

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Stanley E. Reed
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
December 8, 2009
Marianna, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

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

- Brackets enclose
 - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds that interrupt speech;
 - annotations for clarification and identification; and
 - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

Citation Information

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed Stanley Reed on December 8, 2009,
in Marianna, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Well, here we are, Stanley. My name is Scott Lunsford. You're Stanley Reed. We are at the Reed residence just outside Marianna, Arkansas. Today's date is March the eighth, two thousand and nine. And, Stanley, I've got to ask you if it's all right with you that the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History is here videotaping and audio recording this interview and that it will be—uh—archived in the Special Collections Department of the Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville campus forever. Now, we're gonna take this, and we're gonna give it back to you—make sure you like it—and then we're gonna do things like post parts of it on the web—make it available to researchers and documentarians and teachers of Arkansas history—students of Arkansas history. Is all that okay with you?

Stanley Reed: That's all okay. It's fine.

SL: Thank you.

SR: The only . . .

SL: That's a great . . .

SR: The only thing . . .

SL: That's a great answer.

SR: . . . it is December the eighth, not March the eighth.

SL: Oh, it is?

SR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: It's December the eighth. Stand corrected. Thank you.

SR: I didn't know if that was some—uh [*Trey Marley laughs*] . . .

SL: You need to watch me.

SR: . . . some ploy or what. [*Laughs*]

SL: Watch me carefully. Watch me carefully. [*Laughter*]

SR: I thought that might've been intentional.

SL: I don't know why I got March.

Trey Marley: [*Unclear words*] caught that?

SL: I was born in March. I don't know why I went to March.

SR: Yeah, we're talkin' bout . . .

SL: But thank you.

SR: . . . birthdays. Okay. Yeah, it's great—great to have you here in our home and have you in Marianna especially, and—uh—uh—we've been lookin' forward to this.

SL: Well, it's an honor . . .

SR: Thank you.

SL: . . . to be sittin' across from you. Uh—I've got the greatest job in the world.

SR: Well, you do.

SL: Uh—I get to . . .

SR: I envy you.

SL: . . . sit across great, great folks . . .

SR: Well, not . . .

SL: . . . every week.

SR: Uh—today excepted maybe, but [*SL laughs*] I know you've had some great interviews though.

SL: Well, we're gonna find out. Uh . . .

SR: Okay.

[00:01:31] SL: I tell you what we're gonna do. First of all, I need to know when and where you were born and your full name.

SR: I was born Stanley Eldon Reed. My father's name was Eldon, and I have his—uh—name as my middle name. Born in Milan, Tennessee, August the first, 1951.

SL: You and I are bout the same age.

SR: Yeah, real close.

SL: You've done much better'n I have.

SR: I thought you were a lot younger than I am. [*Laughter*] You've

got—you got a lot more hair than I've got, Scott. [*Laughter*]

[00:02:02] SL: Well, um—uh—Milan . . .

SR: Mi—Milan. *M-I-L-A-N*. Milan, Tennessee.

SL: Tennessee.

SR: It's in—uh—west central Tennessee.

SL: Uh-huh.

SR: Uh—there's a long story, I guess, how I was born—born there
but—uh . . .

SL: Well, let's hear about it.

[00:02:17] SR: . . . we'll probably—well, my parents—uh—both grew
up in Camden, Tennessee, which is—uh—about halfway between
Jackson, Tennessee, and Nashville, Tennessee, right on the
Tennessee River. That's where . . .

SL: Is . . .

SR: . . . all my families are from.

SL: Is that *C-A-M-D-E-N*?

SR: *C-A-M-D-E-N*. Just like Camden, Arkansas.

SL: Just like Arkansas. Okay.

SR: Camden, Tennessee.

SL: Uh-huh.

SR: Small town similar to Marianna—four or five thousand people.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:02:38] SR: Uh—my dad grew up out in the country—uh—there, and his father died when he was seven years old. And—uh—he still lived with his mother and his two older sisters for a while, but I think the conditions were so harsh there in the hills of Tennessee that durin' the Depression—uh—he was born in 1926—uh—they literally almost starved to death, and without other family helpin' 'em, they would've starved to death. And—uh—finally, Dad came to Arkansas to live with his uncle, Jack Crossno—uh—that was his mother's brother, and he was a carpenter. He did construction work out here. Worked on some of the highways between here and Memphis—uh—but he also farmed some, and—uh—so Dad came out and lived with him during his teenage years to farm, and then he joined—um—uh—the Marine Corps when he was seventeen years old and—uh—durin' the World War II—at the end of World War II and went to—uh—the Pacific front—uh—fought on Iwo Jima. He was—uh—on the sec—second wave that went ashore there and survived without injury until the last day. They were actually cleaning up—mopping up the island there, I think on about the thirty-second date, and he got hit with—uh—shrapnel and a land mine, and—uh—so he came back to Millington—was there about six months—and he—he received a—a disability—uh—his whole

life 'cause it really messed his leg up. But you couldn't tell it.

He was so tough that, you know . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:03:54] SR: . . . he—he overcame that. But, anyway, after the war he married my mother, who was still a senior in high school in Camden, Tennessee. He went back and forth to Camden. He was kind of a war hero—got a Purple Heart, and—and—uh—they were very proud of him. It was very—he wasn't but nineteen when the war was over, so—uh—a lot of—lot of young men made tremendous sacrifices—uh—in World War II, and Dad was one of 'em. And—uh—he went back and married my mom. She was seventeen, and he was twenty-one. She'd just turned seventeen. And then durin' that time, he was tryin' to decide, you know, what he was gonna do, and I think he was back here workin' in Arkansas with his uncle some, and—uh—when Mother became pregnant—uh—it was just a lot easier for her to go back to Tennessee to live—to stay with her mother while she was birthing babies. So—um—the—the hospital where I was born was where my mother's doctor was when she was living in Camden and had—uh—had me in—uh—in—uh—Milan. My sister was actually born in Camden, Tennessee. She's two years older than I am. She was born in Camden. So even though our—our

native birthplaces are Tennessee, I've never known anything but Marianna, Arkansas. I mean, this is all I've ever known—uh—because they—uh—you know, they brought us back just shortly after our—we were born, and—uh—so—uh—the families kinda reunited, and—uh—we've—uh—we've been here ever since.

SL: So was it just you and your sister?

SR: Yes, my sister. She's two years older than I am.

[00:05:11] SL: All right. Well, let's talk—let—let's talk about your—your father's folks a—a little bit here now. Do you—did you ever know your daddy's parents?

SR: No. My dad's father died in 1933. He was—uh—sixty-seven years old. It was his second marriage. Uh—he had married—uh—uh—another lady and had three or four children, and his first wife had died, and he married—uh—my father's mother—uh—Rosie was her name, and she was, like, twenty, and he was sixty.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:05:42] SR: So a lot of age discrepancies. And all three of the children, as a result of that marriage, have some sort of birth defect, and I don't know if it was probably because of age—uh—the father. Uh—the—the oldest child had a—had a severe heart—uh—defect, and she was really sick all of her life and died

when she was thirty-nine, finally . . .

SL: Hmm.

SR: . . . but never was able to do anything physically. Uh—the second child was a—uh—uh—she was born with very deformed legs—bow-legged, and really she was a midget. She was dwarf. Uh—not dwarf—she was—had the midget features. A sweet, sweet person. A—just a wonderful person, and she married and—uh—and they—uh—doctors told her there's a high degree of probability that she would have children—uh—that would be midgets also, and—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:22] SR: . . . she did. And—uh—my cousin Patty's still living up there in the same house where she grew up in Tennessee. But my dad was born with a cleft—uh—lip. A very strong—uh—bullheaded-type young man, but—uh—and—but he was fighting all—his whole life. He's kinda like "A Boy Named Sue." You know, he had a mark on him that people always made fun of him or made fun of his sisters, so he had a—he had a very aggressive personality because of that. But at the same time, it kinda molded him to the man he was, to be able to go to war and volunteer—fight in the Marine Corps when he was seventeen years old to go, you know—uh—stare the Japanese down—uh—

in—in—in a foxhole, and that's—you know, that's the way a lot of our—uh—our heroes grew up, under a lot of adversity like that. But—uh—Dad eventually—they eventually—uh—got his—uh—his lip was fixed when he was a teenager. [00:07:07] His parents were Primitive Baptists—uh—and—uh—they just did not believe in corrective measures at that time. Uh—you know, if—if you were born with—with a bad leg or born with a—with a cleft lip, that that's just the way you remained. So—um—uh—that was—uh—part of the culture in—in the hills of Tennessee that, I guess, kinda formed maybe some of my—uh—early upbringing. Uh—but—uh—some of those scars there from Dad's childhood remained, you know, for—for a long time, and I think—uh—it probably had a—had a—had an impact on—on our family and divorce and—uh—that we went through all that—uh—when I was growing up—and not a pleasant time. But I had two wonderful parents that loved me and my sister very much, but it's just a lot of emotional issues there because of the war and the tough circumstances where they were bringing up—where they were brought up that—uh—made it hard to—uh—overlook—oh—hard to get by all of that.

[00:07:57] SL: Well, now what about—um—your—um—granddaddy's wife? Did—did you ever know . . .

SR: Yes, I did.

SL: . . . your—your grandma?

SR: I did. Yeah, I knew my grandma on my father's side.

She—uh . . .

[00:08:08] SL: And what was her maiden name?

SR: Crossno.

SL: Crossno.

SR: Crossno.

SL: Okay.

SR: And there are some Crossnos, I know, up around Paragould, but—uh—I—and they—uh—she—my father came to live here in Arkansas with Jack Crossno, her brother, but her maiden name was Crossno. And I remember her. We called her Mammie, and she lived in a very—a very small—uh—wood-frame house that had—uh—wood heat. Uh—she cooked with a woodstove, and—uh—we'd go visit her when I was a child, and—uh—the house was always just so hot because she kept that woodstove—and I remember even goin' out cut—cuttin' wood for her splitting wood 'cause they got their wood—they were slabs from a sawmill. That's where—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:08:46] SR: . . . they—she got her wood. And—uh—uh—she

would have 'em cut up, but some of 'em'd be too big to go in her wood stove, so even though I was seven or eight years old, I'd go out there with an ax and split some slabs to keep her stove warm—keep her house warm. And she'd come to see us in Arkansas occasionally. But—uh—we had—uh—forced-air heat. You know, just a regular central heating unit . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . in our house and—uh—she just froze to death because she couldn't get close to a stove, you know, to warm up. She was used to bein'—uh—real warm durin' the daytime, so she stayed cold all the time. But she had Alzheimer's. They called it hardening of the arteries back then.

SL: Yeah.

[00:09:17] SR: And—uh—she went into nursin' home—uh—really, about the time I was in—a senior in high school and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . she was—didn't know much for ten years after that. Uh—but—and then—then my mother—on my mother's side really was—uh—uh—Grandmother Bawcum—Beadye Bawcum—she was probably one of the most positive influences in my life. Uh—she was in Camden, Tennessee. Course, that's where my mother grew up and—uh—but she was—uh—her—her husband

died when I was six years old. My grandfather on my mother's side died when I was six, so I never had a relationship, really, with either one of my grandfathers. But—uh—my Grandmother Bawcum—uh—she was just an outstanding lady. She never criticized anybody—had the sweetest spirit—disposition. She was always learning new things. Uh—she went to a country school outside of—uh—Camden at Flatwoods, Tennessee. The interstate runs right past there now. If you're goin' towards Nashville, it's the Paris-Camden exit, and she grew up right there. [00:10:13] And they had a little country school, and it only went to the eighth grade.

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: And back then . . .

SL: That's pretty good.

SR: Uh—yeah.

SL: Actually.

SR: If you went through the eighth grade you were highly educated . . .

SL: That's right.

SR: . . . back in the hills of Tennessee and—uh—you had to go to town—you know, twenty miles to go to Camden or Paris, and that was like goin' off to college. So . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:10:28] SR: But she enjoyed school so much, she went to the eighth grade eight times, and then she started teaching it.

[*Laughs*] She loved school so much. She loved to learn. And that—that really was her whole life. She always kept up with things. She read all the time—read books. Read the Bible through every year. She learned to make crafts—homemade dolls. And she was just a—she was a great inspiration to me. And there's a verse in the Bible in Psalms, chapter 103 that says the—"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to those that fear Him and His righteousness to children's children." And I think a lot of the blessings that I've received in life is because the righteousness of my grandmother. I'm a "children's children"—uh—that that verse talks about—uh—so I think there is a—a direct correlation—uh—with—uh—righteousness not only in our lives, but—uh—the impact it has for our children and our grandchildren on down through the lines. [00:11:21] And she was just a marvelous woman that only died—she was ninety-four when she died. She died in 1997. So . . .

SL: That's a good life.

SR: And had her mind all the way up till she passed away and—uh—just—just a wonderful lady.

[00:11:35] SL: So now her—uh—your—uh—granddad on your mom's side—was he a farmer?

SR: He was a mechanic and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . actually had a Studebaker dealership in—uh—Camden, Tennessee. His—uh—his father—uh—was—uh—originally had the Studebaker dealership, and—uh—that was back—uh—you know, durin' the war—before the war and during the Depression—those periods. And it was—uh—and my—and—and my father worked for him some, I know—uh—after the war. Uh—that was probably his first job, working for my Grandfather Bawcum at the Studebaker dealership there. And that's where he learned a lot of his mechanic skills. And—uh—there's still a lot of Bawcums in the hills of Tennessee there around Camden. Uh—they're—uh—we don't have any more—any more family reunions, but they're still—still run into some if I'm—if I'm there occasionally. I have a cousin that lives there. My dad's niece—uh—still lives there—be my first cousin.

[00:12:28] SL: So—um—your mom's side o—of the tree was more urban than—relatively speaking.

SR: Yeah, they were.

SL: They—they were town folk.

SR: They lived in town. Yeah, they were town folks, you know,
in a . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . in a community of four or five thousand people, but they
were—uh—and my father really lived—they really lived out in the
country.

SL: Um . . .

SR: Well, bout fifteen miles from Camden, probably, where he grew
up. But it was a very—very rural and still is—still is a very rural
area.

[00:12:53] SL: Well, it sounds like you may have gotten some of
your—uh—um—interest in—in school—in schoolin'—you come by
that honest, too, in a—in a way. Maybe that came down through
your mom's side.



SR: Well, it did—uh—but my dad—uh—even though he—he
probably—I—he never told me how far he went in school, but I
just guess around the eighth grade. He was very intelligent—
uh—but, again—uh—very independent. And—um—uh—he—he
valued higher education. Both my parents did. My mother . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:13:22] SR: . . . she didn't go to college, of course. She just—
uh—she did finish high school after they got married. But my

dad always valued higher education. He said—uh—"You know, I want—I'm saving right now." And even though we didn't have anything growin' up—I mean, they were just day laborers or—uh—worked in—my mother worked at a—uh—as a bookkeeper at a drugstore, and my dad was a—uh—he worked on the farm some; he worked as a mechanic at a local garage here in Marianna; he worked as a security officer at Mohawk Rubber Company in Helena, and then they finally—together, between he and Mom, they saved up enough money to buy a couple of old tractors and started leasing some land back in 1958. [00:13:58] But—I mean, his dream was that—uh—me and my sister would have a college degree. And—uh—he wanted me to go to the University of Arkansas, and he'd never been there before. There's just somethin' about uh—the University of Arkansas. Uh—I don't know if he had known some graduates from there, but he said, "You know, I just—uh—uh—would like for you to go there." And you know, he didn't compel me to, but it was very important for him that I get a college education, and—uh—and I appreciate that 'cause he instilled in that in me in a very early age. And I think so many times now, parents make it too much of an option. They really don't foster a culture of education and attainment of—of—uh—of improving yourself and leavin' the

world a better place that you—that you left it. And that's what—that was drilled into my head, whether it was on the farm, whether it was workin' in the church or whatever, that you're always supposed to leave the world not in as good a shape as you found it, but in better shape than you found it. If you borrowed someone's piece of equipment—uh—if you borrowed once somebody's lawnmower, you cleaned it up. You had it lookin' better when you took it back—uh—than when you borrowed it. And so those—those values stuck with me, you know, through my whole life, and even when I was growin' up, always was encouraged to do the best that I could do. Uh—don't every—don't ever be satisfied with—with doing your second-best. Do your . . .

[00:15:15] SL: Just gettin' by.

SR: . . . very best and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . try to control the things that you have some degree of control over, but the things that you don't—uh—you can't worry about those. You just do your best and—and the things you don't—don't have any control over, then—uh—you just let God take care of those results. And—uh—that's what I've always done.

[00:15:30] SL: So—um—your folks worked really hard, and—and they—they saved enough money to buy a couple of tractors and then lease . . .

SR: Right.

SL: So does that—is that part of a—a sharecropping arrangement?

SR: Well, it really wasn't—I wouldn't call it sharecropping, it was—uh—now Dad did sharecrop, probably, when I was two or three years old with his uncle, again.

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: Uh—he was kind of a day—a day tractor driver and probably had a—a sharecropping arrangement with him. But—uh—when he started leasing land, it was actually at Hughes, Arkansas, and he—uh—my uncle who was still—he was kinda my surrogate grandfather. I mean, he was a—he was around a lot—and fine, fine Christian man. They had a—but he—uh—he didn't own any land. They just moved year to year, and—uh—he had leased a farm in Hughes, Arkansas, that had nine hundred acres. So he took three hundred acres. Uh—his son, which'd be my father's cousin, had three hundred acres and he—he let Dad have three hundred acres of that farm, and that's where we first got started farming, when I was—uh—in the second grade. So I was seven or eight years old. And . . .

[00:16:34] SL: Now how far is Hughes from Marianna?

SR: Well, it's—it's about—uh—our farm was actually Greasy Corner—Hughes—which—uh—Greasy Corner, which is on the side of Hughes, and uh—uh—back then, I mean, the early—early bird got the worm. Uh—we—I've heard that all my life, so at three thirty in the mornin', we got up. And we lived in Marianna 'cause my mother had a job here—uh—as a bookkeeper, and that's where we'd leased a house. So we got up at three thirty in the morning—uh—to drive to Hughes, Arkansas. By the time we ate a breakfast and we—and we picked up some labor along the way, it was five o'clock when we got—uh—to the farm, and that's when we started work, at five o'clock in the morning. Course, it's like—Daylight Savings Time, it'd be, like, six o'clock now.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:17:14] SR: But it was—it was breaking day, so we started at five o'clock in the morning. And I remember that just like it was yesterday, riding in the back of that pickup truck 'cause, you know, we just had a small pickup truck, and we'd take four or five people. And I'd always get the privilege of riding in the back, which I didn't mind it. I'd curl up and take a little nap as we were riding over there. But that's where we got our start

farmin', you know, was leasing land, you know, at forty-five minutes away. A very, very small tenant operation and—uh—so we—I guess we farmed there for one or two years, and then we started leasing land closer to Marianna—uh—and, really, some of the land we still farm now. We still lease from the original family members back in the late 1950s. So—uh—but we don't—don't lease much land. Most of the land, now we've been able to purchase through the years and develop and—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:00] SR: . . . uh—so—just through hard work and gradually—uh—building our operation and having goals and dreams and—uh—you know, it's—we've been successful at—uh—putting all that together.

[00:18:12] SL: So I—I'm just going to assume the—uh—crop was cotton.

SR: Well, it's—it's varied over the years. Uh—cotton . . .

SL: I mean, back when you were a—a . . .

SR: It was cotton and soybeans—uh—back then.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SR: Um—not as much—probably more acreage and—and—probably



half and half, maybe, when we started out. But cotton—all the work was done by hand. We—uh—chopped the cotton by hand—

uh—we picked it by hand. There's just a limit on how much cotton you can grow. You just couldn't get enough labor and—and it was a pretty intense crop. So—uh—you know, a hundred to two hundred acres was about as much cotton as you could really physically handle when you're doin' all that with—with hand labor.

[00:18:46] SL: If you were to describe what choppin' cotton is—uh—what is that exactly?

SR: Well, chopping cotton is taking a hoe . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . and chopping the grass—uh—from around the cotton. We had cultivators—plows that plowed the middles—but they would leave, oh, six inches on either side of the—of the cotton row itself—the row of plants—uh—that it wouldn't—it wouldn't cover the grass up or wouldn't plow. If you plow too close, you'll plow—prune the roots, and course, you'd hurt the—hurt the stalk. And you'd try to dirt the cotton—throw dirt up underneath it the best you could to cover up the small grass, but there'd still be a lot of grass—uh—and weeds. Uh—that's before the days of chemicals, so we had to chop every—uh—we went through there with hoes and literally chopped the grass. And you'd thin the cotton. Back then, we didn't—seed was very inexpensive and

you just planted—uh—a real thick—uh—row of cotton—a lot of seeds—and—uh—it'd—it'd be too thick of a stand, so we had to thin the stand out. Uh—so that's really—when we'd chop the cotton, we were actually cutting stalks, too, 'cause we thinned it out to have about two stalks every—every eight inches.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:19:46] SR: About the width of a—of a—of a hoe, we would chop it and—and thin it out. So—uh—that's what chopping cotton is.

SL: Okay.

SR: Course, picking cotton is just literally, you know, with your hands, picking, and I—I just always loved to—to pick cotton. I don't know why. But when I was a child—uh—I would—I would catch the school bus and ride after school before I was—started sports and ride the school bus out to the farm 'cause we lived in town still, 'cause most of the land we were farmin' was in the flood plains, and it flooded ever winter.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:13] SR: So—uh—we didn't live on the farm. We lived in town. But I'd ride a school bus out and pick me a sack of cotton in the afternoon, so I could make me a dollar. I mean, if I could pick thirty pounds, I could make a dollar. And I just—made me

happy.

SL: How long did it take you to pick thirty . . .

SR: Well . . .

SL: . . . pounds?

SR: . . . bout an hour, you know, hour and a half. I mean, I—when I was twelve years old, I was pickin' close to three hundred pounds a day, which was a—you know, I had my goals of being the Mississippi County cotton-pickin' champion. That was my dream in life, you know, 'cause I was big. I was always oversize for my age. [00:20:43] And always expected, you know, because I was big, to be able to do as much as a man could do when I was ten years old, so those expectations, you know, they—I guess they kind of encouraged me to—because I could do about anything most men could do by the time I was ten because I weighed a hundred and sixty or seventy pounds and, you know, was strong. And so pickin' cotton—I just enjoyed doin' it and—but that dream kinda subsided when the mechanical pickers came in when I was about twelve years old. So the whole cotton industry changed with the mechanical cotton harvesting.

SL: Is that rain or is that . . .

TM: It's . . .

SL: That's rain, isn't it?

TM: It's a lot of rain.

SR: That's rain. Hard rain.

[00:21:18] SL: Yeah. [SR laughs] Okay. That's good. Well, we
[laughter] like the sound of rain. We don't like the sound of air-
conditioning, but [laughter] rain'll be fine. All right, now, I
wanna talk a little bit about your uncle . . .

SR: Okay.

SL: . . . that you said was kinda like—became kinda like your
granddad. Now let's talk about him a little bit. This was your—
uh—your dad's . . .

SR: My dad's uncle.

SL: . . . your dad's uncle. So . . .

SR: Yeah—be my great-uncle.

SL: . . . your great-uncle.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: So this would be your dad's dad's brother.

SR: My dad's mother's brother.

SL: Your mother's brother.

SR: My dad's mother's brother.

[00:21:46] SL: Okay. Well, let's talk about him.

SR: Hmm.

SL: What do you remember about him?

SR: Well, I just remember that he was a great carpenter. He could build anything. He loved to fish. And every time he would move—and he moved around a lot—he would always be living in a house that was on a lake bank or a riverbank or some—somewhere close to fishing 'cause he loved to fish. And he retired probably about nineteen—early [19]70s, maybe, when I was in college, and he moved down below Holly Grove on Maddox Bay, which is a fishing—kind of a fishing camp. It's on one of the oxbow rivers of the—I guess that'd be the White River. And I remember goin' down there fishin' with him 'cause he would fish every day. He loved to fly-fish. [00:22:32] He'd go out in a boat by himself, and he just loved to fish. And I actually still have—I bought his boat and motor from him when he died—right before he died, he got so he couldn't fish. This was in the early sev—mid-[19]70s, and right after we—I came back from law school. And I bought his boat and motor and still use it duck hunting—still have it out at our duck club and still use that same motor and boat that he had. Still have a lot of his fishing gear, so that's kinda what I remember him by. But a very sweet, sincere, devout Christian man. Very active in our church. We all went to the same church together and . . .

[00:23:08] SL: What church was that?

SR: First Baptist Church here in Marianna.

SL: In Marianna?

SR: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: That's—did you ever see him—did you ever go fly fishin' with him?

SR: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, we—he wouldn't use a bream killer, just always little poppin' bugs. And that's—now we—he would crappie fish with a minnow and a pole, and we did that some, but fly fishin' was what he loved to do. And he'd go out by himself, you know, day after day after day. And he'd just—and I—you know, I developed a love, I think, for fishing because of him—and the outdoors. I hunted a lot with my dad, but dad didn't fish too much because farming and fishing just didn't—weren't very compatible in the springtime. And the times you'd normally go fishin', he was always busy on the farm. But for some reason, I was able to go with my uncle some—not a whole lot, but enough to really develop a love for the sport, and I still remember that.

[00:24:00] SL: I wonder, did he ever make his own flies, you think, or . . .

SR: Well, I think he did. Yeah, I think he . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . he was that type of a innovative person and, again, being a carpenter, and he built a couple of houses that he lived in, and he did some work for us. Even after he retired, he would come and help us do some carpentry pro—he loved to build things, and he was very good at it, so . . .

[00:24:22] SL: Now what—tell me again what his name was.

SR: Jack Crossno.

SL: Crossno. Jack.

SR: E. V. E—we called him Jack, but it was E. V., Eunie Vester. Eunie Vester Crossno. I guess with a name like Eunie Vester, Jack was a *[laughs]*—was a very upgrade name from that.

SL: That's an interesting name.

SR: Eunie Vester. That was an old Tennessee name. Eunie—Eunice—Eunie Vester was his name, and they called him Jack.

SL: So he may've been named after his grandma or somethin'.

[00:24:48] SR: Yeah, there's no tellin'. There's no tellin'. And my dad had another—had a half-brother. I mentioned that my dad's father had two different series of children.

SL: Right.

SR: So my dad had a half-brother that was twenty-five years older than he was. So my dad had nieces and nephews that were his

age . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . because of the marriage relationship. And his name was William Reed. And Uncle William, as I called him—he had a—he lived right across the street from where my grandmother—right across the road from where my grandmother I mentioned had a small house where my dad kinda grew up. And he really helped my grandmother, who would've been his stepmother . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:25:33] SR: . . . and they were about the same—he really helped her a lot, you know, after his father had died, and he knew that my father and his siblings were having a real tough time, and he helped them a lot. And he really took up with me. He was another kind of a grandfather image, I guess, also. So I really—even though I didn't have any biological grandfathers, I had a great half-uncle, or I guess, he was a—not a great—he was a half-uncle. And then I had my great uncle, and they were both different men, but still had an influence on me, especially my Uncle William, when it came to farming, because that's—when my dad was working as a security officer, and you know, he wasn't farming, he had a dream to go back into farming or, you know, to start farming on his own. And I would go and visit with



my uncle in Tennessee and would stay—spend several days durin' the summer with him. And he had a hog operation. He had a—probably fifty sows, and he raised two to three hundred head of hogs every year. But it was all by hand. He had mules that he actually plowed the ground with. [00:26:36] He had a tractor that he'd bought after the war, but he only used the tractor to pull a trailer to haul his planting seed and his water jugs to [SL laughs] the field. And the only time he actually used his tractor to pull an implement was when they was—he was disking the ground in the spring, he would use that to prepare for planting. And that's the first tractor I ever drove in my life. He was—he did everything himself—had about a hundred acres of farmland, and I was down there helpin' him, and he was planting with a one-row mule planter, and he lacked just a little bit finishing this field, and he still had some disking to do. He was preparing the—he would get on his tractor and disk a little bit and then he'd come back with his mules and plant it with this one-row planter. Well, he asked me if I wanted to drive the tractor, and I said, "Well, Uncle William, I don't know how to drive a tractor." He said, "Get up there. I'll show you." [SL laughs] He said, "You just push in on this clutch, and then you let out on it real slow, and then you go to the other end of the

field, and you push in on the clutch and take it out of gear." So I was probably eight years old. [00:27:34] Seven years old, 'cause it was fore we started farmin'. I was probably seven years old. And I remember doin' that, and I guess that was one of the most proud moments of my life, you know, when I didn't run off in the ditch, and I was able to drive that tractor, which is like a toy now, there—it was so small. But he instilled in me a love for animals; a love for farming; a love for dogs. He always had a dog with him, you know, to chase the squirrels or the rats or the groundhogs or something. And he worked by himself all the time, so he talked to the animals all the time. So that helped me to develop a relationship and to appreciate animals and really appreciate being by yourself and entertaining yourself and being confident that you know what you're doing is worthwhile and productive, and he was always that way.

[00:28:19] SL: Well, so he didn't have any sons or . . .

SR: He did, but they did not farm with him.

SL: They didn't farm.

SR: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Hm-mm.

SR: Hm-mm.

SL: That's interesting.

SR: They—his son worked at a gravel company. He was kind of a manager of a gravel company there in Tennessee, so he didn't farm with him. And it probably didn't generate enough income. It was just a hundred acres and a hog. And they had a little cotton on the farm. Back then everybody in Tennessee and Arkansas had a little patch of cotton . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, back in the [19]50s and early [19]60s. But I spent a lot of time with him, you know, durin' vacations and when I could, and developed a close relationship with him, also.

[00:28:56] SL: Well, did—do you remember any stories that either of those uncles ever told you?



SR: Well, yeah, I mean, I—my Uncle William especially—he was a very devout Democrat . . .

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

SR: . . . because they—he . . .

SL: That's [*laughs*] good—devout Democrat. [*SR laughs*] I like that.

SR: He remembered the Depression from 1929 'cause he grew up through it. He was a young man when the Depression hit, and they all blamed Hoover. Yeah, I guess it was Hoover. He was president then for the Depression. And the Republican—

Republicans for that. And even though, you know, philosophies of the parties change over the years, he was just a—such a devout Democrat. When I was young, it didn't make much difference to me, but you know, when I got a little older, I was a little more conservative, and I probably thought more like a Republican—at least I was open minded. [00:29:46] And I never will forget when I brought Charlene up there to meet the family after we had met in college at the University of Arkansas, and I took her there to meet Uncle William. Almost the first question they asked her when they—when she sat down—"Are you a Democrat or Republican?" [*Laughter*] You know, they had to line her up philosophically. Course, Charlene was half-scared to death—said, "Uh—uh—you know, I just kinda vote for the person, I guess." [*Laughs*] But . . .

SL: That's a good answer.

SR: . . . they were very, very strong in their beliefs. And I got in a little—and, you know, I always had a great respect for my uncle and I'd—you know, when I was young, and even though I might disagree with him about somethin', I never would've indicated 'cause he was such an intimidating kind of guy—real gruff and harsh, you know, and just spoke real—he always had a—some snuff or tobacco in his mouth, and he, you know, worked those

old mule, and he was just tough . . .

SL: Hardscrabble.

SR: Oh, he was tough as horse leather, now. He was tough. [*SL laughs*] But I remember we got in a little bit of discussion about a Republican versus a Democrat, and they'd had some problems with one of the Democratic governors up there—I think maybe had gone to jail in Tennessee or been involved in a scandal. And I said somethin' about, "Well, Uncle William," I said, "So-and-so was a Republican." I said, "Could you ever vote for a Republican?" [00:31:00] He said, "No, I could never vote for a Republican." And I said, "Well, Uncle William, you'd probably vote for a Democrat even if he was a jackass, wouldn't you?"—you know—and I never said things like that very often, but I was just tryin' to make a point to him. He said, "Son,"—he said, "a jackass would be better than the best Republican I've ever seen in my life." [*Laughter*] So you know, he was that kind of a strong Democratic background, and so that's—that was very common up in the hills of Tennessee back in, you know, the [19]40s and [19]50s. And, again, it went back to the days of the Depression. And the times were so rough up there, people literally starved to death, and they blamed the Republicans for that. And they went to their grave blamin' the Republicans for

that, so it created some interesting politics in our family as many of us, you know, kind of—at least were open minded and more independent minded. [00:31:51] And even my dad was. He was a—he grew up in that, you know, strong democratic mentality. But he became very open and was really a strong Independent most of his life. He did not really—I mean, he believed in statesmen and that you were elected to serve your country and that party—partisan politics should take a background to the service of the country. And I guess through the war and, you know, his commitment there and the suffering that he went through, being injured, he had a strong feeling about patriotism and about serving your country and being a statesman and not being—not getting bogged down with party and partisan politics.

[00:32:31] SL: Did he ever talk to you much about his war experiences?

SR: Not a whole lot. A little, but he talked more, I guess, in the later years of his life, and when he had cancer the last year and a half. And he—I think he reflected a lot more. He was always so busy before that, working. But he reflected quite a bit and told me, you know, the war stories about the foxholes and about actually guarding the flag on Mount Suribachi. His platoon—he

talked about—he called it the Hollywood version, where they did the re-enactment, and they did the photographs. [00:33:04] He said that was just a Hollywood show. He said, "You know, the original flag we guarded was stuck up on a little wooden stick, and it got shot all to pieces and my"—he said, "my platoon was guarding the flag on Suribachi, and every time, you know, it—they would shoot towards that mountain, those bombs would go off, and that whole mountain would shake." And he talked about, you know, Suribachi and the impact it had, guarding the flag and being right there and then, yet seeing what he thought was a Hollywood production. He kept callin' it that—a Hollywood production, where they brought different members of the armed services in, you know, to [SL sniffs] hoist the flag. And it kind of offended him because he was there and saw all the people that got killed putting that flag up and to make some kind of Hollywood production out of it just—and I think later history confirmed that. [00:33:50] The movie, *The Flags of Our Fathers*—I remember seeing that. It was a lot of discussion about, you know, what was the real version of Iwo Jima and Mount Suribachi. Now he did talk about that with a pride, but yet with a remorse, because he saw so many of his friends in his platoon killed or injured. We actually went back—we've got

some pictures of the sixtieth anniversary of the landing of Iwo Jima in 2004—2005—and he was—it was about four months before he died of cancer. He'd never wanted to travel anywhere. I don't know if you've read the book, *The Greatest Generation*, by Tom Brokaw, but it talked about the type of person that fought in World War II. Many of 'em were farm boys from the country just like Dad that'd never been anywhere in their life—never been outside their—you know, the local community hardly or maybe across the state lines. And all of a sudden, they were plucked out of their secure environment—even though as harsh as it was, and they were placed—they went to a land they'd never been to fight for people they'd never known. And there they were, in a strange country and doing—and traveling and stuck on these ships for months at a time. He talked about goin' through typhoons in the Pacific and about the eye of the storm and passing through that and how bad it was. And he was on a ship for six months, I think, when he left San Francisco, and they were goin' out into the Pacific. And then, you know, he was at Guam as well as Iwo Jima, and that was really the extent of his war front. But once he got back to Arkansas, he never wanted to go anywhere. And Tom Brokaw talked about that in his book, that they were just so happy to be back on American

soil that it was never their des—I mean, they'd seen enough of the world. They did not want to see any more. And Dad was that way—never wanted to go anywhere. He just wanted to stay at home. And so it created, you know, a lot of emotional problems for him, I think, just seeing that kind of tragedy and that kind of suffering—human suffering—on both sides, Japanese and the American side and just the needless—oh, I don't say needless, but a huge loss of life. And Iwo Jima—I mean, he would say that it was not worth the cost. I mean, it was one of the greatest battles, I guess, as far as loss of life and casualties for the Americans there, and the Japanese, on just such a small island. It was, you know, what, two or three miles long and a half-a-mile wide or somethin'. I mean, it was just a very small—it was just a landing strip . . .

SL: That's right.

[00:36:20] SR: . . . in the middle of the Pacific. And the cost was a whole lot more than what they anticipated. I mean, he said—as they were preparing to land he said—you know, the generals had told 'em—they said, "Ah, this'll be a cake walk. There won't be anything there. You'll go over—just mop through Iwo Jima and move on. It won't be much there, but we gotta secure the island 'cause we need a landing place for all the"—I guess it was the B-

52s that were bombing in Japan, and when they got hit, they needed a place to land. So that was something close to Japan—fairly close—that they could have a place when they were hit they could come back and have safe refuge there. And they did. And once they took the island, I think there were several planes that were able to make it back there. [00:36:59] But the loss of life was just tremendous. And Dad talked about that and questioned whether or not it was a—you know, proper use of the American military to have such a huge loss. And I don't think they—they had never envisioned how much the Japanese would fortify that island. They'd been livin' there for twenty or thirty years and dug all those catacomb cave underneath Suribachi and the whole—over the whole island. And they were very, very much entrenched there, and it was very hard to root 'em out. And they—the Japanese were such fierce warriors, they would never give up. They would fight to the death. I don't know how many thousands that were there on the island, but Dad told me that, you know, he didn't think there were over twenty or thirty survivors. They just fought till they died. They would not give up. [00:37:40] And course, you know, we've seen that in modern day dealin' with terrorists, that a man that's willin' to give his life for any cause, whether it be good or bad, it's hard to

corral 'em and hard to deter 'em because he can take a lot of people with him. And there's just not much you can do to prevent it, and we're still seeing that, you know, in our security issues now fighting the terrorists around the world. And they had the Kamikaze pilots that they were several of the ships that he was on got hit in war—in—while they were in the Pacific.

SL: So he saw some Kamikaze . . .

SR: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . action.

SR: Oh yeah, he did. They never sank his ship, but they had several ships that were hit by the Kamikaze pilots, and you know, they were—they zeroed in on the plane. He said they would always be dead by the time their planes hit the ship because the guns on the boat were—you know, had already killed the pilot, but he had already zeroed in on the plane—I mean, on the ship, and it was coming in. So I think—and the fact that he had so much hand-to-hand combat with the Japanese always made him—it affected his ability to relate to Oriental people. And I don't know if that was common with a lot of World War II veterans, but he just always had a little bit of distrust for Orientals because of that. And you know, it's something that I couldn't relate to because, I mean, I have such great friends—we had several

Chinese American families here in Marianna and I just—I went to school—just had great relationships with 'em. But he just always had a distrust of Orientals because of the tragedies and the hand-to-hand combat that he had, you know, there fighting in the—World War II.

[00:39:18] SL: It's not uncommon. A lot of war veterans—whatever war—it—they find it difficult . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . to talk about.

SR: Yeah.

SL: I think the scars are deep and . . .

SR: The . . .

SL: . . . and they're with them all their lives.

SR: Bout the only time Dad would talk about it—when we'd be coon hunting, or we'd be sitting around a fire waiting on the dogs to tree a coon. We'd go out when I was a kid and a lot of it was a little—you know, sometimes heroes like to talk a little bit. But it would be—it'd just be at certain times that he would even talk about it, but very seldom. Most people didn't even know he'd been to Iwo Jima—you know, when he died very few knew that.

[00:39:55] SL: So he got close enough to the enemy where he saw faces, and it was . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: It was . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . hand-to-hand stuff.

SR: Oh, it was hand-to-hand. Yeah. Getting 'em out of the caves and jumpin' in the foxholes with him, and it was hand-to-hand combat.

SL: Man . . .

SR: So . . .

SL: . . . that's tough stuff.

SR: Yeah, it is.

[00:40:11] SL: Well, it—you know, any World War II stories that come to mind anytime during our talk—but those are all very . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . very valuable historically.

SR: Well, he had—I guess the only other thing—I mentioned that we went to the sixtieth anniversary in Washington three months before his death, and he'd never want to go anywhere, but he wanted to go back to that sixtieth anniversary because he knew that he was gonna die soon. He had cancer, and he was in the latter stages of that. And he was wantin' to see some of his

friends and see if he could find—there were two or three hundred people in his . . .

SL: Company.

