretty long. That's how we met and got started.

Michael Camp: 00:28:24 Could you talk about your experience moving to Wyoming in the mid-1950s? What took you there and what it was like?

Bud Jones: 00:28:32 Well, I wanted to do taxidermy full-time. I had a friend that was in the Air Force and when he got out I had a taxidermy magazine and there was an advertisement for a taxidermist out in Casper, Wyoming. I showed it to him. He answered the ad and he got a job in Casper, Wyoming.

Bud Jones: 00:28:53 Well, he got me a job in the same shop. When we went to Casper back then television was in its infancy and all of the
programs were live. I told Jackie my wife, I said, "You know, I believe I could get a program on that."

Bud Jones: 00:29:16 I took my guitar one day and went up to Station KSPR and told them I was a folk singer and I'd like to see if I could audition for a program. She said, "Let me hear you sing." I sang three songs for her. She said, "I'll be back in a few minutes." About fifteen minutes she came back. She said, "I've got you a sponsor." She said, "It's the Forsling Furniture Company in Casper, the biggest furniture company, and they're going to sponsor you."

Bud Jones: 00:29:52 Every Tuesday night I started singing folk songs on television and I worked in the taxidermy shop. I think they liked my accent better than they did my singing but I became very popular in Casper, Wyoming. Back then I think Casper was 55,000 people. I remember I used to get mail from home and it'd just be, "Bud Jones, Casper, Wyoming" and I got the mail somehow.

Bud Jones: 00:30:26 We had a good time in Casper, but I had promised Jackie that we would stay long enough for me to learn taxidermy, which I did, and so we came back to Georgia. When we got back to Georgia, we knocked on the door at her mother's house about two in the morning. They came downstairs and they hugged us and all. I hugged her mother, and accidentally I broke two ribs when I hugged her. She was pretty mad at me there for two or three weeks.

Bud Jones: 00:31:05 I don't know how my former ... I had taught biology three years and I don't know how my former principal found out I was back. I never did ask him. He called me the next day and he said, "Can you come and teach?" I went back and taught biology again. That's how we went to Wyoming and I really enjoyed my experience out there.

Michael Camp: 00:31:32 What sparked your interest in taxidermy? You clearly like animals and being outside. Is there any other thing that got you so interested?

Bud Jones: 00:31:38 My daddy was an outdoorsman and I love the outdoors. I just wanted some way to preserve animals. I saw an ad in a sportsman magazine one time from the Northwestern School of Taxidermy and I wrote to them. Back then there was no emails and all that stuff. I wrote to them.

Bud Jones: 00:32:03 I started taking courses. They would send you a booklet on how to skin a bird. Then they'd send another book how to mount it. I got to mounting birds and became ... Well, I was actually the
only taxidermist around anywhere. People would bring me their trophies to mount.

Bud Jones: 00:32:24 I didn't mount very many deer heads because the deer hunting was in its infancy back then but I did a lot of birds and things like that.

Michael Camp: 00:32:34 You even had work coming from as far away as Atlanta.

Bud Jones: 00:32:37 Yes. Then as our taxidermy business grew I had to make a choice. At the time I was working at Dixie Steel. I was a foreman out here at Dixie Steel. I was getting in in the afternoon about four o'clock and working in my taxidermy shop until twelve or one and I was getting four or five hours of sleep.

Bud Jones: 00:33:11 You know, I just said something’s got to give. We had so much work on hand in taxidermy that I quit my job at Dixie Steel. In 1972, we built our current shop. I went into business full-time in taxidermy.

Michael Camp: 00:33:28 Could you talk a bit about your children and your family?

Bud Jones: 00:33:32 Well, we were married seven years I think before we had any children. We have three girls and our first girl is an artist. She has a shop over in Kennesaw. Our second girl is a physical therapist. Our third one works for us in our taxidermy business.

