

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: “A SIMPLE CHICKEN PLUCKER”

A. L. Burruss often referred to himself as a “simple chicken plucker.”¹ A self-effacing man who loved his family and friends and was a lifelong supporter of Georgia’s citizens and especially the people of Cobb County, Burruss always saw himself as one of the common people, albeit one who was fortunate enough to be successful at most anything he put his hand to, be it business or politics. Al Burruss acquired Tip Top Poultry, Inc., a chicken-processing plant located in Marietta, Georgia, in the early 1950s and turned it into a highly successful company, one of several he came to own, in the process. Well liked and respected by all who met him and dealt with him in his businesses, Burruss found it a natural next step to move into public service. Burruss began a new phase in his life in 1964 when he was elected one of the five commissioners in Cobb County’s newly formed five-member county commission.² He served as a Cobb County commissioner from 1965 to 1969. In 1968, Burruss was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives, where he served from 1969 until his death in 1986. He was greatly mourned at his untimely death from cancer, and hundreds attended his funeral, including former President Jimmy Carter. The two men had been close friends since Carter’s first campaign for governor of Georgia in 1966 when Burruss had flown him around the state in his plane.

The story of how a simple chicken-plucker became a highly respected and honored elder statesman is essentially an American success story of

the twentieth century, with all the elements of such a story: an aggressive drive to succeed; a willingness to work hard; perseverance in overcoming obstacles; an understanding of people, how to win friends, and convert antagonists to supporters; and the knowledge of how to manage a company, including its money and its people. Burruss was guided by his faith in God and thankfulness for all the blessings he felt were bestowed on him.

Governor Roy Barnes said of his close friend and longtime colleague in the Georgia Assembly: “Al is the epitome of the American Dream, someone who came from very humble beginnings, worked hard, was eternally optimistic, and then decided to give back. That’s the full cycle of the American Dream.”³ Going into politics, says his brother Buddy Burruss, fulfilled Burruss’s desire to help people where he thought he could really make a difference. Burruss’s sister Jane Ragan remembers her brother’s interest in politics as the result of his seeing something wrong and thinking he could make it right, make it better. Of her husband’s political career, Bobbi Burruss, his wife of thirty-seven years, notes that her husband “never forgot where he came from” and continued to run for public office “because it was a way to help people.”⁴ His daughter Renée Burruss Davis concurs that her father never sought political office for personal aggrandizement, but saw it only as a way to help others: “he was always there to help people,” she says.⁵

A. L. Burruss was born on July 3, 1927, in rural Forsyth County, the son of carpenter John Chesley Burruss⁶ and his wife Eula Malinda Corn.⁷ Bobbi Burruss relates an amusing family anecdote about her husband’s birth date. Burruss’s mother used to say that because she had him on July 3, they had to take the next day off to celebrate.⁸ Though he was called “Al” most of his life, it was only a nickname. Burruss was only given the initials “A. L.” Bobbi Burruss recalls the story that Al’s mother wanted to name him after his two grandfathers but didn’t like her choices—Albert, Luke, Alfred, or Luther, so decided to give him the initials A. L. instead. It’s unusual that as the eldest of eleven children—Sarah, Betty, Jimmie, Shirley (who died at fourteen months of age), Peggy, Buddy, Gerald, Linda, Jane, and Dan—that A. L. was the only one not given a name. According to his wife, he was never happy with being called Al though that’s how he was known from the time he got out of high school until his death.⁹ Burruss’s

sister, Linda Moore, recalls that when she asked her mother how to spell her brother's name, her mother would say, "His name is A period, L period, that's his name."¹⁰ Though Burruss was known as Al to Bobbi and most of his friends, as well as to his fellow politicians and constituents, many in his immediate family continued to call him by the initials he grew up with, A. L., some even to this day.