SR: Yeah, his company. It was Charlie Company with the 29th Infantry, I believe. [00:40:55] And yeah, he just knew he would see some of those people, and when he got there, there was only one person that was there, and he was a dispatcher for the colonel who, I guess, was head of his company. But Colonel Saylor was his—Naylor was his name. Captain Naylor, not colonel. He was a captain. Captain Naylor. And Captain Naylor's wife was there, and his daughter was there, and we were able to have dinner with them. But that was the closest he got to really seeing, you know, even seeing anybody that he remembered. And I guess they all got killed, or else they'd died since then. But that was kind of a heartbreak for him cause he hadn't had any contact—had not gone to any reunions for sixty years, but he wanted to go to that one just to see if he could, you know, see and have some remembrance of the people that he had fought with, and they were all gone. And very disappointing to him, I think. But still, it was a great time for me and my son. We were able to go up there with him, and, you know, we had never gone anywhere with him cause he just

didn't like to travel. But—and he started talkin' about, you know, the war and the tragedy and he—[00:41:58] I remember him tellin' me specifically fore he died that there was a young man—and I can't remember his name—I think he was from Missouri or Iowa—that was—they were in the foxhole together, and they had a machine gun that they were manning up on top of the foxhole, and his friend was up there—he—the friend was in the foxhole, and Dad was up there mannin' the machine gun. And his friend said, "Eldon, you come down here. Let me get up there. I need to get up there and do that. You need to rest." So Dad jumped down in the foxhole and just as soon as his friend got up to the machine gun, he got just hammered. And Dad said his intestines were comin' out of his body, and Dad took him and literally stuffed his stomach back in his shirt and got him to the medics. But he died, of course, and that really affected Dad to see—you know, knowing that he was just [*snaps fingers*] a split-second away from havin' that—you know, havin' that direct hit that his friend took. And he—and I never saw Dad cry many times, but he cried when he talked about that, knowin' that, you know, his life had been spared for some reason—I guess, by the providence of God that, you know, he could've been—very easily been that friend just a split-second earlier that

was killed. So—and, you know, I think he felt just by the grace of God he was still alive. Well, he knew it. He didn't feel it, he knew that. So—but he didn't talk—that's about the extent of the war stories, but it had had a tremendous impact on his life and on my family's life, you know, because of the emotional scars, I think. And a lot of war heroes had trouble adjustin', you know, to relationships because of the nightmares and the things that you went through. He had a fungus that he—I guess that he got it when he was in the war, but I remember when he had gangrene set up in his foot even when I was a young kid. He got a little bit of injury, and it was all related to his—to the war, and they call it jungle—some kind of jungle disease that he still had in his body somehow because of his service there. And he almost lost his leg. [00:44:00] This was when I was probably ten or eleven years old. He stayed in veterans' hospital for about a month, and his leg was just set up with gangrene, and it was related to—you know, to that infection that he'd gotten in the war somehow that still—bacteria was still in his body. So—and all those things . . .

SL: No one knew.

SR: Yeah, just all those . . .

SL: No one knew. All those boys that served.

SR: Yeah.

SL: No one had any idea what we were gettin' into.

[00:44:20] SR: I mean, it—they truly were, you know, the greatest generation.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And I think that kind of unyielding loyalty in the face of death to follow the command of—I mean, he hated his drill sergeant. I mean, he talked about how much he hated him, but yet he knew, looking back, that his drill sergeant prepared him, you know, to face death in the eye and to do his very best and to—you know, to be victorious and to follow the commands. I mean, you had to follow commands of your commanding officer. And Dad being a stubborn, kinda independent hardheaded guy, that was hard for him to stomach. But you know, lookin' back, he knew that those lessons he learned in the military in the boot camp and when he went to war, that's what saved his life because he could follow instructions and knew they were doing it for his own good. And so that kind of respect for authority—the—you know, goin'—sacrificing everything to protect your country—you know, those are lessons, I guess, that are—you live out in different ways through your life and the things you pass down to your children—to me. And of course, I've never

served in war. I was kind of too young for Vietnam, and I got a high lottery number, and I did not have to go to war. But my dad never encouraged me to join the military. You know, he said, you know, said, "I know we've gotta have a military," he said, "but I just"—he had such a—it was such a tough experience on him. He just couldn't see anybody voluntarily wanting to go through that, so he never encouraged me to get involved in the military at all—not that I wouldn't have. Course, if I'd been called or been drafted, you know, I would've done my civ—my duty. And he would certainly would've wanted that. But to be—just to volunteer to do it, he said, "Son, it's just—it's too much of a sacrifice. You know, I mean, it's"—said, "some people do it," he said, "but it's a huge sacrifice." So . . .

[00:46:09] SL: Well, yeah, even volunteers probably don't know . . .

SR: [*Laughs*] What they're getting into sometime.

SL: . . . the extent of what they're . . .

SR: I think you're right.

SL: . . . gettin' into.

SR: I think you're right.

[00:46:18] SL: You know, you mention him loosening up a little bit when you all go coon huntin'.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: So let's—just for the fun of it, let's talk about goin' coon huntin' with your dad.



SR: Well, I can remember as far back as I was probably two years old—three years old. Dad was always a hunter growin' up in the hills of Tennessee, and even, you know, in Arkansas, that was a big sport. And he had some dogs, Blackie and Spot. They were two—one of 'em was black and tan; the other one was a treein' walker, and they were—somehow they were siblings in the same litter, and one of 'em [SL *laughs*] turned out to be black and tan and the other one looked like just a walker, but they were very good coon dogs. And . . .

[00:47:02] SL: What makes a good coon dog?

SR: Well, they have to have a good nose—a cold nose—be able to smell a cold track. And very persistent to be able to work the trail out. When the coon may have passed by thirty minutes or maybe an hour ago, well, they have to, you know, go up trees and smell around trees to be sure they didn't go up and come down and they—you know, they—a lot of it's genetics. They have to be the right kind of breed, so—and persistence, and they have to have a love, you know, for wanting to hunt. I mean, some dogs are just born to hunt; some aren't.

[00:47:33] SL: So you don't really train 'em?

SR: Well, you do to some extent, but it has to be—they have to . . .

SL: They have to got it.

SR: . . . have a certain quality within 'em, you know, to be a good coon dog. Now some hunting dogs tree by sight or by sound. We call those—cur dogs is what we called 'em back then. They really didn't have a sharp nose to be able to smell the animals, but the—most of the hound dogs that we always had—you know, they had very keen noses, and they could trail, you know, a coon or a squirrel, you know, a long distance. And, of course, at night you didn't have any sight. Well, I guess they could see some, but they were—they always treed by smell and not sight that much. But when I was just a little kid, I wanted to go with Dad so bad. He wouldn't let me 'cause I wasn't but two years old. I could just [*SL laughs*]*—*you know, I was still in my diapers. But I'd cry, and I remember—and he said, "Well, I'll wake you up when I come in." So he'd wake me up and show me the kill every night, you know. [00:48:24] In the middle of the night, I can remember crawling out of bed, and Mama sayin', "Well, you're dad's here, and he's got some coons out here on the porch." And this was—we lived out in the country then, here in Marianna. That's when he was working for his uncle, I guess, as kind of a tenant farmer—tractor driver. And I remember one

night they—he had killed a bobcat, and he told me the story of about lookin' up in the tree—you know, he was shining up and finding the lights up in the tree, finding the eyes, and he thought they looked kinda funny—kinda beady-lookin', and it was a bobcat. And he shot it out, and that was a—I can still remember that. But—so, of course, soon as I got old enough, I was hunting with him by the time I was four or five years old. And . . .

[00:49:00] SL: So y'all—it—this takes place at night.

SR: Coon hunting takes place at night. We squirrel-hunted a lot in the daytime and had a lot of great memories. I remember when I was six years old, before I started carrying a gun, I'd just follow my dad around just like, you know, any young person would do. And I stayed with him a lot. We were—I was with him a lot. Anytime he was off, he wanted to go with—I wanted to go with him. And we were squirrel hunting one day, and I remember he was lookin' up the tree tryin' to find the squirrel. The dogs had treed the squirrel, and I was followin' him. Every step he took, I would step in his steps, you know. And I wasn't really lookin' up the tree. I was just tryin' to put my foot in Dad's steps. Well, somehow he had stepped on a yellow jackets' nest . . .

SL: Whew!

[00:49:41] SR: . . . that was down in the ground, but his foot was big enough that it didn't go down in the nest. Of course, my foot was smaller, [*SL gasps*] and my foot went down in that yellow jackets' nest, and those yellow jackets were all over me. And Dad picked me up and just ran through the woods and got me away from the yellow jackets and just stripped my clothes off, and he said—I can remember it just—he was havin' to pull the—they just covered my head. And my head was so swollen and I—you know, of course, I got some antibiotics, and you know, I was fine. But I called 'em jackrabbits instead of yellow jackets. [*SL laughs*] You know how kids get names . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . mixed up, and I said . . .

SL: Sure.

[00:50:18] SR: . . . "The jackrabbits got me." [*SL laughs*] That's what I told people. [*Laughter*] They asked me, "What happened to you?" [*SL laughs*] I said, "The jackrabbits got me," and they did. And I remember that like it was yesterday. Boy, that was a very painful experience. But we had good days. I really enjoyed that.

[00:50:33] SL: Well, you know, I wanna get back to this coon

hunting thing 'cause I've never really gotten a description of how you go about doin' this. So . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . it—it's at night, and you get a couple of dogs, and I'd assume you're in a truck . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you go out—now raccoon terrain—is that around water? Do they . . .

SR: They like water. They like around cornfields, cotton fields, and really just any hardwood timber. They eat acorns and pecans. So we would go out and, generally, a big—we had several big blocks of woods that we would hunt in, and we would hunt in those at night.

[00:51:15] SL: And what kind of gun?

SR: Twenty-two is what . . .

SL: Twenty-two.

SR: . . . we always took.

SL: A twenty-two?

SR: Yeah, because the raccoons usually—when they were up in a tree, one of the dogs treed them, they would run up a tree, and the dogs would tree 'em. They would bark up the tree and climb on the tree, and that's how you could tell by the change in their

bark—the sound of their bark, whether they were treeing or whether they were trailing. And so, well, you know, you could be a quarter of a mile from 'em and listening to 'em run the raccoon—chase the raccoon. You could tell if they were treed or if they were still trailing. And you didn't wanna get too close to 'em when they were trailing because your scent would—you know, would get in the way of the coon's scent, and you'd kinda mess the dogs up. So you wanted to stay back a little bit, so you kinda followed them at a distance, and you followed them by their barking. And you could just follow them through the woods. We had little lights or lanterns that we would walk through the woods. So—but once they treed, you would—you could tell the distinctive bark. It's kind of a real—a deep [*SR howls*] "Ah-oooh. Ah-oooh." Much deeper than the higher, shrill barking when they'd be trailing. And you'd go and take a high-powered flashlight and look up in the tree and try to find him. And sometimes it'd be in a hole, but usually if it's—50 percent of the time, especially early in the year, they'd be on the outside of the tree laying up in a fork somewhere and they wouldn't be movin', so you'd just—and they'd look at you, and you'd shine your light, and you take a .22 and—you know, try to shoot 'em out. [00:52:32] And generally, a .22 wouldn't kill 'em, but they

would bail out, and you'd have a little scramble on the ground when the dogs caught 'em. You know, that was always the fight after the hunt. That was all part of it. Course, now it'd probably be considered animal cruelty, but it's a—it was still, you know, somethin' you did. And that was just part of our culture. And if you've ever heard the Jerry Clower stories talkin' about that—that was—in the South that was a great—you know, we didn't have any other forms of entertainment growin' up. We didn't hardly have a movie theater. You never went to Memphis. Didn't go out to eat. So that was our form of entertainment, was hunting.

[00:53:05] SL: So the raccoon would fall out of the tree or get out of the tree, and you'd have to pull the dogs off of 'em?

SR: Yeah, generally, or the dogs would kill 'em. And many times they'd—they would be dead when they hit the ground, but sometimes . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . or just because a .22 is not that powerful, and them raccoons are a pretty strong animal.

SL: I'd always heard that a raccoon could drown a dog.

SR: Oh, they could if—and the dogs had . . .

SL: And they were smart. The—raccoons are . . .

SR: Yeah, raccoons are very smart, and dogs had to know—they had to outsmart the raccoons. They—when you fought a raccoon, that dog did not want to grab him up under the throat because the raccoon could get his head, and they could work a dog over pretty quickly, especially if they were in water. So a good coon dog would always grab the raccoon—he would go and grab him behind the neck, and he would pick him up and shake the coon violently, and that's what would kill the coon. But they'd—you never want to grab a coon on its mouth or underneath its throat. Dogs'll learn real quick—they—dogs that did that had—they had ears that were kinda [*laughs*] eaten up, so they learned real quickly how to do that. But probably one of the early experience in childhood of havin' to deal with death is when the black and tan, which I called Blackie—he lived till I was about twelve years old. He was thirteen years old, maybe, and he really became a pet at that time. [00:54:20] And when he died, I mean, it was like a part of me had died because I had been with that dog my whole life—had hunted with him. He had been hit by a car, and he had—just had three legs, but he was still a good hunting dog—a little bit slower. But I mean, he literally was part of my soul. When that dog died, I was in the sixth grade, and I never—I will—I cannot forget it. I was so disturbed I had to

miss a day of school. You know, when people'd ask me, "Well, where were you yesterday?" And I just said, "Well, I was sick." And I was. I mean, my heart [*claps*—I don't think I've ever had a person that I've lost that's hurt me as much. [*SL laughs*]

'Cause that was my first experience, really, with death other than my grandfather who died when I was six, and I didn't really remember that, but my parents, you know, were alive and my other grandparents. I never had to deal with death and just the eternal nature of departing, you know, of something you love so much. And that dog that I had hunted with all my life—I mean, that's a very, very emotional experience when you've had that kind of relationship with an animal. And a lot of people, you know, they experience that. But it was traumatic for me and—but we had lot of great times together as a kid, squirrel hunting and coon hunting. And I took him out by myself by the time I was twelve or thirteen. You know, by the time—about the time he died I was hunting, you know, with him by myself even—squirrel hunting. [00:55:32] So just a lot of great memories not only with him, but with my dad and our friends that we would do things with. All those things kinda flash back in your mind when things like that happen and realize it's—you know, life won't be the same. It's all changes.

[00:55:43] SL: Yeah. That's interesting how you talk about first startin' out, goin' huntin' with your dad—how your footsteps'd be right . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . right on top of his.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And there must—you must've really bonded with your dad early.

SR: I did. I did. We had a . . .

SL: There must've been somethin' about him that . . .



SR: Well, I think that's just natural. And, now, he spent time with me, and I remember one time he was—he had been working at Mohawk Rubber Company, and he worked a lot of sixteen-hour shifts 'cause he was tryin' to make as much money as he could, you know, to save up to start farmin'. That was his goal. And he was off one day, and someone asked him to go duck hunting with him, and he said, "Was it okay if I go duck hunting?" And I said, "Well, I thought you were gonna stay home with me?" He said, "Well, I was, but, you know, this guy asked me to go duck hunting." I knew Dad liked to duck hunt. He said, "But you know, if you don't want me to go, I won't go. I'll stay home with you." And I think sometimes as parents, we forget how much impact it has on a four- or five-, six-year-old kid when they

real—the child realizes that they're that important to us that we will change whatever it is that we wanna do just to accommodate and be there with the child. And, you know, it's just time—spending quality time, you know, with a child.

[00:56:59] And my dad wasn't perfect by any means. I mean, he had a lot of emotional scars, and my parents were divorced when I was young, and he ended up marrying three other women. They were all wonderful ladies. He had a great ability to pick very fine ladies for wives, but he just had some traumatic difficulties establishing relationships the way he should. But our relationship was strong, you know, to the day he died. I took care of him to the day he died, and so those bonding—I think that sometimes we—we're too busy in life now to take time to develop that relationship and to realize how important it is to developing character and relationships with our children because we don't do the simple things—the small things. You know, we think we gotta take 'em to Disneyland or take 'em on some cruise or something like that, and it's just a matter of spending quality time with 'em, whether it's in the woods or in a duck blind or whatever it is. And I learned from that and I—you know, I spent—tried to spend time with my son—and my daughters. I mean, all my daughters have gone duck hunting

with me, but my son especially. It's just different with a son and a father. And I tried to spend a lot of those quality times with my son because I knew how important it was for me with my father and so—and my son. We—we've had great relationships in the same way. And, really, probably even more so because—did not have the family trauma to go through as far as divorce. My wife and I have been married thirty-seven years, and we've just had a wonderful family life. And my son—you know, he's kinda mirrored me all the way through his life, following in my footsteps maybe literally in that, you know, he's farming now. [00:58:36] He went to law school just like I went to law school. He doesn't practice just like I don't practice. [SL laughs] He squirrel hunt—he has squirrel dogs and coon dogs, that even though I got out of it when he was growing up, I really didn't hunt that much as far as with dogs—didn't have hunting dogs—duck hunted a lot. But when he got old enough to get dogs, he had heard me talk about when I was a child and we had squirrel dogs and coon dogs, so he has a—two mountain cur dogs. I call 'em—they are mountain curs, but they are wonderful dogs—you know, hunting dogs. And he squirrel hunts and coon hunts a lot, and so . . .

[00:59:08] SL: Acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

SR: Doesn't fall far from the tree. And, really, he kinda did it unrelated to me. I mean, I had told him about, you know, how much fun I had when I was a kid doin' that, and we didn't do—we didn't squirrel hunt and coon hunt that much when he was a kid. We squirrel hunted, but not with dogs—just still hunting. We duck hunted a lot. We did a lot of duck hunting. But somehow I guess that—just the stories that I'd told him intrigued him, and he started reading about squirrel dogs on the Internet and next thing I know when he—after he's back here from law school, he's bought him a real expensive squirrel dog, and he's on squirrelhaters.com. He goes on the website and [laughter] checks all that out—post his kill—and we've had a great—I hunt with him a lot in the wintertime. We have a great time with that. It's—and it's kind of coming—a sport that's coming back. There's a lot of people that's doing it now.

[00:59:58] SL: Well, Stanley, we can go back and talk about things you remember about your father—times with your father—any time during this talk. But let's talk about your mom a little bit now.

TM: Hey, Scott—real quick—let me change tapes.

SL: Okay. [Claps] We're gonna change tapes. We're gonna take a break.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:14] SL: All right. This is tape two.

SR: M'kay.

SL: You've done very well this first hour, and we're gonna—we've been talkin' a lot about you and the times that you spent with your dad and some of your dad's stories that he told you. And we've got a pretty good hold on that. But I wanna spend some time talkin' about your mom now. And you mentioned earlier in talkin' bout your dad that there were a number of wives—three wives, four wives?

SR: Actually, four wives. Yeah.

SL: Four wives.

SR: Counting my mother.

[01:00:48] SL: So I wanna talk about your mother and what kind of relationship you had with her. So do—what do you remember about your mom?

SR: My mom was a neat freak. I mean, she wanted everything in order. Everything she ever bought, it looked brand new. I don't care if it was twenty years old; it still looked brand new. She's—she was just fanatic about cleanliness. And she didn't particularly like hunting, but she would cook wild game and she—she'd—and I always enjoyed—when I went hunting, part of

the thrill of the hunting was get the—getting to eat the meat at the end of the hunt, you know. So I would clean the game, and she would—as long as it was clean and all the blood was off of it, you know, she'd take it and process it. And she's a great cook. My mom was a great lady. Very talented. She never went to college, but she had very high intelligence and just a wonderful mother. She took care of me, my sister—and my parents had a rocky relationship from the very beginning, and Dad wasn't around that much—around some as a child, but he worked a lot, and he had other interests. He hunted a lot and they just weren't around too—we didn't—never did much as a family.

[01:02:01] So my relationships with my parents were kind of independent of each other. But my mother—she was always there for me—every school play, every function, she was always there. And my dad—you know, I may have seen him at two or three high school football games, and you know, I was involved in everything and he just—he never was there, you know, for the games. Now on the farming, that's—the farm is really where our relationship—and around hunting—was where our relationship was. My mother was—she was there for me in school and took me to church. And I became a Christian when I was eleven years old because my mother and my grandmother were sure

that, you know, I was always in church, hearing the gospel
and . . .

[01:02:41] SL: This is your mother's mom?

SR: My mother's mom, the one I mentioned earlier . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . that was, I think, a real inspiration on me and my mother
also. But my mother was—she was always there for me doin'
the little things, you know, that mothers are supposed to do.
And she provided me the nourishment—the emotional stability—
and just a wonderful lady.

[01:03:01] SL: Well, now you were tellin' me that she did the books
for a business in town.

SR: She did.

SL: What business was that?

SR: It was Turner drugstore. P. R. Turner drugstore there in
Marianna. It had been there many, many years before I can
remember. And she worked there as a bookkeeper for six—
probably six or seven years when she and Dad were tryin' to get,
you know, started savin' up money to farm. And then she
probably quit when I was maybe nine or ten. [01:03:29] But
we used to have a lady that kept us—you know, when I can just
barely remember, we had a black lady that kept us when we

were small—my sister and I—while Mother worked. And, course, Dad was working too, so they were both makin' about forty-five dollars a week back then.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And just struggling to pay the bills and save a little money, you know, to be able to start farming. But Mother was a—she always kept the books for the farming operation and even up until the time—even after they separated when I was probably twelve years old, and she kept the books and paid all the bills till the time that she—they finally got a divorce when I was a freshman in college. I was nineteen. But she kept the books all the way till then, you know, and Dad trusted her. I mean, he had a lot of respect for her bookkeeping skills and her wisdom and—know that she'd do everything just perfect because she was that type of a person. So—you know, they didn't have a hostile relationship, it just wasn't the nurturing relationship that—what I have in my family now. I mean, we've got a perfect relationship if one—ever one could be. And I always longed for that as a child and just never did have it. Not that we were too much different from other families that had the same problems. But both my parents are very good to me, and I was very blessed. In spite of our difficulties of them getting along,

they both were wonderful to me and treated me, you know, with much love and respect and just—I couldn't have asked for better parents.

[01:04:57] SL: Well, now, Stanley, it sounds like to me that your father was—worked a lot—spent a lot of time . . .

SR: Yeah, he did.

SL: . . . providing, and your mom did her share of that, too. But you had a lady—a African American lady that would be there.

Where—did she have her own place to live?

SR: Yeah, yeah, she didn't live with us. She lived across town. But she cooked—mainly, she was there—before we started school, she stayed with us all durin' the day, and she would usually cook the evening meal and have it ready when Mother got home.

But . . .

[01:05:34] SL: And what was her name?

SR: Her name was Laura.

SL: Do you remember her last name?

SR: No, don't remember her last name.

SL: Laura.

SR: Laura.

SL: And was she much older? Was she . . .

SR: Yeah, she was . . .

SL: . . . older than your parents or . . .

SR: . . . she was an older lady. You know, and again, I'm—this is before I started school because once we got out of school—once we started the first grade, I'd go to the store a lot—just hang around till Mother got off. And we would 'cause our school was right there almost next door to our house, and she lived—her work was just a block or two uptown, so it was just before I started to school that—you know, when I was from, say, two to five, so I don't remember a lot of details about that, but I remember Laura. [01:06:18] She was very nice and very sweet, and she took care of us and made sure that we stayed around the house and didn't wander too far and didn't get in trouble and—but she was a sweet lady. I do remember that.

[01:06:33] SL: Well, you said your mom was very concerned about keepin' things in order and neat and all of that. Were there—when it came time for dinner, was it—were you expected to be at the table . . .

SR: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

SR: Yeah. We always . . .

SL: . . . Laura would set the table?

SR: She would usually—she wouldn't be there by the time we were

eating. She would kinda get the meal started and maybe get, you know, somethin' on the stove. But Mother would kinda finish up the meal. Then she would come, and I think Laura—I can't remember if she—I think she walked home 'cause she didn't live that far from us. [01:07:09] And Mother would finish the meal and get it on the table, and that's when we were all together as a family unit. Dad, even though he was working, he was still around quite a bit. But he worked odd—that's when he was workin' at Mohawk Rubber Company. And he worked odd shifts. You know, you didn't know when he was gonna be there or when he wouldn't. And—but I . . .

[01:07:24] SL: So dinner was the time when the family . . .

SR: Yeah, generally.

SL: . . . gathered.

SR: Yeah, it was, as a youngster and then—you know, even after I started goin' to school that was kinda the time when we gathered. And again, my memory's a little bit foggy of all those years, you know, because there was some unpleasantness.

There was some conflict.

SL: That happened at the dinner table, probably, 'cause that's when . . .

SR: Well, some. Yeah, there was arguments and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, there were some—so a lot of that I try to block out, to be honest. It's a . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: 'Cause I—there's so many good things I can remember about my parents and my family that I just try not to focus on the negative.

[01:08:00] SL: Were—I know that you've mentioned becoming a Christian at eleven. Did church play a role before that in . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . your life?

SR: Yeah, yeah, my mother was always very active. And Dad, I'm convinced, was a Christian, but he just never came to church very much; and I always prayed that he would be there, and you know, he might come one or two times a year. But it was my mother that took me to church and was sure that I was involved with RAs and youth choir, and you know, she was—it was very important to her that—and she was a Sunday school teacher—always studied her Sunday school book. You know, she was a very devout Christian—not perfect by any means, but none of us are.

SL: [*Unclear words*].

[01:08:44] SR: But she was a very loving, guiding, shepherding mother that set very high expectations and always expected the best from me and . . .

SL: Now did you mention RAs?

SR: Yes.

SL: What are RAs?

SR: Royal Ambassadors.

SL: That's a Baptist . . .

SR: That's a . . .

SL: . . . youth ministry?

SR: . . . that's—yeah, right. This is real young, you know. We are ambassadors for Christ. You know, we are Christ's ambassadors here on Earth, and that's—Royal Ambassadors was kinda like GAs, which was the Girls Auxiliary or somethin'. It was a Baptist youth group. This was, like, you know, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. Very young. But I was involved with that and involved with our youth program at church. Very much involved with our youth trips. That's really the only time I ever went anywhere was on our church youth trips. We had a pastor when I was in junior high that was very—he liked to travel a lot, and we'd all board a school bus—we'd go to the Yellowstone National Park. We went . . .

SL: Wow.

[01:09:42] SR: . . . to San Francisco, Haight-Ashbury section, drivin' in a school bus. He took a seat out of the back of the bus and put a grill back there, and he'd [*SL laughs*] cook hamburgers as we was goin'—you know, we'd spend several nights on that bus. There'd be thirty or forty of us youth, you know, and we'd sing for our food—sing—we sang at the Golden Gate Seminary there in San Francisco and slept on the floor. You know, I was thirteen or fourteen . . .

SL: Sounds like the Baptist . . .

SR: . . . years old.

SL: . . . version of a magic bus.

SR: That's about what it was. But we had some great times on that bus and [*SL laughs*], you know, I was—I guess the last trip I went on I was probably fifteen because I'd gotten so—in the summertime, it was—I was expected to be on the farm and do my share there, so it was very difficult, once I got older, to continue on these youth trips. But I went on three—probably three of 'em. And we went on one of 'em that was for two weeks. We took off and went to Colorado Springs. That was our first stop, Colorado Springs. There was a [*SL laughs*] seminary there, and we drove from here to Colorado Springs on that old

school bus. You can imagine what that was like. It was, like, a day and a half. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[01:10:39] SR: Went up to Yellowstone and camped there for a couple of days, and just had wonderful, fond memories. Lewis Clark was our pastor and kind of eccentric guy. He's still livin', but just a wonderful man of God who had a great passion for lost people and for young people and for travel. He wanted to show us what the world was like, and he took several youth groups even after I was—wasn't involved as much—he took 'em to Scotland, overseas, and that was almost unheard of back, you know, when I was that age. I didn't go on those trips, but we went on some great trips.

[01:11:15] SL: Back at that dinner table, then—would your mom say grace or was—I'm tryin' to . . .

SR: Well . . .

SL: How much of the church . . .

SR: I can't . . .

SL: . . . came into the house, I guess, is what I'm . . .

SR: Not as much as it probably should have . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . because of the conflict. But my sister and I always said

grace. I mean, I can remember us sayin' our prayers. "God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food." [01:11:38] You know, those kind of—wasn't a real deep spiritual tone, but yet we always knew that we were to say grace. But it wasn't probably as—certainly wasn't as evident as it was in my family and my kids. I mean, it was—we all held hands and—you know, I learned a lot from that. I guess you learn from your mistakes, and you learn from your parents' mistakes. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, my desire was to—even though I had a great relationship with my parents—was to improve, you know, some family issues that I was—that we had, and conflict and not havin' Christ, really, at the center of our family because of the conflict. That was my desire, I guess, as a father and as a husband, to be more spiritual, and you know, we still to this day hold hands . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . around our dinner table.

SL: Yeah.

[01:12:31] SR: And you know, we said—we always said grace at my grandmother's. I can remember her—she would always say grace, and we'd always pray there. And we generally did when I was growin' up, but I never heard my father pray. Never heard

him pray when I was growin' up. Now I heard my mother pray a lot, but not my father.

[01:12:50] SL: Well, let's talk about your house.

SR: M'kay.

SL: What kinda house was it?

SR: Well, we had several houses.

SL: Well, what's the first one you remember?

SR: First one I can remember—it's about three miles outside of Marianna in the floodway. It was up on stilts because it flooded every year, and the water got underneath it, so the house was built up on stilts. It was a greenhouse, and that was the house we lived in. It's the first house I can remember, and that's where—the house where Dad would go coon hunting and bring the coons in and lay 'em up on the porch. And I don't think that house had runnin' water or—you know, or bathrooms.

[01:13:26] SL: Did it have electricity?

SR: Best I can remember. Now, we moved from there when I was about three, so I've got very . . .

SL: Oh.

SR: . . . vague memories of that house. But I always knew—I mean, that house stood there for probably another twenty-five years, so I always saw that house and knew that's where—and I could

kinda vaguely remember, you know, things. But, you know, when you're two or three, you don't remember a whole lot, but I do remember a little bit about that.

SL: The small house.

SR: Yeah, it was a small house. It was just a shotgun farmhouse is all it was. [01:13:53] Then we moved into town when Mother got the job at the drugstore. I was probably three or four. Three. We moved into town—a little, small, frame, four-room house—two bedrooms. My sister and I stayed in one room and Mom and Dad, and then we had a livin' room and then a kitchen. And that house is still livin'—still standing. It's a . . .

SL: So that'd be mid-[19]50s.

SR: Yeah. Yeah, early . . .

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-six.

SR: Yeah, [19]55 probably—[19]54. [Nineteen] fifty-four, probably. And by [19]58, my mother inherited five thousand dollars from her grandfather.

SL: Wow, that's a lot of money.

SR: Lot of money back then. And she took that money and put it down on a brick home that she built about the same time Dad started farming, about nineteen—I think I was in the third grade, so it may've been the year after he started farming. And they

built a house. It was a three-bedroom brick house—you know, nice for those days—thirteen hundred square feet. And we lived there that—I moved—we moved there when I was, I think, between the second and third grade, and we lived there throughout my high school year. [01:14:58] And when my mother left and went to Nashville after she and my father got a divorce, she got the house in the divorce settlement, and I bought the house from Mother 'cause I was comin' back and forth from school and needed a place to stay, and so I bought the house from Mother. And that was our first home after we got married with Charlene, and we lived there until 1980.

SL: Wow.

SR: And so . . .

SL: That house's been . . .

SR: So—yeah, it was there for . . .

SL: . . . very much a part of your life.

SR: . . . thirteen, fourteen years—right there in the very formative times of your life, and our first—as our first child was born there. Hailey was not born in the house, but you know, we had a nursery set up and so very—we had good memories of that house. And it's still on Texas Street and still looks about like it did when we built it . . .

[01:15:38] SL: So . . .

SR: . . . fifty years ago.

SL: . . . how long were you in that frame house when you first moved into town?

SR: About four years.

SL: Bout four years.

SR: Yeah.

[01:15:43] SL: Okay, now let's talk a little bit about technology in those houses. I—I'm gonna assume that—did you always have a radio? Do you always remember having radio?

SR: No. I can remember we got our first black-and-white TV, and that was a big deal.

SL: Yeah.

SR: I can remember when we got a telephone. And I . . .

SL: So you didn't always have a telephone.

SR: Oh, no, no. And I still have the same telephone number now that I had back then. It was C-Y-five-two-two-seven-three. Then you picked up the phone, and you talked to the operator and told her, you know, who you were gonna call, and your number was C-Y-five-two-two-seven-three. And that's . . .

SL: That's a lot of numbers, really.

[01:16:22] SR: Yeah, it's—but it's two-nine-five—C-Y is two-nine—

five-two-two-seven-three, and that's still my phone number.

I've got the same phone number that I—and I've traced—you know, I've gone through all these different homes that I've lived in and I've kept the same—I've kinda—the family's kinda gone different ways, and I've kinda [*laughs*] kept the family phone number through the years.

SL: That's neat.

SR: So we still have that.

[01:16:42] SL: So you say you picked up the phone, and you spoke . . .

SR: To the operator.

SL: You just spoke into it.

SR: Yeah, you . . .

SL: And there—So there was, like, a switchboard operator.

SR: There's a switchboard with an operator, and you talked to the operator, and you told her what number you wanted to call. And she would ring it up. We didn't—it wasn't a wall phone. It was one of these—I remember it had a, you know, a little clip—I mean, a little—it was a free-standing phone that had a little stand, and the receiver you put on this little clip and it—you know, that cut the—and when you picked it up, then you automatically, then, keyed—or keyed into an operator. So when

you picked . . .

SL: So the clip . . .

[01:17:15] SR: . . . the receiver up . . .

SL: . . . was on the side of the box or . . .

SR: Well, it wasn't a box. It was a freestanding phone, and it had a little clip where you hung your receiver that you talked—that you listened to, and it had a little microphone on the phone that you actually talked in so—you know, you held the . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . ear . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . ear thing up here [moves hands to ears and mouth] and you talked here. You could hear the operator here, and you talked into the . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . the phone. So—and I'd call Mom at work. You know, we'd check in with her a lot, so I can remember that. That was a big deal when we got a telephone.

[01:17:46] SL: So was there a time limit that you could spend on the phone by the company or by . . .

SR: I can't—I don't think there was. Now long distance was just, you know, completely out of the question. You didn't make a long-

distance call. Course, then, to make a long distance you had to go through the operator, you know. I remember sometimes people would call collect, you know, and we were told never to accept a collect call, you know. That's—we just couldn't do that, but the parents did, of course, if they knew who it was. But we had an old gas heater there. We didn't have central heat. It was just an old . . .

SL: Freestanding?

SR: . . . freestanding natural gas heater. [01:18:22] And—but, you know, a comfortable house, but it was—and we had plumbing—indoor bathrooms, which that was a big—I remember that was a big move for us to [*laughs*]*—*to have an indoor bathroom.

SL: Now is that with both houses—the first panel—the first wooden house you . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . moved into and the brick house?

SR: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SR: The brick house. Oh yeah.

SL: Okay.

SR: It was—it's—it was a—and we had central heat in the first brick house we moved into. And, course, it's—yeah, it was nice—had

a bathroom—had a bath and a half, even.

[01:18:49] SL: How much yard . . .

SR: We were really uptown.

SL: . . . where . . .

SR: Had a half an acre on the brick house and the other house—the little white house we lived in, it probably had an acre. We had—a lot of it was woods and had a—I remember there was a pen out back to keep all Dad's coon dogs, so [*laughs*—had—always had dogs barkin' all the time.

[01:19:06] SL: Did they—did your mom keep a garden or your dad?

SR: No, she didn't at that house, but when we moved—because she was working. But I do remember when we moved to the brick house that she—we'd always—she'd have someone kind of break up the garden, and I'd help her plant the garden every year. It was—you know, I was eight or nine years old, and she really enjoyed vegetables and planting gardens. But she didn't when I was real young. I don't remember. Now she may've had a few—I just can't remember having much of a garden when I was real young, but by the time we were eight or nine years old, you know, she had a garden at this other brick house that we built. And she worked hard, I mean, planting peas, and I'd always help her. I had a little push plow that I would use to kinda help her

plow it out. And, course, I'd do it—I was workin' on the farm, you know, by that time, so I'd—in between workin' on the farm or Sunday afternoon or somethin', I'd get out in the garden, help her get it cleaned out and worked. But we always had fresh vegetables and had lots of wild meat to eat—squirrel and didn't eat too much raccoon back then. [*SL laughs*] We usually gave those away, but had lots of squirrel and duck. That was always—and a lot of fish and wild game was always a part of our family diets.

[01:20:16] SL: Did y'all—did—but your dad didn't do much fishin',
so . . .

SR: No.

SL: That was your uncle.

SR: He—uncle would give us fish and people'd give us fish. And we'd go fishin' occasionally, you know, with Dad—not—maybe once a year, twice a year, but not that much. But people'd give us fish, and you know, we would eat about what anybody gave us, and you know, you just tried to make do with what you had.

[01:20:39] SL: Did you always have a refrigerator or was—early on, was it an icebox?

SR: No, I can remember a refrigerator. I can't ever remember us havin'—I knew people that did have iceboxes, and we had an

old—we had a icehouse here in Marianna and a fellow that had a mule and a wagon. And I can remember him, you know, goin' up and down the streets sellin' ice—block ice to go in iceboxes. But we actually had a refrigerator, long as I can remember.

[01:21:04] SL: Okay. Let me think now. What about the laundry?

SR: Had wringer-type washin' machines. You know, they had the tub, and then you had this little wringer that you put 'em through to kinda dry 'em, and then you hung 'em out on the line. You know, we didn't have a dryer till we—I was way up in high school, I guess. Always had a clothesline to hang your clothes on.

[01:21:27] SL: Did you help with that—you take . . .

SR: Not much.

SL: . . . 'em off or . . .

SR: Not much. I [*laughter*] didn't do . . .

SL: Not much?

SR: . . . much of that. Mother—and I hate to admit this, but she was such a neat freak, that by the time I'd get up in the mornin' to go to the bathroom and get dressed, she'd have my bed made and my room clean. I very seldom made my bed because she wanted things to be so—if I did it, it wouldn't suit her. She'd

have to do it over again. So . . .

SL: Well, and also that kinda meant you were done with that bed for the day, weren't you?

SR: [*Laughs*] Well, yeah. [*SL laughs*] I didn't get back in it, for sure. And I always got up early. I've always been an early riser, you know. [01:21:57] I'd get up at five, five-thirty in high school even. That's when I'd do my studyin', and our family always got up early. Daddy was up, you know, goin' to work on the farm, and course, when I was—in the summertime we got up early, so I just got used to that. But my mom always—you know, she wanted everything to be perfect, and then I never could make the bed to suit her or anything else, so she always made it. And I guess, that's the—I always had trouble with my kids because they knew that, and I'd ask 'em—"See, you gotta make your bed and clean your room." "Well, you never made your bed, Daddy." [*Laughter*] I couldn't say much. [*Laughs*]

[01:22:26] SL: That's right. Well, what about the dishes? [*Pen clicks*]

SR: My mom always did those 'cause I couldn't do those to suit her either, you know. She was a perfectionist, and I never remember really washin' the dishes. I might help take stuff to

the table, but I never did a lot of household chores.

[01:22:42] SL: Now—but you—your sister—what about your sister?

SR: Well, she did some, but not a whole lot. Again, Mother was such—you know, she was such a worker and such a perfectionist that we couldn't do it to suit her. So she . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, we just let her do it, and she wanted to do that, you know? It wasn't like she—we'd a done it had she asked us to, but . . .

[01:22:58] SL: Well, where do you think she got that?

SR: I don't know. She was always kind of that way. Her mother talked about that, that Willene could—you know, that was my mother's name—she was always—she was the oldest daughter. There were four children in her family. She had an older brother, but she was the oldest daughter. And she just matured very young, you know, of takin' care of her younger sisters and just always had this perfectionist attitude about everything. She wanted everything to be perfect, you know. Her dress, her clothes. When I was comin' in off the farm, you know, I was not a—necessarily a neat person by nature or I [*SL laughs*—and I'd get around dirt, and it'd just jump all over me, and I'd just be filthy and nasty—I mean, but like I'd wallered in the dirt.

[01:23:43] I would have to strip down outside the door fore I could come in the house. So I'd be out there with my underwear on, you know, [*SL laughs*] strippin' down fore she'd let me come in the house. And she'd have to wash the dirt off of 'em outside, and we actually had a washin' machine in a storage room outside. So she was that neat of a person that, you know, I—and if I brought dirt in—oh my goodness. I mean, it was a [*laughs*—it really upset her. And she couldn't help herself. She was just that much of a perfectionist. You know, some people just have that nature about 'em. And she would get—it would just upset her, you know, if things weren't perfect. So—and that—you know, that's probably some issues with her and Dad getting along 'cause Dad was a real neat person, too, but you know, she was just such a perfectionist that it was just overboard, you know, with her. [01:24:27] And at the same time, it—she had—high expectations for me and my sister as far as making grades and behaving ourselves, and you know, she wanted our lives to be somewhat perfectionist in a way, too, in how we performed in school and how we got our homework done and, you know, that there wasn't any playin' hooky or, you know, not doin' your homework or—I mean, there was never—no excuses for that. She wanted everything to be done right.

[01:24:54] SL: Well, I do get the impression that she probably was
at home more than your dad . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . was.

SR: Yeah, she . . .

SL: Especially in the evening . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . when your dad was workin' late . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . and—or huntin' or . . .

SR: Yeah.

[01:25:05] SL: . . . or whatever he was doin' and—but—so would
she actually help you with your homework, or would she just . . .

SR: Eh—no, she would . . .

SL: . . . made sure you were . . .

SR: She would . . .

SL: . . . doin' your home . . .

SR: She would help if I needed it. I mean she was there, but
generally, you know, I was able to do it on my own. I can
remember that. [01:25:20] But I was one of the few kids in my
first grade class that didn't go to kindergarten. Most of the kids
that I went to first grade with—a lot of 'em had gone to

kindergarten, so that's when Mother was working full time, you know, when I was young. And she didn't teach me my ABCs. She didn't have time. She was so busy doin' everything else that I didn't learn my ABCs till I was in the first grade—didn't learn how to write or read or anything. I know she read me some books, but she never took time to really teach me, you know, just the things that most other kids had learned, you know, in kindergarten. And I remember goin' to the first grade and, boy, I said, "Man, I'm dumb. All these folks know all"—I couldn't—didn't know my ABCs—couldn't sing 'em—couldn't write my name. And course, I picked up pretty quick after that. But my parents were just so busy tryin' to make ends meet and save money, and my mother bein' such a perfectionist, she just didn't have time maybe to spend with us on learning those things initially. Now when I—once I got to the first grade and started reading, I mean, she did spend time with me and wanted me to read books to her, and she'd read to me. But I don't—you know, she didn't spend the time with us that we spent with our young children, reading them books. You know, we read them books from the time they could listen. By the time they were three, you know, if we missed a page or missed a word, they'd tell us, you know. *[Laughter]* "Hey, Daddy, you—it's this, not that, you

know. You missed a word, Daddy," or "You missed a page."