Bud Jones: 00:33:59 They've been the joy of our life and I feel sorry for people that don't have children. I feel sorry for married couples that don't have children. It's just a blessing. We now have eight grandchildren. Six granddaughters and two grandboys.

Michael Camp: 00:34:17 Can you talk more about your involvement at church and that community?

Bud Jones: 00:34:22 Well, I've always been involved in church, of which I'm thankful. When I was a kid my mother took me to Sunday school and I didn't want to go to Sunday school. I wanted to stay outside and play cowboys and Indians. But no, you're going to Sunday school.

Bud Jones: 00:34:38 I went to Sunday school, and as I grew into a teenager, it was just automatic that I went to Sunday school. As an early adult I just went to Sunday school. I'm thankful for that. At about the age of twenty-one I started teaching the young people, like ten and twelve years old, in Sunday school. I gradually worked up to teaching the adults.
I have taught Sunday school now for I think sixty-six years. It's just been a part of our life. Jackie was a Christian when I married her and I was a Christian and it's just been part of our lives. I would hate to think that we had to raise our children without the church. The church was important in our lives and still is.

Today, Jackie and I work with the seniors. We started a program back fifty-one years ago where I used to watch Hee Haw and on Hee Haw they had a picking and grinning where they would pick a little bit and tell jokes on people in the audience.

I think I remember that.

Yeah. When we started our senior adult program we started a picking and grinning. Jackie's uncle was the first person that worked with me. We had a party one night at the church.

I told him, I said, "Bant ..." His name was Bant Bailey. I said, "Bant, let's do a little picking and telling jokes on the people" and we told four or five jokes on people and they just thought it was the funniest thing in the world.

I organized a group of three of us and we started our picking and the grinning and we've been doing it ... This is our 51st year for working with the adults and we still do our picking and the grinning every third Tuesday night.

Excellent. Could you talk about the time that your taxidermy shop flooded and the challenges that presented?

Yeah. We live on Green's Creek. Green's Creek, the original bridge across the creek is about two hundred yards below our shop. It was just a little bridge and it had a small opening under it.

One weekend, Jackie and I had gone to Biloxi, Mississippi, to a board meeting of the National Taxidermy Association. I was on the board. That was a week that we ... It was in '79. We had had an ice storm in March. Then the ground was just covered with ice. Then for three weeks it was saturated with rain. We just had rain.

While we were gone, the rain had washed debris down the creek and stopped up that little bridge and it got stopped up and we got four feet of water in our shop. When we came back,
our daughter met us at out at the interstate and told us what happened.

Bud Jones: 00:38:20 Well, luckily, Jackie’s sister worked for us at the time and she got a refrigerated truck to come down there. They took everything ... We had nineteen freezers in the shop, and every one of them turned over and just dumped everything in the floor.

Bud Jones: 00:38:36 Well, we were real lucky: we didn’t lose any customer stuff, but we lost a lot of personal items. It was a month before we could get back into operation. That was really a blow to us. You come, come back and all.

Bud Jones: 00:38:55 Tom Murphy was in the legislature then. He had that little bridge down below our shop demolished and so there’s been a free-flowing stream since then, and every once in a while it gets up, but we’ve just been lucky. That was really a blow to our economy.

Michael Camp: 00:39:21 Yeah. The 1970s was about the same time as the Tallapoosa Twenty incident. How did that affect your perceptions of the city?

Bud Jones: 00:39:31 The Tallapoosa Twenty? Well, that really affected our town. Back then Jackie and I were taking our children on vacations to ... We went to our National Taxidermy Association meetings everywhere all over the United States. "Where you from, Bud?" "I'm from Tallapoosa, Georgia." "Oh, that's where they had the gas scandal."

Bud Jones: 00:39:53 It was really embarrassing. That really affected our town. It was a shameful thing that just ... I don't know. It happened and it affected the officials of the city, the police. It affected various citizens around town. It was just a thing that I wish Tallaposa had never had to go through but we survived. We got good mayors. We started good mayors and our city progress. Eventually I-20 came on through, and we have a wonderful town today.

