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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Jim Blair

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

October 28, 2008

Springdale, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Jim Blair on October 28, 2008, in Springdale, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: So the first thing I have to do is, we have to kind of determine what it is we're doing here.

Jim Blair: Okay.

SL: Today's date is October 28. It's one day after your birthday. Is that right?

JB: That's correct.

SL: October 28, 2008. We're at your office here on South Thompson . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . uh—between Fayetteville and Springdale. We are—my name is Scott Lunsford. Yours is Jim Blair. We're here with the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History. Um—Jim, this videotape and audio recordings will be archived in the Special Collections unit at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Mullins Library. And I have to ask you now if that's okay with you that we . . .

JB: Absolutely.

[00:00:50] SL: Okay, I appreciate that. Jim, the first thing—um—that I need to do—um—I need to know when and where you

were born.

[00:00:59] JB: Well, I was born in a little house next to a—a school building in Elkins, Arkansas, on October 27, 1935. My father was—uh—teaching school and coaching the women's basketball team at Elkins. And—uh—the—uh—shortly after I was born—uh—my parents begin having difficulties, and they started leavin' [leaving] me—leaving me with—uh—my father's mother and father, my paternal grandparents, who—uh—lived in a house on the corner of School and Meadow Street—102 North School Street in Fayetteville. And—uh—they would reconcile and come get me, and then, they would—uh—separate and bring me back. And, finally, my grandmother allegedly said, "Well, I'm gonna [going to] take him one more time, but you can't come back and get him anymore." So from the time I was six months old—uh—I was raised by my paternal grandparents, and I lived in Fayetteville—uh—on that corner, which was right across the—uh—street and catty-corner to—as we Ozark hillbillies, say—uh—catty-corner from the old Fayetteville High School, which is where the—uh—some senior center housing is—uh—located now.

SL: Hillcrest Towers.

JB: Yeah, Hillcrest Towers.

[00:02:43] SL: So—um—well, did you ever get to know your mom and dad?

JB: I never knew my mother. I think I saw her one time when—uh—I think she came through here when I was about seven, and—uh—I—uh—I vaguely remember seein' [seeing] her as a very, very pretty, dark-haired woman. I—I have a picture of her. I—uh—uh—periodically—uh—after I started practicin' [practicing] law, I would put skip tracers out to see if I could locate her. Uh—by the time I actually did locate her—uh—she had already passed away.

SL: Uh-huh.

JB: She died in—uh—San Diego, California, in 1974, but I never really did know her.

[00:03:34] SL: What—what was her maiden name?

JB: Her maiden name was Woolsey, and—uh—I knew her father. Uh—he was a conductor on the Frisco Railroad.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JB: And after I was in law school, occasionally, I would arrange when he was comin' [coming] through Fayetteville—uh—to meet him there at the Fayetteville train station. Uh—his nickname was "Brouse"—uh—C. E. Woolsey—and he was—uh—uh—married to—uh—a second wife. He was divorced from my

mother's mother, whose name was Zena, and—uh—uh—the second wife's name was Goldia, and—uh—she may have known where my mother was, but she would never help me find her.

SL: Hmm.

JB: Uh—she had adopted—uh—another child of my mother's—uh—an older girl named Shirley, who is now passed away. Uh—and—uh—there was a boy also. Uh—they were from a previous marriage before—a teenage marriage before my mother married my father. And the boy was killed in a New Year's Eve car accident.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:04:53] JB: He was in service—eighteen years old and—and killed in a New Year's Eve car wreck. Uh—the irony of all that is [*laughs*] that just about five years ago, I found there was another child. And so I discovered—uh—that I have another sister I never knew about at all. And—uh—her name is Peggy Marsh. [*Clears throat*] She lives in—uh—uh—Palm Springs, California, and—uh—she—uh—uh—believes that her—we have the same father. Unquestionably, we have the same mother. And—uh—the way I found her was my oldest daughter [Heather Elaine Blair] is the family genealogist. She got to probing around in my mother's background and got to wondering why

this woman named Peggy Marsh paid for my mother's funeral.

SL: Hmm.

JB: So she called up and asked her, and [*laughter*] she said, "Well, because she's my mother."

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:06:02] JB: Well, Peggy turns out to have a photo of me that was taken when I was seven and—uh—given to her by her mother's mother—um—Grandmother Zena, who told her not to tell her mother she had this photograph, but this was her brother. And—uh—her mother told her that her father was a guy named Blair, but he was dead, which he wasn't, but . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

JB: Uh—I regularly go to Palm Springs at least once a year and see her. So . . .

[00:06:36] SL: So whatever happened with your father?

JB: Well—uh—after the split-up and after the teaching year was over—uh—he went—uh—off to—uh—we're talkin' [talking]—um—you know, 1936—uh—pretty bad times.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JB: He went off to work for the CCC.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:58] JB: And—uh—then he wound up—uh—in Salt Lake—uh—

working for Magna Copper Company. And, then, in 1940, he—somehow his—uh—ROTC commission got activated. He went in the service as a second lieutenant—did his training at Fort Benning, Georgia, and—uh—spent most of his rest of—rest of his life in the army. He—uh—he got out in 1947 for maybe a year—said he didn't understand civilian life and went back in the service. So—uh—I would see him occasionally. Uh—and he had—uh—he did remarry in [19]42, and he did have—uh—uh—two more children. I have two half-sisters. Uh—one is an M.D., who runs a charity organization in the Republic of Georgia.

SL: Wow.

JB: And the—uh—younger one is—uh—a—uh—oh, a substitute schoolteacher—uh—who has a C.P.A. degree but doesn't use it—uh—who lives in Columbia, Missouri. So—uh—and—uh . . .

[00:08:20] SL: So it's kind of amazing to me that Elkins had enough students to have a girls' basketball team.

JB: Well, one of the ironies there was that I was a problem student in school in my early years, and—until I got to the fifth grade. And—uh—I had a—uh—a teacher named Mrs. Pheland, who made me a teacher's pet. Nobody had ever [*laughs*] treated me as well as she treated me, and she would just not let me fail. And what I did not know is that she had played basketball for my

father. [*Laughs*]

SL: Wow.

JB: I later knew her—uh—nephew, Norris Pheland, was the—uh—in charge of the credit department at—at—uh—Tyson Foods for years.

SL: Is that *P-H-E-L-A-N* or . . .

JB: Yes, *P-H-E-L-A-N-D*.

[00:09:19] SL: Um—[*clears throat*] okay, so now you were raised, then, by your father's . . .

JB: Father.

SL: . . . father. And . . .

JB: And mother until—he—uh—his name was Rufus Blair. He had a little—I would call it a country grocery store on the—in that little brick addition to that—uh—house on the corner of School and Meadow. And—uh—uh—he—uh—he would run the grocery store in the—uh—wintertime, and then come spring, he would go up on Mountain Street and open up what he called his fruit stand, and my grandmother would run the grocery store. And—uh—the fruit stand was behind the Walker-Stone House . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

JB: . . . just immediately to the south, where—uh—there are some condo buildings now. And—uh—but he died in [19]48, so then it

was just my grandmother and—and—uh—and me, so . . .

[00:10:27] SL: So you would've been—um—fifteen?

JB: No, I was—I was—uh—I was twelve.

SL: Twelve.

JB: Uh—uh—well, I'll have to add it up. He died in [19]48. I was—in July of [19]48, I was twelve, and I would've been thirteen in the fall.

SL: Okay.

JB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, that was my bad math.

JB: Yeah.

[00:10:48] SL: Um—well, what do you remember about—uh—the house that you grew up in?

JB: Well, the old part of it was built, I believe, in 1930, and it still exists there. It's been remodeled—uh—uh—by some local developers—uh—very nicely—uh. But—uh—I—I sold it for forty thousand dollars. The last I knew, they wanted four hundred thousand for it, but—uh—[*laughter*] that house—uh—I hung a ton of wallpaper in that house because my grandmother rented out rooms or—or—uh—kinda [kind of] studio apartments in that house. And when people would move out, instead of painting the walls, we wallpapered 'em [them]. And I hung a ton of

wallpaper in that house, and all I can tell you is the corners did not true up. [*Laughter*] I mean, the house was not . . .

SL: Square.

JB: . . . in perfect plumb.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:11:54] JB: And—uh—and I—I hate wallpaper to this day. I will not have—uh—wallpaper in my house. [*SL laughs*] But I—I mean, we used to wallpaper the ceilings—uh—I mean, standin' [standing] on planks on kitchen stools with a paste made—uh—out of flour and water on the stove and—and usin' [using] a broom to sweep it across the ceiling. I mean, it was a—um—and it was an ordeal. [*Laughs*] I just hated it. [*Laughs*]

SL: So you pretty much had a—a—a city life, then, growing up. It wasn't . . .

JB: Oh, I did.

SL: it wasn't any . . .

JB: I did.

SL: . . . farm activity or . . .

JB: No. No, my—uh—my grandmother's people, and—and my grandfather's people—uh—came from—uh—uh—Searcy County, Arkansas.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:12:48] JB: And—uh—we would occasionally go to Searcy County to see the—uh—her relatives. Uh—and—uh—eventually her older sister—eighteen years older—came to live with us a short time before she died. But my exposure to farm life was goin' [going] there to—I might occasionally ride a mule or somethin' [something], but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

JB: . . . I was never—uh—intrigued by the farm.

[00:13:16] SL: Well, what was Fayetteville like when you were growin' [growing] up?

JB: Well, it was a pretty small town. Everything almost revolved around the square, and—uh—the—there was a Blair's Bookstore on the square, but they were no relation to us . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

JB: . . . that I knew of. And—uh—at a pretty early age, I carried a newspaper route for the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, and eventually, I managed to carry two newspaper routes for 'em. And so I knew most of the back alleys and streets and everything in town. Uh—it wasn't a large town, and—uh—I walked—uh—I went to school at Washington School . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:00] JB: . . . and—uh—I started when I was five in the first

grade. I woulda [would have] been six in a couple of months. And—uh—uh—my grandmother walked me to school the first day and assumed I could find my way home [*SL laughs*], which was not correct. I got lost my first [*laughter*] day tryin' [trying] to get back the nine blocks or however many it was to—to the house. But—uh—for the next eight years, I—uh—I would usually run to school, and then—uh—I'd run home in the afternoons, and then when I got my newspaper route, I'd spend—you know, it was an evening—afternoon newspaper, and I would spend the—at that time it was.

SL: So Washington Elementary back then went eight grades?

JB: Eight grades.

SL: Eight grades. And—um—um—you had—uh—uh—a fifth-grade teacher that—that took you on. Up until that time, you were kind of a—a problem student?

JB: Well—uh—the first—the first year I was in school—uh—I know I had the mumps, the measles, the whooping cough—uh—uh—scarlet fever—uh—almost ever disease that we don't have anymore, so I missed most of the first grade. And—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:15:25] JB: But I was—uh—and I—I—learned to read by accident by the time I was three, and so there wasn't anything goin' on in

the first grade that interested me anyhow, and—uh—and that was basically true for a number of years is I was just very bored with the classes. Uh—I was—uh—quick with arithmetic and—uh—and—uh—uh—so—uh—in the fourth grade, my—uh—uh—teacher was Mrs. Harry Vandergriff. [*SL laughs*] And—uh—she made a gallant effort, including—they had a difficult time tryin' to teach me a decent handwriting [*laughs*] skill. And I remember—uh—at one time the school principal was named—uh—Mrs. Caudle, and I saw in the paper where she lived past a hundred. Had I known she was—uh—still alive in the last few years, I would've looked her up. But she's since passed away. And—uh—but—uh—uh—to give you an illustration of how—uh—I was indulged in the fifth grade—uh—we—uh—I was a copious reader, and I used to go—uh—particularly in the summertime, to the Fayetteville Public Library with a cardboard box, and I would just fill it up. And the librarian, a Mrs. Dean, let me get away with breaking all the rules I—'cause she knew that at the end of the week, I'd bring the box back and—uh—and—get another boxful. And so I read a lot of—uh—weird things, but—uh—[*SL laughs*]—at one point in the fifth grade, we had to do a five-minute book report, oral book report in front of the class. And I did my book report on Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and—uh—I—

uh—my report lasted a little over forty-five minutes. [*Laughter*] And the teacher never cut me off. Uh—and I had the class pretty well entranced because I loved the book, and I was enthusiastic about it, and—uh . . .

SL: That was a turnaround for you.

JB: Well, it was. It was. And I found it was easier to cooperate academically than to fight the system.

SL: So how did you accidentally learn to read at three years old?

[00:17:57] JB: Well, my grandmother had been a schoolteacher—uh—and had taught in a one-room school, and—uh—the reason the family was in Fayetteville was to send the kids—uh—the generation before me, to the university. And—uh—so she would read to me, and I'd be sitting there looking at the book while she was reading it, and—uh—uh—I think the first book I learned to read was *Peter Rabbit*. But—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

JB: [*Laughs*] In Mr. McGruder's garden. But—uh—[*SL laughs*]—I—you know, I never learned phonics. I just suddenly was sight-reading.

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, that was a blessing and a curse early then, wasn't it?

JB: Well—uh—I—uh—really think it's the most valuable skill you can

have, and it's—for survival in today's world. And—uh—I made a point when my kids were little—uh—I didn't trust the system to teach 'em to read, so I got a book called *Why Johnny Can't Read*, which teaches phonics, which, as I say, I never learned myself, but I taught them all to read before they started school. So—and they were all National Merit Scholar semifinalists. Now whether that's connected or not [*laughs*], I don't know.

SL: I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is. Well, so—uh—gosh, readin' [reading] at three years old—growin' up in Fayet—Fayetteville probably had, what, less than ten thousand people?

JB: It was less than ten thousand. Uh—I remember when it crossed ten thousand, and I thought it was a huge number. Uh . . .

SL: Were—um—all the streets paved in Fayetteville at that time?

JB: No, no, certainly not. And—and the street—uh—[*laughs*] I mean, we take it for granted—College Avenue comin' out of Fayetteville, Thompson Avenue as it goes into Springdale—the road between Fayetteville and Springdale was not paved. Uh—I don't remember when they paved it, but I remember I was a Boy Scout, and I had to do a hike so many miles long, and I walked up that road, so I [*laughs*] remember it wasn't paved.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:10] Now that doesn't fit with some of my other experiences,

and maybe I'm not remembering it right, because in the [19]40s, I—while the war was goin' on, I had a bicycle, and I had a friend named Bobby Smith and a—one named Alfred Taylor and a kid named Alan Adams, who has been teachin' physics at the Naval Academy now for several years—and we would take our bicycles on Sunday afternoons and ride down the middle of the street to Goshen or to Greenland or to Farmington or to someplace about five miles out and find a little country grocery store and buy a Coke and ride back. That was Sunday afternoon.

SL: And were they paved then? Was . . .

JB: And they were paved, so I'm—maybe I'm misremembering the pavement to Springdale. May—[*laughs*]—or maybe it was torn up to be repaved. I don't remember.

SL: So back then, the US Post Office was right there in the center of the square.

JB: US Post Office was in the center of the square.

[00:21:38] SL: What kind of—let's just talk about the Fayetteville square back then. What was . . .

JB: Well, the—there was a—on the east side of the square was Blair's stationery store—stationery and bookstore. There was the Palace Theatre. Movie theatre. There was the Fayetteville

Drug Store, and on the north side was Collier's drug store on the—right on the corner of East and Center Street. And the First National Bank on the other corner. And somewhere in there was Hunt's Department Store. And then on the west side was a Lewis Brothers Hardware Store and Campbell & Bell. And then on the south side was—I think it was Davison Shoe Store and the Royal Theatre. And there were four movie theatres in town—the UARK Theatre down on Dickson Street and the Ozark Theatre over by the Courthouse. And they were all owned by Bill Sonneman, who I was sure must've been the richest man in the world. [*Laughs*] But . . .

[00:23:04] SL: Well, now McIlroy Bank was around there somewhere, wasn't it?

JB: That's right. The McIlroy Bank must've been in the middle of the block, 'cause I'm pretty sure Collier's had the corner.

SL: Middle of the north block.

JB: Yeah, middle of the north block.

SL: And then wasn't Hunt's—Hunt's was over there on the . . .

JB: Well, Hunt's . . .

SL: . . . or when I worked at Hunt's . . .

JB: . . . Hunt's—Hunt's—was—I—Hunt's, I think, originally was on the east side of the square, and then at some point, it moved

into the north side. His—Fred Hunt was the guy that owned it. He was one of my Sunday school teachers, and he had a couple of kid—one named Larry Hunt, and I've forgotten the name of the other one.

SL: I remember Fred Hunt. I . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: I worked . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . there.

JB: Did you?

SL: Uh-huh.

JB: Yeah.

[00:23:52] SL: So was it also kind of a social focal point as well? I mean . . .

JB: Well, it was a—you know, Collier's drug store had a soda fountain. It was a big deal to go to the Collier's—you know, have a Coke float or a cherry soda or somethin'. And then if you proceeded west across Block Street and—there was the Eason Building, and then there was Ricketts Drug Store, which also had a soda fountain. I worked there when I was fifteen. I—I'd lied about my age to get the job. And you was supposed to be sixteen to work nine hours a day, which I was doing in the

summertime. And some woman from the Arkansas Labor Department came in and interrogated me about how old I was, and I lost my nerve and told the truth. And, consequently, [*laughs*] lost my job. [*Laughter*] So . . .

SL: That's funny. You think somebody sicced her on you or . . .

JB: I don't know.

SL: You don't know?

JB: I was invited as a delegate to the Key Club convention in Miami, Florida, and I was tryin' to make enough money to go, and so I wasn't gonna stay all summer anyhow.

SL: Yeah.

JB: But the . . .

[00:25:25] SL: What kind of—were there any—we were talkin' earlier about characters in Fayetteville at that time—some of the old characters, and you mentioned J. D. Eagle.

JB: Well, I mean, there were—I mean, Fayetteville's solidest citizen of that day probably was Hal Douglas, and Hal Douglas had married into the Fulbright family, and a lot of the local critics carped that, you know, the Fulbrights were the richest people in town, and he had, you know, married into what they considered undeserved wealth. What most people never [*laughs*] appreciated is that Hal Douglas made the Fulbrights really rich.

SL: Hmm.

JB: He was a brilliant businessman, and he was very astute at managing their investments, which included the Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Fulbright Wood Products. And in his group, kind of, was a guy named Deacon Wade, who was a very powerful state senator from northwest Arkansas, and together with a guy from Siloam Springs named Russell Elrod in the state senate. The two of them really protected northwest Arkansas politically. And in that group was a—the sitting circuit judge, Maupin Cummings . . .

SL: Cummings . . .

JB: . . . and the—but the one that I really admired was a guy named Don Trumbo. And Don Trumbo had no visible means of support. [*SL laughs*] He came to the square every mornin', went up in his second-floor office there kinda between the hardware store and Campbell & Bell's, read the *Wall Street Journal*, and made a few phone calls. And that was how he made his living. He was the first guy I ever knew to literally make a million dollars out of the stock market. And he handled the—a lot of investment advice and—for the rest of the group. I mean, he made Hal and Maupin and Deacon a lotta [lot of] money. And so when we first got our first, I believe, television station, they were the initial

investors in that television station. But I was, you know, just watchin'. I thought, "Gee, that's what I want to be when I grow up, is a guy that just goes to the office, reads the *Wall Street Journal*, and makes a few phone calls." [*Laughs*]

[00:28:42] SL: Yeah, it works. Well, let's—you mentioned television station. Let's go back to your house. What—did y'all have a radio when you . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . were growing up?

JB: . . . we did, of course, have a radio. We did not—my grandfather, when he was alive, was very conscious of the value of a dollar. And he—we did not have a car. He thought that if you wanted to just find one way to just absolutely burn money up, that an automobile was the biggest, most foolish waste of money [*SL laughs*] he could wrap his mind around. We didn't have a telephone. He didn't have any reason to call anybody. He didn't [*laughs*] want anybody to call him. People would come knock on the door at six o'clock in the mornin' to get him to open the grocery store, and he'd go open it. And he'd close it at eight o'clock at night, and somebody'd come knock on the door at nine o'clock [*laughs*] and ask him to open the grocery store, and he'd go open it. But we didn't have a car. We didn't have a

telephone. We did have a radio, and we listened to *Lum and Abner* and to *Fibber McGee and Molly*. And I listened to *The Shadow* and, oh, the comedy shows of the period. I've forgotten the names of some of them, but we listened to the radio a lot.

[00:30:21] SL: Were there any musical instruments in the home?

JB: Well, I wanted—when I started—I guess, I don't know, six or seven years old, I wanted to play in the band. And I wanted to play a cornet. And through some unhappy circumstance, I wound up with a clarinet. Now whether that was the band director's fault or my grandmother's fault—whether it was deliberate or accidental [*laughs*], I don't know. I played the clarinet for a number of years. I never liked it. [*SL laughs*] There was a piano in the house. I never learned to play it very well. But my grandmother thought I could be a singer, and so she insisted on me singing, and I did. And I always sang in the church choirs, and I did wind up at some point taking voice lessons from a university professor named Pop Schultz, and I don't know that I ever learned to sing, but in terms of the fact I spent twenty-five years on the floor of the courtroom, it did, I think, enhance my speaking voice, and I—to the point that one time somebody from [Washington County Chancery Judge] Tom Butt's court came over to Maupin's court and said, "Can you get

Mr. Blair [*laughs*] to be just a little quieter? He's interrupting our court next door."

SL: You're good at projection. So what about [*clears throat*] around the piano at home? Did your grandmother play or . . .

[00:32:07] JB: My aunt, when she was home, played. And she was—told me that she was always given the choice between practicin' the piano and washin' the dishes, and as a consequence [*laughs*], she always . . .

SL: Played piano.

JB: . . . played the piano, rather than wash the dishes.

SL: Were there . . .

JB: But . . .

SL: . . . sing—was there singing around the piano?

JB: Oh, yeah. I mean, we had little songbooks that had things like "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" and, you know, "Shine On, Harvest Moon" and all—a lot of kinda Scotch Irish folk tunes. "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean." There was a lot of that.

[00:32:56] SL: Sounds all secular. Was there any hymnal—any . . .

JB: Well, there was probably a hymnal there, and my grandmother took me to the First Baptist Church, which was there on the corner of Dickson and College—still is. But it was a much prettier building in those days. It was a building with a dome

and old yellow brick. And she took me there when I was five, and again, she would make me go, but she wouldn't go with me. So I would trot off to Sunday school. And Feriba McNair was one of my very early Sunday school teachers, who's—she's still alive and around, and we still visit some about those days. I—during church service, the little kids weren't expected that little to go to church service, and they had a thing called the Sonbeams, and I would usually stay for that. And a song I remember is "Red and yellow, black and white / They are equal in His sight / Jesus loves the little children of the world." And I think that's what made me an integrationist. I—from early on, I was emotionally, intellectually, and viscerally an integrationist, which caused me to have some interesting experiences later in life. [*Laughs*]

[00:34:32] SL: Well, so—but at—so were you the only member of the household that actually . . .

JB: Yes.

SL: . . . attended church and . . .

JB: Well, if my aunt was home—she was workin' for the Bureau of Standards in Washington, DC, by then. But she wound up starting at the university when she was fourteen and had her master's in math and chemistry when she was nineteen and . . .

SL: Wow.

JB: . . . and went to work for the Bureau of Standards during the war—eventually went back to school in [19]47 to Ohio State and got a Ph.D. in chemistry and—and became a significant organic chemist. But, basically, I was the only one, and I wasn't really given a choice. I was—but I didn't mind. It was something to do, and . . .

SL: Well, when it came time for dinner in the evenings, was there—I mean, did you say grace, or it just wasn't . . .

JB: Actually, no.

SL: . . . the religious side just wasn't . . .

JB: No, it was . . .

SL: . . . happening at home.

[00:35:42] JB: It was not a religious household, really. Occasionally, when something happened at church that involved me, my grandmother would come. I mean, I think I was five. There was a Christmas program at the Episcopal church. They couldn't find a child that could remember the lines and whatever [*laughs*] the little Christmas play was, so the Baptist church loaned me to the Episcopal church to . . .

SL: They brought in the ringer, huh?

JB: . . . to do that chore, and yeah, I think she may have come—she came to see that, and she would come to—you know, if I was

doing somethin' significant in the church.

SL: That's—I have to say that's pretty unusual that just the child was expected to go to church, and it . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . wasn't, you know . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . a whole family . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . deal.

JB: That's true.

SL: I—that's . . .

JB: Yeah.

[00:36:42] SL: That's unusual. Well, talk to me a little bit about the Sonbeams. What were the Sonbeams?

JB: Well, it was just—I mean, they—this was a—and today it would be almost like a kindergarten. These were the kids that they thought were too young to be in church. They would be disruptive in church, so they were, you know, sent to . . .

SL: It was kind of a daycare . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . thing for during . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . church service.

JB: Yeah. We sang songs and played games and . . .

SL: So were you . . .

JB: . . . listen to stories.

SL: . . . expected to go to church other than Sunday? Did you do the Wednesday services?

[00:37:19] JB: I—not until my big religious conversion. I don't remember when I started goin' to church on Wednesday nights. But when I was—you know, I was twelve or thirteen, I—there was a big church revival that focused on young people, and I—they had a very hypnotic, fairly young evangelist—very charismatic evangelist. And I got very caught up in that, and I made my public profession of faith, and the Baptist church has changed a lot in the last sixty years. [00:38:11] But in those days, the local church was a very democratic organization, and it was totally autonomous, and there wasn't any—they were a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. But the bureaucratic structure that has come into the church did not exist then, and they were great believers in Patrick Henry and the freedom of church and state and separation of church and state. And they—once you made your public profession of faith—and you could make it at any age—and were baptized, you

were a voting member of the church. It didn't matter how old you were. And so I became a voting member of the—I was baptized and became a voting member of the church. I think I must've been twelve. The next year—I'm thirteen—we're havin' another youth revival, and Walter Johnson is the pastor of the church, and he's become somewhat eccentric, and the church is in a turmoil over whether he should be fired or not. And a number of the deacons wanted to fire him, and a number of the deacons did not want to fire him. And that's what led to the schism of the church and the creation of the University Baptist Church. But a lot of this was goin' on in the middle of this youth revival, and so I'm sitting there—business meetings were always on a Wednesday night. I think one night a month. [00:40:07] And I'm at—it happened to be the business night meeting, and they are—the quarrel is achieving significant levels of acrimony. [*SL laughs*] And God speaks to me, and God says, "Go up there and take the microphone and tell those people to shape up," which I did. I mean—and do I now believe that God speaks to thirteen-year-old boys? No, I don't. I suspect it was some kind of autohypnosis. I have no idea. But I'm telling you, the voice was very real. The command was very real. And so I did exactly that. And as a consequence of that, I got marked in the

church as being maybe more religious than I actually was. But they began to lean on me to do things, and as I got older, I got sent to fill in as a religious speaker for some occasions where there wasn't an appropriate speaker. [00:41:24] And so when I was eighteen, the church gave me a religious examination, which by then, I could pass any kind of examination without any effort. I once took a final in a psychology course over at the university on a dare that I—a course, I'd never taken. They had a multiple-choice final, and I—which I said was not an adequate exam and that I could pass any kind of multiple-choice test. And so the psych department gave me the test, and I did pass it. Well, I—you know, I passed the religious examination. And so I was ordained as a Baptist minister with the power to, you know, marry people, bury people, baptize people. My credentials were filed with the circuit clerk of Washington County. And, then, I was sent out to pastor on a temporary basis little churches like the church at Sonora and eventually the church at West Fork, who could not afford to get seminary-trained ministers. And so . . .

SL: Did . . .

JB: I did this until the big integration crisis of [19]57 and . . .

SL: Well, did you love doin' that?

[00:42:56] JB: Well, I—it was interesting. It was tough because I had to give three sermons a week. I obviously didn't know anything. So I would go in the McRoy McNair Bookstore and buy out the religious shelf and take it home and plagiarize everything I could plagiarize. [*Laughter*] And I was pretty indiscriminate in—you know, why I acquired some Reinhold Niebuhr and some Martin Buber, and I tell everybody that I—everybody says, "Well, you used to be a preacher. What happened?" I said, "I became a theologian." [*Laughter*] I accidentally got a fairly broad religious education, which led me to understand that the Southern Baptists were not teaching the truth about their origins—were not teaching the truth about, you know, their actual beliefs, and some of them were not justifiable even under the tenets they professed to believe. But the thing that really broke me was the integration thing, when the church refused to step up on the integration side of the issue in [19]57 in Arkansas, and they refused to do that. I could not really stay comfortable in that environment. And lookin' back, I understand all of the emotional and cultural things that were involved, but it still seemed to me [*laughs*] that if you taught "Red and yellow, black and white / They are equal in His sight," [*laughs*] you could not be a segregationist. And I had great respect for

Andrew Hall, who had become the pastor of the First Baptist Church, and I think his heart was on the right side of that issue, but his willingness to oppose his congregation was not strong enough.

[00:45:11] SL: So did that kind of ruin organized religion for you?

JB: It certainly put a dent in it, and I—you know, I chaired—cochaired Religious Emphasis Week on the campus at the university—I don't know, [19]56, [19]57—somethin' like that. And one of the guys that I brought in to be a speaker and participate was a brilliant black pastor, and I could not house him. I couldn't [*laughs*] find a place to put him up. And no matter how controversial Walter Johnson was, and I certainly didn't side with Walter in the schism, Walter Johnson put him up in his own home and had him speak to his church. And I've—that certainly elevated Walter in my estimation. But I was rapidly, I guess, getting too intellectual. My courses—I was a philosophy minor in the university, and that didn't help, either.

