

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center  
for  
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

Doyle Rogers

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

September 25, 2008

Little Rock, Arkansas

## Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

## Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 15th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Double underscores indicate two people talking at the same time.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
  - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
  - annotations for clarification and identification, and
  - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.
- All geographic locations mentioned in the transcript are in the state of Arkansas unless otherwise indicated.

### **Citation Information**

See the Citation Guide at

<http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.asp#citations>.

**Scott Lunsford interviewed Doyle Rogers on September 25, 2008, in Little Rock, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, first thing I have to do is I have to kind of take care of some business. I have to say that today we're talking with—uh—Mr. Doyle Rogers. We're at—uh—his daughter's house—Barbara Hoover's residence in Little Rock, Arkansas. Today's date is September 25 . . .

Doyle Rogers: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . uh—2008. My name is Scott Lunsford. I'll be doing the interviewing. And we are here—uh—for the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History. And—uh—Mr. Rogers, I have to ask you if it's all right with you that we're videotaping this interview and that it will live in the archives at the University of Arkansas's Special Collections Department in Fayetteville.

DR: Well, it's an honor for me to be—to do this with you all, and especially since David Pryor, a friend of mine, started this, and I've talked to David. He's talked to me about it, and he—anything that David wants, David gets.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, I love that. [*Laughter*] He has—he has—he

thinks very, very kindly of you.

DR: Yeah.

SL: He's very—and I can tell you that it's an honor for us to be here in the same room with you.

DR: Well.

[00:01:19] SL: We're gonna [going to]—Mr. Rogers, we're just going to have a conversation. I like to start at the beginning, really. If you can kind of just think about your earliest, earliest memory as a child.

Trey Marley: Scott, I'm sorry. Can we stop for one second and just pick that right back up?

[Tape stopped]

[00:01:41] TM: Okay, we're rolling tape . . .

DR: Well, let me ask you this . . .

SL: One more second. Okay.

Joy Endicott: One second. Turn it on.

TM: Cut off.

DR: Could I ask you one question?

SL: Oh, yeah.

DR: When you say that, do you want me to say anything about my family's background—how they came . . .

SL: Oh, yeah.

DR: Huh?

SL: We'll—we're—I'm gonna . . .

DR: We're going to do that later on?

[00:01:59] SL: I'm gonna start— I want you to tell me everything  
you can remember about your mom and dad and your  
grandparents and.. . .

DR: Okay, I'm gonna leave everything up to you. Okay. Okay.  
Good deal.

SL: . . . any aunts or uncles or—or brothers or sis—I mean, grade  
school teachers. . . .

DR: Yeah. Okay. Okay.

SL: You and I are gonna go way back . . .

DR: Okay.

SL: . . . and we're gonna spend a long time there—uh . . .

DR: [*Laughs*] Okay.

SL: You know, it's—this is a—it is your life story, but it is also  
history. It's Arkansas history.

DR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And if you can . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: I like—what's best for us is when people give us . . .

DR: Oh, you just [*unclear words*].

SL: . . . images. When they . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . talk about how their house looked or . . .

DR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . what the schools were like and what the rooms were like or  
what was in the living room or . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: You know. Let me see if Joy's not quite back yet.

DR: Okay. [Pause] Well . . .

SL: I'm sorry we're kinda . . .

DR: I've been fortunate to live . . .

JE: Okay.

[00:03:07] SL: Okay. So—um—Doyle, we were talking about your  
earliest memory. Now it could be . . .



DR: Okay, the early—one of my earliest memories, 'course [of  
course], as a small baby I didn't remember too much, but one  
thing that's always stood out to me is my—my—I had a younger  
brother . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DR: . . . two years younger, and he was up at a friend and playing,  
and this friend had a match and struck a match and set him on  
fire. And then my mother was always looking after her family

and she heard him screamin' [screaming]. He lived only two doors down—this young man lived only two doors down from us, and I could—she—my mother heard him scream. And she went outside, and he was running to her with the fire going up his arm. And she grabbed him and put out the fire. And in those days the medical profession had a very unusual way that they tried to handle the wound, and they took him to the hospital. And I know they sealed his side up with paraffin and that type thing, but the only thing that saved his life, that he had a little—in those days you wore some underwear that had little buttons on it, and two buttons on his side kept enough flesh where it started growing and would cover that side. But he had a terrible time and was in the hospital for some time. But . . .

SL: But you remember that.

DR: Oh, that's one of the first things that I remember in my life . . .

[00:04:53] SL: Before we go any further, first—Doyle, is—what is your full name?

DR: Doyle Wayne Rogers.

SL: Okay. And you were born in . . .

DR: Nineteen—October the twentieth, 1918.

SL: And it was Diaz? [pronounced DEE-az] Is that how you pronounce it? What town were you born in?



DR: I was born in Diaz. [pronounced DIE-az].

SL: Diaz.

DR: Just a few miles from Newport.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: It was a place where the White River division that goes to Kansas City [Missouri] comes into the main line from St. Louis [Missouri] to Dallas [Texas].

SL: You're talkin' railroad.

DR: I'm talkin' railroad. My father worked for the [Missouri Pacific] Railroad [Company].

[00:05:29] SL: And what was your father's name?

DR: My father was—name was Ivan Floyd Rogers, or I. F., and on the railroad they called him "If." [*SL laughs*] And he was a—he was a telegrapher and a dispatcher. And in those days you handled all the trains by wire. And he was sent up there to go out and switch the trains that—comin' [coming] in from Kansas City into the main line, and we lived there for a few months, and that's where I was born. My father went on the hand cart to Tuckerman, just about eight miles from there, and brought the doctor down on the hand cart, and I was delivered at the house that the railroad furnished to my father, and the house still stands. And then a few months later, then we moved to

Newport, and that's where I was raised. And as time when on, why, everything changed, and—but I certainly recall my—the many days going up to be with my father, about how he handled the trains and those things. And I've—I—that is a very vivid picture in my life.

[00:06:50] SL: Well, before we go on with your father, tell me about your mother. What was her maiden name?

DR: Her maiden name was Morris. She was a Morris.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: And well, a Taylor, and then she—but her grandmother was a Morris, and my grandfather was named Taylor, and they came to Arkansas years ago and . . .

SL: And . . .

DR: . . . and homesteaded in Garner, Arkansas. There was three brothers that came to Arkansas.

[00:07:21] SL: And this is . . .

DR: Mother . . .

SL: . . . on your mother's side.

DR: On my mother's side. And my grandfather's side I—I don't know the back—as much background. They also came from actually Virginia, too, but they all came, and in those days you could homestead land, and each brother homesteaded approximately,

or put together about fi—uh—fifteen hundred acres in Pleasant Plains, Arkansas—one in Pleasant Plains, one in Searcy, and one in Garner. And as time went on, why, the cemetery that's—at Lebanon Cemetery is—my grandfather was the first person interred there. [00:08:06] And they have these monuments—the Woodsmen of the World would give you in those days a—with your insurance po—uh—policy, and they would give you a monument. And as you go into the cemetery—it's a large cemetery now—there's a monument of my grandfather. He died young. And my grandmother—the policy in those days was that she had five children, so after her husband died and the children became—were married—she raised the children. She spent four months with each child and lived with them for y—until she died. So we had a very close-knit family. And my mother's side is the Morrises—they—home is—was a two-story—I can still remember the house. 'Course, it's burned down now, but my—uh—grandfather was very strict and always contending that we were not out in the country. We lived in the city. He called Newport "the city." And we would spend six weeks in the summertime with them playing all the time, but he wanted us to chop cotton and do those kind of things. And he taught us the habit of working when we were quite young.

[00:09:52] SL: All right. So now let me get this straight. The first—  
the brothers were Taylors?

DR: No, the brothers that I'm talking about were Morrises.

SL: Morrises.

DR: Yeah.

SL: And they each had about fifteen-hundred-acre farms that they  
homesteaded . . .

DR: Yes.

SL: . . . in and around Newport and . . .

DR: No, around Garner . . .

SL: Around Garner . . .

DR: Now that's about fifty miles closer to Little Rock.

SL: Okay.

DR: Yeah.

SL: And the main crop was cotton on . . .

DR: No, they had strawberries. They had cotton . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DR: Main—one of the main crops were cotton, and they had—but  
they also grew a lot of strawberries.

[00:10:33] SL: Did you get to know any of those brothers? I guess  
they would be . . .

DR: Well, yes, I—my—the family—we would always have a reunion

and we still have a reunion at the cemetery, the Lebanon Cemetery . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: . . . and we still have a reunion . . .

SL: Do you . . .

DR: . . . even today.

[00:10:54] SL: Do you remember any conversations you may have had with those . . .

DR: Well, yes, I remember . . .

SL: . . . original brothers?

DR: . . . when my grandmother's brother went to Texas.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: He decided he'd go on to Texas and they went down there and all became schoolteachers. And then we had another that—my father's brothers decided that they—that the railroad was where they—was a company they wanted to work for, and they went to Kansas City, and all of 'em [them] started working for the railroad. And so one of 'em was a conductor of the Rock Island Railroad. The other one wound up as a claims agent for the Santa Fe at Amarillo, Texas, and so—and then he had a sister that also worked—that her husband worked for the railroad. But—and my—on my grandfather's side, why, those people

stayed—pretty well stayed in Garner and farmed, so it was a close-knit group.


[00:12:02] SL: I guess the railroad back then was pretty much the lifeline of the community.

DR: It was the main—if you could get a job with the railroad, probably one of—one of the best jobs. And most people rented their houses then. We didn't have many people that owned their homes, except some people that homesteaded, and—and things were just different.

SL: Well, what were the railroad houses like? I mean, do you remember much about the . . .

DR: Well, the railroad houses—the houses we lived—and the reason I know, I've been by and gone inside—it was practically a four-room house—living room, kitchen and two bedrooms.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:52] DR: And, 'course, my father and mother were young, and that was plenty of room for them. And I was the second child. I had a brother four years older, and I have a brother two years younger. 'Course, I'm the last living person in my family and—  
 but in those days you had a close-knit family. I remember when my grandma—grandfather—my grandfather died, and he was—he was a fellow that would—I would go down there and he was—

he was a strong person, and he—anything he said we knew to do. [*SL laughs*] And when he passed away—he didn't believe in—he did not want to be embalmed. In those days you could—was not necessary to be embalmed. And they put gallon jugs of water around his body. His friends dressed him and the undertaker brought the casket to the house. And my grandfather had his best friend to go out and hook up his mules, and he didn't want to use a automobile. His mule—his—they put his body in the wagon—put casket in the wagon and took him to the church that he had—my grandfather gave the land for the Methodist church in Garner, Arkansas. It still stands.

[00:14:27] And I remember when he—we would go down—we would always go to get on the train and go down to Garner for Christmas, and my grandfather would load the big stove—a big stove and get it so hot it would be red. And everybody in the town would bring their Christmas presents, and we'd have Christmas down there in the church. My grandmother rode on horseback, and I have a discipline of the Methodist church before the Civil War—very small. The only requirements to be Methodist minister—that you couldn't curse or drink. [*Laughter*] It's about a quarter of an inch thick in those days, and now it's probably five inches thick.

SL: Yeah.

DR: But . . .

[00:15:22] SL: *[Laughs]* Well, so your—what was the grandfather's name that lived in Garner?

DR: Taylor. Hawley Taylor.

SL: Hawley Taylor.

DR: Yeah.

SL: So he was very supportive and active with the Methodist church.  
He—um . . .

DR: Oh, yes. Yeah. That's right. Then my grandmother—in fact, all of 'em were. In fact, in those days pretty well your town centered around your church and your neighbors, and you didn't listen to the world news. You lived within a community. So . . .

SL: So when you would go visit, would you be there in the summer, too? Help . . .

DR: I would visit in the summer. I'd—we'd—were very close and since we had passes on trains . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.



DR: . . . you didn't take a trip in those days on the road because it was gravel, and not many people had cars. My family—my father, until I finished high school, after—till I finished high school, my family never did own an automobile.



[00:16:33] SL: So if you went somewhere you went by . . .

DR: By . . .

SL: . . . horse or train?

DR: No, I've—no, I traveled on the train. My father . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: We had free passes on the train, and to buy our clothes—my mother—we'd get on the train, come to Little Rock, go to Union Station, and I really liked to ride the trolley downtown and go to the stores downtown. And I know they would even—they had a cashier on the second floor where Blass Department store is downtown now, and they would pull a big cable and pull it down and that would shoot this tube with the money in it up to the cashier. And then my mother would take me up there after we would buy our clothes—take me up there and we would have a bite to eat. And then we would go and take the train back to Newport and take one-day trip to come to Little Rock.

[00:17:30] SL: So were those trains—were those trains fuel-driven or were they . . .

DR: No, they were coal.

SL: They were coal-driven.



DR: And you can't realize—I mean, you don't realize, but in those days they had approximately twenty-five trains each way north

and south at Newport where my father worked. That's fifty trains a day plus the freight trains. Everything was moved by rail. We didn't have any big trucks, and so we could walk everywhere. I could walk to school. I could walk to church. We could—I only lived just a few blocks from downtown. And everybody was very trim in those days.

SL: Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*]

DR: And we walked everywhere, and it was a wonderful life. I still have close friends and we just all—were all together.

[00:18:37] SL: Let's get back to your [*telephone rings*] grandfather in Garner. When you would go visit, would you be doing—would they have chores for you to do? I mean . . .



DR: Well, what he would do—he'd—he'd get up, and he'd say, "Okay, let's go down and feed the cows," or "Let's go down and hook up the"—and he'd go out and I'd watch him, and a lotta [lot of] times he'd plow "gee and haw."

SL: Mh-hmm. Left and right.

DR: Yeah, that's right. And he could—and he had—and he'd talk to the mules. They knew him and, "You do this and you do that" and all of that. I was amazed. And I would watch the land be turned, and it's a—he required that if we—if he had a—or found a rock or anything, we'd be required to go pick it up and get it

out of there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:19:33] DR: And he showed me how to milk a cow and all [*laughs*] that kinda [kind of] stuff. And my grandmother would—I would come in at lunch, and she said, "Now I'll tell you what you do." The store was only a block from the house. They lived in downtown, and the land was a little bit out, and she'd give me some eggs, say, "Go up there and get you a sucker. You take these eggs up there and just trade 'em in." So we didn't have—I didn't take any money. So you can't realize it, but see, I was living in a day—I remember when the telephone came in. I remember when the radio came in. And it was something to talk on the telephone.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:20] SL: Oh, yeah.

DR: The only phone we had in town that—for—they had in town at Garner was at the country store, and everybody would go in there if they had to call something. And you had a local doctor. Now that was a very small town. And we had a Dr. Sloan there, and his daughter was raised with my mother and they were very close. And as time went on, all of his—he had boys, and they're still some of the Dr. Sloans in Garner and in be—not in Garner,

but in Beebe, a larger town that's closer to Little Rock.

[00:21:01] SL: What was their house like in downtown Garner?

DR: Oh, my fa—we had a living room, dining room, kitchen—had a smokehouse outside, had a . . .

SL: Now was this your all's house or your grandfather's?

DR: No, it was in my grandfather's house . . .

SL: Okay. Yeah.

DR: Now . . .

SL: And a smokehouse. Were you ever involved with any of the hog days or . . .

DR: Oh, yeah, we'd get out—they'd have hog days, and everybody would come to the place, and we'd do the hogs, and they'd—it was amazing to me—we didn't have any refrigeration, and they'd put salt on everything and put it in the smokehouse, and I tell you what, my grandmother would get up and make a wonderful breakfast of black-eye gravy and biscuits. And in the center of the deal—in the home was in your living room—in the wintertime our heat was by a fireplace, and we had a great big log in the back. My granddad would come in with his boots on, and he'd kick the stuff around—go out and bring in a log and tell us to bring in the small stuff. And my grandmother would have a hanging deal there that she'd have hot water hanging there all

time but . . .

[00:22:27] SL: So there wasn't any plumbing. They—was it not plumbed or . . .

DR: No, we didn't—no, the houses were not plumbed.

SL: So you all had a . . .

DR: Now we actually had a—sometimes in the kitchen had a pump to pump the water. Yeah. But we didn't have any plumbing. We had to go to the outhouse. And we used—a Sears and Roebuck [Sears Roebuck and Co.] catalog a lotta times was out there [SL laughs] if you didn't have anything else. [Laughter]

SL: Well, it wasn't a double-seater, was it?

DR: Huh?

SL: It wasn't a double-seater out there, was it?

DR: It might've been. Yeah. [SL laughs] But you also had a—in each bedroom you also had a pot for each bedroom.

SL: Yep.

DR: So . . .

SL: Well, it was a single-story house and . . .

DR: Single-story house, yes.

[00:23:28] SL: And so how big a town was Garner?

DR: Oh, probably in town, three hundred people.

SL: Yeah.

DR: Yeah. But you lived within the town. I know my—one of the—my grandmother's cousin or one of the fellows that came—the—one of the three brothers, and they had the first cotton gin in Searcy. And my granddad would take the cotton, and we'd fill the wagon full of cotton, and we drove to Searcy. It took us all day long to drive to Searcy. It was about—I'd say about twelve miles. And we would drive to Searcy, and they would take the cotton out of the wagon, and then we would fill the wagon full of corn seed—I mean cottonseed. And we would come back home. And we'd stay all day long at the gin there, while they were ginning the cotton, and then he left the bale of cotton there and then we would drive back home. But we had a wonderful—I had a wonderful time visiting with him, and we'd talk, and my grandfather even liked to sing. Now when we were just by ourself, he would sing.

[00:24:53] SL: What kind of stuff would he sing? Was it hymns or was it . . .

DR: Oh, he generally sang hymns and that type thing.

SL: Did . . .

DR: Very dedicated person.

SL: Did the church have a piano?

DR: Yes. Uh-huh. Yeah.

SL: And so was church—it wasn't just a Sunday thing. Were there activities during the week?

DR: Oh, they had Wednesday night service and all of that. And the classes were held—it was a one-room church. Now the Sunday school classes were in the corners. The young people in one corner and all that kinda stuff. But also they had a lot of meetings in the homes. I know my grandmother was very involved, and it wasn't a structured church like they are today. It was pretty well—they had a presiding elder, which now is called district superintendent. But they pretty well function—their system—each church had a little bit different system than the other. They pretty well left it up to the church.

[00:26:09] SL: So was Garner on the railroad line, too?



DR: Yes, Garner—from Little Rock to St. Louis—[Highway] 167—that was the highway is a straight shot from Little Rock to St. Louis. And the railroad generally—the highway was on the side of the railroad. They just extended the right-of-way. See, in those days the government was very liberal and gave a lotta land to the railroads to establish railroads. And might be getting a little off the subject, but I'll tell you one thing—I've been in Europe, and Europe has a fine railroad system. And one thing that we really passed up is that we've let our railroads go down, and

we're only hauling freight. And you can't realize the passengers that they're moving over in Europe. Over there if you say, "I'm going to leave at one fifteen," you have to be there at one fifteen. That train's on time. And I predict that eventually that this country might want to get back and start moving a lot more by rail than they have been by the big trucks. The big trucks are so heavy. They're so expensive to repair the highways. So . . .

[00:27:47] SL: Well, you know, the automobile kinda changed that emphasis, and I guess you probably remember the early automobiles coming in.

DR: Oh, yes. I remember the first time—in those days, most of 'em were open and they'd come by and, boy, that dust—it rolled. It would—man, they'd come down, and your—dust was all over your porch and everything. [*Laughs*] But a gallon of gasoline was about five cents a gallon. [*Laughs*] You'd get out there—I know when I was at the first gasoline station I went with my—no, I didn't go with my grandfather, but I was at the station, and I could—really got—I really was—got a big kick how they pumped the gas back and forth to get it up into the glass. See, they'd have a big container that the gas—that they pump up the gasoline in, and so you would make sure you were getting your five gallons or whatever you were buying. Well, when they got



down to that gauge at five gallons, that's how they—how you knew that you got your money's worth.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And . . .

[00:29:07] SL: Well, is there anything about your time in Garner that—I mean, you've talked a little bit about some of the activities with your grandfather. Is there—do you ever—do you have a conversation that you remember having with your grandmother or how your grandmother was or—back then . . .

DR: My . . .

SL: . . . she pretty much ran the house, I would assume.

DR: Yes, but my grandmother was just such a wonderful person and a very Christian person—is that she was so good to her grandchildren. Anything we wanted we were able to get. But I know that—recall one time that my mother and dad said, "Now you have to catch the morning train to come back home." And I had kids that I played with in Garner. We all—and we were all playing, so my grandmother dressed me and everything to get on the train. And so one of the boys came by, and we started playing, and before I knew it, my grandmother was doing something else, and I looked up, and the train was over at the



station, and I was supposed to catch the train. So my grandmother had told me, and my granddad says, "Now you make sure you catch that train." [*SL laughs*] So my grandmother already packed for me. I had a little—very small suitcase, and when that train left I said, "I've got to go." [*Laughs*] I had a pass. I said, "I'm going to"—I didn't say anything. I went in and got my suitcase, and I walked from Garner to Higginson, down the railroad track about eight miles or ten, and another train came in there at three thirty. And I never will forget—and I sat in the station till three thirty until the next train came in [*laughs*] so I wouldn't have to tell my granddad that I didn't catch that train. Now my grandmother was observing me, and she saw me go over there and start out, but she didn't know what to do, and she didn't say anything about it. And [*laughter*—but she was always lookin' after us. I know I was really embarrassed about it—one time that I was down there, and something—I got my socks wet, and then I was goin' [*going*] back home. And, 'course, I had these shorts that I was wearing. They came on down past my knees.

[00:32:25] SL: They called knickers?

DR: Yeah, knickers. I had knickers. And so she said, "I—Doyle, you're going to have to have something to wear with your

shoes." So she went up—she went and got a pair of her hose, and I was so embarrassed. She said, "You've got to wear these hose." So I pulled up the [*laughs*] hose, and I'd have hard time. They'd be comin' down. [*Laughter*] But she expressed her love in so many different ways.

[00:33:01] SL: So you'd visit with your brothers. Your brothers'd go . . .

DR: The—all three of us were down there. Yeah . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: We were all young in those days and . . .

SL: What kind of games did y'all play?

DR: We played some baseball. We played jumpin' over. It's—I think it's called pat or something, where you lean over, and you—with one and then they—then you start jumpin' over, and if you don't make it, why, then you have to get in the—if you make an error, you have to get in there. Then you have two. And then you see if you can jump over the two. And then if somebody makes an error, they have to lean over, and you have to jump over them. And you have the right when you're in the air to kick 'em.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh, gosh!

DR: And you would go over. We even did—and that even came into the school system. And every day at noon we'd call that—we'd

have [*unclear words*]*—*I think that's what you called it—  
something like that. And if we could get to go over three and  
kick 'em, why, we were doin' real good. And, 'course, we played  
marbles in those days. Marbles was a big game, and so we  
played marbles. All of us had some marbles. It was really pride  
to go to the store and get what they called . . .

SL: A shooter . . .

DR: . . . a agate. Yeah, and so—you had a closeness among your  
friends that I still—I talked to one of 'em the other day up in  
Indiana, and we still—so . . .

[00:34:54] SL: Well, let's get back to Newport, then. You were born  
in Diaz, but you were . . .

DR: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . raised in Newport.

DR: Yeah, we . . .

SL: You don't remember anything about Diaz . . .

DR: I don't remember anything about Diaz. And then I moved to  
Newport, and of course, the first thing that I remember so well  
was one afternoon they had a big mill and they had a lot of  
sawdust, and it was in March. And the sawdust caught on fire.  
And all the houses were—had wooden shingles. And I don't  
know whether you've ever been to Newport, but you cross the



bridge, and it started—and that wind was real high, and it started blowing these sparks over the town, and over four hundred homes were burned. I was in the first grade, and I think it was 1926. And I was in either the first or second—and Mrs. Box was our teacher, and the siren kept goin' off, so she said, "I'm"—said, "You all need to go home." We only lived about a block and a half from the school, so I went down there and my father was on top of the—and he was getting water to try to—he had some sparks and, 'course, we lost our home.

[*Laughs*] My mother told us to—she was going in and getting all the clothes that she could, and she put 'em in a quilt and that type thing just to get 'em out of the house. [00:36:52] And so she said, "Now you boys go in and get whatever you can. First thing you think of." So I was teased about this all my life. [*SL laughs*] The thing I went in first, and I picked—I took the dining table and picked a vase of flowers that my mother had and brought 'em out with the flowers—brought 'em out there. And now my brothers kidded me about that all my life. [*SL laughs*] So—and so our house—our place burned down. We went down to our aunt. My aunt had married a man that was on the—I mean, Newport has a river and, you know, Batesville, Arkansas, was the second town founded in the state of Arkansas, 'cause

[because] it came up in the Mississippi River, and the water came up to Batesville, and they founded that town. And the first two governors came from Batesville, Arkansas, so river was a real important thing. But . . .

[00:38:06] SL: So the house burned down and . . .

DR: So the house burned down. And we went down and my grandfather—I mean, my great-uncle during the—when they—he—when he married my aunt—my great-great-aunt—he had the biggest saloon in town, and he was doin' well, and then he founded the bank there—was one of the [*laughs*] founders of the bank. When they voted that out, why, then he went in the coal business, and we went down and spent the night with them, and the next morning we got on the train and went to Garner, Arkansas, and stayed there for, I guess, three months until we could find another house and moved back.

[00:38:58] SL: So let's talk about that house in Newport. What kind—what'd it look like? What was it . . .

DR: Oh, it was a house—it was about five rooms. It was close to the Catholic Church, and we—you know, we were all so close and it was so nice with our family at—like, on the Fourth of July my father always—the biggest thing we got on the Fourth of July—my father bought a case of cold drinks. One time a year he'd



buy—on July the Fourth—in those days you had different flavors. You had Coke [Coca-Cola], but you had grape, and you had strawberry and all of that, and he'd go buy a case of—take a—in a wooden case—bring 'em home—set 'em down in the kitchen. He said, "Okay, boys." He said, "You put this in the refrigerator." Now we didn't have any refrigeration. You would have the ice man comin' down the road, and my mother would have a sign she'd put in the window, and so she'd say, "Ten pounds, fifteen pounds," and he'd bring it in and put it in the 'frigerator [refrigerator]. And that's how you kept your food cool. And so—but it's a—it was a frame house and wood shingle. So when our house was burned—we were renting the house. We didn't own the house. Then we moved about three blocks on the same street and moved into another house at 415—at—yeah, four—415 Main Street.

[00:40:48] SL: Was it pretty much like the other house or . . .