We'd try to skip a page, and they could tell us, so [*SL laughs*]—but, still, you know, my parents were very busy when I was young and so maybe didn't have the time to spend with me that we had to spend with our children.

[01:26:50] SL: Do you remember your first grade teacher's name?

SR: Oh yeah. Leila Hogan.

SL: Leila Hogan.

SR: Leila Hogan. *L-E-I-L-A*—Leila Hogan—and a wonderful lady. Hadn't been dead too many years. Her husband was Clyde Hogan. He was the principal in the school at that time, and she was a first grade teacher. And they went to our church, and we were active with them in the Gideons—serving with them in the Gideons after we came back from college and just maintained a wonderful relationship with them for many, many years. She was a wonderful lady.

[01:27:24] SL: Well, I was just gonna say—you know, you came in a little bit disadvantaged 'cause you hadn't been to kindergarten.

You say you picked up on it pretty quick . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . but I have a feeling the teacher . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . probably . . .

SR: Well, she was very . . .

SL: . . . read the situation pretty quickly.

SR: She was very encouraging. I remember that. You know, I think she probably saw I was behind, maybe, initially, a little bit, but she never let on. I mean, she was so encouraging and so proud of me for picking up. And, I mean, I never made anything but A's or G's or whatever you made back then. I think it was G's or E's.

SL: E's. E, G's, S's.

SR: G's—good and excellent, I think.

SL: U's.

SR: [*Laughs*] Didn't have any U—didn't have any U's. I think there were S's. [*Laughter*] I had a S-minus one time. I think I talked too much, but I had wonderful teachers all the way through school. I mean, you couldn't have asked—I don't think you could've been in Little Rock or New York City and had better quality of teachers than I had in school.

[01:28:14] SL: So the first school you went to was a Marianna public school. How many grades were in that school?

SR: There were three grades in that school. It was Mulberry School—three grades. We had a cafeteria there that the other

school—the high school actually did not have a cafeteria, it was T. A. Futrall, and they came to our school to each lunch. So they had—all the schools from one through twelve came to our school to each lunch.

SL: T. A. . . .

SR: T. A. Futrall.

SL: Futrall.

SR: And there was some relation to Futrall . . .

SL: Up at . . .

SR: . . . Hall . . .

SL: . . . Fayetteville.

SR: . . . at the University of Arkansas. And I'm not sure exactly what all that is, but some relationship with that family name. But Mulberry is the first school I went to, fir—grades one through three. And I can—Mrs. Keasler was my second grade teacher, and her son is now the county judge, Jim Keasler, who was at the dinner today where we went to.

SL: Okay.

SR: She was my second grade teacher. And Miss Winnie Roane was my third grade teacher.

SL: Roane.

SR: Roane. *R-O-A-N-E*. Miss Deadrick was my fourth grade teacher.

I can remember 'em all. Miss Sanstead was my fifth grade, Miss Jackson was my sixth grade, so I just had wonderful, wonderful teachers.

[01:29:24] SL: So the Mulberry School just had three grades in it.

Now I haven't . . .

SR: Three grades.

SL: I haven't heard of such a thing.

SR: Yeah.

SL: Was it a pretty small school?

SR: Well, no, we had—back then, we probably had—see, Marianna was a pretty good-size town back then. Now, the schools were segregated. We had a African American school system and a white school system. We probably had—we had three classes of about thirty to thirty-five students each.

SL: Well, that's pretty good.

SR: We had about a hundred in each class, so about three hundred in that school. Grades one . . .

SL: That's pretty big.

SR: . . . through three. Yeah, for Marianna—you know, a small community, it is.

SL: Well, I've just never heard of the—it usually is grades one through six and . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . then maybe a junior high school.

SR: We had one through three, four through six, and then seven through twelve all together.

SL: That's interesting.

SR: Yeah. So . . .

[01:30:12] SL: Well, you've brought up the segregated schools. So I still wanna keep you in the elementary grades, but I want you to talk to me a little bit about the—at that point in time, you—it would be the mid-[19]50s—fifty . . .

SR: Mh-hmm. Yeah, late [19]50s.

SL: Late [19]50s.

SR: Late [19]50s. Mh-hmm.

SL: So I guess *Brown versus Board of Education* . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . has already happened.

SR: Right.



[01:30:42] SL: So where was Marianna in the segregationist—in the . . .

SR: Well, probably like most other Delta towns—a lot of resistance to that.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SR: But you know, at the same time, I had grown up around African Americans, workin' on the farm. And I loved to be around 'em. I mean, they were fun; they were happy; always treated me, you know, with the utmost respect. I worked side by side with 'em. I mean, I picked cotton; I chopped cotton. Even though Dad was farming, he said, "You know, you're gonna work just like I work and just like every other laborer works." And he expected more out of me than he did his other labor, even, so I—and I was around African Americans my whole life.

[01:31:23] And, you know, just never saw much distinction there, and I really detested the hatred that I could feel, you know, among some white people and couldn't really—never could understand that. But you know, that's just a part of the culture you grew with in the South back in the [19]50s. And I remember people talkin' about, "Well, sometime, you know, we're just gonna have one school system here in Marianna,"—and they thought the end of the world, you know, was coming when that would happen. But, you know, we've had a lot of changes in the Delta since then and a lot of acceptance and a lot of funerals. And we've had 'em in our church, and we've had a lot of changes in our church that even when I first came back here as a young adult, a lot of resistance to integration even in

the church at—long after the schools . . .

SL: Sure.

[01:32:04] SR: . . . had been integrated. And we had some pretty controversial discussions in our church about African Americans and about . . .

SL: This is after you came back to . . .

SR: Yeah, after I came back. And we had people leave the church, you know, because of those issues. And—but now, you know, we have African Americans that come to our church, and they're welcome. And it's still not to the point it probably needs to be, but again we've had lots of funerals that I think have opened up the way. God had hardened so many people's hearts because of their hatred that it just—it wasn't Christian, and I knew that.

[01:32:40] And I said, "How in the world—you know, if you're goin' to heaven where there's no respect of person and God's no respect of person, how can you discriminate and have hatred for someone just because of the color of their skin?" And it just—it never squared with me, and I never believed it. I never taught it to my kids. I never—and my parents didn't. My dad was a—you know, he was a product of the Old South, but yet he was a man of compassion and never—I can remember he had lots of black friends that we'd go over to their house and sit there and

talk and coon hunt with and just wonderful people. But you know, Dad had a great relationship with a lot of the people in the African American community here in Marianna, so it was—I wasn't brought up around hatred at all, and that's—that standpoint. I was brought up in accepting people for who they are and helping people regardless of what color their skin was. And I've tried to teach my children the same things, and I think, you know, I think we've got a healthy race—attitude about race, realizin' there are differences in cultures and people, but that we're all the same in God's eyes, and we need to treat everybody with respect and love and compassion. And, you know, I've got a daughter now that's in Africa teaching school and I—you know, it's just because we've—she was president of her sorority when they pledged the first black member at the Kappa—you may—the Kappa house. She was president and front line—front-page pictures and—you know, she was kind of offended they were makin' a big issue out of, you know, pledging this black girl. And she said, "Well you know, we pledged her not 'cause she's black—because she's a wonderful girl, you know." And . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:34:15] SR: . . . so she couldn't see why they were makin' such a

big issue out of it and—because I think we'd taught her that, to be accepting and loving and look for—look at people as who they are. And so my parents were very much that way—not liberal in the sense, but I think very pragmatic—very open—and just very understanding because they had suffered—you know, Dad especially had suffered as a child, you know, just of poverty—gone through a lot of the hardships that he saw many of the African Americans goin' through. So he could understand their plight and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . where they'd been, and I think he sympathized with that probably more than a lot of other people that were around us.

[01:34:54] SL: Well, as a child, early on, when did you first become aware of the segregated society? I mean, by—I mean, did you see signs—"White" and "Colored?"



SR: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, we had—in our city park I can remember, you know, we had white and colored bathrooms. And the—course, the school system, you know, was completely segregated; the churches were segregated, but yet the workplace was not. You know, the farms were not segregated. I mean, we had an African American foreman when we—when I was in high school. Horace Harris was our foreman, and most of

our labor was all African Americans—you know, that worked for us on the farm. And so our farm place—our farm wasn't really segregated. We had whites and blacks that worked together side by side. And never had any kind of racial incidents that I can remember at all. You know, it was just—you know, you were treated fairly. You expected to work hard for a—you know, a hard day's work, and we never asked anybody to do anything we wouldn't do ourselves. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:35:59] SR: . . . I was always right there with 'em—probably workin' harder than anybody just because that's the way I was taught. You know, my dad said, "You don't ever do anything—don't ever ask someone else to do somethin' that you won't do yourself and haven't already done." And I always kind of abided by that. Even when I was farming—did the same thing. I—I'd probably work harder and get dirtier and—than anybody workin' for me because I felt like that stimulated—motivated them to work harder if they knew that I was not askin' them to do somethin' that I'm not willin' to do myself. So . . .

[01:36:29] SL: As far as the public segregation segment, was



Marianna's population about 50/50, or was it more white than black . . .

SR: Hmm.

SL: . . . or more black than white?

SR: I would say probably 50/50—the Mari—the community and the county of Marianna. Back then we were thirty, thirty-five thousand people. It's probably half and half. This was in the [19]60s. You know, it was a thriving community. I can remember goin' downtown on Saturday nights, and course, back then nobody had transportation, so you loaded all the—you worked till noon on Saturday, and then you loaded all the labor up in your pickup trucks, and you brought 'em to town.

[01:37:08] And they all got their groceries and visited and went to the joints and, you know, just everybody—that was their social time, was Saturday night. And so all week they talked about either what they did last Saturday night, or what they're gonna do this . . .

SR: Gonna do next . . .

SR: . . . Saturday night. [*Laughs*] That was the great expectation, but—and then about midnight, you know, Dad would go and gather 'em all up or ten o'clock, you know, when the stores were closed and gather 'em all up—and their groceries and take 'em back home. And so that was just—and the streets would just be hustlin' and bustlin'. I mean, it was—I can remember goin' up

there when I was a kid. I'd ride with 'em sometime to go get the—you know, pick the people up and take 'em home. And several of 'em'd be in jail, you know. Sometimes you couldn't find 'em. They'd be in jail—had gotten in a fight somewhere, and that was just part of, you know, life back then. You expected it, and had some of 'em that drank a little too much, and so you'd have to go up there Monday mornin'—bail 'em out of jail and—but—and this was, you know, white and black. It wasn't—it was a culture thing; it wasn't a racial thing.

SL: Right.

[01:38:00] SR: It was just the culture of havin' a good time, and they worked hard all week, and they were gonna blow off a little steam. It was kinda like the old wild Wild West days. But the town was bustling. I mean, it was just like a carnival atmosphere, and you couldn't walk down the streets—I can remember as a kid—you know, I was, I don't know, nine or ten—eleven years old—just ridin' in the truck, and I'd be half asleep, but I could hear all the noise—the honkin'—people hollerin'. It was just like, you know, Madison Square Garden or somethin'—just really, really crowded activity. [01:38:29] And, course, it's—all that's gone. That's gone with the wind, and it's a past era, because when mechanization came in and a lot of different

programs in the early [19]70s, late [19]60s, and the need for farm labor, and we've mechanized, and we had larger operations—larger machinery then—you know, the jobs just weren't here, and that's when the mass exodus started and people goin' north lookin' for better opportunities and, certainly, you know, that's just a natural process. It happened not only in the Delta, but all across rural America, you know, where people—agriculture changed tremendously from being a labor-intensive operation to a capital- and machinery-intensive and technology. And that's kinda—it's takin' less and less people to run farms, and we've become more efficient, but we also, you know, didn't need the labor. But, you . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:39:15] SR: . . . know, the labor was very backbreaking, hard work. I mean, it was a tough life, but yet, you know, families, I think, were closer back then 'cause they had to struggle together, and they worked together. But it's—you know, people talk about the good old days, but—and there was a lot of adversity in those days, and I can remember that—a lot of struggle for a lot of people. It was hard for a lot of people.

[01:39:37] SL: You know, you talk about the movement north—there was also a great exodus around the flood—when—was . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that in 1920 . . .

SR: There was two floods, [19]27 and [19]37.

SL: [Nineteen] twenty-seven . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . [nineteen] thirty-seven. Now, I guess your folks . . .

SR: They weren't . . .

SL: Maybe their parents . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . would have been . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . they would've known something . . .

[01:39:55] SR: But I think most of—I—Dad was probably most of



the time in Tennessee. He talked about the [19]37 flood, but that's probably before he came—I think he was out here maybe right about that time. But he didn't remember—he didn't talk a whole lot about that other than everything between Marianna and Memphis was under water.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, that's before they'd really built the levees up higher,

and it was still—I can—I remember pictures of everybody moving into Marianna 'cause we're kinda up on the edge of Crowley's Ridge. You don't notice it when you come in from the west, but we're—our town is really on the edge of Crowley's Ridge. It's much higher elevation than the bottomland, so people would move in durin' the floods and build—and have tents—set up tents because all the land'd be covered under water. Even 1973, when Charlene and I got married, we had a real big flood 1973. All of our farmland was under water, and we rode to our farm—landed a boat right on top of a gravel road because it was flooded all the way. So that was part of what we lived with back then was floods just about every year. But we've . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . got levee systems now that protect that, by and large. We don't have that drastic of floods. We do have high water. We had a lot of flooding this year with a lot of rainfall, but it's still mainly the low-lying areas. It does not threaten, you know, houses, and course, not many people live in the country where we farm now. Most of the people have moved to town, and it's mainly just—used to—where they used to be a lot of sharecroppers and a lot of tenant houses out on the farm,

they're all gone now. Very few people live in the country around here.

[01:41:17] SL: Well—but when you were young and workin' the farm and stuff, you were aware of the poverty, though.

SR: Oh, yeah, I was, but, you know, we were—we didn't have much either. I mean, we were poor. We were just barely strugglin', you know, to make ends meet and, you know, had to borrow—I remember Dad's—was so excited when he finally got a farm loan. He'd tried to get a farm loan for several years before we did—just wouldn't loan him the money. He—I can remember goin' and sittin' in the truck—and I rode with him a lot when I was a kid. When he was off, I was usually with him.

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:48] SR: And when he was not workin'—and I remember for a couple of years, he kept tryin' to go to PCA—Production Credit Association of Forrest City and talk to them about lendin' him some money. And I remember sittin' out in the truck while he'd be inside, and you know, he'd stay in there for two hours sometimes, and he'd come back and, "Ah, didn't—can't—they—were not gonna loan me money, so wait till next year." So finally got a farm loan and was able to put up a little money he had of his own—he'd saved—and that's kinda how he got his

start. [01:42:15] So we—you know, we grew up very, very poor. You know, we—not as poor as some, but we certainly weren't a family—we were on the other side of the track, to say the least. So we identified with people of poverty because we were—we weren't as abject poverty, but we certainly were not a family of means and had to struggle and, you know, not knowin'—you had to borrow money every year to farm and not—even when we started farmin', it was just—you hoped you could, you know, make enough back to pay your crop loan off and have enough left to live, you know, through the next year and, you know, you just build on that, and every year it got a little better and a little better and—but it certainly wasn't somethin' that you were an instant success overnight. Farming's just not that way. I mean, when you start from nothing, it takes a while to build up to anything. [01:43:03] So we were all, you know, in a—somewhat of a poverty condition in Lee County. It's a—you know, you had degrees of that, but it was still as a—wasn't like we had a—and there were some wealthy people in the county. You obviously knew who those were—the landowners that had, you know, inherited it and worked hard and bought land. But I mean, they were older people that had taken them many years, you know, to be successful. And—but Dad was just twenty-five

years older than I was, so when, you know, he started farmin' he was thirty-two, I guess, or thirty-three, and I was eight. And I was really with him the whole time he was farming—from then on I was—and when I wasn't in school or playin' football, I was on that farm, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:43:42] SR: At night, seven days a week, you know, we worked all the time, and that was just a part of tryin' to get ahead, you know. We farmed a lot more land than we had equipment for, so we just doubled up and worked—I worked many a nights all night long when I was a kid because of tryin' to beat a rain, or just somethin' we had to get done. And—well, even I was playin' sports, Dad would come get me. He'd be short of a driver—he'd come get me out of practice to plant wheat or—you know, or run a cotton picker or whatever, you know, needed to be done. I—I'd—many times I couldn't—didn't get to practice ball as much as I wanted to because he needed me on the farm. And that was—you know, I just—not that I didn't really resent it, I just knew that's—you know, that he needed me badly, and I needed to help. And I didn't mind helpin'.

[01:44:25] SL: I want to get back to that, but I wanna keep on this racial track because, first of all, it sounds like Marianna was

about 50/50 in the population . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and so, you know, in . . .

SR: May've been a little more African American 'cause I think that the . . .

SL: Oops. Excuse me.

SR: . . . African American school was a little bit larger than our school system, so it may've been a little more—50/50.

[01:44:52] SL: Did that—did you ever see any taunting or any flare-ups or friction in the community here?

SR: I never did until 1971 when they had the boycott here in



Marianna. There was a move to—for the African American community to really step up, and they boycotted all the white merchants with a list of demands. I was in college durin' that time, and I can remember coming home in the summertime, and it really got nasty there a couple times in the summer because there were militants on both sides. [01:45:31] And I was really concerned. I thought there was really gonna be a race riot. But eventually that stuff settled out. A lot of the white merchants went out of business—went bankrupt, and you know, it really hurt our community for a long time. It's—we're still sufferin' from that—from the boycott of [19]70—[19]71. It's when they

had a, I think, a strike at the school—a sit-down—the students wouldn't go in to class, and the fire chief put a water hose on the students, you know, and hosed 'em down. Just a very unfortunate—just not usin' good judgment. And—but, again, I was in college then and—but the whole time I was in high school, we never had any—you know, we used to go out and the African American school, Moton High School—they played on Saturday night, and we'd all go out to their football game. We'd stand behind the fence, but we loved to watch them play football, and we supported each other. We knew a lot of the players, and we just had a—you know, had a good relationship as far as young people and never really saw a lot of friction in the community until the boycott of 1971, I guess, and—which really hurt because there were a lot of outsiders that had come in on both sides that were tryin' to agitate and a lot of scars from that that, you know, our community still hasn't gotten over, I don't think.

[01:46:50] SL: Well—but did the schools get integrated while you were in the public schools . . .

SR: No.

SL: . . . here?

SR: Hm-mm. There was freedom of choice, and we had African

Americans in our class probably starting in the tenth grade, but you know, they would let 'em choose, and we had several—probably four or five in my graduating high school class. Irene Hansberry, Betty Robinson, Lee Eggerson. I never will forget—he came out for football—I was a junior, I guess, and he was the only African American came out for football. And, you know, I just—this guy—kid's got a lot of courage, you know, to be the only one out here 'cause I know how I'd feel if I went to their school and I was the only white guy on . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:47:32] SR: . . . the team, I'd be, you know, scared to death.

And I took him home after practice. I asked him if he had a ride home. He said no, and I took him home after practice and just made friends with him, you know, and just befriended him 'cause he was new in the school. And I still—he's a prac—he's a pastor—a preacher here now, so I still see him, and we still talk about that. And it's amazing just the little things you do when you're a kid and, you know, the . . .

SL: How it comes back to you.

[01:47:56] SR: How it comes back to you, you know, just for showin' kindness. And I really—I had compassion for him, knowing what he was goin' through and the struggles, and you know, I'm sure

the harassment and the taunting that he was probably getting—which I never saw—again, I never saw that, but I know it had to take place. But I admired him, and you know, we were—I was friends with all the African Americans, and we were—you know, had good relationships, and I think they were well accepted in our classes. There just wasn't an issue. I think it was more the adults.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, the older generation that made the issue out of it. The kids—I mean, it didn't matter to us and I—and a lot of it [*unclear words*]—and we were in a different generation, and I think it takes sometimes several generations to work these prejudices through. [01:48:40] And you know, when I went to school, I really, again, had not seen a lot of the conflict or friction, but it was still a segregated society. And most of the African Americans that I'd had contact with were not educated. You know, they were farm laborers, farm workers, maids, you know, household—domestic help. And I went to the University of Arkansas, and met a gentleman named Eugene Hunt, who was a dean of students. He was in law school then. And a super intelligent guy—I mean, just a great guy. And I was president of my college fraternity and for some reason, the president of

fraternities always had contact with dean of students. I don't know. There's always some kind of problem with fraternities, but . . .

SL: Sure.

[01:49:24] SR: Eugene and I became very good friends, and I gained a respect and appreciation for struggles that the African American community had gone through, I guess, from his standpoint and just—he helped me see a lot of things that I hadn't seen. You know, I—and it—we developed a great friendship and he is now—we're servin' together on the Simmons Bank board together. He's a judge or was a—he was attorney in Pine Bluff and he served on the court of appeals. Governor Beebe appointed him this last year. He served out an unexpired term on the court of appeals, and so we've maintained those friendships somewhat distant. We've really gotten back closer in the last couple of years, but he had a great impact on me in understanding the racial issues, and where I could come in and take a stand, you know, for injustice. [01:50:16] And when I came back from law school and got involved with the local Farm Bureau here, probably 30, 40 percent of our membership in our county Farm Bureau was African American. We didn't have any African Americans on our board. [01:50:29] And I said, "You



know, that's just not right. I mean, we've got African American farmers that, you know, that are good businesspeople, and we need to put—we need to have some of them on our board of directors." They said, "Nah, we're not gonna do it." I said, "Well, I'm not gonna serve as your president unless you put—unless we have some African Americans elected to our board." It was really a standoff 'cause there was an older generation that were very segregationist, very prejudiced, and here I was, this young punk kid comin' back from the university that had an education, and all of a sudden, I was gonna make a stand for race relations. And—but I stood my ground and I meant it. I mean, I was not gonna serve as president organization that openly discriminated against the leadership. And I—and we did—we elected three African Americans to the board. They backed down, and we've still got African Americans on our local Farm Bureau board and in line—we were in line for having the first African American president of a county Farm Bureau, Claude Kennedy, back in the [19]80s was gonna be our president of our county Farm Bureau, and lo and behold, he got an appointment to USDA to go to Washington, so that didn't work out. But, anyway, I—and a lot of that was from things I learned in college and from Eugene Hunt's influence. And it's—and I've always

been real open, you know, in tryin' to understand the sensitivities there about race relations. And you know, we've never had any problems. You know, we have never—we love Marianna. You know, our racial divide here now is—you know, we have—we just don't—there's—I'm sure there's some tensions there, but I just don't feel 'em. I just don't feel 'em.

[01:51:57] SL: You never heard of any local cross burnings or . . .

SR: No.

SL: . . . never saw . . .

SR: I really have . . .

SL: . . . any of that kind of stuff?

SR: I never have here.

SL: You know, the—well, the thing about prejudices and—sometimes it's quiet.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And—I mean, you were aware that there were different schools. I assume if the population was that big, and it was 50/50, they probably had their own theaters—own movie house.

SR: Well, actually it was upstairs.

SL: They went up to the balcony.

SR: But they had—they did have another one in their—you know, we had two sections of town. The towns were segregated, and you

know, they had different stores, and they shopped—generally, they would shop in the white section of town, but we wouldn't dare go to the black section of town, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . for some reason. I don't know why. Not that we weren't welcome, but it's just—it was your culture, you know. But we had—did have separate theaters, but they went upstairs. We didn't . . .

[01:52:56] SL: And then when it came to restaurants, they would be in the back if they were in a white restaurant. Is that . . .

SR: Generally, and I—you know, I just—'cause we had a lot of—I mean, we went to Jones Barbecue even back then, and it was a black barbecue place, and you know, we were eating with blacks. But it—generally—I mean, they were segregated, but I don't remember that much of an issue about it because we didn't really have many restaurants that much. We was Dairy Queens or, you know, somethin' like that where you're standing outside eating. [01:53:22] We didn't have that much of establishments, but there were some, and there was definitely segregation there, you know. I can remember that, but it—you know, they had their own restaurants and I—it just—I didn't think that much about it as a kid, growin' up. Not—and most of

that had—was worked through by the time I came back from college. All that had been sorted through, and you know, we had a lot more African Americans in—working in banks, working in government offices, you know, and the restaurant issue—it just wasn't issue as much when we were back here . . .

SL: One of the things . . .

SR: . . . after college.

[01:53:53] SL: So you told me that the schools were still segregated. You had free choice, but basically they were still segregated as you went through the Marianna public schools. But then you had one black that came out for the football team, and you befriended him and still have that friendship.

SR: Yeah.

[01:54:12] SL: Now in some places in Arkansas, if there was an integrated football team, let's say . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . there were schools that would not play that . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that school. Did that—I mean, over here, you had a much . . .

SR: We didn't—Lee Eggerson did not stay out for football very long. He decided . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . that was not for him.

SL: Yeah.

SR: So we did not have an African American on our football team, but we played several schools that did. Forrest City had an African American. Or had two or three. Helena did. I can remember that. DeWitt. Wynne had several African American athletes on their team. We just—for some reason, we didn't have any on our basketball or football. We played lots of teams in our district that did, and, I mean, they were great competitors—I mean, great athletes, and you had a lot of respect for 'em.

SL: Yeah.

SR: I mean, they were—usually, they were very competitive, great athletes. And we'd been a lot better team [*laughs*] if we had some—'cause they had a great African American school here that had some great athletes. I mean, Rodney Slater. He was a little bit behind me, but they had a guy named, Collier. I think that went to Colorado State maybe and played. They had some great athletes, so we longed to have some more of their participation, but they [*laughs*] enjoyed playing in their league, and they had different leagues, to some extent. And I think our sen—my

junior year in our—we actually played some all-black schools. West Memphis Wonder, I remember, was in our region. But I don't think our school here in Marianna—they may have been in the same—we never played 'em, though. It would've—it would probably created pretty good tensions had we played . . .

SL: Sure.

[01:55:47] SR: . . . you know, across-town schools—segregated.

But we did play an all-black school in the district tournament, and, oh, man, I was scared to death. Those guys—they came out—they were all about six five, and they played Globetrotter music. And back then, we couldn't dunk it, and practice for ever one of 'em get their foot—a hand—and, you know, get their hand a foot above the rim. I said, "Oh, man!" [*Laughs*] Somehow we beat 'em. I don't know how, [*laughs*] but we did.

[01:56:10] But you know, great competitors, and I mean, it was a—you know, I think there's a camaraderie around sportsmanship and around playing together that really helped alleviate racial tensions in the South, to some extent. There was a respect there that was earned by African American athletes that I think helped transcend racial differences and . . .

SL: You bet.

[01:56:32] SR: . . . and prejudices. So I—you know, I don't think

you can underestimate that. And even though we didn't play each other, we had pickup basketball games together, you know, and played each other and, you know, gained respect for them and them with us, and just learned to be friends and be competitors. And so we did that on kind of an informal basis, even though it wasn't sanctioned, you know, on a—on an official basis, we'd do it—there was some—a family—the Wolfe family that lived right down the street from where I lived there in the brick house where I grew up in, and we used to go play basketball with them. Just had great times together and, you know, just—and once you gain that respect and that understanding—I mean, it lasts for a long time, and you just—you forget about the color of their skin that's—you know, accept 'em as people. And, hopefully, that was recipro—I know it was reciprocal, so . . .

[01:57:25] SL: You mentioned Rodney Slater and I—one of the more—one of the things I remember about my talk with him, is that he remembers his mother providing instructions to him. And he's talkin' about what he could do and what he couldn't do in the community. And I—I'm sure she was talkin' about the white and colored bathrooms.

SR: Yeah.

SL: White and colored.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And the restaurants and how to get along . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . with the culture that was engrained. [01:58:01] And I've just never heard any Caucasians talk about instructions . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . on how to get along with the black community. Do you remember . . .

SR: Well, other than, you know, you'd never mistreat 'em, and you never use the "N word." I mean, that was—my parents would never tolerate that. And it was colored, and then it became black, and then it became African American. But you . . .

SL: Right.

[01:58:28] SR: And then, before that, it was Negroes.

SL: Right.

SR: I mean, that was the term that you used. But to use it in a slang way, that was forbidden for my family. I was—you know, I'd been whipped and beaten, you know, if—'cause I just—that was not—that was a degrading term even back then, and my family taught me different.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And course, I've never allowed that with my family either.

That's just—you know, it just wasn't—we—not that we had different rules, you know, 'cause we—I guess we were not as restricted, maybe, as the African American community was about restaurants and where they could go. You knew they were there, and you didn't know why, but they were just a part of your culture that, at that point, you didn't question that much—but I did question as I got older. And I—you know, I knew that something wasn't right and, you know, started to make amends the best I could, you know, as an adult. And I think, you know, sometimes it just takes you a while. It's hard to rebel against your own culture when you're just a kid.

[01:59:27] But yet, you know things aren't right, and you do your best to try to treat people fairly, and I felt like I've always done that and befriended African Americans and treated 'em the way I'd wanna be treated as a Christian. I just always felt like that was—the Golden Rule applied to black people as much as it did to white people. And I've always felt that way and still do.

[01:59:51] SL: We've kinda—we kind of got you through—up into high school pretty quickly here, but I wanna go back just a little bit . . .

TM: Scott, let's go ahead and change tapes.

SL: Okay.

TM: We're . . .

SL: We'll change tapes.

TM: [*Unclear words*].

SL: [*SR clears throat*] All right.

[Tape stopped]

[02:00:06] SL: So I guess we're on tape three now.

SR: Okay.

SL: Hadn't gotten you through public schools yet.

SR: [*Laughs*] We're gonna be here all night, it seems.

SL: Well, we won't be, but I do think that it's important that we get this early life down because I think it's where we are given the tools to work with that . . .

SR: Well, I think that's . . .

SL: . . . get us through life.

SR: . . . what forms the foundation, you know, for our later years . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . is what—it's—those formative years are called formative for a reason, because they do form our behaviors, our character, our values, our habits, and they determine our destiny, ultimately.

[02:00:37] SL: Well you know, we had been talkin' about racial relations and the culture—the engrained culture of America, really. It wasn't just the South but . . .

SR: Right. [*Clunking sounds*]

SL: And how a lot of times there wasn't really problems because it was just the way it was, and it was just handed down through the years. And I mentioned some of the silent, quiet things that normally you don't notice that, you know, you'd just taken for granted. You never really questioned 'em. It sounds like to me, though, that in your house growin' up as a child, your parents engrained in you the—kind of a "do right" . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . rule . . .

SR: No question.

SL: . . . in a way.

SR: Yeah.

[02:01:35] SL: Treat people the way that you would like to be treated. Don't ask anyone to do somethin' you hadn't done . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . or wouldn't do. Those are . . .

SR: Two wrongs don't make a right.

SL: That's right.

[02:01:45] SR: My dad—I can remember him talking about when he was a child on farms here in Arkansas, seeing blacks mistreated—beaten—you know, and that had a—and as a young person, he witnessed that, and I think that had a real impact on him because it was, you know, pretty commonplace, I think, back, you know, when he was young. And him growing—again, growing up in Tennessee in much poverty and came here to live with his uncle and observ—he'd never been around many black people when—you know, when he was in Tennessee. And he came here, and he saw a lot of the, you know, the intimidation, the physical abuse and it really—he talked about that quite a bit. It ?wrest? with him. "That's just not right. It's not right." He knew as a human, "That's just not the way you treat people," and he shared that with me, you know, many times that you—you know, "You treat people the way you want to be treated. You treat 'em with respect and dignity," and my dad always did. I mean, he was a hard man. I mean, he had high expectations for me as well as the people that worked for him. [02:02:50] But I never saw him treat African Americans any different than what he'd treat white people that worked for us, and we had, you know, both races workin' for us and had Hispanic people workin' for us also. And he treated 'em all the same. I mean,

he didn't pay 'em any more or any less, you know. There was no difference in the pay and, you know, I—and I've always—I've—you know, that's just part of how I grew up, and I think that's help formed my values as far as the way I would look at race relations and that, you know, you—I mean, my highest-paid man we have on our farm now is an African American, and he's worked for us for many, many years, and you know, he's worthy of the wages we're payin' him, but he's the higher—highest-paid employee. So I don't ever consider—I mean, wouldn't even think about makin' a difference, you know, in the way I would pay someone based upon, you know, what color their skin is; it's how much experience they have, what kind of work can they do. It's the same thing that you'd do in any job, you know. You look at their objective qualifications, and you base their pay according to that.

[02:03:51] SL: I love that story about how your father would take the workers in, and I'm assuming it's both black and white . . .

SR: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . workers into town on the weekends . . .

SR: Oh yeah. Load 'em up.

SL: . . . and then come back and get 'em later that night.

SR: Oh yeah. None of 'em'd have vehicles, you know. And back

then, nobody had cars.

[02:04:06] SL: Was that common for . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . for employers to do that with their laborers? They . . .

SR: Oh yeah, at least—you know, I'm sure the higher class—you know, the farm owners—I mean, we were just—we rented land.



I mean, we were strugglin', you know. We were able to get loans to farm on, but we weren't a whole lot [*laughs*] better off than the people workin' for us, financially.

SL: Yeah.

SR: We did have a pickup truck, but that was pretty common back then because people didn't have vehicles, and they had to go to town to get groceries, and you know, you just didn't work on Saturday afternoon or Sunday. I mean, you just didn't work 'cause that was a day of rest, and that's when you had to go to town, replenish your groceries. Now I would—Saturday was my day to pick cotton 'cause I was in school all week, so I'd stay and pick cotton Saturday. Everbody would leave except one old African American that stayed there with me. His name was Floyd Houston. He called me "Little Boss Man." [*SL laughs*] And I called him "Pop." And we had a special bonding relationship because he loved to work, and, you know, and I'd

stay out there, and he'd stay out there wit—we'd pick by moonlight sometimes. And he had a lady that he lived with called Annie, and he was just kind of a—he was a tenant in her house. I mean, they—I don't think they maintained—they didn't cohabitate. He just rented a place there from her, and she would buy his groceries. So he'd stay and work with me, and he smoked an old cigar, and we'd pick cotton together. I don't know how he kept his ashes out of his—out of the cotton, but he did. [02:05:30] But we'd stay and work, and this was, you know, when I was ten, eleven, twelve years old when we were pickin' cotton by hand and, course, Dad—all—everybody else would quit at noon, and Daddy'd take all into town, and he'd eventually get me, and I'd help him take 'em back home. But that was just part of the culture, you know, and seemed like it was a long period of time, but it wasn't but just a—you know, it was just a relatively few years there until we became mechanized and people started movin' off the farms, and you know, there was a tremendous exodus, as I mentioned, back in the late [19]60s—middle to late [19]60s. [02:06:01] But it was a—fond years for me. I mean, I had a good upbringin'—a good, healthy relationship of work and school and sports and not much leisure time. I mean, we were always busy. I mean, work just

permeated everything that we did.

[02:06:17] SL: Before we get to that mechanization transition, you mentioned pickin' cotton by moonlight. I hadn't heard of that either. I bet it was a lot cooler then.



SR: Well, it was. You know, the days would get short later on in the year, and the cotton would get a little dew on it, and it would pack in the sacks better. And we'd start early when the dew was on, and we'd pick late. Course, I wasn't pickin' but one day a week, so I could, you know, work a little extra. It didn't bother me. I'm sure if I'd been workin' all six days, I [*laughs*] wouldn't be near as eager to stay out there. But we'd—it'd always be dark, you know, I can remember when we were—full-moon night. Now we wouldn't stay out there pick at dark, you know, when there was no moon, but a full-moon night, we'd stay out after dark—finish our sack or finish our row or whatever, and I just enjoyed—I always enjoyed doin' physical and hard labor.

[02:07:04] I got—I don't know, it just felt good about doin' that. I always hated to run—you know, I never liked to run or do a lot of extra stuff in sports, but I could work with the best of 'em, and that's how I've stayed in shape my whole life. And honestly, that's why I didn't really enjoy practicing law, because I liked to be outside and do physical labor on the farm. And

some value to that just I couldn't outgrow, you know, once I even got an education, I still felt there was some value in hard work and character building and productivity. And I'm not near as fond of it now as I'm approaching [*SL laughs*] sixty.

[*Laughter*] I've learned to wean myself a little bit from it. My body's not near as adaptable as it was back then.

[02:07:46] SL: Well, let's talk about the mechanization of farming now. We talked—you talked a little bit about how it changed the town here and the culture; the population drop; how the machines replaced the labor and all that. But do you have any stories about the first time you witnessed or worked with machines?



SR: Well, I do. We—well, I can remember the first time I—I told you the first time I drove a tractor for my uncle up in Tennessee. Well, I remember the first time that Dad put me on a tractor. I was ten years old, and I was disking, and we had a—we were—the field edge was the riverbank. [02:08:30] So it'd been very easy for me to run off in the river, and Mother liked to had a fit when she—he told her I was disking. But I—you know, he put me on a tractor, and Dad was just one of these—he just put you on the tractor and let you go. He didn't ride two or three rounds with you and be sure you knew where the things were. He just

put you on there and let you go, and you had to figure it out. But I did, and [*SL laughs*] first time he put me cultivating, I never will forget. He jumped up on the tractor, he put it in gear. He said, "Now what you do—you hold it right here, [*indicates position with hands*] so you don't plow the cotton up. You gotta look here at the cotton, and you keep the plows off—out of the cotton so you don't plow the cotton up." And he jumped off the tractor, and I didn't see him for the rest of the day, [*laughs*] you know. So here I was tryin' to figure out how to do it—never been—I'd ridden with some guys that had cultivated. But I was about eleven years old, I guess, at that point. A [19]60 John Deere. Had the old hand clutch, and of course, there were some other drivers there, and they would stop and kinda show me and help me, you know. So I learned a lot by doing. And Dad was always big about you learn from your mistakes—you learn from doing. [02:09:24] But I never will forget the first time he put me on a cotton picker. We had a one-row cotton picker, and we've got a picture, I think, they're making of him driving the picker. But it's a John Deere picker. It's on a thirty—I think it was a Thirty-Ten tractor—the first one I'd driven—that put it on and you drove—actually drove the tractor backwards. It was a one-row cotton picker. And I was up there with him. He was

sitting in the seat. No, he put me in the seat, and we were driving, and he said, "Now this handle goes to this. This handle goes this. This dumps the basket. This puts it in gear." And he jumped down off the machine [*SL laughs*]*—you know, still—and he didn't want me to stop, he just jumped down. Well, I know when he jumped down he hit the lever that dumped the basket of cotton, and we had almost a full basket of cotton. Now he says to the day he died that, "No, I hit it"—but I know I didn't. I had my hands on the steering wheel. He jumped down off the cotton picker, and I'm lookin' back, and here's this basket of cotton—it's dumpin'. It's startin' to dump. And I forgot which lever it was, you know, to stop it from dumpin', and I'm pullin' levers, and this basket is steadily dumpin' it. It dumped the whole basket of cotton right there in the middle of the field.*

[*Laughs*] And it took us all day long to get that—Pop Houston—Floyd Houston—he was helpin' us pick the ends off the cotton and stompin' the cotton trailers, and he picked up all day long, and I helped him. [02:10:36] We finally [*laughs*] got it all up, but, you know, you remember from your mistakes or how—and I learned how to drive a cotton picker that day and [*SL laughs*] I, you know, I'd pick cotton. Every time I got a chance, I drove the picker on the weekends and just really enjoy it. I went from

pickin' two hundred pounds a day to ten bales a day, you know,
from the sack to the picker to the . . .

[02:10:56] SL: How much would a bale weigh?

SR: Well, seed cotton, about fifteen hundred pounds.

SL: Oh!

SR: So you know, instead of pickin' two hundred pounds of seed cotton, we were pickin' fifteen thousand pounds of seed cotton, you know. And that was with a run row—you know, very slow machine. And now we're pickin'—with the six-row machines we'll pick a hundred and fifty bales a day with these big machines we have now. So that's how far mechanization has taken us—you know, one man pickin' two hundred pounds or a—well, that'd be a seventh of a bale, to pickin' a hundred and fifty bales. I mean, that's, what, a thousand times more or somethin'? I don't know. It's hard to put the numbers to it, but you know, it's—takes a whole lot less labor, I guess. [*Laughs*]

SL: The economy of scale.

SR: Economies of scale. Yeah. But instead of growin' a hundred acres of cotton, you have to grow fifteen hundred acres now to justify one of those big machines. So it's a lot different.

[02:11:42] SL: What's seed cotton?

SR: [*Takes a drink*] Seed cotton is the cotton that you actually

extract from the burr. If you see out in the field it's growin'. You extract—you pull the cotton out of the burr, and it has the lint, and the seed within the lint. It's embedded within the lint. And then you remember Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, which removes the seed from the lint, and that's what cotton gins still do today. They have saws that actually extract the seed from the lint, and they put the lint in a bale, and that's what goes to the textile mills to be spun into fabric—the lint cotton. And the seed, then, goes for livestock feed; it goes for—they crush it for oil—cottonseed oil; Crisco is crystallized cottonseed oil. That's where the acronym Crisco came from. It's just cottonseed oil. So that's—they extract the seed from the lint at the cotton gin, but the seed cotton is the cotton that actually has the lint and the seed embedded in it as it grows in the field. So—and we—you know, that process really hasn't changed any, I guess, in two hundred years. I mean, you have to get the lint to make the fabric, and you'd use the seed either to plant as cottonseed for the following year or for animal feed.

