

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Betty Bumpers
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
March 10, 2010
Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed Betty Bumpers on March 10, 2010,
in Little Rock, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay.

Betty Bumpers: Okay.

SL: The first thing I'm gonna do is we gotta take care of a little
business here first. I . . .

BB: All right.

SL: . . . I've got to determine who we are and where we are so . . .

BB: Okay.

[00:00:07] SL: Today we're—is the—uh . . .

Trey Marley: Tenth.

SL: . . . tenth. March 10, 2010. We're at the Bumpers's residence
in Little Rock, Arkansas. And my name is Scott Lunsford, and
sitting across from me is Betty Bumpers.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And—uh . . .

BB: Hooray. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . we're—uh—we're going to—uh—videotape this interview,
Betty, and it's going to reside at the Pryor Center and at Special
Collections at the University of Arkansas. They'll keep it
preserved forever.

BB: Which is . . .

SL: We'll take this material, and—um—we'll make it available upon your release—um—to students, researchers, documentarians. We'll put some of this stuff online. It'll be a wonderful gift for Arkansas history. And so now I just have to . . .

BB: Okay.

SL: . . . ask you if it's okay . . .

BB: It is okay.

[00:00:55] SL: I appreciate that. [*BB laughs*] Okay. You know, what we first start off with is your full name and where and when you were born.

BB: Well, I am Betty Lou Flanagan, and I was born at—at home in Grand Prairie, Arkansas, in Franklin County.

SL: In what year?

BB: Nineteen twenty-five.

SL: And . . .

BB: January 11.

SL: Nineteen twenty-five. Okay, well . . .

BB: And I weighed eleven pounds on the cotton scales, I'm sure.

[*Laughter*]

SL: Uh—they did do that. And—uh . . .

BB: They did.

SL: . . . scales at the hardware store and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . stuff like that. And so you were a—a home birth.

BB: Yes.

[00:01:38] SL: Now where is Grand Prairie in relation to other towns?

BB: Well, it's—uh—close to Charles—to Branch, really is the closest town.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: Close to Peter Pender and—uh—which is located between Grand Prairie and—Peter Pender's located between Grand Prairie and Ozark.

SL: Okay.

BB: And then the other direction, it's close to Branch.

SL: So—uh—it's in Franklin County . . .

BB: Yes.

[00:02:05] SL: . . . then? Okay. And—um—what about your mom and dad? Now what were their names?

BB: My mother was Ola Callan, *C-A-L-L-A-N*, and my dad was Herman Edward Flanagan . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . better known as "Babe." [*Laughs*]

[00:02:24] SL: Great. And—um—how—how far did their education go?

BB: Well, my dad, course, went to the—there was a schoolhouse—a one-room schoolhouse . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: . . . in Grand Prairie.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: And he said he got through the eighth grade, but only because it was a one-room school, and he could hear all—hear the same lessons over and over. [*Laughs*] He didn't like—he didn't take to school too well, he said. He could read the newspaper . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: . . . and he was, you know, pretty well-educated for—you know, through the eighth grade 'cause they really . . .

SL: He—that was typical.

BB: Yeah.

SL: In fact . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that was—uh—maybe more than ty—almost exceptional to be—to go all the way through the eighth grade back then.

[00:03:06] BB: Yeah, that's right. And he said he—uh—I—had a—the—about the equivalent of a fifth-grade education. But

anyway—and my mother went to—uh—UCA two years.

SL: That was a—back then that was Arkansas . . .

BB: Normal or . . .

SL: . . . Teachers . . .

BB: . . . Teachers. Arkansas Teachers College.

SL: Teachers College.

BB: Uh-huh.

[00:03:23] SL: And so she—uh—was she a certified teacher or . . .

BB: She—uh—she was a certified, yeah, teacher or . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: I'm not sure what they called it. Something to that degree. You know, it was really—they taught women mostly homemaking skills . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: . . . which, you know, was very—we were lucky that she'd had that . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: . . . because she was a sanitation nut, and I remember her, you know, scalding everything that [*laughs*—gettin' my hands and fingers scalded a little bit a few times 'cause I'd try to grab dishes to dry 'em before she'd get 'em scalded and . . .

SL: Well, I'm gonna talk a—I want you to talk a lot about your mom

and dad, but I also wanna know as much as you can tell me about your grandparents.

BB: Okay.

[00:04:09] SL: Did you—uh—know your grandparents at all?

BB: Very well. Both sets of 'em.

SL: Okay. Well, let's—uh—which side do you wanna start with?

BB: Well, I guess my mother's side because it—it was a step-grandmother. My mother—my mother's mother was a Chastain.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: And I don't know whether you wanna get into this later. I later found out just the last few years that the Chastains were French Huguenots . . .

SL: Oh, neat.

BB: . . . as were Dale's, the Bumpers. Both were, you know, and—uh—but she died when my mother was five.

SL: Okay.

[00:04:42] BB: And my grandfather married a second time, a woman named Alice Callan—Alice—uh—Cravens . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . and had two more children. And—uh—so I—she was the only grandmother I knew, and she lived to be ninety-three, so . . .

SL: That's good.

BB: Yeah. Uh—and they lived [*slapping sound in background*] in Branch, and he had a store. Uh—I don't know exactly what the—I know it had a lumberyard, and later I remember the filling station that—uh—was attached to the lumberyard. And I do not remember the store in Branch, but it's quite an extensive store. And my mother rode the train from Branch to Berry Dry Goods in Fort Smith once a month to do the buying for the store.

SL: Stock up.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:05:31] BB: And later—in later years—uh—when Dale had the hardware in Charleston, we'd go up to Berry's occasionally, and Mother would go—to do some buying—and Mother would go with me, and there was a elderly gentleman still working in there that remembered her when she was a young woman comin' up there to shop for the Callan store in Branch. [*Laughs*]

[00:05:53] SL: Well, that's great. Now what was your—uh—what was your grandfather's name on your . . .

BB: Um . . .

SL: . . . mother's side?

BB: Cicero.

SL: Cicero.

BB: Cicero Alexander. Cicero Alexander and—uh—and he had a brother in Fort Smith that had a store.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: They were merchants, you know, and had a—two brothers, I think, in Fort Smith that had stores, as well as Dale had an uncle that had a store in Fort Smith, too. I remember stoppin' by there on my way from school, you know, occasionally.

[00:06:23] SL: And these were all hardware stores.

BB: No, they were a general—kinda general stores, kinda like an—a 7-Eleven now.

SL: Okay.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: Small, neighborhood stores.

[00:06:34] SL: Um—do you remember your grandparents on your mother's side's house?

BB: Oh, very well. It's still standing.

SL: It is?

BB: Yes. And we'd go over there quite often—uh—oh, I'd say to spend the night maybe once a month or once ever other month—something like that. He was very—my mother



married—when my mother married my dad, you know, he was just a dirt farmer—uh—and—out in Grand Prairie. And—uh—he—I know she had the first gasoline wash—probably the only washing machine in Grand Prairie—that he gave her. It had one of those gasoline-fired, pop-pop-pop things.

[00:07:15] SL: Never heard of that.

BB: Well . . .

SL: There was a gasoline washing machine.

BB: A washing—a Maytag washing machine. And it . . .

SL: Ran on gasoline.

BB: . . . I don't know how—we used to have to crank it or do—start it somehow, and it used gasoline, I guess. But it would go pop-pop-pop and had a long—uh—exhaust thing on it with a ball at the end of it that made the popping noise. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's funny.

[00:07:37] BB: But anyway, it had a—a wringer attached to it, and I remember my younger sister always getting her hand caught in that wringer, and I'd have to hit a trigger at the—on the top of the wringer, you know, to . . .

SL: To stop it to . . .

BB: . . . get her hand out. [*SL laughs*] She was one of those quick jerk—herky-jerky, fast people, you know.

[00:07:55] SL: Well now, did—I guess we're talkin' Branch now. Did they have electricity at the . . .

BB: Uh . . .

SL: . . . house?

BB: Yes, I—be—be—I think they had some kind of—uh—gaslights—gas . . .

SL: Natural gas . . .

BB: No.

SL: . . . stuff?

BB: I mean, I remember puttin' lime in a well of some kind that fueled that gas.

SL: Hmm.

BB: They had gaslights in the—in the house, though. I remember. But then they—very quickly, I think—pretty soon, turned to electricity. But anyway, they had a basement.



SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: A—a root cellar, they called it, but it opened up into the house. And—uh—I remember—and he had an—ex—rather extensive orchard, and one of our chores when we went there on weekends or on a—to spend a Friday night, I suppose, or a night occasionally—pretty often—uh—one of our chores was to carry ashes from the fireplace to put around his—all the fruit trees.

That was part of our chores, to keep the borers—he thought that kept tree borers, you know, from getting into the trees.

[00:09:02] SL: So were they apple, pears, peaches? What . . .

BB: Peaches, pears—everything. He was really quite a—a farmer.

SL: And . . .

BB: And a big garden. But then—and he was a kind of a hypochondriac. I just—greatest memories I have are those beaded ceilings in that house and him—and he'd burp real loud in the night, and they had a striking clock. And I remember waking up in the night and hearing him, "buh-up," this long, drawn-out burp [*SL laughs*] and that old clock bong-bong-bonging. [*Laughs*]

[00:09:37] SL: Well, now this sounds like . . .

BB: And a goat. He drank goat's milk always. And so I used to help my grandmother milk the goat at night, and he made us drink that goat's milk. And I don't remember that it tasted bad or anything, except we just made a big to-do about gagging on it. And when we got [*SL laughs*] too rowdy, he'd thump us on the head with his big ol' fingers, you know. [*Laughter*] Rattle our brain a little bit. But . . .

[00:10:05] SL: You know, it kinda sounds like they—they were relatively affluent—uh . . .

BB: They were.

SL: . . . for the time.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Um . . .

BB: They were.

SL: Having some kind of lighting that was throughout the . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . house is one thing. A basement that also served as a root cellar . . .

BB: Yep.

SL: . . . is a pretty big hole under a . . .

[00:10:21] BB: And he'd have barrels of apples. I remember it smelling like—you know, when you'd go down there. We loved to go down there and . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: . . . for Grandmother to get—uh—cook her canned goods and, you know, dig apples out of the barrel and . . .

[00:10:35] SL: Well, so he had an orchard and a—a big garden. Did they do—uh—did he have anybody helpin' with the garden and . . .

BB: Well, he had a s—a—my mother's brother.

SL: Huh.

BB: Full brother—lived on a farm there close to—very close.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: And I'm sure he helped do—'cause they had a great, big barn, and I remember playing in the barn down . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: . . . oh, it was quite a ways from the house. And they had—uh—oh, chickens and—I mean, several outbuildings around the house 'cause I remember they, you know, would have a room full of baby chicks which, you know, was very appealing to young kids and . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . we'd go in there. And then they kept that goat 'cause she'd—he thought that was good for him. He was a hypochondriac, I think, so [*laughter*]*—uh—*but I remember it bein' great fun to help her milk the goat when we were over there. And they lived on—up on a hill above—kinda above Branch and up Highway 22. And—uh—it was wonderful to go over there 'cause, you know, their—grandmother was wonderful and sweet. And their son—the two children—my half—mother's half-brother and sister. And the sister died at eighteen with diphtheria.

SL: Mmm.

[00:11:58] BB: And—uh—but the other son, Eugene Callan, and his son now—son and grandson still live in Charleston.

SL: That's great.

BB: And—uh—I see them of—you know, pretty often. One da—they've got one daughter in Baylor and one at—where is she? Quite successful young women. So—uh—and then the—my mother's real, full brother was Bentley Callan, and he taught school, I think, in Branch and also in some little community between Charleston and Ozark. I just remembered the little school still sits—standing there. It's not a school anymore, but it was a little community school.

SL: Hmm.

BB: Or some community on the road toward Ozark.

[00:12:52] SL: Wha—what about your—um—father's side? What about his parents?

BB: Well, they lived—uh—[clears throat] a half-mile from us, and the—one of my uncles—one of my—one of their other sons lived in a—we—we lived in a triangle. They lived here and a half-mile straight east from them was our house, and then at the other point of the triangle was another uncle and his wife, who lived there.

SL: So it was the Flanagan triangle there.

BB: Well, it was. And then [*SL laughs*] below their house there was a—an old log cabin. It's still standing—the remnants of it—and it was called the Weanin House, and I think my mother and dad lived in that Weanin—I think all of the kids did at one time or another—or not all of 'em, but I know my Uncle Harmon, who was the oldest in the family of the six children of Thomas and Nancy Flanagan, lived in the house until they made other arrangements after they married. And then my mother and dad lived in that house until my grandfather built them a house.

[00:14:01] SL: So this was a log house.

BB: No, it wasn't a log . . .

SL: Oh, it wasn't that one.

BB: This—oh, the Weanin House was.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Yes.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: And—uh—and I—there are people who've said that it was a—a—sort of a—maybe a—not like a slave because they still paid—there was some black help because there were some—there was a black community right out of Charleston.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: And I think early on—I don't know whether—I mean, there are

probably some people who could give you a better history on that little, old, log cabin.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: But I know that the . . .

SL: It's still standing, though.

BB: Yeah, it is. It's a shame it couldn't be restored. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well—uh—is it—I get—we don't know who owns it now, or is it . . .

BB: Yeah, my . . .

SL: . . . still in the family?

BB: Yeah, my—oh yeah. Uh—their—my grandfather's—my dad and—Dad's youngest brother's son lives there and owns it.

SL: Well . . .

BB: In the Grand Prairie community because there was a schoolhouse, a Methodist church, and a—had a belfry—and the old belfry still—remnants of it, and I have memories of that thing, too, [*laughs*] of goin' to—uh—by the Methodist church. But that was the community, and I think at one time, it might've had a little store connected there. But—uh—in my memory, it only had the Methodist church, the sc—and the schoolhouse.

SL: Um . . .

BB: And we—and it was served by the minister from a—a circuit, you

know, that it—we had the same minister that—uh—Charleston had in the Methodist church there.

[00:15:32] SL: So how did they work that out timingwise? I mean . . .

BB: Well, we had—only had church once a month.

SL: I see. Okay.

BB: And he also served Charleston and Grand Prairie and [*birds chirp*—I don't know what other—what other—one other . . .

SL: And so the . . .

BB: . . . community probably.

SL: . . . four churches . . .

BB: Three.

SL: Three churches.

BB: Three or four. Yeah.

SL: Yeah, yeah. Mh-hmm. That's interesting.

BB: So Dale and I grew up with the same Methodist preachers all—you know, [*SL laughs*] even though he lived in Charleston and—but we still had the same Methodist preacher.

[00:15:58] SL: Okay, now your—your dad's parents' name were . . .

BB: Thomas Lee.

SL: . . . Thomas Lee and Nancy . . .

BB: Nancy Ledbetter.

SL: Ledbetter.

BB: Nancy Elizabeth Ledbetter.

SL: Okay. Um—and—um—how far did—um—did they have any schooling at all? Do you remember or know?

BB: Yes, they all had—they all—you know, 'cause I—I have letters from my grandmother.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: And—uh—she died the first year I was in college. And—uh—but I had—you know, she used to write to me occasionally 'cause we'd lived in Fort Smith. So they were educated to the point they could read and write and—you know, I'm sure—I don't know. His father, Webster, his father, Webster, was a county judge, I believe.

SL: Hmm.

[00:16:47] BB: So they—they had—they were—I think my dad told me when—when—uh—shortly before he died, I was writing thank-you notes to people—I—'cause my mother died six months before he did, and I was writing letters to people who had made floral or . . .

SL: Hmm. Yeah.

BB: . . . contributions. And I remember askin' him one night—I said, "Dad, how many—uh—how many generations did that Methodist

church serve in Mother's family?" And we counted it back, and it was five generations.

SL: Wow.

BB: And he said, "Well, when you do that for me, Betsy"—he just called me affectionately Betsy occasionally—uh—"you can say it served six generations of mine." So . . .

[00:17:31] SL: Well, now did—uh—your dad's parents—were they merchants as well or . . .

BB: No, they were just farmers.

SL: Just farmers.

BB: Yep.

SL: And—um—did they . . .



BB: Really poor dirt farmers. I mean, in that time the land was worn out, and you know, it was—I mean, we were really poor—uh—but I didn't know it. We didn't know it.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: You know, everybody was poor, really. So—uh—but I know that Dale has talked a lotta times about growin' up—being poor growin' up, so I remember admonishing him a few times.

[Laughs] "You weren't nearly as poor as we were. But, you know, we just—our parents didn't discuss it in front of us or talk about it because your dad had a salary." And he was educated.

He went to Hendrix and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: . . . taught school and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:18] BB: . . . then he bought into the hardware store there in
Charleston when they were very young.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: So all during the Depression, he did have a salary.

SL: Which . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . was not the case . . .

BB: For my dad.

SL: . . . all across Arkansas.

BB: I mean, they . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . were tryin' to grub out a livin' on a worn-out dirt farm.

[00:18:35] SL: Well, do you know—um—how—um—how big the
farm was, your grandparents' farm?

BB: Well, all combined, I would guess that it was somethin' like five
hundred acres.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: But, I mean, I think he must've given or helped give, or they

bought it somehow. My Uncle Rex, who lived in that other triangle, and my dad—and then my grandfather. And then later—it was quite a boon—they had the first—uh—uh—coal mines. I remember when the dragline—the big, old dragline came, and they dug, you know, the coal.

[00:19:11] SL: Now what's a dragline? Tell me what a dragline is.

BB: Well, it's a crane—uh—where they scoop the dirt out. You know, it was—the coal was very close to the surface.

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: And so that . . .

SL: They just trenched out the . . .

BB: Yeah. Yeah. That was really exciting times. In fact, it disrupted the road a few times, you know, when it crossed from one—across the road, you know, to . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BB: . . . move on.

SL: So that was a . . .

BB: That went on for several years.

[00:19:37] SL: Did they—was that kind of a lease arrangement, do you think?

BB: Yes.

SL: Where . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: And so they got . . .

BB: I think they paid 'em . . .

SL: . . . income from the . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . the coal . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . harvesting.

BB: It probably helped pay off the land or, you know, help—helped 'em live for some years. I don't know—I don't remember—as I say, I don't remember my mother and dad discussing finances.

[00:19:54] SL: Do you remember much about their house, [*BB clears throat*] your grandparents' house on your dad's side?

BB: Oh yeah. It was a . . .

SL: Um . . .

BB: . . . it was a nice house.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] SL: Yeah.

BB: Had three bedrooms.

SL: Did they have the gas lighting, too?

BB: No, no. I remember when we got electricity. I remember the [*birds chirp*]*—it was after FDR was elected. No, would that have*

been—it would've been before. Might've been the first year he was elected. I'm not s—real sure. But I remember coming through and getting—my dad signing papers and the big, high lines that went—you know, for them to cut across our land.

SL: Right.

BB: And before that, we had had—we had kerosene lights and Aladdin lamps, we called 'em.

[00:20:40] SL: Now are you talkin' about your house that you grew up . . .

BB: House and my grandfather . . .

SL: And your grandfather's house.

BB: Grandparents. Yeah. But we got electricity for the first time.

[00:20:47] SL: Mh-hmm. Did either of your grandparents' homes have sleeping porches or . . .

BB: Oh yeah. And our—and we had a big front porch. The house that my grandparents built for my mother and dad had a kind of a long front porch—I mean, all across the front of the house. They had two bedrooms and then that big porch and a livin' room, dining room, and a kitchen. And a screened-in—it was a sq—like a square, you know, but it was a screened-in porch . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . and the two bedrooms and then the livin' room, dining

room, and the kitchen—kind of a long kitchen. But I remember we had one of those great big ol' stoves—woodstoves—that had a heating well and a hood that, you know, Mother stored the food, you know, up in the . . .

SL: Yep.

BB: . . . hood above the stove.

SL: So . . .

BB: And a cistern. We had a tank and running water, you know, that came into the kitchen. And—I think it came into the kitchen.

[00:21:57] SL: Were the—were all the kitchens indoors? Inside the house?

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And what about where the laundry was done? Was that done . . .

BB: Just had a wash pot. And we had a smokehouse. And I think the washing machine—she kept that washing machine in that smokehouse because I know we'd have to take that popping tail that came out and not leave it inside the building. We'd have to take it out 'cause when we moved to Fort Smith, we moved that washing machine with us. So . . .

SL: That's somethin' else.

BB: Yeah.

[00:22:27] SL: Now you mentioned taking the train. They would take the train to Fort . . .

BB: That was from Branch.

SL: From Branch.

BB: That's where she married. Yeah.

[00:22:35] SL: So train was the preferred method of travel if you had any distance to go at all.

BB: Yes, yes. And you know, and they just—I'd say twenty—fifteen years ago they sold that right-of-way for that, you know, that train went from Paris, Arkansas. It followed Highway 22. And that's the way she'd catch it. And it didn't have passenger cars. She rode in the caboose.

SL: Ha!

BB: You know, they didn't have a passenger thing. She said she just remembered it had long benches in it, I guess, on either side. But that's where the passengers would sit in that caboose.

[00:23:16] SL: Was it just one or two trains a day or . . .

BB: Well, they hauled that coal, see. And the mi—Paris was a mining town.

SL: Okay.

BB: And they—it was not surface mining. They had, you know, underneath there 'cause—underneath the ground 'cause they

had those big, old—I remember those big slag pits, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . outside. They just did away—they've done away with that now. I think they used it on highways or something or side—auxiliary roads, you know, kinda like paving. But they carried—the trains carried coal. I think they were pretty long trains. I can remember even when we lived in Charleston that we had a station in Charleston. A stationmaster, too, and those kinda long trains would come through with coal and probably timber—some timber. But Mother said she always knew she'd have a sick headache on that—you know, ridin' that train. The fumes and . . .

SL: Right.

[00:24:13] BB: . . . she all—in fact, she had migraine headaches until the—oh, well into her menopause years [*laughs*] she had migraine, sick headaches, pretty often. And the Henrys—the doctors Henry—Morriss Henry . . .

SL: Morriss Henry?

BB: . . . that's in Fayetteville . . .

SL: Ann?

BB: His mother and father were both ophthalmologists, and they

were the ones that discovered that—found a cure for Mother's headaches—migraine headaches.

SL: It was related to the eyes.

BB: Cafergon. No, it was—she said somethin' about—it was—they gave her pills. If she had that aura before they—she'd giv—get the headaches, if she'd start takin' those cafergon pills, it would stop her migraines. It changed her life to some degree.

[00:25:03] SL: So now how—so this was Morriss Henry's dad that . . .

BB: Yes, his father and mother.

SL: And were they in Fort Smith?

BB: They were in Fort Smith. Ophthalmologists in Fort Smith.

SL: What a small world.

BB: I know. [*Laughter*] It's—as I said, it's more like 1 percent or 2 percent separation.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Not 6 percent.

SL: That's unbelievable.

BB: Yeah.

[00:25:25] SL: That's really great. Well, do you have a—now you say you knew both sets of grandparents pretty well.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Were there any—I'm always lookin' for the oldest story. Is there—do you remember any stories that they had to tell about their lives or . . .

[00:25:43] BB: Well, a lot. I mean, my grandfather was not a real talkative man.

SL: On your mother's side?

BB: On my—no, Mother's side. He wasn't. He was sort of—I think he was so—semiretired quite early. As I say, I think he was some kind of a hypochondriac 'cause I just remember in that house where they lived with their son and his wife and grandchildren that, you know, just lived with 'em—they had a—he had built a room on the back of the house—the original house—where he and my grandmother stayed. They had a great big bedroom, and they had extended the porch. So the porch ran across one side and across part of the front. But that one side—and it looked down the hill into Branch and—lovely setting. But they lived back there on that back part of the house, and he—I just remember him sitting in the—a rocking chair with his feet on a thing and her tending to him. But he'd come to the table to meals, and he'd be up and about part of the day. But he was not really well, and he'd—after we moved to Fort Smith when I was twelve, they came up to the Colonial Hospital in Fort

Smith. And they'd stay with us, and sometimes he'd be in the hospital, and that's where he died when I was about—mmm—four—fifteen.

[00:27:12] SL: That's still good that you had that many years . . .

BB: Yes, it was.

SL: . . . with him.

BB: He was not a—I mean, we didn't love him. We loved Grandmother. But—I mean, he was not a really fuzzy, lovable . . .

SL: Warm, fuzzy guy.

BB: No, no. [*SL laughs*] 'Cause he'd—our memory was that—him burping in the middle of the night and being very strict and thumpin' us on the head if we misbehaved and—or if we stumbled across his feet, you know, runnin' around playin' in that room, which we didn't get to play in that room much. But—I mean, we knew he'd loved us and, you know, and provided stuff and, you know, welcomed us there when we'd come to spend the night. And—but she was one of those wonderful, sweet, loving women, and we didn't know them—I didn't know them as well as I did my Flanagan grandparents, Mama and Papa Flanagan. Because sometimes the bus would stop at their place, and we would walk that half-mile home, and I remember

her—you know, we'd come through the house sometimes, and she'd give us somethin' to eat, or a lotta times she'd give us a piece of cornbread with leftover . . .

[00:28:30] SL: Now which grandmother is this?

BB: Flanagan . . .

SL: Flanagan. Okay.

BB: . . . that lived, you know—and then she'd, in the springtime, she'd walk through the garden sometimes and pull a—the skin off of onions, little fresh onions, you know, and we'd have a biscuit with some ham in it or a biscuit with some sausage. I don't know, some kind of food . . .

SL: That sounds great.

BB: . . . that—'cause we were starving, you know, after school.

[00:28:52] And we'd walk from there the half-mile across the field to our house. Had a path, you know, where we went back and forth. And I remember my older brother, who was in charge of all of us—in the summertime, we'd be barefoot. [*Laughs*] And I can remember him takin' my hand and my younger sister's hand and helpin' us hop corn rows when that soil would be so hot on our bare feet, you know. We'd go runnin' across the plowed field [*phone rings*], you know, hoppin' from one corn row to another with his help and . . .

SL: Do we wanna [*phone rings*] pause on this?

TM: Yeah, let's do.

SL: Let's pause.

BB: Yeah.

[Tape stopped]

[00:29:33] SL: We took a little pause here 'cause we forgot to unplug the telephones. And what—while we're kinda gettin' back into this, I wanna let everyone know that you've been living with us now for—this is our third day here. [*BB laughs*] And we, [*laughs*] the Pryor Center, comes in, and we just kinda take over a home. We've got lights and cables and cameras and recorders.

BB: Yeah.

SL: All—and we cover three different rooms—four, really.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Five, almost—and y'all have been magnificent. You just really have put up with us . . .

BB: Well . . .

SL: . . . and our—what I would call our squalor . . .

BB: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . all over your home. [*Laughter*]

BB: I told my friends it looks like a Hollywood studio around here.

SL: Yeah. Well, you know . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . we're—we are very particular. We do like to make it look and sound good and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . we figure if we're gonna keep this stuff forever . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . we oughta try and do it right.

BB: Well, I think it's wonderful.

SL: And so we really appreciate your-all's patience puttin' up with us—get this done. Anyway, thank you. [00:30:30] So before the phone rang, we were talkin' about the Flanagan side grandparents.

BB: Grandparents.

SL: And I forget exactly where we were. We were talkin' about . . .

BB: Comin' through our grandmother's—my grandmother's house and . . .

SL: After school and . . .

BB: After school.

SL: And you mentioned corn rows. So was corn what they were tryin'—what the Flanagans were tryin' to grow? Is . . .



