Mel Steely: 00:00:05 I'm Mel Steely, director of the Georgia Political Heritage Program at the University of West Georgia. Blynne Olivieri, who is the head of the Special Collections at the University of West Georgia Ingram Library, joins me in interviewing former Carrollton mayor Joe McGinnis. This is part of a project that we have to gather together the former mayors of Carrollton's personal papers and do interviews with them so that they can tell their own story, their own way. The interview will not be edited, but it will be available for people to use and to access once it has been processed. Okay, Ms. Olivieri.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:00:53 Thank you for joining us here today, Mayor McGinnis. So we're going to start off with some biographical questions to start and I would love to hear about your background and where you grew up.

Joe McGinnis: 00:01:07 I grew up here in Carroll County, primarily and Carrollton. The family moved from the country into the city when we started school and like many people, we rented for about a year and then my dad built a house on Dixie Street. It was 1100 Dixie Street. It was the last house on Dixie Street before you got to Buffalo Creek, and all of that area now is consumed by Southwire and mom sold the home to Southwire and to properties, Southwire back in the '60s and she moved into town. Well, we were already in town, but we called where we were out in the country. So we moved into town and when I graduated from high school, I went off to college and mom stayed there till she passed away.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:02:21 Great. In what year were you born?

Joe McGinnis: 00:02:23 I was born in 1936.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:02:26 And your family's move out of that Dixie Street home that was then absorbed by Southwire, about what year was that then?

Joe McGinnis: 00:02:34 Probably in the early sixties.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:02:37 Okay. That's great. What schools did you go to?
Joe McGinnis: 00:02:43 Well, we were all Carrollton city schools. College Street school was my first through the seventh grade. Eighth through twelve was at Carrollton High School. That's the old high school building that's on South White Street in downtown Carrollton.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:03:02 Wonderful. What year did you graduate from Carrollton high school then?

Joe McGinnis: 00:03:06 1955.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:03:08 Were you involved in sports in high school?

Joe McGinnis: 00:03:12 Yeah, I played baseball and track and football and senior year, I was captain of the football team and I was the quarterback.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:03:25 So you must have been pretty competitive and hardworking then to reach those athletic positions that you did then?

Joe McGinnis: 00:03:33 Well, yeah, I had to. Had to be.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:03:36 Yeah. Tell us, did you have brothers and sisters and what were your parents' names?

Joe McGinnis: 00:03:41 My dad was Gilbert and my mom's Lois, and I had an older sister and a younger brother. I was a middle child. Joyce was my sister and she was eight years older and she was basically nearly out of school when I started. She went to Georgia Baptist Hospital and became a nurse or registered nurse and later got her degree as an anesthesiologists.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:04:14 Oh, fantastic.

Joe McGinnis: 00:04:16 I had a younger brother, was two years younger. His name was Gerald and he's been successful in the tobacco industry as a salesman and sales manager through the years in many different locations around the country. He had a knack for that type business and he was kind of a fun guy.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:04:43 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Were your grandparents from around here? Carroll County?

Joe McGinnis: 00:04:46 Yes. They were from Buchanan, mostly. Most of my mom and dad's relatives were Tallapoosa and Buchanan area.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:04:56 Do you know when your family first came down to that Buchanan, Tallapoosa area?
Joe McGinnis: 00:05:02 No, I don't and I haven't done much research on it really. I've never really been that interested in it. They were here and I just accepted it.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:05:15 Yeah. Tell us a little bit about your parents. Now your father passed away-

Joe McGinnis: 00:05:20 Dad died and when I was fifteen and he was like 41, and it was sudden, he had a heart attack which was not that uncommon. He smoked, he didn't drink, but he smoked and most of the time I saw him, he had a small Camel cigarette in his hand and it killed him. It was sudden.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:05:51 Yeah. That must've been very hard on you, especially at the age of fifteen.

Joe McGinnis: 00:05:57 Yeah. I look back on it, then I probably acted like, oh, it gave me some exposure. People saw me. I was kind of popular for a few days around the school because my father died. When you think back on it now, what a stupid thought, but that's where kids were and kids are.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:06:27 Was your family religious?

Joe McGinnis: 00:06:29 Yeah.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:06:30 What church did they attend?

Joe McGinnis: 00:06:32 We attended to Tabernacle Baptist Church here in Carrollton and before we moved into town, mom, dad, were members of the Abilene church and that's just a little north of Carrollton on the Temple Road. I remember going there some when I was small with them.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:07:00 Tell us about your military service. So after high school, what happened then?

Joe McGinnis: 00:07:05 At that time in our lives, we had to register for the draft and if you had an exemption, like going to college, you were exempt from the draft until later. I didn't have the resources to just enroll in regular college classes and I got a co-op scholarship with Georgia Tech and I would go to school a quarter and then I would work a quarter. So I did that and during the first couple of years, my wife, Carol and I got married. So I missed one of those cycles of going to college because I got married even though I was interested in other things. So I was going to get drafted, so I had to go ahead and sign up in the reserves. I went to six
months active duty training and then came back and started all over again with college and work. It worked. It took about eight years to graduate, but I did.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:08:34 Thank you.

Mel Steely: 00:08:35 From Georgia Tech?

Joe McGinnis: 00:08:37 No. In the meantime, after I got married, I switched over to Georgia State and graduated from Georgia State and I liked that. I liked Georgia State.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:08:52 What was your degree in?

Joe McGinnis: 00:08:53 Business Administration.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:08:55 Great, thank you.

Mel Steely: 00:08:57 Did you know then, when you switched over, you were going to be a salesman? You sound like your brother knew he was going to be.

Joe McGinnis: 00:09:04 I thought I would and I did become one with the company I worked for, which was Reynolds Metals Company.

Mel Steely: 00:09:16 Well, you were clearly a competitive person right from the get go. When did you first get interested in politics? At school or what?

Joe McGinnis: 00:09:29 I guess I was so busy with other things and just being a teenager and then a college student and a young man that I never thought too much about it. I would be on the skirts of campaigns and things like that and a little involved and knocking on some doors. I never really considered being a candidate. Never thought I would be. It was just not in my mind.

Mel Steely: 00:10:09 While you were in college or-

Joe McGinnis: 00:10:10 No.

Mel Steely: 00:10:11 Anything. Was the ‘56 presidential election the first one you voted in or was it ‘58 congressional?

Joe McGinnis: 00:10:21 It was ‘56.

Mel Steely: 00:10:22 ‘56. You voted for Eisenhower and Stevenson?
Joe McGinnis: 00:10:26 Yeah. Eisenhower and Stevenson.

Mel Steely: 00:10:28 Okay, and you went for Stevenson?