SL: Right.

[00:46:41] JB: I had brilliant, brilliant professors like William Henry Harrison and Harold Hantz, and comin' away from that again, it was hard to be simplistic about these issues.

[00:47:34] SL: So now was Walter Johnson pastor for University

Baptist?

JB: Yes, at that time. And when he left, he founded the University Baptist Church and became its first pastor.

[00:47:09] SL: Well, let's step back a little bit 'cause we're—now you're talking about your university years. But I wanna [want to] get back to after grade school and—or maybe after fifth grade and through high school.

JB: Well, I'll give you some bits about the grade school. I—although I'd become a better student, I hadn't quit being a rabble-rouser. And the—there was a brilliant kid in my class—a member of the Lewis family—the—I don't know his exact relationship to John Lewis and . . .

SL: Tommy . . .

[00:48:01] JB: . . . Tommy and Herb, but I think he was a cousin, but a really, really brilliant kid who never caused any trouble. [*SL laughs*] I mean, he was—would've been the teacher's model student. In the eighth grade, for some reason, he concocted these chemicals at home, that when you poured 'em together—I guess it was sulfuric acid and something reacted—it just smelled overpoweringly like rotten eggs. And he fixed up all these test tubes of this stuff and brought it to school and distributed it, and everybody in the seventh and eighth grades—we actually

changed classrooms two or three times a day, but we had a—or I say we—I—somehow I missed out on it. I was off doin' somethin' else, and I didn't get my test tube [*laughs*] and I didn't get in this circle. [*SL laughs*] And they were all supposed to be uncorked at the same time. I think they were. But he was discovered as the mastermind, and he was paddled in front of the eighth-grade class with a Ping-Pong paddle. And Mrs. Caudle called me down to the principal's office, and normally, she would call me down and not even ask me if I did something, but asked me why I did it. But this time she said, "I'm glad we've finally gotten through to you." [*Laughter*] Gave me all kinds of credit for not participating in this caper.

SL: You just didn't—you were never given the opportunity to participate.

[00:49:50] JB: And—but the—when my grandfather died, I was too young to get a real job, and my grandmother didn't want me on the street. And in those days, we had summer school, and anybody could go. You didn't have to fail to go. And so I was sent to ninth-grade summer school at thirteen and—or maybe I wasn't quite thirteen. But, anyhow, when I actually started to the ninth grade, I already had taken several high school courses. And so that is one of the reasons I wound up taking college

courses when I was sixteen and graduating from college when I was nineteen and law school when I was twenty-one. It all started from goin' to summer school that one summer.

SL: Well, so you say you were kind of a rabble-rouser. What kind of trouble did you get into?

[00:50:56] JB: Well, I mean, it was never anything serious. I mean, it was just disruption. I guess the worst thing I did, [*laughter*] and I've always . . .

SL: Here we go. [*Laughs*]

JB: . . . always wondered why I did this. There was a kid named Jerome McRoy. He was the son of the McRoy-McNair . . .

SL: McNair.

JB: . . . McRoys. And he's—this is seventh grade, and he's up at the pencil sharpener, sharpening a pencil. And I've got pretty good calluses on my hands, so I take a straight pin, and I stick it through a callus, and I turn it out, so it's, you know, wedged in my hand with the point outward, and I go up and clap Jerome on the back and stab him with the pin. [*SL laughs*] Our teacher was a few months pregnant, and I'm sure a bundle of raging hormones, and he—'course [of course], he finked and immediately identified me as the culprit. And she came back and gave me a royal chewing. And so bein' the kid that I was—

like any other kid—I was putting on a brave smile to show it didn't bother me any. And she walked away about five steps and turned around and saw this smile on my face and just pounced on me like a cat would a mouse, and got me by the hair and tried to pull me out of my seat. I'm holdin' onto my seat as hard as I can, and she's [*laughs*] pullin' on my hair as hard as she can. Well, that afternoon after school, I go to the barber shop, and I have him give me a burr haircut as close as they will. [*SL laughs*] And then I say, "That's not close enough." And then, finally, I virtually got my hair—head shaved. And so I show up at school the next day, you know, practically bald, and she didn't want to laugh, but even she laughed. 'Course, all the other kids thought it was just wonderful. I mean [*SL laughs*]—but that kind of thing. I mean, it was . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:53:12] JB: . . . never anything of any great consequence. But the one thing I will say about the seventh grade, I think it was, and that was another incident with the principal. They gave these Iowa Achievement Tests we had to take, and they're multiple choice. And there was lots of things on there I'm sure I didn't know, but I guessed my way through the test because, you know, you eliminate all of 'em down to two questions

[JB Edit: answers], and one of 'em is the trick, and you figure out the trick, and the other one's the right answer. And, apparently, I made a perfect score on the test. And the school authorities thought this was impossible. And they thought I had to have had a—the answer sheet somewhere. And I'm called down to the principal's office, and I don't know whether they ever did believe me, but it was just a total, you know, innocent thing. But there was always some disruption [*laughs*] between me and the authorities, so—and, I guess, that's stayed with me all of my life.

[00:54:22] SL: What about athletics?

JB: Well, because I didn't have a male in the household—I had no role model—I mean, my father had played basketball for the university, but he wasn't there. And my grandfather had been a—they tell me, a pretty good country baseball player, but you know, he wasn't there. And the other thing is I couldn't see. I didn't know that I needed glasses. I'd go out on the playground at recess, and the other kids would, you know, hit the softball or the baseball, and I would try to time the swing, but I didn't know they could see it. [*Laughs*] I couldn't see it. And I had been moved to the front row of class 'cause I couldn't read the blackboard. And so, finally, when I was eleven years old, I got

my first pair of glasses from Dr. Otwell. His office was on the east side of the square. And I walk out of his office, and I can see the leaves on the tree over on the square, and I'm really teed off. I mean, to think that all this time these other kids [*laughs*] had been able to see like that. But, in a way, it was a little bit late for me. [00:55:47] I tried to play junior high basketball. I went out in the ninth grade, and I remember this kid named Clarence Cole and I were the—Benny Winburn was the coach, and we were the last two cut from the squad, but I didn't make it. And, then, I went out my sophomore year, and Harry Vandergriff was the—what we called the B-team coach, and I got to play B-team basketball, and I just absolutely loved it. I had to wear glasses, and I didn't have all the skills, but I was tall, and we played a split-post offense with the Oklahoma A&M weave, and I played with my back to the basket, and then Glen Stokenbury was a very good high school basketball coach, and so, I want to play my junior year, and Stokenbury says, "Well, I hear rumors you're not gonna be here your senior year" 'cause I had already made plans to jump to the university. And in today's world, I would lie, but in those days, I was just—it's like losing my job. I just told the truth too often. And so I wouldn't promise him I would be there my senior year, and he

said, "Well, you're too much of a project. If, you know, you're not gonna be here your senior year, you're not worth puttin' up with for one year." So I wound up not playin'. And then when I finally got what little coordination I have, it really came to me when I was—suddenly, at nineteen—and I noticed it on the Ping-Pong table. Suddenly, my coordination is ten times as good as it used to be, but I'm already out of college. So I think the world missed a great athlete. But . . .

[00:57:57] SL: [*Laughter*] Well, what about best friends, growin' up? Did you have any . . .

JB: Well, the one I ran . . .

SL: . . . close friends?

JB: . . . around with a lot was a kid named Bobby Smith, and Bobby's dad was a poultry science professor at the university, and Bobby lived on the corner of Davidson and College. And he had two older, gorgeous red-headed sisters. But we were in church together as—when we got old enough—he had to go to church, and so I would go with him. And what we would do is we would wait till church had gotten kinda started good, and then we'd sneak out—make sure his parents saw he was there, and then we'd sneak out, and we'd go down to the Bus Station Café and eat pork skins and drink Cokes and sneak back in just

before church services was over, so that we would . . .

[00:58:56] SL: [*Laughs*] That was when the bus station was just a few blocks down the street . . .

JB: Yes, yes . . .

SL: . . . from the Baptist church.

[00:58:59] JB: It was where the building that the county government has just bought from Terminella. It was on that side, kind of between Spring Street and Meadow Street on College. But Bobby was the one that, you know, taught me how to take a bicycle, break it apart, and put it together, and we were part of the bicycle-riding crew. And my first car that I had was a 1928 Dodge that I bought from Bobby for thirty-five dollars, and my second car was a 1934 Plymouth that I bought from Bobby [*laughs*] for thirty-five dollars. And that was the one that nearly killed me and—but he went—he went on to major in agriculture and go off to raise polled Herefords, and I lost track of him only to find that just in the last two or three years that he wound up as a State Farm agent in Siloam, but I—I'd lost total track of him. But he was probably my closest friend. The famous [19]34 Plymouth—we took the doors off of it. It had running boards, so we treated it like a cable car. And one day he's—I guess we sold it back and forth several times. He owns

it. He's drivin' it. We're going by my house down the hill on School Street, and—and he—I said, "You don't need to stop. Just slow down. I'll jump out." And so I step out before he has slowed down, and it tore the heels off my shoes and threw me forward down the [*laughs*] street until it just shredded—like, I was almost naked by the time I skidded to a stop—just one big floor burn. [01:01:08] And that was bad enough, but a year or so later, the car would not go in reverse, and we've taken it into a garage on College right off Mountain Street, and whatever it is, we can't fix it. So we're gonna have to put it in neutral and push it out and let gravity roll it down the hill, so we can get it pointed forward because it would go in forward gears. And so there are about four or five us rockin'—"One, two, three, let's go," and push, and somehow, it hits me on the ankle—knocks me under the car. The car goes right across my knee, which is layin' on a concrete floor, and the tire just took skin off my knee, but it didn't break my knee, and you know, it's amazing that I didn't suffer any more damage. However, for some reason, my ankle would not heal up, and it was ulcerated. And I was workin' at Jug's Drive-In mixin'—all I did is make malts and milkshakes—best job I ever had. And I had to load the beer cooler when it was closed down, but I couldn't hand a beer to a customer

'cause I wasn't of age. But I had to quit my job 'cause I couldn't get that ankle healed up.

SL: [*Laughs*] We gotta [got to] talk about . . .

Trey Marley: We need to change tapes, Scott.

SL: Okay. Change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[01:02:50] SL: Okay, now we were talkin'—I want to talk about Jug Wheeler's.

JB: Oh, absolutely.

SL: Let's talk about Jug Wheeler's.

JB: Well, I . . .

SL: First of all, it was on Dickson Street.

JB: Well, let's go back a little farther than that.

SL: Okay.

JB: I belonged to a Boy Scout troop—I think it was called Troop 112—and Glenn Sowder was the—this Glenn Sowder's dad, and I think his name also was Glenn—was the troop master. And for some reason, they decided it was appropriate to send me as a den chief, over to be the den chief of a Cub Scout pack. And [*SL laughs*] it turned out this Cub Scout pack met at Jug Wheeler's house, and it consisted of Jim Bob Wheeler and Billy Whitfield and Mike Shirley and a half a dozen other kids of that ilk. My

Cub Scout pack won the state junior high basketball championship [*laughs*] when they were in the ninth grade. Now I had 'em before then, but I claim the reason why they did that is obviously what I taught 'em. [*SL laughs*] Mrs. Wheeler was the den mother, and sh—they would do their little programs, and then I'd take 'em down to Wilson Park and give 'em a ball and a bat and let 'em try to kill each other and, you know, just kinda turn 'em loose. But that was my first contact with the Wheeler family. [01:04:42] Jug Wheeler had a drive-in pub [*laughs*], almost, is what I'd call it, which was located there off of that alley that's called Campbell Street that—just west of Ralston Street that comes out from Lafayette to Dickson. And he had a drive-in deal with waitresses, and how he got away with it—now I don't know, but you could come in and a waitress—a carhop—would come out, take your order, and deliver you beer to your car. I mean, it was just—but Jug had been [*SL laughs*] on the basketball team with my father at the university, and Jug wasn't more than about five-six and tougher than a boot and a very beloved character in town. And, I guess, the laws just didn't apply to Jug. I don't [*laughter*] know how he got away with that. But at any rate, I—when I started workin' for him, he had a rule that any of his employees could eat or drink—except for

the beer—anything they wanted to, free of charge. And my sole job was to make milkshakes and malts, and I had these great big five-gallon cans of unhomogenized milk that stood on stands inverted, and I drew the milk out of the bottom. And, of course, the cream would go to the top, and when I'd get down to the last six inches, it would be pure cream. Well, there'd be no sense on wastin' that on the customer, [*SL laughs*] so I would save that cream. And then I would take raw eggs and marshmallow cream topping and that cream and put it in these special milkshakes I would make for the help. I wouldn't—now we wouldn't do this for the [*laughs*] customers. And, in turn, the cook would make us special hamburgers and things like that. [01:07:12] So—and the only other thing I had to do is—I mean, I would go through the week not havin' to do a lot, and then Friday night football games—high school football game night, I'd be up to my ears in malt mix. I mean, I'd have ever machine goin' in the place. But then I would load the beer coolers at night after we closed up and things settled down. And so while I didn't get to serve any beer, I handled a lot. But the—this was an institution that went on—it was there when I was—well, I know I was—from the time I was twelve or thirteen, I mean, it was—for the next ten years or so—servin' beer in cars to—with

carhop waitresses.

SL: Well, you could also—didn't he also deliver beer to . . .

JB: Well, I think there was a delivery car. And I think maybe that's true, too.

SL: Yeah.

JB: I never participated in that part of it. I—one thing I do remember is that I—Jim Bob was sixteen, and I just accidentally walked in on he and his father having a little tiff, and I remember [*laughs*] Jug looking up at Jim Bob and said, "I don't care if you're six feet tall. I can still whip your ass," and he [*laughs*] proceeded to dress Jim Bob down severely, I mean—I don't know what it was even about. I quickly went the other way before I got dressed out, too. But, yeah, that was an anomaly that I guess various small towns had, but Fayetteville wasn't a small town then. I mean, I don't know how that didn't violate all the liquor laws in the state.

[01:09:24] SL: [*Laughs*] You know, you talk about havin' a tiff and I—it seems to me that back in those days, fighting—actual physical fisticuffs—was not uncommon. I mean, you—it seemed like there were—people kinda liked to fight.

JB: Well, there—in terms of—I know our—'course, in grade school there were all those kids that were tougher than others, and I

remember a kid named Jimmy Johnson, who wasn't big, but just really quick. And another kid that had been held back in school, and so he was a couple years older. [01:10:16] And, you know, they were gonna have one of these classic fights, and it lasted about fifteen seconds. And at the end of that time, the big kid couldn't see 'cause both [*laughs*] his eyes had been closed. But some of the things I remember—there was a kid named Simmons, and there was a boy that lived—there were three boys that lived just half a block from me named the Pyeatt's. Barry and Ronnie and Peter Pyeatt. Their mother was a widow, and she worked as a nurse at the Fayetteville City Hospital at night, and so they didn't have any supervision. And I would wait till my grandmother was asleep, and I'd climb out the window. And I'd go down to the Pyeatt house and hang out, and we had some pretty wild times. But Barry was one of these little guys like Jimmy Johnson—he'd just hit you quicker than an eye blink and with either hand. And he got into it with the Simmons kid that lived a couple blocks away, and he stuck his chin out just darin' Simmons to swing at him, and then when he does, he's gonna pop him. [*Laughs*] Well, I'd seen him do that a number of times, but I'd never seen anybody hit him. Simmons knocked him about twenty feet [*laughter*] somehow. Simmons was a

little quicker that we thought, but the one that always amazed me was Maurice Stokenbury. We called him "Monk." He was Coach Stokenbury's son—big, fat kid—never an athlete. I'm sure a disappointment to his father, but he must've been given boxing lessons somewhere. And because he wasn't an athlete and because he wasn't aggressive, he got into fights that he shouldn't have gotten into and won virtually all of 'em. I mean, he'd tuck his chin down, put his left out, and go to work. And yet I always didn't consider myself a fighter, but I always had my bluff in on Maurice. I could whip Maurice any day of the week, and a lotta kids [*laughs*] that I knew I couldn't whip couldn't whip him. I never did understand all the dynamics of that. [01:12:39] But the thing that—Maurice was the one that cured me from fighting. I—by then, he had gotten up to where he probably weighed two-twenty, and a big, heavy kid, and I had a Schwinn bicycle that—because I was six—almost six-four by the time I was sixteen, when I quit growin', but I had the seat set up about as high as it would go, and I told him not to sit on it because I was afraid he would bend the shaft. I had the shaft nearly clear out of the bicycle. And one afternoon, I go to get my bicycle down at—there's a church hay ride, and I'm gonna ride my bicycle down to the church and go on the hay

ride. And by then, I didn't have a paper route anymore, but Monk did. And I went to get my bicycle. It was gone, and I knew Monk had taken it. I just knew that. And so I started huntin' for him, and sure enough, I found him down behind the Pyeatt house. They always played a game in a kind of an alley structure called cork ball, where we'd made our own balls out of hard objects wrapped in tape, and our bat was a broomstick, and you'd throw those balls really fast, and it was pretty [*laughs*] hard to hit 'em with a broomstick. But it was a great game, but he wasn't playin'. He was just watchin' it. He was sittin' on my bicycle and—with his newspaper bag strapped on my bicycle. [01:14:34] And I was furious, and I just yelled at him—"Monk!" And when he turned, I just hit him as hard as I could, and I must've caught him right in the ribs and knocked the wind out of him 'cause he went down like he was shot. And he didn't move, and I didn't care. I threw his newspapers off the bike, and I rode it off to the church. And I got to thinkin' on the way, "What if I've killed him? I'm gonna spend the rest of my life in prison." [*Laughs*] So when I got to the church, I called, and they said, "No, he's starting to move," so [*laughter*] I never hit anybody after that.

SL: Yeah.

[01:15:12] JB: I was always scared to. Probably a good thing for me. It might not have been good for him. But, no, there was—there were kids—the Mahan kids were—went to Jefferson School, and Billy Jack and Johnny and Jimmy, and they were all kinda bantamweight/featherweight boxers. And they were just tougher than our guys from Washington School. I—but the worst trouble I ever got into—and I'm only about twelve or thirteen—is one night we're supposed to have a Boy Scout meeting, and I know it's been cancelled, but I tell my grandmother that I'm going to the Boy Scouts, so—and they met at the Baptist church. So I rendezvous with a bunch of my friends, includin' a kid named Robinson that's a couple years older than the rest of us—held back in school. And we don't have a Boy Scout meeting. So we're goin' down, and we're gonna find some of these kids from Jefferson School that think they're so tough, and we're gonna get these kids. So we find two or three of 'em at Ricketts Drug Store, but they know we're out there waiting for 'em, and they won't come out. [*SL laughs*] And we wait, and we wait, and we wait, and we get tired of waiting. I think I'm in the eighth grade. And so, finally, we start off on some other adventure, and we're runnin' down Meadow Street, and the Ozark Cleaners was owned by a woman named

Billie Head, and she was building a very nice house on the corner of Church and Meadow Street. And they're using lots of plaster, and so they have this lime in these big—almost like vats. They're not quite vats but several inches deep—doin' what they call slaking overnight. Made perfect mud balls. I mean, just perfect mud balls. So we're into that, and we're throwin' 'em at each other, and of course, a few of 'em hit some cars that are parked on the street, which we don't think about 'em eating the paint off the cars. One of the cars happened to belong to one of our eighth-grade teachers, who comes out on her balcony and identifies the big kid, Robinson. And so I go home, and it's one of the few nights my father is ever there. He's come through town and stopped for a visit. And, well, she calls the police. The police find Robinson. He holds out for about thirty seconds [*SL laughs*] and identifies the rest of us. [01:18:22] And so the police are knocking on my door about midnight—or my grandmother's door. And we are summoned to Judge Ptak's court the next day. Well, it gets transferred to the county judge, who was in charge of juvenile court. And I know my father wound up, I think, payin' most of the damages—payin' to have the cars repainted, and [*laughs*] he told me that he expected to get—me to get in trouble three times in my life, and that was

one of 'em. And he'd bail me out one more time, but the third time, I was [*laughs*] on my own.

SL: Well, that's cool.

JB: So . . .

SL: That's good.

JB: . . . that was my criminal record. [*Laughter*]

[01:19:10] SL: What about swimming pool?

JB: Well, they had this magnificent pool at Wilson Park, and it's still there, I guess. But in those days, they had a huge divin' board on it that was double stacked. It was—it seemed to me like one level was six feet high, and the next level was about twelve. But I think we claimed it was fourteen. It was way the heck up there. And when I was too young to really get a good summer job, I would—as soon as school was out, you know, I'd spend a good part of my time at the swimmin' pool. And the first couple of weeks after school was over, I'd burn all my skin off, and it'd come off in sheets. And I'd stay down—stay in till my lips turned blue. But I remember it was a big deal to jump off the top of that tower, and we—most of us were scared to death to do it, and none of us would even think about divin' off the top of the tower, except Doug Douglas. He was something like nine years old [*laughs*], and he's up there on that top of that tower divin'

off of it. I mean, he was three or four years younger than we were. But, no, that was—I remember—I think it was Jimmy Johnson, one of our toughest guys—the Mahan brothers had found him, and they were waiting for him to get [*laughs*] out of the pool. And he was swimmin' around underwater and wouldn't come up, and he wasn't about to get out. [*Laughter*] I think they had to close the pool down to get him out of there.

[01:21:08] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, wasn't—was Hawkins around that time when Doug was . . .

JB: Well, some.

SL: Or was that later?

JB: He had gone to Leverett grade school, and he—somehow, his mother moved across some line. He shows up at Washington School at about the seventh grade. And he was in, I think, the seventh and eighth grades with us, and then, 'course, I went to high school with him. And a little bit like me, it was never clear then or clear now [*SL laughs*] whether he belonged to the class of [19]52 or the class of [19]53. Now, my class theoretically was the class of [19]53. But I've seen the records show Ronnie both ways. [*Laughs*] I don't—but one of the things I remember about Ronnie—Ronnie was a magnificent diver. He had great body control, and he could do all these—what we thought in

those days as fancy dives. [01:22:20] And so we're—he comes out for the track team, and he asks the coach—must've been Vandergriff. I don't remember who the track coach was. But he says, "Coach, how high can your highest high-jumper jump?" And I had high-jumped in junior high by scissoring over a bar 'cause I was so tall, but I never could clear it any other way. And I don't know—the coach said, "Probably five-eight is about as high I've got anybody to jump." Ronnie says, "I can jump six feet." Coach says, "Well, Ronnie, if you can jump six feet," said, "you—you're on the track team." And so Ronnie says, "I'll show you right now. Put that bar up there at six feet." So they set the bar up there at six feet, and Ronnie runs right straight at the bar, which normally no jumper would do. You always come from an angle. Runs right straight at it, hops off both feet, does a perfect jackknife, tucks himself right over the bar, lifts his feet over, goes down and rolls out. Just a beautiful jump. Cleared six feet. Didn't move the bar. Coach says, "Ronnie," he says, "that's just magnificent." Said, "That's great." "But," he says, "the rules require that you jump off one foot. Now let's see you do it off one foot." [*Laughs*] Well, that was the end of [*laughter*] Ronnie's track career. One jump.

[01:23:57] SL: Well, that's funny. Well, what about girls? When did

girls enter your picture?

JB: Well, you know, I was—again, no role models. I was always very awkward with girls. I was always fascinated with 'em, even from the first grade. I used to send some of the girls a half a dozen valentines. And maybe the one I liked the most, eight valentines. But—and this included a gal, Shug Cate, who lived on the corner of Spring and Locust. A girl named Saundra Morelock, who later married Bucky Couch, and she could outrun any boy in the second or third grade. But my first girl I really tried to romance—and it didn't go very far—was a girl named Judy McFarland, who lived down east of College Avenue on Spring Street. But by the time I was fifteen, I had gotten totally entranced with a girl from Greenland named Donna Yoe. Her father had the Yoe's grocery store in Greenland. And she went . . .

[01:25:24] SL: Is that Clay Yoe?

JB: What?

SL: Was that Clay Yoe or . . .

JB: No, and I don't think they're any relation to Clay.

SL: Okay.

JB: His name was Burt Yoe.

SL: Okay.

[01:25:33] JB: He was the first guy to survive lockjaw—a total tetanus infection—that anybody ever heard of in this area. And he'd had it as a fairly young man and walked with a limp all the rest of his life from the tetanus attack. But she had gone to Greenland. She transferred to Fayetteville High School as a sophomore, I think, and I got totally smitten. And I used to—I didn't have a car for a long time. I used to hitchhike out to Greenland, and then they had a bus stop, and I could get—the bus would stop, and I'd put the flag down, and I could get the bus back to Fayetteville. [*Laughs*] But I do remember one Sunday afternoon. I—I've been out to visit her, and I'm tryin' to get back to town, and I'm walkin' down the road—I guess, thumbin' a ride. And a car comes by, and it's full of black people, and they stop. And the guy is Buddy Hayes, and he was a shoeshine boy—he was a grown man, but they called him a shoeshine boy—down on Dickson Street. But he had a dance band that would play various venues at night, and his—I guess they had been to church. He and his wife were very dressed up, and their kids were just shinin' like new pennies. And he said if I wouldn't mind ridin' with 'em, he'd be glad to give me a ride. [01:27:21] And I—you know, I was an instinctive integrationist, but I hadn't had a lot of contact with black people. But I gladly

accepted the ride back to town. His son, "Bull"—they—and I guess Bull was his nickname, but I never knew by anything but Bull—was one of the very first black kids to go to a white school in Fayetteville. And he made integration easier. Fayetteville integrated its schools in 1954, when *Brown v. Board of Education* came down. And Clark McClinton and Hal Douglas were a major part of that decision. And—but Bull Hayes turned out to be a really good football player and immediately on the football team. But as a consequence, Springdale would not play us and several other schools. Harrison, I think, dropped us from the schedule. We had to go to Missouri and various places to—but this was [19]54, and I was already gone from high school. But I went off course. What was the question? [*Laughs*]

SL: No, that's good. I mean, we . . .

JB: Yeah. Okay. We were talking about girls.

SL: Yeah.

[01:28:45] JB: Well, again, I pursued Donna so vigorously that the high school principal, Mrs. Bunn Bell, called me into her office one day and told me to quit actin' like an idiot. [*Laughs*] But when she started to college, her parents just insisted on her dating somebody else, and that broke up, and it's a friendship I've maintained. And after my second wife died, I did date

Donna some before I got remarried again.

[01:29:29] SL: Let's talk a little bit about segregation in . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Fayetteville and . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . the things that you saw. I kinda remember—it seems to me—I kinda remember blacks sitting in the balconies at movie theatres. Is that . . .

JB: That was true. That was true of the Palace had a balcony, and that was certainly true at the Palace. The UARK did not. The Ozark Theatre had a balcony. And that was true at the Ozark. I don't know whether Royal had a—I don't remember the Royal having a balcony.

SL: So there wasn't really a large black community.

JB: No, and it almost all lived in an area behind the courthouse, which we called "Tin Cup." I don't know where it got its nickname, but the—when I was—there was a black grade school, and then they had to bus their kids to Fort Smith to go to high school. We didn't have a high school for 'em until the schools integrated.

SL: So what was the black grade school? Do you 'member [remember]?

JB: No, but it was there two or three blocks up the hill from the courthouse. I don't remember the name of it.

[01:30:58] SL: I'm tryin' to—what about—were there ever any *signs* that you saw, you know . . .

JB: You know, I don't—there was always the—don't know—myth or legend that there was a sign in Springdale that they could not let the sun go down on 'em. I don't know whether that was a myth or not. But—and they—you would see them workin' in the Mountain Inn hotel, or they were maids or janitors. There wasn't really much opportunity for them. I—like I say, Buddy shined shoes, and Buddy had a little band, and there was a—they had their own little nightclub. It seems like it was called Sherman's that was, oh, kind of on highway—I guess it's Highway 16 or whatever it is that went out to Baldwin and Elkins. It was on that road.

[01:32:13] SL: Were there—did you ever see any segregated water fountains or . . .

JB: It never penetrated my consciousness, growin' up. I just—I mean, I was really kind of in oblivion till—you know, my focus was drawn when Orval Faubus, you know, decided that if he didn't become a staunch segregationist, he was gonna lose the election to Jim Johnson. And I was so furious over that, I

devoted the beginning of all my political activities to tryin' to defeat Faubus's [*laughs*] reelection, which was kind of like standin' in front of a freight train and throwin' rocks at it. But I threw my rocks anyhow.

[01:33:03] SL: You know, you say that that's the beginning of your real political involvement, but I'm just wondering if your early teenage work with the church and them relying on you to go out and all that interaction with the community and stepping into a—you mentioned the right to vote in the Baptist organization and . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and hearin' a voice and getting up in front of people . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and basically tryin' to calm everybody down. Don't you think that that was kind of a precursor to your activism, in a way?