[00:30:57] BB: Oh, we had corn. I mean, I don't know where our

land ended and where my grandfather's began. Sometimes we'd have cotton in that field. I remember a big sycamore tree, which is still standing, where they'd hang cotton scales, you know, and where—I remember picking cotton there and weighing it—in—under that big sycamore. But that was the field that we were crossing, and sometimes they'd have corn, or maybe after the—before the cotton. I'm not sure—or different years.

SL: Well, they were probably rotated . . .

BB: Yeah. Crops.

SL: . . . seasons. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

BB: And—but I remember that sycamore tree, and I checked on it two or three years ago just to make sure it was still there.

[Laughs]

SL: Yeah.

[00:31:41] BB: And it's astounding how, you know, long-lived those trees are and how they'll survive almost anything, you know. But—and then I remember my dad would have—or my grandfather at a field a little closer to his house would have corn, and he'd plant peas that, you know, climb up the stalks. And I used to go—when he—I'd see him out there—this was—he was—hmm, I don't know how old he would've been then, but I'd take

a jar of water down to him and help him pick peas. And he always liked—I mean, I was the only one that—my two sisters hated outdoors. They didn't like bein' outside [*laughs*] at all. But I'd go down and pick peas with him, take him a drink of water, and often he'd give me a penny.

SL: Oh, that's neat.

BB: So that was a real treasure.

[00:32:34] SL: How old do you think you were?

BB: I was between ten and twelve, or maybe even younger 'cause we'd left the farm when I was twelve and—so . . .

[00:32:44] SL: So you mentioned pickin' cotton.

BB: Yes.

SL: Now was that—was everyone expected to do that or was that just . . .

BB: Absolutely. We all worked. We had two cow—I had two cows I had to milk before I went to school in the mornings and at night. And . . .

SL: Now this is at your home.

BB: Yes. And—but—I mean, if we weren't busy, then I'd go down and take my grandfather the water and help him pick peas, and then I'd be—I mean, on my—I'd spend the night with 'em s—nights. I remember sittin' on his lap and him tellin' me all these

stories about he's gonna buy me a pony. And I was really, very close to him 'cause, as I say, my other—my two sisters didn't like bein' outside. And I don't know what kinda memories—they have very few memories of him, or at least my younger sister doesn't. My older sister probably has more, but she was not the type that would be workin'—you know, I enjoyed workin' in the fields and outside.

[00:33:49] SL: Uh-huh. And he probably really liked that.

BB: Yeah, he did.

SL: Saw that in you.

BB: He did.

SL: Respected and . . .

BB: 'Cause . . .

SL: . . . 'cause that agricultural—all those endeavors were—that was pretty much the way it was.

BB: That's right.

SL: I mean . . .

BB: Everybody worked. I mean, they needed to work, you know.

And I remember the cotton sack. When—Ruth is eighteen months younger—my sister—youngest sister is eighteen months younger than I am. And she hated that [*laughs*] kind of stuff, and I remember she'd get sleepy, and I'd put her on the end of

my cotton sack . . .

SL: And drag her.

BB: . . . and she'd take a nap. And I'd drag her and pick my row and her row. I wouldn't get very far but [*laughs*—I mean, do much—but anyway, I just remember doin' that 'cause I kinda looked after her. With four children that were two and two and a half years apart, I mean, we had to kinda help look after each other because my dad had begun to—not only was he farming, but he had begun to do some trading with cattle. [00:34:56] He'd go into Fort Smith and there was a—mmm, what was his name? Thompson Barn out in—at the west side of Fort Smith, out sorta close to—it was on Grand Avenue in Fort Smith, and there was a sale barn there. And he'd go up there. He'd take cows. He'd raised some cattle, you know, cows. He'd take a cow up there and sell it and then make a little money, and then he—maybe he'd buy another cow and then sell it later 'cause they had kind of an ongoing auction, I think.

[00:35:29] SL: Now this milk cows?

BB: Uh-huh.

[00:35:32] SL: And so you mentioned earlier about milkin' the cow.

BB: Yeah.

SL: You did that every morning? Is that . . .



BB: Yes, we had two or three cows 'cause then we'd—had a cream separator, and we'd put that in the—you know, and then the—we'd put the cream in a tin can—tin thing, and it was picked up every week.

[00:35:49] SL: So you did that before you'd go to school . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . each morning.

BB: Yes.

SL: So you were probably up at four thirty, five in the morning . . .

BB: My dad—at four o'clock ever morning, we got up.

SL: Four o'clock.

BB: And he was a morning people, which I am. Didn't bother me to get up. And—but my mother was a night person and remained so all of her life. When—even after we married and lived there in Charleston, and she was in her eighties, we'd be out, you know, or come by there at one—twelve and one o'clock at night, and the lights in her breakfast area would still be on. She'd still be up listening to the Chicago radio station. She would sit up and listen to that, and played bridge, you know, or sol—or . . .

SL: Solitary . . .

BB: . . . played card games and listened to that radio. [00:36:41]

And I remember one time even when we were on the farm,

she—I mean, bein' married to a farmer who got up at four o'clock in the mornings was absolute torture to her. [*SL laughs*] But, course, got up to fix a big breakfast, you know. And I remember one time when she was so lethargic, I suppose, [*laughs*] and my dad fixed her a hot toddy. He had a little pint of whiskey and that—you know, and I just remember her standing in the corner where we had a potbellied stove, kinda gigglin' and sliding down the wall, and my dad just so tickled. [*SL laughs*] But evidently, he'd fixed her a hot toddy, and he'd made her about half . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Looped.

BB: Yeah, looped, [*SL laughs*] and she was—and he was so amused at her sliding down the wall tryin' to help her cope with the early morning.

[00:37:37] SL: Was she kind of a small stature or . . .

BB: No, she was large. She was taller than any of us. She was about five nine. She was a large woman.

SL: Well, he probably dosed that hot toddy pretty good.

BB: He probably did and [*SL laughs*] thought it was funny. And she did, too. I remember her gigglin' and, you know, slidin' down the wall, and we were all standing around the room lookin' at her and wonderin' what in the world was goin' on, you know.

[00:37:59] SL: So she'd have breakfast ready for you guys?

BB: Yes.

SL: And was that table in the kitchen area, or did you have a formal dining . . .

BB: We had a—the—a table both places and a kitchen table that had—I think it had benches on either side of [*unclear words*]. You know, one of those. And then in the dining room we had one, but it was pushed back a lot. We did our homework on it, and she always had a quilt up with—you know, suspended from the ceiling, you know, and she'd wrap the corners, you know, and lift it up above when we weren't quilting. But at night she'd let that down, and I remember comin' home from school, and we'd be cold, and we'd come in, and she'd have hot chocolate or something. Anyway, we'd sit around it 'cause that's where the stove was—the big potbellied stove. And we'd all sit around that quilt and quilt—even my brother. He was a very good quilter. [*Laughs*] Course, he was the oldest one in the family and was a little more skilled but . . .

[00:39:04] SL: So that potbelly stove—that was a wood-burning stove.

BB: Wood-burning stove. Wood and coal. I think they burned coal in it some, too. Wood in the kitchen stove. Big ol' kitchen

range.

[00:39:17] SL: So your brother would split the wood probably? Is that . . .

BB: Yeah, some.

SL: There were . . .

BB: He was—but . . .

SL: I mean, there was probably a dichotomy of chores.

BB: Oh yes. Yes.

SL: Female and male . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . chores, and it seems like wood . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . was—usually fell on the men and . . .

BB: It did. But then later on, I remember we had a young, black man—I think he must've been developmentally disabled to some degree—that lived there after—my dad was deathly afraid of tornadoes and—because that was kinda "Tornado Alley" in Arkansas. Still is.

SL: Yes. Uh-huh.

[00:39:53] BB: Lots of tornadoes go through there. And we had a dirt—first, I remember goin' to—down under the hill 'cause we lived up on a hill—kind of a hill—and goin' down a road that was



not paved [*clears throat*] to a neighbor, and we called him "Pa Snow." He was English. They had migrated there—or immigrated there somehow. I wish I knew the history on it, because he had a buggy shed and a buggy. Buggies used to go down that road, and it was one of those sheds that had a—all kinds of tools and stuff, and it had a high thing that would accommodate a carriage.

SL: Okay.

BB: And he had all kinds of tools, and I think he repaired bu—those carriages some. But they had an English garden and lived in a log cabin, and we spent a lotta time down there.

[00:40:53] SL: Now what was it about the garden that made it English?

BB: Well, the way it was laid out. And she had gooseberries. She had all kinds—and he had a really fancy orchard 'cause I remember a certain peach that he had called Indian peaches. And they were sorta small, but they were red. When you peeled 'em, the meat was red in 'em. And I just remember how delicious those peaches were, and he had some of those. And then he had the first Georgia Belle peaches that are still—I remember that peach. And then—but gooseberries, and he had raspberries, and the way the garden was laid out on one side of

the house—the yard—front yard. [00:41:38] Course, everybody scraped their yards, you know, a certain part of their yard. You know, didn't have lawnmowers, and they didn't want weeds growin' up, so they scraped 'em. And I remember that was one of my chores—our chores was to scrape our backyard.

SL: What did—so you used a hoe or something . . .

BB: Hoe. Just a hoe and . . .

SL: . . . and just pulled the grass up?

BB: Just scraped it, and then it was just patted down, you know.

Packed down with activity.

SL: Yeah.

BB: It's where we went to the—out to the well and where we had the si—the tank—water tank that collected rainwater, you know.

[00:42:11] And the smokehouse was out there and all of—and clothesline and where we played. So the gra—the—it was packed down. The dirt was packed down.

SL: But it would still get dried up and dusty . . .

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . in the summer, right?

BB: And dusty.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Oh, sure.

SL: Yeah.

[00:42:26] BB: But anyway, it's—that's one of our chores. But anyway, Pa and Ma Snow, we called 'em. And they had this cabin. It had a front porch, and it consisted of one great big room where their bedroom—their bed was in there—a big ol' four-poster bed and a huge fireplace and the—a lean-to kitchen right off of the—that you step down in, you know, in the kitchen and dining area.

[00:42:56] SL: Now this is the neighbors down the . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: So that . . .

BB: And then a living room . . .

SL: . . . that lean . . .

BB: . . . on the other side of that, and they had an organ in there, and my mother played so . . .

SL: Pump organ.

[00:43:08] BB: The pump organ. So to get into that room was a real treat. And above the organ they had a calendar, and they also had a dictionary, a great, big, thick dictionary, and it was open at a dictionary stand. And I remember begging Ma Snow to let me go in that room because above that organ was this calendar, [*laughter*] and it had—the picture on it was somethin'

about heaven and hell, and it showed—the road to heaven and hell. That was it. One of 'em it showed these—1920s, I'm sure—people with a champagne glass and a cigarette holder . . .

SL: Sure.

[00:43:52] BB: I'm sure you've seen the thing—of dancing and drinking and whatever it was—their way to hell . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . and the River Styx, and then on the other side, the—you know, [*pats something*] and I always fascinated by that calendar and—but more than anything else, the dictionary, because I would thumb through it and find these exotic animals out of Africa and look up words and . . .

[00:44:16] SL: So it was kind of a music/reading room.

BB: Yeah, it was. I mean, I don't remember ever goin' in there as company. I would just—Ma Snow would let me go in there. I'd come down and help 'em out or do something, and she'd—you know, I'd beg her to let me go in there and—but I didn't get to go very often. And . . .

[00:44:35] SL: So did you ever hear them play the—did she play the organ?

BB: My mother played it. No, she didn't.

SL: Oh, your mother.

BB: But my mother would play it occasionally.

SL: Mostly Methodist hymns?

BB: She wanted to play a hymn—some hymns. [00:44:45] And anyway, he had tobacco—dried tobacco in the rafters in that room and all kinds of herbs hanging from the rafters.

SL: In the same room with the . . .

BB: In the same room where the fireplace and where we sat around that, you know. And we'd go down there on really stormy nights. I don't know how they knew it, that it was a—I guess the humidity or how they calculated the weather. But some nights we'd go down there and sit with them for a while.

SL: Get off the mountaintop.

[00:45:11] BB: And then he had a dug-in cellar, and I remember goin' in that cellar a few times. And it had a platform of boards, and it'd be wet and soggy underneath the boards, and sometimes the—you know, our feet would get . . .

SL: Muddy.

BB: . . . muddy and wet—and little, dugout benches on either side. It was a crude kind of a thing.

[00:45:34] SL: But it was a storm cellar.

BB: A storm cellar. And then later, my dad dug one—just a mound, you know.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

BB: And I hated goin' in that thing, but I saw a tornado go over one time. We were in the cellar, but he hadn't pulled the door down, you know, and it was up high. But I remember him pointing that out to us. I could see that—you know, the funnel . . .

SL: Funnel.

BB: . . . passing over the sky. And then he later dug a deep—he dug a storm cellar—I remember him with a team of mules, you know, scoopin' out that—the place to put the storm cellar. And it was attached to our house. He poured a concrete . . .

SL: Pad.

BB: . . . thing outta the kitchen and then went down these nine steps, I think it was, down into the cellar where Mother . . .

SL: That's pretty deep.

[00:46:24] BB: . . . had a big—had a—I remember the old springs and a mattress that home demonstration people helped my mother make—taught people in that community how to make mattresses. And all of our canned goods were down in there. And it had one window about yay [indicates width with hands]—I'd say it was about two feet by eight—two by eight—you know, just a—big enough that you could crawl out of if—barely get out of if you weren't too fat. [Laughter] And then above that he

built a room, and this is where that young black man lived in—
you know, when he was out there to help—when he was in Fort
Smith a lot and to help with Mother with the milk—and us with
the milking and the pigs and—because we grew our own . . .

[00:47:14] SL: So the—the . . .

BB: . . . pigs.

SL: . . . storm cellar that your dad built was kinda the basement . . .

BB: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . to the help's . . .

BB: And then it had a breezeway attached to the kitchen and a—you
know, that went into that room above the storm cellar. And it
had kind of an open attic, too, that attached over the breezeway.
So . . .

[00:47:35] SL: Well, I wonder [*BB clears throat*] if your dad had a
tornado experience when he was a child that—or knew family
members or something . . .

BB: I don't remember him telling about it . . .

SL: . . . but you mentioned . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that he was very . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . concerned about tornadoes.

BB: Well, once he had kids—I mean, he was just paranoid about takin' care of us, you know. And then sometimes—I remember the DeWitts—they were all—it was a very musical family. In fact, we still keep up with a lot of 'em—but sometimes they'd come over—I guess, when it was a certain time of the year when people kinda knew the humidity, you know, 'cause they could read the weather [*laughs*] pretty well.

SL: Sure.

[00:48:13] BB: Would come over there and make music. You know, they'd come and—be two or three would—people in the community that maybe played the guitar and sang and—'cause I can remember 'em coming and sittin' around in the house, you know, and then maybe goin' down to the storm cellar when a real—the storm came through, and then they'd go home before—they didn't spend the night there. I don't remember but . . .

[00:48:34] SL: So music—your mother's ability to play the keyboards . . .

BB: Yeah, and she had a—we did have a piano.

SL: And you had a piano.

BB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, now that's interesting. As poor as you were, you had a

piano.

BB: That was her piano when she married though.

SL: I see.

BB: 'Cause she—and she took from a blind teacher.

SL: Wow.

BB: So . . .

SL: And she loved it.

BB: But none of us . . .

SL: She liked to play.

BB: She—well, she liked to play and didn't have time to play very much, and she wasn't all that accomplished, you know.

[00:49:08] But—oh, I can remember playin', you know, pretty often. And we'd—she'd play hymns, and we'd sing and then—but we liked the somethin' somethin' waltz. I can't remember what it was, but it was kind of a fast piece. And then we had a cousin who came—one of her cousins who came and spent a summer there, maybe a couple of summers—you know, weeks, several weeks—that lived in Dardanelle. And she'd come down, and she really played—she played by ear, and so she really entertained us.

SL: More secular . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . tunes. Popular tunes.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Well, before we—I don't feel like I'm quite done with your grandparents yet.

BB: Okay.

SL: And your Grandfather Flanagan was the one that kinda took to you or . . .

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:50:03] SL: Do you member any conversation you may have had with him, early on? I just have—I just get this feeling that he saw your proclivity to the outdoors . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and helping and then draggin' your little sister around on your . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . cotton sack. I'm sure that he saw that stuff and—or . . .

[00:50:25] BB: Oh, I'm sure he did. And we had kind of a special relationship that he did not have—I know he did not have with my sisters. They don't remember him with the fondness I do. And I remember goin' over there and—I guess I spent the night with 'em quite a lot because I remember my—in the daytime helping grandmother sometimes. And she always took a nap

after lunch, and she had whiskers. And my job was I'd get up and sit on her tummy and—with the tweezers—and pick those whiskers. And I can remember her lying there going, "Poo. Poo" [*breathing sounds*]. [*SL laughs*] And I knew she was asleep, you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: But here I am, sitting on her stomach, pickin' the whiskers out. But—course, you know, she had [*SL laughs*—but anyway, I had a really special relationship with my grandparents—Flanagans—my grandmother and gr—Papa Flanagan. And then they had a younger son who—kind of a "oops" child. You know, he was the youngest one. He was twenty. She had her first child—first son when she was barely sixteen. And then I think he was twenty-some years younger.

SL: Wow.

BB: And so . . .

SL: That's a big difference between spring and fall crops.

[00:51:42] BB: Yeah. Yeah. And I remember her goin' out and catchin' a chicken. She'd, you know, fix a hoop on a wire hanger or just some barbwire or something—some kind of a stiff wire. And she'd fix a little loop on it, and I'd go out among her chickens, you know, and slip that wire, and then get the leg of a

chicken, you know, and catch it. And I remember selling that chicken to the peddler who came through routinely and—to get spending money for Warren 'cause he had a date that night.

[00:52:15] SL: [*Laughs*] How much would you get for a chicken?

BB: Fifty cents.

SL: Fi—that's pretty big money.

BB: That—it was big money.

SL: Yeah.

BB: But I guess it took that for—going a—and he took us when we were—after we had moved to Fort Smith and back to Charleston, he took us to—out dancing a time or two at sort of a—we thought it was a really racy place, I think, 'cause they sold beer at—in Paris—what—Short Mountain Inn.

SL: Okay.

BB: Yeah. So we let—he taught us to dance, [*SL laughs*] and that was always kinda fun and—when the peddler came, course, that was exciting when the peddler came around. He came to our house, too, you know, had spices . . .

[00:52:58] SL: So he'd buy and sell.

BB: Yeah, he'd buy chickens, and I suppose other things.

SL: If he had stuff that—did he have—try to sell stuff to the family, too, or . . .

BB: Oh yeah. He'd have all kinds of—I mean, I remember Mother buyin' black pepper and . . .

SL: So it's a rolling . . .

BB: . . . he'd . . .

SL: . . . store, grocery store . . .

BB: Oh yeah. Really.

SL: . . . basically . . .

BB: And he'd fold out . . .

SL: . . . or a hardware . . .

BB: . . . that suitcase thing, you know, and [*inhales*] my, it was really quite a treat because—we also had a state senator, King, who lived north of us, and so—I mean, it was excitement to see a car at night, you know, at those days.

[00:53:36] SL: Well now, was this peddler—was he in a truck or was it a . . .

BB: I don't remember exactly.

SL: . . . horse-drawn or . . .

BB: No, it was a truck. It was a motor . . .

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

BB: . . . motorized thing.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And I think he just came—I think his name was Riley, and I think

he came out of Branch.

[00:53:51] SL: *[Laughs]* It may be one of my relatives.

BB: Could've been.

SL: Yeah. Rileys were . . .

BB: Were they?

SL: Yeah.

BB: Well, they had a store there for years and years, and I still know where the house is in Branch, you know, where they lived. And later on, he had a store and a—but, anyway, he came to our house, and he also came to my grandmother's house, and that's—I just remember that incident of catchin'—more than once though, I would catch a chicken for her to sell.

[00:54:18] SL: Did any of your grandparents ever talk about their parents at all?

BB: My granddad did because I remember my grandmother—I have pictures of my grand—great-grandmother Flanagan.

SL: Okay.

BB: And goin' to her funeral. And I keep—I know where she's buried at—up at—out from Peter Pender at the King Cemetery.

[Laughs] And I keep intending—I've gone out there a couple times, but it was so grown up I didn't wanna get briars on, you know, on me.

SL: And chiggers and that . . .

[00:54:49] BB: Didn't get to it. But it's probably the oldest memory I have of goin' into that church and passin' by her casket and seein' her. And I have some slight, vague memory of her when she was alive. Because she lived around with her children and—you know, at grandmother—at Mama and Papa Flanagan's, [*squeaking sound*] she'd be there sometimes. And I just remember that she was buried at that Methodist church.

[00:55:19] SL: So it was an open-casket funeral.

BB: Yes.

SL: Did they have—do you remember the hearse? Was it a horse-drawn . . .

BB: No.

SL: . . . hearse or . . .

BB: I don't remember any other details except just seeing that bo— [*laughs*] body in that box.

SL: I know they used to pack cold water or, you know, somethin' to keep the body cool . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . back in those days.

BB: I—but there were—I remember other houses that had bodies, but I don't remember any of that. [00:55:48] And I remember

one time—after church, we'd go home—lots of times we'd go to somebody's house for dinner. We'd go in a wagon a lotta times, and sometimes we had a car goin' there. But one time goin' by this cousin—a McFerran, which were related to us, and goin' by their house, and they stopped us, and my mother got out and stayed there, and we went on to this—Uncle Cap, we called him—up about—oh, I'd say a fourth-mile up the road for Sunday dinner and stayed in the afternoon. And then we came back by and stopped at that house and picked my mother up and went in, and they had this dead baby laid out on a trunk that was—you know, just—it was just laid out on a trunk. And she had on a beautiful, little, starched bonnet and pretty dress, and—and I was under twelve, because we moved—as I say, we moved there [*unclear words*] twelve. And I remember goin' on home that night and remember seein' Doc Akin. He was the doctor that was there attending, and I went out to—caught a chicken we were gonna have for supper. And I was helping my mother dress the chicken and some—I was questioning her about that baby. And where did that baby come from and what had happened to it and why was it dead, you know? [00:57:22] And her tryin' to sort of explain the facts of life to me and having me pull out the testicles in that chicken—that rooster, you know.

And I think she took off from that tryin' to explain [*SL laughs*] about babies to me. [*Laughter*] But I said, "But if it came"—but she tried—also tried to tell me it came in his black bag—that baby, you know. I said, "But how did he get that baby in there with that starched bonnet, you know, dressed like that? He—that baby couldn't've been in that bag, Mother. It's not that big, you know." [*Laughs*] And I just remember that conversation about really questioning all of that. But anyway, the—it was a stillborn baby, and they'd asked my mother to get out and help and so . . .

[00:58:09] SL: Well, it sounds like the meals were pretty much made from stuff that was grown . . .

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . and raised . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . there at the house.

BB: It was. We had—and I remember the vegetables—one of our chores to—was to store—put carrots, and I don't know what other root vegetables, in mounds of dirt. And then I could—she'd send us out there sometimes in, you know, in cold weather to dig 'em up. And, you know, she'd cook that and . . .

[00:58:40] SL: What about hogs?

BB: Well, we had—the first heavy frost we always slaughtered a . . .

SL: Hog day.

BB: . . . one or two hogs. And I remember my dad making sausage and, you know, and having to wash the intestines out with—you know, to put the sausage in—havin' to—I think we used salt water to . . .

SL: Probably.

BB: . . . flush 'em or somethin'. But I remember that gross job.

SL: Well, they used every part of a hog.

[00:59:10] BB: They did. And then we had a smokehouse, and they'd hang all of that stuff in there. And I remember some—sometimes she'd go bring a ham in or Dad would, and then she would use vinegar water to wash the mold. You know, it'd be kinda molded on the sides of it, but she'd scrub that off and then slice, you know—and that—it was the meat. And then—that's why I say it was the agricultural extension women started coming. I don't know—I don't remember—I just remember the goin' to the kitchens with my mother. And we'd go in the car. We had a car part of the time. Mother drove, and we'd take beans or whatever excess vegetables and stuff, you know, we'd have to those kitchens, and then they taught 'em how to can, how to preserve, how to do all kinds of stuff.

SL: Now how old were you when you . . .

BB: Well, I had to be under twelve . . .

SL: Under twelve.

BB: . . . because we left there.

SL: 'Cause it was before you went to Fort Smith.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And so these were University of Arkansas . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott.

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . extension . . .

TM: We need to change tapes.

SL: Okay. [*TM clears throat*]

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:17] SL: Okay, now, Betty, when people are looking at this

interview they're gonna notice that [*BB laughs*] a few frames ago

you were wearing a black jacket. Now you're wearing a red

jacket, so I'm gonna assure them that it's not them . . .

[*laughs*]

BB: No. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . that the black jacket was wool and too hot for you, and you

put on . . .

BB: That's right.

SL: . . . a lighter jacket.

BB: That's right. Couldn't stand it.

SL: You look fabulous still so . . .

BB: Oh, thank you. [*SL laughs*] Thank you.

[01:00:38] SL: Okay. So we're now on tape two, which is our second hour. So I'm tryin' to think. Where did we leave off? We were talkin' about . . .

TM: Well, the group that brought everything in, and we'd mentioned maybe how they taught people how to do the mattresses . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

BB: Yeah.

TM: . . . and the . . .

SL: Yeah, the extension . . .

BB: Yeah, the canning—the agricultural extension . . .

TM: Yes.

BB: . . . ladies.

[01:00:57] SL: And I was asking you if that was a University of Arkansas program?

BB: Yes.

SL: And so you and your mother would bring them . . .

BB: Department of Agriculture, you know, was the—they graduated from there. They came out of the land grant colleges, you know.



Extension—home—the agricultural extension homemakers. No, home demonstration ladies, they were called. They've got a new title. They've gotten several but the—it is the largest network in the United States. They're in every—not anymore. They used to be, and they're still in most states. And there is—they have an office, an educated man and woman, and many times more than one, you know, in every county of the United States.

[01:01:45] SL: What a fabulous idea and program. So what was it that they would teach? I mean, what was it that they would demonstrate?

BB: Well, I remember the agricultural extension men coming out and flagging my dad's farm and my grandfather's with little red flags to help him—teach him how to stop erosion. And I remember following along behind him and, you know, the freshly—with a turning plow, building levees where, you know, erosion was occurring. 'Cause, as I say, we lived on a hill, and it was not a big hill—but anyway, a hill, and there were several areas that needed to be leveed, so that it didn't wash away the topsoil. But I remember following behind him, plowing these—and making these levees across the land.

SL: Was that a team plow or . . .

[01:02:37] BB: Uh-huh. Horse—he had a team of horses and a

team of mules, and he loved his mules. But I remember that, and then they came in and taught us how to poison for potato bugs. And I know it taught my mother—worked in the garden and with helpin' my mother and then in these canning kitchens. They'd—I don't know how often they came, but it was more than once a year. I mean, it was several times a year, and they had these clubs where the women would also meet—they formed clubs. And the women would—they'd put together cookbooks that they'd share, and they'd teach each other things. They taught women to make tea towels out of flour sacks and—oh, I remember goin' to that, and they'd sit around embroidering things. And I remember even doin' some of it myself. And then going to the first canning kitchens when they got pressure cookers. And they'd bring all that stuff in, and then the first time that we had meat all year was after they got the tin can sealers, and they'd come into that community. And I remember my dad fattened a beef one time and took it over there. And they put it up in tin cans. You know, it was shared, you know. And anyway, they—that way we had meat all year.