Joe McGinnis: 00:10:31 No.

Mel Steely: 00:10:32 No?

Joe McGinnis: 00:10:32 No. I was typical teenager and wrapped up, enthralled with military and I just thought Eisenhower was the most wonderful man in the whole world at that time. I still do.

Mel Steely: 00:10:50 Yeah. I was two years behind you, but I felt the same way. I didn't get to vote till '60, but had I voted then, I would have voted for Ike back then. Did you get involved? Did you go get an Eisenhower button? “I Like Ike” and anything like that or you just watched it all?

Joe McGinnis: 00:11:09 I just watched it. I was still in college working a full time job and by then, four years later, my oldest son was born and I was consumed with work and family and things to do while I was still in college. I didn't graduate from college, but I had had enough time in with Reynolds to be promoted a couple of times. I started out just sitting on a desk writing orders and doing what people told me to do. Then opportunity came one day for a salesman with Reynolds Wrap and Reynolds Wrap was kind of a new item at that time. People didn't know that much about aluminum foil, how you can wrap a potato in it and put it in the oven and bake it, have a nice meal with something that came out of aluminum foil and aluminum foil was a new item.

Joe McGinnis: 00:12:33 So there I was selling aluminum foil to grocery stores and having demonstration cookouts on the weekend at major supermarkets and things like that and I loved it. They gave me a company car and all at once, I felt like I was moving up.

Mel Steely: 00:13:00 You were somebody.

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:01 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:13:03 Clearly you enjoyed the selling part of it.

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:05 I did.

Mel Steely: 00:13:06 You just enjoy people, don't you Joe?

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:08 Well, I guess I do, but I don't try to make a fool out of myself.
Mel Steely: 00:13:15 Yeah. Okay. Well, you voted for Ike and then four years later you voted for Kennedy.

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:24 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mel Steely: 00:13:25 Okay. What was the switch here? You went from the Republican, you weren't thinking Republican, Democrat, were you?

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:33 No. I was people. I was thinking about the person. He was the most exciting thing that had happened.

Mel Steely: 00:13:43 Kennedy?

Joe McGinnis: 00:13:44 Yeah. Eisenhower was a wonderful man, but he was an old man and Kennedy was young, exciting, had a young family like I did, at that time and, beautiful young wife. I know everybody didn't feel that way, but I did. I was excited about him and I voted for him.

Mel Steely: 00:14:13 Enough people did to elect him. So it made a difference. How did you find time really to be with your family when you were running around holding weekend demonstrations on aluminum foil and doing it all over the country and everything? How'd you balance all of that out?

Joe McGinnis: 00:14:36 Well, some way I did and the wonderful thing is I had just a wonderful wife and whatever I was doing, she was supportive. We had a conversation recently about her dad was a local business man and they were one of the old families in town-

Blynne Olivieri: 00:15:08 Tell us about him.

Joe McGinnis: 00:15:10 Ed Copeland was his name, Joseph Edwin Copeland. He was a graduate of Emory and got a job when he graduated from Emory with one of the tobacco companies and they went around the Southeast and all over Georgia and Alabama and Tennessee pushing cigarettes. It was kind of exciting for a while, he told me but after a while he realized, you need to settle down and get a job. His father was the only salesman for Tanner Grocery company in Carrollton. So Mr. Ed went to work for Tanner Grocery and they opened a supermarket or a grocery store in Carrollton. It was on the corner of Newnan Street and right by the Methodist Church and across the street from the Carroll Theater. He managed that store and he opened early in the morning and he'd worked till late in the evening and all day Saturdays.
Joe McGinnis: 00:16:31 His tales of that business at that time were exciting but unbelievable the time they put in and things that happen. Supermarkets were few. There was an A&P in town and later a Kroger, but the independent grocery store was the most popular place to go and buy groceries. Most people bought groceries and charged them by the week. Many people ordered them by phone and they were delivered. My wife is two years younger than I, and she talks about how she worked in the grocery store, just menial jobs, make a little money and stuff. She loved the grocery business through and she was used to that kind of, growing up. The life I was leading after we got married was very similar to what her dad had done, except in a different area.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:17:59 So Carol, your wife, was working in her parents or her father’s grocery store? Copeland groceries?

Joe McGinnis: 00:18:07 Copeland supermarket.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:18:08 Copeland supermarket.

Joe McGinnis: 00:18:09 Early on it was Carroll Trading Company and then he purchased the business and became an independent and changed the name to Copeland Grocery.

Mel Steely: 00:18:21 And you worked there some?

Joe McGinnis: 00:18:23 Yeah. Well, just very little. He was my girlfriend’s dad. I didn’t want to be around him too much.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:18:33 So you and your wife were sort of working there even before you were married, but so this would be really the late 1950s through maybe early 1960s? Is that the time?

Joe McGinnis: 00:18:46 I graduated in high school, she and I, in ’55 and then went off to college then. It was earlier than in the early fifties that we were like dating and seeing each other in the grocery store and things like that.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:19:07 Wonderful. We'll hope to hear about him later as you talk about who might be influential in your career.

Mel Steely: 00:19:16 Well, you got involved in all kind of things in your career as far as public service is concerned. You said you weren't really interested in all of that early on. You went to school and you had school activities and chasing girls and one thing and another, but you didn't really get into politics and yet you ended
up doing all kinds of stuff. You were a mayor and you were a member of and chairman under the school board, you’re vice president of the historical society and you were a charter member of one of the civic clubs, which club?

Joe McGinnis: 00:19:51 [inaudible 00:19:51].

Mel Steely: 00:19:52 Yeah, and-

Blynne Olivieri: 00:19:54 And Rotary Dawn Breakers, is that right? [crosstalk 00:19:57].

Mel Steely: 00:19:59 Your obituary is going to have all these things listed and it's going to make it look like you were a super involved person and you were, weren't you?

Joe McGinnis: 00:20:08 No.

Mel Steely: 00:20:09 Not really?

Joe McGinnis: 00:20:10 No.

Mel Steely: 00:20:10 Well, explain that.

Joe McGinnis: 00:20:12 Well, most of it was behind the scenes. Civic clubs and things like that aren’t given much notoriety in the paper. You’re a member and you go to the meetings and the morning rotary was obviously morning and you could go to like a seven o’clock meeting and go to like eight o’clock and then you could leave and go about your business. So they weren’t so conspicuous but I had a job and I needed to be gone. I didn’t have time to travel and be somewhere every Wednesday at lunch and go to a Rotary Club. So it worked. It worked for me.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:21:10 So that Rotary Dawn Breakers meeting allowed you to really focus on your work activities during the day sort of without-

Joe McGinnis: 00:21:21 And be a part of the community and serve a community.