[01:33:43] JB: Well, it very well could've been. I mean, I certainly—when my grandfather was alive, he was always interested in the local elections. And he had been county clerk of Searcy County as a Democrat in a Republican county in 1910—Marshall's the county seat of Searcy County—and I think maybe reelected in 1912. And he had a gang of what my

grandmother called his "loafers" that hung around the fruit stand in the summertime, and to some extent, they hung around the grocery store in the wintertime. And he always believed that [*laughs*] he—that was his voting block—that he wasn't—he didn't have just one vote, maybe he had twenty votes. And so he did know some of the local political people. I was told that, you know, my father wanted to go to West Point, and it was—the only way you could get there—well, there were two ways. You could get there by congressional appointment, which was the normal way. And Rufus just could not get him a congressional appointment. So he took a competitive exam, and he came just barely short of making it on a competitive exam. And then a local congressman—and it may have been Jim Trimble—but whoever it was offered him a appointment to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, and he didn't want to do the navy, so he turned it down. Which was a shame. But, yeah . . .

[01:35:50] SL: So did you start paying attention—I know you had a newspaper route or two—did you start reading the newspaper early? I mean, were you . . .

JB: Well, I can't say that I really did. I mean, I was [*laughs*] foldin' 'em and throwin' 'em. I mean, we used to fold 'em up into a nice sailing shape, and I would throw 'em, and once in a while,

unfortunately, on a porch roof or something.

SL: Yeah.

JB: But, no, I can't say that I was really too aware of things. My grandfather considered himself a Democrat, but he didn't like Roosevelt, and he hated the Blue Eagle, and he really didn't like the WPA. And my grandmother regarded herself as a Republican, and they would argue politics, and they basically would cancel each other's vote. But I never could understand—they were buildin' the high school gymnasium right across the street from his grocery store, and he would foam at the mouth about how it took one guy to supervise and two guys to lean on the shovel, and you know, very little work seemed to be getting done. And it didn't make any sense to me, even at that age, 'cause these guys [*laughs*] would come over and buy stuff from his grocery store. Why did he care about how they got their money to do it with was somethin' I never could understand. But, no, I think my interest may have been more in terms of economics than politics, mostly.

SL: Mh-hmm. Do you think that was from the business side—the grocery store and the . . .

JB: I think so. I mean . . .

SL: . . . fruit stand?

[01:37:55] JB: . . . the idea that, you know, you bought things at one price and sold them at another and depended on people to buy 'em from you. And when the chain stores started comin' to town, it put a lot of pressure on the small grocery stores 'cause they could buy stuff cheaper than he was—I mean, they could sell stuff cheaper than he could buy it. And I, you know, got aware of some of the dynamics of, you know, economic struggles in the retail world.

[01:38:35] SL: What kind of chores did you have to do around the house?

JB: Well, you know, in the early years before I started having to wallp—help my grandmother wallpaper all these rooms and things, maybe not that much. I—my early years, they were tryin' to keep me out of the way, and a—an illustration, I guess, of where I've gotten some of my ideas—School Street, at one point, was Highway 62. I—it wove through town and for—I think somebody directed it down that way, so they could [*laughs*] pave the street. But we had trucks on that grade, and she really didn't want me crossin' the street when I'm three, four years old, and I'm under pain of death to get caught crossin' that street. And when I did get caught crossin' it, we really did have a peach tree in our back yard, and she would take a switch, and I was

always in—you know, short-legged pants, and she would just cut my legs to ribbons with that switch—which I've always said never taught me not to cross the street. I'm still gonna cross the street. Never taught—made me not want to cross the street. All it did is taught me I better not get caught crossin' the street. [*Laughter*] And maybe that was good training for law practice. I don't know. [01:40:19] But the issues, I mean, that were discussed there—the family had very strange political beliefs. They really didn't—particularly my grandmother—didn't like Roberta Fulbright. She didn't like her column in the newspaper. [*Laughs*] And if you wanted to send her up in smoke—Roberta was always writing about "beautiful Mount Nord," and that would send Bessie up in smoke. Just the words "beautiful Mount Nord" would—but on the other hand, when Fulbright was in town doin' a political rally, and I'm fairly young—I'm, you know, no more than a teenager, and—he was gonna see his friends down at the Washington Hotel, she decided that—I don't think she'd ever met Fulbright, but I obviously was his friend, and I was [*laughs*] sent down there to participate and see Senator Fulbright. Ironic that, you know, I later was a campaign manager for one of Fulbright's campaigns, and I think he was a delightful, brilliant person. But, no, I don't know really where my political interest developed.

I've just—it was there fairly early. I never wanted to hold office. I—well, I say I never wanted to hold office. I mean, I fantasized when I was young that the greatest job in the world would be to be a United States senator. Now as I got older, I managed to be associated with so many United States senators [*laughs*], I decided it wasn't a good job after all.

[01:42:32] SL: Yeah. Right. Right. Well, let's talk about you moving into the University of Arkansas and your time spent there.

[01:42:42] JB: Well, the—after I took my year or my summer of courses, I found that—normally we took I don't know how many courses in high school—four or five—but the rest of the time, you took study halls. And study hall was a guaranteed way to get sent to the principal's office. I mean, it was just trouble in the making. So I found if I had a B+ average or somethin', I could take an extra class, and I wouldn't have to take study hall, and that would keep me out of the principal's office. So I would always take an extra class. And by the time I was through my junior year, I had decided, the way I read the college handbook, that I had qualified for admission to the university. I hadn't qualified to graduate from high school, but the handbook didn't say anything about graduating from high school. It said so

many high school credits, which I had. Now I think I may have misread that, but [*SL laughs*] I was so convinced I was right, I spent hours arguing with the dean of arts and science and the admission officer till finally they put an assistant [*laughs*] dean on my case, so they wouldn't have to argue with me anymore. And he finally gave up. And I wanted to graduate from high school with my class, and I had to have senior English, which I hadn't had, and I needed one other credit. So my senior year in high school, I took senior English, and I took dramatics, and then the rest of the time, I took classes at the university. So I originally took sixteen hours, I think, my—at the university—my senior . . .

SL: Year in high school.

[01:45:02] JB: . . . fall semester in high school and found that was pretty easy. So I took eighteen hours the second semester. So I had thirty-four hours when my class graduated from high school. And then I took twelve that summer, so when my class started to college, I had forty-four hours ahead of them. And then I found that, again, if I had a B+ average, I could petition the university senate—take twenty-one hours. And since I—what I instinctively was was a test-taker. It didn't make any difference how many hours I took. I wasn't gonna spend a lot of

time workin' on it. [*Laughter*] So I wound up takin' twenty-one that fall and twenty-one that spring and twelve that next summer. And so then I figured out that I could take law as my major in those days for my B.A. degree. So I got my B.A. when I was nineteen, but I already had a year of law school behind me. And so then I went through law school the same way. I went every summer takin' max hours. Ever spring, ever fall, takin' max hours until, you know, I'm—I am twenty-one years old, and I have taken all of the hours necessary to graduate from law school. And law—the law school says, "Well, the American Association of Law Schools requires you to be in residence twenty-seven months, and you haven't been here [*laughs*] twenty-seven months." So we figure out I gotta stay another eight weeks. So I say, "Will you let me go through graduation ceremonies in January if I stay another eight weeks?" And they say, "Yeah." And so I enrolled in the spring semester of [19]57 without ever intending to finish it and spent my time studying for the bar and—but . . .

[01:47:25] SL: When did you decide it was law?

JB: Well, after this first year of—at the university, I was goin' to school in the summer, and the psych department had a kind of a—some kind of summer program. And they had people that

gave you aptitude tests and IQ tests, and I mean, they were kind of a testing lab. That's where I took my challenge to pass one of their courses without having taken it. And so I took all the aptitude tests they had, and they said my highest aptitude was to be a writer. And I had some members of the English department that wanted to try to get me a full scholarship to the University of Chicago to study creative writing. But I didn't think I could make a living writing, and my second-highest aptitude was for law, according to these tests, which I don't know are all that reliable. But my grandfather had said that he knew enough law when he got out of the county clerk's office that he could've passed the bar exam and always wished he had taken it. So I decided I wanted to make some money. I'd never had any money, and I was focused on makin' money. And I'd started trading the stock market on a penny-ante basis my senior year in law school. But I decided, you know, bein' a lawyer was a way maybe to make some money. And so I decided I would try it that way.

[01:49:23] SL: Was there—were there favorite instructors that you had?

JB: Absolutely. The best instructor I ever had—was a guy named Dan Pollitt. And he left—I don't even know what he was doin'

here. He wandered in here for two or three years and then went to the University of North Carolina at Raleigh-Durham. And he's still alive. He's gotta be in his nineties. But he had been a very early civil rights lawyer—not in the civil rights movement, as we think it, but in the freedom of speech movement. And he had represented a bunch of Communists—accused Communists, I guess, in the McCarthy era. And had practiced law in a fairly sophisticated Washington, DC, environment and somehow decided he wanted to teach law. [01:50:27] And I took a course to him in administrative law, and there were only four students, and one of 'em was—one of the other students was Ray Thornton, who later became attorney general and president of the university and a member of the Arkansas Supreme Court—and a couple of other guys that were—they were all returned Korean War veterans. And he didn't think it made sense waste a classroom on four students, so we had our classes at George's. [*Laughter*] Yeah. Which I thought was kinda neat. But I also had constitutional law to him. He was really brilliant. And Bob Leflar was—I didn't get to have torts under him. He wasn't here the year I took torts. But I took conflict of laws, which he was maybe the world's most—foremost authority in. I also took a course called legal professions, and that led to one of

the funniest things in my law school career. It was a second-year course, and it would, I guess, be called legal ethics today. It was called legal professions for some reason. And I was not very interested in the course, and I'm not sure he was all that interested in the course.

SL: Was this . . .

JB: But I was . . .

[01:52:11] SL: Was this Bob?

JB: Yeah. I was the business manager of the *Law Review*, and I was tryin' to shape the *Law Review* up, not from an academic standpoint, but from a fiscal standpoint. So I was out buyin' used desks and things, shapin' up the *Law Review*, and I was workin' as a janitor at the Baptist Student Union, and I was courting a woman I later married, and I was busy. And I didn't have time to go to class. And the class met twice a week for sixteen and a half weeks for a little over four months. I figure it met thirty-three times, and I missed thirty of the thirty-three classes. [*SL laughs*] And I've never been sure whether I made the first two and the last one or the first one and the last two. But Leflar used to stop me on the street, and he had this clipped way of speaking, and he would say, "Mr. Blair, I hope you can come back to class soon." [*SL Laughs*] And so in those days,

we had a very classic structure. The final exam was taken anonymously. You went into the dean's office. You signed up. You got a number. You took your exam by number. The professor graded the exam by number. He didn't know whose exam it was—at least theoretically. And then he would take the grades graded by number back to the dean's office, and they would transpose them back to the names of the students. So I knew if I could pass the exam—I knew Leflar would play with the rules. There were some that would not, but he was a classics—a classicist in terms of the legal theory and legal teaching. So I knew if I could pass the exam, I was okay. [01:54:17] But I knew that he took it personally that I wasn't there. [*SL laughs*] So I knew he would write the exam where I couldn't pass it. I knew that I could memorize the textbook, and I had a very good memory, and I probably was capable of memorizing the textbook. But I knew I could memorize it, and I couldn't pass the exam. A lot of outside reading, most of which I hadn't done, but I knew I could do all the outside reading, and I still couldn't pass the exam because I knew that he would figure that I would do those two things. So I knew the exam was gonna come from the lectures. There was a guy who's still practicing law in El Dorado, Arkansas, named Denny Shackleford—became a superb

lawyer. And Denny took superb class notes. So I sidled up to Denny, and I—night before the exam, and I said, "Denny, [*SL laughs*] my class notes are a little short, and whenever you pack it in, if you don't mind if I could borrow your notes, I'll give 'em back to you at four o'clock in the mornin' or five o'clock in the mornin' or whenever you want 'em 'cause I plan on stayin' up all night." And he really didn't want me let me have 'em, but he did. And I memorized his class notes. And the next day, the exam is just like big softballs coming over the plate. There it is. And so if you made the highest grade in the class, you got a book. And when Leflar had to give me the book [*laughter*], it was just one of those amazing things. [01:56:04] Well, he adopted me from that, and he—we became very good friends, and he thought that what I did was play bridge all the time, so he got to where anytime he wanted me, he would go to the card room. And he would be put out if I was not there [*laughs*] playin' bridge. But when I graduated, he got me two superb job offers in New York City, both of which I wound up turnin' down. But as distinguished from that class, when I took his conflict of law class, I was there every class, and it was a brilliant, brilliant class.

[01:56:46] SL: What was he like in class?

JB: Well, he was very abrupt and very precise in his speaking, and when—and the traditional way of teaching would—and he was a traditionalist—is that you would have to read these cases. And then during class, you might get called on to explain one of these cases, which was like steppin' in a bear trap because then the object of the professor is to show you how stupid you are and how you don't understand this case and how you can't read and you have no judgment. And they'd proceed to play cat and mouse with you, so the students were just terrified. I mean, these are combat war veterans [*laughs*], and they're just terrified of being called on in class. And he was very good at—as several others—Al Witte has a great reputation for that. Wiley Davis had a great reputation for just, I mean, workin' you totally over the coals. But he would do it in very precise terms. [01:57:59] And I remember one time I went to sleep in one of his classes, and unfortu—I could usually sleep tilted forward on my fountain pen, but I had, for some reason, fallen backwards. [*Laughs*] So I'm hearin' this voice, and it's sayin', "Mr. Blair. Mr. Blair. Mr. Blair." I finally opened my eyes, and there he is, crouched over his desk. He has his hands folded. He says, "Mr. Blair, I'm going to ask you a question. Are you ready?" And—but he just a—an amazing person. The—one of the funniest

things I ever saw him do—I mean, he's eighty-five years old by this time, and it's homecoming, and he always had a bunch of ex-students and people over to his house, which wasn't far from the football stadium, for a prehomecoming football game party. And Bill Clinton has just been elected governor, and Bill would have been teaching there at the school, and so Governor Clinton's there, and all kinds of people are there. And it was not uncommon to have a touch football game out in the yard, and so, a touch football game springs up. And Leflar, at eighty-five, [*laughs*] is out there playing in the touch football game, and there's this—about this twelve- or thirteen-year-old kid on the other side of the line, and the ball is snapped, and Leflar just flattens the kid. [*Laughter*] Just—kid never knew what hit him. I just—I laughed till I was sick. [01:59:52] Leflar's father was actually a marshal for "Hanging" Judge Parker—a federal marshal—a deputy federal marshal. And I don't know where Leflar—oh, he—I think his graduate degree—his doctorate was from Harvard, and I don't know where he picked up these, you know, very—he had very strange pronunciations of lots of words. The *A*'s were always hard. And his Latin phrases, the *A*'s were always hard, and he was just [*laughs*]—I don't know. He was just a delight. He was—one time he served a period as dean of

the law school, and another one of my professors, who's still alive, Ray Trammell, had gotten a job as his assistant and had put some kind of notice up on the bulletin board, "Ray Trammel, assistant dean." And Leflar came along and put a caret mark under it and put a "to"—"assistant to the dean." [*Laughter*]

SL: Dean. Well, okay. So, now what years were you in law school?

JB: I started takin' courses in law school in the fall of [19]54, and—and then I was there till April of [19]57, when the Supreme Court said I needed to come down and get sworn in.

[02:01:40] SL: So you were there past all the hubbub with Silas Hunt and . . .

JB: Yes, I had—I did not know Silas. I had a handful of blacks in my classes. One of 'em I knew—I was such a natural test taker, and there were a lot of these guys that had been *A* students in business school, and they just didn't understand law school exams, and they were in danger of flunking out of law school. I mean, straight-*A* business school students because they thought everything had a right answer. Well, the classic law school exam, there is no right answer. In the first place, it's a set of facts which hides the question. The first job is to find what the questions are, and if you can identify the questions, then most professors teaching classic style would give you a passing

grade—if you just identified the questions. It's called characterization. You can't look—you can always look up what the law is if you know what the question is. You can't look the law up if [*laughs*] you don't know what the question is.

SL: If you don't know what the question is.

JB: But the second thing is then you need to find as many alternative answers as you can, and you're gonna get credit for the alternative answers. And then the third thing is you want to make a persuasive argument for what you think is the best alternative. When you do all those things, you've got a perfect exam. Well, I remember there was—I think he was from Pine Bluff—this black kid, and he—he's dead now, Delector Tiller—just—I used to take him and drill him on how to pass a [*laughs*] law school exam. But I didn't do that just for them. I did that for, you know, a number of my classmates who just really needed help.

SL: Well, you mentioned a lot of 'em were Korean War veterans.

JB: Yeah.

SL: Is that . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: So this was an—a GI Bill kind of thing?

[02:03:51] JB: Yeah, they've come back—older and some of them

ready to settle down but—and some of 'em not. I mean, the—I ran around with the class ahead of me, for some reason. I was kind—and they were—you know, I was kind of the mascot. I was eighteen years old, and they were, you know, in their mid-twenties. But Ray Thornton was one of those. A guy named Harlin Perryman, a guy who got elected to the legislature from Fulton County while he was in law school. A guy named Dan Dobbs, who's now the world's preeminent authority on torts. He took over—there was a guy named Prosser that had written the major treatise on torts. And . . .

SL: Well, that was Leflar's area, too, wasn't it?

JB: Yes, it was. But he—his preeminence was in conflict of laws.

SL: Okay.

[02:04:56] JB: Dobbs is, I think, still teachin' at the University of Arizona. He taught at Chapel Hill for a while. But I—a guy named Richard Davis, who flunked out—but these were the guys I kind of ran around with. But there was a room, which became the card room, and I'd never seen a bridge game, and some of these guys played bridge in there, and I'm watchin' 'em. And I learned how to play bridge insofar as I ever knew how just from watching it be played. And so there's a lot I don't know, and one day there's no fourth, and I'm asked to sit in, and my

partner turns out to be a guy named Burt Darrah, who had been battlefield commissioned as a captain in the marines after everybody around him had gotten killed and a very fierce guy. And my very first bridge hand, he opens with a two no-trump bid, and I don't know this is a forcing bid. [*Laughs*] And I've got a terrible hand. Then I pass his bid, and I thought he was gonna come across [*laughter*] the table and kill me right there. That was gonna be the end of my bridge-playing career. But they . . .

TM: Actually we're about to run out of tape.

JB: All right.

TM: If we can pick this up where . . .

[Tape stopped]

[02:06:34] SL: Okay. So [*TM clears throat*] James Blair—what is your middle name?

JB: Burton—it is now, and I think it always was. But like everything else in my life, there's a story behind that.

SL: Well, let's hear it.

JB: Well, I had always been told my name was James Burton, and I—I'd always signed everything James Burton, and when—at some point in life, I go to get a birth certificate—I think I'm still in law school. And the birth certificate comes out James

Bertram. So I asked my father—I said, "I've always thought my name was Burton." He said, "It is Burton." And he tells me why—it's named after some family friend. And so one of—the first thing I did after I got out of law school is officially change my birth certificate [*laughter*] and correct it, so it is now James Burton.

SL: So it's *B-U-R-T-O-N*?

JB: Right.

SL: And it—but on—originally, it was Bertram.

[02:07:40] JB: Well, he says the doctor wrote it down wrong.

SL: Oh, okay.

JB: He says it was never Bertram.

SL: Okay. Well, I forgot to ask you what your full name was at the beginning.

JB: Yeah.

SL: So we've got that taken care of [*TM clears throat*].

JB: Yeah.

SL: Where were we? What were . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . we talking about?

JB: . . . we were talkin' about law school days . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:07:57] JB: . . . and it makes me think of my—one of my forays into early politics. I was always, like I say, at war with authority. [*SL laughs*] And the parking regulations at the university drove me crazy. I hate to think what they do now. But I had—the first new car I'd ever bought, I bought in 1956, a 19—well, I guess it was in [19]55—in the fall of [19]55—a 1955 Chevrolet. It was what they called a salesman's car. It was a stick shift, and its only option in it was a heater. It had no armrests. It didn't even have a visor on the passenger side. And it was totally stripped down, and it cost me fifteen hundred dollars brand new. Really great car. But parking it at the law school was a problem, and so one day I had enough of the rules, and I parked it on the law school patio. [*SL laughs*] And, of course, they gave me a ticket for it, and I took the ticket before the judicial board and proved to 'em that the way the regulations were written did not prohibit parking on the law school patio. [02:09:41] Well, I parlayed that incident into a race for student body vice-president. I ran against Phil Anderson, who was a Kappa Sig, and they believed they were, you know, obviously gonna win this. But he didn't. I wound up being elected vice-president of the student body over parking [*laughs*] my car on the law school patio.

SL: So that was your first run in politics.

JB: Right.

SL: And was that your only run in politics?

JB: Maybe. I can't think of anything [*laughter*] else I ever ran for.

SL: Okay. So we talked about a couple of your favorite law professors. Is there any—what's amazing—you were eighteen years old when you were . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . in law school.

JB: Right.

SL: And so you were hangin' out with the older guys.

JB: Right.

SL: You were kind of . . .

[02:10:42] JB: And, you know, they were wonderful guys that were always doing something that amused me, and I'm sure I was always doing something to amuse them. But one of the things I remember is a bunch of them decided to go to Dallas. There was a airline stewardesses' school for Braniff stewardesses in Dallas, and one of them had a connection down there. And they were gonna take these airline student stewardesses out to dinner. And they took 'em out to the Chateaubriand, which was a fairly expensive place. And Richard Davis was sayin', "We

gotta go first class. We gotta go first class." And Ray Thornton was protestin', and I don't remember who the other gang leaders were in the enterprise. But when they got the check, they had to go to the men's room and pool ever dime they had [*laughs*] to pay the check. And Ray Thornton said, "Well, I'll say this. It only costs six times as much to go first class." [*SL laughs*] So we quoted that through the rest of law school.

[02:12:03] SL: So you've mentioned Ray Thornton several times.

JB: Right.

SL: So what do you remember about Ray during law school?

JB: Well, when he ran for president of the student body—and that was—and I probably was complicit in that—we intended it as a joke. And we wandered around with Ray playing his guitar, and I was a part of a quartet. We'd go serenade the sororities, and he plays the guitar and then make his political speech. And, then, one day, he's playin' his guitar on the steps of the student union, and I hear him say, "I might have a lot of fun runnin', but I'm not just runnin' for fun," and we've realized we've created a monster, and that he actually is serious about the race. And, 'course, he did win it. He did become president of the student body. But what I really remember about Ray was that the—this group that I kinda drifted around with were basically very liberal.

Ray Thornton was Witt and Jack Stephens's nephew, and they were not liberal. And he was always conflicted. [02:13:30] He was the, you know, "Hamlet of the Ozarks." [*Laughter*] He wanted to be liked and admired and—by his liberal friends. He wanted to be liked and admired by [*laughs*] his conservative uncles, who had the power to make him rich. And the—when he got out of law school, he took a job with Arkansas Louisiana Gas, and his liberal friends thought he had betrayed them. And I—you know, I think—I've had a lot of interaction with him over the years, but I think he's [*laughs*] always been conflicted. [*SL laughs*] But with a lot of talent that never got fully utilized, even when he got elected to Congress. One time when he was president of the university, I wound up at a meeting in Pine Bluff. I guess I was on the University Board of Trustees when he was still in the last years of his presidency. And we usually had some university airplanes. He said, "Do you want to fly back with me?" And I said, "Sure." And so I assume we've got professional pilots. We go out to the airport. There's this Beechcraft Baron, and it turns out he's flyin' it, and I couldn't gracefully get out of not goin'. I didn't like it, but I got in the airplane with him. We took off for Fayetteville, and we are landin' in Fayetteville. There are bad crosswinds, and as we're

comin' down and we're about to touch down, we get hit by this really terrible crosswind gust. And I think, "Man, this is it." But he handled it just absolutely perfectly. No professional pilot could've handled it any [*laughs*] better and set it on—crabbed it and set it on the ground. But . . .

[02:15:45] SL: You know, your name was—we were interviewing Dan Ferritor . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . a couple weeks ago, and he was talkin' about how Ray Thornton, and eventually, you just kept after him to at least be chancellor for a while. Is there . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: What was the story on that?

JB: We had had some bad experiences with a guy takin' the job and quitting almost immediately. And we were in circumstances where we could not recruit nationally, and we were gonna have to promote from within. And the other leading candidate, I thought, was a screwball. And so I think the only hope is to get Danny to take the job. And so I ask him to take it, and I pretty much have the votes lined up on the board to approve it, and he won't do it. He turns me down. So I go back a second time and ask him a second time, and he turns me down. And the third

time, I [*SL laughs*] said, "Danny, you know, if women didn't change their minds, the population would die out. And if you don't [*laughter*] change your mind, the university's gonna die out here." And he finally agreed to take it. And I think was a—I don't think he was a natural administrator, but he loved the university, and he cared about academics. And I think, you know, learned on the job but became a superb chancellor. But it's a job where, you know, nationally, chancellors rarely last more than four to seven years, and to get ten or eleven years out of a chancellor's pretty . . .

SL: Pretty good deal.

JB: . . . pretty good for the system.

[02:18:16] SL: Yeah. So back in law school, you—what do you end up—law school—you're short eight weeks in residency. Is that what the deal was?

JB: Yeah. So what I did is I used that eight weeks to study for the bar exam, and I played bridge. And I probably didn't go to any of my classes that I signed up for.

[02:18:41] SL: You became familiar with what a two no-trump bid was. You became familiar with what a two no-trump bid [*laughs*] . . .

JB: Oh, yeah, my bridge playin' got a quite bit better. [*SL laughs*]

The—yeah, we had a guy—and by then, I'd become editor-in-chief of the *Law Review*, and I—my friends in the class above me had all graduated and gone. So I hung out a lot with the *Law Review* guys. And there was a guy named Hank Chamberlain that smoked like crazy, and he had had a eye put out in some gang fight in St. Louis growin' up, and we used to sit around and talk in *Law Review* about what we were gonna do when we got out. And he said he was gonna get out and go to work for the IRS, learn all their secrets, and then he was gonna get out and start his own tax practice, and use all their secrets against 'em. And in, you know, ten, fifteen years later, he is the leading tax litigator in [*laughs*]—in Houston, you know, making a mint of money. But . . .

[02:20:07] SL: There is something about—I mean, do all law schools have this kind of notoriety and this kind of star quality? It seems like to me that the University of Arkansas Law School really cranked out some great minds and . . .

JB: Well, we had—I think we had classes that I don't think they have anymore. I've traded stories with Dean Nance and some of the other people about the current classes, and I don't think they have quite the joie de vivre that we had. There was a guy named Hugh Overholt, and Hugh's father, I think, had been a

principal that had moved around from school district to school district. Hugh had gone to school a lot of different places. And he had a brilliant clarity of thought and no command of the language to express it in. And to give an example of that, one time Bob Branch—another member of our class who had a very successful law practice in eastern Arkansas—was walking through the lounge of the lobby, and he says, "Hugh, are you going to the Legal Beagle's game?" And Hughey—he says, "No, it's been 'transponed.'" [*SL laughs*] And Bob shakes his head and says, Hughey, that's postponed." And Hughey says, "Postponed, transponed—what's the difference? They're both pseudonyms." [*Laughter*] Well, this guy, Hugh Overholt, becomes the Adjutant General. I mean, the Adjutant General of the United States Army. He is the highest-ranking lawyer in the whole United States Army. So General—Major General Overholt now. I mean, there were just characters like that . . .

SL: Yeah.

JB . . . all over the place.

SL: That's amazing.

[02:22:24] JB: The—there was a guy named David Minton that became a colonel in the army. Just—he was just as fidgety as he could be. And he'd been a clerk typist in the service, and he

was the fastest typist I've ever seen. I've seen some fast women typists, but he had a big ol' Underwood typewriter—not a portable—and he'd sit down and flip a sheet of paper in there and bang. You know, he's got a typed sheet of paper. He's real squeamish about bugs and always, you know, hated anything that creeped or crawled. And we used to have—we didn't have any air conditioning in those days in law school. In the summertime, we had these giant moths the size of bats that flew around in the law school. So one day, I captured one of these moths, and I put him in the well of David Minton's Underwood typewriter and put a sheet of paper over it. So he'd come in, he'd pick the sheet of paper up, the moth'd fly out and scare him. So David comes in, picks up the sheet of paper, whips it in and types about ten million holes in this moth, and [*laughs*] the dust just comes up like smoke out of his typewriter. [*Laughter*] The moth never had time to fly out. [02:23:54] Well, a guy named W. Q. Hall shows up the second year we're in law school. He became a very famous figure over in Huntsville, and for a long time, the municipal judge of Huntsville. He had lost an arm in the navy, and he had a prosthetic arm, and sometimes he wore a fake hand, some—most of the time just a hook. And he got about a three-hundred-dollar-a-month check from a—as a

disability pension. And he had a Chihuahua dog named Pedro, and he would walk into class, throw his jacket on the floor. Pedro would sit down on his jacket and stay till the class was over. So one time, David Minton decides that—I mean, the law school had to have a representative on the student council, and David decides that he'll run for a student council position. He wants to be on the university student council. So I filed Pedro against him. [*SL laughs*] Well, this infuriated him to the extent that David said if the dog won, he was not gonna serve. So then I had to engineer the—or rig the votes, so that David won by one vote [*laughter*], or we would've lost our legal representation. But David became a colonel in the army and a teacher in their war college, and you know, he had quite a successful military career. Perryman went off and became a big fixture in legal circles in San Jose, California. [02:25:47] And Richard Davis, who might've been the brightest of them—no, it might not have been Richard, it might've been David John. One of those guys got paralyzed during finals one year and wouldn't go in and take his finals. And he was spinnin' a quarter out on the desk, and he never went in and took his finals. Flunked out. So . . .

