

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Phyllis D. Brandon
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
November 20, 2009
Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Phyllis Brandon on November 20, 2009, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay—um—we're here today, and my name is Scott Lunsford. And we're going to be talking with Phyllis Brandon. We're at her residence in Little Rock, Arkansas. Today's date is November 20. The year is 2009. And, Phyllis, I need to ask you that it's okay that the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History is here audio and videotaping this interview and that we will archive it in the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas Libraries in—in Fayetteville at Mullins Library, and we'll keep it forever. And we'll make it available—uh—to researchers and documentarians and students and teachers through a number of means, including the web. Um—uh—I just need to know if you're comfortable with all of that and—uh—if it's okay with you.

Phyllis Brandon: I understand. It's all okay. Thanks.

SL: Okay.

PB: Appreciate it.

SL: Great, thank you. Great answer. [*Laughs*] So all right—so we're gonna start with—uh—Phyllis, what is your full name?

PB: Uh—my full name is Phyllis Louise Dillaha Brandon. And Dillaha is *D-I-L-L-A-H-A*.

SL: Thank you. And when and where were you born?

[00:01:13] PB: I was born here in Little Rock, July 31, 1935. My daddy said it was the hottest day of the year. [*SL laughs*] There, of course, was no air conditioning then.

SL: Well, now what was your father's name?

PB: My father's name was Calvin Arthur Dillaha.

SL: And—uh—your mother's name?

PB: Her name—her maiden name was Vera Burt, *B-U-R-T*.

SL: Okay, and—uh—were they both from Little Rock?

PB: Ah—they were working in Little Rock when they got married. Um—I think my daddy's original family was from Jacksonville. He once told me about coming into Little Rock in a covered wagon. But—uh—and mother—um—was—um—raised in south Arkansas but came to Little Rock in—in the teens. Uh—when—in her teenage years.

SL: And Jacksonville, Arkansas?

PB: Yes. Uh-huh.

SL: [*Clears throat*] And so he—your father had a—a reminiscence of

being in a covered wagon?

PB: Uh-huh.

SL: So when—do you know when he was born?

PB: Um—no, I don't. I have all that, but I don't know . . .

SL: Okay.

PB: . . . right offhand. Um—they were married—uh—in the early 1900s, like 1920 [PB edit: 1922], something like that. Uh—and he was a pharmacist.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: He—uh—learned to be a pharmacist as an apprentice at Snodgrass & Bracy Drugstore. At—which was—uh—on Main Street between Markham and 2nd.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And my mother was working there as a bookkeeper, and so that's how they met and married.

SL: Met—met at work . . .

PB: Yeah, right. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . met—met on the job.

PB: Exactly.

SL: Um—well so did you ever know either set of your grandparents?

[00:03:10] PB: Uh—I knew both of my grandmothers. Um—my grandmother Dillaha, we called Grandma. And—uh—she had,

like what, six children? And—uh—she lived with the youngest daughter. And—uh—uh—she, you know—we'd visited her often, and she would come to the house—um—for Thanksgiving and stuff like that. My—um—mother's mother's name was Musette, *M-U-S-E-T-T-E*, Burt. And—uh—she had three daughters—um—my mother being the youngest. And—uh—uh—they came to Little Rock to work, you know, when the girls were little.

[*Unclear word*] neither my mother or my father—uh—finished high school.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And—uh—was typical of that time, I think. And—uh—then—um—my mother's mother lived with her other daughter, my Aunt Phyllis, for whom I was named, obviously. And then—um—uh—when my Aunt Phyllis died young—uh—the—mother's mother came to live with us. And—uh—we'd played dominoes and that sort of thing.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:04:32] SL: Do you remember—did she ever tell you anything about her growin' up? Her childhood or her mom . . .

PB: Um.

SL: . . . and dad? Any experiences?

PB: Not really, not really. I don't remember much about that.
Uhn-uhn.

SL: Uh-huh. And then what about your—uh—father's mother, did she—did you ever know her very well?

PB: Well, that was Grandma.

SL: Oh, that was?

PB: Yeah, Grandma.

SL: Okay.

PB: And then. Yeah. Uh—Grandmother Dillaha. Yeah.

SL: Okay.

PB: Mh-hmm. And then the grandmother Burt who came to live with us.

SL: It was—it was Burt, Grandmother Burt, that lived with you?

PB: Mh-hmm. For a while. Mh-hmm.

[00:05:08] SL: Uh-huh. And—and what about—uh—your—uh—father's mother? Did she—did you ever meet or talk with her?

PB: Oh, yeah. I—that's Grandma Dillaha. Yeah.

SL: Okay.

PB: I—am I mixin' 'em up? No. [*Laughs*]

SL: I'm—I'm probably mixin' 'em up.

PB: Uh-huh.

SL: Which one lived . . .

PB: Uh-huh. The two grandmothers.

SL: . . . which one lived with you?

PB: Mother's mother, Mrs. Burt . . .

SL: Right.

PB: . . . and Mrs. Dillaha lived with her youngest daughter.

Mh-hmm.

SL: And was that here in Little Rock?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So did you get to spend any time with her?

PB: Yes, mh-hmm. Yes, mh-hmm.

SL: And—uh—did she relate any stories?

PB: Not that I recall. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Were you—were you pretty young—uh . . .

[00:05:44] PB: Yes, mh-hmm. Well, let's see—uh—my Grandmother Dillaha died when I was a junior in high school.

SL: Oh.

PB: In college—in college, when I was a junior in college. And—uh—so—uh—you know. Uh-huh. That's the only time I ever saw my daddy cry.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Was when his mother died. Uh-huh.

SL: Well, she must've had a—a—a great—uh—long life.

PB: Yes, right. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And . . .

SL: 'Cause—uh—your parents were married around
the . . .

PB: Yeah, 1920. Something like that.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: So she died in 1956. That would've been—mh-hmm. So . . .

SL: Well, I—I'm—I'm always lookin' for the oldest stories that we
can . . .

PB: Yes, right.

SL: . . . that we can find.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:37] SL: Um—so let's talk about your daddy for a while then.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Um—he was a pharmacist.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: He—he—self-taught—self-educated.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Pharmacist. Didn't finish high school, but . . .

PB: Yeah, was an apprentice. Right.

SL: . . . learned to—learned to—was an apprentice pharmacist and—
and became a full—licensed pharmacist later on.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Um—what—uh—did he have any—uh—hobbies or things that he liked to do . . .

PB: He . . .

SL: . . . when—what did he do when he wasn't workin'?

PB: He worked all the time.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: In those days, if the drugstore opened, he thought he had to be there. And—uh—later on when I was born, he owned a drugstore. Uh—it was Dillaha Drug Company at 11th and Battery. And I was born at Baptist Hospital, which was just a few blocks away. But later on, he—uh—during my teen years, he was pharmacist and manager of Smith's Country Club Drugstore here in Little Rock.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: That was at Country Club Station. It used to be on the corner up there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:07:43] PB: And he—uh—was the manager of that, and he thought if the drugstore was—uh—open he needed to be there. And—uh—it was open from like ten till six or seven, something like that.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: Um—seven days—six days a week and then af—afternoons on Sunday. So—um—and now but he was—he was always workin'. Always workin'.

SL: Anytime the shop was open . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . he was there?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, he must've enjoyed it too.

PB: Yeah, he—well, he—uh—he loved people, and he loved the people to come in and chat, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Was the—was there any—uh—you know, some pharmacies back then—um—sold other things. And some even had soda fountains.

PB: Well, it had a soda fountain.

SL: It did?

[00:08:34] PB: Yeah, and he wouldn't let me go behind it. He wouldn't let his daughter go do—be a soda jerk, you know. Um—also, I was gonna point out, he was in World War I at the end, as a marine. The end of World War I. So—um—I—I don't, you know, think it was very long. But—uh—the kids that hung

out at the drugstore wrote a song about—uh—he was called Dilly, *D-I-L-L-Y*, you know, Dilly's soda fountain that did it to the *Marines' Hymn*. You know, so it was funny.

SL: That's fun.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, did he tell you—ever tell you any World War I stories?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: Did he actually . . .

PB: He wasn't in too long. You know . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: . . . the war ended, and he came home.

SL: So—but he actually was in Europe?

PB: No, he didn't go to Europe.

SL: No, he didn't?

PB: He didn't go outta the United States. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Oh, okay.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's kind of a blessing. Yeah.

PB: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. Mh-hmm.

[00:09:28] SL: Um—uh—okay, well—um—did he have any hobbies at all? Did he—did he fish or . . .

PB: No, uhn-uhn. Well, no. But he—his brothers fished and—uh—

they had lodges, and we'd go there. He had, like, you know, three brothers and two sisters. Uh-huh.

SL: So do you remember your aunts and uncles?

PB: Oh, yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Were they—uh—often . . .

PB: They were . . .

SL: . . . at the house?



PB: They were fun and—uh—one of my uncles owned the Dillaha Fruit Company, which was—um—um—supplied all the fruit and vegetables to all the grocery stores. And—uh—and then two of his brothers—um—worked with him. They were—uh—very jovial and very fun loving. And I'd go down to the fruit company, and they'd always give me as many bananas as I could carry. [*SL laughs*] And that was fun, you know. And I love bananas to this day. And so they—you know, it was good.

[00:10:34] SL: So—um—what was the house like that you grew up in?

PB: Well, it was small.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: Uh—we—um—they moved in this house when I was three months old. And I moved out when I got married. And—uh—so it was—um—of course, my—I had two brothers. And they—uh—

were eleven and nine when I was born. Uh—I was a surprise.

And so—um—of course, by the time I was up to teenager, they were gone, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And—uh—so—uh—the house, you know, it was just a small nice little house. And I think about it now, and you know. And—and get—no dishwasher, no clothes, you know, washing machine, no nothin'. You know, so my poor mother, you know.

[00:11:29] SL: Well, so—but laundry was done there. Was it a washing machine with a wringer and . . .

PB: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

SL: . . . and you all hung . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Hmm.

SL: . . . line—hung the clothes out on the line.

PB: On the line. Yes.

SL: Absolutely.

PB: They smell good when they've been out on the line. Yeah.
Hmm.

SL: Yeah, I—I—I remember experiencing that . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when I was growing up.

[00:11:48] PB: And we had—uh—we raised rabbits, and we had

chickens. And—uh—um—you know, lots of things like that.

SL: And a garden.

PB: Yeah, I had a little garden, a victory garden. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

PB: World War II, sure did. Green beans and all kinds of things.

SL: So would—would your mother—uh—uh—kill the chickens and—
and clean and pluck them and . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . prepare them?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And rabbits, too. Did—did . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. My brother raised the rabbits, and they sold
those for rabbit meat. Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, I mean, that's not—that wasn't unusual back
then.

PB: No, right [*laughs*].

[00:12:28] SL: Um—so let's see. Now did—uh—your folks ever talk
about the Depression?

PB: Yes. Um—they built a house on Park Hill in North Little Rock.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: Um—you know, several years before I was born. And they took
their money out of the building and loan, is what it was then,

right before the Depression. So they saved their money and got their house. So they, you know, always bragged about that. It was a good thing.

SL: It was smart.

PB: Mh-hmm. And got their money out.

SL: And lucky, too.

PB: Yeah, yes [*laughs*], very.

SL: Yeah, hold on to it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:13:06] SL: So—um—do—um—um—well, let's—give me a little tour of the house. It was a small house . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . but you had some kind of yard . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . if you were raising chickens and had a victory garden . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and rabbits.

PB: Mh-hmm. Hmm.

SL: Was it a pretty big lot or . . .

PB: No, no, it was a small lot.

SL: Small lot.

PB: Not any—not—not as big as this one . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: . . . that I have now.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: It was probably fifty by fifty, you know.

[00:13:34] SL: How—how old was the house. Was it a new—
relatively new house back then?

PB: It was a relatively new house.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: Mh-hmm. When . . .

SL: So . . .

PB: . . . they moved in.

SL: . . . single story, kind of . . .

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm. You know, they were all—uh—living room,
dining room, kitchen, and a little breakfast room here.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: And then on this side were the—uh—uh—bedroom, bath, and
two bedrooms, you know. So, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Um—well, so the—um—you didn't have a washing machine,
dryer in . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . in today's sense.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:09] SL: Uh—was your refrigerator a refrigerator, or was it an icebox?

PB: It was a refrigerator . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: . . . but the people down at the corner had an icebox.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And I would watch the iceman come, you know, with the tongs holdin' the block . . .

SL: Uh-huh. Sure.

PB: . . . of ice. Yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And—uh—what about—um—did you have natural gas?

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Um—and I gue—I'm assuming electricity was . . .

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . fully in place.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Well, we didn't have any television until, you know . . .

SL: Right.

PB: . . . about the time I left. Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:14:45] PB: Yeah. But when we moved in that house, or they moved in—um—the street was dirt. And I remember when the

street was paved.

SL: Made a big difference.

PB: Yes, huge. Mh-hmm. Had a little bitty driveway to a garage, you know, in the back. So—mh-hmm.

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Um—well, did you always remember having a radio?

PB: Oh yes, we listened to the radio a lot.

SL: [*Noise in background*] Oops.

PB: My daddy would come home and listen to the Traveler games . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: . . . on the radio.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: And—uh—I remember listening to—um—I was worried when—uh—Roosevelt died.

SL: Yeah.

PB: I was afr—and I asked my mother if we were gonna lose the war. I was worried about that. And I remember listening to the radio a lot. Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—boxing matches, maybe?

PB: No. No boxing matches.

SL: No boxing matches?

PB: [Whispers] Girls don't listen to boxing matches.

SL: Well, but your dad may be listening to them.

PB: Yeah. Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn. Baseball. Mh-hmm.

[00:15:44] SL: Uh—what about some of the entertainment shows.
Did they—do you remember *Lum and Abner* or . . .

PB: Little Abner, Little Abner. Yeah.

SL: Little Abner. Yeah.

PB: Uh—yeah—um—there were—there were a lot of those.
Mh-hmm.

SL: And—uh—the family would just kinda gather around the radio
and . . .

PB: Uh-huh. Huh.

SL: . . . it's—it's funny how . . .

PB: And we had radios in several rooms, you know.

SL: Oh, okay. Mh-hmm.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:16:13] SL: Um—what about automobile?

PB: Well, there was one. Mh-hmm. And—uh—um—I am remem—
remembering a green Chevy—uh—Chevrolet.

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: Uh—two door.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And—um—um—later on there was a salmon-colored Ford. You know . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: . . . but there was always just one.

SL: That's pretty.

PB: And then my daddy—um—when he worked at this drugstore out in the Heights, we lived on the other side of town. And—uh—we'd have to drive—if we needed the car, we'd have to take him to work. You know, which would be fifteen or twenty minutes. And—uh—he wouldn't move out to West Little Rock or to Kingwood because he thought that was too far out.

SL: Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*]

PB: Mh-hmm. And he also didn't want me hangin' around with those kids that hung out at the drugstore, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: He was protective of you.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So—uh—as far as siblings go, you had two brothers?

[00:17:12] PB: Two brothers. Uh-huh. My—uh—older brother was named Calvin.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: Uh—and he died at age forty-two with colon cancer.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: He—uh—was a dermatologist. Uh—he graduated from medical school here in Little Rock.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: And—um—he—uh—accomplished a lot in a very short time. He discovered the bite—the cure for the bite of the brown recluse spider. And he put together the doctors—uh—to build the Doctors Building on University. And he—uh—was married and had four children—uh—which, you know, would've been so much better if he'd lived.

SL: Yeah.

[00:17:59] PB: Mh-hmm. And then my middle brother whose name was Bill, William Burt—um—uh—oh—is—was electrical engineer. And he just recently died.

SL: Oh.

[00:18:13] PB: He died—uh—uh—just—um—in September. And—uh—he has a wife and a son. Um—and he was—um—uh—an engineer with Dallas Power & Light for—for many years. They lived in Dallas. And—uh—um—you know—um—so—and he left a wife who's having all kinds of difficulties and then the son. So—um—but—um—Calvin had nothing to do with me until I got grown, till I came home from the university 'cause I was, you know. Uh—except to tell me that my ears were too big, which I

still [*laughter*—I'm sensitive about. And then Bill—Bill paid attention to me and—and was nice to me as a child, so—uh . . .

SL: Bill was the older . . .

PB: No, he was the younger.

SL: He was the younger?

PB: Younger. Yeah, yes. Uh-huh. So . . .

SL: Well, you're kinda like our—my family—uh—we had what we call a "fall and spring crop."

PB: [*Laughs*] Yeah, right.

SL: It's ten—there's ten years difference between me and . . .

PB: Oh, that's good [*laughs*].

SL: . . . my . . .

PB: Ten years difference between you and . . .

SL: And Gary.

PB: . . . Gary, yeah.

SL: Gary. And then Barbara's, what, three or four years older than Gary, I believe.

PB: Oh, my. Yeah. Uh-huh. Well—uh—I was a surprise package. So—mh-hmm.

SL: [*Laughs*] I . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Happens in the best . . .

SL: . . . I—I probably was, too.

PB: Yeah.

SL: I don't think I was ever told that.

PB: . . . it happens in the best of families. Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[00:19:40] SL: Yeah, yeah. Um—well, let's see now. Um—I'm trying to—um—let's talk a little bit about your mom.