Mel Steely: 00:21:26 When you were on the road, did you make it a point to be home on weekends a lot?

Joe McGinnis: 00:21:36 I most always was home on weekends. In the later years my boys tell me they remember that I was usually at home most of Monday and then about three or four o’clock in the afternoon, I would pack my suitcase and I’d either go the airport and fly out or drive maybe to New Orleans or somewhere in South Florida and get to a hotel in New Orleans about nine or ten o’clock.
Then early the next morning I’ll have appointments there in that city and then maybe fly home or drive home over to Baton Rouge or up to Memphis and then back around Thursday to Carrollton. I had my office in my home and it worked well. I had time with the family and also I’d check in every night. I did a lot of reading.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:22:51 Mr. McGinnis, tell us what year you and Carol actually moved back to Carrollton because you were living elsewhere in the United States over various periods.

Joe McGinnis: 00:23:04 I’d been moved by the company to Birmingham and later to Chattanooga and then back to Birmingham again as a district manager in sales and then, so happens in the sales business you have bosses or sales managers that you most identify with and look up to and admire and you let them know that if you ever move, I want to go with you. So that happened and I was moved to Houston and we stayed there about two and a half years and then to St. Louis. We were there less than a year, but I was in charge of sales for one particular division of the country for the whole country and I loved it. I really, really enjoyed it, but Carol and I were home on Thanksgiving and the boys were out playing and the youngest was about a little over a year old and we were sitting around the den or the kitchen table, it might have been and talking and just reminiscing and talking about how much we enjoyed home and what mom and dad and what the others were doing back home while we were sitting in St. Louis.

Joe McGinnis: 00:24:59 Just the two of us and the kids outside playing but between the two of us, we just decided right then, let’s go back home and we did. Come Christmas, I moved she and the children and they were three boys at that time and we moved them to Carrollton and my father-in-law and mother-in-law, have a big house, big beautiful home on Newnan Street in downtown Carrollton and no one was living upstairs. So Carol and the children moved in upstairs and I had one of these rental units on the back of the station wagon. We had of all things a piano, the piano and all the clothes and those kind of things. I stayed in touch through the years with people in the community, my friends, high school classmates and others.

Joe McGinnis: 00:26:22 I’d already gotten in touch with the schools and made arrangements, told them my boys were coming and would be new students in January. So we kind of had it all laid out and I went back to St. Louis and listed the house. It took about three months, sometime in March before sold and the company said they were very surprised and I had a great relationship with the people and I hated to, it was one that I’d worked on for so many
years, but I never regretted moving. I came home and bought my father-in-law’s store. I’d never run a store, never been really in the grocery business. Of course he was there tell me how to do everything and I’d been so used to being my own boss more or less that it was disconcerting to have my father-in-law telling me how to do everything and I finally weaned him from that and got up by myself and got to know what I was doing.

Joe McGinnis: 00:28:01 I was successful in this business. The business made money but it didn't make enough money. It didn't make near enough to support the way we'd been living. So in the world of business and especially sales things get out that this man's available and he's not in the business now, but maybe we ought to talk to him. I had a couple of companies to contact me and asked me would I like to go back into the business that we were in, the same industry, and so I did. In the meantime, we had bought a home here in Carrollton and we still live there and that was 1978. So Carol and the children, is a beautiful old, turn of the century, Sears Roebuck, craftsman style home that’s so well liked back then and today, and we’ve remodeled and added to it and, not added to it especially, we made it better and put a swimming pool and things like that, that young families have and we’re still there.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:29:38 That's 216 Cedar Street?

Joe McGinnis: 00:29:40 216 Cedar.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:29:41 It's a beautiful home.

Joe McGinnis: 00:29:42 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:29:43 Now after you got back and go kind of settled in before you bought that house, you were involved in the community again, pretty much on a full time basis, weren't you?

Joe McGinnis: 00:29:55 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:29:58 Is that when you first began to-

Joe McGinnis: 00:29:59 That's when I came back and I had that grocery store.

Mel Steely: 00:30:01 Right.

Joe McGinnis: 00:30:02 Grocery store was from seven in the morning to about seven at night but then, that gave you plenty of time to, if you want to do something in the evening-
Mel Steely: 00:30:14 And you'd already switched over from the Baptists to the Methodist?

Joe McGinnis: 00:30:16 Yeah. Well, when Carol and I married, she was a Methodist and I had been going to the Methodist church through later years in high school and through college and most of my high school friends were Methodists and I wanted to be where they were.

Mel Steely: 00:30:40 Is this when you first began to get interested in the school board and in politics? How did you get involved with the school board and decided to run for school board?

Joe McGinnis: 00:30:52 I don't know. There was a movie and I can't remember the name about a young man getting involved in schools and, I'm sorry, I can't remember exactly. I hadn't thought about it in a long, long time, but that kind of touched me and then when my children got to go into school, backup a little. I loved school. I enjoyed going to school and I really looked up to, admired and really had a warm feeling for my teachers, most of them and the others I felt like they had to act like that. They got paid to be fools but I enjoyed school and two or three of my teachers in high school told me you would make a good teacher. I thought about it, but I got a job in Atlanta with a big company, Reynolds Metals Company, it's the old Reynolds aluminum and I could make four times as much money and have a company car as I could being an algebra teacher. So I became more interested in the money aspect of a career than it was teaching school.

Joe McGinnis: 00:32:40 Then through the years that I've regretted that in some ways because I think I would have been a good school teacher and I probably would have enjoyed it.

Mel Steely: 00:32:54 Is this when you decided that you'd get involved or did somebody die and an opening came or what sparked you or who sparked you into deciding to run for the school board?

Joe McGinnis: 00:33:06 Doctor Reeve, Tom Reeve was a friend of the family and my sister as I mentioned earlier was a nurse and she was friends with Dr. Reeve and there was a vacancy in the school on the school board. He encouraged me-

Mel Steely: 00:33:36 He was on the school board-

Joe McGinnis: 00:33:37 He was on the school board and he was a Methodist. An old strong Methodist-

Mel Steely: 00:33:47 He's been a missionary.
Joe McGinnis: 00:33:48 His parents were and he and Ruth had done some missionary work and I said something to him one time about, I think I would enjoy the school board and he just encouraged me to run and I did and I was elected first time and I ran against the-

Mel Steely: 00:34:14 What year was that Joe?

Joe McGinnis: 00:34:17 Probably '78.

Mel Steely: 00:34:20 Okay. About the time you were buying the house-

Joe McGinnis: 00:34:23 We'd been back in Carrollton about two years and I ran and thinking back on it now, the person that I ran against and beat, became one of my best friends.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:34:41 Who was that?