SL: Now when you say paralyzed, you mean he just . . .

[02:26:18] JB: He just could not make himself go and take the exam. Just—we all tried to talk to him. He just wouldn't do it.

SL: What'd he end up doing?

JB: I don't know. He disappeared. Yeah, I mean, flunked out of law school and went on.

SL: I always—I thought you were tellin'—mentioned that name—that he had flunked out.

JB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: And so that's the story.

JB: Yeah.

SL: He was fine, brilliant, and . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . then just refused to take the final.

JB: Yeah, an emotional thing of some kind. But in those days, I mean, the finals were an emotional wring out because . . .

SL: Well, they still are.

JB: . . . a hundred percent of your grade was the final. You could've done everything perfect and blow the final and flunk the course. You could do everything wrong, rack the final, and you know, make an A in the course. It all rode on the line. Well, I maintain that's good training for the practice of law, because a lot of times in the law, you know, you're down to one thing.

Everything rides on the line. And so I didn't object to the system. But . . .

[02:27:35] SL: All right. So Bob Leflar gets you a couple of very attractive offers out of New York City. What were those offers? What . . .

JB: Well, there was a graduate of the University of Arkansas Law School named E. Nobles Lowe, and Nobles was the general counsel of what was then West Virginia Pulp and Paper. It became Westco. And he mostly hired lawyers out of the Ivy League schools, but about once ever third or fourth time he needed a lawyer, he would at least look at the University of Arkansas. And he was lookin' for a new lawyer, and he asked Leflar for a recommendation. And Leflar recommended they interview me. And I had been west of—or east of the Mississippi River one time to go to a Key Club convention in Miami, Florida, and so I rode the train up to New York City—twenty-one years old. I stay in the Roosevelt Hotel in a room that cost five dollars and fifty cents a night, which was the published rate. They say nobody ever found a room that cheap except me. It was about the size of a broom closet. And I interviewed for that job, and they offered me the job for seventy-five hundred bucks a year, which in 1957, I thought was a lot of money. [02:29:16] But

my grandmother would not move to New York. I didn't feel like I could go without her, and I thought workin' for a corporation wasn't really practicin' law. And I wanted to practice law. I mean, that's ironic, considerin' how many years I've spent workin' for a corporation. But I decided I didn't want to do it, so I turned 'em down—came home. They talked to their outside law firm, which in turn requested me to come back and interview them. And this would be practicin' law and not bein' corporate counsel. So I decided to do that, and this time I flew to New York, and I stayed at the Yale Club. I mean, I learn quick. [*SL laughs*] And they again made me a very attractive offer, but at the end of the day, I decided, you know, if Bessie would not come with me and nobody in her family was anywhere near her, that I'd have to stay here. So I turned that down, came back, and opened my own law office on Center Street above the Easterling news service in a building that was torn down for the Continuing Ed building.

[02:30:44] SL: And that would've been next to Deacon Wade's?

JB: And it would've been next to it. And there was an old lawyer named C. D. Atkinson. And C. D. let me have a—an office and a table and a chair for maybe nothin'. I don't know that he even charged me any rent. And lawyers up and down the section of

Center Street between College and the square, which we called "Smoky Row," would send me little cases they didn't want. [02:31:26] And I remember C. D. givin' me a case in municipal court, and I said, "Well, Mr. Atkinson, why don't you want to do this?" He said, "I don't go to municipal court. You take this case." I said, "Well, why don't you go to municipal court?" And he said, "Because of Judge Jim Ptak." And I said, "Well, what about him?" He said, "Well, he used to have this chair you have here and this table you have here, and I gave him a desk and a table and a chair, and I let him have this office. And then he became municipal judge." And he said, "One day I had a case in his court, and I went over there, and we used to have a police chief named Dan Allen." And he said, "I'm up examining a witness, and I look back, and there is Police Chief Dan Allen going through my file. So I walk over there, and I snatch that file out of his hand. And so he gets up and tries to turn my arm up behind my back. And so I get him by the throat, and I choke him a little while until one of the deputies comes up and says, 'Mr. Atkinson, you're gonna have to let him go. He's turnin' purple.'" And he said, "And Jim Ptak fined me for contempt of court [*laughter*] just for chokin' the police chief to death." And the old man had talons like a—I mean, hands like talons. His

son—I mean, he must've been in his eighties when this—he told me this story. His son was fifty-five or sixty but didn't practice with—his name was Charles Atkinson. And I got a few little personal-injury cases, and then I realized after a point that I was—the cases that had any money in 'em, I wasn't gonna get the money for two or three years. And I'd had about fifteen hundred dollars that I didn't know about that my father had put in some bonds, and Bessie had never told me about it till I got out of law school. [02:33:54] And "Hot" Johnson—Louis Ponder Johnson—wanted to come back from Tulsa, and he was askin' me if there was any way I could help him get back to Fayetteville. And so the two of us—I took the fifteen hundred dollars, and we assumed the outstanding indebtedness and bought the Gulf service station south of town from a couple—well, I don't remember who we bought it from. But I remember movin' my bank account from the First National Bank that wanted to charge me 10 percent interest on the indebtedness to the McIlroy Bank that only charged me 6 percent. And I'd been better off if nobody had let me have the money. [*SL Laughs*] [02:34:42] We lost the fifteen hundred dollars. We finally just virtually had to give the station away to a couple red-headed brothers that worked for Frontier Airlines, called the Dial

brothers, who also went broke in the station. And I was runnin' out of money. I was not gonna survive. And I'd gotten married in August. And so I had to go to work for somebody, and I really wanted to go in practice with Bill Putman. His stepfather had just died, and he didn't know whether he was goin' to be able to survive himself. Price Dickson was his stepfather. And E. J. Ball and Rex Perkins offered me a deal I was tempted by, but Courtney Crouch in Springdale offered me a job at two hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. Now business school graduates were gettin' four hundred dollars a month. I'd just turned down a seventy-five-hundred-dollar-a-year [*laughs*] job. But I went to work for Courtney for two hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, and it's the smartest thing I ever did.

[02:36:00] SL: 'Kay [Okay], before we go on with that, I wanna ask you two things. One, how did you know Hot Johnson? What was that story?

JB: Well, Hot hung out at the Pyeatt house. I had known Hot since—he's four years older than I am—three and a half years older. I had known him since I was about nine and he was about twelve, so I've known Hot virtually all my life. And the—Courtney had—he had come to Springdale in the [19]30s. He had gotten out of law school at a precocious age, but [*SL clears throat*] it wasn't

much of a law school—some kinda off-brand Kansas law school—and he had set up practice in Springdale. He had become the youngest mayor in the United States. He'd been mayor of Springdale, and he'd become John Tyson's lawyer. The last divorce case he ever handled was John Tyson's divorce from Mildred, Don Tyson's mother. And then he had left in about [19]35, about the time [*laughs*] I was born, and had gone to work for a troubleshooting company called Baum and Company that was mostly ex-FBI agents. And then he had worked for Safeway, and he'd handle antitrust stuff and—for Safeway. And then in the war, he worked for North American Aviation, and then he came back to Springdale in [19]47 with a lot more sophisticated knowledge of the business law practice than the average Arkansas country lawyer. [02:38:04] And he had started representing all of the emerging poultry businesses. He represented George's and Brown and Lloyd's and Tyson, and he also represented both the local banks. He had 80 percent of the business practice in Springdale, and he represented a bunch of insurance companies in defense work. And he had a lawyer with him by the name of Lewis Jones. And so I started workin' for Courtney in October of [19]57, and the—at the time, I was—I told you I'd started tradin' penny oil stocks while I was still in

law school. So I was playin' the stock market on the side, and by 1959, I'd made my first big killing in the stock market in a stock called American Motors. I'd made about ten thousand dollars practicing law and about thirty thousand dollars in the stock market in 1959. In 1960, my law partners—by then we had brought Jim Cypert into the firm—told me I was either gonna have to practice law or trade the stock market. I couldn't do both, and I made the wrong decision and [*laughs*] said, "I'll practice law." But I've always continued to stay kind of in touch with the market, so . . .

[02:39:52] SL: Why would he say that to you? Why . . .

JB: Well, I think it—he—they thought . . .

SL: Thought it was a conflict . . .

JB: . . . I was taking too much time away . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

[02:40:00] JB: But I bought my house, which my first wife still lives in, behind Lowe's off of Zion Road in 1959. And it came with twenty and a half acres of land, and Courtney said I couldn't afford it, and said he couldn't afford it, and [*SL laughs*] as it turns out, my ex-wife has made [*laughs*] a substantial fortune out of that piece of property, and she's entitled to it, and I wish her well. But I started workin' on the Tyson account about as

soon as I got to Springdale, and I showed a flair for trial work. And I would go to trials with Mr. Crouch, and he would early on let me participate in the trials. [02:41:10] And in [19]59, we tried a case against Dun & Bradstreet for a local trucker named Joe Robinson. And Dun & Bradstreet had issued a report that Joe Robinson was bankrupt, which he was not. He might've been insolvent, but he wasn't bankrupt. And we filed a defamation suit—a libel suit against Dun & Bradstreet. They hadn't lost a libel suit in twenty-five years, and they weren't gonna lose this one. And so they brought in White & Case, a very sophisticated, powerful, huge New York law firm. And then they hired the Friday firm out of Little Rock, which was the biggest law firm in the state at that time, and then they hired Rex Perkins, who was regarded as the best trial lawyer in northwest Arkansas. And then they hired Deacon Wade, who was regarded as the most powerful politician in northwest Arkansas. [02:42:38] And so Courtney Crouch and Lewis Jones and I [*laughs*] against a formidable legal group, and the case, by our standards, was way too big for us. We had huge boxes of files and division of labor—I wound up havin' to handle the legal part of it. I read and briefed ever libel and slander case that had ever been decided in Arkansas, and I knew more about the law

of defamation than I think maybe anybody [*laughs*] in the state ever had. And so I didn't get to do the floor work at the trial, but when it would come to arguin' the points of law, when we'd have to go back to the judge's chambers, I would have to do that. [02:43:37] And for some reason, at the end of the trial—and most lawyers don't like to do this—Crouch did not mind splitting up his closing argument and sharin' the close with other counsel. And this was a really important case to us—a huge case—and we've tried it for a long time. I mean, weeks. And he turns to me and says, "Young man, would you like to make part of the closing argument?" And I said, "Yes, sir." And so I—you know, I got up there, and I said, "You know, Dun & Bradstreet shows you this chart of Mr. Robinson's business, and they show where it was goin' downhill in a very steep slope. But they don't show you the whole chart. They don't show you where the chart would be after they said he was bankrupt because they would have to go to the basement of this courthouse to show that on a chart." [02:44:40] I said, "If a man is fallin' off a cliff, and he catches it by his fingertips, are you entitled to go stomp on his fingers?" Anyhow, Crouch liked the argument, and the jury liked the argument. And we won the case, and it got appealed to the Arkansas Supreme Court, and we wound up, in effect, changing

the libel law in Arkansas to uphold that verdict, which we did. So after that, Crouch decided I was a trial lawyer. I was twenty-three by this time, and I'm startin' to try fairly major law cases, which I do. And I had a flair for it. I enjoyed it and—one of our clients was Jones Truck Lines—Harvey Jones, the biggest independent trucker in the South, and he would go to Kansas City to have his Interstate Commerce Commission work done. And he said to Crouch one time—"Don't you have anybody down there that can handle this?" And most lawyers don't like to learn new things. Anything that gets passed after they're outta law school is a new thing they don't want to learn. And I used to hear Lewis Jones complain about the Uniform Commercial Code that was passed in somethin' like 1956. And Crouch would complain about the new probate code that was passed in 1949. [02:46:27] But my insight came when I was talkin' to ol' Homer Pearson one time, Tom Pearson's adopted father, and—Tom Pearson Sr.'s adopted father—and Homer was complainin' about those new rules of federal civil procedure, and they were passed in 1932, so [*laughter*] I said, "You know, I'll learn the interstate commerce law." And so I started handlin' a lot of the Jones Truck Lines interstate commerce cases, which wound up—I tried the biggest case that was ever tried before the ICC in 1964 and

[19]65—a hundred and forty-nine days of oral hearing over a period of about two years and spread out all over the country. We'd try it for three weeks in Atlanta, take a break, try another three weeks in Atlanta, take a break, go to Birmingham for three weeks, take a break, go to Houston for three weeks. [*Laughs*] Go to New Orleans for three weeks. It was an incredible case, and it wound up goin' to the US Supreme Court, and there were probably two hundred trucking companies involved in the case. And by the time it was over, there were only three winners, and we were one of the three. So that was quite an accomplishment, but it was takin' a lot of my time away from my other major client, which was Tyson Foods, and . . .

SL: Now . . .

[02:48:13] JB: I'll drift back to that story, but in the interim—in [19]57 I'm out practicin' law now, and I am put out with Governor Faubus. So in the [19]58 election, I devote all my spare time tryin' to defeat Faubus. I go to—I think it was Joe Hardin—it might've been Jim Snoddy—I backed every candidate that ever ran against him. I go to Mississippi County, and I make a speech in place of Joe Hardin at a Mississippi County Democratic rally, and I think I would not have escaped alive out of that county if Elsijane Roy—who later became a member of

the Arkansas Supreme Court and later a federal judge and whose son later became one of my law partners—hadn't managed to [*laughs*] save my life and escorted me out of the county. But I got crushed at every point, and I—but I never quit tryin'. And so while I'm active in all of these cases, and we take Tyson public in 1963, and I was very involved in that—you've seen a picture. I was one of the handful of people that went to Dallas to pick up the check. I think there were four of us, and those other three people are Dallas or underwriting lawyers. I think it was Bob Kennedy, Don Tyson, Don Trumbo, and myself, and it might've been Joe Fred Starr that went to pick the check up. [02:50:05] But while all this is goin' on, my stockbroker has become the son of the guy that I so strongly admired that went to his office and read the *Wall Street Journal* and made phone calls. Don Trumbo Jr. became my stockbroker, and the way he did this is that when he got out of school, he went to Dallas and worked on the trading floor for a brokerage firm called Rauscher, Pierce & Company, which was one of the underwriters that took Tyson public years later. And he came back to Fayetteville and said, "I want to open a brokerage office in Fayetteville. Will you guys set me up in a brokerage office?" And they said, "No, we won't set you up in a brokerage office.

We're not gonna invest [*laughs*] our money in Fayetteville, Arkansas. But if you'll call an order in, we will honor the order, and we'll pay you your broker's commission." He had gotten his broker's license. Well, his father was a big stock trader, and his father told Hal Douglas and Maupin Cummings and Deacon Wade what stocks to buy. So all of a sudden, Don had a lot of orders to [*laughs*] call in to Rauscher Pierce. [02:51:34] And out of these orders, he set aside the money to equip a little office upstairs in the building next to the building where I'd had my law office. And then as he made more money, he moved the office downstairs. And as he made more money, he moved it over to the old Mountain Inn plaza, which—in the interim, he and I had tried to buy from the Teamsters and had been outbid by Joe Fred Starr and Don Tyson because we offered to take it over for nothin'. And they offered ten thousand dollars, which they never paid [*laughter*] to take it over, which they did. But at any rate, Don then—A. G. Edwards offers Don a deal, and Rauscher Pierce has no money in the office, and so he moves his office to A. G. Edwards from Rauscher Pierce by changin' the name on the front of the office. And I've been a client of A. G. Edwards ever since. I got off course. Where . . .

SL: Well . . .

[02:52:56] JB: Oh, yeah, politically. That's what we were talkin' about.

SL: Yeah.

JB: Okay. Don was the most liberal stockbroker I've ever seen, and he decides—they're havin' a convention of the Arkansas Young Democrats in Fayetteville in 1964, and he decides that he wants to be the president of the state Young Democrats. And we had no idea about the internecine warfare that goes on at that level [*laughs*] of politics. And so I said, "It's fine with me. I'll do whatever you want me to to help you." So we run Don for president of the state Young Democrats. And, 'course, we totally get our head beat in 'cause we don't know what we're doin'. [*SL laughs*] But as a result of that, Lyndon Johnson is runnin' for president, and he has very little support in the South, and certainly, none in Arkansas and no conservative Arkansan's willin' to support him. So Don winds up going to Little Rock—becoming very active in Lyndon's campaign, and I did what I could to help him. And the—out of that, we get more active in the Young Democrats. And so we wind up electing ourselves in some fashion or get elected as delegates to the infamous . . .

SL: Sixty-eight.

JB: . . . sixty-eight convention in Chicago. And a young man named

John Warren comes down to solicit our help in electing Gary Hart president of the United States.

SL: Okay.

[02:54:49] JB: Now Don had served in the marines, and you know, I had the experience of my father's career in the army, and we're both opposed to the Vietnam War. And I think that if Humphrey is—by this time, Johnson's withdrawn, Bobby Kennedy's been killed, Humphrey is the designated nominee, and I think he is—would not have the freedom to reject the war, and Hart would. And so we become floor leaders for Gary Hart at the 1968 convention. Well, we go up a week early to get trained, and I get introduced to the—Chicago by this John Warren, who has just gotten out of the University of Chicago Law School. And he takes us down to the Near North, and we're out there drinkin' with the Polish ethnic groups, and they've never seen a delegate to any political convention, and they just love us, and [*laughs*] we have just the best time for a week getting ready for the convention. And then the convention starts. We've got walkie-talkies, and we're out on the floor, workin' the delegates and the—and if I can find a delegate that would be persuadable on economic issues, I can take him to John Kenneth Galbraith personally and get Galbraith to lecture him on economics. So

this is, you know, heady stuff for me.

SL: Yeah.

[02:56:43] JB: But in the interim, I can see that our delegation is gonna vote for the war plank. It's gonna vote for all the things I disagree with. And Tom Harper is the Democratic National committeeman, and Leon Catlett is the . . .

SL: Catlett.

JB: . . . chair of the party and the chair of the convention delegates.

SL: For Arkansas?

[02:57:18] JB: For Arkansas. And so I decide that I've got to remove Catlett as the chairman of the delegation if I've got any chance to do things I want to do. So I set out to build a coalition, and I need a candidate to replace Catlett, and I can't find anybody. We've got a young congressman that I'd been in college with named David Pryor. David won't get into the controversy, but if he is asked to be the chairman without havin' to run for it, he will accept the chairmanship. So on that basis, I'm out building a coalition [*SL coughs*] to replace Catlett with Pryor as the chairman of the delegation. And I've put together a coalition that can do it. I get all the labor people on our delegation. I get all the blacks on our delegation. I get a goodly number of the women on our delegation. I put together all

these minorities into, in effect, a majority. And so I've got the votes to win it, and I—finally, at three o'clock in the mornin'—I haven't had any sleep in days. I've got to have a couple hours' sleep, so I go to bed at three. I get up at five. I went to bed at three with the votes to win. I get up at five, and I don't have the votes because the National Labor Party—the head of the CIO and people like that have called our Arkansas labor people and told 'em they cannot vote to depose Catlett as chairman. So I've lost that round. [02:59:10] So then the next scrap I get into is over seating of the delegates. They want to seat a delegation from Mississippi, and they have two elected delegations. And one of 'em is black, and one them is not. And the blacks in our Arkansas delegation want to vote for the blacks in Mississippi. And we're still voting. Even though it's against party rules, we're still voting the unit rule. And we decide in the delegation what the majority wants, and that's the way all the votes are cast. And so I figure, "Well, I asked the blacks to help me out. I've got to help them out." [02:59:54] So I finally go to Catlett and Harper, and I say, "Look, what you're doin' is against the party rules, and I'm not gonna let you do it. And if you do it, I'm gonna challenge you openly on the convention floor, and you have to let them vote their votes like they want to vote." And

they don't—I'm not bluffin', and they don't think I am, so they finally capitulate. And that's really how the unit rule was broken in Arkansas. But, of course, they lose that vote, and then by the time I get down to the vote on the war plank, I've [*laughs*]—ever vote we have, I've lost some more votes. And by then, I'm pretty thin on my votes, and I lose that. So I go out and sit all night in Grant Park with the totally [*laughs*]—rejects that are sitting out there protesting everything. And the—by then, Daley's people have gotten involved. [03:01:10] I actually had a friend—I'd made a friend from New Hampshire that suspected Daley was packing the convention, and he used his credit card instead of his delegate pass to get through one of these green-light deals, and when he did that, the police pounced on him and drug him off. So, I began to get on the fringes of some of the violence. The police later came into the McCarthy headquarters and arrested a bunch of people and manhandled them. And my friend, John Warner, was trying to prevent 'em from doing this, and they broke a billy club over his head [*SL vocalized noise*], and he wound up in the hospital, and I think was never right after that. He wound up—I saw him a few times after that. He went off up into the north woods of Michigan and lived on three hundred dollars a year and read, you know, some kind of wild

Buddhist religious tracts. But at any rate, the Arkansas Democratic Party structure told me that I might as well not come back to Arkansas. They said, "You know, you're—if you ever thought you had any career in politics, you are through in Arkansas. You might as well not come back." But as it turned out, they decided after that that they were tryin' to put together a candidate and a force that could defeat Winthrop Rockefeller, and they decided that they needed a token progressive on the—in the party structure. [03:03:10] So instead of killin' me, they made me legal [*laughs*] counsel to the state Democratic Party, which was a job I held for the next twelve years, and it put me kind of on the inside of a lot of the political machinations of the state, including—we went on a talent search after our last candidate went down in flames, and we were tryin' to find a candidate for governor, and we were—we created this panel to hold these hearings that were really fake hearings. We were just tryin' to find a—and give a candidate TV exposure. And that's where I really got acquainted with Dale Bumpers and managed to give Dale his first, really, TV exposure. The—by then, you know, my law practice is goin' at a fairly hectic pace, and by [19]69, I wind up tryin' eleven jury trials in six weeks, and I would've told you I was havin' a good time, but the stress was

getting to me in ways that I was not aware of. And I was havin' back pains and thought I'd hurt my back. Well, I—what I had was a peptic ulcer that was eating a hole in my gut, and it finally erupted, and I was bleeding from both ends and . . .

SL: Oh.

JB: . . . taken to the hospital. I had to have six pints of blood to get my head up off the pillow. And at that point, I kind of decided I was gonna change some of my [*laughs*] lifestyle. The—by then, Tyson had become fairly successful with its new role as a public company, and we did a secondary stock offering in [19]69, which we were heavily involved with. We had brought another law partner into the law firm named Frank Waters. We'd hired him away from Ralston Purina in St. Louis. He was from Hackett, Arkansas, and he wanted to come back to Arkansas. And the—we wound up eventually with about thirteen people in the law firm, the largest law firm, I think, at one point, north of Little Rock. [03:05:53] And the—you know, my—I had gone on to the 1972 convention in Miami, Florida, as a pledge delegate to Wilbur Mills. And I'd gotten acquainted on behalf of Jones Truck Lines with both John McClellan and Wilbur Mills, who were—McClellan was the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Mills was the chairman of the Ways and Means

Committee of the House. Probably the two most powerful men in Congress at that point. And I will pause and let you redirect me.

SL: Well . . .

TM: Let's change the tapes, please.

SL: Okay, let's change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[03:06:52] SL: So the Dun & Bradstreet case . . .

JB: Right.

SL: Was that your biggest case?

JB: Well, it was the biggest—my biggest case in the 1950s. Yeah.

SL: Yeah. And you were working for Mr. Crouch. Is it Crouch?

JB: Right.

SL: And he started you at two and a quarter . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . a week . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . and . . .

JB: No, no. Not a week!

SL: A month.

JB: A month. [*Laughter*]

SL: A month. So . . .

JB: God, no, not a week.

[03:07:22] SL: So how long was it before that got kind of blown away?

JB: Well, I wound up—he made us—made me into what he called a junior partner, and I got a percentage of the profits, which he had this complex formula—we never knew what we were gonna [*laughter*] make. The end of the year, he kinda divided the money up however he wanted to. And he had some formula that would justify it. It depended on—you got so much credit for business you brought in—so much credit for business you handled. And—but the—oh, I was not getting rich but certainly making adequate money in the [19]60s, and I had learned, to some extent, a new part of the world. I had started goin' in the [19]50s with Mr. Crouch to arguments before the Eighth Circuit Court—Federal Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, which normally met in St. Louis, and we would always stay at the Mayflower Hotel. And Crouch had traveled the country on an expense account, but—and he knew all the good restaurants, but he was strictly a filet-and-a-baked-potato kind of guy. [*SL laughs*] I, on the other hand, saw all these weird things that I'd never heard of, and—you know, I remember at the Mayflower Hotel seeing this menu that was incomprehensible, and I decided I

was gonna eat everything on that menu [*laughs*] before . . .

SL: Before you left.

[03:09:19] JB: . . . before I was through. And so I ate my first eggs Benedict. I ate my first steak Diane. I—you know, I had all these incredible experiences. But the—it kinda peaked out when I was in New Orleans on the big ICC case, and this would've been in December, I believe, of [19]64. It could've been December of [19]65. And I had a vice-president of Jones Truck Lines named Bob Wiseman, who was supposed to get my witnesses ready, and the witnesses—we had a rotating situation where each truck line that was putting on witnesses would be able to put four on the witness stand, and then they'd have to give up their turn, and somebody'd put on four more. And we learned to trade them like they'd trade these carbon certificates now. We would—so that places that were good for us, we would accumulate witness spots. And so we're in New Orleans in December of [19]64, and it's cold. The wind's blowin' off the Gulf. [03:01:41] Somewhere I've acquired a leather overcoat, and one of the lawyers from Washington, DC, gives me a silk scarf, and they start callin' me the "Red Baron." [*SL laughs*] And Wiseman handles the witnesses and does the entertaining and so forth, and then I get 'em ready. I—we have to have

prepared statements. I've got a clerk typist named Jerry Stamps, who's typin' the statements, and we distribute those, and I put 'em on the stand. Well, Wiseman winds up havin' to leave because he has a death in the family. So I get the word that I've got to do the entertaining of the witnesses who also were clients of Jones Truck Lines, and Harvey's terribly tight with a dollar, but I'm told to spare no expense for these people—whatever they want. And, you know, I'm thirty—maybe twenty-nine years old—twenty-nine years old, loose in New Orleans with an unlimited expense account. [*SL Laughs*] And these guys all want to go out and eat at a very nice place, and then they all want to go to the strip clubs. [*Laughs*]

SL: Of course.

[03:12:10] JB: So I'm—one night I'll eat at Galatoire's, one night I'll eat at Antoine's, one night I'll eat at Commander's Palace. There was a restaurant then called Tujague's that I liked—La Louisiane—but I'm in a different really nice restaurant every night. And then I'm down on Bourbon Street late at night every night. And so it got to where, you know, I was recognized in all the clubs, and the strippers would throw me roses, and it was a—it was quite a scene for—and it probably changed my perspective on a lot of things. I—this was before the big bleed-

out experience.

[03:13:01] SL: What's the bleed-out experience?

JB: Well, when the ulcer erupted . . .

SL: Okay.

JB: . . . and I nearly bled to death. I . . .

SL: Okay.

JB: The—but interesting enough, that whole area of the law—and I was a member of the Motor Carriers Lawyers Association—that has all been blown away by deregulation. It doesn't even exist anymore. I mean, I wasted a good part of my life on a part of the law that's gone. [*Laughter*]

[03:13:34] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about—I want to hear the story about how you ended up hooking up with Tyson.

JB: Well, the—Courtney represented Don Tyson's father. And in the early days, I was doin' piddling things for Tyson but—things that Crouch didn't wanna do or things that Lewis Jones—I don't think he ever did much for the Tyson account. But Don considered me kind of a, you know, kid that wasn't wet behind the—still wet behind the ears and probably justifiably so. But I started kind of concentrating on takin' care of the little things that Don wanted done that he couldn't get anybody else to do. And by the early [19]60s, I'm doin' substantial things for 'em, and I'm also

socializin' and runnin' with him. He moves his father's boat to Bimini in the [19]60s, and I—they take it down the Arkansas River and then to the Mississippi and down the Mississippi through the—across the Gulf to Cedar Keys, across the inland waterways and out into the Gulf Stream and over to Bimini. And I actually did part of that. In fact, I managed to run the boat aground in the Gulf of Mexico.

SL: Well, that is kind of a [*JB laughs*]—there is a kind of a—that is a famous adventure, isn't it?

JB: It is.

SL: I mean, many personalities were . . .

JB: It is. It is. It is.

SL: . . . involved in getting that boat.