PB: Fine.

SL: So she was doing the books for the pharmacy when she met your father.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—did she continue with that. . .

PB: Yes.

SL: . . . even when . . .

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . they started havin' a family?

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:00] PB: Mh-hmm. Yes.

SL: So she was a working mom.

PB: Yes, but she was always home when I got home from school. And when I was in grammar school, lots of days I walked home because the school was just three blocks away. I'd walk home for lunch. And—but she was always there. And she did a lot of the, you know—and it's amazing [*laughs*] the changes from then

to now, you know. She had to record every purchase on the statements, you know. And so she could do a lot of that at home.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That—that's good, a home office almost.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Dining room table. There's the, you know . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: . . . help her get the statements out, you know, so . . .

SL: Yeah, that's good.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:20:43] SL: Well, so was she a good cook?

PB: Oh, yeah. You know, she always cooked what everybody liked, which is what I would not do for my family [*laughter*], you know. We had to have all of our dishes, you know, so—mh-hmm.

SL: And . . .

PB: And I think about the st—poor stove she used, you know.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Well, tell me about that stove.

PB: Well, you know, it's a gas stove, and it was, you know—one side was the burners. Like, I guess, four burners and then the oven

over here, you know. And . . .

SL: She . . .

PB: . . . freestanding, yeah, and . . .

SL: Porcelain.

PB: Porcelain. Yes, indeed. Mh-hmm.

SL: And so the oven compartment was actually raised?

PB: Right. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Instead of being below the . . .

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: That's neat.

PB: It's interesting. Yeah.

[00:21:33] SL: Well, I mean, you know, I've talked with folks that used the wood burning stove to cook on.

PB: Hmm, hmm.

SL: At least the . . .

PB: At least we've come a little ways, you know.

SL: Well, I mean . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I think it's also the difference between urban and rural . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . growing up.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: It is interesting though that y'all had some chickens and rabbits and a little garden.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And I, you know—I'm not so certain that that doesn't have something to do with their experience through the Depression—that.

PB: Oh, yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Those that could be self-sustainable. . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . did a little bit better during the Depression.

PB: Mh-hmm. And she had flowers. She always had flowers.

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Flowers.

[00:22:16] SL: She make cakes?

PB: Yeah, mh-hmm. And I made cakes later on. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, when you were growing up and your much older brothers were still at the house, how were the chores divided up? I mean, were the kids expected to do—help around the house at all?

PB: I don't remember any of that.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn. I don't remember any chores, you know. I guess, mowin' the lawn was my younger brother. But, you know, by the time I got—by the time I got to fifteen, they were gone.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Bill being nine years older, you know. He was twenty-four. He was outta college and workin'. And Calvin was, you know, had all his long medical training. And he was—went to Scott & White in Texas. And then to his residency at the University of Chicago. So, you know, they were gone. Yeah.

SL: Right.

[00:23:27] SL: When you got up in the morning gettin' ready to go to school, did you make your own bed? Or did your mom—do you remember your mom makin' everyone's bed? Or it seems like you probably didn't make your own bed.

PB: I don't, yeah—I think I'd remember it if I did.

SL: Yeah.

PB: I probably didn't. Mh-hmm. Uh-huh. Probably didn't.

SL: Well, so it sounds like you had a fairly comfortable living.

PB: Yes.

SL: And . . .

PB: Very, very comfortable. Mh-hmm.

SL: So your father's business was a good one. And . . .

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Were they active in the community at all? Were there organizations that they belonged to? Or . . .

PB: No. Uhn-uhn.

[00:24:11] SL: What about church?

PB: They were Episcopalians. And as well—as long—as—also that—the children were. We were. And the reason we were Episcopalians is my mother's grandmother came from London. So it came right on down, you know, that we were Church of England Episcopalians. And I'm still an Episcopalian. And I'm sort of a backslider. But I, you know, try to go. And then mother's mother lived here a while. Mother's grandmother, I should say.

SL: Oh.

PB: Okay. Mother's grandmother who came from England, she called Gran, *G-R-A-N*. And she lived—I remember visiting her. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: She have any stories to tell you?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Do you remember any of those?

PB: Uhn-uhn. [Whispers] It's a long time ago.

[00:25:17] SL: Yeah. So was—did the church play a central role at all . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . in the household?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: They . . .

PB: No. Mother and daddy belonged to Christ Church, and when I was eleven, I transferred my membership, which is kind of strange [*laughs*]. But, anyway, I took Trinity Episcopal Cathedral because there were no young people at Christ Church. It was all older people. And so I was a regular attendant at Christ Church [PB edit: Trinity] with a lot of friends there.

[00:25:58] SL: Mh-hmm. Now tell me about Christ Church. Is that affiliated with any . . .

PB: It's Episcopal church.

SL: It's an Episcopal church.

PB: Yeah, it's in downtown Little Rock. It's across the street from the *Democrat-Gazette*.

SL: Okay. All right. So you just changed to a different . . .

PB: Yeah, it seemed sort of like heresy, you know, [*laughter*] that I would leave the family church. But, you know, they let me make

up my own mind about everything, I think. Mh-hmm.

SL: So really the church involvement was mainly just on Sundays.

PB: Right.

SL: And was it—was there Sunday school?

PB: Yes.

SL: Did you . . .

PB: Sunday school, and during Lent, there was a Friday afternoon service where we went and sang. And I can't sing, but they let me sing. So, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Were you a part of the choir? Did you . . .

PB: Yeah, yeah, we had a choir, but you know, everybody was in the choir. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, did you enjoy that?

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:26:51] SL: What about other—did y'all have any musical instruments in your house growing up?

PB: Yes, when my Aunt Phyllis died [*phone rings*], she left her piano to me. As she'd always said. And so we had the piano, and it was a—it's a player piano. You know, you pedal.

SL: Yeah, sure.

PB: I thought she [*unclear words*]. Anyway, all my friends would come over, and we'd pedal, you know, the piano. And play and

sing the songs, you know. And so—and of course, we had a record player with those big records, you know.

SL: The 78s or the—were they 30—the regular albums that . . .

PB: The big ones. You know.

SL: The big ones. Uh-huh.

PB: During that time, you had to crank it up. You know. And, yeah, that was. Mh-hmm.

[00:27:47] SL: So who played the piano in the house?

PB: Well, I took piano lessons, but they didn't stay with me, you know.

SL: They didn't?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn. Oh, and my brother took—my brother Calvin took piano lessons from Jimmy Hagan, who taught downtown. And had a way of teachin' the modern stuff, you know, with just chords and stuff, and he was really good. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did—were there any times when folks gathered around the piano and sang songs?

PB: Oh, yeah. When—I'd have parties and people would, you know—we would all do that. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Piano's a great thing to grow up with.

PB: Mh-hmm. It's wonderful. Mh-hmm.

SL: And a player piano . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's interesting.

PB: Mh-hmm. It was just great.

SL: So you had—it was cylinders that you loaded into the . . .

PB: It had rolls, you know, that had holes cut in.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: And, yeah, we had a whole cabinet of those.

[00:28:43] SL: Do you remember some of the selections?

PB: Well, I remember "Polonaise" is one. Of course, you can't sing to that but loved that. And "No love?" [PB edit: "White Christmas"] was one, you know. I just can't remember 'em all. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Well, let's get back to your record collection then. I guess the family, your mom and dad . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . probably had a set of records.

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: And did you start collecting records as soon as you could or . . .

PB: Not really, not really.

SL: Not really?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

[00:29:19] SL: So the—were the albums that they played, were they

mostly orchestral, or were—did they—was there a particular genre of music that they enjoyed listening to?

PB: Oh, I think it was popular music. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: So that would be big band . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . stuff.

PB: That, yes. Uh-huh. Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh-huh. So do you—you mentioned earlier about being worried about losing the war when . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . President Roosevelt . . .

PB: Died. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . died. [00:29:55] What do you remember about the war years?

PB: Hmm. Well, just that it was serious, and we were worried about it. And I was worried about it. And, of course, if it was—the war ended in what [19]47?

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

PB: [Nineteen] forty-seven. I would've been, what, twelve years old?

SL: Mh-hmm.

PB: But I was very aware of it and listened to on the radio to all of

the reports. And then, well—and my brother, Bill, was in the military. He was in the air force. And was stationed in Germany, and he got out just as a war—after the war ended. But while he was Germany, he went to some of the Nuremberg Trials. Which would've been real interesting. Mh-hmm.

SL: So did he see combat?

PB: No. Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: Lucky again.

PB: Yeah, right. Mh-hmm.

[00:31:03] SL: Do you remember any of the coupons or . . .

PB: Well, I remember gas rationing. You know, we had this sticker on the window of the car and on the inside it would say, "Is this trip really necessary?" And so we had more gasoline than most people because daddy had the drugstore, and he had sometimes to deliver and stuff, and he had to be at work for the sick people, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: So the government allowed . . .

PB: Uh-huh. More. Uh-huh.

SL: Had allowances for . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . businesses that depended on delivery.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's interesting.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:31:48] SL: Did you feel like the business—his business was just fine through the war? I guess, you know, folks . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . need medicine and . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Right. Mh-hmm. Yep, everything was fine. So . . .

[00:32:07] SL: Well, let's talk. Let—let's start talkin' about you a little bit now. Do—what is your—have you thought about what your earliest memory is?

PB: Well, one of my earliest memories is chasing my brother Bill into the bathroom. And he slammed the door on my little finger. And smushed it. And they, you know, grabbed me up and wrapped it up and put me in the baby bed. So I was pretty little then. And they took me to the dentist office to get it x-rayed because [*laughs*], you know, it was so little. You know.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: So—and that's one of my earliest memories. I had—I thought the house had a terrace in front and steps going down, and I thought it was so high up. Of course, it's not. And I remember fallin' down those front steps on Christmas with a little bit of ice

or something, you know. And I remember ridin' the tricycle up and down the sidewalk. And, you know, I remember the neighbors so well. They were just wonderful to me. And Mr. and Mrs. Kerr next door. And the people on the corner of the Browns [PB edit: and Mr. and Mrs. Blake Gladden]. And lived with their grandmother—grandparents. And he, the grandfather [PB edit: Mr. Gladden], worked at the *Gazette* as a printer. And he walked to and from work at night. He worked at night. From his home, which is—must be six miles.

SL: Wow.

PB: Mh-hmm. So—and he was a great carpenter. He made his granddaughters a dollhouse, you know, that you could get in. A real dollhouse. And he also made smaller dollhouses. You know, that little girls liked to play with. And mother got me one one Christmas. You know, it fit—it's big enough for a cardtable, you know . . .

SL: Sure.

PB: . . . covered the whole thing. [00:34:42] So—but, you know, I remember—oh, they had a swing off the tree in the backyard for me. And they had a cherry tree that I would climb. [*Laughs*] And, you know . . .

SL: Was the swing a tire swing or . . .

PB: No, it had wooden . . .

SL: It had a wooden seat?

PB: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Not good, but it was, you know—I didn't get hit in the head with it fortunately.

SL: Right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:35:14] SL: Were there any other neighborhood kids?

PB: Mh-hmm. They were—there were two down on the corner and Tiny and Midge Brown. And a boy up at the street, Buddy Worden. And then along about junior high, Charlotte Cooper moved in a block away. And we went to and from school every day. For—through junior high and high school. We had a carpool in high school. And so, you know, there were a lot of kids around. Mh-hmm.

[00:35:49] SL: I know when I was growin' up, we never locked our doors and . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . the keys would be left in the cars and all that.

PB: Hmm.

SL: Was your neighborhood kind of relaxed like that?

PB: Sort of, sort of. But we were sort of on the—an imaginary dividing line. Because we were one block from High, and on the

other side of High was black. And so it was kind of a dividing line, you know. So I think we may have been more careful.

[00:36:29] SL: So I don't wanna get too far ahead here. Let's talk a little bit about—I would assume you went to kindergarten. Do you remember?

PB: No, no kindergarten. Uhn-uhn.

SL: No kindergarten?

PB: Uhn-uhn. Went to elementary school, Mitchell. And then I went to West Side. Which is two words, West Side. They've spellin' it with one word now. It irritates me. *[SL laughs]* So, anyway, and then I went to Little Rock High School, which is now Central.

[00:37:04] SL: Well, did—let's get you in school then. How were you with homework?

PB: Oh, yeah. Well, you know, I was good *[laughs]*. I was good.



Interesting thing about junior high is we had a wonderful ger—English teacher. Her name was Eleanor Cooke.

SL: Okay.

PB: *C-O-O-K-E*. We—and the boys called her "Mrs. Cookie," you know.

SL: Okay.

PB: And we talked her into having a journalism class. And that's where I started doing journalism writing. And, in fact, I wrote

an article for the little newspaper that we had, that was entered in a contest, and I won a prize. So, you know, that encouraged—early on encouragement, I think, was important.

SL: Sure.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Absolutely.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So the English teacher acquiesced to adding . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . a journalism class to . . .

PB: And having a newspaper, and I was features editor. [*SL laughs*] And did all this, you know, stuff early on. And then when I went to Little Rock High School, I worked on the newspaper there. And the senior year in high school, a friend was Wesley Pruden who, for many years, has been editor of the *Washington Times*. He just retired, I guess, a year ago. But we both were competing to be editor, but he couldn't work after school 'cause he was workin' at the *Gazette* after school. So I got to be editor [*laughs*]. And so—and then, you know, I was on my way to majoring in journalism.

SL: So junior high, you got the fever.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:39:11] SL: Well, let's talk about grade school for a while. What kind of—do you remember any favorite teachers . . .

PB: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . that you had in grade school?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Let's talk a little bit about what you did in grade school.

[00:39:23] PB: Well, my first-grade teacher was Mrs. Dent, and I was crazy about her. Crazy about her. And there was a problem with me talking too much in class [*SL laughs*], and I told my mother that I didn't know what she was gonna do about that. And then the next day, I came home, and I'd had to stand in the corner. So my mother said, "Yeah, she knew what to do with you." [*Laughter*] So you know, so—yeah, so it was good and had Miss [PB edit: Mrs.] McCreight in the third grade. And it was all—it was very good experience.

SL: You know, I—I've talked with people, and this is kinda the way it was when I was growin' up. The neighbors knew all the kids . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in the neighborhood.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And they really weren't part of the disciplining of a child, but if you did something wrong or . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . one of your friends did something wrong [*PB laughs*], the whole neighborhood kinda knew about it.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Or, you know, they would say, "Now you shouldn't be doin' that; get on home."

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: By the time you got home, your mom . . .

PB: Already knew about it.

SL: . . . had gotten a . . .

PB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . had already gotten a phone call.

[00:40:46] PB: Well, it's different with a girl, I think.

SL: Yeah.

PB: I think it's different. With that people that lived between my house and the Browns on the corner were the Kerrs I mentioned. And we could just walk in their house anytime, you know. They sat a lot out on the porch. And we'd just go over, and they'd talk to us like a—we were adults. You know, we just loved 'em. And I remember one night, I went over there, and we'd been out catching lightnin' bugs . . .

SL: Sure.

PB: . . . and had a jar of lightnin' bugs and dropped it on the concrete floor . . .

SL: Oh.

PB: . . . of the porch, you know. I was mortified. And all the bugs went and glass everywhere, you know [*laughs*]. But they were wonderful to me. And to all the others—kids, too.

SL: Yeah, I think that was common when I grew up. That you really did feel comfortable about going in and out of people's houses. I mean . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

PB: Just go and walk right in. If they're eatin' supper, just sit and talk to 'em while they eat supper, you know.

SL: Yeah, or they'd fix you a plate.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: [*Laughs*] Those were days—those were good days.

PB: Interesting.

SL: Yes. Uh-huh.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:41:57] SL: So were there any favorite subjects early on that kinda got you in grade school? I mean, did you like the math? Did you have . . .

PB: Well, I liked the math. And I liked the English. One would think I would like history, but I never have really liked history. Haven't gotten into it much. But—oh, and my older brother used to always listen on the radio to the Democratic National Conventions. And I would listen with him. And then, of course, the time came that I got to go.

SL: That's neat.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:42:50] SL: Radio was such a great media. It really made a difference. When it . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when it started happening across the country. All of the sudden, oratory was so good.

PB: It was important. Mh-hmm.

SL: Important. Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And people sat in front of the radio at the appointed hour [*PB laughs*] to hear what was going to happen.

PB: Right.

SL: So let's see. I thought of a question. Well, I'll have to—it'll come to me in a little bit. But—oh, so you were close enough—you lived close enough to the elementary school . . .

PB: To walk.

SL: . . . that you just walked home after school.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And the boys started pickin' on me, and some of—my brother, Bill, said he would teach me jujitsu so I could protect myself. [*Laughs*] Not.

SL: Not. Uh-huh. Well, I mean—but you were safe. I mean . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . it was a safe neighborhood.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: It was a good school, and you had good teachers and there—you know, there's always some bullies or some kids . . .

PB: Always. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that act out. But for the most part, it was a totally positive and wholesome and healthy . . .

PB: Oh, yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . environment to grow up in.

PB: Mh-hmm. Very.

[00:44:11] SL: When you got home from school, what did you do?