Joe McGinnis: 00:34:42 George Ward, and Mr. Ward was a good guy. He always has been a good guy.

Mel Steely: 00:34:50 Big Boy Scout man.

Joe McGinnis: 00:34:52 Yeah. I was naive. I didn't run because I had a problem with the person that was in office. I just wanted to be on the school board.

Mel Steely: 00:35:05 What did it cost you at that time?

Joe McGinnis: 00:35:07 Pardon?

Mel Steely: 00:35:07 What did it cost? How much did you got to-

Joe McGinnis: 00:35:11 Very little, very little. Maybe $50.

Mel Steely: 00:35:17 So I won a big time campaign with-

Joe McGinnis: 00:35:18 No, no. I might have spent $100 on a couple of ads in the paper and a little time, but, no, it wasn't expensive at all.

Mel Steely: 00:35:36 Once you got on the board, was it what you thought it was going to be?

Joe McGinnis: 00:35:40 It was different, but it was better than I even thought it would be. Two of my high school friends were already members. Dr. Reeve was a member, there was a black person. I can't think-

Mel Steely: 00:36:05 Brooke? Bernice Brooke?
Joe McGinnis: 00:36:07 No. She was a-

Mel Steely: 00:36:10 She's in Villa Rica, I think.

Joe McGinnis: 00:36:12 Yeah. Anyway, she was a member. I got to know her very well and through her I became more and more involved with the black community and realize that they weren't represented and I guess I really have a soft spot in my heart for the black community and it became kind of a point to me to make sure that the blacks were represented and had a voice. I think they responded and I certainly enjoyed it.

Mel Steely: 00:37:03 How did this affect the integration of the Carrollton system? It began in the late sixties actually, but really stepped up in the '70s.

Joe McGinnis: 00:37:14 Yeah, it was already fully involved when I became a member of the school board. There was still a lot of politicking, if you want to call it that, behind the scenes, but it seemed like everything in Carrollton went smoothly. Now it might not have behind the scenes before I became a board member, but once I was a board member, I was behind the scenes and I never saw that much difficulty having a good working relationship with the blacks. You never know what they really think. I know what they said to me and I always felt complimented by their reaction when I was involved with anything.

Mel Steely: 00:38:30 Who would you pick as you go back now, because you were on the board a good bit. Who were your major allies? You said you were concerned that you had black representation, were you the only one that felt that way or was that a feeling across the board?

Joe McGinnis: 00:38:48 We really didn't discuss it among ourselves that much. I don't recall ever seeking any other opinions from the school board members. We had a wonderful black board member, Mr. Joshua Mabry, let me back up a little bit. He wasn't there when I was elected. There was a woman and she was an old time school teacher and real sweet lady and God bless her, I forgot her name right now, but anyway, she passed away and the board was given the responsibility of naming her replacement and we chose Dr. Mabry, I mean, Mr. Mabry and then he served several years.

Mel Steely: 00:40:00 He was black?

Joe McGinnis: 00:40:02 Yeah, and he was a good board member.
This is what the Mabry Performing Arts Center-

Yeah, it was named after him. Yeah, out of respect for him. He was very involved.

Was the racial factor the most important thing you dealt with or raising money and getting public support for SPLOST or what was your biggest challenge as a school board? Maybe aside from getting elected chairman.

The black/white thing wasn't that big a deal. It was never a problem. I don't recall any kind of incident or anything like that where we really ever had to, really wrack our heads and wrack our brain about how we handle this. When I was elected, we had old buildings dilapidated. They were maintained. They had good facilities, good lunch rooms, kids had lunch, they had playing fields and playgrounds but they were out of date and old and the minute I became board member, people got to talk and tell us about, "When are we going to do this and when are we going to have a school system like they do in some other town?" It's hard to say that Dr. Reeve and those good board members like that, that I'm thinking of were against it.

They weren't against making it better. They just had never really given it that much thought and they'd been rocking along all these years with the same facilities and everything was going good. You didn't hear many complaints, so what's the problem? Once we got to thinking about it and we had three little elementary schools, in Maple Street, in Alabama Street. Alabama Street had been the old black school system. We made like grades four and five there and grade six and seven at College Street. So we decided to have one elementary school and so we set about buying the property for a new elementary school. We bought all of that property that the elementary school sits on now, plus the middle school and then the junior high school, we bought all of that property and then we started thinking about building.

Of course there were a lot of people in town thought we were crazy. Why don't you just merge with Carroll County and be part of the county system? So many of us that just like myself had been products of the Carrollton city schools since first grade. We didn't want to give up our school system and it has such a strong identity and connection to the city. No reflection on the county, but we didn't want to be a part of the county. We wanted to have our own city school system and now there aren't that many left. There weren't that many then but we decided to have bond referendums and we proposed a new
elementary school and a new junior high school. We would move out of the old junior high and the other school buildings and if the vote passed and then we had the campaign and raised the money through the state and started construction and took about three years to finish everything.

Joe McGinnis: 00:45:19 Basically the elementary school, what you see now is what we built then. It’s been enlarged two or three times in the rear but if you drive up to the circular driveway in front of the elementary school, that’s just like we built it.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:45:40 With the school bell and with parts of other schools, the original elementary schools built into that building with these wooden beams that are identified as coming from this or that elementary school.

Joe McGinnis: 00:45:54 Yeah. The school itself that we built then was brand new. Everything there, every brick, every nail was new. Nothing was old but that’s twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago, maybe thirty years ago, forgot my dates.

Mel Steely: 00:46:20 How did you finance that, Joe? Did you use the taxpayer’s money from the school board to lobby the tax payers to vote for the thing or did y’all kick in your own money? How did y’all finance that?

Joe McGinnis: 00:46:32 I don’t recall. I think we probably had to kick in enough money to have photo sessions and things like that and meetings but it didn’t take much money to talk and to be seen in the community and go to Rotary Club and make a speech. Then, of course, we had new people involved, new leadership, school principals and superintendents and they would go to board meetings and propose. They would follow up on all our proposals and it caught on. People got excited about it. The votes were overwhelmingly positive and once the decisions were made, we started grading and bricks were being laid and people were getting excited.

Mel Steely: 00:47:48 Very satisfying experience for you?

Joe McGinnis: 00:47:50 Very exciting.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:47:52 When did you start thinking about running for mayor?