Michael Camp: 00:40:42 Your life has overlapped a lot with the growth of Atlanta, its metropolitan growth.

Bud Jones: 00:40:47 Yes.

Michael Camp: 00:40:47 Do you have any thoughts on how Atlanta growing physically and demographically has affected places like Tallaposa?
Bud Jones: 00:40:56 Well, actually, you'd be surprised at the people that live here in Tallapoosa now that work in Atlanta. They go back and forth every day, which I wouldn't want to do. Atlanta's growth has affected towns like Lithia Springs and Douglasville and Villa Rica more than it has Tallapoosa. It just hasn't reached this far yet.

Bud Jones: 00:41:27 The growth of Atlanta has affected our town as far as people being able to go to Atlanta and shop with I-20. It's really been a factor in our town. It has affected our town.

Michael Camp: 00:41:44 Yeah. I wonder how that might play out in the coming years. I'm familiar with the areas around Acworth, and just a few years ago, Acworth was kind of the edge of the metro area. I hadn't been there in about four or five years and recently rode through.

Michael Camp: 00:41:57 Now the metropolitan growth has reached out of Acworth into Cartersville, and it seems every four or five years another city or town kind of gets drawn into the growth of suburbia and highways and things like that.

Bud Jones: 00:42:09 Well, I think it eventually will reach our city and along with that comes the drug problem, the alcohol problem, stuff like that. I look for it to happen to our city. I don't know how we'll react to it but the other towns have survived so I guess we can too.

Michael Camp: 00:42:34 You talked a little bit about the arrival of Walmart and Kmart and retail stores. Do you have any other thoughts on how economic changes have affected life in the city?

Bud Jones: 00:42:42 Well, just like a while ago I mentioned to you the little stores and different things we had. When Walmart came in, well, you know, why pay for something that's higher in Tallapoosa when you can go there to Walmart and get it cheaper and drive ten miles?

Bud Jones: 00:43:06 Well, it just put the little businesses out of business. It's really affected our community. We've had some businesses come in to make up for that. We have the Japanese industry out here in town. What is it? What's the name of it, Jackie? She's not even in here.

Michael Camp: 00:43:36 Are you talking about the Honda plant?

Bud Jones: 00:43:37 Yeah. Honda. I couldn't think of it. The Honda plant has come in and we have some other industries so it's kind of made up for the little industries that we lost.
Can you talk about how you got involved creating the local museum in which we find ourselves today?

Well, I told you a while ago about my friend that I got a job in Casper, Wyoming. When he and I were teenagers we always said we’re going to collect enough animals to have a museum in Tallapoosa. We wanted to have a museum in Tallapoosa.

Well, he went his way and got embalming. I went my way. We had three children and I had to work and kind of the museum went back always in the back of my mind but one day the city called and wanted to know if I would be in charge of a cultural committee. I said, "Well, what is the cultural committee?" He said, "We're trying to get a committee to work on finding ways to improve our city." I said, "Okay, I'll work with that" and they put me as the chairman.

Well, we fooled around and didn't do much. One day the local banker here in town, his name was Benny Tolbert. He called me in his office. He said, "Bud, what can we do to improve things in Tallapoosa?" I said, "Benny, we need a museum." His face lit up like a Christmas tree. It just seemed like that was something he had never thought of. We talked about it a while. I said, "People need to know where they came from. We need to know the history of our town and the natural history."

He just gobbled that up. He said, "How do we get started?" I said, "Well, we need a building the first thing and we need a museum board." He said, "Let me get back with you."

About a month later he called me and said, "I got the building." That was the old laundry building here in Tallapoosa. It was about five thousand square feet. The city sent me fifteen names of people that I could choose to be on the museum board and I chose eight people to be on the museum board.