Legendary Atlanta reporter Celestine Sibley, who wrote about Burruss for *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, interviewed Burruss about his early beginnings. He told her he "came from the hills of Forsyth County—Hopewell Community, out from Silver City, out from Cumming" and the family moved to Smyrna when he was seven or eight years old, where his father got a job as a carpenter and painter.¹¹ Times were hard for the Burrusses, just as they were for many Americans during the Great Depression. He reserved his highest praise for his mother, explaining to Sibley that it was "the tenacity and dedication of his mother, who kept the family together." Of his youth, Burruss recalled that "his summers were the happiest [...] because he spent many of them in Forsyth County on the farm of his grandfather, Luke Burruss."¹² In what he says of his grandfather can be seen the seeds of his own character; Burruss noted that his grandfather "was everything I ever wanted to be—hard working, honest, full of determination that's hard to find these days."¹³ The qualities he so admired about his grandfather—that he was hard-working, honest, and full of determination—were the hallmarks of Burruss's own approach to life.

Chet Austin, who was Al's closest friend, met him in the third grade after the Burruss family moved to Smyrna. The two were recess partners and playmates, then partnered as teens in various jobs around Smyrna.¹⁴ Austin recalls that his friend worked all the time as he was growing up—mowing lawns, doing odd jobs, and working as a janitor while he was in high school; and Austin joined Burruss in many of these occupations. Even while in elementary school, Al worked as a delivery boy and on a farm.¹⁵ As Burruss told Celestine Sibley, he was helped by the principal of Smyrna High School, who was aware that Al needed to work so he could stay in high school, so he arranged for Burruss and Austin to substitute for the janitor. This was during World War II, when it was hard to find anyone to take that job because of the shortage of manpower.¹⁶ As Austin explains, the

high school's custodian was a tenant farmer who had to leave to tend his crops during the spring gathering season, so the two young men took over his job.¹⁷ For several years, he and Burruss arrived early to fire up the coal-fueled furnace and stayed after school to clean up. Additionally, the two cleaned local Baptist and Methodist churches, of which Austin remarks that "We got pretty good at it."¹⁸

Once Burruss and Austin graduated from Smyrna High School, in 1944, Austin went on to Georgia Military College in Milledgeville. Burruss, who could not afford college, went to work. In later years, Al always explained that instead of going to college, he "went to the school of hard knocks."¹⁹ During the year Austin was away at college, Burruss continued to work multiple jobs. At one point, he was "a bicycle-riding mail clerk at Bell Aircraft in Marietta,"²⁰ and he also worked at Graves Refrigeration.²¹ Yet, his friendship with Austin was important to him, and Burruss kept close to Austin even after he left for college. When Austin returned home for winter break, he worked several weeks with Burruss at Graves, even though he says he had little knowledge of what he was doing. But Burruss, he says, was smart and could grasp things.²² Both young men, however, were eager to join in the war effort. Since neither was yet eighteen years of age, enlisting for military service required parental consent.

Burruss was the first to get his parents' consent and in 1945, shortly before his eighteenth birthday, he joined the US Naval Reserve. Celestine Sibley points out that "the war ended just as [Burruss] finished boot camp and headed for the Pacific, halting him in the Philippines."²³ He served as a refrigeration machinist in the Philippines, training he was to put to good use once he returned to Georgia. However, Burruss was unable to serve his full time in the Navy because his family had an urgent need for him to be at home and he was given an honorable discharge for hardship.²⁴ Austin, who had enlisted in the Navy in the fall of 1945, after obtaining parental consent shortly before his eighteenth birthday, was stationed in Hawaii when he received a telegram from his friend with the announcement, "Bobbi and I married."²⁵

Bobbi Burruss, the former Barbara Nelle Elrod,²⁶ recalls that as soon as she met Al, she knew he was the man for her: "I met him through my best girlfriend. I got him a blind date with her. And then we decided we were

going to get married. Just about that quick, too.”²⁷ Burruss also recognized in her the woman he wanted to marry, and their courtship began in earnest, if only on the weekends. A friend of his had introduced him to flying and Burruss soon had his pilot’s license and would borrow a friend’s plane to go see her. She recalls that: “We just knew it from the moment, and he used to fly up. He was [working] in Smyrna, and I lived in Cornelia, Georgia. And he would fly up with one of his friends in a J-2 Cub, that’s a tiny little airplane, and land in our friend’s cow pasture. And we would have weekends and that would be it because he worked, of course.”²⁸ The two married on August 17, 1947, and moved to Smyrna. They had two sons and a daughter: Robin Alan, born February 5, 1952; Michael Adair, born April 16, 1955, who died in infancy; and Patricia Renée, born December 10, 1958.²⁹ In the early days of their marriage, Burruss ran his own refrigeration and service business in Smyrna, Georgia. It wasn’t until the early 1950s that he acquired the company in which he would eventually make his fortune.