Joe McGinnis: 00:47:56 I hadn’t thought about it too much. A couple of times people would say, why don’t you run for mayor and I hadn’t really given it much thought, but on one or two occasions something would
happen in the community and we were so anxious about the relationship with community and schools. Originally we had to go to the schools to get our money, the school was part of the city and the money had to come from the mayor and council to run schools, even though we had a school board. So we had an election to make the school board independent and it passed overwhelmingly. Then once that happened, we started really seeing the progress the way it should've been. That worked well. I guess the thought came in my mind along that time about how the process worked that maybe someone Proposed that if one of us were mayor, this would gone a lot easier.

Mel Steely: 00:49:41 One of us meaning school board, yeah, okay.

Joe McGinnis: 00:49:45 If one of us on the school board had been the mayor, this would have been a lot easier. So we all thought about it. There were several capable, David Parkman, DoctorBarr, and Jimmy Poke and myself, Ms. Lewis, [inaudible 00:50:07] Lewis. Then one day Tracy had resigned from the mayor's job to run for something-

Blynne Olivieri: 00:50:21 Tracy Stallings?

Joe McGinnis: 00:50:21 Tracy Stallings, yeah. So I was up for reelection on the school board, I would have been up for reelection on the school board that same time and I was available. So somebody said, why don't you do it now? I chose to, and I was elected.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:50:48 Now the mayoral race is nonpartisan in Carrollton. Did your political affiliation, and I understand you're a Democrat, correct me if I'm wrong, did that ever become an issue during your campaign or at any time?

Joe McGinnis: 00:51:02 No, no. Never did. Back when I was first elected to the school board, Democrats were very popular. Just about every elected official in the state, not every, but most of them were Democrats and it started switching. It started changing. I guess I was always kind of on the fringe. I was never really right in the middle of everything as far as politics was concerned. I never saw any reason, I was never given any reason why I should not be a Democrat and up until later in life, I never saw any reason to change and I didn't.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:52:11 When you announced for mayor, you were elected in 1993 so your mayoral campaign, I presume started in about 1992-ish, did you have a platform and it campaign staff and explain that?
Joe McGinnis: 00:52:25 No, it was different. It was different then. My wife and I thought about it. Well, I say my wife and I, it was mostly my opinion and my decision, but she was supportive but-

Mel Steely: 00:52:52 Carol supported your school board bid too, didn't she?

Joe McGinnis: 00:52:58 Yeah, she's always supported just about everything I've ever done. She had no reason not to. She did enjoy the tenure that I had with schools. So she was all for it.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:53:20 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Would she campaign on your behalf or who was actively helping you campaign? Did you have staff?

Joe McGinnis: 00:53:30 No, it was small, small town-ish. I had friends, a lot of friends worked. My next door neighbor, Nancy Johnson. Nancy was my campaign manager and basically that just meant that she was in charge of soliciting funds so that I didn't have to do it. Mostly church memberships, club memberships, lifelong friends, lifelong friends with my children's families and their friends. Those are the people that I chose to ask for their vote and it worked.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:54:30 Tell us about some of your campaign strategies. Was it door to door, newspaper advertising, radio advertising?

Joe McGinnis: 00:54:37 It was amateurish, I'm sure others would have thought. At that particular time, I was in sales, and I had a good job, and traveling a lot mostly around the country. But I also had the opportunity to manage my own time, like most salesman do if they've been in it while. So I'd manage to help a day occasionally, one day a week or maybe two days a week that I would get out in neighborhoods and knock on the doors, I really did. I knocked on doors and met people. I knew a lot of people, but a lot of them were new to me and it was rewarding and I'd met people that I'd seen in town but really didn't know them. Then they would invite me in and we would talk and talk about schools and they would ask me questions that I'd never thought about before. I'd get the answers and I'd be back in touch with them and tell them why we did this or what we were planning on doing when we got this and I learned much more from running and campaigning than probably people did.

Blynne Olivieri: 00:56:41 It sounds like you really enjoyed it.

Joe McGinnis: 00:56:43 I did.
Mel Steely: 00:56:48 Once you got into it, you went at it with full vigor. You had a good time. You had people that you liked, that you worked with and I remember you mentioning to Blynne and I the other day when we were chatting with you, how much easier your job was made by having a good city manager. Tell us about your staff people and about those meetings where you had to open it up to the public to come in and, the process is what I'm after Joe.

Joe McGinnis: 00:57:21 Yeah. When I was elected there was a city manager and an assistant city manager and Danny Mabry was city manager and Robert Barr was the assistant city manager. I really went into it with not any idea of what was going on, on a daily basis as far as the city was concerned. It was one of those things and a lot of people feel this way. You want to be involved, but you don't really know what you're going to be involved with and doing. That's so true. I had no idea what a city manager did and I had no idea what a mayor did. Others thought maybe, looking back on it, maybe I'm being simplistic, but I just thought they had a meeting once a month and a couple of issues came up and you made decisions. There's no big deal. It was totally different.

Joe McGinnis: 00:59:03 A lot goes on in even in a small town and Carrollton is much more than just a small town now but it was then and still is a small town in a lot of ways and there's a lot that goes on every day that makes it a good town rather than a bad place to live and one that no progress is being made. The people that manage the city on a daily basis, the city manager, the police chief, the fire chief and all those people at City Hall that send out the water bills and the people over across town at the waterworks that fix the water pipes and dig the holes and things like that, they all do just an exemplary job of making the city work and it takes them all. It was naive to think you can get elected to be the mayor of the city like that when you really have no idea what happens every day.

Mel Steely: 01:00:22 Was that the biggest surprise you had? The totality of involvement and all?

Joe McGinnis: 01:00:28 Yeah. As I look back on it, really, there's much more to it. Even in a small town, there's much more to it than most people think. It's not just sending out the water bill every month.

Mel Steely: 01:00:44 What were your easiest problems to deal with?

Joe McGinnis: 01:00:49 Fortunately, during my term I had a wonderful city manager, Danny Mabry. Dudley Cross was the one right before that and he and I had a good relationship through the years just by knowing each other. Dudley was a caustic, smart answers.
Mel Steely: 01:01:17  Like Horrie Duncan?

Joe McGinnis: 01:01:18  Yeah, just smart aleck. You just want to feel like you want to cry because he could be so ugly and he didn't mean it personally and the Lord knows I had enough of those kind of reactions from people when I was trying to sell them something in business. You stand up and smile and say “Thank you.” I'll see you in a few weeks and walk away with a smile and shake hands and come back few weeks and ask for another order. Danny was totally different. He was a professional and he had training. That was his business. He was trained to be a city manager and he had experience at several locations around the state. He was good at it and he was good to me and very supportive, plus I wasn't a greenhorn, far as how to handle people and meet people and conduct myself around people. That helped, but Danny knew the day to day operations and the day to day secrets about how to make a city work.