One of them was a man named Gordon Heath, and Gordon was in charge of our rubber plant here in Tallapoosa that we had. We had a meeting at the First Baptist Church in 1989 and we very wisely on one of the board members was always the mayor. Whoever the mayor is he's automatically a board member of our museum. That's a very wise thing because the first board mayor we had was a contractor, Micajah Bagwell.
We said, "We've got to improve the old laundry building." We were able to borrow $30,000 from the city and the mayor contractor did all the work. We said, "Now what do we do?"

We went to a place in Alabama in Pike County. Now Pike County has a historical museum complex that is tremendous. I mean, it is acres and acres of buildings. In one of the buildings, they had little stores, and those little stores represented buildings that were in Pike County earlier.

We said, "Boy, that's the way to go." We didn't know what to do if we got things to put in the museum. We didn't know what to do with them. We came back and our mayor-contractor built little stores. We had Johnson's Shoe Shop, we had the barber shop, the drug store. I had all these historical items.

We said, "Now we've got to fill up these stores." I put an ad in the paper for people, "Would you donate stuff to the museum?" We hardly got any response. I've always worked with the Anniston Museum of Natural History over here in Anniston, Alabama.

I got to thinking, I said, "They let people loan stuff." I put another article in the paper, "Would you loan something to the museum?" Well, the next week we were inundated. There was five people that worked in the museum taking in stuff.

And so that's what we did. We took all of this stuff and put it here and put it there because you didn't want to just take a wall and hang something on it. That didn't mean anything but if it was in the store, a fake store, it meant something.

Well, we wanted something for the schoolchildren so I built a fifteen foot hadrosaur dinosaur. We brought it up to the museum and the next week, which was I believe in April and May, the next month there, we had over three thousand schoolkids come and see that dinosaur.

Well, our museum grew and grew. We ran out of space. The local Lion's Club has always helped us. They said, "We'll buy the building", a reasonable museum building, and I believe they paid $100,000 for it. We got a local contractor, Tony Ellis, who erects steel buildings. He erected a hundred foot long, 15,000 square foot new building.

We decided to move in it. The museum board ... I told them. I said, "Now look, if y'all want schoolchildren to be interested in
the museum they're not going to be interested in the history of our county or area. You've got to do something for them."
"What do you suggest?" I mentioned dinosaurs. Well, they just bit that right away.

Bud Jones: 00:51:06 I started building a thirty-foot T-rex dinosaur in our shop. We had a museum board meeting. We had our new building. I was building the dinosaur. I started on him in February. The museum board met. I figured I had maybe a year to build that dinosaur. Well, the museum board said, no, let's open the Fourth of July. I about had a heart attack.

Bud Jones: 00:51:37 I had to get busy and I finished that thirty-foot dinosaur on July 2. We got a U-Haul truck, a flat bottom truck close to the ground, and we put that dinosaur on that truck and the police cordoned off the traffic. We went up the highway with that dinosaur while cars just going every which way looking at that dinosaur.

Bud Jones: 00:52:13 We finally got it into the museum. We had a bunch of prisoners that ... At the time we had a place for these prisoners out here. They unloaded the dinosaur and we took it in the museum. We opened the Fourth of July of 2000. Tom Murphy and Nathan Dean got us each a $5000 grant. We just got the museum opened.

Bud Jones: 00:52:52 We had so many people you couldn't believe it. It was hard to move around. We just had a wonderful opening. That's really how our museum got started.

Michael Camp: 00:53:03 Now that it's been here about nineteen years, what do you think it's meant to the city to have something like this here?

Bud Jones: 00:53:11 I think the citizens really approve of it. The city council has always approved of our museum. You see, a lot of cities the size of Tallapoosa have a little museum but they have volunteer workers. I remember one time Jackie and I driving out west. We wanted to see the museum in the town. We stopped at a little museum open on Wednesdays and Thursdays or open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Things like that. That just don't work.