DR: It was a better house. It was built out of concrete blocks. And then we had plaster on the walls, and—had a German family that owned a grocery store. In those days after they had the telephone, what you would do—you'd pick up the phone in the morning and call the grocery and say, "Would you send me this or that?" And the women didn't do much shopping by goin' in



the store. They didn't have any cars, or not many people had cars, so they would be—the grocery man would have somebody to deliver the groceries. And Mr. 'Bach?', I talked to him and got a job, and when I got out of school, well, I'd go down, and he brought me—he bought me a wagon, and I'd load the groceries in the wagon, and I'd go to each house and deliver the groceries. And then I would put my knee in the wagon and go on back up and go out. And it's an interesting that—I was out front waiting—and them to get all the orders ready, and they had a train number. They had—generally, there were two passenger trains come about after school that would—one would be goin' south and one would be goin' north. [00:42:21] And my great-uncle's coal business was across the track on the river, and in those days you heated your place—you heated your home with coal. Everybody used coal in the wintertime. And so I was out front, and my great-uncle started across the track, and as the train pulled out goin' south, he pulled across the track, and the one goin' north hit him and brought him within about a block from where I was and killed him. Now he was in his late forties. And my grandmother lived till—and my great-aunt to her—in her nineties, and the bank looked after my [*unclear words*]. My mother was her bodily guardian, but the bank looked after her



from then on, and I always remember that.

[00:43:32] SL: So you saw that happen.

DR: Yeah, I saw that happen. And I've always been concerned. I didn't know too much about my great-uncle, and about a year and a half ago, they had—the historical society in Batesville—had a picture of a lady that started the first museum at Moorefield, Arkansas—I mean, at Sulphur Rock, Arkansas. And I noticed that her name was Sanders and that's what his name was. And I looked at that and found out that he—that his family came and established the little town of Sulphur Rock—incorporated the town, and then he moved from Sulphur Rock to Newport and started the saloon. And I was pleased that I found out more about him. But—and my great-aunt—she could watch—her house was practically—after we had lost the house—well, eventually we wound up living across the courthouse and my great-aunt lived next door, so my mother could look after her. So we were right on the highway, and we lived in a house that—a large house. And my great-great-aunt needlepointed all the time in this window that she had in the bay, and she would needlepoint, and she'd needlepointed for the Episcopal church, and most of the needlepoint work in the Episcopal church in Newport was—is still there that my great-great-aunt did.

[00:45:22] SL: So she'd be in the—she set up that operation in the bay window of the front . . .

DR: Yeah, she just . . .

SL: . . . front bay . . .

DR: Just to have something to do and beautiful work, and in fact, I hadn't been in the Episcopal church until Harriet Hodges, you know, her granddaughter. I was there when her grandmother had the funeral, and I observed all the needlepoint in the church. Beautiful church that the stone came from Batesville, Arkansas. That's where the same stone came to build the state capitol. So . . .

[00:46:01] SL: Huh, that's interesting. Well, was Batesville ever considered to be the capital city? I wonder—if it was there so early.

DR: I don't know. The—now, of course, the first town was over on the Mississippi River. They only have a monument there now. But the second town was Batesville, and if you've ever been in Batesville . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: . . . they have some beautiful homes there. And one of the main homes there was brick brought down by water and built, and they founded this town right on the point and—in Batesville.

And now it's—they have the county jail down there. But it's right at the end of Main Street. But . . .

[00:46:54] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about your mom.

DR: Well, my mother and father are probably one of the lights of my life. I never heard my father say a bad word about anybody. He always taught me, "If you can't say something good about somebody, don't say anything." But my father was strict, and I'm sorry, I'm talking about my father now, but . . .

SL: That's all right. That's good . . .

DR: . . . to talk about—I'm talking about—they're just, from my standpoint, one, my mother and father. My mother would give me orders. Sometimes I didn't do what she would say. But I knew if my father gave me an order, that I would do it. And they had—my dad had a razor strap. In those days you'd shave with a straight razor. You didn't have all this stuff we have today. And in fact, I started out when I was young shaving with a straight razor, and it's not hard. You just have to watch how you cut. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

DR: But, anyway, [*laughter*—but my dad—this razor—I mean, this . . .

SL: Strap.

DR: . . . the strap he had had two pieces to it, and it would sound a lot louder than the hit was. So he would make that thing pop, but he never did make a mark or anything. But when my dad would tell me—when—see, my dad worked from twelve at night till eight in the morning. And so if my mother—if anything got out of line there, why, then my—or all three boys—we had the same system. But our father was very strict and our—kinda like my grandmother. My mother pretty well looked after us. In those days, we had three meals a day. We didn't have any—we didn't go to the restaurant. In those days I don't even—I don't recall many times being in a restaurant. My mother prepared all the food and all of that.

[00:49:15] SL: So you'd come home from school at noon . . .

DR: We would walk home from school for lunch. Yeah, we only lived—the grammar school—we only lived a block from the school, and then we would live—lived a little piece from the high school after they moved it out in the park. But my mother had us in church every Sunday now, and we'd be—so we were very involved in the church. In fact, my mother—I got up one morning, and my brother was sick, and I said, "Mother, our Sunday school class is going to go join the church today." She said, "You don't join the church today. You wait and join it with

Ralph." We were only two years apart. So I went on to Sunday school, and because Ralph was sick, my mother stayed home with him. I went on and joined the church.

SL: Uh-oh.

[00:50:23] DR: I didn't say anything about it. So the next Sunday they were still taking in, so my brother went into the church. So I went down again and joined the church again. [*Laughs*]

SL: They didn't say anything about it.

DR: They didn't—oh, the minister ?missed a few? of—and his children were about our age, and they were—they found out about it, and as time went on, we all kinda laughed about it. But church was so important. Our lives were really around the church. We had Methodist youth fellowship. All of my friends pretty well very active in the church. And, in fact, one of my closest friends—my closest friend wound up as head of the school of business [the College of Business Administration, renamed the Sam M. Walton College of Business in 1998] at the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville]—John [P.] Owen [served as dean from 1967-1983]. I don't know whether you knew John.

SL: I did not know him, but I know the name.

[00:51:34] DR: Yeah. Well, John ["Jack"] Owen's father was a doctor in Newport. We only lived about a block apart, and we

were practically raised together. We either stayed in—after school we played at Jack's house or my house, and we played football and eventually were the tennis team for Newport. And John couldn't pass the physical in World War II. He went to LSU [Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge], and his dad was—his uncle was from Arkadelphia, and he was dean of the graduate school at LSU. So he went down there and stayed down there till he got his doctorate degree and went on to the University of Houston [Texas], I think, and was in the school of business. [00:52:26] And when Dr. [David W.] Mullins, president of the University [of Arkansas]—the man that retired—he called Jack and had asked him to come up and named him head of the school of business. And then I was—as time went on, I was on the advisory board of the school of business when they first started it, and built one of their first buildings there, and we raised the money. And I think that's when the—one of the first chairs was when—that's how Sam [Walton] got involved in using the school of business to help him out and started having—eventually now they have where their people come in and they have a training system. They have a system now between Walmart [Stores, Inc.], and the University of Arkansas.

SL: It was a smart move.

DR: And I had—we were coming up spending the weekend with Sam and Helen [Robson Walton], and I'd called Jack, and then we'd go—we'd—but, anyway, and I remember when that thing first started. But I'm gettin' off the subject here. I'm sorry.

[00:53:33] SL: Well, no, but that—you know, I remember Dr. Mullins.

DR: Yeah.

SL: He lived up the hill from where we . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . lived. I used to play with his son, Gary, all the time.

DR: Dr. Mullins was from Ash Flat.

SL: Is that right?

DR: That's just about eighteen miles from Batesville.

SL: The . . .

DR: He was raised at . . .

SL: I remember him quite well. And, of course, we are housed in the Mullins Library.

DR: Is that right?

SL: The Pryor Center is. We're a part of the library.

DR: Yeah.

SL: So it's a small world, isn't it?

DR: It really is.

[00:54:06] SL: Well, okay, so your dad worked for the railroad.

Now I'm assuming that your mom and dad didn't have any education past high school. Did they even go to high school?

Do you know?

DR: My mother and father went to high school.

SL: They did.

DR: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

[00:54:25] DR: We had—they had a small school in Garner. And



then my father would go down to the station and learn telegraphy. And that's—and when they got married, he had his first assignment at Beebe, Arkansas. And then they moved to Kensett and lived next door to Wilbur Mills. Mother and Father—they had a store there, and so—and then they transferred him. My father was doing well as a young man, and they transferred him, and he was—to Diaz, and then after he was there a short time, he went to Newport, and that's what he did for years at Newport. He'd work from twelve at night till eight in the morning. Very unusual person. He built some houses. He would get off in the morning, and he'd have a crew, and he would build a—he built some houses and sell the houses. And I would go over—he'd make me go over—and wasn't in school—all



the three boys—we'd go over, and he'd give us a job of picking up nails. Nails cost money and all of that, and he was very conservative. And so we would—we'd learned a little bit about building houses and . . .

SL: So he'd get off work and meet his crew at eight in the morning. . .

DR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And he'd get them lined up, and then he would go home and sleep some and then—he would go to bed about seven at night and get up at eleven o'clock or eleven fifteen. But he liked that. He just . . .

SL: Four hours' sleep.

DR: Yeah, he liked that, and it was so fortunate that—my father died of a heart attack when he was fifty-seven, and my mother lived by herself and—one of the—and the thing I did—I—the house came up for sale—one of the houses he'd built, and I bought the house and—she ow—so she lived in the house that my father built until she died.

[00:56:49] SL: That's nice. Well, how did your mom and dad meet? Do you know that story?

DR: They met in Garner. They met at school. And they didn't talk to us much about that. They just—and I had—my mother had a sister, and her name was Jewel, and we called her Jota.

[Laughs]

SL: Jota? [Laughs]

DR: Jota. And she married a fellow that moved to El Dorado in the oil bu—in the oil fields. But—they—my mother and father just met when they were going to school. And everybody in the small town of Garner knew each other.

[00:57:39] SL: So did they get married after they got out of high school or . . .

DR: Yeah, my—I think my mother married when she was about eighteen years of age. And so . . .

SL: So they were . . .

DR: But my father immediately—he had a job on the rail—he had a job with the railroad. And he was known—I've talked to people—he was known all over—up and down the system, as "If"—and you could tell when you sent the messages on the wire, they would say, "Okay, 'If' is sending us a message." You could tell the way they were sending it and tell the person that was sending it.

SL: Just like a signature almost.

DR: Yeah, just like a signature. And I would go over there as a little boy, and they would send the messages—they would white—they would take a pad—say, they would have a big pad of just

tissue paper, and he would have a pencil—have a pen that had a steel point. And he put—would put carbons in this tissue paper, and he would write train orders. You had to have a train order for the conductor, had to have one for the engineer, and some of the brakemen. But he'd—he would give them copies of their orders, and they'd pass 'em out. And here comes a red-ball freight that wasn't even stopping at Newport. And that train—and my dad would go and tie this message on a string, then he would put it in a Y, and this string would be from here to here [gestures between the tips of the Y], and he would hold the Y up. He'd get a certain position away from the track, and this engineer was the first fellow—he'd hold his arm out, and when, and his arm would go by and that string would come off and wrap around his arm, and he'd pull the message in. And he'd—and then he'd do the same thing on the—see, the conductor was on the back.

SL: Yeah.

[00:01:00] DR: Now if they missed it, why, then, they would stop the train 'cause he had to have orders because you only had one rail going north and south. And those trains had to pull in sidings. If you had a freight train, it'll pull in a siding for the passenger train and those kind of things. And so having that

many trains, you were writing orders all the  
time . . .

SL: All the time.

[01:00:30] DR: Yeah. And we had a roundhouse in Newport. A  
roundhouse means that you bring the engine in from Kansas  
City, and it was goin' south, and then you'd turn it around, and  
then it starts north. And they would rework the engine and fill it  
full of coal and fill it full of water and start it. So Newport was  
really a hub of a town—had lots of trains. But my mother was  
so—she pretty well—her job was taking care of the house,  
feeding the boys, looking after the boys, and keeping us in  
church, making us study, and all of those kind of things. Our  
stoves were such that you'd have a—we would have hot water in  
the stove.

SL: In it?

DR: Well, what we would have . . .

TM: Can we stop . . .

DR: You . . .

TM: Just one second? I need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

TM: So we're picking it up with . . .

SL: How you doing?

DR: Oh, fine. Now I don't know—am I . . .

SL: Oh, you're doing great. Are you kidding me? We've got—these are stories that we have not heard.

DR: Huh.

[01:01:48] SL: [*Voices and shuffling in background*] We don't have many train stories, so this is really good. And I want to talk a little about coal and water. Now and that was milk delivered to your all's front porch?

DR: Yes.

SL: Different from the grocery store?

DR: Oh, yeah.

SL: Yeah, I can see—I can remember when milk was delivered to our front door . . .

DR: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . in Fayetteville.

[01:02:13] DR: We didn't have any blacktop streets. We had a—just a dirt deal.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And you know how they'd keep the trash—keep the dirt down—keep the dust down?

SL: Water, I would guess . . .

DR: We would water it—had a little sprinkler thing that they'd come

by, pulling—pulled by horses, and he'd have—and they'd sprinkle the deal.

SL: Yeah.

DR: Now eventually we're got a . . .

SL: Well, we're gonna get this. We . . .

TM: Yeah, we need to get that.

SL: Yeah, we'll—yeah, we'll—let me . . .

TM: Do you need some water? You okay?

DR: Yeah, I'm . . .

SL: You've got some water right there.

[01:02:47] TM: Now was that the White River?

DR: Yeah.

TM: Okay. I wasn't sure if that was the one. I'm kind of curious if there are any big settlements in the . . .

DR: Well, you know, do y'all know the first town founded in Arkansas?

TM: Hmm . . .

SL: Arkansas Post?

DR: Yeah. That's a [*takes drink of water*] . . .

TM: There's alligators at Arkansas Post.

SL: Is that right?

TM: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Kinda waitin' on Joy here.

JE: Everybody good in there?

SL: Yeah, we're good.

JE: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:03:20] TM: Rolling tape.

SL: Four—422's good?

DR: Am I talking loud enough, or everything's okay?

SL: Is he talking loud enough?

JE: Yeah.

SL: Good. So we're good all the way around here?

TM: [*Unclear words*]

SL: Okay. So now let's see, where were we? We were talking about . . .

TM: The stove.

SL: The what, now?

TM: Water in the stove.

[01:03:39] SL: Oh, yeah, the water in the stove. Now how do you get water in the stove?

DR: Well, on one side of the stove you would have a compartment that you put your water in. And then you would have the stove, and the heat from that side there would heat your water. And

my mother would have water right there right at the stove.

SL: And so did they just keep that stove going the whole time or . . .

DR: Oh, yeah.

SL: Only around meals or . . .

DR: No, you just had your stove going the time that you needed it, but most of the time during the daytime the stove had a small fire in it, but you'd have—but your regular heating the house—that would be by wood—generally, your stove was in the kitchen. But then you would have coal for your heating.

[01:04:28] SL: So did you have a coal bin that—a wagon would bring coal and fill up the bin?

DR: Oh, yeah. No, what we had at the back of the house—on the back of the property. They would bring—see, we had an alley. And the people—the coal companies would come in and sell us a ton of coal or whatever it was, and we'd put it in a coal bin, and we'd have to go out and bring in the coal. Now we had a bucket that we'd bring in the coal. But generally for your house, you'd only have one big stove for the entire house. Now our bedrooms were cold, and as time went on, my father built a sleeping porch on the end of the house, and we had two bedrooms and a sleepin' porch. The sleepin' porch was big, but the boys were required to sleep on the sleepin' porch. Now that means



summer and winter.

SL: Oh! [*Laughs*]

DR: Now what my dad did—he put a canvas that he would let down in the wintertime.

SL: Keep the wind off.

DR: But I tell you what, my mother had a big featherbed mattress—I mean, a deal on the bed where you'd jump, and we'd go out there—it'd be so cold in the wintertime, we'd go out there and jump in the bed. But, boy, just immediately with those feathers getting around us, man, it was really good. We were right out there sleepin' in the air and all. We didn't have any problems at all sleeping like that.

[01:06:08] SL: I bet that kinda kept you healthy, too, didn't it?

DR: Oh, it did. We didn't have many colds or anything like that. We only had one—it was really a—we only had one bathroom in the house in those days. And then my mother was a—liked to do things. My mother was a seamstress. She would make some of our clothes, and she—somebody—a friend of hers was needin' something done, and so she started doing some of that. My father had a good—was making a good salary, but my mother still wanted to make some money herself. So my mother started taking in sewing and doin' some things like that. And, in those

days I can remember one of the greatest things that they—my mother enjoyed is having her friends, and they would quilt. And I have quilts that we're using in our home today that were quilted by my mother with all of her friends. And they would put a—make a quilt that would have their names on it or have something special—it was a special quilt. And my mother—in my home today, we have these rugs that my mother even learned how to knit rugs, and she has some of the most beautiful rugs that we still have. I don't know whether Barbara has one here or not, but we have a lot of . . .

SL: But they were like braided rugs or . . .

DR: No, this is a different . . .

SL: . . . woven?

DR: Yeah, it's a knitting-type deal that a lady in Batesville would—even at the college, they even have—would teach you that type of thing. But all the colors they would put in. And I know when I got up this morning I went in the kitchen, and there was my mother's rug. So . . .

[01:08:11] SL: Do you remember watching her make those?

DR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, she had the—she was very talented, and—we moved in this large house across from the courthouse—had plenty of room.

[01:08:26] SL: Now is this the one after the fire or is this the third one?

DR: Oh, now, well—you know, we actually went through three problems, three things when I was in Newport. One was the fire. The second thing was a flood. The third thing was the [Great] Depression. Now I heard last night what the president [George W. Bush] talked about and all, but I'll tell you that the people are not seeing anything today to what we saw during the Depression. But we talked about the fire and, you know, it's interesting—I'll just talk about that just a minute. When I—is that when that fire started burning all these houses, it burned—one of the last blocks it burned was our house. That came up to the courthouse. That burned about nearly half the town. Now I'm talking about dogs were burned, cats—it was an awful fire. And in those days not anybody had insurance. And so we had lost everything, and then so the town had to build back, but everybody worked together. I didn't—we didn't—you know, everybody just—once they got the house we could move into, we didn't pay any attention. We were still having a good time playing together and all of that. A lot of times we played out in the streets. That's the kind of traffic that we had. We didn't have many cars.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And so . . .

[01:10:21] SL: So how old were you when that fire happened?

DR: I was about seven or eight years old. I was in either the first or second grade. Yeah.

SL: And that was from a sawmill, and it was a sawdust . . .

DR: Yeah. Yeah

SL: . . . fire.

DR: It was down on the river, and I know all the houses were wooden shingles. And, you know, the fire then—just had one fire truck, so they couldn't do much about it.

SL: Right.

DR: And so—and I'm talking—when it burned, it burned every house. It cleared every house. It was so big. And people started, you know, going to their friends and all of that, but . . .

[01:11:16] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about—I want to talk a little bit about the house you grew up in. I guess you probably don't have a whole lot of memories about the house that the fire was in. Did you have a big yard? Did you have a garden?

DR: Yeah, all the families had gardens.

SL: Did you help . . .

[01:11:39] DR: Yeah, and I don't know whether you recall a young

man that was a fine attorney, Fred [M.] Pickens [Jr.]?

SL: I know that name.

DR: Used to be—Fred was chairman of the University of Arkansas Board [of Trustees] at one time.

SL: Okay.

DR: He's an attorney. Pickens' family lived back of us. Now they lived in a beautiful brick home, and their house did not burn.

SL: Right.

DR: And—but Fred Pickens and mother—and my mother were so very close, and so Fred—and when my mother passed away, I have one of the finest letters about my mother. My mother went over and when Fred and Ashley Morrell—that's his sister, and Jeannie that's passed on, they were all going to college, and every summer my mother would go over there, and she would help her get all the clothes ready. They were growing, and they would alter the clothes and all so—I wish I could've brought that letter. I don't know exactly where it is, to—just to show you what a wonderful—and, 'course, being an attorney, he can put some words together so well. But in those days the families were so close together, and that's—I hope we're continuing that today—where our families stay close together.

[01:13:23] SL: Well, you're not just talking about your family, but

families living next to each other.

DR: I'm talking about all the families.

SL: Yeah, all of the . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . neighbors and . . .

DR: Yes.

SL: . . . everyone knew everyone and . . .

DR: But you recall—you have a closeness with your family—or at least with my family—that if you're worrying about some something, why, we—see, eating three meals a day together, you're practically—know everything that each other is doing. And that's one thing that's a real key to a strong family—that connection. Our fast-food places and all—there's very few families now have many meals together during the week.

[01:14:16] SL: There's something about putting your feet under a table.

DR: Yeah, that's right. And I know my mother came up with an idea of learn—how to learn, you know, a special word, and she'd bring it to the table, and we'd all have to talk about it. Actually "gregarious"—I remember that's a word [*laughs*] that she taught me, how, you know, how to be friendly. You're a gregarious person. And she would do those kinds of things. And my

mother and father were very religious, and I certainly appreciate them. And when my mother and father passed away they didn't want to be buried in Newport. They came back to the Lebanon Cemetery . . .

SL: Is that right?

DR: . . . and buried with the family and all, so . . .

[01:15:14] SL: You know, there's a couple things I want to ask you about. What—and I hate to jump back to this, but you were talking about your grandfather that didn't want to be embalmed and was . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: And you said something about having jugs of water around him.

DR: Yeah.

SL: Was that to keep the body cool or . . .

DR: Yeah, what they would do—his friends would put a gallon jug of water with ice, and they'd keep it around the body. And the embalmer—I mean, the—not the embalmer, but the funeral director—my—you know, I remember—I don't know what they called them, but his friends put his clothes on, and they dressed him and all of that, and they—and so he just stayed right at the house. He didn't leave the house. So . . .

[01:16:02] SL: That's somethin' else. And then your mom, taking

up sewing and making a little extra money—did she have a sewing machine?

DR: Oh, yeah, I still have one of the sewing machines.

SL: And . . .

DR: Electric sewing machine.

SL: It was an electric.

DR: First it was a pumper. First you pump 'em, and that was a Singer, and then Singer [Company] came out with electric, and she was so proud. She would just push it with her knee. And we have that sewing machine—the last one she had in her home. And very fortunate that my mother—my two brothers are gone, and I've been able to retain all of my mother's furniture. Some of my children have—Barbara and Rog, my two children, have some of the furniture and were so pleased to—and this chair that my great-aunt sat in and did all the needlepoint—I have that in my home—have it in the bedroom. So—now, she was well educated. I mean, she was educated by travelin'. She traveled all over the world, and so she pretty well educated herself.

[01:17:26] SL: So this is the one that did the needlepoint?

DR: Yes.

SL: What were her needlepoints like? Were they religious in nature?



DR: No, the needlepoint is a—just the colors. It's the red and that type thing. Yeah.

SL: She wouldn't depict any particular scene or . . .

DR: No, well, it was the railing in the church and the kneeling pad and those kind of things.

SL: Okay.

DR: Yeah.

SL: So between the three meals a day, church on Wednesday, church on Sunday, school during the day.

DR: And Saturday downtown.

[01:18:12] SL: What'd you do Saturdays?

DR: Everybody on town—in town from the county came in on Saturday, and the streets were just loaded. I—when I was able to work, I got a job clerking in a store. Generally, I'd had friends in school that owned a store, and so they'd pay me a dollar a day. [*SL laughs*] And my wife—father was an attorney, and he went to the—he knew the man that owned the largest department store, and he went to them and said, "I tell you what you do." The fellow's name Holmes—he said, "You let my girls work here, and when you think they're making you any money you can pay 'em." So that's how my wife started her first job. And they would go down there, and he'd hire 'em at

Christmas, and they wrapped packages. But they expected a full day's work. And the first job I had when I finished high school was I worked from six in the morning in the summertime until six at night, and on Saturday I worked from six till ten. And I walked up to the front, and the man paid me seven dollars and a half. [01:19:47] And I saved fifty dollars, and with a close friend of mine we got a fellow to take us over Jonesboro, and we went to Arkansas State [University]. Cost us thirty-five dollars a month room and board. Cost us ten dollars to register. And the only thing we had—we went down and bought a radio for our room and paid twelve dollars for it from Western Auto, and they let us pay it out a dollar a week. [SL laughs] And we started a freshman hand laundry because the laundry over there at Danner Hall—they would come down and pick up your laundry, and it was pretty expensive, and we made a deal with a lady that lived off campus, and we started freshman hand laundry, and we'd go up and down the halls and say, "Freshman hand laundry." [Laughs] And she would launder the stuff, and we'd charge them about third. Now we were not very good businessmen. We should've just said fifty percent. We charged them a third, and we hadn't—and—we thought we were doing good. And we would hitchhike home on the weekends, and



[*laughs*] one night we got to Hoxie, Arkansas, and we got a ride there. And, man, we'd been standing there on the highway for a long time. And [*laughs*] boy, I tell you, young people take chances. So here comes in the passenger train that we knew the next stop was Newport. Hoxie, then Newport. So I told him, I said, "G. C."—his name was G. C. Nance—I said, "Let's just get back of the engine here and hang on because it's not very far. It's only about thirty miles." [*SL laughs*] So we rode from Hoxie to Newport [*laughs*] back of the passenger—I mean right back of the engine. We didn't realize that those sparks out of that—those coals—they were burning coal, and they were—those were coming there. When we got there we were kinda covered in coal dust. But we never did do that again, and my mother and father never did knew—know that I did it.

[01:22:17] SL: So you just jumped on that train as it was going by?

DR: Huh?

SL: Did you just jump on it or did—it stopped at Hoxie? . . .

DR: No, no. It had stopped to pick up passengers.

SL: Okay. Okay.


DR: And so that . . .

SL: You just snuck on the back of the engine.

DR: But I'm sorry to get off the subject of my—you asked me about

my father and mother.

[01:22:32] SL: Well, no, you're fine. This is good. We—you know, I'll get us back to where we were. The—but I do want to—we were talking about three meals a day, church on Sunday and Wednesday nights, school during the week, but on Saturdays everyone came into town. Was it like a big market—big farmers . . .

DR: Oh, yeah, yeah, everybody came into town. Some of 'em were driving wagons and all of that, and they would stay there. And,  'course, the big thing in those days was the beer parlor and shooting pool.

SL: Okay, I want to know about that.

DR: Okay . . .

SL: This is in Newport, Arkansas.

DR: Oh, man, they had a—they had two places down on Main Street. Everybody'd come in and they'd start shootin' pool, and so—and they'd drink beer. Now, boy, you talk—and then they would—they didn't have the restrooms in the saloon. They had 'em out at back—out in the open. These urinals and all of that because they were having so much business. And so.