Mel Steely: 01:03:16  So he could do it without having to involve you overly. You've trusted him to handle it and he didn't bother you once you all understood each other?

Joe McGinnis: 01:03:27  Yeah, absolutely. He was very good about, listen, Joe, I called this, mayor, he always called me mayor. Listen mayor, I called this person, they call me about a problem. I've told them that I would talk to you about it and this is what I think we ought to do. He would give me a couple of suggestions and I said, I agree or don't agree. He said, okay, I'll take care of it. That went on throughout the six years I was in the office.

Mel Steely: 01:04:05  That was the easy part. What's the hard part? The hardest work you had to do as mayor?

Joe McGinnis: 01:04:12  Some of the issues of the alcohol-

Mel Steely: 01:04:27  Where they legalized alcohol?

Joe McGinnis: 01:04:28  Legalized alcohol or some of the just routine stuff about, the running the city on a daily basis. Water rates or put a water line down the street. You're going to tear up somebody's yard, call him up ahead of time and tell them. Danny would suggest I call them and tell them it's going to happen. We'll make sure that it's done right. The yard will be sodded and grass will grow and it'll look just as clean and green as it did before and if you aren't happy, we'll do it over. Those kinds of things. Just the daily business.
Blynne Olivieri: 01:05:24 Where was City Hall at that time, Mr. McGinnis?

Joe McGinnis: 01:05:27 It had already moved into its present location and-

Mel Steely: 01:05:32 It's where the old Tabernacle Church that you were a member of, tore down and moved.

Joe McGinnis: 01:05:39 Yeah.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:05:41 On Bradley Street then?

Mel Steely: 01:05:43 Yeah.

Joe McGinnis: 01:05:48 The fire department was still downtown and the old City Hall where the South Wall sits on now, and we began the process of moving the fire department where it's now located. We began thinking about other downtown locations for, we bought those old warehouses, thinking about a cultural arts center-

Blynne Olivieri: 01:06:26 These are the former cotton textile warehouses on Bradley then?

Joe McGinnis: 01:06:31 Yeah. We'd already had discussions with the ownership of those buildings. We laid the groundwork, all of that in those six years. A lot of it that happened later. The cultural arts center was finalized. A group and I went by bus, toured several cities around the state and looked at the cultural arts centers in other towns, Dalton, Gainesville, to name a few, and to find out what they were doing and what it would take. I recall thinking about the money, what it was going to cost, but actually, when I was defeated at the end of the '90s, the guy that defeated me was talking about doing a way, not having an art center but it's been built and it's just like we proposed it. It's just like the architects drew it up. When I took those pictures and went around other cities and told them, this is what we're going to do and we did just that. It was just like we planned it.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:08:25 That's quite a contribution to the city-

Mel Steely: 01:08:28 Tell us about the town-gown relations while you were mayor.

Joe McGinnis: 01:08:34 They were always good. Nothing significantly changed. They were always cordial. The college is such an important part of the community and a big part but it's not governed by the city. So you've got to get along, but I think most everybody just thought you'd be foolish. You'd be absolutely idiotic if you didn't do everything you could to make sure that there were good
relationships. I think we've always worked that and we've always rejoiced when there's a growth here instead of when I was in high school, we had 500 students, 350 students here, something like that and now to 15,000. It's a major college.

Mel Steely: 01:09:53 Well, other big contributors to the community were Southwire and the Tanner hospital/health system thing. How did you get along with those? Now, you did have more of an impact on them than you did the university.

Joe McGinnis: 01:10:08 Yeah. We did everything a city could do to accommodate Southwire and not give anything away, but to make sure this was the place where they needed to stay and do their business as it was headquarters. It would have been so easy, so easy for Mr. Richards to leave this community and go on to Atlanta, make his headquarters in Atlanta and take advantage of everything that the big city of Atlanta had to offer that time. But he was happy to stay here and we all benefit from that.

Mel Steely: 01:11:09 You were there when Tanner health began to really take off from the old hospital. It was shaped like a T when you were coming along to what they have now has just been incredible and you were right there at the beginning of that growth. Did Joe get involved in it ... You just watched him do it, huh?

Joe McGinnis: 01:11:34 The hospital was so far ahead of us. They knew what they were going to do and already thinking about the next thing they were going to do before the city did, except for those things that they'd call and ask, can we get this? We have enough water to do this? We have enough fire protection to do this? Can we do this with the city health? Of course we always said yes but thinking about it, it was true. I think we were excited and all the administration, Tracy for instance. Tracy was such a big part of the good relationships we had between the city and Southwire and the hospital-

Mel Steely: 01:12:30 And the school. He was an officer at the school.

Joe McGinnis: 01:12:34 Right. So all of the mayors have played an important part. The gentleman that was with Douglas and Lomason that became mayor, I'm sorry, I can't think of his name right now, but he was one of the most influential, early mayors other than Tracy.

Mel Steely: 01:13:03 Mm-hmm (affirmative). What was the cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce, which also was growing rapidly during this period and the various civic groups? Did you go out and enlist, say the Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club and so forth to get
behind projects and have them become involved in it? How did that work?

Joe McGinnis: 01:13:25 Well, it wasn't so much that we would ahead of time go to them and ask for their help but we made arrangements and made an effort to speak to meetings and open forums and things like that at each one of the civic clubs. Either myself or Mr. Mabry would do that and of course, most people in Carrollton supported schools. They support industry, they support business and you go to talk to eighty people at the Kiwanis club meeting, sixty-eight of them are already behind you. They are ready to go. You can sign them up, give them a shovel a day. There's always some and they're the loudest that, well I don't think we ought to do that, you know and-

Mel Steely: 01:14:29 Who are those people that opposed it?

Joe McGinnis: 01:14:39 I don't recall.

Mel Steely: 01:14:42 You're trying to be polite here? Okay. Tell me about the Chamber. Who finances the Chamber and pays their salaries now?


Mel Steely: 01:14:52 They assess the businesses a certain amount?

Joe McGinnis: 01:14:55 Yeah. Fees belong to the Chamber of Commerce, and I've never been that close with the inner workings of the Chamber to know exactly the answer to that question but it has to come from the, is the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce.

Mel Steely: 01:15:18 It's not tax money from the city or the county or whatever?

Joe McGinnis: 01:15:23 I don't recall that. No.

Mel Steely: 01:15:26 That was my impression too. Okay, Blynne.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:15:33 So tell us about what were your biggest budgetary problems and challenges.