Fortuitously, Burruss met the owners of Tip Top Poultry, then located behind the YWCA in downtown Marietta, through his refrigeration business; they had contracted with him to build a walk-in freezer. At that time, Tip Top was owned by two partners, E. T. Banks and Vernon Green. Banks liked Burruss and, wanting to retire, decided to sell him his share in the partnership. Because Burruss had no means of buying him out, Banks offered to finance his purchase of the partnership. Suspicious of the deal, Green insisted the two buy him out as well. Though Banks didn’t want to do so, he bought his old partner out in a limited partnership because he was eager to quit the business. Thus, Burruss acquired Tip Top Poultry and became its president in 1951 shortly before his son Robin was born.³⁰

Around this same time, Austin, who had gone to work at Lockheed after returning from the war, began courting his future wife, Hazel, who also worked at Lockheed. Austin recounts how he took Hazel to meet Al and Bobbi one night. At the time the Burrusses were living in Smyrna, which was considered rural country. In 1950, Smyrna’s population was only 2,005;³¹ and the current Atlanta Road was the main highway, then known as the Dixie Highway.³²

Finding the house dark, the Austins decided to wait though this made Hazel nervous. But when she met Burruss, Austin says, she loved him. The

couples became friends, just as the men had always been, and it wasn't long before they found themselves sitting around the dining table, coming up with a plan for bringing Austin into the chicken processing business with his friend. As Austin explains, Al was having to learn about and manage the business at the same time; he was working himself very hard and getting very little sleep. Sometimes they would go to his house and Burruss would be so tired he'd lie on the floor and immediately fall asleep.³³ In short order, Austin joined Burruss as a partner and owner of Tip Top Poultry. Their duties were split along their own inclinations and what they knew best. Burruss was the front man, the one who met with customers and worked with the community, and Austin was an administrator, taking care of payroll and the financial end of the business. Later, Burruss's brothers Jimmie and Buddy joined the company, too.

Al Burruss's personality in particular suited him for his role as front man at Tip Top Poultry and later at the state legislature. Those who knew him recall that he was always smiling; Austin contends that anyone who met him loved him. Though Burruss had his share of opposition in business and the legislature, his friends and family recall a man who had great strength of personality. Former Georgia Governor Barnes says that, "The force of Al Burruss' personality would have made him a center of influence in and of itself. But with the friendships and network that he built with President Carter (Governor Carter, then President Carter), Joe Frank Harris, the chairman of the appropriations committee, and with others gave him an inordinate amount of influence."³⁴

During the period when he was a young married man and father and starting up his poultry business, Burruss also found spiritual strength in the friendships he made with three other couples. The young people were close friends and went to one another's house on Saturday nights, Austin says, because they couldn't afford to go anywhere else. Austin recalls the spiritual awakening of his friend:

When we were young, and had only a few children between us four couples, we started attending a little Methodist church. Before that, Al didn't go to church. Bobbi's brother and his wife, Chet's cousin and her husband, Chet and Hazel,

and Al and Bobbi started going and joined the church. But Al did it with more depth to him than the rest of us. He had a Paul's conversion; he felt it very, very strongly.³⁵

Though his great-grandfather on his mother's side of the family had been a preacher, it wasn't until after the death of his infant son, Michael, that Burruss's spiritual faith grew. But as Austin and his family recall, Burruss never did anything halfway. He became one of the founding members of the Tillman Memorial Methodist Church in Smyrna, which now has a memorial garden in Burruss's name.

Al and Bobbi Burruss moved to Marietta in 1959, where they joined the First United Methodist Church of Marietta, a church in which he eventually served on the Administrative Board and Finance Committee³⁶ and became good friends with Reverend Charles Sineath, the minister. Rev. Sineath remembers Al Burruss for his extraordinary faith and spiritual wisdom.³⁷ When the church was planning a new family life hall, the original budget grew from \$2.5 million to \$3.2 million, and the Board thought it would not be able to build it as planned. During a meeting at which many ideas were being discussed, without any solutions being proposed, Burruss spoke up, making what Rev. Sineath calls an "affirmation of faith." Al framed the question in terms of how faith informed the committee's decision.