PB: Well, I probably got a snack. And then went and checked on my friends to see where they were. Yeah.

SL: Immediately went out to play.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: That's great.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And what about whenever you had homework? Was your mom kind of the person that made sure . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you did your homework?

PB: No. I just did my homework. I don't think I had any in grammar school. I don't remember homework in grammar school. Uhn-uhn.

SL: But when you did have homework, your mom was kind of the . . .

PB: Yeah, well.

SL: . . . you just took care of it yourself. You were motivated.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: You enjoyed it.

PB: Yeah, gettin' the job done. Mh-hmm.

[00:45:02] SL: So you looked forward to going to school and . . .

PB: Oh, yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: What about when you were in junior high? What about extracurricular activities around . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . the junior high.

PB: We had a good time. We had dances every Saturday night in the gym at West Side. It was . . .

SL: Every Saturday night.

PB: . . . it was called the Den. And we weren't coupled, you know, but we had—everybody went, and everybody danced. And, you know, together and all of this stuff, you know. The coach did that for us. His name was Coy Adams. And we had music, you know, records, I guess. And we had a good time. I was in the National Junior Honor Society. Worked on the newspaper and, you know . . .

SL: Were you a sports fan at all?

[00:46:11] PB: Yes, yes. I have—I've always been a very big sports fan. But I don't know if it was junior high or high school, but I remember goin' and watchin' Brooks—Brooks Robinson play baseball. And, I guess, we had football games in junior high. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, what about the whole athletic culture, you know, homecoming, the cheerleading, pom squads?

PB: Yeah. Well, I always went out for cheerleader, but I never got it 'cause I'm not coordinated. But that was okay. And we didn't—I don't think we had homecoming in junior high. I don't think so. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Hmm. That's interesting.

PB: I don't remember it. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Uh-huh. What about marching band? Did you ever enroll in band classes?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Or they weren't . . .

PB: No. No, no band. I didn't have any musical ability either.

[*Laughter*]

SL: Well, okay.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[00:47:28] SL: So let's see. Let's get back to the house then. What about do you remember when you first got the TV set?

PB: Yes. [*Laughs*] Yes. It was when I was in college.

SL: Wow.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: So that would have . . .

PB: It—I think it was . . .

SL: Television hit kind of in the mid-[19]50s, I think.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Like . . .

PB: Well, that's when I was in college.

SL: Yeah.

PB: So we used to sit and watch the test pattern. Do you remember that? [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, absolutely. Did yours have one with the Indian on it?

PB: I don't remember. [*Laughs*]

SL: There was some that had an Indian that—kind of a bull's-eye.

PB: And we had the antenna on top, you know, of the set. You know, oh, it was quite something. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:48:19] SL: Do you remember any favorite shows?

PB: We loved Perry Como. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh, sure.

PB: Perry Como and the Academy Awards, Miss America, and then the news, you know.

SL: What about some of those early serials like *Roy Rogers* or *Sky King* or . . .

PB: No, I never was big on those.

SL: Ed Sullivan?

PB: Yeah. We always watched Ed Sullivan.

SL: Lawrence Welk?

PB: Not Lawrence Welk.

SL: Not Lawrence Welk?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: "Champagne Music" hour?

PB: No, no, no, no. [*SL laughs*] No, nope. We watched Ed Sullivan every Sunday forever, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you remember seeing Elvis . . .

PB: I do.

SL: . . . on *Ed Sullivan*?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. I do.

SL: I—that's a vivid memory for me.

PB: Yeah, right. [*Laughs*]

SL: Had the hair—the black hair that . . .

PB: Yeah, oh gosh.

SL: . . . came to point on his [*PB laughs*] . . .

PB: Yeah, you know, it was really funny. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, so do you—were there any kind of events that your parents took you to when you were growin' up?

[00:49:59] PB: The comp—Kiwani Club had a minstrel at Robinson Auditorium that we always went to.

SL: A minstrel show?

PB: Mh-hmm. You know, that would be blackface. [*Laughs*]

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

PB: But we always went to that because somebody involved in it sold at my daddy tickets at the drugstore, you know, so—uh-huh.

SL: And did you enjoy those?

PB: Yeah, ?amusing?. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. So—mh-hmm.

[00:50:31] SL: What about any other theatrical . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . plays or . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . concerts or . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn. Went to the library a lot during the summer. Was in the book club reading books.

SL: Good.

PB: And—mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Went to Fair Park Pool, swam all summer. Mh-hmm. That's the reason I'm wrinkled today.

[*Laughter*]

SL: Well . . .

PB: Too much sunshine.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You're kind of fair skinned.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah, I learned early to stay in the shade.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Even at the pool, I'd find a shade somewhere.

PB: Well, you know, we had to tan. You know, we had that . . .

SL: Right, well, of course.

PB: . . . baby oil with iodine. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yes, yes. Absolutely, absolutely.

PB: You know. So it's funny. Mh-hmm.

[00:51:19] SL: Well, what about boys? When did boys kinda start entering your life?

PB: Oh, I've always liked boys.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And did that please your mom and dad or . . .

PB: Yeah. Well, we had a neighborhood theatre that was not too far away, and we would have dates walking to and from the theatre. It was called The Nabor Theatre. It was on Wright Avenue. And so—yeah, I had boyfriends. Mh-hmm.

SL: And do you remember the kind of movies that you'd go see?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: I'm tryin' to think, probably westerns maybe?

PB: Might've been. [*SL laughs*] Might've been.

SL: So how—was this a small movie theatre?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And were there—was there a balcony to the theatre? Was it segregated?

[00:52:24] PB: There was a balcony, and that was segregated, mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: And so maybe we should just go ahead and talk about the whole race thing and your growing up. I—I'm assuming that your public schools were totally segregated . . .

PB: Yes.

SL: . . . when you were growing up.

PB: Mh-hmm. I loved Little Rock High School because that was the only white high school. So I knew every white person in town, you know. But, yeah, so . . .

SL: So did it just seem ordinary, you know, that the African Americans would be up in the balcony and the whites would be down in below? Was there a—did you ever—were you ever aware of any inequities that were going on growing up?

PB: Well, yeah, and I remember the white and black drinkin' fountains at Pfeifer's Department Store. I was aware of that, but I guess, I didn't think that was something I could do anything about. [00:53:40] But, you know, I was always kind to black people. I remember having a class with a black person in—at the university, and she was smarter than I was, which was very embarrassing to me. [*Laughs*] You know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: But, no. Uhn-uhn. You know.

SL: What about—I guess, you never saw any African Americans at the swimming pool?

PB: No.

SL: And what about at church?

PB: No.

SL: Never at church either?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Did your father cater to African Americans? Were they ever—you ever see any there at the drugstore?

PB: No. Uhn-uhn.

SL: It was just the way it was, wasn't it?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: It was just a—people just accepted that, and it wasn't really contentious, was it?

PB: No. Uhn-uhn.

SL: I mean.

PB: Not at all contentious.

[00:54:41] SL: What about buses? Do you ever remember riding on a bus?

PB: I rode—we rode on the buses a lot, and you know, they were at the back of the bus. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Did your family ever have house help or . . .

PB: [Whispers] Yes.

SL: In . . .

PB: Always.

SL: Always?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did you yourself have a relationship with any of the house help?
I mean . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Hmm.

SL: . . . did they—a lot of times, you know, they were almost nanny-
like.

[00:55:14] PB: Yeah, naw. They weren't that. They, you know, did
the washin' and the ironin' and the cleanin'. Mh-hmm.

SL: So did you ever feel close to any of the African Americans in the
home?

PB: No, no.

SL: There was a great—there was a distance there, and it was
probably more pronounced with white females, I would guess. I
don't know that, but . . .

PB: I don't know. You know, it was friendly, but there was not, you
know—not any relationship there. Uhn-uhn.

[00:56:04] SL: Well, okay. So you would date—you started dating

in junior high, I would guess?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And it was usually a movie kind of date?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And these dances that happened every Saturday night, were the boys on one side of the gym and the girls on the other?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And did boys come and ask . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . to dance?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Were you fairly popular growing up?

PB: Fairly. Yeah.

SL: Fairly?

PB: I think so.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: I had fun, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did you break a lot of hearts—many?

PB: [*Laughs*] Not really.

SL: Not really, no?

PB: Not really. Mh-hmm. Yeah.

[00:56:52] SL: Well, I—tell me—give me a description of your school

that you went to.

PB: West Side?

SL: The elementary school.

PB: Elementary school—it had those floors that were oiled. You remember? The, you know, oil on the wood or something. And—but it was just—it's still there. Still here, but it's closed. They keep trying to figure out something to do with Mitchell, but I told 'em they could just put a plaque up . . .

SL: Yeah.

PB: . . . that I went there. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: In fact, I was at a school board meeting once and suggested that. [*Laughter*] Anyway, it's just, you know, a boy playground and a girl playground.

SL: Oh, so the . . .

PB: And the boy entrance and a girl entrance—and . . .

SL: Really?

PB: And, yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And we had art, and we had Christmas programs, and—mh-hmm.

SL: So it was a brick building?

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Was it two stories or . . .

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And it was grades one through six. But the girls had a separate entrance from the boys.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: So you probably had your own cloakrooms.

PB: Yes.

SL: Was there a cloakroom . . .

PB: Cloakroom.

SL: . . . that you entered through?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[00:58:09] SL: And what about—and so even the playgrounds—you . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, boys on one side and girls on the other. Mh-hmm.

SL: That's interesting. I don't think I've ever heard of that.

PB: Hmm.

SL: But you took classes together?

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: They didn't segregate the classes.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And you—did—you walked home for lunch?

PB: Most of the time.

SL: Most of the time.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: But they had a cafeteria there?

PB: They had a cafeteria. Mh-hmm.

SL: And were the boys and girls allowed to eat together?

PB: I don't remember. Probably not. Probably girls in one and boys in one. Didn't have anything to do with each other at that point, yeah.

SL: Yeah. That's so interesting. I—I've never run [*PB laughs*] across that.

PB: Hmm.

[00:59:03] SL: But, okay. So that's elementary school. So—but when you start going to junior high, that's not the case there?

PB: No. Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: And everybody's commingled.

PB: Together. Mh-hmm.

Joy Endicott: Let's stop before we get to junior high. We got about a minute left on tape.

SL: Okay, all right. [*PB laughs*] All right, let's stop tape.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:22] SL: Okay, Phyllis, we're on tape two now. Had a little break, and while we were on break, you remembered something about your Grandmother Burt. Well . . .



PB: Right. Well, I was telling you I thought it was so interesting that she was really a businesswoman. And she had a cafeteria behind Blass Department Store on—I guess it was on 4th. And it was called the Businessman's Cafeteria.

SL: That's a great name.

PB: And something happened, and it burned to the ground. And so she went to the bank to borrow money to build it back, and they wouldn't loaned it to her. So then she went and was the cafeteria director at North Little Rock High School. But she would—apparently was just a really good cook. Of course, I—you know, I didn't really know her until much later.

SL: I wonder how long she had the restaurant.

PB: I don't know. I don't know.

SL: And it's—do you think that—I mean, what—I wonder what years that was. I mean, it was—it's unusual that a woman would have her own business.

PB: Business. Yes. That was probably why they wouldn't loaned her the money to build it back. But I just think—I think this was before I was born. You know.

SL: That makes it even more rare.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. I was born in [19]35. Yeah. I think it may have been before I was born. [01:01:09] But another thing

that I remember is that my Aunt Phyllis who died young and left me the piano. I used to go visit her in the summer in El Dorado, and they let me ride the train by myself. I was—and I'd go down there, and it was just wonderful. And you know, and they'd—I'd play the piano. And they—I thought that house was so big. It was so big. I've seen it since, and it's not that big. But they had a fishpond, and they had, you know, all this land and all this stuff. So they lived in the Country Club Colony in El Dorado. And they—he worked for the oil company, so there was some money there. But they had two sons. And one of 'em was in the Second World War and was in the Battle of the Bulge. And . . .

SL: And survived it?

PB: And survived that. Yeah. He developed diabetes, and they attributed that to the war, but I don't know how that could be. But they—it was these two boys, so I don't know, you know. We lost touch after she died. So I don't know what has happened to them, so—mh-hmm.

SL: Now let's see now. Which relative was this that . . .

PB: This is my mother's sister.

SL: Sister.

PB: Phyllis.

SL: Phyllis.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:02:47] SL: And so you got to travel by train.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now for a long time, trains were the mode of transportation . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . if you had to go someplace. . .

PB: Right.

SL: . . . far.

PB: Mh-hmm. Well, we drove back and forth some. But I remember the train and how special that was. Mh-hmm.

SL: So let's talk a little about the train. I mean, you've—how old were you when you got do that?

PB: Well, not very old. I wanna say seven or eight, maybe.

SL: Wow.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So how long—do you remember how long it took the . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . how long of a train ride it was?

PB: No. It wasn't long though, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: A couple of hours.

SL: And so . . .

PB: I remember getting on the train . . .

SL: Yeah.

PB: . . . at the Rock Island Station, which is where the Clinton School of Public Service is now. That's fun.

SL: That is fun.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:03:56] SL: So they just took you to the train station? Did you have your bag with you or . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . did you hand . . .

PB: I think so. Yeah.

SL: . . . that to the porter?

PB: Mh-hmm. And the porter—I think they alerted the porter to look after me, you know.

SL: Well, sure.

PB: Mh-hmm. Hmm.

[01:04:14] SL: And were you in your own compartment or did—or was it?

PB: It was just a seat.

SL: Just a seat. Mh-hmm.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Gosh, that had to be exciting.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Well, I thought I was very well traveled, you know. [*SL laughs*] I thought I was just a big-time thing, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, you know, there were a lot of trains back then. And
I . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . I've heard that back in those days, there were fifty trains that went from Newport to Little Rock a day.

PB: Fifty?

SL: Fifty a day.

PB: I can't imagine. I can't imagine.

SL: That's the way people traveled.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And other than the freight and all that stuff.

PB: Hmm.

SL: It was—if you needed to go to Little Rock, you got on a train.

PB: Hmm. That's amazing.

[01:05:02] SL: So El Dorado, what a town.

PB: Well, it was big time then, you know, with the oil boom. It was quite something. I remember it smelled like oil, and I remember the soil is very sandy. And—mh-hmm.

SL: Oilfields were very muddy back then.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: We've got photographs of how horrible the roads were . . .

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . back into the oilfields.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: So was your Aunt Phyllis—her husband—your uncle worked in the oil industry.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you have any idea what he did?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: If he was actually in the fields or . . .

PB: No, he was in an—as executive.

SL: He was in town.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: An ex—yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, what a great—that's a great time in Arkansas history.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when all that was goin' on.

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: It was quite remarkable.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: A lot of great stories down there. So did you just get to it that one time or . . .

PB: That one time is all I remember. I think, my mother worried too much about me. So probably . . .

SL: Well.

PB: . . . didn't get to do that again. Mh-hmm.

SL: It's a pretty big adventure . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for a young girl.

PB: Mh-hmm. For a little girl. Mh-hmm.

[01:06:17] SL: And the house, was it an old two story—kind of a historical . . .

PB: In El Dorado?

SL: Uh-huh.

PB: It was two story, but it was just nice, you know. I thought it was just wonderful. Mh-hmm. They had a music room for the piano, you know. And had a wonderful, fuzzy rug on the floor. And I took my naps on the rug. And . . .

SL: Do you remember what kind of heat they may have had? Was it radiator heat, maybe or . . .

PB: I don't remember.

SL: They had electricity, too?

PB: Oh, sure.

SL: Of course.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And did they have a garden and things like . . .

[01:07:00] PB: In way back in the yard. You know, they had a lot of yard. But they didn't—way back they—and they'd have a man out there who plowed it up in the spring, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did they ever take you into town to do things when you were visiting?

PB: Oh, I'm sure . . .

SL: Do you remember any of the town life?

PB: Uhn-uhn. I don't remember anything like that. I'm sure they did.

SL: And so when it was time for you to come back to Little Rock, they just put you on the train and . . .

PB: I don't remember. I don't remember. Mother may have come after me, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: I bet you would've remembered if you'd . . .

PB: Yeah, I would've, yeah.

SL: . . . gotten a return trip.

PB: Right. Probably so. Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's int—so your mother drove?

PB: Oh, yes. Mh-hmm. One car. Mh-hmm. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:07:53] SL: Well, okay. Let's get back to life in Little Rock. And you—we were talking about—we had started to talk about race relations and the culture then growing up. I guess, you would've been—did—you went to school at the University of Arkansas?

PB: Yes.

SL: In Fayetteville?

PB: Yes.

SL: Okay. Let's talk about the difference between your life here, and then when you went to Fayetteville. What was . . .

PB: Hmm. I wanna talk about high school.

SL: Okay. Well, let's talk about high school.

PB: You know.

SL: Okay.

[01:08:39] PB: Well, I did tell you that I was the editor of the paper at high school.

SL: Right. Uh-huh.

PB: And that I had decided that I was gonna go to the University of Arkansas. At that time there weren't very many from my high school that were gonna go. You know, it's expensive then. So I was lucky that my parents arranged that. But then I went to

Fayetteville. Lived in Holcombe Hall with all the freshmen girls.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm. And pledged Kappa Kappa Gamma. [*Laughs*]

SL: And so you were in a sorority.

