

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

University of Arkansas  
1 East Center Street  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
(479) 575-6829

**Arkansas Memories Project**

Dickson Flake  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
November 19, 2010  
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 16th 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.
- 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.

### **Citation Information**

See the Citation Guide at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.php>.

**Scott Lunsford interviewed Dickson Flake on November 19, 2010, in Little Rock, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Dickson, we're gonna start the—uh—Pryor Center interview now. But before I start asking you questions, I just kinda wanna go over what we're doing here and—and make sure that you and I are on the same page and—and we're comfortable with what we're doing.

Dickson Flake: Okay.

SL: Um—everything that we—uh—gather here at your house, and—and that's the—um—videotaping that we're doing and the scanning of your pictures, and we're also recording just the audio of this interview—all that stuff is gonna be housed at the—uh—David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History. We'll also have a copy—um—of it in the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas at Mullins Library. Um—we will provide you all the raw footage. We'll provide you all the scans, all the materials that we gather. We'll also provide you a written transcript [*thumping noise*] of our entire interview. [00:00:59] And we'll ask you to look at that stuff and read it and make sure that you are comfortable with

the content of what we do today. And if there's any—uh—if you're uncomfortable with any part of it, we'll take it out. It's not—you know, we try not to take things out, but sometimes folks will say something about something dis—disparaging about an in-law [*sniffing in background*] or something, and they wish they hadn't said it. We'll—we take those kinds of things out. Now our transcript is a verbatim transcript. Uh—in other words, we transcribe what is said and not so much for readability. So—uh—some people are kind of concerned about that at first when they actually read the words they say. [00:01:44] Um—but we—we like to keep the character of—of the conversation, and we like for it to match both the video and the audio. So when we get all—all this stuff together and you've looked at it and you're happy with it, then you will get a final copy, a final edition—uh—of what we've landed on. But we will also like to post—um—all the audio of the interview that we've decided is good. And we'll do video highlight clips that we'll post on the web. And we'll post the transcript. And we will encourage—uh—students and researchers and documentarians to be at our site and to look at the—um—memories—uh—of the stories, the Arkansas stories that we're gathering. And this—they—they may want to use it in their classroom. [00:02:39] Teachers may

wanna use it in their classroom. Researchers may want to do it with their papers. And documentarians may want to make a documentary and include some of it. And we will let you know how this stuff is being used when—when there's any request. If you're comfortable with all of that and you realize that this is gonna be preserved forever—uh—then we'll just keep going here. If you've got any questions or concerns, you should just voice 'em now and we'll work it out.

DF: Fire away.

SL: Okay, good. Well, I usually—first of all, I have to say that we are at the Flake residence here in Little Rock, Arkansas. And today's date is November 19. The year is 2010. And my name is Scott Lunsford. And I'm sitting across from L. Dickson Flake. And, Dickson, what does the *L* stand for?

[00:03:31] DF: Leon.

SL: Leon.

DF: My father was—was Charles Leon Flake, and because he used Leon, well, a—as always is the case, the offspring avoids and uses the other name.

SL: That's right. And, Dickson, when and where were you born?

DF: I was born here in Little Rock at St. Vincent Infirmary, which then was over on High Street uh—in—in—near downtown Little

Rock.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: Now Martin Luther King Drive.

SL: Mh-hmm. And what was the date on that?

DF: August 10, 1938, was the birth date.

SL: Okay. Well, I wanna get back [*clears throat*]*—*I wanna talk about your mom and dad for a while, and also I'll—I'll want to talk about your grandparents. In fact, did you know either set of your grandparents at all? Did you get to know them?

[00:04:30] DF: I knew only the grandmother on my mother's side.

And I have a vague recollection of my grandfather on my father's side. Now the other two grandparents—uh—died before I was born.

SL: And do you know your grandparents' names?

DF: Yes.

SL: Okay, well, let's—let's start with your father's side first. What—what was your—uh—daddy's dad's name?

DF: Us—they called him C. L. It was—uh—Charles Leon.

SL: Okay.

DF: And my mother was Della.

SL: *D-E-L . . .*

DF: *D-E-L-L-A.*

SL: Uh-huh.

DF: Yes.

SL: And—uh—what—do you know her maiden name?

DF: [*Unclear word*]. Yes, her maiden name was Srygley.

SL: Srygley.

DF: My grandmother—uh—was Della Srygley.

SL: Okay. And I guess I could just ask you to spell that.

DF: *S-R-Y-G-L-E-Y*.

SL: Wow. *S-R-I* . . .

DF: *Y—Y*.

SL: *Y-G*—okay, okay. And—um—you just have a vague recollection of your grandfather on your father—your dad's side.

DF: Yes. [00:05:44] I can remember when I was very young—uh—visiting at his res—at his residence and his store. Yeah. He had a small grocery e—on the east side of Little Rock. And he lived above the store. And I can remember when I was very young having to visit there, but—uh—the recollection is vague, and I never knew him before he died.

SL: Okay, well—um—did your father talk about him much at all?

DF: No, he didn't.

SL: He didn't?

DF: No.

SL: Okay.

DF: Very little.

SL: Very little?

DF: As a—matter of fact, my father talked about family very little—uh—or his family. And my mother maintained more contact with his family than—than he did. Uh—she was very diligent at maintaining contact.

SL: Okay, well, le—let's—let's move over to your mother's side—uh—and—her—her family. Um—you said that you did have some recollection of your mother's mother.

DF: Very—yes. She lived with—to be within four months of one hundred before she died. So we had many, many years with her and—and wonderful. Her husband died at—at age forty-nine.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: And she still had—she had four daughters, my mother being one. And—uh—must have been an excellent financial manager because she was able to—uh—maintain her house and—and to raise those children—uh—and—uh—uh—still lived in that house until she—uh—af—long after they were gone. And—and—and then later moved.

[00:07:56] SL: And—and so that was here in Little Rock?

DF: It was here in Little Rock, uh-huh.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: On the south side of Little Rock—uh—on Battery Street about a block from Mitchell School.

SL: Um—do you know what—um—their—um—her husband, your grandfather on your mother's side, what—what he did for a living?

DF: Oh yes. Uh—he was in banking. Uh—an—his name was Perry Simpson. Uh—and—uh—uh—he was a vice president with Worthen Bank. Of course—uh—uh—was one of the fatalities, and I don't mean literally, but of the Depression.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: Uh—was with the bank during the Depression. Worthen [*beeping noise*] was one of the few banks that did not fail. And—uh—he—uh—his father was—uh—had been a physician at Corning, Arkansas.

SL: A country doctor.

DF: Yes. And—uh—and my grandmother was from Nebraska originally, and she was—uh—half Czech. And her maiden name was Hvizdalek.

SL: All right, now let's spell that.

[00:09:27] DF: I—I couldn't spell it.

SL: You couldn't spell it.

DF: Right. [*SL laughs*] I co—and . . .

SL: I think—I think we saw an image of her—um—in—in—in the scanning area, and I just kinda guessed at how that was spelled.

DF: And I . . .

SL: We'll—we'll work that out.

DF: And I failed to mention that—uh—my father grew up in—in Clarksville, Arkansas, and—uh—was originally from Coal Hill, a small town right outside of Clarksville.

SL: Uh-huh. And—uh—do you remember going to your—uh—grandmother's house in Little Rock?

DF: A—frequently. Every—every occasion—uh—it—it would be at her residence. Uh—and when I—uh—worked during the summers—uh—my—some summers my place of employment was over there in the—in the south part of town, and I would—uh—have lunch there with her—uh—every Saturday and maybe other days in the week.

[00:10:29] SL: What—what was that house like? Do you remember—can you describe it?

DF: Well, it was a one-story frame home with a big porch in the front, a covered—uh—porch typical of that era. And—uh—it—uh—uh—the terrain of the property fell to the rear, and so it was what we would call today a split to the rear—uh—residence,

except downstairs was not finished. It was all basement.

SL: Uh-huh. Did she—um—have a garden? Do you remember a garden or . . .

DF: She had a small a garden.

SL: Uh-huh.

DF: She did. The—uh—nothing—uh—like the gardens that they were encouraging, of course, in World War II.

SL: Mh-hmm. Um—so I guess she was a—a—would she cook you lunch when you were working over there?

DF: Oh yes.

SL: Uh-huh.

DF: Uh-huh. She—her—her lunches and—and everything she cooked was a—a big attraction.

[00:11:36] SL: Well, did she ever tell you any stories about her mom and dad and her childhood and growing up?

DF: Sh—we—we used to—uh—laugh at the stories because she would regularly tell us—uh—you know, every generation talks about—uh—the hardships that they went through, and now we—we talk about—uh—living without air-conditioning and growing up in—in those con—things like that in tha—in those conditions. But she would tell us about—uh—uh—going to school in—in the snow in Nebraska. [*SL laughs*] And walking and—and having to

have a rope to find her way from the road—uh—to the residence—uh—because of—of the height of the snow and trying to deal with the—the cattle—uh—there during the—uh—the snows and blizzards.

SL: So—um—uh—she grew up on a farm, then.

DF: Yes. It was in a rural section of Nebraska, and I don't know the background of that.

SL: Uh-huh. Um—any other—uh—stories that come to mind that you may have heard from her?

DF: None that come to mind now.

SL: Um—well, that's interesting. Uh—a very strong woman to raise the four girls, and I mean—uh—how, I guess—um—uh—if her husband died—uh—when he was almost fifty, I guess he had a hand in raising the kids.

DF: Yes . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . of course, the four girls all—all knew him and knew him well.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: Uh—but—uh—but his death was prior to my—uh—being born.

SL: Did your—uh—mother ever talk about her father much?

DF: No, not very much.

[00:13:38] SL: Um—well, okay. Let's talk about your mom and dad

now for a little bit. Um—uh—earlier, you were talking about how you—uh—they emphasized, or at least your father emphasized, getting an education. Uh—how far did his education go?

DF: Post—uh—high school. He had a short course in Dallas . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . in a business school and learned bookkeeping and typing and became a male secretary.

SL: And his—his name was . . .

DF: Leon.

SL: Leon?

DF: Flake. Yeah, Charles Leon Flake.

SL: Charles Leon Flake. And—um—um—so his—what did he do for a living?

DF: Well, he was—he—a—after business school, he came to Little Rock and was a secretary to J. D. Walthour . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . who managed the real estate department for Worthen Bank. Now, that was immediately before the Depression.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:52] DF: And banks at that time, were allowed to engage in other businesses. And so—uh—Worthen Bank had a complete real estate service department, brokerage, and property

management . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . and the serv—regular services. J. D. Walthour ran that department, and my father was his secretary.

[00:15:15] SL: And—but did you say that he lost his job during the Depression with . . .

DF: No.

SL: No, he didn't?

DF: No—uh—he did not, but during the Depression, when they had the banking reform—uh—laws, they—they made it a—uh—requirement that banks could not engage in other businesses. And one of those was real estate brokerage business. Now Worthen was grandfathered because it was already in the business and they were not prohibited from continuing. But they voluntarily elected to discontinue the business. So—uh—J. D. Walthour left Worthen because of that and formed his own brokerage, real estate brokerage firm. And when he was leaving, my father was going with him and—uh—still working as his secretary . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . and approached him and ask him if he could be on the name of—of the firm with him. And—uh—J. D. Walthour a—agreed to

that. And that was what created Walthour-Flake—uh—Realty in 1934, right in the—the bottom of the Depression. And so—and he—and—and to the day m—J. D. Walthour died, he was—he w—always called him Mr. Walthour. [*SL laughs*]

[00:16:49] SL: That's good. So—um—what about your mother?

Was your mother basically a housewife? She ran the household?

DF: Yes. N—now mother did have two years of junior college. And that was at Little Rock Junior College before it had its—uh—location on University Avenue. At the time, Little Rock Junior College was in the building with—uh—Central High, which now Central High e—of course, then it was Little Rock Senior High, and we o—because we only had one high school . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . in the city. And the junior college wa—shared space in the same building.

SL: Um—well, do you know how your mom and dad met?

DF: Uh—I don't know the specifics except that they—they both met after my father had moved to Little Rock, and—and they met each other—uh—when they were both living here. And then had occasion to date an—uh—and developed a relationship and were married.

SL: Um—well, let's talk a little bit about the house that you grew up

in. Um—where in Little Rock was that at?

DF: Well, from birth through the middle of elementary school, it was on Pearl Street in the—uh—district—uh—known as Stiff Station. It's—it was on the trolley line and—uh—between downtown and Hillcrest.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: In—on—on—on Kavanaugh Boulevard on the trolley line, and—uh—we lived at 212 Pearl. That was about three and a half blocks from—uh—my elementary school, Woodruff School, and right across th—which was right across the street from Lamar Porter Field. And so we spent a tremendous amount of time a—at Lamar Porter Field—uh—which was the home of—uh—the American Legion team and—and all of the—uh—younger teams that played—uh—baseball.

SL: Um—so I'm going to assume that your house had running water and electricity and . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . all the conveniences of urban living in—in the mid-[19]30s.

DF: It did.

SL: Um . . .

DF: A—and of course y—th—that was almost—World War II had almost begun. I was born in [19]38 and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . so—uh—uh—m—my recollections are limited to really the early [19]40s and the . . .

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

DF: . . . and the war years.

[00:19:55] SL: Uh—was the house—um—a single-story house and—  
or . . .

DF: Yes. It was a single-story frame . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DF: . . . residence.

SL: Mh-hmm. And—um—uh—was it—uh—boiler heat? Was it a coal-fired boiler?

DF: Floor furnace.

SL: Floor furnace.

DF: Yes. So that would have been gas.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Um—that's—uh—that's . . .

DF: At—at—at one time it had radiators, but—uh—which would have been steam. Bu—but—uh—it was—uh—converted to floor furnace.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:34] SL: So it was an older home that got converted, then?

DF: Yes.

SL: So you also had refrigeration. It was real refrigeration. It wasn't an icebox.

DF: At one point it was an icebox, and then there was refrigeration, yes.

SL: Do you remember the icebox?

DF: No.

SL: No?

DF: I really don't.

SL: The—what was the neighborhood like?

[00:21:06] DF: It was an interesting neighborhood. A number of children. We—everyone knew each other. Of course, there was no electronic entertainment, so your entertainment was all outside and relating to your neighbors and engaging with the other children in the area. And there were some gardens in our area, but we did not have one at our residence. And I can remember two or three doors away where they were still raising chickens because our dog was sometimes guilty of getting one of their chickens.

SL: So it was basically an all-white neighborhood and . . .

DF: Yes. There was no integration at the time. And—but it—not far south of us were black neighborhoods. They were not far, but there was really no mixing housingwise at that time.

SL: Do you remember much about the war years at all? You were so young when that started up.

[00:22:31] DF: I remember the rationing and the limitations on any driving because of the rationing with the emphasis on gasoline. The—I remember the emphasis on having gardens that—from the government. They were—that was almost as big a program as the savings bonds. They called 'em victory gardens. And I—one of the developments of Walthour-Flake was a Victory Garden Acres. [SL laughs] It was an addition over in North Little Rock where they had adequate land for each lot that allowed each to have their own garden.

SL: It was—so it was like a community garden?

DF: No.

SL: No?

DF: No, they were individual.

SL: Individual.

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm. But they—they had a number of small subdivision developments like that. Mr. Walthour—J. D. Walthour was very visionary. And he had a developer's sense of timing and market.

SL: So as an example he . . .

DF: Well, their biggest—their most significant development was

immediately after the war. It was the Kingwood addition, which is not far from where we are right now. And was considered then to be outside of Little Rock on the periphery.

SL: Yeah.

DF: It was—Highway 10, or Cantrell Road, was a two-lane highway, and when they developed Kingwood addition it was hundreds and hundreds of acres. And he—it was very—it was a real bold development. And if it weren't for the commitment of J. D. Walthour and his vision, I don't think that my father and the other two partners would have been—had the confidence that they did. [00:24:59] But it was very successful. There was a pinup demand immediately after World War II for housing with the returning servicemen and the fact that nothing had been constructed during the war, all the resources going to the war. So it was very successful.

SL: So he anticipated—he knew that was going to—he could see that that was gonna happen and he . . .

DF: He had that intuition. I don't know if he—if analytically he went through that process, but he knew. And he had that sense of market and timing.

SL: Did you ever get to speak with him at all or . . .

DF: Yes. I returned to Little Rock after working at Burroughs in

1965, and he lived until 1969. He was almost bedridden during that time, but I would visit with him many times.

SL: Did he ever relate any old Little Rock stories to you, or was he that—in that good of shape to really . . .

DF: He was in that good of condition because his problems were circulatory with his legs. There was nothing mental. But he did not relate those stories.

SL: Okay. Um—well, back to your house. Now how many children were in the household that you grew up in? Let's just go ahead and talk about this first house and the . . .

DF: Okay.

SL: . . . through elementary school.

[00:26:40] DF: Well, at the time, we lived on Pearl Street. It was—there were two children, my brother—fir—brother Gordon. He's just over two years younger than me. And me. Then we moved when I was nine years old. And after that, two more children were born. And that was John—John Joel and—who lives here in Little Rock and is practicing in real estate. And then the fourth sibling, Tommy, was a Down syndrome child. We didn't initially know, of course, at that time with the knowledge that we had that—we later learned it was Down syndrome, and so he was the fourth child.

SL: In the house that got you halfway through elementary school, you mentioned that y'all didn't have electronics, but was there a radio in that house?

DF: Oh yes.

SL: Do you remember spending any time in front of the radio?

DF: Absolutely. Sure.

SL: But . . .

DF: We just lived with the radio and our favorite programs.

