

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Archie Monroe

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

October 10, 2008

Magnolia, 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 website 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.

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed Archie Monroe on October 10, 2008,
in Magnolia, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Well, the first thing we have to do—we have to—I have to take—kinda take care of some business here. I have to—um—say who we are, where we are, and where this stuff is gonna go. So—um—my name is Scott Lunsford, and I'm talking with Archie Monroe, and we're at his house in Magnolia, Arkansas. And today's date is October 10—um—2008. And, Archie, this videotape recording and audio recordings and all the [photograph] scans that we're doing . . .

Joy Endicott: You might give her a minute. She's still in [*unclear words*].

SL: . . . um—are—um—going to be housed in the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History . . .

Archie Monroe: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . which is a part of the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville's Mullins Library.

AM: Mh-hmm.

SL: And, Archie, I have to ask you—is it okay that we're videotaping

all this stuff and it's all gonna go up there to the university?

AM: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:01] SL: All right. Well, thanks. So, Archie—uh—what is your full name?

AM: My name is Thomas Archimedes Monroe Jr.

SL: Junior. Archimedes.

AM: My dad was—uh—Thomas Archimedes Monroe. He was a native of Cleburne Parish, Louisiana, and he moved to Magnolia at an early age. And he and my mother, Alice [Awilda] Couch, married in 1903. I was born where the Magnolia City Hall now is situated.

SL: What—what year was that?

AM: I was born November 23, 1909, in a two-story frame house that my Grandfather Couch had given my mother and father as a wedding present. And—uh—that house was sold two months after I was born to Captain Wade [Hampton] Kitchens, who was a lawyer serving the United States government in the Philippines, and he came back to Magnolia to practice law, and he bought that house from my dad. We then moved in with my grandparents [Virginia Kelso Couch and Sanford Osgood Couch]—Couches—in a different part of Magnolia. Magnolia at that time was only a—a town of about—uh—eighteen hundred

people.

SL: Now, is this after you were born?

AM: At the—I'd say ti—around the time I was born . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . the population of Magnolia was around that figure.

[00:02:55] SL: Well now, what was it that your—uh—father did for a living?

AM: My father started with the Peoples Bank when it was established in 1902, and he became head of that bank till his death in 1926. In those days, the CEO [chief executive officer] of a bank was called a cashier, and he was cashier of the Peoples Bank till 1926.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: And—uh—my Grandfather Couch—uh—my mother's father, was—was a merchant on the square till he sold his business, and he then—uh—was—looked after some farmlands, raising cotton.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: But my father's father [Thomas Cooper Monroe]—uh—was a captain in the Alabama Regiment—Eighth Alabama [Infantry] Regiment in the Civil War. And—uh—after he returned from the war, they moved from Alabama to north Louisiana, where my daddy was born.

SL: Wh—where was he born? Do you—do you know?

AM: In—uh—in Arizona, Louisiana.

SL: Arizona, Louisiana.

AM: Mh-hmm. It's Claiborne Parish. And—uh—he moved to Magnolia with his father and mother [Elizabeth Mahan Monroe] when he was a young—just a young boy. Mh-hmm. And he grew up in Magnolia till his death. And—uh . . .

SL: Well now, did your dad ever have any—uh—ed—what education level did your dad . . .

AM: My dad finished what was called south—uh—Southwest Academy, a private school here in Columbia County. And—uh—then he went to Bethel College, a Baptist institution in Russellville, Kentucky, and was up there for two years, and—uh—finished that and came back and started working for the bank. Uh-huh.

[00:05:14] SL: Well, let—let's talk about your mom a little bit.

Um—were—now, the Couches—were they fr—from Magnolia? Was she . . .

AM: They were . . .

SL: . . . born and raised in Magnolia?

AM: Uh—she was born in Magnolia, too.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: In 1878. And—uh—and she lived here all of her life and passed away in 1964 at the age of eighty-five. And—uh—my dad was only fifty-five when he became ill and passed away.

SL: Uh-huh.

 AM: And—uh—that was in 1926. And—uh—Magnolia was a cotton-growing community.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: We raised at one time as much as thirty thousand bales of cotton in this county per year. And we had three cotton gins inside the city limits of Magnolia. We had a cotton-oil mill and pound bales and compressed 'em so they'd fit more bales in a railroad car. And—uh—I grew up in this kind of economy. And—uh—the square as we know it in Magnolia today was really constructed pretty much—uh—how it looks today from the ear—turn of the century—from 1900 to about 1915, when World War I came along. So most of those brick buildings around that square have been there since that time. And the courthouse was built in 1906. Before that was a frame two-story courthouse, which was demolished, and—and the new, modern courthouse was built, and it still serves our county.

[00:07:27] SL: Did your—um—did your mom have any education when she was growing up?

AM: She finished Southwest Academy and went to a Methodist school in Searcy, Arkansas, called Galloway [Female] College . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . which later merged with Hendrix College in Conway. So she—uh—had a—had probably one year . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . of college work at—at Galloway College in Searcy, Arkansas.

[00:08:02] SL: Was—was she—um—uh—did she run the house? Is that what—or did she have her . . .

AM: She was a homemaker. She . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

AM: . . . she never worked in the business world at all.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: She was what the—most women did in those days—uh—um—did all the cooking . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . and—uh—housework and had their gardens and—uh—belonged to a women's clubs and was active in church work, and—and the typical Southern-town—uh—homemaker. And she was from a large family. Uh—she had—uh—one—a lotta cousins and—uh—one brother and one sister. And—um—she—uh—raised my brother [Sanford Couch Monroe] and me. I had a

younger brother who became a doctor and—uh—uh—practiced in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, till his death in 1988—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:09:16] AM: And—uh—I—um—went to school at the old Southwest Academy. Became a public school, and the first six grades were in that building. It became part of the Magnolia Public Schools, and—uh—I went through six grades there. And then they built a new high school [Magnolia High School], oh, on—uh—East North Street and Jackson Street, where Bancorp South building now stands, and across the street from the location of the city hall, where I was born. So I went to high school across the street from where I was born. But in the meantime, when I was five years old, my dad built a house on North Washington—a two-story frame building, which now stands and is in excellent shape today. Uh—and I lived there until 1939—uh—when I—well, I went away to the university in nineteen—I went—finished high school in 1927, and—uh—Magnolia A&M here in Magnolia had—uh—established a junior college in 1924. [Editor's Note: The official name of Magnolia A&M was State Agricultural and Mechanical College, Third District.]

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: And I went out there for two years and obtained an A.A. [Associate of Arts] degree, and then I transferred to the University of Arkansas in 1929 and graduated from the School of Business up at Fayetteville in 1931. I had worked in a bank in Little Rock durin' those summer months I was at the University of Arkansas—Banker's Trust Company in Little Rock.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: And—uh—my graduating class at Fayetteville in the School of Business was only forty-six.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: The whole graduating class of the whole university was around 350. [SL laughs] And we graduated in what was the old Greek Theater up there on Maple Street. [Editor's Note: The Chi Omega Greek Theater is on Dickson Street.] That's where we had our graduation exercises. We could—uh—we were so small that—the whole student body wasn't—was only around two thousand and—uh . . .

SL: Let's—uh . . .



[00:11:57] AM: And—uh—[19]31 was a [Great] Depression year.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: The stock market had crashed in 1929, and my dad had lost—my mother had lost—the bank actually failed after my dad's

death. It merged with another bank, and they failed. And it was one of those casualties that President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt in 1933 closed every bank in the state—in the United States till they could furnish new capital to get reorganized. So the Peoples Bank in Magnolia failed—was closed, and we lost—we had lost our—uh—stock in the bank to the failure of that bank. And—uh—it was hard times. So my mother moved to Fayetteville and took an apartment on Arkansas Avenue right in front of the campus called Wilkins Apartments, and she kept house for my brother and me, and he was still in high school, so he finished high school. At that time, the university had what they called University High.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:13:26] AM: So he graduated from University High School and—uh—then went to the university with me and then went on to med school [University of Arkansas School of Medicine] in Little Rock. And—uh—after I graduated in 1931, I was one of the few graduates that had a job waiting for me at that bank in Little Rock. So I went down there and started workin' from the ground up in that bank in [19]31. In [19]33 it closed and was closed by the federal order for sixty days when—uh—instead of the government pumpin' money into new banks to get them

open again, you had to find individuals who could—had enough money to invest—uh—capital. So the bank was reorganized in sixty days by a man [Arthur McLean]—a man who had means—had a successful lumber operation in North Little Rock called McLean Arkansas [Hardwood] Lumber [Mill] company. He had come down there from New York, and he had the capital in his hands to come over there and get the bank open.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:52] AM: You had to get approval to get the bank open. And—uh—those were lean days, and for sixty days there we could not cash a check in that bank. And b—through the goodness of [Gus] Blass [Co.] Department Store and Pfeiffer [Bros. Inc.] Department Store and Cohn's [M.M. Cohn Co. Department Store] there in Little Rock and the Safeway grocery store, credit was extended to us so we could eat. [*Laughs*] And my mother and my brother had moved from Fayetteville back to Little Rock with me to keep house for—so we could—uh—survive. Uh—she was a—uh—a homemaker for us. And—uh—our—I worked there till 1939, when—uh—my dad had helped reorganize the Magnolia Insurance Agency here with two other bank presidents, and—uh—oil was discovered in Magnolia in Columbia County in 1938. And the manager of that agency—uh—wanted to leave the

insurance management and—um—get in the oil business. And so the opportunity for me to come from Little Rock back down here and take over that insurance agency—uh—was offered to me, and I came here and started workin' in that insurance office as a manager and—uh—had to learn that trade. Uh—through my training at the university, I'd had some insurance classes, and it helped me—uh—uh—manage that business. [00:16:48] And I did that until 1941, when I met my future wife in the summer of 1940, who was a resident of Homer, Louisiana, which is thirty-six miles from Magnolia—across the line down there in Magnolia. And—um—she was a student [AM edit: working] at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, at that time. And—uh—and we married in—in March of 1942 [AM edit: 1941]. But in the meantime, she had—um—gone to LSU [Louisiana State University] and gotten her degree in—uh—counseling . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . down there. But—uh—after a year or so [AM edit: in 1942], my first s—child was born, Ark Monroe [Thomas Archimedes Monroe III], and—uh—World War II was—was—um—beginning to affect America, and the draft was in effect, and my number was coming up. So in 1942, I volunteered and went in the service and served—uh—uh—in—in the air—in those days, they

called it the [United States Army] Air Corps—Army Air Corps—later changed it to the US Air Force. And I served in San Antonio [Texas at Kelly Field, which was renamed Kelly Air Force Base in 1948]; Sioux Falls, South Dakota [Sioux Falls Army Air Base]; and Belleville, Illinois [Scott Field], at different fields, but never did go overseas.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: But I was—I was nearly thirty-two years old when they—when that draft was about to take me, so I volunteered and—and served till—till the war was over.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: And—um—it just—I had clerical jobs. I was an enlisted man. I was not an officer. And—uh—I'd—I'd had no military training at all, so I was a—a—a clerk in the—in the air force at—uh—Randolph Field, [San Antonio,] Texas, and . . .

[00:19:36] SL: Well, did you have to go through boot camp?

AM: I had to go through boot camp. Yes, I did. Mh-hmm. Which was quite a task—uh—[*SL laughs*] for me at thirty-two. [*SL laughs*] And I was thirty-five when I got discharged. I came back and took over the agency again and—and did that until—uh—for the next—uh—few decades. [*Laughter*] Stayed in that business for thirty-nine years and finally sold it, and—uh—in the

meantime, I had—uh—helped organize a savings and loan. So I worked in that for a few years and—and—uh—finally retired from it, mh-hmm, 1978, and I've been retired ever since. Mh-hmm.

[End of verbatim transcription]



[00:20:35] But Magnolia saw its—I saw its growth from a small rural agricultural community to become a—really a big factor in the oil business in 1938, when oil was discovered in this county. And that brought a lotta people from Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana into Magnolia. And the population grew from bout three thousand people in 1940 to—when I got home from the service in 1945, it had doubled in population. And by 1950, the population had reached close to eight or nine thousand people. And then in the [19]50s and [19]60s it grew further till where it—in the [19]60s, it got to be a town of nearly thirteen thousand people, and it stayed there, [19]60s and [19]70s, and then in the 1980s it started leveling off because the oil business was depleting and there was no further exploration. It was settled production—what we call settled production. But we had a change of economy came from—it came from a agricultural area to a more oil-related. And then in the la—after World War II, some far-sighted men had acquired some property out north of Magnolia towards the university and had attracted some

different kinds of businesses. One was a aluminum plant called Southern Extrusions, where they extruded raw aluminum into making window frames and door facings and shower stalls and things like that and even got into wra—building stadium seats. And they—they had the contract to build the stadium seats for the Cotton Bowl right here—a plant in this town. [00:23:13]

We were timber—we were—another factor in our economy has always been timber. We raise a lotta pine trees. It'll grow faster in this county than most any county in—around—in any part of Arkansas. And we had a lotta nice little—of industry—of lumber mills. We used to have small ones, which were so small that they called 'em peckerwood mills. [*SL laughs*] They'd just move—instead of moving the lumber to the mills, they'd move the mills to the lumber—where the timber was to be cut. And so a lot of people were involved in that industry, and it meant a lot to Magnolia to have that, and it's still a very important factor in this area. And believe it or not, our county population has remained static. We've been around twenty-five thousand people for at least since 1930s and [19]40s, and it's still around that figure. It hasn't grown a lot, but it's stayed steady. And our farms have become just privately owned cattle raising and— and a lotta chicken houses have been built for the processing

plants that Tyson [Foods, Inc.] and Pilgrim's Pride [Corporation] have in this area. So agriculture is still a important factor, as I call timber as part of agriculture. We ra—we plant and harvest these pine trees so after clear-cutting, we plant 'em again. And in thirteen years, you can get small-enough timber to where paper's—paper mills will take it and make paper that—newsprint and different types of paper. And so it's been a change of a k—a change of business that we've experienced here.

[00:25:35] SL: When you were growin' up here as a child in—did the—you were sayin' that the Couch family was here in Magnolia and there were quite a few cousins and relatives that—were—did they have their own farm outside? Did you ever . . .



AM: What happened—the merchants on the square would own the land, and they'd get a responsible man who knew how to run a farm and plant cotton and gather it and raise cattle. And so cotton and corn were usually our products that were raised on the farm, and they would—the men—the merchants on the square—they were hardware stores and general merchandise. They sold livestock feed and piece goods. You didn't have finished goods to buy in those days. Women's—were homemakers, and they stayed at home, and all of 'em had machines to sew with, and they made their own clothes. And

course, we had some men's stores who made men's clothing, but most women made their own dresses, and in those days they wore hats, and they had millinery shops and things like that. So the stores have gone through a transition from piece goods to finished goods in the last several decades. And we've seen that change.

SL: Well, did your mom make your clothes or . . .

AM: She would make our clothes, some of our underwear, and shirts. She'd buy the goods and make shirts. Mh-hmm. Surely would.

[00:27:40] SL: Let's talk about the house that you grew up in.

You—it was a two-story house there on the square?

AM: Yes, it was a two-story house and had three bedrooms upstairs with a bath and kitchen and sun parlor and living room and dining room downstairs—a breakfast room. And we had all the necessities that went with houses in those days. We had running water, and a sewer system had been installed in town. And it was a modern town that—what was late coming was [natural] gas for our heating. We used to have wood. And my brother and I would always have to stack the wood on the nights—the cold nights in the house, so it'd set in the fireplace and in the stoves, so in the morning we'd have to—all we'd have to do is just light the wood fires and heat the house.

SL: What—so was there just one fireplace, or did you have a couple of . . .

AM: We had a fireplace upstairs and two downstairs. Mh-hmm.

SL: And then did you have stoves in other rooms?

AM: Yes, we had freestanding stoves that used stove wood. And we had a lotta oak timber then. We could have—people would bring in lumber to—firewood, they called it, to sell some in the late summer, and we'd stack it up. That was our chore: to stack the wood and then bring it in the house in cold weather. That was—every family had boys in the family to do all those chores.

[00:29:49] SL: So was it a wood cookstove, too?