PB: Right. Mh-hmm.

SL: And did you like that? Did you like . . .

PB: Yes. Oh, we loved it. We had a great time. It was more fun than you could imagine. And lots of good friends still today from that time.

SL: Let's see. Now what year? That would've been in . . .

[01:09:32] PB: I went to Fayetteville in 1953, the fall of [19]53.

SL: Okay.

PB: Mh-hmm. And then I pledged Kappa, and I was in Mortar Board. And I was in Who's Who in Colleges and Universities. And I ran for secretary of the senior class and got it. So my name is second on the walk on Senior Walk. And I worked on the *Traveler*, the *Arkansas Traveler*, the newspaper. With—Ronnie Farrar was the editor, and I was his associate editor. And then the next year I ran [PB edit: for editor], but I didn't get it because I was a girl.

[01:10:14] SL: Do you remember any of the blacks on campus?

PB: Very few. There were very few blacks. There was, you know,

like—I had one class with one. And like I said, she was smarter than I was, so—but, nope, there weren't very many. There weren't very many in Washington County at all, anyway, you know.

SL: Did you ever sense any hostilities at all . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . up in Fayetteville?

PB: Uhn-uhn. No.

SL: Never saw any evidence . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . of prejudice or . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

[01:10:56] SL: Was the—in the class that you had with the black were there—was there any accommodation . . .

PB: No difference.

SL: . . . for that?

PB: No difference. Yeah.

SL: No difference?

PB: It was Norman DeMarco's class at the art center.

[01:11:08] SL: Ah, let's talk about Norman DeMarco.

PB: Oh, we loved Norman DeMarco, you know. Mh-hmm.

SL: What was it about him that was so great?

PB: Oh, he was just a great teacher. And creative and did lots of good for the university, I think.

SL: Now his painting, I believe, hangs in the theatre.

PB: Yes, yes.

SL: In the University Theatre.

PB: He directed the theatre. Mh-hmm. Yes, he did.

SL: So did you . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . did you have theatrical classes with him?

PB: No. I don't remember what the classes were, but I had a couple. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. I don't remember.

SL: So he wasn't a part of the journalism department then?

PB: No, no. Uhn-uhn. No.

SL: But you . . .

[01:12:01] PB: But the journalism department was an interesting thing in that . . .

SL: Well, let's talk about it.



PB: Okay, one of the teachers was Joe Thalheimer . . .

SL: Okay.

PB: . . . and we called him "Smokey Joe." [SL laughs] And he taught a lot of the classes. And, you know, we all smoked then. The professors smoked in class; we smoked in class the whole

time. And he had a problem in that he could not get his filter cigarette out with the filter in his mouth. And so he would light the filter, which would go "foof," you know. [*Laughter*].

SL: Oh.

PB: And so whenever he was gettin' a cigarette out, we'd all sit there [*laughter*] and watch to see what was going to happen. And he, in fact—he even opened the bottom—the—of the package to—in hopes that with that coming out that way that it would get in his mouth . . .

SL: The right way.

PB: . . . the right direction. But one day I remember vividly that he lit the filter, you know. And all I could do was laugh, you know. And then my friend, Ronnie Farrar, was sittin' here, and he bit his hand to keep from laughing [*laughter*] out loud, you know. [01:13:10] But journalism was wonderful, and I did well. But, you know, in arts and sciences, you have to take all these other requirements.

SL: That's right. Mh-hmm.

PB: So, you know, like biology and geology and physical science, and so that kept me from having honors, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

PB: And so that's fine. That was fine. But I had—Mortar Board was

a great thing. So that was good. But, you know, my daddy didn't want me to go into journalism. I think he didn't think that was a good profession for a woman. But the—I was determined because it—that's easy for me.

SL: Yeah. Well, you had a passion for it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You . . .

PB: It developed early on . . .

SL: . . . you got a bug for it in junior high.

PB: . . . yeah . . .

SL: And it stuck with you.

PB: . . . mh-hmm, mh-hmm. I just—it was just my thing, so . . .

[01:14:09] SL: Well, was there—what else was there? Fayetteville and Little Rock had to be very different.

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: So, I mean, Fayetteville was smaller for one thing.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: But all—now you were in a—you had a pretty big student population relative . . .

PB: Yes, right.

SL: . . . to what you were used to.

PB: Mh-hmm. But we developed our groups. You know, you

developed your—if you wanna call 'em cliques, you can. That's what . . .

SL: Right.

PB: . . . but it's your group, you know. And so that was, you know—it was great. We had a friend who had a car, and so we could ride back and forth. You—but, of course, in those days it took four, four and a half hours. Mh-hmm.

SL: Seventy-one.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:14:55] SL: So Ron Farrar?

PB: Mh-hmm. *F-A-R-R-A-R*. Mh-hmm.

SL: So he's not—was he part of the Farrar family in Fayetteville?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: Different?

PB: He's from Fordyce.

SL: And I think they spell theirs *F-E-R-R-E*.

PB: Mh-hmm. Maybe so.

SL: He was from Dallas?

PB: Fordyce, Fordyce . . .

SL: Oh, Fordyce.

PB: . . . Fordyce. Mh-hmm. Fordyce on the Cotton Belt. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[01:15:19] PB: And he was a Kappa Sig, yeah. So—and of course, at that point, at the university, I met my future husband. And we had classes together. And we married soon, you know. In November after I graduated.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, other than the journalism studies, was there—were there any other—and there were classes with DeMarco . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . was there any other remarkable professors that you—I mean, who else was in the journalism department back then? Was . . .

PB: Well, Ron Farrar was, and he went on to get his Ph.D. in journalism at the University of Missouri. And he taught at Ole Miss and he taught in, I think, Wisconsin [PB edit: University of Indiana]. He taught at SMU, and he retired from the faculty at the University of South Carolina. So that was an interesting one. And then "Buddy" Portis was in school with us and worked on the *Traveler* with us. And this is Charles Portis of *True Grit* fame. And so we knew him well, and Phil Anderson who was editor of the yearbook. And he went on to get a law degree. And a couple years ago was president of the American Bar Association. So a lot of these people turned out well. You know, Paige Mulholland was business manager for the *Traveler*. And he went

on and was a university president somewhere. He's back living in Fayetteville now.

SL: Hmm. Was Ben Kimpel around then?

PB: No, no.

SL: He wasn't there?

[01:17:18] PB: But I did have one class with Walter Lemke. You know, the legendary . . .

SL: Yes.

PB: . . . and—but he was sort of past his prime at that point. And this class was advertising, and so, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah. He was—he is quite a legend.

[01:17:39] PB: I'm a Walter Lemke Scholar.

SL: Oh.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: How did that happen?

PB: [*Laughter*] I don't know. It was a nice honor.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: You know, it's for journalism graduates, you know. From up there that continued their career, which I have done.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, so he was a little bit beyond his prime you think . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . by the time . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you got to be with him.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Hmm. Well, he had a lot to do with the County Historical Society.

PB: Hmm. Good.

SL: And he also was fairly prolific in his correspondence with kids that were in the war.

PB: Oh, yeah. That's great. Mh-hmm.

[01:18:23] SL: Mh-hmm. Well, what about the life in Fayetteville? I mean, you had George's down the street.

PB: I never went to George's. Can you believe that?

SL: You never went to George's?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Did you ever go to Dickson Street at all?

PB: Oh, sure.

SL: Jug Wheeler's?

PB: We went to Jug Wheeler's. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

PB: And you know there's a guy, a Wheeler—a son of that Wheeler is

at the med center now.

SL: Is that right?

PB: Yeah. Yeah. But, no, we did that, and we went to movies
and . . .

SL: Ozark and UARK theatres.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And the, you know, fraternity and sorority
events and the football games. Never went to a basketball game
up there, though, surprised. You know, I don't know. And,
so . . .

SL: Well, let's see. They played in the men's gym . . .

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: I can't remember if Barnhill was built that early or not.

PB: Yeah, it was. It was Barnhill. [01:19:35] One—we had lots of
entertainment come in. We had Louis Armstrong. I remember
him vividly—I reviewed it for the *Traveler*. We went to dinner
with him beforehand. It was quite something, you know.

SL: Where did y'all go? Do you remember?

PB: No, uhn-uhn. We had a private room somewhere.

SL: Mary Maestri's maybe?

PB: I don't know. Uhn-uhn. I was back up there two weeks ago for
the game, and we went to AQ. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: We used to go to AQ all the time.

SL: Sure.

PB: It's not as good as it used to be.

SL: Nah.

PB: When Roy Ritter had it.

SL: Yeah. Did you go to the one up in Springdale or the one in Fayetteville?

PB: Springdale, the original.

SL: Springdale—the original. Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I remember goin' to that.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: What about—do you remember Heinie's?

PB: We didn't go there too much. It must've been expensive or something.

SL: It was a little—it was a steak house.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Yeah, I know. No, didn't do that much. We went to AQ a lot. [01:20:46] But—you remember Gaebale?

SL: Yeah, sure. And . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . actually there were concer—Gaebale concerts.

PB: Yeah.

SL: I think the last day of Gaebale there . . .

PB: Right. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . was a big—always a big concert.

PB: That's—I think that's what Louis Armstrong came for. What does Gaebale stand for?

SL: I have no idea.

PB: It's all the letters of the various colleges.

SL: Is that right?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, now I've learned something.

PB: Mh-hmm. Well, I do—I don't think they have it anymore do they?

SL: No, they don't.

PB: Hmm.

SL: But I remember it when I was growing up. Mh-hmm.

PB: Yeah, in Fayetteville. Mh-hmm. [01:21:21] And so, well, there was sock hops at the Union. And then they moved the unions, you know. And there were all kinds of parties.

SL: Do you remember Buddy Hayes, the shoeshine guy?

PB: No.

SL: Outside the Union?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: I can't believe you never went to George's. That's so . . .

PB: Isn't that funny?

SL: That is funny.

PB: You know, well. I guess I didn't drink enough beer or something. [*SL laughs*].

SL: Well, you know, you could get something to eat there, too.

PB: [*Laughs*] Yeah, really?

[01:21:57] SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: I've never been in George's. So . . .

SL: Do you mem—did you ever go into Collier's?

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: They had a soda fountain there.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. I remember Collier's well. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did it resemble in any way your daddy's?

PB: Sort of. Yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Drugstores today don't resemble it though.

SL: No?

PB: We have a drugstore down here sells groceries, you know, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: It's amazing. So—but, yeah. I guess we studied. You know, we were bound to studied a little bit.

SL: Well, you had—I'm sure you had curfews being in a . . .

PB: Oh, we did have curfews.

SL: And you had a housemom.

PB: Oh, yeah. And one day . . .

SL: You remember her name?

PB: Oh, yeah. Mother Jennings—Laura Jennings in the Kappa House.
And one night I missed curfew.

SL: Oh.

[01:22:52] PB: And I'll never forget it. I was with Buddy Portis.
And, of course, he was an independent, so he really wasn't
tuned in to a curfew, you know. So it got—went to—and had to
ring the doorbell. And Mother Jennings opened the door and
said, "Why, Phyllis!" You know [*laughs*], so that was a date-
jerk, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: You know, so . . .

SL: How late were you?

PB: Well it wasn't that, you know—fifteen minutes or something like
that.

SL: Right, right.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, [*PB laughs*], they were like mother hens.

PB: Yeah.

SL: They really . . .

PB: Yeah. And she, you know—she made us cut up our fried chicken. You know, we learned how to cut fried chicken, you know. She made ladies out of us. It was a really a, you know—a girl's polishing in the school. Refining school to be in the Kappa House 'cause she was determined we were gonna be ladies. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[01:23:58] SL: Do you remember any bands—local bands at all? Did you go to any of those—you had sock hops, were there . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . was that just record player?

PB: Hmm. [Whispers] I don't remember. We went to—what is it? The place out the highway. The . . .

SL: Rockwood Club?

PB: Rockwood [PB edit: Tee Table] and the other one—there's another one.

SL: Shamrock?

PB: Yeah, maybe so. We went there. And that—and that's where—well, there was a band, but I don't remember. I've seen him recently. He's played at the Governor's Mansion recently. And he's big. What's his name?

SL: Ronnie Hawkins?

PB: Yes. [*Laughs*] Ronnie Hawkins, right—and . . .

SL: Was he . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . do you remember his performances . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . at the Rockwood Club?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now it's my understanding it's—the smoke was pretty thick out there.

PB: Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, we smoked. Smoked like chimneys. It's disgusting to think about it now. It's just terrible.

[01:25:02] SL: Did you ever notice the guy at the door? The door—the guy?

PB: The doorman?

SL: Yeah.

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: That was Don Tyson.

PB: Mh-mh-mmh. Isn't that amazing?

SL: Uh-huh. My brother Porter was his bouncer. [*PB laughs*]

PB: Oh, wow.

SL: We go way back with Ronnie Hawkins.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah, he—did you ever meet Doug Douglas?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: He's nephew to Senator Fulbright. But . . .

[01:25:38] PB: Hmm. This is another incident. My cousin was
Homer Adkins.

SL: Okay.

[01:25:46] PB: A cousin of my daddy's. And he fired Bill Fulbright
as president of the University of Arkansas. [*Laughs*] Isn't that
funny?

SL: That is.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Wow, well did you ever hear the "why fors" or anything?

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Did you ever get any . . .

PB: Well, it was all political, of course—and . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

PB: And so I don't know. But I think Homer Adkins may have been a
member of the Klu Klux Klan.

SL: I've . . .

PB: I've heard that.

SL: I have—I believe I've heard that too.

PB: Mh-hmm. But he was married to my daddy's cousin, Estelle.

Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

PB: We'd get Christmas cards from him. [*Laughs*]

SL: Really?

PB: Yeah. When he was in the Governor's Mansion, which was fun.

Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah.

PB: No, it—there wasn't any Governor's Mansion then, when he was governor. [*Laughs*] Mh-hmm.

[01:26:36] SL: Huh. Well, so let's see. We were talking about Ronnie Hawkins. Ronnie, you know—Ronnie was a kind of a Greek god.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Back then.

PB: He still is pretty cute. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, he and Doug Douglas had a diving comedy show they used to do at the swimming pool. I don't know.

PB: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh.

SL: You know, Ronnie was a pretty good-sized specimen . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . but Doug Douglas was a little guy. [*PB laughs*] So it was

kind of a Mutt and Jeff . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . thing. And they actually took it to Florida for a couple of summers.

PB: Mh-hmm. Oh, that's fun.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Ronnie, we've interviewed Ronnie a couple of times.

PB: Oh, good. Mh-hmm. That's great.

SL: Yeah, he's a good—he's a great interview.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: He could say—do you remember his stage performances at all?

PB: Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: 'Cause he could do backflips and . . .

PB: Oh, no. I've not seen any of that, you know. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Yeah, in his prime he was pretty hot.

PB: Yeah. Well, he was good when I saw him at the Governor's Mansion last year. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Party over there.

SL: Yeah, he sits now and sings.

PB: [*Laughs*] Yeah, right.

[01:27:54] SL: Well, that's good that you could remember him. So what about John Tolleson? Do you remember John Tolleson?

PB: Oh, yeah. I remember John Tolleson, too. Mh-hmm. A lot.
Mh-hmm.

SL: There was a dance hall above the UARK Bowl. Do you remember going—do you remember the UARK Bowl?

PB: I do.

SL: On Dickson Street? Across the street from the UARK Theatre.

PB: Yeah.

SL: And there was a dance hall up above. A big, open hall.

PB: Uhn-uhn. Didn't go there. Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn.

SL: And I guess there was . . .

PB: I never went on a blanket party either.

[01:28:26] SL: A blanket party. Now what's a blanket party? [*PB laughs*]

PB: Oh, I don't know—you go on a date, and you get a blanket and go somewhere, you know, and have supper out or something like that. And I was highly offended when I finally got invited to do that. And I, of course, did not, you know. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Well, that's good. [*Laughter*] I'm glad you didn't go. Well, so let's talk a little about dating in college. [*PB laughs*] I mean, you know, you had—first of all, you had the benefit of a curfew.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you knew you had to be back by such and such hour.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And then whatever activities there were were probably geared around accommodating . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . a curfew.

PB: Right.

SL: Maybe you'd go from one set at the . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . Rockwood Club in order to get back in time or whatever.

PB: Right [*laughs*]. We'd go on Friday night when, you know, it was later. Yeah.

SL: Oh, it was later?

PB: Mh-hmm. On Friday and Saturday. Mh-hmm.

SL: Were they midnight? Was there—as late as midnight . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . or eleven.

PB: It seems like it was eleven thirty or something like that.

Mh-hmm.

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Do you remember the county fair?

PB: No.

SL: Don't remember the county fair?

PB: No. Didn't do that. Uhn-uhn.

[01:29:42] SL: Well, so the sorority house probably had two telephones, maybe?

PB: Hmm.

SL: You didn't have a telephone in your room?

PB: Oh, no. Uhn-uhn. Nope, no phone.

SL: There was one right out in the hall.

PB: One on—in the hall on all floors, you know.

SL: Okay.

PB: Three floors. Mh-hmm.

SL: So . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . y'all had to take turns.