SL: What were some of those programs?

[00:28:06] DF: Well, of course, it was during the war, and a lot of the children's games were almost all war games. And so there was *The FBI in Peace and War* [SL laughs], and there was another FBI program and all—several detective programs that we enjoyed listening to and made sure that we were there. They were all only thirty minutes. And so you didn't miss one. And they were all continued.

SL: [Laughs] Episode after episode.

DF: Right.

SL: Series. Well, of the programs, did you have a favorite?

DF: Oh, it was always the FBI programs.

SL: Huh. That's interesting. Was there—was *Roy Rogers* around then?

DF: Yes, and *The Lone Ranger*, right?

SL: "Hi-yo, Silver."

DF: Yes, and *Jack Armstrong*.

SL: Uh-huh. What about music? Did you pay much attention to music over the radio?

DF: Not very much at that time.

SL: And prize fighting?

DF: No.

SL: Don't remember that?

DF: Not very much at the—on the radio.

SL: Was there a musical instrument in your house growing up?

DF: Yes, my mother played the piano. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did she encourage the children to take lessons and learn to play, too, or . . .

DF: No, none of us did.

SL: What kind of music did she play on the piano?

[00:30:09] DF: She—it was not classical. It was typical song sheet music.

SL: Popular music?

DF: Yes.

SL: Okay, so did—what about the dinner table when your—I assume that your mom would fix the meals. Were y'all expected to be at

the table at a certain time for each meal or . . .

DF: We were. And we—that was a very important time in the evening.

SL: The evening meal . . .

DF: The evening meal . . .

SL: . . . was the main meal?

DF: Yes.

SL: And what about breakfast and how—would she should pack your lunch for you for school or . . .

DF: No, we usually would eat at the cafeteria . . .

SL: Okay.

DF: . . . at school.

SL: Okay. And . . .

DF: And we very seldom did we bring a lunch. I envied the kids that could bring their lunch and have the sandwiches they wanted. And I had to eat the vegetables in the cafeteria.

SL: The powdered potatoes?

DF: Right.

[00:31:12] SL: What about breakfast? Did you have breakfast every morning?

DF: Yes, every morning.

SL: What was a typical breakfast for y'all?

DF: Toast, bacon, eggs. Things haven't changed.

SL: Things haven't changed. Well, let's—so would everyone gather round at the same time for breakfast as well? Would y'all start . . .

DF: Yes, except . . .

SL: . . . your day together as a family?

DF: Yes, exce—my mother always would—it would depend on whether or not my father had early commitments.

SL: What about church and religion or—in the home? Was church a part of growing up in your household?

DF: It—very much so. I'm third generation and member of Second Presbyterian Church. My grandmother was a member, and her family, and then our family—my mother's family. She was the one who really was the driving force at making sure that we were exposed to the church. My father had been raised in Church of Christ, but he was not practicing.

[00:32:38] SL: So you would be—go to church every Sunday?

DF: Every Sunday. And . . .

SL: And was that—were there activities in the afternoon on Sunday?

DF: No, but other activities. At that time, church—Second Presbyterian was downtown. And it was immediately behind where the Federal Building is now at Third and Gaines streets.

It's now part of the federal complexes there—or the property is—where they have parking for government vehicles. But there were other activities constantly at the church. We would go to Sunday evening programs for the children and then, of course, the summer Bible school classes and then the other recreational activities. There was a church softball team and that type activity.

[00:33:40] SL: Was your mother active in the church at all? Did she volunteer for activities?

DF: She was always volunteering and doing things in the church and then in the community. She was just an active giver when it came to volunteer service.

SL: Do you remember some of the things that she did for the church?

DF: Well, she was very active in the Women of the Church and all of their programs they had, which incidentally still exist today at Second Presbyterian, and the Women of the Church was one of her beneficiaries for memorials. She was devoted for her whole life, but she did so many other things and the—she was active and president of the PTA, and she was one of the organizers of the Association for the Retarded and worked in that association for probably forty years as a result of . . .

SL: Tommy.

DF: . . . our Tommy.

[00:35:01] SL: So—but your father didn't really participate on the church side of things. Would he go to church with you-all on Sunday?

DF: Very—no, he really did not attend very frequently. [*SL clears throat*] It was unusual when he attended.

SL: Was . . .

DF: He was good about making sure we got there. He would deliver us. [*Laughter*]

SL: And I'm assuming you had Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes on every Sunday? Was it . . .

DF: Absolutely.

SL: . . . dressed up and . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . pressed and . . .

DF: Your church clothes were the best you had.

SL: So would you go to church service and then come home for the day, or would you go back to church on Sunday for . . .

DF: Sunday evening . . .

SL: . . . afternoon—evenings?

DF: . . . frequently we would go back to programs. Now that was in

our early years. You know, later, sometimes I would attend Sunday evening programs at other churches because you tended in junior high and high school days to wanna be with your peers.

SL: Y—sure.

DF: And so you—everyone tended to go one place together.

SL: So you kinda, as far as youth activities, you were maybe open to switching denominations a little bit to stick with your friends.

Was that the . . .

DF: In terms in youth activities.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And the reverse was true. For example . . .

SL: They would come . . .

DF: . . . when we had our church softball team, well, I would recruit players from our school that were not—they might have been Methodist, but they were eligible to play as long as they committed to the team. They did not have to be members of the church.

[00:37:06] SL: Was there ever any Bible study at home? Did your mom ever read Bible stories to you or . . .

DF: Yes, it was not a—an ongoing discipline program. But I can remember sh—early in our development she had the *Hurlbut's Stories of the Bible*, which put the stories in a language easier to

handle for young people. And they—we were active in re—in studying those.

SL: Was grace ever said at the dining table?

DF: Oh yes. Uh-huh.

SL: Was it your mom that usually said it, or did y'all take turns or . . .

DF: Both. Mh-hmm. Generally, she would have one of us do it. But that was not every meal. Was—when I think about it, probably it was only Sunday noon that we did that.

SL: What about chores around the house? Did you help with any of the upkeep of the house at all? Did you make your own bed in the morning, or was that left up to your mom to do, or . . .

DF: No, we had those responsibilities.

SL: Good.

DF: Yes.

[00:38:42] SL: Uh-huh. Anything else—what about laundry? Was that hung out on the line, or was there . . .

DF: It was on the line for—even after we had moved and lived in the Heights area, it was still on the line for many years. Mh-hmm. Now we did not—her sons didn't participate in the laundry. We did to have to keep our room pretty good, but that was it.

SL: What about the games that you would play in the neighborhood,

like after school or before you went to—started going to kindergarten or first grade? What were the kind of—what were the social activities for you in the neighborhood?

[00:39:45] DF: Well, here again, if you said preschool and even—well, preschool—it was very much related to the influence that the war had on us because the war was still going on preschool. And then later it was more athletic activities, and we were—whether we would stay on the school ground at Woodruff School or use Lamar Porter Field, we were always engaged in athletic activities. Everyone was always outside. There was—you just—you didn't go inside, almost. [SL laughs] The—and when we moved, we didn't have a field close by when we were in the Heights area, and we played softball and touch football on the—in the street. And just move when [unclear word] and get out of the way and stop the play when there was a car coming. We'd pick a lightly used street that was as wide as we could find.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And that was the playground.

SL: Were you aware of any of the families around you that had folks in the service during the war?

DF: Yes. More s—there were some over in the Pearl Street area, and I was not close to those, but after we moved to the Heights area

in the latter part of elementary school and beyond, we had a neighbor right across the street from us that were—whose—the family were very close to ours, and he had lost his eyesight during the war.

SL: Do you remember going to movie theaters and watching the newsreels about the war?

DF: Yes, I remember a lot about the movies during not only the war years but during the war years where it was not related to the war because—that we had so many movie theaters in Little Rock at that time, most of which were downtown. I would say there must have been eight or nine theaters in the central business district, of which probably six or seven were on Main Street alone. And, of course, that was the era of the serials. And so you had to go back [*SL laughs*] every Saturday to see what happened after they jumped off the cliff.

[00:42:57] SL: How—yeah, the cliff-hangers. How much did it cost to go to a film then?

DF: I don't remember the price at that time, but I know after we moved here, the Heights Theater was still operating and did for many years after that, and that was about ten blocks from our residence. And we would walk to the theater, and a—the adult price was thirty-five cents, and the children was fourteen.

SL: Fourteen? Wonder why fourteen.

DF: I don't know.

SL: That's an unusual number. Popcorn a nickel or dime, maybe,  
or . . .

DF: I think it was a dime.

SL: Did you experience any segregation conventions at the theaters?  
Were African Americans relegated to the balcony, or did you  
just—did they just have their own theaters and there was never  
any mix?

[00:44:07] DF: There was—it was both. They were at some theaters  
relegated to the balcony. The Heights didn't have a balcony.  
And it was all white. The—but they also had their own theaters.

SL: I would guess that probably the most popular movies were  
Westerns? Saw mostly Westerns?

DF: Westerns and, of course, war movies.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Particularity when the—after the war was over. Yeah.

SL: Did you—do you remember listening to war news on the radio?

DF: Yes, I do.

SL: And presidential addresses and things like that?

DF: I really don't remember presidential addresses.

SL: Telephone? Was there a telephone in your house?

[00:45:04] DF: Yes, we had phones. Of course, it was a single phone for the house and long before push buttons, the dial. The—we were talking a few minutes ago about the difference in pricing. And I can remember when I was talking to my dad and he would tell me about how pricing was so expensive when I was a child and he was an adult compared to when he was a child because he was buy—he would get—on Saturday, he would buy a bowl of chili for five doll—I mean for five cents. Or you could get a big bowl for ten cents. And so we thought then to pay thirty-five cents for a bowl of chili was so much more than what he was—had experienced. And it—every generation seems to be able to relate that with different numbers.

SL: Yep. Yeah, it never—that stuff just keeps climbin' forever. Let's see, I was gonna ask you about—oh! Automobile, car. Did y'all have a car?

DF: We did.

SL: Do you remember what kind it was when you were little?

DF: Mostly Plymouths. Yeah.

SL: Were they—was it a four-door or a coupe or—probably a four-door with the kids.

DF: We had one four-door and, I believe, one coupe. At one point we did have two cars even—when we lived over on Pearl Street

because in the real estate brokerage business if you did not have a car, well, you were not in business.

SL: Did y'all ever go on vacations in the cars?

DF: Yes, we took some trips to Florida in the car a couple of times. We—on the Gulf Coast, we were unable to take trips during the war, obviously. This was postwar.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And during the war, we had two trips to Colorado, but by train. And my dad didn't go. He stayed and worked at home, but my brother Gordon and I—and it was before John and Tommy were born. And we took—we'd take the train. At the time, the trains were—there were a few diesel, but most were steam powered. And there was no air-conditioning, so you had to leave the windows up, and so you were black by the time [*SL laughs*] you arrived at your destination because of the soot.

[00:48:26] SL: The soot. Uh-huh. That's interesting. But you know, rail transportation was really the way a lot of people got from town to town.

DF: Of course.

SL: Much more important role in public transportation than it is now. Do you remember going to the train stations and . . .

DF: Oh, yes. Yeah, Union Station in Little Rock was a bustling,

active center of town.

SL: So did you go anywhere else besides Colorado by train?

DF: Later, we went to Saint Louis to see professional baseball for a couple of days. Mh-hmm. But very seldom did we travel any—by train. We—once we were able to use the automobile after the war, then that would—was generally the method.

SL: Do you remember your dad ever fixing flats on the car?

DF: Yes. Yeah. It was something with the inner tubes and everything that went with it. And tire problems were much more frequent then. They were not near as reliable as we have now.

SL: So you would bring extra tubes and certainly a tube repair kit? Was it a hot patch? Did you get to see him do a hot patch on the tube?

[00:50:09] DF: No.

SL: No?

DF: No. It was just changing.

SL: Just . . .

DF: He'd put that spare on and get—and go where you can get help.

SL: Okay. All right. Let's see. You've mentioned baseball several times. Did you ever play any football in the neighborhood? Was it . . .

DF: It depended on the season. We'd be on the street with foot—

touch football or softball.

SL: And were the Razorbacks on the radio back then?

DF: Oh yes. And we would—and they still—they had—they played games in Little Rock when we were not that old. And my brother Gordon and I would go to the games. We initially saw them—they used to play at Central High Stadium. And—which was in Senior High. And then War Memorial Stadium was constructed right after World War II, and we attended many games there.

SL: Did you get to see Clyde "Smackover" Scott play?

DF: I sure did. He was my idol. I had his autograph on my programs, and he was my idol. And as a matter of fact his widow, Leslie, is a member of our church. Yeah.

[00:51:42] SL: Well, of course, Clyde is still with us, you know, I mean . . .

DF: I'm sorry, I didn't . . .

SL: Yeah, he's still with us.

DF: I just never . . .

SL: In fact, we've interviewed him.

DF: Okay, I did not . . .

SL: We spent a couple of days with him.

DF: I didn't know that.

SL: Yeah. And he's wonderful. What about Muscles Campbell? Do

you remember Muscles Campbell?

DF: I sure do. Yeah. Those were great memories. They—I would be down—they were not as restrictive then on the field—and I would be down there behind the bench getting their autographs during the games.

SL: Sure. Well, you know, I've heard that War Memorial Stadium was really built to accommodate everyone that wanted to see those guys play, wanted to see Clyde Scott play and Muscles Campbell and that whole [19]40s, you know, late [19]40s, early [19]50s players. They were quite the sensation for the state. Something to be . . .

DF: They were, right. And I—and even in the early [19]50s—those were the John Barnhill coaching days and then later in the early [19]50s with Bowden Wyatt.

[00:53:06] SL: Uh-huh. Was there any particular football game that you remember very well?

DF: The Ole Miss game.

SL: Okay, now let's talk about those Ole Miss games. That was a very big rivalry back then.

DF: Intense rivalry. And I can't tell you that I remember a play-by-play in the games, but I do remember the 6-0 game with the long pass.

SL: Uh-huh. And do you remember what happen—what could happen after those games, immediately after the games?

DF: No, I don't.

SL: Well, I know my father was in a few fights [*laughs*] after those games. They would actually go to Mississippi. They'd take a train to the Ole Miss games in Mississippi as well. I just remember that growin' up.

DF: I see. At that time, you know, University Avenue was Hayes Street, and it was a—it was not paved. It was a dirt road. And so the best way to avoid the traffic when you were leaving War Memorial Stadium was to go west to Hayes Street and then go ahead and fight the dust and the dirt road because the other cars didn't wanna do that. The other drivers preferred to stay in the paved streets.

[00:54:39] SL: That's good. What about Little Rock? Can you kind of remember your first impressions of Little Rock as a town? You know, you've been so—through your career, you've been so instrumental in the growth of Little Rock and what it has become. But can you remember what it was like growing up as to—compared to what it is now? I mean, I know that there weren't thirty-story buildings at the time that you were growing up, but was it more village-like? Series of villages that—or

neighborhoods that were kind of conglomerated into one big town, or what was Little Rock like?

[00:55:30] DF: No, I think it was even less village-like because we have so much more sprawl now. Postwar, with the influence of the automobile and the change in our residential preferences. We changed the street patterns from the grid streets to the designs that more meandered through a residential area to control traffic and the—our population was much denser then. There was much more activity on the streets than we have now, some of which was due to the layout of the residential neighborhoods, but—and some of which is due to the electronic entertainment and the con—air-conditioning . . .

SL: Sure.

DF: . . . that we have that keeps us more inside now and less on our porches and outside. But it was—except for the segregation of the races, it was more homogeneous and less separate by major subdivision, which you might characterize as villages.

SL: Mh-hmm. What about discipline in the home when you were growing up? What was that like? Was your father the main enforcer of doing the right things, or was it shared? Or was your mother more . . .

DF: It was all mother. [*SL laughs*] She was the discipline, right.

SL: That's because she was with you.

DF: Yes. Yeah. And that was an era, which really carried on through much of my parenthood, early parenthood. And that was an era when the—basically, the mother ran the house, and the father was expected to produce the living. And those roles were very well defined.

SL: Yeah, really, in our lifetime we're just—we have just now started to see that erode where it's more even now than . . .

DF: It's much more balanced now, and the young people with whom I work now—it's far more balanced than what certainly the experience I had growing up, but much more balanced also than what was practiced when I was a parent raising our child.

[00:58:37] SL: So was it a switch that your mom had, or was it a paddle or just—was there physical reprimand?

DF: Sure, yeah, we had spankings, and we had—and there might have been a light switch on your legs sometimes, but basically it was the flat of your hand.

SL: Yeah. Did the—you know, I know some folks have commented before that even the neighbors, if they saw you doing something wrong, either they would—maybe they wouldn't discipline you on the spot, but they might call the house and your discipline would be waiting for you when you got home. Did you—were the—was

the neighborhood kind of a watchdog group too for the kids  
and . . .

DF: Yes. And the retailers in the neighborhood. If you were in a store and they—and you were either picking up products and not puttin' 'em back right and messing up the shelves or anything like that that you might be doing that was inappropriate behavior, and—they would call your parents because they knew your parents. It was the neighborhood stores. And I believe now at Stiff Station where we were growing up that the same drugstore is still there, Buice Drugs.

SL: Okay, we're gonna change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:36] SL: Dickson, we're starting our second tape into our second hour of our Pryor Center interview today. We were—we had been talking about—one of the things we'd talked about toward the end of tape one was discipline, the way discipline was growing up as a child. And we were saying, you know, not only would the neighbors call the parents whenever they saw a child acting out, even retailers knew—everybody knew everybody.

DF: That's right.