SL: So . . .

[01:04:09] BB: Beef, which we'd never had before 'cause they, you know, didn't have a pressure cooker and—I don't know what.

But taught 'em all kinds of homemaking skills and health things. And my mother was pretty moxie 'cause she'd had two years of college, and I remember her helpin' out with some of the kinda teaching, you know, some of these women. And teachin' 'em how to make—somebody that made a better piecrust or that—you know, all kinds of stuff. But it was a fabulous way of educating. I remember even having exercise classes—teaching women how to do certain kind of exercises. And [*bird chirps*]—but I mean, they offered a—an invaluable gift to the farmers—like, helpin' stop erosion and, you know, a lot of other things.

[01:05:02] SL: Well, you said that the—you'd go to the canning kitchen. Would they just bring all the utensils and then set up in someone's house or . . .

BB: No, in the community center. The school.

SL: In the community—okay, or a church or . . .

BB: Or a—it was in a school or the church. But I . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . think it was in that—the school because they had—what, several years—when I started first grade, they ended the school. I didn't go to the first grade there, but my brother and sister—older sister and brother went to school in that community, and one aunt taught. She was the teacher there for a while.

[01:05:33] SL: Now this is Grand Prairie?

BB: Uh-huh.

SL: And [*BB coughs and sneezes*] how long would these extension service classes last? I mean, what is it, just a one day or would it go all week?

BB: One day, I think, or they might've set up for two days, you know.

SL: Uh-huh. And . . .

BB: I'm not sure all the details, but I know that we'd go there, and we'd play out in the schoolyard and the churchyard and the—you know, while they were inside. We didn't—I mean, we weren't hangin' around inside. I was too young to be much of use but . . .

[01:06:01] SL: Mh-hmm. What a fabulous network. It would seem like you could . . .

BB: It . . .

SL: . . . almost repurpose that for a number of things.

BB: Many, many things. It's . . .

SL: Well, I mean, it sounds like they were trying to improve quality of life.

BB: And this was happening all over the United States 'cause they're—you know, they have 'em—you know the—I don't know

whether you know about the agricultural extension. They're in Fayetteville. You can call 'em, and they'll come test your soil.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

BB: They'll come tell you how to prune fruit trees—how to prune—you know, they still do an invaluable service, but they sort of have run out of a purpose, a job, and they just need to be reassigned because it costs a lotta money to keep that organization goin'.

[01:06:44] SL: Well, there's also been a shift in the—in society.

BB: Yeah.

SL: I mean, then it was heavily . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . agricultural based.

BB: Yeah. And then—I mean, with all of our émigrés and a lot of—I mean, they're—if somebody would exercise some real imagination, that is one network—they are the ones that helped me with my immunization effort. They coordinated all of the volunteers all over this state.

SL: We're gonna . . .

[01:07:11] BB: I contacted all the agricultural extension offices and Dr. Runion Deer managed all of that. And they coordinated all the volunteers regionally and countywise and helped with the

immunization.

SL: We're gonna talk in great detail about that a little bit later, but that's interesting that that's the network that you called upon to help . . .

BB: Yep.

SL: . . . get that stuff done.

[01:07:38] BB: Well, and also with Peace Links. That's how I got Peace Links spread. I've, you know, attached—even with the immunization—I mean, that was the smart si—I mean, that kind of background of knowing that and remembering what they—how valuable they were to that community that I thought, you know, "I'll use in-place organizations" . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . "to do this." And you don't have to create anything new. I mean, you can move much faster and . . .

SL: And just . . .

BB: . . . that's how I got thirty thousand women in this country involved by latching on to their programs and getting, you know, an add-on to a program and . . .

SL: That's really, really smart.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Just add material.

[01:08:15] BB: But you know, I've seen—since Dale—all the years Dale was in Washington—every year that comes up in the budgeting and, you know, it is money that's not too wisely spent. It costs too much money for the job that they do 'cause the home demonstration women are now—they help—try to help with teen pregnancy—try to help with a lotta things. But they just need some real—the head of the Department of Edu—of Agriculture needs to really spend some time on trying to find a new mandate for 'em, a new job, because here are these educated people out in every community of this country.

SL: Every county.

[01:08:57] BB: And they've been tryin'—and they're doin' away with 'em through attrition. They couldn't do it through votes because they're too—people have their memory of what they do just like me. It's too ingrained. They don't wanna get rid of them, you know. So, I mean, there is a wonderful job for 'em, and, like I say, they are the ones responsible for the giant step in smoking cessation.

[01:09:22] SL: So you guys would provide—out of your garden and livestock, you would provide stuff for them to work with whenever they came into town.

BB: Yes. All the families in the community would, you know,

contribute.

SL: Would contribute a little bit.

BB: Yeah.

[01:09:41] SL: So let's see. You're twelve years—you're less than twelve years old, so you are—we're talking post-Depression, I guess.

BB: Yes. But it was . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

BB: . . . just the tail end of the Depression.

SL: Tail end of it. Yeah.

[01:10:00] BB: [*Door squeaks*] And I remember my dad telling stories about [*SL clears throat*] when the schools consolidated—when they decided to close that school in Grand Prairie 'cause it didn't have enough students and—I don't know why, but then we conso—I went to the first grade in Branch. And I don't know whether they ran a school bus or how I got there. I think it was a school bus maybe, out of Branch. And—but then the—in the meantime, the community people were building roads. I remember my dad leaving there—the community—Grand Prairie community had to make the roads. I remember he had a two—a slip—same thing he used to dig that hole for the storm cellar.

SL: Yeah.

[01:10:46] BB: But that he'd leave lots of days and—to go out and scoop up the ditches, you know, up on the road and make the roads passable for the school bus . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . for us to get to bec—in our consolidation with Charleston. And so I think the members of the community—the men and families of the community were responsible for doin' that road along with the county judge, you know, and for sendin' out the road grader occasionally. I remember when that would come through, and you know, I'd hate that because it'd dig up a lot of the dewberries that we loved so [*laughs*—pickin' . . .

[01:11:21] SL: Now what is a dewberry?

BB: Well, it's a—like a blackberry, only they're a little bit bigger, and they come up, and they're crawlers—vines instead of the upright. You probably went into blackberry patches and . . .

SL: Black—yes.

BB: . . . picked blackberries.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Well, these were called dewberries because they came out earlier than the blackberries, and they crawled along the ditches and the . . .

SL: Did they have the thorns?

BB: . . . fence rows. Yeah. But not as bad as the blackberries . . .

SL: Not as bad as the blackberries. [*Laughs*] Yeah.

BB: But anyway, they'd do those ditch—those roadbed, and then a bus picked us up.

[01:11:58] SL: So at first grade, you did not go to Branch at first grade.

BB: I went to Branch to first grade, but then the second grade . . .

SL: In first grade. But then after that, you were in Charleston.

 BB: In Charleston. And the bus picked us up. And I remember my dad heating a—the buses weren't heated—didn't have heaters in 'em.

SL: Sure.

[01:12:17] BB: And I remember him—we were the first ones for several years because the bus routes would change as families—kids quit goin' . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . to school or—you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And I remember him—a hill that we lived on had that real thin, kinda layered rocks—kinda big, but they were thin.

SL: Slate.

BB: And it wasn't slate; it was kind of a red . . .

SL: Sandstone maybe.

BB: Sandstone.

SL: Yeah.

[01:12:40] BB: But I remember him goin' out, and he had a couple of big sandstone rocks that he'd put in the oven early in the morning, and then he'd carry that heated rock and put it at the back . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

BB: . . . in that bus. And we would put our feet on it.

SL: Wow.

BB: And I remember my brother gettin' into a—practically, fights two or three different times with some of the bullies that would try to push us, you know, we were younger, and kick us off so they could get their feet on that rock.

SL: On that rock.

BB: And my brother lookin' after us. [*SL laughs*] And—but we'd share it with everybody we could. You know, we weren't selfish about it, but sometimes they'd—the bullies would try to [*sneeze in background*] . . .

SL: Well . . .

BB: . . . as they'd get us on that center pole, and sometimes I remember him gettin' into a—threatening somebody—some boy

or somebody would try to squeeze us all to death 'cause we were—we'd have to ride that center pole. [*SL laughs*] And then they'd get on that and, you know, just sandwich us and, you know, practically kill us. [*Laughs*]

SL: Smother you.

BB: Yeah, with that and then our—but anyway, he put that rock, and then he'd come back by. And then one time, he—I remember him threatening the bus driver, meeting the bus one day with a broom, and he said if he—he'd asked him to sweep the bus out 'cause you can imagine all those dusty roads . . .

SL: Sure. Yeah.

BB: . . . and the wooden floors in that bus and threatenin' that bus driver, sayin' "If you don't—the next time you come by here, if you haven't swept this bus out, by God, I'm gonna sweep it out with you." You know, threatening him. So . . .

[01:14:11] SL: So how much older was your older brother?

BB: He was six—let's see, about six years older than I was.

SL: Uh-huh. And what was his name?

BB: Callan.

SL: Callan.

BB: Callans. Callans. And—but he—no, and my dad was the one that was threatening the bus driver [*laughs*] about sweepin' the

bus out with him if he didn't clean it up better.

SL: So he's named after your . . .

BB: Mother's family.

SL: . . . mother's side of the family. Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

[01:14:38] SL: And the bus had wooden floors.

BB: Yeah, I think it had wooden floors. Yeah.

SL: Huh. That's interesting.

BB: And—because we'd come home and I'd sw—on the hot summers, you know, when it was hot—with a dirt moustache, you know, [*SL laughs*] where we'd perspire, and that dust would be at the—and I remember my dad tellin' my brother and my uncle—'cause he was still in school, his younger brother—that if he wouldn't open the windows in that bus—if he wouldn't let 'em open the windows—"Just break the god" . . .

SL: Get some air goin'.

BB: . . . "break the goddamn thing." I mean, I remember hearin' him say that to my brother. And they did break a window one time 'cause [*SL laughs*] we were just smothering in that—with the dust, you know, and he wouldn't open the . . .

[01:15:17] SL: I wonder why he didn't want to . . .

BB: Oh, he's just a cantankerous, old man. I [*SL laughs*—it was

one of Dale's uncles, too. Jones. My dad . . .

SL: Runs in the family, huh?

BB: Yes, it does, and I remember when I was [*SL laughs*] close to twelve, he was—threatened me somehow about something—about I don't remember what. But I remember tellin' him he didn't have the goose—he didn't have the sense God gave a goose. [*SL laughs*] And he told my mother and dad about it, and I got reprimanded for speaking disrespectfully to an elder. So—but, anyway . . .

SL: That probably stuck with you—probably didn't do that again for a while.

BB: No. No. [*SL laughs*] I didn't.

[01:15:59] SL: Okay, now how big was the Branch school?

BB: Well, it's—it was quite large. It was a two-story building.

SL: It seems like I've seen a picture . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . of the Branch school.

BB: Yes.

SL: It was pretty big.

BB: It was and—I mean, because that was a big—Branch was a big community.

[01:16:11] SL: How big was it?

BB: Well, I mean, it was a pretty good-size store. You know, the—
had several stores and had a dry goods store. I remember goin'
there, and they had a—the—a drugstore . . .

SL: So it may've . . .

BB: . . . and . . .

SL: . . . had a thousand people or more.

BB: Oh yeah. I'm sure it did. More than that probably. Yeah. And
still quite a few people live there and still have a post office.
And—but they don't have any—and I remember it had a big
grocery store for years, Brown's grocery store. And . . .

SL: So . . .

BB: . . . a department store.

SL: Really?

BB: Yeah. That's where we bought our shoes and underwear. And I
remember Mother buying gingham and stuff, you know, and
makin' dresses with . . .

SL: I was gonna ask.

BB: . . . bloomers to match.

[01:16:55] SL: Did your mom make your-all's outfits . . .

BB: Yep.

SL: . . . for you?

BB: Yep, out of—sometimes out of flour sacks, and then sometimes

she'd buy a bolt of pretty, floweredy gingham and then make bloomers to match our dress 'cause she was a accomplished seamstress. And . . .

[01:17:13] SL: Did she do anything for the men of the family as far as clothes?

BB: Made shirts. Made their shirts.

SL: Shirts. Uh-huh.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Were they collared shirts?

BB: Yeah, little collared—'cause I made my boys shirts, too.

SL: You did?

BB: Yeah, we couldn't afford—I couldn't afford the—what they called the "fruit loop." I don't—you—it's probably passé by now but . . .

SL: Yeah, the little hang thing on the . . .

BB: Yeah, the little loop on the back, you know.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

BB: Well, they were about two dollars more if they had that loop on the back of 'em. And I remember doin' that and sewing it on the end of the shirts I made. [*Laughs*]

SL: Raise the value.

BB: So they had a fruit loop.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's good. That's a status thing, wasn't it?

BB: Yeah. Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: But . . .

[01:17:51] SL: Huh. Well, what about—so you continued to live in Branch, but you were bused over to Charleston. Is that . . .

BB: No, we continued to live in Grand Prairie.

SL: Oh, I mean Grand Prairie.

BB: Yeah. But we were bused to Charleston, which was quite a bit further.

SL: And it must've . . .

BB: And it was quite a long . . .

SL: . . . been larger. Was it . . .

BB: . . . and the school was larger. Yeah.

SL: Okay.

BB: Larger consolidation 'cause it took in Fort Chaffee—that area around Fort—that Fort Chaffee took later, you know.

[01:18:18] SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. So at that home in Grand Prairie, do you remember getting electricity . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . to that home?

BB: I do. It was after—I believe that it was after FDR—his first

term—that they came through with the high lines and made electricity available to the houses. And we couldn't afford a radio. I don't think we had a radio 'cause I remember comin' in to visit an uncle that lived in Charleston and hearin' the radio—*Lum and Ab*—I mean, *Lum and Abner*, and Dale's talked about listening to *Lum and Abner*.

SL: Sure.

[01:19:01] BB: And my brother, I remember, made a crystal radio.

SL: Absolutely.

BB: And how—that was pretty exciting. And then we had—I think we got electricity before we moved from the farm. We might not have, but I know that the high lines . . .

SL: Lines came through . . .

BB: . . . went through there.

SL: . . . 'cause they did a utility right-of-way . . .

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . across the property.

[01:19:25] BB: And then that's—about that time is when

Charleston—they got sewer system—a sewer system. Well, you know, it's the first time the South was treated like anything but a conquered nation, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . was after FDR came in. But then I remember when I was twelve, goin'—we—after we moved to Fort Smith, hearing FDR make his "nothing to fear but fear" or at least one—his inaugural speech in the auditorium at Darby Junior High School in Fort Smith.

SL: In Fort Smith.

BB: Uh-huh. [01:20:02] But we moved to Fort Smith in the chris—during Christmastime 'cause we always had a Christmas program at the church, and that's where our Christmas was. Had a huge, big Christmas tree in the church, and everybody took their gifts, and we had a Christmas program and—'cause I remember Dad bringin' us back from Fort Smith a couple of times to rehearse . . .

SL: Attend—oh . . .

BB: . . . for the Christmas program. I was Raggedy Ann that year in the Christmas [*SL laughs*] program. And that's where we got our Christmas—our one Christmas gift. We all just got one Christmas gift, and then we had stockin's at home, and I can remember the one big navel orange, you know, and maybe some English walnuts.

SL: Yeah.

BB: So . . .

[01:20:46] SL: That's fun. Well, what about—I wanna talk a little bit about the—your schoolin'—your grade—elementary schooling. So out of first grade, you start going to Charleston, second through . . .

BB: Second grade.

SL: . . . sixth grade. Is that right?

BB: Se—first half of seventh.

SL: And first half of seventh.

BB: Yeah.

[01:21:08] SL: And so was there a qualitative difference between those schools. Did you notice?

BB: No. No, 'cause this—I started when I was five, because my—I mean, I'm a—my birthday's in January. And so I started in September when I was five, and that's how Dale and I—I'm a year ahead of him in school 'cause he's an August birthday—six months younger than I am. And so I was—we were in the same classroom. It was a split classroom in second grade 'cause we're in a—we've got a picture, you know, both of us in it. [01:21:47] And it's—and I'm in the second grade, and he's in first.

[*Laughter*] First or—yeah.

SL: Did you ever tell him you were a year ahead of him in smarts?

[*Laughter*]

BB: No.

SL: No? [*Laughter*]

BB: Subtly maybe, but never [*laughter*] . . .

[01:22:04] SL: Well, that's interesting—a split—so—but it wasn't in the—you weren't in the same room together.

BB: Yes, we were.

SL: Oh, you were?

BB: Yeah.

SL: And was it the same teacher?

BB: Yes.

SL: The teacher was . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . also split between . . .

BB: Her name was Killings. Killings. And—but that's the only time I remember that—the—in the third grade we were not in the same room.

SL: Okay.

BB: So—but I don't remember him then. I don't remember him bein' in that class.

[01:22:33] SL: Well, did you have favorite teachers . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . in either Branch or . . .

BB: Well, Branch, I loved my—Miss Irma. She later went to—she was a—an aunt—not an aunt. She was some kind of a cousin—second cousin, I guess. And then she later was principal of a school in Fort Smith.

SL: Mh-hmm. And . . .

BB: And my niece went to her—niece and nephew both went to her.

SL: Neat.

BB: Yeah.

[01:23:03] SL: Gosh. And then what about at Charleston?

BB: Well, I—it was—we had a wonderful teacher. I think probably I learned more from her because I was not a good student. I was a daydreamer, and I'd sit and look out the window and, you know . . .

SL: Well, I saw your report card. It wasn't too bad. I think I did see one . . .

BB: Well, that was first grade. [*SL laughs*] I mean, I, you know, I was all right. But I—since I'm a morning people, I remember my dad gettin' me up early in the morning to help me with my—I remember learning to spell the days of the week and memorize the days of the week and how to spell 'em one morning. And then another time I remember him getting me up, and I had to go through the months and learn how to spell 'em—memorize

'em. I just remember him getting me up and me doing my homework in the mornings, early in the mornings.

SL: And that's probably because your mother was busy fixing the breakfast.

BB: Oh yeah. Yeah. And he would—he'd—while she was doin' breakfast, he'd work with the homework.

[01:24:03] SL: Well, now as you grew through elementary school, was it all—was your father the main helper with you on your homework?

BB: No, Mother—I mean, she helped us with homework. I mean . . .

SL: Once you got home during the day.

BB: Yeah, if we needed to. But I don't remember her doin' a lot of—either one of 'em doin' a lot, but I think he knew I didn't—I mean, I guess they got complaints about my *[laughs]* home—I don't remember. But I do remember him workin' with me in the mornings 'cause, I mean, my—both my sisters made straight A's, and I think I had, you know, evidently reports from the teachers some that it caused him to help me. [01:24:45] And then we—but we had a fifth-grade teacher that I especially liked because she—it seems like Dale and I have talked about that a lot since then. Her name was Bullington. Mae Bullington. She taught us the words to "The Star Spangled Banner," the Lord's

Prayer, the Twenty-third Psalm. She's a big Methodist, too. What else did she hammer us with? The Pledge of Allegiance. Maybe it was just the fifth grade where you remember—you know, old enough to remember a lotta stuff. She also had us do a lot of—let us do a lot of art stuff. And I remember puttin' a—I did a bare tree on the thing, and I remember her putting that up as an example, and I remember that—probably one reason I thought I was gonna be an artist, you know, majored in art. And then when I was faced with [*laughs*] the first blank canvas and said, you know, "Express yourself," I thought, "I don't have anything to say." [*SL laughs*] You know, that's when I turned to be an art teacher, not an artist. But . . .

[01:25:56] SL: Okay. So now—but you're still living in Grand Prairie and going to . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . school in Charleston. How many miles was that between Grand Prairie and Charleston?

BB: I would say it's about twelve—ten to twelve.

SL: That's a pretty good clip.

BB: Yeah, it is.

SL: It took some time to get there.

BB: It—yeah, it did. And then stopping, you know, and winding

around through that community. [01:26:19] And then, as I say, they were digging coal all through there—that area, and the roads would be muddy sometimes, and we'd get stuck occasionally. And I remember a creek we had to pass one time—it flooded—and my brother and another [*coughing in background*] couple of other adult males walked that—it was a wooden—it was—we called 'em thunder bridges. You know, the wooden bridges . . .

SL: Where the planks were . . .

BB: Yeah, and they'd [*vocalized noise*] . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB: . . . you know, as you go across 'em. Walking in front of the bus to make sure that there were no—that the bridge was still there [*SL laughs*] and, you know, us in the bus, you know, lookin' [*laughs*] out at that swollen creek. And—but no other real incidents about the bus. We just—we had two or three different stops. We didn't always stop at my grandmother's. Sometimes we got off at another corner and—because the rut—the route had changed to some degree. But . . .

[01:27:16] SL: So I guess we oughta talk a little bit about race relations when you were growing up. And I like to start at the grade-school level and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I'm assuming that there was a black school that was . . .

BB: Out . . .

SL: . . . separate.

BB: . . . out—outside of Charleston. And I knew nothing about any of that. Just—Dale knew about the community outside of Charleston. This—there was a black community, you know, outside of Charleston, and they were—had their schoolhouse and, you know, and we were the first ones, you know, to integrate and . . .

SL: Well, I know there's always that talk between you-all and Fayetteville. Fayetteville was early, too.

BB: Yeah.

SL: I mean . . .

[01:27:57] BB: Yeah. [*Phone rings*] But we integrated all grades 'cause I was teaching at the time. I had seven black kids in my third grade. And we integrated all grades. I think that was the difference in Fayetteville.

[01:28:14] SL: So back on the farm, did—in doin' the cotton and all the farming stuff, were you acquainted with any of the black families?

BB: No.

SL: Did the black families come and . . .

BB: Well, we had one that lived there—a woman, and one or two of her children—had a little house and it—I don't know who that house had belonged to. It was a nice little house that—on the side of the hill, real close. And we had more than one. I think my grandfather probably helped provide help for my mother with four kids, and my dad gone a lot after he started doin' some of that trading. But they lived there a very short time, but I don't remember much about it except goin' up there and sittin' and listening to this woman talk some. But I don't remember any details about it 'cause then another family—a woman and her daughter named Bill—and I can remember Bill comin' in and setting the table, and she'd say, "One for Betty and one for Ruth and one for Maggie—Margaret and"—you know. [01:29:20] She'd count the plates out, and her mother would—I remember her mother tryin' to teach us how to scrape the yard. Helping some, but it—not long term. We didn't have help all the time. And Dad had black help on the farm to help with the milking and at periods of time, but I don't remember how long. But I remember he was scared of the dark, and he would carry us on his shoulder to go turn the mules out after they had—or the horses out after they had been fed . . .

SL: Fed.

BB: . . . and, you know, turn 'em out for the night. [01:29:58] And he was scared to walk—the barn was about a four—half a block away from the house and . . .

SL: This is your father?

BB: No, the black man . . .

SL: Oh, the black man.

BB: . . . that lived there.

SL: And he would carry . . .

BB: Carry . . .

SL: . . . carry y'all on his shoulders.

BB: Carry me and one—two of 'em—me and Ruth or Maggie—one of us—on his shoulder—bribe us that way. He'd give us a piggyback ride out to the barn to go with him to turn the horses out. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's a great scene.

BB: Yeah.

[01:30:23] SL: That's a great story. So now your father started trading cattle. Is that . . .

BB: Uh-huh.

SL: And these—were these milk cows, or were they beef cows?

BB: I don't know whether they were milk cows or beef cows.

SL: And did you help with that? Did you participate?

BB: No, not then. Nuh-uh.

SL: Not then?



BB: No. Hm-mm. He would just—he would make a little extra money 'cause, I mean, money, you know, just didn't have any. And I remember we had, at one time, we had a molasses press. I mean, they were—he tried growin' cane. [01:30:55] And I remember that little donkey that would pull that thing and people—other farmers around there would bring their cane and, you know, run it through that press—the juice. And then we had a—he'd built a great, long—oh, it was—pan that they'd put it in and cook it. You know, make sorghum.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[01:31:20] BB: But that—I don't remember how long that lasted, but I remember looking out the front—sitting on the front porch and seeing wagons come in there with their cane. And that—it was so dry and dusty that the dirt would come up almost to the hub of the wagons.

SL: Wow.

BB: The wheel.

SL: Wow.

BB: 'Cause that deep in dust. You know, just—'cause it was so dry.

And that's when they had some of the windstorms. I mean . . .

SL: And the Dust Bowl.

BB: . . . occasionally we'd get some . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . you know, some dirt from Oklahoma if the wind was blowing from . . .

SL: It would come through.

BB: Yeah.

SL: You could see it comin' probably.

BB: Wasn't a lot but some. [01:31:58] And then I [*clears throat*] remember hobos—a few—havin' hobos.

SL: And we're talkin' train guys . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that went from community to community . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . by train.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Didn't really have a home. And would they work? Would they ever . . .

BB: Well, sometimes I think they did a little work, but I just remember my mother, you know, feeding them. [01:32:18]
She'd, you know, go out and send us out to—or she'd go out in

the smokehouse and slice off, you know, ham and make 'em—she made bread and stuff—and make 'em sandwiches or—you know, feeding them. And then we had threshers that came routinely, you know. There's a Ben—Dick and Ben Kramer were the men's names. They're the one that built the house and did all the lumber stuff. They were talented men and had a threshing machine that would come around, you know, and we'd have . . .

[01:32:49] SL: Is that for wheat or . . .

BB: Wheat. I guess wheat or oats. Something because I remember I almost got a spankin' from my dad . . .

SL: How come?

BB: . . . 'cause we had some friends that—it's—it was right after the thresher had been there and threshed ours, and they'd build those great big, old haystacks.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And—straw stacks—and we didn't know it, but anyway, we climbed up to the top of that big thing before it had rained, and my dad almost thrashed us [*SL laughs*] because that way, you know, you ruin the stack because you punch holes in it before it's rained and . . .

SL: That's right.

BB: . . . packed it down, see. And we had climbed up on it—three or four of us little ol' girls, and oh, he was—when he saw us up there I remember him comin' out and yelling at us and we—I could tell he was mad and—hated to go to the house, but he really gave us a lecture about it. And then had to go up the end—and my brother had to go up and try to fluff it up again, I guess, or somethin'.

[01:33:51] SL: When it—okay, so you started out with a family breakfast really early . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . in the morning, so everyone is at the table.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And it's pretty strict as far as when this happened. There wasn't any lackadaisical . . .

BB: No.

SL: It wasn't . . .

BB: No.

SL: You ate when you showed up.

BB: It was a workday.

SL: Everyone showed up. Everyone ate at the same time.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Then everyone [*sirens*] went out about doin' their chores.

And . . .

TM: Scott, let's hold one second. We got a siren.

[Tape stopped]

[01:34:22] SL: In the morning breakfast, was a grace ever said?

How . . .

BB: Yes, we did. Not—it wasn't really strict—anything—but we—
yeah, especially at my grandmother's. She was very . . .

SL: Well . . .

BB: . . . strict about that.

SL: Okay.

BB: And—but we didn't always—I don't remember all of that being a
real . . .

SL: Institution?

BB: . . . institutional thing. No.

SL: Uh-huh. But at your grand—on your mother's side of the
family—grandmother's—it was very strict . . .