[01:23:53] SL: Were they—but they were just open urinals or—I mean, did they . . .

DR: Yeah, open urinals.

SL: They weren't . . .

DR: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . like outhouses or . . .

[01:23:59] DR: No, they were just—well, they were—you couldn't—they had 'em kinda enclosed to a certain extent, but they were out in the open, and they tied 'em into the sewer line. Now Newport had sewer and water then and—but I know that I had a job delivering papers. I always delivered papers after school. And I would—after school I'd go down to the *Newport Independent*, and I would [*laughs*]*—that was one block back of Front Street, and I would always go through the pool hall to give 'em their paper. But when I opened the door to the pool hall in the back I'd hold my breath. The smell was so bad, and I'd hold my breath till I walked through the pool hall and got out on Front Street. Then I'd take—then I'd go on up [SL laughs] to Bevans' Drugstore and go upstairs, and I was delivering to all the doctors. All the doctors were in a building above the druggist there and the dentist and some surgeons and all. And, you know, I'd go by real—and then leave the paper, and then I would listen to see if anybody was having a pain or hollering or anything. [Laughs]*

SL: Well, back then that was . . .

DR: That's right.

SL: You heard that stuff.

DR: Yeah.

[01:25:33] SL: How big a town was Newport when you were deliverin' papers?

DR: Newport was about seven thousand people—six or seven thousand people. And I guess I would deliver about—I'd deliver probably fifteen or sixteen blocks—Front Street and all of that. And they'd have probably ten or fifteen boys or some of 'em—we'd all meet there and deliver papers. But then in the morning I would—then I would take on the *Arkansas Democrat* and deliver papers in the morning.

SL: And was this during the school year that you did that?

DR: Yeah.

SL: So you'd get up—well, okay. Would you have breakfast before you went out and delivered papers, or you came back to the house, had breakfast, then went to school?

DR: No, I would—I'd come back. I'd get up and deliver papers and some—one—you know, I didn't do that all the time. I—but I was always trying to make some extra money. I even sold *Grit*—this *Grit* paper that you—did you ever hear of that?

SL: True?

DR: It was a deal that you would get on—it was a weekly paper. National paper. And they'd hire kids to sell it. I even tried that.

*[Laughs]*

[01:26:50] SL: What about your brothers? Did they . . .

DR: My brothers did not do as much of that as I did. My brother was—he was four years older, and I really didn't pay that much attention because he was very active in the school and all of that and he—very good athlete. And so he actually worked some, too, and my younger brother did, too.

SL: So on these Saturdays when everybody'd come into town, would there be farmers selling produce and . . .

[01:27:28] DR: Yeah, they'd come into town and just everybody wanted to come into town to go to the movies.

SL: Movies?



DR: Yeah, the movies. We had the movies. And in those days at first they were not air-conditioned until—and—but it—they came up with a system that they'd—built—put a great big fan in the back of the building. And then they would buy ice and put it down in the bottom and then that fan would come over the ice and it would cool. And then once we got these big fans in there, they were advertising that they had air-conditioning. *[SL*

*laughs*] And they—we—charged us—I never will forget it was—to get in the theater it cost twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for youths. And when—and as time went on, when I was in high school I was—I took up tickets at night at the Melba Theater, and I was—*Gone With The Wind* was published, and I—for the first time I dressed in a tux, and I was supposed to be—Rhett Tutler—Rhett what?

SL: Butler.

DR: Butler. Rhett Butler. [*SL laughs*] And so—but that—they were so strict that the theater company came in and gave us the tickets, and they counted the tickets. Everybody wanted to see that, and all the theaters were doing real well when they did that.

[01:29:07] SL: So—did—when you were growing up was—did Newport always have a theater? A—now, you're talking a movie theater.

DR: Yeah, a movie theater.

SL: And was it always with sound? Do you ever remember . . .

DR: Oh, yeah, I remember the theater when it would had—you would—they'd say somethin', and they'd flash on the black screen, you know, then, what he said. No, I was going to theater before they had sound.



SL: Did they have a piano player that played along with the movie?

DR: Yeah, they had a piano player, but not so much in Newport because I don't think that they could afford it. And we always had a series every Saturday, like Hoot Gibson and all those fellows, and we would—so they were always bringing you back in to see what was gonna happen the next time.

SL: You bet. [*Laughter*] Cliffhangers. [*Laughs*]

DR: Yeah. Boy, we had a friend of ours—at first we were just real young, and we didn't have any money, and the owner of the theater—in fact, my great-aunt owned the building, and—but the man that rented the building from her was so nice that he kinda told him—he said, "If you can get these fellows to pay anything, you just let 'em in." So we'd all on Saturday—we would [*laughs*] go down and wait until everybody got in the theater—the movie hadn't started yet, and this fellow would give us the signal, and we'd come in and give him five cents, and we'd go in and watch the movie for half price. [*Laughter*] So . . .

[01:30:56] SL: That's something. I've thought of something when you were talking about that. What about when you were—I'm thinking terms of grade school now. We haven't really talked about your elementary school days. Tell me about the school. Was—did the school cover all the grades or was it . . .

DR: Yeah, we had—actually had one building that covered from the— well, we had a building across the street that covered the first and second grades. And then the building—a brick building called Walnut Street School covered from the third grade on up to the twelfth.

SL: That's interesting. I'd never heard of a town that . . .

DR: But it was a—I think, it was a three-story brick building.

SL: That's big.

DR: And we had to go up—we didn't have any elevators. And so we had to go up and I went there until I was a, I think, a senior, and they moved the school. Built a high school on out in the park, and that was about eight or nine blocks from where we were going, and I'd walk to there.

[01:32:13] SL: So you finished up your senior year at the . . .

DR: Yeah. But, see, we would have recess and—during when I was in school young. And we would have our teachers, but we were all—have recess in the morning and recess in the afternoon. And we played—I never will forget one of our friends that was going to school with us—some kids were throwing rocks and one day at noon we were all playing, and he—we'd all go home and eat real fast—real quick, and then we'd come back, and we'd play till one o'clock or whenever the school started. And they

threw a rock and hit him in the chest. And they called the ambulance, but it killed him. And that really was a shock to all of us, but we—'cause we had never lost a friend. And they had a funeral and all of that.

[01:33:18] SL: How old were you when that happened?

DR: I was about—I guess I was in the—probably sixth or seventh grade. But, see, like I tell—I've told you before, is that we were living within a town, and we had our little—had our friends that we pretty well just kinda—we kinda lived together in school. We were friends with each other, and we looked after each other, and we were very close to each other. So—but you all are, as younger people, going to have different—going to have more interesting stories to tell than, you know, than we have because things—life has changed so many times.

SL: Well, I don't know about that.

DR: So many things have happened.

SL: Well, lots of things have happened, but, you know, lots of things happened—were happenin' in your time, too when you were a . . .

DR: That's a . . .

SL: . . . child.

DR: Well, see, I was borned at—with—when World War II—World

War I was over in 1918. That's when they—the war was over. And I was named after a hero, Wayne. My mother told me—said, "I couldn't think of any name except I read in the paper about this hero in World War I over in Europe, and I named you Wayne."

SL: That's nice.

[01:35:01] DR: Now my brother has—Harding is named after the President [Warren G.] Harding. And my older brother was named Edwards—Dorce Edward. And I don't recall what my mother said—how that—but he spelled his name *D-O-R-C-E*, and he never did like that name because he had some—he had a lot of people to kid him—"Well, that's a girl's name."

SL: Mh-hmm. Hmm. Well, so, you know, I know when I was growing up, rock fights were not really ever meant . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . to hurt anyone.

DR: Yeah.

SL: It was just being able to . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . throw a rock and hit something and sometimes, you know, you started doin' it among kids, and . . .

DR: Well, see, the—see, it's so hard to get medical service in those

days. The people that owned the ambulance owned the funeral home—I mean, owned the furniture store.

SL: Oh.

DR: And they also sold caskets. They didn't have an undertaker that just did under—the—all—in Newport the undertaker owned the furniture store.

SL: Guess that's the last piece of furniture you'd need.

DR: Yeah it was the—Newport Furniture Company, a store—"the store with a heart." And ambulance—you would call them, and they'd have an ambulance out there, but trying to—you know, that—it'd take some time to do that, and then we didn't even—we just had one little place as a hospital, the Harris Hospital, and Dr. Harris was calling on—see, the doctors would call on the houses. If you were sick you'd call him, and he'd stop by.

SL: Yeah.

[01:37:07] DR: My—another—my great-uncle, that was my grandmother's first cousin, was out of this—he practiced medicine over at McCrory. He went to medical school and practiced medicine over at McCrory, and he's talked to me about that. He was—he had a buggy and a wagon. And he would call on people, and a lot of 'em couldn't pay their bills, and he would take land in at a dollar an acre, and his family over there now

has quite a few acres of land. And he was at one time—remember when—in *Believe It or Not*, they had articles about people in the newspaper?

SL: Yeah.

DR: And he was named the oldest practicing physician in the US. He was ninety-three, and he was still practicing medicine. And he died when he was a hundred and three. But he mixed all of his medicines. He had a nurse that was with him for sixty-four years. Every Thursday he would go fishin'. And [*SL laughs*]—but that—but . . .

SL: Boy, those days are gone.

DR: Yeah.

SL: I hadn't even thought about the medicine. I don't think I've ever heard about a doctor mixing his own medicine.

DR: Yeah. His family still has his—the stuff that he—you know, he—they retained that. And . . .

[01:38:48] SL: Well, so did you have a favorite teacher early on?

DR: Yes, I had a—my favorite teacher was a lady by the name Gatty, and she taught me. And I was—she was a really, a good math teacher, but in those days you taught several subjects. And she finished college, and she was young, and all the boys—we all liked her and all of that. And I'll tell you an interesting story

that—my wife's father was—started out and read law. He taught school in the early 1900s or—and read law and came to Little Rock and passed the Bar [Exam]. Came back home and put up a shingle, and so everybody knew Mr. Jackson. Every governor that came up there would go see him. He was representative. Every Saturday he'd walk the streets because he could pick up business like that, making out a deed or something or doing something like that. Everybody knew Andy Jackson. But they would always knock on the door at—on Saturday if they couldn't get home, go to his house, knock on the door, and he'd get up and put on his clothes and take 'em home. So everybody knew Andy Jackson. So when we got married, Miss Gatty saw—on one Saturday ran into Mr. Jackson. And she said, "Andy, I don't know—you know, Doyle's a fine young man, and I hope he can make a living," but he says, "You know, now it's better to marry somebody that has a little more than he has." [Laughter] And he said, "I hope your wife will"—I mean, "I hope that Raye'll be okay." [Laughter]

SL: [Vocalized noise]

[01:41:19] DR: So then we had our fiftieth anniversary, and she was there. And she made a talk to us. And at that time she bragged on me and said I was one of her best students she ever had.

[*Laughter*] But she was just a wonderful person. She just passed away a few years ago. But . . .

[01:41:46] SL: When did organized sports happen for you? Did it—was Newport—I'm assuming Newport had a football team or . . .

DR: Oh, yeah, I was—I paid more attention to, I think, my studies—to sports than I did—I should've been more involved in making better grades than I did. I made fair grades, but I was not a—you know, top—I was not the top of my class. But I also think to be a well-rounded person, that it's good to be involved in sports. And sports taught me a lot of things—the fairness of dealing and all of that. And so I was—I went out for freshman football, and the first thing I did—we played Augusta and a fellow kicked me in the mouth and [*unclear word*], and so I went out and the coach—my tooth was stickin' out and the coach just pushed it back in, and he said, "You just go on back on in." [*Laughter*] And so I went on and played, and I was very fortunate to be able to do well, so I lettered there at—on the first team from then on at high school. And then . . .

SL: Did you go both ways on the football team?

DR: Oh, yeah. We . . .

SL: Offense and defense?

DR: We didn't have any—we just played the whole game.



SL: What position did you play?

[01:43:17] DR: I played end. And I have a scrapbook that I kept, and I was very pleased that—we played Blytheville, and at that time Blytheville had the best football team in the state. In those days—see, they had the Mosley boys, Russ and Norman, that went to [the University of] Alabama [Tuscaloosa, Alabama] and became All-Americans. [*Unclear words*] Mosley and played in the Rose Bowl [Pasadena, California]. And Alabama went to Blytheville and started working with them and even furnished their suits. And they had a football team that was beating everybody. So we went over and played 'em, and they kinda ran over me. And we were coming home. In those days we didn't have buses. The schools didn't have any buses. We drove—and the friends of the people playing on the team would drive their cars and take us. And so we had a fellow driving us. There was three of us in—on the team. We came back, and he hit something and—well, I had been—they had kicked me in the chest, and I was really not feeling good at all, and so we—he had a—his brakes gave out on him, and we were going to stop at a store, and he found out his brakes were out, so we went right on into the store. [*Laughter*]

SL: Uh-oh.

DR: So we got home pretty late, but anyway, I played football over there and then to go to Arkansas State, I went over there and played football—Arkansas State. That was an agriculture school in 1938, so—and they played more basketball than football. And then we were fortunate to also play tennis, and we were fortunate at that time to win the state championship. We were in the AIC [Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference] then—those colleges. And Arkansas Tech [University, Russellville] and Hendrix [College, Conway] and [Arkansas] State Teachers [College, Conway, now University of Central Arkansas], and all of that were all together. We didn't pay any attention to [the University of] Arkansas. It was all—in those days we paid attention to the local schools that all of us were goin' to. Not many people—some of 'em were going to the university, but they were playing the—and they were in the Southwest Conference, and people didn't pay attention to—they paid attention to their hometown sports, but that was about it. And then if you went to college and played on that team, that was good, but they didn't have articles in the paper that—not many people paid much attention to.

[01:46:11] SL: Okay, now I want to get back to Newport.

DR: Okay.

SL: You mentioned earlier that there were three things that happened in Newport. There was a fire, there was the flood, and what was the third thing—the . . .

DR: Depression.

SL: Depression. Now the—did the—let's talk—did the Depression follow the fire or was it the flood . . .

DR: Yeah, the fire—no, the Depression followed the fire. It was . . .

SL: Well, let's talk about the Depression in Newport.

DR: Well . . .

SL: What'd that look like in Newport?

[01:46:43] DR: Well, you know, not getting all the news like you do today, Depression just started coming into the picture and people were out of work. People couldn't get any jobs. They—I know they were trying to hire people for a dollar an hour. And—but we just did not—there was not many jobs available. And so FDR—Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt was elected president, and you know that our school decided that they were going to have to charge to go to school. Now some schools didn't, but our school did. Newport High School did. So they had a meeting, and they decided, "We're going to let our children go to school, but how are we going to do it?" Well, President Roosevelt passed a law called the National Youth Administration. And

anybody that didn't have the money to pay his tuition at school would work. And they started—they opened up a building at the armory, and they had a building desk and building woodwork, and they were teaching a program, and you would go down there, and you would work so many hours after you got out of school, and that's the way—not anybody were refused going to school, but that's the way that you paid your tuition to go to school.

[01:48:22] SL: So did you do that? Did you have to work?

DR: No, I didn't. Well, I worked some because I was in the category. My father—in those days in his job he made about a hundred and eighty dollars a month. And that was higher than most people. But the category that he had—I went down there, and I didn't have to do—I only had to do a small amount, but I'd go down there and work about one day a week. But . . .

SL: You were in what grade—sixth?

DR: Yeah, I was in the . . .

SL: Sixth or seventh grade . . .

DR: I was—no, I think I was in the—I think I was in my first—probably first—I was in the—freshman, probably, or something. See, that had happened in the [19]30s.

SL: Yeah.

DR: Yeah. And so, but he created work for people so they would have money to live on. Now all of us in those days were having a problem, but our families were very close, and we didn't think—you know, we just were—you know, just young, and we didn't pay a great deal of attention to it. But then we would see pictures in the people about, in these large cities, people needed work and all of that.

[01:49:49] SL: So there wasn't—you didn't see a soup line or anything like that?

DR: No, we didn't have those things, but the churches were all working and giving people—I think I told you my father, getting off of work at eight o'clock in the morning and going and buying food and giving it to people at—that—friends that he knew of in church.

[01:50:14] SL: No, I didn't—I—you talked about your father getting the—there was one time a year and I thought it was that—or maybe it was your grandfather that did the one-time-a-year thing with the . . .

DR: Well, that's a—oh, you mean, that's—but that's at Christmastime.

SL: At Christmastime.

DR: No, during—and during the Depression my father would get off

of work at eight o'clock in the morning and he would go to the grocery store a lot of times and buy groceries and take 'em to a friend of his because they were out of work. And then in those days they also had—the church would meet and they would also take food—people would give food, and they'd take it to the homes. And because—and didn't go out to restaurants, and everything you had was at home. Now my mother baked her own bread. And we would have lunch and dinner. We'd have dessert. My mother was a good cook and—but we was all so active that we didn't gain a lot of weight. We were walking. We were walking all the time and—but we were—and then the radio came in, and we were hearing news about what was going on and . . .

[01:51:44] SL: Was—when did—do you remember when the radio hit in your all's house?

DR: The radio was in there before the Depression started. I think it came in before that because I heard—you know, I could hear—I've listened to the president's speech. And I would always come home for lunch. And in those days the orchestras—Guy Lombardo and all those people . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . were taking tours, and they would come to the Peabody

Hotel in Memphis [Tennessee]. And they had a dance hall on top of the building on the—at the top, and they would play at the lunch hour. And I would go home and listen to that and—while I was eating, and they—boy, that Guy Lombardo was a wonderful orchestra. And then he would be there for a month or two, and then some other orchestra would come in. And so—and I listened to the Trianon [Ballroom] in Chicago [Illinois] and *Amos 'n' Andy* and . . .

SL: *Amos 'n' Andy*.

DR: . . . all that kinda stuff . . .

[01:52:54] SL: So y'all got the radio—when do you think it was that you got the radio . . .

DR: In the [19]30s.

SL: [Nineteen] thirties.

DR: Yeah.

SL: So—but it pre-dated before the Depression kinda hit . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . Newport.

DR: Yeah.

[01:53:08] SL: So you were—then that's kind of—I mean, before then there wasn't a whole lot of national news in your life. It was basically . . .

DR: No, there . . .

SL: . . . the local stuff . . .

DR: No, there really wasn't. There were—there's probably some national news, but the young people didn't pay a great deal to it.

SL: Yeah.

[01:53:27] DR: We actually did everything at—in Newport. And you know, we—the big event in the schools were the district meet. And when I say the district meet, we would have in, I guess it was in April, before the schools let out, we would have a district meet in math, in choir, in glee clubs. Everybody contended, and it was similar to a football game. And you would go in—if you wanted to excel in math, you would—they would have one or two students in the school to represent that school in math. If you wanted to excel in public speaking and debating, you—they would have a debate team. And we would meet at one weekend—now I remember that we also had track that time and tennis at the—that was at the end of the year.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And we would all go, and then they would have a meeting on Saturday night and give out the awards. But that kept—you know, like in geometry and things like that—people excelled in that and people would like to—if they found out they were good



in something, why, then the teacher would say, "I think you need to try out for the—go to the district meet." And so we'd have—all that week—it'd start on Thursday, or sometimes on Wednesday, and for all that weekend we would have a district meet of all the schools that was in our area. And, 'course, Searcy and Newport and Batesville and all of that—and that was a good thing that the schools stopped and then only excelled in sports. And I think if they'd had—if they had that system today, I think our schools would be in . . .

SL: Be a lot stronger . . .

DR: The kids would get a better education. You know, it's . . .

[01:55:39] SL: So did you ever participate in the district meets?

DR: Oh, yeah, I participated in the—I really participated more in the sports than I did in anything else. Yeah. I was taught by a fellow that—by the name of Bill Baccus. Bill Baccus had gone to the University of Arkansas. Four—a four-point [4.0 grade point average] student. All he liked to do is paint signs. [*SL laughs*] He came back to Newport, and he took an interest in all the young people. And he taught us how to play tennis. He had a book from Bill Tilden, and he taught us how to stroke the ball. In the summertime we would either be in the swimming pool or on the tennis court. And he taught us sportsmanship. It's

interesting that, like, when Fred Pickens went to law school—when he'd come home the summertime, he would claim to know about law—I mean, he'd talk to Fred Pickens about going to law school. When Jimmy Daugherty that's a cardiologist went to med school, we were playing tennis—he—we'd sit out there and talk about the med school in the summertime. But he kinda would work with all of us, and he taught us all how to play tennis. And he was single. But I would go by—we'd go down on Main Street, and he'd be painting the signs, and we'd say, "Bill, could we play tennis this afternoon?" He said, "Oh, I'll meet you out there at four o'clock." And we didn't have a net. Bill owned a net. He'd bring the net, and we'd put up, and we'd play tennis. [*SL laughs*] So . . .

[01:57:41] SL: I'm gonna go ahead and jump a—pretty far ahead here. When you—I know that Sam Walton liked to play tennis. Did you ever . . .

DR: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . get to play tennis with him?

DR: Yes, I have a picture here of Sam and—the four of us went to Bermuda. And we always had some matches. I played Sam. He was my partner. And a doctor here, Ted Bailey, and another friend by the name of Lee Rogers—they were the other team.

And we played—at that time we had built the Excelsior Hotel, and Trust House Forte were managing this hotel, and so they gave us some fine accommodations. And so they arranged it where we played on their stadium court. And we claimed that we were having a [*SL laughs*] a tournament there, and so we [*laughs*—I even brought a picture of that. But Sam was very competitive. And so that's where we—I met Sam when he came, and after I came out of World War II.

[01:58:57] SL: Well, okay, so let's kinda get back to the Depression Era and Newport. Do you—did anyone—did any businesses shut down in Newport? I mean, did it . . .

DR: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . really affect the town?

DR: Yes, several of 'em shut down.

SL: Did the bank hold up okay and . . .

DR: The bank held up. We had Billingsley as head of the bank. He was the only bank in t—that was the only bank in town.

SL: Is that . . .

DR: That was . . .

SL: . . . George Billingsley's family?

[01:59:32] DR: No. I don't know. It was a Billingsley that—an old family, and they—and Mr. Billingsley owned the bank. I mean,

not owned the bank, he was head of the bank, and I told you that my great-aunt was one of the large stockholders there. But Mr. Billingsley had a system that he—like Dr. Owen—Jack Owen's father. I called him Jack. His name was John. His father decided he didn't like medicine. So he went in the ?fir? business and the pecan business and all of that. And so the Depression hit, and he was buying pecans, and he would crack the pecans and you'd go get a sackful of pecans and take 'em home and hull 'em and bring 'em back, and he'd pay you so much a pound. [02:00:28] So he would—so Jack and myself, after we got off school—we'd get out of school, he ga—his dad gave us a job of taking the boxes of pecans—instead of—and shipping 'em, but we first had to take 'em to the bank and stack the pecans in the lobby of the bank. And Mr. Billingsley would go over and count the cartons of pecans and call the express company, and they'd come by and get 'em, and he'd ship 'em to St. Louis. And he'd ship 'em for the bank, and they'd mail the check to the bank. Mr. Billingsley, then, would call Dr. Owen in, and he'd take his money for making him the loan, and he'd give Dr. Owen the balance. It was so crucial in that day—in those days that Mr. Billingsley wanted the money so he'd get his loan paid off.

SL: You bet.

DR: And that bank did not go down. But that was hard, taking all those cartons up there. And he'd call the express company, and I didn't pay—I didn't really know what was going on until—till later on that I found—you know, that I got in the banking business a little bit, and [*SL laughs*] I could see what he was really doing.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, that's good, though. That's hands-on involvement and keeping track of your . . .

[02:02:04] DR: But the main thing that—during the Depression that—if you were a neighbor and your next-door neighbor was not doing well, you would try to help him. You had a closeness with each other, and so—but it was hard, but I listened last night to the president [George Walker Bush], and I don't—and he was saying that—you know, that this—the economy now is in some real problems, but it's completely different than what it was during the Depression days, and we were able to get over that by not doing what they're doing today. If you had a problem, you work out the problem. Now in those days, we didn't have many people that owned their homes until they came out with the [*unclear word*] federal housing, but I know I was—we were—Dr.—I mean, Mr. ?Bach? that owned the grocery store lived next

door to us. And he was—his son went off to ar—Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia] and was acoustic engineer, and then he got a job with [Metro-]Goldwyn-Mayer [Inc.] and was one of their top people. But he never did come back home, so they kinda took me in as a—as kinda the adopted son. I'd go over there, and he'd tell me stories about Germany and about World War I. He had one of the helmets and all of that. And he'd cook some stew that he knew, German stew, and we'd go—so we got to know each other so well. And—but—you were—just had that closeness among your neighbors. And . . .

[02:04:16] SL: Well, you know, you keep coming back to that. That not only were the family unit itself very close and supportive, but the neighbors and the families around you would rally for each other. They would—if one was down the other one would help lift 'em up. If there—it was a—it's like a village. I mean it—there was something about . . .

DR: You know, first your doctor came to your home if you were sick. Your minister came to your home if you missed church. Things have changed. Ministers—the churches now have visitation people. You had a closeness there that's different today. Your families were even closer together, I feel like. Because there's

so many other things to do today. It's similar to—a good example on the—of what you do in sports. We were the top country in tennis for a long, long time.

SL: Yeah.

[02:05:46] DR: But your young people now have so many other things to do that they don't work to become a good tennis player. When I—the way I was fortunate to—I didn't have a lot of talent, but what I did, I worked. When I decided I wanted to play tennis, I would go to the Walnut Street School in the summertime and go down to the furnace room where they had a great big room. It was cold, but that furnace was going and heating the school, and they had a—and I asked permission to let me hit against the wall. And I would go over there and hit against the wall and, boy, when we started playing tennis, I was way ahead of anybody else. And so for the time that we were playing tennis, John Owen and myself would always win the district. We didn't have anybody that could touch us. You've heard of a young man by name of [James L.] "Skip" Rutherford?

SL: Oh, yeah. I know Skip.

DR: Well, Skip's dad was—is one of my best friends.

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

DR: But Skip's dad played for Batesville. He had a partner that

was—wound up as a doctor in Fort Wayne [Indiana] and—Skip didn't play football. I mean, G. G.—that's his father—didn't play football, but he played tennis. *[SL laughs]* And so the first time—first night I spent in Batesville, I stayed with G. G. Rutherford. And his father—his grandfather, they owned—were large farmers, and I always remember I walked in there for breakfast that morning. His grandfather was there, and he left him a quarter at the table. And so I said, "G. G., man, that is really something. You mean you get a quarter?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "My dad—my granddad always leaves me something every time we have"—see, we just lived next door, and we'd just eat over at the big—over at the large house. And so—but G. G. became my friend and, of course, I've known Skip all of his life, and . . .