SL: On your path to school and back or wherever you went to the stores or the drugstores or the movie theaters, everybody kinda

knew who was who.

DF: And part of your discipline was not only what was delivered at home, but at least at our home we were forced to go back to the place of the infraction and make the apologies.

[01:01:44] SL: You know, that's really—I don't wanna start committing a lot of philosophy here, but that really teaches you something.

DF: It's tough to do.

SL: It's much easier just to not get in trouble and not do the thing that got you in trouble.

DF: Right.

SL: Let's talk a little bit more about your mom and dad. I'm gonna ask you this question. I kind of gave you a sneak preview on this during our coffee break. But sometimes I like to ask people if they can remember the very first image that they have in their mind of their mother and father. Can you remember looking at your mother and realizing that she was your mother, or you remember what she was doing when you really kind of understood that you were somebody and that you had a mother and that she was doing something? Can you remember?

[01:02:54] DF: I think with my mother that my first recollection was probably when I was three and had a tonsillectomy, which was

commonly done with all children at a very young age at that time. They automatically removed your tonsils. And I was in the hospital at St. Vincent, again over on High Street where I was born, and now Martin Luther King, and she was there in the room. I don't remember any of the details.

SL: Your throat was probably sore.

DF: That I remember.

SL: And maybe the next day did they give you ice cream?

DF: Oh, that—you got it. [*SL laughs*] You know the drill.

SL: Been there.

DF: Yeah.

SL: Well, that's good. So that's interesting. Your earliest memory was in the same place that you were born, essentially.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's fun. Do you remember going home from the hospital?

DF: No, I don't.

SL: And the hospital—maybe we should talk a little bit about the hospital. I would guess probably white everywhere and tall ceilings and . . .

[01:04:23] DF: Yes. It was, and of course, at that time there were many more young, devout Catholics that entered the vocations. And so it wasn't only the management that were in the order,

that ran the hospital, but many of the nurses were in the order and—the—it was a special atmosphere.

SL: Maybe Bibles in the rooms? I can't—you know, I can't really speak to that, but . . .

DF: Well, of course, the rooms—I can't be sure of this, but I think that it was just like the hotels—the Gideons had been there . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . with the Bibles.

SL: Yeah, yeah. Well, okay, and so you can remember your mom in the room after the tonsillectomy at the hospital. Do you remember your first conversation or your first exchange with your mother? That probably happened a few years later, but was there something that she said to you early on that—can you remember the first stuff that she ever talked to you about?

DF: I really . . .

SL: Or an early conversation?

DF: I cannot, Scott.

SL: Okay. And what about your father? Do you remember the first time that you were really aware of your dad?

[01:06:15] DF: I'm sure I was aware of my dad long before the first experiences I remember with him, but my experiences with—my first recollection of experiences with him were in the evenings

when he would take my brother and I for drives in the car, and of course, there was no real entertainment at that time. And one of the big entertaining activities was to go to the airport and watch the aircraft landing and taking off because it was a big thing then. And we would sit at the edge of the field and watch them landing and taking off. And I can remember on one occasion, probably I was four at the time, four and a half, when we—again during the war, and you revered the servicemen, and we had picked up two servicemen that were walking along the road and givin' 'em a ride to their—wherever they were going near the airport, and drop them off, and they were in uniform. It was my—they—it tended to make the memories of the drives with my dad—distinguished themselves because of that incident with the service people.

SL: It was exciting, wasn't it, to have . . .

DF: It was. Yes.

SL: You know, it's interesting that you should say—remember going to the airfield to watch the planes come and go 'cause that's the second time this week that someone has said something about that. They would even pack a picnic lunch [*DF laughs*], and the kids so loved watching the airplanes come in it gave the mom and dad time to catch up and talk and visit. I don't know, did

your mom go to the airfields with y'all? Or was that just a father-son . . .

DF: I'm sure she did some, but it was primarily father-son.

SL: What about—you mention baseball early on. What other kinds of games and activities did you do as a youngster early on?

[01:09:13] DF: Well, all sports, and not all of them that we have today. I mean, we certainly weren't exposed to soccer.

SL: Right.

DF: But—and then I can remember in—not preschool, but in elementary years—one of our big activities—and we would spend all summer making rubber guns.

SL: Rubber guns?

DF: Yes, now this was part of the era of the tires with inner tubes.

SL: Okay.

DF: Okay. And we would have saws and get wood scraps and cut out pistols—wooden pistols. And then you would tie a clothespin on the end and then cut an inner tube and knot it, and that would be your trajectory [DF edit: projectile] and pull it from the barrel and clamp it with the clothespin and then fire it [*SL laughs*], and of course, we spent ten times as much time making 'em as we ever did playing with 'em or having rubber gun fights, but because the big thing was making the best gun and the

longest one and you made one look like a submachine gun and—  
or a pistol and curved handles. And so that was our  
woodworking exercise before we knew what it was.

SL: I guess the tighter you could stretch that tire tube, the further it  
would go and the more velocity it would . . .

DF: That's right.

SL: . . . hit the other kids with.

DF: And I don't know if you can remember, it may be before you, but  
inner tubes were made with both synthetic rubber and natural  
rubber. And you could sure tell the difference in how they—the  
elasticity . . .

SL: Well, talk to me about that.

DF: . . . and how they fired.

[01:11:45] SL: Tell—talk to me about that. Which one was  
preferred?

DF: Oh, the natural. It was much more elastic and would fire further  
and harder. [*SL laughs*]

SL: More effective.

DF: Yes.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, that's interesting. No, I did not know.

DF: The synthetic rubber had very little stretch to it.

SL: So it was—maybe it was in some way more—it was advanced. It

was more durable for the purpose for which it was made to . . .

DF: I don't know if it was more advanced or if it was as good as they could do because you wanted an inner tube to be elastic . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. That's interesting.

DF: . . . when you fill the tire.

SL: Well, so this—and it was mostly playing army. It wasn't cowboys and Indians. It was army.

DF: There was that, too.

SL: There was?

DF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Yeah. A lot of that.

[01:12:51] SL: Well, what about—you know, your life seems to have been so urban-centered. I mean, even your grandparents seemed to be urbancentric. The—were there ever any, you know, camping or fishing or hunting, any of those wildlife sports or activities? Did y'all ever go on camping trips at all?

DF: As a family, we did not go on camping trips. My—we did have several occasions where we went fishing. My father was not a hunter. And so we did some of our own camping out with the kids, without the parents, where they would—we had tents and we could set the tents up and they would—we would go to, say,

a friend's residence out from town where we could camp and—on their farm.

SL: Have a little campfire?

DF: Yes. Right.

SL: Did you—were you ever attracted to Cub Scouts or . . .

[01:14:20] DF: Yes. Uh-huh. I was a member of the Cub Scouts.

And that was back in the Stiff Station neighborhood. And the—I can remember our den mother was Mrs. Nash, Mary Burt Nash, who later was a juvenile judge here in Pulaski County. And she was a very close friend of my mother's. Their families had been friends for years, even with their parents. And she was our den mother for many years. And I can remember the den meetings at her house every week.

SL: I was gonna ask you about—were those church-affiliated? Was that—were the . . .

DF: Ours was not.

SL: It was not. Okay.

DF: No. Even though the Nashes and our family were both members of the same Presbyterian church. Yeah.

SL: But the church didn't sponsor the troop or the den.

DF: No.

SL: Well, did you take it further than Cub Scouts?

DF: No, I was never a Boy Scout.

SL: Okay.

DF: Did not.

SL: What kind of fishing was it that you did, and where would you go?

[01:15:43] DF: We would go to Lake Hamilton.

SL: Over in Hot Springs.

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm. And so you were—we're fishing primarily for bass and crappie.

SL: Yeah. Cane poles?

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did y'all have a—did you rent a cabin or stay overnight there?

DF: Yes, many times. Mh-hmm.

SL: Screened-in porch and . . .

DF: Some, yes. Uh-huh. I can remember the several resorts or trailer courts where we would stay.

[01:16:27] SL: Yeah, now let's talk about trailer courts for just a little bit. That's—those were essentially motels, but they had individual little separate units. Is that the way—is that what you mean by trailer court? Where the family would stay, basically, in a tiny little house . . .

DF: Well, the cottages—the trailer courts were not distinguished as

being detached. They were—we always thought of trailer courts, including the attached . . .

SL: Okay. Uh-huh.

DF: . . . buildings. But many of them did have separate detached cottages.

SL: Mh-hmm. And it came with a kitchen and . . .

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: So—and a sink and, you know, just so you could fix your own meals there.

DF: Sure. Right.

SL: Not as many of those as there were back then.

DF: No, they're rare now, and it was really after World War II with the—with Holiday Inn where Kemmons Wilson developed the concept that you were not gonna get any surprises. You knew the accommodations you would get because they were the same at every Holiday Inn. And then when you combine that with the freeway system being developed and all of the trailer courts were then not only obsolete in terms of being competitive with the Holiday Inn concept but also bypassed. And not on the freeway. I think those two things together were the death of that type of . . .

SL: Of the mom-and-pop . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . the trailer court.

DF: That type of hotel facility.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Although with the budget hotels now and some as small as thirty and forty units were—we've almost come 360 degrees.

SL: This is so rich. The—I was trying to think—you made me think of something while we were talking about hotels and the—oh! You know, do you remember the end of the war?

[01:19:15] DF: Yes, from the newsreels, but not local celebration.

SL: M'kay [Okay]. Do you remember an influx of men coming back from the war and seeing veterans and . . .

DF: I wasn't as conscious of that as I should have been.

SL: Okay. What about—you may have been too young to remember Pearl Harbor or . . .

DF: I was too young.

SL: You were too young.

DF: Yes. December of [19]41 . . .

SL: You would have been three.

DF: And see—three.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: You were busy having your tonsils out. [*Laughs*] First things first.

DF: Right.

SL: Well, so let's go back to movies. I wanna go back to movies because that's—and let's talk a little bit about segregation as you grew up. So you were aware that African Americans, if there were balconies, they would be relegated to a balcony in a mixed theater. Do you remember any other signs of segregation growing up here in Little Rock?

[01:20:33] DF: Oh, of course. There were many signs.

SL: What . . .

DF: There was—there were separate water fountains in the department stores and in the other public places that were large enough to have water fountains. There was a separate seating in the buses with the front and the rear with the blacks having to sit in the rear of the bus. So there were many signs.

SL: But you saw that as you were growing up. You could . . .

DF: Sure.

SL: And restaurants, too?

DF: Yes. Just admission to restaurants—and admission, for that matter, with—as a hotel guest.

SL: Did you ever see any—I mean, did you ever witness people

being refused service or being harassed in any way? I mean, you know, it seems to me that it's just kinda the way things were and people kind of—both sides just kind of accepted that. But there were—there was also, you know, confrontations happening as well.

[01:21:50] DF: No confrontations did I—do I recall. I can remember, though, it—not that it was acceptable, but that it was—we—it—the fact—it was so accepted that we would go to the rear of the black barbecue restaurants, and we would—they would have a separate area in the rear for whites to come and eat because they had the best food.

SL: Sure.

DF: And I can remember two different barbecue—favorite barbecue restaurants in Little Rock where we were seated in a separate area. But it was a real treat.

SL: Did your parents ever address segregation with y'all growing up? Did they ever sit you down and give you any kind of indication where they fell in that?

DF: No, but I—not until the Central High Crisis, and then it was clear to me how my dad felt, and his feelings were much stronger in resistance to integration. He wasn't an activist. But just how he internally felt as opposed to my mother, who was not—didn't feel

that way. And she was much more influenced by the church because our pastor at the church was very active in—not an activist, but very active in counseling and advocating the acceptance of integration and the equality of all people in the sight of God. And he was highly criticized in the community during those early—the years in the mid to late [19]50s.

[01:24:28] SL: Well, did this opposing views in the home—did that ever become any kind of problem at the house or . . .

DF: No, they weren't really opposing views because my parents had their personal views, but they weren't advocating. In one case you had moderate resistance; in the other case you had moderate re—acceptance. But neither were activists.

SL: Neither were on the extreme end . . .

DF: Right.

SL: . . . of everything. Did you know anybody that was extreme, or did you experience any of that extreme attitude one way or the other?

DF: Yes, I did, in the white community.

SL: Was it through the children or was it always the parents that kind of—or both . . .

DF: It was both because the children were always influenced by the parents. Although I think the children were much more

receptive to integration except for the parents' influence.

[01:25:59] SL: I guess we can talk about—we may as well go ahead and talk about Central High School. Okay, now did you go to Central High?

DF: I did.

SL: And what years were that—that would have been [19]60 . . .

DF: I graduated the year before the [19]57 crisis.

SL: Is that right?

DF: I graduated in [19]56, so I was in Ann Arbor in my freshman year of college when that occurred. And, of course, so I was seeing it through the perspective of the northern culture when I was in Ann Arbor. And, of course—and they wanted—there was a lot of open discussion then because they were—they not only had their own views but wanted to know mine and tended to want to discuss it more than I did.

SL: Yeah. Well, did you sense that this was coming when you were at Central High? I mean, in [19]56?

DF: No, I didn't.

SL: It was . . .

[01:27:10] DF: I did not sense it at all. And I don't—two observations there, Scott. I don't think it would have come had it not been for the influence of some of the adults. I think it

could have been relatively smooth if it had not been for the adult influence, if it had strictly been between the students. And the second thing I've always wondered is why that it was started at the high school level when so many people had had their attitudes formed over a number of years rather than at the elementary level when they could grow up going to school together. Yeah. I . . .

SL: Go ahead.

DF: I'm not sure of the merits of either, but I've always had some misgivings about whether or not that was the right strategy. But I still think it could have been a smooth merger of the school system had it not been for the adult influence.

SL: I wanna stop tape.

[Tape stopped]

[01:28:45] SL: We've been talking about segregation, and you're wondering, always wondering, if maybe the better strategy would have been to start with the earlier grades than at the high school level where things were so entrenched with the older children and that—having grown up in the culture of segregation and separate but equal. If maybe it would have been better if they had kind of eased into it in the earlier grades. And it makes me want to get back. We really haven't addressed your initial

experiences from just, you know, being a youngster growing up around the neighborhood and doing all the things that kids get to do growin' up before they have any big responsibilities. And now when you enter public school you've got lots of kids all in one room, or a couple of rooms, and you've got a new set of authority figures and you're now having exercises that you're doing that have to do with teaching you to form the basis of your contribution to society. So what was grade school—where did you go to grade school?

DF: At—started for the first three grades when we lived on Pearl Street at Woodruff School, which was still operating until last year they closed it as a elementary school, and I'm not sure what uses they're putting the structure to at this point, but it was still operating until last year.

SL: Do you remember how many kids were in your class? In each classroom?

DF: Mid-twenties.

SL: That's a good size. That's a great size.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: And were all your elementary grade school teachers women?

DF: Yes, yes. I don't think there was a male—other than maybe the sexton, I don't think there was a male in the building—male

adult, including the principal.

SL: Now when—what do you mean by sexton? What . . .

DF: Well, the combination maintenance, housekeeping . . .

SL: Okay, okay. That's a term I haven't encountered lately for that.

[01:31:11] But—so—well, what did you—do you remember—I

mean, you know, I can kind of remember—certainly with my children, I can remember the trauma of the first day of school.

And I can vaguely remember my hesitation or my, you know,

uneasiness about not being at home and not being with my

mother or my brothers or whatever and actually being out there

kind of by myself with a bunch of kids that I didn't know. Can

you kind of remember your first day of school or that first . . .

[01:31:48] DF: I don't remember feeling intimidated or fearful. I—if

I had been, I think the memory would have been stronger. But I

never was afraid of it, never disliked it, and of course, the

discipline in most of our homes was fairly strong, and it was

pretty easy to accept the group discipline as an—a first grader.

SL: So do you remember tornado or fire drills or any of that?

DF: Definitely the fire drills. I don't remember tornado.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, I'm assuming they had a cafeteria there at the school.

DF: They did. Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh-huh. And was that your favorite food?

DF: I never was a fan of cafeteria food. [*SL laughs*] I—as I said, the—earlier in our conversation, I envied the kids that were able to bring their lunches.

SL: What about recess at the schools? Did you have a morning recess and then a lunch . . .

DF: Morning, noon, afternoon.

SL: Afternoon recesses.

DF: Yes.

SL: What kind of activities happened at recess?

DF: Well, at that age it was basically the swings and the jungle gym and the parallel bars and just kids playing, but not—very little until third grade of any sports activity.

SL: Four square, hopscotch . . .

DF: That—sure.

SL: And were there—were the recesses pretty loose? You could just kind of do whatever you wanted to do with the . . .

DF: They were not structured.

SL: They were not structured.

DF: No.

SL: Did—were there any bullies?

DF: Yes, I think there are in every environment like that. Uh-huh.

SL: Did you have to face any bullies, or were you a bully?

[01:34:34] DF: No, I was too small. [*SL laughs*] I was not a bully even if I had wanted to be. And I'm sure, yes, I would occasionally have to face one, but it—I never was afraid to go to school. Never—it was never a sense of fear. Sometimes there would be an incident. Something would happen.

SL: Did they—did you have any music activities in the grade school?

DF: We did.

SL: What were those?

DF: Well, of course, you had basically one teacher in your classroom with every subject, whether you were learning to read or learning arithmetic or whatever the subject was, and the same was true with music. You'd—we were just taught to sing simple songs together and form a half-hearted chorus.

SL: What was the first activity in a classroom in elementary school? What was the routine every morning?

[01:35:56] DF: Well, it was all the same and didn't vary from day to day. The Pledge of Allegiance and prayer and then announcements.