Bud Jones: 00:53:49 We had already decided when we have our museum we need a full-time worker and the city approved of it. We've always had good reception. We had for our last Indian exhibit, we had a tremendous crowd to come and see that exhibit. You could look
at our guestbook out there and people are really proud of our museum in Tallapoosa.

Bud Jones: 00:54:21 I've had people come from Marietta, from different cities, and they say, "I wish we had a museum like this." For Tallapoosa, a museum that's over 16,000 square feet is a pretty nice size museum.

Michael Camp: 00:54:37 Pretty nice for any city really.

Bud Jones: 00:54:40 I think so.

Michael Camp: 00:54:42 How did you get involved or interested in writing Western novels?

Bud Jones: 00:54:46 Well, I'd always wanted to write a book. When I was nineteen years old, I started writing “outdoors” for the Tallapoosa Journal and the Gateway Beacon, which is actually the whole county paper.

Bud Jones: 00:55:06 I'd always wanted to write a book. When I turned sixty years old I said, "Well, if I'm going to write a book I better get at it." I wrote a book called The Pleasant Valley. It was a western. I remembered things that I had seen in Wyoming. Wyoming is a historical state. I mean, it's got Indian fights, historical, all of that, you know? Montana, that's where Custer met his end. I remembered all those things.

Bud Jones: 00:55:50 I wrote this western. I remember the library we have here in Tallapoosa they sponsored my first book signing. We had I think around five hundred people coming to get a book. I kept writing, and I've written also a book on wild animals I have known, I've written on a book on oddities of nature. Just different animals that people don't know about, they don't see but we have, and things like that.

Bud Jones: 00:56:34 I wrote ... probably one of my most popular books has been Growing Up In Tallapoosa. Locally, I mean. I love to write and I still write. The Tallapoosa Journal went extinct here a few weeks ago but I still write for the Harrison Gateway Beacon.

Michael Camp: 00:56:57 How did the possum drop get started?

Bud Jones: 00:57:02 I don't remember the exact year but let's just say years ago some of the local citizens got together and said, "We need to have a new year's celebration." See, Tallapoosa used to
celebrate one year with Tallapoosa and then one with Buchanan and we swapped.

Bud Jones:  **00:57:29** We wanted to do something on our own so they said, "We're going to call it the Possum Drop." For two years, across town on the old Bailey and Barnes building, they dropped an artificial possum. I think the first year they had about forty people. The second year they had a few more. The third year, Mary Tolleson, who you know, called me and asked me did I have a real mounted possum. I said yes. They said, "Can we use it in the possum drop?" I said yes.

Bud Jones:  **00:58:03** They named him Spencer for a man named Ralph Spencer who started to help get Tallapoosa started back in the 1890s. The possum drop just kept growing until we've around four thousand people to come. Well, four thousand people is more than our population. It's gotten so big that now we have to have one entertainment venue on one side of the town and across the tracks on the other we have another venue of entertainment.

Bud Jones:  **00:58:43** I remember we went up there. Jackie and I were up there one year. They dropped the possum off of the highest building in town, which is the old bank building. They dropped it in a big globe about that big around. You can see in it, and it's all lit up, and old Spencer the possum is in there hanging on his tail.

Bud Jones:  **00:59:05** They dropped that thing down and when he got into the ground the people ... We were inundated with people. Jackie and I were standing right there. They just nearly knocked us down. One old codger said, "Is that thing real?" He reached in there and tried to touch it. They were taking pictures of it. I just thought to myself, "That old possum never thought he would be so popular." People would go crazy over that.

Bud Jones:  **00:59:35** I've been asked why the possum drop is so popular. Well, Atlanta has the peach drop, and everybody knows what a peach is, and different towns have this drop and that drop and everybody knows what they are.