BB: Yes, we always had the blessing at my grandfather's, Papa
Callan's. Yes.

[01:35:01] SL: And did they have, like, a family Bible out all the
time? Were there . . .

BB: No, no.

SL: Okay.

BB: It was never a big deal, you know. Methodists sorta grew up . . .

SL: Typical Methodists. [*Laughs*]

BB: . . . yeah, grew up thinking, you know, the Lord gave you a brain and told you to use it and, you know. So . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . no strict rules and regulations.

 [01:35:20] SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. And then would y'all pack a lunch for school? Is that . . .

BB: Yes, we always took our lunch. And—but then in the summertime, I remember always my dad comin' in at noon, and we had a big noon meal. And then after he ate, then we'd lie down on the floor 'cause it's cooler down on the floor.

SL: Sure.

[01:35:42] BB: And he'd put his arms out like this, [*stretches arms*] and we'd put our heads—use his arms as pillows.

SL: What a great . . .

BB: And we'd all take a little nap. And sometimes we'd have little wrestling matches or, you know, stuff, but it was always a kind of a special time. [01:35:59] And—but then for supper, as we called it, we had cold vegetables, and then Mother would cook hot cornbread or hot rolls or some hot somethin', you know. Or

we'd have—lots of nights in the wintertime, we'd have rice with cream and sugar and cinnamon toast or cinnamon biscuits or, later on, once—a big treat was to have light bread—homemade bread—I mean, store-bought bread, you know, for cinnamon toast. And—but I—to this day, I mean, I'd just as soon have my vegetables cold as hot. That's a big bone of contention with him. [*Laughter*] If it's supposed to be hot, he wants it hot, and if it's cold—but, I mean, I'd just as soon eat cold vegetables as hot vegetables.

SL: Yeah. Well . . .

[01:36:54] BB: And fruit. We always had—my mother always—and I still do it to this day—some kind of dried, stewed fruit, prunes, peaches, apples, something, a stewed fruit on the table that we—you know, and molasses. We always had sorghum molasses, and she wasn't really big on cakes and pies. I mean, she did some, you know, but not—my grandmother always had some kind of sweet 'cause she wanted something sweet after her meal. But that dried fruit—'cause we—that was one of our other chores, that we'd take peaches and apples and put 'em out in the summertime and, you know, and then we'd put 'em up on a—on the sheet iron and then put 'em up on the roof, and then we'd have to turn 'em over, and put—she—I—it's like

cheesecloth, only I think it was just worn out . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:37:54] BB: . . . dish towels, you know. To keep the flies off of 'em. But that was one of our summertime chores, and that was to turn those apples and peach halves, you know.

SL: Was that on the porch roof or . . .

BB: Porch—yeah, that we could get to easily—that's sort of screened-in porch. Had a ladder we could get up on the roof.

SL: How long would it take 'em to dry out?

BB: I don't remember. Maybe two or three days, depending if it's—had hot sun, and then she'd put 'em in some kind of sack with a string on the top of 'em and store 'em in that smokehouse.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Well, that sounds like . . .

BB: So . . .

SL: . . . good eating to me.

BB: Yeah, it, well, it is, and it's—you know, I still like dried, stewed apricots or peaches or apples.

[01:38:41] SL: Okay, now the bathroom facilities were outdoors.

BB: Yes.

SL: And what about . . .



[01:38:47] BB: And the WPA built us outhouses—built us a fancy outhouse. We had one kind of a crude-type thing, and then the

WPA came—when it came into being, they came around and built these nice—with the hole dug into the ground, you know, away from—you know, taught people not to put 'em where the drainage, you know, would get to . . .

SL: Or next to the well.

BB: . . . your water.

SL: Or—yeah.

BB: Next to a well and stuff. And I remember ours—the one they built was down behind our chicken house and real close to a oak tree—one of these kinda droopy oaks. [01:39:30] And my younger sister and I [*laughs*] used to climb up there, and my mother used snuff. And I remember one time we pilfered some of her snuff and chewed up a twig or a branch or something—got up in that tree on top of the chicken house and tried the snuff out and got so deathly sick that we almost fell off the roof of the chicken house. [*Laughs*]

[01:39:53] SL: Okay, now let's describe snuff because [*BB laughs*] not everybody's gonna know what snuff is.

BB: Oh, it's just ground tobacco, you know. A powder. And now they call it Skoal. You know.

SL: And you would put it in your mouth?

BB: And your—between your lip and your teeth. And my mother in

her—when she was eighty-three years old, had cancer . . .

SL: From that.

BB: . . . where she—from that and lost her chin from here to here.

Dr. Suen, who is here, operated on her and took all these glands out and her jawbone from here to here [indicates area with hands].

SL: Wow.

[01:40:33] BB: And she lived to be eighty-eight. It—he got it.

SL: Yeah. That's amazing.

BB: But it was from that use of that snuff, and you know, she never quit it.

SL: My grandmother smoked a cob pipe.

BB: Yep. Well, she started using snuff—didn't start using snuff until she was pregnant with me. And for years I had a big, old birthmark, I think, on this side of my neck [indicates area with hand]. Not a real—but a sort of a brown thing and that's—everybody thought she'd marked me. [*Laughter*]

SL: That's funny. That's good.

BB: It disappeared. I don't know when it disappeared. I can remember faintly seeing that and thinkin'—noticing it for some reason. [*Laughs*]

[01:41:18] SL: Okay, now, so you had a piano. You didn't get a

radio, but your brother built a . . .

BB: Crystal.

SL: . . . a crystal radio so you got to . . .

BB: It hooked onto his bedstead.

SL: . . . hear some of that. And didn't really do any Sunday schoolin' in the house. I mean, there wasn't—you didn't really study scripture or . . .

BB: No, we were . . .

SL: . . . any of that . . .

BB: . . . not regular Bible readers or that . . .

SL: Bible readers.

[01:41:47] BB: We went to Sunday school and church all the time though.

SL: Every Sunday?

BB: Oh yeah. My dad was . . .

SL: But not through the week.

BB: No.

SL: But just on Sundays.

BB: No, no.

[01:41:54] SL: And what about getting dressed for Sunday? Did everyone have their—a Sunday best?

BB: Oh, yes. Yep.

SL: And . . .

BB: We got dressed up, and we had a—sometimes we went in the wagon, or if we had a car, we drove. And then we'd usually have somebody come home with us for Sunday dinner or, you know, but when the preacher was there he—we'd take the preacher home for Sunday dinner, and then he'd preach that night, too. And then go back to—into Charleston.

SL: Well, now did the families take turns with that preacher?

BB: Yeah.

SL: Did you-all . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

BB: Took turns.

[01:42:31] SL: Okay. And was the church itself a gathering place for the . . .

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . community?

BB: Oh yeah. Big.

SL: I mean, even if church wasn't happening, there would be community . . .

BB: Sunday school.

SL: . . . meetings . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . at the church maybe or . . .

BB: And, like, a lay speaker, you know. And we'd have Sunday school. We'd go—it was all—we always went to church every Sunday.

[01:42:56] SL: Well, now what about other denominations? Were—
was there a Baptist . . .

BB: No, just that one Methodist church.

SL: Just one Methodist church. Didn't have any Catholics or . . .

BB: No. If we did, they went into—you know, but they just didn't . . .

SL: Fort Smith?

BB: No, at Charleston. There's . . .

SL: To Charles . . .

BB: . . . always been a big Catholic church in Charleston.

SL: Oh, okay.

BB: Yeah.

[01:43:16] SL: Okay. So there wasn't a really heavy Baptist
influence . . .

BB: No.

SL: . . . between those two.

BB: No.

SL: That's interesting.

[01:43:24] BB: I remember this one family that, you know, made—kinda made a to-do about they were Baptists, but they, you know, didn't have a Baptist church to go to, so they . . .

SL: Suffered with the Methodists.

BB: Yes. Yes. [*Laughter*] But kinda let everybody know they were really Baptists.

[01:43:39] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, that's good. Okay, so when you were in grade school, did you have any subjects that you were fond of? I mean . . .

BB: Yeah, I always kinda liked science, and I liked geography. I remember being much more interested in those two things.

[01:44:01] SL: What about athletics and . . .

BB: No.

SL: Were there any teams—any sporting . . .

BB: I didn't play basketball. I didn't play any sports at all.

SL: But did the schools . . .

BB: Course . . .

SL: . . . support . . .

BB: . . . school had 'em. School had some, but see, I moved when I was twelve, and—but we didn't have any organized sports. We just played out on the playground at noon. And there's another



time I—a memory of my brother that we wore longhandles—
underwear—longhandle underwear and old lisle-cotton stockin's.
[*TM coughs*] [01:44:37] And I remember my brother [*laughs*]
chasin'—and then when it'd get springtime, it'd be so hot. We'd
be out on the playground, and I'd roll that underwear up and
then my old, heavy, cotton stockings down, and here I'd have this
wad of stockins here and a wad . . .

SL: A wad of . . .

BB: . . . of underwear here. And my brother would run us down on
the playground because Mother had told him not to let us do
that—you know, to I guess get a cold, or I don't know what,
running us down—the humiliation of him out there on the
playground pullin' my—rollin' my underwear down and rollin'
those socks up and hookin' 'em onto these suspenders, you
know. [01:45:16] The humiliation of [*laughs*—I'd stand there
[*SL laughs*] with my face covered up. But anyway, he had these
three chickens he had to look after. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that's—he must've been crazy about you guys.

BB: He was.

SL: Sounds like he was very protective.

BB: He was. He was a very, very good brother. He died when I
was—he died in December, just the day before Christmas and

Brooke—I had Brooke on—in April. But he had been with me through both deliveries—much more helpful than he was, [*SL laughs*] you know. And I thought, "How can I have this baby without him?" [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

BB: But—yeah, he was a—he was very good and took care of us.

SL: What did he . . .

BB: And took after us.

[01:46:01] SL: Later on, what did he develop into? What did he become?

BB: He was just—he was very smart. He would've been a wonderful veterinarian. But he got moved to Fort Smith at a bad time. And I think he was in the eleventh grade, and I don't think he ever—I'm not sure that he ever graduated from high school.



[01:46:24] And then he went to work with my dad 'cause my dad, after we moved to Fort Smith, started transporting cattle to Iowa and havin' these private cow sales.

SL: At Ames.

BB: And he did the buying of, you know, Jersey cows. My dad introduced the Jersey cow to Iowa and Nebraska and South Dakota 'cause that's when dairies were organizing. You know, big dairies. And, course, in the—those states, they had to keep

their cows in the barn all winter 'cause the . . .

SL: Can't get out in the cold.

[01:46:54] BB: No. And course, they were small, compact little cows, and milk sold by the butterfat content, and they gave a lot of milk for such a little cow, and it was very high in butterfat. So it was a sensation, and he made a fortune doing this, having private sales. And he had two—I remember one time he had two tractor trailers that—and I remember goin' with the—my sister and I goin' with the driver to help take care of 'em 'cause a lotta times, they'd have calves on the journey to Iowa—the two or three days it took to drive 'em up there in a truck. And we'd have to help him take care of 'em—milk 'em or, you know . . .

[01:47:38] SL: You'd help . . .

BB: . . . tend to 'em.

SL: . . . with the delivery and . . .

BB: Well, if they needed—I mean, they didn't have much trouble 'cause they were such compact, little cows like—now they have a lotta trouble with the big ol' Holsteins, you know.

SL: Right. Uh-huh.

BB: But walking up the hills, goin' up through Fayetteville, you know, up through there, and we'd get out because the truck was in

whatever gear it was in, tryin' to make the—that . . .

[01:48:02] SL: Up 71?

BB: . . . those hills. Yeah. And we'd get out and walk, you know, get exercise, walkin' . . .

SL: Just to . . .

BB: . . . alongside the truck.

SL: . . . just so the truck could pull the hill.

BB: Well, it was just so slow, you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And so we'd just—it was fun to get out and . . .

SL: Oh, I see.

BB: . . . walk along the . . .

SL: I see. Okay.

[01:48:19] BB: We didn't make many trips with it, but then I made several over a period of years with the truck to help take care of 'em 'cause they'd have to stop a couple of times on the way overnight, see, and let the cows out and feed 'em and water 'em and clean the truck out and take care of calves—little calves if they'd been born, you know, to fix a little . . .

SL: Now which sister was this that went with you on the . . .

BB: Oh, Ruth usually.

SL: Ruth.

BB: Now . . .

[01:48:46] SL: Okay, so you go to Charleston schools through seventh grade.

BB: The first half of the seventh grade.

SL: First half of seventh grade, and then your family decides to move to Fort Smith.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And that [*TM coughs*—let's see. And your older brother would have been in . . .

BB: Eleventh grade.

SL: . . . eleventh grade. So really, those are not the best of times to be . . .

BB: No.

SL: . . . moving kids . . .

BB: Oh, terrible. Terrible.

SL: . . . as far as their social . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . skills being honed and, you know, your group of friends and . . .

BB: Yeah.

[01:49:23] SL: . . . you—so you both kinda had to leave friends and go start anew in Fort Smith.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And what was Fort Smith like?

BB: Well, it was traumatic 'cause we lived about a mile or a little over a mile from the school and, of course, we walked to school and back, but everybody did. And then the—in the seventh grade, we went to Darby—I think it was Darby Middle School.

SL: Okay.

BB: So it was seventh through the ninth.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And it was that old castle building.

SL: Yeah.

BB: You know, it had the turrets, and oh, it was a huge—four floors countin' the basement.

SL: I used to play against Darby.

BB: [*Clears throat*] Did you?

SL: Junior high. Yeah.

BB: Yeah. [01:50:08] And they had a swimming pool in there. But I remember the first semester and me tryin' to find room—I'll never forget the number 319. But you had to go through room 318 to get to 319 because it was in one of those turrets. And I remember [*laughs*] tryin' to find that room and running from the basement to the fourth floor frantically looking for 319. And I

finally ended up just standin' up against the lockers sobbing, and I guess some teacher or some other compassionate student saw me standing out there and—on third floor, you know, crying and so distraught and explained to me where 319 was. But, I mean, that was the most traumatic thing [*laughs*] that happened to me.

SL: Well, sure. I mean, at that age . . .

BB: But I . . .

SL: . . . you want—you don't wanna stand out, but . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . but you want to be confident, too.

[01:51:07] BB: And I wanted to be a boy so badly, and I had my hair cut like a boy. I went to a barber and, where my brother and dad went, and had him cut my hair like a boy. And here I am, this twelve-year-old girl . . .

SL: Tomboy.

BB: Yeah, with hair cut like—a boy haircut. And then the—I remember wanting curls one time, and my mother rollin' my hair up on sock rollers, and it being curly. It got long—I let it grow out and long enough—it had these curls. But then I was so inept at takin' care of it, and I remember putting a tam on, wearing a tam all day, [*laughter*] even though I had curls. I mean, that

was kinda dramatic, too, 'cause I was sorta—suddenly aware of, you know, that I looked like a boy, and I didn't want to look—continue lookin' like a boy. [01:51:56] But—and then being called into the big auditorium and—to hear FDR's acceptance speech and, you know, that—being quite impressed with that.



And then not knowing anybody or anything, you know, as they say—you know, as—my mother used the expression—or Dad—that birds of a feather flock together.

SL: Sure.

[01:52:21] BB: Well, they had the Rosalie Tilles Orphanage in Fort Smith.

SL: Okay.

BB: And those kids were kinda outcast or . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . you know. And so I became friends with a bunch of 'em, you know. We'd just—we were outcasts and whatever. And you know, I kept up with those people for years, and you know, they did so well, and I've always been—kinda fought that foster home bit in the orphanage 'cause it was a good, Catholic orphanage. And those kids were secure. They knew they were safe. They were fed. They were clothed. They were—you know, and they succeeded in life.

SL: But they went to a public . . .

BB: School.

SL: . . . school.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Well, that's interesting.

[01:53:11] BB: Yeah. And I've always kinda argued with social workers about, you know, the—if they had somebody like agricultural extension people that would regulate—that would go and inspect because they live in that community. They know who works there. They know who—you know. And they would know if they were abuses or if it was not a well-run thing. Just like nursing homes now. Instead of being—having inspectors that know nothing about that community and who's running that nursing home, you know, I just think, you know, that could be a job for people like that who live in that community and have an education and understand the—what they're looking for, you know. But anyway, I've just—that was always interesting that those kids all were successful. I mean, they've married and had families and had good jobs and—five of 'em I kept up with—I mean, even until recent years. Some of 'em—three of 'em are dead now but . . .

SL: So real friendships forged . . .

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . in—at Darby. So Darby Junior High . . .

BB: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . was much larger than the . . .

BB: Oh!

SL: . . . schools in Charleston and . . .

BB: 'Cause it was—oh yeah, huge, you know.

SL: And . . .

BB: It's the only junior high they had in Fort Smith.

SL: I kind of remember that.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.



[01:54:33] BB: And I remember being able to take swimming, you know, 'cause all we had ever had to swim in were the old coal pits that were—you know, after they'd dug the coal and moved on, you know, they'd have—the pits would fill up, and it'd be so alkaline sometimes and—you know. My grandmother—I remember my grandmother lettin' us go swimming—goin' with us, and she couldn't swim. I don't know why she [*laughs*]—she'd wear her dress and go down to that pit with us to swim, you know. And I remember—I think she'd tie a rope or a string of strong twine . . .

SL: Cord.

BB: . . . binder twine or somethin' around us, you know, in case
somethin'—we got in trouble, and you know, she could pull us in.

[01:55:17] SL: Uh-huh. And this was outside of Fort Smith?

BB: No, in—there in Charleston.

SL: In Charles . . .

BB: In Grand Prairie though.

SL: Oh, Grand Prairie.

BB: I'm just—back—reversing back to early—those early years.

SL: Well . . .

[01:55:27] BB: But I was fascinated by that swimming pool in Darby
Junior High School, so I took swimming for—you know, we had a
recreation time or PE, I guess.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

BB: And I remember that was the first time I was ever in a pool like
that. So . . .

SL: Chlorine and all.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

[01:55:46] SL: Yeah, yeah. So what about the house in Fort Smith?
What was it like in comparison to the house in . . .

BB: Well, [*clears throat*] much like the one we left in Charleston.

And it's—we were on Thirty-fourth Street, and it'd been shortly

after they'd had a rather devastating tornado in that neighborhood. And that's the first time I met Roger Bost, who's the—you know, he was later head of health and human—you know, Dale named him that. His cousin lived on the street next to us, and he'd be up there in the summertime sometimes.

[01:56:18] SL: Now, what was your-all's address in Fort Smith?

BB: I don't remember. It's on Thirty-sixth Street though.

SL: Okay.

BB: I don't remember the exact address.

SL: Okay.

BB: And then we lived there for a couple of years, and then we moved down to another house that had a—closer to that sale barn that had a kind of a big pasture, and my dad would put cattle in that pasture. And then I'd—I had to milk—take care of those cows sometimes.

[01:56:45] SL: Well, now, did your mom and dad keep the property back at Grand Prairie?

BB: Yeah, Grand Prairie. Yes.

SL: And were . . .

BB: And my brother later . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

BB: . . . my brother later—when he married rather young and

rebuilt—and built—added to the house and modernized it. And he and his wife lived there, and their first two children were born there.

SL: So . . .

BB: And then it burned one . . .

[01:57:09] SL: When did your father start making the trips to Iowa with cattle? Was that when you were . . .

BB: Yeah, moved to Fort Smith.

SL: And . . .

BB: Shortly after that.

SL: So you must've noticed a change in your lifestyle if he started making money on this or . . .

BB: Well, my mother, I think, finally told him—because she was [*clears throat*] worn out—I mean, with those migraine headaches that she had, and then he was gone tryin' to, you know, make money, a little money, to supplement—you know, to get us clothed and educated and . . .

SL: Right.

[01:57:49] BB: And I think she later told me that she told him that either he was gonna have to get her off that farm, or she was not gonna live to raise her kids. She was not in really good health. She was . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . worn down 'cause my mother was a indefatigable woman. She—even though she lived through five primary malignancies and didn't die of cancer, [*laughs*] you never saw her in bed. Never, ever went to bed. And I'm sorta like her. I've told my kids, "If I ever take to the bed, you'll know the end is near."

SL: Yeah.

BB: I just can't stand to be bedr—you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . not active and involved. [01:58:33] And she worked—she really literally worked herself to death with tryin' to take care of four kids and run that farm and garden and milk cows and take care of pigs and, you know, all of that when he was gone so much. And she said, "You're either gonna have to get me off this farm or, you know, raise these kids by yourself."

[01:58:53] SL: So it was a combination of the business that he was developing . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Fort Smith and your . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . mother's health that sent y'all . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . to Fort Smith.

BB: 'Cause I remember my grandmother comin' over and trying to help my mother out quite a bit. And—but, anyway, so I didn't notice much difference. No. [01:59:11] We still didn't have a lotta mo—I remember we'd get a penny to—comin' home from school, we'd stop in the drugstore and get Ice Mandys . . .

SL: Don't know . . .

BB: . . . where they crushed ice, and they'd—two cups of crushed ice, and they'd stick 'em together and then pour that . . .

SL: Syrup.

BB: . . . juice over 'em, you know, 'cause it—we'd have one of those. I think it cost one cent.

SL: Snow cones.

BB: Snow cones.

SL: Yeah.

BB: That was a big treat.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And then on weekends, I think we got a dime. [01:59:42] And I remember we'd get a Powerhouse. That was the biggest candy bar you could get [*laughs*] . . .

SL: I remember those.

BB: . . . and split the candy, the Powerhouse, and that was a—took

up a half of a afternoon, Saturday afternoon, to . . .

[01:59:55] SL: What about movies? Did y'all start to go to see movies when you were in Fort Smith?

TM: Excuse me, Scott.

BB: Not very often.

TM: We need to stop tape.

[Tape stopped]

[01:59:59] SL: Okay, we just had lunch. We're on our third tape. We're in Fort Smith. You've made the move to Fort Smith.

BB: Mh-hmm.

SL: We were talkin' about the penny and the dime that you'd get every week. I think that was right.

BB: Weekend.

SL: Weekend.

BB: Weekend allowance.

SL: And you had just talked about the—what was the candy bar—the big candy . . .

BB: Powerhouse.

SL: Powerhouse.

[02:00:25] BB: And the favorite thing to go with that Powerhouse—there was a neighbor up the street, up the alley from us, that had one of these plum trees.

SL: Okay.

BB: And we'd go there, and I would—it hung out over the alley, and that sour plum, green plum, with that candy bar—you know, course, at that age, you know, you—I know the taste is crazy anyway, I guess. Anyway, I'd bend over, and Ruth'd crawl up on my back and stand up high enough she could snatch a—those plums, you know. And we ate 'em from the time they were this big until they were this big [indicates size] ripe, you know, with that Powerhouse. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's funny.

[02:01:08] BB: And go to Tilles Park. Do you remember Tilles Park?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: How far away is that from the . . .

BB: Oh, it was just about three blocks from where . . .

SL: Oh, that's good.

BB: . . . we lived.

SL: That's good.

BB: Yeah.

[02:01:21] SL: Well, what about movies?

BB: Well, I don't think we—I remember they had a wonderful Joie Theater in Fort Smith that had a balcony and a sitting area and—I mean, it felt like goin' to New York to Broadway, you

know, to go there because you could go up in the lounge part up on second floor that overlooked—it was the balcony part, you know. But it had a big area that was a lounge and the restroom. And we'd go early just so we could go up there and sit, you know, and felt like queens. But we couldn't go to the movies very often 'cause we didn't have the money to go. And—but we did see—I saw *Gone with the Wind* and—oh, a lot of good movies there. But the amazing thing was that they had—like in Fayetteville, they had an organist or, you know, a pianist or—music, you know, before the movie started. That was always kinda exciting and fun.

[02:02:21] SL: So they had a little musical revue or something before the . . .

BB: No, they had a—at Fayetteville, I remember when I went to the university, they still had that organ there in the theater, and they'd—somebody would play the organ before the movie started.

SL: That's so great. I never got to experience that.



BB: Well—and they—same thing in Fort Smith. And Dale's sister, when she was at the College of the Ozarks, went up and got into serious trouble—probably helped get her kicked out of C of O—she sang and played the piano and sang won—beautifully—had a

beautiful voice. And, course, at C of O there's—always had a lotta music in that community there in Clarksville. I mean, just a lotta families that, you know, made music and stuff.

[02:03:12] And she would, on weekends, would go to the "owl shows," the midnight show movie. And—but they'd have live entertainment on the stage, and they'd go up there and play, and she'd sing. And her dad's partner in the hardware—or employee in the hardware store snitched on her.

SL: Oh, she wasn't supposed to be doin' that.

BB: Oh, my heavens, no!

SL: How old was she?

BB: Probably eighteen.

SL: Too young to . . .

BB: Seventeen, eighteen.

SL: . . . be doin' that, huh?

BB: She graduated—skipped a couple grades in school.

SL: Oh, I see.

BB: So she was probably eighteen when she first went down there.

And they . . .

SL: Well, that's . . .

BB: . . . told her dad, and I don't know what—she was an extremely talented woman. If she had been born in New York City, she'd

have been a Ethel Merman 'cause she had that kinda drive, you know. She was very successful businesswoman.

SL: So [*clears throat*] . . .

[02:04:09] BB: Started the Servomation Corporation of America.

It's twenty-one companies—vending companies that merged together to form Servomation Corporation.

SL: She started that?

BB: She was one of the twenty-three businesses . . .

SL: Wow.

BB: . . . that—yeah. She's the one that helped us educate our kids and helped him put—the three of 'em put most of the money in his first campaign.

SL: That's good.

BB: Yeah.

[02:04:40] SL: So back to Fort Smith. Let's see. What year are we talking about that you moved there? It would be . . .

BB: [Nineteen] thirty-six.

SL: . . . [nineteen] thirty-six. So what is goin' . . .

BB: No, it was before that—it was after that. We moved back to Charleston in [19]43. No, I graduated in [19]42. 1940. No, it was about [19]36 or [19]37. Just—in—we moved in December of [19]36.

SL: So let's see. What is going on across the United States in [19]36? We're just now coming out of the Depression.

BB: Yep.

SL: The CCC stuff had . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . been put in place . . .

BB: Big.

SL: . . . and it was big—made a big difference. Well . . .

[02:05:31] BB: The WPA program.

SL: Yeah.

BB: I've got a wonderful story to tell you about that. My dad—can we go back to that?

SL: Yes, absolutely.



BB: My dad—it was—I was tellin' you that Peter Pender was this—another community that we were related to 'cause they had a store and a cotton gin.

SL: Okay.

BB: It's where we took our cotton to be ginned. And the people—Pendergrass—it was a man named Pendergrass who married my great aunt—one of my great aunts—Flanagans. And he had the cotton gin and general store.

SL: Okay.

BB: No, the cotton gin. But he was a carpetbagger, as my dad only referred to 'em as carpetbaggers. And then there was a man who had the general store there—was also a carpetbagger. And my dad, workin' on the school—building the—helpin' build the roads for the school bus and goin' there to the store 'cause it was the nearest store to us. We'd go by, and he—and they traded, and he—as a young boy, he would kill quail and dry 'em. [02:06:47] You know, tack 'em up on the side of the smokehouse is where my brother did. I don't know where my dad tacked his. But, anyway, he would kill quail and dry 'em, and then he'd—when he got a big stack of 'em, he'd take 'em to the store. And [*laughs*] he was sayin' that he—we'd take a big stack of quail in there, and ol' Mr. Pile, who was the grandfather that started the store, was the real carpetbagger. Had bought the land and all that, you know, for taxes. Had his son and his grandson working in the store with him. And so Dad said he would go in, and Mr. Pile would pick up the—a pile of the birds—a bird, and he'd [*sniffs twice*] smell it, and then he'd put it back down on the counter. And then he'd pick up another one. He'd smell it, and then he'd stack it in another place. It didn't smell right. And he said he'd go through a whole stack of quail that way. I think he said he got two cents a quail.