PB: And you get in trouble if you hung on the phone too long.

Mh-hmm.

SL: That was—did that make it tough to [*PB laughs*] have an active dating life or . . .

PB: Oh, it worked out okay, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you remember—there was Gaebale; there was Jug Wheeler's.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And never went to George's.

PB: Hmm.

[01:30:40] SL: What about the D-Lux. Wasn't the D-Lux just up the street from Jug Wheeler's?

PB: Didn't go there. Uhn-uhn.

SL: Don't remember then Collier's . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and the theatres. What other activities did you have?

[01:30:52] PB: Well, let's see. Sigma Nu had Sadie Hawkin's Day.

And Jim Johnson, who I think is one of the most talented people in this state, was a member of Sigma Nu. And he drew Al Capp cartoons all across the back of the house, which was floor to ceiling sliding glass doors, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: And he drew that; it was wonderful. I'll never forget it.

SL: I remember those.

PB: And he came down, and he and Wayne Cranford founded Cranford Johnson, which became Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods later on.

SL: Right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's good.

PB: Mh-hmm. Saw him the other night. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: So let's see now. We're still talkin' early [19]50s.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now you say that you met your future husband . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when you were in Fayetteville. Now what was his name?

PB: His name was Jim Brandon.

SL: Uh-huh. And what was he doing in Fayetteville? Was he in school?

[01:31:53] PB: Was in school, right. Mh-hmm. And he never got his degree, but he came home and went into an adver—into working on an advertising—in an advertising agency. He went to work for Ted Lamb. And then started his own business.

SL: At—his own ad business.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And so he left Fayetteville while you were still there in school?

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm. And he had—did his six months military thing.

SL: Was that part of . . .

PB: ROTC.

SL: ROTC.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And it was only for six months?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's a good deal.

PB: Yeah, I guess. [*Laughs*]

SL: I mean, don't you—your—the commitment's years now . . .

PB: I would . . .

SL: . . . isn't it?

PB: I don't know. I don't know.

SL: Yeah, I think . . .

PB: I haven't thought about it.

SL: . . . I think it—yeah, I think you have to . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . go for a couple of years.

PB: Wait a minute. Was it six months, or was it may have just been six weeks.

SL: Really?

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. May have—wait—I'm not—I can't remember, six weeks [PB edit: six months].

SL: Hmm.

PB: Six.

SL: So how did y'all meet?

[01:33:07] PB: We had classes together. But he's from Little Rock. But he's—he was three years older than me. Mh-hmm.

SL: And when did you know. I mean—when did you know that it

was going to be serious, I mean?

PB: Well, when I was a senior, you know. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: And what did your parents think?

PB: Well, you know, it was okay.

SL: It's okay.

PB: You know, I always made my own decisions. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: So.

SL: So he didn't go to your father and ask . . .

PB: Oh, he did. Sure.

SL: . . . ask for your hand?

PB: Oh, sure.

SL: Your father's response was . . .

PB: Yeah, oh.

SL: . . . positive.

PB: Yeah. Oh, sure . . .

SL: Okay.

PB: . . . oh, sure. Mh-hmm.

SL: So he comes back to Little Rock. You're still in Fayetteville. He does his commitment because of ROTC.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Starts his—he starts—he initially is working for someone else.

PB: Right. Mh-hmm.

[01:34:03] SL: And how long was it before he started his own company?

PB: I guess it was three or four years.

SL: Mh-hmm. And so you all were married while he was still working for someone else.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Is that . . .

PB: That's correct.

[01:34:18] SL: So he—you graduate with a degree in journalism.

PB: Journalism.

SL: And you come back to Little Rock.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now do you have a job . . .

PB: Yes, I went to work for the *Arkansas Democrat* as a news reporter.

SL: And how many women news reporters were there at the *Democrat* at that time.

PB: [Whispers] One. At least one. [Laughs]

SL: One other one?

PB: One other. [01:34:43] Yeah. And this was the amazing year.



This was 1957. And so I worked through the summer. And then

when they were gettin' ready to integrate Central High. The editors decided that I would go out there and get in the school because they weren't lettin' any reporters in the school. And since I looked so young, I put on my National Honor Society pin and got my bobbysocks on and some books. And the editors of the paper did not think the blacks were gonna show up that day. And they got me out there late. So by the time I got there, they had guards on all the doors, and students who had left could not go back in. And so I went, and I said, "Can't"—you know, "Can't I go to my locker?" And they said, "Nobody can go in." So I stayed and covered the mob, which was amazing. They were, you know, yellin' and carryin' on. [01:35:52] And then I went into that Magnolia filling station there on the corner from Central. And got in line to call in my story. And the people in the line said, "Who are you with?" And I said, "I'm with the *Democrat*." And they said, "Well, it's a good thing. If you were with the *Gazette*, we wouldn't let you use the phone." You know, that was going on. But these people, we've talked about it a lot. These people didn't look like Little Rock people. They were people from out in the state that somebody stirred up like Jim Johnson or somebody, you know, got 'em to come to Central and act up. And they did. And, of course, that was the day that

the National Guard had been removed. So the people guarding the school that day were Little Rock policemen. And these people would say, you know, to the policemen, "You're one of us. Throw down your badge and come over here." And one of 'em did. One of 'em did. And so the crowd was so unruly that day, they took the blacks back out. And then that's when Eisenhower sent the troops in and escorted the blacks to their classes and made sure everything was seminormal.

[01:37:26] SL: Let me—when you say Jim Johnson, you're not talkin' about the same Jim Johnson . . .

PB: Justice Jim Johnson.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Justice Jim Johnson.

SL: Different Jim Johnson.

PB: Oh, I'm sorry.

SL: That's okay.

PB: I didn't pick that up. Yeah.

SL: Well, I mean.

PB: Yeah, Justice Jim Johnson.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Who had been on the supreme court, and it's our luck . . .

SL: State supreme court.

PB: Yes. And sort of a segregationist. Well-known segregationist.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[01:37:59] SL: I had heard—I've heard stories of people gathering
up their guns . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and their pickups . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and coming to Little Rock and . . .

PB: Right. Mh-hmm. Well, when I was walkin' up to the school, this
guy turned to this other guy and said, "Let's go get our guns."
You know. [*Laughs*] That was kind of unsettling.

SL: Mh-hmm. So that's interesting that there were folks there that—
kind of controlling the stories comin' out of that gas station
phone.

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[01:38:40] SL: How many folks do you think were actually there
protesting this stuff?

PB: I think, maybe a hundred and fifty. Mh-hmm. Yellin' and
screamin' and cryin' and carryin' on.

SL: Were there any that were prointegration there at all?

PB: Not that I saw. Uhn-uhn, uhn-uhn. You know, those people

were in line to call to get their children out 'cause they didn't want their children in school with these black people.

SL: Wow. [01:39:23] So did you continue to cover that?

PB: No, they were worried—the editors were worried about me with—probably good cause. So the next day, I covered the ministers [PB edit: Ministerial Alliance] who were trying to bring peace, you know, to the town and mediate, and so forth. So I got put on the church beat.

SL: Well, but that's still a big deal. I mean . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . now you were kind of behind the scenes. And you had access to the folks that were supporting the . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the integration, so . . .

[01:40:03] PB: Mh-hmm. And my husband's boss was a member of the Little Rock School Board. A liberal member of the Little Rock School Board. So we were very involved.

SL: What—well, talk to me about the religious community at that time and what they were doing. And who—do you remember who it was that you were talking with?

PB: Well, my family's always been moderate, you know. We—but my daddy's brothers were segregationists and my daddy's—one

of my daddy's brother was white—was vice president of the White Citizens' Council. And my daddy would go down and tell him to keep his name out of the paper. [Laughs]

SL: Yeah.

PB: You know. And Daddy didn't like that. So we quit goin' to family gatherings because it'd always be a big argument, you know.



And so for a long time, we just couldn't go. [01:41:13] But I eventually left the paper that fall after I got married. I guess this was before I got married, okay. When I got married, because I didn't—at that time, at the *Democrat*, you worked six days a week, from seven thirty to three thirty. And I didn't think—six days a week, I'm sorry. I meant six weeks—days a week. And I didn't think workin' Saturdays and all of that was conducive to being married. So I went to work at the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission at the state capitol.

SL: Now that was actually a commission that Faubus instituted.

PB: Right, and Winthrop Rockefeller was chairman.

SL: Right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:42:06] SL: So how long were you there?

PB: I was there a couple of years. I worked on an encyclopedia of Arkansas that they prepared. And so I did that. And I stayed

maybe a year. And I went to the *Gazette*. And the women's department and worked for Betty Fulkerson, who was just wonderful. I feel like I was a sponge. I picked up everything she said. It just, you know—she was wonderful. And I got acquainted with a lot of people at the *Gazette*. And—but then I got pregnant. And it was a difficult pregnancy. It didn't work out. And so I was in bed for a couple of months. And so I had to quit the *Gazette*. And 'cause they needed to replace me and somebody to do the work, you know. So I did little odd jobs at various places until I got back to the *Gazette* workin' for Milly Woods in the food department. And I told them at the beginning that I intended to get pregnant again. And that I wanted to do that. And so I did. [*Laughter*] So then I quit, and I stayed home as sixteen years and raised two sons. But I wasn't really just keepin' house.

SL: Yeah.

[01:43:52] PB: I—well, let's see—I was on the Pulaski County Election Commission for five years. I was a delegate to two Democratic National Conventions. I was president of the Little Rock PTA Council when we discovered that the milk prices were always the same. And, you know, a couple of men went to jail.

SL: Yeah.

PB: And they paid out some big money. They would meet in a hotel room in Chicago and decide what the milk prices to the schools in Little Rock would be. Anyway, I did that. And I was president of the Church Women at Trinity Cathedral. And I did a lot of stuff like that.

SL: So that was all during the sixteen years that you were raising the kids, too.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:44:51] SL: Going back to the Industrial Commission, were you there—did you ever meet Bob Lamb through any of that?

PB: I think he was after me. But I do know about Lamb. I worked directly for Bill Legg. But Bill Ewald was the director then. Mh-hmm.

SL: Mh-hmm. And then on this milk-pricing thing. Is—was that something that you investigated yourself or . . .

 [01:45:22] PB: At the first PTA council meeting, one of the mothers asked about the sch—the meals at the schools, why they couldn't be better. So I said, "Okay, I'll appoint a committee and put myself on it." And we went around and ate in all the schools. And so then we went back and met with the cafeteria director, and she was talkin' about what it costs to, you know—to prepare the food and all that. And then I said, "And then

there's the cartoon of milk." And I said, "How 'bout the price on that?" And she said, "Well, it's always the same." And I said, "Bingo," you know. [*Laughs*] She hated me. She really did. I called a lawyer when I got home, I said, "What's the next question?" And he said, "How long has it always been the same?" And I asked her that, and she said, "It's always been the same."

SL: So what . . .

[01:46:24] PB: The dairies—the three dairies split the business and charged, you know, the same thing.

SL: So there was never any competition.

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: They price fixed . . .

PB: The next—yeah—oh, yeah. Yeah. And I said I don't know how I knew about that, you know. How I knew that you weren't supposed to do that. But the next year, they trucked the milk in from Fayetteville, cheaper than it had been.

SL: That's pretty big doings.

PB: Well, it went to the supreme court. It became a, you know—it became a class action suit. Went to the supreme court. I went and listened, you know. Won all the way. Mh-hmm.

SL: So what happened to those guys?

PB: A couple of 'em went to prison, mh-hmm, for just like three months or something. They fined Coleman as much as they felt Coleman could afford without goin' outta business.

SL: That's crazy.

PB: Mh-hmm. Amazing.

SL: That, you know, milk had come from Fayetteville.

[01:47:26] PB: Mh-hmm. They—the school district gave me a plaque that's on the wall in there. And I thought it made me mad it—I thought they were givin' it to me to shut me up, you know.

SL: Oh.

PB: Put—move right on out to pasture Phyllis, get out of our hair, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right, right.

PB: So—mh-hmm.

SL: Well.

PB: So you can see I was busy.

SL: Yeah.

PB: You know. Involved with lots goin' on during the sixteen years I was home.

SL: Did we finish up talkin' about the reporting you did with the pastors durin' the [19]57 crisis?

PB: Nah. Well, I don't know. [01:48:14] I, you know—I—I've got the bylines framed on the wall . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

PB: . . . in the hall, you know, so . . .

SL: Did you—were you ever threatened?

PB: No.

SL: Over the stuff—material that were putting out . . .

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: . . . at that time?

PB: No. Oh, the FBI came to see me, which I loved. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, what'd they have to ask?

PB: Yeah.

SL: What were they after?

PB: They wanted to know what I saw and heard. And I laughed when they came. I said, "Oh, like nuns, they come in pairs, you know." And they didn't like me laughing at 'em. And so, you know, I didn't have anything to tell them. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah.

 [01:48:53] PB: Mh-hmm. I was an original member of the Women's Emergency Committee to open the public schools.

SL: Yeah, so the decision was to shut the schools down, right?

PB: Mh-hmm, yeah.

SL: And so now there were . . .

PB: The people voted to do that. Mh-hmm.

SL: So what was their thinking on that? Why would they choose to shut the schools down . . .

PB: [Whispers] I don't know.

SL: . . . rather than have them integrated? Is that . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the solution, they thought, just no schools?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And so how many kids were affected by that?

PB: Hmm. Lots, you know, I don't know the numbers, but it was all the high school kids.

[01:49:30] SL: And was this for one year?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So everyone migrated up to North Little Rock . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or how did the kids just not get an education or . . .

PB: They all went somewhere. We had private schools. Were founded at that time. And Pulaski Academy, and there were some others, and then they went to small towns in Arkansas. And Jacksonville, you know, anywhere there was space to get an education. But, of course, not everybody could afford to do that.

So, you know. Well, yeah, I mean, just the travel everyday.

SL: Mh-hmm. I mean . . .

PB: No, well, they'd go stay with the family, you know, in the town.

SL: There'd be a cousin . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or an uncle or grandma or somebody.

PB: Somebody. Somebody somewhere else, you know.

[01:50:21] SL: Uh-huh. Wow. So as the Emergency Committee member what did you all do? What . . .

PB: Well, it was just to show that there was somebody out there who was thinkin' straight and was moderate and that was not in favor of what was happening.

SL: Mh-hmm. So what pressure came to bear to get the schools back open after a year?

PB: Well . . .

SL: Was it a federal thing that they . . .

PB: Yeah, it was Eisenhower. So I don't know. The school board. You know, there was all kinds of stuff going on. They had an election where they recalled some members of the school board—and—oh, and there was a—they fired all of the schoolteachers who were liberal, you know. And that was the Stop This Outrageous Purge committee, STOP, you know. And,

you know, it was all kinds of turmoil. Dale Alford beat Brooks Hays. Brooks Hays was a moderate. Dale Alford was a segregationist, and Dale Alford went to Congress. Amazing, you know, amazing.

[01:51:51] SL: The state still suffers from all that.

PB: Mh-hmm. I think so.

SL: There's still a stigma about that, isn't there?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Yeah, unfortunately. And it was all over the world. I mean, the pictures went everywhere. And it . . .

SL: Well, it was one of those things, early TV . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . extravaganzas . . .

PB: Exactly.

SL: . . . where it really brought the crisis into homes all across the country.

PB: Right. Well, and it—the pictures and all made it seem like Little Rock, the whole thing was in flames, you know. Which, of course, was not at all the true. It was confined to just a neighborhood and this beautiful, beautiful high school.

SL: Well, the crowd shots of the sneering and the . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . yelling . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and the anger that was on those faces . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . was very, very poignant . . .

PB: Yeah, it was terrible.

SL: . . . and would not be easy to forget.

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: It was not a casual news item.

PB: [*Laughs*] No, unfortunately.

SL: They really, really played it up.

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:53:00] SL: Yeah, it's interesting. I mean, the whole—I guess, it really, if nothing else, the [19]57 crisis really galvanized the camps.

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: It really brought . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . kinda the folks that weren't really saying much of anything. Even—I mean, the ones that were thinking straight . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . now started to stand up . . .

PB: Right, exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

SL: . . . that hadn't before.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: They couldn't believe that there were—that this was really that big of a deal with the . . .

PB: Right, and then it was—mh-mh-mmh, mh-hmm.

SL: And then when it got to be a big deal, then the . . .

PB: They . . .

SL: . . . opportunities came for . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . people to stand up. And it was startin' to happen all across the country then.

[01:53:50] PB: Mh-hmm. Well, Faubus has admitted that he did that for political gain. Faubus admitted that to one of the reporters. Mh-hmm. He said, let's see, somebody—he was trying to—Bruce Bennett would've been governor if he hadn't done that.

SL: There was that, wasn't there?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And Bruce Bennett was . . .

PB: Attorney general. It's amazing.

SL: And the consensus was Bruce Bennett would not have been a good governor, is that—I mean . . .

PB: I don't know. But who's to know, you know.

SL: And was he—was Bruce Bennett a segregationist?

PB: I don't know.

SL: I mean, there was something about Bruce Bennett that made it seem as if Faubus was doing the right thing . . .

PB: Thing.

SL: . . . for him to be elected instead of Bruce Bennett. There was some kind of question about Bruce Bennett. I don't . . .