[03:15:52] JB: The—Hayden McIlroy had a guy that worked for him. His last name was Hanna. I can't remember his first name because Hayden always called him "Fire Wall." [*SL laughs*] And I think he was an FF—ex-FBI guy. But one of these guys that thought he knew absolutely everything and was not always right. But the first time I joined the boat, they had managed to get it into the Arkansas. They'd managed to get it locked into the Mississippi. And Don and I flew down to Greenville, Mississippi, and joined the boat to take it as far as—I don't remember

whether we were going to Natchez or Vicksburg, but we managed somehow to run out of gas on that leg of the [*laughs*] trip, and we wound up spendin' the night tied up to a gravel barge. And then the next morning, Don and I had to get out on the highway and hitchhike to a gas station and bring back enough gas to get the boat [*laughs*] to a marina. We had gone past the one we should've stopped at, and so that was, you know, the beginning of some of the misfortunes. We—Doug Douglas was involved in it. Hayden McIlroy was involved in it. [03:17:41] The boat eventually got as far as Apalachicola and ran into a storm, and nobody would take it across the Gulf. And every time somebody would go down to take it across the Gulf, they'd find some reason why it was too rough to go. So one day, Doug Douglas and Hayden McIlroy and Don Tyson and I fly down on an airplane piloted by Bill Keaton, and we go to Apalachicola, and we're gonna see about takin' the boat across. And it looks a little too rough, so we sit there that night, and we're playin' gin rummy and drinkin', and Don and Bill Keaton go to a motel somewhere and go to bed. And Hayden and Doug and I stay up all night drinkin' and playin' cards, and we decide early the next mornin' that we'll just run out the channel and see how the Gulf looks. Now [*SL laughs*] I suspect we had a little

belief in our hearts we weren't gonna stop there because we did manage to wake somebody up and get the boat gassed up. We ran out the channel. We got into the Gulf. It didn't look all that rough to us. And the last people on board, when they had abandoned ship, had taken all the navigation stuff. All we had was a compass rose and a chart, and I plotted us a course. [*SL laughs*] And, of course, I knew nothing about what I was doin', but I certainly didn't know anything about the wind. I didn't know anything about the currents. But I just drew us a straight line to Cedar Keys. Well, we take off, and we are cheating on the inside of that course because I'm scared to death if we miss Cedar Keys, we're gonna wind up down in the swamps, and nobody'll ever find us. So at some point—the windshield's encrusted with salt, and I'm drivin' the boat. Hayden's out on the bow pourin' water over the windshield—wash some of the salt off. [03:20:17] And the depth finder goes from thirty feet to twenty-five feet to twenty feet—it's rapidly goin' to zero. And Doug Douglas reaches up and chops the power—accidentally puts it in reverse, but it's too late, and we skip two or three times, and we are dead aground on a mud flat. Hayden is thrown off the boat—or woulda been thrown off the boat, but his foot catches on a guy wire that's comin' down from one of the

things stickin' up on the top of the boat, and he's spinnin' around like a—one of those Fourth of July pinwheels. [*SL laughs*] And there we are. So we can't—we try, you know, to get off on the—by backin' the boat off, and we can't do it. So we call the coast guard to see what we should do. Well, Hayden doesn't want his name on the coast guard records, and I don't want my name on the coast guard records, so we get the coast guard on the radio, I hand the mic to Doug Douglas, and Hayden and I run to the back of the boat. [*SL laughs*] [03:21:45] So Doug is forced to deal with the Coast Guard, and he's trying to talk to 'em, and they're sayin', "What is your name, Captain?" And he says, "Douglas Fulbright Douglas." He wants the Fulbright in there 'cause he thinks it'll get us better [*laughs*] treatment. And they say, "What is the color of your boat, Captain?" And he says, "White." And they say, "No, no, captain, the trim of the boat." [*Laughs*] They're—very quickly they know they're talkin' to a total idiot. [*SL laughs*] And—whose only companions are also total idiots. And so they say, "Well, are you in immediate danger of sinking?" "Well," he says, "not exactly. I mean, you could knock a hole in the bottom of the boat ten feet wide, and it won't [*laughs*] sink 'cause we're aground." [*Laughter*] They don't tell us we're at low tide. I mean, they know, I think, we're

gonna float off, but they won't tell us that. And so about every hour, they'll call back and say, "Are you in any danger of sinkin'?" And we are throwin' the anchor out and tryin' to hook it and then all of us pullin' [*SL laughs*] on the anchor, tryin' to drag this boat off this mud flat. Well, we hear an airplane, and it's comin' right at us. Well, we know it's gotta be Keaton and Don, and so we don't want to admit we're aground, so we all grab fishin' poles, and we run out, and we act like we're fishin'. And the plane banks and flies right over us. And Don and Keaton later said they [*laughs*] could clearly tell we're aground. [*Laughter*] But eventually we—because the tide is comin' up, we managed to drag the boat off the ground—get it back in the channel. We go a few miles, find somebody, and go over and plot a new course to Cedar Keys. We get to Cedar Keys. They tell us we gotta run this channel in by followin' these channel markers. [03:23:48] Well, nobody tells us that a hurricane has come along and blown out two-thirds of the channel markers. So we're out there—we're—now Hayden's runnin' the boat. Now I'm out on the bow tryin' to tell him "Turn right" and "Turn left." And I say, "Turn left," and he said, "No." And I said, "Why no?" And he said, "Because there's a bird standin' over there, and its tail isn't wet." [*Laughter*] And we're trying to call in to Cedar

Keys, and we don't know that they don't use marine radio—they use citizens' band, and they don't pay any attention to the marine radio. So we're not gettin' anybody, and we're not gettin' any help. But Don and Keaton finally send help, and they send somebody out in a Boston Whaler. Keaton comes with 'em. And they lead us into—through the channel, or we'd still be out there in the Gulf somewhere. [*SL laughs*] But . . .

[03:24:53] SL: Well, didn't Mister—didn't you kinda get assigned to Don Tyson?

JB: Well, actually, that is true, Scott. Courtney was a great believer that we needed to socialize with our clients, and he was a social friend of John's. And he believed that everybody ought to go to a different church and belong to a different cyn—civics club, and he was a Rotarian, so Lewis Jones had to be a Lion, and I had to be a Kiwanian. And then—he didn't believe in advertisin' for business. He thought that would—violated legal ethics, but being exposed to people was within the purview. And Don, who was a—early on, a notorious partier, was partyin' sometimes with Bill Putman in Fayetteville, who was a very, very good lawyer. And Courtney thought that it was not a good idea for us to leave Don neglected even though we had our contacts with John. And so he just directly told me I needed to socialize more

with Don. And so I don't know that I needed that much encouragement, but I did start doin' that. And as we, you know, spent more time together, I think he got more confidence in my judgment, and I—let me in—let me insert this story about Don. I wish I remembered the professor's name, but there's a guy that I see occasionally that was in ag school with Don, and there was a professor over there that had taught there for about twenty years, and I—unfortunately, I don't remember his name. But this guy said that the professor told him one day that in thirty years of teaching, that he'd had maybe a dozen really, really bright students, but that he had had only one genius in his class in thirty years of teachin', and that was Don Tyson. And having said that, you know, Don never finished his degree. He dropped out his senior year to run the processing plant in—that was open.

[03:27:41] SL: Was that the process—the first processing plant?

JB: That was their first processing plant . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. That they just celebrated the . . .

JB: . . . which was in the building for some time but open. He—it couldn't have been to run the plant. I know he's told me that, but the plant didn't open till August of [19]58, and he was already runnin' stuff in the company in [19]52, so that can't be

correct. But I know that's [*laughs*] what he's told me. But the—he had become president of Tyson, but the old man still called the shots. And they never really agreed on anything, and the day the payroll hit a million dollars a week, the company had really gotten too big for John Tyson. He could never put his mind around the idea he had to have a million dollars [*laughs*] every Friday to pay all these people. And Don—it was just numbers to Don. So John would want to go north, and Don would want to go south. And so Don would say, "Well, how about north/northeast?" And they'd compromise on north/northeast. And then he'd get John to go northeast, and then he'd get him to go east/northeast. [*Laughs*] And he'd gradually move him around till he had him goin' south, but it would be a process. And then John and Helen got killed in January of [19]67 on the Sunday of the first Super Bowl game.

[03:29:44] SL: Yeah. Now what was the story on that? How—they—it was—they were crossing a railroad track . . .

JB: Well, Beaver—I think Beaver Dam was closed, or maybe the lake was filled in [19]64, and John had built what he called a cabin but a very nice lake house there on the shore of Beaver Lake about halfway between Hickory Creek and Horseshoe Bend, right by Nelson's Hollow. And they had had brunch at the Springdale

Country Club, and they were on the way out to the lake house—John and Don's stepmother, Helen—and his half brother, Randal, was with 'em, but Randal decided he didn't want to risk missin' part of the Super Bowl by goin' with 'em. So he was gonna stay at the club, so he did not go. And they were on Highway 264, and it crosses a set of railroad tracks between Highway—what was then—71 and what is 2—now 265. And it was a crossing that had no electric signal. It was just a warning sign and certainly no guard gates. And it was January. It was cold. And John had fallen and hit his head on a plant floor. And as a result of that injury, he'd apparently had tunnel vision, so he—his peripheral vision was not good. And he is driving, and Helen is sitting in the seat beside him reading the Sunday newspaper, so she's got newspapers up, and they've got the radio on, and they've got the heat on and the windows up. And they apparently never saw the train and never heard the train and drove right square in front of it. And they were both—as far as anybody could tell—killed instantly. [03:32:16] Now we sued the railroad, and they did pay us a settlement, but I don't think they ever thought it was their fault. And they did, you know, put up a better signal at the crossing, which is still somewhat of a dangerous crossing. And every time I cross it, I'm very careful

to look both ways, so—but Don, then, you know, becomes president in fact, as well as title, and in total control.

[03:32:56] And he has said one of his defining moments is he gets a call from Harvey Jones, and Harvey says, "Young man, I'm terribly sorry for your loss." He says, "Let me give you some unsolicited advice." He says, "Do not make any major decision for a year. Wait a year before you make any major decision." And Don said, "You know, that was very good advice," and he's given it himself to a lot of people in similar circumstances. But he then was able to put the pedal to the metal, as he would call it, and we—I say we because I came so closely identified with it, we began to—started buying poultry plants and companies and parts of companies. And the first big one that I actually handled was we bought the Ocoma Foods Division from Consolidated Foods, and that gave us the plant at Berryville, Arkansas, and a plant at Shelbyville, Tennessee, and a plant at Humboldt, Tennessee. The one at Humboldt made pot pies, and eventually it got to be a nonmoneymaker, and eventually we sold it.

But . . .

[03:34:40] SL: Well, now there was a—when did you quit working for Crouch . . .

JB: Well, I had . . .

SL: . . . and start working with Tyson?

JB: I had not gone on over to full-time to Tyson's. I didn't do that till 1980.

SL: Okay. So you're still . . .

[03:34:54] JB: But then through the [19]70s, I—well, we bought the Wilson Foods Division of Ling-Temco, which gave us the Berry Street plant in Springdale and a couple of other plants. I get a hard time separatin' [*laughs*] 'em out now. Somewhere we—in that, we acquired the Green Forest plant, Garrett Poultry in Rogers, and we built very few plants—I think maybe three—and bought something like seventy-two. I don't—but, no, I had always, as I say, been a stock-market trader. In 1973 or thereabouts, they—Tyson had a table egg division that produced the eggs that you would buy in Safeways or Krogers or, today, Wal-Marts or Harps. And it was run by a guy named Norman Bell, and Bell decided to go into business for himself in Oklahoma City. And he left, and Tyson put two or three different people down in the table egg division to run it. Nobody could run it. There was a guy that ran the trucks for Tyson. His name was Robert Bone, and he was known as "Red Bone." And he had been raised as an orphan in Pineville, Missouri; had never gone to college; started out drivin' a truck; wound up runnin' all of

Tyson's trucks. And so they finally sent him down because he was a real tough, hard-nose guy to run the table egg division. And they said, "Norman will help you." I mean, obviously, he's busy with his own business. So Red, who goes—knows nothing about table eggs, goes down and finds the table egg business—does some hedging in the futures market because there is a futures contract in eggs. And so Red discovers the futures market. Now Red is really, by nature, a gambler. The purpose of a business using the futures market is normally and should be simply to hedge against the position that your business requires. If you're, you know, buying corn, you can buy corn in the futures market for future delivery, in case the price of corn goes up. You shouldn't be sellin' corn 'cause you're not in the business of sellin' corn. Well, Red saw the table egg—the egg contract as really just a trading mechanism, but he wound up stumbling into a situation where this was a very small market that was dominated by a bunch of floor traders in Chicago, and they made a little money out of it by just manipulating the market. Red didn't know that, but he soon got aware of the fact that that market didn't always behave like it should. And so he thought, well, he can make it do like it should. [03:38:59] And so he—one month started buyin' up futures contracts, and he got

friends to buy futures contracts. And the next thing we know, he has virtually cornered the egg market—at least the Commodities Exchange Authority accusin' him of cornering the egg market. And the traders would deliver eggs to his futures position, and normally, you take those and redeliver 'em back to the market. He would take them and send them to the mayonnaise manufacturers, have the eggs broken, and they would disappear from the market. And both sides got very stubborn, and they wound up both sides—as impossible as it might seem, both sides [*laughs*] lost money in the operation. But at the end of the day, a—ninety-nine people who were short the egg futures market in Chicago sued Tyson. The Commodities Exchange people charged Tyson and some others with an illegal squeeze on the egg futures market. And I had to deal with that, and as it turned out, the ninety-nine plaintiffs that sued Tyson that—they listed 'em in alphabetical order, and the top guy was a known Chicago mobster, a guy they call a "leg breaker." And Mike Royko, who was writing a column for the *Chicago Tribune*, got a hold of the story, and he made a hilarious story out of the fact that these hillbillies from Arkansas came up there and took the Chicago [*laughs*] mobsters in the futures market, which caused them to drop a lot of the plaintiffs out of

the lawsuit. And we managed to settle everything else, and I—Red was barred from various things and suspended from various things, and the company was fined. And so somehow Joe Fred, whether authorized or not, took it upon himself to go down to the table egg office. And he told Red that he could not trade the commodity futures and work for Tyson Foods, and Red said, "Well, if I had my desk cleaned out by two-thirty, would that be okay?" Now Joe Fred didn't intend to fire him or didn't intend to have him quit, but Joe—Red had fallen in love with the futures market. So he quit. He became a broker, and he wound up, you know, trading for himself and for customers. [03:42:35] And so one day I get a call from Red after—I mean, he'd been my client for a long time before this, and I'd gotten him through divorces and various troubles. He calls me and says he's gotten in a bad situation, and he's lost all his money, and he has to have forty thousand dollars, and if I'll loan him forty thousand dollars he'd, you know, pay me back in a matter of weeks. So I loan him the forty thousand dollars, and then I don't hear from him for a long, long time. In 1978 he calls, and he says, "I've got your forty thousand dollars ." But he said, "I've got you a better deal. Why don't you come by here and talk to me?" So I go by to talk to him. And he says, "Look," he says, "I've got this

deal that's just mintin' money." And he says, "The cattle trade in eleven-year cycle, and the live cattle futures contract's so big you can trade telephone numbers in it." And he said, "Ever day at the end of the day," he said, "we have a conference call with two of the buyers for the biggest packing houses in the country; two of the operators of the two biggest feed lots in the country; the guy who wrote the cattle contract for the Mercantile Exchange, who is with a guy named Sharp in Memphis; a bunch of people with a company called Revco, who I now trade through, and the—including the guy who trades for Revco's account in the front cattle pit month." And he said, "We share all the information, and we know more about the cattle market than anybody in the world, and it's just a chance to make money. So instead of paying you back the forty thousand dollars, why don't we put it in an account we'll own jointly, and you get the first forty thousand of it, and then we'll just be partners after that." Well, I don't see how I'm gonna get [*laughs*] my forty thousand any other way, so I say, "That's fine with me." [*SL laughs*]

[03:45:10] And so the next thing I know, you know, we've made a substantial amount of money. I get my forty thousand back. I sit in on a bunch of the conference calls. Everything seems to be working beautifully. So I start trading actively for myself, and

then I'm taking so much money away from the law firm. I set up accounts for the law firm. We have a thing called the Lawyers Investment Company or something, and I set up an account for it. I set up an account for the law firm. I set up an account for the associates in the law firm I call the pups account. I set up a joint account with a friend of mine named Jim Brooks, who's son, Joe, is now the head of AERT, and I had gotten divorced in [19]74, but I set up an account for my ex-wife. I set up accounts for my kids. I'm engaged to Diane Kincaid, and I set up an account for her and for her kids. And then, unfortunately, I talked Hillary into setting up an account so—but at one point, you know, I'm looking after about twelve accounts, and there are a lot of ups and downs, and everybody focuses on the fact that Hillary ran a thousand dollars into a hundred thousand. Well, one, it was a short hundred thousand. It was ninety-nine thousand and somethin'. But it was nine months of hard trading with a lot of ups and downs and some losses. [03:47:03] You can't trade if you won't take losses. But while I was doing that for her, I made three hundred thousand for my ex-wife and three hundred thousand for Diane, a lot of money for my law firm partners. And then, as these things usually do, the wheels ran off, and the thing blew up. I had gotten almost

everybody out by the time it blew up, except me. [*SL laughs*] And I was out and let them lure me back in on what I thought was a breach of a fiduciary obligation, and I wound up filing a lawsuit, and I wound up settlin' it with Revco. And then I wound up doin' a terribly hard-nosed tax audit, and at the end of the day when I had paid my taxes and settled up with everybody, I had netted after taxes about 1.4 million dollars, which in 1979 I thought was a lot of money. And Mr. Crouch had died, and Frank Waters wanted to be a federal judge, and so we had managed to get him appointed to the bench. And Jim Cypert, my other partner, had owned half the real estate in Springdale, and it was payin' out on a monthly basis. [03:48:36] And so I told Tyson—he said, "Why don't you come over here, and you'll only have to work half-time?" And I said, "Nah, I'll come over there, but I'm gonna spend a third of my time workin' for charity, a third of my time travelin', and I'll spend a third of my time on company business." He said, "Okay." So as it turned out, I spent some hundred-hour weeks over there, but it was good. I mean, I spent the next twenty years over there as his in-house general counsel.

[03:49:09] SL: What was his offer to you?

JB: Well, basically, that I could name my own salary, and I did that.

Now Howard Baird, who was the—what we would now call head of human resources—we called it industrial relations then—came and said, "You can't be a company employee unless you agree to be here thirty hours a week." And I said, "Howard, I don't know how long I'm gonna be here, but I'm not gonna promise you I'll be here thirty hours a week." I never did learn about these promises. [*Laughs*] I always kept tellin' the truth. [*SL laughs*] And so I never did actually become a company employee, which cost me something in stop [JB Edit: stock] options and things. But what I did was I put myself on retainer to the company, and you know, for the next twenty years I set my retainer, so if I got under—over—if I got underpaid or overpaid, it was my fault. And I—but it gave me a lot of freedom, in a way, to do some of the functions that are necessary for a general counsel, which is—one of the tough things a general counsel ought to do is tell the CEO when he can't do something. And they don't like to hear it, and Don never liked to hear it, but he would take it from me. [03:50:37] I mean, he would go fishing for two weeks, and he'd come back with twenty new ideas, and about twelve of 'em would be illegal. [*SL laughs*] And, you know, four of 'em would be impractical, and maybe there'd be four that really would work. But I would have to tell him about the illegal ones. I'd

say, "You know, Don, that's a great idea. That's so good [*laughs*] that the Congress passed a law against it." [*Laughter*] And—but the end result of that was that when I moved my offices to Tyson, I agreed with my old law firm I would go back and try four cases a year for 'em for five years. And they gave me the worst God-awful cases you could find to try, but I did that for five years. And . . .

SL: How did you do?

JB: . . . it helped me wean myself out of the trial work instead of just walkin' away.

[03:51:43] SL: How'd you do with the cases?

JB: Well, they were bizarre. I mean, one of the worst ones—the Beaver—the Boone-Carroll County Water District decided to build a water tower in Beaver Lake. Now this is after the lake's full. [*SL laughs*] So they drill a hundred and fifty foot hole in the limestone, and they pour this tower, and then they're gonna take dynamite and blow away the limestone and let the water in on the tower. And they have an engineerin' firm, and they have a—you know, an explosives expert, and they have a general contractor and all these people involved. And on the first shot, they blew away this big toe that's hangin' out over the lake. And the second shot, they blow out what they call the overburden.

And on the third shot, they blow a seventy-foot hole in the water tower, whereupon everybody sues everybody, and the—it busts the contractor, and he is broke. And so his surety company is called in to take his position. [03:53:04] And my old law firm represents the surety company. So we're the last one in the lawsuit, and we wind up, you know, havin' to go over to Eureka Springs with, you know, lawyers from everywhere in the country representin' everybody [*laughs*] in the country and try this lawsuit where everybody's pointin' a finger at everybody else. And Judge Enfield is the circuit judge that's tryin' the case, and . . .

SL: U of A Law grad.

JB: Enfield . . .

JB: What?

SL: UA law grad, or was he . . .

JB: He's a . . .

SL: He was a professor, wasn't he?

[03:53:41] JB: . . . yeah, and a really great lawyer. But when he became a judge, he got a little bit, as some judges do, of a God complex. In fact, the young lawyers used to call him "God." And I was always very fond of him, but I never was able to see him in that role. And—but he liked to run his court in a very

hard-nosed manner. And so one day in the middle of the trial—and there—Bob Light's there from Little Rock representin' the engineers, and I never thought Bob particularly had a sense of humor. But one day from the bench, he looks up, and he reads this note, and he says, "I've just been handed a note that a tornado has hit the ground ten miles from here and is headed this way." And then he puts the paper down, and that's all he says. And we sit there. [*SL laughs*] And he doesn't say anything. And so Bob Light finally says, "Does Your Honor plan to rule on that?" [*Laughter*] And I just fell off my chair. [03:54:58] But the worst thing I did in that trial—I—we got in there late, so we had not had the chance to depose witnesses, so you know, I'm yelpin' that I've got a right to take witnesses' depositions. I want a postponement. He won't give me—Enfield won't give me a postponement. He says, "You can take the depositions while the trial's going on. You can take the depositions at night." So we try that for two or three nights, and that doesn't work 'cause lawyers are makin' objections, and there's all kinds of—the crap that goes on in depositions is takin' too long. So we finally reach an agreement with all the lawyers that we'll just interview the witnesses. [03:55:42] So somebody—I think it's the engineers—that brought in this

explosives expert. His name is Wazzio, and he thinks he could blow a filling out of your tooth [JB Edit: mouth] and not damage your tooth. He thinks that he has, you know, blown caves open to house nuclear submarines, and he's brought down ever size building in the world without disturbing a blade of grass next to it. And so he's really arrogant and really opinionated. He's gonna be a devastating witness for my position in the case, and so I have got to damage him on cross-examination. And the only way I figure that I can do that is I have got to make him angry to the point that he doesn't watch himself, and I lay some traps for him, and he is so mad he walks into the traps. So I think, "Well, you know, it's—the jury—this case has gone on for days. They're tired of it already. If I have to spend a day makin' him mad, they're gonna be mad at me. So they set up an interview for him at one of the local motels, and Jim Roy is over there with me on the case. And I tell Roy I want him to dress down into the most informal, casual clothes he's got—preferably, blue jeans, runnin' shoes, and he said he's got 'em. And so I put on a pair of black jeans and a black shirt, and I've got a gold medallion I put around my neck and [*SL laughs*]—and I tell him the interview's supposed to start at seven or something. I said, "We don't want to get there on time. We

want the interview goin' on when we come in, so let's wait." And we sit around for about twenty minutes. I said, "Okay, let's go." And we walk in, and every seat's taken and I—the bed's—nobody's on the bed, and I say, "Roy, go over there and lay down on the bed." [*SL laughs*] And I sit down on the floor to the nearest thing I could approximate—a lotus position. [*SL laughs*] And I don't say anything, and Roy doesn't say anything. I tell him not to say anything. And they go ahead, and they're, you know, askin' Wazzio questions, and I let this go on for about ten minutes. [03:58:29] And, finally, I ask him a complicated question about trinitrotoluene. I had tried a case against Trace X Chemical Company—for Trace X Chemical Company against a big manufacturer in Canada over TNT, which is what trinitrotoluene is. And so I knew a lot about it at that point. And he says, "That's a powderman question." "I don't know the answer to that. That's a powderman question." "I don't know the answer to that. That's a powderman question." I said, "Roy, let's go. This guy doesn't know anything." And we get up and walk out. He's saying, "Who is that guy? Who is that guy?" He's mad. He gets madder all night long. He calls his wife. She calls Bob Light—eats him out about lettin' her husband be abused. He gets so mad the next day, he leaves and refuses to

testify. [*Laughs*]

SL: Whoa.

JB: That's my most devastating cross-examination.

SL: I mean, he didn't even have a chance to do the traps. He . . .

JB: I never got to say a word [*laughter*].

SL: . . . that's a great story.

JB: Well . . .

[03:59:57] SL: That's a great story. Well, so it—what—you said you got the worst four or five cases? Is it—I mean . . .

JB: Well, another typical case.

SL: Yeah.

JB: This one—I mean, we won that case. We got a judgment so big against the engineering company it would break 'em. And it finally had to be negotiated down on appeal and stuff, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:00:19] JB: Yeah, we got a jury verdict. We represented State Farm—my old law firm. Okay. They called me one day and said, "We got a State Farm case we want you to try." "Fine." Okay, here's the State Farm case. [*SL laughs*] A State Farm agent is driving a State Farm car, and he's got a little dog in the seat next to him that travels with him. And he is drivin' up north of Bentonville, and a family is turning into a church, and he hits

'em, and he kills the daughter, breaks a boy's leg, and the mother claims that she's got TMJ and various other injuries. And one kid's claimin' a brain injury or somethin'. [04:01:22] You know, we always—when we represent insurance companies, we try to—the jury's not supposed to know if there's insurance. I mean, this is a State Farm agent. I mean, State Farm itself gets sued. How are they [*laughs*] not gonna know there's insurance? Bobby Odom has the case. I offer him a half a million dollars to settle the case, and he won't take it. I offer him six hundred thousand to settle the case, and he won't take it. And so we go to trial, and so I don't have any defense except damages, you know. And the father and the mother are suin' for pain and suffering over the death of their daughter. She's suing for her own injuries and then the boys' injuries. And the mother is a bitch, and I decide that I'm gonna try to make the jury dislike her. And, you know, they've got psychiatrists comin' in on the stand and everything. But by the time I get through with her, the jury dislikes her so much, and I did feel somewhat bad about it. Bobby gets somethin' like sixty thousand dollars instead of the five million he thought he was gonna get. And they give damages to the two boys for their—and I don't think they give any for the alleged brain injury, but they give some for the

broken leg. And they give the father somethin' like twenty-five thousand dollars for pain and suffering for the loss of his daughter. They give the mother zero for pain and suffering for the loss of her daughter. I mean, that's—which I thought was a little bit of overkill. But those are the kinda cases I won, you know.

[04:03:43] SL: You know, you're talkin' about offerin' to settle. It seems like someone would—or it seems like, to me, that Don Tyson prefers to settle or just pay the fine and move on.

JB: Don does not like—and I just finished ?Howard?—I mean, Warren Buffett's new biography. They're very much alike. They don't like controversy. They don't like confrontation. And Don considers, you know, major lawsuits a waste of executives' time, and he'd rather have them focused on business. He'd rather pay up and go on. I always maintain that once they know you'll settle, that makes you . . .

SL: Vulnerable.

[04:04:34] JB: . . . an increased target. And I always wanted to operate on the—what I call the "break 'em from suckin' eggs" philosophy. And a typical example of that is a lawyer named John Arons filed a lawsuit for some people that were livin' next to a hog farm down in Brentwood. And he wanted a lot of

money to settle the case, and I thought the lawsuit was unwarranted, and you know, it was gonna cost probably somewhere between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars to try the case. [04:05:18] And it probably makes good economics to say, "Well, offer him forty thousand dollars," but I wouldn't do it because I thought if we paid him, we're gonna get sued by ever hungry lawyer in this area over ever neighbor to ever hog farm we had. And we're tryin' the case in federal court in front of Henry Woods, and he wants, I don't know, three or four hundred thousand dollars. And the closer we get to trial and I won't make an offer at all, he'll take two hundred thousand dollars. He'll take a hundred thousand dollars. We get up to the day of the trial, and he says, "I've got twenty thousand dollars in this case. If you'll just give me my money back, I'll settle the case." And I said, "John, I'm not gonna do it." And so we tried the case, and he didn't get any money, and it probably cost us more than the twenty thousand—I'm sure it did—to try it. But nobody else sued us for another five, ten years . . .

SL: Yeah.

JB: . . . because they knew it wasn't worth it. And I always thought that was the better course, but sometimes Don would force me to settle cases, or Leland would do that. And I preferred not to.

[04:06:45] SL: You know, it seems—some of the genius, I think, that Don showed was the enhanced-product deals. I mean, it was, like, no longer was Tyson just delivering chickens to . . .

JB: Well, the whole idea of his major foray into the chicken business was to take out the commodity cycle part. I was tellin' you how the cattle trade in eleven-year cycle because once you kill the breeding herds, it takes a long time to build 'em back. Well, the unfortunate thing about chickens is that, you know, one rooster and a hundred chickens can produce a whole bunch of eggs that can hatch out, and you know, in a few months they can start hatching out. And pretty soon you've got chickens, you know, all over the place. [*Laughter*]

SL: Right.