AM: Yes, we had a wood cookstove. Gas didn't come to Magnolia till 1927, even though we were in a area where gas was being produced down in Louisiana and Texas. But it was a long time getting gas lines built to where the towns could afford to lay the expense—going to the expense of laying pipelines to furnish us. But ARKLA [Arkansas-Louisiana] Gas [Company] came in and had a nice supply for us and—but my dad never lived to see a gas fire in Magnolia. He died in 1926, so I—that's how I can remember when it did come to Magnolia. We were late getting our streets in Magnolia improved, too. We did not pave that square with concrete or asphalt until 1927. And what



encouraged us to do it was that we had a more progressive president out here. At that time they called it Magnolia A&M, which is now Southern Arkansas University. And he had prevailed upon the [Arkansas state] legislature to pave around that campus out there. So the city said, "Well, we can get that same contractor to pave our square," and that's when the streets of Magnolia started being paved. [Laughs] It was not until the late [19]20s and the early [19]30s that we had any paved streets. All of 'em were gravel streets, and we had muddy streets to endure all those years as I grew up. Through grade school and high school, I never saw a paved street in Magnolia. [Laughs]

[00:32:10] SL: Well, what were the cars like back then? Do you—were there many—do you remember the influx of cars?

AM: Yes, I do because one of the men [Alvin Boyd a.k.a. Ickie Boyd] workin' in the bank had a—on the side, he'd taken on a dealership. And he worked in the bank till about two o'clock in the afternoon, and then he'd—he would—had a farm out from some dealers around here in other towns, like Texarkana and El Dorado [Arkansas] had had some dealerships before Magnolia got them. And that was durin' World War I, and my dad bought his first car in 1917, and it was a Chalmers. *C-H-A-L-M-E-R-S.*



Chalmers, which was a forerunner of Chrysler. And believe it or not, in 1919 he took that car and got his nephew—my dad never learned to drive a car, and my mother didn't drive. Women didn't drive cars in those days. And he got his nephew [Wade Willis], who was a student at Ouachita [Baptist] College in Arkadelphia [Arkansas], who could drive. He was about nineteen. And he drove us down to see some relatives in San— or in the San Antonio area of Texas, and Houston, and Gonzales, and down in that area. And we visited his uncle and his family in those places. And that was quite a trip in 1919 to take a car, because nearly all the roads were—they were all gravel in Arkansas for sure, but what roads there were, most of 'em was sandy clay with a few rocks on top, but no pavement. But in Texas, we did run into some paved roads down there. And I remember one time we ran into a flood down there between Houston and Waco, and the roads were flooded by this river. And we actually took that car and rode on rails [railroad tracks]—bump, bump, bump—down the rails for about two or three miles to get around those bridges.

SL: Water.

[00:35:04] AM: And what an experience we had. We got stuck and had to—a terrible time gettin' that car out of—and we had this—I

never will forget how worried my mother was. She thought we were gonna have to spend the rest of winter down there. That was in summertime, [*laughs*] and we didn't have any means of gettin' that car unstuck out on that rail—[railroad] ties. And



bout three years later than that, you know, my dad didn't take many vacations, but he says, "I want to go up east." And he took this same nephew, who's bout a senior in Baylor [University, Waco, Texas] at that—I mean, at Ouachita at that time, and asked him to drive us. And we drove from Magnolia to New York City in the summer of 1923. He wanted to show us where he went to college in Russellville, Kentucky. And we went by Russellville and saw that old college—it'd been abandoned. There's—somebody'd taken it over and changed the name of it. I believe the state took it over, and it's state school there in Russellville now. I don't know what the name of the school is, but we have pictures taken in—on the campus of that school. And he was so proud to show it to my brother and mother and me, where he'd gone to college. And we drove all way to New York. They had some pretty good roads up east, and—but it took us about two weeks to get up there.

[00:36:55] SL: How fast would that car go?

AM: It would go about fifty or fifty-five.

SL: That's pretty . . .

AM: Top speed's sixty. But the roads wouldn't permit us to . . .

SL: Right.

AM: . . . go over forty miles an hour. And you had a lotta flats. We'd just change flats all the time.

SL: Were those . . .

AM: Tires. Tires were small.

SL: Small tires, like . . .

AM: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . on a . . .

[00:37:19] AM: And we camped out. We had a tent. We'd just set up camp. They had what they call trailer camp—auto camps along the way. And we had Sterno stoves—little heating—stoves to cook with, and my mother would cook. And we drove clear to Cleveland, Ohio, and took a ferry, and went over [to] Toronto [Canada], and came back down through state of New York to New York City—we drove right in New York City. [*SL laughs*] Spent about three days there, and then we went to Washington [DC]. And we were in Washington seein' all the sights of Washington—I was thirteen years old, and my brother was ten—and President [Warren G.] Harding died in California—San Francisco. He'd been to Alaska, and he'd had a heart attack and

died. And my dad says, "You know, that'd be somethin' if we just stayed here. We got a good campground here in Washington. We don't have to pay a hotel bill. We'll just stay in that tent, and we'll just see the sights—?really? sights and see that funeral." [00:38:47] And you know, we stayed in Washington a week. It took about nearly a week for that train to bring his body from San Francisco to Washington for the state funeral. So we stood in line and went through the [US] Capitol [Building] and saw the remains of President Harding. And then we saw the procession down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol, and in that was President [Woodrow] Wilson, President [William Howard] Taft—all the presidents that had served while I was still a—while I was living. [*Laughs*] So I—that was a wonderful experience. And my Dad was a great adventurer. He loved to try new things like that. That was quite a feat to take a Chalmers—really, we had traded that car for what was called a Willys Knighton [AM edit: Willys Knight]. Willys Knighton [Willys Knight]. You've never heard of that, did you?

SL: Never have. Hm-mm.

AM: Well, the Willys Knighton [Willys Knight] was a little more modern car with a better motor in it. But we found out it burned

more oil than it did gas, [*SL laughs*] so we had a hard time keepin' enough oil on that thing to keep from burnin' it up. But it served us on the whole trip. It took us bout—we were gone nearly seven weeks. [*Laughs*]

[00:40:17] SL: Well, was your dad driving by then?

AM: No, he—this nephew drove us all.

SL: So it was five of you. Your . . .

AM: My mother couldn't drive.

SL: . . . your dad, your mom, your nephew, and . . .

AM: That's right.

SL: . . . you and your brother.

AM: There were five us. Uh-huh. And they were open cars. They weren't closed cars then. The rains come, we'd have to put up curtains. [*Laughs*] The isinglass curtains. [*Laughs*]

SL: So it was almost—it looked kinda like a buggy in a way?

AM: Yeah, just like a buggy. Just like a buggy. And . . .

SL: How many cars were on the road back then?

AM: Not many. Not many.

SL: You still saw a lotta horses and . . .

AM: Had a lotta ferries to go across rivers. We ferried a lotta rivers. We had to ferry the Mississippi [*River*].

SL: Yeah.

AM: We ferried the Mississippi from Arkansas City [Arkansas] over to Lula Landing in Mississippi. But we—after we got through Tennessee and Kentucky, we hit paved roads. Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York had paved roads. So we really could move and . . .

SL: Big difference.

AM: . . . and have fewer flats. And—but what an adventure. What an adventure.

SL: So y'all were your own mechanics on that thing any time it broke down.

AM: Oh yes, you had to do everything from change tires to patch 'em. We had to learn how to patch a inner tube. Tires had inner tubes in those days.

SL: Yeah.

AM: And you had to patch the inner tube. Mh-hmm.

[00:41:58] SL: Well, let's get back to—let's get back down here to Magnolia and you growin' up. Now, did your house in town—did y'all have a garden out back or . . .



AM: Oh yes. We—my dad was a great gardener, and he raised vegetables—peas and corn, okra, squash—and he was proud of it. Every man competed who had the first prod—of—garden produce every spring, who in the [*SL laughs*] summertime was

gonna have some cantaloupe out there in the garden, who was gonna have some peaches. And we had peach trees and apple trees, and we had to raise a lot of our own food. And a habit that most people had in those days—they would have—the tenant farmers usually had some hogs and cattle. And they would butcher those hogs in the wintertime and bring us hams, and some—they would butcher cattle on their farms and bring 'em in to us. You'd furnish the feed to feed those hogs during the summer, and in the winter when the weather was cooler, they'd—they had no refrigeration those days. There wasn't any way to keep 'em from—cool enough to . . .

SL: Even with the electricity in town, they . . .

AM: They didn't have.

SL: Didn't have.

AM: No.

[00:43:42] SL: And did they go ahead and smoke that meat out there on the farms or . . .

AM: They would butcher 'em on the farms. Uh-huh.

SL: Uh-huh. And then they'd smoke it and . . .

AM: That's right.

SL: . . . then they'd bring it to you.

AM: They had smokehouses in their farmhouses. In their barns—

near their barns.

[00:43:57] SL: Did you—were you ever witness to or participate in a hog day whenever they . . .

AM: Sure did.

SL: . . . slaughtered a hog?

AM: We had a tenant farmer down south of town named Colvin. I'll never forget him. And he would bring in the hogs to our house there in—here in Magnolia, and they—and we would spend a whole day helpin' butcher the—those—that meat . . .

SL: You used it . . .

AM: . . . and put it up in sausage—up in sacks and store it in the—a part of the house that was cooler. And it was cool enough then to preserve it. But then electricity came with electric iceboxes and things like that, and we had that to . . .

SL: Well . . .

AM: . . . help us.

SL: So you—in your earliest memories, was the house you [were] in—did it have electricity?

AM: Oh yes.

SL: Okay.

AM: We had electricity. Back to my Couch family, which my mother was a part of. One of her cousins was the man who helped

establish what is now Entergy [Corporation]—he helped found Arkansas Power and Light Company. That was her cousin, Harvey Couch . . .

SL: Okay.

[00:45:22] AM: . . . who started out with a little telephone line between here, along the LNW [Louisiana Northwestern] Railroad between here and south—Gibson, Louisiana, down here across the line from McNeil [Arkansas] to Gibson, this line ran. We were not on the main line of the Cotton Belt [St. Louis Southwestern Railway] railroad. They could not get the people to agree to sell 'em the right-of-way, so they just moved over six miles and went in that part of the county. So we never were on the Cotton Belt—what is St. Louis/Southwestern, called the Cotton Belt Route. From St. Louis [Missouri] to Dallas [Texas]. So the only line we had was one that the Cotton Belt built from McNeil to Gibson, Louisiana—distance of about sixty miles. And that's the little line called Louisiana [and] Northwest, which was the only railroad we've ever had. So we used to have to take that train here to go to McNeil to catch the Cotton Belt to go to Memphis [Tennessee], Texarkana, even to Little Rock. We would have to take the train because the roads weren't suitable in those days to even get to Little Rock.

SL: So passenger . . .

AM: [*Unclear words*].

SL: . . . trains were a major . . .

AM: Oh yes, that was the only way we could go places. Uh-huh.

SL: What—how much would it cost you to go to Little Rock?

AM: Oh, the fares were very reasonable in those days. I imagine five dollars would get you to Little Rock. Mh-hmm. I . . .

[00:47:08] SL: Would you—were you able to go to Little Rock and back in a day?

AM: No. Hm-mm.

SL: No.

AM: You had to spend the night, usually at the Marion Hotel. And that was a real experience for my brother and me to get to go with my dad to Little Rock and spend the night at the Marion Hotel. [*Laughs*] That was a—quite a feat. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, Little Rock—di—were their roads paved, or were they . . .

AM: Oh yes.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Little Rock was a modern city, and even the roads out of Little Rock were paved before the rest of the state got any hard-surfaced roads at all. And it was many years, up until nearly World War II times, that—before we had many paved roads here



in this county. Mh-hmm. When I married in 1942 [AM edit: 1941], I had a gravel road to travel till I got to the Louisiana [state] line. And I know I was so disappointed. I had a new black Chevrolet automobile to take my bride on a tour—a bridal tour—honeymoon. [*Laughs*] And when I got to Homer, Louisiana, where the wedding was, my car was—it happened to rain that March [*SL laughs*] day, and I had a muddy car to dr—pull up in her family driveway, and I was so embarrassed that—and we left Homer to drive to New Orleans [Louisiana] with a muddy car, but I stopped in—somewhere along the way and got it washed. [*Laughs*] But our roads were so bad then. But the [19]40s and [19]50s came along, and they paved 'em. Mh-hmm. But that's how far behind we were in this area with modern roads. Uh-huh.

[00:49:16] SL: Do you member much about World War I veterans comin' home and . . .

AM: Oh yes. We had several who had to go. To me, the—they were—I was a junior high or high school student at that time, and when I saw those fellows in those uniforms, I was in awe of their experience in gettin' to go overseas and fight a war.

[*Laughs*]

[00:49:52] SL: It was different back then, wasn't it?

AM: Yes, it was. In fact, to train the infantry from the National Guard that was out here at that time—in World War I, this was called Third District Agricultural School. This was really a school to ta—teach young people—young boys how to farm and girls how to—they had to learn—they had ec—home economics—the two main things that they offered was a degree in agriculture/animal husbandry or home economics—what they called home economics—cooking and sewing. So every girl would take home economics, and the men would take agriculture courses. And so the National Guard had a 153rd Infantry [Regiment] here, and they needed some training before they were sent overseas, and we had a lieutenant come down here from Little Rock and stay at our house. There was no place for him to stay in Magnolia. We didn't have any modern hotels in those days. We had what was called rooming houses and boarding houses. People served meals in the bigger homes and set up rooms that they could afford to rent. So he rented a room from us while he helped train those first troops that went overseas in 1918. And Lieutenant Emerson—now, he was a hero to me. Boy, he'd wear that uniform and come down with those boots, and it was really a model for me to try to look up to. *[Laughs]*

[00:52:04] SL: You mentioned the telephone lines. So telephones

were in Magnolia when you were . . .



AM: Well, Mr. Couch helped establish a little local telephone line [North Louisiana Telephone Company or NLTC] up and down the railroad. And in 1911, Southwestern Bell [Telephone System] bought him out. He was thirty-four years old. He had met his bride down there in Athens, Louisiana, and married her. She—that's right on this little LNW Railroad. And Harvey Couch sold his telephone line to Southwestern Bell for a million dollars, and for a thirty-four-year-old, at that time, that was a lotta money.

SL: You bet.

AM: And he took that money and hired some people who knew how to build electrical lines—transmission lines from town to town, and he formed Arkansas Power and Light [Company], and built the first transmission line in the state of Arkansas between Arkadelphia and Malvern. Arkadelphia was a more thriving community than Magnolia—more progressive at that time. We were strictly a little ol' country agricultural community with not many advantages—no rail transportation. And Arkadelphia was on the main line of the Missouri-Pacific [Railway] railroad, what was called the Iron Mountain [St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway] in those days. They—we called it the Iron Mountain railroad. And he established a local power plant in

Arkadelphia. Magnolia had electricity at that time, but it was locally owned, called Consumers Power Company. And a bunch of local people operated and had the generator. But it was so badly operated—they had no good electrical engineers to do it. And always breakin' down. [00:54:35] And the only lights we had when I was a teenager—up until 1920, we only had lights at night. We didn't have any electricity in the daylight—in daytime, just nights. Turn on at six o'clock at night and turn 'em off at six o'clock in the morning. And we could hear that ol' generator down there. He's a-runnin' or playin' d—bein' not operated. [SL *laughs*] And so Harvey Couch found a lotta communities like that that were trying to furnish their own electricity and bought 'em and formed the Arkansas Power and Light Company. And he built the first transmission line between Arkadelphia and Malvern. And my uncle had finished in—[James] Leland Longino grew up with him down here in Magnolia, and he had married my mother's sister [Selma Couch]. And he was an electrical engineer—graduate of the University of Arkansas [Fayetteville] class from 1904. His name is right up there in the front of Old Main right now. J. L. Longino.

SL: Longino.

AM: And . . .

SL: I'm gonna straighten your tie here just a little bit.

AM: J. L. Longino. Yes. And he became a partner with Mr. Couch. Their wives were kin. [*Laughs*] I mean, his wife was kin to Harvey. And he became his chief engineer, and he designed that transmission line—my uncle did.

SL: So . . .

AM: He was . . .

SL: . . . so Harvey put together reliable electricity . . .

AM: That's right.

SL: . . . in this part of the state.

AM: And he started buying up these city franchises and establishin' Arkansas Po—it was called Arkansas Light and Power in those days, and later on they . . .

SL: Switched it.