PB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . it may have been a socialist or . . .

PB: I think there's something, or something . . .

SL: . . . socialist or something like that. Mh-hmm.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:55:02] SL: Well, in your time around that, were there anyone that you considered a real hero through that crisis?

PB: Well, of course, Mrs. David Terry was when she founded the Women's Emergency Committee and the moderate members of the school board. Virgil Blossom, bless his heart, was the superintendent. And he was, you know—he should get sainthood for going through all of that. Well, and Brooks Hays, you know—it was tragic that he got beat on a write-in, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: So.

SL: What about the kids themselves?

PB: Which?

SL: The black kids?

PB: Well, they had—apparently it was a hard time. You know, they got chili dumped on 'em. And they dumped chili on the white kids, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: But time has moved on, and you know, the Little Rock Nine came back for the fortieth anniversary. And Bill Clinton was president and opened the door of Central High, which ushered them in. And they—Governor Beebe was talking about how they were in the Governor's Mansion in the living room where it was planned with Faubus. And that they were there, you know, where it happened, and they had the Emancipation Proclamation at the Clinton Center, and the Little Rock Nine was there to see that. So it—there've been lots of good memories made for those Little Rock Nine.

[01:57:06] SL: Did you ever get to spend any time with Daisy Bates?

PB: No, but we became friends later on. She was in a wheelchair for

a lot of her later life. But, you know, I would see her at parties and visit with her. Mh-hmm. And they've made her house—a little, humble dwelling—into a museum.

SL: She had remarkable strength.

PB: Mh-hmm. She sure did. Amazing.

[01:57:43] SL: She was good at getting support from the black business community.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Anyway.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I know some about her. Well, you really just kinda fell in to this huge history.

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: And did you have any idea at the time that it was going to be . . .

PB: No, I didn't. And I wasn't afraid at all. You know, I was unconcerned for my safety. But the guys at the paper were, so . . .

SL: Well, you got angry people like that . . .

PB: You never know what's going to happen.

SL: . . . and talkin' about gettin' the guns and . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: You know, I guess . . .

PB: Nutty people. [*Laughs*]

[01:58:36] SL: Mh-hmm. Why don't we go ahead and—we're about out of tape here. Why don't we go ahead and take our break?

PB: And have lunch.

SL: We'll have some lunch.

PB: Lunch, yes. That would be so nice.

SL: And we'll get back to this after a while.

PB: Okay, I wanna get back—I want to be sure and get to my career that . . .

SL: Sure.

PB: . . . it's been so amazing. Okay. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, sure.

[Tape stopped]

[01:58:56] SL: Well, Phyllis, we're on tape three. We've had a big lunch . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. A picnic.

SL: . . . with pecan cobbler.

PB: [*Laughs*] A picnic.

SL: Never heard of such a thing.

PB: On the deck, a picnic on the deck.

SL: Yeah, on the deck.

PB: Yeah.

SL: It's a beautiful day.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[01:59:08] SL: So let's see. I'm tryin' to remember where we were.

I know that we had talked about some general things about you coming back to Little Rock and some of your activities when you got here. We talked pretty extensively about the [19]57 crisis.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And some of the roles that you played in that.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And some of the activity that you experienced with that. Now you also met—you met your husband-to-be in Fayetteville.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: He came back and started his own pharm—was it?

PB: Advertising agency.

SL: Advertising agency. That's right.

PB: But he went to work for Ted Lamb . . .

SL: Yeah.

PB: . . . for several years. And then started his own. Mh-hmm.

SL: And then you all started to have a family.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And that kept you out of the—pretty much out of the journalism

business.

PB: Right. Mh-hmm.

SL: For about sixteen years.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And then—and so you had two sons? Is that right?

PB: Two sons. Alex . . .

SL: And what are their names?

[02:00:15] PB: Alex and Philip. James Alexander Brandon and—who was born in 1961, and Philip Dillaha Brandon, who was born in 1964. Philip was supposed to have been Phyllis, you know. [*SL laughs*]

SL: Well, sometimes things just don't happen the way . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Right.

SL: . . . you want them to happen.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: All right now. Your husband's name—what was his name?

PB: Jim Brandon.

SL: Jim Brandon.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And that marriage ended.

PB: Yes, yeah.

SL: And were you kind of a single mom for a while?

PB: No, I had to go back to work.

SL: You did?

[02:00:49] PB: Yeah, I had gone back probably shortly before that.

And I was working at the Graduate School of Social Work to help the professors with their writing, papers, and stuff. And so at the time that the grant ran out for this project, the marriage also ran out. And so I had to go to work. But I had—while I was workin' for the Graduate School of Social Work, I took a course at UALR on a computer science writing. And so that I got the job I wanted. I got to—I went to work for Systematics as a nice, quiet, calm technical writer. While the world crashed and burned outside with the divorce, then I was in a little cubicle all quiet, all day. And so I worked there almost four years before—this is a fun story, I think. Alex, my older son, graduated from the University of Missouri in photography. And his goal in life was always to come back to Little Rock and work [*SL coughs*] for the *Democrat* because two of his best friends worked there. And it was all I could do to keep him in school. I said, "You've got to get your degree. You're not comin' home till you get it." So he came—went to the work at the *Democrat* as a photographer. And he was living in my garage apartment. And he came in one day, and he said, "Mother." [02:02:32] He said, "They want



somebody at the paper to cover parties. And I said, 'My mom can do that.'" [*SL laughs*] And so he said, "I want you to go talk to 'em about it." And so I didn't do it, but he came back around, and he said, "I want you to go talk to them about it." So sure enough, I went down and started coverin' parties as a second job. You know, we were poor as church mice. And so then I started that, and then in a little bit, I got word that John Robert Starr wanted to see me. And so I went in, and he said, "I wondered if maybe you might want a full-time job." And I said, "Well, I already have one." And he said, well, he didn't know that. So he—that's when they had decided they wanted to start the High Profile section. And were interested in my going to work to do that. And I said, "Well, you know, it's just a matter of money. If I can make as enough—as much doin' one job as I do—doin' two then that—we can make a deal." So that's what happened. And so then as—in those—in the beginning at—for parties and stuff, they'd assign a staff photographer to meet you at the party and take pictures. And Alex says, "Now, mother." He said, "If there's a fire, the photographer's going to the fire, and you're not gonna have your party pictures." He said, "You could take pictures." [*SL laughs*] So he picked out my camera and taught me how to use it and then critiqued my

work.

[02:04:11] SL: Now this is back in the film days.

PB: This was film. Yes, yes. It was very much film. They developed
[*SL clears throat*] the film at the paper. And now they don't
even have the capability to develop film. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, so Alex just kinda stepped in and determined what you
were gonna do with your career, didn't he?

PB: Mh-hmm. He did. He made it happen. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[02:04:37] SL: Well, I wanna pause just a little bit with John Robert
Starr.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did you have much interaction with him?

 PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah, we were friends. It's funny, you know. [*SL
clears throat*] He was always nice to me. And he always took
care of me. And, of course, I think it is because he knew that I
had Walter Hussman on my side. And what—I was Walter's
choice, you know. So he was very nice to me and took care of
me. We were friends.

SL: So how is it—what do you mean by on—you—Walter Hussman
was on your side? How . . .

PB: Well, Walter wanted to start the section. And Walter and Paul
Smith took me to lunch at The Little Rock Club to talk to me

about it.

SL: Ah.

PB: You know, and have—and so whatever I wanted, you know, they—he took care of it. And so he knew I'm—Starr knew that, you know, the boss was on my side. Mh-hmm.

SL: This was going to happen.

PB: Yeah, right. [*Laughter*] [*SL clears throat*] Yeah. That everything would be fine, you know. Mh-hmm.

[02:05:55] SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm. And so you got to be good friends with John Robert.

PB: Yeah, I had met him and known him when I worked at the *Democrat* in [19]57. He was the bureau chief for Associated Press, and the bureau was in the back of the *Democrat*, second floor. So I had known him then.

SL: Well, and so y'all got along fine.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: The—is there—well, let's talk a little about the *Democrat* at that time.

PB: Well [*SL clears throat*], we were still on the second floor, you know. And we started out—determined what we wanted in the section. And people came around, you know. It became accepted, and the *Democrat* was strugglin' and—but gettin'



better and better. And then, of course, here came the newspaper war, when Gannett bought the *Gazette*. But first of all, we had the lawsuit when the *Gazette* would—sued the *Democrat* for having free want ads. And Phil Anderson was the *Gazette*—I mean, was the *Democrat's* attorney. And they had—the *Gazette* had a lawyer from Texas. And Phil Anderson won. And so after that, the Pattersons sold the *Gazette* to Gannett. And then Gannett just messed it up and ruined it. And run it into the ground. And so they decided to close the paper, and Walter Hussman bought the assets. So it became the *Democrat-Gazette*.



[02:07:49] SL: Okay, so you get hired to—you—initially you're covering parties. Is that right?

PB: Yes, first when I was just covering parties. Right. And writing them up on the weekend when, you know . . .

SL: And had they been doing that before?

PB: Mh-hmm. Yes.

SL: And they were just looking for someone . . .

PB: Else to do it.

SL: . . . else to do it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And the profile . . .

PB: Section.

SL: . . . was an idea that came along later or . . .

PB: Yes. Mh-hmm. Came along later. And I happened to be in the right place to step into that job. It's—it was a copy of the *Dallas Morning News*, had a High Profile section. And theirs hasn't lasted. Theirs is now just a page inside a section.

SL: Yeah. Well, it—the High Profile became kind of a coveted . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . very highly sought after commodity . . .

PB: Yes, it did.

SL: . . . in the community, didn't it?

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, it was something if you made . . .

PB: The High Profile.

SL: . . . the High Profile page.

[02:08:57] PB: And then, of course, the weddings. [*Clears throat*]

The features on weddings was—were very coveted, too. I had a death threat. [*Laughter*] It's not funny. They called at four thirty in the morning, and they were so dumb, they left it on my answering machine, "I'm going to kill you." So we traced it, you know. And it, you know—that—so that's why I have a security system.

SL: Was it over a wedding?

PB: Wedding. Mh-hmm.

SL: That you chose . . .

PB: One . . .

SL: . . . not to cover?

PB: Right.

SL: Is that?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. It's amazing. But he did have his day in court. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay, so I—let me get this—let's get all this . . .

PB: Logistics straight.

SL: . . . logistics here.

PB: Hmm.

[02:09:45] SL: You—early on it becomes evident that you're gonna be takin' pictures.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You're gonna be doing the interview.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You're gonna be covering the . . .

PB: Parties.

SL: . . . whatever event . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that's going on. [02:10:02] How were you able to do all of that as . . .

PB: Well, I had an assistant.

SL: Oh, you did?

PB: Uh-huh. And, well, let's see. Maybe at first, I may have had two assistants.

SL: Ah.

PB: But, yeah, we divided it up and all that. So we could get it all done. But at this point, I'm not married. You know, as I said, I've often said, "If I had been married, I couldn't've done all of that."

SL: Right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You wouldn't've had the time.

PB: Wouldn't. Uhn-uhn. Couldn't've done it. So—but it, you know—I was very busy. I—and it was—I did it for twenty-three years. So it was quite an adventure.

SL: So is that a profile every week.

PB: Every week. Mh-hmm. Takes . . .

SL: So I'm trying to do the math.

PB: It's kind of a big—the whole thing is organization.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Just organizing it and staying ahead of the game and having your deadlines and meetin' your deadlines. And, you know, and for a while, they wanted to start a Northwest Profiles. And so for a while, I did that, too. And so it was like a vacation when they finally hired somebody in Northwest to do that.

SL: In Northwest Arkansas. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[02:11:38] SL: So, okay. Let me—let's do that math here. Twenty-three years times fifty-two weeks . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . is a lot.

PB: Right. It's a lot.

SL: That's a lot of interviewing.

 PB: Mh-hmm. Well, I, you know—I didn't do every cover. I didn't interview every cover.

SL: You didn't?

PB: Uhn-uhn. No. I, you know—I'd do a couple a month, you know. I'd work on Saturday and Sunday to do that. To write the cover stories. They were—take a lot of time.

SL: Yeah.

PB: So—but, you know, some of the interesting ones.

SL: Yeah.

PB: I, of course, went to Mons, Belgium—and interviewed Wesley Clark . . .

SL: Ah.

[02:12:21] PB: . . . when he was NATO commander. And he's from Little Rock. I went to New York and interviewed Helen Gurley Brown, who was editor of *Cosmopolitan*. She's from Little Rock. I went to New York and interviewed Bea Smith's daughter, Virginia Smith, who is an editor at *Vogue*. I, of course—I covered the Clintons in the Governor's Mansion. And then I got to go and cover lots of different things in Washington when they were there. I'd get to go to a state dinner and take the pictures—take pictures of their arrivals, and then when they got through dinner and go out to dance in the foyer, I got to take pictures and so forth. And I was telling yesterday that one of these events, you know—they put somebody to watch you every minute . . .

SL: Sure.

PB: . . . like, yeah, you know, you know. So I start—headed towards Clinton, and she [PB edit: the minder] says, "Oh, you can't go there. You can't go talk to the president, you know." I said,

"Look, we're friends, I just wanna say hi." [*Laughs*] You know.
And I did.

SL: Yeah.

PB: I was, and I did. And so, anyway, that, you know, I to—and I got to—Wayne Cranford was appointed head of the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts. And they would go to The Kennedy Center every December for the presentations of these awards to these outstanding people. And so they took me with them.

SL: Neat.

[02:14:15] PB: And what it is—was was the show at The Kennedy Center, and then they had a party afterwards in The Kennedy Center, a dinner. And so I got to take pictures of all the dignitaries and all the people. Met a lot, a lot of fascinating people, famous people. And I went to the Democratic Convention when Clinton was nominated twice. And I also went to his inaugural twice. And then I—before that, I went to Daddy Bush's inaugural because Mary Anne Stephens, who at that time was married to Jack Stephens, was on the committee of something. And I went . . .

SL: Uh-huh. Committee to elect?

PB: Huh?

SL: Committee to elect?

PB: Yeah, mh-hmm. And so I went to this—oh, this party after he—I guess, it was election—no, it was inaugural night or something. And I knew that he [PB edit: Bush] was coming in and so was Mary Anne. So about eight o'clock, I stood in front of the platform, and I stood there three hours.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

[02:15:38] PB: And, of course, the crowd formed behind me. So I couldn't've gone anywhere if I wanted to. But the best advice I got was from my friend in Washington. Lou Ivey who said, "Don't wear high heels." [SL laughs] I could have never have stood for that long for—in high heels. And so I got my picture, and it all worked out well. I interviewed Glen Campbell here in Little Rock. And he sang a little song to me, you know. I love Glen Campbell. And let's see. Who else?

SL: He's in California now. Is that right?

PB: I think so. Mh-hmm. They still have a place here in Arkansas, but they don't stay here, and he's sold his theatre and stuff he started down there. But I've gone to all the Final Fours. I've gone to all the bowl games. [Laughs] And, you know, we've—it's been a—I've been very, very lucky.

SL: So when you go to the Final Four and the bowl games and stuff,

are you there to report on the partying, the dinners?

PB: They are all parties.

SL: Yeah.

PB: They're just parties really. And then, of course, the university gets me tickets. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, what a great—what fun. That's gotta be fun.

[02:17:07] PB: Oh, it's been fun. It's been great fun, yes. I've been very, very lucky. Mh-hmm. Oh, one thing I wanted to mention, they did a card for me when I left the paper to go to the magazine. And Griffin Smith, who's now, you know, the editor of the newspaper signed the card to me that said, "Thanks for winning the newspaper war."

SL: Well.

PB: I've never had anybody really officially acknowledge that. But everybody says that that may have been it, you know.

SL: Immensely . . .

PB: I made the *Democrat* socially acceptable with High Profile. Mh-hmm. And the people that I got to write about.

SL: Well, they're always so engaging. I mean, the . . .

PB: Yeah, well . . .

SL: . . . everyone wants to know about these folks and . . .

[02:17:57] PB: Yeah, people like to read about people. And the

whole purpose of it was that it was to be positive.

SL: Yeah.

PB: And we don't talk about all those divorces and all that stuff, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: It's positive and upbeat. And that way, I could—everybody would say yes, you know.

SL: Sure.

PB: Mh-hmm. So I went to Paris to cover a wedding.

SL: That's great.

PB: It was fabulous. In a chateau. In a chateau. And the next morning, we had a boat ride down the river, you know. Oh. [*SL laughs*] And I went to Paris to cover Jim Dyke's art exhibit. And I was in—well, I was in—all that lunch's made me—my brain quit workin'. [*Laughs*] Well, I was in Scotland before—when Princess Diana was killed.

SL: Oh.

PB: And my friend and I were planning to go into London on the train the next day, and we did. And the paper called, and so I wrote stories every day. And sent back for the—which were on the front page three or four days. Love that. And so the—I wrote stories, and then I extended my ticket and stayed over to watch

the funeral that was in the park. We just—and had a big screen, and they had the service printed in the newspaper. Of course, it was the Church of England's service . . .

SL: Right.

PB: . . . and everybody participated like they were in the cathedral, you know. So it was quite something.