TM: Just ran out of tape there.

SL: I want to pick this family togetherness thing back up when we come back. But I think we ought to take a break and have some lunch.

[Tape stopped]

[02:08:30] DR: We'll sit around and talk, and I tell them things and they—one of 'em knows one part and another one—and so I hope—I'd like to make the most of it for my family.



SL: Well, that's what we'll do.

DR: And, you know, you've asked me some things, and I needed a—I knew a lot of things—and I knew my grandfather died of a—in those days it was an enlarged heart. Yeah.

SL: My daughter's got an enlarged heart.

DR: Yeah. And so, and I didn't—but I knew my grandmother because my granddad died at fairly young, and my grandmother lived till in her nineties. And—but . . .

SL: We're gonna . . .

DR: So—and now with all the—you know, everything you have, I'm sure that this program you've started is just gonna get larger and larger.

SL: It is. You know, we'll take the highlights out of all of our interviews . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: And we'll post those on the Web. And it's not—it won't—once that happens, you know, that Web's 24/7.

[02:09:53] DR: Yeah, you know, I have a deal . . .

JE: Okay, guys.

DR: I told you that I was interviewed when they—A and N made a deal on Sam Walton.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And I was interviewed for that. And they told me that they had—see, Jim [Walton] or his children were not even—I don't even think in 'em. But, anyway, they told me that they only had forty minutes that they were gonna put on television, and so they didn't have my—what I—but I was interviewed for two and a half to three hours by A and N up at Bentonville. And they sent me all of that, and I have that. And the only problem I had with them is that they were building the [Northwest Arkansas Regional] Airport up there and Alice [Walton] was involved.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And they were asking me questions, trying to find out, is somebody—you know, is somebody favoring—I think [John Paul] Hammerschmidt was involved in it, and they thought maybe that Hammerschmidt was getting things, some money that—to favor that area up there. But . . .

[02:11:06] SL: So they had an angle they were working on.

DR: Well, and—but they—then they called and said they had these co—they had a professor from Harvard [University, Cambridge, Massachusetts] on about the Walmart, and they had—so they worked them in and all, so a number of people they interviewed never—were never . . .

SL: Never made the program . . .

DR: But they sent me everything—the entire tape that I had.

SL: That's good.

[02:11:29] DR: But that was a very unusual situation. I had to sign a lot of legal stuff that I had to show that Walmart owned all the rights on that thing. I couldn't even. . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: I couldn't give any of this information out to anybody.

SL: Oh. Well, we have a release that everyone signs . . .

DR: Is that right . . .

SL: . . . when we're doing the interviews. But it's mainly that it's okay that this stuff gets housed at the University of Arkansas and that we used it for educational purposes. We're not gonna—and, you know, Doyle, we'll send you—we'll give you all the . . .

DR: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . raw footage.

DR: Yeah.

SL: And we'll send you a written transcript. You can read through it that—mainly we just want to make sure that the things that you say are the things that you . . .

DR: That's right . . .

SL: Meant to say.

DR: That's right. And that's . . .

SL: Not so much . . .

DR: And probably—I'm probably saying it in one way then I meant it another way. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, and you know, that happens. You know, the thing about oral history is that it's not accurate. It's based on people's memories.

DR: Yeah.

SL: And it's okay to make mistakes, and it's okay to remember it wrong or not to remember it entirely. I mean, it's really the stuff—you know, all the stuff that you were talking about growing up and the way life was around you—that's very valuable history. That's a living history. That's something that people can look back on that—you know, gettin' around by train. We've never had anyone talk about that. And that's a valuable—that's valuable testimony about the way life was back then.

DR: Well . . .

[02:13:12] SL: I want to get back—we were talkin'—we'd gone back to the three things that you had gone through in Newport, and we were talking about the Depression, but while we were talking about the Depression and how it showed up in Newport—you had a good story about the local bank made it through the Depression just . . .

DR: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . fine. And the pecan crop and all that. But we started talking about—and you've gone back to this several times in our interview so far, about how close families were back then. And not just the family unit itself, but families around families and how people kept up with what everyone was doing—how the doctor would come to see you if you were sick; the preacher would come to you if you'd missed some church. People just took care of each other. And I'm wonderin'—you know, people—folks these days have lots of things goin' on—lots of options that were just not around back then. And I'm just wondering if it was just a little bit harder life just to do the simple things—just to have the simple things. I'm just wondering if, back then, people helped each other and cared for each other so much because everyone understood what it took just to get by, just to live, just to put those three meals on the table every day, just to watch your kid get up in the morning and deliver the papers and—you know what I'm trying to say here?

DR: Yeah.

[02:15:01] SL: That times were different back then . . .

DR: Right.

SL: . . . and the emphasis was on not just doing whatever you

wanted to do, but getting the things done that you had to get done in order to live.

DR: Right.

SL: Do you think that . . .

DR: Yeah, you need—are you all taping it now?

TM: We're good.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[02:15:24] DR: Okay. I think that one thing that made it different is that I knew I had the love of my parents, and I knew that I could make my own decisions. And my parents taught me that if I want spending money, I earn spending money. Is that my dad's money—my mother paid the bills, and they worked together. But if I decided that I needed—they would give me the clothes, but they taught me that I needed to earn money, and that's the reason I had a number of jobs. Now I had friends that had already—my mother taught me this, and I've always remembered one thing she said: "I want you to run around with the best people in town. You're as good as anybody. You're goin' to school with 'em." So I was in a town where the—I had the—my—one of my best friends owned the Hudson Motor Company—sold Fords. One of I—some of 'em were doctors, some of 'em were lawyers and all of that, but we all worked

together. And I remember a friend that my wife has talked to several times that had a popcorn—that her family made their living out of selling popcorn on the street—on Front Street in Newport—popcorn and peanuts. And they would bring popcorn and peanuts to school, and they would share those with other—and they would swap sandwiches—they would swap a sandwich for some popcorn. [02:17:30] But people just bonded together that way so well, and so if I wanted to spend a night in Detroit [Michigan]—if I was up there—now I know when I was coming back home one time, we had a lady that I knew that her husband was working in Detroit. Well, before I went up there I—my mother gave me her telephone number and said, "If you're goin' through Detroit, why, you stop in and stay with them." I went up there and stayed a week with 'em. But people were workin'—if you would come to Little Rock, I think, and you knew somebody—had a friend down there, you'd come down there and spend time with them. You would not go to a hotel. Living was just completely different. A relationship then was different than it is today. Generally, when friends come to see each other today, they'll come to Little Rock, go to a hotel room, and you'll have the weekend, and you'll do this and that together. Now it might be that people are so busy now that they

don't have time to prepare the food and do the things. And so many people now—the two people, mother and father, are working. In those days, the ladies stayed home and looked after the family. And that was different. The only problem we had with drugs—we didn't have drugs. We had whiskey. And sometimes they'd—you had—eventually, you had the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous]. But you had—I remember people getting—would go up to the pool hall and drink, and they would stagger home. If they would fall, sometimes somebody would go by and pick 'em up and take 'em home.

SL: Yeah.

[02:19:35] DR: And people looked after each other possibly a little more than they look after 'em today. But, you know, that's in the Ten Commandments, and so I think that people lived a little bit—lived a completely different lifestyle today. Your churches are—a lot of your churches are losing members. They're down in membership. Our church—of course, they—now, you have the congregational churches now are building, and you have some different-type churches that are reaching out and increasing congregation but—and a lot of changes all over the country, you know. I even—I'm just rambling here, but while I think about I'll tell you. We made a cruise to Europe some time



ago, and we—I had decided to go to the Holy Land, and we—on the cruise, and you can make up at your civic clubs on the cruise. I've been a Rotarian for years. And so I was amazed that they also had the Masonic Lodges [*telephone rings several times*] in Europe—invited them 'cause they could make a—and most of the people the people there were members of the Masonic Lodges. And I talked to them. I talked to them and could find out—they are very strong in Europe—the Masonic Lodge. 'Course, and Masonic Lodge is down some in membership in the United States. But that still comes back to so much—this country is so different. It's been so free in what you can do that you have so many things you can do that you're—over in Europe you have your families that have been over there so long that have their place. It's not completely like it, but in India they had the caste system. That was over there when I was in World War II. That means if your father's a barber, you're a barber. But that's changing over there now. But we do—but we have had change. We're having changes not only in the family and the other things, but 'course, your computers and all of that has changed this country and the world so much.

[02:22:48] SL: Well, okay, let's get back to Newport. The third event that you went through in Newport was the flood. Now

what year was that?

[02:23:01] DR: Well, that was practically every year. [*Laughter*]

It's accordin' to the rains. Let me tell you, Newport was built on a system that it had a levee system completely around the town. The trains were—they were coming in and when it would start raining—and at that time the dams were not built on White River, and so it would start raining and then we had levees around the town, and the town was like a bowl. And if you kept on raining, why, then that water's going to start coming over. Now, it never did come into town. We had a levee system. Now, and when I was in high school we would go out and help put up sand bags at some of the places that they might think we'd—that it might come over, but we never did have a flood in the town. But what would happen, if the water would get high and get it over the railroad track, in some places all of us would leave town. And I would—we would go down to my grandparents' and stay until the flood went down. And so until the dams were built, why, we actually had that problem. And there's other problems all up and down the White River the same way. You go in all of these towns like that, Augusta and on down the line. They have I—a levee system around 'em, and that costs lots and lots of money.

[02:24:46] SL: Yeah. Well, so—but the water never got downtown?

DR: No, it never did get downtown.

SL: But it would go—it would get over the railroad tracks, and that would be . . .

DR: Well, see, the levee would—when you get into town, you had a levee surrounding the town.

SL: Okay.

[02:25:05] DR: But the railroad track was built high enough that it was pretty well as high—when you come into town was—had that height. But when you get five or six miles out there, you might have some places that you had some water.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And I remember even going over the track when the water was covering the track. But they'd have people to check it out, and the train would go very slow. And there'd be a few places like that. And then we'd get out of town, and then we'd get the message to come back home. And they would let out school during that time and all of that. See, we didn't have any cafeterias in the schools or anything.

SL: Everyone always went home or they brought their lunch.

DR: No, we didn't have it. I mean, you—all of us would have to come for lunch, or you'd have to take a sandwich with you. Now

they had some children coming in—eventually, they had some buses coming in when they consolidated the system, but those people would bring in their food, and they would eat in the gym or someplace else or even on the outside.

[02:26:17] SL: Let's talk—that's one thing that we have not talked about is segregation.

DR: The what?

SL: Black and white and segregation in Newport . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . as you were growing up. Did—was there much of a black population in Newport?

DR: Well, we actually had a black school. But we didn't have any real problems in that area because of this reason: I think the southern people probably treated that situation a lot better than the northern people did. The northern people tried to make a lot more out of it than there really was there. Now we had a black lady—we lived—on the back of our lot we had a coal house and all of that, but also we had a living place for a lady by the name of Lizzy. And Lizzy lived back there and my mother—she would come up and help my mother clean the house and all of that. But we looked after Lizzy. If she needed a doctor, we got a doctor. And she was just a member of the family. So we never

did have any problems. Now it was a rule that we had her—they had a black church—a Methodist church. They had a school there—a black school. And we didn't have—when they segregated the school—well, I mean, we just didn't have that problem.

[02:27:48] SL: Were the—was it separate seating in the movie theater?

DR: Well [pauses], I think—I don't recall. Everything else was separate. The station that—the train station had a black restroom, had a black waiting room. It was just a—you didn't—the restaurants did not serve the minorities. Some—now we had one restaurant called Fred's that had a restaurant that had one long table on one side and one on the other, and it was in a *U* shape. And he came up and had his cash register in the center, and the blacks were on one side, and the whites were on the other one. But we all talked together and hollered together. And the best meal that you had in Newport was a—and I never will forget—we would order a helping of beans, navy beans, and we'd put chili on as a topping. And there—and that was full. [*SL laughs*] And that restaurant is there today—still going on. Now everybody eats together now. And—but we didn't mind. My mother was as concerned about Lizzy as she was about us. So

we just had that relationship, and we—I never know—I never knew of any racial problems in Newport as long as I lived there. Now I do remember this, that we had a grocery store—we were only about two blocks from Main Street—I mean, Front Street, and that was reason we called it Front Street—because that fronted the railroad track. And then you had the river on the other side. And so I heard that they had a shooting downtown in the grocery store. Had two blacks got in a scuffle, and one black shot the other one. And the other black chased him for a block, the one that shot him, knocked him down, pulled out his knife, started to cut his throat and fell over dead.

SL: Wow.

[02:30:50] DR: And they had a black undertaker. And that undertaker was busy, so we heard about the killing, and that's the first time that I've ever seen anybody murdered, and he was laying in the alley, and I went up there, and I can see that picture today. And it really shocked us how bad a man could look after he was shot—how much blood was in his body. And they—we waited there all—the crowd kinda congregated and eventually, why, we—the undertaker came and picked him up. And I recall one time that the newspaper that we—you know, in those days on—during the summertime you would play tennis

and have a good time all day long and then you'd go downtown at night, and you had service in front of the store. Like, the drugstore, they had a soda fountain, and they had a soda jerk. And then they would have girls that would—you would drive up there and blow your horn and they'd come out [*SL laughs*], and you'd give 'em your order. And so we had all that going on. But I got off the subject there.

SL: Well, we were talking about segregation and how there was never any problem.

DR: No.

[02:32:39] SL: So when the town became desegregated, it was just another day . . .

DR: No, you never had—we really never had any problems. Let me tell you, in my opinion, [Orval] Faubus is probably one of the best governors Arkansas's ever had. [The 1957 desegregation crisis of Little Rock] Central High School was put around his neck, and I think the real facts will eventually come out—a lady—a friend of mine has written a book, and she brings out some of the things that happened—that really happened in those days because the band that started—one of the bands that started, Smith, Elridge, and Clark—Friday, Elridge and Clark. Judge Smith advised Faubus, and Herschel Friday was a young

attorney, and Judge Smith came up with an idea and told Faubus, "We need to get us some plants in the state of Arkansas, and we need to create a bond issue." So Herschel Friday created what—under the—under Judge Smith was the attorney for the Act 9 [of 1960] bond issue that was created in Arkansas that they're still using to bring plants in Arkansas. And Faubus brought more people into Arkansas than any other governor ever has. But because of the Central deal all over the world, he's known by fighting that. But he didn't fight that. I'll just tell you this. Did you know that [President Dwight David] Eisenhower looked at Alabama? He looked at Louisiana? He looked at Mississippi? They decided the schools were going to be, you know, desegregated. He even went to Texas. [Sam] Rayburn was Speaker of the House, and you know who met him there? Rayburn and the Texas Rangers . . .

SL: Is that right?

DR: . . . and said, "You can't come to Texas." And so they picked Arkansas. Have you ever heard that?

SL: No. Hm-mm. Never heard that.

DR: So it was a plan to do what they did.

[02:35:39] SL: Well, I know Faubus was—Governor Faubus was—built a lot of roads.



DR: Huh?

SL: Built a lot of roads—that he was—that one of his—one of the great—one of the reasons he was so popular was he understood that people needed roads. You know, most of the roads were dirt back then. And so he built—he helped communities.

[02:36:09] DR: Well, I'm going to make a statement here, but I think other people know it, too because I'm sure Smith had told 'em, and [pause]—Faibus went to see Eisenhower. Faibus called Judge Smith, said, "Come down here. I want to go to talk to Eisenhower about this problem. I've called the president. He told me to come up. Would you go with me?" He went up there and talked to him. Judge Smith said, "You don't need to take me. You need to go over there and talk to him one on one."

SL: Yeah.

DR: He did. Faibus proposed a plan—they were talking real good—had a knock on the door. A man walked in—the attorney general—"Mr. President, you can't do this." They broke up the meeting, came back, and you know what happened. Now I don't know whether I need to cut this or not. You can advise me [*laughs*] on that.

SL: No, I think—you know, that's a good story.

DR: But Judge Smith told me that hisself because I bought

Metropolitan Bank. I bought that from Judge Smith. We were friends. I'll tell you more about that later.

SL: Okay.

DR: But I was just saying that Faubus is—was a good governor and I—first [Act] 9 bond issue was built in Batesville, Arkansas, for a rubber plant.

SL: Is that right?

DR: Sebring Rubber Company, building tires.

[02:38:27] SL: Hmm. [Pause] So you played football in high school.

DR: Yes, I really enjoyed sports.

SL: And did you do—did they—did you—did they have a baseball team? Did you play on the baseball team or basketball or . . .

DR: No, no, my brother played baseball with George Kell. And my brother played shortstop. George Kell played third base, and—but I didn't—I played sandlot baseball over in the high school. Over in the elementary school we had a ballpark, and we didn't have teams in those days like they have now and the coaches and all of that. We would meet over there in the summertime and choose up sides, and we'd all play baseball. And we'd do that all the time.

SL: Yeah.

DR: So. You created your own—you kinda created your own activities.

[02:39:34] SL: What about the—what about girls? When did girls start entering your life . . .

DR: I never did do much dating because I was interested in sports. And I was playing, and I was tired. I'd play ball. I'd play tennis all day long or going swimming or—and something like that in the summertime. And I played football, and I never did date too much.

SL: Well, you went to—did you take anyone to the prom or just . . .

DR: We didn't have a prom.

SL: Didn't?

DR: No. We had some dancing, but it was out at the country club—out at the American Legion. We didn't have a country club. And [pause] . . .

[02:40:31] SL: Well, tell me how you met Raye.

DR: Well, I was going to school down at Arkansas Tech. I had transferred. I'd been over at Arkansas State, and then I got hurt playing football the first year in my knee, but I was still—could play tennis. And then a fellow by the name of Shorty Hardin—that's Lu Hardin's father . . .

SL: Okay.

DR: . . . finished—he was from Newport, and he talked me into going to Arkansas Tech.

SL: Okay.

DR: I went in down there and ran into Wilson Matthews.

SL: Is that right?

DR: And . . .

SL: [*Whispers*] Wow!

[02:41:18] DR: Wilson Matthews was going to Arkansas Tech, and I was coming home on the weekends, and I had a friend that we finished school together, Jack Grimes. And so I was there one Saturday, and I heard my brother talk about—and he was captain of the football team and he was quarterback—talkin' about Faye Jackson—I mean, Raye Jackson. Raye has a twin called Faye.

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

DR: And they were cheerleaders on the team and everything. And they had just built a bowling alley downtown in an old building, and everybody was down there bowling, and I could see Raye right now: she had a pleated skirt on, had a sweater, and, man, they were bowling and, man, I—"Man, that's a pretty girl."

[*SL laughs*] And Eloise was her best friend, so Jack whispered to me, said, "I'd really like to date Eloise." And so I

said, "I know Eloise. I don't know the—I don't know Raye Jackson very well." And so I went to Elo—called Eloise and said, "Well, Doyle, why don't you—do you have a date?" And I said, "No." And she said, "Well, I've got a friend, Raye Jackson. Why don't you—why don't we double-date?" So we double-dated, and I didn't know how to handle girls very well. And so I told Jack and myself—we decided that we wouldn't even try to kiss 'em for six weeks. So [*laughs*] we started dating 'em, and I would come back home. I really got to—really liked Raye, and I'd come back home, and so they even—they tell us today that—is that they wondered for a long time, "Why in the world—do we have bad breath? Why won't [*laughter*]—are they not trying to kiss us?" [*Laughs*] So anyway, but Raye was just such a—she was involved in everything—all the sports. They—she ran. She played basketball—anything they had in the school, and she was just such a vivacious lady and a beautiful young lady. So I thought I was real fortunate when I could date Raye.

[02:43:47] So then, I was going to school down at Arkansas Tech and saw the sign on the bulletin board, "Come to Canada and join the Royal Canadian Air Force." I'd never been out of Arkansas, and my friend, Jack Grimes, he hadn't either, and another boy by the name of Walter James Sherrill. So we came

back and we were going with Eloise—in fact, it wound up that Jack married Eloise, and I married Raye. So I talked to Jack and Walter James and talked them into going to—said, "Let's go up to Canada and join the Royal Canadian Air Force." We were not in war at that time. And so it got around town, and so we got our—we left on the train. We had a pretty good crowd down at the train to see us off because—I never will forget going up there and going in Chicago—"Windy City." Went on over into Detroit and went on over to windsy on—Windsor, Ontario [Canada]—took our exam. And Jack Grimes did not pass the exam on his physical. He said, "Doyle, I've got to go home, but I don't know how to get home." And he said, "Could you go back home with me?" Since I had a pass on the train, well, that was good for me. I wanted to see Raye again, so I went back home and stayed about a week. And so I—and then I was going back up there. And I want to tell you a little thing about my grandmother.

SL: Okay.

[02:45:34] DR: She was living—my grandfather had passed away . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . and she was living with my mother. And I got on the train

and reached in my pocket, and as she hugged me, why, she slipped some money in my pocket. That's an indication how she was always takin' care of her grandchildren and that. So I went on up there. And I was so southern that they couldn't understand me. They were teaching English—I mean, they were speaking English. Sorry I missaid teaching, but they were speaking English and [*laughs*]*—*but I was able to get along and stayed up there. And I tell you [*telephone rings several times*] they're fine people. I met a lot of fine people going in the service. See the—Great Britain was fighting the war, and they were trying to get pilots ahead. And so we trained up there, and then as time went on, I came back home. Now we didn't have to take any allegiance to the country, and so whenever we wanted to come back I did. So I came back home and then married Raye and—right after—a little after [*the Japanese attacked*] Pearl Harbor [*in 1941*]. And then that's how I—then I went in the service. You want me to continue on that?

[02:47:22] SL: Yeah. So you join up with the Canadian Royal Air Force. Is that . . .

DR: Yeah.

TM: What year was that? What year was—would that have been?

SL: That you went to Canada.

DR: That was about 19—hmm—that was about 1940.

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, so we hadn't entered the war yet, so did you end up having to serve in—with the Canadians?

DR: Oh, I already had a uniform. I told you—I tell you, beautiful uniforms. Man, they were really nice. Man, beautiful gold buttons, and all of that.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And in fact, I came back home in that, and my grandmother made Barbara, my daughter, eventually a little coat and put those gold buttons on it.

SL: Is that right? That's cool.

[02:48:21] DR: And so I came back, but, I decided that—when I decided to come back home, I wanted to come back home. And I didn't know how to get—see, we had gone to Windsor, but we'd gone from Windsor across the country over into—to Toronto [Canada]. And I didn't even know where the railroad station was in Toronto, so when I left—in those days you could hitchhike.

SL: Oh, yeah.

DR: Real fast. So I decided that I would hitchhike home. And you didn't have access to telephones or anything, so I didn't call anybody. I just started back home. But I did one thing. I went



to Detroit and called this neighbor that I knew in—there, and at that time I decided that—I heard about these good jobs at the automobile plants. And this gentleman was working for the automobile—one of the manufacturers, and he told me that—he said, "If you'd like a job you'll have to join the union." And so after I stayed there a few days, I decided I'd come on back home, so I left Detroit and started back home. I kept going, and I'd get a ride—I never will forget. I got—I'd been gone about a day, and I got in—I hadn't shaved or anything.

SL: Yeah.

DR: Late in the afternoon I got off of the truck and stopped on the corner. I went into a nice restaurant and the fellow—I walked up to the counter and go in to get a cup of coffee. I didn't have much money. And the fellow knocked on my shoulder and said, "We don't allow tramps in here." And so he told me to leave.

SL: Yeah.

[02:50:24] DR: So I went out. I got a ride with a trucker and then he told me—said, "Now, Doyle, I'm gonna stop along this—stop in the town I live in, and you can spend the night here with me. I'm going on to Texas, and I'll take you on through Newport." I didn't want to do that. I wanted to keep on. So I stayed there at the filling station, and here comes a cattle truck. I asked the

man—he had a driver—he had another man with him. He said, "Oh, yeah," said, "We're going to East St. Louis [Illinois]." He said, "If you want to ride back there where the cattle are," [SL laughs] he said, "There's a place there that'd be safe."

SL: Yeah.

DR: So I got in the cattle truck, and then when he got to East St. Louis, he stopped at the bridge and said, "Now you go across the bridge, and you're right in St. Louis, and they'll show you where 167 is." [SL laughs] By that time, I was kinda out of money.

SL: Yeah.

[02:51:25] DR: So I walked across the bridge, stopped, and it was late at night, and here comes a trolley, and I opened the door. There wasn't anybody on the trolley and the man driving it—in charge of it—said—I said, "What's the fare?" He said, "Twenty cents." I said, "I'm sorry. I don't have that." He said, "Son, you just crawl under that deal, and I'll take you wherever you want to go." [Laughter] So he took me to 167. I got down to Poplar Bluff [Missouri].

SL: Okay.

DR: That was in the afternoon by that time. Here comes a great big truck. All at once he slams his brakes on, and it was the man that wanted me to stay all night [laughs] with him. And I got in

the cab, and I went to sleep, and he woke me up till I got to Newport. And we lived right on 167, right in town. And he stopped at—the house was on one side, and I just walked across the street and went in the house. And my mother and dad were so upset. But I made it pretty good, and—in fact, I could hitchhike from Newport to Russellville when I was going to school at Arkansas Tech. I would leave after lunch, and I was there before dark in Russellville. That's how fast you could hitchhike. 'Course, you can't do that now.

[02:52:59] SL: No. Hmm. So I'm a little bit confused about the Canadian thing—the air force thing. So you saw something on the bulletin board, and you gathered up some of your friends, and y'all just went up there and signed up? Did you get any training? Did you . . .

DR: Well, they started us in training.

SL: Yeah.

DR: They sent us to the equitation grounds. We started our training there.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And so—and we went to Picton, Ontario, and—but we didn't get completely trained, and . . .

SL: So you didn't have any real—they didn't require any obligation

to . . .

DR: Huh?

SL: . . . finish your training? They didn't say . . .

DR: No, they didn't have—see, they were needing pilots so bad.

They didn't—any American that wanted to come up there did not have to—they could come home any time. They were just risking that. Just like Walter James Sherrill now, that went up there with me, stayed in. And wound up in the Eagle Squadron over in England. And then he—then when the war was over he transferred to the [United States] Army Air Corps and became a commanding officer at Scott Field Air Base [Illinois].

[02:54:23] SL: So you got back home from Canada and you went to see Raye. What—how—what happened next in your life?