AM: . . . reversed it and made Arkansas Power and Light. And then it became Middle South Utilities, and now it's Entergy.

[00:56:39] SL: Well, back then, were they just running on gasoline generators? How . . .

AM: Yes, they would—they were using gasoline to operate the generators, they were. Big generators—breakdowns all the time. [*Laughs*] And that called for—really, usually these towns that had local electricity plants were the ice manufacturers, too.

Somehow they went together.

SL: You bet.

AM: So we'd have ice manufacturing down there at the power plant, cross the railroad. I know where it was down at—west of town. And the ice wagon would come around and put ice in our iceboxes. We didn't have electricity [*laughs*] to run elec—there was no electrical refrigeration.

SL: And those were blocks of ice.

AM: Blocks of ice. You bought—you'd have a sign you'd put in the windows. Forty Pounds Today. Sixty Pounds Tomorrow.

SL: Now, did they bring you milk like that, too?

AM: Yes. Mh-hmm. From the farms around that had milk cows.

[00:57:53] SL: Now, did y'all have chickens in your backyard?

AM: Yes, Magnolia allowed chickens. They wouldn't allow cattle after—they gradually went from not ha—lettin' you have hogs to let you have a cow or two—milk cow and chickens. And then it—I'd say in the middle [19]20s, the ordinance was plan—passed. We had to do away with chickens. But electricity had come along, and we could get the kinda meats that were refrigerated, and then the stores were beginning to put in refrigeration, and they kept their meat products and milk products fresh. And so our grocery stores had that in [19]20s. Mh-hmm. But until

then, you had wells that you had to get your water, and you had to try to keep your food as best you can—the coolest place you could find. [*Laughs*]

[00:59:02] SL: So now, y'all—you had well water. I . . .

AM: Yes, we had—nearly every house had a well of their own.

SL: So the water that was city-operated was just for the sewer.

AM: Well, they—in the 1920s, they built a water system. Laid the lines and had the equipment to provide running water to all houses.

SL: But early on, there were outhouses, and you had your own well.

AM: When my house—our house was built in 1914, we did not have—we had a well in that—at that place, and we used that well until, I would say, 1920 we got running water up North Washington Street. They formed what's called improvement districts. Water improvement districts. The residences would—the owners would get together and form those. They're under the law. They're permitted and let contracts for the laying of water lines and provide the elevated tank. We had a small tank right there off the square for many years. Mh-hmm.

SL: And what reservoir did they draw the water from?

AM: Wells.

SL: Even the . . .

AM: All the wells.

SL: Even the—on the city . . .

AM: Deep wells.

SL: . . . city . . .

AM: Deep wells.

SL: . . . stuff was comin' out of wells?

AM: Right.

SL: Wow.

[01:00:40] AM: What they called the Sparta Aquifer. It produced a lotta good, clean water. We used to brag bout the—how soft the water was. I saw all this sandy soil on a surface over clay, and we could go down about sixty to eighty feet and get all the water we wanted.

SL: Oh, that's a blessing.

AM: Mh-hmm. And the—and as electricity came along, people had electric pumps, and they kept their wells and used their pumps to pump water into the homes.

SL: Well, it's the same water.

AM: Mh-hmm.

Trey Marley: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:01:27] SL: Did your—when electricity came, did your house get a telephone, too?

AM: Yes, we always had a phone.

SL: You had a phone before the electricity?

AM: Oh yes.

SL: Was it a crank?

AM: Yes, the old-type crank, and the service was through a central—you had to go through a central office—what they called central. You called up the operator in a central place, and she would punch you to the line you called. Yeah, our number was eight-one. I'll never forget that. And my grandmother's number was five-one. [*Laughs*] I still remember those numbers. My bank—my dad's bank was number two-three. [*Laughter*] So we did not get dial phones in Magnolia till 1958. Believe it not, we were on the old system where you just pick up the receiver and it—you'd get a central office. But we did not get dial phones till 1958. We were one of the last ones for Southwest to put—convert over. South Arkansas was one of the last areas of the United States to get dial phones. I would put—I would bet that. Mh-hmm. We . . .

SL: So they'd have to patch you in to Little Rock to make a long-distance call.

AM: Well, you patched in to your local central long-distance operator. You had a special operator down there at the headquarters of Southwestern Bell who handled long distance. And it was so expensive in those days. I remember the time we had little eye drops to show—you paid—after three minutes, your rates went up a lot, back in those days. That's up until World War II. We didn't call long distance much. And we used telegraph here. In fact, I delivered telegrams. One of my first jobs was delivering telegrams, and that's the way we got all the news of the—was telegraph. It wasn't by phone and certainly wasn't—radio was just a br—new in those days. My dad died in 1926, and he had never—he didn't get to hear a radio. We did not have radio till after his death.

SL: Well now, did he die of a heart attack or . . .

AM: No, he had cancer. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

[01:04:34] SL: Had cancer. Golly. Well, I wanna talk a little bit about this phone business. Now, so you'd pick up the recei—or the earpiece, and you'd crank the phone.

AM: Yes.

SL: And that'd ring the switchboard operator . . .

AM: Right.

SL: . . . down at central.

AM: Mh-hmm.

SL: And if you talked more than three minutes, did you have to keep crankin' the . . .

[01:04:46] AM: No, no, I was gettin' on something else. Long distance was the three—first three minutes was more economical. So you usually had your conver—long-distance calls, otherwise it was very expensive in those days. I mean, nowadays you wouldn't think about it being expensive, but it was. And we had a little eye dropper that when that sand had gotten three minutes up, we'd hang up. [*Laughter*] But that—I—we—I'll tell you, telegrams were not only a—that was usually the sign of death, when you got a telegram. And a residence—now, businesses used telegrams to transact business items, but residences—when you were delivering telegrams to a residence—I remember down in the black sections, the addresses weren't very accurate for us to deliver them. And so I learned early—I'd ask for where so-and-so lived—I'd just have the name and maybe a street address, maybe not. And they weren't very helpful till you said, "Well, this message is telling about somebody's died." Well, boy, they'd get right in high gear and take you to the place. You'd just follow them. They'd take you down there, and you'd deliver the message. And same way

with money. They wouldn't tell you where anybody lived down there in the quarters. I—we called 'em the quarters. And they would help you locate the places if you says, "Well, he's got a money order here that—he's got a little money comin' from Muskegon, Michigan." That's where most of it came from. They had transferred durin' the hard days of the Depression. A lotta blacks moved from here to Michigan to work in the auto plants, and we lost a lotta black population. But you know, believe it or not, they gradually came back. [*Laughs*]

[01:07:28] SL: Yeah. Well, so I guess we oughta talk a little bit about the black and white relationships in Magnolia when you were growin' up. You know . . .

AM: We depended on the blacks for so many tasks in—around the house. In the—on the farms, most of the workers that did the hard work of raisin' the cotton, who were choppin' the—what we call choppin' the cotton. That's gettin' the weeds out in the spring when your first planting was done in April and May. And then later, keeping the weeds out of cotton durin' the wet summer months, and then picking cotton. The blacks could outpick a white man. A black man could outpick a white man two to one. They just had a knack for knowing how to do it. And they brought their little kids up in the fields to where

they'd—they could be good workers, too. And we had no tractors in those days. They just had mules and plows—old Georgia stock, they called 'em. And one of the thriving businesses that my uncle had was a mule dealer. He'd go to St. Louis and buy those Missouri mules and bring a trainload of 'em—a carload on a train back down here and sell 'em. That was what—everybody had to have mules on the farm. Weren't horses. There were mules. And that was our way of cultivating crops—cotton crops, especially. And they had to handpick. They had no cotton pickers until the cotton picker was discovered in Pine Bluff by a man [John D. Rust] up there who invented the cotton picker—mechanical cotton picker.

SL: In Pine Bluff.

AM: Mh-hmm. Sure did.

SL: Was he a black man that did that?

AM: No, he was a white man.

SL: White man. Yeah. So here in Magnolia the blacks . . .

[01:09:43] AM: The blacks had their separate schools. They had a high school down there south of town, and they were expected—the superintendents and the principals of those schools and the teachers—they were all black teachers and qualified. They'd been off to college. And—but they were not—they didn't have

lab—sciences labs like the white schools did. They [the schools] were most inadequate, and their teachers did not have the degrees that the white teachers did. So they were not given a good high school education although they got a high school diploma. They could read and write a little and figure a little simple arithmetic, and that was the extent of their knowledge. So they were not educated at all, and it was really a segregated community. They had their own churches. They lived in a separate part of town. There was no such thing as a white—as a black living in a white neighborhood. There was no such thing as that.

[01:11:01] SL: Did they have their own businesses—their own grocery stores?

AM: Later on, some of the more thriving entrepreneurs of the black community did establish a little grocery store in their community down there. A little small building, usually one room, with not many canned goods in it. No fresh meats, of course. Not at all. And—because they'd all ra—had their own chickens and hogs in their own yards. And cattle. They had their own cattle—milk cows, and butchered their hogs and cattle. Mh-hmm. But the relations were congenial because we depended on them to work for us. And they had a—were usually law-abiding, good citizens.

I remember Professor Green was the superintendent of the schools here—was so interested in getting kids educated properly. He sent his own kids to Chicago [Illinois] to go to college, and they came back here and teach—taught in the schools here. We called him Professor Green. I never did call him by his first name. I called him Professor. I remember him so well. Mh-hmm. [01:12:37] And the relations were handled here very well. We integrated our schools real good because the superintendent at that time saw what was happening in other cases, like Little Rock and Selma, Alabama, and the other places that had had riots and disturbances and marches. He hired some of the black instructors to come into the white school and start teachin' white students. There were no blacks in school, but he brought Fairbanks Buffington, who everybody admired and respected, who was well educated, and he taught in the white schools for several years before they beginnin' to bring in the black students. And the city attorney took a big part. He was made a special envoy to represent the schoo—white school board. See, the white school board actually controlled the black schools. And that was unfair to the blacks. And they very seldom ever elected a black to the white school board in those days. But as integration took place, they brought some blacks,

and we have them now on school board at Magnolia. They've been there ever since. And good members of the school board.

[01:14:19] SL: So when did the black teachers start teaching in the white schools? How early was that?

AM: When integration took place. When they brought the students in.

SL: Like . . .

AM: Nineteen sixty—well, my daughter [Sarah Schley Monroe Jones] finished high school in [19]64, and the year after she graduated, [19]65, they brought in black school students. She did not go to school with any black students. Mh-hmm.

SL: And—but did they have their own movie theater, too, or . . .

AM: They had a separate entrance to the Cameo Theater. They had a stair. They went upstairs. And they had a ticket window on the south side of the building, and they had to go and buy a ticket and go up a separate set of stairs. And they sat up there in a separate section. That's right, they . . .

SL: It was like that in Fayetteville, too.

AM: That's the way it was then when I went to school there. It sure was. That's right. It was that way. So they integrated very smoothly. No problems at all. Mh-hmm. And it's been that way ever since.

[01:15:38] SL: So were there—you know, sometimes if relations were grea—I mean, were there white and colored water fountains and . . .

AM: Oh yes, courthouse—up until, I'd say, World War II. There was a fountain out there in the lobby of the courthouse [labeled] Colored. Over here across the hall [labeled] White. Yeah. And they had a toilet in the basement on the west side that they—the only ones they could use. It was strictly for the blacks.

SL: How were the restaurants in that regard?

AM: Well, there was no such thing as a black trying to go into a white restaurant. Mh-hmm. They just didn't do it. But that used to create a problem because the kinfolks that had transferred up to Michigan to work in the auto plants would come back down here in the summertime, and they'd say, "Well, let's go up here and eat dinner at this restaurant." And they'd go. And you know, they—there was nothing—people'd raise their eyebrows, but there was no—no animosity arose from those instances. But they would come in here from Michigan and California and be used to it in their communities there. And they wanted to do it here. And it gradually worked its way that way. They usually steered them to a booth that was maybe in the back. My insurance office was next door to a very popular eating place

called the Chatterbox. And we would see—that was back in the late [19]30s and [19]40s.

[Tape stopped]

[01:17:54] SL: You know, the locals grew up a certain way and . . .

AM: Yeah.

SL: . . . they just—that's just the way it was done back then. Well, so you were in Magnolia when the great flood happened on Mississippi River.

AM: No, I was in Fayetteville.

SL: Oh, you were in Fayetteville then. Mh-hmm.

 AM: And I'll never forget that because the—I had some relatives that lived in Pine Bluff that had sawmills up and down the Mississippi. And even into Louisiana—Lake Providence, Louisiana—McIntyre family. They were—had married into our Couch family, and they were relatives that—by marriage, not by blood. One married my cousin, a Couch girl—lived in Pine Bluff. And their mills were flooded, and they went broke. And they were very prosperous till that flood came along, but that wiped 'em out. That flood wiped 'em out. They were through after that. They took bankruptcy, and the mills no longer opened. They didn't open after that. And I was in Fayetteville at the time, and the comedian Will Rogers was famous on—in New York stage—came

outta Oklahoma as an old cowboy that could tell funny stories and twirled that rope while he talked. And Harvey Couch had made a fortune in the electrical business. And he was appointed by the [Arkansas] governor [John E. Martineau] as a head of a [Red Cross] relief organization to help those sufferin' from the floods of—all the way from Memphis through the Delta—all the towns—Helena [Arkansas] and all of 'em were just destitute. And he prevailed upon Will Rogers to do some lecturing—do a show. Well, they were—his lecturing wasn't nothing but entertainment. And I'll never forget going to the gym in Fayetteville and hearin' Will Rogers put on his show to benefit the flood victims. That was in nineteen twenty—I went up there in [19]29, and that was bein' done then. Even after—two years after the big flood. [01:21:12] And I always bragged about bein' able to—after Will Rogers got killed in that plane crash in Alaska in 1934 or [19]35, I says, "Well, I"—I told those fellows I was working at the bank with up there in Little Rock—I says, "Well, I heard Will Rogers give one of his shows up in Fayetteville when I was a student." [*Laughs*] And that was quite a feat, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . and Harvey Couch helped provide the airfare for him to have

a private plane. And he always wanted to fly. He didn't want to take time to—he'd gotten used to flyin' in New York—goin' from place to place for his shows. And well—he'd done so well financially from his acts. Incidentally, when that trip—my dad took me to New York in 1923, one of the things we went to see was the Ziegfeld Follies. I saw the Ziegfeld Follies when I was thirteen years old. That was quite a show.

SL: Yeah.

AM: See those naked girls bring that curtain out [*laughs*] was somethin' for me to see.

[01:22:30] SL: What'd your mom think of that?

AM: She didn't like it. [*Laughter*] But that was an education. Really, it was. Not many kids were as fortunate as I, that—whose father would take the time and expense. And in those days—it wasn't much money now, but in those days that was a lotta money, except we camped out. We didn't have to pay a hotel bill. There weren't any such things as motels in those days. You had trailer parks—camping parks. And every town had a campground with runnin' water, and even some of 'em—then—but more—near the bigger cities, they'd have showers even. Showers and maybe a little fast-food place—a hamburger stand at one end of it. You could—if you didn't wanna cook your own

meals on those little Sterno heaters, go over there and buy you a hamburger. Mh-hmm.

SL: Where were you . . .

AM: Or a hot dog. [*Laughs*]

[01:23:41] SL: . . . where were you when you saw your first airplane?

AM: Well, they had a county fair here—we still do—just over in September. And the fairgrounds was down there on East Main Street where there's a China restaurant there called the China Star. I don't know whether you saw it.

SL: Mh-hmm.

AM: It's a nice China—if you like Chinese food, it's one of the best.

SL: Okay.

AM: And I could've taken you there. I would like to have done that—and it's really neat. All their equipment came from China that's in there. But that was—?China? spent a lot of money there.

That was the fairgrounds. And they had a barnstormer with a little ol' one-engine biplane who was gonna fly in here, I think, from Little Rock, and fly over the fairgrounds—not—they had no place to land. And that plane crashed right up here on Dudney [Road]. It never did make the flight over the fairgrounds.