Bud Jones:  **00:59:52** The possum drop, people said, "What the heck?" There's a town in North Carolina that had a live possum drop. Well, they should have known that PETA and all that bunch would get on that right away. Well, they did and they stopped them. They should have never had it. I mean, how do you hang a possum by his tail and him alive?
Bud Jones: 01:00:16 Old Spencer just hangs on his tail and comes down there and he's been doing that for years and years and years. His front claws are gone off his legs and he's slowly getting kind of deteriorated but he's still in pretty good shape.

Bud Jones: 01:00:31 They asked me, "What are we going to do when Spencer wears out?" I said, "Well, I've got some more possum skins in the freezer" ready to take care of it. It's been ... Even StoryCorps came here back in September and interviewed us about the possum drop from Brooklyn, New York. We've had newspapers from New York, Michigan, all over calling about the possum drop.

Bud Jones: 01:01:00 They call me and I don't know how they ever associated me with being the one, you know? All I did was furnish the possum. The city fathers and all they got the possum drop started. They all come to me and say, "How did you do that? What about the possum drop?" It's amazing.

Bud Jones: 01:01:26 This year we had some rain and the crowd wasn't as big but it was a big crowd. Luckily, it stopped raining about 11:30 and everybody came out and they had a pretty good crowd. When it's good weather, it's a sight. They come to see that old possum.

Michael Camp: 01:01:49 Great. Is there anything else you think people should know? Anything you want to add to the historical record about yourself, Tallapoosa, anything you think people should ...

Bud Jones: 01:02:00 I think that all towns, whether small or large, have got a history. You know they have or they wouldn't have gotten started, if they hadn't. I think that every town ought to have some kind of museum, whether it's just a small place or a large building. Young people need to know where they came from, about their ancestors.

Bud Jones: 01:02:31 That's how we got the Creek Indian exhibit because I told our museum board, I said, "If you want to really give back to history, we have to go back to the Indians," and so we did. It's been one of our most popular exhibits.

Bud Jones: 01:02:48 When young people come ... I'm talking about school kids. When they come to the museum today they go right to the dinosaurs, our director tells me, and then they run over to the exhibit of the mounted animals of Haralson County. Then they go around the rest of the museum and they learn what Tallapoosa is about.
Bud Jones: 01:03:12 We have an exhibit of the Lithia Springs Hotel, which was the largest wooden structure in the South at the time. We've got people here in town today that don't even know we had a Lithia Springs Hotel. So somebody found the original plans for the hotel and we had a local contractor to take those plans and get it down to where we could make a realistic model and we have a realistic model of the Lithia Hotel.

Bud Jones: 01:03:48 It's about eight or nine feet high and fifteen feet wide. It's a realistic model of our hotel. People come here and we've got pictures of the old hotel. They say, "I didn't even know we had that." I just think every town needs something that people know where they came from.

Michael Camp: 01:04:12 Well, I think you've done a lot to make that happen here.

Bud Jones: 01:04:14 I've tried to. I have spent a lot of money on our exhibits. This case right here is birds that I collected when I was a teenager. I've kept them over the years and I finally donated them to the museum.

Bud Jones: 01:04:37 People come here and they see these animals and they say, "Well, I didn't know we had that in Haralson County" or they come to see the hotel, "Well, I didn't know we had a hotel" or, "I didn't know we had that barber shop here" or, "I didn't know what tribe of Indians even existed here."

Bud Jones: 01:04:56 It's amazing how ignorant people are of their beginnings. I just think it's wonderful that a town ... I'm really proud of our museum and I don't mind telling you. I love it. I just hope it will exist forever and people can come here in fifty years and say, "Well, good gracious. Is that what Tallapoosa used to look like?"

Michael Camp: 01:05:24 Great. Well, thanks so much for being here this morning, Mr. Jones and sharing your thoughts and recollections.

Bud Jones: 01:05:30 Thank you for inviting me. Thank you.

Michael Camp: 01:05:30 It's been a pleasure.

Bud Jones: 01:05:31 Thank you.