SL: Okay, that's good. I never knew that, and I think a lot of kids will . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . appreciate that.

[02:13:02] TM: I think it's—Scott, it's kinda interesting, too, what the mechanism did to the town—I mean, how—did—how it may have changed the town a little.



SR: Yeah, well you know, we—again, the fall time was really the time that people looked forward to. It was cooler to work, and people always looked forward to picking cotton because you got paid on your production. When you were hoeing cotton by hand—I mean, when you were chopping cotton during the summer, getting the weeds out, you got paid so much a day—three dollars and fifty cents a day or five dollars a day. But when you were picking cotton, you got paid so much a pound. So if you could pick, you know, twice as much as somebody else, you made twice as much money. There was incentive there because the more you worked, the more you got paid, whereas, if you were just on a chopping crew, everybody got the same. So you know, it was just kind of a drudgery you go through. And you didn't care if you worked real hard, or if you drug behind because you're gonna get the same amount anyway. It's kinda like Socialism, you know. A . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:13:56] SR: . . . or Communist viewpoint of how you do things.

Everybody gets paid the same regardless of what they do. But

when you're pickin' cotton, you get paid on what you actually pick, so there's an incentive there and excitement that people could make—a good cotton-picker could make ten or twelve dollars a day back then, which was a lot of money . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, when they were used to makin' three dollars a day or four dollars a day choppin' cotton, well, when they were pickin', if they worked hard they could make ten or twelve dollars a day. You got paid three, three and a half cents a pound. So there was just an excitement about that and—but yet, you know, when mechanical pickers came in and wages were beginning to rise because of the industrialization—factories coming in—you know, a lot of the labor were moving into higher-paid jobs. And that's really the reason we mechanized—it was because of loss of labor. It wasn't the other way around. It wasn't that the mechanization drove people away from the farm—is that people were already seeing they could upgrade their standard of livin' by goin' to work at a factory. There were other jobs available. [02:14:53] So necessity is the mother of invention, and that's what happened on the farm. And we had the—we had to—necessary for us to modernize and mechanize because the labor was just leaving us. And we—at first, we

started bringing in Mexicans from Mexico. There was a lot of programs back then where you brought in—it's similar to the H-2A program now where you provided housing for the workers and we brought those in to pick the cotton. But eventually it just became more advantageous to go to machinery. But it was—that was a transformation in the South then where there were other jobs available. That's when the factories started movin' in. We had 'em here in our—our community had factories that moved in. And there was initially some resentment from the large farmers that the factories were takin' their labor away. And you know, some of that—there's some truth to that. [02:15:38] Not they were takin' away, but they were utilizin' their labor force in a different way, you know, and they were makin' more money at the factories and, generally, they attracted your best employees—the people had higher skills that were, you know, more literate. And so there—it was a change. Anytime there's change, there's tension and friction. So there was some of that—not a whole lot—but it was just a gradual process we went through, and every year there was less labor, and you wanted to get your cotton harvested and, you know, the pickers back then weren't that efficient. They—you couldn't hardly tell where they went down through the field, they

left so much cotton on the stalk or dropped it on the ground.

But that's still the way we got into mechanical picking because there just wasn't the labor supply there that we needed to get the harvest done.

[02:16:21] SL: That's great. That's a great clarification 'cause, you know, you just jump to the conclusion that it would be the opposite . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . of that.

SR: Yeah.

SL: The machines came, and then the labor left.

SR: Right, but it . . .

SL: But it was really . . .

SR: Really the other way around. Yeah, it was the other way around. I mean, we—the system we had served us well for many years, you know. [02:16:39] And people didn't starve. It was hard work, but people—you know, they had enough to get by on. But it was a—you know, there was a better way of life, and they found it and people—upward mobility is just a natural evolution, you know, for people's ambitions—and wanna better themselves—provide for their family. And certainly, you know, that's just the way that change comes about.

SL: Let's see. Joy gave me some notes here. Now, what was your sister's name?

SR: Joella.

SL: Joella.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did she have a middle name?

SR: Hm-mm.

[02:17:19] SL: Okay. And have you got any stories about your sister?

SR: Well, my sister and I were never that close. We had different interests. You know, she couldn't stand animals. She couldn't stand hunting. We just—we always got along as children. We don't really get along that well as adults, because of lot of the friction with my parents. I love my sister tremendously, and we've—but as a child she kinda went her different ways. You know, she never went on the farm, and she and my dad were never close at all. And I was close to Dad. So just always friction there. But, I mean, we got along well as children, but just—I never was around her that much. She was around Mom, and I was with Dad most of the time.

[02:18:05] SL: Now she was older than you or . . .

SR: She was two years older than I was.

SL: Two years older.

SR: She still lives here in Marianna, and she's married and got a daughter now that's in college at Tulane, and she married later on in her life. She was kind of a free spirit. I was always more traditional, I guess, but she was just more—had more liberal viewpoints than I did about life and nothin' wrong with that, but . . .

SL: No.

SR: . . . it just—you know we just didn't have as common interests as generally my children have. They're much closer than my sister and I was.

[02:18:35] SL: Okay. Mother's father's name?

SR: My mother's father's name was Wilburn—Wilbur—Wilburn—*W-I-L-B-U-R-N*—Wilburn Bawcum.

SL: Okay.

SR: He was a Studebaker dealer there in Camden, Tennessee.

SL: Okay. All right. That's good. Yeah, I remember the Studebaker. [02:19:01] Okay, now we're talkin'—this kinda gets back to the segregation thing. We were takin' a break between tapes, and you were talkin' about how there was an African American instructor here that wanted to take his students to some of the working farms.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And none of the white owners, farmers would allow that to happen.

SR: Yeah, that's the story my dad told me, and I, you know, I didn't personally experience—just from what he'd told me—Claude Kennedy—and I'd mentioned his name earlier—Claude was a successful farmer. His family owned land. But before he started farming, after he came back from college he was a vo-ag teacher at the African American school here. And he wanted to take his classes out to see, you know, the best equipment, the latest in equipment and farms operating and do—they did some maintenance schedules on some equipment—actually worked on maining—maintaining equipment. And he wanted to go on some real farms to do that. And Dad told me that Claude came to him 'cause they were friends—had known each other a long time. Dad had known Claude's dad and that Claude said that, you know, "No other white farmers will let me come on their farm. Can I bring my class out to your farm?" Dad said, "Well, sure," said, "love to have 'em out there." [02:20:16] And Dad—I don't actually remember them. I was in school at the time. But Dad, you know, told me about that several times, and I think he was kinda proud that he realized he was kinda bucking the

trend, I guess, of the community—not that he made a big deal out of it, but he had so much respect for Claude, and for Claude's family, that he just couldn't understand why some—why someone would reject his request to bring his class out there to his farm, you know, just because he was black. I mean, it didn't make sense to him, and he [*SL grunts*], you know, he didn't appreciate that. [02:20:50] And Dad and Claude were friends. You know, the time Dad died, I mean, he was—Dad thought the world of Claude Kennedy, and the community thinks the world of Claude Kennedy. He's been here the whole time except for eight years when he went to Washington, DC. He worked as a regional director for Farm Service Agency. Then it was the ASCS office and—under the—he was a Republican. Still is a Republican. And that's kind of anomaly, I guess . . .

SL: It is. Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . in eastern Arkansas, but I think it went back to the Winthrop Rockefeller days, and his family's always been strong Republican. And now he's a—he came back and worked with extension, and now he's a director of the Lon Mann Cotton Research Station here and takes a lot of pride and just a tremendous director of that station out there.

[02:21:35] SL: Do you remember much about the Little Rock crisis?

SR: I really don't. 1957. I'd just . . .

SL: Yeah, you were just five years old.

SR: It's just a blur. Five, six years old. I just . . .

SL: Six.

SR: I don't—I remember, you know, a little bit, but really I didn't know what it was about. You know, just didn't understand it. I remember Faubus just because of my uncle in Tennessee—Faubus kinda his hero—you know, a Democratic governor of Arkansas—longest-serving governor, I guess, in the country at that point in time.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And so he talked a lot about Faubus, and he was kind of his hero, I guess. But I didn't—I didn't—really didn't remember much about the [19]57 crisis or what that was all about, you know, as a child. That was—I mean, Little Rock was like a foreign country to me. I'd never been to Little Rock till I was a junior or senior in high school. Junior in high school, probably. We always went to Tennessee to Memphis and in to Camden to see my rela—that's the only place we ever went, just . . .

SL: You always went east.

SR: . . . just to see relatives [*unclear words*].

SL: Yeah.

SR: Never went to Little Rock. And I never went to Fayetteville till I was a senior in high school—I guess the—maybe a senior in high school. A friend and I went up there to a football game. First time I'd ever been there. So didn't do a lot of travelin'. But Little Rock was like a foreign land, you know. [*Laughs*] It just as well could've been.

[02:22:45] SL: Well, let's get you back—let's get you to junior high and high school. [*SR takes a drink*] By then, you're probably startin' to become your own guy.

SR: Well, yeah. My parents, as I mentioned, were kinda split up at that point in time. There was a lot of friction. Dad was livin' at the farm, and I would stay with him on the weekends. And then I'd stay with Mother durin' the week. I was really involved with sports. I started playin' football in the seventh grade and involved in student council, leadership organizations. And really stayed a lot with friends. We had—we—we'd fix up old cabins on the farm, and we were drivin' by the time we were thirteen and fourteen years old. So on the weekends if I wasn't with Dad farmin', we'd be out—we'd go out to one of these cabins, and you know, we'd camp out and go coon hunting, and I'd fish and duck hunt, and I just wasn't home a lot in my junior high years. You know, there was friction there, and I just felt uncomfortable.

[02:23:46] And Mother—she was relying upon me for her emotional stability, and it was like I—I mean, she tried to promote me to be the man of the house when I was thirteen years old and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and I didn't run from that responsibility, but I just felt uncomfortable assuming that role as the man of the house at thirteen. And I helped her do everything I could do and—but I just—for some reason, I always wanted to be somewhere else, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SR: So I stayed a lot with friends, and we got along well, but I just—there's some—something about the tension of the home that caused me to wanna be somewhere else.

[02:24:22] SL: Well, now I would just guess that your sister probably stayed with your mom . . .

SR: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . the whole time?

SR: Oh yeah.

[02:24:27] SL: But what's interesting here is that you embraced Christianity at an early age. And it sounds like to me, of the two parents, your mom was more involved with the church.

SR: Oh yeah. No question.

SL: So—and you—I've heard you mention this a couple of times now—Gideon service. What . . .

SR: Well . . .

SL: Tell me what that is.

SR: Well, I joined the Gideons when I came back from law school, and I was initially practicing law. Gideons is a—it's a Christian business and professional men's association whose a—it's across denominational lines—Evangelical Christians that formed for one purpose, and that's distributing the Bibles in hotels and motels and schools. You've seen Gideon Bibles. [02:25:07] But it's an organization I became very involved in right after college and was really active for fifteen years. Spoke in a lot of churches. I was a state officer. We were very involved with that. I'm still a member, we just have not—not as active as we had been in years past. So Charlene and I were kinda in that together. But I did a lot of church—that's really where I began speaking in public. Not preaching, but just giving reports on how God had changed people's lives through the placement of a Bible. Even if there's no preacher, no church—in a motel room somewhere was someone—you know, with the—really, the end of their wits' end, they went to the motel room to take their life or do somethin'

drastic, and they saw a Gideon Bible there, and they started reading God's word. And Isaiah 55:11 is kind of our theme song that says that, "My word should not return void, but shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the things whither to I sent it." So God's word won't return void. It will accomplish things, even without people being there. God's word is that powerful, and that's kinda what—that's what the Gideons believe. And we've got so many salvation experiences from people that have proven that, that just God's word being there at a strategic point in their life made the difference, literally, between life and death for them.

[02:26:18] SL: That's a beautiful thing to be a part of.

SR: Yeah, it really—very fulfilling and you—really, you saw the essence of what Christianity is all about. It's not about denominations, it's about the Gospel. And it's not about self-aggrandizement or, you know, building up anybody. It's about building up Christ and the Word of God. And every money—every penny the churches gave to the Gideon work went to buy Bibles. It didn't pay administrative costs. We pay dues as Gideons to provide administrative costs for our national organization. And now—when I was speakin', we had about a—Gideons in a hundred different countries. And now we probably

have Bible distributions in a hundred and eighty countries around the world. And so it's just been a tremendous ministry, especially when the Iron Curtain collapsed and all of Russia and a lot of those Soviet-Bloc countries became open to the Gospel that—just tremendous work goin' on all around the world. And so we were happy to be a part—real active in that for many years, but in the last fifteen or twenty, we haven't been as active. God's kinda called us to other areas, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:27:18] SR: But I—as a kid I didn't know anything about the Gideons.

SL: Okay.

SR: Never received any Bibles. First experience I had, I guess, on the college campus of Fayetteville. The Gideons were handin' out some little green Testaments on the street corners there.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SR: It's the first experience I ever remember about the Gideons. I remember 'em in the hotel rooms, but I didn't know what they were about. So . . .

[02:27:33] SL: Right. Let's see, now I was gonna ask you about—let's go back to the church and influence of church. Did you go to church on Wednesday evenings?

SR: Hmm . . .

SL: Was that—or was it always just a Sunday . . .

SR: Sunday, Sunday night. Not too much on Wednesday. That was usually just for the older people. Sometimes we had—some of the youth organizations met on Wednesday, but I was generally—when the door opened—if I wasn't on the farm, you know, I was in church. I very seldom missed. I was very active in the youth group—youth choir. [02:28:09] And you know, the preachers always assigned me a lot of duties 'cause I was big, and I could do a lot. And I didn't mind helpin', you know, I was always eager to help and do my part. And—but it was—church was a very much part of my growin' up, and it was, again, mainly because of my mother's influence. Not that Dad—I still think that Dad was a Christian. He just had so many interests and was so busy, and he worked all the time that he just—it was not important for him to be there as much when I was growin' up. But he did come around later on in life. I mean, he wouldn't miss [*clears throat*] later on in life. And then, you know, I was missin' to go with the Farm Bureau, and he'd always get on me 'cause I wasn't in church, so [*laughter*] . . .

SL: It's funny how things come around, isn't it?

[02:28:49] SR: Come around full circle. It really was.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Really was. To see the—well, to see the importance that faith played in his life later on. And you know, it was very rewarding, I guess. It answered my prayers that I just wanted to be sure that my father was a Christian and was saved. And I felt that assurance as he became older in life. You could see him mellowing and changing, and the hardness was going away. And just see God's grace at work in his life.

[02:29:15] SL: Well, by all accounts, he's lucky to have survived the war and . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . so . . .

SR: And he knew that.

SL: Yeah.

SR: He knew that.

[02:29:22] SL: Yeah. Well, okay. So—social activities—it sounds like to me, you did a lot of things with the boys and went hunting. You signed up for football.

SR: Yeah.

SL: You did talk about your father comin' to get you from practice . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . from time to time if something had to be taken care of.

SR: He just—he didn't really place much value in sports.

SL: He didn't?

SR: He didn't participate much. He played baseball maybe when he was a kid, but he never played any organized sports—football or basketball or anything. So he really didn't see much—that was just kind of, you know, wasted time to him. He didn't see much value in that. So you know, consequently he very seldom ca—I don't think he came to any games in junior high—maybe came to a couple. We had a real good team my junior year, I think he went. And again, my dad and my mom were estranged durin' this time. But they did come together to games, I think, my junior year. We had a real good team and a lot of excitement in the community about that. We were really high rated in the state—and came to one or two basketball games. But I'd just see 'em out in the crowd. He wouldn't come up to the stands. He'd kinda stand down at the end, you know, and talk to some guys. But, you know, that just never was important to him, and I don't think he realized how much it meant to me for him to be there and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:30:34] SR: Because he didn't have a father, you know, growin'

up.

SL: Right.

SR: And he didn't have the role model that he needed. So I mean, it's kind of a process of learning and—but I knew he loved me. I knew he cared for me and—but it—he showed it in different ways.

[02:30:47] SL: So would your mom come to all the games?

SR: Oh yeah, she was there for every game.

SL: She was there.

SR: Oh yeah, every game. You know, she washed my clothes—washed my football uniform. I mean, very supportive and there for every—traveled to every game. She was there for everything.

[02:31:01] SL: So—well, let's talk about your—so was football the main . . .

SR: Well, junior high . . .

SL: . . . football and basketball . . .

SR: . . . football. I was big but slow.

SL: Yeah.

SR: A little overweight as a . . .

SL: Was it . . .

SR: . . . football player, but I was big. And so I started in the

seventh grade, you know. I was . . .

SL: Played line.

SR: Played line. Always in the trenches. I always wanted to run the ball, but I was always too slow.

SL: Hey, the games are won on the line.

SR: Yeah, the trenches. But you know, enjoyed—it was hard 'cause I didn't—I was not athletic—did not have a lot of quickness and just kinda stumbled around the first two years in junior high, and, finally, third year—ninth grade—I had a coach, Charles Moore, who's been a big influence in my life in a lot of ways. He was a—played for the university and played for the Washington Redskins and came back here, I guess, my eighth grade year and was our coach. But a fine Christian man that—he had me in Sunday school. He had me in PE. He had me in math. He had me in study hall. [02:31:53] I mean, like, five times a day I had this guy, so—and he knew [*SL laughs*] I wasn't a athlete either, but he was gonna—determined he was gonna try to make one out of me, and he's—had me runnin' the four-forty and the fat-man relay, and it really got me in shape—and made me wear ankle weights in basketball practice. So really developed me, you know, as much as I could. And I was a, you know, pretty good athlete. I mean, I was a—I could compete. I was the

athlete of the year my senior year in high school and got hurt—
couldn't play football my senior year 'cause I got hurt the first
play. But you know, I was about a twenty-point average in
basketball. [02:32:30] A good center and just take up a lot of
room and could—you know, score thirty-five points a couple of
games and a good high school athlete, but not great by any
means. I always wanted to be a Razorback. But I did go and
play one year—I walked on, and got a partial scholarship
freshman year. Played with John Boozman, Joe Ferguson—that
group—and just a great experience. But I was a year behind
and just didn't have the athletic skills that those guys had. But
it still—I had determination, but you gotta have a little bit of
ability, and I just didn't have the ability to play at that level.
Maybe a, you know, a Division II, I could have. I had some
scholarship offers at Division II level, but I just wanted to go to
the University of Arkansas. It wasn't—you know, it was an issue
of goin' somewhere else. That's where my dad wanted me to
go, and honestly, that's where I wanted to go. [02:33:14] They
had a degree there called agricultural engineering, and my
uncle—my mother's older brother—was an agricultural engineer
at International Harvester, and he was kinda my role model as
far as the interest level and being in—I was good in math and

science. And so the university had a ag engineering program—only one in the state—so that was another reason that I wanted to go there.

SL: So have . . .

SR: So . . .

[02:33:36] SL: . . . we mentioned your mother's uncle before?

SR: No, other than she was the second child. It was my mother's brother.

SL: Brother.

SR: Brother. My mother—my . . .

SL: And . . .

SR: . . . uncle and my mother's older brother.

SL: And what was his name?

SR: His name was Wayne Bawcum.

SL: Okay. Wayne.

SR: And he went to the University of Tennessee . . .

SL: M'kay.

SR: . . . I guess on a GI Bill, I think.

SL: Great.

SR: And . . .

SL: Great program.

SR: Yeah, great—and became an ag engineer and worked with

International Harvester just about his whole life in Memphis. And then later on in career they closed that plant down and moved to Chicago. But he lives back in Memphis now and still living and doing quite well.

[02:34:06] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about the Razorback culture—and growin' up, and you said you wanted to be Razorback . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: And so I guess you were growin' up durin' the peak of . . .

SR: Well, six . . .

SL: . . . Coach Broyles's career.

SR: [Nineteen] sixty-four. I can remember that. [Nineteen] sixty-four team and playing Nebraska. My sister, for some reason, was a real big football fan. I remember listenin' to those games on the radio, some reason we didn't get it on TV. I don't know why. Maybe it wasn't on. I don't remember. But . . .

SL: Well, it was mostly radio . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . early on.

[02:34:37] SR: And I do remember the [19]65 Cotton Bowl when LSU played us. It was like a—I remember, like a dagger goin' through my heart when we got beat. I didn't think we could get

beat. But really got into sports about that time. And, you know, Jim Lindsey, you know—Jon Brittenum, Light Horse Harry Jones, Jerry Lamb—all those names, you know, that are—you know, you grew up with those names. You don't forget 'em.

SL: That's right.

[02:34:59] SR: And of course, Jim Lindsey was just kinda like a hero back—and I never knew him at that point in time.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And never had any idea that he'd later on in life become one of my best friends.

SL: Yeah.

SR: So you know, life, I guess, takes funny turns. But I'd—you know, I always wanted to play Razorback football. It's kind of a goal you set for yourself, and I felt like by stayin' out there a year, and I lettered in freshman football and played in about every game and got—you know, got a notice from the coaches. I think there were thirteen walk-ons and were four of us that got selected for just a little partial scholarship they gave us, I guess, to kinda reward us. So I felt like maybe I'd achieved my goal in being recognized.

SL: Yeah.

[02:35:35] SR: And competin' with the big boys and—but then I

realized it was probably time for me to retire from college sports and move in a fraternity house and go a different direction. So I was in engineering. We had afternoon lab, and I was always late for practice, and it just didn't work out too well, but I enjoyed it. It was a great experience and met a lot of great guys that I still have friends, you know, remain friends today from those experiences.

[02:35:58] SL: Well, there is something about athletics that also builds some kind of . . .

SR: It does.

SL: The—that culture does something for you—your—to your personality and to the way you think about work and career and . . .

SR: And determination, perseverance . . .

SL: Teamwork.

SR: . . . teamwork. It's all, you know, part of athletics that you can't . . .

SL: Setting goals.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

SR: And doin' more than you think you're capable of doing sometime and, you know, that—we experience that in a variety of activities

in life. You know, we just don't think we can do it, and you realize if you push yourself that you can do a lot more than you think you can do. And I think athletics is an example of that, 'cause I never thought I could run a quarter-mile, you know. Sprint a quarter-mile. But the more I practiced, and the more the coach pushed me, you know, I was the lead man on the mile relay team for a couple of times, you know. And I came in first in my first leg. I said, "Man, lookee here!" So I [*laughs*] never thought I could do that.

SL: Well, you . . .

SR: But . . .

SL: . . . told me earlier you never were much for runnin'.

SR: [*Laughs*] I wasn't, but [*laughter*] sometimes you get pushed, you can do things you don't realize you can do. So—but athletics has a way of doin' that—basketball and football and track. I hated track, but I mean, it was the best thing you ever do to, you know, try to develop your running speeds and quickness. And so—but I enjoyed high school athletics. I was very involved, and I was president of my student council in high school and very involved in student government. [02:37:17] Even though I was running around with a crowd of young boys who were a little bit wild—you know, drinkin' beer and stuff

when they were young and—I never drank. As a Christian, I just—I always thought it would destroy my influence—not that I thought that it was a sin, but I just felt like I'd be a stumbling block to others—be a bad influence to others if I drank. So I was—even though I was around guys that drank, I was always the sober one that, you know, drove the cars and kinda responsible one, and I guess that kinda parlayed into—I think people respect you . . .

SL: Absolutely.

[02:37:49] SR: . . . if you take a position and . . .

SL: Sure they do.

SR: . . . and the character there that people admired, not because of me, but what Christ was doing in me. And so, you know, I was a—just got about—I got just about every award in high school you could possibly get, you know, from being the president of student body to Mr. Marianna High School to, you know, Teenager of the Mid-South and just about everything you can imagine. And [*unclear words*] I was very fortunate—have a good high school and a lot of good friends and it, really, I think, propelled me in leadership and some other areas of life later on, so . . .

[02:38:22] SL: Well, in high school, you know, you talk about

hunting and goin' out and campin' and stuff with your friends.

What about the girls? Did you . . .

SR: Hmm . . .

SL: . . . ever . . .

SR: Yeah, I dated, but I—you know, I never was a real womanizer . . .

SL: Ladies' man.

SR: . . . a ladies' man. You know, I just never was—considered myself really handsome or attractive or "Mr. Cool," you know. I never was that way. And I dated and had a couple of steady girlfriends, but it was not really a possessive relationship at all. But had—you know, had one particularly steady girlfriend for maybe a year or six months or so but, you know, nothing that romantically involved.

[02:39:10] SL: So a typical date would be, like, to the movie?

SR: Yeah.

SL: You'd go see a movie?

SR: To the movie.

SL: Do you remember some of the movies that you liked when you were growin' up?

SR: Oh, man! I remember in college—you know, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and those kind of movies. But, boy, in high

school I probably wasn't watchin' the movie as much as I shoulda been. [*Laughter*] May've been doin' some other things. I don't know. We'd go ball games—you know, go to a lot of dances. We had a lot of dances on Saturday night—you know, community dances or . . .

SL: Now . . .

SR: . . . school dances.

[02:39:41] SL: . . . would bands play at the dance?

SR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we'd have bands—have group out of Memphis. Have some record—you know, junior high have some record type. We had a lot of birthday parties—just a lot of parties at people's houses. Went to the movies some, but, you know, not a whole lot. It cost money. You know, we didn't have much [*laughs*] of that. So . . .

[02:40:00] SL: Well, did you ever see—do you remember goin' to just see a band or—I mean, were there ever any . . .

SR: The first professional band I ever saw were the Temptations . . .

SL: Ooh!

SR: . . . at the University of Arkansas at Gaibilee . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . when I was a senior in high school. First group I'd ever seen in my life. And they came all dressed out in blue suits or

somethin' . . .

SL: You bet.

SR: . . . in just perfect unison, and I was knocked over. I could not believe people could sing that—you know, that much in harmony could dance. I mean, it was just—"Oh, man, I've never seen anything like this." I'd seen stuff like it on TV, but seein' it in person—just your whole—you know, your whole world changes. But as a kid I never, you know, went to see anything like that. Went to see Holiday on Ice a time or two with my mother, and some friends took us when we were little, but you know, I never saw any professional groups. We had—you know, high school bands would come in from Memphis, so there were several bands would come play at our proms. And on—we always—seems like we had bands—a lot of bands, you know, would come to entertain or just have fund-raisin'. They'd—you'd buy tickets to go, you know, dance, and some class'd make a little money out of it. But—and they were good, you know.

[02:41:07] SL: Any local musicians that . . .

SR: No, I can't remember . . .

SL: Any . . .

SR: Uh . . .

SL: I mean, I would think . . .

SR: And we had some, but I thought they were all a bunch of rednecks back then. Had Conway Twitty. He married a girl from Marianna. Jaco was her name, and you know, he had a band that came around, but you know, he was country and western, and that just wasn't cool back then for us, you know. [*SL laughs*] That was our parents' music.

SL: Yeah.

[02:41:29] SR: And for some reason, you know, we were in more to the Beatles and—you know, more pop music. The—Diana Ross and Supremes. I loved that group—just their singin', their harmony. So we were—never was into the country music back then—you know, the George Jones and the Conway Twittys. I mean, he wasn't a big name back then. He was movin' up the charts, and he was around a lot. He used to perform in all of our talent—we had to have a talent show here in Marianna once a year, and he'd perform at that. And I'm thinkin', "How can this guy sell records, you know." [*Laughter*] But obviously he did. He had some . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

SR: He had something people liked. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:42:02] SR: . . . he married a lady that actually was a member of

our church. And her brother and I were—he was my Sunday school teacher. So we had some relationship with—Harold Jenkins was Conway's, course, real name. He was from Helena and—so he was around Marianna as I was growin' up, but really not a—not much was thought about it 'cause nobody ever thought he was goin' anywhere. So—but he did. [*Laughs*]
[02:42:24] But I can remember Elvis Presley used to play at some of the—I've never witnessed him, but he'd play at some of the local things around—you know, different communities around. Probably before maybe I was of age, really, you know. In the [19]50s, probably was when he was doin' that.

SL: Yeah.

SR: My sister was a fan of his, but . . .

SL: Yeah, he played Forrest City.

SR: Yeah. Yeah, he would play some of these communities around.

[02:42:43] But—and I remember him talkin' about it, but I never witnessed that. But I never had a, you know, a great appreciation for music. I just listened to it on the tractor.

SL: Y'all didn't have a piano in the house . . .

SR: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . growin' up

SR: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . or any kind of musical instruments?

SR: Hm-hm.

SL: No guitars or . . .

SR: Now my sister was pretty accomplished. She played the clarinet in the band. She was a musician. But you know, clarinets by themselves—they're kinda squeaky, especially when you're learnin', you know, and I [*laughs*—it kinda turned me off. [02:43:08] 'Cause I can remember her playin' and practicin' and squeak and blowin', and of course, you get it, you know, in a band—she was, like, first chair. She was a very accomplished musician and can play a lot of different instruments now. But—and I love music, but I just—I never had a lot of musical talent. I sang in a youth choir but just never could read music other than just follow the notes up and down. I didn't know what they meant. I just knew if it went up, you raised your voice a little bit; if it went down . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you kinda got lower, and that's about the extent of my music-reading skills. But enjoyed music and—but more of the pop at that time, not the country, the bluegrass. [02:43:42] It was more the—the more pop music. We had—again, the—you know, the Beatles, the Eagles, the—there's another—several—

the—Neil Diamond was big back in those days. In college—Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. You know, they were a little more bluegrass kinda startin' to go into that era. But the Four Seasons—you know, I enjoyed their harmony and their singing. But just never—you know, never was exposed to a lot of music, but I always have enjoyed music like, you know, when I was a kid, Daddy would get a—buy a radio for me, and I could put on my tractor. We didn't have cabs back then. You—you'd mount it on your fender of your tractor, and you turned it up so loud so you could hear it over the roar of the tractor engine. And, course, they could hear it a half—you know, a half a mile across [laughter] the field.

SL: Right.

SR: But [laughs] . . .

SL: Right.

SR: But I liked to listen to popular music back then. So . . .

[02:44:37] SL: You know, I remember—we were talkin' about the River City Band—they got to meet with Tony Joe White. Do you remember Tony Joe White at all?

SR: Remember the name, but I . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I don't know what . . .

SL: He was a Memphis guy.

SR: Okay.

[02:44:50] SL: Well, what about revivals? Did you ever . . .

SR: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . experience any . . .

SR: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . revivals?

SR: Oh, yeah. I was actually saved in a revival when I was eleven in my church. It was durin' a Sunday a mornin' session when the rev—when the evangelist met with us, and you know, and asked us about our relationship to Christ and wantin' to become a Christian and give our heart to Jesus. And somethin' just came over me, and I did, and I mean, I have no doubt that that was the moment that I became a child of God 'cause you—I'm a—can point back to that and see the difference in my life. I was beginnin' to curse, beginnin' to look at nasty magazines and just doin' things that . . .

SL: Didn't feel right.

SR: . . . that boys do.

SL: Yeah.

[02:45:28] SR: But after that, I mean, it's just like that the Holy Spirit was telling me, "That's wrong. You know, that your

behavior's wrong." And, I mean, I could tell a definite point in my life that God took over and directed me from there on. And so—and that was during a church revival. And I—you know, I—and I went to revivals. We had 'em in our church. I'd go to churches—other churches. The Methodist church always had revivals, and I'd go over there. I just enjoyed listenin' to preaching and Bible study, and it just inspired me, you know, to be a better Christian and to have a closer walk with God. And I think that's what revivals are all about, you know. Revivin' you.

[02:46:00] SL: So was this a visiting pastor that . . .

SR: Yeah, always a visiting pastor.

SL: Do you remember his name?

SR: His name was Walker—was his name is all I can remember. But I remember he was very popular 'cause the—you know, the churches were just—it was full. It was overflowin'. We had a lot—big crowds. And back then that was a popular thing to do because, again, you didn't have much entertainment, and church was kinda entertainment. Somethin' to do. So that's what you did and everybody—not to say everybody went to church, but we did. I mean—and we had a very active youth group in our church and good pastors and good Bible study and just had a lot of fun, but at the same time, had a close walk with God durin'

those days. And I think it's somethin' that—you know, one of those foundational things that have built on, you know, throughout my life and still as much as important to me or more important it ever has been. It's . . .

[02:46:48] SL: Any tent revivals? Did you ever see . . .

SR: No.

SL: . . . any tent . . .

SR: No.

SL: It was always at the church?

SR: I've seen 'em, but it's—they were always in our church. I never went to any tent revivals.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Just always in our church or some other church [*clears throat*] in the community.

[02:47:02] SL: Okay. Let's—now if you think of anything about Marianna and your—well, your time here before you got to the university . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . why, we can go back to it. So there—there's really no rules here in this conversation. If there's anything that you wanna say about Marianna before I take you up to Fayetteville—is there anything . . .

SR: Hmm.

SL: I mean, I guess, just over—overall, this was a great place for you, wasn't it?

SR: It was. Yeah. I . . .

SL: I mean—and you're still—you've come back.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: You're still here. So it's not like you felt like you had to run away . . .

SR: Hm-mm.

SL: . . . or abandon it.



[02:47:41] SR: I always wanted to farm. You know, I always loved—I've developed that yearning to watch things grow and to work and to be outside—you know, either it's hunting or working with my father on the farm. I mean, I loved farming. I really did. But we didn't have any land. We didn't own land. We just leased land, and you know, Dad was a little contrary at times with landlords, and so we didn't stay on farmland too long.

SL: Yeah.

[02:48:08] SR: We'd move around some. Now I guess in high school, he had developed a good relationship with a landowner from Memphis, and we were on that farm probably five years, but then he went bankrupt. So then the bankruptcy judge—you

know, we had to—we were changed again and—so just a lot of uncertainty about whether I could farm or not, you know, 'cause you had to have land to farm. And back then everybody was tryin' to farm, and there were a lot of Farmers Home Administration loans. A lot of people'd get loans and farm, and it was very competitive. Very competitive. And people were buying larger equipment. They were tryin' to get more land to justify the equipment. You had a lot of small farmers, and it was just a gradual process of transforming, you know, to small family farms to larger family farms. So I didn't know if there'd be an opportunity there. [02:48:49] So that's why I went on to law school after I got my undergraduate degree 'cause Dad was not farming that much. He probably had fifteen hundred acres, maybe—two thousand acres, which was a pretty good-sized tenant farm back then. But all leased land—again, very uncertain. And actually, the year I graduated from college, he lost all but down to a thousand acres of overflow grounds is all we had—and just soybeans all you could plant. And it's—you know, just wasn't enough for two or three families—two families to live out of. So I went on to law school just to try to get a—more education prepare myself for whatever. [02:49:23] A law degree was, I thought, somethin' that would be a good

foundation for whatever I wanted to go into.

SL: Sure.

SR: And I honestly had some dreams about politics back then, and I thought that would be a great stepping-stone to maybe enterin' politics with a legal background. I did very well in law school. I always applied myself. I was never that smart, but I always worked hard and made very good grades. And I did well in engineering school. I was right at the top of my class there, and then law school I was—I don't remember—first or second or third—somewhere in there. But I made the highest score on the bar exam. I took the bar exam, and I thought that was a miracle, if nothin' else. [SL laughs] But you know, never really had any desire to practice. And everybody said, "You gotta practice law, man! It'd be such a waste if you don't practice law."

SL: Well . . .

[02:50:09] SR: So—and we didn't have much land to farm, so I came back home and kinda worked with Dad part-time farmin', set up a law practice for a couple of years. But, you know, my heart never left the farm. I always wanted to be out there, and that's really what I enjoyed doin'. So we had an opportunity, I guess, when—[19]78 after I'd been out of school a couple—out

of law school a couple a years—practice a little and was in the process of running for state representative, I just quit farming, and we rented a bunch mo—I mean, quit law practice and rented a bunch of land in Mississippi and that—you know, all that kinda created, I guess, a lot of uncertainty. I didn't win the election, by the way. I was not elected, but it was close. It was a good experience.

SL: Yeah.

[02:50:45] SR: I won the primary, but then we had a runoff, and I lost that, so it was a—generally, a great experience. But that's when we started farming a lot of land scattered over all over. We had—one time we were ten thousand acres of rented land scattered over ninety miles.

SL: Wow.

SR: So we just—you know, we're tryin' to get a toehold, you know. Tryin' to get somethin' to open up so we could start buyin' land. That was the ultimate goal of me and Dad both was to start buyin' land, but you know, it was tough times back in the late [19]70s, early [19]80s. You know, we really—the depression in farming hit in the early [19]80s—an embargo—the Carter embargo—and prices went to nothing, and we had some real bad droughts. Nineteen eighty was still the worst year, you know, by

far, that I've ever experienced as far as heat and dry weather.

SL: Yep.

[02:51:31] SR: And it just—it really set us back financially. And still able to just borrow enough money to keep goin' another year, and that's the cycle we were on for, you know, twenty years there—just kinda keepin' your head above water, but keepin' your bills paid and workin' hard and hopin' somethin' would open up. And then we finally started buyin' land in the [19]80s. We didn't have any money, we just had pretty good reputation—a good—we could—had a pretty good credit and just borrowed it all, bought it all on credit and just started—I used my engineering skills to—we started laser land-leveling all of our land, getting—so we could irrigate. And, really, doin' that before a lot of people getting into irrigation. And, of course, our yields improved and then, you know, we were able to—I guess I gained a little foothold and was buyin' more land, and God blessed our efforts, and so it was a very worthwhile, you know . . .

SL: Sounds like . . .

SR: . . . activity.

[02:52:24] SL: Sounds like good strong worth ethic with some smarts behind it.

SR: Yeah. Well, Dad and I both kinda built it up together. He was—

he had—he never bought hardly any land, and so it was, you know—but he had a desire to do it, too, and he wanted to work, and that was his goal and dream, was to own land, and you know—and so he worked, you know, all the way up to the time he died, helpin', [*tapping sounds*] you know, put that together and bein' there. And that was his—he never went anywhere, and his work is all he wanted to do. And he was—so we had a great—not only his kids had a relationship with my father, but even as adults—and they were tryin' times there, but I mentioned he went through three divorces, and so you can imagine in a family relationship and family business, you know—but, fortunately, all three of those women were very nice ladies who I still maintain relationships with.

SL: Good.

SR: So it wasn't near as traumatic to the family business as it coulda been. So—but, you know, worked through all that, and a lot of children probably wouldn't've stayed in a family business with those kind of adversities, but I did, and God honored it, and we—you know, things worked out well.

SL: Okay. So I mean, we kinda went down . . .

SR: Kinda went through a . . .

[02:53:36] SL: We went down that path [*SR laughs*] because I tol—

because I mentioned that you didn't just—it wasn't flight out of Marianna for you.

SR: Right.

SL: You went to University of Arkansas. Your dad always wanted you going University of Arkansas. You always wanted to be a Razorback. You'd grown up idolizing Razorback football.

[02:53:57] So you go to Fayetteville. Now you hadn't been many places. You'd talked about some church strip—church trips on the bus and goin' over to Tennessee. But now you're headin' west, and now you're goin' to Fayetteville. Now what—when you hit Fayetteville, what struck you as it compared to Marianna?

SR: Well, the campus was three times bigger than my town.

[Laughs] You know, just a huge amount of people there. Just the number of kids and—you know, and adjusting. You know, you're away from home the first time. And of course, my parents didn't take me to college. We just—I had a car and we loaded 'em up, you know, and I left, you know. They didn't take you to school. You just left—packed your stuff in your car and you took off.

[02:54:45] SL: Now even though your folks were separated durin' high school, they had stuck . . .

SR: Oh yeah. They still . . .

SL: They stuck together.

SR: And they did. They did that for me and my sister.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know. And I admire that about 'em. They were cordial to each other, and, you know, there was not a lot of fighting or fussing, you know, in front of us that much. Once they, you know, kind of determined—but they were—you know, they knew they were gonna get a divorce soon as we left. And Dad—I don't think they cohabitated very much at all there for the last five or six years. But you know, some tension, but they still stayed together. They wanted to be married while we were still at home.

SL: Yeah.

SR: They just felt like that was important. And I admire that they went through some struggles [*laughs*] to stay together—you know, at least legally.

SL: Yeah.

[02:55:30] SR: And so—but I went to Fayetteville and, you know, really had a great experience up there—played football. I mean, that was challenging, you know, and especially as a walk-on and not havin' the kind of athletic skills you probably need. But I

really enjoyed it and made a lot of great friend. I mean, it was tough. I mean . . .

[02:55:48] SL: So is that [19]69?

SR: [Nineteen] sixty-nine. Yeah. That's the year of the [19]69 "Shootout." And I remember, you know, goin' to that game. We were—back then, freshmen did not participate with varsity ball. We had our own freshman team . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and we just practiced among ourselves.

SL: Shoats.

SR: So—the Shoats. That's exactly right. [02:56:04] So we—I remember goin' to that game, and it was a wild week—anticipation of that football game.

SL: It was a wild week. There were some racial things going on that week as well.

SR: I don't remember the racial things.

SL: You don't?

SR: No.

SL: You don't remember . . .

SR: I . . .

SL: . . . the "Dixie" controversy and . . .

SR: Not—I remember Jon Richardson was on our team.