SL: Did they have a little speaker where the principal made announcements, or was it not quite that advanced at that time?

DF: It wasn't that advanced.

SL: It was read from a note that . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . a teacher was given?

DF: Yes.

SL: Isn't it—it makes you really appreciate those elementary grade school teachers that had to know how to teach everything all the way through, I mean, you know.

DF: It does. They were terrific.

SL: Did you have a favorite teacher or two or three?

DF: Not at that age I did not.

SL: Was there anything about the studies that you were more attracted to than any of the other studies? Or was it all pretty much just the same to you? It was just another lesson, another area.

DF: Well, of course, if you include reading then as part of English training—education—then English and math were both just—or English and arithmetic at that time—were both subjects that I loved and so fortunate that that was the case because that was the foundation of everything else that I could build on.

[01:37:57] SL: Yeah. But did they have—did you have a science time when . . .

DF: Yes. Uh-huh. And elementary science books. Mh-hmm.

SL: And what about history? Did—was there ever any history taught in the grade schools?

DF: Not—it didn't have real history at that age that I can recall. Had geography.

SL: So you had to memorize where all the states were?

DF: Yes, and the capitals.

SL: [*Laughs*] Did you ever get to the rest of the world in elementary? Probably not. That probably didn't happen till [*unclear word*] . . .

DF: No, we were in North America . . .

SL: North America.

DF: . . . I think, pretty much.

SL: Yeah, yeah. You know, the second place you lived, what was it called—what station?

DF: Well, the first was Stifft Station.

SL: Stifft Station.

DF: Yes.

SL: And that was on a trolley route.

DF: Yes. It was . . .

SL: And so . . .

DF: It was on Kavanaugh Boulevard.

SL: And so the trolley was very popular then? Was it always . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . packed and busy and . . .

DF: It was busy.

SL: And you got to ride on it and . . .

DF: Yes, mh-hmm. A . . .

SL: Where would you take the trolley to?

[01:39:04] DF: Well, we would take it to town, and then if you went west on it, you—we seldom went very far west, but we'd go—we could go as far as—we'd go on out as far as Hillcrest, which was the next, if you will, commercial node or village on the—on Kavanaugh Boulevard as it went west. And you tended to have development along the trolley line.

SL: Sure.

DF: And the trolley line would be out in front—the trolley line development would be out in front of residential development and the—well, I don't know whether it's a private system or publically owned, but I can tell you that they were pretty good at staying ahead of development and, as a result, directed where development went.

SL: Well, you know, that was kind of true with the railroads and commerce. I mean . . .

DF: Sure it was.

SL: . . . if a railroad passed a town and the town that it went through used to be a lesser town, you know, that town would grow and the bigger town that the railroad bypassed would, you know, either level off or die, I mean.

DF: That's right.

SL: So it kind of makes sense that a trolley system would do the same for a local community.

DF: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: That's an interesting observation. [01:40:37] So back to grade school. Did you stay in the same grade school all the way through or . . .

DF: Just through the third grade, and then we moved to the Heights area to a residence over on Shadowlane not far from where we are now, half mile, maybe. And so then I began the fourth grade going to Forest Park Elementary, which is still operating today and very popular in the neighborhood here.

SL: What was the difference between the Stiff Station house and the Heights house?

[01:41:21] DF: Well, my parents were planning to expand the family, and so it was bigger. It was two-story residence. I wish I had kept a photograph the way it looked then because it's still there, but it's been redeveloped by other owners to the extent

where you'd—I'd still recognize it if it were on a street or an address where I wasn't familiar. But still had—has had many changes. It was Spanish-style, two-story residence.

SL: Does that mean stucco?

DF: Stucco. Mh-hmm.

SL: And . . .

DF: And tile roof.

SL: Uh-huh. So that was probably a more substantial home than . . .

DF: It was.

SL: So did you have heat upstairs and down?

DF: We did. We had radiators there.

SL: So that was boiler driven?

DF: Yes.

SL: In the basement . . .

DF: Right.

SL: . . . I would assume.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: And was there a coal chute, or was it a gas-fed boiler . . .

DF: Gas.

SL: . . . or do you—it was gas. So that was a modern boiler back then. Did—tell me about radiator heat. Did it make noises?

DF: Occasionally. Of course, when you got it—air in pipes that—it did make noises. But it was great heat in the sense of not—you didn't need a humidifier. It was not dry. And it was good heat.

[01:43:12] SL: Was there an upstairs bathroom, or was the bathroom always downstairs?

DF: No, we had two baths upstairs.

SL: Wow, that's . . .

DF: And only the—only a powder room downstairs.

SL: Ah. That's pretty modern facility . . .

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for then. And what about the yard? Was it a same-size yard, smaller yard, or . . .

DF: 'Bout [About] the same size.

SL: 'Bout the same size?

DF: More house on it, but a smaller size or about the same size.

SL: Well, so what about the neighborhood that you moved to there? Was it a whole new set of kids? Was it . . .

DF: Sure.

SL: So there were kids in the neighborhood?

[01:43:54] DF: There were. New set. Mostly similar-type residences on the street we were on, and they were within a block of us more one-story cottage-type. And so much of what

we still have in the Heights area. And I—there were—at elementary school many friends that I developed then I still have. [*Beeping noise*] And we ran together all through school from that experience at Forest Park and till college and then renewed relationships after college.

SL: So you think it was just the age difference that helped you maintain those relationships? I mean, you had certainly a set of kids to grow with, you know, at the earlier school, but when you got to Forest Park there was just more camaraderie, or you were easier? It was easier to do or . . .

[01:45:09] DF: I think it was—had a number of things. One was we—I don't know how it would have been at—if I had stayed at—in the Stiff Station neighborhood. It might have been exactly the same. But we were separated from that group and then developed the relationships with the group that were at Forest Park. And also then you're much more engaged in athletic activities, and there's a lot more bonding when you're playing in athletes—athletics every day. And then the fact that we continued and went to the same every—that elementary all flowed to the same junior high and then in turn to the same high school.

SL: So now . . .

DF: And there was only one high school still—until some time during my high school three-year period, Hall High was opened in Little Rock. And that's when they changed the name from Senior High to Central High.

SL: So you started with athletic activity in your last three years in—two, three years in grade school?

DF: All through grade school, right.

SL: What—was it Kiwanis and Kiwanis-driven or little leagues. . .

DF: No, it was the school teams.

SL: School teams.

DF: Yes.

SL: And in what sports?

DF: In football and basketball and softball. Mh-hmm. And I—no, I started going out—you know, I wasn't talented, but started going and trying for the team in the fourth grade.

SL: Do you remember the positions you played with each sport?

[01:47:19] DF: I wasn't a skilled player, so even though I was small I ended up in the line.

SL: [*Laughter*] You ended up in the line? Now I take it . . .

DF: Right, in football.

SL: See, you should not say that.

DF: And of course . . .

SL: There's . . .

DF: Because of . . .

SL: . . . a certain set of skills at the line.

DF: Because of size I was always a guard in basketball.

SL: Yeah. Well, I have to say at 165 pounds I was guard in high school or a linebacker. It was—we—people were smaller then. Well, let me ask you this. And I've got—I've heard stories about mixed football teams and athletic teams. I guess that didn't really happen here in Little Rock at all. And the blacks still had their own elementary schools, and, I mean—but you never played each other ever.

DF: They—no. They didn't have mixed teams, and they didn't play each other.

SL: And—but did you ever go to any of the black games, or did they ever come to any of the white games just to watch?

DF: No, I don't recall . . .

SL: Okay.

DF: . . . that.

SL: Did you have a favorite coach in your athletic career?

[01:48:39] DF: I don't know if I had a favorite coach. I certainly had coaches that left the most memory, and not necessarily pleasant or unpleasant. Just that they were memorable coaches. In

junior high, Coach Koepel, and then, of course, the legend in high school, Wilson Matthews.

SL: You got to play under Wilson Matthews?

DF: Well, I didn't get to play under him. He was—as the football coach, he was also head of all of the . . .

SL: Like the athletic direct . . .

DF: . . . athletic program of the school, including even gym classes. The others reported to him.

SL: So did you ever have any experience with Wilson Matthews? I mean . . .

DF: I did my share of push-ups.

[01:49:35] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, let's talk a little bit about the athletic culture. I mean, you know, it's more than just the game, of course. It's all the things that you go through to get ready to play, and it's all the team-oriented mentality and, you know, the working hard and getting better and doing your job and following direction. I mean, there's a whole mantra of physical and mental activities that you have to be—that you have to embrace in order to participate. Did this—did any of that seem—I mean, was that—were you comfortable with that, and did you like that? Did you feel like it was influencing you in some way?

DF: I liked it. I liked the organization. I liked the routines of the

drills. My parents never pushed me to engage in trying out for teams for—in athletic programs. It was always because I wanted to. And I enjoyed it even though I might have been, in most cases, a benchwarmer. I was on the practice field because of choice.

SL: Were some of these relationships that you've maintained through all these years—were they forged, or partially forged, in the athletic realm?

DF: Somewhat, yes. They probably weren't so much forged as they were—where maybe my interest was because my friends were participating, and even though they might have been better athletes, that was part of the relationship, the practice and the after-school activity together.

SL: So you survived two-a-days in football?

DF: [*Unclear word*] before school started, sure.

SL: Yeah, and also . . .

DF: As a matter of fact, we used to go over—when we were junior high players, we were allowed to go over to Central's practice fields and practice in the mornings before school started.

SL: What do feel you came away with? What did your athletic involvement provide you? I mean, do you feel like you gained something out of it other than being with your friends?

I mean . . .

DF: No question.

[01:52:54] SL: What were the most valuable things you think that brought you?

DF: The fo—sense of how to follow the rules and realizing the importance of the rules, teamwork, the relationship between individuals on a team totally independent of friendships. But the relationship of the team members engaged in that activity, and then, of course, the things that you experience—the discipline—and then, later, time management. If you're going to do—engage in those activities, then you have to be a better manager of your personal time.

SL: Commitment. Just committing to doing something you . . .

DF: Right.

SL: It may cost you time here, but this is what you've decided to do. If—well, were the teams winners? Did you have good seasons?

[01:54:25] DF: Well, we were—in elementary we were—it was mixed. One year yes, another—it just took one or two stars to make the difference.

SL: Right.

DF: And in junior high we were competitive but not dominant. And then, of course, in high school with one high school in the city,

and Wilson Matthews as coach, I mean, there was—it was very seldom that any team in the state could compete . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . with that team, even though it was preintegration.

SL: Had an enormous pool to draw from.

DF: That's right.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And great staff to coach and train and discipline, and they would have—because the state competition was not that strong rel—occasionally we had a real rivalry with Pine Bluff, and maybe one out of every five or six years Pine Bluff would win that game. But other than that, to get real competition they would schedule teams from other states and generally have about four games with teams from either Memphis or Baton Rouge, Louisiana, or surrounding states such as that.

SL: Texas, maybe.

DF: Yes.

SL: Well, now so did—I guess Pine Bluff did have an all-white team.

DF: Yes.

SL: I mean, usually you think of Pine Bluff a fairly sophisticated and well-developed African American community with their own set of businesses and, you know, just a—I don't know, a strong

African American community. So, well, I can't believe Fayetteville never beat you guys. [*Laughs*]

[01:56:38] DF: Fayetteville, at the time, was not that large. And did not have the pool and was in a different classification. They weren't in the same conference where they played—they—Hot Springs was in the conference and schools from communities of that size. But Fayetteville was, when you think of the growth that's experienced in the period since the [19]50s, they were almost a rural community.

[01:57:25] SL: Mh-hmm. Well, so I was asking you about favorite subjects in grade school. Did that continue into high school? You still liked the English and the math the best?

DF: Yes. Sure did.

SL: Was there a particular teacher that you remember in your high school years that was influential?

DF: In math, I can remember the teacher there. I can't remember—give you her first name—Mrs. Fi—Mrs. Poindexter, and then in English there were two. One was Bowen, Mrs. Bowen—or Miss Bowen—and Mrs. Fioek. And the teachers were—those teachers were just true professionals. I mean, every summer they would be in—they would go to Fayetteville or another campus to take enrichment courses and to get—advance to degrees, and they

were real professionals. And I—when I went to college as a freshman, I felt prepared when I—after spending the first part of the first semester in college, I think they did a good job. And I—the competition there included a lot of students from the East, from prep schools . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . because the out-of-state tuition was so much less than the Ivy League schools.

SL: Yep.

DF: Course, those were private, and so there was no out-of-state/in-state. But the tuition was so much higher, so so many of the students from the prep schools in the East or from the academies, they—even though were public in the new—in New York where they had the academies that specialized in math and science and in other—and the arts—would end up there at Ann Arbor. And so I know it was a good competition, and those teachers at Central served us well. They were professionals.

[02:00:07] SL: What was going with you churchwise as you were going through high school? Were you still active? Were you still going to church every Sunday and . . .

DF: I was pretty good attender in high school, but I never had a depth of spiritual commitment. I was going, I was there—I was

pleasing my mother. I was there for the relationships, but I didn't have a real depth of commitment, a spiritual commitment. And that was obvious when I went to college and drifted away. Probably in the three and a half years I was in a—in college, I might have attended three and a half times.

SL: Right.

DF: And then didn't reengage until the time we lived in Detroit I did not reengage. We attended maybe four or five times in the four or five years—or five or six years—and then didn't really reengage until returning to Little Rock. And then it was not any depth of commitment until the last few years.

[02:01:30] SL: So your mom and dad are doing well while you're in high school, and they're—you had—you moved to the house in the Heights, and there were two more children . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . born there.

DF: Yes.

SL: And, let's see, you're—you were the oldest.

DF: Yes.

SL: And followed by . . .

DF: Gordon.

SL: Gordon.

DF: Gordon Perry. All sons. Then John Joel, and then Tommy.

SL: Now Tommy had Down syndrome.

DF: Yes.

SL: And I guess early on no one knew what Down syndrome was  
or . . .

DF: If they knew, we didn't know that Tommy was a Down syndrome child. And mother spent a number of years taking him to physicians, particularly a physician, and I can remember when they would take these long train rides to Boston to a specialist to see if there was anything that could be done to improve his learning ability. And so he—she really devoted much of her life to him, first in the home and then later when he was involved in institutional residency and care, in involvement with them and in caring for him. And he was never left alone. She—even when he was at—first at Children's Colony and then later in smaller, more residential settings, he was always at home every weekend.

SL: We're gonna cut tape here. We've filled up another hour.

[Tape stopped]

[02:04:00] SL: Okay. We're on our third Pryor Center tape, which means we're starting our third hour, and I—looking at you, I think you're holdin' up pretty good through the process.

DF: Doing fine.

SL: We were talkin' about your brother Tommy, your youngest brother Tommy, and your mom's devotion. But there were two other brothers, weren't there?

DF: Yes. Gordon and John.

SL: Gordon and John. Now what was the age difference between you and Gordon?

DF: Just over two years.

SL: So you guys were kinda partners going through . . .

DF: We were . . .

SL: You were . . .

DF: . . . and we were two years apart in school, and I think two years and four months in age.

SL: Mh-hmm. And is Gordon still with us?

DF: Yes, yes.

SL: And then what does he do now?

DF: He's with the National Institute of Health . . .

SL: Ah!

DF: . . . as a researcher in the Research Triangle in North Carolina.

SL: Excellent.

DF: Lives in Chapel Hill. It's ironi—ironical.

SF: It's great irony [*laughs*].

DF: It's iron—it is great irony that that's the job he wanted when he graduated from med school and was not accepted—not given an offer because of his asthma. Couldn't pass the physical because it's a government agency. And then after practicing for his entire career as a—in the private sector as a pathologist and then retiring, and now he's working for a National Institute of Health where he wanted to be in the beginning.

SL: That's so great. Did it—so did he get his degree here in Little Rock, or where did he go to med school?

DF: He went to undergraduate at Johns Hopkins and then Vanderbilt med school and did his residency at the University of Minnesota and then first practiced in Huntsville, Alabama, with a group that he had spent med school together with and then moved to New Orleans and practiced there for most of the rest of his career. And then when he retired—he has an autistic son and the—when they researched the best programs for autism, they decided North Carolina was where they would be. So they moved to Chapel Hill. And he is with the National Institute of Health and probably happier with his job than he ever was in private practice and in his lifetime.

SL: Well, he kept the faith, stuck with it, and is now doing what he's always wanted to do. That's a good story.

[02:07:26] DF: He's always been a researcher. His specialization was pathology. So his forte was in his analytical ability and his thoroughness and his research, not his bedside manner.

[*SL laughs*]

SL: What are you saying about his bedside manner? [*Laughs*] Is it . . .

DF: Well, that was—he generated tremendous confidence because of his competence, but he didn't have a great inclination to spend time with you to, you know, make you feel better in terms of your attitude and your outlook.

[02:08:20] SL: The accuracy and the diagnosis and the science was there for the benefit of the patient, but he was not great with empathy for the patient, I guess, or . . .

DF: I think he had a tremendous empathy, but he just didn't—wasn't the type that expressed it. His empathy was demonstrated so many times with the way he would just labor and labor over the right . . .

SL: Treatment.

DF: . . . diagnosis. Yeah, he—I mean, he would take slides home and study and study to be sure that he did not make an incorrect diagnosis.

SL: Sounds like a great guy.

DF: Very, very dedicated.

[02:09:05] SL: Okay, and then brother John?

DF: John would have been another—he's—he would be almost nine years younger than me—eight and a half years. And so—and he went to—also the business school route. University of Illinois and then Babson Graduate School and is also in real estate here in Little Rock. And the Flake name in Flake & Kelley Commercial.