DR: Well, when I came back, Raye and myself married, and then I went—then we [the United States] declared war after Pearl Harbor. And then I went in the service. Came down here and went into—at Camp Robinson [North Little Rock] and was—and went in and went to Jefferson Barracks and went into the army air corps—went to Scott Field Air Base and went to radio school and then went to Atlantic City [New Jersey]. We took over—the government took over all the big hotels on the West Coast—on the East Coast, and we stayed in the Claridge Hotel. We drilled

in the convention center where they have the Miss America  
[Pageant].

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

DR: And we also—good weather, we would drill on the boardwalk.  
And when Raye would come up there—we were married, and she  
would come up there. She visited me one time, and so she  
stayed in a hotel and—so happened they were nice to me. I—  
we'd have roll call early in the morning, and then I would—  
instead of going on out, why, they'd let me go on and be with  
Raye. So we'd spend the day together, and we spent some time  
like that. And then she—it was real interesting for a young  
person to get on the train by herself and come to Atlantic City.  
And she had never been out of the state and . . .

SL: That's a big trip . . .

[02:56:22] DR: You know, when I was going to Scott Field Air Base,  
I would get—I could get leave, and I could come home to see  
Raye. But I—to show you how much traffic the trains would  
have, I would get on the passenger train in Newport, Arkansas—  
by that time it left Little Rock the pla—all the seats were full.  
And I would have to stand up, generally, until we got to Poplar  
Bluff.

SL: I wonder why that is.

DR: And—well, because of all the—they didn't have enough trains.

Everybody was moving by rail. All the troop trains were rail . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . and everything. We didn't have the system we now have on trucks.

SL: Yeah.

[02:57:07] DR: Have to move merchandise. And so—then I went from there, went to gunnery school at Panama City, Florida. Then went on to Salt Lake City [Utah] and then eventually went to San Diego [California]. Raye came out and lived with me in Salt Lake City, and that's when our—Raye got pregnant. And she—Raye worked for the Transportation Corps downtown, and we lived in an apartment. And then she got pregnant and came back and lived with her mother and father until Barbara was born. And they gave me a five-day pass to come home and see her.

SL: Wow.

DR: And then I saw her, and then when I came back from overseas—I was over in—at first we—I left San Diego, we zigzagged because the Japs at that time had their subs out. We didn't have any escort—forty-five hundred of us on a ship, and we went—took us thirty days to get to Australia. And then we went

on from Australia to Bombay [India]—went across the street—  
across the country in Bombay to Calcutta [India]—took us a  
week. In Calcutta, the system that you have on the trains were  
that the crews stay with the trains.

SL: Okay.

[02:58:46] DR: Wherever they are in the country, they stay with the  
train, live with the train. And they'd stop every three hours, and  
we'd have tea at the station. They'd have a great big pot of hot  
water, and they'd give us tea. And then we went across and  
went to Calcutta, and a friend of mine at Newport—we were at  
Dum Dum Air Base, and I found out later that he had crashed  
there and was killed at Dum Dum Air Base. And then we went  
on from there over into Burma and India and China, and I  
started a—we had this air base there. General [Joseph Warren]  
Stilwell was pushed out of Burma in World War II, so we were  
going in to—they built the Burma Road, and we went in to  
establish this air base. We got the first radar that just came out  
to go in the airplanes. Instead of putting it in a plane, we put it  
up in the mountains when the Japs would come over to bomb  
the air base. And we'd put it in the mountains, and they called  
in—had a meeting—we just had—we—they were organizing the  
base. Commanding officer called us in and says, "I've—we've

got to establish an APO [Army Post Office] here to get money back to the [United] States for everybody, and we've checked in Calcutta, and the people building the Burma Road also need to get their money back to their homes, and we need a APO. And the only person that I can see here—find here—I think's qualified is Doyle Rogers."

SL: Oh.

[03:00:35] DR: So I established the first APO in Burma in World War I [Editor's Note: World War II], and I wrote a money order to my wife—we still have it framed—for five cents. [SL laughs] And I mailed it to her, and I—and they told me at that time—they sent an officer from Calcutta to help me to set it up and he said, "Doyle, for you to take on this responsibility you'll be working—reporting to Howard Goldman, postmaster of New York City."

SL: Whoa.

DR: "But you're responsible for this money." And said, "We will let you—we'll fly it from Myitkyina [Burma, now Myanmar] into Calcutta, and you give us a report every week." And so I was named the postal officer. And I—in those days, we were censoring all the mail for safety.

SL: Yeah.



DR: And we had what we called V-Mail [Victory Mail]. That had to be very light, real tissue-like paper and that type thing. And for safety, we were censoring everything. We established our money-order unit in an old building at first. Had a great big British well, about five feet wide and the sides came up about three feet. We were getting our water from the well, and we would pull the water up. We had one bucket's all we had. And we had a rope. We would tie—let the bucket down and get our water, and we'd put it in a Lister bag, and we'd put tablets in the Lister bag, and that would purify the water . . .

SL: Okay.

DR: . . . where we could drink it. So I was in—I was working. We were trying to clean up everything and a fellow came in and said, "I'm really sorry, but I dropped the bucket down in the water. The rope came off of it." And I said, "Well, we've got to get that bucket." [*SL laughs*] So we built a ladder and tied a rope to it and let it down. So I decided that I'd go down there myself.

SL: Oh, no.

[03:02:54] DR: So I went down there and started walking. I let myself down in the water, and I felt something, and I went under the water and pulled up a Jap rifle. The Japanese when

they fled out of there—when they—put all their—threw all their rifles down the well. So we started pulling these rifles out, and we decided that we would clean 'em up and keep 'em at the postal unit. So I was help—trying to help 'em, and we would take turns going down there and getting 'em out. So my turn—I went down there, and I heard this fellow said, "Watch it." And he had pulled a bucket up, and then he turned around, and the rifle hit the bucket, and then I—the bucket hit me on the head, right up—you see that . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . bump?

SL: Yeah.

[03:03:54] DR: Man, I was bleeding, and I said—they said, "You hurt?" I said, "Well, no, it hit me on the head here." I said, "I'm bleeding," and I said, "Pull me on up." So they—so I got in the Jeep, and we were fighting about fifteen miles up the line on the Burma Road. They were fighting and had an emergency station. So [*laughs*] I got up there, and so they worked on it and fixed it up. I didn't know—I noticed a fellow taking a picture, and we had to call the *CBI Roundup*—China, Burma, and India newspaper that was published for the troops for all of us in Calcutta.

SL: Yeah.

[03:04:37] DR: The next month I saw my picture on the front page.

At—on the top it said, "And he nearly got a Purple Heart." [SL laughs] It told the story about me [laughs]—this bucket hittin' me on the head. [Laughs] And when I got back to the States, I had a friend of mine in Newport—I mean, in Batesville—I eventually ran into as an attorney there, and he was in Burma, too. And he said, "Doyle, you know, I have all of those *CBI Roundups*. I'll give you another copy of that deal about you." I didn't bring that with me. I didn't want to show it to you. [Laughs] It's kinda embarrassing. But, anyway—and I stayed over there till after the war was over, and they brought us home on points. You'd been in—been over there for so long and all of that. And then I went to Karachi [India, now Pakistan] and spent a month there and then got on a ship and came to the—to New York, so I made a trip around the world. I'm a shellback. I've gone across the equator. And—but you learn so much in living with people. I was over there for quite some time. And they gave us some free telephone calls. I think they gave us three free telephone calls when we got back. And I called home and Barbara—Raye had talked to Barbara and said, "Now"—and she knew the [USS] *General [M. C.] Meigs*, the ship I was

coming home on. Said, "Now when Daddy calls you answer the phone." So she answered the phone, "Hello, Daddy." And so—and Barbara has a picture of a—of that. I mean, Raye does. I don't know where it is, but . . .

[03:06:29] SL: You were saying that they let you go home based on points. What system was that?

DR: Well, it was according to how long that you had been in the service, and that's pretty well the point system.

SL: Okay.

DR: If you'd been over there fourteen months, fifteen months, the man that's been there fifteen months goes home before the fourteen months.

SL: Okay.

DR: And they would fill that ship, and then they would get another one in. But it'd take these ships—they'd have to go back and forth. Took us about, oh, ten days to go from India then—might even been less, but it went so fast. We were all, you know, passing time, and not many of us had—when we got back to New York, we didn't have many clothes. 'Cause what you would do—what clothes you had were worn out, so we would—when we'd wear something, instead of going back in it, we'd just throw it overboard. You know how you wash your clothes on the—

now, going over there we did different. You could wash your clothes by tying a rope on your clothes, throwing it overboard, and the salt water would cleanse your clothes for you.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

DR: And we would sleep on the top deck instead of in our bunks at night because these bunks they had were not very comfortable. But we'd go out and take stuff and sleep out on the—it was real cool, but it . . .

SL: That sounds great.

DR: It's a wonderful feeling going back. You're out on the water by yourself—can't see any other ships. But when you're going over, and when it's in time of war, you don't know what's out there.

SL: Right.

DR: And so—in those days it—I think it taught me a lot—how to deal with people, how to bond with people, and we all got some good out of it. I—you know, it was a war, but that's part of life.

[03:08:57] SL: Unfortunately. So how long did you serve?

DR: I served over three years.

SL: Three years. So did you ever—were you ever in harm's way?

DR: Well, you're so young you don't think you are.

SL: Yeah.

DR: It got down to the point that when—you know, you hear things,

and you hear shots, but you don't think too much about 'em. They told one story about the base that—maybe I shouldn't tell this, but in those days, you had slip trenches instead of outhouses. And they had a plane coming over. We were alerted. And when they started coming over, you got to get somebody. So we had a couple of fellows—instead of trying to find a place to go, jumped in the slip trench. So [*laughs*—but you'd talk about those things, and you know, eggs—fresh eggs—we'd get fresh eggs about every six weeks. Our meat was generally horsemeat or something like that from Australia.

SL: Yeah.

[03:10:19] DR: And—but we ate a lot of peanut butter. And it was known—actually, malaria was really bad. But if you would take Atabrin—a capsule of Atabrin every day. And when you went through the mess hall, you would have a medical officer there giving you one pill. When I got back home, Raye met me in St. Louis, and I was completely yellow. They thought I had yellow jaundice. But I was taking that stuff so much that my ankles had . . .

SL: Were jaundiced.

DR: Yeah, and they—we were over there doing a—you know, in Burma you have the monsoon season. It rains for three solid

months. And I would take off my shoes at night, and we would have our bunk, and then we would have a net, too, and we'd have an aerosol bomb to spray for mosquitoes. Kill all the mosquitoes went in the net. And we'd sleep real well, but I'd get up the next morning and fungus would be all over my shoes.

That's how much moisture was in the air . . .

SL: How wet it is. Uh-huh.

[03:11:35] DR: And we at first thought that we had some good tents. We had canvas tents when we first went over there.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And we found out that the only tents that would last is the British tents that are made of cloth and that fungus will get in the cloths and seal the deal. And we were under the land lease program [Lend-Lease Program]. The United States was—Great Britain was running out of money, so they passed a law to help Great Britain, called the land lease. And that means that every time we landed a plane, or they used some stuff out in the jungles that we build a building out of, that they would send a British officer from Calcutta, and he would charge for that, and they would take credit on making a payment under the land lease.

TM: We need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:12:37] SL: Let's see [pause], three years, and you spend most of all that time in Burma. And you never got—you never really got any—in harm's way in any way?

DR: No, I really didn't.

SL: Okay.

DR: Except on a ship. [*Laughter*] Being subject to submarines and all that kind of stuff. And, 'course, we had some—they had some bombings in Burma, and they—we were close—right over close to China.

SL: Right . . .

DR: We had a base over in Chabua, China. And—but we had C-47s and P-40s at Myitkyina, and we had a flight surgeon. And you know what his job was? We were all in such good shape. And his job was he was in charge of the whiskey. [*SL laughs*] Once you made a run you'd come in, and they'd give you a shot. [*Laughs*] We were rationed a case of beer a month and two cartons of cigarettes. And I didn't smoke or drink. So I started—the fellows that—in our unit there, we had these ration cards and some of 'em would be—were not using 'em and all, and we kinda accumulated a few ration cards, and so we started



going to the PX [post exchange] and buying cigarettes, and the Irrawaddy River is the swiftest river in the world.

SL: Irrawaddy?

DR: Yeah. And we built a pontoon—built a little boat using an empty gas tank, and we would put these cartons in a package of ten and would go across the river and hold 'em up, and the Chinese would come out and . . .

SL: And buy 'em.

DL: . . . give us—pay us for 'em. And it took three hundred and ten rupees for a hundred dollars and twenty annas. It's—in—over there your money is in rupees and annas. And so I started sending money home, and Raye couldn't realize. She said, "What in the world is going here?" I'd send her—and 'cause I didn't say anything in my mail because we were censoring everything . . .

SL: Right.

[03:15:18] DR: So when we—when I got back home, we had—we bought our first car and didn't have to pay any money—didn't have to go in debt for it. We bought—first car—I bought a Ford and paid fourteen hundred dollars for it. We were so proud of that car. We would wash it ourself every week and wax it.

*[Laughs]*

SL: Yeah. Well, that's good.

DR: But, anyway, I came—so—that's—I mean, I really wasn't in harm's way over there. Flying and stuff like that, you are, to a certain extent, but that's just part of life.

SL: So basically you had a pretty—you had a good experience then. It was okay in Burma and the Japanese people were . . .

DR: Yeah.

SL: . . . were . . .

DR: It's a . . .

SL: . . . friendly to you.

DR: Well, the only Japanese people we really saw was just a few. But later on in life I've met—I've known—I know the Japanese. I know some of 'em.

[03:16:25] SL: Okay, well, so let's get you home. You came home. What was the next thing that happened in your life?

DR: I came home, and I've always—I was working for the express company when I was in high school during the Christmas season because my father worked for the railroad, so he helped me, and I got a job with them. And so I came back home, and I had five years seniority with 'em, so I had a full-time job. And my . . .

[03:16:56] SL: What was your—what exactly was your job?

DR: My job was, I was called a money clerk. In those days, the

banks were handling all the money—the express company handled all the money—movement of money by rail.

SL: Okay.

DR: And the messenger, he was called a messenger, on the train would start out at Little Rock, and they would start picking up money from Little Rock on up to Newport.

SL: Okay.

[03:17:28] DR: Or picking up money from Poplar Bluff coming on down, just according to the way—when he had a small safe that he had a key to his—the safe hisself. In those days—in the movies you'll see they had robberies on trains . . .

SL: Sure . . .

DR: . . . and all of that. Well, he had this small—and he had a chain attached to the train—the joist of the train—the car—and then he had a—we had a great big safe in the center that had a dial on it, and I had the dial. So I would get a wire. They would call and say, "Need a money clerk, train so and so—train four." I would get a—go up to the car, get in the train, and put my dial on it and open the big safe. He'd take all of his money that he had accumulated in his small safe and put it in the big safe. Then if he needed another one opened, he'd call somebody up the line. It wound up in St. Louis. And they had guards to come

in and take the money out of the big safe and take it to the Federal Reserve System. And so I had a gun, and I thought I was [*SL laughs*—I had a gun all the time.

SL Yeah.

DR: I didn't know—hardly know how to use it, but—so I worked at that job, and then . . .

[03:19:04] SL: So you did that out of Newport?

DR: Out of Newport.

SL: Okay.

DR: And then, we decided that—the tax office, like I say, Mr. Jackson had a lot of connections, so we got a job, Raye and myself got a job at the tax office. And I worked there in the morning from eight to twelve, and then Raye would take Barbara over to her mother's, and she'd work from one to five and then I would come and have a bite to eat, and I'd go down to the express office, and—at four o'clock, and then I would work from there till, you know, midnight at night. So we held that job—the two of us had at that time. And then, so, and then I changed the course, and I started working the five-thirty shift, and that's when I met Sam Walton and—at his first store.

[03:20:11] SL: The one in Newport was his first store?

DR: First store. He came out of service. He had worked for J. C.

Penney after he got out for a little while. And then he—the Ben Franklin Company were giving franchises and he put in a Ben Franklin store. And Helen's father was an attorney over in Oklahoma, and he kinda helped 'em some, and they started the first store. And Sam was—only signed a lease for five years. And so I would—he would go over there, and Sterling Stores were the big merchant in Arkansas at that time.

SL: Yep.

[03:20:58] DR: So he would go across the street and find out what Sterling Stores was selling real good, and then he would call Cash Wholesale that was owned by Sterling's in order to sell in his store the next morning, and I delivered the merchandise to him at five-thirty. Then we'd—he'd check it, and we'd go over and have coffee together. And that's how we met. And then when Bud [Walton] came out of the service—his brother. He said, "Doyle, you've got to find him a place today. Bud's just married." And he said—and I said, "Well, we found a house. The only place I can find is an apartment we're living in." And So Bud moved in the apartment where we lived. But every time I'd see Bud, he would complain about—to me about the two beds 'cause we couldn't afford a—when we moved in we couldn't—you know, the people—it was furnished, and they had two—we had—

it had twin beds. So we had to push those beds together. But these twin beds had rollers on 'em.

SL: Yeah.

DR: So he said, "Every time we try to sleep together, why, these beds would part." He said, "I had such a time with that." [*SL laughs*] So for years there, we would laugh about that. And—but Bud was there working with Sam, and they made a good pair. And they lost their lease after . . .

SL: Five years.

DR: . . . the people—they were doing so well in that store that—the man that built the store's the one that owned the large department store, and he died, and his brother was an attorney there. But his younger brother just finished at the university, so they decided that they would take over the Ben Franklin store. And they refused to lease the store to give him any more time on his lease, so that's when he moved to Bentonville.

[03:23:10] SL: Hmm. So—well is—was Sam from Newport?

DR: No, Sam was from Columbia [Missouri]. He was from—his father, during the Depression, worked over the country on—foreclosing on lands and stuff like that. But he went to University of Missouri at Columbia and he lived there the most time. And then some way he got—it might've been while he was

in the service—met Helen, and they married.

[03:23:48] SL: So what prompted him to put his first store in Newport, you think?

DR: Well, I think it—what prompted him, I think the Ben Franklin Company would tell him where there's a pretty good place . . .

SL: I see .

DR: . . . to put a store.

SL: I see.

DR: Yeah.

SL: So his lease ran out, store shut down?

DR: Huh?

SL: His lease ran out on the store that . . .

DR: Oh, he—they refused to renew his lease. So he decided that he would look for another place. And I think his father-in-law helped him—I think his father-in-law found a space in Bentonville for him, and he moved over there.

SL: Boy.

DR: And that's how he got to Bentonville. And so [pause] . . .

[03:24:44] SL: So how did your all's paths cross again, then?

DR: Well.

SL: I mean, he ended up in Bentonville . . .

DR: I went on—after I was made agent at Newport, I was very

eager, and I liked the express work. And I was there till—I went over there in 1949—in July of [19]49.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And I—in about nineteen—latter part of [19]51, they called me because I was relieving some agents even before World War II. And I was very eager, and I was reading all the rules and everything like that, I liked the work so well. So they called me into St. Louis and called me and said, "We want you to come to St. Louis." And St. Louis had a vice president—the railroads owned the rail—Railway Express [Agency].

SL: Okay.

[03:25:36] DR: Because they had—all the different railroads had their cars moving stuff. We handled the mail, and we handled all—everything on the train. So they called me in and gave me the Wonderlic [Personnel] Test—still goes on, I understand—that they interview you for about two day and stay with you and ask you questions and eat and have meals with you and the whole thing. So after about four months later, they called me, and they said, "Doyle, the New York office says that we don't have any division supervisors under twenty—under fifty years of age, and they're gonna take in some young men and make 'em acting division supervisors and see how they work out. And you're the



first one that the Mississippi Valley is going to take. So that covers about nine states." And so they say, "We want you to go to Kansas City. Get on the train. The first thing you have to do, though—you need to go and have three hundred dollars to take care of your monthly expenses. We'll pay you at the end of each month." I went [*laughs*] down to the bank and the banker talked to me, and he said, "Well"—I said, "I need to borrow three hundred dollars." And he said, "Well, tell me what you have collateral." I said, "Well, you know, I—we're building a house. I have a VA [Veterans Administration] loan, but I'm borrowing money—but I have my car paid for." And he said, "Well, tell me what your father-in-law does." I said, "He's an attorney over at Newport." And he said, "I tell you what you do. I'll make out a note here, and you put up your car, and you go over to Newport and get him to sign the note with you."

SL: You're kidding me.

DR: So I came back.

SL: Three hundred dollars.

[03:27:31] DR: I got the three hundred dollars, and so I got on the train and I went to Kansas City.

SL: Okay.

[03:27:38] DR: Now, I was in my twenties, and so—I went in the

station that night. I got in there late. I was feeling pretty good. Man, I—this big position I had. [*SL laughs*] And a fellow tapped me on the shoulder, and he was a security man, and he said, "I don't know who you are, but you got to get out of here. This is the express office, and we don't allow anybody to—just to look at things." And I said, "Okay." He was really embarrassed the next day when I was introduced as the division supervisor over the whole thing. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, he was doing his job. Did you give him a promotion?

DR: So then I was—then I—huh?

SL: Did you give him a promotion?

[03:28:20] DR: No. [*Laughter*] I tell you what I did. I went on into St. Louis. That's—and I—eventually I was permanently assigned to St. Louis, and I had thirty-two hundred miles of railroad. I had the Illinois Central from St. Louis to Cairo, Illinois. Had the Burlington from St. Louis to Burlington, Iowa. I had the Frisco from St. Louis to Kansas City and St. Louis to Springfield [Missouri]. I had the Missouri–Illinois from Mount Vernon [Missouri] to Bloomingdale [Illinois]. And I was gone—I had passes on all the trains, all the Pullmans, and I had an automobile furnished to me. So I was—I would come in at Newport on Saturday morning, and Raye and Barbara and Rog

would come over there and pick me up at ten o'clock on Saturday morning. I'd go home, and at ten o'clock Sunday night I would get on the Eagle going back to St. Louis, and I'd sleep and wake up and I'd be in St. Louis the next morning. And so I did that for a year and a half, and then I went in, and I told the vice president—they sent me a letter and said, "You've got to move up here, Doyle." So I went in, and he said, "Well, are you gonna find you a house?" I said, "No." I said, "Mr. Price, I'm going to leave the express company." He said—he looked at me and he said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "No." He said, "Don't you have an ambition?" I said, "Well, you judge that in different ways." And he said, "Well, you're the first man that we picked and we've trained you. Don't you realize what you're giving up?" And he said—I said, "Well, I just—I have some things goin', and I feel like that I need to leave to be with my family." He said, "Doyle, I want to give you a five-year leave of absence because we've trained you, and we think that you will be coming back after you get out in the public environment." [03:30:37] And they gave me five years, and then I talked to them at the end of the fifth year. And they called me again, and they gave me another five years. [*SL laughs*] But I never did go back to the express company. But during the time that I was—when I was

agent for the express company in Batesville, I was very interested in Masonry [Freemasonry]. I was lecturing some of my friends in Masonry, and a fellow name of Dr. Wesley Ketz—you know, the young lady I think I mentioned today that's on your television—Ketz girl that's on television in Fayetteville?

[Editor's Note: reference to Ashley Ketz on KFSM Channel 5 News.]

SL: Oh, maybe so. Yeah.

DR: That's her daugh—that's his grandfather.

SL: His daughter.

DR: Grandfather . . .

SL: Or his granddaughter. Okay . . .

DR: Granddaughter.

SL: So now . . .

[03:31:30] DR: He was grand master—he was a doctor, but he had a photogenic [photographic] mind. Masonry is word of mouth—nothing in writing. He could lecture for two and three hours with no notes. And he wound up as grand master for the state of Arkansas. And a man over in Tulsa, Oklahoma, studying Masonry, had put the Bible—everything in Masonry is about—is involved in the Bible—in the biblical structure of the Bible. He decided he would put the—some of the work of the Masonry into

the Bible and went to the Hertel Bible Company, and they published a Masonic Bible for all the Masonic Lodges. He came into Arkansas to get Dr. Ketz to approve it. And I was—like I say, I was eager, and Dr. Ketz knew me, and he said, "I want you to go down to the express office and call on Doyle Rogers and show him this book." I was so excited about that book. I asked him, I said, "Would you leave some with me and see if I could sell 'em?" I made one trip to Searcy. See, stores in those days closed on Wednesday. And I made more money on one day down at Searcy than I would make in a half a month with the express company. So I decided—I contacted him, and I said, "Can I start a Masonic distributorship?" [03:33:14] And I started one selling these to the Masonic Lodges. All we would do is go into the town, talk to the master of the lodge, get the list, and we would sell it to 'em on credit. And my wife started keeping the books, and then when I was division supervisor over the country hired thirty or some salesmen over the country, and I would go into these different places that I was—I would spent the night, say, in Carbondale [Illinois]. I would contact the master of the lodge, get the list. They—then I'd—we'd have a salesman call on 'em. So we were doing pretty good, and we named the company the Ozark Masonic Bible Company. And so



I knew that I had something to start out on. And so I left the express company and started that. [03:34:11] And during the meantime, during the war they need steel to—or they need manganese to harden steel. And Batesville, Arkansas, is one of the few states—they only have about one or two states in the nation that has manganese. And the government was mining manganese, and they were coming in there and buying this ore on the ten-car weighted average from some ore yards that had been established. But the ore yards were just trying to get at the lowest price from any of the miners, and the miners were having a problem. So I kept watching that, and I decided that, "I need to start a company where the ore buyers get a fair deal." So in addition to doing that, I started the—this manganese company, buying the ore. And I called a laboratory in Joplin, Missouri, that was testing the ore for the government, and I said, "Can you test—teach me how to buy a truckload of ore—just a dump load of ore—and put it—be able to put it in a ten-car—railroad car and know what that car is going to test?" They said, "Yes." So I put a big ad—I—so I went down and leased a cotton gin—I mean, a man that the gin had been closed, and they had scales. So I put an ad in the paper: "You come down and sell the ore to me. I'll get a sample. I'll pay you what it's

worth." Boy, I tell you, I started really buying the ore. Well, about four or five months later the bank called me, and they said, "Doyle, you're buying all this ore, but it's—the government's—you have these government deals—you're shipping the ore on a ten-car weighted average, but it's taking this—them about two months to pay you. And you don't have anything, so we're getting concerned about it." So I'd heard of a man by the name of Vance Thompson.

SL: Okay.

[03:36:37] DR: Vance Thompson was the first electrical engineer licensed in the state of Arkansas.

SL: Okay.