Joe McGinnis: 01:15:40 Far as the schools, just every day, making sure that you have so many rules and guidelines you have to follow to have a public school and making sure that you've got good people that understand that and telling the truth and doing the right thing. But it's city, you're always concerned that will the citizens support this. Or is the digest going to be so much that the city
won't support it. You try to make it reasonable an increase. You try to make an increase reasonable, but be able to justify it and always include something in there that was meaningful to enough people that there's something that they want as much as you want and something that makes a city more livable or more vital to other people that make them want to come here and live.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:17:24 Keeping the clean water supply and maintaining roads, this was sort of just ongoing business as part of the city and those kinds of improvements. Were there SPLOST funds back then or were you using city funds for some of these city roads?

Joe McGinnis: 01:17:40 Originally, SPLOST didn't come along till later but it did come when I was mayor and I think possibly one of the early SPLOST, Tracy was still involved. Those were great income. That was great income for the city. Before that, if you've got a thousand dollar increase in your budget, you were doing a great job ... because that thousand dollars had to come from taxpayers, from the little old ladies who didn't want to pay $14 a year in city taxes. $16 would have driven them up a wall. You wouldn't believe the telephone calls you'd get from people if their city tax went from $101 to 106, honest ... but $100 was $100.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:19:07 How about tax incentives to encourage new businesses or any kind of that happened under your mayorship 1993 to 1999?

Joe McGinnis: 01:19:17 Well, I've forgotten a lot of that. It was important. Tracy was good at that. It was necessary and it was done and it was successful, but it was difficult.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:19:56 Tell us about some public safety issues and race relations, particularly relating to police and to schools. We covered a little bit about schools during that time, but what about city entities like police and fire.

Joe McGinnis: 01:20:09 Well, is all important. The city police department probably is the most visible aspect of city government. You'll see a police car, you'll see one every day somewhere and most of the time you'll see dozens of them and you won't even think about it. In a town like Carrollton we have fifty or sixty police cars plus other vehicles that are identified with the city. They are everywhere and it's just such an important aspect of running the town and meanness is everywhere. It's difficult being a law officer now and being a good law officer and being kind and understanding. Those young men and women have a very difficult job and no one that has never done it can understand what they go through in a twelve hour cycle in a day's work and they're
visible but they don't want to be. They don't need to be, but they like to. They like to feel like they're supported.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:22:20 Tell us about some stories about your interactions with Carroll County Commissioner. When we were chatting together a few days ago, you mentioned stories about sole commissioner at that time. Sole County Commissioner Horrie Duncan. Can you share some of your stories?

Joe McGinnis: 01:22:40 Mr. Duncan is a legendary figure in Carroll County, Mr. Horrie Duncan. He was like a generation older than I, maybe two generations older than I. When I grew up down on Dixie Street at 1100 Dixie Street, the last house on the left as you're leaving town before you cross Buffalo Creek, that pasture, going back up toward the railroad track, we had our house and a barn and garden and it was fenced but the parcel of land, vacant land that was beyond that fence was owned by some farmer but boys being boys, we inhabited it. We treated that land like it was ours and we played in it and I had horses and I ride horses in there. So, that was like I said, 1100 Dixie Street and we were the last house in city limits. Then Horrie lived about a mile for the south on Highway 27, which is still called Dixie Street. So there was a large, old grocery store and service station just a little north on Dixie Street of our house and farm.

Joe McGinnis: 01:24:53 It was owned by Mr. Opal Showery and Mr. Showery was well known at that time. He was a good businessman, a lot of activity or selling farm supplies and things like that, but Horrie would come to Showery's store and buy his gasoline and all and have his truck serviced and buy groceries. A lot of times I was out there at that store and boys at that time were pretty notorious about hanging around grocery stores of service stations, being where the action was and Horrie would see me and as a kid and he was an older man, a couple of generations older than me, maybe twenty-five, thirty years but he got to know me and he was Mr. Duncan and I was Joe.

Joe McGinnis: 01:26:06 So we speak, hey Mr. Duncan and hey Joe, what you up to today and he was always kind of grump and always had some smart remark to make about me, about the clothes I was wearing or why didn't I have on shoes and things like that, you know. So it was always that kind of give and take relationship, you know, hey Mr. Duncan, every time you see him in town, hey Mr. Duncan, and real grump, but you knew he knew who you were. Well, things change. I was elected mayor and he was county commissioner and he called me one day right after I was elected, said, "We need to get together," real rough like. Yes sir and he was still a yes sir and I said, "Yes, sir. Where?" Then he
told me he wanted to meet me at the county jail. He said, I'll be back in the kitchen and gave me a time on a particular day. I was there waiting for him and he came in and you could tell he liked you, but he was never real close.

Joe McGinnis: 01:27:52 I don't know if either of you knew him that well, but he was distant and kind of short temper type. Everything was his schedule, his agenda. So it was a small table out in the back of the kitchen and a couple of the inmates were working in the kitchen and they brought us a plate back there with a meat and couple of vegetables. We were sitting there and of course, this is just one story, but I think it just was like-

Mel Steely: 01:28:43 It was very typical.

Joe McGinnis: 01:28:45 Very typical. I was sitting there and this convict comes in. He was black and he comes in with a ham, a great big country ham, and it still had a cloth around it where it was wrapped and cured. So he walks over to the meat slicing machine, had a big saw around on a tape and he goes over and turns it on and sticks the ham into the saw and just kind of pushes it through and the saw blade hangs up on the bone and breaks. Of course it flies up in the air and starts slapping around, and it scared the hell out of him and did Mr. Duncan too. He jumps up and he takes his cane and he starts to beat that guy and I'm sitting there with my coat and tie and he's got the guy down on the floor beating him with a cane and I'm thinking, he's gonna kill him right here in front.

Joe McGinnis: 01:30:18 I'm going to see him kill the man and by that time, two or three other people had come running in, "What's going on, what's happening!" They grabbed Mr. Duncan and kind of hold him back and get him up and set him down and get him to calm down a little. Then they grabbed the other guy off the floor and howl him and take him out. I'm sitting there with my eyes wide open and my mouth wide open thinking, he was going to kill that guy. So he sits down and, "Well, where were we?" I'm thinking, I don't know. You tell me. So that was the introduction of our business relationship as far as mayor and county commissioner and nothing was said about the fact that I just saw him nearly beat the devil out of a guy. That didn't even happen. It's gone, it's over.

Joe McGinnis: 01:31:35 Anyway, we pursued onto our business agenda and we had a good relationship and I knew we would. I think he did too but we did have a good business relationship with city-county at that time. It has continued as I read and listen and hear about the relationships that are going on even today. We are so
fortunate in Carroll County to have such a good relationship with our county government.