SL: Okay.

[02:07:53] BB: And he said—then, when he got through, he said, "Now, these I'll pay you for, but these are not any good." And he'd rake 'em off the counter, and they'd fall into this wastebasket. And he said, "The second time I went—I knew he was cheatin' me." He said, "The second time I took a batch down there for him, and when he stacked 'em up there, [*slapping noise*] I beat him to the pile." He said, "My dog likes quail, too." [*Laughter*] And he said, you know, "And I took 'em back to him later, and 90 percent of 'em he kept." He said, "And I knew he was cheatin' me, but I wasn't disrespectful. I just beat him to that pile of quail and"—[*laughter*] and then, later on, when the WPA came in, he said he would go in there, and Mr. Pile would cuss and rant and rave about the WPA spendin' his money for a blankety-blank program for a bunch of bums that wouldn't work, and oh, it was just costin' his tax dollar, and he'd just spit and fume and carry on. Dad said, "You know, it's the first time I ever remember speaking disrespectfully to an elder." And he said, "No, it's a good program, Mr. Pile. It's a good program 'cause I used to come by here early in the morning and you and"—he named the son and the grandson—"would be sitting on the west end of the store in your chairs in

the shade spittin' and whittlin'. And then when I'd come back in late in the afternoon, goin' home from workin' on the road, you'd be on the other end, spittin' and whittlin'. And now you're all three in the store workin'. Yeah, it's helpin' us all." [*SL laughs*]
"It's helpin' us all." Now isn't that smart?

SL: That is smart.

BB: I thought that was just really . . .

SL: Really smart. [*TM clears throat*]

BB: . . . a terrific observation that he made about that program.

[02:09:55] SL: What—why don't we talk about carpetbaggers.

What—your dad called 'em carpetbaggers.

BB: Yeah.

SL: What constitutes being a carpetbagger?

BB: Well, it's people from the North who came down there after the Civil War and bought up all that land for taxes—people—farmers and people couldn't pay their taxes and lost their farms and lost their land. And they were all—I can name you the names of the families right now to this day who the carpetbaggers were. And when my aunt, my Grandfather Flanagan's sister, married Mr. Pendergrass, who had the cotton gin, oh, they were just horrified [*SL laughs*] that, you know, he—she would marry this carpetbagger.

SL: And now we've got one in the family.

BB: Oh yeah. And he lost both his feet just tromping cotton down into the presses.

SL: Wow.

BB: They didn't have—you know, it was not automated and stuff.

And I remember goin' there with my dad with a—the thing of—a ton. He tried—just hoped to raise one bale of cotton 'cause that would be enough when he sold it to buy our shoes and school supplies, you know, for that year—coat if we needed it or whatever, you know. But that was what he'd strive for was to make at least one bale of cotton.

[02:11:18] SL: So how much would a bale weigh?

BB: I think it's a thousand pounds.

SL: A thousand pounds.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Half-ton.

BB: After it's been ginned and the seeds out and stuff—or maybe it's before it's ginned. I'm not sure. Dale could probably tell you but . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . I just know that that was sort of an aim to get a—that much. It would carry us through the school year.

SL: It was on the books as . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . expected and necessary income.

BB: And so the—I mean, the banker—there were two bankers in Charleston. They were both carpetbaggers [*laughter*] who came there. I mean, I just remember—I mean, that—he still referred to it—my grandfather probably more than my dad, and he probably picked it up from him.

[02:12:01] SL: Yeah. Hmm. Okay. Well, thanks for that explanation. That'll—kids will like that.

SL: Yeah.

[02:12:10] SL: So we're in Fort Smith, and there's gotta be—you know, you—a big difference in the school. Much bigger . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . school—had a swimming pool. You're now more urban. Now you're having an urban experience instead of . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . out on the farm. What else about Fort Smith—did they have a trolley at all or . . .

BB: Yes, they did have, but it was goin' out. I mean, I don't remember much experience with the trolley, but I know they did have—I think they did have some and certainly had the tracks

still on the streets.

SL: But you don't remember it really being active.

BB: Not—not—no. I don't really have any real memories about ridin'
the trolleys.

[02:12:53] SL: Now Fort Chaffee was there.

BB: No.

SL: No?

BB: Fort Chaffee came in 1940—it started filling up with the tanks
and the things, and they confiscated the land back in the late—I
guess in [19]39, [19]40. But built it very quickly.

SL: So . . .

BB: It was after we moved back to Charleston during my senior year.
I graduated in [19]42. We moved back there in the summer of
[19]41.

[02:13:29] SL: So the fort wasn't there yet.

BB: No, no.

SL: Well . . .

BB: I guess all the negotiations and everything had taken place by
then. And—but our—'cause I remember days at end—the—
these half-tracks and big army trucks and stuff coming from
Camp Robinson, I'm sure, came up Highway 22. [02:13:52]
And goin' up there, 'cause I remember the family lived kinda up

behind us. It was kinda up a hill, and I remember this one little girl runnin' down there sayin', "Hurry, Mary, the" [*unclear words*] "Hurry, Mary, the truck—the half-tracks are comin'," [*laughs*] you know, down the highway. They'd gang up there on the edge of the highway to watch 'em go by and wavin' at all the soldiers . . .

SL: Well, sure.

BB: . . . drivin' 'em.

SL: It was big doin's.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Big equipment.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Long convoy.

BB: Huge. I mean, all new . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . sights to us.

[02:14:25] SL: So did y'all have a garden in Fort Smith as well?

BB: Yes. Yes.

SL: And . . .

BB: We did.

SL: . . . were there any livestock? Did you do any chickens or anything like that?

BB: Well, that—I told you we lived on this one house for, I think,

close to two years, and then we moved to another house on 37th Street, I think. Just not very far from there. But it had a—it was sort of on the fringe of town and on the north side of Grand Avenue. And it had, I'd say, a twenty-acre pasture behind the house, and he would—and it was very close to that sale barn, and then he'd, you know, move the cattle. In fact, he'd drive 'em up there from the sale barn sometimes—herd 'em up there, you know. We'd go down and help him, you know, negotiate a—up the alley to get 'em into that pasture. And then sometimes they'd be—they'd have a calf, or they'd birth a calf shortly after, and I'd help milk 'em. And we had to see that they were watered and fed and . . .

[02:15:33] SL: So you were helpin' . . .

BB: . . . got hay.

SL: . . . drive the cattle off . . .

BB: Oh, just from the sale barn.

SL: It wasn't very far, but still . . .

BB: But—yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:15:40] BB: Yeah, we had chores. We had to—we helped out 'cause he'd still be at the sale barn, you know, at the sales or whatever, you know. And we had that, and then later we moved

further out Grand Avenue to just—oh, five or six blocks from where—it was the county poor farm, they called it. It was where they—Dale, I think, talked yesterday some or talked—taped yesterday about taking somebody to the poor farm. They called it the poor farm—to this—it was a big, old, colonial-looking, mansion-like thing there where UALR is. And it—on that grounds there—we moved pretty close to there. And we had a—oh, I guess we had a twenty-acre pasture out behind that house, and he would keep cattle. He'd bring cattle out there.

SL: So . . .

BB: And I had a horse, and I was madly in love with my horse and used to drive—ride out into the addition right—that's across the street from—the interstate runs along the edge of it. What was the name of that park? Bonneville Park, where the police did their—had their shooting range out there, and I used to ride my horse out in there all the time. [02:17:11] Somethin' that you wouldn't dare. I mean, it was a—probably eighty acres of heavily wooded area, you know, and I'd go out there on my horse. And sometimes I'd go out where the road that led where the police were out there doin' their practice shooting.

SL: What was the name of the horse?

BB: That horse? Buddy. [*Laughs*]

SL: Buddy? [*Laughs*]

BB: Yeah.

SL: Was it a big horse or . . .

BB: Yeah, it was a big horse.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And, course, you know, I rode him all over that end of Fort Smith. And—oh, right, like I say, I was in love with the horse till I was about fifteen, sixteen. [*Laughs*]

[02:17:55] SL: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about poor farms. Poor farms were—and you called it a county . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . poor farm. So it was probably supported by county funds and . . .

BB: Yeah, where they just sent indigent people.

SL: Right.

BB: I think it was a lotta veterans were there—at least there's some of 'em, but then I remember Dale was talkin' about this one man that they—that he took in the ambulance up there. I think he's told that story about—but that's—it was just known—and I'd see these old people sitting around on a veranda of that house and, you know, out in the—and walkin' around out on the grounds.

[02:18:37] SL: So veterans—does this predate Veterans

Administration facilities?

BB: I think so. Yeah. Oh yes. I mean, that was—this was back in the late [19]30s.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, that's interesting that—so he—you'd—he'd put some cattle up there. You'd . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . ride your horse up there. So was there—were there any other kids ridin' horses?

BB: Oh, there were a few, not many. No, I—that's why I say I rode my horse by myself out in there. And now today, I mean, you wouldn't dare let a girl go . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . roamin' around, you know, in that heavily wooded area. I can't remember what that addition's called now. Do you remember that?

TM: Un-uh. [*Clears throat*]

BB: But it was one of the first sort of developed subdivisions that built out there in that area. It's . . .

[02:19:36] SL: So you say you loved that horse till you were about fifteen. So . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . about that time, you've probably kinda semisettled in Fort

Smith. You've probably developed some friendships now.

BB: Oh yeah. We had a—we belonged to the Second Methodist Church and were very active and involved in the MYF and . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . you know, did a lotta stuff and—with the church—with the youth group there. And my dad—because my dad was gone so much, and my brother was, course, doin' the buying and—of travelin' around the state to sale barns and buying young Jersey cows, heifers, and putting 'em on the farm, too. He'd ha—he'd buy a lot, you know—have there—and he'd have 'em—get ready to—and the ones he'd bought in Fort Smith, they'd come out to that place where we had—sometimes we'd have forty—twenty-five to forty head of cattle out there on that—you know, not long periods of time. But he'd buy 'em and then ship 'em out in a truck, you know, to Iowa or—mostly Iowa at that time.

[02:20:45] SL: Now did you ever go on any of the Iowa trips?

BB: Yes. It's like I say, I'd go along several times and—you know, to—not consistently. It would be out—when school—wasn't in school. And I don't remember doin' that so much that young and before we lived in Fort Smith. This was . . .

SL: Later.

BB: . . . a little bit later. Yeah.

SL: After you moved back to Charleston.

BB: Yeah.

[02:21:08] SL: So what about the racial climate in Fort Smith?

Were you more aware of a African American community?

BB: No, 'cause they had separate schools then, too, and I don't even remember bein' particularly aware of it—of any racial anything at the time.

SL: You didn't see any "whites only" or "colored" fountains or . . .

BB: Well, if I did, it was just accepted. I mean, we weren't, you know, conscious of it. I mean, I had no bigotry about me. I didn't even know there was such a thing. I just thought—I mean, until I went off to college and started goin' to class with—at Iowa State, and I had black classmates. And at the time, I think that was the first time that I became aware that there was any prejudice against Jews. I had just always been taught they were God's chosen people, and you know, it came as a real "Duh?" What? You know, I didn't know what people were talkin' about 'cause I had two friends in Fort Smith that were very close friends of mine. Jewish girls. I didn't know they were Jewish. I just—you know, they were just friends.

SL: Right.

[02:22:26] BB: And even the blacks—I mean, I don't remember

having any feelings about classmates or I—we just—we really grew up without prejudice.

[02:22:40] SL: Well, I mean, was there a black presence at all in Fort Smith that you were aware of, or were you just so isolated—were the communities, so . . .

BB: Just isolated . . .

SL: . . . isolated from each other?

BB: . . . that I was not aware.

SL: I know, in Fayetteville, I remember the African Americans sat in the balcony . . .

BB: Well, they did in Charleston.

SL: . . . of the Ozark Theater.

BB: I remember in Charleston that they had a little ol' balcony up in the theater, you know, up there. But I had no feelings of—I just wasn't—I mean, I'm sure that we did things that we—you know, that were prejudiced or just accepted it.

SL: Right.

[02:23:15] BB: I just simply was not aware. And, of course, Dale's father was a very liberal man. I mean, they grew up—and he—there was a couple of incidents that he could tell you about where his dad—and it's in that *Idols and*—the book of Francis Gwaltney's about some of his actions about the way people

treated some of the blacks.

[02:23:37] SL: Well, why don't you go ahead and tell us a little bit about that?

BB: Well, I don't really—I can't remember that story—the story about it, but I mean, he—I just was not aware. I mean, I'm sure that I had—I treated 'em like everybody else did. We would donate pennies or—at church, you know, to give for the classroom to put a new roof on their building or their school out there. Or something, you know. But never, ever dawned on me that we—that there was anything wrong with 'em, and they worked for my dad. I mean, he always had one—Buck Freeman—in Charleston when we were there—worked for 'em for years and years, and his wife worked for my mother some. But she never had much—we never had much household help, but there were one or two who did do household help around in Charleston, but not—I never—we could never afford 'em—afford to have help, or if we did it was, you know, some special occasion or something. But it just was never an issue until I went away to college.

[02:24:47] SL: What about electricity in the house in Fort Smith?

BB: Yeah.

SL: So did an electric . . .

BB: And we had a radio.

SL: A radio entered the scene in Fort Smith.

[02:25:01] BB: Yes, 'cause I remember the radio because I remember it's when Louis—Joe Louis—I remember my dad and brother listening to the Joe Louis . . .

SL: The boxing—boxing was really big.

BB: Yeah.

SL: You could hear the bell ring and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And there were some—and we used to listen to *Amos 'n' Andy*, and there were some other programs but not—I was always outside. I mean, I was not in the house a lot or . . .

SL: There was *The Shadow* out of Chicago. "Who knows?"

BB: Yeah.

SL: "The Shadow knows." Course, *Lum and Abner*.

BB: Oh yeah. We listened to *Lum and Abner* and . . .

SL: And there was another hour. What was the hour? There was—I forget what the name of it was.

[02:25:49] BB: But we were not the kind of radio listeners that Dale's family was. Because they had had a radio a lot longer than we had. [*Laughs*]

[02:26:01] SL: What about music? Do you remember music over the radio at all?

BB: Yes, some that—once in a while—like somethin' like *The Grand Ole Opry* and, you know, some of the—I remember hearin' some of the music but not—it wasn't big in my life.

[02:26:17] SL: So when was it that you started being—about dancing and—you . . .

BB: Oh, well. We'd—we learned to dance in Fort Smith and did a lot of dancing in the house. It was like I say, with the youth group, the MYF. And my dad traveling all the time. Mother would let us have all the company we wanted, but we had to be home. She wanted us home. [02:26:44] We never went to other people's houses very much, but we had—the house was full of kids all the time. Our MYF group met there. We played there. We filled up [*clears throat*]—'cause we lived up on a hill, we'd fill up sacks of groceries—fake groceries, you know, and put 'em out on the highway, and tie a string onto it, and the cars would stop thinkin' somebody had lost a sack of groceries. And one night I remember feeling so badly because a lot of the—that church was rather close to our house where we moved out on Grand, but we'd been goin' to that church even before we moved out that far east. But one night we'd put a—there was an old, caved-in

cellar across the street from our house, and we tunneled a hole out to the highway to the bank, you know. Dug a hole, and we ran a string through that and [*clears throat*] [*SL laughs*] built it up so it—but we could stand up and peep out the top part and put a purse out on the highway. And there was a older woman that went to our church that we all loved and she—but she walked to church.

SL: Yeah.

[02:28:01] BB: And one night she was goin' along there and saw that purse and reached down to pick it up, and we jerked the string, and it startled her so that she fell down.

SL: Oh!

BB: And, oh, we jumped out of that cellar and ran out and, you know, tried to get her up. But we felt so badly about that, so we quit doin' that.

SL: Yeah.

[02:28:20] BB: But we—we'd still put the grocery sacks out [*laughs*] there. It would cause a traffic jam [*SL laughs*], and my dad was always sayin'—I don't know—every time he'd come home, all these bicycles would go "shoooot" [*vocalized noise*] down that bank—they'd go ride their bicycles side—we'd slide down the bank, you know, all these fellas from the—that would—hangin'

out there at our house. [*SL laughs*] And girls, you know, 'cause—but the boys would all leave, or we'd be out in the yard and—'cause Dad would drive in, and he'd scare 'em all, you know, and they'd leave. [*Laughter*] Not that he ran 'em off or anything, but anyway, he was always talkin' about that that hill—couldn't grow grass on that hill because too many bicycles [*laughter*] were ridin'—slidin' off of it.

[02:29:02] SL: Well, that's a [*TM coughs*] really—you probably didn't realize at the time that you were developing some real hosting skills by . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . having those kids over all the time.

BB: That's right.

SL: And not going someplace else.

BB: Yeah.

SL: You were . . .

[02:29:25] BB: We had a great big yard and a garden, and that's when Mother would—Dad devised this harness thing that he'd—Mother would hitch us up to the garden plow.

SL: Okay.

BB: A couple of us. And we'd pull while she, you know, plowed her garden. It quite a big garden 'cause he thought, you know, you

couldn't have—even back when she was in her eighties, and she loved gardening and begged him—but she was too old to keep a good garden, you know. [02:29:57] But she couldn't stand for the weeds to grow up in all that, and she would beg him just to plow her up a little bit of a garden that she could take care of. But he thought if you had a garden you had to have a half-acre.

SL: Acre. Yeah, [*laughs*] that's a big garden.

BB: And so it got to the point—I was livin' there at the time—that I would go out and just personally spade up a space where she could have her turnip greens and, you know, a little garden . . .

SL: Just a little plot.

BB: . . . that she could manage.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

[02:30:25] BB: 'Cause I had my own little garden on—over on Fourth Street in [*laughs*] another part of—up about five blocks from where she lived.

SL: Now is—when—is this when you were in Fort Smith?

BB: No, after I married and had the . . .

SL: Oh, after you married. Okay.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

BB: Yeah, and lived there.

SL: Okay.

[02:30:45] BB: And growin' up in Charleston—after we moved back to Charleston—she assigned—we moved into this house, and it had a five acres, and I had my horse there. Not that horse, but another horse. And we had a cow and—but Mother gave each of us three girls one—we had to take one meal a day that we had to cook, prepare.

SL: Oh, okay.

BB: And so I would trade off with my two sisters. I would milk the cow, mow the yard, and worked in the garden for them to take my meal. And then I was the only one that married a man that came home for lunch every day for eighteen years. [*SL laughs*] I've had to cook twice as much as either one of them ever did. But I . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . I did all that kind of stuff and, you know, and trade them— traded off for them. But that house had two, three outside doors to it, and my dad was, you know, around a lot—would be out at the farm, which was out of—about a mile and a half out of town. And any time he would come in, we were—would wear shorts [*clears throat*—had shorts, but we had skirts—it was the fashion then—you'd have—wear shorts, and then you had a skirt that

would go over 'em.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And so we had a skirt and a dust cloth by every door—outside door—'cause the minute he drove up and came in the door, we grabbed it if we were sitting around—lolling around doing nothing, we'd jump up, put that skirt on quickly, and act like we were dusting furniture, because if he came in and we weren't busy, he called us triflin'.

SL: Hmm. Triflin'.

BB: Triflin'. And to this day, I cannot sit down and read comfortably during the daytime. I find myself [*SL laughs*] tensing up, you know. And I have to say, "It's okay. It's okay. You can read all day. Sit and, you know, loll around and read all day if you want to." But that old tape is still going in my head that, you know, "If you're not doing something constructive, you're triflin'."

SL: Well . . .

BB: So I have a hard time. [*Laughs*] So I have to either be quilting, I do patchwork quilts, or I have to be knitting, or I have to be doing something, not reading for pleasure, you know, unless I lecture myself that it's okay. [*Laughs*]

[02:33:19] SL: You were never trained that it was a job to read.

BB: No.

SL: [*Laughs*] A chore. That's funny.

BB: No, we had to be either helpin' fix dinner, lunch, doin' somethin', housekeeping, workin' in the yard, doing something constructive.

[02:33:32] SL: So moving back from Fort Smith in the—for your last year in high school, that's not really a great time to move either.

BB: Oh, it was awful 'cause I was in love and—you know, but I had never even thought about questioning my parents or protesting. Just—you know, that was the fact of life. We were movin'.

[02:33:54] SL: Now we haven't really talked about boys yet. When did boys . . .

BB: Oh, I was . . .

SL: . . . start to interest you?

BB: . . . about the—in the eleventh grade.

SL: [*Laughs*] Just when you were gettin' ready to leave.

BB: Uh-huh. And I started dating a young man that was quite a tennis—even though I had a crush on another one but not—I never really wasn't that interested, but I did like one boy particularly, and we had a—to the eleventh grade—dated quite a bit. And then I met ol' Dale that summer.

SL: When you moved back to Charleston?

BB: Yeah.

SL: What was he doin'?

BB: Carryin'—had a paper route and later worked in a Kroger store in the—as a butcher.

SL: Is that right?

BB: Yes. And, ugh, I had—we had a pickup truck, and I could get the pickup truck pretty often—pretty easily—and after he'd get off work on—at the grocery store, then I'd pick him up in the truck, and we'd go to the movies. [02:34:57] And, oh, yack! He'd smell so bad [*laughter*] from workin' in that—the butcher department. You know, butcher thing. But anyway, and then on Sunday nights he could get the car, and we'd go to MYF together. And then my older sister was dating his older brother some, and it was more a friendship. They weren't—never a serious a romance or anything, but we did double date some 'cause . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . they could get the car occasionally, and we'd—and his older brother was a maniac driver. [*SL laughs*] And sometimes we would have an hour to go to MYF, and we'd have two hours, you know, to go to MYF and the program and then to go get a Coke or somethin', and then they'd have to be home. [*Clears throat*] And we would take off for Paris and, you know, just somewhere to go. And Paris was, like, eighteen miles away.

SL: Oh my gosh.

[02:35:54] BB: And he would drive, like, ninety miles an hour. And then later on, we double-dated with my sister and the boy—her first husband. [*Clears throat*] And he always had a car. His dad—he had a car in high school. But [*clears throat*] he'd get mad at her, and we'd go up to Cove Lake down at Paris. [*Coughs*] And it was a gravel road up to Cove Lake. We'd go down there swimmin' sometimes early in the evening and have to be home by ten o'clock. But he'd get mad at her and drive down that mountain like a maniac, and so I got to the point that I'd tell her we wouldn't go with 'em unless she'd promise me she wouldn't make him mad. [*Laughter*] [*Coughs*]

TM: Would you like some water or anything?

BB: I'll be all right now, I think. So, anyway, it was quite a hectic romance.

[02:36:55] SL: So by the time that you're finishing up high school, are the horse and mule days kind of over with? Are they still using the mules to work land or to do anything? Or it sounds like to me . . .

BB: There was . . .

SL: . . . the automobile had . . .

BB: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . taken over. The roads were startin' to proliferate enough and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . be built well enough to handle that kind of traffic.

[02:37:22] BB: Yeah, and the county judge system was in place and,



you know, a lot of things. And Charleston had a water and sewer system—all came about under FDR. Rural electrification. The water-sewer thing and, you know, and bathrooms. People put bathrooms in their homes and—in fact, Dale's mother was very—I mean, she just knew—I mean, the sky was falling all the time—very depressed woman and very aware of money, you know. And she was so upset because her husband put a bathroom in their home. It's one of those two-story houses, and they put it—you go in the front door and straight back under the stairway, you know, that went upstairs, put a bathroom in there, and she never, ever used it. She got so angry with him for puttin' that bathroom in.

SL: For spending the money to do it.

BB: Spending the money to put that bathroom in.

SL: And then probably paying the utilities to . . .

BB: And—yeah.

SL: . . . have it. Mh-hmm.

[02:38:26] BB: And she had a—they had an outhouse. [*SL clears throat*] I don't think she used the outhouse either. Like, she had a chamber pot in the pantry.

SL: Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*] In the pantry?

BB: And—'cause I remember—yeah. And—'cause I remember goin' there some and sometimes—I mean, I could smell the odor. [*Laughs*] You know, but that was not unusual 'cause a lotta people didn't put bathrooms in at that time 'cause they still couldn't, you know, afford a lot of 'em.

SL: Couldn't afford it. Yeah.

BB: And—but, I mean, it was—it told you something about her tenacity.

[02:39:03] SL: Yeah. Well, so now y'all—when we say you moved back to Charleston, you actually lived in Charleston?

BB: Yes, we moved back.

SL: And what happened with the Grand Prairie house? It . . .

BB: It burned after my brother and sister-in-law had their first two children there, and then it burned one weekend. They were away from home, and it caught fire and burned.

SL: Oh my gosh. What . . .

[02:39:26] BB: And I take my daughter and son-in-law, who is Australian . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . but—I mean, he grew up—he was born and grew up in Australia till he was fifteen and then his parents—his mother was Scottish—and they moved back to England to put the kids in prep school. And so he's got dual citizenship.

SL: Citizenship. Uh-huh.

BB: But anyway, he—his family moved around and were very secretive about background in a way about—they didn't talk about their background. And so he sort of would like to have roots. He's a dear and wonderful young man, and he loves goin' to places like that, and the grandkids love goin' to old cemeteries because my granddaughter, who is nine now, and the other one is twelve, love goin' to old cemeteries and just runnin' around in 'em. And they go to the trash bins and take the flowers and stuff and decorate all the undecorated [*laughs*] graves. Anyway, it's just one of those . . .

SL: That's neat.

BB: . . . things they've—at this age they enjoy doin'. [02:40:34] So we go back down there, and he just loves to hear stories and—you know, about my childhood and about our growin' up there and the family 'cause we've got—still got extended family living all through Grand Prairie. And still got an aunt—that younger

brother, my dad's youngest brother—she's between—she's a year and a half younger than I am.

SL: Okay.

BB: And she still lives there, and we're very close. And, course, you know, a lotta family still live in Charleston—extended family—and Peter Pender and Grand Prairie, so I've still got lots of ties in that area. And we go down there—oh, you know, once or twice a year and go visit all the places and . . .

[02:41:24] SL: Well, so talk to me a little bit about your house in—about your-all's house in Charleston then when you moved out of Fort Smith and came back to Charleston. What was it like?

BB: Well, we bought a—there was a German—[sniffs] excuse me, I've got to get a Kleenex. I got a runny nose.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:41:38] SL: So we were talkin' about the house in Charleston after you'd moved back from Fort Smith.

BB: Well, we found a—had this German doctor who was a fabulous man. He came—moved—migrated to Charleston 'cause there's a large German—Catholic German population all through that area. Subiaco Academy, you know, is in Subiaco . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . just out of Paris. And then—so—and Charleston is—has a—probably the largest church in town. No, I guess the Baptist church is larger—one of 'em. But all—have always had a lot of big Catholic population. And he came there—I don't know the history on it or anything, but really a smart, old man, and he built this house. And, anyway, they had moved into a much smaller—his family's grown and in a smaller house and we—Dad bought it and had five acres around it—right at the edge of Charleston. And so we moved in there, and that's where—we lived there until—hmm—I don't know whether they bought another house—the man who built a brick house—a very nice brick house—that owned the coal company that came in there and did the strip mining.