DR: He was up in the years—over at McCrory, Arkansas. He built—he had an ice plant in Batesville. So I went over. I'd heard about him. I went over and went over to see Mr. Thompson—went in his office. Had a great, long table—had it stacked up with all this stuff. He said, "Son, tell me what I can do for you." And I said—told him—I said, "I want to tell you a story. I don't know whether you'd be interested, but I'll tell you what I'm doing, and I need somebody to help me." I told him I was buying this ore. He said, "Now, you—the government's paying you for it?" And he said, "Yes." He said, "Son, we'll just form a

little country—a little company here, and we'll be partners, and you don't have to worry about any money anymore. You just keep on buying the ore." And I said, "Well, the bank's telling me they're gonna need some collateral." He said, "I tell you what I'll do. I'll have some collateral over there tomorrow. I'll have a man to bring it to you." So the next day the cutter boy shows up and brings me a [*laughs*] sack of stuff in a paper bag with a rubber band around it. And I took it to Tom Benson—we were about the same age—and I was working with him and told—I said, "Tom, I've got this deal and here's some collateral for this thing." He opened it up, and he said, "Doyle, I've never seen so much stock." And I said, "Well, you need to call"—he said, "I don't need all this stock." And he said—and I said, "Well, let's call Mr. Thompson." And he said—so I never will forget. He's so—he told him. He said, "Mr. Benson, I don't want a part—I—you know, I've had that stock in that one deal with that rubber band around it for a long time, and I don't want to split it up. You just keep the stock over there." So we had plenty of collateral.

[03:38:52] SL: What was it stock of?

DR: Huh?

SL: What was it stock of?



DR: I don't—he didn't—I never did find out.

SL: Never knew.

DR: Well, let me tell you a little bit about this person. He was a person—Vance Thompson was—helped work—when Witt Stephens was young, they started working together, and Witt Stephens and Vance Thompson bought out Arkansas-Louisiana Gas [Company].

SL: Okay.

[03:39:29] DR: And Mr. Thompson called me one day and said,

"Doyle, I want you to go to Little Rock and meet a fellow name of Witt Stephens." So I met Witt Stephens, and we became

friends and that type thing. But Vance Thompson also—a little bit about him, 'cause not many people know this—Vance

Thompson came up with an idea after—when—after he finished college that the fruit from the West Coast was not getting to the

East Coast. And he joined with another person and they went

out and talked to the railroads on the West Coast—Union Pacific.

And they said, "Why don't we built a series of ice plants, and you design the refrigerator car that moves the air by the wheels, and

we'll put the ice in the car every two hundred to three hundred

miles. We'll fill the bunkers and put salt in it, and as that car is

moving to the East Coast, it's cooling the car." And that's the



system. [03:40:48] They started moving fruit all over the world—all over the United States 'cause at one time I was division super—when I was division—I was route agent for the express company in loading strawberry cars at Searcy—I mean, at Bald Knob, and we would take that same car—a similar car that you put on the passenger trains, and we would load it with strawberries, put ice in each bunker, and put salt on the ice. And then we would cool it down to about fifty-five degrees [Fahrenheit], and then we would stop the train and put the—an entire carload of strawberries that was shipped to New York or Canada. [03:41:33] And that's how they started shipping the fruit all over the United States. And Vance Thompson was one of the first men that started that system. And that's the reason that he made—Vance Thompson made a lot of money. He and Witt Stephens—where Park Plaza is where the shopping center—they built that center. And that center was—energy was created by a system that Vance Thompson used gas to generate the electricity. And up until about fifteen years ago, that's the way the electricity was generated for Park Plaza. And he's the one that—have you ever heard of a place called Coachman's Inn?

SL: Yeah.

DR: Mr. Thompson and Mr. Stephens were building Coachman's Inn,

and he'd worked late that night, and going back to McCrory he hit a br—a bank culvert and killed himself.

SL: Hmm.

DR: So—but . . .

SL: Let . . .

DR: But, anyway, I got off. . .

[03:42:39] SL: Let's go back to the—I want to go back to the

Masonic business—the Masonic Bible business. So somewhere along the line you became a Mason. Is that . . .

DR: Oh, I was a Mason before—when I moved—see, my father was a master of the lodge at Garner, Arkansas. And then my mother was in the Eastern Star at Newport, so I went—when I came after the war, I joined the—I went into the Masonry in Batesville. Masonry is a group that you're never asked to be in it. You have to make up your own mind. But it's an interesting—you just read the background about Masonry. It's in the—you know, *The DaVinci Code* and all of that.

SL: Oh, yeah.

DR: But the—but this is something that's really helped the world a lot, really. But . . .

SL: You know, my father was a Mason, but he never would. . .

DR: Yeah. He never did . . .

SL: . . . talk about it much.

DR: No, you don't talk about it.

SL: I mean, that's interesting that you had the idea of the Bible thing.

[03:43:55] DR: Well, and we—most of the lodges—in those days we were going to the lodge and selling the Masonic Bible to the members, and then we would give the lo—we would give a Bible to put on the altar of the lodge. And Masonry is word is his bond, and if they want to pay two dollars down and a dollar a month, my wife would—and we would start out a deal, and we would send them a statement each month, and they would pay us for it. We never did have anybody that never did pay us. And so that's one thing that we got started on. And then by that time I bought the—I was buying the ore, and then the government stopped buying it. They had enough stockpiled for it, and so then I went into the real-estate business. And then I started—Mr. Thompson—I decided I wanted to start a subdivision. And I built a subdivision next to Lyon College [Batesville] that used to be Arkansas College. It was the first college established in our—in the state, before the University [of Arkansas]. And established in Batesville. I—you know, I told you that was the second-oldest town. Well the only reason that

Arkansas—that it was not—the university was not in Batesville, Arkansas—the only reason—they met in Little Rock, and the city of Fayetteville said they would make a gift of fifteen hundred—or fifteen thousand dollars. They wanted to put it in Batesville, and Batesville would not give any money because they already had the first college, Arkansas College, that was a Presbyterian school.

SL: Yeah, I didn't know the story about Batesville, but I knew the story about the University of Arkansas. So . . .

[03:45:54] DR: And I—so I built—so I decided that I would buy eighty acres and start a subdivision. Everybody was coming after—you know, needing houses. We—Federal Housing Administration were backing the loans—a hundred percent veteran loans and all of that. And so I had been thinkin' about building some houses, and then the—some fellows up at Indianapolis, Indiana—the University of Indiana—had designed what they called a Sanford trust [truss]. And they started building some fabricated houses, so I read about it and got on the plane and went up there, and I ran into Hammerschmidt up there.

SL: John Paul?

[03:46:50] DR: Yeah. John Paul was on the same plane coming

back. I asked him how in the world did he—I said, "Tell me what kind of business"—he said, "My—we own a lumber company in Harrison." And he said, "You know, Doyle, I've never been in politics, but they're trying to get me to run for [US] Congress." [SL laughs] And so I—we went up there, but I found out the best material going to these houses was material from California—western fir and all of that. [03:47:19] So I decided I would be—I would build some National Homes [Corporation prefabricated housing]. The main key that's the reason I decided is because they gave me a package. They would give me the price of the house. All I had to do is control my people working for me. They would even tell me what my labor should be. And they set up a plant at Longview, Texas, and I started getting—so I started building houses. And I would sell the lot, build the house and write the insurance and make the mortgage. I had a deal with a company that paid me a fee to get them a loan. And everything was through the Federal Housing Administration [FHA]. And so I came to Little Rock, and to do things right, I asked them, "You tell me the best subdivision in Arkansas that's complying with everything." He said, "Well, it's a subdivision called Breckenridge out here on University [Avenue]. A fellow name of Albert Fawcett's building that. And

Albert Fawcett's a lot older, and I went in his office downtown, and I told him—I said, "You know, the FHA tells me that you are really building one right." I said, "I'd like to tell me about it." He said, "Well, you come on with me," and so he spent a day with me telling me about this subdivision. I went up and used the—his system, and started building one in Batesville. And he said—the last thing he told me before I started home—he said, "Doyle, the only thing you have to do now is you dig you a tunnel from your office to your bank, 'cause you're gonna need plenty of money to put in the water and sewer." [*Laughter*] In those days, the city of Batesville did not furnish anything. We had to build a water system, we had to build a sewer system, we had to put in the streets. [03:49:25] And I went and talked to the county judge. It was—the part I brought into the city limits was in the county, and I—and he said, "Doyle, I don't have any money." I asked him to just cut my roads in there. He said, "I don't have any money." And I said, "Well, if I pay you for your gas and pay the man that's driving the road patrol, would you furnish the equipment?" He said, "Oh, yeah." I said, "It'll make you a better tax base." So we went in there and did everything, and so we created what they call College Heights, right next to the college, and that's where we have our home.

[03:50:06] SL: Tell me about your—when did your—you start having the kids in your family?

DR: Well, Barbara was born in World War, you know, during World War II. And Rog—after I came back, Rog was born in 1948.

SL: Well, when you. . .

DR: And Rog—and then Rog, you know, went to school, and Barbara and all that.

[03:50:34] SL: Well, so you didn't get to spend a whole lot of time with your kids while you were doing the rail express and—'cause . . .

DR: No, no. But—and really, that's one thing I regret. I worked ten or twelve hours a day. I liked—I was doing so many things. I built—during the time that I was building houses, I would go to the—I had foreman and a crew. I'd say, "Now, fellows, this is what we should—the cost of labor should be. When you improve that, I'll give you a bonus. I'm not gonna be out here in the morning to start you off work. I'm not gonna be out here when you end work. I'll probably be checking with you to see if you need anything. And I'm gonna bring that house in there, and we're going to"—we would put up the exterior walls with a Sanford truss. Now I'm talking about a three or four-bedroom house. By the end of the day we would have the—everything



blacked in, and then we would put the partition walls on the inside. I put a crew together that—I had electrician that he became one of the house construct—the house construction that day. The plumber—we had a team that all came together and put that house together the first day. Now that house came in with the wiring in the walls, the windows in it, the sheet rock on it, all the air-conditioning equipment was there, all the kitchen equipment was, all the kitchen cabinets, the hot water heater, and all I would do is build a foundation and have it ready, and the truck would come in, and I'd have a *T*-thing that we would put on the outside that we would push the walls against, and we'd put the Sanford truss—and the Sanford truss to have a notch in each end, and when we would put that Sanford truss on it, it would plumb the walls. And I had a young doctor that just had finished med school—didn't have any money. His wife really wanted a particular house we had finished. And you're supposed to have—in those days you're supposed to have three years of working before they can make you a loan.

SL: Right.

[03:53:05] DR: I was so eager. I came to Little Rock, and I knew Mr. Johnson. So happened that he used to date my—he was from Garner, Arkansas—and used to date my aunt. And I said,

"Mr. Johnson, I've got a doctor here, and I've got three letters from doctors in Little Rock that can tell me what they think he's going to make, and I have 'em a house sold." He said, "Doyle, we can't approve that unless you have three years, you know, background of their working ability." And I said, "Well, would you just send this into Washington [DC] and see if you can get it approved?" [*Laughs*] And he sent that in and called me about three weeks later, and he said, "I've got your loan approved." And, you know, this doctor now is one of the finest doctors in Batesville. And just about a month ago I called him, and I said, "Bob, you need to come by here and get your application—I still have it—that you made when you came in here fifty years ago." [*SL laughs*] And so . . .

SL: That's good.

[03:54:15] DR: But I started building houses. And then I was reading the paper and, well, I had a man to come in, and they—Lion Oil Company were building some new filling stations.

SL: Okay.

DR: They came into Batesville, and I had a one-room deal, and I had my real-estate office. And a man came in. He said, "I want to find a place here to build a filling station." I told him—I said, "Well"—so we went out and drove around. I found a place. I

could buy the property, and I had a contractor to give me a cost—nineteen thousand five hundred dollars. And I told him—I said, "Well, I've got everything worked out under your plans. You gave me the plans." It's about a month or so later. I said, "The only thing I don't have is where can I borrow the money?" He said, "Well, Doyle, you can get your money at National O-Line Insurance Company, and they have the Grand Ole Opry over at Nashville. You call them and tell 'em I told you to call 'em."

SL: Okay [*laughs*].

[03:55:19] DR: And I called 'em, and I said—and he said, "Tell me how much money you need?" I said, "I need nineteen thousand five hundred dollars." He said, "Tell me how much rent you have?" I said, "Well, I have enough to pay the loan off in fifteen years." And he said, "It include taxes and insurance?" I said, "Yeah, I've got all that." So I built my first filling station and leased it to them for fifteen years, and I said, "Man, they're strong enough they can pay that off. In fifteen years I'll have this thing paid for." And then using that system, the Kroger Company [The Kroger Co. supermarkets] decided they would build some new stores, and they—Mr. Witt Stephens and a fellow name of Jack Farris in Little Rock working for him built a Kroger

store in Little Rock and leased it to Kroger. I read about that in the paper, so I get in the car and come down and talk to Mr. Stephens. I said—he said, "Doyle, we just tried that one time. We don't care anything about real estate." Said, "You can't make money fast enough fooling around with these long-term deals." He said, "I'll let Jack Farris show you how he did that." So I sat down with, and he told me, and then I went to Kroger and they s—told me they wanted to build some stores out in the state.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And so I started building an eighty-five hundred foot store in little towns like—first one I built was in Batesville, and then I built one in England and one in—so I was having stores all over the state, even got close to Fayetteville. I built one in Paris. And then eventually they came to—they wanted me to build one in Little Rock at Colony West. They'd just finished the super—just finished the highway out there, and I finished up about the time they opened it up. And then we started building Krogers, and then a company called Magic Mart in discount business, and then Sam—Walmart came in, and then I . . .

[03:57:37] SL: So how did that—how did you get back to Sam?

How did y'all . . .

DR: Well, what happened was—is that I was doing some work—I was building also a few stores for Safeway [Inc. grocery], and we were putting a Magic Mart next to Safeway. And—but I—Sam and myself were—we would talk, and he was just—he had several Ben Franklin stores, and then he decided to go into Walmart. And so I called him, and he said, "Well," he said, "yeah, I'll be glad to lease one." So he started—we started—I would lease 'em for twenty years and give him five—four five-year options, and—but I was building the stores on the strength of Sam's financial position on their lease. And so—now Sam was just starting out, and Magic Mart was the one that I didn't have any problems with their lease. [03:58:31] And so, like, in Batesville I was going to build a Kroger store. I called Sam. I said, "Sam, I'm going to—I'm—are you ready to come into Batesville?" He said, "No, I don't have—I can't do that. I can't stock the store." I said, "Well, I'm going on with Magic Mart." So in about two years later or three years later, he called me and said, "I'm ready to go into Batesville." So I said, "Well, Sam, I only have an eighty-five percent location there," and we looked at it, and Jim [Walton] was just starting out, and so I had talked to Sam about it, and he said, "Well, I'm gonna let Jim come over there and look at the site, kinda"—so we—I told Jim

I'd meet him at the airport. He's flying. He's just getting in his flying lessons—getting his pilot's license. And I told him I'd meet at the airport and I said, "Jim, what do you have that bicycle for?" He said, "Well, Dad told me that if you couldn't meet me or something came up—I could just go on and get in—said 'Not to get a cab, you just take that bicycle and go on down there and look at the property.'" [*SL laughs*] And so I went on—and then he went on and did his night flying to look at another store someplace else. So we built the store there, and now when Sam was living, the first superstore they're building all over the country, we built that—the first one in Batesville. I had the land tied up for over a year in my name and then we—but that was in the [19]80s. Sam had already gone, you know, gone public and all of that—a different story. But at that time, and Jim will tell you this, Jim didn't seem to like working at the Walmart part of it, and Sam—you ever heard of a feller name of Tom See?

SL: Mh-hmm. No.

[04:00:56] DR: Tom See was head of his—vice-president of real estate, and Tom's the first man that Sam hired. And he called me and said, "Doyle, I'm gonna work—I've hired—I'm gonna try a man for six weeks—six months—and you tell me what you

think about him, and then I'll know what I'm gonna do, 'cause he's going to be working with you."

SL: Okay.

DR: And I had been calling him and telling him that you need a store at Heber Springs. So the first time I met Tom, we went to Heber Springs. 'Cause Sam had called me before then, I'd been telling him that I thought he needed a store, and one night—one Saturday morning he called me and said, "Doyle, flying back to Bentonville last night, I counted the lights over at Heber Springs, and I think there's enough houses over there to put in a store." [SL laughs] So we put in a store over there—a Walmart—only forty-six thousand feet, and then eventually we made it a superstore.

[04:02:05] SL: So what was it—do you remember what the threshold—what he used for the threshold of where a community could sustain a Walmart?

DR: Well, I don't know that secret . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . because Sam had an executive . . .

SL: But I mean just flying over and counting the lights.

DR: No. Well, I'm sure they did—I think I—'course, most of 'em—the way they do it, they also get in the sales and see how much

grocery sales are and all of that. But when you put in a Walmart—I mean, when you put in a superstore, why, that's a different deal in small towns.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And they had to look at it, and then Sam was not in the grocery business when he decided to put in the superstore in Batesville. But I could tell you a lot about that, but it'd take a long time—a lot about the situation—that situation, I mean, my relationship, and I think you don't have the time for that [*laughs*].

SL: Well, I might. I mean—you mean, talk to me a lot about how he got into the grocery business or . . .

[04:03:11] DR: Well, you know, for a long time until the [19]80s, the margin in grocery are very small. Not—now they are different in the—five—you know, the other type business. Clothing and all of that. And so—but they decided—Kmart had gone into it on the West Coast. And that thing started, and they started the Gibson's [Discount Center] stores and all of that.

So that's how this thing got to goin'. And so—then eventually—none of those stores had groceries, and then Sam decided to put in groc—put in a superstore. And they didn't know anything about the grocery business. Sam was on—you might not know this, but you've heard of Winn-Dixie [Stores,



Inc.]?

SL: Yeah.

DR: Did you know those two fellows were from Arkansas that . . .

SL: They're based in Fort Smith. Is that right?

DR: No, they were over at—oh, a smaller town. I've known it—over in the—over in that area, but not at Fort Smith.

SL: Okay. Well . . .

DR: But they moved to Jacksonville [Florida], and Sam had known them and Sam was on their board. And then eventually decided to go, you know, to build this superstore and then he went in the business. And our company's done work—we built—we—I mean, we have Winn-Dixies and—that we built for them, too. And that type thing. But I—but we were doing business with J. C. Penney [Company, Inc.], Magic Mart—I built Magic Mart in Arkadelphia—built one in Little Rock, built one in Batesville. We were doing a lot of—we were working for everybody in those days, and we built Meadow Park Mall in El Dorado. And Woolco—you've heard of Woolco?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DR: Woolco took bankruptcy, and then I called Sam, and then Sam put in a Walmart.

[04:05:36] SL: So you started these relationships with all these

companies, but you were basically using the same formula that you started with—that you would build the buildings . . .

DR: Same thing . . .

SL: . . . get the lease agreements for fifteen years. . .

DR: I would buy the property, build the buildings, charge them a certain amount of rent, and in those days after they passed their base rent, they would pay me a percentage rent. So—and the wonderful thing about Sam is—was—is that they were payin'—is that by the—I figured it out—as time went on, it wouldn't take him long to get to percentage rents.

SL: Right.

DR: So that means that he would exceed the base rent, and then if I added all the sales up, why, then Sam would pay me the difference in the base rent, and I got to the point on some of my stores, I was getting as much percentage rents as I was getting base rent. But . . .

SL: Business is good.

DR: . . . it was good for both of us.

SL: Yeah.

DR: But it's been better for them, since now they build their own stores, 'cause they can control things a little bit different.

[04:06:57] SL: Well, but what about—you know, there seems to

always be stores around them as well. I mean, they . . .

DR: The place that we're involved in, we build the stores around 'em. We just—they build their own store and we do everything together—the dirt work, we get the property, and I don't know whether Walmart would want me to tell all this or not [*laughs*].

[04:07:26] SL: Well, the real story is—that you met Sam a long time ago when you were really young and you were able to maintain a good relationship, and y'all trusted each other and business was good. Business worked.

DR: Well, David Glass—when the Walmart family was honored here by the Congressional Medal of Honor, I talked to David, and David was telling me that I was fortunate to be probably one of Sam's best friends. Sam was doing—so busy that within the type business he was, that he had—that he—you know, that he probably didn't talk to people like he—you know, Sam and myself—Sam would get up at four-thirty in the morning, and he was down at his office by sometimes at four-thirty or five. And Sam—we would take trips together over in—you know, I think I mentioned to you we were robbed in Milan [Italy] and looking at a—and that's how this—you know, Sam came back, and that's when this superstore thing started. I told you that story, didn't I?

SL: Huh-uh.

DR: Well, we were going to . . .

TM: Can we change tapes real quick?

SL: Yeah.

TM: Before he gets [*unclear words*] . . .

[Tape stopped]

[04:09:02] SL: Well, okay, so what's your take on how the Sam's  
[Club] stores—supercenters started?

DR: Huh?

SL: How did they . . .

[04:09:14] DR: Well, we had been—so Sam had talked—had it in his  
mind about the supercenters and all, but we got to the point that  
we would go to Europe, and we went—that the friend I was  
telling you—I don't know whether I told you this—a friend of  
mine by the name of Lee Rogers . . .

SL: Hmm. Maybe not.

DR: Well, Lee was a good friend of mine, and we played tennis  
together and Lee played quarterback on [the University of]  
Alabama [football team] when Bear Bryant . . .

SL: Oh, yeah, okay.

DR: Okay.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

DR: So we decided, the six of us decided to go over there and see the tennis matches and play in Europe, and so we went to Milan. [04:10:07] We found—during that time, we were traveling in Italy, and we found the finest and the largest shopping center in Europe, actually in Milan. They had over a hundred and twenty checkout lines. So we went into the store, and so Sam asked me if I'd help him measure out all the checkout lines and all the aisles and everything, and we were doing that. We came out of the store, and they had, you know, knocked all the glass out of our station wagon, and so clothes all of our store—stole all of our clothes. And so we were asking Italy to—people were being kidnapped over there, and they had everything about Walmart, and Sam even had some traveler's checks in his briefcase. And so they advised us to get out of the country, so we left. And so—but Sam came back, and that's when—the next thing I know he called me and said, "I think we want to build—what do you think about building a Walmart superstore in Batesville, Arkansas?" And so we started that. And the system that I've always worked with 'em on is that I tie up the land in my name—no one—not anybody knows anything about it, and so that's what we did. And we built the superstore there. So [pause]—but Sam didn't do too well in the grocery business when he

opened up, and the next thing I know, he called me one day, and he said, "Doyle, we're buying out a grocery chain in Dallas that knows the grocery business." But he said, "That acre and a half of land that you were going to put the filling station on, you go on and get an oil company to take that on because we're not going to sell any gas because this grocery company is servicing about forty-five percent of the convenience stores in the South, and we don't want to get in competition with them." So to show you how we worked together and I think it—I told Sam—I called him one day and I said, "Sam, I've got a—I've got this filling station put together." He said, "You have?" I said, "You know what I sold the land for?" I said, "I sold that acre and a half for two hundred and twenty thousand dollars." He said, "Dad blame, Doyle! Man, I tell you, that's wonderful. You know, you only paid—you know, we—you only paid four hundred and twenty thousand dollars for the twenty-five acres." [*Laughter*] So the—see, when you bring in a Walmart you create a different piece of property.

SL: Yeah.

[04:13:20] DR: And so—but you've got to give the benefit of the people that's making it happen, and that's what a developers need to do. You got to have fairness in your dealings. If you

always treat a person like you want to be treated, you're goin' to do well in your business. And I think one of the things that I've been forced to doing and probably taking some of the principles my mother and father gave me, is that do to the other person like you'd want to be done. And I've never had a falling-out with any of the customers I've ever had. I've even had—when I first went into business, I even did a project when I first started out with Magic Mart, and I came in and made—and they were so interested in it, and they asked me—said, "Can I—come in it with you? Can we be your partner?" And we still have that partnership today.

SL: Well, now we've been talking about your real-estate business all this time.

DR: Okay.

SL: How did you get into the banking business?

DR: Well, let me tell you the first—I went into the hotel business.

[04:14:31] SL: Okay, let's talk about the hotel business [*laughs*].

DR: Okay. I'd been building Colony West Shopping Center in Little Rock and building Colony South, I've built the first Sam's Club in North Little Rock and all of that—been doing the Walmarts. And I was coming to Little Rock, and I was seeing these two old hotels down on the river. I like to read a lot, and I noticed that

all the cities eventually come back to their water where they started out. Well, there was two old hotels, the Marion Hotel and the Grady Manning and the Capital Hotel—that part of the city was gone. So I had a friend of mine—I was fortunate that—in traveling and doing things because we were looking at a lot of stuff over the country, and I had a friend of mine that was doing the convention center in Miami [Florida], and he was telling me about it. He said, "I made a joint venture down there." And I said, "Would you send me the information about that because Little Rock's trying to build a convention center." [04:15:45] So he said, "Doyle, there's not an attorney in Arkansas that can do this. They're not"—and he said, "This is a real—a—you know, when you join with public sector you've got a lot of legal things." And he said, "You think any"—and I said, "My son-in-law's an attorney, and they're in a fine firm and his father was a judge here and all of that, and I think he's smart enough." And So he sent me the deal on what they did in Miami—joint venture—where the system is—it's pretty simple. The city builds a convention center, and the developer builds a hotel and puts it on top of the convention center. So I went in—I'd already went to the people that owned the two hotels and got an option to buy the land. They gave me a price. [B.] Finley Vinson was



president of First National Bank, which eventually became First Commercial—eventually became Regions [Financial Corporation] in the building down there, and they had a restaurant on top of it. And the A and P Commission—you can be a member of the A and P Commission if you're in the hotel or restaurant business, so since he was head of a bank, the city asked him if he would be head of the Advertising and Promotion Commission.