SL: Yeah.

SR: On our freshman team. The first African American that the Razorbacks had signed, and we all loved him. I mean, he was a tremendous athlete and a great guy. And I don't remember the—you know, the "Dixie" deal up there. I remember the little somethin' about it, but I was so busy studyin' and playin' football and practicin' that [*laughs*] I didn't have time to date. I don't think I had two dates the whole first semester . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:56:47] SR: . . . I was up there because you were so busy with engineering. I was takin', like, eighteen hours in engineering, plus playin' football, you know, and just tryin' to adjust. And I'd come home as often as I could, which wasn't very often. But I don't remember—I remember some issues about "Dixie," but I really—I wasn't involved in any of that.

SL: Okay.

SR: That's probably more on the student campus—on the, you know, government level, and I wasn't involved that much at that point in time as a freshman. But I . . .

[02:57:11] SL: Do you remember Nixon . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . comin' in?

SR: Oh yeah. I remember the helicopter landed down there and them walkin'—they were sitting on the west side, and we were on the east side. All the players. We were in—we went through the players' gate and we all—all the freshman players went down there together.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Stood up the whole game. But I remember that. And it was a—it was an exciting time, but yet a—boy, a agonizing defeat . . .

SL: It was.

SR: . . . to get that close.

SL: It was.

[02:57:33] SR: But I remember, you know, the students were just wild that week. I mean, panty raids in all the girls' dormitories—I mean, just screamin' and hollerin' and, you know, people out all—it was a—you might as well cancel class that week [*SL laughs*] 'cause it was a wild [*laughs*] time. But a great, great atmosphere, you know, for college. Somethin' you'll never—you know, we'll still talk about the "Great Shootout." I mean, that still makes headlines. And, unfortunately, we didn't win it, but it will still go down as one of the greatest, you know, college football games in history, I guess at least from Arkansas's standpoint.

[02:58:01] SL: What about the coaches?

SR: Had—Wilson Matthews was the freshman coach back then, and, you know, he was a terror, you know. He had a reputation of bein' a hard-nose coach, but I loved him. I mean, he'd cuss you out. Hit you up the head. You know, things that they'd do back then—he'd take a clipboard and just work your helmet over, you know. But you knew he was doin' it for your good, and you knew he knew what he was talkin' about. And he'd grab you—say, "I'm just doin' it 'cause I love you, and I want you to be better," you know. And he was a player's coach, and I really loved that man, even though, you know, I didn't like for him to get on me, *[laughter]* 'cause he did a few times. But I had more con—I didn't have much contact with Coach Broyles as a freshman, but Mike Bender was my line coach and Louis Nalley—I guess it was Louis Nalley—yeah. He was also our line coach. And Bob Ford was a defensive freshman coach. And that's interesting 'cause Bob Ford is an attorney now in Wynne, and I got to know him very well, you know, since our college days. And Mike Bender was the athletic director at Forrest City High Schools for a few years, and he's back livin' in Forrest City now—he and Gail. [02:59:13] So I've just got reacquainted with those guys, and course, when I got on the Board of Trustees, I

got reacquainted with Wilson Matthews and visited with him a lot and just—you know, he was just a unique individual. That's all you could say about him. He had a way of motivating people, especially athletes—like no other coach I've ever been around. But he did it in a good way, you know. He was very positive and just—he wanted you—he was really one that could get more out of you than you thought you had in you. I mean, he was that kind of a coach, and course, it proved when he was at Central. I mean, he had one of the greatest high school coach—high school teams in America. And he was just a great coach, and I enjoyed that experience, just playing under him and just witnessing his—the way he treated people and how his expectations improved your performance. You know, you never—hardly ever do you exceed—does your performance exceed expectations. You've gotta have expectations out there, and they kinda pull your performance along.

SL: You bet.

SR: You know, there's a poem I learned somewhere in high school that a man's reach must exceed his grasp for what heaven's for. I mean, you know, you've got—you've gotta have somethin' you can't hardly get a hold of to keep urgin' you to push a little bit higher and a little bit longer and a little bit harder. And that's

what a good coach can do, you know. He can push you harder than you think and get more out of you than you realize and—because he sets high expectations, and he believes you can do it, and he believes in you, and he can instill that kind of confidence in you. [03:00:44] So Wilson Matthews did that—and I think Coach Broyles, to some degree. He did it also for his players. And, again, I retired after my freshman year, so I never really got to be under Coach Broyles. I know he had some of those same qualities. In a different way, he was more—you know, he sat up in the tower with a fog horn and let his assistants more work with the players, where Wilson Matthews was out there right in the middle of you and hittin' you and pattin' you on the bottom and knockin' you upside the head and—you know, gettin' in your face and yellin'. So they had different coaching styles, but both very effective—what they did.

SL: Was . . .

TM: Scott, let's change tapes. [*Clears throat*]

SL: Oh, okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:01:18] SL: All right. Tape four. We've got you in college.

SR: Yeah, we're movin' on.

SL: We're [*laughs*] movin' on. We're in Fayetteville, Arkansas now.

SR: Right.

SL: This is not Crowley's Ridge.

SR: No.

SL: It's the Ozark hills, and you're up there where you've dreamed that you wanted to be, and you've walked on as a freshman on the football team. You've got there in the [19]69 "Shootout" days and experienced some history there. You were—you had—you went in doing agriculture engineering. Now how is that different, say, from civil engineering or electrical engineering or . . .

SR: The . . .

SL: What's the major . . .

SR: The basics are the same. I mean, we took—it was an engineering curriculum, you know, with calculus—all the dynamics—thermal dynamics of mechanics, materials, fluids, statics—the basic foundation you take for any engineering program. The agricultural engineering—you had several different emphases—you could go, and power machinery was—and that's the emphasis I took, which most of my electives, they were in mechanical engineering. So I—with another semester, I could've gotten a double major with mechanical engineering. We had a few classes that were just distinct to the agricultural

engineering program. [03:02:46] But most of our courses were taken in other colleges, whether—if you wanted to go—you could take a soil and water track; in agricultural engineering you took a lot of civil engineering courses, and you could take the mechanical. And there were some other different tracks you could take. But it was—more tried to focus on mechanical applications to agriculture, you know. Farm machinery, farm design, machinery design, soil and water, soil runoff, erosion, watershed load—those kind of issues. Kind of the beginning of environmental-type approaches to water-resource management and things that, you know, they're doin' much more involved now in agricultural engineering. They don't even call it agricultural engineering anymore, they call it biological engineering because it's really biological systems that you're dealing with as far as the water and the soil and environment. And most of the mechanical is really dealt with—instead of havin' specific ag engineering-type mechanical design, and it's all become mechanical engineering and specialize in agricultural machinery. But it's a little different major. But it . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:03:47] SR: . . . was something that, you know, I was—I had the science and the math background in high school and did real well

with that and then had the desire—you know, the love for agriculture, so I just thought it was a—you know, I didn't know much about it. I didn't know what I was gettin' into, but it was . . .

SL: It was . . .

SR: It was . . .

SL: It . . .

SR: . . . a good major for me.

SL: . . . it was really an extension of your father's dream, wasn't it?

SR: Well, it kinda was. Yeah, it kinda was. And I actually—I learned there—we learned land leveling, and that was specific ag engineering course. It wasn't something we learned in civil engineering or in mechanical. It—we had a—our soil and water course was ag engineering specifically and learned how to land level land and how to design a plain of best fit and how to form soil, land, fields to—for irrigation. [03:04:28] And when I came back, you know, the first land we bought, I started doin' that. Nobody else knew what I was doin'. "Oh, you're destroyin' the soil, you know. You're movin' that topsoil around. You're ruining your farm." And you know, it didn't. We had deep topsoil and were able to start irrigating and growin' rice on land that nobody ever thought you could grow rice on because I had

those—you know, I'd learned those skills in engineering school in ag engineering. So it really benefitted me a lot—not necessarily the mechanical aspect, even though it did mechanically, but probably more in the soil and water and the field design and drainage and designing culverts, and issues that you deal with when you're dealing with, you know, big blocks of land and how to effectively manage your water and irrigation and drainage. And I kinda—I got a lot of training in that with ag engineering. I think it really helped us.

[03:05:15] SL: You probably didn't realize it at the time, but—I'm gonna jump ahead a little bit—but you—when you came back and you started applying these things that you had learned, you were teachin' the community, whether you knew it or not.



SR: Well, yeah, 'cause people'd be there—come out there and look—"What are you doin'?" I remember Lon Mann, the guy that owned—built this house—he came by, and you know, he looks—said, "Stanley, what are you doin' out there? Aren't you gonna ruin your topsoil?" I said, "Well, I don't think so, Mr. Lon. You know, we took some soil samples, and it looks like we got pretty good soil—you know, our deep topsoil. And we're just gonna try this. And we know we gotta irrigate. We can't keep farmin' without, you know, goin' up and down with dry weather and not

havin' good drainage." And so there were a lotta people looking, you know, and you know, it wasn't but a few years, everybody was doin' it.

SL: That's right.

SR: So I won't say we were trendsetters, but we were doin' it before anybody else was doin' it. And luckily, we just—it worked for us. So . . .

[03:06:06] SL: Well, you were either—you were smart to do it, but you were also—it was risky, 'cause it . . .

SR: Oh, yeah.

SL: Well, it hadn't been done over here. Is that . . .

SR: It was risky, and you generally had the—back then, we had some government farm programs that required you to set aside some of your land each year. You couldn't plant your whole farm. You had to leave out a certain percentage in order to qualify for support payments. So we would have to summer fallow some land, so it was perfect time to work on that land and land level it. [03:06:35] So we did that all the way through the [19]80s when we started buyin' land—you know, we'd leave forty or a hundred acres out under the government farm program 'cause you're gonna be idle anyway. And we'd take our dirt buggies and start land leveling that land and cutting. When

we first started, we didn't have lasers—we would design—I'd lay the field off in hundred-foot grids and take elevation readings with a level, and then I'd plug those elevations in their computer program to get the field design and how much you would cut or fill the dirt at each station. And then we'd go out there and paint stakes. We'd paint red for a cut and blue for a fill, and we'd stick 'em up at ever hundred-foot intervals, and you'd just kinda guess. You know, you're goin' out there—"Well, that says a cut, so I need to cut right in here, and that says fill, so I'll go over here and dump some over here." Very imprecise way of doin' it. But we land leveled a lot of land like that, and that's the way you had to do it back then. Of course, lasers came along in the mid-[19]80s, and we started usin' those. And course, they just revolutionized the way you moved dirt because your laser tells you exactly where you cut or fill. There's no more guesswork to it. [03:07:35] So it changed, but we were—you know, we had done it the manual way—the old-fashioned way—so it was very easy to adapt the laser technology to what we were doin' and we're still—I mean, it's still—I'm usin' the same laser now I used in the mid-[19]80s. I mean—and I bought it used back then. [SL laughs] It's a nine-forty-five [laughs] dual-grade laser-plain laser. So—but a lot of technology in dirt movin' and things, but

it's still basically the same. You're tryin' to design your field to get good field drainage, and so you can water down the furrow and get a better management for your use of your water. And that's . . .

[03:08:10] SL: You know, it kinda had to—it had to be kind of exciting to you back in Fayetteville when you're getting this engineering knowledge and you—I can see your mind turning and thinking about this land over here . . .

SR: Well, I could. I . . .

SL: . . . and how to apply this stuff.

SR: Yeah, I was—yeah, everything we were doin', I could see some application back to my farm back home. You know, what I could do to improve our farm even though we didn't have a farm 'cause we were leasing the land. I knew that it was gonna benefit me if I could farm. You know, the issue was did I—was I gonna have any land to farm? That was the issue because it was so competitive, and there's so many people that—I mean, they inherited land. People were much weal—I mean, we just didn't—we weren't wealthy people—didn't have any land. We were just lend—leasing the land, and it was a very tenuous [*SL coughs*] situation from year to year. So—but you know, my goal was that, hopefully, someday we could buy some land and be—you

know, it's hard to land level 'cause it's a very expensive operation do that to somebody else's land, so you almost had to buy your land and, you know, try to improve it yourself.

[03:09:12] But the fact is that as we leased land through the [19]80s and [19]90s, and that's how I got to be friends with Jim Lindsey. It goes back to land leveling. He owned some land next to where we were farming. We were leasing the land, and I was actually doing a lot of development in field—in dirt moving on leased land. I'd made a deal with the landlord—"If you'll put the well down, I'll do the dirt work, so we can get this filled with growin' rice or get it to irrigate." So it's kind of a—you know, a good relationship for both the landlord and the tenant. And Jim Lindsey started noticin' that, and he was getting into land leveling on some land that he had bought next to me, so that's how we became friends. You know, that I started leasing some of his land and doing dirt work improvements on his land. He was putting the wells down. I was doin' the dirt work, and we ended up, you know, becoming friends because of that, and that's developed in just really a lifelong friendship. I don't—we don't—I don't rent any land from him. We actually own about a thousand acres together—half and half—and we farm it and we—I guess we do rent his half of it—undivided half—but we own the

land together. But used to farm three or—three thousand acres of his land back in years past when we farmed more of it. As we became more successful and got our land paid for, then we just basically farmed the land that we own now. We don't lease a lot of extra land.

[03:10:27] SL: So that was kind of serendipitous that . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: Here's this hero of yours that . . .

SR: It was.

SL: . . . all of a sudden you're kind of gettin' a relationship with him, and I guess his brother, "B," as well.

SR: Well, the—you know, I mentioned the Gideons.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And I guess it's—you know, you see how God works in your life to bring people together. But I became a member of the Gideons. We didn't have a Gideon camp in Marianna, so I had to go to Forrest City. And actually it was an attorney, Knox Kinney, from Forrest City, that I was practicin' law against in courtroom that asked me would I like to become part of the Gideons. And I didn't know anything about it, but I wanted to get involved—came back to the community, and it's a Christian organization. So I became involved in the Forrest City, Arkansas, Gideon camp

and went up there every Sunday mornin' for prayer breakfast. Well, B Lindsey was a member of the Gideons up there. [SL laughs] So I got to talk with B, and we became good friends and went on Bible distributions together. So B knew about me and my farming, you know, back in the late [19]70s, and this was the late [19]80s is when I met Jim Lindsey. And Jim just drove up, and I was just dyin' to get more land 'cause we were still farming some land in Mississippi. I was tryin' to get land, you know, in Arkansas so I could at least be close to my family and not have to be gone from them all the time, you know. [03:11:36] But it was a really struggle back in the [19]80s, farmin' ten thousand acres over ninety miles, you know, and movin' equipment and, you know, I—"Lord, just let me get some land back close to home." So Jim Lindsey drives up and says, "You like to lease my farm?" And yeah, you could've knocked me over with a feather. Here's a man I didn't—had—I'd met him one time at a—at Tontitown at Venesian Inn. [SL laughs] Someone just introduced me to a . . .

SL: Number nine rare.

SR: Yeah.

SL: You bet. Yeah.

SR: Someone just introduced me to him, and it was a common friend

we had and, you know, it just—you know Jim, he meets people all the time.

SL: Yeah.

[03:12:07] SR: So I'd met him, and I don't know if he even remembered meeting me, but he drove—but he had—I guess he had talked to his brother, and he knew that we were doing dirt work, improving land. And he really had an interest in getting his farm improved. So you know, he drove up and said he wanted to lease me his farm, and it was like manna from heaven, you know, just right there. I couldn't believe it. And we basically just had a handshake deal and didn't even draw up a contract for a long time, and you know, he let me basically just kinda name my terms. And just an unbelievable relationship, and it benefitted both of us, you know. I was able to get out of Mississippi, farm land back home, and Jim was able to get his land improved, so it was a—Jim always said that if it's not a good deal for both parties, it's not a good deal. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:12:50] SR: And that's his motto. That's the way he goes in life and he's—you know, he wants to be sure that if you're dealing with him that you have an opportunity to make money, and it's good for both parties. So learned a lot about that. And his

generosity and his success that he's had over the years, I think, is in large part the way he treats people, and honestly, the way he treated me as we were, you know, beginning business partners and just the admiration I had for him and the way he dealt with people. And he didn't try to nickel-and-dime you over ever little thing, you know. He just took your word for it. He trusted people and just a great role model for me, as a up-and-coming businessman, to see the way he dealt with people.

[03:13:29] SL: Let's get you back to Fayetteville.

SR: All right.

SL: So you're [*SR takes a drink*] doing agriculture engineering.

You—yeah, it's a different culture in Fayetteville from Marianna.

SR: It was.

SL: I mean, it's—had to be almost night and day.

SR: I initially was very concerned about my being able to compete in the classroom against people from—you know, from Little Rock and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . Fort Smith, Fayetteville, and here I was from Marianna.

[03:13:55] But I found out real quick that—you know, I had a very good education in high school, and I made very good grades in college. And I think I ended up in engineering with a

3.87 out of a 4.0. Back then they didn't give many four points. But—so I was very pleased, you know, that I was able to compete. And I became a member of a fraternity. After I retired from football, I joined the SAE fraternity and went through that pledging program and enjoyed it. We had a small pledge class. I was a spring pledge—pledged the spring after my fall semester of playin' football. And just really—even though I didn't drink—still didn't drink or party the way they did there, I still developed a relationship—a very fond relationship with a lot of guys that—and I think they—I gained their respect for some reason, and I moved up in the officer ranks and became president—was vice-president then president of the fraternity and eventually president of the interfraternity council my senior year in college. [03:14:54] And just had a great experience in college—involved with interfraternity-type council work—Cardinal 20 was a men's leadership organization that I was president of. I was president of just about ever organization I was in up there just because—I don't know why, just kind of rose to the top for some reason. But I always wanted to make a contribution and to be of service. I thought that was very, very important to give back and to help people and just be a part of making things better.

[03:15:25] SL: You know, you've mentioned several times that you weren't really a party guy or didn't go out and—I mean, did you . . .

SR: Oh, I went to parties.

SL: And . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . Dickson Street? You can remember Dickson Street back then?

SR: I didn't go too much. It was more other fraternity houses. Apartment parties. You know, just to socialize—to be with the people and—but I didn't drink, you know. I mean . . .

[03:15:48] SL: So it was mostly campus socialization.

SR: Mostly campus. Oh, I went to The Rink, you remember?

SL: Oh, absolutely.

SR: Had a lot of parties at The Rink. But I can't ever remember goin' to Maxine's or D-Lux. I mean, that was where a lot of the guys went, but you know, those were more bars and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and I didn't—I just didn't go do that. And—but I did enjoy the fellowship and the camaraderie, and you know, most people that—you know, if you didn't drink, weren't a part of that, you didn't like to be around it, and I can't say I liked to be around it.

I mean, there was times it got so wild that I'd just leave, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[03:16:22] SR: I wasn't gonna be around a bunch of drunks throwin' alcohol on your date and all that. So—but, generally, the quieter times of the night—you know, before it got too rowdy—I mean, I enjoyed that, and it was a great part of life for me because in Marianna, you know, you didn't have that many friends. It was a smaller town, and you had five or six good friends. But, you know, had a whole fraternity of guys that you had bonded with and, you know, you had—you ate with all the time. We had seventy or so in the house, and, you know, we had a lot of projects we worked on and, you know, it was just a—I really enjoyed 'em. I never had a brother—didn't grow up with a brother, so it just—you know, they were really my extended family and really had some wonderful times there.

[03:17:03] SL: Were there any names you wanna mention that you developed brother-like relationships with?

SR: Well, Don Giles was someone that I played football with. We both played football together as freshmen, and he was an SAE, and we still are very close. Bill Kennedy—I played football with him, and he was an SAE, and we still maintain some

relationship. [03:17:28] Dave and Perry Lee were twins from Clarendon, Arkansas. Perry is now deceased. He had a brain tumor. But . . .

SL: Hmm.

SR: . . . we actually roomed together. Still talk to Dave quite often. Mike Robards, again, was another football player that played a year or two, and he was an SAE. And he was from Marianna, and he lives in Fayetteville now. There're several people in Little Rock that are attorneys over there now that—Tom Baxter is with the Friday . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . Law Firm. He was a—he was younger, and I kinda developed relationships with the class under me because I protected a lot of those guys from the hazing. I still have pledges walk up to me—Tommy Machen in Forrest City had Machen Ford. He says my name was "Goon." They called me Goon. That was the nickname I got when I was a pledge—Goon—because I was so big, you know, and kind of bossed those guys and—"Goon, you never will know how much I appreciate you protectin' me from ol' Steve Creekmore—all those guys tryin' to harass me and jack me around." So I really had more relationships with the younger guys, like Tom Baxter, Joe

Cogdell . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:18:33] SR: . . . from Fayetteville. You may remember Joe.

SL: I went to school with his son, I think.

SR: Yeah, the—no, you probably went to school with Joe, I bet.

SL: Oh! That's right! In fact, I saw Joe Cogdell . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . not—just this season. He came back . . .

SR: He lives in North Carolina.

SL: David Gearhart . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . paraded him through the stadium then.

SR: Yeah. And actually, David Gearhart was an SAE at Westminster, but he was dating Jane Gearhart. He would always come over the house. So—and I had met Dave at Camp Couchdale. When I was in high school we went to a senior—he was actually a camper, and I was a counselor there. It's a national leadership camp at Hot Springs—Camp Couchdale. And I met Dave Gearhart there and then met him, you know, in college as he would come back—and he'd come to the SAE house and just developed a relationship with him—felt like he was kind of an honorary member there, even though he was in the chapter at

Westminster. So kinda funny how all those relationships . . .

[03:19:21] SL: Yeah, Joe was on our debate team, too.

SR: Joe Cogdell? Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Yeah.

SL: He was. Yeah.

SR: I knew him. David Glenn was from Fayetteville.

SL: David Glenn. I . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: He was on the line with me . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . on the football team.

SR: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah, sure.

[03:19:30] SR: So—I'm tryin' to think—someone else from

Fayetteville—course, Whitney Morgan is still up there. He's in the real estate business now, but Whitney was from Blytheville, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . he was an SAE. Richard Justiss is a doctor in Pine Bluff that was from Forrest City. We had a lot of SAEs from eastern Arkansas that were up there.

[03:19:52] SL: That whole Greek organization—that's another culture—another subculture . . .

SR: Well, it is.

SL: . . . that . . .

SR: But you look at the people that were involved in it. I know we get a bad rap because of the drinking, and . . .

SL: Yeah, sure.

SR: . . . the Phi Delts were recently, you know, their charter was removed. And then it was—no question it was excess alcohol from my standpoint 'cause I was a teetotaler.

SL: Yeah.

[03:20:15] SR: But when you look at success of the people that went through fraternities, they developed people skills—social skills that I think they're somewhat lacking, maybe if you weren't involved in that—not that you couldn't develop 'em, but I mean, you were kinda forced to learn to get along with people even though you didn't like 'em or they . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . had some attributes that you—you know, you detested—they were your fraternity brothers, and you had to, you know, you had to look for the common good of everybody. So a lot of good qualities you learned there. And so I—you know, I—again,

it's not for everybody, but where I came from and my limited background experiences, it really opened up a whole world. You know, I was in the house with Alex Dillard and Mike Dillard. And even back then, you know, they were pretty good household names, and, of course, they've, you know, really . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:21:03] SR: . . . expanded since then. And so—you know, I was exposed to a whole element of people that, you know, I'd never been exposed to in my life, with a different culture than what I'd grown up with. But, yet, you know, we all had a lot in common and you—it kinda leveled the playing field. It didn't matter where you came from, whether a small town or big town or Dallas, Highland Park—you know, you all lived there together. You all basically had a bed, you know. So you mighta had a little better car than somebody else, but it was kind of a common denominator that you felt like that you were all on an equal footing—kinda like being in the military, to some extent. You didn't notice that wealth or disparity, and it gave you some confidence and ability to relate and to develop those kind of social skills that I think are very valuable in life.

[03:21:43] SL: Now I always heard that being a president of a fraternity is a lot like havin' [*SR drinks something*] to do the

dishes all the time—that you were—and you mentioned how you had to kinda look after folks and . . .

SR: Well, I did. I was—I won't say I was a bouncer, but I—now, I mean, I probably was a little bit intimidating because I was big, and I was still, you know, kinda the ex-football player and kinda walked around. I never had to violently confront anybody, but usually they paid attention when I said, you know, "That's enough. We need to stop this. Y'all need to go on"—you know, I was able to kinda control order—and, again, eliminated or prevented a lot of harassment, I think, from takin' place. We never had any real severe hazing when I was there. Not like I've heard of since or even before.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And I—you know, I—and I tried to control that when I was an officer and, you know, within limits. I mean, some of it was fun—you know, just natural stuff, but when it got to the point of harming someone or being a threat to someone's life or health . . .

SL: Self.

SR: . . . then it went too—yes, it went . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . too far. And we never really had that. We were, I think,

more conscious of protecting the pledges and the members and tryin' to build up rather than tear down. So . . .

[03:22:56] SL: Are you keepin' in touch with Mom and Dad while you're up in Fayetteville or just Dad?

SR: Some. Probably Mom more.

SL: Really?

SR: She'd come to see me occasionally, even though she had—she moved to Nashville . . .

SL: Nashville . . .

SR: . . . Tennessee . . .

SL: Tennessee. Okay.

SR: . . . right after that and remarried. [*Clears throat*] But I—Dad never came to college—never came to see me. You know, I'd come home and see him . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . but the only time he ever came up there was when I graduated from undergraduate. And that's the only time he ever came to Fayetteville. Again, he didn't travel much.

SL: Yeah.

[03:23:28] SR: But I'd call. You know, we'd talk on the telephone. And I'd come home usually once every month, generally—at least the first year or two. Now later on, I didn't as much. But,

again, you know, Mom had moved to Nashville, and I'd go up there Thanksgiving, Christmas, usually, and usually one time in the summer. But that really—you know, when she moved there, and I was so far away, I mean, our relationships kinda—never really go bad, but just—we weren't as close 'cause we didn't see each other as much.

SL: Right.

[03:23:56] SR: And our life kinda went their separate ways, and I was always still involved with Dad because of the farm. And I came back every summer—moved back every summer, you know, to farm with Dad. I've never had a summer job. I've never worked for anybody else in my life. *[Laughter]* I've never drawn a paycheck from anybody. You know, I've always either worked on the farm or had a law practice.

SL: Yeah.

[03:24:19] SR: So I guess I worked for Farm Bureau in some legal sense, I guess . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . so maybe I was employed there when I was president of Farm Bureau. But I always had that independence of, you know, you made it yourself, and you know, your success returned by your own efforts. And nobody else is gonna do it for you. And

that's kinda the—that's the way farmin' is. I mean, you can't blame anybody else for your mistakes. The buck kinda stops here. It's a very challenging life, but it's not boring. I mean, everything is different. You're dealing with the elements. You're dealing with markets. You're dealing with government policy, trading rules, the value of the dollar, you know, embargoes, tariffs—I mean, all these things. And you're tryin' to put all that together and make business decisions on all those variables and dealin' with the pestilence and the herbicides and the chemicals and, you know, planting seeds and genetics. I mean, it's just a . . .

SL: Lots of elements.

[03:25:08] SR: It's lots of different things to try to put together to—you know, to try to be able to make money and be profitable. And it's a very risky business, but it's somethin' I enjoy. It's very challenging, and I've always enjoyed it. And my son—you know, he followed my footprint—footsteps, as I've mention. He's back farming—really doin' most of the heavy liftin' on the farm now and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and really enjoying it. And he's getting married, and he's twenty-nine—getting married this summer, so . . .

SL: Congratulations.

SR: . . . kinda starting—and he's living here. He's actually living in [*clears throat*] our old house before we—where we lived before we bought this house. [03:25:40] We've moved—I guess, from the brick house we've moved to a couple other houses in town before we got to where we are now, and he's living in our previous home where he's . . .

SL: Now . . .

SR: . . . where he grew up most of the time.

SL: Who are you talkin' about when you say "we?"

SR: We? Probably me and Charlene. [*Laughs*]

[03:25:55] SL: Okay. Well, let's talk about Charlene just a little bit.

Did you . . .

SR: Okay.

SL: Where did you all meet? How did you meet?

SR: We met at the SAE house—Fayetteville. And I guess that's one of the reasons that I'm so fond of fraternities, because that's where I met my wife. She was a Kappa Kappa Gamma. David Stanley introduced us. His older brother, Joe Stanley, and Charlene's older brother, Dennis Berner, who played for the Razorbacks—you may remember was safety for the Razorbacks.

[03:26:21] They were SAEs together. So that's how Charlene

knew David Stanley. David was a year younger than me in the fraternity, from Augusta, and he introduced us. And then, you know, I just briefly got to meet her there. She was actually president of Chimes, which was the girls' service organization on campus for supposedly the top twenty freshman girls selected as Chimes. Just like Cardinal 20 was for the men.

SL: Yeah.

[03:26:48] SR: I was president of Cardinal 20 the year before she was president of Chimes. I was actually "Greek Week" chairman when I met her with a girl named Carlana Reed, who is now Carlana Lambert, married to Bob Lambert, who's an attorney in Springdale.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Carlana and I were—we were good friends even from high school. She was from Benton or Malvern, but we were involved in student council work, and I met her on a student council trip when we went to Houma, Louisiana, in high school. And we were friends in college—never dated, but just—she's just a lovely person to be around. And we were Greek Week chairmen that year, and we had the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band coming in for a concert.

SL: I remember.

[03:27:22] SR: They had been there the year before, and we were tryin' to schedule a big group for the Greek Week 'cause that was always the culmination of all the week's activities.

SL: Yep.

SR: And every—everywhere we went we got turned down, you know. And we were down to the month before the concert and didn't have a big-name concert booked. And Carlena was a very strong Christian, and we prayed, you know, that God could use this to somehow, you know, make this work out, that He'd send us a group. And the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band had been there the year before, and it's cardinal rule—you never bring another group back, you know, the next year. I mean, you gotta—you know, you gotta bring somebody new in. Well, they're the only group we could get. But they had been such a hit the year before that we had two sellout performances. And we actually made money on this concert. [*Laughter*] And we knew we were gonna have a big crowd, so I needed some ushers for the concert. So Charlene Berner was president of Chimes, and they were kinda the official hostess for the university, so I needed to get her to get her girls to be the ushers for the concert. So we had—got to talk, you know, and identified with each other durin' that process. And then at the concert, for some reason, she and

I kinda, you know, were together a lot and ended up holdin' hands for some reason. And, you know . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] It was . . .

SR: . . . it was kinda . . .

SL: . . . the song.

SR: . . . kinda love at first sight. [*SL laughs*] Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SR: "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," maybe. [*Laughter*] I don't know.

[*Laughs*] But it was the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and just a great, fun time—great—you know, we had two big sell-out crowds, made money and everybody—all the world was well. But we started dating after that and really never dated anybody else. And got engaged, I guess, about nine months after that, and got married after my senior year. She still had one more year in college. [03:29:00] And then she was from Little Rock. Her dad was the executive vice-president of Arkansas Farm Bureau.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Oh . . .

SR: So . . .

SL: . . . boy!

SR: You know, all these webs . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . kinda come together here. And of course, I didn't know anything about Farm Bureau at the time either, but just a wonderful family. And I told her, and I told her family, "You know, I'm just as much in love with your family as I am with you. Even though I love you, Charlene, I love your family, too," because I missed that family camaraderie and relationship. And they have a wonderful family. [03:29:28] And you know, very strong family unit, and I really admired that about, you know, her family and just—they treated me, you know, just royally—just brought me in as one of the family, and I mean, it was just a—we've had a great relationship—been married thirty-seven years and—be thirty-seven this June, I guess. And so—but that's where we met, and so when I say "we," it's me and Charlene, I guess.

SL: Okay, I knew that, but I'd . . .

SR: That's the "we." [*Laughter*]

SL: I just wanted to . . .

SR: Yeah.

[03:29:55] SL: . . . clear that up for everyone else listening that [*SR clears throat*] may not know. But—so she was a year behind you. You graduate.

SR: Right.

SL: But she finishes her degree?

SR: Yeah, I started my first year in law school while she finished her undergraduate. And then she started to graduate school. She got a teaching assistantship in home economics, teaching clothing and textiles. So she had a graduate assistantship, which was a two-year program to get her master's degree while I'm finishing my second and third year of law school. So we both graduate at the same time.

[03:30:27] SL: So y'all stuck in Fayetteville.

SR: Yeah, for three years there after we're . . .

SL: After you were married.

SR: . . . after we married. But again, we'd moved back and forth every summer to the farm. I didn't work up there durin' the summer. I worked—I had some odd jobs workin'—I clerked for a couple years at a law firm, Wade, McAlister—Wade, and Burke. A law firm uptown.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Johnny Elvridge . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . was a fraternity brother of mine, and he got me the job there—wanted to know if I wanted to clerk, and he was a good student, and, I guess, you know, he had noticed me when I was

in the house and leadership and grades and stuff, so . . .

[03:30:57] SL: So let's see, that's Lynn Wade.

SR: Yeah, Lynn Wade. That's right. Yeah.

SL: Well, I call Lynn, Brother Lynn.

SR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Well, he probably doesn't remember me. But Rudy Moore . . .

SL: Sure.

SR: . . . was in there, and course, I saw Rudy at a ball game not long ago, and he remembers me, and of course, Tom Burke is dead now, but he had Marianna ties. His family was originally from Marianna. His father was a judge here at Marianna. [03:31:17] So—but I had a great experience learning the law and, really, the practical application of law there. And—but again, we'd come home every summer, you know, to farm. I mean, I just felt like I was needed on the farm and just enjoyed—looked forward to it.

[03:31:31] SL: Well, now so Charlene's dad was with Farm Bureau.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: Were they farmers?

SR: No. He grew up on a farm in northwest Arkansas—a very small—like, a forty-acre chicken—uh—cattle farm. But, really—

you know, the family struggled, and he kinda helped work off the farm to help support the family. And he went to the war and came back on the GI Bill, and that's when he went to the University of Arkansas. [03:31:57] And his—Charlene's mother and dad were high school sweethearts, and so they married durin' the war, actually. And then he came back and worked for the extension service after he got his college degree from the University of Arkansas, and he worked the extension service—a couple of counties—but ended up in Russellville. And that's where Charlene was born and spent, I guess, the first nine, ten years there in Russellville while he was extension agent, and then, I guess, when he was—she was two, he started workin' for Farm Bureau and became a regional field man for Arkansas Farm Bureau. And then he became a lobbyist—their chief lobbyist—and that's when they moved to Little Rock, when she was about—I think about nine years old.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Nineteen sixty-one, I think . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SR: . . . is about when she moved there.

SL: Yeah.

[03:32:39] SR: And he was chief lobbyist for eight or ten years, and

then he became executive vice-president, I think, in 1972.

About the time I met Charlene, he became executive vice-president, which is the chief administrative officer Farm Bureau.

[03:32:50] SL: Okay. Well, let's talk a little bit about law school.
First-year law school.

SR: Quite an adjustment. [*Laughter*] I was an engineer—used to solving math problems—and I didn't—I went to law school because I took a couple of business law courses as electives, and I had Hugh Kincaid and Dick Halperin, I believe, was the other gentleman.

SL: That sounds right. Mh-hmm.

SR: And great professor. But Hugh Kincaid—I still credit him. You know, he was such a kind—had such a great demeanor about him, and I still tell him this, that, "Hugh, you're really responsible for me goin' to law school," because he intrigued my interest in the study of law and in cases and factual situations and how courts make determinations and just the study of law—it just somehow intrigued me. And so I said, "Well, you know, I don't—really don't want a graduate degree in engineering. I've gotta go to school two more—at least two more years. Course, Charlene's up here, you know, and I'm not gonna leave her. She needs to get her degree. So I'll just try to go to law school."

You know, and back then, goin' from engineering to law was a big jump 'cause I didn't read a whole lot in engineering. You know, you had—we took some Western civ and some other courses—literature courses. But when I got to law school, you know, you read all the time.

[03:34:04] SL: Yeah, but you get the—you have the analytical skills . . .

SR: [*SR drinks something*] Maybe that's what it was. I don't know. But I remember . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: I remember the first—I was in contracts. Al Witte was the professor, sitting right next to Skip Rutherford. [*SL laughs*] We were in the first year of law—and we were all shakin' in our boots 'cause Al had a pretty intimidating personality back then. I know he's changed a little bit now but never will forget—we—you know, he kept—everybody kept sayin', "When he starts callin' on people in class, you better watch out 'cause, boy, he'll just cut you down to nothin'." We were all scared to death. And about three weeks into the year, he's comin' in—he's lookin' at the roll. We all sit—you know, he had us all assigned. He knew where we were all sitting, he looks down over his glasses, you know. He looks up, and he doesn't call on anybody. Did this for

three weeks, and finally, we were studyin' *Lucy v. Zehmer*. I never will forget the—it's the "reasonable man" test. And, of course, that's the fundamental ingredient for any tort case or any civil wrong is, "What would a reasonable man do under the circumstances?" And that's the *Lucy versus Zehmer* case.

[03:35:12] So he's lookin' over this roll. He hadn't called on anybody yet, you know, the first year. [SL laughs] "Is there a Stanley Reed in the room?" And ol' Rutherford hit me [laughs] like that [swings hand to the side]. Course, back then they wanted us to stand up, you know. "Mr. Reed, would you recite this case—the rule of law in this case?" And, course, I'm shaking in my boots, you know. And I said somethin', and I got somethin' mixed up. I forgot what—I forgot how I mixed—I juxtaposed a sentence, and he laughed, you know. "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Well, you almost got it right," or somethin'. You know, made some kind of slide remark. But, you know, I never will forget that. Ever time I see Skip Rutherford, to this day, he said, "Is there a Stanley Reed in the room?" [Laughter]

[03:35:50] So it was quite a—quite an adjustment, but I loved the study of law—the research, the reading, analysis of the case. And the way the court determines, you know, the application of the law to the facts. And I never will forget Wylie Davis. He

was—he taught us—what did he teach? He taught us torts, I think. And he's up there preachin'. "Why did"—he was talkin' about the facts of the case, you know. "Why did the court come to this conclusion? How did the court know what the facts were? Why did the court—why are these the facts?" And the question—the answer was because the jury said they're the facts. The jury is the fact finder, you know. The judge applies the law, but the jury tells you what the facts are when the—so when the evidence is in dispute, it's the jury that determine what the facts are. [03:36:39] So I always remembered those little things that people threw in to really, you know, drive home to you the points of law, and how you determine, you know, who makes determination, what's the jury's function, what's the judge's function. And then, you know, the reasonable man test—again, you know, that's still relevant today, you know. What would a reasonable man do? And if it's not what a reasonable man—course, that's really a figment of the law. There's no such thing as a reasonable man, [*laughter*] you know. We've all got some abnormalities some way or another.

SL: Yeah.

[03:37:05] SR: But again I was—law school, you know, I was—very few times I've had trouble sleeping in life, but the first test of my

freshman year in law school—you know, you don't take any tests durin' the semester. You have one exam. It's all essay at the end of the semester. You know, I didn't sleep a wink. It was a property exam, and I didn't sleep a wink that whole night, and I said, "I'm gonna flunk out of law school. I mean, here I go back to the farm, I guess." But I think I made a B on my first exam—you know, I was just unbelievable. And I ended up makin' B's and maybe a A or two that first semester.

SL: That's big.

[03:37:40] SR: Yeah, it was big back then. I mean, it was real big for me. But then I just—I kinda into the groove in the study, and I pretty well—you know, I made A's and B's. I mean, I was pretty well at the top of my class. I made the highest score on several of the exams, you know, in the different classes—contracts, torts, domestic relations. So . . .

[03:37:59] SL: Now who was teachin' property? Was that Guzman or was Guzman . . .

SR: No, I had . . .

SL: . . . after you? Tryin' to remember . . .

SR: Who was my property law teacher? I remember Miss Osenbaugh was my criminal law and constitutional law. I actually never had Bill or Hillary Clinton. They were—they taught . . .

SL: They'd already . . .

SR: . . . different sect . . .

SL: . . . gone, right?

SR: No, they were still there.

SL: They were still there?

SR: That's when they came, [19]74.

SL: Okay.

SR: [Nineteen] seventy-three. They were there. Property—it was a lady that didn't stay very long. Tom Burke taught property, but I didn't have him.

SL: Mh-hmm. Okay.

[03:38:29] SR: And I forget who my property—but I had F. H.

Martin. I had him in estate tax. Bob Lancaster. Had him in a tax course—federal income tax. I had the venerable, famous . . .

SL: Leflar.

SR: Yes.

SL: Now, didn't . . .

SR: Dr. Leflar.

SL: . . . he tea—he was the big . . .

SR: Con . . .

SL: . . . torts guy.

SR: Well, and conflicts of law is where I had him.

SL: Conflicts.

SR: I had him in conflicts. And . . .

[03:38:48] SL: And well, talk about one of his classes.

SR: Well, he had a unique teaching ability that he could take a very complicated issue and just bring it down to very simple analysis. And, I mean, he—and he taught federal judges conflicts of laws. You know, not in between—only between states but between governments, between nations. And just a fabulous teacher. He had a brilliant mind. And course, then he was teachin' for free, and that was during that period where you had a forced retirement age at sixty-five, and they couldn't pay you—you could—if you wanted to volunteer your time—and he was in his seventies, and he was teaching for free. And he was writing books and writing treatises and just to be able to take classes under him and to see him teach, and you know, he would—he didn't use the Socratic method that much—not like Al Witte did. Al—you know, that was the Socratic method, and I mean, it was really intimidating, kinda like *Paper Chase* if you saw that movie.