SL: Yeah.

BB: My mother and dad moved in that my third year of college, and some family still owns—part of the Flanagans that still own it. But anyway, we lived in that house in Charleston, and that's where I had the cow, and I had my horse and a big garden and mowed the lawn. And it was the end of town where Dale's paper route went. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

BB: So ever afternoon, he'd come zoomin' down the hill from the—on

the paper route.

SL: Was he in a car?

BB: No, bicycle.

[02:43:41] SL: Bicycle. And so he is—are y'all still in the same—
he's a year . . .

BB: Younger.

SL: . . . younger—grade—schoolwise, he's a year . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: And so I know that you knew him from earlier times but . . .

BB: No, I didn't know him.

SL: You didn't really know him.

BB: Hm-mm. I met him that summer—the summer we moved to
Charleston.

SL: Okay. Okay.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Even though he was in the—kinda the same class . . .

BB: Family and . . .

SL: . . . and family and stuff.

BB: . . . the same classes. I mean, we have some of the same first
cousins and . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Lot of family.

[02:44:14] SL: So here he comes down the hill deliverin' paper every day.

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And you're . . .

BB: I usually found some excuse to be out in the yard or somethin'.

SL: So he was pretty good lookin', I guess.

BB: Yeah, he was.

SL: Fit. And he . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . was on that bicycle all day long deliverin' those papers.

BB: All afternoon.

SL: Or afternoon. All afternoon long. Was that a daily paper?

BB: Yeah.

SL: So you got to see him every day.

BB: Well, most every day.

SL: Mh-hmm. [*Laughter*] By some excuse or another . . .

BB: Yes. Yeah.

[02:44:41] SL: . . . you were able to wrangle that. So how did y'all start dating? I mean, did he ask you out for . . .

BB: We started dating that summer with my sister and his brother.

We would go out and then, like I say, then we managed one way or another to make it through that year, and then I graduated and then moved to Fort Smith.

[02:45:05] SL: Now why did you move back to Fort Smith?

BB: Well, my—had to—actually they were related to him—they were—their mother was a Bumpers, but [*laughs*] she had been my mother's best friend growin' up together at Branch.

SL: Okay.

BB: And she had two sons, which she was a widow at—by this time, and she had two sons, and they had a malt shop—a sandwich and malt—ice cream place.

SL: Okay.

BB: Right across the street from Fort Smith Senior High School.

SL: All right.

BB: Westside, it's called.

SL: Okay. Okay.

BB: And they were goin' into the service—both had been drafted—and needed to sell that malt shop. So my dad—my sister was in—had just finished two years at Westark, and I didn't have any definite pla—at that time, I wasn't even out of high school when this happened. [02:46:00] So just, in a way, to help this widow woman out that was Mother's best friend, and you know, those

boys goin' into the service, he bought that malt shop and put us up there to run it.

SL: You and you older sister or . . .

BB: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay.

[02:46:15] BB: So we made sandwiches every day and sold 'em to the high school kids, and it was a drive—you drive in and, you know, order—curb-hop service. Not a lot. We just had room for four or five cars, but we did do some of that. And we ran that for close to a year. Well, all one winter—one school term, and then the next summer, I went off to school to Iowa.

SL: Okay, so . . .

[02:46:44] BB: In fact, all three of my—my sister and—both sisters and I went to Iowa. Dad moved my mother to Ames, Iowa, because he was spending so much time in Iowa, and he thought that'd just be a good thing to do, to move her up there with us, and he'd spend . . .

SL: That's where he was takin' the cattle.

BB: Yeah. And he'd spend—he would be able to spend more time with us 'cause he was up there so much. He'd had it all worked out [*unclear words*] where he had sales, you know, a couple of sales a month 'cause he was makin' a lot of money doin' that.

And so we moved to Iowa and went—started at Iowa State. Two reasons—my older sister started dating a Pennsylvania Dutchman that was [*sneeze in background*] at Fort Chaffee, and he didn't like that. And then my younger sister was [*SL laughs*] dating a boy there in Charleston, and she was about to get married, and he didn't want her to marry him. So he thought, well, to kill, you know, three birds—three—with one stone, he'd kill three birds. Anyway, send me to where I wanted to go to school or to college and get both of them away from these boys.

[02:47:52] SL: Okay, now wait a minute. I wanna get to Ames, but I don't quite understand how you could be workin' the malt shop, and you're still in high school.

BB: No, I'm out of high school.

SL: Oh, you're out of high school.

BB: Yeah. He's still in high school.

SL: He's still in high school.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And so that summer and the semester—fall semester or fall term you're in the malt shop. Is that right or just . . .

BB: Yes. Yes.

SL: And then the spring semester, you're in Ames. You go to Ames.

BB: No, the fall—that fall semester.

SL: That fall semester.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

BB: But I don't think he bought that malt shop until after school was out.

SL: Okay.

BB: I think they went into the service in early fall.

SL: Okay.

BB: And so we were there that—a year—close to a year and . . .

SL: A whole year.

BB: . . . then the next year, see.

SL: I see. Okay.

[02:48:35] BB: He went off to the university that summer, and anyway, we—and then the next fall I went off to Ames. We moved to Ames.

SL: Well, how was . . .

BB: And I went two years to Ames.

SL: Mh-hmm. Is that Iowa or just . . .

BB: Iowa State.

SL: . . . University of Iowa, or was it Iowa State?

BB: No, it was in Ames. It's Iowa State.

SL: Iowa State.

BB: The University of Iowa is in Ames.

SL: Okay.

Dale Bumpers: No, Betty, the University of Iowa is not in Ames.

BB: No, the—Iowa State's in Ames . . .

SL: Iowa State's in . . .

BB: . . . and Iowa City—the university's is in Iowa City.

SL: Right. Okay, okay.

[02:49:08] BB: And so he went to the university and then went into the service in November of the year after he graduated. And then I was in Iowa for two years, and then the third year I had an appendectomy three weeks before I was supposed to go back to school, so I stayed home, and then I started—one of the teachers got pregnant, and I taught—finished out the year for her from Christmas on, teaching in Charleston.

SL: In Charleston.

BB: With just two years of college.

[02:49:43] SL: So how was Ames?

BB: Well, it was a new experience. My mother—I mean, we bought—Dad bought a house there and moved her lock, stock, and barrel [*laughs*] into the house, and we had a great time. Of course, all of the—or half of the girls in our—that we ran around with in Ames lived out at our house, and we didn't take college

very seriously. And my sister—older sister quit at—after the first quarter and got married—her Pennsylvania Dutchman. And [*SL laughs*] then she—my brother was married at this time and had his first baby. In fact, he had two babies . . .

SL: Now was he in Ames . . .

BB: . . . eleven months apart.

SL: . . . or Fort Smith?

BB: No, he was in Charleston.

SL: In Charleston. Okay.

[02:50:31] BB: Yeah. And they had—their first two children were eleven months apart, and Mother was lonely there 'cause Dad didn't get to spend that much time there, so she moved back after the first year, and then my younger sister and I went back and lived in the dorms our second year. And then she got married [*laughs*] after two years, and then I had the appendectomy and couldn't go back, so I taught that next year—the rest of that year. And then the next summer, I went to Chicago Academy . . .

SL: Of art?

BB: . . . 'cause this cousin—this friend or cousin—the boy—one of the boys that owned the malt shop came back—got out of the service, and he went to Iowa to school—went to Chicago and

talked me into comin' up there to go to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts where he was. So I went up to—I went to Chicago for a year and a half.

SL: Did you love that?

BB: Yes. Loved Chicago.

SL: Did you love the art ins . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . art school?

BB: I had a great time. I worked part-time in a—the department store with—where he was working, too. And had a great year and then came back and went to—taught a year—another year in Charleston, and in the meantime, he came back out of the service and went to the university and—oh, it's so garbled up. And then I transferred to the—taught another year and then went to summer school at the university and then another year.

[02:52:13] SL: You're talking the University of Arkansas?

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And then another summer session, and then we got married.

SL: So . . .

BB: Took about nine years of courtship before we—you know, of being in separate schools and in the service and stuff and . . .

[02:52:29] SL: Well, did y'all make some kind of commitment early on when—back in high school—when he was still in high school?

BB: Yeah. Yeah, kinda.

SL: And you stuck to your guns and . . .

BB: No, we dated other people. And, you know, had breakups and . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Like everyone else on the planet. Yeah.

BB: Not—not—yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:52:47] BB: And—but somehow—I don't know. I just knew we were gonna get married someday so—it wasn't any sudden proposal or romantic destination wedding or whatever, you know.

SL: You just finally got around to it.

BB: Yeah, we finally got around to it. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, so had he—I feel kinda odd talkin' about Dale while he's sitting in the room, but when did he finish the—law school? He went to Northwestern . . .

BB: That—he started after his parents were killed. I was at the university, and he was at Northwestern, and they were killed in March of 1949. And he came home and he—because his brother was in Harvard and woulda lost a full year, and the estate

needed to be taken care of so he—'cause he would only lose a semester—ought to stay home and take care of business.

SL: Yeah.

[02:53:47] BB: And the sister was in business in Ohio, so he stayed home and—to take care of the estate, and stuff had to be done. And then he—and it turns out that his brother had rabies shots from the second time and had to—he lost a year at Harvard anyway 'cause he started—he got the side effects from that second series of rabies shots.

SL: I read about that . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in this book.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Instead of in the stomach, they . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . shot in all different places.

[02:54:18] BB: So then he went back—he started in summer session at Northwestern—went back to law school that summer session. And I went to the university summer school, and then we got married in September.

SL: In Charleston.

BB: In Charleston, and then went back—moved to Chicago, and he

finished law school. I worked, and he went to school.

[02:54:46] SL: Okay, so he gets out of law school, and y'all come back to Charleston.

BB: Back to Charleston.

SL: And a couple of things were going on then. He—there was the store. Did y'all kinda take over the store? Did he . . .

BB: He bought the store back because—I don't know why he'd—I—we still haven't—we never figured out why he did, but [*SL laughs*] he did. [*Laughs*] In his innocence and my innocence and—got taken advantage of, and I'm sure he learned many valuable things over the period of years. We both did. But we were—he had worked, like, a—you know, devote full time to keeping his head above water for about . . .

SL: Well, yeah. I mean, that's true . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . with any . . .

BB: With a lot of people.

[02:55:38] SL: Especially early in a business. Did it—did the—was the funeral home still part of the store?

BB: No, no. They had gotten rid of the funeral home and the frozen food plant and some other enterprise he had. But, anyway . . .

SL: Now that's another thing we haven't talked about is refrigeration

and ice and when—I guess when electricity hit, then refrigeration became mainstay. But up to that point in time . . .

BB: It was—they had a frozen food plant, and it was all, you know, under way. Frozen food lockers were the thing in every small town. And they—his dad was quite a—an entrepreneur, I mean, and saw things that—you know, a good businessman, and he had put in a frozen food plant. And so—but he had gotten rid of that, Dale did, after—with the closing out the estate. And just . . .

SL: But when you were growing up, it was an ice wagon or a truck that would bring ice to the . . .

BB: Well, when we lived out on the farm . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . we had an icebox, and an ice truck would come once a week. And we'd buy fifty pounds or whatever the icebox would hold.

SL: Depending on what time of . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . year probably.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Okay, I'm sorry. I . . .

BB: That's all right.

SL: I usually try to include that in the early days but . . .

BB: Yeah, but to have . . .

[02:57:00] SL: So how long were y'all involved with the store?

BB: Oh . . .

SL: Fifteen years was it, that I . . .

BB: Yeah, about fifteen.

SL: Is that about right?

BB: Yeah, while he was tryin' to establish a law practice.

SL: In Charleston.

BB: Yes, yes. And he'd—he would work Saturday night until closing.

We could never do anything on a Saturday night for two reasons.

He stayed—the store stayed open till eight-thirty or nine, and

then he had to prepare for—he taught a Sunday school class for

eighteen years, and he'd have to prepare his Sunday school

lesson and—then or Sunday morning. And . . .

[02:57:41] SL: Was that an adult Sunday school class?

BB: Yes, his dad had been the teacher of a—of an adult [*clears*

throat]*throat*]—not young adult but older adult Sunday school class. So

he took over when we moved back to Charleston in 1950.

SL: And you are teaching during . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . all this time . . .

BB: Yeah.

[02:57:59] SL: . . . as well. And what about children?

BB: Well, taught two years, and then I got pregnant in the middle of—with my first one and had to wear—devise—sew and make my own dress that had a little peplum, we called it.

SL: Yeah.

BB: A little ruffled thing around, so it didn't show that I was pregnant because they wouldn't let pregnant women teach.

SL: Is that right?

BB: No. So I disguised that pregnancy and [*SL laughs*] taught the next year. And then . . .

SL: Okay, now wait a minute. So—but you—what happens when you have the baby? I mean . . .

BB: Well, that's all right. I mean, you're not pregnant, so [*laughter*—but then they didn't want children . . .

SL: It sounds like a miracle to me. [*Laughs*]

BB: These children—they didn't want these children knowin' that women did such things.

SL: Oh, I see.

BB: You know, that's why you weren't supposed to be pregnant.

SL: Oh my gosh.

BB: Well, you know, it—there was a time that married women

couldn't teach either 'cause men needed jobs—the jobs.

SL: No, I didn't know that.

[02:59:05] BB: And—but anyway, then the—with the—I taught the next year, and then I got—let's see. There's two and a half years' difference in the kids, so I was also pregnant with the second one, and it was timed so that I could disguise it with those little dresses that, you know, had ruffled tails on the blouse that covered up the fact [*laughs*] that I was pregnant. And then after he was born—it was an August baby, and I did not teach the next year because one day, even though we needed the money desperately, I came home from school when Brent was—my oldest one was about eighteen months old—and I said, "Well, what have you been doin' all day, honey?" And he said, "Well, I hoped Hu Hu." This was this dear, wonderful woman that kept my children, but she was uneducated, and—I mean, she could read and write, but you know, not—no other education. And she—he said, "Well, I hoped Hu Hu start a far, and we arned, [*SL laughs*] and I hoped her do somethin' else." And I thought, "Oh! What in the world are you doing? You know, here are the formative years of a child growin' up with somebody, learning the basic skills, you know, like that. What in the world are you doin'?" So we talked it over and decided that I

was gonna stay home—even though we needed the money desperately—to raise my kids, and so I never—hardest thing I ever did because, you know, raising children, while it's very challenging and something you wanna do, but it's pretty boring.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And, you know . . .

SL: It's tough on a career.

[03:00:58] BB: That's right. And so it was very hard on me that first year when I was stayin' at home. So I got involved in garden clubs and doin'—arranging flowers for the church ever Sunday and growin' my—doin' my garden and bein' a stay-at-home mother. And—because that's when almost all the other mothers were goin' to work, and I didn't even have a group of stay-at-home mothers to, you know, to bond with particularly, and it got less and less so every year, but I stuck with it, and I've never regretted it. And I really think it's changed a lotta things. It's been wonderful for women that they could fulfill their, you know, lives if they can't fulfill it raising children.

[03:01:45] But I had such strong feelings about stayin' home and raising my own children that it—that was never a problem with me. And—but I can see how it would be with a lot of women who, you know, enjoy a career. So that's good, but I do

think that a lotta children have suffered. It's getting better now with wonderful daycare. In fact, I've just had to apologize to my daughter who—when she moved back to Little Rock, she put her five-year-old in kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, and then went to daycare after, you know, 'cause she works from her home with her law firm in Washington. And I really scolded her, and I started, when I was down here, picking her children up and tryin' to do things with 'em, and we saw all—did stuff and tryin' to entertain 'em, but you can't keep 'em away from television, you know, a lot. And I just thought, "Well, I'll just sit and watch television and critique it." You know, make fun of dumb programs and stuff.

SL: Right.

[03:02:50] BB: And I realized that not only is television today non-instructive, it is destructive crap. So I said, "Brooke, put 'em in—back in daycare. I apologize to you 'cause they're much better off in daycare that's—you know, offers friendships, activities, planned things." I mean, the daycares, and if you're careful about selecting them, are very good. I mean, they're getting better all the time. So—I mean, that's benefitted children a lot, and I mean, that's just one of my shticks that television has missed a fabulous opportunity that they've just let

sail right over their head, and it gets worse all the time.

SL: Okay, we're gonna stop and change tapes right here.

[Tape stopped]

[03:03:37] SL: Okay, we're rollin' here.

BB: Yeah.

TM: Yes. [*Clears throat*]

SL: All right.

BB: And then Bill—he quickly grew out of—he's never been a real—he's turned into a TV guru now, but he was always too busy with sports and stuff that he wasn't a real TV fan growin' up at that age, but Bill wasn't—and I would limit him or let him watch two hours after he came home from school, and then it was off the television and hit the road, you know, and he'd go out and play till dark, you know. And so—but never a real problem with him because he just knew he couldn't watch TV after the two programs that he liked and—but parents don't do that to kids anymore. I mean . . .

SL: No.

[03:04:15] BB: . . . my daughter—I just—it blows my mind, and I just had to talk with her this week about—I said, "You know, it really isn't a grandmother's role to limit television and to nag at their grandchildren." But . . .

SL: No, you're supposed to be spoiling them.

BB: Yeah, but I said, "But I have to replace you as a nag." You know, because they don't set limits, and it's funny. I was tellin' her—she's just got this precious, adorable, little girl that is so smart, but she is so emotionally out of control in some ways. I mean, she just gets beside herself over the craziest thing. And I said, "You're gonna have to discipline her about that—about—send her to another room when she gets clingy and crying and so upset over some trivia because she'll never learn how to discipline herself." But somehow, they don't un—they don't seem to get that, you know, that you have to set limits for kids and help them. [*SL sighs*] So we have . . .

SL: I see some of that.

BB: I said, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . and they're entertainment. Their children are their entertainment. And my son and daughter-in-law in Washington have made their childrens' sports events and their events their entertainment. I said, "You know, I think every kid ought to be able to win and lose without their parents bein' there to witness it all the time." I think that's kinda—it's good in some ways, I guess, but it's . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . also bad and—but that's ol' Grandma.

[03:05:55] SL: Well, I can tell that as a father I always regretted
when I couldn't make a soccer game or a baseball game. I . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I felt a guilt that I wasn't there to "rah-rah" and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . support them on and suffer through the disappointments. I
mean, it's hard . . .

BB: I mean, they need to deal with that—learn how to deal with that
without . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . the parents being there. Don't beat yourself up with . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . guilt about it.

SL: Well, they're all grown now, but . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I'll try and do that with my grandchildren, too. [*Laughter*]

TM: I'm takin' notes for my five-year-old though. [*SL laughs*]

BB: Yes. [*Laughter*]

[03:06:25] SL: Well, okay. So now let's talk about [*BB clears*
throat] Charleston again, and you are now at home raising kids,

and you—you've gotten the red flag that they were not getting the attention they really should be getting to make themselves develop well, and so you've quit teaching. You're at home. Dale is runnin' the hardware store.

BB: And practicin' law.

SL: And practicing law. And you know, the law practice is . . .

BB: Picking up.

[03:07:03] SL: Is it picking up?

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah. So when is it that—did—were all the children born in Charleston?

BB: Yes.

SL: And—but I know that y'all came from Charleston to the Governor's Mansion. So how long was it—I mean, what was it that prompted Dale to enter politics? I mean, was it just the—that he . . .

BB: Well, of course, he—his dad, you know, was very interested. They were on the courthouse lawns, you know, anytime a politician was in town, and his dad was a state legislator and would have loved to have continued on with it. [03:07:44] But his mother would not let him and just—I mean, she was just adamant about it. And so he sort of, I think, lived vicariously

through—hoping that one of his sons would, you know, get involved.

SL: You know . . .

BB: Saw to it—wouldn't let 'em work in the store—in the hardware store. They worked in the cannery and every other endeavor, you know but he—you know, sort of inspired him to get into politics and into public service.

[03:08:21] SL: Well, now did you have an interest in politics? I mean, were you—did you keep up with that stuff?

BB: Well, I mean, my dad had always been a yellow dog Democrat and had been involved, you know, voted, and I knew that voting was important and—but not like his family did. No. I mean, I know—I knew exactly where my dad stood and who he voted for and what he liked and what he didn't like and who he liked and didn't like and who the lyin' sons to bitch was in the community or who was a good man—honest fella and who was a, you know, a rake or a whatever, you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: We—'cause I was always so curious and listened and paid attention to what was goin' on that way. I mean, a lot of other areas I didn't but [*laughs*] . . .

[03:09:04] SL: Do you remember the—you mentioned the

courthouse square. Was it in the middle of town?

BB: Charleston. Uh-huh.

SL: A lotta times the downtown was built around . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . a central courthouse. That—you know, those were the days, weren't they?

BB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Because anybody running for anything, it pretty much . . .

BB: Showed up.

SL: . . . showed up at . . .

BB: That—yeah.

SL: . . . that courthouse and . . .

BB: Yeah, and . . .

SL: . . . face the . . .

BB: . . . I remember goin' there with—becoming active with Dale, that we'd go hear people that would come. You know, with him and getting politically involved. But no, he never talked about it very much and just all of a sudden—I mean, it came kind of as a surprise to me when he decided to run for governor, but I had just taken care of my children and the house, and we didn't talk about it a lot, that I remember. [*SL laughs*] And—but when he decided to run, I mean, I just assumed he would be elected

governor.

SL: Is that right?

BB: Yeah. And . . .

SL: Let's see, now we were—we're talkin' Rockefeller. We're talkin' Faubus as well, right?

BB: Uh-huh. But you know, I just—you know, somehow—I mean, I've always been very optimistic person. And so I just assumed he'd be elected governor. I mean, I knew it was gonna be a hard race and all that, but I was not—I mean, I—my attitude was always, "I'll take care of the children and fulfill my duties as a wife and blah, blah, blah, you know, and then you take care [*laughs*] of your business and" . . .

[03:10:35] SL: Well, weren't there about—what were there, eight candidates . . .

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . on the Democrat side?

BB: Yeah. And when he decided—we decided—I don't know whether he told the story about the first pictures and . . .

SL: No, let's—just go ahead and tell me the story. I . . .

BB: [*Laughs*] Well, we decided if he—when he decided that he really was gonna run and talked about it a lot, anyway, and my brother-in-law, Archie Schaffer, who lived—you know, we lived

there just—shared a driveway. And Archie was involved and interested. Anyway, they came down. We were gonna do a picture and—'cause Dale had one kinda droopy eye, and often it'd show up in the [*laughter*] pictures, and we were—he was photographing, and we even got a toothpick and tried to prop that eye up, so it would look [*SL laughs*] the same as the other one. [*Laughs*] And—oh, did all kinds of crazy, funny things, and finally he—I don't remember all the details, but we had a lotta fun puttin' it all together. And he devised a bumper sticker that said "One more bumper for Bumpers." Oh, and we thought that was just the cleverest thing [*claps hands*] in the world, but then when he really got involved, the—Deloss Walker said, you know, "Serious—politics is serious as cancer. You don't put levity into politics," so . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . he nixed the—we thought that "Bumper for Bumpers" was great. But anyway, he nixed that idea. But I remember bein' involved in some of that and then when they first came, his—Deloss's public relations person came to—after he's got into the mix of it, you know, and declared. And I remember my dad comin' down and sayin' to him that he'd put up the money for his filing fee. He'd give him the money. He gave him the money

[*clears throat*] to file and then later Deloss Walker—Joel—
whoever his cameraman and public relations person was—came
up to do a video of me 'cause they were gonna do one, you
know, of Dale. And I had a house that was designed with a
courtyard . . .

SL: Okay.

[03:12:47] BB: . . . inside. [*Clears throat*] I had beautiful flowers in
there, and I was—one of the things—he wanted me to kneel
down and do somethin' with the flowers. So—course, the first
time I'd ever been videotaped. We—although we had a 16mm
camera that we'd bought when we got married, but, you know, I
didn't know much about that. But anyway, I was to squat down
and do somethin' with the flowers, and I was lookin' up and
answering questions of Deloss with my hands in the flowers, and
all of a sudden a big ol' green fly goes [*vocalized noise*] and
landed on my nose, and I just kept talking as if it was not there,
you know.

SL: Not there. [*Laughs*]

BB: And after about three minutes, Joel and Deloss just cracked up,
you know. [*SL laughs*] But I thought I couldn't move. I
couldn't . . .

SL: Well . . .

BB: . . . recognize that fly. [*Laughter*]

SL: I'd love to have that footage.

BB: Didn't think that—I would, too, [*laughter*] but God, what a misery sittin' there with a green—big ol' green fly on me. [*SL laughs*] And I wasn't [*laughs*] even lookin' cross-eyed at it.

Joy Endicott: Let's pause.

[Tape stopped]

[03:13:49] SL: So we're talkin' the gubernatorial race. See, what year is this? This is . . .

BB: [Nineteen] sixty-nine.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-nine. Wow. And he just kind of—he really did just come out of the blue . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . with this idea of running and totally unknown across the state. I mean, his name recognition was probably one percent, maybe, if that.

BB: No.

SL: I mean, it was zero, really.

[03:14:17] BB: Well, I just remember him—when Faubus announced again, you know, that he was gonna run—him saying one evening at—somethin' about it—he said, "You know, I can't die—let him run again for governor of this state, and I can't die

peacefully knowin' I didn't do somethin' about it," you know.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

BB: I mean, that was part of the motivation is that—you know, if—just the idea of how destructive he had been, you know, to the state and the disruption and all the stuff he'd created, that he just felt like he had to do somethin' about it. I think that was one of the motivating things . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . to him. And it was all right with me. I mean, whatever he wanted to do. I mean, I was gonna be supportive anyway and so . . .

[03:15:05] SL: Well, so how long was it before y'all knew that he was a real contender? I mean, you said you felt like you just assumed that he was gonna win from the beginning.

BB: Yeah.

SL: But surely after you got into it and saw that it was hard work . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . for one thing.

BB: Well, of course . . .

SL: A huge . . .

BB: . . . he's never shirked at hard work so . . .

SL: . . . yeah, but a huge commitment, a lot of travel.

BB: Yeah.

SL: A lot of listening, too.

BB: Yeah.



[03:15:38] SL: So did you get out on the road with him? Is that . . .

BB: No, I never traveled with him. I've—my sisters and cousins—his first cousins, too—we—they sent us down to south Arkansas and into areas they didn't think they could win anyway, you know, that were—I mean, we were—whatever little good we could do, I think, you know, that it was—so we'd—we would take off with four, sometimes five of us in the car. And go to different places, and we'd hit the main street, and we'd go door to door up and down the main streets, maybe four or five of 'em. Even into Fort Smith, and I remember in Hope and in—where some—where Hayes McClerkin's area and in areas that, you know, that were already kinda committed to other people. And we'd just go into those towns and go up and down main street handing out cards and, I don't know, just all different places, hoping that we could get his name recognized. And I remember knockin' on the doors and saying to people—givin' the card and saying, "My husband is running for governor, and we'd appreciate you looking this over and giving him some consideration." And usually people would

ask me, you know, what—was he a Democrat and blah, blah, blah and have a conversation. And so many—because we would go door to door on main residential streets, a lot of people thought we went to ever house in town. [03:17:17] And— 'cause we all looked so much alike, [*laughs*] too. I think they— we, you know, didn't—I think they thought that, half the time, that I had hit ever street in town, you know.