[04:17:13] So for two years they were going to build a convention center in downtown, not on the river—over in the area that was growing, where the Regions—where that First National [Bank] had built its building and then Worthen [Bank] had built a building, and they were find—trying the spot. So I walked in his office and I said, "Mr. Vinson"—he had—knew me a little bit from my shopping center. And I said, "I've got a plan that I think it can work." He said, "Doyle, we've been kicked in the mouth by—it's two straight years—by real-estate taxes to build this convention center." And he said, "I don't know whether I can go through it again and take time. Tell me what you want to do." I said, "You won't have to go to—I understand, not even go to vote. I can handle it with the city directors if y'all will approve a one-cent restaurant and hotel tax. And you can raise enough money on that, I think, to build your part of it, and

I think I can raise enough money to build my—build a hotel. And I owned the land, and I'll sell it you at my cost, and we'll sign a hundred-and-two-year lease, and the city of Little Rock will own the project." And we went to the city board, never had a vote against it, and that's how we created a hamburger tax that—was interesting that we had to go out to the state capitol and get it passed. And the legislators in Arkansas didn't—most of 'em didn't like Little Rock, so we had to put in there that if any town wanted to build a convention center, they could use the same process. And we—and Herschel Friday and his firm—Judge Smith's firm—developed a plan, and my son and—my son-in-law—that the attorneys worked together. They developed a plan, and then they—and it so happened that the fellow—speaker of the house—was my close friend from Melbourne, Arkansas, and so he helped us a great deal. [04:19:36] And so we got it worked out where sixty percent of the revenue—state revenue created by the convention center will go to the city to pay for the project. Sixty percent of all the taxes derived from the sales of anything in the hotel, and that—that's a state law now and several convention centers have been built under that plan. Well, we had lot of ups and downs. If you look at this big book that you all saw today, we had a lawsuit filed that we

couldn't do that, but we knew we could and all of that. So [President Jimmy] Carter came into office, and interest rates started going up. If we sold—we have a state law at that time that if an interest rate goes up to ten percent you can't sell bonds—state bonds. That's the highest you could go. Carter was in office, and if we hadn't sold—we sold—we started selling the bonds and we didn't have 'em all sold, and we found out the interest rate was going up. The next morning we had another meeting—the city board—and they increased it an eight percent more. We sold the balance of the bonds. Within three days it was up to ten percent. And so we imploded the hotel and built a convention center, and then during that time—we finished in 1982. [04:21:20] During that time I built Colony South Shopping Center, and Judge Smith had a piece of property that I bought from him, and he—cocktail party one night—he was telling me, "I'm so pleased I sold you that property." And I said, "Judge, I know the reason you're so pleased. I checked it out. I know what you paid for it." [SL laughs] And he was laughing. He said, "Doyle, I want to talk to you when I come back. I'm going back to—for the winter down in Florida—down in Texas, but I want to talk to you when I get back." So he came in, in March of that year—called me and I came down here. And he

said, "Doyle, I've been watching you, and I've decided I want you to buy Metropolitan Bank. I don't have the time. Most of the attorneys in our firm own interest in it, but I have control with my brother in New York, and I want to get a young man that I can build this bank." And so I—in those days my—Pete Hoover here and his son—his—Bill Patton was his son-in-law, he's an attorney—and they gave us all the information. Not anybody knew anything about it. The president of Metropolitan didn't know anything about it till he walked out one morning and picked up the paper. On the front page it said, "Metropolitan Bank Sold." And so that's how we got in the bank, and it was in the neighborhood of sixty million dollars, and now we've—the bank's in about one-point-seven or one-point-eight billion.

[04:23:10] We employ over five hundred people and have a hundred and fifty-three branches. So confidence of a person and in another person—that's the reason I got so close to Judge Smith. He passed away a few years ago, but when he retired, we'd still meet and talk and visit, and a wonderful fellow. And he was a—and I'm so pleased that—and that's the reason I think Faubus did so much. He had the knack of surrounding himself with people that knew what they were doing. And that's the real key. The real key with [former President] Bill Clinton—when he

went to Washington, being a Rhodes Scholar—he had connections. And if you'll notice, his entire cabinet has excelled in everything that they've done, and what did Bill Clinton do? Our economy was good and all of that. It wasn't Bill. It was the people he surrounded himself with. And I—but that's getting off the subject here.

[04:24:33] SL: No, that's okay. Did you know Bill Clinton? Do you know Bill Clinton?

[04:24:43] DR: I knew Bill Clinton well. I knew Bill Clinton with the Excelsior Hotel. Every Saturday morning he'd run and come through the hotel. And when Bill Clinton was—lost the race for governor [to Frank White in 1980], I wrote him a nice letter—told him I had a lot of confidence in him. And I think he's one of the smartest presidents this country's ever had. So—and I think one of the worst things this state has in politics is the term limits. If you have a man doing a good job, why not let him stay in office? It takes a young man his first term in office to even find the bathroom. And in my opinion, in the state of Arkansas the people that are really, very strong in the government—I hope they're not making the big decisions but—is the lobbyists. They're there every year, and I'm sure they're doing the good things for who they're—ever they're lobbying. And I—and I've

never had a real problem with that. The people have different interests and you have to work for those interests. So—but I think that this state should not have term limits, and I think the greatest thing—one of the best things this state could do is get out of the term limits. You ask David Pryor about that.

SL: I—yeah, I'm on the same page with you there. I understand that.

DR: So I went on, and I've been fortunate—been in the bank. And so we're continue on.

[04:26:59] SL: What about—don't—haven't you helped—worked with J. B. Hunt? Didn't you work with J. B. Hunt some and . . .

DR: I've known J. B. Hunt when he first started. He married a—his—he came—started over at Heber Springs. And he had a—he was working for a man at Stuttgart hauling . . .

SL: Rice hulls.

DR: Yeah, hauling from up in the Fayetteville area and bringing chicken litter back up to Stuttgart to put on the fields, and then he decided to start a truck line. And so J. B. went from that, and then he went public. I was so proud of J. B. one day. He came in my office in the building and said, "Doyle, I—you've got Metropolitan Bank." I said, "Yeah." He said, "I," said, "I've done so well in this stock. I have a young lady with me. I'm not very

smart, but I have a young lady with me, and I"—he said, "I'm not gonna leave town today until I buy a bank. Would you sell Metropolitan Bank?" I said, "No." I said, "I'm so pleased, though, that you have that kind of money." He said, "Doyle, you don't realize how much money I have. Boy," he said, "I've sold all this stock, and I don't owe any money." And so he went over and bought the bank over in North Little Rock, and then he bought the bank in Fayetteville. And then we started talking about—forth and banking, and then he kinda—he decided he'd get out of the banking business. [SL laughs] And he sold a bank in Little Rock here to the—a fellow that he brought in that made him so much money, he told me, "He made me a lot of money in the stock market"—that he'd be good to run a bank, and then eventually sold the bank to him. And I understand he's doing quite well. And then I think he sold his bank in Fayetteville and—but . . .

[04:29:41] SL: And what about—you mentioned to me earlier you'd done some business with John Q. Hammons, too.

DR: Well, John Q. Hammons is—I met him when I was in the hotel business years ago. And he decided he wanted to build—and so we would talk back and forth when—during the Excelsior days, when he'd come into town—see, he was a strong person in the

Holiday Inn. He was one of the big people in the Holiday Inn, and he had known a—I got to know him through Kemmons Wilson that started Holiday Inn. And I got to know Kemmons—I'll talk about—just bring this up—I was—when I was in Batesville building houses, I was—I took on the chairmanship of the Rotary Club programs for the entire year. I enjoyed it. It was real easy. I'd pick up the paper—instead of having a local program, I'd pick up the paper, and when [Winthrop] Rockefeller came into state, I wrote Rockefeller, and I said, "Tell me what Monday you can come in and speak to the Rotary Club in Batesville." If it's three months later, I'd put him down. So one morning I got up—one Sunday morning I got up and read the paper—told a story about Kemmons Wilson from Osceola, Arkansas, where he started out, then he moved to Memphis. And the—his father had died, and then he—so he didn't—so he started out there in the theater, selling popcorn and all of that. [04:31:23] And then he decided on—when he went to Washington one time—that he decided that it wasn't a very good place for him to stay and he came back home and decided he'd build a—some—build a better motel—a better hotel where the people traveling could stop along the roads. He didn't even have a name for it, and the reason—and his architect named it



Holiday Inn, 'cause at holiday—had seen this program on the movie called *Holiday Inn* or something. And he said, "I think that'd be a good name." So I read this story, and I called Kemmons, and I said, "Kemmons, why don't you come over here and tell us your story." So he came over and told us this story. He said, "Doyle, I'm gonna fly over there. I just bought my first plane, and I'm gonna bring a fellow name of Pigeon Thomas, head of the steel company, here with me." So they flew to Batesville, and so we became friends. And he—at that time he was saying, "I can't get anybody to build one of these things." He said, "I—we had the national home dealers, and I offered every home dealer there a franchise free of charge to build a Holiday Inn in their town, but I couldn't get anybody to do it." So he said, "It looks like we're going to have to build some." He had a partner over there, so we had a long rela—we started that relationship. After I got in the hotel business myself, I kept up with him, and then I met John Q. [04:33:04] But John Q. came in and he decided he wanted to build an Embassy Suite[s Hotel] out here on Chenal [Parkway, Little Rock], and we made him a loan to buy the land. And then he told me—he said, "Doyle, I'm gonna get ready to build that." And I said, "Well, have you got your loan worked out?" And he said, "I've already got it

arranged for in New York." And I said, "Why don't you give me a chance at making you that loan." He said, "Doyle, there's not anybody can—a bank can't make me thirty-four or thirty-five million dollar loan." I said, "Well, when you gonna start?" And he said, "It'll take me thirty days or sixty—I don't know when we'll get the plans completely finished. But do you want to try to finance it?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I—just give me a chance." He said, "Okay." [SL laughs] I called him back in one week. I got twenty-two banks. We were the lead banks. Arkansas needs—small banks don't have opportunities to get these kind of loans, and we were the lead bank. We did all the work—charged a small fee to do it. So I put together a group of twenty-two banks, and when he had his thirty-fifth anniversary of his company, we went up to Chateau on the Lake, and he had all the hotel companies from all over the world, you know. He's been named now the number one hotel builder in the world. And he told a story about—"I want to tell you about the most unique financing package that I ever did, and I'm still doing it." [04:34:29] So he told us—he told about me making him the loan. He said, "You know that I'm still getting referrals from these banks in Arkansas. And some time ago I had a little luncheon for all of 'em." And he said, "I"—he said—so that

connection with John Q. has been good. And John Q. has no children and a wonderful man. If you go to—you can't realize what that man has done for Springfield [Missouri]. If you've ever been into town—he even built the [Hammons Field] ballpark and gave it to 'em up there. Nicer—you know, as nice as this park down here. [04:35:33] So that's the way I met him, and then Kemmons Wilson, about two or three years before he died I called Kemmons, and I said, "Kemmons, I had you to come over here and talk to Rotary Club about fifty-five, sixty years ago. Why don't you come over here and tell us what's happened to your life?" I said, "I'll fly over there and get you. We'll spend the day together." So he came and Scott came and made a talk, and we taped the talk, and we played that—I guess, for two months we getting requests of his life. He told a story—he said, "You know, I'd been honored by the University of Alabama and Christian college and Rhodes [College, Memphis, Tennessee] and all. I got a call from the superintendent of schools in Memphis [Tennessee] wanting me to talk to the graduation class," and said—and he said—told her—he said, "You know, I really appreciate this call, but I don't want to embarrass you. I have not finished high school. I didn't even get through grammar school." And she said, "Mr. Wilson, we don't want to embarrass

you either, so we're—so we plan on giving you your high school diploma when you make the talk." [*Laughter*] [04:37:15] But, anyway—but you know, the Excelsior Hotel was—I didn't have any experience in the hotel business. But Arkansas, I felt like that if I could put it together, Arkansas needed that, and Finley Vinson—they were only doing probably less than, I'd say under fifteen million dollars worth of tourist business in Little Rock at that time in the [19]70s. And I'd say now they might be doing now, I don't know, several hundred million. And so—but I worked and we had ups and downs during the Carter Administration or just—well, first we had—the city had to finance it and all of that. We got that worked out, and then we had to get the financing worked out, too, and the—with the savings and loans and all of that. And—but I met a lot of people, and I learned pretty fast. I first thought it was gonna be a Hyatt Hotel, and that's where I met the Pritzkers, and they started the Hyatt chain. And I thought I had the deal made with Mr. [A. N.] Pritzker. He was in his eighties at that time, and I went up there to finalize it, and they work twenty-four hours a day—have their offices on the top of the bank building there, and they—all of 'em were attorneys. And had my son-in-law with me, and we negotiated everything the next morning—and I—he—that they

were going to manage the hotel for us. He called me back, and A. N. [Pritzker] called me, and he was in his eighties and said, "Doyle, I'm leaving town, but I've decided that we want an interest in the project. We'll go in the project as partners with you." And I said, "I don't think I can do that. I made some—have some obligations with the city, and I don't think that you would want—I don't think I can do it." So I had been dealing with Trust House Forte just—in New York City, and they were the largest hotel company in the world. They built Savoy in London [England], the Excelsior—that's the reason it's named Excelsior, in Rome [Italy] and in Florence [Italy]—the finest hotels in Europe. And so I went to New York, and I told 'em what kind of contract I wanted, and that's how I signed up them to manage the hotel. And the fortunate thing about it—Trust House Forte—his—Sir Charles [Forte] had died—his son, Rocco, at that time was the most eligible bachelor in Europe. And Rocco came to Arkansas and brought—darn—what was the prime minister during the war—of England?

SL: [Winston] Churchill?

[04:40:33] DR: Huh? Brought Churchill's son that was working for him, and he came and went duck hunting in Arkansas. And the Queen of England sent her body—sent her guards—flew 'em in a

British plane—flew 'em in here, and they were here during the grand opening of the hotel. So.

[04:41:14] SL: Well, you know, to hear you talk about that deal, it comes—you're so fluid with it. But I have to tell you, it sounds—it sounded awfully complicated to me to juggle all those different entities and to get it right.

DR: Well, Finley Vinson is gone now, and he would say we had a lot of meetings that we didn't think we were gonna make it. But we did because we had a dedication by everybody in Arkansas to do it. And you go downtown now, and you'll see the changes.

SL: Oh, yeah.

[04:41:55] DR: Now let me tell you—I mean, I'm—that's—see, that's the real problem with the small towns—what's happening to small towns. We were doing a project up in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, for Walmart. I got up one morning, and I walked downtown—beautiful town. They made the submarines in World War II at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

SL: Okay.

DR: And they would take the submarines and go on up to the lakes and get 'em on out. I got up that morning, and I walked downtown, and I saw this building there built next to the courthouse—beautiful building. And I asked the man and he told

me what it was, a county jail. But I noticed that town was really strong downtown. I can go in with my experience to any town and tell you how strong the town is by going downtown.

[04:42:57] See, I've learned that you need to keep your government offices that you can control—keep 'em downtown and that—these county seats, you need to keep doing everything you can for the downtown. The big boxes—in those days when those towns were built, you didn't have any large boxes. You had a store that had six thousand feet, and that was a pretty big store. But they're building superstores now—a hundred forty to sixty—hundred and forty to a hundred sixty thousand feet. So I came back home. I flew back home, and that night I picked up a paper, and I noticed that in Batesville, Arkansas, the county judge says, "We're building a—and the jail is going to be built out on the highway." I got up and called the county judge the next morning. He said, "Doyle, I can't find any land downtown." I was concerned about it. I drove downtown that morning and then went down to where the town was started, found a piece of property that was not in the floodplain, and I called the two banks, and we had a luncheon meeting with the quorum court, and I said, "I've got an option for the land right here to build a jail. This will keep it downtown where your people will be

coming to downtown." And that's what the downtowns need to do. Fayetteville's strong, but they have to work at it. And I'll say your—some of your businesses over there might be struggling, but you need—to keep your downtown strong is to keep to the businesses downtown. If they get out on the highway—if you go to Newport where I was raised, Front Street is no more. We went out on the highway and built a large Kroger store. Walmart's out there now. And all of that. And that town is really, really hurting. But you hate to see that.

SL: Yeah.

DR: And I notice Walmart now is building some smaller stores, and I hope that comes about to help some of these small towns. But [long pause] I'll say one thing—is—you about—do you have any more questions?

SL: Oh, yeah. I can keep going. I'm just—I'm kinda just lettin' you . . .

DR: Okay . . .

SL: . . . you think a little bit there. Go ahead.

DR: Well, I'll tell you when we get to the end. I'll make a statement.

[04:45:09] SL: Well, what do you think about what's going on now with the economy?

DR: I think we—I think the statements that are being made about



the worst econ—you know, our economy's the worst it's ever been in and we've never been—I—sure, you know, you get different facts in different situations that you're in, but in my opinion the—this country was completely different during the Depression. We had different problems. [04:46:46] But, now, you can solve problems in a quicker way because of the media that you have because the people can understand what you're talkin' about overnight. And—but it's hopeful that they—everybody working together can get it solved. But the world is—I mean, this is a—now we're in a worldly situation, not a country situation. There's so many elements that are in this thing. And it—if we don't do—if we don't get our act together better shape than it is now, and I'm just talking about—I don't know anything about politics, but this is what I'm afraid of. We've been a world power—number one for years. If you read the article a few months ago, *Forbes* magazine told an interesting story, real [unclear word]. This country started out—for years had been free trade, free trade, free trade. The manufacturing companies, to be able to compete, have had to have lower wages. When I was president and [unclear words], and when I was in Batesville I—the thing—I think I have a pretty good feel of this because I've been president of real estate, I've been president of the

insurance deal, president of the [Batesville] Chamber of Commerce and all that, so I've gone through all those things. And I have a good feel, a little bit for what's happening in our area, and I feel like that on the world market is that we've had the free trade, and it kinda dovetails into what the *Forbes* magazine said—that we've been so liberal on our free trade that our companies like Nike [Inc.] [*telephone rings*] had to move to China. Their tennis shoes got to the point they cost close to fifty-five to sixty dollars or way up there to when they put the whole package together, they were having to—and their product—and they—and now they can do that same shoe in China for fifteen dollars. We've lost, in the last year, in Batesville, Arkansas—when I was president of the Chamber of Commerce there, we brought in White-Rodgers Company, that was Emerson Electric. We bought in Eastman. We bought in a manufacturing company for Ford [Motor Company]. I know that's all total about, between fifteen and eighteen thousand people. [04:50:10] In the last three years, well, gradually, I'd say, in the last five years we have lost every one of those companies. The reason? Emerson has moved their—a lot of their stuff to Mexico. They started doing that ten years ago. So—did you know that our exports have been increasing every

year? Which they say that's good. You know the reason it's been increasing? Because we've been sending all of our manufacturing equipment to China that we have put together here to send over there so the workmen over there can make the things that they're coming back to sell because we won't have a higher embargo on any foreign products. [04:51:05] Okay, when World War II started out, we were the number one nation in the world on manufacturing. We manufactured the planes, ammunition, and guns—the whole thing. We cannot do that today. The only thing we might be able to do is airplanes, but we don't have all this other manufacture—that's gone. They're gone to India, gone to Mexico, gone to China. Okay, now, who's the strong—now, Russia has kept up. Well, it might be a possibility here that before a few years this country could become a third-class country because if we get in a war, where are we goin' to get our guns? Where are we goin' to get all of those things? Now I'm not tryin' to be an alarmist. I'm just tellin' you what I'm seein'. And *Forbes* magazine had an article about it that Congress has shot theirselves in the foot, and I notice that [Democratic presidential candidate Barack] Obama said the other day, it might be better for us to pay a little bit more money for a T-shirt, so we can get a little higher price to bring

some of those manufacturing companies back to the United States, 'cause we're the one that started everything. And, if you've ever been to China—have you ever been to China?

SL: Hm-mm.

[04:52:53] DR: I talked to a man who'd just been—came back from over there and he said, "Doyle, don't fool yourself about China. They're getting stronger all the time. I've seen the cities. They're clean. The housing is getting better. They're improving all the time." And you know who's doing all the—you know who—what we're doing—you know, who's making—you know, now all of our companies are getting involved in China and all of that. That's making those countries stronger. In my opinion, the person—the strongest leader right now in the world affairs—it's not the US—Russia. Who's calling the shots now with Georgia? What did Russia do? Can the US do anything about it? Russia's not paying attention to the US anymore. I shouldn't be taping this kinda stuff.

SL: No, it's fine. [*DR laughs*]. It's alright.

TM: It's good.

DR: Huh?

TM: Good points.

[04:53:58] SL: Is [pauses]—well, Doyle, is there anything that you

want to say about family or your kids, your grandkids? Is there anything that—what would you like—if you had—if you want to say something to them, what would you say to them about the . . .

[04:54:30] DR: Well, regardless of what Raye and myself have been doin' in life, everything that we've been doing is around our families. We wanted our children to have a better education that we ever did. I didn't finish college. I went to school. I was even fortunate and when I was in aviation training I went to the University of Denver [Colorado] and—when I was in the service. But education is the real key to so much—so many things, and we've tried to do our best to keep our children in church. That's an important part of life. It's a very simple thing, is that after you—on—after you've been in the world for a long—raised your family and all, you come back to the basics. Material things are wonderful, but your children and your family's the main thing. And this country was founded on the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and I—we don't realize how far we're getting really from the Declaration of Independence. We're getting atheist, trying to take the name off of our money and all of that. But I'm saying is that, the real key it boils down to is your family, and as life goes on you hope to be where as

you get older you get closer to God. If you've been going to church and all of that, how in the world can anybody look at this world and what's happened—how can your body operate without—our people are not smart enough to know how your stomach can do so many things to get—and your body and all of that. The, I mean, the universe is so complicated. So we need to understand that that's where we're from, and we do have a supreme being. [04:56:57] I had the fortune to become close friends with a fellow that died about a year ago, Bob Canada, that had the largest—has the largest law firm in Mississippi. All the attorneys here, and all of 'em know him. Bob Canada came out of the war. He's about two years younger than I am, and he was a member of the Presbyterian Church. He decided the Presbyterian Church was too liberal. As a young lawyer he had made some money and gone down and bought some property down in Destin, Florida, right on the beach. And Pickens-Bond [Construction Company], a developer here, went down there and developed a place called Hidden Dunes, and it—we were playing tennis one day down in Florida. We all came back and stopped by there, and we—my wife liked it, so we have a penthouse there on—in this place. So we got to know each other, and so he sold that and started a seminary in Jackson—a Presbyterian

seminary. Now they have one in Orlando, Florida; one in Charlotte, North Carolina; and one in Washington. And so he's a man that had in principles in life and would stand up to those principles. He also has written a book called *The Rule of Law*. He contends that this country was started with a supreme being—Declaration of Independence. And he's been—and he formed a—the lawyers' Christian group in Kansas City [Missouri]. And he's the one that's been—there—have been filing the brief to get the atheists—there's a group—there's—the last brief that he filed was against the atheist group on the West Coast, that he—to take our money—or where—money—the word "In God We Trust" off of our money and completely take everything between church and state. [04:59:36] Now he contends that that is there, but he said what has happened to this country—what has happened to—since 1776, is the country was founded on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. But our Supreme Court has ruled—has—keeps ruling on—under the Constitution and not the Declaration of Independence. And they have—now they're ruling in a way where he has contended that—that they have had input in the Constitution, that as time changes we should need to change our rules. And this country— if they ever get to the point—this country's the only country in

the world that was only—that was founded by the people and for the people. But he contends now that the Supreme Court is making the laws.

SL: Yeah.

[05:00:37] DR: And he's the one that called the man over in Alabama that had the monument in the capital and told him to take it out. Very—but he's a person that's really [*telephone rings*] stood up for what he thinks. And if you'll notice in our leaders in the 1776 and on then, were standing up for what they thought and dying for what they thought, and how many leaders in this country right now will do that? Now that's how this country was founded, and we need to get back. And we're doing a lot of things now that's—really don't come up to those standards. But I had a call—I—Bob still had an—had his office in the—in—even, and so the other day—I mean, I keep up with his children. One of 'em's in the law firm. The other one's head of the seminary. They called me when Bob died, and he had lost his wife by cancer a few years before that, and every time I'd go to Destin, I'd call him, and he'd come down there and meet with Raye and myself, and we'd spend some days together. I called him—I called his office a few weeks ago, and I said, "I know Bob is"—a lady answered the phone in the law firm, and I said, "I



know Bob's not there, but is Rick there?" And so he called me back and he said, "I really appreciate you calling me." He said, "I wanted to call you and tell you that the Christian lawyers association that my dad helped start years ago, called us the other day, and they've been over here, and they've taken everything about my father's life and making a de—a DVD about it," because things are coming up in this country now—I don't know whether you know this or not—did you know now that for the third straight time they're trying to pass a bill in Congress that the Christian network has to give the atheist group free time. If they have a sermon about Christianity, that they have to give them free time to respond to that.

SL: On the Christian network?

DR: Huh?

SL: On the Christian network?

DR: Christian network.

SL: Yeah.

[05:03:18] DR: And the Christian network are contending that that will—that they don't have the money to do that. So there's a lot of things that you young people are going to have to take care of. [SL laughs] And—but the thing I'm saying is that we all need to stand up for what we think is right. So—but basically

it's a simple life—very simple. Go by the Golden Rule. If you go by the Golden Rule, your word's your bond and live that kind of life, you're not going to have any problems.

SL: Well, you're kinda known for that. Hold to your word. Is there anything that I should've been asking you about that I haven't asked about? I—you know, we didn't really talk too much about politics . . .

[05:04:18] DR: Well, I tell you one thing and I—we're proud of is the ski resort at Winter Park [Colorado].

SL: Well, I've read that you put that development in. Tell me about that . . .

DR: I did that in 1983. A young man that—his grandfather started Beech aircraft [Beechcraft].

SL: Okay.

[05:04:37] DR: And he had some inheritance, and he went out there, and that was a dude ranch. A man from Chicago had put this place together, and one of the finest dude ranches in the country. And then after World War II, the city of Denver decided they'd have a ski area out there because Winter Park is up in the twelve thousand—and from an altitude and the ski area is even higher than that. They have three mountains there now. But, anyway, he bought this property—two hundred and thirty

acres—and so he decided he wanted to sell it, and I worked with him for a year and a half, and we bought it. And we've owned it since 1983. I have a young man who was in the banking business, and we wanted a controller, and he's worked with 'em for two years, and I made him general manager. And now his daughter is the second year in Hendrix [College], and so he's running the deal and my children look after it now. But it's a—and David Pryor is fortunate. I let—called David one day, and I said, "David, why don't you all go out there and spend some time." So he went out there one summer and really enjoyed it. And the altitude is—but it's a wonderful place, and I'm pleased with it that that's the closest ski area to Denver, and they have a train that goes up there three days a week. And it's probably the—one of the better—a lot better skiing than Aspen [Colorado]. The [US] Olympic ski team work out there and then all of that, so the skiing's a lot better. They have three mountains. But my children look after that, and I'm pleased with it. So—but I think you've asked me about everything and . . .

[05:06:49] SL: Well, there's one—I just thought of one thing. Do you want to say anything about Lunsford Bridges?