[*Laughs*] It crashed over here on the Cooper property, which—

two blocks from where I'm sitting right now. And demolished part of it to where it couldn't fly. They had take it out in pieces, I think. But the first time I saw an airplane was about 1915, when in the paper one Sunday, *Arkansas Gazette* had a story about a plane flying from Memphis to Dallas. And the reason it was going from Memphis to Dallas—because it could follow the tracks of the Cotton Belt railroad. That was their navigation expertise. And my dad took me on that Sunday afternoon. It was saying what time it'd be leaving and how long it'd be over certain areas. It flew over McNeil middle of the afternoon, and we went over there to that boarding house and had Sunday dinner, and we sat around there and waited for that plane to come. And course, it wasn't on schedule. I think we spent half the afternoon waitin' for that flight to fly over, and that's first airplane I ever saw. [01:26:36] But my mother took a lotta pages out of my dad's book, and she liked to travel. And when [Charles] Lindbergh flew over the Atlantic [Ocean] in 1927, he made a bar—he was a hero, and he had a barnstorming tour goin' from city to city and landing in qualified airports that were available, and Little Rock was one of his stops. Because I don't know whether you know it or not, but Lindbergh took part of his training as a crop duster over in the Delta. Did you know that?

SL: No, I did not know that.

AM: Around Lake Village. He learned a lot of his flying skills in Arkansas. And he had a tender place in his heart for our state. And in 1927, it was quite a drive from here to Little Rock on gravel road till we got to bout Sheridan or Benton. You hit pavement then. But it was gravel from here to those places. And you were talkin' bout three or four hours' drive. She says, "We goin' up there and see that hero, Lindbergh." And we were out there at Adams Field when it was just a [*laughs*] very small airstrip out there with a little hangar or two and some—one of these [*wind*] socks that was blowin' in the air, which fascinated me. I says, "Look, that's how they tell where the airflow is." You know, those sacks—socks that used to fly.

SL: Yeah.

AM: I don't know whether you've ever seen 'em or not.

SL: Yes, I have.

AM: [*Laughs*] You know what I'm talkin' bout.

SL: Yeah.

[01:28:45] AM: But we went up [*unclear word*] and saw Lindbergh, [*laughs*] and drove up there and back same day. We didn't spend the night. We just—we weren't gonna spend that money. We just—gas was cheap, and went up there and ate a meal and

watched him. And he was very gracious, and he talked to the crowd. There was a lotta people out there at the airport to honor and to welcome him. So I got to see Lindbergh.

SL: That's great.

AM: That was about a year after his famous flight in [19]27—bout 1928 'cause I was still in school out here. And I could drive her up there. She didn't drive, and I could drive. Mh-hmm.

[01:29:34] SL: Let's talk a little bit about the radio. Were you—did y'all get a ra—I know your father never got to hear one, but did y'all have a radio in the house soon after they came out?

AM: Not soon after they came out, but I had a neighbor across the street named Bill Shipley, who—his father worked for the railroad, and Bill was a only child and spoiled rotten. And anything Bill wanted, his daddy and mother would buy it for him. So I'll never forget. To buy a radio was quite a expensive item in those days in [19]28, [19]29. And the only stations you could get was Cincinnati [Ohio] and Memphis [Tennessee] and KWKH out of Shreveport [Louisiana] and a big station out of San Antonio [Texas]—I forget the call letters—New Orleans [Louisiana] had a big station. We couldn't get Little Rock. I don't think Little Rock had a big enough station in those days. But Memphis and Shreveport and San Antonio. Not even Dallas

[Texas] had stations strong enough for us to get. And Bill Shipley had a superheterodyne [or supersonic heterodyne receiver] radio. Boy, it could pick up—had a aerial on top of his house, and he knew how to—he tinkered with electrical stuff. He never did work anywhere. He just—*[SL laughs]* a playboy, we called him. And I'll—I used to go over there and say, "Bill, I wanna listen to such-and-such program on your radio," and he'd turn it on and let me hear it. And then we didn't get one. I don't remember us getting one until—I don't think we had one till I left—1929, I think we finally got one in Fayetteville, because Fayetteville had a little local station in those days. We could get it. We bought a radio in Fayetteville. I'm sure my mother did. But it was a long time gettin' a radio, because they were expensive, and we didn't have—nobody had any money in those days—was Depression days. And as I remember, we had a little ol'—oh, what do they call those cheap radios we used to buy at—almost at the dime store? *[Laughs]* They had a name for 'em. I can't even think what they were now. But . . .

[01:32:40] SL: Do you . . .

AM: . . . some of 'em were battery operated. They weren't even electrical. Hmm. Battery operated. Had to have batteries. Uh-huh. And we could get Kansas City [Missouri], and Tulsa

[Oklahoma], I believe, had a big station. Mh-hmm.

SL: Chicago [Illinois] had a pretty big . . .

AM: Chicago. WGN.

SL: Yeah.

AM: That's right. And Cincinnati was a big station, too.

[01:33:03] SL: Do you remember the—what programs you liked to listen to?

AM: I think I started listenin' to *Amos 'n Andy* [*laughs*] those days.

It might've been later on during the [19]30s that I listened to them. *Amos 'n Andy* and then the guy fr—Burns from Arkansas that made us—and Chuck Lauck—had the bazooka instr—musical instrument. He was a Arkansas native and got on some big stations, and I'd listen to him. [Editor's Note: Radio personality Bob "Bazooka" Burns, from Van Buren, Arkansas, invented and played the bazooka; Chester Harris Lauck, from Mena, Arkansas, was co-creator and star of the *Lum and Abner* radio program.]

Then we'd have some famous orchestras. We'd hear . . .

SL: Tommy Dorsey.

AM: . . . Fred Waring and regular programs on Saturday nights and certain nights. And lotta stations were not on twenty-four hours. You had to get 'em at night. Late in the afternoon till early bedtime. [*Laughs*] And not late at night. No such thing.

SL: Did you have any musical instruments in your house growin' up?

AM: I played a trombone in the band in high school. Uh-huh. My brother played saxophone. Mh-hmm.

[01:34:41] SL: What about church when you were growin' up?



AM: Well, church was the center point of our lives. It was only expected of us to be in church on Sunday—not only on Sunday morning, but Sunday night. They were—it was really a—I remember we stayed in our Sunday clothes all day. In those days, we had certain suits—we ?wrote? on certain garments that we specified was strictly Sunday wear. [*Laughs*] And we did that, and a lot of the social life revolved around the church activities, such as New Year's Eve. The big deal was to go to the church and ring in the new year, because all churches had church bells. And on Sunday morning you could hear church bells all over this town. It—and I'd know the tone of my church [First Methodist Episcopal Church South, now called First United Methodist Church, Magnolia] as compared to the First Baptist [Central Baptist Church] down here, which had a different tone. [*SL laughs*] And that was all my—that was a watch party, we'd call it—go to the church and have lemonade and cookies—homemade, all of it. Wasn't anything bought at a fast-food place. No such thing, those days, when I was a kid. We had to

manufacture our own food items as well as our own entertainment. And then Halloween—everybody dressed up and usually deviled—got into a lot of devilment and—[*SL laughs*] a lotta parts of town didn't have—weren't on the sewer system and had outhouses. And I remember we used to topple those things over on Halloween night. And that was somethin' that if you found—if they found out who did it, you suffered some punishment, not only by your parents, but by the whole neighborhood. [*Laughs*] But that was a way we had of entertaining ourselves. [01:37:21] And they used to have in the summertime such things as what was known as the Chautauqua Circuit. Every town had a little committee forum that wanted to hear better entertainment than local talent and local plays and drama that was more professional, and you'd set up a tent, and you'd have a week—each night there'd be a different entertainer—there'd be a singer or even a—one who was called an expression teacher who put on one-act drama, who could put a play on—a one-person play, or maybe they'd have two or three people in a little drama. But they would—you'd have a Chautauqua week—say, in the middle of July, when the crop was laid by and people had plenty of time. And my dad and mother were always active in the committee bringin' the



Chautauqua. They had to sell tickets ahead of time, so the entertainers would know they were gonna get their money for the performance. And we had traveling minstrel shows come that would set up tents and put on blackface comedies or . . .

SL: Yep.

AM: . . . minstrels. And the whites enjoyed those. The blacks didn't like it.

SL: Yeah.

[01:39:13] AM: They would—they'd—they would not try to go. They wouldn't like it. But that would—we had to do those things to have some entertainment. And really, we didn't have a real every-night movie. We'd have it just on Friday and Saturday nights a movie here until 1924, when Mr. [William Pinckney "W.P."] Florence [Jr.] put a movie in the house on the corner there from where the Democratic headquarters—there on that corner was a Maaco Theater. He came over here from Stamps [Arkansas]. He had a—he lived over there, and he moved over here and put in a theater in 1924. And we had ti—a movie every night, even on Sunday nights, after church. It didn't—wouldn't start 'em till eight o'clock. That's how important the church was to this community—every little Southern town. It was that important. But talkin' about church—one of my relatives, the

Magales—this woman's picture that's in there [pointing] on that dining-room wall was my mother's first cousin. And they grew up together, and their mothers were sisters. And her parents lived in Galveston [Texas], and her mother died. And her—his father—her father was a importer of whiskey and—from overseas. And his name was Magale, of Portuguese origin, from—Maga—*M-A*—they spelled it *M-A-G-A-L-E*, but it was originally *M-I-G-U-E-L*. Portuguese. And he met my aunt—my grandmother's sister—and married her, and they moved to Galveston. And he died early, and she was sent to a convent in—they were Catholic—sent to a convent in New Jersey. But she didn't like it, and she came back. My grandmother raised her, so that woman and my mother were like sisters although they were first cousins. And [pointing] that screen came from her.

SL: It's beautiful.

[01:42:08] AM: A lot of this furniture came from her because she married a man and—she went off to school at Cincinnati Conservatory [of Music in Cincinnati, Ohio] and met a man up there who was with Hearst [Corporation] newspapers, and Hearst sent him to England to represent him as a writer for Hearst Newspapers in New York. And he stayed over there and

joined the *Daily Mirror* and became editor of the *London Daily Mirror*. And he was over there thirty years. And sh—so she lived over there, but they would come back periodically and visit us.

SL: Now . . .

AM: But the first Catholic mass in Magnolia was held in Magale home down there—it's a two-story home right now that is the Magale home. It's been restored, and it's a beautiful home. But the—Mrs. Magale and her husband were Catholics, and that's the first Catholic church we had here, was in that home. [*Laughs*]

[01:43:14] SL: So I wanna know about the importer of whiskey. What . . .

AM: Well, how he happened to meet my aunt—the Kelso girl—there were thirteen Kelso children up here above McNeil, about six miles—a place called College Hill. And he would bring the whiskey through New Orleans up the Ouachita River to Camden [Arkansas], and then trucked—I mean, traveled through this cotton country sellin' whiskey—sellin' spirits. And he met my—Angela Kelso and married her, and that was the start of that part of the family. [*Laughs*]

[01:44:01] SL: So was this—were you very much aware of Prohibition when you were growin' up?

 AM: Yes, I very much was, because in [19]29, when I went to Fayetteville as a freshman—as a junior in college, Prohibition was in effect. And those Italians out there at Tontitown [Arkansas] made a very strong liquor—white liquor that was called grapejack. It's really just almost pure alcohol, and every fraternity—I happened to be a KA [Kappa Alpha]—the initiation was a—was—ended up with a ja—a grapejack party from the Tontitown grapeja—it was fermented grapes is really was. And strong stuff! Oh, it was strong! It'd blow y—the top of your head off. [*Laughter*] And so everything was done under the table up there then. You'd—some of those restaurants were pretty lenient. They'd even allow you to brown bottle—what we called brown bottle. Bring in a little bottle of wine or some beer in a brown bottle—drink it with your meal. And I'll never forget—even Shreveport was dry, of course—oh, everywhere was dry. But I used to go to—beautiful food—Sansone's Restaurant down there on King's Highway. I'd go to Shreveport, and they'd serve us wine in a cup—a coffee cup. [*Laughter*] So there was ways of gettin' around it.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

AM: But it wasn't a problem. It wasn't a problem. It was with a few, and it was a sad case usually because that stuff was so rotten.

SL: Yeah.

AM: If you drank too much of it, it'd kill you stomachwise, mentalwise, and if you were caught with it, you—it was—Katie bar the door. You were through. No questions asked. But that was a thing that happened durin' World War II in Magnolia. When I came back here in [19]39, Magnolia was open. In fact, the restaurant next to my insurance office then served beer. You'd go in there and drink a beer next door. But when we went away to the service, the religious community in this town was so much opposed to alcohol, they dried it up. They had a vote while we were away in the service. So when I came back in [19]45, Magnolia was dry. It was. Mh-hmm. So that was the experience I had with Prohibition.

[01:47:39] SL: What kind of chores did you have to do around the house growin' up?

AM: Stacking wood and bringin' in wood at night for the kitchen stove and for the fireplace. And then my dad had a—what we called a base burner, which burned coal that was flued—emptied into one of the chimneys that could take the heat off the—and the smoke out of the house. And we'd bring in coal for that base burner. It was—and very few houses had those, but my dad had one.

SL: So was that located—what room was that located in?

AM: Living room.

SL: Living room. Mh-hmm.

AM: The chimney there—it wasn't—didn't have a—and it had a flue up the top—a connection at the bottom that we could connect the pipe from the base burner into that chimney. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did y'all have sleepin' porches?



AM: Yes, we had a screened-in sleeping porch on the second floor that we slept in all summer and had curtains that you'd have to let down when it rained, otherwise it'd rain in your face.

SL: Yeah.

AM: But we—all of us—all four of us slept on that sleeping porch. Everybody had a sleeping porch with screens. You had to have because mosquitoes were bad.

SL: Yeah.

AM: We had mosquitoes from . . .

[01:49:31] SL: But it was so much cooler out there during the summers.

AM: That's right. Most of the houses built in those days were frame, because we were timber country. And I can remember only two houses, the Longino—Dr. Longino house on West Main Street and the Joiner house on East Main Street, that were brick. All the rest were frame homes. We wouldn't dare go against a

timber man that was [*SL laughs*] sellin' lumber [*laughs*] by not buying lumber for their house. And the lumber in that house that you saw a picture of in my bedroom came from Bodcaw Lumber Company in Stamps, which was the largest sawmill in south Arkansas. And that was the Buchanan family out of Texas in Texarkana who had that mill. Bodcaw became a well-known name and later sold out to International Paper [Company]. But they actually built the L and A railroad [Louisiana and Arkansas Railway] just to haul their logs out of El Dorado—I mean, out of Louisiana up here through Stamps and up to the mill here. Mh-hmm. [01:51:03] But sawmilling was a big, big industry. Big industry. Sawmilling and cotton processing were the two big industries. And at one time, we had a canning plant—factory here that progressed very well as long as enough people were growing fresh vegetables. But later, they didn't grow enough, and the mill finally had to go out of business. Mh-hmm. But we, later, after World War II, got some people from Wisconsin to come in here and build a wooden arch plant called Unit Structures. What goes in vaulted ceilings and churches, gymnasiums. And it's still in existence out here.

SL: It's still . . .

AM: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . puttin' out product?

AM: It's a big business.

SL: These are wood arches?

AM: Big business. Wooden arches. Called Unit Structures. It's locally owned now—locally owned. The people in Wisconsin sold out to local people. And we had a cotton mill here. We raised so much cotton that a group of businesspeople in 1928 formed the Magnolia Cotton Mill company and constructed a nice plant out here and made a—the material that you make—use for overalls and blue jeans—that kind of material.

SL: Denim.

[01:52:59] AM: And it operated from [19]28 till—through World War II as the Magnolia Cotton Mill Company. And N & W [Industries Inc.] overalls out of Virginia bought it, and they operated it for about ten years, and they went out of business nationally, and that closed the mill down here. So chamber of commerce group here in Magnolia back in the late [19]50s formed what they called the Columbia County Industrial Development Corporation. We incorporated. I was one of 'em. And we prevailed upon Firestone to build a—to come in and use that building. We made arrangements to acquire that building. And Firestone was establishin' what they called Firestone Coated Fabrics to make

airplane cells for airplanes and fuel cells out of rubber. So they—Firestone Coated Fabrics Division of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company established that plant here and hired five or six hundred people. And it operated makin' fuel cells for airplanes during the Korean War and during first part of the Vietnam War. And it later—Firestone closed it down, and a local group took over. Called it—it's AmFuel [America Fuel Cell and Coated Fabrics Company], and it's going now. [SL laughs] But it's owned now by Zodiac [Aerospace Group] out of Paris, so the French people own it. And it hires three or four hundred people out there now making those same things for aircraft—military aircraft and as well as commercial aircraft. Uh-huh. Firestone Coated Fabrics. That young man you met here today, he worked out there for a while.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Mh-hmm. And they hire—they've been a good employer here. Mh-hmm.