SL: So this is you and your sisters.

BB: My sisters and the two cousins, Bernice and Berquita.

Bernice . . .

SL: So we're talkin' about a platoon of women . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . out here doin' this.

[03:17:41] BB: Yeah. And I remember I was over in southwest

Arkansas, down in there one time when somebody—some—one of the candidates had called him—that he was not a hunter.

SL: Yeah.

BB: I don't remember—some . . .

SL: I remember this.

BB: And I got really angry. I said, you know, "I've cleaned enough quail and"—anyway, I got sort of angry at the—somebody that was interviewing me about it, and I said, "You know, the very

idea that he would not be supportive of guns, I think"—I don't remember what it was, but I kinda lost my temper and [*SL laughs*] got a little—and I called Dale, and I said, "Oh my God, I probably shot you out of the saddle or somethin'." And it turned out it was a very positive thing . . .

SL: Sure, it was.

BB: . . . that I just stumbled into.

SL: I remember that.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[03:18:31] BB: And then I was up in Northwest Arkansas once, and I was in a—out of Berryville—somewhere between Berryville and what other—Mountain Home.

SL: Eureka.

BB: And Eureka. I went into a supermarket and . . .

SL: Oh, well, there's Yellville between Berryville and Mountain Home.

BB: But anyways, a big supermarket up there, brand new one, too.

[03:18:54] And I was handing out cards, and I was goin' down the aisle in the grocery store, and this older man was pushin' his cart. So I just walked up to him and handed him a card, and I said, "My husband's runnin' for governor, and we'd appreciate your consideration." He said, "Democrat or Republican?" And I

said, "Democrat." And he took that card and two or three other leaflets and stuff that I had in my hand—took 'em and just [*vocalized noise*] threw 'em down on the floor. And I grabbed the front of his grocery cart and swung it around [*SL laughs*] and kind of offset him a little bit and got down on the floor and with my finger, routed that literature out from under the counter, you know, like it was a precious piece of something, you know.

SL: Yeah. Well . . .

[03:19:42] BB: And I was just as rude as he was, you know. And I decided then maybe I shouldn't be out on the road. [*Laughter*]

SL: It is . . .

BB: But anyway . . .

SL: . . . hard not to take it personally . . .

BB: It is. It is. And . . .

SL: . . . when you're doin' that.

BB: . . . I mean, I remember he was walkin' down the aisle and turned around and chewin' his tobacco and lookin' and me and, I'm sure, thinkin' what a fool—you know, glad—anyway—but there were just a few times when I got a little—my temper got a little out of whack. [03:20:11] And then we'd go—the—another—friends, Dr. Luther and his wife and I would go around, you know, on Saturdays or Sundays when he'd have time,

we'd—they'd go with me, and we'd go to all these country stores
all around Mountain View, Glenwood . . .

SL: Mountain . . .

BB: . . . and all through, you know, rural places . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . where, country stores, where people were—and, oh, just
different friends and I. I mean, I campaigned quite a bit,
but . . .

[03:20:44] SL: But you-all kind of divided up the . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . state.

BB: Yeah.

SL: The chores in the . . .

BB: Yeah.

[03:20:48] SL: . . . campaign a little bit. Now you mentioned Archie
Schaffer. Now are you talkin' the Archie Schaffer that I know
now?

BB: Spike.

SL: They lived . . .

BB: We called him Spike. Arch. The—yeah, my nephew.

SL: Your nephew.

BB: My sister's . . .

SL: And they lived right next door to y'all . . .

BB: Yeah, we shared a driveway.

SL: . . . in Charleston?

BB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now was Archie playing a role in this—in the gubern . . .

BB: Oh, he was—he drove Dale everywhere. He was his constant companion. Yeah.

[03:21:18] SL: So when you were out there campaigning, were you sensitive to the—to this notion that you were actually reading people and listening to people and what they have to say? I mean, did you engage in any . . .

BB: I did.

SL: . . . conversations and did you get a pulse of the folks of Arkansas when you were out there? I mean, it would seem like to me—you'd come back and I—you'd—surely there'd be some kind of debriefing of what happened and what the mood was and how much resistance there was . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and how much excitement or lack of excitement or what . . .

BB: I got a sense that people were pretty excited about and involved in that race, whether it was for him or what—was—they were involved. They wanted to be involved. They wanted to pick

somebody, and they were looking for someone. [03:22:20] And they were—I mean, I was—by and large, I was greeted very cordially. And so I'm—I had a good feeling about it—I mean, that—not that they were for him, but they were—people were engaged and were looking for someone. And then I just thought—you know, he is such a good speaker. And—because he'd, you know, done a lot of the—emceed the Bar Association a couple of years, and I'd, you know, gone with him—heard him speak for years and, you know, knew what an engaging speaker he was. And I don't know—I just had—like I say, I just assumed he was gonna be elected. I didn't worry about it. If he didn't, I—you know, 'cause he had run, you know, for representative in, what, three—two or three years before that, you know, for Franklin County. [03:23:19] And he was defeated and got up the next morning and went to work and never . . .

SL: Missed a lick.

BB: No.

SL: Missed a stroke.

BB: No. So I knew it wasn't gonna—if—I mean, that he was—had the courage to lose and had the—you know, it wouldn't wreck his life or our lives or anything else if he lost, and he would've felt like he had fulfilled a—something he needed to do as a citizen of

Arkansas and as a public—you know, somebody who felt very strongly about public service. And so I didn't have any of those things of—feeling of—that he'd be devastated or crushed and, you know.

SL: Right.

[03:23:56] BB: Course, I had Hu Hu, this woman who came with me after Brent was—after my first child was born and was the only sitter my children ever knew 'cause she was a widow and had no children, and she adopted us as well as we adopted her and we—even when we couldn't afford to have her babysit much, we paid her Social Security, and Dale looked after her to make sure that she got a house that she had shared with her parents after her husband was killed.

[03:24:28] SL: Do we know how she got the name Hu Hu?

BB: The kids. Brent couldn't say Henrietta. Her name was Henrietta, and he just started callin' her Hu Hu [*SL laughs*] instead of Henrietta. I mean, he just—Hu Hu. So she was always Hu Hu.

SL: Now how did her husband die?

BB: He was—fell off of a oil rig and was burned.

SL: That is dangerous work. Burned.

BB: Fell and—yeah.

SL: Is that here in Arkansas?

BB: Uh-huh. No, I think it was down in Texas somewhere.

SL: In the gulf maybe or, you know, in Texas, okay.

BB: Yeah.

[03:24:58] SL: Well, so did you ever feel like—while you were out there in the state, did you ever feel like that Dale was gaining?

BB: Yes. Oh yeah. Along toward the end, I mean, I knew he was 'cause after people began to recognize his name. After he'd been on TV and then especially in Fort Smith after, you know, the first posters—the first billboards that went up—yeah, I knew that he was . . .

SL: This was now . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . maybe a reality that . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that could be.

[03:25:37] BB: Yeah. But I never built any dreams about anything of—a time or two, when I was in Little Rock, I—we'd drive by the Governor's Mansion just to see, you know, in case he did win or [SL laughs]—where . . .

SL: Where it was.

BB: . . . there was such a thing, you know.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

BB: And lookin' at it, but I mean, not any fantasies about him being elected, you know. So it . . .

[03:26:02] SL: When you were out there on the campaign trail in Arkansas, did you start to get a sense of people's needs—what they were most concerned about or what issues were . . .

BB: Yes, I did. Education.

SL: . . . really facing the state?

BB: Yeah, especially in education because I was really interested in that [*clattering sounds*] and in the school issues—I mean, like I say, in education and then in image of the state. People were embarrassed and wanted the state to have a better image. It was like reliving or beating down Bob Burns and the hillbilly state, you know.

SL: You bet.

BB: Again. It was—I mean, they had been through that once with Bob Burns . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . thinking we were a bunch of hillbillies.

SL: Yeah.

[03:26:54] BB: And they didn't want to be viewed as a bunch of racists and that image. I got the feeling that there was some

kind of need that had not been fulfilled and, you know, while the—Rockefeller did some good things for the state; the state also did some good things for him.

SL: Sure.

BB: And they were embarrassed about him bein', you know, a—sort of an embarrassment to the state in a lot of areas . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . and appreciative, too, but, you know, but they did not want him to be re-elected and—so, yeah, I've—I got a sense of what a bunch of good people that were out there that were willing to do anything, you know, to help their state or their community or their whatever, and that's—after he was elected, that it really dawned on me what an opportunity I had. And, course, I'd grown up like Dale had, in the meth—same preachers, same values, you know, taught in church and Sunday school, and that's where, you know, we learned all those values.

SL: Yes.

[03:28:07] BB: And our—as well as our parents did. And that—my mother was saying always, "The most—the only unforgivable sin is the sin of omission." So I pretty quickly recognized that here I had an opportunity of who I was as a governor's wife—a visible, credible—comes with the job—had nothin' to do with me, you

know. It just came with the—who I was. As a governor's wife, you are given instant credibility and visibility.

SL: Yeah.

[03:28:45] BB: And so you can choose what you wanna do . . .

SL: Or not do.

BB: . . . or not do.

SL: Right.

BB: And so I thought—I mean, "That's, you know, an opportunity that I can't pass up."

[03:29:03] SL: Yeah. You know, Betty, I guess what I was—what I sense is happening out there when you were campaigning, you were getting acquainted with the state, and whether you realized it or not, they were also getting acquainted with Betty Bumpers. And, I mean, it's funny how a good experience proliferates—how if someone walks away from a good conversation . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . they can't help but talk about it. And I just get this sense that you came out of that campaign with a real [*DB sneezes*] caring about the people that you had been asking for their vote all across the state, and whether you really saw it that way or not, and then you're giving this opportunity—you're seeing—you're realizing now . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that you have an opportunity to do something.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And so I bet the campaigning across the state—getting familiar with the state—seizing an opportunity, you were looking for something to hitch your pony to.

[03:30:21] BB: Well, I'd felt sort of that way in that same community in Grand Prairie. That's why I paid—I was payin' attention to what agricultural extension and the home demonstration women were doin'. What our church was doing for people. What my parents were doing, you know, and their helpful ways or whatever. My dad was—and Mother were always aware of needs, you know, of people or—in the community. And, I mean, I think that part of that was—that it's—I don't know how you—whether it's just inborn, or what it is, but you know, like I say, I was paying a lot more attention than my sisters were to a lot of stuff. [03:31:09] But they were paying a lot more attention to other areas that I did not.

SL: Right.

BB: It's not that—it's just—I don't know, a . . .

SL: It's a path. Just a different—a little . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . bit different path.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.



[03:31:22] BB: And once that—I realized—once he was elected, and I realized that—how much—what an opportunity there is there for someone of visibility and credibility, and that's why I tell people all—that I use for Peace Links and for—still, with immunization, is to say to people, "You have credibility and visibility in your own little circle. I don't care how little it is. You carry a degree of credibility and visibility, you know. And so don't waste it."

SL: Make somethin' happen.

[03:31:58] BB: Yeah, and I mean, just like now, I get so upset, I mean, and I'm so aware of it since I've moved back to Arkansas, of how splintered our educational system has become. And every time I turn around, there's a school, I mean, in a churchyard—I mean, not more than twenty or thirty kids in it. How can that school be accredited? I mean, why wo—should it be accredited? And I've looked at some of the textbooks, you know, of some of 'em—just borrowed stuff. [03:32:32] And I mean, the thing that—I mean, I know from havin' traveled to every state in this union twi—at least twice and some of 'em

more than twice—of the thing that makes this country so cohesive and has made us succeed as a country has been our language—common language, our common education, and I see it waning. I mean, that is so worrisome to me. And after listening to Diane Rehm the other night saying the most dangerous thing happening in America is the demise of public school because that's what's held us together all these years and made us an operating democracy. And as that disappears, history's taught according to this denomination or that denomination's view are—not as a common thing, you know, maybe not always perfect, you know, in our textbooks, but at least it's a—I mean, 'cause I've—when I was teaching, served on the book selection, you know, for the state. I mean, and that's a pretty good system.

SL: Yeah.

[03:33:42] BB: And I mean, that's really, really worrisome to me that this is happening to our public schools. I'm afraid we're gonna turn into a country like—I mean, all—in factions of all kinds of religious people fighting each other . . .

SL: Belief . . .

BB: . . . and . . .

SL: Belief based instead of knowledge based.

[03:34:00] BB: Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's really—I worry about my children's—and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. What's gonna—what kind of a society are they gonna grow up in or have to contend with? And, course, I just think education is the key to it, and we still need that. You know, we all still need the same history lessons and the same civics lessons and the same geography lessons. And if all of that energy that's put into all these private schools were put into public school, we could have a fabulous system. I mean, we grew up with wonderful, well-educated, young women and men as teachers. And my father and mother—I mean, in a way—have you ever looked at some of their textbooks and the tests they had in high school? Well, it's tougher than college exams—high school—to pass these tests that they had to take in high school. And they had brilliant teachers—I mean, Professor So-and-so and—you know, they called 'em professor. But if we just put all of that energy into public education, we could still have a fabulous thing. And I just don't understand why we have this—how—we're not educating. We're just not educating our people properly. And I'm a fine one to talk—got three grandchildren in a private school—over my dead body but [*laughter*] . . .

[03:35:36] SL: Well, okay. So let's get back to the Governor's

Mansion. You guys win.

BB: Yeah.

SL: He gets elected. He beats all eight Democrats in the primary—or seven other Democrats in the primary. Goes on to beat Rockefeller.

BB: Yeah.

SL: You guys are walkin' into the Mansion. So tell me about it. What was the first order of business when you walked through those Mansion doors?

BB: Well . . .

SL: I guess you went through the kitchen door . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . probably?



BB: And Liza was my best friend.

SL: Oh, what a great person!

BB: Oh! I mean, she knew how to—I mean, while I had been—you know, I mean, I knew how to do a party. I had been taught to always practice good manners, which will hold you in good stead anywhere.

[03:36:22] SL: Now we're talkin' about Liza, the cook . . .

BB: Yes, yes.

SL: . . . at the Governor's Mansion.

BB: And I had a lot of good help from . . .

SL: And what was Liza's last name?

BB: Ashley.

SL: Ashley. And she had been the cook for . . .

BB: From Faubus on. She went to work for . . .

SL: From fau . . .

BB: No, she went to work for Governor [*pats something*] Faubus,
who was—McMath . . .

SL: Not Cherry.

BB: Cherry.

SL: Is that right?

BB: She started with Cherry.

SL: So she . . .

BB: I believe she started with Cherry. Yeah.

SL: She probably knew more about that mansion than . . .

BB: She did.

SL: . . . any person living.

[03:36:55] BB: I mean, and then Jeannette—I must say, Jeannette
Rockefeller—the Rockefellers—she was—I mean, the chef—the
Rockefellers' chef taught her a lot, too. And Jeanette Rockefeller
taught her a lot, too—I'm sure about some . . .

SL: Protocol and . . .

BB: Yeah, all that, and Liza was smart. And she knew how to put on a tea. She knew how—where everything was. I mean, she was so helpful when some reception would come along or a dinner or whatever, and we started trying to—it started out—and, course, Brownie Ledbetter and Betsy Blass and Sissi Brandon and—I mean, I had a lot of rather sophisticated women here in Little Rock that stepped in and were there to help me out if I needed help. But as I say, if you just exercise good manners, and you have somebody like Liza that knows the ropes and how to—who the people were to call in to help and how many we needed and what we needed, and it was easy. And my sister, Ruth—my younger sister, Ruth, is a wonderful cook, and she'd put together a—worked with Liza and put together a cookbook and—you know, I had a lot of help. And, I mean, I can't say that it wasn't sort of—I mean, I wasn't sort of nervous or anything, but [*SL laughs*] not overwhelmed or anything, simply because it's . . .

[03:38:16] SL: Mh-hmm. What about the kids?

BB: Well, course, Hu Hu moved in with us because Brooke was only eight, and I was goin' around with Dale all over the state quite a bit. And she was there. And, course, you know, we had a housekeeper and a—in fact, two maids that kept everything clean and done up and . . .

SL: Upstairs and down.

BB: Yeah. [03:38:40] And Liza and prison help in the yard and somebody—and the State Police were—you know, Captain Tudor and some—anyway, they had—and civilian guards, you know, that were patrolling, so I didn't have those worries and didn't have to worry about Brooke because Henny was there. And I put her in Cathedral School because she had never been—spent a night away from me except when she was in the hospital when she was four. And I wanted her someplace where she could see home, and so I put her in Cathedral School, where she could see the Mansion, and if she needed to, she could walk home, which was very reassuring to her.

SL: Yeah.

[03:39:23] BB: And then Bill started to Central, but he—after three days, he came home, and he said, "Mom, I'm not goin' back to that school." He kinda wanted to stay with his grandmother or with Spike—Arch's family.

SL: In Charleston.

BB: Yeah, and finish the eleventh and twelfth grades, you know.

SL: Yeah, you . . .

BB: But I said, "Son, I"—three. Tenth grade. I said, "Son, I can't let you do that. I know it makes sense to you, but it doesn't to me.

I've got three more years of raisin' to do on you, [*SL laughs*] and I can't—you can't be away from me that much"—and never questioned me again. And moved down, and he started to Central, and he was a chub at the time. He was only five two somethin' and a chub. And he said, "I'm not goin' back to that school again. You can beat me. You can do whatever you think you have to do, but I'm not goin' back to that school." And I said, "Well, why, Bill?" He said, "Because the blacks part the hall when I walk down it," 'cause, you know, they were all supporters, more or less—most of 'em supported Rockefeller, you know.

SL: Sure.

[03:40:30] BB: And he said, "They part the hall, and the school is physically dirty. Dirt, dirt, dirty—what I'm talkin' about." And he'd been used to a little school. I mean . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . Charleston's population isn't as big as Central High School.

SL: Right.

BB: You know, entire population. And he said, "The kids are in control not—instead of the teachers." And I said, "Well, son, you don't have to." So that very day I called Father Tribou, and I said, "Will you talk to me?" And he said, "Well, you know"—and

I thought it was so wise. He said, "You know, we have parishioners who are on a waiting list, but if we can't take the son of our leader of the state, then we'd be pretty poorly served." And I thought which was pretty smart. So he said, "Bring him out, and we'll interview him." So we drove right out and, course, Bill had, you know, shaggy hair.

SL: Yeah.

[03:41:27] BB: Had on jeans and a sweatshirt, I think, or somethin'.

And so Father Tribou looked at him and he said, "What kind of grades do you make, son?" And Bill said, "I'm an A/B student—mostly A's." "Well, you'd be about a C student here." And I saw the muscles [*SL laughs*] flex in ol' Bill's jaws, and I thought, "Mmm mmm, you don't know who you're dealing with."

[*Laughter*] And he said, "Well, you know, you have to wear dress pants or khakis. Khakis or dress pants and a shirt and tie." "It's okay." "Have to cut your hair." "That's okay." And he just practically insulted Bill, but he just—"That's okay. That's okay." It was better than goin' back to Central High. And so he said, "Well, we'll take you." Well, it was such a relief to Bill just to be somewhere where the size looked like he could contend with and—not that he, you know—but he was fearful, you know. And I could understand that.

SL: Now we're talkin' about Hall?

BB: No, Central.

SL: Oh, cen—well, but moving to . . .

BB: Catholic High.

SL: . . . Catholic High. Okay.

BB: So he started the next day, and Dale called [*laughs*] me that afternoon after—course, it hit the news [*claps hands*] that fast, you know. And he said, "What are tryin' to do, get me impeached?" [*SL laughs*] I said, "No, I'm takin' care of your children."

SL: There you go.

BB: And so [*SL laughs*] he didn't say any more.

SL: That's smart . . .

BB: And . . .

SL: . . . on his part.

[03:42:55] BB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] And so he—course, he really had to buckle down and work hard, but he did and he . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . yeah, he ended up makin' A's and B's so . . .

SL: And he liked it.

BB: Yeah, he did. He liked the security of it. He felt secure. And, of course, then he promptly had a growing spree and grew up to

six feet somethin', you know. Big ol' tall, handsome boy but . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . you know, before that he'd been five two and a chub and insecure and—not only physically, but mentally, and it was a good thing for him.

[03:43:29] SL: Okay. So that's Bill and Brooke.

BB: And Brent started at Hendrix that first year. And, poor thing, just got thrown out of the nest—paid no attention to for the rest of his life—I mean, the rest—you know, his college. We stopped by there on—oh, at least two Sunday nights a month that we'd go to Charleston over the weekend. [03:43:50] And had—stop and meet him at the Pizza Hut and have pizza 'cause that's what we had done in Charleston. We'd—once a week or once ever other week, we'd go to the Pizza Hut in Fort Smith 'cause they had just opened up and—you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And so we'd stop there and visit with him. But as far as really being involved in his college life, outside of—comin' down on some weekends, and he didn't even come home that often—come down—'cause we were either in Charleston, and he was very involved. He had a little, ol' band and, you know, tootin' away his college years, kinda. [*Laughs*] But he really did, as I

say, get thrown out of the nest too early. He was only eighteen and . . .

SL: What instrument did he play?

BB: But we were so over—trumpet.

SL: Trumpet.

[03:44:37] BB: But we were so overwhelmed with that job and everything else, and you know, and we knew he was in good hands and—you know. So we just didn't participate very much with him, which I look back and kinda regret that we didn't—but he didn't want us messin' with him either, [*laughs*] you know.

SL: Yeah.

BB: [*Clears throat*] One time he said to me, "Well, I learned everything I needed—the most important things I needed to know, I learned after I went away to college." And I said, "Oh? Like what?" And he said, "Well, that I could stay up all night in a truck stop without worryin' about my parents comin' lookin' for me in their underwear," [*SL laughs*] meaning pajamas, which we had done because . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

BB: . . . he had overstayed a curfew a few times. [*SL laughs*]
And . . .

SL: And so y'all went out lookin' for him in your under . . .

BB: Oh yeah. We—if he didn't . . .

SL: In your pajamas.

BB: . . . come home—I mean, we were tough parents.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And so anyway, I said, "Well, did it ever dawn on you that you mighta had a little more sense at eighteen and nineteen than you did at twelve and fifteen?" He said, "Huh, never thought about that." [*SL laughs*] End of conversation. [03:45:38] And a few other things, mentioning once that he wished that he had grown up like two people that he knew. And I said, "Oh? How's that?" He said, "Well, that everything they did, their parents thought it was great and wonderful." I said, "Oh? Well, would you liked to have ended up like they have?" Which was not very successful. He said, "Huh. Never thought about that." [*SL laughs*] But he got his payback. He needled us, you know, about . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . negle—and he's still one—this—his uncle, Dale's brother, lamented the fact until he died at eighty-nine—eighty-eight last year—that his mother made him wear knickers until [*SL laughs*—because they were hand-me-downs, you know, from a—other family. He was persecuted all of his life over that.

[Laughs]

SL: Knickers. That's funny.

BB: Oh.

[03:46:27] SL: Okay. So you're in the Mansion. The kids are taken care of one way or the other. The—you're now out traveling the state with Dale?

BB: Some. And then doin'—you know, I'd pick—I made decisions early on that I wouldn't have teas because I just got inundated—wanting teas, teas, teas. So I made the decision that, along with some help from other friends talkin' about it, you know, and—a dilemma—of only having their state convention or their state somethin'. It had to be a state thing. It couldn't be a local . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . organizations and things.

SL: Okay.

[03:47:13] BB: And that's what I would sponsor or be involved in and do with . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . you know. And then after the—a certain time—I can't remember how soon it was—then the Centers for Disease Control—that was the year that the measles—rubella vaccine



came out, the mumps vaccine, the combined DPT, and one other vaccine. I can't remember it—a combination. But anyway, so the Centers for Disease Control came to see—went to every state to see the first ladies to ask them if they would help educate the people of their state to these new vaccines and try to raise the levels and cut down on the incidence of measles, which were massive measles epidemics every year. And mumps and—you know. Well, as soon as he said the word "help educate the people," all of a sudden it, you know, [*vocalized noise*] flared in me, and I said, "Our people don't need any more educating, but the kids need to be immunized. Sure, I'll help do that." Well, I mean, they were so overjoyed that all of a sudden I realized, "You put your foot in your mouth this way." [*SL laughs*] I mean, this way [*covers mouth with hand*]. But—so I was trapped. I had to think of some way to fulfill that, and so I jumped into it. And harking back to agricultural extension, of knowin' how helpful they were in that community and how the church—what it meant—how the nursing—I had been the health nurse for the school. And the public health nurses had—I'd held many, many childhood clinics—pushed out lots of teeth, you know, that—there were two sets of teeth in some mouths, you know, and discovered kids that had scoliosis, and their parents

hadn't recognized it and, you know, as the health officer and workin' with the public health nurses—how helpful they were. [03:49:09] And then we had started that nursing home in Charleston in the [19]60s. And I had been to the nursing home when Nell Balkman, who was president of the National League for Nursing—Arkansas League for Nursing—came up there to do a workshop on helping children assume—switch roles with parents. You know, puttin' 'em in nursing homes with . . .

SL: Yeah, sure.

BB: . . . you know.

SL: Parents become the child.

BB: 'Cause that was extremely traumatic . . .

SL: Sure.

BB: . . . at that time.

SL: Yeah.

[03:49:40] BB: And she did those workshops with such compassion, and it was such help to those children and—as well as some of the parents.

SL: Parents. Yeah.

BB: So I knew she was a smart woman, so I called on her and asked her and laid out the idea—the plan—and she said, "We can do it, Betty. We can immunize this whole state." And so she's the one

who directed me. And she said, "If you will use the Mansion as the meeting place"—and [*SL sniffs*] she and I—but mostly she devised this plan. The first thing we'd do is invite AMA's key health people in the state—president of the health department—the woman who was head of the health department—not head of the health department, the nursing organization. Not the Arkansas League for Nursing, but the state . . .

SL: Nursing board . . .

BB: . . . nursing association.

SL: . . . or . . .

BB: Yeah. Anyway, they were all the original key board members.

And we asked the doctors, "If we pulled all these children and if we educated the parents and got these children in, would they immunize 'em?" "No way," they said, "we could do that." But they had been invited, so they couldn't fight us.

SL: Right.

[03:51:02] BB: She was that smart, see. I mean, she just walked me through that plan, and it was a brilliant plan. And so we brought in other key figures. Sara Murphy was the head of the early childhood development here and to—key people that, by that time, I had learned who a lot of the players were—and put 'em on that committee and got involved—Dr. Runion Deer, who

was the agricultural—agriculture—and I knew there was a county extension agent and the home demonstration ladies and [*clears throat*] all that—the National Guard. We—Nell's husband was a general at the guard.

SL: That's handy.

[03:51:47] BB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] And we decided to have the clinics in the guard—in the National Guard . . .

SL: Armories.

BB: . . . Armories. Well, we pulled it all together, and we had the—we'd had the board meetings and the planning meetings at the Mansion, which everybody was thrilled to come to, and a luncheon, and you know, and we pulled it off . . .

SL: Well . . .

BB: . . . with her help.

SL: . . . now were the vaccines just provided?