SL: Yeah.

[03:39:42] SR: And I saw that movie right after my freshman year in law school, and I was just—I mean, ah—ooh! Just a repeat of

all the drama [*laughs*] you'd been through all year. But Leflar was different. He was a—just a great mind, and you know, I really—I learned a lot about the law and conflicts and how you determine, you know, which state laws apply, and it's always the law of the situs—you know, that was something—the law of the situs is where the act occurred. That was kinda the general rule you used. But it was a real experience being able to study under him and just had a lot of great law school professors. And I enjoyed the study of the law. I never thought I wanted to be a lawyer. [03:40:20] You know, I just never had that desire to be in the courtroom. I wanted to be outside, to be honest. I wanted to do something different and—but still the study of law was a great education, and I think it prepares you for anything you go into in life. And I highly recommend it to anybody, because it is such a good general education. To me, it's better than an MBA—at that point in time in my life it was, because I think it just broadens your horizons more.

[03:40:46] SL: Atkinson. Did he teach . . .

SR: Dick Atkinson. He . . .

SL: He . . .

SR: . . . taught me . . .

SL: He taught prop . . .

SR: . . . domestic relation . . .

SL: Domestic relations.

SR: . . . as well as Newbern.

SL: David Newbern.

SR: David Newbern. [03:40:54] Who was—went on to be a supreme court justice. Dick actually taught me civil procedure, I think, and another guy named Richard Richards—do you remember Richard Richards?

SL: Sure. Yeah.

SR: Who would ever name their son Richard Richards? [*Laughter*]
But, great—kind of a heavyset guy but . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . a great teacher. We just—we had some great professors there and . . .

[03:41:12] SL: Well, talk about Dick Atkinson. I mean, he was always kind of a favorite, wasn't he?

SR: He was. He was a student's professor. I mean . . .

SL: He was . . .

SR: . . . he wouldn't badger anybody. I mean, he—you know, he was so mild mannered, and he wanted you to enjoy his class, and he didn't want you to be afraid of him. I mean, just a great guy. Howard Brill was another one.

SL: Sure.

[03:41:35] SR: Howard helped—he came—I don't if—I think it was my second year, and he helped us start the Christian Legal Society there at law school, which I think is still going on now. And he was the ethics teacher. But he was—he's still the—one of the few that's still around.

SL: Yeah.

SR: But Dick Atkinson—we were friends, you know, from the time until he came until—you know, until passed away, and that was a real loss for the law school, when he—his demise. Just a great man and just loved the students—I mean, just had a great rapport with students. [03:42:03] Steve Clark was the dean of admissions. Again a great people person. And there were several of us that'd go play basketball down at—it was Barnhill back then.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It was me, a guy named Rex Terry, Lu Hardin . . .

SL: Lu. Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . Ted Yates—Rex is attorney in Fort Smith—Bill Clinton, Steve Clark, me, a guy named Norman Wilber—Putt Wilber from Mountain Home.

SL: Didn't know him.

SR: He's an attorney over there. [03:42:32] And there were probably a couple of more, but those are kinda the ones I remember. Eight or ten of us, and we'd go down there periodically and play basketball, you know, in between classes or after class or somethin'. So—and it was kinda interestin' to play ball with those kind of folks that—kinda see where everybody's gone in different . . .

SL: Well . . .

SR: . . . directions.

[03:42:48] SL: How were those guys on the court?

SR: They were very—competitors, you know.

SL: I mean, you were the biggest guy, though, right?

SR: Well, yeah, and I was pretty good basketball player. You know, I was tall, and I was in shape 'cause I played a lot of intramural basketball. [03:43:00] And Bill Clinton was a real competitor. [SL laughs] Didn't have a lot of athletic skills [SL laughs], but he'd love to get in there and rough it up, you know, and elbow you and push you around and just, you know, just kinda the camaraderie of doin' it and competition and [SL laughs]—Lu Hardin was a good athlete—good.

SL: Yeah?

SR: I remember he had a good shot—a good basketball player. So I

remember those—you know, again, athletic . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . competitiveness and . . .

SL: Sure.

SR: . . . teamwork and workin' together and enjoyed those days.

[03:43:25] SL: Did you get to go to the Atkinson's memorial service?

SR: I did not, and I . . .

SL: Oh.

SR: . . . had some conflict with Farm Bureau.

SL: Remind me, and I'll send you a . . .

SR: I made a contribution to the fountain.

SL: Yeah.

SR: The . . .

SL: Remind me to send you a DVD of that.

SR: Okay.

SL: You will love it.

SR: I would. I'd like . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: I hate . . .

SL: Al Witte . . .

SR: . . . that I missed that. Yeah, I hate I missed that.

SL: . . . talks about—I—you'll love it.

SR: Yeah.

SL: So let's remember that.

SR: M'kay.

[03:43:49] SL: Well, my gosh—okay, so you get to that Fayetteville law school—UA Law School in Fayetteville—at a really prime time.

SR: Oh, I did.

SL: You got—well, first of all, you got to have Leflar.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: That in itself is . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . enough reason to be there.

SR: Yeah, it was. Looking back on it . . .

SL: You could talk to anybody and . . .

SR: Anybody around the country.

SL: . . . if you got a chance to be in his class . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . you'd—that was somethin' else and—but all those other guys—and then, of course, Bill and Hillary were there.

SR: Yeah.

SL: Even though you didn't have 'em, you were in that class.

SR: I had contact with them, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and was able to see—have appreciation for their high level of intelligence and teaching abilities—both of 'em. They were great teachers. I knew that, and—[03:44:38] I never will forget, we had a [*clears throat*—it was durin' the Nixon-Watergate trial. And the issue about the tapes and executive privilege. And we had a—we were having a—kind of an assembly of law school students to have a debate on executive privilege, and why or why not President Nixon ought to give the tapes up. Well, there was a kind of a panel, and I forget who all was on the panel, but all the panel was saying—"Well, Nixon has no right because it's criminal activity—has no right not to give the tapes over. You know, he violated the law, and he's a criminal, he's a thug, you know. He's gotta give it up. He has no legal grounds whatsoever." And one student spoke up—he said, "I thought this supposed to be a debate. We're talkin' about the president of the United States here. Surely he got some reason why he could hang on to these tapes." [03:45:28] And you know who it was that defended President Nixon's right to keep the Watergate tapes and not handin' 'em over?

SL: In this debate?

SR: In this debate.

SL: Well, I know Hillary did [*SR laughs*] work on the other side of the fence, didn't she? No. Who was it?

SR: Well, I don't know—Bill Clinton got up and defended President Nixon as to why . . .

SL: Is that right?

SR: . . . why he should [*SL laughs*] not have to give those tapes up. [*Unclear words*] executive privilege.

SL: Now how about that?

[03:45:48] SR: So you know, that just made—you know, so of all the people in the world to be defendin' Richard Nixon and defendin' his executive privilege on givin' up the Watergate tapes, you wouldn't think it'd be Bill Clinton. But he did, and that showed you his ability to understand the law and rationale and reasoning and to gauge an argument based upon whatever facts he had. And I mean, he has such a great recall and great intellectual skills as well as great political skills. And that was noted, you know, at a very early age by all of us. And so we knew he was going somewhere. We didn't know how fast or how quick, but I mean, it was no secret he wanted to be president of United States even back then.

[03:46:28] SL: There's something riveting about his eye contact

isn't there?

SR: There is.

SL: I mean, there is just something about him that . . .

SR: Well, he just—he has a demeanor about him that's so affectionate. That's so warm. And so personal. I mean, when he looks at you, it's like he's not looking, but—he's not looking anywhere in the world but straight in your eyes. And he's focusing his 100-percent attention on you, and I think that's why he's loved by so many people. You may not like his politics, but you got to like him as a person . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, because he's so genuine. And he's that way. I mean, it's not just a front that he's putting on to be, you know, politically popular. I mean, that's just the way he is. And he's still that way.

SL: Yeah.

[03:47:10] SR: You know, the people that know him. And I've run into him, and he never forgets your name. I mean, I've run into him several times since then. I've got a note right there on my wall from him when we were sharing a stage of when I was chairman of the Board of Trustees, and we were at the math and science school at Hot Springs, and he was a speaker, and I was

representing the board and gave a little welcome on behalf of the board. And we sit there and shook hands with all the students and talked about eating bear meat and all the things he did on the campaign trail, you know, and then he wrote me this nice note that talks about—"Well, to be one of my former students, you didn't turn out too bad," or somethin', you know. [SL laughs] Just still the same congenial person that he always was and, you know, here, the president of the United States, and he still has this—these same great people skills. It's just—it's an attribute that few people have. A lot of people emulate, but few people have that just inborn ability to be able to relate to people and remember people's names the way he did. I mean, it was just a—he was a phenomenon in politics that the world probably will not see for a long time.

[03:48:21] SL: Yeah. He did have a—he has this ability to make two disparate—you know, two opposite entities figure out how to . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . make a consensus.

SR: And he was a consensus builder.

SL: Yeah.

SR: He did not burn bridges behind him. You know, even when—in Farm Bureau, while he was president, I was very active on the

state board of Farm Bureau. And even though we didn't always agree with him, he never burned bridges with us, and he always said, "Well you know, I may not agree with you on this thing, but I—but there'll be something else that we can agree on. I'll need your help on another issue." So whether it be a trade issue—he was real big on expanding trade and doin' things good for business. He was also good on raisin' taxes, which we usually disagreed with him on. But we had a lot of things we could work together, and I think agriculture not only in Arkansas, but when he became president, we had good agricultural prosperity because of his trade policies—opening up markets and understanding Southern agriculture the [SL sniffs] way he did because he was around that as a governor. And I think we worked with him a lot in Farm Bureau—that he understood. He had a lot of farmers that were his counselors and strong supporters in Arkansas, so—at least in the agriculture realm, I think he served us well.

[03:49:25] SL: What was I gonna say about him when you—oh, it's interesting, you know, he also grew up in a household where there was friction.

SR: Yeah.

SL: I'm just—that just kinda . . .

SR: Yeah, he did.

SL: . . . came . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . to me.

SR: And he overcame his . . .

SL: Overcame that. Yeah.

SR: Probably much greater [*laughs*] than I've overcome mine
but . . .

SL: Well, his was pretty violent, I think.

SR: Yeah, mine wasn't.

SL: Yeah.

SR: He had much tougher than I did.

[03:49:47] SL: Well, what about Hillary? Did you ever get to spend
any time with her?

SR: Not that much. You know, she just wasn't as outgoing. She was
good friends with good friends of mine, Meredith and Graham
Catlett.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Meredith worked with her on a lot of different things, but I just
never developed much of a relationship with Hillary. I don't
even know if she knew who I was. Bill did, but just because of
our playin' ball together and doin' some things together. And he

just had a way of—you know, his political skills—but Hillary's are good, but Bill's are out [*SL laughs*] the top, you know. [*Laughs*]
He's . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . wantin' to know everybody . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . and what they did.

SL: He raised the bar.

SR: He raised the bar.

[03:50:25] SL: Let's see, back then Jim Blair was in there somewhere—I mean, he was practicing law.

SR: Yeah, I never . . .

SL: But he was friends with that . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . with those folks, but . . .

SR: But I never really had much contact with him. You know, I have since I've been on the Board of Trustees . . .

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SR: . . . and just maintain—just a very casual relationship. I think he was general counsel for Tyson maybe . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . durin' that time, so I never had much contact with him.

[03:50:53] SL: Okay. Well, we gotta get you outta Fayetteville, I guess. I mean, you were at that law school at what I would consider a pretty magical time. In fact, Fayetteville in the second half of those [19]60s—the whole [19]60s thing in Fayetteville into the [19]70s was . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . pretty amazing.

SR: It was a very exciting time to be a student up there, and you know, it seemed like the whole focus of the state was there on campus, and again, I just—I made such great friendships through those years that I still maintain. You know, it's amazing the people I run into that I hadn't seen in thirty years, and, I guess, because maybe some of my, you know, positions I've been in, I've been—my picture's been splashed around a little bit.

SL: Yeah.

[03:51:36] SR: And they've heard my name, and, you know, they make a point to come up and see me and introduce themselves and they—you know, after thirty years some of 'em I don't remember as well as I should, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . but just a lot of great contacts and friendships that I've been

able to—have been a great part of my life over the years.

[03:51:53] SL: So you've got under your belt [*SR clears throat*] a really—a pretty dynamic education out—comin' out of Fayetteville, and you're headin' back home.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And you're still—you still have this farming desire in your belly. But you've got a law degree and everyone's tellin' you, "You ought" . . .

SR: "You gotta prac" . . .

SL: . . . "to be practicin' [*laughs*] law" . . .

SR: "You gotta practice law."

SL: . . . "if you've gone to all this trouble, [*SR laughs*] and you've survived it." And so you come back here. Now what happens when you get back here after you all . . .

SR: Well . . .

SL: . . . move out of Fayetteville?

[03:52:26] SR: . . . I come back again. We'd been comin' back every summer, so we came back after law school, and I started farmin'.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, helped Dad get the crop in. We had about—I guess that year—we're still farmin' two or three—two thousand acres,

little better. And then the bar exam was in August, and I—so I took off six weeks before the bar exam and started studyin' and really never had any intention to open a practice up. You know, I just wanted to farm. I was gonna take the bar exam. I thought about not even takin' the bar exam, to be honest . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:52:53] SR: . . . because I wanted to farm that bad. So I studied really hard for six weeks—you know, just the same routine I'd gone through in law school—just usually read everything twice. You know, that's—that was my secret in law school. I'd read a case pretty quick, and then I'd really read it and make notes in the margin, you know, and brief it and really study it. I was a slow learner. I always had to read it twice to [*laughter*] learn what it says.

SL: Yeah, right.

SR: So I did that in law school, and honestly, I prayed a lot and just felt a real peace about takin' the bar exam—again, thinkin' I probably flunked it. And I was out workin' on a—after we took the test—three-day exam—all essay. [03:53:33] I wrote I don't know how many blue books—I don't know—eighty or ninety pages I wrote, you know. I couldn't write that good. I was surprised they read my writing, but—we didn't have any multi-

state part then. It was all essay. No objective part. All subjective. And—but I was actually workin' on a grain cart and repainting it and refinish it and out at the shop. And Charlene came and told me I passed the bar exam. Not only did I pass, I made the highest score, you know. And, gosh, I [*laughs*]—"Surely she's [*laughter*] wrong. No way that coulda happened." But I did, and then the expectations were really high. "Man, you gotta practice law now, you know." And, honestly, we were in the process of losing some land that we were leasing, and we didn't have much land to farm the next year. So I did open a law practice and—just a solo practitioner. I had the opportunity to go in with a firm or two, but I really didn't want to because I wanted to farm.

SL: Yeah.

[03:54:25] SR: And so I practiced, and I'd go in the office and practice till about two o'clock in the afternoon, unless I had a court appearance or somethin'. But I'd try to get out around two to go to the farm to—you know, to work 'cause we didn't have much land, and I was tryin' to do everything I can so we didn't have to hire a bunch of labor. And so I ran—I'd go run the combine at night and then get up the next morning and go to the law office, and Dad'd runnin' the combine in the mornin', and

we didn't have another combine driver, so he'd run it in the mornin' till I got there, and I'd run it the afternoon. Again we're down about a thousand acres, so it wasn't—didn't have a whole lot of farmland to deal with. And actually, it was located at Helena, Arkansas, where the casino is now—right across the river there—that overflow ground. That's where we're—that was our main farming land.

SL: Over in Mississippi.

[03:55:06] SR: Over in Mississippi—yeah—for about two years there. And then, 1978, we got an opportunity to lease another big farm thirty miles below Clarksdale, Mississippi. So you know, I couldn't do that and continue to farm—continue to practice law, so I really closed my office. I still had a lot of cases that I continued to—you know, to work on and to try to finish the law practice.

[03:55:34] SL: But you didn't take on any more.

SR: Didn't take on any more—now other than, you know, maybe a will or a property transaction. I had some legal . . .

SL: Some friends or somethin' . . .

SR: . . . some legal secretaries in town that would help me. And so I really—I main—had kind of a part-time practice durin' the winter. Tried a case or two through the winter, and . . .

[03:55:50] SL: How'd you do?

SR: I lost. [*Laughter*] I tried one big one against David Solomon, the only jury trial I ever had and, course, it—I say I lost. I mean . . .

SL: I talked with him the other day.

SR: Did you?

SL: Yeah.

SR: David Solomon?

SL: Yeah.

SR: Oh, he's a brain. Man, he was on the highway commission then—just a—you know, just a huge lawyer. Just a great guy.

[03:56:08] SL: Well, so . . .

SR: He was very kind to me.

SL: . . . what was the case?

SR: It was a personal injury case. I was representing a lady who'd gotten hit from behind. It was kind of a hit and run. I mean, it was a obvious case of liability, and I was representin' the lady, you know. It shoulda been easy shut—open-shut case, but with David Solomon on the other side, a little more of a challenge. But we came—we went to the jury and ended up—we settled before the jury came back, and you know, we got a settlement out of it, but might coulda got more money, but I—it—probably

I'd committed so many irreversible errors, we'd been in court forever. [Laughs] So I know he would've appealed it, even if we'd got much of a verdict. But a real learning experience for me. But probably convinced me that my talents were better used out on the farm [laughs] they were in the courtroom. But a—you know, a good experience, and I had, you know, a lot of municipal court cases—DWIs and more probate work, title work, deed transaction—real estate. Commercial law-type things. I did that and handled several estates, and I even handled an estate up through 1995, I guess—still maintained my license and did some work off—you know, kind of in the winter months. But, primarily, we were farming. You know, I didn't have a regular office, and I had an office in my home that I did what little legal work I did out of that. But tryin' to expand the farm and get a toehold there and leased a lot of land in Mississippi and ended up farming about five thousand acres down there. [SL vocalized noise] [03:57:33] You know, eighty miles or thirty miles—what was that? Eighty—seventy-five to eighty miles away from home. And then we started pickin' up land in Arkansas in the early- to mid-[19]80s, so we had two operations goin' there for a few years and movin' equipment back and forth and, you know . . .

SL: Now are you—you're still leasin' land?

SR: Oh yeah. Yeah, we're still leasin' land durin' all this time.

SL: Okay.

SR: Started buyin' some in 1983. We bought about nine hundred acres in 1983. Well, I say bought—we just were able to come up with the down payment, and we were turned down two or three times to get a loan, so we finally got insurance company to loan us some money so we could buy a piece of land. [*Laughs*]
So . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:58:06] SR: But still leasing a lot of land, and course, the goal was to try to—you know, to buy enough land that we could eventually turn loose some land in Mississippi and—you know, and try to consolidate and to cut our acreage back. And so we were farming all the way from close to West Memphis—a place called Round Pond. It's between—it's Widener, Arkansas. I don't know if you know where Widener is.

SL: Yeah. Sure.

SR: But it was all the way up there—all the way thirty miles south of Clarksdale. That was our span . . .

SL: Man!

SR: . . . we were goin'. So . . .

SL: That's a lot of commuting.

[03:58:32] SR: Tryin' to grow [*SL laughs*—tryin' to raise three children. I mean, it was a real . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

SR: . . . real challenge.

SL: There is that goin' on, too.

SR: Yeah, that's goin' on, too, and we're all in Marianna still, and we're commuting back and forth.

[03:58:40] SL: And are you in the brick house at that time?

SR: No, we're in a big white—we're in a big house. Our . . .

SL: Okay.

SR: We had three kids at that time. We had our first child born in [19]73—I mean—excuse me—[19]77; second one in [19]80; and then the last one [19]82, so we had three children. We'd moved in a big older house—fixed it up—worked on it every year, you know. It was one of these big ol' money pits.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[03:58:59] SR: But a great home for us, and it was . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . kind of a—the real beginner home, but we, you know, learned how to be a carpenter and sheet rock and . . .

SL: Sure.

SR: Well, that's—we'd did that in the wintertime, you know,
that's . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: We did—every winter . . .

SL: Me, too.

SR: . . . we had a project. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: But a great home for our children. Big house. Lots of room.
Kinda indestructible. But we really enjoyed that, and that was
through the [19]80s and, again, tryin' to gr—you know, raise
your family and then all this farming goin' on and tryin' to get a
foothold financially and just really struggling. I mean, you know,
struggling—not—really thinking you were bankrupt every year.
And in 1986 we really were bankrupt. We couldn't pay our
debts. Couldn't pay our farm loan off. And went to Mountain
Home. Judge John Dan Kemp, who was then an attorney, just
got elected circuit judge, and we were very—good friends of
ours. We were in law school together, and our wives taught
together. [03:59:50] Susan and Charlene taught together in
home ec, and we had maintained friendships with them, and he
was gonna sell me his law practice. I was very seriously—you
know, I thought we were probably gonna be—you know, couldn't

farm anymore 'cause, I mean, it really looked bad. And we ended up getting a disaster—some sort of a disaster program, which was just enough money to kinda pay our debts and keep goin'. And that was really the low ebb, you know, in agriculture for us because the next year we rented some land in Arkansas—a big farm up here that a SAE—wasn't a fraternity brother of mine, but he was an SAE, and he knew I was, too. Randy Pierson leased me some land, so—able to get out of Mississippi in 1986 and get everything back in Arkansas and—you know, and that was a real relief. [04:00:34] And durin' all this time, I mean, I wasn't involved in Farm Bureau that much—a little bit on the local level, but hadn't gone to any Razorback games since we got out of college 'cause, you know, our life was just so involved with farming and tryin' to get ahead financially and pay the debts and raise the kids and, you know, the things you do.

SL: You were in survival mode.

SR: Just survival mode, you know. That's all you're doin'. But, really, a lot of good times. I mean, you struggle, but lookin' back, it was a really development time in our family, but Charlene really kinda—you know, kept the family together when I was gone a lot 'cause I'd be gone all week. You know, we had a trailer down in Mississippi—we'd stay down there, and you

know, she was stayin' by herself with three young kids, and that was kind of a challenge, to say the least.

SL: You bet.

[04:01:15] SR: But she was very supportive and very much a loving wife and stood with me through all that, so—but that kinda brought us back to Arkansas, and then we started—we—and I got—it's about the time I got—friends with Jim Lindsey and started—able to pick up more land and buying a little bit more along and then—you know, and you know, not payin' for any of it—just borrowin' a lot of money is what we're doin'. And—you know, and then gradually through improving our lands and irrigation and, you know, good farming practices and a lot of hard work—I mean, I've—again, a lot of long hours. I mean, our standard time—we'd start at six o'clock in the morning, quit at eight at night—fourteen-hour days. And so we did that for a long time and—but . . .

[04:02:02] SL: Your dad's still workin' all this.

SR: Oh yeah, he's still workin'. In Mississippi, he kinda—he was the main cook and truck driver—and go get parts and stuff. And I kinda stayed there to keep everything goin' and drove some myself. But he cooked for us. He loved to cook. He was a great cook, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SR: He could cook any—cook cornbread. It'd rise four inches, so . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

SR: And he would kinda go get things, and he would drive the big truck to the elevator. But kinda had our own areas of expertise, and Dad was a very smart man—a good marketer. We always did well marketing our crops and didn't take a lot of inordinate risk. But even when we were in Arkansas, he was—he had a dream of gettin' some land paid for and, you know, accomplishin' somethin', and again we're goin' through all these divorces about that time, so there was some drag, you know, on our finances 'cause we just had this one farming pot to pay all the alimony and property settlements out of, and all that was comin' out of it. But again, because of the nature of the ladies he married, it was not near what it coulda been. I mean, it was a—coulda been disaster. [04:03:03] But the ladies—all three of 'em—Aladine, Maggie Spence, and Sue Reed, which Sue was who he was married to when he passed away. They were just all great ladies. And Aladine—we still go to church with her and, you know, she's—so we're still real close to her, and we were—it was kinda funny 'cause we would maintain good—he'd, you know, marry these ladies, we'd become real close to 'em, they'd be like

the grandparent—grandmother to our kids, you know, 'cause they lived here in Marianna . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:03:30] SR: . . . and he'd end up gettin' a divorce with 'em, and he'd be kinda mad 'cause we'd still be likin' his first wife, you know, or his second wife, [SL *laughs*] and he'd be [*laughter*] gone—so that created some tension, but it worked out fine.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It worked out fine. But it could've been a lot worse had those ladies not had the kind of spirit, and I think because of my relationship with all three of 'em, it—you know, they weren't near as tough as they coulda been. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . so it worked out fine.

[04:03:53] SL: Well, they probably saw the goodness . . .

SR: Well, and Dad . . .

SL: . . . in your family, and . . .

SR: . . . Dad took care of 'em, to some extent. I mean, he . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . he realized there was some responsibility on his part. But, still, what he took care of 'em was the money outta—I mean, he didn't have any independent money—just what we had in the

farm pot, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . there's just so much money there. So it was a struggle to try to grow a business and do the kinda things you need to do with . . .

[04:04:13] SL: Did you ever have to sit him down and say, "Now, Dad" . . .

SR: [*Laughter*] Well, there were a couple of times when [*laughter*] I said, "You know, let's at least get this alimony paid off fore you get married again," you know. We had two alimonies at one time we were payin' off. [*Laughter*] But again, you know, it worked out.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, there's a verse in the Bible that says honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on this earth. And that's a commandment with a promise, but I do think that God honors children who honor their parents. Maybe sometimes when, you know, there's some difficult circumstances there, but I always honored my father and respected him, knowin' that he wasn't perfect, but we're—none of us are perfect. But I think . . .

SL: That's right.

SR: . . . God blessed that relationship and financially has rewarded—not that God owes me anything, but I think that it's just worked out that way. So—but, anyway, we—you know, I guess the rest is history. As far as the farm, we were able to start buyin' land and, you know, payin' for it and makin' good crops. And 'stead of making a crop—good crop every three years, we were makin' good crops every year. And so . . .

SL: Well, that has a lot to do with . . .

SR: It does.

TM: We need to change tapes. Excuse me.

SL: Okay. *[TM clears throat]*

[Tape stopped]

[04:05:20] SL: Okay. So this is tape five—right, Trey?

TM: Yes.

SL: Stanley, we were *[SR clears throat]* talkin' about how you got back into farming.

SR: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you were havin' to travel all over the state of Mississippi and Arkansas, too, and it was not working. It was just not workin'. You are just on the verge of buying a law practice out of Mountain Home?

SR: Mountain View.

SL: Mountain View.

SR: I may've said Mountain Home. Mountain View.

[04:05:52] SL: And somehow or another, you were able to latch on through some kind of disaster-relief program. You were able to kinda save the dream, and you kinda fell into some circumstances where you started pickin' up property . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . back in Arkansas . . .

SR: Hmm.

SL: . . . which simplified . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . things a great deal for you and made it more [*SR clears throat*] likely that you can continue to be a farmer.

[04:06:20] SR: Well, we had survived [*SL clears throat*] in Mississippi on some of the poorest farmland in the country, and that—course, that was the reason we were able to lease it 'cause nobody down there wanted it. [*Laughs*] And, you know, our average soybean yields were, like, eighteen bushels per acre over a ten-year average, which is terrible. You can't even survive on that, and yet, we were surviving. So I knew that if we ever got land back in Arkansas that was productive land, that we could make it. So that was the crossing point, that we had to

get land back here that was productive land 'cause that was very unfertile land where we were farming down there. But we were still able, you know, by being very resourceful and doin' a lot of work ourselves and workin' all night and, you know, doin'—farming twice as much land for the equipment that we needed to far—you know, that we had. We pushed everything to the limit and were just able to stay in business. That's all we did. We just treaded water for ten years.

[04:07:07] SL: So [*SR clears throat*] you get back—really, you get back home.

SR: Yeah. I . . .

SL: Where you hadn't been for about [*laughs*] ten years tryin' . . .

SR: Well, you're right.

SL: . . . to make . . .

SR: It always—it'd been pulled, you know.

[04:07:18] SL: Yeah. So let's talk about that a little bit—about how the property started—how you started gaining ground here, literally.

SR: Well, it was mainly—it really—the responsibility for getting new land kinda transferred from my dad to me, and as good as dad was, he had burned a lot of bridges with landowners and people. And it was almost impossible for him to lease land back here.

But as I was takin' more and more management responsibilities over on the farm, people began to look at me as a farm manager—as the one to deal with and that's—I was the one that made the leases on the land in Arkansas, not Dad. And he was very much a part of the farmin' operation, but it's just that I was more out-front person, and I was easier to get along with and the—and, probably, in the community had a better reputation as far as being more of a family person—maybe a little more stable. You know, if you've been through four marriages, it kinda gives you a reputation [*laughs*] of being a little unstable—three at that point, I guess. [04:08:26] So I think because of that reputation and, honestly, because of my friendship with B Lindsey and Jim and my fraternity associations, I was able to kinda get land back in Arkansas and leasing land and added—we started growin' rice and, again, it was a real tough time in the [19]80s for farmland. I mean, people were goin' broke right and left. We were buying land for seven hundred dollars an acre that the owners had been offered two thousand dollars an acre the year before. I mean, it was that much of a plummet durin' the—you know, we had inflat—real high inflation and farm economy was terrible. So—but without that kind of stress in the farm economy, we never woulda had opportunity, you know, to own land. So, you know,

one man's downfall, I guess, is another's opportunity, so—and not that I wanted anybody—there were a lot bad things that happened back then. They were taking land away from farmers—Federal Land Bank and others were doin' some atrocious things to farmers. They weren't givin' 'em any kind of relief on their debt. The minute they were one minute past due on their payment, they took the land in lieu of foreclosure. They wouldn't relieve any of the debt from the farmer, but then they'd turn right around and sell that land to a Memphis investor for one-third the price that the farmer had before, and if they'd just given the farmer 10 percent of those terms, you know, he could've stayed there. [04:09:49] So I became very frustrated with the system, and what I thought—the farmers were getting a very bad shake in the mid-[19]80s 'cause I'd experienced some of that. And had I been a landowner, you know, during that time, I mean, I'da probably had the same problems. We couldn'ta paid 20 percent interest. The first land we bought, we were 15 percent interest, and luckily, we were able to negotiate with an insurance company a lower rate, because we couldn't make the payment either in 1986. I mentioned that to you—we were—had a very bad year, and we couldn't make the payment on the land. [*Clears throat*] But the insurance company—

Prudential Insurance Company—they worked with us and lowered our interest rates—let us have a little time to make the payment, because they knew it was better if we stayed on the farm—try to make that payment—it'd be much better'n them takin' that farm back in inventory and then tryin' to get rid of it through someone else because it was just a very—it was a very tough time in agriculture back in those—back in the [19]80s.

[04:10:38] But we were able to survive and eventually came out of it—one of the fortunate ones to do it. But it was some tough times and had a lot of friends that went bankrupt and lost their land. And had they been given half the benefits that some out-of-state investor was given, they could've stayed on the land and been successful. And it—that . . .

[04:10:57] SL: So this is really affecting friends and family here in Marianna.

SR: Oh, big time. Big time. Yeah. And, you know, it was really a stressful time in the agriculture community. Prices were very low. We had droughts during that period of time and then runaway inflation—higher interest rates—just the worst-case scenario.

SL: Perfect storm.

SR: Perfect storm. You know, [19]86 was a perfect storm. I mean,

we had very low yields, very low prices. You know, we just—it was just a terrible year, and I really thought from [19]80 through [19]86—[19]83 was a bad year. [Nineteen] eighty was a bad year. [Nineteen] eighty-six was a bad year. So you know, three out of six years or seven years were just really negative years. And so I'm—I mean, I guess I'm thankful we didn't own much land back then 'cause we couldn'ta made the land payments. We had trouble makin' what we [*laughs*] did on 'em. [04:11:50] But after [19]86, [19]87, [19]88, we bought a lot of land for six and seven hundred dollars an acre that the insurance company was just tryin' to get anybody to take up payments on it—you know, nonrecourse notes. I mean, you just make your deal, I mean—and the rent—normal rent would make the land payment. And you've never had those kind of cash flow situations very often in agriculture where you could borrow 100 percent of the money and the rent would make the land payment. But we were able to walk into some of those deals. So, you know, we increased our holdings from nine hundred acres to, you know, three thousand there over another ten- or fifteen-year period, just takin' on land that joined us and squarin' our farms up and tried not to get too much debt. You know, tried not to get it too unworkable, but manageable, and

just exercise, you know, prudent business practices and takin' on enough debt till we could see we could pay it off in a certain, you know, period of time. And that's what we did.

[04:12:41] SL: What's goin' on with the community while . . .

SR: Well . . .

SL: . . . while you guys are buildin' . . .

SR: . . . you're seein' a lot of people leave. I mean, that's when we really had a lotta—a lot of people left—went to Heber Springs, Mountain View, Mountain Home—they went to the hills like I was considering goin' to the hills.

SL: Yeah.

SR: School system—we had—the schools were not good here in the Delta. It's expensive to go to private school. So we had a—it was a stressful time for our community as well.

[04:13:08] SL: Stanley, [*SR clears throat*] there's gotta be some—the folks that stayed had to—you—your—you and your family had to be gaining some kind of respect in the community because you stuck it—you stuck here . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you made it work in the direst of circumstances, and you deployed your education and your experience to really kinda keep the hometown, at least, living.

SR: Yeah.

SL: I mean, I know it—it's nothing like it was when you were growin' up, but at the same time, you held true to your roots here.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

SR: Well, it was durin' all this time we were very active in our church. And, you know, our kids were born in—durin' that time and just—you know, all kind of church programs and just—I mean, we had them in the church the same way I was in the church growin' up, except Charlene and I were there together with 'em. And that paid a pivotal role that you could focus on the important things of life. It wasn't just about the farm, you know. You—we weren't so focused that that's all of our goals. I mean, we had family goals. [04:14:20] Spiritual goals—raising our children, being involved with them. I mean, it's very fulfilling from that standpoint. It wasn't just a—one focus in life.

SL: Yeah.

SR: So, you know, had we lost everything on the farm, I mean, it woulda been no huge loss. I mean, we could've survived as a family. We were confident that, you know, because of our education—again, our background—both had higher-education degrees—you know, postgraduate degrees—and we knew we

had employable skills, so we were never really worried that much about it. Again, I just was taught that, you know, you don't worry about the things you don't have control over, and you know, we did everything we could do, you know, to work hard, to make crops, to irrigate, to market our crops, to—you know, be as informed as we could. And all these things about droughts and low prices and—we didn't have any control over any of that. So I honestly didn't worry about it that much. You know, you had some naggin' worries, but we knew that there were a lot bigger issues in life than just worryin' about your financial livelihood.

SL: Yeah.

[04:15:17] SR: And the family . . .

SL: Family.

SR: . . . was very, very important and . . .

SL: And the community.

SR: And the community and our church. So we became . . .

SL: Was there . . .

SR: . . . more involved, you know, I guess, at that—when I came back Mississippi, we were able to get more involved in the community—or I was. Charlene was always involved, you know, with the kids and with the school—started servin' on the

local school board. I got involved with Farm Bureau and the state board there. Just got involved with more organization and more community-type work.

[04:15:44] SL: There's strength [*SR clears throat*] to be gained in that—personal strength to be gained in getting yourself involved in that stuff, isn't there?

SR: Well, I mean, I learned from other people. That was one of the great benefits at Farm Bureau. I had association with some of the best farmers in the state and just talkin' to them and seein' how they did things and—you know, how they did their fields—what crops they planted, how they harvested, what their process was. I mean, I learned a lot from talkin' to the other people.

[04:16:07] SL: We—I think it's probably time that we talk a little bit about Farm Bureau now. Just tell me, what is Farm Bureau?

SR: Well, Farm Bureau is a—it's a nongovernment organization—completely private of—generally, started by farmers and ranchers for the purpose of bettering their profession of makin'—improvin' their livelihood, workin' on common problems.

Generally, it's the voice of agriculture at the state—the local and national level, to be the spokesperson for agriculture. That's the fundamental purpose of Farm Bureau. Any problems that we've had, whether it be bad markets, poor trade agreements, bad

government, foreign policy, taxes—all these things we could address and formulate policy on that we could take to our governor and say, "You know, we've got two hundred thousand Farm Bureau members and this in our policy, and we want y'all to listen to us because we think we're relevant, and our voice is important to this discussion." And you know, it worked, and it's—it was a very democratic organization that had a lot of different tentacles in a lot of different areas, from youth development to leadership to local community service projects to agricultural education, scholarship programs, women's activities, commodity promotion, Miss Fluffy Rice, Miss Soya, Miss Cotton—I mean, all these beauty contests we had to promote agricultural commodities—working with the local fairs—the state fairs.

[04:17:33] I mean, it was just a very wholesome, family-oriented-type activities that, you know, we could be—become involved in as a family. They had a lot of children's programs, and we'd go to conventions that, you know, our kids would be involved in things. So we really enjoyed that as a family.

Charlene's dad had retired in 1982, so there was no conflict for me, you know, running and serving on the state level at the state board. So—and I saw that Farm Bureau was an important organization to represent an industry that I'd given my life to—

that I expected to be involved in the rest of my life. And we needed someone to be that spokesperson, and I saw that Farm Bureau could make a difference. And I liked the people I was involved with, and you know, I started at the board level and just kinda worked my way on up, you know, through the office ranks through the years. But . . .

[04:18:20] SL: So how—tell me how you got into Farm Bureau.

How does that happen?

SR: Well, we have a local Farm Bureau. Every county . . .

SL: I mean, is it a membership that you . . .

SR: Well, you have to—initially, if you want to be a—if you want to buy insurance from Farm Bureau, you've got to be a member. If you see the value—even if you don't have insurance, if you see the value of what Farm Bureau is doing because of their lobbying activities—because of some program they have—then you become a member. So you become a Farm Bureau at the local level—at the county level—and I did. When I came back from school my dad was on the local county board when I was growin' up, and that was one of the few things he was ever involved in. So I knew no more than he went, no more than he's involved in, it must be pretty important if he's gonna take his time to do it.

SL: Yeah.

[04:19:08] SR: So I got involved when I first got back from college on the right to work amendment. We had a—oh, I forget the amendment number, but it's the right to work that allowed us to—the freedom in the workplace, so you didn't have to join a union if you didn't want to. And I thought that was very important to maintain that freedom in the workplace, so I worked on that, and it was passed. And it really still is fundamental to our right-to-work laws we have in the state today, and I think it's helped attract a lot of industry to our state that we're not—the industries are not hampered by strict union rules that, you know, let the unions get the upper hand, maybe, in some of the workplaces that we have. So . . .

[04:19:45] SL: When did that state legislation happen?

SR: I think it was 1976 'cause that's when I first came back from law school.

SL: 'Cause . . .

SR: [Nineteen] seventy-six or [19]77.

SL: . . . I think Bob Lamb was right in . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . the middle of that.

SR: Oh, he was. Yeah, he was—right in the middle of it. And my father-in-law, Arnold Berner, was very good friends of Bob Lamb

when he was state chamber. Course, Arnold had been a lobbyist, and then he was now head of Farm Bureau or the chief executive officer of Farm Bureau. But that was my first entry, and then I became county—I was on the county board, became county president. It was just kinda automatic. You stay around long enough, they'll [*SL laughs*] make you county president, [*laughs*] so . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: And then on the state board, I actually ran—it's a district that you run for—it was northeast Arkansas, and I ran for that district and met with other county Farm Bureaus and their leaders to seek their support and got elected in 1987, I guess, initially, and then became a part of the state board.

[04:20:31] SL: Okay. Well, now so this is [*SR drinks something*] politics. It may not be retail politics, but it's . . .

SR: Yeah, it's . . .

SL: It—there's some politics involved here, so you're scratchin' an itch here a little bit.

SR: Well, and I . . .

SL: Something that you'd thought about.

SR: . . . thought about, and I guess I'd always thought that Farm Bureau would be my bent for my political aspirations, you

know . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . through Farm Bureau. And I—you know, from the time I got in, I kind of desired in the back of my mind, "I want to be—like to be president someday," and I kinda worked towards that goal. And became involved and, you know, attended the meetings and read all the reports and just did the things a good board member should do. And then, you know, I worked for secretary, treasurer and then for vice president and then president, so—I was an officer, actually, for fifteen years of those twenty-one years I was on the board, I was an officer in Farm Bureau. And once you become an officer, then you become a board member of a lot of insurance companies. In Jackson, Mississippi, I was on the life insurance company board there and the casualty company board, which are billion-dollar-plus companies. I mean, they're huge companies, and I learned about insurance operations, risk management, big budgets, employee retirement systems, contribution systems that benefit—a lot of different pension plans you had to define benefit and define contribution plans, but I'd never heard of those before. But I learned a lot about 'em durin' the pension issues we had, you know, ten or fifteen years ago and had to fund all those when interest rates

are low and, you know, your obligations are pretty high.

SL: Yeah.

[04:22:12] SR: So a lot of stress there in insurance, and really, it just corporate America. We saw it in General Motors and a lot of huge corporations. How do you fund these insurance—I mean, these pension plans—when all the bottles that you've predicted 'em on, you know, are not takin' place. You know, instead of havin' 10 percent interest, we were down to, you know, very low interest rates and weren't getting returns. The stock market was goin' south, so a lot of concern and a lot of business things I learned that I hadn't been exposed to, you know, running a farm. But I think they really expanded my horizons again. And I enjoyed that aspect of large business operations that were dealing in hundreds of millions of dollars and serving on those boards. And, actually, our state board had control of our state mutual company, and we were about—we wrote about a hundred and fifty million dollars a year business in that company, so . . .