SL: Tremendous out—emotional outpouring.

PB: Yeah, and you know, I took pictures of the cortege, everything, you know. Amazing.

[02:19:55] SL: Well, is there—did you—was there a part of that job that you liked over the others? I mean, would you rather be takin' pictures or doing the interviews or . . .

PB: [*Laughs*] Well, it reached the point where we cut my hours back to thirty. So I didn't do any more of the cover interviews because of it—that takes so much time. And so I just scheduled them, you know, for everybody else. And I—at the last year, I didn't have a staff person other than the bridal editor. And so that would be one reason why I would not do the cover stories, you know. I'd just line 'em up and schedule other people to do it. Mh-hmm.

SL: I bet everyone likes to get a call from you.

PB: [*Laughs*] Well, I don't know, you know. They—sometimes they

hesitate, you know. And some man will say, "Oh, I don't know. I'm so low profile." And I said, "Talk to your wife. [Whispers] I bet she'll say yes." [Laughter] And she does.

SL: Yeah, of course. Of course.

[02:21:05] PB: And, you know, I've interviewed Harriet Stephens. And I interviewed Bill Dillard Sr. before he died. And he was very interesting. And it was all about the beginning of the Dillard's stores. And then I called to ask him a question or something. I said, "And this will be in High Profile section." And he said, "Oh, I don't wanna be in that society section." And I thought, "Well, didn't you know that before?" [Laughs] And so he said, "I absolutely don't want to be in the society section." So I went to the business editor and said, "Would you like a story from Bill Dillard?" [Laughter] And they said yes. So . . .

SL: Well, of course, they would. Sure.

PB: Uh-huh. Mh-hmm. So they ran it in the Business section.

[02:21:45] SL: What was most interesting about Bill Dillard?

PB: Well, he was extremely successful. Oh, and the most interesting thing, I guess, is that he kept up with how much money the store was making all during the day. And at—he started that in the beginning. They'd send stories. But when he interviewed him, he was doin' it on the computer. He knew exactly what

they were takin' in. He could tell by the weather or whatever, you know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: How his businesses were doing. Amazing.

SL: Smart guy.

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: I heard that he could—that his demeanor was kinda gruff, though.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. So is his son's. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah. [*PB laughs*] He comes by it honest probably.

PB: Yeah, right. [*Laughter*] Oh, my. Yeah.

[02:22:39] SL: Well [*clears throat*], what a fulfilling . . .

PB: Oh, yeah. It's been wonderful. Mh-hmm. Yeah, get to go see the world. And every time I would go on an—to go abroad to do an interview or something special. And the boss said—and Griffin would say, "Now I let you go, but you must take a side trip. [*SL laughs*] You must take some time for you and go see and do something."

SL: Well, that's nice.

PB: Isn't that fabulous?

SL: That is fabulous.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And I'm sure you complied.

PB: Oh, yeah. [*Laughter*] Why not?

SL: Direct order.

PB: Yeah, why not? So . . .

SL: Can't be insubordinate.

PB: No. So, yeah. Hmm. But it's been amazing.

[02:23:32] SL: Well, so for twenty-three years, I get—did it just
take off right out of the chute, I mean . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: It was just an . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . unabashed success.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: It was just . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . it just happened. You talked about the death threat over
not covering a wedding.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, would people get angry if they weren't . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in High Profile, too?

[02:24:00] PB: I've had people—grown women sit at my desk and

cry [*SL laughs*] because they weren't, you know—the criteria for the brides was to get it out of the socials thing, was to make it on the accomplishments of the young people, that they must have attended college. And they had to, of course—that part of the paper only goes to Pulaski County. So they had to have a Pulaski County connection, and both of 'em must have attended college. So it was not on the social standing of their parents. And so this lady was crying—and because she said, "My husband-to-be has more money than anybody." You know, but he had never been to college. And I said, "Well, I'm sorry as I can be." You know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Good luck to you. Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: Yeah, I've had a lot.

SL: Get a degree and come see me then.

PB: Send him to college.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: Yeah. But, no, it—that's a very coveted—I've had, you know, lots and lots of people call about getting in there. And some do, and some don't. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, still once you're out there doing it, though, you've never

really had a bad time doing it, did you, I mean . . .

PB: No. Uhn-uhn.

[02:25:23] SL: I don't want you to name names, but were there any difficult interviews or uncomfortable interviews that—or any that just didn't go right or . . .

PB: Not really. I guess, since I just asked those positive questions and everything, that it just never was very difficult for me. I identify with the people. And one thing, I interviewed Mary Good in Washington when she was under secretary of commerce for computer science or something—technology. And her PR person—her press person sat in on the interview. And that's something we don't like.

SL: Yeah, sure.

PB: Because it spoils the chemistry.

SL: Yeah.

PB: You know, I say, "Oh, don't—isn't there something you need to be doing?" You know. [*Laughs*] Couldn't get rid of her. And that always irritated me. I interviewed John Paul Hammerschmidt at the Capital Hotel, and his press person sat there. But John Paul's a great guy even if . . .

SL: He's a great guy.

PB: . . . even if he is a Republican, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, yeah. He's—I owe him a lot.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: He . . .

PB: Yeah, I like him a lot.

[02:26:47] SL: Yeah, he gave us all day. In fact, I just saw him the other night. He wants us to come back. He just got through completely restoring and renovating his old homestead there . . .

PB: Really?

SL: . . . where he grew up there . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . just above Crooked Creek.

PB: Wow.

SL: And it's beautiful. You know, he had a . . .

PB: Yeah, he's aging. He's aging, too.

SL: . . . grape arbor.

PB: But he also has a condominium here in 300 Tower, you know.

[Laughs]

SL: I know.

PB: Which is funny, yeah.

SL: I know. I know.

PB: You know. And his wife died a couple of years ago, you know.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

PB: So [*laughs*] . . .

[02:27:15] SL: He and I drove all over Harrison, and he showed me—he wanted to show me all the different places in Harrison. And, you know, after spending a whole day with him, I get this feeling he's kind of a sneaky, sneaky guy.

PB: Yeah.

SL: He does all these neat, good things.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Helps people out in all these different ways but doesn't never . . .

PB: ?Know about it?.

SL: . . . really talk about it.

[02:27:36] PB: Yeah, that's why he got such a good reputation when he was in Congress, because he would listen to anybody, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm. And his staff was the best on . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the Hill.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: No question about that.

[02:27:45] PB: Isn't that so interesting? Yeah. And—but I interviewed David Pryor. I interviewed Barbara Pryor.

SL: Well, I'm sure Barbara and David were really hard to get along with. [*Laughter*]

PB: Not. No.

SL: They're—you know, they're both really good storytellers, too.

PB: Oh, yeah. Very good.

SL: Barbara's probably not as well known.

PB: But let me tell you about David.

SL: Okay.

PB: Don't you tell him I said this. [*Laughter*] I never could get him off the tape. You know how they have responses to everything you say? He's got this taped response. And he—and I never could get him off the tape when I was interviewing him.

Interviewed him in the office here.

SL: How long ago was that?

PB: Oh, it was a long time ago.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: He's much more—he's quite a bit more spontaneous now.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: He has such great stories.

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: Of course, that's what is driving this. [*PB laughs*]

PB: Yeah, exactly.

SL: I mean, he, you know—they wanted the people from Arkansas to tell their own stories.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And we love doing this. I . . .

PB: Oh, sure. Absolutely.

SL: Well, I could talk for hours about those guys, but . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . this is not about me and the Pryor Center. [*Laughter*] It's about you. [02:29:19] So the—let's—what I love about your career is—and it is—I think that it's probably—there is plenty of evidence there that what you were doing certainly elevated—raised the bar . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for the *Democrat* [PB edit: *Democrat-Gazette*].

PB: I think it did.

SL: The readership.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And the interest. And you're right. People like to know about people.

[02:29:44] PB: Mh-hmm. And to think that it was either eight or ten pages a week, plus four. So it was twelve or fourteen pages a

week.

SL: That's a massive amount of copy.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. That's a lot of stuff. Very—a lot of stuff.

And, you know, they let me do. So that was very nice.

SL: Well, they must've known you had good instincts.

PB: Well, let's hope.

SL: And you could be in the same room with some—with folks . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the results would be positive.

PB: Mh-hmm. Well, it's been great. And then you know what I'm doin' now.

SL: Well, I—no, you're gonna have to tell everyone what you're doing now because not everyone's going to know.



PB: Well, I am—this last summer became editor in chief of *Arkansas Life*, which is the *Democrat-Gazette's* magazine.

SL: Okay.

PB: It comes out every month. And it—I am working twenty hours a week from home. And I—it—it's perfect. [*Laughs*]

SL: So you're working as editor.

PB: Editor in chief, but I'm really just a figurehead, I guess.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Oh.

PB: Just, you know, everybody says, "Oh, the magazine's so good," you know. And, anyways, so I have done some interviews. And I'm—instead of a—three parties a week, I'm doing three a month.

SL: Well, that's a better pace.

PB: And they put a big, beautiful computer here in—on my desk. And so all is well.

SL: Yeah, I saw that iMac in there. [*PB laughs*] I am very impressed. I like that.

PB: Yeah, it is. Quite something.

SL: I love it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[02:31:36] SL: Well, I don't think it's just a—in name only. I'm sure they count on you to give it the "Phyllis touch."

PB: Well, I—they—I know everybody, I'm sorry. It just—that's what the job is called for, and that's what has happened. So I can point 'em in the right direction and hopefully make for some interesting stories about Arkansas people.

SL: Well, it's not only that you know everybody; you know the connectors. You know how it all . . .

PB: It's Arkansas.

SL: It's Arkansas. [*Laughter*]

[02:32:12] PB: Instead of four degrees of separation, it's just two in
Arkansas.

SL: That's right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's right.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: But you know what? The state is as full of great people . . .

PB: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . and great stories . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that many people have no idea . . .

PB: Yes, that's true.

SL: . . . how wonderful this place is . . .

PB: Yeah, that's true. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and how wonderful the people are that are in it . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and what they've done . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that affect many, many people. Not just in the state, of
course, all over.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So that's a great job for you now.

PB: Yeah, it is great. I'm very lucky. Mh-hmm.

SL: It's a better pace for you.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You—I would guess that you probably get to pick and choose who you want to interview? Is that right?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's good.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's good.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you've got good people . . .

PB: Yeah.

SL: . . . working on it.

[02:32:59] PB: Yeah. They—they're very good. I'm very—
magazines are just different, though. You know, it's hard for me
to get used to the deadlines. And—you know, I'm used to a
weekly deadline. And then this is, you know—they finish it, like,
three weeks before it's released or something like that. And it's
just . . .

SL: Oh, so it's kind of old news to you by the time it gets out.

PB: Yeah. It's kinda, you know—I just kinda have a hard time with
that.

SL: So this comes out once a month?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's still a pretty good body of work. How many pages is it average?

PB: Hundred.

SL: Wow. That's a big piece.

PB: Something like that. Mh-hmm.

SL: That's a big piece, Phyllis.

[02:33:40] PB: Mh-hmm. It's a great magazine. Mh-hmm. It's a real magazine. It's not just a party magazine like the others. It's a real magazine. Uh-huh.

SL: And is it just all about people?

PB: No. Uhn-uhn. It's—they have all kinds of categories, you know. Fashion and people and parties and collections and spouses of people who are . . .

SL: Now is this the one where I saw the Rogers family on the cover? Were they?

PB: No.

SL: No. Different magazine.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I saw one the other day that . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. I'll show you one. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay. Good.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, I should subscribe.

PB: Yeah, I can arrange that.

SL: Okay. [*Laughter*]

PB: Yeah, you need to see it, so . . .

SL: Just to keep tabs on you.

PB: Yeah.

SL: To make sure you're still holdin' up all right.

PB: Yeah, holding up. [*SL laughs*] Yeah, so . . .

SL: Well, did . . .

[02:34:35] PB: We haven't talked about my sons.

SL: Well, we just barely . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: We just barely.

PB: Mh-hmm. We got 'em born.

SL: We got 'em born . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And we know that one became a . . .

PB: A photographer.

SL: . . . photographer.

[02:34:48] PB: And the other one, the younger one, graduated from

Texas A&M in engineering and has been working with Alltel-Verizon for some years now. But that has ended. But he and his wife are the parents of my grandchildren. Darby is sixteen and—finally a girl. [*SL laughs*] And Trent is thirteen, and they're great. And Darby goes to Central.

SL: There you go.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And Trent goes to the Episcopal school, so—they're great. Mh-hmm. And we try to get together every Sunday night. Because I feel like you if you don't take time to see people that you want to see, that you won't ever do it. So we started out when they were little. We had tacos every Sunday night. And that was a good menu because everybody can fix theirs like they like 'em, you know.

SL: Uh-huh. True.

PB: So—and we still occasionally have tacos. And we have other stuff, or we'll go out. But it's great to see them.

SL: Well, you got to get that spoil factor in there at least once a week.

PB: No, yeah. I . . .

SL: Right? That's a heavy job, that spoiling . . .

PB: [*Laughter*] Yeah, right.

SL: . . . thing.

[02:36:07] PB: Yeah. Well, it, you know—Darby was going to Fayetteville to a football game, and she wanted a red Izod shirt.

SL: Okay.

PB: One store in town has them. We drove to—I picked her up at school, and we drove to the store, you know. You know how much Izod shirts cost?

SL: No, but [*laughs*] . . .

PB: Eighty-three dollars.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

PB: But she was so pleased that I would have bought her five. You know, you know.

SL: There you go.

PB: She was—she says, "Oh, Ga." They call me Ga, G-A. It was supposed to be Gran like my grandmother, great grandmother, but they call me—they lost some letters . . .

SL: Ga.

PB: . . . and it's Ga. And so, "Oh, Ga," she said. You know, "This is so classic." [*Laughter*] But she's a girly girl, and it's fun.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: So . . .

[02:36:57] PB: And Trent looks exactly like his daddy. And he's

blonde blonde. And he is taller than I am now.

SL: Well.

PB: And both of 'em are. And . . .

SL: And how old is he now?

PB: He's thirteen.

SL: Thirteen.

PB: And he plays—they play tennis, and he played football and basketball, and you know, they're very active. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's good. You're blessed.

PB: Oh, yes. Very blessed. Mh-hmm. Very lucky and very blessed.

[02:37:26] SL: Okay, now what about your other son?

PB: Alex is—lives in Washington, and his—he and his wife, Ann. And they have just moved to Washington the first of the year from New Orleans. Alex covered Katrina with the *Times-Picayune*. And they got two Pulitzers for that. He says, "Mother, you wanna see my Pulitzer?" Well, I didn't know there was one to look at, you know. And so he—and he covered the Obama campaign. And now is covering—got transferred to Washington and is covering the White House and all that stuff for Associated Press. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did he get assigned to the Obama campaign early . . .

PB: Yes.

SL: . . . or did he just decide this . . .

PB: No.

SL: . . . is the guy I wanna . . .

PB: He got assigned.

SL: He got assigned.

[02:38:13] PB: He covered the Huckabee campaign for a couple of months. And the Huckabees were lovely to him because he was from Arkansas.

SL: Sure.

PB: And I really appreciate that for them.

SL: Yeah.

PB: That was really, really nice. And so then he got assigned to the Obama campaign. He went to Hawaii, went everywhere. In so many states, it's hard to imagine. He was in Chicago on election night, when he won. You know.

SL: Yeah.

PB: And he was in Washington for the inaugural. Mh-hmm. He has pictures in our paper all the time.

SL: Well, now is he married?

PB: Yes, his wife's name is Ann.

SL: Ann. Uh-huh.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: Well, he's got a great job.

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: Loves that.

[02:38:59] PB: Yeah, and he's real humble about it. He says, "Oh, mother. I just can't believe I'm here." You know. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah.

PB: So I just love hearing about it.

SL: Well.

PB: 'Cause he said, you know, "You wanna tour the White House?" I said, "No, Alex, I've already been to the White House a bunch." [*Laughter*] And so I'm goin' up there next week, so—mh-hmm.

SL: Gonna do Thanksgiving.

PB: Mh-hmm. We're going to make it to New York to watch the Macy's Parade.

SL: Oh, that's great.

PB: Yeah, we have seats.

SL: Wow.

PB: In the grandstand in front of Macy's.

SL: Wow.

PB: Isn't that amazing?

SL: That is great.

PB: Exciting. Mh-hmm.

SL: That is great. Well, you know, he wouldn't be doing what he's doing if he wasn't really good at it.

PB: Oh, he's really good. Mh-hmm. That's. . .

SL: Yeah. So you gotta be proud of him.

PB: I am.

SL: Proud of both 'em.

PB: I'm proud of both 'em. Yeah. Mh-hmm. So . . .

[02:39:49] SL: So now the engineer, his name again was . . .

PB: Philip.

SL: Philip. So Alltel-Verizon—Alltel that's kind of messed up, isn't it?

PB: It's a mess.

SL: I saw today . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: . . . let off all the office—the old office . . .

PB: Mh-hmm. [Whispers] They laid him off. But he has a plan.

SL: He does?

PB: Mh-hmm.

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

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, man that corporate takeover stuff is ruthless, isn't it?

PB: It just breaks your heart.