SL: So he's done well, and he's happy and . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . all that.

DF: Yes.

SL: That's good.

DF: To . . .

SL: And it's good that you have a brother here in town.

DF: Yes. Not only here in town, but less than a block away. [SL *laughs*] He was our last lot purchase in the subdivision that we developed here.

SL: That's great. That's good. Nine and a half years difference between the two of you?

DF: I would say nine and a half, yes.

SL: Yeah, yeah. Mh-hmm.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: My mom and dad would call that a fall and a spring crop.

DF: Yes. No—well, it's either eight and half or nine and a half.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DF: I'm not positive.

[02:10:23] SL: Okay, well, I just didn't want to—we didn't really talk about your growing up with your brothers. I guess—how old were you when Tommy was born?

DF: Well, he's a year younger than John.

SL: Okay.

DF: So . . .

SL: So ten years?

DF: I would say roughly ten years.

SL: And so there probably was a fairly dramatic shift of attention, I would guess, when Tommy—when it became evident that Tommy was not as well equipped as the rest of the boys were.

DF: There was. Mh-hmm. And deservedly.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did the brothers ever help out with Tommy much or . . .

DF: Yes. Yes, we did. We probably could have done more. But we—everyone helped.

SL: Okay, so let's see. And Tommy has since passed.

DF: Tommy is the only brother who—sibling who's deceased, yes.

SL: Lived to be almost fifty, is that . . .

DF: He was just over, I think fifty-one, when he died in 2001.

SL: So that's really fairly recent.

DF: Yes.

SL: Yeah. I'm sure that was a hard loss.

[02:12:05] DF: It was, and his—I think part of—he had a de—some degenerative neurological problem, which was never diagnosed, but he got worse and worse physically—not mentally, but physically, and we had to move him on a couple of occasions to different facilities. And the thing I remember most about my mother's death, and she predeceased him by roughly three years, was that when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer and she was—there were—it was kidney cancer. There was no treatment for it except to give some modest extension of life but no chance of any remission or any significant extension. And when she and I were having our discussion about it and about whether or not she would take treatment, she told me then that the only thing that made her wanted—want to—could even consider treatment was that she was concerned about Tommy. And I—at the time I ask her, "Did you really think that you were gonna outlive your son? And did you consider for a moment that

you would have to—that you were going to be there to care for him in his entire life—that the rest of us were prepared to do that?" And we had expected to do it. We didn't expect her to outlive her son. And so she elected not to take treatment, and we—as a result, we planned activities for the last nine months and with all the family together, including the family from North Carolina, and took several trips together, including Tommy and mother, and it was a good year.

[02:14:30] SL: That's a beautiful thing to do. [*Sighs*] Well, now as long as we're talking about those that have passed, now tell me about your father. Is he—he's deceased, too.

DF: Yes.

SL: And when and how did he pass?

DF: He died in 1973 in his sleep at our home. Just went to bed that night and didn't wake up the next morning.

SL: Just natural causes.

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's a restful . . .

DF: Right.

SL: . . . passing, I guess.

DF: Yeah. Typical diagnosis of cardiac infarction.

SL: Yeah.

DF: When we're not sure and it just—his heart stopped.

SL: So that must have caught you guys off guard a little bit. Let's see, you were here and . . .

DF: I was.

SL: And John was here. Gordon was probably in Huntsville, maybe, or . . .

DF: No, Gordon was in New Orleans.

SL: He was in New Orleans?

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[02:15:49] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about your father before we move on to college. What do you think was his greatest influence on you? I mean, I know it's probably difficult to recall any particular conversation or any particular event of note when you're talking about your parents 'cause it's—so much of it is by example, day-to-day . . .

DF: Sure.

SL: . . . example. And you can probably speak to that if you like. But what do you think your father's greatest strengths were?

DF: Well, his devotion, his love, his absolute commitment to family. His total just preoccupation with higher education and—as evidenced by the fact that, except for Tommy, every son has a graduate degree, and he instilled that. And he also was good

about building responsibility without making it a classroom experience. I think of one example. [02:17:33] My first car I had saved to buy—purchase when I was sixteen. And I bought a used car then and had it for a couple, three years, and then was going back to college after my freshman year and halfway through my sophomore year. And I wanted to purchase a car then. And I think I was nineteen. And I was able to make the down payment and to make the installments on a loan, but of course, I was a minor. Well, he arranged with—for me—for the court to make me legally an adult so that I could go to the bank and make the loan and would be directly responsible to the bank and not to borrow from within the family. And I'm sure that they didn't make the loan without some hidden assurance that he was going to be responsible if I defaulted, but I didn't know that. And it was up—and legally, not for things like drinking, I was—I—but for contract purposes, I was legally an adult then and could make a note to pay as an adult. And so it was a good lesson for me without any lecturing by him.

SL: It did put the ball in your court, didn't it? In a very real way, I mean.

DF: Sure. I was responsible to an independent third party.

SL: Yeah. As a young man—you became a young man fairly early.

You know, I want to get back to your dad, but how did you save money, enough money to buy a car when you were sixteen, is that right? Did you tell me that you just bought a car when you were sixteen?

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: What did you do? How did you get that money?

[02:20:06] DF: I was always working.

SL: Well, let's talk about your jobs. We haven't talked about that as a kid. What kinds of things would you do?

DF: Well, I had paper route, I worked in a grocery store as a sacker and stocker. I could, of course, look forward to the Razorback games in Little Rock because the best job you could ever get is selling programs outside the stadium. And so on game days, I'd have three jobs that day. The—on Saturdays because the store would allow me to get off to throw my paper route. But then they would also give me enough time on game days to go sell the programs before returning to the store to finish job there. Course, I was paid by the hour so I wasn't being paid for it, but at least they gave me the time off to do it. And I would work full time during the summer and then worked in between college . . .

SL: Semesters.

DF: . . . year—semesters except for one year I did go to one summer

school and our—because I was anxious to get in the working world. And I was taking eighteen hours a semester so that I could finish a semester early, which I did. And that's why I ended—I graduated in the—at the end . . .

SL: The fall.

DF: . . . of the fall semester.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. How much—do you remember how much you paid for your first car and what it was?

[02:21:59] DF: It was a—oh, I remember what it was. It was a 1946 Ford. And I think I paid \$350.

SL: [*Laughs*] Okay [*beeping noise*], so you were, let's see, you were sixteen, so that would have put you at [19]56, I guess. You—is that right? About right? Ten-year-old car?

DF: It was [19]54 . . .

SL: Used—yeah, fifty . . .

DF: . . . because—well, yeah, it's [19]57. I'm—[19]55, yes.

SL: So it was . . .

DF: A year before I graduated.

SL: Nine-year-old car, I guess.

DF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you only had it a couple of years before you wanted another—or three years before you wanted a new car?

[02:22:47] DF: Well, I sold it when I went to college . . .

SL: Oh, I see.

DF: . . . because Michigan would not allow . . .

SL: Freshmen to have a car?

DF: . . . freshmen or—really, you were supposed to be a senior before you had a car on campus. So I sold the car when I went to college.

SL: Did you get three fifty for it?

DF: I don't recall [*SL laughs*] what I got for it. I doubt it.

SL: You didn't sell it to your brother or . . .

DF: No.

SL: . . . didn't keep it in the family?

DF: No, didn't keep it in the family.

SL: What was the second car you bought?

DF: It was a used Austin-Healey.

SL: Really, so it was like a little sports car?

DF: Mh-hmm. Right.

SL: And how was the maintenance on that?

DF: Tough. [*SL laughs*] Yeah. And I've had problems, too, driving to and from Ann Arbor in Little Rock. And that was tough. Try

to get a Chevrolet dealer to even open the hood.

SL: Yeah, that's right.

DF: You could forget it.

SL: Yeah and . . .

DF: He's not interested.

SL: If I remember, is that—a lot of electrical issues with those cars.  
Is that not right?

DF: There were.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: So . . .

DF: And transmission.

[02:24:00] SL: I'm gonna pick back up on that car in just a second, but we kind of talked a little bit about your father and the strengths that he brought to bear. Why don't—you've said quite a bit about your mom, but let's—I'm gonna ask you the same question about your mom. What was it that—what was the most influential thing that she provided you, you think? I mean, besides the day-to-day living by example, which, of course, carries the most weight and you don't really—you're not really aware of it until it's gone, but—give me some kind of example of how your mom was. I mean, we've talked about her devotion to

Tommy and running the house and how—and the volunteerism that she had, which I have a feeling has probably passed on to you as well. But just—if you had just a paragraph to talk about your mother, what would you say about her?

[02:25:11] DF: Well, in one sentence, she was the glue in the family. She was the one that held the family together, that made us all closer, that was committed to family activities. She was the glue in the family. And her commitment to education was just as intense as my father's, except it was different. His was to achieve the advanced education. Hers was performance in whatever you were doing right then. And so it was a good combination.

SL: Great combination. Did either one—did she ever help you with your homework growin' up?

DF: Occasionally.

SL: But it was pretty much on your—each of your shoulders to . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . own shoulders to do—to get it.

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's good. That's strong. Okay, now I'm going to get back to this car, this Austin-Healey. I see you as a college student, you're in this sporty—it's a British car, isn't it?

DF: It is.

SL: Is this the time when you—when did you meet Linda?

DF: I met Linda in our junior year in high school.

SL: Oh, okay. So she was introduced to you in the Ford years, then.  
Is that right?

DF: Yes. That's right. [*SL laughs*] In the Ford years. Uh-huh.

SL: Uh-huh. And how did y'all get together? How did you meet?

[02:27:02] DF: We were in the same class together in our junior year all the way through the year, and I never noticed her. And then about three weeks before the end of the school year, probably the first of May, equivalent time, I suddenly noticed her, and I was just—I can't tell you how attracted I was. And I don't know why I was blind before then, but she was beautiful, and it was just like a lightning bolt. And so we dated for three weeks, and then her father was already in Morocco with his assignment there with the Corps of Engineers and the family knew they were moving. But they had made that decision several months before, and so we dated and had—knew each other for three weeks, and then she moved to Morocco.

SL: Man, I bet that was hard.

DF: It was. Yeah. But then during her spring year when she was in Morocco—and actually at the time, she—I take it back. She had

been over there about a year and a half. And she was—all of her senior year in high school and then part of school in the fall, after high school, in Switzerland, where they had sent her. Her father then had a heart attack and died. And he was only forty-two.

SL: Wow.

[02:28:57] DF: And so the family moved back to Little Rock from Morocco. And, of course, I was in Ann Arbor then. And I learned through my mother that she had returned. And so I started contact again with her and was able to see her over the holidays. But I never—would never go home Thanksgiving because it was such a big trip to leave and go back Thanksgiving for such a short period of time.

SL: Right. So Christmas and maybe spring break you might, or just . . .

DF: Maybe.

SL: Maybe. Mh-hmm.

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: So, I guess—you know, I hate to backtrack a little bit back into high school, but you're involved in athletics, but you—were you dating as well when you were in high school before you met—or before you noticed Linda?

DF: Yes.

SL: And typical date would be going to a movie or . . .

DF: Or some—or school activity. Right.

SL: Uh-huh. A dance or . . .

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[02:30:25] SL: And did you have any favorite movies when you were in high school? Is there a movie that—do you remember the first movie you saw as a child?

DF: No, I don't.

SL: Do you—was there a blockbuster hit for you in high school?

DF: None that I recall. I'm sure there were.

SL: When were the—when was the Marlon Brando motorcycle—is *The Wild Ones*?

DF: *The Wild Ones*, yes.

SL: When did that come out?

DF: I believe it was in the early [19]50s.

SL: Yeah, yeah. I would have thought maybe it was a social comment movie.

DF: And I remember it well.

SL: Do you?

DF: Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay, well, I just, you know, was there—so what about—were

you startin' to slack off on the church activities in high school? I think we talked a little bit about that.

DF: Ye—somewhat, yes. I was still a pretty good attender, but there was no commitment.

[02:31:32] SL: Uh-huh. Okay. Well, let's go back to you and Linda, then. So she gets back from North Africa and Europe. You find out about it. You're making contact with her, and how long does that go on?

DF: Well, that had its ups and downs, too. I was—I came home for Christmas and renewed our relationship. And I had been miserable all semester knowin' that she was back in Little Rock and I was in Ann Arbor. And so in the spring of 1958 I transferred to Fayetteville.

SL: University of Arkansas?

DF: Yes, to the University of Arkansas. But I continued the eighteen year—eighteen hours a semester . . .

SL: Regimen.

DF: . . . to try and accelerate graduation. And so then I would come to Little Rock on weekends from Fayetteville. But then at the end of the—or during the summer of [19]58, she and a girlfriend decided to go to California. And so she wasn't as committed to me as I was to her. [*SL laughs*] And so she—they went to

California, were unable—it was during the [19]58 recession.

SL: Okay.

[02:33:28] DF: And they were unable to find work. And they then ended up with a job after they moved to Houston. And the reason they moved there is because her girlfriend's brother lived in Houston and they were able to get some help to start, at least, and then Linda found a job, and they got an apartment, and so they were in Houston then, and so the fall semester I went back to Ann Arbor. So I was only at university at Fayetteville for one semester.

SL: So that equates to about ten weekends.

DF: Right. [*SL laughs*] Right. And you know, I'm gue—I'm diverting here, but I had—I was thinking about some of the shifts in colleges. And how it was affecting my military commitment because, of course, that was still during the draft. And, again, I was trying to think about how fast could I get in the working world. And you were almost certain to be drafted once you graduated if you had a deferment for college purposes. So I immediately—well, during the last few months of high school, I joined the Air National Guard . . .

SL: Okay.

DF: . . . with several other friends from Little Rock that were in high

school together. [02:35:17] We all joined the guard and went to basic training together in the summer of [19]56. And that was—we were in a—at a base—an airbase at Wichita Falls, Texas. Sheppard Air Force Base.

SL: Okay.

DF: And the—they were using—that was not really a planned to be a basic training base. Most basic trainees went to Lackland. But they were sending some guard units to Sheppard because they didn't have enough room at Lackland, and they were—they took mothballed World War II barracks, and—they were wood-frame World War II barracks—and reopened 'em for the basic trainees from the guard units. And so we were all—the entire flight, which was a group of fifty that's housed in the single barracks, were all from Arkansas.

SL: Wow.

[02:36:28] DF: All from the guard unit in Arkansas. And many of us from Little Rock that knew each other—maybe four or five, six that were friends from school that knew each other. So it was a great experience at basic training. I was probably only out of school a week and then went to basic training after graduating from high school, spent the summer there. And then maybe had two weeks and was put on the train and went to Ann Arbor for

my freshman year at Michigan. But it was a great experience there for basic—it went basic training for that eleven weeks during the summer, yeah. Really developed some habits and some values that served me well. But what took me off the subject and made me mention this is because going back and forth collegeswise I had no appreciation for what would be involved in changing my military service because contrary to the situation with reserve units, your guard unit, which is a part of the reserve contingent of the military, are still state organizations. And so to move from the Arkansas Air National Guard to the Michigan Air National Guard, and then back, and then back, I would have to get a discharge from one and re—and join the other one. [02:38:20] And so, many times when I was in the Michigan guard and would come to Arkansas for summers, I would go to Michigan once a month for the meetings in order to avoid having to try that—the discharge route, and I would—and—or I would go—also go up there for the two-week summer camp that was required of the guard unit.

SL: Did you ever calculate the hours and miles traveled . . .

DF: No.

SL: . . . while you were doing that? That's a pretty hefty road trip each time.

DF: It is. It was—it's an eighteen-hour—it was an eighteen-hour drive. That was before the freeways.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And I could not do it now, but I would make it all the way alone without stopping.

SL: In the Austin-Healey?

DF: Yes, right. Get up—leave at daybreak, or even before, and then get in around midnight.

SL: Wow. So, okay, you've got all of this going on, and I guess—had you just kinda given up on Linda? You just didn't know what she was gonna do next, and you mentioned that you felt like you were more enamored with her than she was with you and . . .

[02:39:49] DF: No, we stayed in close contact. I did—I was better at writing than she was, but—and then in the, as I mentioned to you earlier, the fall—when we were talking about Burroughs, the fall of [19]59 when I was going to graduate at the end of the semester and had the offer from Burroughs and the other companies and accepted Burroughs, and she visited me Thanksgiving. That's when I ask her to marry me. And then later in December she accepted. And so I maintained the relationship as close as I could.

[02:40:38] SL: Well, it must have worked. I mean . . .

DF: Persistence.

SL: She did say yes, although it took her a few weeks to say that.

DF: That's right. Yeah. Persistence paid off.

SL: Yes. Uh-huh. So when were you married, then? She says yes  
in December and . . .

DF: February of [19]60.

SL: A few months later.

DF: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

DF: Just barely two months.

SL: Here in Little Rock?

DF: Yes.

SL: Where? What church?

DF: Second Presbyterian.

SL: Second Presbyterian.

DF: It was . . .

SL: Was she a member there, too?

DF: No.

SL: No?

DF: She was—at the time, she was Christian Scientist. Attending.

SL: Oh yeah. Okay, that's right.

[02:41:17] DF: And then we—but she has not become a member of

Second Presbyterian.

SL: M'kay.

DF: Sh—probably more spiritual than I am. But never one that's embraced organized religion since her Christian Science days.

SL: Right. Okay, so you're married in February, and then you move to Detroit?

DF: Mh-hmm. And started working at Burroughs in March of [19]60.

SL: Okay, now let's talk about Burroughs for a second and the kind of company it was. It—what was their business? What was their main business?