[04:07:35] JB: And so it's very easy to overproduce in the chicken business and hard to control it. And so Don thought, "Well, if we've—if we enhanced value by further processing, we take out some of this boom and bust." And he said, "What's wrong with the approach of the traditional poultry operator is that they figure out a product, and then they go try to sell it." [04:08:07] He said, "Why are we doin' that? Let's go to our customers and say, 'What would you like to have? And we'll make it for you.'" And, you know, he called on McDonald's for fourteen years

before he got the McDonald's account. But at the end of the day, he kept sayin', "Look, I'll make something you can sell in there and make a lot of money off of it. You just tell me what it is you want." And then we wound up, because of his size, he could dedicate a whole plant, or he could dedicate two plants or three plants, whereas the competitors—they gotta run chicken nuggets for a few hours and tear the lines down and put 'em back up to run some other product. And so, I mean, it was a philosophy that worked beautifully in the chicken business. Now it was probably a mistake to think we could ever do that with the beef business, and we haven't been able to at this point. Maybe we will someday, but it also doesn't have the—quite the violence of the—abruptness of the commodities. Even pork—you know, they have pigs in litters. They're not havin' calves in litters yet, but . . .

SL: Right.

[04:09:30] JB: But, yeah, he's a—he was the first one to figure out, "Why send a chicken to a supermarket who has to hire a butcher to cut it up? Why don't we cut it up, send the cut-up pieces to the supermarket? And while we're at it, why don't we do somethin' to extend the shelf life? And while we're at it, why don't we precook it? And while we're at it, why don't we add

flavoring and seasoning? And while we're at it, we could batter it if they want it. I mean, and while we're at it, you know, we can fix it, so all the housewife has to do is pop it in a microwave, and she's got dinner." And then he said, "But she likes to do something to it, so that she thinks she's a cook. So while we're at it" [*laughter*] . . .

SL: So he covers all bases that way.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: We need to change tapes. [*Clears throat*] Excuse me.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:10:34] SL: So I want to spend a little bit more time with your years with Tyson. What is it about Don Tyson that you admire the most?

JB: Well, I mean, there are a lotta things that I admire, and the—you know, he has a reputation for bein' ruthless, and he is absolutely not. The reason, I think—how did he build Tyson Foods to begin with? Why was he in a position where the George's family, the Brown family, the Lloyd Brothers—a dozen other—the Garretts—a dozen other people could do anything he could do? Why did he emerge, and they did not? I think the

beginning of that is that they were never willing, in the early years, to pay anybody outside the family substantial amounts of money to work for 'em. And Don, early on, was a spotter of talent. He hired Leland straight outta college. He hired—Leland Tollett—he hired Buddy Wray straight outta college. And he helped them grow, and then he delegated responsibility, and then he paid them well. And, you know, neither one [*laughs*] of 'em's ever done anything in his life but work for Tyson Foods. But they both were very, very good at their jobs, and he did that with lots of other people. [04:12:45] He turned the whole company upside down about [19]68 and demoted a bunch of old people and put a bunch of young guys—it may have been earlier than that—put a bunch of young guys in positions of great responsibility. And then he did not micromanage 'em. He always—he uses the phrase "grimy details." He will ask one of 'em to do somethin', and they will say, "How do you want it done?" And he said, "That's your problem. Don't bother me with the grimy details." He's very good at managing people. He's very good at managing me. I'm—you know, at heart, I'm a rebel, and I can't take orders. And I—[*laughs*] since I was three years old, I've never been able to let people tell me what to do, and he's never told me what to do. He calls me in and says,

"Don't you think it would be fun to do this?" [*Laughter*] And, of course, I do. And then I ask him how does he want it done. And he says, "Don't bother me with the grimy details." I mean, he's a great delegator and a great motivator. He walks in a plant, and he goes up and down the plant lines shakin' people's hands and sayin', "Hi, I'm Don," and he just lights the plant up. [04:14:16] I mean, the—when we were in the middle of the Espy case, Espy sent a hundred FBI agents in here to dig up everything they could, and they decided to try to find people that had been former employees of Tyson that were mad at Tyson that would give them some dirt on Tyson. So they decide the key to that is the workman's comp cases, so they subpoena every workman's comp case that Tyson's ever had, and their—as the nature of a business that employs a hundred thousand people over a period of forty years, there are thousands of them. [04:15:00] And so they find this woman over in Carroll County, and she's a former employee that had a workman's compensation case against Tyson that didn't turn out well. And I can't remember her name, but I've got it in a file somewhere. And so they go over there to interview her, and they find she's drivin' a school bus. And so they ask her, "Mrs. So-and-so, you know—you know Don Tyson?" She said, "Very well." And they

said, "Well, tell me, what do you think of Mr. Tyson?" She said, "I think he's the greatest man in the world." [*Laughs*] They're obviously taken aback, and they said, "Well, why do you say that?" And she said, "Well, I ran into him somewhere, and I was tellin' him about these kids I pick up to take to school and how in the wintertime," said, "they're standin' out there at the side of the road freezin' to death, and they don't have warm coats and things, and he went out and bought every one of 'em a coat." [*Laughter*] I mean, there is a—he is a very generous guy, and he's certainly been very generous with me. But he's a—he's generous with a lot of people, and I think he should've sold the company three or four years ago, and I tried to get him to sell it. But he really cares about all the people that helped build the company, and he doesn't think it's right to abandon them. [04:16:37] And, you know, I think he's—he has some instincts that—I used to sit in on the management meetings, and the typical corporate management structure—everybody on the management meeting is making above a hundred thousand dollars a year, and everybody in the management meeting's a Republican. And the only people that, you know, aren't Republicans is [*laughs*] Don, who owns the company, and me. And so I was talkin' to these guys one time, and I said, "You

know, you guys don't think that anybody ought to have any money that doesn't deserve it by your standards." And I said, "If that program were ever in place, then there wouldn't be anybody to consume the products we produce, and you all wouldn't have a job." I said, "The only guy that understands this is the chairman." Said, "Don Tyson believes that everybody—no matter whether they deserve it or not, and no matter how they get it—he wants everybody in this country to have enough money to buy chicken." I said, "That's good economics, [*laughs*] and that's good politics." And that's what he believes. I mean, he's told me that.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[04:18:10] JB: Yeah. I really admire—but don't understand how his mind works. He will be lookin' at a company. We're talking about buyin' it, and he kinda had a rule that he imposed on himself. If he couldn't sell his idea to Buddy Wray and to Leland Tollett, then he wouldn't do it. And, you know, we'd—he'd see this company, and he would try to decide what was a fair price. And I remember—I don't remember the company, but we're lookin' at a company, and Buddy Wray's done this analysis of what he thinks it's worth, and Leland Tollett's done his analysis of what he thinks it's worth. And for whatever reason, Don even

asked me to do an analysis of what he thought it was worth, and—so we're sittin' in there talkin' about it, and he said, "This is what it's worth." And it doesn't—the figure just comes out of the blue. I'm doin' discounted cash flows, you know. Everybody's workin' some kind of formula. [04:19:29] And I said, "How in the hell did you come up with that figure?" He said, "Well, it wasn't hard." He said, "I just took the number of birds they had in the field and multiplied by forty-seven." Where did that come from? I mean, he has all of these little rules of thumb—shortcuts. You know, he thinks quickly in arithmetical terms. He can do percentages in his head and things like that. But he's got these rules of thumb that he's just invented. I don't know where they come from, and they're not anywhere to be found except in his head, but they work.

SL: Well, they gotta come from his experience.

JB: Yeah.

SL: From . . .

JB: Yeah. But . . .

SL: What he has . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . personally experienced.

JB: Yeah.

SL: And the way he looks at stuff.

JB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[04:20:20] JB: Well, I mean, he could sit there and say—he say—"I know that the bird in the field requires a hatchery. I know what it costs to build a hatchery. I know a bird in the field requires feed trucks to feed it. It requires a feed mill to mill the feed. I know what it requires, you know, all these things—but he somehow encapsulate that in a . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] In another . . .

JB: . . . forty-seven-dollar figure. [*Laughter*]

SL: Wow.

JB: And today it'd be a different figure, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:20:54] JB: . . . the—and—he, you know, has the ability to—well, in [19]74 Tyson Foods could've gone broke. I mean, it was a bad time. We think times are bad now. Boy, they were bad in [19]73 and [19]74, and they were really bad for Tyson. And he has the ability and imposed discipline on himself. He parked the airplanes. He cut everybody's salary ten percent. He cut his salary to zero. I mean, he imposed total financial discipline till we, you know, worked our way through the bad patch. But he

doesn't take a long time to do this. He doesn't ant—agonize over it. He is quick to decide. [*SL sighs*] And probably the biggest single thing I ever did—and he let me pretty much run it like I wanted to—was the hostile takeover of Holly Farms. And I wound up spendin' a year and a half in New York and goin' to the Delaware Supreme Court three times. And—but at the end of the day, it was probably his strategic decisions that finished it off. He said, "Let's call up ConAgra and tell 'em we'll give 'em fifty million dollars to just go away." I said, "We can't do that." I said—he said, "Why not?" I said, "'Cause fifty million dollars is a lot of money." He said, "Ah, not in this context, it's not." So . . .

SL: Just numbers.

JB: And he said, "We—you know, we gotta offer Holly Farms seventy dollars a share." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "'Cause it's a round figure." I mean, it's a [*laughter*] . . .

SL: Well, what a great friend he's been to you, huh?

JB: He's been a wonderful friend. Absolutely wonderful. And I'd do anything for him, and I am totally confident he would do anything for me.

[04:23:42] SL: List some other friends we haven't even talked about.

JB: Well, you know, one of the early players in the Tyson game was Joe Fred Starr. And Joe Fred is certainly a town character. And Joe Fred was Don's pledge son in the Sigma Nu fraternity, and Joe Fred is a great salesman. And when he got out of college, he went to work for S&H Green Stamps and became one of their top salesmen. But what he also did was they have a lot of money that they can't admit they have because it's unredeemed stamps—or it was in those days. I mean, that—I think that business has disappeared from the world. But—and so this was money that could be borrowed to use to build chicken houses or whatever. And I think Joe Fred had a lot to do with some of the early, you know, successes that Don had in getting the infrastructure built that he wanted built. He kinda put Joe Fred in charge of their private investments, and they had a lot of partnerships in real estate and so forth. And Don was willin' to use Joe Fred's energy and acumen and Don's money. But he said, you know, when Joe Fred got to a certain point, he just quit 'cause he said he had all the money he needed and all the money he wanted. [*Laughter*] Don said, "I don't understand that. I mean, why are we quittin'?" But, you know, they built Scull Creek Apartments in their early days of their ventures, among other things. But I wrote a short story about Joe Fred,

which I'll have Nancy run off for you here if she's still around. [04:26:02] Joe Fred has inoperable prostate cancer and has now had it for—well, MD Anderson told him twelve years ago he had only a few months, and he wound up—I took Joe Fred out to a guy named Errol Payne, who was Diane's first cousin, who had taken a lot of medical—high tech medical companies public—I say a lot—several—and had made a lot of money. And in his last venture, he had a company that made the only lithotripter made in the United States, and it's the ultrasound machine that pulverizes the kidney stones. And he took all the profits from that and invested it in prostate cancer research because his father died of prostate cancer. He's afraid he'll die of prostate cancer, but if he could cure prostate cancer, he would have all the money in the world. [04:27:13] As a consequence, he knows all the players in the world, and so when Joe Fred wound up—it surprised me—Joe Fred just went into a total funk when they told him he was gonna die, and I would not have predicted that. But Errol took him up to Stanford. He met the guy that created the Gleason Scale. They went around doctor shopping. They found this brilliant young urologist/medical oncologist named Jonathan Simon at John Hopkins, and Jonathan took Joe Fred on as a patient, and I—has been absolutely brilliant in his

treatment. When Emory got a bunch of money from the Coca-Cola family to name a cancer center after one of the matriarchal lines—it's called the Winship Cancer Institute, or something like that—they went to Jonathan and said, "Look, we want to build a cancer institute that's gonna find the cure for cancer, and we'll let you hire anybody you want and pay 'em twice what they're makin', and you can set your own salary. And we'll build you a hundred and fifty million dollar building, and—if you'll be its director." And so he left Johns Hopkins and became the director of the Winship Cancer Institute. But he said, "I want to keep some private patients." And he kept Joe Fred as a patient. [04:29:01] And I wound up with prostate cancer and wound up going over to visit with him. And Joe Fred had told him all these local stories [*SL laughs*], and he said—you know, I went out to dinner with him a few times and confirmed some of the stories and told him some others. And he said, "If you guys don't write this down, I'm gonna fire you as my doctor." So I wrote this one short story about a poker game, which I sent him, and that seemed to [*laughs*] be enough. I mean, that kept the wolf from the door. He has since gone on to—he now runs Milken's cancer institute in California, but he still has Joe Fred. He kept Joe Fred as a patient. And Joe Fred turned seventy-five October the

nineteenth. Now he's been dyin' since he was thirty-five, but he's still looking pretty good to me.

SL: Yeah.

JB: So . . .

SL: That's a great story.

[04:30:07] JB: Yeah. You know, my closest friend but now dead, was Don Trumbo Jr., my stockbroker. One time I get a call—cold call from a broker from Baer Stearns, and he's got this hot stock deal for me. And I said, "Look," said, "I've had the same stockbroker for thirty years, and we've made enough money that I don't care whether we make any more money or not. I'm not leavin' my stockbroker." [*Laughs*] And he said, "God bless you," and hung up the phone.

SL: Yeah. No kidding. It's a broker's dream.

[04:30:52] JB: The—but Don was one of these, you know, totally liberal people in a very conservative profession, and you know, he just gave the town fathers fits over the bond issues, and he was more anti-authority than even I am. He went in the marine corps, and he had a—developed a friend named "Dirty Shirt" McGuirk. I don't know . . .

SL: Dirty Shirt. [*Laughs*]

JB: . . . where Dirty Shirt got his name. But they were ordered to

go worship the church of their choice, but they had to go worship. They—not worshiping was not an option. So Don and Dirty Shirt decide that they believe in Ba'al, and they light all these candles and dance around [*laughs*] and everything. They've got these Southern Baptist kids in there with with their hair standin' up. [*Laughter*] Finally told 'em they didn't have to worship anymore.

SL: Oh, brother. Well, there's lots of areas we haven't touched yet.

JB: Oh, I know.

[04:32:29] SL: So do you want to—should we move on to—back into politics?

JB: We can do that. I mean, there is so much we haven't touched. But, certainly, the politics is a big deal.

SL: And we haven't really talked anything about family at all.

JB: I . . .

SL: And we probably ought to talk about family some, too.

JB: Well . . .

SL: And I know some of the politics is kind of almost family . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in a way. So . . .

JB: Yeah.

[04:32:58] SL: . . . I want you to talk about what you wanna talk

about.

JB: Well, you know, I wound up getting married in August of 1957 to Margaret Gibson from Poplar Grove, Arkansas.

SL: Now how did y'all meet?

JB: Or Walnut Corners. I met her at the Baptist Student Union. She's two years younger than I am. She's—by the time we get married, she's nineteen and been admitted to med school. And I've always regretted in many ways that I didn't let her go on to med school. I think her life would've been better off, and I think we shouldn't have gotten married. But we did get married, and we wound up with three kids, and the kids all wound up as National Merit Scholar semifinalists and . . .

[04:33:59] SL: And what are their names?

JB: And the oldest one will be fifty next month in November, and her name is Heather Elaine Blair, and—although she finally got married to a guy she's livin' with, she kept her name. And she wound up going to Wellesley and taking a degree in philosophy and then working at MIT for a while, and then goin' to the University of Chicago to get a Ph.D. in philosophy, which, as far as I know, you—is a degree you can't use to do anything but teach with. And after she got the degree, which took her seven years, she decided she didn't like teaching. So, she works at the

University of Chicago Surgery Department running their database. And she lives about two blocks from Barack Obama in Hyde Park. And she—her husband's twelve years younger than she is, and he's one of these arcane computer geniuses that just knows stuff nobody else knows. The [*SL laughs*] University of Liverpool a couple years ago tried to get him to come to England because they needed somebody that was fluent in a computer language called Python, and he was [*laughs*] one of the few they could find. So he works for some little computer start-up company. And when the companies get very big, he leaves and goes to another start-up company. [04:35:53] My younger daughter is named Arden Sue Blair, known by most of her friends as Arden but known at home as Suzy. And she's always been a little fragile with emotional problems. She's the reason I absolutely left the church because when she was about seven, she got to where she couldn't do anything because she was afraid anything she did might send her to hell. Now that's more symptomatic of other problems, I think, but she's been somewhat depressive and anorexic and barely able to function. I wanted a child to go to Harvard. She got admitted to Harvard—framed her admission—gave it to me and went to Brown [*SL laughs*]. And she's kind of a perfectionist, and so she

thinks you gotta read every written assignment. And she was always behind in her coursework, so she took math courses as breathers because she could handle a math course without having to do anything. [04:37:12] And so one day her professors come to her and say, "Young lady, would you be interested in being an electrical engineer?" She had gone to Brown to study linguistics. She said, "I don't—I never thought about it." They said, "Well, you have done all the math requirements. [*Laughs*] If you take thermal dynamics and a couple other courses, we'll give you a degree in electrical engineering." So she said, "Why not?" So she wound up graduating from Brown magna cum laude in electrical engineering. Westinghouse came through recruiting, and they said, "If you'll go to work for us, we'll transfer you to ever plant we've got—spend six months at each one of 'em till you decide the one you like, and you can stay there." That sounded like fun, so she went to work for Westinghouse and they—she went to Pittsburgh, and then she went somewhere else. She wound up in Baltimore, and she liked Baltimore. She said, "I'll stay here." She wound up workin' for a—on a team of engineers that were designing radar for the Swiss government. There were about a half a dozen of 'em. And they got mad at Westinghouse

because Westinghouse had got in the finance business and wasn't payin' any attention to their engineers. They felt underappreciated, so they quit en masse—started their own business, but they didn't know how to run a business. [04:40:22] So they went to John Hopkins—hired a guy that taught management at John Hopkins to be their CEO, and they started a company called—I think it was originally called Excalibur, and then it became ConQuest, and it's been merged a couple of times into public companies. It's now known as Convera. But they didn't have any money. They created a text engine data that could find things in huge databases, even if you couldn't actually describe exactly what it was you were lookin' for. And it works on some kind of algorithms that are out of my league. It's way beyond Boolean logic. And you can guess who loved that—the CIA. So they got a lot of CIA money early—in their early days and keep 'em alive, but they were payin' each other in scrip, and they wound up with fifty employees and they just—their burn rate—they were never gonna make any money. And I went on their board for a while, and I said, "Look, you all have either gotta go public—you gotta have three years' clean accounting to do that. I don't think you do. You gotta find a venture capitalist. And if you do, he'll suck the blood out of you.

Or you've got to find a merger partner." And so they wound up doing that, and they merged into another company that was public. And so all of a sudden these scrips of—that they've been payin' each other with became stock, and so she cashed in all her stock options and retired at thirty-nine with about six million dollars. Now this is a child barely able to function [*laughs*] if . . .

SL: Right.

[04:40:56] JB: . . . if—and she teaches—tutors people in math as a hobby. Some of her students are third graders, and some of 'em are college grad students, so . . .

SL: That's beautiful.

JB: And she married one of the other engineers who still works for a piece of the company. A piece of the company got sold to the Norwegians, and they just sold him to Microsoft, and now he's workin' for Microsoft. But it hasn't been very many months. And they live in Columbia, Maryland, which is a suburb of Baltimore. [04:41:32] Then I have a son, James—I named—gave his middle name after my grandfather, whose name is James Rufus Blair. He wanted to make films, so he went to UCLA, and he decided to—you know, that you can't get in the film program until you're a junior, so he took two years of playin' in the UCLA band and takin' whatever he was takin'. And then

when his junior year came, he didn't get in the film program. They only take a very limited number of people and most of 'em not from their own school. So he wound up takin' a degree in economics, and then he went to work for Systematics, and he worked for some banks. And now he's a computer programmer in Fort Worth for Pier One, which is where their home office is. And married a woman he put through med school, and then she divorced him. And then he's remarried—has one child. I have one actual grandchild, and she's five and in kindergarten in Fort Worth. Then I got divorced in 1974, and in 1979, I married—remarried Diane Kincaid. Her maiden name was Divers. And so I acquired Bill Kincaid and Katherine Kincaid—stepchildren who I'm still very close to and both of whom I talked to yesterday. And they each have two children, so I have four step-grandchildren there. And she died on June 26 of the year 2000 of lung cancer, and I said I was never gonna get remarried, but I—and I dated a lot and then gradually down to two women and gradually gonna have to make a choice. [04:43:48] And so I did wind up getting remarried December the thirtieth of 2005 to—her maiden name was Nancy Beth Horton, and oddly enough, she's from Marshall, Arkansas, where my grandfather and my great-grandfather were born—and my father were born.

So—and she has two children, and between them, they have three children. So there are three more step-grandkids there. So I've got a total of eight grandkids to look after. [04:44:31] But the years with Diane—she was a political science professor who had published her way into full professorship. And she wrote a couple of books and chapters on a dozen books and articles by the hundred and has been honored by both the Southern and the Midwestern Political Science Associations for the body of her work. She was a member of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and eventually its chairman, and its boardroom is named for her. And I have set up a—well, I've set up a chair—I funded a chair for her in the Political Science Department, but they've never found anybody to take it. And they're thinkin' about splittin' that into a couple of professorships, so we can step down a level and get some young, bright people that are gonna become stars because ever star we've tried to hire has just gotten a big raise from whoever we tried to hire 'em away from and don't—and hasn't come. And in addition to that chair of political science, I managed to get funded the Blair Center for the study of political—southern politics and culture. I've—they've changed the name two or three—I don't know what it's called now, but I think that's what

it's called. [04:46:10] And the—my plans—I've tried to memorialize her in as many ways as I could, but I guess the biggest one was that we're buildin' a local library for the first time in sixty years in the city of Fayetteville, and the people handling the funding thought they were gonna get a lead grant from the Reynolds Foundation, and they got turned down. And, finally, I said, "Well, I don't have that much money, but if you'll put the Blair name on the library in memory of Diane Blair and my Grandmother Bessie Blair and my Aunt Mary Grace Blair, I'll give you the three million dollars," which I did, and probably the best money I ever spent. And the building turned out better than anybody thought it could, and I think it's been very appreciated and very successful.

[04:47:22] SL: Isn't it just a block from where you grew up?

JB: It's actually two.

SL: Two.

JB: I—you gotta walk from Meadow Street to Center Street, Center Street to Mountain Street, but they're short blocks. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

[04:47:38] JB: It's not far. And the—oh, in terms of educatin' the kids, Bill Kincaid wound up takin' his undergraduate degree from Yale. He was admitted to law school at Michigan. Michigan—he

wanted to work for Bill Clinton for a year while Clinton was governor—wanted Michigan to hold his spot. Michigan wouldn't hold his spot, so he went ahead and went to work for Clinton for a year. But then he went to reapply to law schools—he went to the University of Virginia to law school. While he was at Virginia, he talked them into doing one of these four-year programs, which they'd never done with Princeton, and so he wound up takin' a masters in public affairs from Princeton while he was takin' his law degree from Virginia. And then he worked without the title in what would virtually be an undersecretary's job for the secretary of education, Governor Riley, under Clinton's Administration—worked in the White House for a while as a—Clinton's education guy and came back to be associate—probably the most overqualified associate [*laughs*] general counsel to a college anywhere in the country. But he is associate general counsel to the university system, workin' for the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. [04:49:27] And Katherine went to Northwestern and then went to grad school in—at a private school at Wisconsin and took a graduate degree. But she had really followed a local Fayetteville boy named David Jong, whose father is a mechanical engineering professor at the university. David took a protracted residency in radiology at the University

of Wisconsin med school, which required an extra year of internal medicine, and then they moved back to Fayetteville. And she taught for a year at Rogers. She taught kindergarten in Wisconsin, and now she's just a full-time mother lookin' after two kids. And that's pretty much the family except for I have a nephew, my younger half sister's son, who is graduatin' from Northwestern this spring and is gonna go to med school somewhere. So that's the family.

[04:50:50] SL: Okay. So what about—you've had a long and wonderful relationship with the Clintons as well.

JB: That's true. That's true. And it's been long, and it's been wonderful. I got acquainted with Bill Clinton at the 1972 convention—Democratic convention in Miami. After McGovern was nominated after my candidate, Wilbur Mills, [*laughs*] did not get nominated, Bill Clinton wound up as a multistate coordinator. And I don't know whether it included other states, but it included Texas and Arkansas. And he would periodically come through here on that campaign—became a friend of Diane's. And they [JB Edit: he] used to tell her about this wonderful woman that he was tryin' to get to come to Arkansas. When the campaign was over, he took a job teaching law at the University of Arkansas School of Law and was tryin' to get her to come. And when she

finally did come, when Hillary took a job at the University of Arkansas, I had agreed when Wiley Davis was dean—they were short of an instructor, and I agreed to teach one course in contracts, I guess, for a year while they got their workload straightened out. And I became friends with Hillary, and the four of us used to run around some together. Hillary and I played some tennis tournaments, including I remember one at the Fayetteville Country Club, which was pretty hilarious. She was not a great tennis player, but a fiercely competitive one. [04:53:01] And [*SL laughs*] the—when Clinton ran for Congress in 1974, I would have probably been active in his campaign, but the Fulbright people called me, and they said their campaign manager had—whose name was Elrod. I can't remember what his first name was now. I think it was John Elrod but not the one from Siloam—the one from Augusta. And he had hurt his neck and gone in the hospital and was not able to function as campaign manager, and would I come down and be the campaign manager in the 1974 campaign. Well, I hated to do it because Clinton had been a friend and—but I felt like I owed Fulbright. I really admired Fulbright. I greatly respected his views on the Vietnam War. So I went to Little Rock and was shown a poll that was done by an outfit in Washington named

Hamilton, and I knew why Elrod had gone to the hospital. He had read that poll and snapped his neck. And it—I nearly snapped mine because it pretty much showed the campaign was unwinnable. And . . .

SL: This was against Bumpers.

JB: This was against Bumpers.

TM: Can we stop for one second?

[Tape stopped]

[04:54:50] SL: Okay, we were just gettin' to the Clintons, and we took a break and . . .

JB: We were. I gotta stop and tell you a story. You were askin' me about friends and something back there . . .

SL: Okay.

[04:55:01] JB: . . . made me thing about a guy named Jim Ogden and his son, Greg, built a empire in the athletic calendar world and died not very long ago. Jim died right at the time Bill Clinton was inaugurated, but Jim and I played tennis together for many, many years, and I've never known anybody quite like him. But I—the story that I use to illustrate the kind of person he was—one day he is driving a midengine Porsche convertible in front of the Fayetteville courthouse, and he is rear-ended, and his car catches fire, and he has to climb out through the roof of

the car to escape the burning car. And two hours later, he comes to my house to play tennis, and we're playin' tennis on my court, and I ask him what was goin' on or how his day had been, and he said, "Same ol', same ol'." [*Laughs*] And it was only the next day that I found out that this—you know, he'd had to leap out of the top of a burning car. But I got to thinkin'—in Jim Ogden's life, that was a kind of an ordinary day. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, now is that Athletic World Advertising . . .

JB: That's Athletic World. Yeah. They . . .

SL: And they just shut down, didn't they?

JB: . . . they just shut down because the driving force, which was Greg, died. And he had leukemia and been treated for many years, and then his liver went on him and had a liver transplant. It failed. He had another liver transplant. Finally, it was just too much.

SL: Yeah.

[04:57:10] JB: But his dad was playin' tennis at a resort in Mexico and had gone out and had just started warmin' up and fell over dead. They said they thought he was probably dead when he hit the court. And he was a great beer drinker, and so I couldn't go to the funeral because I was at the inauguration, so I came back after the funeral, and I found his grave out in the Fairview

Cemetery, and I had bought a can—one of those big oil-size cans of Foster beer, and I poured it on his grave. And I'm sure I heard a sucking sound [*SL laughs*] while I was doing that. But, okay, back to the Clintons. So in [19]74, I can't be a part of the congressional race because I'm tryin' to save Fulbright. We'd raised more money—spent more money than anybody ever had in a Senate race in Arkansas, and we moved the polls about two percent. I mean, we—but the crowning moment for me was that they had a rally where both candidates were speaking at—in Fayetteville at the high school cafeteria, and I knew if Fulbright was gonna carry anyplace, it was gonna be Fayetteville, so there was no point in him going to Fayetteville. So his wife, Betty, came to speak for him, and I came to introduce her. And we flipped a coin as to who would go first, and it wound up that she would go first. And so I'm introducing her, and I get up, and I say, "Now this guy over here," and I point at Bumpers and "is going to say 'Cynicism is pervasive. It is a cancer eating at the heart of American life.'" His lips went white. He was just furious, and I wanted him furious—my old technique of makin' the guy mad, and I wanted him to blow his speech. And he didn't do all that well with his speech, but he didn't exactly blow it. Sometime later after he's elected to the Senate, and it's the

first time after the election, I am forced to go to the Senate dining room and sit down with our newly elected Senator Bumpers, and I said, "Senator, there—some people think I was excessive at Fayetteville." He said, "Yes, I'm one of them."

SL: [*Laughs*] Well . . .

[05:00:08] JB: But, anyhow, back to the [19]74 race, and we lost it. And—the—but—and Clinton lost his race. Bumpers went to the Senate. Pryor took Bumpers's place as governor. And . . .

[Tape stopped]

[05:00:31] SL: Okay, so the [19]74 race between Bumpers and Fulbright. You knew that Fulbright was not gonna win that race.

JB: I knew he was not gonna win it, and he didn't. And I—you know, maybe I wasn't a good campaign manager, but I did everything I could think of and—including—we—with was some questionable legality—got a hold of the membership rolls of the Arkansas Duck Club members, and we had some kind of hunting thing that made Bumpers look like he was opposed to duck hunting or something, and we did a special mail-out of it [*laughs*] to ever duck hunter in the state. We . . .