SL: You know . . .

[01:55:44] AM: So that's some of the industry that's been brought in here. Then we had a—see, the chamber of commerce had—during World War II—had bought this land out here. It used to be just a cotton patch. And I'd like to show it to you how it's

developed out there. And you wouldn't know it was here unless you went out that way [pointing]. It's between here and the college.

SL: Okay.

AM: Kind of the northwest part of town. And a garment factory out of Rockford, Illinois, came in here called W. Shanhouse. They were two Jewish brothers. Established W. Shanhouse [&] Sons [Incorporated]. They were Jewish people. One of the brothers lived right up the street here and made jackets—wonderful jackets. They made jackets for the winter Olympic team right here in Magnolia. And they sold out to the one that makes your bathing suits—listed corporation—so famous.

TM: Not Speedo.

AM: I can't think of the name of it.

SL: Speedo or . . .

AM: No.

SL: . . . Nike or . . .

AM: Not that. The—I'll think of it in the middle of the night tonight.

[01:57:13] SL: Okay. That's all right. [*Laughs*]

AM: But . . .

TM: [*Unclear word*] fix his tie.

AM: . . . they operated it for several years, and it finally went out of

business. Went out of business.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Went out of business, and it shut down, and the building's been torn down. And the Shanhouses moved to—one brother was killed in their—they operated their own airplane, and he used to—they had plants not only here, but they had one in Hope, Shreveport, and some up east. And he piloted his own plane, and one foggy night, he crashed trying to land at the El Dorado airport [South Arkansas Regional Airport at Goodwin Field]. Killed himself and one of the other Jewish boys that worked for him.

[01:58:05] SL: Do you—does Magnolia have much of a Jewish community?

AM: Not now. There's a Jewish dentist right up the street here that lives in the same house that that other Jewish [*laughs*] man lived in.

SL: Is that right?

AM: Named [Jerome] Falkoff. Yeah, he's been here several years.

SL: Well, did they ever have any kind of Jewish community?

AM: Well, that Shanhouse brought in several. Mh-hmm. They did. Mh-hmm. And then we had a man move down here from St. Louis, and he established a little mercantile store—I mean, a

dress store. Sold dresses to ladies—ready-to-wear—called the St. Louis Store. Named Burke.

SL: Burke.

AM: And I went to school with the Burke boys, and the brother came on later and established a jewelry store here, so we've had just a very minor number—just a small number. Not many. Mh-hmm. But they've made good citizens.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Mh-hmm. Good merchants. They're good, good people. But they know what they're doing. They're good businesspeople. Mh-hmm. And the St. Louis Store—the one brother died, and the other brother didn't want to keep it up, so they sold it, and it's still on the square, but it's by a different name.

SL: Yeah.

[Tape stopped]

[01:59:35] SL: Well, Archie, we've been kind of all over the map here on the timeline, but I still wanna talk a little bit more about early Magnolia and your life here as a child. Do you—did you have a favorite subject in school?

AM: Yes.

SL: What did you like?

AM: History.

[01:59:58] SL: History. What do you remember back in grade school that—or was it grade school when you first started lovin' history?

AM: I very well remember what a wonderful history teacher I had. When oil was first playin' around in this area after the El Dorado boom and Smackover [Arkansas] boom of the early [19]20s—you know, oil exploration and development requires a lot of lawyers. A lotta legal expertise. And we had a firm here called McKay [&] McKay, a father and son. And the oil boom in El Dorado came in [19]20, and the oil boom in Smackover, [19]22. And it was so hectic and so fast developing. You know, El Dorado became a town of thirty-five thousand pretty quick, and it's not more than twenty [thousand] right now. And they required a lotta legal help, so the McKays got in on that and were representing the pipeline companies because nobody will run any oil from any well until the pipeline companies get a legal opinion showing who owns the oil that's—they're buying. And they've got to be sure that they have the right owners. So they were so swamped that they brought a la—young lawyer from Boston [Massachusetts] down here that'd graduated from Harvard [University] and—named Wright. Charles Wright. Well, he was a typical New Englander transferred to a little Southern

town—area down here that was as foreign to him as any place could be.

SL: Yeah.

AM: And he was a misfit if ever was one, but a brilliant lawyer. And his wife was from Maine and was a teacher. And she came with him and got a job teaching history in the local schools. And Mrs. Wright taught me history. And I learned more history from that woman than all the history teachers I had through the years, including college history teachers. And although he was a pain in the neck, she was a wonderful person. *[SL laughs]* And he was a Harvard misfit down here, and she smoo—they had one child. He was a spoiled brat, but he got along. And she adjusted to it so well. She loved teaching here in these schools. And after he kinda fell crossways with the law firm, they made it McKay, McKay, and Wright there for a while. He dropped out of the law firm, and she stayed on and taught, and he had a little practice of his own. But that was an interesting episode in my study of history.

[Tape stopped]

[02:04:12] AM: Nila Turner, who grew up here and was a natural English teacher if there ever was one—not only composition, but literature. She as good at both, and a brilliant woman. And we

were fortunate to have those kind of pe—teachers in the local schools, and I learned English from her. And her brother—son was honored last night at my SAU [Southern Arkansas University] Foundation. As a graduate back in the [19]50s—I mean, not [19]50s—later on than that, but he graduated from high school in [19]50s here, and I heard him speak last night. And he's retired head of the neurology teaching of surgery at the LSU med school [Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center] in Shreveport. But he went to Harvard and was a graduate from the medical school and practiced in Boston for a while. [02:05:32] But it was so good to have that kind of connection with the local schools to teach us. And I'm afraid sometimes we're not getting that kind of instruction nowadays that we had—that I was fortunate enough to have. Mh-hmm. And we had a physics lab and a chemistry lab there in the high school as well as manual training. They had—down in the basement of the high school, they taught you—those fellows that didn't like book learning would learn to do somethin' with their hands. I wasn't good at that. I couldn't screw a lightbulb on today if I had to. But that wa—it was well-rounded courses we had. That was—some things they're not teaching anymore. And the girls had home ec[onomics] down there—same time. They

don't teach that anymore. And I think we're missin' something there. [*Laughs*]

[02:06:43] SL: Yeah. Well, when you were even younger than high school and you were growin' up here in Magnolia, did the community—I mean, everybody knew everybody.

AM: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, if . . .

AM: Well, most people were related. [*SL laughs*] I had cousins all over this place. Man alive, the phone book was just filled with our names, and now they're gone. They're gone. Mh-hmm. Southern towns were noted for that. Everybody was related to everybody. And my granddad said he was so worried about it—my Granddaddy Couch—he once said, "If some of you young guys don't move out of town, we're gonna have nothing but idiots around here." [*Laughter*] And he was worried that new blood wasn't coming in here, and for a long time it didn't until the oil was discovered in Texas and Oklahoma. Moved in here en masse—and Louisiana. And they brought in supply houses that had to furnish the oil fields. They brought in engineers—petroleum engineers—well trained, from—mostly from Oklahoma A&M [Agricultural and Mechanical University], Oklahoma State [University], and Louisiana Tech [University] down here. See,

Arkansas doesn't have a petroleum engineering department. And those fellows made good citizens—some of 'em still around here. Uh-huh. Fact, my minister's daughter married a graduate she met at Louisiana Tech down here at Ruston, and he's now got a big job in Houston [Texas] with ExxonMobil [Corporation], and he's just finished a tenure in Korea and Paris [France]. That's how good he is. Exxon sent him to those two places with his wife, and I know it's a wonderful job he has. *[Laughs]*

SL: Yeah.

AM: But that's the kind of people that come in with the oil booms. And the schools have developed, I think, here—kept up with the pace very well.

[Tape stopped]

[02:09:40] SL: When you were—early on, in grade school and stuff, what—did you ever get into any kind of trouble at all around town?

AM: Oh, on special occasions we would. On Halloween.

SL: What'd y'all do on Halloween?

AM: Well, we'd—like I mentioned before, we'd topple over the outhouses. We would do what was ticktacking. Ticktacking?

SL: Hm-mm.

AM: Do you know what . . .

SL: What's that?

AM: . . . that is?

SL: No, I don't.

[02:10:10] AM: That's attaching a hook on a screen. Everybody had to have outdoor screens. Mosquitoes. There was no mosquito control, so we had to have screens. Every window. And it—fore the days of air-conditioning, so you raised your windows at night to get your air-conditioning.

SL: Right.

AM: You got natural air. You didn't get manufactured air. And you hook a—some metal hook on a screen, and you know where their bedroom was, and you knew about—everybody went to bed early when I grew up—eight thirty was late because there were—wasn't any late things on the radio or TV. We didn't have any TV. I'll never forget when TV came. And you'd run a string, and some way you'd get a tin can and tie it on that—end of that string where you're holdin' it right next door or in the next yard. And then take some wax or some kind of substance that you could run on that can and that string, and it'd make the worst noise on that—comin' into that house. [*SL laughs*] And we called it ticktacking.

SL: No, I've never heard . . .

AM: And I don't know where it got its name. [*Laughs*]

SL: So . . .

AM: It would make a—sounded like a can opening or a can falling or somethin'. It'd make a noise that was unusual to the neighborhood. [*Laughter*] That was . . .

SL: That's good.

AM: . . . somethin' we did. And, well, our playgrounds were the middle of the street. We played ball. We—and traffic was so light that you didn't have to dodge many cars. No trucks, and not many of those—and not many trucks around. There was not many cars. [*Laughs*]

[Tape stopped]

[02:12:40] SL: So your playgrounds were the middle of the streets?

AM: Yeah. They didn't have any organized boys' club like they do now. Boys and Girls Club, they call it, and we had to manufacture our own entertainment, which was marbles. We played marbles. The girls played jacks—rubber balls out on the concrete . . .

SL: Yeah, pick up jacks.

AM: . . . during recess. Pick up the jacks. [*Laughs*] And so that was the extent of our games. Flew ki—our homemade kites. Now they buy all these elaborate ones at Walmarts and everywhere

else. We manufactured our own. Made it out of . . .

SL: Newspaper?

AM: Made it out—bought some right kind of paper and paste and glue and light woods. [*Laughs*] And make our own kites and fly 'em. I think of those every spring when winds came. And then the churches always had a lotta parties for boys and girls.

SL: Wednesday nights or . . .

AM: On Fridays and Saturday nights.

SL: Fridays and Sa—mh-hmm.

AM: Mh-hmm. And some of the churches didn't allow dancing, but our church did.

[02:14:17] SL: Now, were you Methodist? Is that . . .

AM: I'm Methodist. And we allowed dancing at our church. They still do. Some of the Baptist churches don't allow dancing.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Mh-hmm. And we had that as good, clean entertainment. But we had—we didn't have drugs in those days.

SL: Yeah.

AM: We didn't know what they were.

SL: Did you—did Magnolia have its own football team or baseball team or . . .

AM: Oh yes.

SL: . . . basketball?

AM: We had a town baseball team made up of businesspeople who played baseball in the high school and liked to keep it up. And we'd play Stamps and Waldo [Arkansas]; Haynesville, Louisiana; Bastrop, Louisiana; Ruston [Louisiana]; El Dorado; Camden. Called it the town team.

SL: Okay.

[02:15:19] AM: And you notice up on the courthouse square there's a wooden two-story structure there on the southeast corner of the—where the courthouse is—kind of a gazebo-type building. That's a bandstand. They used to have band concerts there on Saturday nights. They had a town band—not the high school. Course, now they've got this elaborate high school band.

[Laughs] Bout 150 pieces that performed at basketball games—I m—football games.

SL: Right.

AM: But every—like every high school. But then it was men who had learned how to play instruments in the high schools that wanted to keep it up, so they'd have these concerts. And the town would have a—what they called drawings during the fall. See, you had—your economy in this cotton country—when—the cotton is planted in the spring, cultivated in the summer, and

gathered in the winter. And they would sell the cotton up on the square. You saw that mural?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[02:16:48] AM: That's a typical picture of how the square looked when I was a kid. The cotton buyers would just go from wagon to wagon and buy the cotton off of these wagons—sample it and take their hands—and knew how to . . .

SL: How to grade it.

AM: . . . what price to pay. And buy it. And they'd ship it on down to the compress for it to be pressed [*claps hands*] into b—the bales would be [*claps hands*—the cotton would be put into bales and—for—compressed for the shipment. And cotton buying was a good occupation those days—represented big mills all over the southeast and Tennessee and other states that had cotton mills. And that was big business, and so that was an occupation that some of the businesspeople had. And so gettin' back to the sales that happened in the fall, they'd give you a ticket from every dollar you spent that had a number on it, and then they'd have a drawing bout once a month—a cash drawing. The merchants would gather up a—maybe a \$500 prize for the first and \$400 to—on down.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

AM: And have their drawing on the last Saturday of every month. And then on Christmas Eve, they had the final drawing, which was a car—Ford automobile given away. And believe it or not, one of the men that worked for my dad's bank was single man, and he already had a car. Dern if he didn't win that thing. [Laughter] Everybody was so mad at him [SL laughs] for winnin' it they didn't know—they never did appreciate it. And he's the only man that ever won it that had a car, I think. [Laughter] And he wasn't even married.

[02:19:15] SL: You know, earlier you mentioned minstrel shows coming through.

AM: Yeah.

SL: Now, did they—was there a theater that they performed in, or did they . . .

AM: They'd bring a tent.

SL: They brought a tent.

AM: Uh-huh. Not only that, Scott, but every summer, these traveling revival preachers would come in with a tent and have a two-week revival on these hot summer nights. Usually after the crop was laid by and people weren't working. And they would—oh, they'd draw big crowds and raise a lotta money for themselves as well as [laughs] for the churches they represented. Mostly for

themselves.

SL: Well, did the local church leaders . . .

AM: They usually brought them in. The ch—local churches would bring them in. Now, there were some traveling ones that not many people paid any attention to that were just out for the quick buck.

SL: Right.

AM: They didn't pay any attention to those like they did—but they would sponsor some of the better ones, usually comin' out of Oklahoma and Texas and Louisiana—some from Arkansas. Mh-hmm. But that was entertainment. That was some of our entertainment in the summer. We had a outdoor movie. You'd go out and see a movie at night—park your car and have those earphones . . .

[02:21:01] SL: Oh, they'd had a drive-in?

AM: Mh-hmm. Drive-in movies. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay.

AM: Had two. [Pointing] One on the sou—north side and one on the south side. Had two of 'em. Mh-hmm.

SL: Was the south side one for the black folks or . . .

AM: Mostly. Uh-huh.

SL: Mostly. Uh-huh.

AM: But the trouble with that was mosquitoes would eat you up.

There was no mosquito control in those days, and . . .

SL: Right.

AM: . . . and it was—that's the reason you had to have screens on your house. Now nobody thinks of puttin' a screen on a window because they don't raise the windows. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's right.

AM: They're all sealed.

[02:21:41] SL: Yeah. Well, in the small town—I guess I wanted to get back to how everybody knew everybody. And didn't every—didn't—I mean, did you feel like your neighbors had as much influence or some influence on the way that you were raised, or did everyone help raise everyone else?

AM: Oh yeah. Well, you felt you could just go into anybody's house at any time. And if you knew their mother was a good cook, you'd try to make your visit late in the afternoon when you knew they were gonna sit down to a table. And they would not even—you would not even think about lettin' you go home without you sittin' down and eatin' with 'em. You had a good meal away from home, and the families accepted it. They said, "Well, he's over there eatin' with [*SL laughs*] the Crumplers across the street." "Where is he?" "Well, he's over eating with the

Crumplers or the Hudsons over there, [*laughter*] or the Pierces."

[02:22:52] SL: Those doors were always open, weren't they?

AM: Oh yes. We—close—neighbors were close in those days, and you know how things do change. There's a house I noticed for sale right around the corner here on this curve—on this circle. I says, "Who in the world are those people sellin' that house?"

[*Laughs*] I have no idea who they are."

SL: Yeah.

AM: Now, that's—course, at my age, I don't get out like I did.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Unless I have some connection with 'em through former relations and customers in th—in my business or at the church or some organization like Rotary Club, where I see them. I'm the oldest member of the Magnolia Rotary Club. I've been a member seventy years. Next year'll be seventy years. I was . . .

SL: That's somethin'.