DF: Well, they—their business up till that point had been office equipment with the principal customer base being the banking industry. This was precomputers, and they were manufacturing and marketing primarily bank automation equipment, but it was mechanical.

SL: So let's talk about that equipment. What did that equipment do? What did it perform?

DF: It was—it performed the accounting functions in the bank, the—it was heavily manual, of course, but—with the feeding the equipment, but it was—they would process checks and perf—all of the accounting functions for a customer's loan and deposit accounts.

SL: And so a typical Burroughs machine would have stacks of checks that—or . . .

[02:43:24] DF: No they would . . .

SL: . . . by account or . . .

DF: They would be indexed or—by an operator and coded in, and then they already—the banks had adopted the MICR coding, which you still have on your check. That's what is used . . .

SL: All those numbers are.

DF: That's what those numbers are, the magnetic numbers . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . that are used to process your check today. The banks had adopted that, but there was so much hand, manual involvement and so much potential for operator error, so you almost had to do every function twice, once to enter it and once to prove it. And the principal machine that—and it was a series of machines, so different models—was called the Sensymatic, and it worked with the MICR characters and—but was highly operator driven.

[02:44:41] SL: And so—well, what was it about—I mean, you said you had five offers or five other offers. What was it about Burroughs that made you choose them? I mean, were they—was it because they were paying you the most or . . .

DF: No, it was competitive. It was equal to the best offer, but the

differences were not large. And there were other good companies and—that were well managed, and one of 'em was Procter & Gamble. One was Boeing aircraft and two others whom I don't recall at the moment, but the—Burroughs was moving into an industry that was clearly an industry of the future with—trying to catch up with IBM in the computers. And they were not dominant in their industry like Procter & Gamble and Boeing where you had an opportunity to help them to excel, and if you excel to help them improve their industry position. You did not have the management depth that these other companies with such a cavalry of capable people had. And so there was more opportunity, even though there was more risk.

SL: Smaller pond.

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm. And as I mentioned earlier, I—the alternatives in getting my master's in business influenced the decision also. I was only—working in Detroit, I was only forty miles from Ann Arbor. And it was all freeway. So that really allowed me good access to the campus. And then they had another campus in Dearborn, Michigan, that they had just opened, which was just five miles.

SL: But you ended up in Detroit?

DF: Yeah, I was in Detroit working but then would go to classes in

either Dearborn or Ann Arbor.

SL: And so you and Linda both moved to Detroit?

DF: Mh-hmm.

[02:47:31] SL: And what was the biggest difference between Detroit and Little Rock?

DF: There were just a myriad of differences.

SL: Okay.

DF: The density, the development, the racial mixture and diversity, the climate. I can't—there were so many differences.

SL: So this is . . .

DF: The . . .

SL: What year is this about? [Nineteen] sixty . . .

DF: This is in 1960.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty, okay.

DF: The—and the ethnic groups and ethnic neighborhoods—because we had such large ethnic populations in Detroit, they would tend to cluster together, when in Arkansas, in Little Rock, the ethnic populations were small enough where they tended to be assimilated within the Western European culture.

SL: Right.

DF: But that didn't happen near as much in large, urban areas where the ethnic populations were large enough, where they could

cluster together and maintain their own culture. And so we lived in a neighborhood in Dearborn, right outside of Detroit, which was heavily Polish.

[02:49:34] SL: So maybe one of the major differences is all of a sudden you were aware of the different ethnic groups and what that brings to a town, to a city. What about the workforce at Burroughs? Was it pretty much all white or . . .

DF: High percentage white.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Yes. Certainly in the mid to high nineties.

SL: Yeah.

DF: They had really not done—they didn't have legal segregation, but they hadn't done a much better job than the South at true integration. And Dearborn was even—we found later was even more that way. Dearborn was a city the size of Little Rock, or—well—little over a hundred thousand, maybe a hundred and twenty-five. And it had no more black families than you could count on one or two hands.

SL: So you were there at Burroughs for how long?

DF: Five and a half years.

SL: So that puts you there through [19]66, then, I guess.

DF: Mid-[19]65.

SL: Mid-[19]65.

DF: Yes, we returned in the summer of [19]65.

SL: What was the—what was Detroit like as far as the racial climate and the health of the city? I mean . . .

[02:51:29] DF: It was a great city. It was—this was before Watts. Or not Watts. That's—that was Los Angeles. But before—Watts came first in Los Angeles. And then the Detroit riots came later. This was before all that. The—there may have been racial tensions below the surface, but there were not obvious racial tensions on the surface level. Not overt racial hostility. And we thought Detroit was a great city. We liked it. We were not unhappy in Detroit. Now obviously, it's changed, but when we left in mid-1965 it was not because of Detroit.

SL: What was the reason to leave Detroit?

DF: Well, we kept, or I kept—probably I was the influence—I kept not being certain about whether or not long run it would make sense to return to Little Rock and to go into business here and to build a business as opposed to working for a major corporation. And probably Burroughs finally might have contributed to my decision to leave because of how really good to us they were. And the fact that they would give us the opportunity that they did and allow me to progress at the pace I was progressing, and

I still was harboring that uncertainty about returning, then I concluded that we had better try it. And see if it made sense to try to build a business here in Little Rock. The—but the time I spent there, particularly that first three and a half years, although the last two years with Burroughs I was in a great management position there and—matter of fact, to give you an example of how good they—how open they were in not holding you back because of age or seniority, we had thirty-five thousand employees worldwide, and they had allowed me to be one of two hundred that were involved in the stock purchase program. And one of my—I can remember now, one of my offers had been at Ford Motor, which was so well managed and set such good talent. And I knew I would never have an opportunity like that at Ford Motor.

SL: Right. [02:55:15] Well, didn't you say earlier when we were talking about the Business Hall of Fame that every time you guys would get ready to seriously start planning to come back to Little Rock that Burroughs would give you another raise?

DF: And a new assignment, which was more important than the money because of the challenge and the responsibility. The money was obviously important, but—and it's not that they knew it or that I discussed it with them. It just happened. And would

cause me to table my thinking.

SL: [*Laughs*] It was exciting to get a new project, hmm?

DF: And a new challenge. It sure was. And . . .

SL: What kind of stuff would they have you do?

[02:56:11] DF: Well, we did all—the financial analysis group did the projections for the division, all the financial projections for the division, long-range planning, financial planning, the near-term budgeting, the new—the financial studies for new products. And then basically special projects, where we were responding to management questions that—where the financial implications of certain decisions would influence what those decisions were, and they would give us the assignment for the special project and we'd do that. And it gave us a great deal of exposure to senior management that someone at our level would not otherwise have.

SL: So what was it that finally convinced you to come back?

DF: Just that uncertainty. It—if—that the longer we kept our postponing, making permanent commitments in Detroit, not knowing, like purchasing our own home. We were renting that entire period. And the reluctance to make those permanent commitments convinced me, I think more than Linda, that we needed to test it, try it, and see if we were going to be satisfied

trying to build a business in Little Rock.

SL: I guess do it while you're young, kind of.

DF: I did—it would not have helped to put it off . . .

SL: Right.

DF: . . . and then do it.

SL: Right.

DF: And to—because if I had advanced further at Burroughs and then made the change, I would not have been any more qualified when I started whatever my activities were here.

SL: Right. So you come back to Little Rock. Now do you go into practice with your father?

[02:58:46] DF: Yes. I joined Walthour-Flake, and by that time J. D. Walthour was no longer active. He was at home bedridden.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And so I worked with my father and assisted in the—with that firm for 1965 through 1971.

SL: You—when you got here and went in with your dad, essentially, his business almost entirely or heavily residential . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . real estate? And did you have in your mind then that you would want to try to bolster the commercial side of that business . . .

DF: No.

SL: . . . or did that just come later?

[02:59:46] DF: That—it came later, but quickly. [*SL laughs*] I didn't have that much foresight. But I quickly saw—I would say within six months of joining—that that was where my interest was. And it not only allowed me to apply some of the same financial training and financial work that I'd had at Burroughs, but it also allowed me to use the tax training from the programs at Michigan because real estate at that time was such a tax-driven investment decision.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And so as a result I tended to gravitate towards real estate exchanges and—which were tax driven—and became fairly good at the structuring of exchanges.

SL: So an exchange is like trading one property for another and reaping a tax benefit from that?

DF: You defer the recognition of gain when you exchange like-kind property.

SL: So was it always like-kind property, or could it be, you know, a big other residential s . . .

DF: Well, the definition of like-kind is very broad.

SL: Okay.

DF: And it includes all investment property as like-kind.

SL: Okay.

DF: So even a farm, which is producing a product . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . is like-kind to an apartment.

[03:01:44] SL: Okay. So in six months, you're seeing this niche in some way and also . . .

DF: In the commercial, yes.

SL: Yeah.

DF: I didn't really start engaging in exchange activity for several years later. But it all was a—an extension and a bi—and a way to use the training and experience that I'd had in another industry.

SL: It's interesting how that experience can apply to a really different set of circumstances. That I guess in some ways data is data. I mean . . .

DF: Exactly. [*SL laughs*] Right.

SL: You may have a different name for the column, but the bottom lines are similar, I would guess. [03:02:54] So how long did it take you to make a—an impact on this desire to do the commercial stuff?

DF: Not that long. Probably within two years . . .

SL: And your . . .

DF: . . . of returning.

SL: And your dad's health is still okay at that time?

DF: Yes, it's marginal but not—there's no—he had had two heart attacks over the years and was not as—it didn't have the stamina—or the motivation, for that matter—to really maintain the commitment that he'd had before and the intensity that he'd had before. But he wa—but he had no serious illnesses. And he was at work every day.

SL: Well, how long was it just you and your dad?

DF: Well, there were some other—he had some other . . .

SL: Brokers.

DF: . . . agents there, yes, that engaged in the residential activity. And—but it was virtually the same size, small, roughly total ten employee or—including agents and office staff—for that five-year period.

[03:04:33] SL: And—but were you the only employee that was engaged in the commercial side of stuff? All the rest of 'em were—I mean, maybe they . . .

DF: There was one other individual that was—had been with Exxon and their real estate department for several years and—almost his entire career. And he was also engaged in some commercial

activity.

SL: If I remember, I mean, I had, I don't know, a year or two stint in real estate sales. It seemed like that as a agent you just kinda took what bumped into you or what you could root out of the market, if it happened to be a lot or if it happened to be an apartment building or a retail space or a residence. You just took it and worked with it in some way—in a vague sales-like way. And it sounds like to me you were seeing a void of commercial—or concentrating on just commercial, having that as a specialty. Is that—was there anyone else that was specializing in commercial property at the time?

DF: Yes, there were some agents with other companies that were doing that. And there was some void, but I also saw a real opportunity. At the time, Little Rock was going through an urban renewal program, where the urban renewal agency was purchasing much of the downtown area for—or quite a bit for redevelopment opportunity. And when they did, they displaced businesses. And so that was a real opportunity for me to call on those businesses. And to work with them and also work with the property owners whose properties were being acquired by the agency because they had to replace those investments.

Bruce Perry: We need a new tape.

SL: Okay, we're gonna stop tape here. We're 'bout through this third tape.

[Tape stopped]

[03:07:07] SL: Dickson, we are—we're on tape four.

BP: Tape four. [*Sniffs*]

SL: We're starting our fourth Pryor Center hour. We had a little less than an hour with the Business Hall of Fame, so you've actually been in that hot seat now for about four hours. And we're—you know, I keep thinking of things that we didn't really talk about. I know that you had choices of—you had different opportunities to go work in different places when you graduated from Michigan. But—and you went with Burroughs. But we didn't really talk about who you worked with at Burroughs and why Burroughs was—became kind of pivotal in your career. I mean, were there folks that you associated there that meant something more to you than just a fellow worker or a boss? Did you have any mentors, or did you have any aha moments in your career development while you were at Burroughs?

[03:08:17] DF: I know exactly where you're heading, and there was one individual and one of those moments. And it was not only pivotal. It was just a very meaningful sum of experiences for the—that were—made a difference—were difference makers for

me for the rest of my life. When I first joined Burroughs, the controller in our division was an individual—a seasoned individual by the name of Dick McNeal, R. S. McNeal. And, of course, I was an analyst and separate—separated from him in terms of reporting. I reported to a department manager who, in turn, reported to him. And then through several progressions, all of which took me away from his division to—first to corporate staff and then to—back to the same division but a different organizational unit. And then I had the opportunity to manage the financial analysis staff in his division and report to him. And he—of course, we had known each other, and he had made that possible. He—I couldn't have had the position had he not asked for me. But the—it was a very critical time in my career and the life at Burroughs because Burroughs was going through a wrenching change. What I would call, at the time—it was an internal coup. And the CEO of Burroughs was nearing retirement. And they had designated his replacement, who was then the international vice president. Not our division. We were domestic. And he was named executive vice president and was the president, CEO designate, to replace the CEO when retirement came in approximately a year. Well, he did not wait for that year. He brought his own staff in from the international division

immediately and basically took over running the company and was allowed to do so by the CEO. And I don't know if the board had authorized that or it was simply a de facto assumption of the role. But in every organization there's a formal organizational chart and there's an informal one. And he was the CEO in the informal organization chart. And with his staff in there—and they were at all levels, particularly the finance and the planning staff, which directly affected us. [03:11:52] And in effect, coming direct to department heads, such as me, and instructing us what to do instead of going through the hierarchy and the chain. And I was maybe technically qualified but not mature enough in my people judgment. And I guess twenty-four at the time and had started early because of early graduation and been given these assignments and now had the department reporting to me, probably not ready for it in terms of people skills. And clearly my push back to their knowing how to do it better than we did was obvious, even though I may not have intended it to be and—because Dick McNeal asked me, on a couple of occasions, why—what was the problem and why I did I feel like it was necessary to insist on doing it in a way that was different from what the international group was advocating. And he always did his counseling with questions. He was a great coach.

And it took me several weeks of these discussions, two or th—we had two or three. And then one day the light went on that this was just so shortsighted on my part and so stupid to handle it the way that I was, and he taught me, without ever lecturing, how to reach the same objective without going through the wall but goin' around it. [03:14:24] And we became fast friends. Within two or three weeks of when the light bulb went on, he was—had me in the office tellin' me how complimentary the international staff had been and how much cooperation they were getting, and we were still accomplishing the same thing, doin' it the same way we wanted to and yet accomplishing what they wanted also. There was no deviousness about it. It was simply a lesson in people relations, which—and he was a master at that. And we were already good friends, but we became fast friends. And long after I'd left Burroughs, I went to Rochester, New York, for his retirement party. Stayed with he and his wife. Then visited him later in retirement in—when they were in San Diego, and he visited us several times here. The last time being approximately six years ago when he and his wife were in Branson and—with a senior trip. And they rented a car and drove to Little Rock, spent two days with us. And he did that at age ninety.

SL: Wow.

DF: And—amazing man. He died last year. Had a great life, and I never knew anyone that didn't love the man. But he was one of the three most meaningful influences in my business life.

SL: Well, we'll—have we already gone over the other two?

DF: No.

SL: That comes later on in your career?

DF: It does.

SL: Okay. [03:16:53] I wanna go back to—I kinda dropped the ball on your college days in Ann Arbor. You know, you talked about, you know, doin' the Air Force Reserve, and the very next thing you do you're on a train and you end up in Michigan. And you haven't even visited the campus. You just went there like, you know, there wasn't any real recruiting. You got accepted and you decided to go, and you show up for the first day of classes. You had to be—well, first of all, you just came from a—the—even the Air Force Reserve training was with a barracks full of people from Arkansas. And—but now you're eighteen hours away in Michigan. What was the—what was it like when you got there? I mean, what happened to you? Surely you just didn't [*snaps fingers*] fall in line and everything was hunky-dory. I mean, what was it like when you got to Michigan?

[03:18:00] DF: Well, I was—I'd never traveled alone, was naive beyond any comprehension. Didn't know anything more than to give an address to a taxi driver at the train station and go to a dormitory and was—I met, fortunately, met a great roommate, and we became fast friends. We still communicate with each other and get together when we can. But the one person I knew on campus from Little Rock was a black football player. And I don't know if you recall the name of Jim Pace, but about the time that—in the era—Clyde Scott era, Jim Pace from Dunbar High in Little Rock had been recruited to go to Michigan. And he was a running back, a halfback, at Michigan and was just probably a nine-six in the hundred-yard dash. That fast. And a real one of the star players on the Michigan campus. And so they—the Michigan recruiters found Little Rock. And so the next player they recruited was a large, all-muscle, strong lineman by the name of Willie Smith from Dunbar. And Willie Smith's dad was a friend of my father's. And he was a year ahead in attending Michigan. And so my father arranged through his father for Willie to meet with me when we were still in Little Rock during the summer and where we developed at least an acquaintance, some relationship, where he could be a resource to me on the campus at Michigan. But it was an intimidating

experience to go up there alone and to—simply because I was so unexposed previously to travel, and particularly to travel alone.

SL: Mh-hmm. [03:21:00] Now was Willie African American?

DF: Oh, yes. He was black. He was Dunbar. Uh-huh. Sure was.

SL: And so . . .

DF: He was a tackle with the varsity.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, so while you were there, did you continue your relationship with him?

DF: Yes, just on occasion. We would get together for coffee and talk but not frequent.

SL: Okay.

DF: Yeah. But it—he was a resource, and it was nice to know that I could call on someone if there was a problem where he might have through a year's experience on campus that I didn't have—be of assistance.

SL: Was Willie really your first opportunity to have any kind of relationship with an African American?

DF: Yes. And it was very superficial . . .