SL: Well . . .

JB: We caused a lot of disruption, but we didn't [*laughs*] move any . . .

SL: Many votes.

JB: Any votes.

[05:01:30] SL: Well, let's talk just—before we go back to the Clintons, let's talk a little bit about Senator Fulbright. I mean . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . you admired him because of his stance on Vietnam.

JB: Well, yes, I—and because of his stance on international affairs—because of his—you know, his strong belief that we did not have the right to impose our culture on the rest of the world, and the rest of the world wasn't necessarily bad or wrong because they didn't have our culture. And at some point if we kept doin' it, we would suffer for it, as I think is about to happen.

[05:02:16] SL: Also, you can't—what about the Fulbright Program?

JB: Well, and that, I think, was a part of his overall internationalism. I—the—we speak of globalization glibly now, but it was a big thing when he started advancin' it, and the Fulbright scholarships have just been a—I think one of the finest things that's even been done in the world.

SL: It's probably one of the few [*laughs*] bright spots in US relations with the rest of the world these days.

JB: That's—I think so. I think so. I mean, I've run into countless

people that have had Fulbrights that have come to this country or gone to other countries, and it's a life-changing experience for 'em.

SL: So how much time did you get to spend with the senator?

JB: Well, he had as good an AA as anybody would every have in a guy named Lee Williams. And, really, more of my time was spent with Lee than was spent with Fulbright, but part of that was Fulbright was a resource. We had to keep him employed. We had to keep him movin'. I had not spent a lot of time with him before that campaign. You—very austere person who had—I mean, his nephew was a close friend of mine, and yet he had all the family scared to death of him. I mean, certainly [*laughs*] Doug was scared of him. And he was a lot like Bob Leflar, I mean, in demeanor [*laughs*] the—you know, the bluntness and the unwillingness to suffer fools. But the—after the—things had begun to fade, and he was back here—a few years after that campaign, he was down in the—at somethin' near the Ramada Inn, and I think it must've been some function at the Ramada Inn, and Diane and I are with him, and he's about to walk in. And this woman stops him, and she says, "I know you." And you can see him kinda straighten up and beam. And she said—I said, "You're somebody famous." Finally, then, she said, "You're

Orville Henry." [*Laughter*] His wife said, "Come on, Orville, we gotta go to this meeting."

[05:05:09] SL: That's funny. That's funny. But now you and Diane weren't together by that time, though.

JB: We were not together . . .

SL: I mean, in [19]74.

JB: . . . in [19]74.

SL: Right.

JB: No. No.

SL: 'Cause . . .

JB: Now, by [19]76, we're starting to date.

SL: Mh-hmm. She had already wielded her influence on Bumpers already, hadn't she?

JB: Oh, absolutely. I mean, she was—he—Bumpers was very fond of her, and you know, she got along well with Pryor. Pryor—I don't remember whether it was Pryor or Bumpers. I think it was Bumpers that must've made her head of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was a big deal she did for a couple of years. But she was certainly on very good terms with both of 'em.

[05:06:31] SL: Okay, so Fulbright loses. Clinton loses. You're fillin' in helpin' out at the law school with their . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . teaching schedule . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . for a year. It's then that you become familiar with Hillary . . .

JB: Right.

SL: . . . and Bill, too. Hillary's moved here at Bill's begging . . .

JB: Right.

[05:06:58] SL: . . . to come to Arkansas. So how did that relationship grow? I mean . . .

JB: Well, originally, you know, Bill Clinton was closer to Diane, and I was closer to Hillary, but eventually, you know, as—and I guess as Bill and Hillary got married, it kinda switched directions. Diane gets closer to Hillary, and I get closer to Bill. The—a lot of things in Bill's background, you know, reminded me of myself, and I could identify with his stories about his grandfather's grocery store in Hope, and I'd been raised in a little grocery store. And his playin' in the band, and—I'd certainly never had his opportunities to go to Yale or Oxford, but you know, I—and he had a—I think, a—an obvious political drive that I didn't have. I was interested in politics. I enjoyed politics. Did I want to make an overwhelming commitment to politics? I never reached

that level. So—but I loved hearing him talk about it and think about it and strategize about it. And so, you know, we get to [19]76. He makes the run for attorney general. They get a little house down on L Street in Little Rock. We would go down and sometimes spend the night in their little house, and I would sometimes write an attorney general's opinion and send it down for him to sign. [*Laughs*] And, you know, he was gearin' up for [19]78, and he wanted to run for the Senate, and you know, he would—it was obviously gonna be a clutter race. Ray Thornton was gonna be in it. Jim Guy Tucker was gonna be in it. The—I advised him to—not to do it—to run for governor because I said, "You know, you just walk into the governorship." And—but he would call me and ask for my advice, and then I know he would call a thousand other people and ask them for their advice [*laughs*], and sometimes I would tell him, "You know, I don't know that—I don't want to give you my advice 'cause you're gonna dilute it too much for it to be of any use to you." And I acquired a house on the lake—I guess that was after the first governor's race. He ran for governor and got elected in [19]78. I acquired the lake house in June of [19]79 with . . .

SL: By this time you're workin' for Tyson.

JB: Well, I hadn't moved over there till—I thi—I don't think I went

over till 1980.

SL: Okay.

[05:10:58] JB: I mean, there's been some question about that in everybody's mind. But I bought the lake house, which was Willis Shaw's lake house. It was built right beside Don Tyson's father's lake house in June of [19]79, and then Bill and Hillary used to come up and stay at the lake house. And after they were in the governor's mansion, we would go down and stay in the little guesthouse part of the governor's mansion that Rockefeller had built. And I remember one time I got a brand new Cadillac El Dorado convertible, and I drove it down to the governor's mansion, and Hillary is entranced with the—it's a red and white convertible. Red with a white top. And she thinks it needs a hood ornament, and so she gets some piece of pottery that's—this laughing Buddha—and gives it to me to be a hood ornament for the Cadillac, and I [*laughs*] still have that piece of pottery. Needless to say, I didn't put it on the Cadillac. But I think I thought even then he was larger than life on the political scene. [05:12:41] But when he got beat for governor in 1980, I begged him not to turn around and run again, and I remember specifically—he was stayin' out at the lake house, and I said, "Go out and make some money. Get a real job. Don't do this." And

he said there's nothin' else that interested him. He was pretendin' to practice law for the Wright firm, but he was not really interested in anything but politics. And he said, "There's nothin' else I want to do." So I wasn't sure he could rehabilitate himself quite as quickly as he did in the minds of the Arkansas people, but he was sure, and he was right.

[05:13:31] SL: Well, also Frank White kind of burned some bridges.

JB: Well . . .

SL: He kind of . . .

JB: . . . Frank White and—I had a very close friend who was Tyson's accounting guru. His name was Harry Erwin. I shouldn't say was—it still is. Harry's still alive. And Harry belonged to a club they called the Red, White, and Blue Club—which was a poker club that Frank White belonged to—and he knew Frank White very well. And he insists that nobody was more surprised than Frank White that Frank White got elected governor. He didn't expect to get elected. He wasn't prepared to be governor, but he certainly didn't, you know, handle his governorship very well.

[05:14:30] SL: Okay, so Clinton rehabilitates himself.

JB: Yeah.

SL: Much more quickly than you dreamed he would be able to.

JB: Absolutely. And so I had thought at one time that Bumpers had

promised to make me Democratic National Committeeman. He probably doesn't think so, but at any rate, he wound up making Charlie Ward from the Ward Bus Company National Committeeman and telling me even though he knew—I knew better, that he had promised it to Charlie first. But that's just what happens in politics. And so Clinton does make me National Democratic Committeeman in 1980, and so I get to go to Washington and sit in on the national meetings, and I get to meet Jesse Jackson, who's a regular rabble-rouser at these meetings, and some interesting people. But—and I get to go to the 1980 convention in New York with Bill and Hillary, and Diane and I stay with 'em at the—in the New York convention. And I remember they had among their aides a guy who's now a university professor named Steve Smith. And Steve had a talent for disappearing right before a crisis. If there was a crisis, Steve was not to be found. And so Hillary starts callin' him the "fat phantom." [*Laughter*] And she would be demanding that somebody go in search of the fat phantom. I think he was—his function at that time was a—maybe speechwriting. [05:16:41] I don't know why they needed him, but—and I remember Hugh Patterson was the publisher of the *Gazette*, and he was staying at the St. Regis Hotel. And he insisted that Clinton come have

breakfast with him or somethin', and for some reason, Clinton drags me along. We go over there, and Hugh seemed like the mildest person in the world, but the breakfast service wasn't what he thought it should be, and he was bein' embarrassed in front of the governor. He was [*laughs*] extremely upset. [05:17:30] But that throws me back to an earlier story. After Clinton is elected—Hillary's pregnant—we go to the Super Bowl in—Super Bowl—the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans with the Clintons and stay with the Clintons. And it must've been January of 19—I mean, December 31 of [19]79, January of 1980 'cause Chelsea's born in February of 1980. And so Hillary's quite pregnant, and we're stayin' with the Clintons for New Year's Eve, and you know, we wind up, you know, with a very festive occasion. I think we stay in a hotel room and watch a Japanese movie [*laughs*] on television. But Clinton had arranged for us to have breakfast at Brennan's, and so we saunter over there about ten o'clock in the morning, and we walk into Brennan's, and one of the security detail goes over and declares that Governor Clinton is here with his party. And so they come over to me, and they say, "Governor Clinton, so glad to have you. Right this way." [*SL laughs*] And Clinton never says a word. And so for the whole breakfast, I am Governor Clinton. Clinton just had the

best time sittin' over there watching me . . .

SL: Well, see, you did hold office.

JB: . . . watching me be governor. [*Laughter*] Well, I've got . . .

SL: How did it feel?

JB: . . . I've got a picture here somewhere of me sittin' in David Pryor's chair when he was governor.

SL: Yeah.

[05:19:35] JB: But the minute Chelsea was born, Diane was there the very first day, you know, of Chelsea's life. And then—so we were very involved in watching Chelsea in her early years, and actually they put in their wills that if somethin' happened to both of them that we were to raise Chelsea. And—so I guess that kind of shows how close the relationship was. The—I rock along as Democratic National Committeeman for the next four years, and then an opening comes up on the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees. I probably got a little time left on the State Board of Higher Education 'cause both are ten-year appointments. But I want—I think the power has shifted to the college boards, and I want on the Board of Trustees. 'Course, everybody Clinton knows wants on the Board of Trustees. But he finally decided to put me on there, but he would not let me keep my Democratic National Committeeman thing. He thought

that was [*laughs*] holdin' too many political plums at the same time. So I had to give that up to take the Board of Trustees. And as I gave that up, I had spent from [19]68 to [19]84 attending virtually ever state Democratic committee meeting that had been—ever been held and every state Democratic convention that had ever been held. And, usually, on the platform and, usually, involved in something. And in a way, I'm kinda glad to see the end of that.

[05:21:51] SL: It's—that's interesting. I think I've heard you say—well, of course, after you tried to replace the state chair at the [19]68 convention . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: You felt like you were just gonna be banned from all things . . .

JB: Absolutely.

SL: . . . Democratic Party. And then it—they made you the accountant or . . .

JB: Legal counsel.

SL: Legal counsel.

JB: Yeah.

SL: And that kinda put you back in all those functions.

JB: Yeah.

SL: And even though you didn't really have . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . a lot of power, you were seeing . . .

JB: I . . .

SL: . . . it all . . .

[05:22:22] JB: I had about as much power as I wanted because, as I told a class over at the university not long ago, I've seen people accumulate a lot of power just by showin' up [*laughs*] at all these meetings, and as soon as people assume you have it, you do have it. And I—yeah, I notice right now ACORN is very much in the news, and people are talkin' about ACORN like they appeared out of nowhere. Well, you know, I was dealin' with ACORN on behalf of the state Democratic Party back in the early [19]70s. I mean, I spent a long time dealin' with ACORN. I . . .

SL: So you were—it was not a tough choice for you to make. I mean, you preferred to be . . .

JB: No, I was . . .

SL: . . . on the board.

JB: . . . I much preferred to work on education issues in the state. I was getting tired of politics. But the—I'd gone to the [19]68, the [19]72 conventions. I don't know why I didn't go to [19]76. I went to the [19]80 and the [19]84 national conventions. I can't remember the [19]88 convention, but I had—I'd had about

enough of party politics. And so I'm focused on the state education issues. Clinton wants to pass a penny sales tax to devote to education in Arkansas, which I think is a great idea, but he wants to spend it all on K through twelve.

SL: Twelve.

[05:24:30] JB: And I want some of it for higher education, so I go to him, and I say, "Look, I've got a bunch of people that can help you pass this, and I will bust my rear to help you pass it, but I want a quarter of it for higher education." And, reluctantly, he let me have it, and we did pass it. And there's a picture around here somewhere of—you know, he's comin' up the steps, and I'm comin' down the steps when we hear the news it's passed. And we hug on the steps, and some newspaper photographer shoots a picture, and it makes me look like I'm a foot taller than Clinton is. [*Laughter*] But he's a step below me on the step. But he always claimed that it was a mistake for him to have given me that quarter of a cent and that higher education didn't have a political constituency and—which is somewhat true—and that he didn't get the biggest bang out of that that he could have. But on the other hand, I think it did higher education a lot of good in this state. It was needed, and I still don't feel bad about it. [*Laughs*] But, you know, as things rocked along in the

[19]80s—I can't remember many things all that extraordinary. He took a hard look at runnin' at the presidency in [19]88, and Betsey Wright, in particular, talked him out of it. But I went to a kind of a secret meeting with just the three of us, and we discussed some of the reasons why and addressed Betsey's concerns, and at the last point, he decided not to make the race. And . . .

SL: Now where was Betsey Wright coming from?

[05:26:52] JB: She had been a very brilliant political activist in Texas, and [*coughs*] after his staff had caused his—in his opinion, his staff had caused his defeat in 1980, she came in in [19]82 to see that that didn't happen again. And, you know, I think he needed her, wanted her but resented her. He didn't like too many women around [*laughs*] tellin' him what to do. And she told him what to do at the office, and Hillary told him what to do when he got home, and I think he would like to rebel against a lot of it. But I really think she made a substantial contribution to his success as governor, and—but when she talked him out of runnin' in [19]88, I think it changed their relationship, and she had devoted, you know, almost ten years of her life to Clinton—left and got a job teachin' at the Kennedy School at Harvard. And the worst thing I think he did to Betsey

was to call her back in the middle of the [19]92 race to pull his assets out of the fire one more time. And if I had their lives to live over, I wouldn't let her do that. And would he have won without it? I don't know. I mean, Betsey's not doin' well. She's been diagnosed as bipolar, and I think having lots of problems, and maybe her life would've fallen apart anyhow. But I felt bad enough about that that I paid her house off and let her give me a mortgage back that she doesn't ever have to pay off as long as she's alive.

[05:29:33] SL: Do you really think that was a contributing factor to her current state?

JB: Well, I think that, you know, after having done that, she felt that she should've had a job in the administration and felt like she had been promised a job in the administration. And I think he wanted to give her a job in the administration, but she was such a controversial lightning rod that I think people around him objected to anything he wanted to appoint her to, and he wound up not doin' it. And she never, I think, could put her life back together.

SL: Hmm. Now, is she up at Beaver Lake?

JB: She—she's in Rogers on Beaver Lake. Living in—on the edge of poverty. All I can tell you is she doesn't have a mortgage

payment, but—after Clinton got elected, you know, I was kinda told that I could have anything I wanted in Washington, and I thought about it, and I thought, "You know, there isn't anything I want in Washington. [05:30:56] And the one thing I don't want in Washington—Bill Clinton is my treasured friend, but I don't want to work for him." And so I didn't. I would go and frequently stay at the White House and frequently, you know, give him my advice, which as I say, I'm sure he diluted with a thousand others. But—and which he should have taken in a number of instances when he didn't and would've been better off to have taken it. But, you know, I still treasure him as a friend, and I—you know, I called him the day after Hillary had to fold her campaign. And I promised to go spend some time with him in Chappaqua. I just haven't done it yet, but I will.

[05:32:04] SL: He seems to be—has a few good causes that he's pretty successful with.

JB: Well, I—you know, I think his foundation's doin' quite well, and I think it is about as good a substitute for pure politics as he can find. I mean, he loves the action. He loves the crowds. He loves everything about it. And the only thing he doesn't get, which to some degree he would've gotten in Hillary's campaign except that nobody in the campaign wanted him to do it—I still

think he's probably the best political strategist around. But, you know, her campaign never got any discipline—never got any cohesion, and I don't think did her a very good job. But anything that he's involved with at that level is chaotic, and I think the nature of those campaigns is chaotic. I don't think it can be avoided. In the [19]92 campaign, though, he was kept on the road all the time, so there was a minimum amount of chaos he could actually cause.

[05:33:41] SL: [*Laughs*] You know, but still, in some of the interviews I—I've seen him give, he still has that ability to take over a room and enthrall people.

JB: Oh . . .

SL: I mean, he's just . . .

JB: . . . absolutely.

SL: There's something remarkable about . . .

JB: Absolutely.

SL: . . . how he can take something . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . complex . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and make . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . sense for everybody for it . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and it sound [*unclear words*].

JB: Yeah.

[05:34:09] SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*] So Hillary—you know, toward the end of her campaign, it seems like we finally got to see her—I mean, the way she really is.

JB: Well, she sometimes is her own worst enemy, and I don't know how much of this was strategy. I was not a part of it. You know, I sent her the forty-six hundred dollars. Nancy sent her the forty-six hundred dollars. I called her and asked for phone numbers to call if I had to call somebody about any problems, and I had to do that sometimes. Diane's papers at the university got put into a political turmoil. But, essentially, I think the people that I talked to in her campaign, with the exception of Cheryl Mills, the lawyer who had been associate counsel to the president when Clinton was in office and who I think ran a lot of the legal affairs of the campaign, she was about the only one I ever talked to that understood any of my concerns or problems that could surface that I thought needed strategic advice. And so I don't know what their focus was.

SL: Well, what was the most fun that you had with those guys?

[05:36:18] JB: Well, I mean, a lot of it was just little things. The—in probably, you know, late in the summer of [19]79—maybe early in the fall—they are stayin' at the lake, and Hillary wants to water-ski, and I've got this boat that's too big, really, to ski behind. [*SL laughs*] But I take her out, and bang her all over the lake. None of us know that she's pregnant, and they had tried very hard to get pregnant. And so we're all horrified to find out, shortly after that, she is pregnant [*SL vocalized noise*]. We're thinking, you know, "What if we've shaken the embryo [*laughs*] loose? I mean, what—no tellin' what damage we've done." So, you know, Chelsea comes along, and Chelsea's doin' fine. And, then when he's president, and I can't remember the year, but it must be about [19]95 'cause Chelsea's about fifteen. They come back and stay at the lake house for a few days, and Chelsea gets told this story about her bein' banged around on the lake in embryonic form, and she is determined to get up on water skis while she's there. And so a former University of Arkansas football player named Richard Brothers is—was the caretaker of the Tyson complex next door, and I get Richard to run the boat and take her out and try to get her up on skis. And, you know, anybody that's water-skied, getting up the first time is the big deal. And she can't get up. She can't get up.

And [*SL laughs*] the next day, they have to leave, and they're getting ready to leave, and she's back out on the lake tryin' to get up [*laughs*] on skis. And she's not leavin' till she gets up, and they're lookin' at all their deadlines, and they've gotta go, and you know, she manages to get up just right before departure [*laughs*] and has her water-ski experience. And . . .

[05:39:01] SL: So what side of the family does she get that stubbornness?

JB: Well, I think the—stubbornness comes in many forms, and I knew Bill's mother, and I knew Hillary's mother, and I'm gonna say that I think one of the most amazing people I ever met was Dorothy Rodham. I think Hillary's mother is just a really amazing, amazing, amazing person. I mean, Virginia certainly had a strong will and a strong way, and you know, a lot of energy has been used up in psychology analyzing major world leaders—all male—with weaker absent fathers and strong mothers who believe their children are the center of the universe and instill that in 'em till they become [*laughs*] the center of the universe. And that's Adolf Hitler's mother, and that's Wilson—Winston Churchill's mother, and that's countless others, and I think it's true of Clinton. But Hillary's mother is just a real amazing woman.

SL: What makes you say that?

[05:40:36] JB: Well, her childhood was just about as bad as anybody's childhood could be and without her parents and taken care of by another relative. I've forgotten whether it was an aunt who won't let her go to school and who virtually makes a house slave out of her. And, I mean, everything that could be done to her to keep her from bein' successful in life was probably done to her in childhood, and yet she comes across as one of the most balanced people that sees reality. I never felt that way about Hillary's father. I never thought that he necessarily really saw reality. And I sat down one day and tried to figure out what all my friends had in common because they're a very diverse, eclectic bunch, and basically, I decided it basically was that most of them saw reality for what it was. And I think Dorothy has that clear vision, and I remember when they left the White House, Hillary is dead set on havin' an actual house. She does not want a condo or an apartment. She wants a house with a yard, and [*laughs*] I remember her mother sayin', "Now, Hillary, the park service is not gonna come out and mow your yard." [*Laughter*] But, no, I think that both of them are way, way above average in intelligence, and it functions in different ways, but it frequently gets to the same places. And I've always said

that Hillary is a person that can listen to something that she's never heard of before—I mean, it can be nuclear physics or astronomy or, you know, technical military weapons or any arcane subject, and she immediately will be askin' questions that go to the center of whatever that is. I mean, she's just unconsciously, I think, super smart. Bill gets there a different way, and he's analyzin' everything to death to get there. [05:43:23] But the—you know, he told me one time that he—you know, he missed most—like my story about my legal professions class, he missed most of his corporations law class at Yale Law School, and he got an A on the final. And his professor called him in and said, "Mr. Clinton, I can't help but congratulate you on your very nice grade on the final exam." He said, "I don't understand how you did that, since you missed most of the classes." And Clinton said that he said, "Well, sir, I don't know much about corporate law, but I know a lot about politics, so I just gave the political answer to all of the questions." [*Laughter*]

SL: He wrote what he knew. Well, what about the—your times at the White House? What—I mean, what . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . was it like?

[05:44:37] JB: Well, you know, one of the nice things—and there

are a couple of pictures over here, but I [INDEXER: PLEASE INDICATE IF AND WHERE JB IS POINTING]—on—normally, when I was at the White House, I stayed on the third floor where there's about six bedrooms and the residence of the—or the bedroom of the president is on the second floor. And the famous bedrooms—the queen's bedroom and the Lincoln bedroom—are on the second floor. Now I've stayed in the queen's bedroom a couple of times. This is the bedroom that Churchill went to when he was disturbed by Lincoln's ghost in the Lincoln bedroom. But for my sixtieth birthday, the Clintons arranged that all of my children and stepchildren would be at the White House and that Diane and I would stay in the Lincoln bedroom. And they, you know, gave me a birthday party down in the movie-theatre area, and it was—you know, it was pretty special—had all the kids in the Oval Office and—with a picture taken with the president. But the times, I guess, that—I mean, you know, I—I'd be sittin', talkin' with Clinton in his—other than his office in the West Wing in the Oval Office, he has—the president has an office on the second floor of the residential quarters in the East Wing. And so one night we're sittin' there, talking about whatever we talk about, and he says, "You want a Cuban cigar?" And I said, "Sure." And so he looks around, and he says, "Well, they must

be in the other office." So we—to get from the residence quarters to the West Wing, you have to sorta [sort of] walk out of the White House and walk across and back in another building. You've got all these guards around and everything, and here we're—it's midnight or somethin' like that, and we're walkin' down a corridor and goin' over to the Oval Office like we have really important business over there. [*Laughter*] And we loot his cigar box in the Oval Office and come troopin' back to the residence quarters. [05:47:22] The—you know, I remember a lot of evenings sitting up—and I had a lot of meals in the—some in the White House residence kitchen, which they frequently ate in, but some up in the solarium, which is the kind of bulb on top that you see. It's about a half a floor above the rest of the building. You walk up a little ramp to get up there. And you've got a almost three hundred and sixty degree view. I mean, you can actually get out on the roof, and I used to go out on the roof and smoke cigars until I noticed that frequently there was an armed guard up higher than I was on the roof [*laughs*] with a gun lookin' down at me. So I curtailed my cigar-smokin' on the roof a little. But I'd be sitting up there with Clinton, and you know, he'd be doin' a *New York Times* crossword puzzle, and he'd be talkin' to the attorney general of the United States on

the telephone, and he'd be watchin' a movie on television, and carryin' on a conversation with me at the same time. And just watchin' him multitask like that was just kind of an awesome thing. [05:48:40] But one time that I thought was somewhat unique—I'm sittin' up there in the solarium with him, and we're doin' all of those things, and he says, "Do you want to"—and Hillary had started her race for the Senate in New York. He said, "Do you want to go down and listen to the debate prep?" And I said, "Well, sure." So he said, "Well, it's down in the movie theatre." So we go down to the movie theatre, and Hillary is off in a heated—there's Bob Barnett and Harold Ickes Jr. and, oh, some lawyer from Edward Bennett Williams, Williams & Connolly Law Firm. And they're doin' debate rehearsal, and so Clinton and I just take seats like we're watchin' a movie, and there's a popcorn machine there, and we get some popcorn, and [*SL laughs*] you know, we're sittin' there watchin' the debate. And Clinton's saying, "She oughta [ought to] say this. She oughta say that." Finally, he turns to me and says, "You want to go to Buffalo with me tomorrow night and listen to the debate?" And I said, "You can't be serious." And he said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've—we've got room on the plane. Why don't you go up there with me?" [05:50:04] I said, "Bill, you can't go to Buffalo." I

said—he said, "What do you mean I can't go to Buffalo?" I said, "When you walk in the room, you suck all the air out of it." I said, "It's her show. You go up there. You're an immense distraction. You just absolutely can't go." Well, he had never thought of it that way—never looked at it that way. Now everybody on her staff knew that. Nobody wanted him to go. She didn't want him to go. Harold Ickes didn't want him to go. But everybody was afraid to tell him he couldn't go, and you know, one of the advantages I had of not workin' for him and not owin' him anything is I could tell him anything I wanted to. And they all came by afterwards and sayin', "Thank God you told him that." And . . .

SL: And he didn't go.

JB: Yeah, he sulked a while, and then he invited me to watch the debate with him in the solarium—watch it on television. And we sat there and watched it, and he's sayin', "She oughta say this. She oughta say that."

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, she won.

JB: She did and . . .

SL: And by all accounts, she's done very well.

[05:51:16] JB: And I came up—I was in Florida when the election took place, and I flew to New York that night to be at her victory

party in New York. And I flew up there. I'd been in Destin, and I flew up there absolutely convinced that Florida had voted Democratic, and we're sweatin' the votes out by the time I get there. And I'm sayin', you know the Democrats carried Florida, and I think they did carry Florida.

SL: I did, too.

JB: But the Supreme Court doesn't think they did, so they didn't. But, no, the victory party was fun and . . .

[05:52:08] SL: So what do you think—what's in store for the Clintons?

JB: Well, I think Hillary—you know, builds seniority in the Senate—I think she can become, you know, the next Ted Kennedy of the Senate. I think she can be one of the most powerful forces in American politics if she just sits where she is. The—you know, I don't know that that's what she'll do, but that's certainly what I'm gonna encourage her to do. And then Bill—you know, he can cure AIDS in Africa or, you know, do whatever he wants to with his foundation. And a lot of it's workin'. I've been in his office in downtown Harlem, and that was a brilliant, brilliant move when he backed out of havin' his office in mid-town Manhattan and moved it to Harlem. And the people around him—I—you know, I've wandered around the streets right around the office, and

they're all crazy about him. I mean—and he's made their lives better. And he's put together little projects where he's taken on all these little store operators and teach 'em how to negotiate a lease, teach 'em how to improve their accounting, teach 'em how to, you know, conduct their business better. And, you know, it works. And I just—I think he's got an unlimited opportunity to be a do-gooder and a great ex-president. Now whether you can keep him out of foreign policy and all that, I don't know. I mean, you know, he's—always has strong opinions about every issue and . . .

[05:54:28] SL: Is he making any more appearances with Obama?

JB: I haven't talked to him recently, but I think, you know, it's almost over, and they think it's won, and I think that he'll probably do two or three more appearances. But I think they think it's over, and I agree with 'em. I think it's over.

SL: You don't think any position in the Obama administration headed his way?

JB: I wouldn't think so, and I wouldn't think it'd be a—I wouldn't think Obama would do it, and I wouldn't think it would be a . . .

SL: Good thing.

JB: . . . really good idea. His best function, if Obama's gonna use him, is on an ad hoc, special assignment basis. But he doesn't

need to be dealin' with a staff on a day-in, day-out basis, and he doesn't need to be dealin' with, you know, administrative organization and all of that. I mean, the problem with bein' secretary of state is not that you don't get to go solve problems in China and Russia but that you [*laughs*] have to run the State Department, which is a darn hard thing to do.

SL: Right.

JB: And he doesn't need to be doin' that.

SL: Is there anything else you want to say about the Clintons?

JB: Oh, I don't know. I mean . . .

SL: I guess, maybe, what do you admire most about them?