AM: . . . I was the first member they took in after the charter was granted. All the charter members are dead, and I'm the last of the first they took in. [*Laughs*]

SL: I wonder if you're one of the—you're probably—you may be the oldest Rotarian in the state.

AM: I don't know. [*Laughter*]

[02:24:13] SL: So did you participate in any organized sports at all?

AM: No, I just played tennis for myself.

SL: Yeah?

AM: And golf. I started playing golf when I moved back to Magnolia.

I joined the club—well, the club out north of town then, and it burned. The clubhouse burned. And they built the new one down south of town. We have a nice eighteen-hole course here, and I played up until ten years ago. I played up until I was ninety. I didn't play very well, but I played. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well . . .

AM: But we've had—it's been a good sport—I bet a good help to Magnolia to have it. We got a nice club out there. Mh-hmm. And they've got their other usual clubs—[Magnolia] Lions Club—the [Magnolia] Optimist Club were here. I don't know whether they're still very active or not. I think so, maybe. Some ladies—PEO [Philanthropic Educational Organization] is very active here. They're active in Fayetteville, too. I know that. Mh-hmm. But we have changed a lot in the last years. The population's changed. We've got—one of the best things that came along in 1965 was takin' this saltwater that oil people don't want in the ground, from a depth of about 8,000 feet where our oil comes

from—the principal wells will do—and use that saltwater to extract the bromine out of it. So Dow Chemical [Company] built a chemical plant west of town, and Ethyl Corporation out of Baton Rouge [Louisiana] built one south of town. Well, in years later—some ten years later—Ethyl bought out the Dow plant. And now they've changed the name to Albemarle [Corporation]. I don't know whether you've heard that name or not.

SL: Hm-mm.

[02:26:55] AM: It's listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and they were headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, until a couple of months ago they moved their headquarters to Baton Rouge. So this plant hires a lot of people making flame retardants, stu—additives for gasoline. Anything pertaining—that's related to bromine—any chemical that comes out of bromine. Even your cosmetics comes out of bromine. And it's a natural saltwater we get from these deep wells. They drill their own wells to get it. They don't just take dry holes and get the saltwater from them. They drill their own wells—8,200 feet.

SL: That's a big—that's a deep well.

AM: That's a deep well. And now down here in north Louisiana, they've got what they call the Haynesville Shale similar to what's so prominent up in the Fayetteville Shale in north Arkansas. And

the Haynesville Shale is below 11,000 feet. Now, that takes a lotta money. To drill an average well to 8,200 feet is over \$1 million.

SL: Golly!

AM: That's a big investment.

[Tape stopped]

[02:28:30] SL: Well, what do you think about all the political stuff right now?

AM: Well, I think [Barack] Obama's gonna win this thing.

SL: I do, too.

AM: I—do you think that?

SL: I do.

AM: I do, too. I think what's thrown it into Obama's lap is this terrible credit crunch we're in. I went through the Depression. I was workin' at a bank in Little Rock when President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt says, "Shut 'er down." I'll never forget that Saturday before the edict was put out on Sunday night. I had to listen to the radio to see if our bank was gonna be open. It wasn't open. Didn't open for sixty days. I told you about that a while ago.

SL: Yeah.

AM: How it opened to—one of the banks here opened in two weeks.

The president of the bank had enough money stashed away in some other banks way out of this state—Kansas City and St. Louis—that he just tapped his bank account and opened it up—went to Washington [DC] and says, "I've got the money. Here it is."

SL: Yeah.

AM: See, that's the difference in this new bill they passed last week and now—and then. They made individuals come up with the money some way. And Mr. Harvey Couch had all his money in the—from developing the power company. He came down here and helped this—the Peoples Bank here—that was my dad's old bank—reopen. Mh-hmm. And so I've been through this. I know what's goin'—what they're doin'. Mh-hmm.

SL: Man! It's scary stuff.

AM: It's scary.

[02:30:18] SL: Well, let's get back to growin' up. There's one area I hadn't—we hadn't really talked about, and that's dating and girls. When did you first start thinking about datin' and . . .

AM: Well, they used to have boys and girls' parties from—usually girls would break it up for their own houses. Their mother would help them have a party. "We gonna have a party." And we played little ol' innocent games, like musical chairs. Did you

ever hear about musical chairs? [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

AM: Where the boys and girls walk around—they hide a chair right quick and you can't sit down, and finally a girl has to sit in your lap. [*Laughter*] Do you know about that? No, you don't. Maybe you do.

SL: I know what—yeah. [*Laughs*]

AM: Musical chairs.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[02:31:16] AM: And then we would play blind man's bluff and hide and seek and little ol' innocent things. Dancing was kinda scarce. You—certain houses the girls' mothers wanted to encourage the girls to dance. They'd given 'em dancing lessons, and they wanted to practice it. And we would have dances in the homes with a Victrola. You member a Victrola? With old records?

SL: Yep.

AM: Well, that's the way—that was the music we danced by. Wasn't any such thing as a radio to play dance music.

SL: Yep.

AM: It was the Victrola, and those Victrolas were as prominent in those houses, as I grew up, as radios and TVs are now.

SL: Now. Mh-hmm.

AM: Everybody had a Victrola, and the old dog listening to the big ol' loudspeaker. [*Laughs*]

SL: Horn. Mh-hmm. Well . . .

[02:32:26] AM: And then in the middle [19]50s, Texarkana got a license for [KTAL National Broadcasting Company] Channel 6, and El Dorado got a [KTVE National Broadcasting Company] Channel 10—9—10 it was, and that encouraged us to buy TVs—middle [19]50s. I'll never forget the first TV I ever heard, really, was in early [19]50s. I drove from here to Washington. Ark, my son, was a history buff, and he got that from me, I guess. And we were going to Washington. I wanted to take him to Washington and let him see what I saw when I was thirteen years old. Well, he was, in [19]50—well, let me see. He was in junior high, and he was ten—eleven years old. And—but he wanted to visit every capital between here and Washington, and we were invited to stay at the Fairfax Hotel in Washington. It was owned by my mother-in-law's cousin, and we had rooms waiting for us there. It was [former Vice President] Al Gore's uncle who owned it.

SL: Yeah.

[02:34:13] AM: My mo—I don't know whether I told you, but my

mother-in-law was kin to Al Gore.

SL: No, you haven't told me that story.

AM: Al Gore Sr. and she were first cousins—grew up in the same town in eastern—east of Nashville, Tennessee. Her mother was a Gore, and Albert Sr.'s father was a Gore. They were brothers and sisters. And they were first cousins. So we were very much for Al Gore when he was running, and Meredith had a—pulled out a picture that's over here somewhere of a party—after a fund-raiser that [Bill] Clinton gave—I mean, that—Clinton was there, too, when he was still president, and Ark had 'em all gathered—family all gathered at his house, and that was the picture she showed me this morning.

SL: That's good.

AM: I don't know where it is. It's around here.

SL: I bet she's got it back there.

AM: But anyhow, back to my story about the TV—we—I'll never forget on a Sunday afternoon, the chamber of commerce says, "I've got a special bus. We're going over to the dedication of Channel 6 TV station in Texarkana." And we—about fifty of us got on a chartered bus and went to Texarkana, and they let us all say one word—one little sentence—each one of us from Magnolia—saying how much we appreciated 'em putting that on

the air. [*Laughter*] So that's my first experience on gettin' to hear local TV—1954.

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-four.

AM: Or five [1955]—one of the two.

SL: Yeah.

AM: Middle [19]50s. But what I was gettin' at—the first TV I ever saw, we struck out here and went to Jackson, Mississippi, and to Montgomery [Alabama], then to Atlanta [Georgia]. And I stayed in a motel that I could put a quarter in and get a baseball game on TV. You had to put a quarter in every thirty minutes.

SL: [*Laughs*] Every thirty minutes.

[02:36:37] AM: And it cost me bout two or three dollars to see a ball game. So I stayed up, and my wife, Elena, got so put out with me. Says, "You're spendin' all that money just to see a ball game!" I says, "I never do get to do this in Magnolia."

[*Laughter*] And that's where—that was my first experience.

That was 1951. And finally, they gave up. They says, "When are y'all ever gonna get to Washington?" Well, we had to go to Raleigh [North Carolina] and then Richmond [Virginia] and finally got to Washington, and it took us ten days to go from here to Washington. We'd spend a night in each town where we'd see the capital, because we had to see everything in that capital.

SL: Yeah.

AM: He wanted to go to the tourist department and the . . .

SL: Oh my gosh.

AM: [*Laughs*] But what a joy it was because when we got to Raleigh, and going through the capital, the woman says, "Have you ever been to Manteo [North Carolina]?" Says, "They have a wonderful pageant [*The Lost Colony*, first performed in 1937] over there." Manteo—off of Nags Head up there.

SL: Okay.

AM: And it's a historical pageant they put on every night during the summer. And it's a play of the early settlement up there—Jamestown and how that was all settled. Oh, it just—he thought he was in heaven. [*SL laughs*] And I did, too.

SL: Yeah.

AM: I liked it, too. And that was an experience we had in the early years of his life, and my first experience with TV on the way.

[*Laughs*]

[02:38:24] SL: Well, how did you meet Elena?

AM: I had a cousin [*Susie Willis Hulse*] who taught school down at Homer, Louisiana. And you know, like I said a while ago, there was no such thing as apartments in these small towns. There were boarding houses that rented rooms. And Elena had lost her

father [Jenkins Lorenzo Schley], and her mother [Carrie Schley Watkins] had not married again, and she was trying to raise three daughters [Elena, Lurene, and Sarah] and a son [Jenkins]—a widow at age eight—twenty-eight. And she rented—she had a big two-story house down there at Homer. And she rented a room to my first cousin, who went down there to teach school in the Homer[-Mayfield] public schools.

SL: Kay.

[02:39:18] AM: And she met a man in Homer and married him, and he was the publisher of the local paper. And one summer when Elena worked for Stephens College at Columbia, Missouri, after she graduated up there and before she had—I mean, she—in the meantime, she'd gone to LSU and gotten a degree . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . in counseling. She was a counselor at Columbia University [AM edit: Stephens College]—Stephens College [Columbia, Missouri]. And Susie, my cousin, says, "I'm goin' up to see my mother." My aunt. Her mother was still living . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . here, and she dropped by my office. And I met her. And I says, "I'm gonna"—I told my mother—I said, "I'm gonna call that girl and go down to see her." So I went down there and—to

Homer, and I had a nice summer seersucker suit on. I'll never forget. I—those days, when you had a date, I don't care if it's hot weather or not, you put on a tie and a jacket and—especially with a girl I hadn't even dated. [*SL laughs*] And I called her up, and I wanted to come down there to see her. And the thing then from Homer—there was no entertainment there. There wasn't even a movie house in that town. You had to go drive to Shreveport and either go to the Washington-Youree Roof and dance or go to a movie.

SL: Yeah.

AM: She didn't like to dance. She never did. So we went to a movie, and dern if she didn't go to sleep durin' that movie. [*SL laughs*] That was my first date with her.

[02:41:05] SL: You member what movie it was?

AM: But anyhow, I'll never forget—her younger sister [Sarah] had a little old two-year-old daughter runnin' around there, and they says, "That's Martha. She likes you." See, she was always just coming up—walkin' up to me and says, "Put her in your lap." Well, I did, and she peed all over that nice, fresh-creased, starched white suit.

SL: [*Laughter*] Oh my gosh.

[02:41:39] AM: So they had to clean me up fore I went to the movie.

[Laughs] But those're some funny episodes I remember in our early days of dating. And pretty soon she had a girl—a old roommate [Virginia Carpenter] come down there from Columbia to visit her, and my brother was here. He'd already been commissioned as a medical officer in the service, and he was on leave. He was stationed in Alaska, and he was here, and says, "Well, Virginia's here. Sank can date Virginia, and you date Elena, and we'll all go to the movie in Shreveport." Well, Sank went down there and dated these two girls, and Virginia went with us, and later my brother had to go back to duty at Anchorage. And Virginia had to go back to Stephens, where she met a—the art instructor and married him. And Virginia was matron—maid of honor in our wedding, and Elena had to go to Columbia and be maid of honor in her wedding. And married a art man [Albert Christ-Janer] who became real famous. He did these [*taps on paintings with cane*].

SL: Well, I was wondering who that—who did those.

AM: Did those right there.

SL: Yeah, and there's a couple more around the corner.

[02:43:31] AM: He later taught at Michigan State [University, East Lansing, Michigan], Pratt Institute in [Brooklyn,] New York, New York University, Chicago University. He became famous—so

famous that the Callaway Garden [Pine Mountain, Georgia] people down in Georgia gave him a fellowship to come to the University of Georgia—a wonderful position to be their art critic and . . .

SL: Man!

AM: . . . and try to help develop the art in that school. And he and his wife were given a trip to Italy to judge some art over there for the University of Georgia. And on a cold December day—he wasn't a very good driver . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

AM: . . . he got up there in those northern Italy Alps. Hit some icy roads up there and . . .

SL: Oh!

AM: . . . died instantly.

SL: Oh!

AM: So that was a sad episode in our life. And they—but we stayed very close to his widow, who later moved to Sarasota, Florida. And we used to go down there and visit her. And it was a sad occasion when she became ill and passed away. But they—we were very close to her, like—Elena treated her like a sister. Mh-hmm. That was some episodes we experienced in our early married life.

[02:45:16] SL: How long did it take you to propose to her?

AM: Well, I took her to the Cotton Bowl [Classic] in January. And you know, you didn't just go off and take a girl in those days. That was 1940.

SL: Yeah.

AM: I'm tryin' to think who we saw play. I forget who we saw play in the Cotton Bowl. But my cousin and his wife [Kelso and Margaret Couch] chaperoned us [*SL laughs*] 'cause we stayed in a hotel.

SL: Right.

AM: And we had to stay in proper quarters. [*Laughs*]

SL: You bet.

AM: It was those days.

SL: Yeah.

AM: And her mother was mad at her—kinda mad at me more than she was her 'cause I took her to the Cotton Bowl and she was supposed to have been at a wedding . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

AM: . . . with one of her dear friends there, and she—I knew then [*SL laughs*] I was playin' pretty fast. I was kinda at the head of the line when she passed up a wedding to be with me at the Cotton Bowl. So we came back, and she went back to Columbia. On

February the fourteenth, Valentine's Day, I took the train. I didn't fly in those days in 1940—it was somethin' to fly. You flow—flew on very—emergencies. You didn't just fly. So I took the train over here at Hope and went to St. Louis—got on the Wabash [Frisco and Pacific Railroad] and went to Columbia on a snowy February day. On Valentine's Day in 1940, I proposed [*laughs*] in Columbia.

[02:47:13] SL: Were you at dinner or . . .

AM: And we went to dinner and—mh-hmm. And she was staying at some friend's house, and I was stayin' at the Tiger Hotel.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Did you get down on your knee and . . .

AM: Well, I had some flowers I gave her.

SL: Okay.

AM: [*Laughs*] I didn't get on my knee.

SL: Okay. Okay.

AM: But that was our proposal, and we married later that spring.

Mh-hmm. I had a happy life of sixty-three years.

SL: That's amazing. That's something to be proud of.

AM: Sixty-three years. It was a great life. I was tellin' Meredith, I'm so happy we did what we did. After I retired, we traveled all over. We went—I bet I—I bet we went to Europe five times.

SL: Is that right?

AM: Mh-hmm. We had a couple up the street here that liked to travel, too, and we'd go together. They'd go, and we'd go with 'em. And we went everywhere with them. So we did so much of that, I don't have the desire to travel anymore. I have the bug. I took my grandson [Alex Jones] to Alaska three years ago on a cruise and two-week trip. He was eighteen at the time—Sarah's boy. And we had a good time up there—saw a lot of Alaska I had not seen. I'd been there before, but I'd not been beyond Juneau. And we went to Anchorage and on up to Fairbanks and saw a lot—Denali [National Park and Preserve] and all the state parks and things.

[02:49:07] SL: That's a big . . .

AM: It's wonderful country.

SL: . . . big state.

AM: Mh-hmm. Sure is. Mh-hmm. And it's been a—it was a happy life together, and we tried to do the things that we wanted to do and were able to do it. That's fortunate. I think couples that don't like to be together are not gonna get along. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that's right.