SL: Yeah.

[02:20:40] PB: I mean, so many people in Little Rock, you know, worked there, so—they—and all they're gonna have here now is a call center.

SL: Yeah, and it seemed like when they were first doing that, they were saying, "No, we're gonna keep all these folks."

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: Didn't happen.

PB: Uhn-uhn.

SL: That's too bad.

PB: Mh-hmm. It is too bad.

SL: Well, I'm trying—there was a—I had a question for you about what you're doing now. And I can't think of—I've—it's lost—it's left me.

PB: Oh, well.

SL: It's that lunch is what it is.

PB: That lunch.

SL: Interfering with me, too. [*PB laughs*]

PB: Yeah.

[02:41:11] SL: Maybe we ought to talk a little bit more about the *Democrat* [PB edit: *Democrat-Gazette*] and your time there. I feel like we kind of rushed through . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . all of that. And you gave me some interesting—some names of some of the interesting interviews and . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and profiles that you've done. And I know you cannot have a favorite. I understand that you can't speak . . .

PB: [*Laughs*] Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in terms of favorites. But what—of the interesting ones, in all your—well, let's try this. In your travels . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for this stuff, did you ever feel—when people found out you were from Arkansas, were they elated because of Bill Clinton?

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Or did they talk about the . . .

PB: Think of Central High.

SL: Central High.

[02:42:13] PB: Yeah. No. Uhn-uhn. Of course, and I had a terrible time with the people that managed Bill Clinton in the White House. Because a lot of them were not from Arkansas, and they didn't understand what I did. So I had a hard time with that. But I don't think people think too much about [19]57 anymore. I think people think of Arkansas as Bill Clinton.

SL: Yeah.

PB: And I wish he were perfect. But, you know, he's not.

SL: No.

PB: And none of us are. Mh-hmm.

SL: Mh-hmm. I know when I was—traveled some that they really— everyone seems to really like Bill Clinton.

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: Worldwide.

PB: Well, he's brilliant.

SL: Yeah.

PB: He is brilliant. His speech last night was fabulous. Just fabulous. At UALR for Mary Good. It was just wonderful. You know. He says, you know, the last thing he said was, "If we could just get people to do what Mary Good has done all her life, think."

SL: Yeah.

PB: You know, talking about the health care stuff. All that, you know. It's amazing.

SL: Boy, I hope that happens.

PB: Yeah, I do, too. Mh-hmm. Hmm.

[02:43:51] SL: You know, it was awfully disappointing how poorly Obama did in the state.

PB: [Whispers] Yeah, yes. McCain, it was awful. [*Sighs*]

SL: I guess, as much as I hate to say it, I think there's still some of that racism left in the state. I just really . . .

PB: You know, yep. You'd think our black population would've gone out and vote and overrode that. You know. But I don't know. And I saw Asa Hutchinson this week. He and his wife. So he was in the paper with something. You know. And that stupid guy that worked for Clinton that got fired [*laughs*] was in the paper today. Leading a rally, a jerk. [*SL laughs*] He's a jerk.

SL: It is strange how there can be so much racket by so few people that—and then it's . . .

PB: Distracts everybody from the . . .

SL: . . . and all the media picks up on it . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and it just kinda—it doesn't really glorify it . . .

PB: Twenty-four hours.

SL: . . . but it amplifies it.

PB: Mh-hmm. Oh, yeah. Amplifies it big time. Yeah, absolutely. And it's a problem. Mh-hmm.

[02:45:18] SL: What—you know what—we should—maybe we should talk a little bit about the newspaper business in general and [*PB sighs*] the life expectancy of newspapers.

PB: Well, I say that the computer's gonna put newspapers and the

post office out of business. But everybody said no. But I think it's just my generation that wants to hold the paper. The younger generation doesn't care about that. And it would be a lot more economical, you know, I guess. But Walter Hussman, you know, is the only one who charges to read his paper online.

SL: Well, he certainly was the, if not the only—at least, the very first one to embrace that.

PB: Yeah, but . . .

SL: And all the others said, "No, you can't charge for that." He said, "No, we're gonna charge for it."

PB: Yeah, he charges.

SL: And I think there's been others that have come around now.

PB: No, I don't think so.

SL: Oh, you don't think so?

PB: Do you?

SL: I think . . .

PB: I don't think . . .

SL: . . . it seems like . . .

PB: The *New York Times*, I think, is considering it . . .

SL: Yeah.

PB: . . . but I don't think they have.

SL: I think they'll move to that. They'll . . .

PB: They have to.

SL: . . . have to.

PB: I mean, you cannot produce a product and give it away. Doesn't make any sense.

SL: Especially when your existing product circulation continues . . .

PB: Is going down.

SL: . . . to drop.

PB: Yeah, and you know, before I went to part time at the newspaper, we had layoffs, and we had furloughs. And we had—they're not putting any more money in the 401k. And besides those that got laid off, there was a psychological damage done to the staff. Those that weren't laid off were afraid they would be.

SL: Sure.

[02:47:13] PB: And so a lot of them have left. You know, one of our best writers just decided, "Well, this is the time for me to go to New York and seek my fortune." And, you know, another one of the best writers has gone to the lottery. And so psychologically—there was a lot of psychological damage done with that. It's amazing. Very interesting.

SL: Well, I, you know—I think I'm on the same page as you on this.

[*PB laughs*] I—you know, I see it that it's just going to

eventually—the computer wins.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you know what? It's not really just the computer anymore.

It's the ability to get the information through any kind of screen.

PB: Yes.

SL: I mean, your televisions are gonna be—end up being your
computer monitor.

PB: Yes, right.

SL: You know, the telephones . . .

PB: Yes, that's all gonna change.

SL: The telephones . . .

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Yeah. All . . .

SL: . . . and all the wireless stuff . . .

PB: . . . everything is gonna . . .

SL: . . . puts all that information available to you . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . anywhere, anytime that you want it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: You don't have to go to the newspaper stand now.

PB: Yeah, I know. Or the front porch. Yeah, so . . .

SL: Yeah, the front porch.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And the weather is not a . . .

PB: It's amazing.

SL: . . . factor in delivery.

PB: Mh-hmm.

[02:48:32] SL: It's—and so—and it's two way. That's the other big difference. You know, with the newspaper, yeah, you can sit down and write a letter, and maybe they'll get it back. But when you're on the web . . .

PB: Oh, it's interactive.

SL: . . . it's interactive.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And . . .

PB: You can converse with them.

SL: You can converse with them.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Hmm.

SL: And the—all that social-networking deliveries now are skyrocketing, so . . .

PB: Yes, exactly. Do you do that?

SL: I—some.

PB: I don't.

SL: I mostly . . .

PB: I don't. I don't. I'm too busy for that.

SL: I mostly just text.

PB: Well, I don't want people to know what I'm doing. [*Laughter*]

SL: I don't tell anybody what I'm doin'.

PB: No, I don't.

SL: I respond to the questions, but . . .

PB: Yeah, uhn-uhn. I don't do that, so—nope. It—interesting times, so we'll see how it works out. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[02:49:30] SL: Well, Phyllis, you have several instances of just kinda being at the right place at the right time.

PB: Yes. Very much so. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: I wish you'd gotten into that high school that day.

PB: Yeah, right. [*Laughter*] Yeah. Well, it . . .

SL: It's almost . . .

PB: . . . I've got the page framed it on my—in my hall from that day. Mh-hmm.

SL: I think we'll probably have to shoot some of that while we're here.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: If it's all right with you . . .

PB: Sure.

SL: . . . we'll do that.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I guess, I'm just not quite ready to let you go.

PB: Oh. [*Laughs*]

[02:50:09] SL: I feel like there's so many other stories that you're not telling us that for one reason or another. You know. Your career is pretty well known. And I usually don't spend a whole lot of time with the person's career 'cause it's kind of available online. You can . . .

PB: Hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . if you Google Phyllis Brandon, you kinda know some of the things that she's done . . .

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and where she is now and all of that. I like to really concentrate on your personal experiences, not so much private . . .

PB: Hmm.

SL: . . . but your personal experiences.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[02:50:48] SL: Was there any of the—what about the getting to the profiles and getting them set up. I mean, when you make that call . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and you ask—you're asking essentially for a profile

interview, I would guess.

PB: Two hours of their time.

SL: Two hours.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And do you usually take the whole two hours?

PB: Mh-hmm. Yeah. And we take photographs at that time. And record it and—mh-hmm. You know, I was trying to think. The woman in Springdale . . .

SL: Brenda—is it Brenda Blagg, Blagg?

PB: No.

SL: Blagg.

PB: The rich woman that has the center. Springdale.

SL: Oh, Jones.

PB: Jones.

SL: Bernice Jones.

PB: Bernice Jones.

SL: Yeah.

[02:51:41] PB: I interviewed her a long time ago. And it was, you know, right after Jack Frost business. And she had loved him so, and he did her so dirty, you know.

SL: Yeah. Yes. Uh-huh.

PB: And, yeah, I interviewed the track coach from Ireland.

SL: John McDonnell.

PB: John McDonnell from Ireland.

SL: What a great story he is.

PB: Yeah. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And then . . .

SL: He . . .

PB: . . . I took a picture one time of all four of the Nutt boys together, lined up, you know. It was great. War Memorial Stadium—and . . .

SL: That's a great family, by the way.

PB: It is a great family. I love the . . .

SL: They can all sign. Isn't that right?

PB: . . . dad. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Yeah. But wouldn't it be sad if you had that problem, and you have a child with that problem, too? Don't they? I think they do.

SL: Yeah.

[02:52:38] PB: So—but, you know, the dad's gone. They taught at the deaf school for years.

SL: Right.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. So—but they're great. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, you know, when David got elected to the senate, they—Mark chose to stay here and finish out his high school senior year. And he lived with the Nutts.

PB: Oh, really? I don't think I realized that.

SL: Yep.

PB: Hmm. That's interesting, yeah. Now he lives with Dee during the week. Is that right?

SL: That's right. He does. Uh-huh. [*Laughs*] I'm crazy about Dee.

PB: Oh, yeah. And—but it's. . .

SL: I'm crazy about all of 'em.

PB: . . . yeah, but it's so sad that they have that child. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Strongest parents I've ever known.

PB: Hmm. Gosh—and—hmm.

[02:53:35] SL: Well, okay. We gotta keep talkin' about you now.

[*PB laughs*] We keep gettin' sidetracked. When you were with Bernice. You know, I don't know a whole lot about her. I know that she has a great heart.

PB: Yeah, she and her husband started that truck line. And it grew and grew. And she, of course, is reaping the profits of that now. And she's really getting up there. But I also interviewed Helen Walton at a truck stop at Alma. [*Laughs*] And had a great visit before she was being honored. And with—and had a great visit with Sam before they—before that dinner. And I was there for the dedication of the Bud Walton Arena.

SL: Yeah.

PB: Mh-hmm. And, yeah, it's—I really liked Helen Walton.

[Whispers] She was a Kappa. [Laughter].

SL: So y'all could relate to that.

PB: Yes, absolutely. So [laughter] . . .

[02:54:55] SL: Now how did she meet Sam?

PB: I'm not sure that I remember that. She was from Oklahoma.

She could fly a plane. Be—her daddy had a bank in Oklahoma.

She could fly a plane before she married Sam. Can you imagine in those days a woman flying a plane? No—uhn-uhn.

SL: That's interesting.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm. She was smart, very smart.

So—mh-hmm. And they have a Fay Jones—or did have a Fay

Jones designed house. Mh-hmm. I also—I went to Washington, which was probably the finest party I've ever been to, when Fay Jones was awarded the Gold Medal by The American Institute of Architects. Prince Charles was the speaker.

SL: Yes, I remember reading that.

PB: And they—and it was at the American—no, it was—the building has tall pill. . .

SL: The architecture building.

PB: Well, no. It was—it's the National Building Museum.

SL: Yeah, right.

PB: And they put a—brought in a fountain and put it in the middle of it. [*Laughs*] And it was black tie. And everywhere you looked, there was a star, you know. And, you know, famous, famous architects. And I forget. There was one I took a picture of, and I said, "I'm gonna run that picture, but I bet there aren't five people in Arkansas that have ever heard of him." And now I can't remember his name. But it was fun. It was great fun. It was very, very elegant. And I love Fay Jones. Mh-hmm.

SL: We never got to interview him, but we've interviewed Gus.

PB: Good. Mh-hmm.

SL: Couple of times.

PB: Good.

SL: Yeah.

PB: She's a character, too.

[02:56:46] SL: Here's a little tidbit I bet you didn't realize at the time when you were at the Rockwood Club. That was a Fay Jones project.

PB: No. [*Laughs*] Really?

SL: How 'bout that?

PB: Oh, that's funny.

SL: He would go out to the—Ronnie told him—Ronnie didn't have any money . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . to pay him up front, but Ronnie said, "If you'll come out every Saturday night at ten o'clock, the door will have some money."

PB: Oh, for goodness sakes.

[02:57:15] SL: And so for two years, every Saturday night, he would go out there—and Fay Jones would go out there, and the next . . .

PB: And connect—collect the rent.

SL: . . . collect the payment.

PB: Uh-huh.

SL: It wasn't the rent. It was to pay for the design.

PB: Oh, really?

SL: I mean, he . . .

PB: Really?

SL: Yeah. And Fay . . .

PB: So he designed the club? Oh.

SL: . . . Fay and Gus, the next day—the next evening, would go to Mary Maestri's to eat on that money. How 'bout that?

PB: How 'bout that. [*SL laughs*] Hm-hm-mmh. Oh, that's great.

SL: That's good.

PB: That's great.

SL: That's a Roy Reed story.

PB: Oh, is it?

SL: Roy Reed tells that story.

PB: Yeah. I read his book. He's a good friend. Hm-hm-mmh. Who else?

SL: Two minutes? Okay, let's stop.

[Tape stopped]

[02:58:10] SL: This is tape four . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . Phyllis. This is not very many tapes to cover a person's life, by the way.

PB: It's okay.

SL: I feel like I'm . . .

PB: It's enough.

SL: I feel like I'm letting you off pretty darn easy today. *[Laughs]*

PB: No. Uhn-uhn.

SL: I've had a good time doing this.

PB: Thank you. Thank you.

SL: I hope that you've . . .

PB: I hope so.

SL: . . . I hope you've enjoyed it.

PB: Oh, yeah. It's fun. It's fun.

SL: We—I feel like—I just hate this feeling of shortchanging your opportunities to talk.

PB: Oh, no. No, you're not. No.

SL: Well, let's talk—let's try and wrap this up then.

PB: Okay.

[02:58:47] SL: Is there anything else you wanna say about your parents or your . . .

PB: Well, I'd—I was thinking that I'd like to say that both my mother and father are buried at Bayou Meto, *M-E-T-O*, Cemetery in Jacksonville, Arkansas. They are there with his mother and his brothers and sisters. And it's my understanding that my daddy's family gave Jacksonville the land for that cemetery. It's being well taken care of. And then when my time is over, I hope to be buried with my grandmother and my great grandmother from England at Mount Holly Cemetery. I've sort of halfway arranged that. I—as far as the future, I just hope my grandchildren will have as much fun as I've had. I've had a wonderful, wonderful career with wonderful, wonderful people. I—no friction, no problems, no nothin'. Everybody has been wonderful to me. It—that sounds like, you know, glossing it all over, but it's true. And to be able to write positively and regularly about wonderful people who've achieved a lot has just been fabulous. And to

take their pictures while they're partyin', whether it's on American soil or foreign soil, has been wonderful. Who'd've thought that I've ever get to London and to Paris and to Brussels, you know. So . . .

SL: It's part of your job.

PB: Yeah. [*Laughter*] On somebody else's nickel.

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

[03:00:41] PB: So it's—I've been very lucky, and these have been the good times.

SL: Well, you've done—you have a remarkable body of work already.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you're con—you're doing more—hundred page publication . . .

PB: Yeah. Well, we're continuing. Yeah.

SL: . . . every month. That's . . .

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I think you . . .

PB: That's good.

SL: . . . have lots of work ahead of you still.

PB: Mh-hmm. Right. Mh-hmm. It's fun. It's great fun. I'm a good proofreader. I—a mistake hits me right here. [*Laughs*] You know. And so it's—I'm very lucky that way, too.

SL: Well, we wanna thank you for giving us your time today.

PB: Well, you're just very welcome. Thank you for coming. It's—
you know, talk about myself all day. My gosh.

SL: Well, but you know, I've gotten to sit across from somebody
that's been in the vortex of history so many times . . .

PB: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . and done well with it.

PB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And really, you know, I do wanna say this. The profile page that
template that you got going is very much like what we're doing
with the Pryor Center.

PB: Oh, yeah.

SL: I feel a kindred spirit . . .

PB: Oh, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in the effort. And . . .

[03:01:48] PB: They're saving all our copies of pro—of High Profile
go to the library, the back issues. And so all of 'em will be on
file down there.

SL: Great, great.

PB: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. So all of your [PB edit: my] interviews will
be available up there. Mh-hmm. It's great.

SL: Well, thank you again for . . .

PB: Thank you.

SL: Okay.

PB: Thank you, Scott. [*Laughs*]

SL: All right, thanks—all right.

[03:02:08 End of Interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]