Is this the building as the commission has planned it, the building God wants us to build? Do we believe it will be harder for God to give us \$3.2 million than it would be for Him to give us \$2.5 million? Well, if we believe this is the building God wants us to have and we believe He can provide, I'm going to believe we can build it and trust God and do it.

In Rev. Sineath's view, Burruss taught people to look at the question of God's stewardship in a new way, as a way to affirm their faith in the power of God, and that this way of thinking created excitement in the church. After Burruss's persuasive speech, the vote was unanimous in favor of the new building. Rev. Sineath points out that, despite initial misgivings, the church built the hall for \$3.2 million and paid for it in

three years. He also recalls Burruss's generosity in the mid-1970s when he anonymously donated part of the fee so people in the church who wanted to could attend an annual ministry known as Basic Life Lessons, aimed at Christians who wanted guidance in living their lives according to biblical tradition. Burruss had previously attended his ministry with his son Robin, and the experience had made a strong impression on them both, one he felt others would benefit from. Because he feared that young people just starting out in life could not afford the fee of \$150, he agreed to cover half the cost, a plan Rev. Sineath says Burruss proposed himself, without prompting. When attendance from church members went up over one hundred, Rev. Sineath says he noticed the difference the ministry made in the life of the church, that "it changed the accent of the church," a difference he says Al Burruss made possible by his anonymous donation and his public endorsement of the ministry.³⁸

As he was recovering from exploratory surgery in March of 1986, Burruss recorded a speech he had earlier promised to deliver for the Church's annual Lenten Lunch. Though the surgery had revealed Burruss had pancreatic cancer, he still felt compelled to speak to church members about his faith, even in the face of almost certain death. In his speech, one can see the strong faith that nurtured him throughout his life.

Since the news has come that I have pancreatic cancer that is most probably terminal, I've been strangely calm and sustained. I give all the credit for this to the fact that my faith was there stronger than even I believed it to be. I am not panicked. It's true that I have spoke about the possibility that my life will be shorter than I want it to be. But I am also encouraged by the fact that my faith tells me that my death and my judgment days can be changed, but they can only be changed by our God and our Maker. [...] Please take this message home with you: God is real and He will be with us through any trial or tribulation that may come our way. I firmly believe that God is greater than any problems that we have. Please continue to remember to pray for me and my family. I thank you for listening and may God bless you.³⁹

Just as his faith was an important part of his life, so was his family. As his brother Buddy remembers it, though he was ten years younger than Burruss, the eldest brother worked hard to help his family while he was growing up and especially after he became successful. Though he may have seen it as his Christian duty to help his family, that he loved them very much is always in evidence. Buddy Burruss, who was born while his brother was still serving in the Philippines, remembers the family moving back and forth from Cobb county to Forsyth county, where the Corns lived, because his father had a hard time making a living for his large family.

Because the birth of the Burruss siblings spanned the years from Al's birth in 1927 until the birth of Dan, the youngest, in 1950, Al was considerably older than some of the youngest and served as something of a father figure for them. Linda Burruss Moore, born six years after Buddy, tells the story of how she was named after the Frank Sinatra song, "Linda," popular the year of her birth. Jane Burruss Ragan, born two years after Linda and nineteen years after A. L., remembers her older brother as a father figure and that he was very protective of her. She tells the story of how, when the two of them were working on George Busbee's campaign for Georgia governor, Burruss told her to keep their sibling relationship a secret until after the election. A. L. became Busbee's campaign manager after Busbee won the Democratic primary. Because Jane was working as a volunteer on the campaign, Burruss feared people might disparage her work as favoritism and he wished to protect her. After being elected governor, it was Busbee who told everyone about the connection. Busbee was so impressed with Ragan's work that he hired her as a secretary to one of his administrative assistants once he took office. Interestingly, though no one else knew they were brother and sister, Ragan says she "never heard a bad word about Al" from anyone the whole time they worked on the campaign.