[05:56:21] JB: Well, I think they are absolutely genuine in that they don't crave political power for political power. They want to do good. They want to help people. I think Bill is more of a natural emotional empath than Hillary, and I think hers comes at a more intellectual level. He's dealin' with his reptile brain, and she's dealin' with her prefrontal cortex, but [*SL laughs*] as I say, they come at things from different directions, and they both get the same place. I think they want to make the world a better place for everybody to live in. I think they want to make the country a better place for everybody to live in. I think they want to make the lives of the people in the United States and the lives of

people in the rest of the world better than they are now. And I think they do that out of no selfish motivation whatsoever. And I—the struggle for political power is because they believe that their way of doin' it's better than anybody else's, and they believe that, you know, they can be more effective than anybody else. And to do that, you have to acquire and function and use political power. But I really don't think—I mean, I think they're both just absolutely the most decent human beings that can be. Now, you know, the big hit on Clinton is, you know, his sexual proclivities, which, you know, I don't think are exceptional in any charismatic male leader in the world. I mean, this is true of, you know, ministers, foreign presidents and kings and ministers and . . .

SL: We got tape? Okay. Let's stop.

[Tape stopped]

[05:58:46] SL: Okay, we were talkin' about—we were last talkin' about the sexual proclivity of Clinton and how that is not exceptional—that it's common . . .

JB: Well . . .

SL: . . . across . . .

[05:58:59] JB: And, again, I think, in his case—and I think it's frequently true of others'—is he does have a need for adoration,

and that's one reason I think he is so successful as you say he is in large crowds of people. He needs to connect with 'em. He needs the connection. He wants the connection. And this is good with a crowd of people. It's not good when you're one-on-one with a woman half your age. [*Laughter*] But the tragedy of his presidency is that, you know, he put weapons in the hands of his enemies that kept him distracted from doin' all of the good things he wanted to do and all of the good things he could have done. And while—you know, I just [*laughs*] read an article, by all people, Arthur Laffer in the *Wall Street Journal* a day or two ago sayin' how wonderful the Clinton presidency was because suddenly they look back now and realize that he reduced the size of government. He reduced federal spending. He balanced the budget. I mean, he turned the government over with a annual budget surplus to people who have doubled the budget deficit and wasted all of those things he built up. And it's tragic, and it's gonna cause the country a lot of problems. There's no question in my mind could he have run for a third term, he could've been elected to it. Now we had a symposium over here in the Blair Center and brought in all of these political luminaries who disagreed with that, and I think they don't know what they're talkin' about. I mean, I think he clearly could've been

reelected president.

[06:01:16] SL: Yeah, I believe that, too. Any other . . .

JB: Well, the Camp David experience, of course, is a very rare, wonderful thing, and I got to go to Camp David a couple of times—maybe three times. And, I guess, they thought whatever little house I stayed in—and I don't remember now the name—I think it was called Hawthorne, or something like that—but, I guess, they thought that's where I belong 'cause it seemed like every time I went I got [*laughs*] put back up in the same house. But, you know, I remember one time, you know, I'm at Camp David, and he is stayin'—I think the house is named Astrid's [JB Edit: Aspen]—wherever the president stays. It's got this pitch-and-putt deal behind it that I think Eisenhower had built. But, anyhow, he wants—and Hillary's brothers are there, Hugh and Tony, and he wants us all to come over there, and we're gonna do some kind of pitch-and-putt contest. And somehow or other, the Rodhams don't show up, and I'm the only person that shows up. So at a time when people would've paid, you know, five million dollars for five minutes of the president's time, I get a two-and-a half-hour golf lesson [*laughter*] out there on this pitch-and-putt course from the president. And he's tellin' me, "No, no," he said, "I've—you know, I've played with Greg

Norman. I know what I'm doin' here. [*Laughs*] You do it this way."

[06:03:12] SL: You know, that kind of stuff, though, has to be just as valuable to him.

JB: Oh, yeah.

SL: To . . .

JB: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . relate to someone that's, first of all, not after him for . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . anything—who's not a threat to him.

JB: Yeah.

SL: That he trusts . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and cares for—who's been through some stuff with.

JB: Yeah.

SL: I mean, I think people forget that presidents are human.

JB: Yeah.

SL: They need that kind of camaraderie.

JB: Yeah.

SL: I mean, you have to have felt good every time that you left him. I mean . . .

JB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, I . . .

[06:03:52] SL: I know that they were very close to Diane, and they were so magnificent at her memorial service.

JB: Well, the last ninety days of her life—I mean, Hillary's in a, you know, major political race. Hillary calls her every day the last ninety days of her life. They come to see her three times in that last ninety days. And, yeah, it was—you know, it was very special and I—you know, I remember I'm sittin' in some café in Paris or someplace in Europe, and somebody finds out I'm from Arkansas, and they're Texans or somethin' like that. And they say, "Do you know the Clintons?" And I said, "Yeah." This woman said—I said, "I'm a personal friend to the Clintons." And this woman said, "Well, I'm sorry for you." And I said, "Listen. Now, you don't know these people," and I tell her that story about my wife dyin' and these people—and I said, "You know, I don't like to hear people say things like that because they don't know what they're talkin' about." And she backed down. But my best moment was I was playin' in a senior tennis tournament in Columbus, Georgia, as a representative of the Arkansas Over Sixties Team.

SL: Okay.

[06:05:36] JB: And I had my friend, Daryl Scott, with me, and we're stayin' in a Holiday Inn. And Columbus, Georgia, has a tennis

facility with thirty-six clay courts. It's just absolutely gorgeous, and so they hold a lot of major regional tournaments. And this is a tournament that includes North and South Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas—includes every state in the South except Texas and Florida. [*SL laughs*] And so I—I'm walkin' across a room—a lobby of the hotel—I'm wearing a shirt that says Arkansas on it, and this blond woman with an elaborate hairdo sittin' over there with ladies that look a lot like her says, "Hey, Arkansas." So I go over and she—and somehow I just *know* that she's from South Carolina, and so she's raggin' me about the Clintons. And she said, "What's Clinton gonna do after he's through being president?" We had established that I'm a personal friend of his. And I said, "Well, he's tryin' to learn a foreign language, and as soon as he masters it, he's gonna go where they speak that language, and he's gonna take over that area and become its, you know, total dictator. [*SL laughs*] She says, "What language is that?" And I said, "Gullah." And her friends just fell on the floor. They just fell [*laughs*] on the floor.

SL: That's good. That's really good.

JB: So . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Are there any other political experiences that . . .

[06:07:40] JB: Well, I mean, you know, the inaugurations were extraordinary events because I got to be on the platform with the Clintons when he was sworn in at both [19]92 and [19]96, and in fact, I'm the one that kind of arranged for Miller Williams to do the inaugural poem for the [19]96 inauguration, and I got to spend the first night in the White House. There's a—I've got two or three copies of a picture around that's taken the first night in the White House where Bill Clinton and Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth and I are playin' hearts in the hall, and the shelves are empty because Bush's stuff is gone, and Clinton's stuff isn't put up. But, you know, that's heady stuff to be sittin' there with the Supreme Court on the—one the dais while he's being inaugurated. And, you know, before he was inaugurated the first time, Diane and I stayed with him in the Blair House where the president-elect stays till—what they do is while he's in the inaugural parade, they move his stuff over to the White House because the departing president's stuff has been moved out. And so that's—you know, that's heady stuff. And watching he and Diane rewrite the State of the Union address—I've never seen him handed a speech he didn't rewrite, and I've never seen him quit rewriting it until he had to actually give it. And so he's always markin' things out, addin' things in, and Diane was a

fabulous editor, and I think she was a real asset in those times. [06:09:56] But one time we are up there, and it must've been durin' the [19]96 campaign, and she—I got her an apartment in Washington because we didn't think she ought to be workin' on the campaign and stayin' in the White House although one—she stayed one whole school semester in the White House when she was a fellow at the Brookings Institute. But we're off on a Sunday mornin', and we're in some museum or somethin', and she gets a call—it's from the White House. And the president needs to speak to her immediately. [*SL laughs*] We think this is some, you know, major political event. So, she holds the phone, and he gets on the phone, and he says, "Have you done today's *New York Times* crossword puzzle? What did you get for number seventeen?" [*Laughter*]

SL: That was an ongoing thing with them, wasn't it?

JB: It was.

SL: He would get it in advance, wouldn't he?

[06:11:10] JB: It was, and in fact, when he came to see her one of the last times—we have a picture somewhere taken on the couch in our living room where two of 'em were workin' the crossword puzzle together. She's quite ill. And then he signs the finished crossword puzzle. I've taken their picture doing the puzzle, and

I take it and the puzzle and frame it. But, yeah, that was a—now, the one that really got me was, you know, I'm up there one time, and Clinton and I read a lot of the same books, and he said, "Have you read the new Walter Mosley book?" And I said, "Of course, I haven't read it. It hasn't been released yet." And he said, "Well, I've read it." I said, "You can't have read it because it hasn't been released yet." And he just grinned, and he said, "I've read it." I said, "Prove it." And so he [*laughs*] has gotten the thing in manuscript form. And I said, "Well, I didn't think it was worth bein' president, but maybe there's some things [*laughter*] may be worth it." But, yeah, we went to several—you know, Hillary's birthday parties, and they were always around Halloween because her birthday's October the twenty-fifth, and Diane's is October twenty-sixth, and mine's October twenty-seventh. And they [*SL laughs*]—sometimes we'd have little joint birthday parties till they became, you know, so famous and important. But I remember one of the first parties we went to was a costume party, and so Diane and I went as James Carville and Mary Matalin, and I got a skull cap, so I make myself bald, and I got little Dr. Spock things to put on my ears, so they'd be pointed and had a "Ragin' Cajun" T-shirt on. And Diane put on a black wig and got the trashiest jewelry she could

find. I mean, it was pretty funny. And the Carvilles were there. That was what really made it special. [*Laughs*]

[06:13:40] SL: I just don't see how those guys do it—the Carvilles . . .

JB: Well, I don't either . . .

SL: . . . function.

JB: . . . but, [*SL laughs*] you know, I'm sittin' one time at a fund-raiser in—oh, the—I think it may have been the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington, DC, and there are a bunch of heavy hitters from New York, and Carville is givin' 'em the pitch. And David Pryor and I are sittin' together listenin' to him, and David leans over, and he says, "You know who James Carville reminds me of?" And I said, "Who?" And he said, "Well, when you're drivin' into northern Louisiana and pull into one of these little service stations," he said, "Carville's the guy that comes out to pump your gas." [*SL laughs*] And about that time Carville told these guys—he said, "And if you're not gonna do this, we might as well whistle in the dogs, piss on the fire, and go home." [*SL laughs*] Well, you can see this blank expression. I mean, there was—none of these people from New York had ever been coon huntin' in their life. They had no idea what Carville was talkin' about. [*SL laughs*] Pryor and I just broke up. The—no, it's been a—it's

been an interesting life, and you know, I don't think we'll see the likes of either one of 'em again and certainly never both of 'em together. I mean, that's an incredible amount of talent.

[06:15:28] SL: [*Sighs*] I—you know, we don't have to go way into this, but sometimes I wonder if one of the worst things that ever happened to Tyson Foods was when Bill got elected president. It seemed like all of a sudden . . .

JB: It was terrible, and it was unjustified. I mean, the press and everybody immediately assumed that Tyson—including Clinton's enemies—assumed that Tyson was much closer to Clinton than he ever was. And I'm a close friend of both, and I was usually kind of a bridge between 'em, but they were never that close. And, you know, we got into all kinds of problems because of—in a way, we're a substitute punchin' bag for Clinton directly. And the Espy investigation was, you know, just a nightmare, and we talked earlier about settlin' that—cases. We wound up paying six million dollars to settle all of the Espy controversy, plus the many millions we spent on attorney's fees. And I didn't want to do it. I wanted to go to trial. I'm totally convinced had we gone to trial, we would've won it hands down. [06:17:05] But the FBI had trapped a friend of Don's, a guy named Mike Levitt, who's one of the biggest apartment builders in the world.

They—two FBI agents had gone to see him, and he's a very sophisticated businessman, but he knew he hadn't done anything wrong, and he knew it ?didn't? involve him, and so we talked to him without witnesses—without counsel. And they write up the story however they want to write it up, and then they call him to the grand jury. [06:17:38] And they said, "Now you're goin' in the grand jury, and this is what you're gonna say," and Mike said, "I'm not gonna say that," and they said, "Well, you're either gonna say that, or we're gonna charge you with perjury, or we're gonna charge you with giving false information to an FBI agent 'cause that's not what it says on this sheet." He said, "Well, I never said that." And they said, "Well, we don't care whether you did or not. That's what's on the sheet, and you're gonna say it in the grand jury, or we're gonna indict you." And I'm convinced that Don, bein' Don, made me settle that case to save Mike Levitt and not for any other reason. But—however, we settled it. So . . .

[06:18:27] SL: What about all the trouble that Archie went through?

JB: Well, and that was just bizarre. You know, I got lawyers for everybody, and I got the wrong lawyer for Cleta Selman. And the guy was unwilling to join a joint-defense agreement. He managed to get her immunity, which is his job and which I think

he did appropriately, but then she could've taken responsibility for her actions, which she wouldn't do. And we were never allowed to talk to her without her counsel present. [06:19:09] And one of the things that had happened was that she had forged Archie's name on an airplane request, and it clearly wasn't his signature, and I know it was her signature. But, you know, they had Archie sayin' he didn't do this and didn't know anything about it, all of which was true, and then they got his—"Well, what about this request for this airplane to fly Mr. Espy and his girlfriend to the Dallas Cowboys football game?" Or whatever the hell it was—to Russellville to the birthday party. And in tryin' to settle, I'm tryin' to walk everybody out of there, and a guy named Bob Ray, who was the assistant independent counsel under Smaltz, had a thing about Archie and determined—and they would not budge on it. And I've got Don sayin', "You have got to settle this." And I'm sayin', "I can't settle it till I get everybody out." And Don's sayin', "You know, we—I don't care how you do it or what you do it. You have got to settle it." And, you know, I know that Maran Bassett was always mad at me because she didn't feel like I took proper care of Archie, and I don't—Archie never shows his feelings. I don't know how he felt. But I did everything I could until, you know, I

finally got Leland and Don on both sides of me sayin', "We gotta settle," and they will not budge on Archie. And so I could not get Archie loose. But the key to that would've been Cleta, who could've gotten him loose, had she taken responsibility for her own actions. And, you know, Don forgives all those things and—but I never did. I was—never really forgave Cleta for that.

[06:21:23] SL: [*Exhales*] Well, Jim, what haven't we talked about that we want to talk about? You know, we didn't ever talk about Ronnie Hawkins much except his diving ability. You know, there's this—Don . . .

JB: Well, you know . . .

SL: . . . Don says he used to be his doorman at the Rockwood Club on the way—you know, which is on the way up to the country club.

[06:21:41] JB: Well, one of the ironies—we were asked about close friends—one of my closest childhood friends was a guy named Jamie Cornett, and he went off to med school at Tulane and became Jim Cornett instead of Jamie. But he lived a half a block away, and I spent a lot of time with him and one of my closest friends for all of his life. He died when he was 62. He's Ronnie's first cousin, and you know, I got a lot of different views of Ronnie [*laughs*] through the rest of family than, I think, the

people that have just known him as a musician. But Ronnie—you know, I remember when he had his chance to step up on the stage when Ed Sullivan was comin' through here doin' some kind of show, and he was afraid to do it. I mean, he wanted to do it. He was dyin' to do it. You know, he was maybe eighteen years old, and he was afraid to do it.

SL: So before he went to Memphis?

JB: It was before he went to Memphis. And he used to run around with Billy Ray Smith and Donnie Stone and those guys, and they were always doin' crazy things. I mean, I—and Ronnie was, in many ways, more of an observer than anything else.

[06:23:25] But a story that I [*laughs*] really love was a Camp David story, and this—it was Easter Sunday or something. I don't remember—some special occasion, and the Clintons were determined that we all had to go to chapel at the—at Camp David. And so we go, and there is a minister there—a—an army chaplain of some kind, and he is tellin' this story, and I do not now remember all the details, but it's a story about some policeman and some kid in Oklahoma, and this kid had a little band, and he played for some local sleazy nightclub operator, who then wouldn't pay him. And so the kid got some gasoline and went over there and torched the nightclub after it was

closed—managed to blow himself up and, you know, blew himself out of the nightclub and burned and sizzled when the policeman gets him. And the policeman hears his story, and he can put him, you know, in prison forever and, for some reason, lets him go. And the kid went on to become a successful musician, and it was Ronnie Hawkins. Well, the chaplain tellin' the story had no idea [*laughs*] that Bill Clinton knew Ronnie Hawkins [*laughter*] personally. I mean, it was just one of those kinda stories that makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. I mean, you need Clinton to tell the story, but I was there.

[06:25:39] SL: You know, there—Ronnie tells a story about, you know, back when he was diagnosed terminally ill and . . .

JB: Oh, the last supper.

SL: Yes. [*Laughs*]

JB: I was there. And it was fabulous. The—he is—declared that he has pancreatic cancer and that they cut him open, and it was so bad that there wasn't any point in operatin', so they sewed him back up, and he's gonna die of patria—pancreatic cancer. So he's—friends are givin' him a last party, and the two guys that pick up the check are David Foster, who was the head of Sony Records, and Don Tyson. And Don has a—by now, has a—one of

those big bombardier jets. They—I've forgotten what they call it, but it's a—it's—you know, carry twenty people and fly from here to Moscow without refueling. And so Don invites a bunch of us to go up—he gets Doug Douglas because Doug and Ronnie went down to Florida and spent a summer as lifeguards together. And he's got Paul Berry and, oh, the guy that has the plant that makes the—that used to run—owned Doe's in Little Rock. George . . .

SL: Etheridge?

JB: What?

SL: Etheridge is his name.

[06:27:24] JB: George Etheridge. And I don't remember—several other of us. I think maybe Dash Goff was there. And anyhow, we all fly to Montreal, and we join this party which includes David Foster's first and third wives and [*SL laughs*] Paul Anka, who's the Frank Sinatra of Canada, and Whoopi Goldberg was doing a film there, so Whoopi comes, and Bill Clinton is there. And it's—and there are only a handful of other people. I mean, but it's a, you know, very star-studded cast, and Ronnie is, you know, at his absolute vulgar best, tellin' all of these crazy stories. And Paul Anka's written a new version of "My Way," and Clinton sings part of it, and it was a remarkable evening. And

then we come back, and [*SL laughs*] we're waitin' for Ronnie to die, and instead of dyin', Ronnie gets a faith healer named Adam. By this time, Don's sent him money to pay off his mortgages, and people have given him all kinds of things. [*SL laughs*] And so Ronnie gets on the Internet and gets a hold of this faith healer named Adam, who I've since seen on national television. And Adam is a faith healer, and Adam cures him of his pancreatic cancer.

SL: Over the phone?

JB: Over—yeah, the phone and the computer. So one day Clinton calls me, and we're visitin' about things, and he asks me what I thought about Ronnie's miraculous cure. And I'm tryin' to be a little delicate in my language choice, and he says, "You think Ronnie scammed us, don't you?" I said, "Well, frankly, I do, Mr. President." And he said, "Well, I'll tell you what." He said, "I'd rather he scammed us than that he actually have pancreatic cancer." [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, yeah, I can see that.

JB: Yeah.

SL: I can see that, too, but . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: I mean, it seems like it'd be easy enough to, you know, check all

that, I would guess. I mean . . .

[06:30:05] JB: Well, I—you know, Ronnie showed us the stitches, and I don't know. He had a doctor's report. I don't know the—I never saw the doctor's report.

SL: Yeah.

JB: But he did have stitch marks. [*SL laughs*] But, you know, one time Ronnie just had to have ten thousand dollars, and I think it was Teresa was taking over Cleta's job. But—and Don says, "Let him have it." So she sends him a check for ten thousand dollars. And then he calls up and says—gets a hold of Teresa and says, "I never did get that check for ten thousand dollars." She says, "Well, I sent it." And he said, "Well, I really need it desperately," and Don's off somewhere. So she sends him another check for ten thousand—says, "If the other one shows up, just send it back." Well, 'course, Ronnie cashes both checks [*laughter*], and that's the last we hear of that twenty thousand dollars.

SL: Right.

JB: But Don seems to have a kind of a relaxed attitude about it.

SL: Well, Ronnie claims he was the best doorman that he ever had.

[06:31:25] JB: Well, because—I mean, when Ronnie was playin' in the old days of Rockwood Club, and you know, Don was there at

the door raisin' money to pay the band, anything that he didn't get at the door, Don would put in himself. [*Laughs*] Sure, he was the best doorman.

SL: Yeah, same story. Yeah, yeah. [*Exhales*]

JB: But . . .

SL: Well, Jim, is there anything else that we ought to talk about? Do you feel like we need to come back tomorrow? Do you want us to—what would . . .

JB: Oh . . .

SL: . . . you like for us to do?

JB: . . . I don't know. Let's give it a rest, and why don't you think about it. And if, you know, we feel like it needs more—I mean, there were a lot of things that happened on the Board of Trustees and ?at? . . .

SL: Oh, yeah.

JB: . . . the university and—but I will just tell you one real quick, and Nancy said I had to call her at seven o'clock.

SL: Okay.

[06:32:26] JB: When I went on the Board of Trustees, I . . .

SL: This is the University of Arkansas . . .

JB: University of Arkansas.

SL: . . . Board of Trustees.

JB: I invited all of the Board of Trustees to meet me in Costa Rica and spend a week fishing on Don Tyson's boats. Don Tyson had a handmade fishing boat made by Merritt Boat Yard in Fort Lauderdale—Pompano Beach, actually. And he has a mother boat, which is kind of I call it a floating house trailer, but it used to be a tuna trawler that's a hundred and ten feet long—hold enough fuel to go around the world and has an elaborate dining room and galley and great bedrooms and a great place to spend the night. And then you go out in the day and fish off the—what was then the sixty-two-foot boat. It's now grown to seventy—a new seventy-four-foot boat. And so six of the Board of Trustees went on this, and the rule, of course, on Freedom of Information Act is you have to notify the press if you've got more than two Board of Trustees together, so I notified the press that, you know, we'd be fishing off the coast of Costa Rica [*laughs*] if anybody cared. And, apparently, nobody cared. Nobody showed up. [06:34:08] And so we had a week of uninterrupted time together, which we didn't have any university administrators. We didn't have any press. We didn't have anybody interferin' with our workin' out our relationships. And we—Frank Kumpuris was in that group. Lewis Epley was in that group. The—oh, I can't think of the name of the guy that died

over in eastern Arkansas—Brad. Anyhow, out of that group became five future chairmen of the Board of Trustees, and out of that group and out of that week, developed a working relationship which allowed us to solve almost any problem without having to, you know, worry about people's private turf or hurt feelings or special projects or posturing for the public or whatever. And I don't think the board ever functioned as well before or as well since. And, you know, if I did nothing else in my time at Board of Trustees, I made the board function. And—but it was through Don's generosity makin' his boats available that that happened.

SL: There's no end to that list of things that he's done that . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . people have no idea . . .

JB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . about . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . isn't there?

[06:35:55] JB: Yeah. And the—I was the vice-chairman of the board when—Sykes Harris was the chairman when we hired B. Alan Sugg as the system president, and we had been interviewing candidates, and Sykes and I, as a committee of

two, went to see Alan, and Alan said that he was not an academic, and I said, "We've got academics. All the schools have their chancellors, and they're academics. We don't need an academic, and we need a guy that won't interfere with the internal operations of a campus unnecessarily." And he said, "Well, what I am is a technician." And I said, "Well, that's exactly what we need." And so we wound up hiring Alan, and then I told Alan—I said, "Now you understand the board that's just hired you—every year one of these people disappears, and a new guy comes on. And in six years, a majority of this board will not be people that have hired you. And in ten years, there won't be anybody on this [*laughs*] board that hired you. Do you still want this job?" And he said, "Yeah." And I think he's been really good for the system. [06:37:34] And I want to get in one more story. The—KUAF. The university decided it wanted, you know, to try to get a public radio station—build a public radio station. It's before I went on the Board of Trustees—university. I was the chairman of the Board of Higher Education, and we had a thing called "ten-ten money" that was kind of a slush fund that we used for special projects. And when the university started trying to raise the money to do this, I said, "Look, I told the board I'd never ask for anything special on the board in the

nine years I'd been on it, and I was gonna ask for something. I wanted the ten-ten money for that radio station." And everybody agreed that I could have it. And then it wasn't quite enough money, so I tapped the Tyson Foundation. Don was in Australia or someplace, and so I took ten grand out of the foundation and made up the rest of the money, and Don wasn't very happy with me when he came back and didn't think maybe that was the focus [*laughs*] of the foundation, but I'd already done it. Better to ask forgiveness than permission. And so I really feel that I had given a very special start to the radio station, which was never made public, and I never, you know, asked for recognition for it, but it was one of the things I'm pretty proud of.

SL: Yeah.

JB: I think . . .

SL: I would be, too.

[06:39:32] JB: . . . we might've eventually gotten it, but we wouldn't have had it when we got it if I hadn't done that. And I'm tryin' to—I'm servin' as the honorary chairman of their fund-raiser now to try to get enough money to build a building, and I've given 'em some money. And I keep my alarm clock on my bedside—it goes off at five o'clock in the mornin', and the first

thing I hear [*laughs*] is NPR news.

SL: NPR. That's exactly what I was starting to say.

JB: I don't get up for the next ten or fifteen minutes while . . .

SL: Oh, we listen to it for a whole hour . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . before we get up . . .

JB: [*Laughs*] Absorb what's goin' on.

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

JB: So . . .

SL: That's exactly what . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . Claudette and I do every day.

JB: Yeah.

[06:40:16] SL: You know, we partner with Kyle Kellams. He's . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: He—I mean, we'll give him any of the audio that they want.

JB: Yeah.

SL: So—well, Jim . . .

JB: Okay.

KK: Work at the library?

SL: Do you want to talk about the . . .

KK: Did you talk about the library?

[06:40:33] SL: We talked a little about the Fayetteville Public Library.

KK: I mean, it's awfully huge . . .

SL: It is.

KK: . . . contribution to Fayetteville.

SL: Now it's two minutes after seven.

KK: Oh.

SL: So you're supposed to call . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . Nancy. And . . .

JB: Yeah, well . . .

SL: . . . we probably need to decide if we want to . . .

KK: Well, we don't have to talk more today or whatever, but . . .

SL: Do you want to . . .

KK: Is . . .

[06:40:53] SL: Do you—here's what kinda happens. This is not uncommon, Jim.

JB: Yeah.

SL: We get done with an interview. We strike, and then all of a sudden, people start thinkin' about the . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . stuff that they wish they had said . . .

JB: Said.

SL: . . . something about. And it . . .

JB: The French have a term [Editor's Note: *l'esprit d'escalier*] for it, and it's—it translates into English as "the wit of the staircase." You're walkin' down the staircase after your encounter, and you think of something you should've said. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

JB: But I can't remember the French phrase.

SL: Well, I mean, it—it's a generous offer on their part to just let us leave the stuff here and come back in the morning if you . . .

JB: I don't mind you doin' that.

SL: Well, why don't we do this? Why don't we leave you the option of—if you think of somethin' else that you want to talk about . . .

JB: Yeah.

SL: . . . or say, we'll come back in the mornin'? And we'll get it—we'll try and get it done in the mornin'. If we don't get it done in the morning and you want to talk more . . .

JB: Okay.

SL: . . . we'll go all day.

[06:41:50] JB: Well, I can't really think, at the moment, of anything we haven't covered. Maybe we haven't talked quite enough about the library, but . . .

SL: It is an amazing building, by the way.

JB: Well—and it won the Library of the Year Award over new libraries at Seattle and Las Vegas. I mean . . .

SL: Yeah.

[06:42:09] JB: I think it's recognized nationally as quite a library, and the building turned out amazingly well, and the—there is a view that only the judges in the federal court building have. The public has never had these views until now. And now the public [*laughs*] can come to this library and see the same amazing vista across the rolling hills to the south and to the west and, really, to the east that, like I say, only the high-and-mighty federal judges [*SL laughs*] in the federal courthouse have. So I'm very pleased with that. I'm very pleased with Anita Huffington's sculpture in the library, and I was an early patron of Anita's.

SL: Yes.

[06:43:08] JB: I own something like eight of her pieces, and she's finally had a piece accepted at the Metropolitan Museum. And I gave a piece of hers to the Arkansas Art Museum in Little Rock, and I was the lead gift in giving a sculpture of hers that's on the fifth floor of Old Main. And I did arrange to have one of her sculptures be a part of an exhibit at the White House. So I'm

very proud of Anita's sculpture, and I'm delighted to have one in the library. Ed Bradbury and his wife funded that and . . .

[06:44:04] SL: Well, so is that—what do you think? Do you think we should do that—just . . .

KK: Well, I don't think it's a bad idea. I think it's happened very often that we really needed another hour or two with somebody, and we didn't have any—we didn't do it, but we really wish we had. You [*unclear words*].

SL: Well, we've had this guy now for eleven hours, about.

JB: Hmm.

SL: Ten and a half hours. That's a pretty good day.

JB: Okay.

SL: So I think you ought to call Nancy immediately.

JB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] I better.

SL: You better do that. And I'm inclined to just leave this stuff here . . .

KK: Yeah.

[06:44:27 End of interview]

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