[02:49:44] AM: You've got to have—be interested in the same things, and we were. And I believe—I have a lotta faith in the

younger people now. I tell you, what they're exposed to, Scott, I'm amazed that they're as good as they are. [*SL laughs*]
Really, it . . .

SL: It is a different world.

AM: Yeah. What's—crap comes across the TV, and even the computer is awful. It's awful. And I—we weren't exposed to those things. And I know it's—I think it's affected our—all of our lives, the way—the freedom that we've taken.

SL: Yep.

AM: A little too much. A little too much. I believe in a little more discipline. And I'm just amazed at how we accept things that we used to frown upon. And I think we've got to get our country back to a more balanced—where the "have-nots" have a little more and the "haves" have a little less—and some basic principles that we grew up by. You know, when we went to college out here, we were forced every Wednesday to go to what was called chapel. Now, that's a state school. It's not a religious school. It's a . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . state-supported school. We were assigned a seat in that auditorium. And if we weren't in that seat, you had to answer to the immediate authority—head of you—the head of your

department—whatever you were in.

SL: Yeah.

[02:51:49] AM: And usually it was the doggone dean of students that was—you had to report to if you weren't in that seat. You could miss your class, but you didn't [*SL laughs*] dare miss chapel.

SL: Chapel. Yeah.

AM: And chapel—it consisted of having a minister from each church take turns in giving about a twenty-minute religious talk—a [*unclear word*] devotional-type meeting. And I—that—course, you couldn't get to first base with that now.

SL: Right.

AM: They—the first place, they'd—student body—student government would go to the—[*SL laughs*] board of the trustees or the crown—the top dogs and say, "We ain't gonna do this."

SL: Lose our rights.

AM: "We'll go to ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] and bring you into the federal court." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

AM: And they'd win your case—win the case, [*laughs*] wouldn't they?

SL: They would. Well now, I noticed—let me ask you this before we go on. Is there anything that your grandparents or your parents said to you that kind of has stuck with you all these years? Is

there any kind of advice or . . .

AM: Yeah.

SL: . . . something that they observed that . . .

AM: Well, having lost—my grandparents were quite old. I hardly knew my grandfather. I got to know my grandmothers better.



They outlived my grandfathers. But I'll never forget somethin' my mother told me when I'd be going out on maybe a date or somethin' or take a trip or somethin' with some boys.

"Remember who you are." That was her advice. "Remember who you are." Well, that implied a lotta things. [*Laughs*]

SL: You bet.

AM: Didn't it?

SL: Yep.

AM: "Remember who you are."

SL: Who you are. That's good.

AM: That was her saying.

[Tape stopped]

[02:54:09] SL: You know, goin' up and down your halls here, I see some photographs of some notable politicians. I saw—there was one in there where—you got [President] Jimmy Carter on your wall, and you got . . .

AM: Well, that's my daughter. She worked for Jimmy over in Atlanta

and down at Plains [Georgia], too, and Washington. She worked in Washington, and she had the time because it was kinda between marriages. And she was footloose and free, so she was in Washington a lot. And she thought a lot of Jimmy and Rosalind [Carter]. Mh-hmm. And you notice her pictured with both of 'em.

[02:54:56] SL: Yep. Well, are you—have you been kinda active politically with the . . .

AM: I'm just . . .

SL: . . . state politics?

AM: I just try to do things for the Democratic Party here. We've got a strong Republican group here. The money group is really with the Republicans in Magnolia. We're the poor dem—poor politicians [*laughs*] compared to them. All my neighbors are Republicans—across the street, two houses there.

SL: You're surrounded by 'em.

AM: This one right back of me. Yeah, I'm just surrounded. [*SL laughs*] And one across the street—oh, he's got a [presidential candidate Senator John] McCain sign out there, I think. Somebody said he had. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, did you ever know any of the state politicians?

AM: Well, I knew [Senator Dale] Bumpers real well and [Senator]

David Pryor, of course.

SL: How'd you meet Dale Bumpers?

AM: Through Ark. See, Ark was appointed state insurance commissioner by him. He served under him and David Pryor, too. Then he took a job with Bumpers in Washington. And so that's how I got to know Bumpers.

[02:56:27] SL: He's a great orator, isn't he?

AM: Yes, he is. He saved Clinton's skin with that speech he made. That was one of the best speeches I ever heard him make. He was a great speaker. And whoever got him to make that speech—he didn't want to do it. He begged off first. He wouldn't do it. And then he—I think his conscience got to hurtin' him. And he knew he could help save Clinton's skin, and he did. He did. I doubt if the whole [United States] Senate would've ever impeached him because he was—had enough pers—friends up there. They wouldn't have convicted him, but there were some after his tail. [*Laughs*] They wanted to get him. But it was a—not a charge that was impeachable to me because it had nothing to do with the governance of this nation. It was really all personal.

SL: It was. Those guys were after him before he ever became president.

AM: Mh-hmm. And then [*laughs*] it's so amusing that some of his chief accusers were guilty of the same thing at that time! [Newt] Gingrich [former US congressman] from Georgia. Ol' crazy Barr over there—Bob Barr [former US congressman from Georgia]. Doin' the same thing, and just such hypocrites. Such hypocrites. That's the reason I can't agree with 'em. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

AM: That's the reason I agree with the Democrats. [*Laughs*] That's the reason I'm not for McCain. I put him in that basket with 'em.

[02:58:32] SL: Well, so how long have you been active in the Democratic Party?

AM: Ever since Ark went to Washington. Well, I was really—oh, grow—grew up with my dad. He though Wilson—President [Woodrow] Wilson was the greatest president we ever had. Well, to me, one of the greatest presidents was not a Democrat—it was Teddy [Theodore] Roosevelt. But he wasn't any kin to the other Roosevelt. I mean, he was kin, but not close. But I thought a lot of President Roosevelt. And when I worked in the bank—how he managed to get things straightened out. I ha—I still had a job, and jobs were hard to get in those days. When I got out of school in [19]31, there just weren't any

jobs. And whether you had a college graduate degree or not, it didn't matter. You were just in a—in the mix. It wasn't any available unless you were very—in a professional field like law, medicine, or accounting—something like that—where you could work for yourself if you wanted to.

[03:00:06] TM: What was Little Rock like during that Depression time?

AM: It was pretty dead. It was dead. Not much happened there. There was no industry comin' in there at all. The largest employer was the Missouri-Pacific Railroad [Company] over there in North Little Rock. And they had—still had the shops over there. And railroads did pretty good durin' the Depression. They had—still had to move freight, and passengers, too. A lot of us had to travel by train. [*Laughs*] We didn't fly those days—went by train. I used—durin' Depression, I was datin' this girl up there at r—Fort Smith. I'd take the train to Fort Smith.

[*Laughs*] But that's—back in [19]30s, I'd take the train up there 'cause havin' a car wasn't a luxury then like it is now—like it later became. They were for people who had to have 'em.



Especially durin' the war days, when you couldn't get any gas. You had to have those tickets. Unless you were crucial to the service of—to the country, you couldn't get any tickets.

SL: We're talkin' World War II.

AM: Yeah, World War II. Mh-hmm.

[03:01:54] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about—so the government issued ticket . . .

AM: Ration. Ration tickets.

SL: Ration tickets.

AM: Yeah.

SL: And were they specifically for gasoline . . .

AM: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or were the ration tickets . . .

AM: Gas tickets, yeah.

SL: Gas tickets. How much could you buy in a week?

AM: It depended on the number of tickets you had. Lucky for me—I couldn't get 'em in the service. Service people couldn't get 'em unless you were essential to the defense, and there were very few of us that—in the service that was that essential. I mean, that was somebody that required a car to—in their work—in their duties. But what saved my life—my dad—my father—my wife's stepfather down here in Homer, Louisiana, worked for several oil companies operating their wells in the Homer oil field. And there's such a—there's a gas that forms called casinghead gas that filters down in the process of running the wells from—

running the product from the wells to the tank batteries where they're gauged. And he operated those wells for two different companies, Sinclair Oil [Corporation] company out of Tulsa and another outfit out of Oklahoma. And he could accumulate this casinghead gas. And it would make your car run, but it would knock so loud you could hear it like a—the old model Mercedes. You remember those diesels . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . how they sound? That's the way that thing would sound. But I—he'd fill my tank up in Homer, and I could take that Ford, and I could nearly get to San Antonio [Texas] on one tank of gas in that Ford I had. And I didn't have to have a ticket. It was kinda illegal, [*laughter*] but you did anything you could.

SL: To get by. Yeah.

AM: Yeah. [*Laughs*] And he was—he'd give it to me. And course, I didn't have to buy it. It was stuff they were gonna discard.

[03:04:54] SL: What kind of—was there any industry here—were—let's see now, were you here in Magnolia at the start of the war?

AM: Yes.

SL: And was there any kinda industry that the war . . .

AM: The oil industry was all priority. If you worked for an oil company, you didn't have to serve. So a lot of their employees

didn't have to worry about goin'. You were essential to the safety of the country. Mh-hmm. Yeah, if you worked for an oil company or related to an oil company, like a supply house or a gas plant, where they clean the gas fore . . .

SL: Refinery.

AM: . . . they put it in the pipelines. See, that—Shell [Oil Company] had a plant out here in the Magnolia field. ARKLA had one down here at Macedonia [Arkansas]. McKamie [Arkansas] had Esso—Exxon. It was Exxon then. I mean, not Exxon—Esso had one over in Lafayette County [Arkansas]. They were called gas plants. Mh-hmm. And . . .

[03:06:15] SL: Now, did your—did I hear you say that your brother served in the war?

AM: Oh yes.

SL: And he went to—he was in Europe?

AM: Yes. He was in Alaska for three years. He was in five years. He went in early. He had just finished his residency in Nashville, Tennessee, at Vanderbilt [University], and the army asked him to serve. And he went in and finished up a lieutenant colonel.

[03:06:56] SL: So what did he do in Alaska?

AM: He was staff—on the staff at the Army Medical Center at Anchorage. Had to—worked in Anchorage and Seward. He was

at the hospital in Seward. And then he was transferred to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where they trained him to—that was at the time the war was draw—coming to a close. And they trained him to be a service to the civilians. So he dealt with the German civilians. We had deprived them of so many things, a lot of medical services, that our conscience, I guess, hurt us. And they weren't gonna let those people suffer for not wantin' health care—for the want of health care. So he was stationed at Wiesbaden [Germany] as a civilian support group. It really wasn't mil—wasn't any military action. It was over. The Germans—see, that ended in May [19]45, before the big war ended in August that year after Hiroshima. So he was there during peacetime in Germany. It was peaceful. And he enjoyed his station in Wiesbaden. Stayed in a hotel. Government had it leased or—and had a nice hotel. And he looked it up and says, "There's the hotel I stayed in." And we—our hotel was just around the corner. [*Laughs*] A beautiful, old hotel. Wiesbaden. And we enjoyed it—he and his wife, and my wife and I. We took a trip then down to Yugoslavia, Austria, and did a little touring after we got through Wiesbaden. Mh-hmm. But it was a fun trip—my first trip over. And I enjoyed it so much that we went back [19]68. We didn't go back till [19]72. I went back in

[19]72. Then I went in [19]74. Then I went in [19]79. Then I went in [19]84. Different countries. Went to Russia in [19]78, and Spain in—no, Spain in [19]78, Russia in [19]79. Mh-hmm.

[03:10:30] SL: Do you wanna talk a little bit about Elena? Now, earlier you were saying that she went to college. She . . .

AM: She went to south—Stephens College. College for women in Columbia, Missouri. It was a two-year college then when she went. Later it became four. And it was a two-year college. She came home, and her stepfather says, "You need to get your degree if you're gonna get along." So he insisted that she go to LSU. She went down there and got her degree in [19]39 and went back to Stephens as a counselor. She was workin' there when we married. She was counselor to one of the dormitories, I believe. One of the divisions or whatever it is—was up there. But it was a great school. Great school. It really was. And she was a good counselor. My daughter went there for two years. She didn't study. So her grades were so bad we brought her home. It was a four-year school then, or going into a four-year school. But we brought her, and she went two years out here and got her degree in teaching—education, and went to Atlanta and got a job teaching. That's how she landed in Atlanta. She came right out of this school right here and went to Atlanta and

got a job. She—I don't know how she picked Atlanta. She'd just been there once or twice to visit and liked it and wanted to go back. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

AM: She's got a mind of her own. [*Laughs and taps fingers*] She's a . . .

[03:12:48] SL: Well, is there anything you want to talk about familywise or relativeswise? Is there . . .

AM: Well, I had a big family here. I had—my father had four sisters [Laura Westbrook, Alice Dennis, Clara Willis, Claudia Blewster] living here and one brother [George Monroe], and they were like my own mothers to me. They just took her in like she was their daughter—took me in like I was their son. They all had children. My cousins—I grew up with 'em. It was just one big family. We had Christmas dinner, all of us together, like a family reunion. We expected to go to Aunt Clara's every Christmas for dinner—for Christmas dinner—Aunt Clara down on East Main, right down there—down from—right across the street from where Dairy Queen is right now. That's where I ate every Christmas dinner till I was in high school. [*Laughter*]

SL: At Aunt Clara's?

AM: Aunt Clara. Mh-hmm. And so it was like a—one big family, and

Magnolia's made up of families like that. I can just name so many families—the Gantts, the Hudsons, the Warnocks, the Jamisons, the—just—they were the old established families here and had business on the square—different occupations. Some were in mercantile business. I had an uncle [Hudson Westbrook] who ran a general store. I had an uncle [George Monroe] who was a gasoline distributor. I had an uncle [Dan Dennis] who ran the cotton compress.

[Tape stopped]

[03:14:50] AM: And it's great to get to know people in other families that have been close to you and have not only been good neighbors, but served in capacities in their professions, such as dentists and doctors. We didn't ha—know accountants as such when I grew up. They were—people who pushed pencils were called bookkeepers.

SL: That's right.

AM: And there [was] no such thing as professional accountants till really after World War II. During World War II, two CPAs [certified public accountants] moved into Magnolia when I came back. I got acquainted with 'em.

SL: Yeah.

AM: And one of 'em turned out to be the man I used. Found out I

later had to use one. [*Laughs*] I couldn't begin to interpret all those rules.

SL: I know.

[03:16:02] AM: And then I had to have one for the business. I couldn't begin to fill out a corporate income tax return. There's no way unless I was trained, and I wasn't trained for that. And—but you sure have to use 'em now.

SL: You bet.

AM: You can't turn around without calling your accountant and your lawyer and whatever. [*Laughs*] Used to be your closest friend was your doctor.

SL: That's right.

AM: Had to have him at your elbow.

SL: And he'd come home—he'd come to your house to look at it.

AM: Yeah, he'd—ol' John Ruff across the street—he'd come to the house. He said, "Oh, you don't have to go down there and wait in that line. You just come—I'll—I'm not going to work till ten o'clock. I'll drop by and see you." [*Laughs*]

SL: There you go. That's good.

AM: I'll never forget that. One day I was havin' an emergency. I was in some pain. And I didn't want to wait to go down to that office of his. He stopped by and took care of me—eased my

pain. His widow lives across the street over there. He and I not only had a good relationship professionally, but we traveled together. We took a lotta trips together. Went to Europe with 'em twice, three times. I don't know. Went to Alaska with 'em—Hawaii, at Panama Canal, Colorado—we traveled all the time. People come back—say, "Y'all still speaking?" [*SL laughs*] Says, "How do you do it?" Said, "Most people that—couples that go off together are good friends when they leave and enemies when they come back."

SL: Yeah.

AM: I says, "I'll tell you how we do it. We do as we damn please. [*Laughs*] They do, and we do."

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

AM: "Not try to do what the other one wanna do every time, but go your own way, and meet at night for dinner and tell you what you saw." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

AM: That's the way we did it.

SL: Makes sense.

AM: He wanted to—one time wanted to go to the catacombs down underneath Rome, and Elena says, "I'm not gonna get in those caves." [*SL laughs*] And I had to back off, and I kinda wanted

to go. And he went, and she says, "I want to go to Tiffany Garden." I mean, not Tiffany, but that garden [Tivoli Gardens] where all those springs are—fountains are—fountain—twenty miles out of Rome.

SL: Yeah.

AM: We spent the day down there. And that night we met for a good dinner, and we were all happy with what we'd seen that day. [Laughs] He was happy he saw the catacombs, and we were happy we saw the fountains.

SL: That's right.

AM: And . . .