Buddy Burruss, too, reports that A. L. "was a great brother; he'd do anything in the world he could for you," and, after working with him for many years at Tip Top, found him a "great boss." Even though Burruss was known for his generosity at the chicken processing plant, Buddy said he wouldn't agree to purchase new equipment unless a clear case was given for its need. This was also true for some, as Buddy refers to them, "down and out" people who asked Burruss for loans. However, Burruss always took

his own council in such matters. Buddy recalls that his brother had made several loans to someone whom Buddy thought was a poor risk, and when Buddy told him so, Burruss told him it was none of his affair. His siblings were only too happy to repay him; later, when he ran for political office, they worked as volunteers in his political campaigns.

It was his mother, however, of all his family, to whom Burruss gave credit for holding the family together. On May 12, 1985, *The Marietta Daily Journal's* Mother's Day tribute featured Eula Burruss and quotes A. L., who, in reply to the question of why his mother was so special, said:

Other than my wife, my mother has had the greatest influence on my life. My mother and I went through some difficult times after the Depression. She always encouraged me to excel even though we had limited resources. She insisted that I go to school and made sure that I always had clean clothes. She was like the Rock of Gibraltar.⁴⁰

Linda Moore remembers that her brother frequently called his mother from wherever he was—be it the State House or when he was on the road—to ask how she was doing, and he always referred to her as his “Rock of Gibraltar.”

In the descriptions of what life with Burruss was like by his immediate family, the same attributes others knew him by—that he was hard working, determined, and generous—came through in their perceptions of him as a father and husband. According to Bobbi, her husband seemed to have more hours than anyone else because he always seemed to be able to do more than anyone else. According to Renée Davis, her father never missed a ball game or performance: “I cannot ever remember a time when he was not in the audience, and I was a very active teenager and young child. And I don't know how he did it because he had to have left some pretty big meetings to come to be wherever I was performing.” She also remembers that mornings with her dad belonged to her and Robin, while he let their mother get more sleep. It was Burruss who prepared the kids' breakfast, got them ready for school, and then drove them there when they were in elementary school, and he did so by choice. Renée Davis still fondly recalls the breakfast her father prepared: “The food that I like for breakfast is the food that my daddy always made me for breakfast. And that's what I still like today. I like

sausage made in an iron skillet that's almost so black that it just chars it to get laid in the pan it's so good." His breakfasts were considered so delicious that even Robin and Renée's friends sometimes came by to eat before school.

Just as Burruss was the kind of father who enjoyed spending mornings with his children, he was also a very hands-on father, joining the Band Mothers club at Marietta High School when Renée was in the band. His wife says it didn't bother him at all to be the only father at the Band Mothers meetings. Moreover, he was just as present in his son Robin's youth, coaching his little league team, and later attending all of Robin's basketball and football games when his son was an athlete at Marietta High School.

He would eventually become president of the Western Marietta Little League, even though, as his son points out,

My dad, honestly, he wasn't real athletic. Growing up, I think he worked all the time and didn't play a lot so he wasn't real athletic. He wasn't the most coordinated guy. [...] [yet] he stepped up to coach when some of the nine-year-old kids were as good as he was. But he wasn't intimidated by his lack of ability or experience.

In Robin's retelling of his father's coaching, the can-do quality that Burruss later evinced in his rise in the state legislature is apparent. Usually when he set out to accomplish something, he was successful, and not simply from ambition, but from a vision he had of improving things. Robin's ball team played in Custer Park, which he says,

was just a pasture; it wasn't anything very nice. But [Dad] had a little vision for it, and this could be more for the kids and my kids and the community. So he worked first as a coach and then his leadership, you know, always rises to the top. And so people began to look up to him for guidance and one thing led to another and they wound up sort of rebuilding the whole ballpark and he wound up being the president of Custer ballpark for like two years in a row for my eleven-year-old and twelve-year-old seasons... he showed leadership even though he didn't have the athletic ability.

That he made his family his first priority is one of the things his children remember so vividly about Burruss. Robin remembers an incident when his father regretted not spending even more time with his children, though neither he nor Renée could remember a time when he wasn't there for their practices and games. Robin recalls a conversation he had with his father where his father was encouraging him to spend more time with his children, "I really wish that I had done more of that.' And I looked at him and I said, 'Dad, I don't remember a time ever that you weren't there for me and everything I did.' And he said something that still stays with me. He said, 'well, you may have got enough of it, but I never did.'"