[04:22:59] SL: Now it—when you say you wrote the kind of business, are you talking insurance business?

SR: Insurance business. That was our insurance . . .

SL: So . . .

SR: The—it—we offer multi-lines. Our state—we had a state company that wrote property insurance. Our regional companies in Jackson wrote life insurance and casualty insurance—automobile insurance and liability insurance. So different kind of lines, but we had three distinct companies. And it's a pretty complicated [*laughs*] network of Farm Bureau companies. At one time, I was on about twenty different Farm Bureau boards from all the different foundations and insurance boards and nonprofit boards and the American Farm Bureau boards and the American Farm Bureau Insurance—reinsurance company boards. And so it's a lot of different operations within Farm Bureau.

[04:23:42] SL: So what happens to your farming . . .

SR: Well, I'm . . .

SL: . . . interests while you're doin' all this Farm Bureau stuff?

SR: I'm still farmin'. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, how can you do that? How can you . . .

SR: Well, it was a—it took a—it was a balancing act and especially the years—when I was vice-president, it wasn't too bad. Dad was still in pretty good health, and he covered for me a lot. I mean, I was still kinda managin', and he was kinda steppin' down, but he would—when I was gone he would—I could kinda make a list, you know, when things were work—runnin'—and we

had some good men that were workin' for us and still work for us. [04:24:17] And we—that's about the time I went to all cotton. Instead of growin' three or four different crops, I just went to one crop. It was—cotton was a pretty good price, and it's a lot easier to get a system goin' if you do, you know . . .

SL: One thing.

SR: . . . threw your farm in the same operation. So I did that and—but it was still pretty touchy until Nathan came back. He came back, I guess, about my second year as president of Farm Bureau and that—Dad had cancer durin' that time, but I guess as God had planned it out, we buried Dad on a Saturday, Nathan took his—or Sunday—Nathan took the bar exam on Tuesday, and then next week, he was back on the farm. So you know, even though Dad was sick the last year and half of his life, he was still there and just havin' his presence there—you know, kinda help run the farm when I was gone. But I did a lot of international travels—a lot of trade missions around the world. I really enjoyed that, promoting Arkansas agriculture and just promoting Arkansas, too, because it is a wonderful state. It's given me great opportunities, and I wanted to share that with the world and was able to do that in a lot of ways.

[04:25:20] SL: So Farm Bureau is made up of a membership. And

then there are all these benefits that the members can
choose . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . or not choose . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . to participate in. Is that . . .

SR: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: So—and the philosophy is, is that two hundred thousand
members [*SR clears throat*] have more weight than one guy.

SR: Exactly. And . . .

SL: Try . . .

SR: . . . not all those two hundred thousand are farmers. You know,
we sell insurance and memberships to nonfarmers, but we feel
like that they—through our publications—they all get our
magazines—that they're all exposed to our thinking, to our
policies, and we think that helps generate a lot of common
support for our viewpoint because, face it, a lot of the things
that we take issues on effect all Arkansans. [04:26:09] Would
be quality healthcare, would be reducing estate tax load, better
foreign policy, personal property rights, private property rights,
education—those are all things that are valuable not only to
Farm Bureau, but for every citizen in this state. So most of our

policies were generated from the grassroots level. All of our policies are generated from the grassroots level from county Farm Bureaus that submit policies to the state. We vote on them as a state organization who have representatives. Our convention has representatives from every county in the state, so it's very much a democratic process. And when we arrive at a policy, whether it be on education or tax or whatever it is—it's been pretty well vetted through the democratic process, and . . .

[04:26:54] SL: Through the membership.

SR: . . . it's got strong support through our membership. Not every member agrees with every one of our policies. We know that.

SL: Right.

SR: But it's still a pretty democratic process. It's got pretty strong support. Animal cruelty—those are issues that, you know, we were under attack for many years because we would not support a felony animal cruelty law in this state. But the truth is that the laws they were tryin' to get passed—the animal cruelty—federal animal cruelty—the felony animal cruelty laws would allow a nonuniform officer—would allow a worker at a animal shelter facility to make a—an arrest without a law enforcement officer being present. And if you're doin' that for a misdemeanor, it's one thing. If you're makin' a felony arrest without a law

enforcement officer present, that's just bad law. And we had to work with that law to be sure it was something that didn't infringe upon regularly accepted animal agricultural practices with working with cattle and chickens and other animal agriculture in this state. So we—it was limited to dogs, cats, and horses—mainly, domestic command—companion animals.

SL: Yeah.

[04:27:57] SR: So—and that was really the most atrocious cases that you had of mass abuse of horses' or dogs' or cats' neglect. And we were able to compromise after about a six- or eight-year period—I mean, workin' with all the different groups, we were able to come together to get a animal felony cruelty law that, you know, to me represents a good policy for this state. And now it's being used as a model all across the country for good common-sense legislation, and really, Farm Bureau was kinda the genesis in working with Dustin McDaniel to get that thing accomplished. And it was just a loggerhead every time we came to the legislature. You know, we were over here, you know, and all the animal cruelty folks were over here—humane societies and shelters—and we just never could meet together. And I think we all had a common purpose, we just couldn't get there.

[04:28:57] But we finally did, and Farm Bureau has a way of

changing, but sometimes it's slow, but we have a way of reforming our policy and working—you know, we had a policy for many years that we opposed removing the sales tax on food and groceries because we felt like that if that was lifted, that when they came to look for other sources of revenue, they would remove our exemption on sales tax for our feed, seed, and fertilizer. Those inputs are exempt from sales tax because they're like manufacturing items. They're not a sale for final consumption, they're like in the manufacturing process, and you don't tax a piece of steel every time it moves through the manufacturing chain. You tax it when it's sold, you know, to the consumer at the final point of sale. [04:29:22] That's the same way our seed, feed, and fertilizer—just inputs in the manufacturing process so, logically, we don't think that we should be charged sales tax on those, and we haven't been. And most other states have not been—they don't charge sales tax on agricultural inputs. But we were afraid if we took the sales tax off of food, that'd be the first place they'd go—and there had been bills introduced to try to limit the exemption on sales tax for agricultural input. [04:30:00] So that was our main concern, and so Governor Beebe came to us and pleaded that we would—he would not ever allow our exemptions to be removed

long as he was governor, and he convinced us that he meant that, and he has done that. He's protected our exemptions, and we've gone along and supported—I don't say we supported, but we've gone along not opposing the removal of sales taxes on food and groceries, and yeah, I think it's worked out. But we're seein' some stress now in the state budget, but it's not because of that, it's because of the economy, and I think, you know, we've got a good tax policy in this state now that—I think when the economy recovers, it will be in the positive for a revenue position again. And we're still—compared to other states, we're still—great shape.

[04:30:28] SL: A couple of things come to mind. [*SR drinks something*] There is a difference between supporting and not opposing.

SR: Yeah, big difference.

SL: Big difference.

SR: Yeah, and that's—you know, when Farm Bureau opposes somethin', I mean, we've been—we're pretty stout because we've got grassroots organizations in every county that have good relationships with their legislators and been pretty effective in either stopping things or—probably better at stopping things we are at gettin' things passed, but you know, I think in the past

we've had a reputation maybe of being—just to get stuff.

And . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:31:02] SL: . . . we want to try to—we've been more proactive, I think, the last few years in being more aggressive in tryin' to work with solutions instead of just being against things, be for something that you can promote and go out and get a consensus on. And I think we've done that both in department of ag, in a sense, that we—even though we fought that, we've helped mold the way the department of ag has been formulating Arkansas—the animal cruelty laws. A lot of our tax policy—I think we've had a big input on just the way we've—but we've been more proactive in our thinking.

[04:31:35] SL: The other thing that comes to mind when you mentioned Governor Beebe [*SR clears throat*—I've always read him as being just very pragmatic. Do you—would you . . .

SR: Oh yeah, he's—you know, he's a man that tells you what he'll do, and he does it.

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, he's a kind of a non-nonsense kinda guy and he—I like him. I think he's very honest, very open, and we've had a good working relationship with him.

[04:32:03] SL: Well, that's an impressive organization and it's—it looks—it sounds like to me it really went to your heart as far as . . .

SR: It did. I had a real passion for it.

SL: Is there anything—but now are you still involved with Farm Bureau?

SR: Well [*clears throat*] . . .

SL: What is it that you—what's your relationship with them now?

SR: I'm—I've retired last year as president. I felt to be most effective, we didn't need one leader to stay in there ten or fifteen or twenty years. And I'd been on the board twice as long as any other board member. [04:32:42] I've been an officer fifteen years. We had some great guys—very capable leaders that were vice-president and were coming up through the ranks as board members, and I thought it's really very selfish of me to want to continue to stay in a volunteer leadership organization, even though it is a job. But I felt like that for me to stay there and enjoy all the benefits of that, it was a little bit selfish—you know, if I stayed there forever. Then I'd been there five years in—as president and fifteen as an officer and just felt like it was probably the best time for me to step down, so I voluntarily retired—even though I was up for election every year. We had

to be elected—reelected every year.

SL: Yeah.

SR: But I never really had opposition. I did, you know, when I first became president. I opposed the incumbent president and won the election, but I never had opposition after that.

[04:33:29] SL: You know, one of the things that I've always heard about leadership [*rustling sounds*] and being a leader or being a [*SR clears throat*] president or a leader of an organization is, is that you come in with a lot of assets 'cause people want you in.

SR: Yeah.

SL: But the more time you spend and the more hard decisions you make and the more positions you take, making those decisions that have gotten to your desk because no one else . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . wants to make those decisions—those assets start dropping. And there comes a time when that balance—you have to look at that balance, and you have to say, "Now you know, we're—have I spent all my assets, or how effective am I going . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . to be if I continue [*SR clears throat*] doing this." And . . .

[04:34:14] SR: And I didn't want to stay too long. And I . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, I agree with that analogy that, you know, when you're a position of leadership and you're dealin' with hundreds of employees—even though I wasn't a chief administrative officer, I was still, you know, called on to make some of the hard decisions. [04:34:29] And you know, you make enemies through the years when you stand up and do the right thing. I mean, people aren't always gonna agree with you, and I've learned that in public service, whether it be Farm Bureau or the University of Arkansas board, or whatever it is. That you gotta do what you think is right. You gotta look—get the best information—get the best advice you can—and then make the decision based on what's best for the organization you're servin', the constituents you're servin' and not what's best for your own political preservation. And I . . .

SL: Right.

[04:34:54] SR: And I always did that with Farm Bureau. I said, "What's best for Farm Bureau, not what's best for Stanley Reed." I wanna—I want what's best for the organization 'cause that's who I'm here serving. I'm not here to try to elevate me, I'm here to serve the organization. And when you do that, you're gonna—you know, you're gonna make some enemies occasionally, and I . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: But in spite of that, I never felt threatened at all—never felt like I'd made enemies. I felt the longer I went, to some extent, I gained more consensus and more support. [04:35:19] But I didn't wanna stay too long because I've seen people stay too long and hurt their effectiveness. And I think it takes the organization a while to get over that.

SL: Yeah.

SR: But you know, the vice president that was under me, Randy Veach—he became president without opposition and just—I mean, [*snaps fingers*] hit the ground runnin' and continue—continued some of the same programs I had started and really elevated them to another level of being involved, being more accessible to organizations outside of Farm Bureau. And I think that's one thing maybe I added to Farm Bureau, was the—being involved in the outside community and the business world. I became a member of the Board of Trustees University of Arkansas. And when I was an officer, I guess I was secretary of Farm Bureau at the time. [04:36:05] And I was on the Baptist Health board and just made myself available to serve in other areas of service outside of agriculture. And I think that gave us more credibility in the lobbying efforts and as an organization

that, you know, we were a player in the business community of Arkansas, not—you know, we weren't really considered in the business. Agriculture for so long was just kinda off by itself, but I think that we were given credibility as a viable player in the business and the political community, maybe, in Arkansas that maybe we hadn't been seen as the—you know, before.

[04:36:38] SL: You know, that's remarkable that [*SR clears throat*—I would think that—well, first of all, most everybody that I've ever interviewed—most, not all, but most sprung from agricultural . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . pursuits.

SR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: And to think that the agriculture is not a part of a business community is just—I just can't imagine that . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that stigma. So you think that one of the best things that happened under your tenure is, is that you certainly made the agriculture community more . . .

SR: I think we were more involved with the rest of the business community—not—you know, not that we weren't maybe considered a business, but we're—we were just not involved as

much with the business—with the chamber of commerces—with the Arkansas Capital Corporation, you know, with the health organizations or with having people serve on the Board of Trustees at the University of Arkansas. I don't think that had ever happened . . .

[04:37:41] SL: So it's more integrated now.

SR: It's—yes, it's integrated—integrating our organization into the community at large. And—cause so many things we had in common, we worked with people, and we did in a lobbying aspect. We had good relations, but we didn't, you know, in other—didn't support a lot of the efforts maybe that we should have in the community, and I think we were—you know, we've always been a very forceful organization, but it's just sheer numbers we had. And I guess as time marched on, we saw that we needed to form coalitions and work with other organizations to be the most effective that we could. We couldn't do it alone. And so hopefully, I've added, you know, add a little dimension to that. [04:38:38] I became very much involved in Governor Mike Huckabee's—just friendship with him, and he appointed me to the Board of Trustees of the university and got involved with some issues that we had at Farm Bureau. And, initially, we had passed a resolution that we wanted to repeal sales tax that was

given to the Game and Fish Commission because we felt like they were usin' that money to go after farmers and try to take some of their land in Crooked Creek and some other areas—used that sales tax money to fund lawsuits to the detriment of farmers.

SL: Yeah.

[04:38:58] SR: And so a lot of our members said we needed to go after Game and Fish and try to get that sales tax repealed, and you know, that was our policy, and here we were with the governor—we all went to the Governor's Mansion, and we tried to work through that. And some Farm Bureau members said that we didn't follow policy, but we didn't pursue that policy of getting that sales tax repealed. And I think the governor was very appreciative of that, because he ready to support it, if you remember.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And I had supported Governor Huckabee back through the years as a candidate for both senate and lieutenant governor. And because of our relationship, we duck hunted together. I've got some pictures on the wall of ducks we killed, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:39:37] SR: . . . we became personal friends, and he appointed

me the Board of Trustees shortly—during that process. And that was a great experience for me, to get more involved with the university institution, that we've already talked about had such a defining—I say next to becoming a Christian, goin' to the University of Arkansas most defining moment in my life because the relationships, the education—just experiences that I had there, I mean, really prepared me. I met my wife. I mean, everything about my life hereafter, you know, had a—was influenced by the University of Arkansas.

[04:40:07] SL: Well, before we get to University of Arkansas, it sounds like to me one of the most satisfying things [*clears throat*] with your tenure at Farm Bureau was this integration and this more active involvement with all the other business community. You mentioned lobbying. Now lobbying is a tricky business.

SR: Yeah, and we have professional lobbyists. But on a real big issue, they'd call the president. They wanted him to testify. You know, they'd hold him in reserve. They didn't want him to be too commonplace down there, so I would go down there once or twice a year to lobby on our real big priority issues. Whether it be Department of Ag, animal cruelty, maybe some bond issue or something, but—tax issue. But, generally, I wouldn't go—I

wouldn't be there too much. You need to let your lobbyists deal with those issues, and you know, I think familiarity breeds contempt. If you're down there too much they—you get too commonplace, and you know, we see that in politics today.

[*Laughs*] I think that you lose your effectiveness. But we have a—very much a professional staff that runs the day-to-day operations. [04:41:12] Ewell Welch is the executive vice president, and he ran the day-to-day operations, and we had a great relationship. I tried to be in office about one day a week, but I'd be all around the country, you know, goin' on trade missions and goin' to American Farm Bureau meetings, goin' to insurance board meetings. I mean, I was working about four days a week for Farm Bureau, but I was just in the office usually a day a week. But we talked three or four times a day—you know, worked every—real close working relationship with the management there.

[04:41:38] SL: Kay. Well, before we leave Farm Bureau, what was the most fun thing you did when you were with Farm Bureau?

SR: Hmm.

SL: You can't think of one, just give me . . .

SR: Oh, I . . .

SL: . . . the top three.

SR: Well, I mean, the most fun thing we did was probably goin' all these nice trips. You know, we went on some wonderful trips—trade missions—as well as trips with the insurance agents we got to go on because I was on the board—the insurance company boards—we got to go on some very nice insurance incentive trips, and we really got to see the world—I mean, Rome, Paris, London, Germany, Caribbean, Hawaii—I mean, we went to some wonderful place—exotic places that I'd never been to before. So I mean, just far as the personal things I enjoyed, I mean, that was fun. [04:42:41] Rewarding—probably just being involved in an organization that made such a difference and took a strong stand on, I think, very important issues for our time. Not just all agriculture, but issues such as defining, you know, what marriage is. You know, we took a position on that, and we were very criticized. People said, "That's not an agricultural issue." Well, it's a family issue, and we felt very strongly that a family should be defined, you know, as between man and a woman. And that's something that's a undercurrent for farm families throughout the centuries, and so we took a position on that, and I think that's the way most people in Arkansas—it's not a discrimination against other people, it's just a—that's the policy of—you know, we feel like our citizens want in this state, and I

think that's been shown all around the country. But we took a position on some very controversial issues, but I think that we represented the values of what Arkansas people—the majority of Arkansas people wanted, and that's a—as a democracy, that's what we have to—that's what we go by. And . . .

[04:43:28] SL: Don't you all have an annual Farm Family of the Year?

SR: We help sponsor that.

SL: Yeah.

SR: That's not—we're . . .

SL: That's not your all's . . .

SR: . . . it's not our—but we help sponsor that along with the—it used to be the chamber of commerce and Entergy.

SL: Okay.

SR: We're the primary sponsor of that, and we have—that is really—we're involved in that, but it's not really our baby. We provide a lot of the support for it, which is really a combination of those three organizations. We do a lotta the legwork. But to help to recognize outstanding farm families from each county—from each district. The county winners come together, and you have a district winner, and the district winners come together, and you have a state winner. But it's really to help promote and to

recognize farm families for their achievements—their accomplishments on the farm and off the farm, too. And that's—we do a lot of that in Farm Bureau. We have a young farmer and rancher program—we'll recognize outstanding young farmers and—for the contributions they've made, both in community service as well as agriculture. We give the winner a brand new pickup truck every year . . .

SL: Hey!

SR: . . . compliments of our insurance company. That really supports the program, so it's a—you know, it's a—wonderful prizes we give and—but it helps to recognize. [04:44:39] And part of our mission in Farm Bureau is to disseminate information about the importance of agriculture and the importance of farm families to our economy and to our culture. And because I think so many people don't realize what our food comes from—they think it comes from the grocery store. [*Laughs*] They don't realize that it has the genesis back on somebody's farm—you know, and a farm family was responsible for that. So we're just tryin' to connect all the dots here between the farmer and the ultimate consumer, and to get them to realize that how interconnected and how interdependent the consumer is to the farmer, and it's—if the farmers don't prosper, and they don't



stay in business, the consumers are gonna be the ones that are gonna suffer with high food prices, volatile food prices, shortages. And that—you know, that all goes into why we have farm programs why we have government support payments. It's not to be sure the farmers get wealthy, it's to be sure that we've got a stable safety net out there, so that there's a—there's plenty of food produced, and the farmers are not continually growing broke. But even with the safety nets, they are goin' broke all the time, but it takes some of the volatility out of production and pricing. [04:45:57] So we think that it's been very effective, and it's a good policy. And if we get away from that, it's gonna be a disaster, I think. We're gonna have our production controlled by a very few large corporations, and we're not gonna have the farm family culture that we still have in America—I mean, but it's larger farm families, but corporate farming only amounts to about 2 percent of total agriculture in this country. It's still controlled by farm families. Just like ours—you know, we're farmin' five thousand acres instead of five hundred, but we're still a family farm.

SL: I like that stat.

SR: Yeah, it's . . .

SL: That's a good one.

SR: Yeah.

[04:46:16] SL: Well, [SR *clears throat*] let's see. You mentioned Governor Huckabee—and developed a good relationship with him, and he appointed you to the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees. [04:46:31] What year was that?

SR: Nineteen ninety-eight.

SL: Nineteen ninety-eight.

SR: Yeah.

SL: I would guess that you probably strongly identified with Governor Huckabee's faith based . . .

SR: I did, and I originally took notice of him because I'm a Southern Baptist and been very active in our church. And he was a very young president of the state Southern Baptist Convention—Arkansas Baptist Convention—and I just—for some reason, I just took notice of who he was and actually met him at some Farm Bureau meetings when he came to speak. And my preacher at the time was good friends of his. He introduced us also, and he came to our church one time to speak, and you know, all politicians like for you to throw fundraisers for 'em, and I felt compelled to have a little fundraiser for him in our home, and, you know, you do that two or three times, and, you know, he takes notice. And we . . .

SL: Yeah, sure.

SR: . . . just kinda hit it off. And I invited him to come hunt. He loved to hunt, and I guess I was such an anomaly in eastern Arkansas—someone that even thought like a Republican [*laughter*] or be willin' to associate with a Republican. He—for some reason he remembered me, and we were very close friends. And just had a relationship with him that I'd never had with any politician before. We'd always been friends with [*SL clears throat*] Senator Pryor, and you know, when he was senator and governor, and went to Washington occasionally to visit with him on issues. But just never had a close personal relationship like I did with Mike Huckabee. So it was enjoyable. I liked it, and he was a—he's a good man.

[04:48:02] SL: Yeah. [*SR clears throat*] So how—did he just, like, call you on the phone—say . . .

SR: Well, he actually had his appointment secret—or his appointment secretary call me. But—so he didn't actually talk—call me himself. He had someone else call me to see if I'd be interested in submitting a application. So . . .

[04:48:23] SL: But you knew that was [*laughs*] comin' from him.

SR: Well—oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Oh yeah. I mean, he had actually had asked me to serve on another board. They'd called me before about another board, and I just didn't—felt like I had a lotta—it was the ADFA board—the Arkansas Financial . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . Development Authority. It was a great board, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I just didn't have the interest in that as much. [04:48:40]
And I was busy on the farm and busy in Farm Bureau, and I said, "Well, [*vocalized noise*]"—and I never thought about the university, you know. I mean, I always kinda—in the back of my mind it was kind of a dream of mine because, you know, I had such a love for the institution.

SL: Yeah.

SR: But, you know, it wasn't long—they called for that, and I said, "Yeah, I think I will." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Well, that . . .

SR: I didn't wanna turn that one down.

SL: . . . that pulled the heartstrings for you.

SR: Yeah, I had a reason, and my . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . youngest daughter was then goin' to school at the university

of . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: My oldest daughter was goin' to school at the University of Arkansas, and I knew all my—my other two were gonna follow her. So to be able to be involved with the university at that level when your kids are in school there, handing every one of them their diplomas—you know, being involved, knowin' what goes on at campus from a student's standpoint helped me be a better board member, I think, to see the student perspective . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:49:24] SR: . . . and the importance of [*unidentified voice in background*] the policies we were making at the board level and how it affected the students. You know, you can't—you don't want—appreciate that, but if you have students—kids there tellin' you, you find out real quick the student's perspective of it. So I think it made me a better board member, but also it was just a very enjoyable time for me to be involved with their higher education at that level.

[04:49:44] SL: Well, when you started working with the board, who all was on it that . . .

SR: Well, Lewis Epley was the chairman. [*Unidentified voices in background*] Chairman Epley and just—you know, the chairman

of chairmen. I mean, just a group of gentlemen that I just have the utmost respect for. And developed—you know, I just—when I fir—I remember my first board meeting, I'm lookin' at these guys—Bill Clark, Tommy May, Lewis Epley, Frank Oldham, Frances Cranford—just, you know, people that I'd heard about all my life and respected and admired just from a distance—you know, respected. And just the fact—to be able to be—work with them, I just kinda felt like a duck out of water, you know.

"Where am I gonna fit in with this group? You know, I'm just an old farm boy from Marianna." But I mean, they just—they took me in and just—we—you know, about that—I wasn't in long till we had the great stadium debate, so I was put right in the middle of that. And you know, me bein' from eastern Arkansas, I think the state, or at least the press, thought, "Well, he's gonna side with Little Rock because, you know, he goes to games there, and it's a lot closer to go to the games there, and it's"—but I looked at it from a student perspective, you know, and where was it best that they have games? Well, for a college it should be on the college campus, and I felt very strongly about that, that a lot of students couldn't come to Little Rock for games. But they could go if they were at Fayetteville.

[04:51:10] So I kind of—you know, I was on the opposite side

from where most folks thought I would be on that issue and that was a very high profile—and we had a lot of interesting, you know, discussions between board members about what we should do, and how we should do it, and I mean, it was a really an agonizing decision because, I mean, I could see the benefits—I could see the other side of the story, that Little Rock had supported the Razorbacks. They'd been the economic engine for the program—strong supporters through the years. And without their support, you know, we never woulda made—never woulda had the foundation support and I—and all of that.

SL: Yep.

[04:51:44] SR: I could understand that argument, but you know, times change, and I just—I felt strongly that we were gonna expand the stadium and get the kind of facility we needed up there. We had to have more games at Fayetteville to help pay the indebtedness on the facility. And they were doin' the renovation on the highway, if you remember, at that time. That's back after Mike Huckabee's highway bond program, and do you remember all the barrels?

SL: Yeah.

SR: I mean, it was terrible to drive up there, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I knew when that got finished, you could make it from Little Rock to Fayetteville in two and a half hours, and you can now.

SL: Yeah.

SR: Two hours and forty-five minutes. So it wasn't that bad of a trip, even from eastern Arkansas—four hours up there.

[04:52:21] But the main point is I just—all the other states had pretty well gone to that. They had quit playing, you know, games in their capital, whether it be in . . .

SL: Split venues.

SR: . . . in Birmingham or—yeah—or Mississippi, they—or Tennessee. They pretty well played 'em all on campus, and we were one of the few that still had the split venues. And so to reduce it from three to two was something I could live with and, at the same time, I got—we developed a close camaraderie, you know, with the board members because when you go through trials and tribulations, you tend to kinda bond, and you learn to appreciate different thoughts and respect other people's views and viewpoints about things. [04:52:56] And so it was a great time, and I—I've become very close to all those people on that board and still am. You know, Bill Clark and I—even though Bill was the only one that didn't vote for movin' the game, you know, he stayed out till the very end. He—in fact, he was chairman,

maybe, of the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce and he just—he fought it to the end, but yet when that was over with, he became one of my best friends. And Tommy May and—they actually are the ones that were responsible for me servin' on the Baptist Health board, and I'm serving on the Simmons corporate board now . . .

SL: I read that.

[04:53:27] SR: . . . with both Tommy—and Bill Clark was on there, of course, before he died and just had a great love and admiration for Bill Clark and Margaret and, you know, Lewis Epley, Frank Oldham, Dr. Hargrove, you know, was a medical doctor and—just some wonderful people. And, you know, the people that came on after that—Jim Lindsey came on the board, I guess, the next year after I did. And that was, I guess, fortuitous, I know, but you know, we were somewhat—we were pretty close friends, but we really developed a bond when he came on the board. And we served together nine years on the board, and he was vice chairman, I guess, when I was chairman and—of the board. So worked together on a lot of different issues. And you know, it seemed like the most agonizing ones always dealt with athletics, for some reason. [*Laughs*]

[04:54:13] SL: You know, I've heard that from every board

member—every chair I've ever talked to, that athletics is always the most ag—well, first of all, it's a statewide culture.

SR: Yeah.

SL: It—and everybody in the whole state is affected by it. And I [*claps hands*] will submit to you to this day, there are still wounds . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . about that stadium thing.

SR: Oh, there is. Yeah.

SL: But you know, [*SR clears throat*] and I'll say this about that stadium thing—you've gotta give it to Coach Broyles and his—he's . . .

SR: His vision.

SL: . . . he's still a visionary.

SR: Yeah, he was.

SL: To this day I think he's still a visionary. And he saw—he sees things comin' usually well ahead of the way it's gonna shape up. But I got—I get the feeling that he just—we just barely got that done in time. I mean, I—it was time to do it and . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

[04:55:11] SR: Well, to compete in the SEC and to be a national

player—I mean, you've gotta have a—and I—that facility still is remarkable. I still think it's one of the best in the country . . .

SL: Yeah, it is.

SR: . . . you know. And it's been, what, ten years or so since we've—well, nine.

SL: Nine.

SR: How long has this been renovated? Eight years?

SL: It's been . . .

TM: Ten. [*Clears throat*]

SL: . . . at least—yeah, I think it might be ten.

SR: Yeah, 2000—2001, but it's just a—but it was a interesting process to go through. I'd never been under that much scrutiny and [*laughs*] that I'm—I've still got a stack of—of letters in my file, you know. I saved 'em—you know, the great stadium debate file—just for posterity, I guess.

SL: Well . . .

[04:55:42] SR: And the passion that it evoked of people, you know, discuss that because, I mean, you—people were just bearin' their heart to you. Wasn't about the university, it was about the Razorbacks, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It was much, much bigger than the Fayetteville campus—it's the

statewide institution that people identified with was the Razorbacks themselves. So—and you gotta respect that because that generates a lot of goodwill. It generates a lot of passion for the program, and you know, the fans are the—fans are important. You gotta have 'em. And so it taught me a lot, too. It—it's—you know, you gotta respect that viewpoint and the fact that the Razorbacks are really one of the great denominators of our state. It doesn't make a difference if you're Jim Walton or a guy named Bones that's a set-up mechanic at a John Deere place in Hughes, Arkansas—they still go to those games, and they still get just excited, you know, and they still love to watch 'em play, and they've got a great passion. And, you know, they can identify with that.

[04:56:33] SL: The hearts break and . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . chests . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . swell . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . with pride.

SR: The same way, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It just doesn't matter. So it's a . . .

SL: There's nothin' like it.

SR: It's a great thing to be in Arkansas to support the Razorbacks.

We don't have—you know, we've got some other great schools in the state that have great teams, but there's just somethin' bout the Razorbacks that's just different. It's unique. It's a unifying—it doesn't have a regional appeal. It's a statewide appeal. And you can support your local college and still support the Razorbacks, and that's what we want. And I think that's what we've been able to see through the years.

[04:57:04] SL: So the great stadium debate certainly is one of the biggest things that ever—that I've been aware of that came [*SR laughs*] down on the Board of Trustees. What—do you wanna say anything about Alan Sugg?

SR: Well, other than he's just—he's a great administrator, and he's a great consensus builder. You know, Alan Sugg—we're alike in a lot of ways in that we don't like controversy. We like [*SL laughs*] to build consensus. You know, I don't like controversy.

SL: Yeah.

SR: I like for everybody to be at peace and to understand and get along. And Alan certainly is that way. And he's dealing with a lot of very capable, strong-willed chancellors at each of these

campuses. And for him to be able to hold all that together and to let them have the attention and let, you know, let them have the autonomy to a point to rule their own campuses but yet still keep the system together and focus on the common things that we can do as a system through financing, through lobbying, budgeting, oversight in academic areas—I mean, lot of things the system can do, but—that better than individual campus can. You get some strength there with those numbers. But he's able just to keep it together and keep people working, you know, common goal. And he's been there twenty years, and that's pretty remarkable. And that is a very high profile, very intense position he's in. But I—you know, we had a great relationship when I was chairman of the board—even when I was on the board—I mean, we talked about a lot of issues. I think we thought a lot alike. We both have a east Arkansas culture we grew up in. He grew up in Helena.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And we just always have gotten along extremely well. I have a lot of respect for Alan and Jeannie—just wonderful people.

[04:58:45] SL: Yeah, you know—did you have any idea how great a guy he was before you got on the board?

SR: Not really. You know, I knew the first—when he first came here

from Texas, we had him speak at a Farm Bureau meeting. And Alan'll tell you he's no public speaker, you know.

SL: *[Laughs]* That's right.

SR: And he really—I was not impressed with him the first time I heard him, but the more I was around him, you know, I mean, I just had unbelievable respect for him and his political skills. I mean, you don't think of Alan Sugg bein' a politician, but he knows the lay of the land. He knows the things he needs to decide and the things that he doesn't wanna decide. *[Laughter]* Things like the stadium debate. You know, how you—how do you deal with coaches, athletic directors—you know, those are things he knows are so volatile that that's political suicide for a system president to make those decisions. He passed those on to the board. *[Laughs]* That's why we—we've made some of the tough ones. But he knows the ones he needs to pass on and the ones he needs to make himself. And he's a—he's very good at deciding the few decisions that the board really needs to get involved in—not that we weren't involved in all of 'em, but, you know, I trusted his judgment on things that we really needed to be concerned about and what was important and what wasn't. And he—they're all important, but some of 'em just elevate to a level of priority that the board needed to be involved at a next

level than what some of the other major—what the other decisions were being made.

[05:00:10] SL: Was there any vote that you're really, really proud of, or any cause that came before the board [*SR sighs*] that you really felt—really brought the passion out in you and your attention?

SR: Well, you know, the stadium issue was one. There was another one that I—we fought the administration on up there—the faculty—on the "D" rule, if you remember.

SL: Mh-hmm.

SR: They felt like that we were overreaching our authority in going into academic areas, but the truth is that at that point in time, Vanderbilt would accept our D, but we wouldn't accept Vanderbilt's D. There was not a common consensus there among institutions in the Southeast or across the country what should be accepted, what shouldn't. Some schools accepted D as a transfer; others didn't. And we just felt like that—I did—that it was hurting our athletic program, but it was also hurting our nonathletes if they couldn't transfer a D. I mean, that's a passing grade. You either pass, or you don't pass. And that was a—we had a lot of discussion on the board about the D rule. And, you know, all this doomsday scenario—it was gonna kill

academic—you know, academia in Fayetteville, and we were gonna be—you know, it was really gonna effect our academic standards and all that. And I don't think any of that's come to pass. [05:01:35] I don't know what impact negative it's had at all, but it's just that we had a few students that needed a D to be able to tran—have enough hours to be—to continue to be eligible, not only in athletics but in, you know, for graduation and other areas. And I just was not a—that's somethin' the NCAA needs to have some kinda common rules on, and they've really left up to each individual campus. And you know, we were more restrictive than a lot of other institutions that had a lot of higher academic credibilities than we did. So I felt like that was somethin' that we did that made sense to me. It was a "do-right" rule, in my opinion. [05:02:10] You know, we struggled with the Nolan Richardson issue and supporting, you know, the things that happened there.

[05:02:16] SL: Now were you . . .

SR: Uh . . .

SL: . . . chair during that?

SR: I was not chair. I was on the board, but . . .

SL: Okay.

SR: . . . not chair . . .

SL: All right.

SR: . . . during that time. But you know, Coach Richardson made a tremendous investment in our state and had been there a long time. And I think he'd kinda lost his passion, you know, to coach. It just seemed like he just—his passion was not there and I—you know, I personally thought it was time for him to retire. And I think a lot of board members felt that way, but we weren't gonna push the envelope. I mean, we felt like that was somethin' needed to kinda take its course. You know, you—and it did. And I think we handled that correctly 'cause he really kinda submitted his resignation as far as I was concerned, when he said, "You know, if they show me the money, I'm gone." And we said, "Well, it's—he brought it up" . . .

SL: Here it is.

SR: . . . "not us." [*Laughter*] And you know, there were some discontent with him even two years before that. You remember . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . Coach Broyles had renewed his contract when he had won the SEC championship. We'd never won the tournament before, and I think maybe Coach Broyles got a little bit overjubilant, you know, just that one event—not lookin' at the long term.

[05:03:11] But you know, I—it was one of those issues you talked about. You got your assets and your liabilities the longer you stay, and I think his passion was kinda burnt out and I—you know, I—and I think—I felt like Coach Richardson always had a little bit of a chip on his shoulder, and I honestly understood why he did. I never thought that the state showed him the sympathy over the loss of his daughter they should have. You know, that happened early in his career and I—you know, it's like, "Well, let's move on, you know." I—and I don't think we sympathized with him and the grief and toil that he went through as a person and as a family when Yvonne, I think was his daughter's name. When—you know, when she . . .

SL: Yvonne.

SR: Yvonne.

SL: That's right.

SR: When she died. And I always felt like that he had a little bit of resentment because of that. Maybe not. Maybe I'm reading something was not there.

[05:04:01] SL: No, I think he was hurt.

SR: Yeah.

SL: Maybe not resentment.

SR: I mean . . .

SL: I think it hurt him a little bit.

SR: It would hurt anybody.

SL: Sure.

SR: But I just don't feel like that we were as compassionate towards him as a state and maybe as a university. And I wasn't on the board at that point in time, but I always felt like that had a little bit—and he had somethin' to prove, and you know, he proved it—won the national championship, and then I, you know, I just think maybe he lost his passion then. But you know, it—I don't know what went on with him, but he was a great coach and made a great contribution, you know, to our state. And, you know, you win a national championship—I mean, we haven't seen that excitement in Razorback basketball since he's here—since he was here. [05:04:35] So—but that was a difficult—I mean, we were involved in lawsuits for several years. I had to testify in the trial as a board member, and you know, it wasn't to me about any kind of racial prejudice. It had nothin' to do with it. It was about, you know, his performance as a coach and the statements he was making, you know, on camera about the university and the administration. I think we had to do something, so I . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: You know, I think we did the right thing there in supporting Alan and Dr. White in the way that was handled. So I was proud that—you know, we were vindicated by the courts in that process 'cause you never know, you know, what the court might decide. So that's one issue I was very gratified that we were vindicated.

[05:05:15] SL: What is the biggest difference between being on the board and being chair of [*SR clears throat*] the board?

SR: Hmm. Huge difference. One, you have to sign all the bonds [*laughter*] for borrowin' money. It's just—you know, it's—everything runs through the chairman. I didn't realize the amount of activity or amount of confidence that Alan placed in the chairman in wanting him to make a lot of the day to day—you know, or at least consulting with him day to day on issues. I mean, didn't hardly a day go by that I didn't talk to Alan when I was chairman, and [*clears throat*] when I was just on the board, I might talk to him once a month, you know, outside of a board meeting about some issue. But just constant communication and being sure that you were informed on everything. And that's why I think Alan is such a good president 'cause he kept his board informed, you know, he—and through his president. That was kind of the conduit [*clears throat*] for

information to the board was through the president. So a lot more activity level and a lot more responsibility and understanding the agendas. And you know, I went over those, you know, much more in detail with him, you know, before the board meetings so I'd be prepared to answer questions and to support him to see where he was coming from and things he proposed—understanding the budgeting process, the auditing process—I just—I think you just got a responsibility to have a broader understanding of all the system as chairman. And I was chairman for two years, and I really enjoyed it. I mean, it was a great experience, and we had some very trying times if you remember. Probably more changes at the university when I was chairman. We had, first of all, the Houston Nutt experience. A lot of trauma there. We had—Stan Heath was terminated as our coach. Coach Broyles retired after fifty years. John White retired—had a ladies' basketball coach. You know, we had a lot of changes durin' that tenure, and if you remember, we had a lot of uncertainty about coaching—I mean, football coaching. We were turned down, you know, several times, and you know, it—a little bit of identity—image problem. It was, you know, "Why'd everybody turn us down?" You know, basketball—we couldn't seem to get the kind of coaching interest we thought we had

deserved before we hired Coach Pelphrey. So a lot of high-profile attention to the chairman and to the leadership of the university at that point in time. And a lot more than I signed on for. *[Laughs]*

SL: Well, *[SR clears throat]* again, that—all that athletic . . .

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes. Excuse me.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[05:07:46] SL: Tape six.

SR: Hmm. Moving *[SL laughs]* right along here. *[Laughter]* Put in a full day.

SL: We—we're not really quite finished up with the Board of Trustees—University of Arkansas Board of Trustees. Not only were you a member of the board, but you were chair of the board through some traumatic times. You know, it seems like there's always some kind of drama *[laughs]* involved . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . at the Board of Trustee level, that they're havin' to make some pretty tough decisions. And it's not just the University Arkansas at Fayetteville, although that gets a lot probably because . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . of the Razorback and the athletic program. But there's also UAMS . . .

SR: Right.

SL: . . . and there's—how many? There's seven campuses—is that right?

SR: Well, no, there's actually eighteen . . .

SL: Eighteen now! [*Claps hands*]

SR: . . . different campuses.

SL: Wow!