SL: Well, you got to share stories . . .

AM: Yeah.

SL: . . . some.

AM: Uh-huh. And so that's how we told people we got along.

[Laughs]

[03:19:14] SL: Well, Archie, is there anything else that you think we should be talkin' about that we hadn't talked about?

AM: Well, I've tried to think of everything, Scott . . .

TM: His grandpa.

AM: . . . in every phase of what life has been around this place, and I've tried to cover events that's happened. This school out here

was founded a hundred years ago next year. I'm the same age as it. It's—it'll reach a hundred next April. And a retired history professor is writing a book—the history of TDAS. It was founded as Third District Agricultural School. What happened—the 1909 legislature said, "We need four agri schools in the state of Arkansas, and we're gonna take bids from different communities—from different section of the state. And those that successfully come up with the land"—you gotta have the land paid for—"the state will build the buildings." And they're high schools. They're not colleges. They were high schools. Strictly trained agri—farmer boy . . .

[03:20:45] SL: High school. Mh-hmm.

AM: . . . farmer boys who had no high school education. They had to be southwest, southeast, northwest, northeast. We outbid bout half a dozen cities by having the land for the school. Monticello got one. Jonesboro got one. Russellville got one—Arkansas Tech. Arkansas State [in Jonesboro]. University of Arkansas at Monticello. This Southern Arkansas University. The man that went up to Little Rock and told 'em he had the land—he had an option on the land . . .

SL: Oh.

AM: . . . on the acreage. And the land cost \$35,000 where it went—

first properties. And he didn't have a dime. He came back here, and he raised \$35,000, which was a lot of money.

SL: Yeah.

[03:21:54] AM: And that's how we got it. And I've been interviewed by him on tape numerous times. And now he's in the process of writing the book. Done a lot of research in Little Rock and in the newspapers—*Arkansas Gazette* and *Arkansas Democrat* and Arkansas Historical Society. Spent more time in Little Rock than he has here. And I'm reading the book as he writes it. And I've just finished about seventy pages this week, reading from the years [19]62 to [19]79. And it's so interesting. And I've found some errors and pointed 'em out. But you know, out of those seventy pages, I didn't find any errors—not a error—because it's current.

SL: Right.

AM: And it was time he was teaching out there, and he had it right.

[Laughs]

SL: Right, right.

AM: But the—way back there, he had a lotta things that I could help him with. So I feel honored that he called on me to edit that thing.

SL: Well, yeah. That is a big honor.

AM: And I put it on that machine and read it.

SL: Yeah. That is a big honor.

[03:23:25] AM: So I spent a whole afternoon reading most of that—those chapters this week. Uh-huh. And it's been interesting. Mh-hmm. I told him when he picked it up yesterday—I says, "I have a kind of place in my heart of what those presidents take on when they assume the presidency of these small colleges. They've got to have a knowledge of accounting. They've got to know how to hire teachers. They've got to know how to deal with human natures. They've got to know how to deal with students. [*Laughs*] And they've got to satisfy all those." And I says, "No wonder they—their lives have been shortened." And one of—and the man I read about this time died of a heart attack.

SL: That's high stress.

AM: Lived right across the street from me, right over there. After he retired, he bought a house right over there. So it was a fellow that I'd gone to school with out there, and he was a great man, wonderful man, and I miss him. Hmm. So that's something I enjoy doin', and I've learned enough about the early beginnings of that school to—things that I was too young to remember and didn't have any contact with it to—and didn't know the details of

what they were goin' through. But raisin' money for the growth of it—I don't know whether you drove around the campus or not.

SL: Have not. Is it beautiful?

AM: It's worth seeing.

SL: Well . . .

AM: Oh, there's some wonderful new construction out there.

[03:25:19] SL: What's that professor's name that you've been workin' with?

AM: James Willis.

SL: James Willis. Okay.

AM: Dr. Willis. Mh-hmm. Just a smart fellow. Reynolds gave a \$14 million grant where the—where they had the banquet last night. There were about 250 people there and a wonderful meal and a wonderful program and something I've been supporting through the years.

SL: That's the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation?

AM: Mh-hmm.

SL: They're very generous, aren't they?

AM: Yeah. He—a \$14 million building. Mh-hmm. And they're gonna break ground on a building [that] costs about the same amount for sciences. Science building. They're badly in need of that. They've got an agribusiness building, and they've just finished a

big addition to the nursing school. They've put out a lot of nurses out here—RNs [registered nurses]. They do not teach medical practitioners. You've got to go to El Dorado to get that. Because it's [in] conjunction with a larger hospital than our hospital here. You gotta have a little more internship. And yesterday at Rotary Club, we had the dean of the business school—a woman—tell about being granted the authority in September to offer a master of business [degree] out here.

SL: That's big.

AM: They just got the grant. And I asked her did they give the test to get in that school here, and she was quick to say no. I was afraid it was a little incestuous.

SL: Right.

AM: Said, "No, we have to go to El Dorado; Monroe, Louisiana; or Shreveport, or Little Rock, to get that."

[Tape stopped]

[03:27:37] AM: I had a little foreign girl [employee] from Bulgaria. I kinda felt attached to her. Alex, my grandson, is from Bulgaria. He's born over there. Course, they came over here when he was four years old. My daughter went over there and got him and husband and brought him here. And I used to bring her in here to—they've got a lotta international students out there, and I'll

have 'em—when he would be here at Thanksgivin' and Christmas and—I'd bring her in here and got to know her real well, and she was in the Computer Science Department out there, and I lacked a lot of knowledge operatin' that thing, and I had a new one and tryin' to learn how to do it, and she helped me a lot. And she went on and got—finished her four years and got her college—honors graduation and met a boy out there from Camden that was gettin'—he was a year behind her. He was finishin' next year. And they married. Went over to her country to get married and came back, and she applied at Walmarts in Bentonville—the headquarters—and they kept puttin' her off. And one time she came back and says, "I got to meet the big man up there." I says, "What do you mean, big man?" Said, "Well, he's vice president, and he's big." [*Laughs*] I later learned she was talkin' about [Tom] Coughlin. [*Laughter*]

[03:29:25] SL: Oh boy, did he get in trouble. Yeah.

AM: I didn't know it at the time who he was—hadn't ever heard the name.

SL: Yeah.

AM: But I heard later that's who it was. But she persisted and tried to get a job up there, and she's gone up there and just done wonderful. They've bought a house together. And he's got a job

at Walmart, too, in the transportation division. And they bought a house in Pea Ridge—one of those new housing developments over there. Little house. They don't have any children. All they got's cats and dogs, I think. But I just—what little I did to help that little ol' girl, I feel like it—I'd pay her to help me do some things out there and helped her with her expenses, and she did very well.

[03:30:31] SL: Well, I bet you've helped a lotta folks in their careers and . . .

AM: Well, I've seen a lot of 'em develop—gets—like this young boy, John Dumas. The man that's taken my place has—I've told people he's really done a better job in the agency than I did. Course, I think maybe the times have made it progress. But he's done some things better than I did, and I just feel proud that I picked—he was a graduate out here. And he's made it grow, and I'm—I've glad to see a nice—I don't know whether you noticed—it's on the north side of the square. It has four columns, over there across from the headquarters—it's diagonally. It looks like a—somebody said, "You built it like a church." [*Laughter*] We remodeled it in—back in [19]66 and did that—did it that way. Mh-hmm. But when I see those go on and do better than I did, it makes you proud.

SL: It does.

AM: Envious in a way. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, Archie, we've been talkin' all day, and I'm thinkin' it's probably about time for us to wrap up. I . . .

AM: I don't know whether all this last stuff I've given you is . . .

SL: Oh, no . . .

[03:32:03] TM: Hold on, Scott. We really wanna talk about your grandfather real quick in the war, I believe. We didn't really talk about that.

SL: Well, we knew—you knew your grandfather just briefly.

AM: Yeah, I didn't know him that well. But he had a wonderful war record.

SL: Well, let's talk . . .

AM: He was with the army of Virginia, and he was in a hospital in Baltimore [Maryland] when his eye was shot out. He was that close to the front of the big battles that ended the war. I don't know whether he was at the surrender or not. I never did hear that. I think he was injured, not—I think he'd already been discharged. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. But he was a great man. Everybody that's spoken of him—he was a county office holder before he went to be state auditor of the state. He had to be elected to that office. But he served four years. But he didn't

like politics, and he says he didn't wanna run again after four years. He gave it up, came back home, and retired. Mh-hmm. His health was failing him in other ways besides his eyesight.

[03:33:24] SL: Now, what was his name?

AM: Thomas Cooper Monroe.

SL: Thomas Cooper Monroe.

AM: Thomas Cooper Monroe.

SL: And he was a colonel?

AM: Captain.

SL: Captain.

AM: Captain. Uh-huh.

SL: In the Confederate army.

AM: Yes, that's right. Eighth Alabama Regiment.

SL: That's right.

AM: Mh-hmm. Out of Selma, Alabama. Uh-huh. And he—everybody said he was not only a good soldier but a good man. We've got a lot to be proud of when you have people like that in your family. *[Laughs]*

SL: Oh yeah.

AM: That's what you try to lead the young ones to the right direction.

[Laughs] It's a big job nowadays.

SL: It is a big job.

[03:34:20] AM: And I just hope that we can get this country on the right path again, but we got a way to go. It's gone down the wrong ways for a long time.

SL: I don't know that—whoever's gonna be president's gonna have his work . . .

AM: Oh!

SL: . . . cut out for him.

AM: It's not gonna be a picnic. It's gonna be a double-whammy, I think.

SL: So don't you think that Obama's gonna win?

AM: Yeah, I do.

SL: Do you think he might . . .

AM: Now, you can't go by Arkansas.

SL: Yeah.

AM: You can't go by Mississippi, Alabama, or Louisiana. You've got to look at those key states and hope that Florida's counted right this time and . . .

SL: And Ohio. [*Laughs*]

AM: Al Gore really won that thing, but he got beat out of it.

[Tape stopped]

[03:35:20] SL: You wanna say anything about David Pryor?

AM: Well, David's just all-around good man, every way you can put

it. He made a wonderful governor, wonderful representative, a wonderful senator. I just agreed with him everything he did, and I can't wait to read his book [*The Pryor Commitment: The Autobiography of David Pryor, 2008*]. I've got it over here [pointing]. It's autographed by him. Ark got him to autograph it.

SL: That's good.

AM: And I wanted to thank him for it—for his autograph, or his signature, yesterday and missed him.

SL: Well . . .

AM: So when you see him—I'm gonna talk to him. I'm gonna call him.

SL: Okay.

AM: How do you get him? The Democratic [Party] headquarters?

SL: Democratic headquarters is a good way to get him these days. You know, he's doin' that. He's also doing his book tour, and he's teachin' a class up [at the University of Arkansas] in Fayetteville, too.

AM: Oh, he is . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . still doing that?

SL: Well, he's doin' it one day a week. Uh-huh.

AM: I see.

SL: Yeah.

AM: He's hard to get.

SL: He's busy.

AM: Well, I'm gonna either call him or write him and thank him for the privilege of doing this [interview].

SL: Well, I know he'd love to hear from you.

AM: I just hope this turns out half . . .

SL: Oh, it's gonna be fine.

AM: . . . half good. [*Laughs*]

[03:36:30] SL: It's gonna be fine. You've done a great job. Well, listen, I'm gonna let you off the hook. I'm a little worried we've kinda whooped you all day today and . . .

AM: Well, this'll make me sleep good tonight.

SL: Well, you've told some great stories, and I appreciate all the time and . . .

AM: I've kinda rambled.

SL: Well, that's okay. It's good.

AM: But you asked me to bring a lot of my family stuff in.

SL: Yeah.

AM: And I appreciate being able to brag on them.

SL: Well, this is gonna be theirs, too, so I think it's a good thing.

[03:37:03] AM: I'm so proud of 'em—all of 'em going to school up there and doin' well.

SL: You say you got nine si—nine names up there on the sidewalks?

[Editor's Note: Reference to Senior Walk on the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville campus, where the names of graduates are etched into concrete walkways throughout the campus]

AM: I've tried to count 'em—six—my brother and me—that's eight. Now, where is the ninth one? Well, Ark. Yeah, that's nine.

SL: Of course, yeah.

AM: Ark. I'm about to forget him.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

AM: I didn't mention much about football, but when I went to Fayetteville, [Francis] Schmidt [1922-1928] was coach one year when I was there, and then they hired a fellow named Thomsen—Tommy Thomsen [Editor's Note: Fred Thomsen coached from 1929 to 1941.] from Nebraska. And Tommy brought in some ringers that were later kicked out of school for not bein' legal. And that affected him. But he was a good coach there for several years. But our record when I was there wasn't too good. We didn't win many games. And you know, five thousand people was a big crowd over there to see them play when I was up there—five thousand people in those old frame

bleachers where . . .

SL: Yeah.

AM: . . . where the stadium is now. Oh, not where it is—where the practice field is, I think. I think that's about—over in that direction. I don't know. I'm kinda lost up there.

[03:38:45] SL: Well, I think the stadium's pretty much . . .

AM: I'm kinda lost up there now, [*laughs*] with Bud Walton Arena down here and . . .

SL: Yeah. No, I think the stadium's pretty much where it's always been.

AM: Well, I believe it is, too.

SL: Yeah. I mean, they did have a . . .

AM: Razorback Field.

SL: . . . they did have a field over where the Fine Arts [Center] building is now, but that was a long, long time ago. But yeah, they put that stadium down there in that hollow.

AM: I've seen students not even go to the game—have tickets in their pocket. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

AM: Students could go with activity tickets those days. They didn't have to stand in line to get a ticket—just go. And some of 'em—
"Oh, I've got some studying to do. I'm not gonna see 'em play

Oklahoma State—Oklahoma A&M." [SL laughs] In those days it was Oklahoma A&M.

SL: Yeah.

[03:39:28] AM: And we were playin' Baylor, and we played [University of] Tulsa nearly every year on Thanksgivin'. And I used to go with my dad down to Shreveport Fair. We played LSU at the Shreveport—Louisiana State Fairs in Shreveport. It's not in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. It's in Shreveport. And Arkansas and LSU played there for years and years and years. Usually, LSU'd beat us. But Elena's daddy went to a game over there and fell off the—fell—the bleachers some way and injured his knee and developed blood poisoning. In two days, he was dead.

SL: Oh my gosh!

AM: He was thirty-seven years old.

SL: Oh my gosh!

AM: He'd been to an Arkansas-LSU game. He died at Shreveport Hospital.

SL: Oh boy. That's a . . .

AM: And he was a doctor himself.

SL: That's a lick.

[03:40:32] AM: And so that left twenty-eight-year-old widow with

four children, and she raised every one of 'em and sent 'em to college. All the girls went to Stephens College, and the boy went to Baylor. She was a wonderful person. I had a mother-in-law for fifty-three years, and she was a—I told my wife—I said, "I wish you had half your mother's business sense." [Laughter] She was a great person. And I think Mark's doing us a good job as senator.

SL: He's—you know, Mark is his own man.

AM: Yeah.

SL: He's not David Pryor. He's not the liberal, populist, progressive guy that his dad . . .

AM: That's right, he . . .

SL: . . . dad was. He's . . .

AM: I hear some criticism from . . .

SL: . . . he's a little bit more conservative.

AM: . . . some of these real deep dyed-in-the-wool yellow-dog Democrats say, "Well, I wish Mark Pryor wasn't so much of a Republican." He was votin' with those Republicans more than some of the other Democrat senators. They could count on him. And I figured he was votin' his conscience, and I didn't argue with it.

SL: Yeah. Well, he's a great man. He's a great guy.

AM: Yes, he is.

SL: He's a good nephew.

AM: Smart, too. Yeah.

SL: He's a good nephew, and I have a lot of respect for him.

[03:42:08] AM: That's right. Is your other crew still taking scans and so forth?

SL: Yeah. We might oughta go back there and check and see how they're doin'.

AM: They're so quiet back there. I . . .

SL: Well, they—we make 'em be quiet. Archie, thank you for . . .

AM: Well, Scott, it's good to meet all of y'all.

SL: We had a good time.

AM: And I thank you for a good lunch.

TM: Watch your head. Watch your head there.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Hey, thank you.

AM: Well, we're just glad to . . .

TM: That was really good.

AM: . . . have y'all down here and . . .

[03:42:39 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]