Though his family was his first priority, as his wife is quick to point out, his constituents and "those that were waiting out there for him to deal with them politically" thought of themselves as his top priority. As she says, he "just had a great knack for making you feel like, I'm here for you. [...] And never having anything else on his mind or thinking that I can't deal with you today." Unlike the ubiquitous cell phones in use today, Burruss set his pager to vibrate when he was at home with his family. Still, the only time he got away from the claims of business and later, legislation, occurred when he was driving. As Renée tells it, "he used to say the only time he ever got any peace and quiet was when he got in the car."

As a state representative, Burruss certainly had his share of calls from constituents whenever he was home. His wife had a particularly harrowing experience during one such call that she took while he was out. A woman called to complain that Burruss had not been returning the calls she'd been making to his office to get his help with something she wanted. This accusation particularly upset Bobbi Burruss because she felt it was an insult to her husband, and not true besides, because he was always returning calls. In trying to impress this fact on the caller, Bobbi forgot that she had been cooking and the stove caught fire, ruining the newly remodeled kitchen. Her husband later made a joke out of this incident, and, neglecting to say the kitchen had been newly remodeled before the fire, told Celestine Sibley, "Four thousand dollars worth of damage. I sometimes accuse Bobbie [sic] of letting it happen so she could get a new kitchen."⁴¹ Still, Burruss did help the caller, who, Bobbi says called several years later to apologize for being rude and to tell her "she had never had nobody work with her like

Al did and [she had] got whatever it was she wanted.” As his wife contends, “There were people who did not return calls, but Al Burruss was never one of them, never.”

Another incident she recalls illustrates one of the primary reasons Burruss enjoyed being in politics—he liked helping people. A couple called to thank him for helping get a brother in a nursing home when no one else had offered to help though they had contacted people “all the way from Washington right on down”; as he explained to Bobbi, “Now that’s why I keep on keeping on. [...] That’s why I stay in politics I guess.”

Generous with his time, Burruss was equally generous with his money. He helped his family, setting his father up in business so that he finally knew a measure of success in later life. But Burruss helped just about anyone who approached him. The stories of his generosity are legendary among those who knew him best. Robin Burruss says he continues to hear stories of how his father took care of others, which he explains as the result of his father’s own poverty growing up: “He never forgot what it was like to have nothing. So he would always help people. I still hear stories. ‘Your daddy paid my utility bill one time’ or those kind of things about, you know, a lot of stuff that nobody ever knew. But he sure endeared himself to a lot of people because he cared about them.” At least partly, Burruss’s acts of caring and charity came from his religious sensibility, for, as his son contends, “he was always motivated correctly to do the right thing because of his faith.” There are tales of how he helped out single mothers who worked at the Capitol with small gifts of cash, always given anonymously, of how he always carried cash so he could give money to the homeless whenever he encountered them, of helping anyone he saw whose car had broken down on the road, of making loans, large and small, to anyone who approached him with a story of need. His wife tells one story of how he had helped out one of his Sunday school students with a small loan so she could get her car fixed and Burruss never told anyone of this help; he just quietly performed what service he could. Bobbi Burruss only found out about the loan to the student because the young woman repaid the money long after Burruss had died, sending the money to Bobbi with a note about how Burruss had helped her and she had forgotten to repay him but now that she’d remembered, she felt she must do so. There are the stories of how he provided funds to little

league teams and gifts of chicken at Christmas when he was in the state legislature. Some of the people who received these gifts of chicken said that without his help, their children would not have had food to eat during the holidays. A running story that is repeated by several people who knew him is that the managers at Tip Top Poultry threatened to take away his key to the freezer because he gave away so much chicken. Yet, A. L. Burruss never asked for thanks or wanted to be acknowledged for giving. One story goes that after he died, it was discovered that he had been a significant contributor to the Calvary Children's Home in Smyrna though it had not been known during his lifetime. Even as he lay dying, he asked that people not send him flowers or gifts but rather that they make donations to the Calvary Children's Home.