DR: Oh, I should. Not only Lunsford Bridges, but—not only working

with people, I want to tell you about—I have two secretaries that have been with me over thirty years. I can count my secretaries I've ever had on my—on one hand. They won't—a secretary has never left me unless she's moving out of town or becomes pregnant. [05:07:20] And Tommy Lassiter that works for me used to be head of Krogers—he's only worked for two people. The Kroger Company—he went to State Teachers and finished and started working for Kroger and wound up in their real-estate department. And then he wound up head of Arkansas, and he was tough to deal with. And they wanted to promote him to Memphis, and they were goin' to consolidate the offices and all of that. And I talk to Kroger, and he said—I said, "Tommy doesn't want to leave. He was raised here." So Tommy is—so I got permission to hire him, and he's head of our development. He's been with me thirty-two years. When I bought the bank in 1983, I hired Lunsford [Bridges] to come to run the bank. And Lunsford was "Mr. Pine Bluff." He was the number-two man in a bank in Pine Bluff, National Bank of [*unclear word*]*—National Bank. And so he came and stayed in a hotel for six weeks. And Lunsford was head of everything in Pine Bluff. He was head of marketing for this bank. And, you know [*telephone rings*] the man that owned the bank, I knew him—friend of mine—and I*

called him, and I said, "I know you're going to—you're retiring, and I understand Lunsford Bridges and—because I'd heard about Lunsford—and another fellow's gonna be named president, that you're looking at him." And I said—so after he named him, I called him, and I said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Doyle, there's one man"—he said, "I'm an old-time banker and I look at loans, and Lunsford's in a marketing department more, and that's the only reason. Both of 'em were qualified." So I was pleased to get Lunsford. And Lunsford had had a divorce, and he came here, and he met a—do you remember when the plane crashed—an architect, Mosso, was killed? He was head of the National Guard, and another architect was with him, and Lynn Wassel. And he had rented a plane out at the central, and he'd flown up there and had to come in on instruments at the airport.

And the instruments—the plane . . .

SL: I kinda remember that. Yeah. Yeah.

DR: The instruments went bad . . .

SL: Yeah.

DR: . . . and he ran into the mountain.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[05:10:16] DR: Well, that's—and so Lunsford came here and met

Carol, Lynn Wassel's wife, and married her and has a wonderful

wife, and she's been there with him. But Lunsford Bridges is—  
and I've had two good people, is Tommy Lassiter and Lunsford  
Bridges. They're just like members of the family. And so we've  
been fortunate. And I can't—I could talk about them all day.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, I just thought you might want to mention 'em a  
little bit, 'cause I know you . . .

[05:10:53] DR: And my son-in-law is—had a lot of input into it and  
also my son. So I've had a wonderful family that works  
together. We've been fortunate in meeting other families.  
When we imploded the hotel, I was figuring out how to get those  
two buildings down. I was playing tennis in Batesville and I  
came in and was watching television, and I saw this implosion. I  
saw this building come down. Two fellows walk in this place,  
and they had a Bud—had a beer—Budweiser beer. They popped  
a beer, and after they'd blew—blown the building down they  
went in this trailer and got 'em a beer, and they were talking.  
So I called Channel 7, and I said, "Can you tell me [*laughs*—I  
want to find out the people that imploded that building." And so  
they called me and about a week later and said, "These people  
are la—named actually the Loizeauxs up in Boston  
[Massachusetts]," and they gave me the telephone number. So  
I called him, and he had started out after World War II—well, he

came down to Little Rock and looked at the building. And I said, "How did you get started in this business?" He said, "I was a—I worked—I was in World War II, and I was involved in a—on a special team to—the word implosion wasn't even in the dictionary. And we were told then to go in and work out the—take down buildings during the war. [05:12:45] And I came in and worked this system out and started this company called CDI [Controlled Demolition, Incorporated]." And he said, "It's just a family business." So he came down here and told me that he looked at the buildings, came over—came into the office, and he said, "This is what it'll cost you to do it." And I said, "Well, man, that's a little bit out of my budget. Can't you give me a better price—go back?" And he said, "Doyle, can anybody knock these buildings down with a headache ball? I went over with a computer, and this is what it's going to cost you. And I'm giving you the best price you're ever going to get." [SL laughs] And he said, "Well"—so they came down, and they had his daughter and his two sons and his wife, and they hired some people locally. And did you know those two people now are the largest demolition company in the world? Out at Las Vegas [Nevada], those buildings you see go down—they're the company that did it. Now, Jack is gone, his wife's gone, but the children go . . .

SL: Kept it going.

DR: Another thing that happened here . . .

TM: Actually need to change tapes real quick.

[Tape stopped]

[05:14:00] DR: When we were—decided to build a—when we were working on the hotel, we decided that we didn't have any interior designers in Arkansas to do the hotel. I had first put the team to do the hotel—every builder—I mean, the two big companies—several companies in—about three companies in Arkansas wanted to build the hotel. Pickens-Bond was the biggest, the largest builder. They had built most of the high-rises and everything, and everything up at the university. And so they had called the—Finley Vinson and—at first and said, "We want to build it." Similar to the architects and said, "We want to do the"—three largest architectural firms wanted to do the architects for the hotel. And I called them together, and I said, "Fellows, this is a state project. Why don't we form a deal called 'Convention Center Architects,' and let's put all of you together, and you do the hotel." So we started working on the plans, and then it came down to the contractor. So Larry Kennedy that owned Pickens-Bond, and now it's CDI. And Larry came over to—he called Finley and just said, "We want to build it now."



Finley said, "You've got to talk to Doyle Rogers because he's calling all the shots. We're paying him a fee to keep everything in budget and all of that. He hires everybody." The state laws said I could do that. [*Telephone rings*] So I said, "Larry, tell me how many hotels you've ever built." He said, "We've never built a hotel." I said, "Well, I don't think you—that you can build this hotel 'cause we're doing something for the state," and I said, "We've got to have somebody that has been tested; somebody that's built hotels." [05:16:00] And I said, "I've got the plans on the Hyatt Hotel in Minnesota, in Minneapolis that they just finished, and I'm—and we're gonna build a hotel that can compete with anybody in the world. The United States' own convention. That's our obligation. And so we going to have to get somebody that's in the hotel business." In a week's time he called me back, and he said, "Doyle, I have a friend that—Hardin Contracting Company has built over forty Hyatts, and we'd like to join together to build a hotel." [*SL laughs*] So it wound up that we did that, and it's easy that those two—is that Pickens-Bond then came over and built the Stephens Building. I built that in 1980—I built that in 19—started it in 1983, 1984. And so we started the hotel in [19]80 and completed in 1982. And so—but also I was going to tell you about, we had a meeting in

Atlanta [Georgia] to interview the interior designers.

SL: Yeah.

[05:17:15] DR: And they had—we had all the big interior designers in the United States doing hotels. Two young ladies come in from Dallas—the last ones to make the presentation. My wife was with me, and she liked them. And I said, "Tell me what hotel you've done." They said, "Well," and she said, "We've worked for Trammell Crow [Company]. We've done a hotel for Trammel Crow called the Anatole [Dallas, Texas]." [*SL laughs*] So I called Trammell Crow. I had known him, and he was one of the largest real estate—I don't know whether you've ever heard of him—Lincoln Properties and all of that . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[05:18:04] DR: . . . and all of that in Dallas. He's building stuff all over the United States. Trammell told me—he said, "Doyle, these—I paid these girls by the hour, but they went all over the world and decorated this hotel, and I—you just come down and look at it." So we were impressed with the Anatole Hotel, and we gave them their first contract. And I still talk to the girls—still talk to the lady that has founded the company, and she's the world's largest interior designer in hotels in the world. [*SL laughs*] And now she has offices in London, in Hong Kong

[China], and in Dallas. And so—and—but my wife is the one that picked these girls. And you know who they're working for most of the time? They have girls for SMU [Southern Methodist University, Dallas] working for them—still working for 'em. When I would fly down there, a young lady from SMU—going to school at SMU would pick us up at the airport. So . . .

SL: Doyle, you've got the knack of surrounding yourself with people that excel in what they do.

[05:19:18] DR: Well, one thing I haven't talked about a little bit. I want to talk about my son and daughter. Barbara and Rog really know a great deal about what's going on, and my wife does, too. But Rog came out of service—I mean, came out with college—he—Rog likes to fly. And Rog—to have—to do our business we had to have an airplane. And we still have a hangar, and this plane's in Batesville. We have a man full-time looking after it, and we have—we can fly direct from here to New York. But our plane has to be a plane that can land in small towns. So Sam and them used to use a Commander, so we have a Commander. Seven people. Pre—it's pressurized. We can fly from here to Denver in three and a half hours. So my son does the flying, and by doing that he's always with me, and that's the reason that when I'm at my age, it's going to be a family company

continuing on, and we hope to build a bank and build our company and continue on under the principles of what we started years and years ago.

[05:20:54] SL: Now what about your daughter?

DR: My daughter and son are brother and sister but good friends, and they work together, talk together every day, and about as close as a brother and sister can ever be. And—but the main key is my wife. My wife is similar to—I tell you, Helen Walton—you don't realize Helen Walton was in charge of raising the children. Sam dedicated his life to Walmart, and I'm not—I didn't—I haven't done anything like Sam has. But as far as working principles, I've—I worked long hours—whatever it'd take to do the job, I did it. And—but Raye pretty well would take everything at home and keep everything going—keep the children in school, keep everything moving along and would sort out, really, the good things for her family. So we're all fortunate in life. Sometimes we pick the wrong people to marry. Things don't work out. I was fortunate in my days, we—I picked out the right person. And I think a lot of things is—that—I mean, today people look at marriage in a different way. When I married, I knew I was going to live with her the rest of my life. And I think the way the things are goin' now, it's a lot easier to

get a divorce, or the laws are such, and I think just the frame of the young people's lives now are, if things are not working out, I'll try it some other way. But the most important thing is I met the right person that could put up with me. [*SL laughs*] And I'd—I always look back. I—one time—one trip Helen and Raye had goin'. They were going to have the Danube—going to be on—go over to Danube, and Sam and myself got tied up and we couldn't go, and so we thought they—and so Helen told Raye, said, "Well, let's just go on and do the trip ourselves." So they're on the Danube River in a Russian ship and [*laughs*] having breakfast, and they bring the paper and lay it in front of Helen. Sam was—had a deal dancing on Wall Street, and it said, "The richest man in the US" [*SL laughs*] And Helen said, "I'll be damn." [*Laughter*]

SL: That's good.

[05:24:00] DR: Anyway, I tell you, I've talked to you like I haven't talked to many people in my lifetime, to spread my life out and tell you some of the things that I've been doing, but I've enjoyed it all. I—my tennis career is an interesting career.

SL: Well, let's hear about it.

DR: I played tennis with a young man from Jonesboro, Arkansas, Randy Gregson.

SL: Okay.

[05:24:32] DR: Batesville, Arkansas, has a water carnival that's the number one activity. It's been kept together for years, over the state. And the second year they had it, that's when Elvis [Presley] came in and all of that, the first year, and they didn't like all of his dancing, so they thought he was vulgar, and they wouldn't invite him back. [*SL laughs*] [05:24:55] But when Raye represented Newport on the float and I came up, and I played tennis with Randy Gregson. He was a good tennis player from Jonesboro, and we entered the tournament—they had a tennis tournament. So we got to know each other. And I wound up years later as president of the Arkansas Tennis Association. Went to a meeting over at Amelia Island [Florida]—ran into Randy. I hadn't seen him for thirty years. Said, "Randy, what you doing over here?" He said, "Well, Doyle, I live in New Orleans [Louisiana]." He said, "You know, I left Jonesboro and went to University of Texas [Austin, Texas]—wound up in New Orleans, and I'm vice-president of USTA [United States Tennis Association]." [*SL laughs*] And he said, "I want to get you involved." So in those days we were going to Forest Hills, playing on grass. I started going up there. Raye and myself started going up. The next thing he did after he was elected

president, he put me on the educational committee of the USTA. And that's when Chris Evert and all of 'em started coming up— [John] McEnroe. I've served on the Davis Cup Committee. I served on the committee in the Olympics that put tennis in the Olympics. That started in Korea. The only reason we were able to get it in the Olympics, that we—the soccer group in Europe tied in—we were able to convince them to help us, and they had to put an age limit because they were trying to have some rules about their soccer players, to keep the older players where they wouldn't have to go into the Olympics. So now I think in tennis you can only play when you get up to twenty-one or twenty-two. [05:26:59] But they brought a—so that's the way our tennis got in the Olympics. But I was fortunate to meet all the young players, and for years we would go up to the US Open. So I know McEnroe. I've been in the sauna with him, just the two of us, and I know what he thinks about—McEnroe's a sharp young man, and—father's an attorney. And—but tennis was—that played a lot in our lives, and I've met a lot of my friends—I've met them on the tennis court. Tennis is a clean game, and I was on the tennis court—I hope to be back on the tennis court in another month or so. The tennis court at Lyon College is my— coach is my partner, and I can pretty well—don't have to move

too much. [*SL laughs*] But, anyway—well, I'm—I think—  
anything else you want to add?

SL: Well, did you have something, Trey . . .

[05:28:05] TM: Yeah, I had a question. It seems like you just have  
such a great instinct for opportunity. How do you—how does  
that come by—how do you come by that? How do you find these  
people and see these opportunities and make of 'em what you  
have? Is there a special thing?

[05:28:26] DR: Well, I think the opportunities I've had is that  
something that I felt like that I would really enjoy doing. I felt  
that I could—that it had a focal point where it had a goal to  
reach. And you put all the pegs in the right place, and it'll work.  
Now that doesn't say everything worked out as good as I—  
because we had a terrible—this country and—in the—'course,  
you know, in the savings and loan days, we're not—it's in—  
similar where we are now, and the bad thing about it is that  
people do things without making the right decisions and move  
too fast. I've had a lot of things I've had to think about. I  
mean, how would you like to have a building, where First  
South—you've leased 'em—have a lease with 'em for seventy  
thousand feet for twenty years, and you get a letter from the  
receiver and say "Your lease is cancelled." They were in—I



named that building after I built it. At first I didn't put a name on it, and architects started calling it the Rogers Building first, and then I got First South to take seventy thousand feet.

[05:30:10] The TCBY [The Country's Best Yogurt]—man that started TCBY [Frank D. Hickingbotham] wanted—we talked about it first. He wanted to go in the building, but he only wanted fifteen to twenty thousand and I said, "I'm not," but he said, "Doyle, you've got to name the building after TCBY." I said, "If you don't take any more space than that, I don't want you. I mean, I can't make a deal." So he went over and talked to John Flake and went in over the—at Metropolitan Tower, and Entergy [Corporation] was the big tenant over there. It's always been the big tenant. So they said, "We don't care what you call the building," so John [*SL laughs*] put their name on the building. And so—but I put First South on the building now. And so I've been fortunate that—and I'll tell this story.

[05:31:09] I went over to see—I'd known Jack and Witt Stephens, and I talked to Jack and Witt before I ever built the Excelsior Hotel—asked them what I thought about the idea. You know, in your life, regardless what you do, there's somebody going to help you. You need to talk to 'em. Everybody that's been successful has had some help. I know where Sam got his

help. Sam, you know, you do all—you know, everybody has needed help. So I thought about it after a little time, and I went over to Jack and Witt and I said, "Fellows, you've been in this old building for years. We've got a brand new building, and I've got seventy thousand feet, and you all look at the building. It's the best building in Arkansas." [05:32:32] The architects went down to the Galleria, the tallest building in Houston, and Whittenberg's son—son-in-law was teaching at Rice [University, Houston, Texas] in the architectural school, and we got permission from the developer to build—to look at that building. He was just finishing the tallest building in Houston. And he agreed that I could take the new things that we had—he had put together and bring 'em and put 'em in this building. And we talked about it, and Witt said, "Doyle, I'll tell you what. I'll never leave here. I'm gonna die in this chair." As I went out of the building, Jack patted me on the shoulder and said, "Doyle, Warren's [Stephens] going to take over. He'll call you." Warren would meet me at night—a wonderful man and a wonderful company. And we met at night, and that's how Stephens came into the building. Now how did that happen? That happened because of long-term relationship. And you can't realize—this state can't realize what the Stephens Group [LLC] do all over the

country. You know who's—you know, I had a friend of mine that had been named the head of the National Bank of Commerce in New Orleans. I won't tell you anything much—too much about this story because there's some other things involved. But I was down there with him one night. We were having dinner.

[05:34:34] I was involved in scouting. I was president of the Boy Scout Council in Little Rock, and ji—I got to know Jack pretty well. After we—when we decided to build a Boy Scout camp over at Damascus. And we—Jack Stephens—I asked Jack to be chairman of the building committee, and we raised—in the [19]60s, raised a million four hundred thousand dollars. And the way Jack did it—we'd have luncheons at his office, and he raised the—we all raised the money to build the camp. So Jack—so I was down there with this fellow and he invited us to come down. He was in scouting, too. And I said—I kept—two fellows kept looking at us, and I said, "Jimmy, tell me—I see those people looking at us." He said, "Doyle, I'm chairman of the Superdome [New Orleans, Louisiana]. We're building Superdome, and my life has been threatened not—more than one time, so I have twenty-four hour surveillance because we're raising taxes on all the hotels." And So he said—and he said, "You know what's happened? I'm—I've got it financed." I said, "How is that?" He

said, "I went to New York, and we worked for months and months to try to finance this Superdome. We had everything put together." And he was from Alpena, Arkansas, went to SMU, got a job with a public bank, wound up over there as president of the National Bank of Commerce. He said, "You know, I called Jack Stephens." I didn't know what they could do. Did you know that the Stephens financed the Superdome? Did you know the Stephens one of the big—one of the companies that financed the tunnel between Great Britain . . .

SL: And France.

DR: . . . and France?

SL: Did not know that.

[05:36:51] DR: Now that's how far that they reach. So this state has been so blessed to have people that started out—I used to do the—I mean, Witt Stephens told me—we actually—when I was going to school, the way you made your money is you could sell—if you had your name, I could sell you a belt buckle that they would have your name on it and everything. We used to wear those kind of buckles. Well, Witt Stephens made a lot of money in selling belt buckles. [*Laughter*] But, anyway—but this state has been so blessed to have that, you know. You don't recall the Tysons having their chicken places in—up at

Fayetteville, when you go to the football game, you'd go to  
Tyson's chicken place?

SL: Yeah.

DR: Okay.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

DR: Okay.

SL: I remember that.

DR: But . . .

[05:37:52] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, you know, I think that's a—I think  
you're on the same page there as David Pryor. He says there's  
so many stories that no one knows anything about . . .

Kris Katrosh: Hey Scott?

SL: . . . about how this all comes about.

KK: Miss Raye would like to know how much longer we think we  
might go, just so she knows . . .

DR: You all need to go, I'm sure.

SL: We . . .

KK: We don't need to go . . .

SL: No, huh-uh. It's up to . . .

KK: She was just curious.

SL: We're kind of—well, we're just—I—we're probably wrapping up  
here pretty soon.

KK: Yeah, less than an hour, right?

SL: Oh, yeah. I think so.

KK: Yeah. All right.

SL: Okay.

KK: That's all we need.

[05:38:28] SL: Anyway, I think that we're on the same page. David just felt like we needed to get Arkansas people telling Arkansas stories, 'cause they're not gettin' told. And they're all—there's so many inspirational ones, and they affect not just Arkansas.

[05:38:52] DR: But, you know, your people that you met—you know, your people in Arkansas have worked together on a lot of things. I think I've told you about J. B. calling me.

SL: Yeah, but we haven't talked about it.

DR: Huh?

SL: We haven't talked about it on tape, but you told me about it.

DR: I was driving back home one day and J. B. called me, and J. B.— I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Oh, I'm out here in the pl—truck, and we're trying to do something over here at the concrete plant, but that's really not what I'm calling you about." He said, "I" said, "Doyle, would you loan me eighteen million dollars?" And I said, "Well, would you guarantee it?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "I've got a group, and we're going to buy some

property up here at Rogers," and said, "We're going to—I think I—you know, we got a plan for it." And that's where Pinnacle Point is. And he said, "I'm gonna buy all this land. We're—our group's gonna buy all this land." And as time went on, we got involved with John—brought—got John Q. came in—built his Embassy Suite, and then John Q. built his convention center, and then John Q. built another hotel there. And then they went across the street and built the mall there [Editor's note: reference to Pinnacle Hills Promenade]. So—but . . .

[05:40:32] SL: Now there's a [Arkansas] World Trade Center there, too.

DR: Well, I was up there when the [*laughs*—to meet with J. B., and I had Lunsford Bridges with me, and we were going to have a meeting, and the dean of the school at the university was going to be at J. B.'s office, and that's when they were going to get the trade center. And the trade center was going to be built in some way by J. B. and his group or something or the building, or they were going to lease it. I don't know what really happened. But J. B. got me in his truck and showed me his cement plant and his mower plant and all of that, and when we came back the meeting was over with. So [*SL laughs*—but—so—but . . .

SL: Well, that—you know, that kind of deal wouldn't have happened

if you hadn't been—if you and J. B. hadn't been comfortable with each other—if you hadn't known each other and had a relationship with each other all these years.

[05:41:39] DR: But, see, things happen when you have confidence in each other. We didn't have any problems working with John Q. Hammons because, you know, he doesn't—he says, "I'll guarantee the loan." And that's what J. B. says, too, so you know they have the net worth. All that's settled because I can't harm my reputation by telling—now in the banking business each, bank has to look at the loan itself. I don't make that decision. I say, "I have a loan. Do you want to participate? And I'll send you everything. And you make your own decision." That's the way you do it in the banking business. But I didn't want to give them anything that I didn't think the bank—that I knew the bank examiners would not approve. And so—but you have a lot of strong people in Arkansas, and that's—and they—a lot of people don't realize, you know, you hear all the stories about Walmart and about, sometimes about some of the others—about Tyson's [Tyson Foods, Inc.], about J. B. Hunt [Transport Services, Inc.] or some of the others not treating somebody—but let me tell you, ninety-five percent of the things, they're all trying to do right. And the only thing that they're



doing—you know, your employees sometimes can get you in trouble, and the top echelon does not know what's going on when you get so big where your right hand does not know what the left hand's doing. 'Cause I've never—the people that I know in Arkansas have been so dedicated doing everything that they do and want to do it in the right way. And they've made a lot of money—and money—I think the—what their company is doing is a lot more important and, you know, it's a shame. Sam [*laughs*] didn't have many attorneys for a long, long time. And I don't know how many attorneys they have up there now, just handling a lot of their stuff. And it's so wonderful that you can—I know when we went down to the—you know, we would beat—you know, we won real—when, you know, when we built—beat [the University of] Oklahoma [football team] in the Orange Bowl [Editor's note: New Year's Day in 1978, Arkansas beat Oklahoma 31-6.]?

SL: Yeah.

[05:44:21] DR: The second time we played 'em [*SL laughs*], Sam called me and said, "Doyle, let's go to the game." And he said, "We'll just"—said, "You fly on up to St. Louis and we'll take a commercial and we'll fly up there, too, and—because Helen and Raye want to go to Williamsburg [Virginia]." So we talked—we'd

leave the first part of the week on a Sunday and then go on and see the game on the first. And we'd—gonna be gone about a week. So one Sunday Sam [*laughs*] called at the house. Rog was over there. And he said, "Doyle, I've decided we'll just pick you up in Batesville, and we'll just fly my plane over there. So we'll pick you up." And my son said [*laughs*—he said, "Dad, I wish you"—Sam flies a little bit different. [*SL laughs*] Rog goes out and starts the motor and starts everything and all that, checks everything. [05:45:28] Sam likes to turn on the key like you do with a car and take off. So he said, "Dad, I think you'd be better off to go up there and take"—so we—I said, "No, we're going with Sam. I'm gonna be on the other side and—on the right seat." And so we got in the plane. Sam said, "Now, Doyle, there's a place I want to stop off and look at the store." So we landed over in Tennessee to look at this store, and this man picked us up and Sam—we went down there. And come to find out, Sam said, "You know, I don't know what's wrong, but is this store number so-and-so?" And this fellow said, "No, that store is about forty miles up the road." [*Laughter*] So I told Sam—I said, "Sam, boy, it's a—it's really something, now, when you started out with your first Ben Franklin store, and now you can land any place, and you find a Walmart." [*Laughter*] So we

went on and went to Williamsburg, and the weather was bad. We were going on—flying on down to Miami, so we stopped off in Savannah, Georgia. Sam called a Walmart manager and got us a room there. The weather was bad. We flew in there. So we had New Year's night together in a hotel in Savannah, and Sam always likes to go—so Sam—he's—and we were sitting in the chair and he was sleeping, and Sam—Helen said, "Sam, you go in there and get in the bed." So Helen and Raye and myself brought in the New Year's night. [*SL laughs*] And Sam was sleeping. [*Laughs*] So we got in the plane and going on down there, and we—Sam called a man, and he didn't—doesn't like to go with the procedure. He said, "We're trying to go to a certain hotel," and you're really not supposed to do that. He was asking the tower. "Now tell me the closest airport," and all of that. So anyway—but we—the bad thing about it—we went on, stayed at the hotel where the team was, and man, I tell you what, we got beat so bad. They slaughtered us that time. [Editor's note: Oklahoma beat Arkansas 42–8.] And so Sam—Bud—Sam wanted Bud to look at some other stores with him, and Bud had flown in on a private plane that all of 'em had rented—paid money. And so Bud gave me his tickets, and I flew back to Little Rock [*laughs*] and Bud went on—and his girlfriend at that time—

and he flew on out with Sam. [05:48:24] And I think I saw Bud about one time after that because after I built the hotel—when I built the Excelsior Hotel, I called Sam and I said, "Sam, now, you've been having your meetings up in Joplin and over in there and over in Tulsa 'cause you can't have—they're not as big—and when you first started Walmart." And I said—that was in 1980, and I said, "We're finishing this convention center, and you're from Arkansas. You've got to have your meetings in Little Rock." So from then on, as long I owned the hotel, he were bringing the companies in from all over the country. We had every hotel room filled in Little Rock, and he was taking over the—and during the month of February Walmart had their—everything in Little Rock. So—but now they're so big they have to do it on regions. Okay. You got a lot of stuff you don't need.

SL: Oh, come on.

DR: Huh?

SL: I like all this stuff.

DR: Well, I'm hoping I haven't—I'm not a very good speaker and . . .

SL: No, you tell some great stories. Now it'll take us a while to get this back to you, but we'll get it back to you.

[05:49:45] DR: Well, you take your time. I appreciate you all taking the time.

SL: I—it's . . .

DR: And I'm really impressed with your crew. Tell me . . .

SL: Thank you.

DR: Tell me, what time is it now?

SL: It's quarter—twenty of seven.

DR: Oh! [*Laughter*] I've got a meeting—I'm supposed to be at a meeting in the morning at nine o'clock.

SL: Yeah? Well . . .

DR: I'm supposed to have a meeting with the—tonight at the Lyon College at the president's house.

SL: Tonight?

DR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: You're gonna be late for that. You ain't gonna make that.

DR: No, I'm sure Raye has handled it.

TM: Stop tape.

[05:50:29 End of Interview]

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