SL: Yeah.

DF: . . . to be honest about it. But it was still an important one because of my loneliness, in effect, before making friends there on campus.

SL: Well, now . . .

DF: But that was easy. They were—the campus was very friendly.

SL: So over the time that you spent there you became more and more comfortable.

DF: Yes.

SL: I think that's also evidenced by you going back there after being in Fayetteville for a semester.

DF: Yes.

SL: How well did you do academically at Michigan?

[03:22:50] DF: I did pretty good. I was—of course, I had to sp—the first—freshman, sophomore year in liberal arts and then was accepted into the bachelor program in the business school. And I graduated with a—right at a 3.5 on—in—from the undergraduate school and was—well, it had to be 3.5 because it was with distinction. But the—what made me the most confident was my freshman year when we would turn in our papers, or go to calculus class, and I could maintain and compete with the other students. I really felt as if the background I'd gotten at Central prepared me.

[03:23:54] SL: Well, that had to give you great confidence that you could do that well. So what about graduate school? How did you do there?

DF: In graduate school, thanks to Linda taking care of everything at the house where I could—I was working full time at Burroughs and then taking classes—of course, a reduced load, but still classes. And I raised my grade point there and graduated first in the class—in my graduating class.

SL: It's hard for you to say that, wasn't it? [*Laughs*]

DF: Well, it meant a lot to me. You're right, difficult to say but still very meaningful.

SL: Yeah, well, that's a big congratulations on that. You can only have one top of the class, so that's a big moment, somethin' to be very proud of.

DF: I am.

SL: And somethin' for this state to be very proud of.

DF: Thank you.

[03:25:06] SL: Is there anything else about undergraduate and your graduate years there that you wanna talk about it? Was there—did we mention any—did you have a professor that was kind of—that you reported to in grad school? Was there any of the professors there that really help spur you on and push you on?

DF: Yes, but not ones that I really reported to. They were ones that were very meaningful for individual courses and classes, but none that I would say that I maintained a relationship and

became close to and related for the—a period of years.

SL: Okay. Well, okay. So we—if there's nothing else with Burroughs that you can think of at the moment, and we'd already gotten you back to Little Rock, and you'd already started to make an impact, at least with the—with your father and his business and the folks that were in his business with him by concentrating on the commercial side of real estate here in Little Rock, and you were—we were talking about the urban renewal plans and implementation that was affecting the businesses in downtown. So I guess property was being bought up, and that meant that businesses had to move away from that property?

DF: They had to relocate.

SL: Relocate.

DF: Yes.

SL: And so you're—you saw an opportunity to help them through that not only to, I guess, to determine where the next business centers were going to be, is that . . .

[03:27:14] DF: Well, it was—there were two opportunities there.

SL: Okay.

DF: One was to assist the displaced occupants in relocating. And the other was to assist the former owners of the real estate to reinvest. And so—because the urban renewal agency was

assembling these properties and creating larger-size blocks of land where there might be a number of individual ownerships in a block. And they were purchasing these. They were older buildings, razing the buildings, and then offering these in a combined aggregate block of land for redevelopment in some higher-density, more intense use. For example, where the Bank of America building is now was all bought—previously owned by owners of fifty- or a-hundred-foot lots, and the urban renewal agency bought 'em all and assembled it and then sold it to Worthen Bank, which built the Worthen Tower and later became Bank of America. And that happened several places in the central business district. And now with hindsight, of course, we know that we lost treasures of these old buildings. But in the [19]60s when that was going on, there was no real appreciation for historical preservation. And those building were razed, and so it was—yes, it was an opportunity for me to acquire clients that were, in effect, involuntary clients because the government was forcing them to, one, sell, and the other one, to relocate. And they—to continue their business, then that was an opportunity, and so I was calling on those people.

SL: Well, you also mention helping the sellers reinvest. So you're really picking up two clients for each situation.

[03:30:04] DF: There's that—there's the possibility if they want you to assist 'em of having two assignments from a single property.

That's right.

SL: And there's—in this instance, there's no real conflict there . . .

DF: Oh, no.

SL: . . . is there?

DF: There's no . . .

SL: 'Cause . . .

DF: . . . none at all.

SL: . . . they're—they've both had to make changes in their businesses or in their income. And . . .

DF: They were separated by the government, not by any other force.

SL: Right.

DF: And they had no other relationship with each other except as landlord-tenant.

[03:30:45] SL: So did any of those relationships continue just in—on new ground, or was it investments over here and relocation over here?

DF: It was a rare case when they . . .

SL: Mixed up . . .

DF: . . . the two parties . . .

SL: . . . together.

DF: . . . stayed together.

SL: So now you're also probably—are you—and I'm—I think I'm getting to your realization that there was a market—there was a service available to not just represent the businesses that were relocated, but also talking with the folks that had property that they could relocate to. Is that right?

DF: Sure.

SL: So you were kind of servicing both the buyer and the seller in a way.

DF: Well, yes, you could not represent the two. In that case, you had to represent one or the other. But you did have the potential of the former owners to help them reinvest when they were the former owners of the property acquired by the agency.

SL: Right. You were busy.

DF: That generated business. And then it was with one of those urban renewal agencies that created the opportunity for the first exchange that I was involved in. And that also involved when my own church was moving, Second Presbyterian, and it was—involved that church property as well.

[03:32:40] SL: So what's going on with the firm, then? What's going on with your dad's firm? He's kind of heading toward retirement, not as engaged or as excited as he used to be, and

you've got maybe one other guy in there that's . . .

DF: That's doing any commercial work.

SL: Yeah.

DF: The others are doing residential. And it's stable. It's not growing. It's not declining. It's just a stable firm. And I'm concentrating more on the assignments and not on trying to engage in the administration of the firm. I'm drawn to the challenge of the business . . .

SL: Boots on the ground.

DF: . . . and the negotiation side.

SL: Mh-hmm. So let me think now just for a moment. When did you-all have your daughter?

DF: When we were in Detroit.

SL: And her name is . . .

DF: Leslye.

SL: Leslye? She have a middle name?

DF: Blaine.

SL: Blaine? [*Laughter*]

DF: Which is Linda's middle name, too.

SL: Yeah, I know. So, in Detroit. So how old was she when you moved back to Little Rock?

DF: She was five.

SL: Okay.

DF: She was—we—she was born eleven months after we were married.

SL: Y'all got right with it? [*Laughs*]

DF: That's right.

[03:34:21] SL: Well, that's good. So really Linda did take care of not just the household stuff, but also raising a daughter while you were doing the grad school.

DF: Absolutely.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

DF: Because for me to be able to put enough time in the job in order to take advantage of the opportunities that Burroughs was giving me and to progress as they were allowing me to progress, and at the same time to do my grad work and to make good grades doin' it, it took a lot of concentration and a great deal of our life management by Linda. And that's—I think we discussed that some earlier with respect to my parents. It was not then a balanced relationship between the spouses. Even then, when we were new parents, it was still a very separate, distinct role between the husband and the wife in the home.

SL: Husband was still the American paradigm as [*ringing noise*] the breadwinner?

DF: Supposed to be.

SL: And the wife took care of the household [*ringing noise*] and the family.

DF: Right.

SL: And that's a telephone.

[Tape stopped]

[03:36:09] SL: We don't know why the alarm went off, and we can't imagine anybody wanting to break in while we're here. But apparently there's no harm, no foul. So we're gonna pick back up where we left off. I think we had just realized that we really hadn't talked about the birth of your daughter. Eleven months after your marriage, you have a daughter. We talked about how Linda how managed the household and raised a daughter while you were in grad school and working all the time and the continuing paradigm of the father being the breadwinner in a family and the wife, mother, being the house manager and raising the kids. And that's just the way it worked out for you guys at the time, and that's just the—and that's kind of the way America was. And to some extent still is, but it's gotten more equal lately. We've kind of talked about that a little bit. So you get back to Little Rock. You have a five-year-old daughter, and let's see, her name again was . . .

DF: Is Leslye.

SL: Leslye Bay—Blaine.

DF: Blaine, yes.

SL: And so do you buy a house when you get to Little Rock or . . .

[03:37:31] DF: We did as soon as we could find something and—that we wanted and negotiate the purchase and get it ready. Yes. And we moved over on Normandy just south of Cantrell, probably a half mile from here.

SL: It's probably a little bit more relaxed here because you're kind of—you've moved in to the business with your father. So there's a—there's support now, kind of, in a way. You've got—you're back home, and you've got some family around you and . . .

DF: That was important.

SL: Yeah.

DF: There was—that was some support. It made a difference.

SL: You didn't have any international folks to deal with. [*Laughs*] You're in Little Rock at that time. Now I did—should we talk a little bit more about your daughter? I guess she's ready to go to public schools at the end of the first year that you guys are here?

DF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: And where did she go to school?

[03:38:44] DF: She went to Williams Elementary, probably [*honking noise*] a mile from our home.

SL: And positive experience . . .

DF: Very, very good. It—Williams also had some excellent teaching staff. It was a good experience. Well-managed school.

SL: So you guys are kind of—you're pretty happy right now during that time. You've come back home. You got some support. Got a beautiful daughter, a good school, new—relatively—you know, you've found the home that you fixed up and you've moved in and you're next to your dad. Everything is great. There's this—these opportunities are coming up, commercial real estate-wise. The whole urban renewal thing gets you activated, and you accomplish great things during that time. The firm itself is solid. It's not expanding. It's not losing ground. But it seems to me that you guys ended up going down a merger path. Is that right? How long was it before you did that?

[03:39:55] DF: No, it wasn't a merger path. The firm itself was stable, as you observed, but dormant. Not really developing any momentum or any growth, and no vision, no management to it. And I was approached individually to join the other three partners to form a new firm. And because of the limited period that my father would continue to be in business, and my not

wanting to be involved in the residential arm of the business, that was appealing to me to have a group that I respected and that with whom I could relate ideas, test solutions, grow together intellectually, and business as well. And we didn't realize it at the time because we didn't, I don't think, give it this type of analysis. But we were—the four of us were totally different, and we brought complimentary contributions to the aggregate. Cotton Barnes was very intellectual, very well trained. An excellent consultant and counselor and well respected. Luke Quinn was much more creative and was the idea man of the foursome. And Sam Anderson was the one with the property management experience from his former firm. And so—and I think looking back my role was more one of the organizational person and the implementer. In some cases taking the Quinn ideas and helping to implement them. And using Barnes as our coach to make sure we didn't overstep and make mistakes. He was an absolute natural student. This—I mentioned three major influences, and he was the second. Every day going to work was like going to school again. He had been trained as an architect. When he couldn't get the right subcontractors for some of the jobs, he wanted—he became a master plumber. And then became a master electrician. And he

was a—just—he was a numismatist. He knew wines better than the wine stores did. He was just a student of everything. And he was the one that we could use to test every idea and tell us where the pitfalls were. Great learning experience.

[03:44:17] SL: Sounds like he had similar analytical skills that you carry but also . . .

DF: He had the experience . . .

SL: He had the experience . . .

DF: . . . and the judgment.

SL: . . . and he had the respect of the community, right?

DF: He did.

SL: He was known for how honest and upfront—ethical he was and the good work that he was capable of. And when you say he became a master plumber and a master electrician, you mean he became a master plumber and a master electrician. It wasn't like he just took the role. He did the work and got that done. Is that . . .

[03:44:50] DF: Well, he had to do it. He had to get—to pass all the tests and become licensed in order to be able to hire the plumbers and electricians under him to do the job. When he couldn't get the contractors he wanted, that was the way he had to handle it.

SL: And don't you think that hi—the respect he had in the community and his broad expertise, his name, also lent kind of an entrée into the experiments that you guys—I mean, there was—if it was coming from your group and he was in that group, there was some validity, at least some—at least more than passing interest in what you guys were trying to accomplish.

DF: His experience and seniority gave us credibility. It contributed a lot to credibility.

SL: Now how much older was he than you?

DF: Probably twenty years. I was the youngest of the four, and we needed that—not only the credibility, but the judgment that comes from the experience. I think at the time, [19]71—so I was thirty-three.

SL: So what were some of the maybe out-of-the-box ideas that Quinn was conjuring and you were trying to implement?

[03:46:50] DF: Well, one of the first ones was what's now the Regions Building. And he was very close to First National Bank, and that was before it merged with Commercial National to become First Commercial years—and then, later, Regions. And so with that relationship, and they were convinced they needed a new headquarters, we assembled the block where the Regions Building is now and then were the leasing agents and managers

of that building and helped in the development. Were not the development managers, but we helped in the development. And then handled the leasing and management. And to this day we still manage the building. And handle the leasing for the current owners, which are successors to Regions.

SL: You know, all those banking entities you named—I have a rental property that switched through all those, and they acquired the mortgage in each of those switches. That's interesting. So business started—you started to expand. Is that . . .

DF: We did.

SL: . . . with the result of this new partnership?

DF: We started a gradual expansion then. Not to be the largest. We never attempted to be the largest. But tried to expand to meet client demand, and it—our—it was difficult to expand because our culture was different. We operated more as a team and not as solo, independent agents, as had been the tradition in that industry and where, as you may know, most—in most firms the indivi—the agents are truly independent contractors. And we've never had an independent contractor. We've always been employees. We've always acted as a team. We share all information. We share ideas. We share solutions. And that allows us also to mobilize team resources when multiple part—

talents and the additional personnel are needed on a particular assignment.

[03:49:53] SL: So whenever a project comes in, everyone on the team has a part to play.

DF: They could. They could have a part. There's always someone that is—obtained the assignment and someone who'll be the manager of the project. But it may require of a number of disciplines.

SL: Inside or outside your-all's firm. You're free to . . .

DF: Sure. They're always outside, but within the firm there may be a number of disciplines required.

SL: And so this growth started—y'all reformed in what year?

DF: We created the firm and organized in [19]71. And we grew it slowly from there, but we were able to do better than break even our first year and then grew it from there.

SL: That's kind of extraordinary, isn't it?

[03:50:57] DF: We thought it was because we had so much fixed cost relative to the industry because our brokers were all on salary. They weren't paid in the conventional method because we knew that you could not say you were a team and then act as if you're solo practitioners and say one thing's important, like serving the client and being a team player, and then paying in a

way that says it's not important. And so . . .

SL: Different concept.

DF: . . . we were—that's right. So all of our organization was on salary. We did have incentives, but we had the fixed cost and we also—the salaries gave us a real advantage in that no individual was financially motivated to advocate some real estate decision or transaction on behalf of a client that was not to the client's best interest because it wasn't a case where they—where their income was all directly dependent upon the transaction side of the business.

SL: So I guess that's a great advantage, but the only downside is that the costs are fixed come high or low water. I mean, it's . . .

DF: And you had to learn to balance incentives with that team culture. And it took us several years to get that balance. We didn't start off knowing exactly what the right mix was.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, that's the way innovators—innovation is. You don't know exactly how it's gonna end up. But sounds like you had great spirit to start with and had a—there was excitement—sounds like there was excitement in that approach, and it . . .

DF: There was. We were all committed to it, and everyone devoted a lot of work and concentration. We worked long hours in the early years for sure. [*Beeping noise*]

SL: Okay, so now it seems like to me that some kind of mergers—or you brought in other companies into your fold. And it seems like—was there one where it was basically just a couple of guys? Was there IR—what was it?

DF: Yes. And that's what generated the name change. By that time, our partnership had changed significantly, and if you don't mind I'm gonna take us up to that point.

SL: Yes.

[03:54:21] DF: First, Luke Quinn withdrew in 1980. And he was in several other businesses at the time. And so he concentrated on those businesses. And then later in the [19]80s, Cotton Barnes retired and then didn't live—we—he kept office space with us and maintained his relationship but didn't live that long after his retirement. And . . .

SL: That was a loss for you, wasn't it?

[03:54:58] DF: It was a big loss. And I missed him terribly because I relied on being able to go to him, even then after that many years. So—and then in 1997, it was clear to me by—because two of our four founding partners were then gone. It was Sam Anderson and Dickson Flake. And it was clear to me that here we were in [19]97. And so I was approaching sixty, and Sam was a couple of years older than me. And that if we were really

going to make that—make our firm continue to grow and to perpetuate it that we had to start bringing in more partners, because we had 98 percent of the firm in between the two of us. Start—we need to bring in more partners and to start transitioning the role of the firm and make it a long-term change from a operation that depended on us to one that had a strategy for its long-term continuation. And so at that time I suggested to Sam that one of the two of us go ahead and withdraw from the firm, or start withdrawing, and give up our ownership, and let's start the process of bringing in younger partners and to start building their roles. And I gave Sam the choice. I would do it, or he should do it. But one of us should be doing it. And he decided that he wanted to do it, that he would transition out. So the firm, over a five-year period, repurchased his interest and redistributed that to new, younger partners. So I had been working at the time on the relationship with Colliers, unsuccessfully. We had not been able to develop the imitation that we wanted to be an independent member of Colliers. Their program was more one of letting the larger firms that were already members acquire firms in other cities. And we didn't want to be acquired.

[03:58:20] SL: Tell—give me a brief sketch of what Colliers is.

DF: Colliers is an internat . . .

SL: Or was at that time.