[05:08:36] SR: You know, it includes, what, six four-years, five two-years, and then we have the Clinton School. We have the math and science school, the Criminal Justice Institute, the Arkansas Geological Survey, and now the Petit Jean conference center at Morrilton. So I think there's—and the Division of Agriculture. I think there's seventeen or eighteen different institutions involved with the system. And that's what most people don't see. They think the University of Arkansas—they just think of Fayetteville campus, and that is the flagship school, but—and there are a lot of great things that go on at these other schools that, you know, really doesn't get the attention it deserves. I mean, UAMS—I mean, that place is phenomenal in the research and the healthcare breakthroughs that are going on there and serving,

you know, as—you're on the hospital board or the governing board there of the hospital and being exposed to all those healthcare issues, to the expansion of the building of the hospital—going through some pretty tough financial crisis for UAMS back durin' some cutbacks in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements—went through some tough times as a board tryin' to figure out the way to improve our collections, improve our cash flow. [05:09:53] I was really involved in the community college effort, and I was chairman of the community college committee when we recruited several community colleges to be a part of the system. Cossatot Community College down in DeQueen; the college at Morrilton—University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton; and also at Fort Smith. WestArk Community College became the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith. It went from a two-year school to a four-year school. So those are big days for the university in merging these other organizations into the university system. And as chairman of the community college committee, I went around to most of the community colleges—all of 'em at one point in time—and visited with the campuses. And we had a committee that would sit down and visit with the faculty and the administration and the students to try to find out what we could

do as a system that would help them promote their mission and help them in their efforts there at the community colleges. Showed a lot of attention—and rightfully so—with the things they were doin' and tried to help them from a system level. And I think that was appreciated, and I spoke, I think, at every community college at their graduation as a commencement speaker. I think every one of 'em—if I didn't—I can't think if I spoke at Batesville as a commencement speaker. I spoke there just as a welcoming several different times, but I spoke at four of 'em as a commencement speaker. So you know, I felt good about our involvement and the system's involvement with the community college campuses. Monticello—had a great relationship there with the chancellor, Fred Taylor, and also with Jack Lassiter. [05:11:31] UAPB—Dr. Lawrence Davis—I spoke—I've spoken there at several different venues. And my identification with east Arkansas, and we have so many of the students from this area that go to UAPB, I felt—I really wanted to show a special interest there at the UAPB and the—their mission—heavy agricultural mission. Their Aquaculture Center there—one of the best in the country—aquaculture programs. So I had a lot of personal interest in a lot of the other campuses except, you know, I had a—certainly had a desire to be involved

with the Fayetteville. But, I mean, I saw it much broader than that, and then, really, the university tentacles reached all parts of the state and how important higher education and access to higher education was for the future of our state. And I saw that going on in the community colleges and providing educational opportunities for people who wouldn't have had it, you know, had that community college not been their campus. And they were not only gettin' two-year degrees, but also through the university centers, many of 'em could stay right there, and they're close to their hometowns and get four-year degrees or get 'em online. So a lot of great innovations in distance learning, compressed videos, interactive videos.

[05:12:36] You know, a lot of technology improvements that I was able to see when I was on the board that really brought education to an underserved population—just didn't have those available opportunities before. And that was very rewarding. I think we saw a big increase in the number of people goin' to college, taking college courses—more nontraditional students—thirty-five, forty years of age, goin' back to learn a new set of skills. And I mean, that's important. As fast as industry's changing and job requirements—workforce training has become so important. So it—it's not just a four-year degree at a—you

know, at a college campus. I mean, it's a—it's learning a life skill—a work skill that can help you improve your employability—help a single mom be able to support her kids in a better fashion because she has, you know, a higher degree of training. And a lot of that takes place at the community college level. So that was a very rewarding part of my tenure on the board—not only as chairman, but also serving on the community college committee.

[05:13:41] SL: Did you ever—did you meet any resistance to the idea of them being part of university system?

SR: No, I think there was some concern that maybe we were diminishing, you know, the name of the university by havin' it so broad-spaced around the state that maybe the university name, you know, would not be as revered, you know, because it was so commonplace. But I mean, that was just a very minor thought, maybe, that I heard expressed a few times. "Well, you're just gettin'—y'all are tryin' to take over everything." [05:14:17] And we really weren't. We never went to an institution and asked them to become a part of the system, they always came to us.

SL: Okay.

SR: And that was a policy that Alan Sugg started—said, "Now I'm not

out here tryin' to proselytize or tryin' to, you know, get people to come to us. We're not here tryin' to, you know, be a big dog or big club tryin' to bring—bringin' in everybody in the system. They're comin' to us, because they see the benefits, from a financial standpoint, in the things that we can offer as a system to help their institution." And the main thing—and I think that Alan has been able to implement through the board's acquiescence is that he allowed local autonomy at those community colleges in the campuses that came in. We didn't—even though we had ultimate governance authority over each of those campuses, we have advisory boards, board of visitors at each of those campuses. And they're really—they're the ones that really make the decisions, and we have to approve 'em, of course, but we relied very heavily on those local community board of advisors and on that local—and Alan worked with the chancellors of each community to be sure that they felt a degree of autonomy and that they could reflect the needs of the community in their programs they offered and the curriculums they offered, and it wasn't somethin' that we were dictating from Little Rock or from the system office. And I think that's been very well received from the new institutions that came a part of the university system when I was there. And they did feel like

that the community was still very much involved in that campus in determining what that campus would be and who it would serve and how it would implement its programs.

[05:15:47] SL: That's where the rubber meets the road.

SR: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So—and Alan has been very good about being sure that those campuses still feel that degree of independence, but yet at the same time, knowing that there's overall a system that they have to somehow be responsible and be a part of. So it's kind of a decentralized system, but yet it's still tied together there in the Little Rock system office. And I think Alan does a masterful job of—you know, of making all that balance out.

[05:16:16] SL: It seems like that [*SR clears throat*] should play well legislatively, too. I mean, when it comes to the—now there's a bigger picture, it seems like, for everybody to . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . buy into.

SR: We do, and I think even all of higher education, to some degree, has come together with a funding formula and all have agreed to that. So they're all—they're not pushing as much individual campuses, even though there's still a little bit of turf protection there but . . .

SL: Well, sure.

SR: They're all tryin' to push together, and they've agreed on this funding formula, and they—when they fund the formula, then everybody gets a certain percentage of that. [05:16:52] Maybe it's not completely fair, but I think it's—it creates less division and less turmoil and less infighting among higher education when you can do it that way. And I think generally that's been the case. There's still some competition and, you know, some specific programs that may—that they may be out there by themselves. But I think especially within the system, you know, we've lessened the intensity of individual schools lobbying against other schools, and we try to work together as a system. And we have a—you know, some common lobbyists that even though each campus may have some specific lobbyists, we try to coordinate that and be sure we're all on the same page. Not fighting one institution in the system against another. That's very important, I think, that we go as a unified front—not only the system, but really as all higher education. And I think we've been the lead in helping some of that take place.

SL: Yeah, that's good work. Good work. [05:17:45] Makes sense. Anything else on the [SR *clears throat*] Board of Trustees that . . .

SR: [Pause] [*Vocalized noise*] No, I think we've pretty well covered it. I mean, it was a—ten years of—it passed really quickly.

SL: It—you know, when you first get on there . . .

SR: Think . . .

SL: . . . ten years sounds like a long time.

SR: It does. Yeah.

SL: But it does go quickly, doesn't it?

SR: Yeah, it does. And again, you know, bein' there when my kids were there and goin' through all that and bein' involved in their education and seein' them do well in college. And it's very rewarding, and we've made a lot of trips to Fayetteville, you know, when our kids were there. Course, we had, you know, meetings there, too, but I just couldn't've asked for a better oppor—better time in my life 'cause most people didn't have kids there, you know. Some of the trustees did, but I think we probably had more there at any one time than anybody. But—'cause, you know, that's where our kids were goin'. They could go anywhere they wanted to, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:18:42] SR: . . . I was only gonna pay if they went to Fayetteville. [*Laughter*] No, the truth is they—all of our kids had pretty good scholarships. They were . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you know, good students and had good records in high school, and they all had quite a bit of scholarship help, and we were very pleased with that. But just—I learned a lot about higher education and, really, the need for it and the importance of higher education. I know how important it had been to me, but you really see in society how important higher education is to mold—you know, the way not only you deal with economic development, but just the way you deal with life or the way you deal with issues—with social issues or things that maybe you can't put a price tag on, but they're so important in improvin' the quality of life for everybody. Education is such a strong component of that. And so it was—I'd never been exposed to that level of management and oversight of higher education. Been on the local school board, and that's probably one of the toughest jobs I've ever had, but the university was a challenging job. I mean, it was a challenging job because there's so much depended on correct policies and being sure that, you know, you didn't overstep your bounds, and you kept everybody workin' towards a common goal. And workin' with Dr. Sugg, I think we were able to achieve that.

[05:19:54] SL: It's amazing how powerful [*SR drinks something*]

those decisions—how they reverberate through many families' lives all across the state.

SR: Yeah.

SL: So [*SR clears throat*] it—it's a great honor to be on that board, but it's a heavy responsibility, too . . .

SR: Well, it is.

SL: . . . and you . . .

SR: It is.

SL: . . . you probably have no idea what you're getting [*laughter*] into until you get there.

SR: Oh, you don't. You know, you don't realize the things that'll come up and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . the things that'll be put in your lap, and, you know, we did a lot of expansion and a lot of capital improvements. Interest rates became low when I was on the board, and we had a lot of building projects. [05:20:34] Had the higher education bond issue that was passed, which provided some funding for projects. We had capital campaigns not only at Fayetteville, but just about all the campuses had some sort of capital campaigns, and it really was kind of a new idea in Arkansas, at least to the level that we were able to raise money. And I think that the

people of Arkansas really responded. And so we're able to do a lot of great things at campuses with new building projects, capital improvements, improvin' facilities, dormitories, classrooms, and I just saw a lot of phenomenal growth, not only in infrastructure but also in student enrollment.

[05:21:08] SL: You know, you gotta kinda hand it to John White on that end of that stick that he made people believers . . .

SR: Well, he did, you know.

SL: . . . when no one would believe that . . .

SR: John White . . .

SL: . . . that kind of goal . . .

SR: . . . you know . . .

SL: . . . was possible.

SR: You mentioned Frank Broyles as a visionary.

SL: Yeah.

[05:21:23] SR: Well, John White was a visionary, you know.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And he set a goal that none of us thought was reachable, and I mean, that's what visionaries are all about. That's what coaches are all about, you know, is putting that thing out there that you don't think you can reach and then pushing and pushing till you get to that point, and, course, he hired Dave Gearhart which was

a phenomenal hire. And Dave had a proven track record, and Dave brought a team in here and—but John put a lot of personal effort. He spent a lot of his own capital, you know, going out and talking to people and sharing the dream and the vision with them. And I think it caught hold. I mean, it was kind of an epidemic in this state. Everybody wanted to be a part of that that's ever—you know, people gave to the university that'd never been associated with it since they graduated, but somehow they—that dream caught fire that, you know, the University of Arkansas could make a difference. And if we were gonna make a difference, we had to have an endowment; we had to—you know, we had to step up to the plate. And those that had received much because of their university education had an obligation to give back. [05:22:22] I think John was able to impress that not in a threatening manner, but in a—at a call-to-duty manner that, you know, we have benefitted and, I mean, even me. You know, I knew what the benefits had been in my life, and I gave a lot more—it wasn't a whole lot, but a whole lot more'n I ever thought I'd ever give to the university because I realized how important it was.

SL: Yeah.

[05:22:42] SR: And I think it caught hold all around the country.

So—and we're seeing a lot of alumni support now to the university because of those contacts that were made through the development of fund-raising efforts from people all around the country that we'd kinda forgotten about—you know, didn't know—didn't realize they were a university graduate. They were looking—they were eager to respond when the outreach was made to them to do something for Arkansas. And so—and it really kind of set the bar for other capital campaigns. I'm involved with the one at UAMS, you know, a three-hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar campaign now. We've already pretty well reached that goal. So you know, I think it's raised the bar in the expectations of what's out there. We've always thought that Arkansas didn't have much—you know, we didn't have much money, and you know, we can't raise—we can't do this—can't do that. And I think it showed us that we can do anything we wanna do. And we have—Arkansas has tremendous wealth. We have tremendous philanthropy and people that are willing to give and wanna give. If they realize they're giving to something that's gonna be worthwhile, it's gonna make a difference. And I think we have made a difference in this state by philanthropy, and we vested it well, and we've got good returns for it.

[05:23:54] SL: You know—course, [*SR clears throat*] one thing that

we experienced in doing what we do, there's a lot of great folks from Arkansas out there—whether they went to the University of Arkansas . . .

SR: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . or not.

SR: There are.

SL: There's great—they've done great things that have—that contributed to the greater good in a lot of people's lives. So I—there's something about—there was something about that campaign that restored some pride . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Arkansas in general, I think. I mean . . .

SR: Well, we got the attention of people across the country, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[05:24:25] SR: A billion dollars in Arkansas! I mean, that's what you expected from, you know, Notre Dame or Michigan or, you know . . .

SL: Small . . .

SR: Some . . .

SL: Very small school.

SR: Yeah, small school with not much resources, but, you know,

we—we've got—we've had some heavy players, you know, with the Waltons and the Tysons and J. B. Hunts. But we had a lot of—you know, a lot of folks that stepped up for a million, two million dollars that, you know, never heard of—that they believed in the state, and they believed in the school. And it was more about just raisin' money. It was about a change of attitude—the "can-do" attitude, you know, that we can do better. And we can show it. You know, we'll prove you—we'll prove the world wrong. So it—I think it helped to improve the image of our state. That we thought that much of higher education that we were gonna invest and people were gonna give that much to see that we did improve ourselves. It meant—it was that important to us. So it was pretty phenomenal when you realize the endowment we had—what, a hundred million dollars?

SL: Yeah.

[05:25:20] SR: And then we went to seven, eight hundred million, you know, within a few years there. I mean, that's tremendous growth. So—but it took John White's vision and his persistence to get it done. I mean, John was not bashful askin' you for money. *[Laughs]*

SL: I know. It was somethin' else.

SR: He . . .

SL: He was. He was great.

SR: He would—he'd ask you for the last shirt on your back, [*laughs*]
I think, because he felt that it was that important that we
reached that goal and . . .

SL: Well, it was.

SR: Yeah.

SL: It was that important.

SR: Yeah, [*SL pats something*] it was.

SL: Yeah.

[05:25:49] SR: And the board—we all were involved some way or
another with the capital campaign. I'd help—I co-chaired the
division of ag campaign with Leland Tollett. And, you know, we
had our own committee and worked our list and, you know, we
just—just to see how it worked. It was an education in itself. I
mean, there's a lot of methodology goes into fundraising—
development work, you know. It's not just pickin' up a phone
and callin' somebody, it's just—it's relationship building.

SL: Yep.

SR: And that's the reason they last for eight years. [*Laughter*] It
takes a long time—or seven years or whatever it was . . .

SL: Yeah, right.

SR: . . . to build those relationships. So—and that's—you know,

people—they want to get comfortable. [05:26:27] You don't just go up—start askin' people for money. You say, "How can we help you with your dreams and your goals and help you do something that you want to do for the sake of posterity at the University of Arkansas? Do you wanna honor someone or—how can we help you do what you wanna do?" And that's—you know, it's a different approach than what I ever realized, but a very good approach so people can feel a buy-in to what they're contributing to and feel good about where their resources are going.

SL: Well, there's a great feeling of being a difference-maker.

SR: Yeah, and that's—that what it was.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It was a difference-maker.

[05:27:01] SL: Yeah. Well, Stanley . . .

SR: [*Clears throat*] Here we are, huh?

SL: . . . here we are now. What is Stanley Reed up to now? I mean, [*SR clears throat*] you're retired from Farm Bureau. You're—
you've got your farm. You've got your son kinda
workin' into runnin' the shop for you now, and you've got
grandkids now, and you're still—your wife has still stuck by you.

SR: Yeah, she's still here.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And more than ever. We've had, I guess, the best year of our life in not havin' the stresses of Farm Bureau or the university—not that they were stresses, but they were very busy times. I was chairman of the Board of Trustees and also president of Farm Bureau for [*SL laughs*] two years there together, and those were very, very busy times, as you can imagine—especially the things that were goin' on at Fayetteville campus. But all over the system, there were a lot of things goin' on. And bein' president of Farm Bureau and then still tryin' to be involved in a farming operation, it was a pretty hectic time.

SL: Yeah.

[05:27:59] SR: You know, I've enjoyed the grandkids, and I'm enjoyin' Charlene, and we're traveling some. But, you know, I'm still lookin', I guess, for a door to open. I don't feel like at fifty-eight that God's through with me yet.

SL: I . . .

SR: I feel like there may be an area of service, and I'm just tryin' to figure out where that is. You know, there's been a lot of speculation about me—two things—possibly succeeding Alan Sugg as president of the university system.

SL: Yep.

SR: You know, I've given that some thought, and you know, that is a possibility. I never really envisioned myself as an academic leader like that, but you know, it certainly has some interest.

[05:28:41] There's also been a lot of encouragement for me to run for the US Senate, and that's currently, at this moment, what I'm deliberating on, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I never could see myself as a US senator, either—never thought about that—but it seems that the people of Arkansas are indicating they want a change in that position, and a lot of people think with my exposure in Farm Bureau and the university and Simmons and other boards I've been on, that I've got a good handle for the state of Arkansas and got a compassion for the state and a knowledge of the state that maybe—and connections that no other candidate has. So, you know, all that's up in the air. I've not made a decision yet, but it's very humbling to think that you could aspire to one of the highest offices in the land, you know, comin' from my humble background and never thought I'd ever be in a position to even be considered for somethin' like that. But I can assure you—I mean, I've been getting unbelievable amount encouragement.

[05:29:37] And I say one—I say, "No" one day, and I say, "Yes"

the other. I mean . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I'm havin' a tremendous war within myself. My family's been very supportive, and they want me to do what—you know, what I think is best, but it's been a real tough decision for me.

SL: Pretty exclusive club, Stanley.

SR: Well, it is, and it's a tough one. I mean, it's—you're talkin' about assets and liabilities—I mean, you're on a honeymoon when you get elected, but boy, I mean, you can't please everybody. I mean, it's a—you got so many different competing interests there. But I did spent a lot of time in Washington when I was president of Arkansas Farm Bureau. I was on the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors, and that's where our office headquarters is, so I was up there five or six times a year at our board meetings as well as doing lobbying, making calls on the Hill, and you know, I've had quite a bit of experience working in the process. So who knows? You know, we'll see what the future holds, but it—we'll decide probably a long time before you get this tape out [*laughter*]*—what . . .*

[05:30:39] SL: Yeah, you're [*SR clears throat*] gonna have to . . .

SR: . . . what my . . .

SL: . . . before . . .

SR: . . . decision is.

SL: Probably so.

SR: Yeah.

SL: And, you know, we—I know you've got a decis—some
decisions . . .

SR: I know.

SL: . . . to make with your life. But, you know, you've shown that
you've got a proven track record of being tirelessly advocate for
the things that you believe in and the people that believe in you,
and you're still relatively young.

SR: I am. I am.

SL: And you've kind of got your ducks in a row with your business,
and your son seems to be . . .

SR: He does.

SL: . . . eager and passionate about . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . about what you and your father . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and your family have built . . .

SR: Carryin'—and his desire is not just to maintain; he wants to add
to.

SL: Well, I wonder . . .

SR: And we're . . .

SL: . . . where he gets that?

SR: I don't know. [*SL laughs*] We're buying land as I speak and making the—building grain bins and bigger barns and . . .

SL: Well, you know . . .

SR: . . . you know . . .

SL: . . . Stanley, you've done—you should do what your heart tells you to do would be my advice. I can tell you that it's vicious out there.

SR: Oh yeah. I know.

SL: And it's hard, and it's not just—it's hard on family, too.

SR: It is. [*Clears throat*] And I—you know, I—I'm goin' into this full aware of that, but, you know, the things I've done in life hadn't necessarily come easy and, you know, I think it's—you know, sometimes our position in life is not intended to be, you know, just a bed of roses. And I think when you have to struggle and—you tend to appreciate things more, and they're more rewarding when you do—are successful. And I know politics can be very tough, and I've never—you know, never thought I'd be in a position to run for US senator, but I mean, it's looking very promising that there is a degree of support out there. But, again, you know, I'd just—at this point I really don't know.

I've—but I've gotta decide within the next week or two, so . . .

SL: Boy . . .

SR: . . . I know the time . . .

SL: . . . I'm glad I'm not havin' [*laughs*] . . .

SR: . . . the time . . .

SL: . . . to make that decision.

SR: . . . is short.

[05:32:40] SL: Well, let me put this to you. If nothin' else, you

know you could just pile up in the back of the pickup truck with a couple of dogs and go out and do some . . .

SR: And I'd be . . .

SL: . . . coon huntin'.

SR: . . . perfectly happy doin' that.

SL: That's what I'm tellin' . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . you, you know. There's . . .

[05:32:51] SR: It's not like something I've got to do for an ego trip, you know, or . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . for my self-esteem. I'm doin' it more—if I did it, it would be out of more of a call to duty and think that our country needs common sense and hardworking values that understand balance

sheets—that understand what deficit spending does to your economy, to businesses, to farmers—you know, to understand what excessive government can do. And I think we're seeing a lot of that, and I don't wanna turn this into a political talk, but I guess there's . . .

SL: Well . . .

SR: . . . just a lot of concern right now . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . that we're doin' so much at the federal level that are gonna take away from our individual freedoms that we're making such long-term commitments financially, that our economy will never be able to get restored, and we're doin' things to the dollar. We're decreasing international confidence in our currency because of our continued indebtedness, which is gonna continue to go through the roof. I mean, I can just see a doomsday scenario of the United States defaulting on its debt and not being able to pay its obligations, just like when we went through the financial crisis the last two years because of excessive indebtedness, not using good business practices individually in banks, but just continuing to borrow and lend money when the collateral's not there—when it doesn't make good business sense. And I—you know, we saw that house of cards came

tumbling down pretty quickly, and who had ever thought, you know, five years ago that you'd have Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and AIG and Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns and all these, you know, huge financial conglomerates in this country go bankrupt. I mean, that woulda been—Merrill Lynch basically—you know, I mean, it's just unbelievable. [05:34:33] And who woulda thought five years ago, or even a year ago, that the United States could possibly default on its debt? I mean, we're the strongest economic power in the world, but I just think unless we get a hold and get an idea of what we're doing—and all these programs they're proposing—they've all got good values to 'em. The healthcare program. [05:34:51] I'm—we all want universal healthcare. We want access to—for everybody to have free medicine, but it's just a matter of what can you afford. And you can't provide things that you can't have—that you can't pay for as a country. And we need to take incremental steps on a lot of these far-ranging programs that're being offered by the administration and try to incrementally make improvements, rather than tryin' to throw the baby out with the bath wash and start all over again. I think that's what we're tryin' to do at a cost that we just can't afford, and it's gonna continue to destroy our economy. So those are real concerns I have as a citizen,

and I think . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:35:23] SR: . . . we're seeing those echoed by people all around the state that like the business experience I've had, and I have some name recognition because of my university and Farm Bureau work statewide. So you know, those are, I guess, some reasons why I might continue to pursue that. But you know, there's a lot of difference being a—being on the university board and Farm Bureau and being—runnin' for US Senate. I mean, the stakes are completely different. You're dealing in a whole different arena, and so—tryin' to analyze [*laughs*] it all and see if it's the right thing for me.

SL: Well, I . . .

SR: . . . and my family.

SL: . . . I . . .

SR: That's important.

[05:36:01] SL: I know that you'll—there's prob—there may not be a right or a wrong decision here, but I'm sure you'll go where your heart tells you to go . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you'll listen carefully . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . to . . .

SR: Well, I've been . . .

SL: . . . what . . .

SR: . . . doin' a lot of prayin' and soul-searching. Talkin' to my family and talkin' to, you know, advisers and people that I have a lot of confidence in, and I, you know, I guess it's very humbling that you've got so many people. I probably get [*sighs*] four or five calls or letters a day from people who're just saying that, you know, "We need you so bad. Our country needs you so bad." I mean, not only in here, but all across the country, people have found—I mean, they know about my possible candidacy and senators from other—US senators from other states that share the same values that I share say, you know, "We need you. We need you to come to Washington. Your country needs you. You've got an obligation to serve your country." And you know, I never served in the military just because of the—my timing and the age I was, and I'm thinkin', "Well, maybe this is my call to serve my country in a way that few people get the opportunity to." [05:37:00] So I mean, it's a—it's not an ego trip, I can assure you that. It's more of a call to duty and a sacrifice for our country that is small in comparison to what so many people have given, including my

father, including Tyler Parten that I mentioned today. And that's the real sacrifice, is your health and your life. And so many—that's the sacrifice so many Americans have given, and for me to sacrifice what little personal freedoms I have or time or bein' with my grandkids—I mean, that's just minute compared to the sacrifices that so many thousands of people have made for our country. So I mean, you can't even call it a sacrifice, you know. It's just a responsibility or an obligation. It's not a sacrifice when you compare it to what other people have given.

[05:37:45] SL: It's a big road trip.

SR: It is. It is.

SL: You got—you'll [*SR laughs*] be all over this state. You've—you think you've traveled before . . .

SR: Yeah, it'll be a lot different.

SL: Lot of listenin'.

SR: If we go through that, it will be.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And a lot of talks and speeches, and I'm—I don't how good a public speaker I am, but I guess if I go through that route, [*laughs*] I'll find out. I . . .

SL: You will.

[05:38:02] SR: I've given a few talks and a few . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . addresses, and I feel like I can go through that part of it. But there's a lot of intense scrutiny that would take place, and you know, because of Internet and communications, they can find out everything about you.

SL: Yeah. That's right.

SR: And I guess if they get this tape, they'll find out a [*laughs*] lot about me, too. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

SR: I'm sure that'll be analogued somehow.

SL: We'll [*SR laughs*]*—*we can talk about that in a minute, but . . .

SR: Till the [*laughs*] . . .

[05:38:27] SL: The—I guess—it's exciting. Life is still exciting for you.

SR: It is. It is. Havin' a good time.

SL: You still have opportunities—you—and you're—but it sounds like to me, you're lookin' for ways to serve Arkansas best and the . . .



SR: I am. I love this state. I love the Delta. You know, I think the state is truly the land of opportunity, and I think you can look at a lot of the people that have come from here—success they've had, both in business and politics. [05:38:56] And it's been

proven, you know, that we've got something that's kinda magical about a small state of Arkansas that can produce one president and then two serious other presidential candidates—you know, all of our politicians have always been well respected. You know, we're a major player in agriculture. Walmart—largest corporation in the world, headquartered in Arkansas. You know, I don't think all that's an accident. I think that it's because of the work ethic of our people.

SL: There is that.

SR: It goes back to the land. I mean, it all—as you said a while ago, it's—the genesis is—it has to do—if not this generation, the past generations and their tie to the land and their hard work, their values that they received from workin' on the farm from making something out of nothing, literally, by their investment of their human capital into the land and watchin' things grow and develop. [05:39:45] I mean, you look at Walmart—I mean, that was really an off-shot of—because they had Tyson's and the chicken industry up there, and the people had money, and they could go to the store, and I mean, it all kinda developed because of the agricultural economy up there. So . . .

SL: Yep.

SR: Agriculture is still a huge industry in this state. It is the largest

industry and I—you know, with my work in agriculture all of my life, I certainly understand that part of our state's economy probably better than anybody else because I've been exposed to it. And if I've learned anything at all, I think I've learned what agriculture is about in this state, not only from a row crop, but from a livestock perspective and how important it is to our state.

[05:40:21] SL: Well, I know you'll make a good decision. [SR *laughs*] You'll make—well, and you know, considering all factors, I know you'll—it'll—and you'll be comfortable with it.

SR: Well, I hope so. And I—you know . . .

SL: I think you will.

SR: When I can sleep at night, then that's what I want. I'm havin' a little trouble sleepin' now. Maybe when I get the decision made, it'll come my way, so . . .

[05:40:42] SL: Yeah. Well, what about—anything else you wanna say about family?

SR: Well, other than been blessed by a wonderful wife—thirty-seven years almost—and three wonderful children. I mean, we've really had a storybook family, and somethin' I didn't have in my own family growin' up, and somethin' I aspired to was to have a close family that supported each other that worked through your kinks and, you know, the conflicts. And I'm not sayin' there

haven't been conflict. Every family has some conflict, but just working through 'em and supporting each other, and we've been able to do that. And Charlene—you know, she's a lot more responsible for that than I am because she had much better teachers [*laughs*] in her parents. And, again, I married her for her family. Remember, I tellin' you that earlier.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*] Mh-hmm.

[05:41:27] SR: And they were great role models for me as to what you oughta do, and you know, I probably hadn't learned as good as I should have, but Charlene is—she's the glue that holds everything together. There's no question about that, so—she's wonderful and a great grandmother and . . .

SL: Now . . .

SR: . . . had three won . . .

[05:41:43] SL: . . . tell me the names of your children again?

[*Shuffles papers*]

SR: Hailey. She's thirty-one and lives in Little Rock—has three children. And she's involved with the farming operation. She comes over once a week and does the payrolls and farm books and very much involved with the accounting aspect of it.

SL: Mh-hmm. Now is she married, or is she . . .

SR: She's married and got three children.

SL: And what's her last name now?

SR: Davis.

SL: Hailey Davis.

SR: Hailey Davis. Her husband, Andy Davis, is an—civil engineer—does wastewater-treatment systems.

SL: Okay.

SR: He's got a business—New Water Systems. They sell equipment—tanks and wastewater-treatment equipment. Nathan, my son—he's got a law degree from Fayetteville also and an ag business degree, and he lives here, and pretty well—he manages the farm, and I kind of turned everything—and I've gotten more comfortable doin' that. I'm—always been a real hands-on guy, you know. I wanna be right in the middle of everything. He delegates more than I do, but that's the way most—most people do it that way. [05:42:40] I was probably one of the few that had to have my hands on everything on the farm and—but he's doing well, making good decisions, and probably a much better manager than what I was on [*laughs*] the farm. And then my youngest daughter, Anna—she has a speech pathology degree. And went to get her master's degree from South Carolina—worked at children's hospital as a speech pathologist working with cochlear implant patients—primarily

young children for two years—two and a half years. And then she's in Africa now teaching with Bridge to Rwanda. It's a faith-based Christian program teaching mainly the genocide orphans English as a second language, so the hopes are them being proficient enough to come to the United States to get a higher education here. So . . .

[05:43:27] SL: That's such a beautiful thing. Now is she married yet or . . .

SR: No.

SL: . . . is she still . . .

SR: She's not married—has no significant other or, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . not even lookin' that way. Now our son, Nathan—he just became engaged to a beautiful young lady in Little Rock and—Kristin Overstreet. And they'll be married, I think, May the twenty-ninth. So kinda get two of 'em married and Anna—I'm still waitin'. She's in no hurry. She's got lots of things . . .

[05:43:52] SL: Now are you gonna be able to do that wedding and still run for the Senate?

SR: Well, I don't know. [*Laughter*] I think the first primary is on May the eighteenth, so it's before the wedding, so—if I have to get in a runoff or somethin', that'd be kinda tricky.

SL: Yeah.

SR: But, you know, some point—some things are more important than political races and—family and weddings and those things that take a priority. So [pause]—but . . .

SL: I think if you remembered that, you'd probably make a great senator. [*Laughter*]

[05:44:21] SR: We've been blessed with three wonderful grandchildren of our oldest daughter, and we see them a couple times a week. And, you know, they were all over this last weekend, and when our—when they left, the oldest one—she's six—she was in the back seat cryin' . . .

SL: Oh, [*laughs*] that's . . .

SR: . . . 'cause she . . .

SL: . . . a good sign.

SR: . . . because didn't wanna leave. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's good. You've done your job of . . .

SR: So . . .

SL: . . . spoiling [*unclear word*].

SR: Yeah, we did. [05:44:40] But we have a great time with 'em and just enjoy being with 'em and doin' things with 'em—take 'em to a lot of Razorback games. We built a house in Fayetteville this year, and that's kind of one of the things, you

know, we were thinkin' of goin' to basketball games—football games. We have season tickets there, so we . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . were lookin' for a place—never could really find what we wanted, and it was a good time to build. Building costs were down and had a little extra money to invest, so we just built us a house there. So we've had a lot of fun weekends this year.

[05:45:05] SL: Where'd y'all build?

SR: Sloan Estates. It's . . .

SL: Sloan. I've seen that.

SR: It's out off of Gulley Road . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . about two miles east of Crossover off of Mission. And it's real close to Bridgewater where Pelphrey and all those guys live.

SL: Yeah.

SR: We're kinda on the other side of the ridge from them. It's nothin' like their houses. It's just—they're just kinda, you know, common houses—nice homes, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . nothin' extravagant. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:45:27] SR: . . . we're able to enjoy our grandkids with that and

do things with them and really enjoyed that. So just bein' a grandpa and a grandma, and that's fun. But you know, I guess a US senator has enough time maybe to play with the grandkids, too. I don't know. We may get that opportunity to see sometime.

SL: Maybe some . . .

SR: I—as a candidate you may not get to 'cause [*Laughter*] . . .

SL: That's right. [*SR clears throat*] Well you know, the important thing is that you wanna make things better.

SR: Yeah, and that's . . .

SL: And—on . . .

SR: . . . my only desire.

SL: . . . in whatever way you choose. It's . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: You're gonna be fine. Yeah. You've had a blessed life and . . .

SR: I have. I've been very fortunate to have a wonderful family and good parents—tremendous business opportunities, you know, some degree of success—not—you know, success is kinda relative, but much better'n I deserve or ever thought I'd have and a very comfortable stage in life right now. You know, financially somewhat independent and kids are all doin' well. All have got, you know, kinda out on their own goin' their different

ways and [05:46:29]—you know, it's a good time in life, but, yet, I've always kinda lived a life of service to somethin', and I guess there's kinda that yearning to see what else is out there—what areas of service I might—could continue to be involved in. And I've gotten quite a bit involved this year with UAMS—with the college of medicine. I'm on the UAMS Foundation Board. And we've started an advisory board at the college of medicine, and I'm chairing that. I'm on the northwest Arkansas advisory board for the medical school up there.

SL: Yeah, that's a new deal . . .

SR: That's a . . .

SL: . . . up there.

SR: It is.

SL: That's a good thing.

[05:47:02] SR: And I'm on the World Trade Center advisory board also—at Rogers.

SL: Yeah.

SR: I guess kind of a carryover from my board . . .

SL: Dan . . .

SR: Yeah, Dan Hendrix.

SL: . . . Hendrix. Yeah.

SR: And board of trustees work and been on . . .

SL: Good guy.

SR: . . . a couple trade mission with the board o—with the World Trade Center. [05:47:15] And you know, have been able to travel around the world for, you know, fifteen or twenty different countries and enjoy that—mainly from either Farm Bureau or from a trade standpoint, and I enjoy that, and you know, I miss being involved to the extent I was involved with Farm Bureau and be in a position, you know, that you could have some influence on policy. And so, you know, maybe that's kinda where the Senate race has some intrigue to me. I still like being involved and tryin' to make a difference wherever I can. So . . .

[05:47:49] SL: Well, I can tell you that when David Pryor retired, he's busier than he's ever been.

SR: Really?

SL: Yeah, I mean, he . . .

SR: Yeah, well . . .

SL: They're just . . .

SR: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . on the go . . .

SR: He never . . .

SL: . . . all the time.

SR: . . . really retired, though. I mean, [*laughter*] he was dean of

the Clinton School and . . .

SL: I know.

SR: . . . dean of the Harvard School of Government, and now he's on the Board of Trustees and . . .

SL: And I—he's . . .

SR: Such popular demand, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[05:48:11] SR: Everybody wants him because he's such a beloved figure. He's one of—you know, some politicians, when, you know, they retire or they stay too long, you know, they get defeated—it's—you know, they don't have maybe as much of a popularity maintaining after that. But you know, Pryor is one of the few that—you know, he's still probably more popular now than he's ever been. David is just a tremendous individual who loves the state of Arkansas.

SL: Yeah.

SR: And has served this state well . . .

SL: He does.

SR: . . . in a lot of different capacities. So I know it must be interesting to have him for a brother-in-law.

SL: It—he's a great brother.

SR: Yeah, I bet.

SL: Great brother.

SR: I bet.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

SR: He's a brother of mine, too. He's an SAE.

SL: I know that.

SR: [*Laughs*] He and Mark both. So . . .

SL: I know that.

SR: We got . . .

SL: I know that.

SR: That's another one of those benefits from fraternity life that . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you get to claim kinship to very famous people. So . . .

[05:49:03] SL: Yeah. Well, is there anything else? This is kind of
my [*SR clears throat*—cover my . . .

SR: Last chance, huh?

SL: . . . my back end. You know, if there's somethin' that we
haven't talked about that you wanna talk about, I want you to
talk about it now. I can promise you a few days from now you're
gonna be thinkin' about things . . .

SR: "I wish I'd've said somethin'."

SL: . . . you wish you had said. But . . .

[05:49:23] SR: Well, I guess, you know, the summary of my life is

the importance of faith, family, and friends. I mean, that can be—sum it up pretty quickly that, you know, my faith first—my salvation—my relationship to Jesus Christ—it has been the foremost thing that's guided me through life—my life, and ever decision I've made it's, you know, as a Christian. "What should I do?" And then my family, and that's—I can't say enough about my family. Both my parents, my immediate family—my kids and my wife—I mean, that's been such a stronghold—a source of refuge and comfort and enjoyment. I mean, I just couldn't imagine it being any better. And the friendships, you know, that I've made through the years and the organizations I've served in, both here in Lee County and, you know, around the state—I mean, there's been a lot of satisfaction in being able to meet a lot of great people and havin' the fellowship and friendship that I've enjoyed. And you know, and the business—I've enjoyed farming. There's no question that's a passion in my life. I don't—you know, it's not the top of my priority, and I think sometimes we get our priorities a little out of order in life. And—but that's been a high priority through my life, is to have a successful business career. And farming was my business and had it been, you know, supermarkets or retail or finance, banking, or whatever, you know, my passion was agriculture.

And I think you've got to pursue your passion, or you're not gonna be a success or really be fulfilled in life. And so—and I have no regrets that I didn't practice law. You know, a lot of people thought, "Well, you're gonna regret it, you know, 'cause you're not practicin' law," and I've never looked back on that decision. You know, that was one of those gut feelings that I was comfortable with, and I knew that that's what I wanted to do. And everybody said, "You're crazy, you know." [05:51:12] But you know, you gotta go where your heart tells you to go. And so that's always been just kinda, Scott, been my guiding light through years, and you gotta trust your heart, and that's what I'll do on this political race I'm lookin' at now. So we'll see where life takes us. You know, if God calls me home today, I'm ready to go. You know, I've lived a fulfilling life, and I know where my final resting place is. I have confidence, and I believe God's Word, and I know God has a place prepared for me, and if he calls me today, I'm ready. So I don't know what else you can add to life about it, but . . .

SL: [*Sighs*] Stanley, it's been a great honor . . .

SR: Well, thank you.

SL: . . . to sit from you . . .

SR: Thank you, Scott.

SL: . . . and I really . . .

SR: Thank you.

SL: . . . thank you.

SR: I've enjoyed it, and . . .

SL: I really thank you.

SR: . . . you've made me reflect on a life and maybe really realize how good it's been, you know, and how blessed I've been through the years and how wonderful this state is and how wonderful [SL shuffles papers] the Pryor Center is for wantin' to preserve all this. I don't know who's gonna sit down and read and listen [Laughs] to all . . .

SL: You'll be surprised.

SR: . . . this stuff. [Laughs]

[05:52:16] SL: Well, you know, we're gonna make folks proud to be from Arkansas. And we're gonna give 'em . . .

SR: You know, I never wanna live anywhere else.

SL: Me either.

SR: And—you know, and I've traveled all around the world and, you know, I've always—it's been so good to come back home and plant your feet here, and my roots are so deep in Marianna. You know, I've already got my gravesite picked out over here right by Dad. We bought eight plots when he was buried, and that's

where I'm gonna be buried, Charlene. I don't—maybe the kids'd want to be buried there. But you know, I've just cast my lot here with these people, and I love Marianna. I love the people here. And there's been change, but I mean, the basic goodness of this community and of this region still exists. And, you know, it's just a place I enjoy—love living here.

[05:53:02] SL: Your life story says that almost every . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . paragraph.

SR: Well, yeah, you . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: Yeah. I mean, I could've gone somewhere else.

SL: Yeah.

SR: It's not that I had to farm. It's what I . . .

SL: Well . . .

SR: . . . wanted to do.

[05:53:11] SL: And that's another thing, you know. We hope that this story will tell the kids that they don't have to leave.

SR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: I—it has a lot to do with what you choose to do . . .

SR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and not so much where you are.

SR: And doing it because, you know, your heart tells you to do it and not because other people expect it out of you. Other people expected me to stay in a law practice. And I—you know, I probably could've made a livin' practicin' law, but I don't—I wouldn't've had the opportunities I've had, you know, to travel and be involved with Farm Bureau—wouldn't've had the extra time, and I don't think I would've had the fulfillment that I've received in agriculture. And some other folks were miserable, you know, doin' what I'm doin'. It's just where your interests lie and what your passions are. So I—you—it's not a template. You know, everybody can—they're—we're all made different, and our interests are different. And you've gotta encourage your kids and people to pursue their interests and their passion. I think that's—whatever it is—I mean, it may be farming. It may be makin' documentaries. It may be [*SL laughs*] interviewing dull guys like me all day long. [*Laughter*] Whatever it is . . .

SL: Well, it is.

SR: You know, and you can tell . . .

SL: I do love doing this.

SR: Yeah. Well, I can tell. I mean . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . you've got a passion for doin' it and delvin' into people's

minds and get them to think about their life and reflect on it,
and that's important to preserve that. So . . .

SL: Yeah.

SR: . . . I commend you . . .

SL: Thank you.

SR: . . . and your team here.

SL: Well, we all love doin' it.

SR: Your team. Yeah.

SL: It's great [*unclear word*].

SR: Okay.

SL: Okay, man.

SR: All right. Thanks, Scott.

SL: All right. Thank you.

SR: All right.

SL: All right.

[05:54:32 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]