Mel Steely: 01:32:24 That's continued on to the present I think, and now even though you have people that are different in temperament: Bill Chappell who did a tremendous amount for the county but made everybody mad in the process, and then Marty Smith has come along and they all work well with the city, with all the cities, Villa Rica, or whatever and they seem to keep a pretty good balance so that nobody's going to say, well, you're always favoring Carrollton or Bowdon or you know whatever I mean.

Now, let's talk about the bad part here, the re-election campaign and let's do it this way. We know who you are. Who was your opponent in that campaign and what position did each of you take? What were your platform so to speak?

Joe McGinnis: 01:33:19 I guess I must have been pretty naive. I'd been a school board member, which was, people just kind of laugh that off. They think they don't do anything, but they really do. School board is not that high as an elected official, but the city mayor and council is important and a good relationship is just absolutely important between the mayor and council and the citizens and county government. Even today, I don't guess the running of the contest to become a mayor in Carrollton is not that difficult. I mean, it's not that involved. Maybe if you're so tied down in your business and other activities that you don't have time to campaign makes it different or difficult. It wasn't that difficult for me to campaign, and I went back and looked at some of my old records. There were three of us that ran for mayor and I was the top vote getter in the first runoff.

Joe McGinnis: 01:35:27 I didn't get 50% so there was a runoff. So we had to do it all over again and I had like 57% and the other person had like 43. I didn't win overwhelmingly or anything like that, but I won and that's all I was hoping for. It was interesting. I ran for a two year unexpired term for Mr. Stallings so that I had opposition and that was the one that was close. The second time I ran, I didn't have any opposition. So that was easy but then in the year 2000, my second term ended in '99 and year 2000 I had opposition and I lost. I fretted about it for a day or two and then went about my business and didn't take too much anymore.

Mel Steely: 01:36:55 Well on election night, you showed up with your supporters and your friends thinking you were going to win, and you didn't. Why? What happened? It reminds me so much of Chappell who absolutely, he had done a good job as commissioner. He thought had it made and then all of a sudden, bam. It's almost like out of left field. What going on here?
Joe McGinnis: 01:37:29 Well, I know exactly what it was. It was my opposition. His wife's parents were Stuart Martin, the Martin-

Mel Steely: 01:37:43 Funeral home.

Joe McGinnis: 01:37:44 Funeral home people. They were members of, God bless them, but they were members of Tabernacle Baptist church. I was a member of the Methodist church, which had like a thousand members and Tabernacle had five thousand. People will vote for people they know and you could be a tramp and belong to the Tabernacle Church, God bless him and you could get elected. I don't believe Bill Chappell could get elected, but you never know.

Mel Steely: 01:38:34 He's giving it another try.

Joe McGinnis: 01:38:40 That's the reason I got beat.

Mel Steely: 01:38:42 You don't think it was any big policy issue. You mentioned earlier you thought he was opposed to the new civic center.

Joe McGinnis: 01:38:51 The guy that beat me was close with Chappell and he had a column in his paper and he was supported by Bill Chappell and-

Mel Steely: 01:39:10 Chappell ran the newspaper. He and Sue.

Joe McGinnis: 01:39:12 Chappell run the newspaper and he had an editorial column every once a month and he didn't support me and he belittled me. I was running on my accomplishments and what we had done and he was against me. Plus the guy he was supporting was a valuable member of the Tabernacle Baptist Church or her family was, his wife's family. God bless him, that's the way small town politics is. You could be the most saintly guy in the world and if you didn't belong in the right church or right civic club in small towns, it's going to kill you.

Mel Steely: 01:40:21 Mm-hmm (affirmative). If you had to look back, well, you do have to look back, on your years of public service, how would you assess your career all the way through your mayor, city, what you call it? The school board.

Joe McGinnis: 01:40:40 Yeah, sometimes I think about how I grew up here and where I came from and my family, mom and dad were good people. People liked them. They liked us and we had a good reputation. The McGinnises were not so well known in Carroll County as they were in Tallapoosa and Haralson County. I couldn't be
more pleased. As a young man, a kid growing up here and riding your bicycle up and down Dixie Street to school and playing football and being a class president in high school in your senior year, graduating, going on to college, graduating from college, marrying your high school sweetheart, who was one of the most popular girls in school and having a good career. I really can't think-

Mel Steely: 01:42:14 And public service.

Joe McGinnis: 01:42:15 And three wonderful kids, sons all married and still married to the same girls, some grandchildren, wonderful grandchildren. I just think I've had a wonderful life. I really do. I can't think of anything ... as a salesman, most of my time throughout my year has been selling something and I probably was turned down 75% of the time that I was promoting a product. Everybody didn't buy my product. You go to the grocery store, you go the hardware store, the building supply. There are different products in every one but I just never let it get to me that I don't understand why they aren't buying from me, why aren't they voting for me. You take them and well, next time maybe.

Joe McGinnis: 01:43:36 So, I rejoice in what I've been able to do. My friends, my high school classmates, we get together and they’ve all been successful. Just every one of them. We came up during difficult times, but there were rewarding times. The war has ended, and the economy changed, and all at once people were buying cars and houses and getting married and having children and they were going to college, and they were becoming doctors and lawyers, and mom and dad were proud. It's been a wonderful life.

Mel Steely: 01:44:33 This has been a good interview. Do you have any question you want to ask before we close out? Did we miss anything?

Blynne Olivieri: 01:44:43 You've covered it all. You've done a wonderful job.

Joe McGinnis: 01:44:46 Well, thank you.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:44:47 And a wonderful job for Carrollton. The cultural arts center, the creation of the Carrollton city school campus, all that entailed. Those are really significant career accomplishments.

Joe McGinnis: 01:45:02 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:45:04 Well, he got into a lot of stuff, huh? He got dragooned into being my vice chairman at the history society and dealing with
all those crazy women, oh, I shouldn't have said that, put it that way. At any rate, you can't believe how much I leaned on Joe during that time. Anyways, is there any last thing that we haven't talked about that you'd like to put on the record?

Joe McGinnis: 01:45:32 No, I think we've covered, covered, yeah, it's been a wonderful, I couldn't ask for a better life and I think this is just probably one of the best places in the world to have grown up. Carrollton is really a wonderful little town. It's still a little town.

Mel Steely: 01:45:59 You sound like Clarence the angel talking to Jimmy Stewart in *It's A Wonderful Life*. Do you remember that?

Joe McGinnis: 01:46:08 No, I've forgotten it.

Blynne Olivieri: 01:46:11 Thank you for participating in our efforts to sort of capture this Carrollton city history in the mayoral office. We're so pleased that you not only deposited your papers at the University of West Georgia's Ingram Library, but that you've also participated in this interview. So thank you.


Mel Steely: 01:46:34 Appreciate you, thank you. All right. Thank you very much.