DF: It was, and is—it's an international network started in Australia, later moved its headquarters to Boston, which is made up of, more so then, but even now, independent firms who have adopted the brand and the relationship with each other and together own stock in Colliers. And so it's the independent firms that are members that own the company. They have some large, dominant members and had some at the time. And they were—they had a big influence on who was invited and not invited to become a shareholder, and because they wanted to continue expanding to these second- and third-tier markets, they were reluctant to allow independent members to join because it would foreclose their ability to expand into that city and that market. So we had been working on this relationship for several years and had not quite gotten there. And then we merged locally with the firm by the name of IBR. [04:00:06] And the two principal partners in IBR were Mark Bentley and Tom Rystrom, the *B* and the *R*. And so they wanted it to be characterized as a merger and not as an absorption, even though our firm was probably four times to four and a half times theirs. And so they wanted a name change and not to be—

become part of Barnes, Quinn, Flake & Anderson, and so we agreed to the name change idea. And this was not my choice but theirs, and they changed it to Dickson Flake Partners. And then we knew wanted a shorter name than when what we had because if we were successful in being invited to become members of Colliers, then that name would go on the front. And so we went through an evolution of becoming Dickson Flake Partners, and then when we were invited to membership at Colliers, we became Dickson—Colliers Dickson Flake Partners, and then last year, all of Colliers' firms had to change their name to Colliers International and drop the local names.

SL: Okay.

DF: So it went through that transition.

[04:01:49] SL: So what was so attractive to you about becoming a part of Colliers?

DF: Well, when we would participate in various national meetings and organizations, and it seemed like that always the ones that were most active, the most qualified, were in Colliers. And it was—it seemed to be such a strong brand, and it was attractive.

SL: So what has that done for you? I mean, what has that done for Dickson Flake Partners, or what has that done for the lineage of your company?

DF: It allowed us to compete and participate with national accounts when, before, more often than not, the national account would select a large broker from another market and they would come in and either associate with someone in our market or not, but occasionally just handle it themselves, and we were not—we didn't have access to the corporate headquarters of so many of these potential clients who were based in other cities but would be able to direct business in our market.

SL: So really what you were providing Colliers is the Arkansas expertise that—and the client coming into the Arkansas market would benefit from your boots on the ground here and your long-term relationship with the state and with the market here that Colliers really couldn't apply. I mean, they would have had to either contract with you or they would have had to come in and either spend a lot of money doing thorough research or provide a cursory recommendation of what to do next with whatever the client was after and consequently not necessarily provide the service—the level of service that Dickson Flake and Partners could provide here within the state. Is that . . .

[04:04:26] DF: We had the local knowledge.

SL: Yeah.

DF: And we—and I think they were surprised, and we were surprised

at how much business was going to go the other way, too. It has been surprising the level that we've been able to direct assignments from here to other markets and engage their cooperation and use their local knowledge.

SL: So I'm thinking this may very well go back to your mentoring that you got at Burroughs, how to work things out and achieve the same goals without making someone feel like you're either pushing back or you're not—or you're kind of steppin' on their toes. It sounds like to me that—I mean, we've mentioned two of your mentors, I believe, and—the fellow at Burroughs and . . .

DF: Cotton Barnes.

SL: Cotton Barnes. Who was the third mentor?

[04:05:48] DF: Linda.

SL: Ah. So while all this stuff is going on with your business, and it's—sounds awfully exciting, but it also sounds like a lot of work and a lot of time. She is continuing to cover the home front and bring up a wonderful daughter and—is that what I'm hearing?

DF: Well, it's more than that.

SL: Okay.

DF: Scott, for someone who has no business training educationally and no business experience, she has remarkable judgment that is applicable [*cell phone vibrates*] to business. And sometimes I

haven't acknowledged that judgment. But she has such people skills. And, I mean, insight into people. And her—I think her observation skills, her powers of observation, may be the result of being an artist, because those powers of observation are uncanny. And they have really—that has given her a judgment and an insight that's really served me.

SL: Almost bankable.

DF: Bankable. [*Laughter*] That's right.

SL: We're at three minutes?

BP: Three minutes.

SL: Okay, we're gonna stop this tape.

[Tape stopped]

[04:07:37] SL: Is this five?

BP: Fi—six.

Joy Endicott: Five.

SL: Five. It's Pryor Center tape five.

BP: Yes.

SL: So you're bumpin' up—you're—you've got a good almost five hours here total, including Business Hall of Fame. But we kind of passed over some of the transition in this Colliers thing. Explain to me what your role has evolved to in all of this.

DF: Approximately the time that we were—just before we were

merging with IBR and they changed the name to Dickson Flake Partners, and I say they because at that point, just before that, I had followed Sam in the transition program. I told you that Sam Anderson had his shares acquired—his interest acquired over a period of time by the firm and that the firm had redistributed that interest. Well, then as soon as we had finished that program and completely completed the relationship there and he was retired, I went to the then existing young partners and told them that I intended to work indefinitely, that I had no plans to retire in the conventional sense of retirement because I enjoyed it. I couldn't wait to get into the working world from college and serve my military so that I could—and not interrupt it and go right to work. And I've enjoyed working for my entire career. And I wanted to keep it up. But I also wanted them to know that I was ready, that they could set the date and that I would either stay in the current role as long as they wanted or make the transition the same way Sam Anderson had as soon as they wanted. And that they could call that shot. It didn't take long for them to come back and say, "If you would stay active and we could do this without any announcement where we don't think we would have an effect on our client relationships. We'd like to start now while you're still active with the firm." [04:10:47] So

we then started a five-year program with me. And they have completed that program, and so I'm now not in the management or ownership of the firm, and I really believe that the transition program with both Sam Anderson and with me and developing the method has been—meant more to the growth of the firm in the last ten to fifteen years. And the assured continuity and the appeal to talented, smart, aggressive young partners with very high ideals and with whom I'm proud to be associated.

SL: Sounds like you chose some really good young partners. It was a good choice, and they got it. I mean, they—I . . .

DF: They came with it. They had good genes and good parents. [*SL laughs*] And they came with the ideals, but—and they're—and we've, because of our different culture, which I've explained, we've had better success at en—at growing with individuals who were—who did not have prior experience in our business. They might have been in a related business, like maybe commercial lending and banking, or they may have been right out of college. For example, our managing partner, Kevin Huchingson, came to us straight from the M.B.A. program. He's now been with us fifteen years, is our youngest partner but our managing partner. And our other partners are all ones who have joined us without prior experience and have grown into that role.

SL: If—can—is there a ranking of real estate firms? I mean, as far as your—the Colliers International business and this association here in—how do you guys rank as far as statewide goes or in the state?

[04:13:43] DF: Well, statewide, which is our firm, Colliers International | Arkansas, there's no ranking of overall business because there's no way to measure statistically what individual firms are doing in terms of their overall business. The only thing that's measured is the management volume. And they measure that in square foot area managed. And so our firm is the largest in the state in square foot area managed by more than double the number two firm. But that only applies to management.

SL: So how many square feet is that?

DF: About eleven million square feet.

SL: [*Laughs*] Congratulations.

DF: And for a small market that's pretty good. That's good penetration.

SL: Mh-hmm. I'd call that extraordinary. Wouldn't you? I mean, that's pretty big for a small market. And your nearest—second rank is, you know, you're double that, so I think that speaks very, very well of what you've accomplished and what your firm has done.

[04:15:06] DF: Well, I really think much of it's due to the bringing smart people with good commitment and good ideas and good ethics and standards into ownership and making it possible for them to be owners.

SL: That's a great Arkansas story. Let's talk a little bit about your daughter, and she—you have a grandchild. I—do you have a son-in-law?

DF: Oh yes.

SL: Let's talk about your . . .

DF: Yes.

SL: . . . son in law.

DF: Very proud of him.

SL: Let's talk about him a little bit.

DF: Okay. Ray Shellam, our son-in-law, is British. He grew up in Manchester, England. Came to the US to learn to fly because he always wanted to be a pilot, and for some reason, it's much more expensive to learn to fly in either Asia or Europe than it is in the US. And so he trained and learned to be a pilot working at other jobs while he was doing it. And now has significant seniority with American Airlines as a pilot. And he's a great father.

[04:16:48] SL: Well, how did he and your daughter meet?

DF: They met in Fort Worth, Texas. He was working for the school where he had trained to be a pilot. Had not yet been able to get the credentials necessary to get with a major airline. And she was working in Fort Worth as—with an advertising company. She had grad—had her bachelor's degree and had graduated. And so—and they met there and dated and became engaged and got married. And we were fortunate enough that, you know, her [DF edit: his] parents came over from Manchester, and we got to meet them, and we've had a long relationship with Ray's father. Unfortunately, before Sarah, our granddaughter, was born—before she was conceived, Ray's mother died. So she never had the joy of being a grandparent.

SL: Yeah.

DF: Or even knowing that she was going to be a grandparent. But we've had a wonderful, warm relationship with his father.

SL: And how old is your granddaughter now?

DF: She's sixteen.

SL: Wow.

DF: She just this past summer got her license to drive.

SL: Okay.

DF: And, course, that's . . .

SL: She's loose now.

DF: Yeah, that is—has her own job to help pay for her automobile expenses.

SL: Good. Good. And where are they located now?

[04:18:47] DF: They're located in Burleson, Texas, just south—less than five miles from Fort Worth. And they've almost grown together. They're both exploding. And they have fifty-two acres there in—there—right at the perimeter of Burleson. And my daughter is engaged in the business of training and boarding students that are involved in English riding and equestrian school. She went back after ten years of work in—being in the working world before our granddaughter was born. She, when our granddaughter was conceived, she had learned after ten years that with a nontechnical degree she needed more. So she went to the Cox School of Business at SMU and got her M.B.A. while she was pregnant with Sarah and then the first year after Sarah was born and finished her degree and worked for Johnson & Johnson in their marketing program for a number of years. And then another health products company, Health Source, which was there in Fort Worth. And gradually then became an independent contractor with Health Source working 50 percent of her time and then—while she developed her love, and that was the equestrian program. And then went full time. And it's been

a blessing in that it allowed her to be a stay-at-home mother and still have a business.

SL: Yeah.

[04:21:05] DF: And so they have a wonderful complex there south of Burleson. They have a outdoor arena and an indoor arena, a barn for more horses than they will ever accept to board. And—because she'll only board horses of her students, not take in boarders that are not students. And they—it's been a very healthy environment for Sarah to grow in. And Sarah goes to school in Fort Worth, a charter school there in the Fort Worth public system. She's very in love with the performing arts.

SL: Okay.

DF: She will get on a stage at—with anyone's request. [*SL laughs*] Sing, perform, whatever you want. Recite poetry, just to be in front of an audience.

SL: Has no fear.

DF: No, none. And so she attends the Fort Worth Academy of Performing Arts, but it's part of the public system.

SL: Her middle name isn't Blaine, is it?

DF: It is.

SL: [*Laughs*] How did I know that?

DF: Good guess.

[04:22:34] SL: Well, that's a wonderful story. Is there anything else that you can think of that we should include in our talk here? Is there—I know—you know, it's not uncommon for someone to call me up after an interview and say, "I can't believe we didn't talk about this" or "I can't believe I forgot this." Is there just—I mean, we can—you can—no pressure to come up with it [*snaps fingers*] immediately, but if you wanna take just a few minutes to think about somethin' before we wrap this up, why, we can do that. If you want to take a break and kind of mull over what we've done.

DF: Let's do that for a minute.

SL: Let's do that. Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:23:18] SL: Dickson, we were talkin' about your granddaughter and your daughter and your son-in-law, but you've got a really good relationship—you-all've got a good relationship with your granddaughter. Talk to me just a little bit about her.

DF: Since birth, she's just been the light of our life. And we've had so many experiences to—even though they live in Texas, so many opportunities to bond with her and to develop great relationships. Started when she was an infant when her parents wanted to take a safari trip to Africa and be gone seventeen

days. And now believe me, after seventeen days, Linda was ready for them to return. [*SL laughs*] But it was still just a great experience, and we've had so many more where she will come and visit us and her—for so many years, I guess because of her father's experience as a pilot, they would not let her travel alone, even with the program that the—with the flight attendants escorting them on and off. But Ray has seen too many experiences where a plane couldn't land and was diverted to another city and things—in his role as a pilot, it wasn't until she was fourteen, maybe thirteen or fourteen, that he would let her travel alone where they would send her up. But we've had so many opportunities, and even as recently as this past summer in June, we went with Sarah to Mexico to tour the Aztec and Mayan ruins, and she took a diary and took notes every day. And absorbed much more of the lectures than we did. And had a great time together, and it is such a joy to know that a sixteen-year-old will still put up with your company.

SL: Hang out with the old folk.

DF: Yes.

SL: And like it. Yeah. That's a great . . .

DF: Like it, or pretend she does.

SL: Well, I don't think she would be, you know—it sounds like she's

a great gal, and I have a feeling her affection is very genuine.  
So that's good. And you're blessed for that.

DF: We sure are.

[04:26:13] SL: Sure are. You know, I was thinkin' I didn't really spend—we just kinda grazed over your Air Force Reserve years or—maybe tell me a little bit more about how that worked. You were talkin' about how it affected your relationship with the air force because you switched from Michigan to the University of Arkansas, and it's like you switched units. You went from a Michigan unit to an Arkansas unit back to a Michigan unit. Is that . . .

DF: Yes, the national guards are state organizations. They're part of the US military and they can be called up at any time by the US military, but they are state organizations. And so I was initially a member of the Arkansas Air National Guard and then became a member of the Michigan Air National Guard. And would go to Michigan for summer camp, which was in the northern peninsula of the state at Alpena, Michigan. And then after Linda and I were married, would attend summer camp there, and we would get a off-base cottage, and she would come, and we would be together there. And this was the year before Leslye was born but when Linda was expecting. And that was the year when I

had the mishap with the jet aircraft that Linda wanted me to mention to you. [04:28:06] I was in the armament section of a fighter squadron, and one of our jobs was to charge the weapons of the fighter jets before they took off for target practice. And there would be three jets in a flight, and they would line up on the edge of the flight line right before taking off and angle forty-five degrees off so that their jet blast was blowing off at an angle and not back on one another. And while they were all three angled, then we in the armament section would go from craft to craft and charge their weapons. Then when all three were charged, they would line back up again in a row and lower the canopies and take off. Well, as one incident occurred, when we had just charged the weapons in the lead aircraft and were rushing—running to the next one, and he didn't wait. And he turned and gunned his engines to taxi down to get ready to take off. And I—we saw him turning but couldn't run fast enough to get out of the blast. It picked me up, and I don't know how high it lifted me, but the blast threw me down the runway. And when I landed, it twisted both legs.

SL: Oh.

[04:29:47] DF: And I didn't realize at the time the damage it had done to the cartilage in my knees, and it wasn't until—when I

knew within a few years that I could no longer do anything that involved pivoting. I could run forward as long as I didn't pivot. No tennis, no nothing, not even golf that would twist your legs. But it—and, of course, then they didn't have orthoscopic surgery. And I was not a good enough athlete to justify the type of surgery it required. And so I simply satisfied myself with running straight forward and not—and just jogging and running and not getting—involving in sports that, from then on, that required pivoting. I never knew the extent of the damage, and finally, then, thirty years after the injury I did have orthoscopic surgery in the worst of the two. And had it corrected. Yeah.

SL: You're lucky to have survived that, aren't you? I mean . . .

DF: Well, I was out of the heat. I did not suffer any burns. But not out of the force of the blast, where it still picked me up and threw me down the runway.

[04:31:13] SL: Did the blast and the heat fall across the planes that were still parked? I mean, did he hit them with them with it, too?

DF: Yes. But, of course, they . . .

SL: They were heavy enough to where it didn't . . .

DF: They were heavy enough. They had they had the weight. Right.

SL: I mean, it could have been big-time, big-time disaster.

DF: It could have been more serious. Right.

SL: I bet he was not the most popular guy for a little while.

DF: No, and I never met that pilot. He—I never [*beeping noise*] saw him even though I was laid up in the base hospital for the rest of the encampment. And he may not have ever known he did it. I'm not sure. But you know, that was—the guard was a great experience. The basic training was, the relationships, and it was—it taught me, really, to appreciate so many things, even dorm food. When I went straight from basic training to my freshman year at the University of Michigan and everyone else in the dorm was complaining about the dorm food, and I was relating to my basic training food, and it was gourmet.

SL: [*Laughs*] The dorm food was gourmet.

DF: Yes.

SL: Well, there you go.

DF: It's all relative.

SL: It's all relative. [04:32:43] Well, Dickson, it's been a great day for me. I've had a wonderful time, and you've got a good, good Arkansas story. You've made a difference, and I can tell you've made a difference in many people's lives and you have—you've had a good life. It's . . .

DF: Well, I hope it's not over in terms of active participation. I'm—

I've evolved now to maybe 50 percent of my time being real estate related in volunteer work and particularly in the—with the higher education institutions. Working to assist them with their real estate issues, and it—that gives me a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, and I wanna continue doing that. It's—it is so wonderful when you can continue practicing but do it after you're in effect semiretired and contribute with the—your lifetime experience and not do volunteer work that's unrelated or that you don't love. And I'm getting to do work that is related and I do love.

SL: And making a difference.

DF: And hopefully makin' a difference.

SL: You—sounds great to me. Really, really good. Listen, I wanna thank you. Both you and Linda for all the time and patience you've given us today. It's a great honor to be here and get all this—all these stories. They're great stories.

DF: It's been a wonderful experience for me just making me think of some of the memories.

SL: Well, if you think of some more, give me a call. We'll do somethin'. And I'm lookin' forward to February. We'll—I'll see you at the Business Hall of Fame. And Bruce will work with the business college to put out a good video for you, and you'll be

gettin' more and more material from us. You'll be hearing from us. This is just the start. It takes a while for us to process this stuff, but I can promise you we'll take care of it and you'll be glad that you did this. It's a good—wonderful gift that you've given us.

DF: Thank you. It's an honor.

SL: Thank you very much.

[04:35:15 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]