Politically, Burruss was also generous, helping Jimmy Carter in all three of his campaigns, as will be discussed later in this book. The true measure of A. L. Burruss lies in his acts of love and service to his family, his friends, his employees, his constituents, and eventually, to all of the people of Georgia, whom he served throughout the fifty-eight years of his too-short life. As the next chapters will illustrate, the traits of hard work, dedication, and selfless generosity would take him first into local political office, then into the Georgia General Assembly.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

1. See Ross Bodle, “Burruss Cites Power of Faith in Taped Message to Group,” *The Marietta Daily Journal (MDJ)* 26 Mar. 1986, 1 A.
2. In 1964, Cobb County voters ushered in a new form of county government when it voted to move from a single county commissioner, an office long held by Herbert C. McCollum, to a five-member county commission. For an in-depth discussion of this change in Cobb County government, see Thomas Allan Scott’s excellent study of everything relating to Cobb County history, *Cobb County, Georgia and the Origins of the Suburban South: A Twentieth-Century History* (Marietta: Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society, 2003).
3. Governor Roy E. Barnes, interview by author, tape recording, Marietta, GA, 12 Dec. 2006.
4. See Tom Bennett, “Al Burruss, Majority Leader of State House, Dies at 58,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution (AJC)* 11 May 1986, 1 A.
5. *A. L. Burruss: A Remembrance*, prod. Peter Kolstad and Rick Westaway, 45 min., Georgia Public Television and Kennesaw State College, GPB-TV, Atlanta, 1992, videocassette.
6. Born 5 June 1905, in Forsyth County, GA, the son of L. Z. Burruss and Sarah I. Brooks, both born in Forsyth County, GA.
7. Born 22 Jan. 1908, in Forsyth County, GA, the daughter of Alfred L. Corn, born 30 Jan. 1867 in Dawson County, GA (died 16 April 1943 in Forsyth County, GA), and Sarah Cardine Grogan, born 23 April 1871 in Dawson County, GA (died 17 March 1941 in Forsyth County, GA). Burruss’s parents were married 26 Sept. 1926 in Forsyth County, GA.
8. Bobbi Burruss and René Burruss Davis, interview by author, tape recording, Marietta, GA, 22 June 2006.
9. Burruss and Davis, interview.
10. Linda Burruss Moore, telephone conversation with author, 25 May 2007.
11. See Celestine Sibley, “Speaker Pro Tem Burruss Worked Hard to Get There,” *AJC* 27 Jan. 1974, 11A.
12. *ibid.*
13. *ibid.*
14. Chet Austin, interview by author, tape recording, Marietta, GA, 27 June 2006.
15. Re-Elect Al Burruss: A Champion Legislator for Cobb County, Friends for Al Burruss, campaign brochure, 1984.
16. Sibley, “Speaker Pro Tem.”
17. Austin, interview.
18. *ibid.*
19. Jane Burruss Ragan, telephone conversation with author, 29 May 2007.
20. Sibley, “Speaker Pro Tem.”
21. Austin, interview.
22. *ibid.*
23. Sibley, “Speaker Pro Tem.”
24. Austin, interview.

25. *ibid.*

26. Bobbi Burruss was born 18 Sept. 1931 in Habersham County, Georgia, the daughter of Eugene Elrod, Sr. (1895–1951) and Jessie Mae Robinson (1902–1993).

27. Burruss and Davis interview.

28. *ibid.*

29. This information was found in the Biographical Questionnaire for Permanent Preservation in the Georgia Department of Archives and History, H. R. District 117, for A. L. Burruss, 10 Mar. 1972, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA.

30. Austin, interview.

31. See Scott, *Cobb County*, note 18, p. 820.

32. Smyrna Historical and Geneological Society. “History of Smyrna.” http://www.smyrnahistory.org/_history_ofsmyrna.htm 2006 (accessed May 25, 2007). According to this website, Smyrna’s population in early 2006 was estimated at fifty thousand.

33. Austin, interview.

34. Barnes, interview.

35. Austin, interview.

36. Re-Elect Al Burruss.

37. Rev. Charles Sineath, interview by author, tape recording, Bent Tree, GA, 7 August 2006.

38. Rev. Sineath, interview.

39. A. L. Burruss, Lenten Lunch Lift, audiotape of speech, 26 March 1986, Marietta, GA. This recording was made from Burruss’s hospital bed at Kennestone Hospital, where he was recovering from exploratory surgery. See Appendix A for the transcript of this recording.

40. See Ann Green, “Gratefulness Given for Mothers,” *MDJ* 12 May 1985, n.p.

41. Sibley, “Speaker Pro Tem.”