BB: Yes, CDC. And there was the Centers for Disease Control state rep that was in on all of it—would fly up here from Atlanta for every meeting and—I mean, and they were very helpful, and they helped me get the state laws—helped—Arkansas was not a state that demanded full immunizations before school, see—starting school. [03:52:30] There were only eleven states that had those laws. They helped me get the state—a law passed,

you know, that said that all school enterers had to be fully immunized, and there were only, like, five vaccines then. But then they added the combined, the rubella and—anyway, long story short, we—the agricultural—the home demonstration women in every county organized the volunteers—recruited—organized the volunteers. They had meetings. I brought Ann Richardson, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . down here and we—the National Guard plane flew all over the state, and she pinned a volunteer action committee button on the head volunteer for every county. Held at the—on the—I mean, the home demonstration office.

SL: Yeah.

BB: So I mean, it was a fabulous role model.

[03:53:33] SL: So we went from what percentage of kids that had been immunized to what percentage?

BB: Well, way up. I mean, it was—it would—we did a good thing, and we did a bad thing, too. We immunized over three hundred thousand kids without one accident—one bad effect. And the National Guard trained their guardsmen how to use air guns.

[03:53:55] They flew vaccine—it was—where we'd have heavy turnouts, they'd—and they'd run out of vaccine. They'd fly

vaccines in that, you know, in that one Saturday. But you have to have a series of those shots. And then—but then the state—the county health nurse—state health nurse, you know—they did the follow-up. You know, I had all my kids immunized at the health department in Charleston . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . who came once a month, you know. And—'cause we didn't have all the pediatricians that we have now. And anyway, that was a great event, you know, held and got the kids—and then we really went to work on it. I visited every health department in the state twice during the four years that he was there. And so they worked hard at, you know, keepin' it—keepin' up with those kids and having records and so-and-so. But then in 1962, when the Carters were—I mean, 1956, wasn't it—[19]58 when the Carters were elected. She had gotten in . . .

SL: No, wait a minute—fifty—you mean . . .

BB: I mean [19]76.

SL: Yeah.

[03:55:05] BB: But I reported on this at a governors' conference—Southern Governors Conference—and Rosalynn picked up on it and started doin'—tryin' do the same thing in Georgia. And sorta started a—some—tryin' to get it started—somethin'

akin to it, but she didn't have time because they had, you know, four years.

SL: Yeah.

[03:55:25] BB: And then—but anyway, they came to Washington two years later. In the meantime, I had been workin' to get it adopted as a national model at the Centers for Disease Control and had gotten my foot in the door. And—but then when President Carter was elected, and she tells as we go around—'cause she's been with me on all these visits to all the other states. She tells a little—in our little dog-and-pony show we've done . . .

SL: Yeah.



BB: . . . in ever state—she always says, "The first person knockin' on the front house—the front door of the White House was Betty Bumpus [*SL laughs*] wantin' me to help her with this immunization program." And she said, "I told her that I was committed to mental health, first and foremost, but that I would help her." And so then I'd interject and say, "But she didn't really know that I came for two reasons, and one was to see the upstairs of the White House." [*Laughter*] [03:56:18] But—so about two weeks—two months later—no, about two weeks later, Secretary Califano called me and said, "The president tells me

not to make a move on immunization till I've talked to you." So I went down and had a conversation with him about how to—just adopting this national model. And so long story short, Rosalynn and I went to every—there were eleven states who had school entry laws in place. We lobbied every legislature and governor and got all fifty states to adopt the laws. We appeared before joint sessions and everything else. And so we got all the states now, you know, have a mandate that all school enterers have to be fully immunized. And we were the first state. He mandated that by 1978 that all school enterers had to be fully immunized and—by September of [19]78—and Arkansas was the first state to meet that mandate. And she came here, and I talked Hillary into havin' a party. We invited six thousand volunteers . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Wow!

BB: . . . that I had kept up the record of that had volunteered all over the state, and I sent out an invitation to 'em to come to the Governor's Mansion—from me and Hillary—to celebrate the fact that we had—we were the first state to—for a secret announcement and it was to—and Dr. Foege, who was head of Centers for Disease Control then, came to announce to those six thousand volunteers that we were the first state to reach the mandate.

[03:57:57] SL: That's wonderful. Well now, didn't you take this model to the Ford administration, too, or am I wrong on that? Did you try to . . .

BB: Yeah, I was—that's how I kinda got my foot in the door. I'd—Dr.—I can't remember what his name was now, but anyway, I had sent out letters to all of the first ladies asking to meet with 'em at the governors' conference in February. And had proposed it at that time. I mean, I had gotten some headway made, but then when the Carters were elected, then I—she really jumped in and helped me so . . .

SL: And got it goin'.

[03:58:34] BB: And then in 19—after this all happened, the states started, you know, educating and that—with the law passed, that they had to be fully immunized by school age then, you know, everything fell in place, and we thought we had . . .

SL: Conquered the world.

BB: [*Pats something*] Yeah. But in 1989, these massive measles epidemics broke out, and we lost over two hundred youngsters.

[03:59:00] Most of 'em—85 percent of 'em were under five.

See, it had done a bad thing. It had shifted people's thinking to think you wait till school age to immunize your children.

SL: I see.

BB: And so it left all these under-five-year-old children vulnerable to the measles and other diseases. So she—Rosalyn called me one day and said, "Betty,"—I'd—course, I had started Peace Links in the meantime and, you know, was very involved in that and travelin' the world. And she said, "What are we gonna do about all these babies a-dyin'?" And I said, "Well, how much time will you give me?" She said, "Well, whatevah it takes." So she [*SL laughs*] tells the story—that same dog-and-pony show we do that—three—two—a month later she called me back, and I had an office and a executive director and a whatever ready to roll, you know. Which I did. And doctor—workin' with Dr. Foege at the Centers for Disease Control. He even named it "Every Child By Two" and—*T-W-O*. And so we took off from that, and that's when we visited all the states to . . .

SL: Another time.

[04:00:02] BB: . . . get the laws, yeah, the laws mandated that—you know, and some of the states were as bad as 14 percent, only 14 percent of their under-five kids were immunized.

SL: Wow.

[04:00:13] BB: So we went—we visited ever state; set up these coalitions; worked our fannies off for—and we are now the major spokesperson against autism. We have a fabulous website, and

I've got a fabulous little executive director that—smart as she can be, articulate spokesperson, and she really runs it. Rosalynn and I just are—now, at this stage in our life, are kinda figureheads, and I have to call her and act like a Dutch uncle once in a while [*SL laughs*] just to say, you know, "You still don't dictate to the states or the state health departments. You ask them what you can do to help them. It's their bailiwick. It ain't yours, Amy," you know. But you know, she gets carried away, and she's so smart and so good at it. But we are the major spokesperson. We—and course, the scientific community won that war by proving that, you know, immunizations have nothing to do with autism. And we've still got a few battles to fight with this Jenny McCarthy, who's developed a business out of selling foods to cure autism and, you know, and—but even England and the scientific community have discredited this researcher, Wakefield, who tried to pin it onto immunizations. So—and our website is the answer to people on that.

[04:01:40] SL: Yeah. So what's the name of the website?

BB: Every Child By Two.

SL: Okay.

BB: "The Carter/Bumpers Campaign." [*Laughter*]

SL: What . . .

TM: Hey, Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:01:51] SL: And this is tape number . . .

TM: Five.

SL: . . . five. Okay. All right. Here we are. What—we were just talkin' about what all this is gonna—you know, all this Pryor Center effort and all these interviews and all—and your story, and what it's gonna mean. And you were just about to say somethin' . . .

BB: About how important it is for every person to realize their potential about what they can do if they have the tenacity and the will to really put the work in on it. And a lot of times when I've used the word—saying—using "I've used who I am," you know, to get my foot in the door. It's like you get a college degree, and it doesn't assure you of success. It just gets your foot in the door.

SL: That's right.

[04:02:41] BB: And it depends on what you do after you get the foot in the door. Same thing with my saying "I used who I am shamelessly," and I've had a lot of—especially feminists—say, "Oh, Betty, don't say that. It just diminishes. I mean, it puts

women down." And I said, "No, it doesn't identify me. I, by the work I put into it and the tenacity that I have of doin' it and what I do, identifies me. I mean, just because I take advantage of, you know, that—gettin' my foot in the door—it's what I do with it after I get the foot in the doors identifies me." So I mean, the fact that—I mean, who would ever dream that a little ol' farm girl from Grand Prairie, Arkansas, you know, could take some observations and ideas and add a little common sense to it and, you know, and remember it and pay attention to what happens, you know, what's effective. Growin' up in a small town is wonderful because it—you get a perspective of how things happen 'cause you know all the players and you—it's small enough that you see how everything works. And it's—the importance of each individual, you know, working together and using skills they have and pulling—drawing out skills other people have, you know, that can really make things happen.

[04:04:08] And so I've—tell people all the time, "If you feel strongly about somethin', talk it to death. Tell everybody. Everybody's lookin' for an idea or a conversation piece or a solution to something. And if you can come up with one—I mean, if it's worth listening to or it captures their attention—you know, just like making people aware of what's happening to

public education. They're not aware of what's happening to 'em—too many people. And if you start talkin' about 'em, it [*claps hands*]—"Yeah, you're right. You know, that is happening, isn't it?" And then they start talkin' about it. So every person shouldn't—every individual should value, you know, their conversation and their input into whatever's goin' on around 'em, and especially in the country, to try to make a, you know, a neighborhood, a community, a household better, function better, or address something that needs to be addressed. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[04:05:09] BB: So, I mean, I really believe in the—and I saw it happen from living in a small town—farming community—then a small town and then a national figure. I saw the—what am I trying to put my words together?

SL: Well, you saw a seed take root and become a magnificent tree.

BB: Yeah, a reality.

SL: A reality. Mh-hmm.

BB: I mean, it—that it can—you know, one idea of somebody, if they pursue it, and you know, and it's worth pursuing, that it can come to fruition. So people shouldn't underestimate their power.

SL: Well, what we had been talking about earlier was the Every Child By Two, which was kind of an epilogue to Every Child by—or what . . .

BB: Seventy-three.

SL: By sev—*[laughs]* . . .

BB: Seventy-four.

SL: It's in [19]74.

BB: We—yeah.

SL: Yeah. Which was a statewide program . . .

BB: Yes.

SL: . . . that model—became the model for the nation.

BB: Yeah.

[04:06:19] SL: And it put you in contact with every first lady of every state. Is that right?

BB: Yes.

SL: And so this wasn't the only effort that you mounted . . .

BB: No.

SL: . . . and rode.

BB: That's right. *[SL laughs]* Put Peace Links in the same model.

SL: *[Laughs]* You took a—you got on another horse and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . went through another forest and . . .

[04:06:48] BB: And by using in-place organizations and, you know, telling—and I'd say, "Can you put us on your program?" or "Can you get on the AAUW program next—for next month or the next month?" And they'd say, "Well, no, we have our year—a plan for the year." "Well, could you—this is such an urgent problem," and you convince 'em it is, "that, you know, make me an add-on. Just give me five minutes on your program as an add-on." You know, and so you've got your . . .

SL: Foot in the door.

BB: That's right. And it's an in-place organization. You haven't had to take the time to create another organization or anything else. You have inspired an existing one to take you on.



SL: Well, so we need to talk about Peace Links. Now how did that come about?

BB: About my daughter asking me one day—because I brought her home ever summer from Washington to spend the summer with—as long as my parents were living—in Charleston. And then when she got old enough to work, and then we came to Little Rock, and she, you know, worked at Aldersgate, and she worked at the med center and the neonate nursery, and she worked there at the med center a couple of summers. And then when she went off to college the first summer, we were coming

home, and Dale had just defeated that Clinch River Breeder. They were tryin' the build on the Clinch River to build a new phase of nuclear weapons. And he had just defeated that bill. And so, drivin' home that summer, we passed the Clinch River in Tennessee, you know, on the . . .

SL: Right.

[04:08:27] BB: . . . way. And she said, "Mother, while we're home this summer, I want us to have a conversation about"—because the—I have a backtrack a little bit—she went to college in New York and—up close to the Three Mile Island that incident that happened—the atomic plant, you know, that started leaking.

SL: Yeah, a little meltdown. Mh-hmm.

BB: And scared the bejesus out of everybody—I—you know, and including her. And she said, "I want us to talk about what would happen in case we had a nuclear weap—explosion of some kind—a nuclear war. Where would we know where to find each other again, with me in New York, you and Dad all over the world, you know, and Bill and Brent in different places?" Bill was in Germany in school at the time, and Brent was here and, you know, I almost drove her up a tree. I mean, can you imagine a child sayin' that to you? And the fact that most of the people in this country were wringing their hands accepting the fact that we

were gonna have a nuclear confrontation. And when she asked me that question, it put me into a entirely new reality because all of a sudden, I realized that my contemporaries were wringing their hands saying, "Well, I hope I'm at the epicenter" or "I hope my children are close enough I can put my arms around 'em" or "I hope"—you know, you remember that talk?

SL: Yes, absolutely.

[04:09:57] BB: And I thought, "You know, I may go down, but it'll be kickin' and screamin' when I do." [*SL laughs*] And so I started talkin' to other friends and women and found out that they were [*wrings hands*] wringin' their hands, but they didn't know what to do. And I said, "Well, we've gotta do somethin'. So, you know, we're not gonna—I'm not gonna sit and wring my hands." And told that Brooke story and, you know, and it—and people related to it, you know, that quickly 'cause their own kids were wantin' to ask the same question . . .

SL: Same thing.

BB: . . . or had asked 'em. And so, I mean, it was astounding how quickly it [*vocalized noise*] had thirty thousand women who were wanting to do something and a hundred and fifty congressional wives who were brave enough to sign on and let me use their names to establish credibility and visibility for Peace Links.

[04:10:48] SL: Now you're saying, "were brave enough to sign on."

Are—was there a fear that it would damage . . .

BB: Oh, a lot of them . . .

SL: . . . their husbands' careers?

BB: Their husbands wouldn't let 'em. Ugh. Ugh. Some of the women—a lot of the women wanted to, but their husbands wouldn't let 'em.

SL: Thought it was a throwback to hippie and . . .

BB: No, it was a—it was—they—afraid. I mean—oh, you can't imagine how many wives are "Stepford Wives." I mean, they—their husbands dictate their lives to 'em. I mean, how—the parameters of their lives. And have no . . .

[04:11:19] SL: And speaking out was not one of them.

BB: Who?

SL: Speaking out was not one of the . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . things . . .

BB: That's right.

SL: . . . they would allow.

BB: Especially on the issue about peace. And Dale had always said, you know, "Do whatever you—it—you're right. Do whatever you wanna to do, and then, you know, I'll take care of myself." And

it's like—I don't whether he told you the story about the campaign rally up at Mount Nebo. You know, that's the big kickoff, you know, July 4.

SL: Okay. Go ahead.

[04:11:48] BB: You know, for the Democratic Party. And somebody back in the audience said, "Senator, ain't your wife's involvement in that peace outfit gonna hurt your chances of re-election?" And Dale just yelled back, and he said, "Only among those who favor whoopin' cough and nuclear war, I think." I mean, just handled it with humor, and you know, everybody just died laughin' and served notice to ever editorial board in the state. It was never brought up again. So, you know, thank God for him to . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . handle it that way. And—but, you know, I mean, the fact that he had the courage to deal with that, you know, because it was the right thing to do.

SL: Sure.

BB: And that's what he said about it. I was frettin' and worryin' about startin' Peace Links. And so, finally, one night he just said, "Well, go ahead and do it. It's the right thing to do, so go ahead and do it, and I'll take care of myself." So—but not many

of 'em have that kind of courage. They're too afraid they won't get—they wanna be re-elected too badly.

[04:12:48] SL: Nope. They're not thinkin' the big picture.

BB: Nope. And too many of 'em come up there just wantin' to be carried out horizontally, you know. Don't have the courage that David and Dale had on a lot of issues, you know. You know, ol' David would dig his heels on an issue and [*laughter*] stay with it till everybody turned their toes down.

[04:13:13] SL: Well, okay, so now let's talk—let's get back to Peace Links. Now—so it germinates from a question your daughter asked, Brooke, your daughter, asked. Got you to thinkin'. You called some women. Who did you call?

BB: Well, I called some of my best friends in Washington and people here. Jean Gordon. Let me think who helped me organized those first meetings. I hate to name names 'cause I . . .

SL: I know.

BB: . . . you know . . .

SL: . . . 'cause you're afraid you might forget somebody but . . .

BB: I would. I mean, there are a lot . . .

SL: But they'll—they understand.

BB: And Sara Murphy.

SL: Yeah.

[04:13:49] BB: Sara Murphy was the—wrote most of my speeches.

And just a lot of 'em. And we organized here and around the state, and then I, you know, got on the agenda of—and Ann Bartley . . .

SL: Okay.

BB: . . . was one of 'em. She—we camp—we went around to every MYF and UMW—United Methodist Women—put us on their programs. The—oh, I can't—AAUW and a lot of 'em, you know, people. In fact, we had a victory thing in Branson, Missouri. We marched a Peace Links victory day parade carryin' big ol' signs up in Branson, Missouri, along the river there. [Laughs] And then I called on congressional wives, and I was—one of 'em was Teresa Heinz. At the time Teresa Heinz. And she said, "Betty, I"—and she co-pon—she found out I had invited Helen Caldicott to come to Washington to a meeting and—to speak. And that was before she got so out on a limb, you know, and before she published the book, *Missile Envy*, and you know, she just got too radical. It turned people off. I mean, you gotta . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . stay with . . .

SL: In the central a little bit.

[04:15:08] BB: Yeah. And—but anyway, Teresa heard that I had

invited her, she called me and asked me if she could co-sponsor the thing 'cause she said, "I've got a 'Brooke story.'" She had three boys, and she said, one day, she was in the—she lives in Georgetown, and she said, one day, she was—her boys were out in the back yard diggin' a hole, thinkin' they were gonna go to China, and she said—but she heard 'em—one of 'em say, "How far do you think we'd have to dig to be safe from atomic bomb?" She said, "Boy, it turned my world around, too." So she lives in a beautiful home there and—anyway, so she had the congressional wives and got a lot of—she was Republican, see. He was from Pennsylvania. [04:15:54] And—oh, I think she had a hundred and—over a hundred wives came, including a bunch of Republicans. And one or two of 'em got pretty nasty with me at that dinner meeting, askin' questions about that. But she hung in there, and right till this day, the Peace Links group in Pennsylvania is our biggest group outside of Washington. [04:16:19] And they did a lot of work. In fact, Michael Dabrishus went to the University of Pittsburgh . . .

SL: That's right.

BB: . . . or Pennsylvania, and the first thing that turkey did was ask them for their archives. [*Laughter*] And he got 'em.

SL: Good.

[04:16:38] BB: And [*SL laughs*] anyway, I called him up and chewed him out about it. He said, "Well, you know it'll be reciprocal. We'll do—you know, cooperate with that." But anyway, she helped establish that Peace Links group in Pittsburgh and then turns around, and they almost defeated John because he'd never saw a weapons system he didn't love, you know.

SL: Right.

[04:17:00] BB: And so she kinda pulled out of Peace Links after that because it was—she got kinda mad at us. I don't know why, but it was just a personal thing 'cause they almost defeated him really his last election. But then he got killed shortly after that, you know and . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: But anyway, she—while John was running, she claimed as—to be a member of Peace Links, [*laughs*] talked about her involvement with it. But—actually, she wanted to run it, you know, and she fancies herself a foreign policy expert but she just . . .

[04:17:34] SL: Well, now there was some foreign policy involved with this. It wasn't just a . . .

BB: Huh?

SL: . . . in the United States. I mean, you guys . . .

BB: Oh yeah, we . . .

SL: . . . embraced a number of countries, didn't you?

[04:17:42] BB: Yeah. And, of course, the first thing I did—because I realized that as I was goin' around the country talking about how we needed to become involved in national security issues because men were gonna get us killed, you know.

SL: There you go.

BB: But—you know, because the question was and still is nuclear weapons are not weapons 'cause we dare never, ever use 'em. So how are they weapons? You know, they do nothing but threaten us. They don't protect us. They threaten us. And why do we need so many, when even the experts have said that we have ten times more than we need to destroy the universe anyway? And yet they keep building new ones and developing new generations of 'em. Now does that make sense? And when I'd explain that to women they'd think, you know, "Well, Betty, it really doesn't make sense. Is it really true? I mean, on what we're"—I said, "Read the papers. Look, you know, all you have to do is read about it and, you know, realize that, you know, it's insanity. It's an exercise in insanity." And still we can't get 'em to even address—they're still on—aimed at us and on ready. Did you know that?

SL: They still do.

BB: Yep. Still are.

SL: Wow.

BB: And they're developing a new generation.

[04:19:01] TM: You talkin' about the Soviet, or are we . . .

BB: No . . .

TM: . . . [*unclear words*]?

BB: No, the United States . . .

SL: United . . .

BB: . . . and the Soviets. We can't get—we are reducing weapons and Obama—even Bush cut down on the number and tryin' to reduce and get rid of some. But [*sighs and pats something*] not fast enough. And I don't even want nuclear energy until we address the waste and the safety. I mean, that, to me, is another piece of insanity. I mean, you know, they could retrofit those things somehow—expensively, but if they don't—if they build more and more and more, it just gets that much more expensive to, you know. And Yucca Mountain is on a fault, a bad fault. And look what happened in Chile.

SL: Where they're storing . . .

BB: Yeah, where they wanna store it . . .

SL: . . . they're planning . . .

BB: . . . you know. [04:19:48] And I just saw an editorial the other

day, Paul Greenberg talkin' about maybe we could get Yucca Mountain filled up with nuclear waste like ours that's stored up here at Russellville. Ship it across the country in—on a train or on a truck. You know, how safe is that? And—but anyway, it's a whole mish-mash of ideas. But, you know, women are not involved in that, and they should be. It's their children. And so that's what I talk to people about and that, you know . . .

[04:20:22] SL: Well, now what year was it that Peace Links started up?

BB: Nineteen eighty-two. And I closed in nineteen—2002. For one thing, it's—you know, the Cold War was over and the whole bit and, you know, it's—you gotta know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em and, you know, I couldn't raise mon—you know, it got to the point that I couldn't raise money. And I didn't want to just fizzle out, so I just took my money and gave it to other likeminded organizations that had more funding like WAND and two or three other—two other organizations that, you know, have good funding. The atomic—the something of atomic scientists and something else—some—a group of men—of scientists who do—you know, have been fightin' this—the Freedom Forum.

[04:21:17] SL: So wasn't there—didn't y'all have conversations with

women in Russia, as well?

BB: Oh, we—I—when I'd go around the country talking about this, the first question that came out of people's minds was "Yeah, but what about the Russians?" And I thought, "Hmm. I'll just let the"—and then we took a CODEL, or a trip, you know, to Russia. And I realized on that trip in 1982 that they had been programmed into thinking about us exactly like we were . . .

SL: [*Unclear word*].

BB: . . . programmed to thinking about them. And they were not prepared for war. Didn't even know how to put a bathroom together. Have you ever been to Russia?

SL: No.

[04:21:58] BB: I mean, they don't even know how to organize a bathroom in their fancy hotels. They may have the—it'll be plumbed, so that the sink's stickin' over the bathtub or—you know, just crude. And their air-raid shelters and their bomb shelters are, like, six or eight feet below the surface—sidewalks. And, I mean, they're—they weren't engineered to really take, you know, to withstand a nuclear war near as much as we were except in their fancy subway. And it—those people, they were—I found out that they were exactly like we are. They're parents whose main objective in living is to take care of their family. It's

what they wanna do. They wanna protect—take care of their family and, you know, have a future . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:22:49] BB: . . . for their families. And I discovered that 'cause I talked to everybody I could talk to and had a wonderful woman there that facilitated my activities of talking. She'd take me to meet with women while the men were having their meetings and stuff, you know. And I just found out that they're people just like us. They've just been programmed by the government into bad leadership. And so I've got people I knew to help me, and Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman astronaut, is a real, peace-loving woman, and she was—I got to her and asked her if she would help me put together a group of women to bring to this country. So she was instrumental and did that—helped me put together sixteen women from . . .

SL: Wow.

BB: . . . different professions and levels and from different countries—states around—different satellite states, you know, that were part of Russia. And so we brought the first group of Soviet women—they weren't the first Soviet women that ever came to this country, but they were the first ones that were programmed—we woodshedded 'em at the—oh, I can't think of

where it is in Washington—anyway—and convinced 'em that they could say no as well as yes. They didn't—I didn't want 'em talkin' about nuclear weapons. All I wanted them to talk about was—in open forums that we set up all across the country—talk about health care, the workplace—'cause they'd been in the working business—daycare. They've been in that a lot longer than we have. Had wonderful programs. I remember when Bettye Caldwell—Dr. Bettye Caldwell went to Russia to study their daycare system and their early childhood programs. This was back in the [19]60s.

SL: Wow.

[04:24:43] BB: And anyway, so they—these sixteen women—we told 'em that—that's all they could talk about. So I got congressional wives, like Barbara Levin, who traveled with the group to two or three different places. We put 'em in sixteen different cities from Reliance, Pennsylvania, to Las Vegas to Stillwater, Oklahoma, to—oh, where else? Asheville, North Carolina. Norman—I—Norman—anyway sent 'em around with congressional or Senate wives with them, and they chaired the open forums. [04:25:28] Utah—Salt Lake City. And we drew thousands of people 'cause they had never seen Russian women before, you know, except in military. Some of these military

women had come that talked about the—their military—their program—their nuclear program and the Cold War, see.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BB: But we wouldn't let 'em talk about that and—[04:25:53] so thousands of women came to see 'em and spread the word. I mean, and a good example was these two women that were well educated, of course, but looked like typical Russian babushkas—fat and, you know . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . and they were in a—in Shawnee, Kansas. The entire junior high and high school were convened 'cause they have a big Russian institute there at Shawnee at the university. And the high school and middle school were invited and the—from the ninth grade on, they were seated down here and on up to seniors. And there were a couple of—one boy sitting on the front row, and he looked up at these two Russian women there and said, "Are you Communist?" [SL laughs] Real ugly. [04:26:40] And one of the women said, "Yes. Yes, we're Communist, like you're a capitalist 'cause your parents are. And our parents were Communists, and so we are Communist. But, you see, we have no horns or tails." [SL laughs] And I'm tellin' you, that kid fell back in the seat gigglin' and laughing, and the

entire school erupted in laughter. I mean, even those kids—it's like these ads you see on TV now where they offer the little girls ponies.

SL: Yeah.

[04:27:08] BB: I mean, even kids understand when you ain't bein' fair. And he understood that he was not being fair and that—how ridiculous that was. I mean, it just electrified that bunch of kids, and they clung to every word those women said.

SL: Well, sure.

BB: And so, anyway, and then that happened in Las Vegas. Senator Hatch was having the first-ever women's conference in Utah, and so he had been on that CODEL to Russia with us, and we had become pretty good friends. And so I called him and asked him if we could come to that women's conference. Well, they just swept that women's conference 'cause all those women wanted to see what these Russian women were like.

SL: Sure. Absolutely.

[04:27:55] BB: We had one of 'em, who grew up in Stalingrad and her—lost her entire family and talked about eating the soles on shoes, you know, to—the leather soles and sides of shoes and, you know, what they went through. And she was a beautiful woman and had this lovely complexion. And so the—and then

the other one was a doctor, a cardiologist, that wanted to go there to—that's when they were having the first artificial heart. And she was a beautiful woman and—but anyway, they just swept that conference. And all those women—if we made any real contribution to the thawing of the co—Peace Links made, it was probably our greatest one, and that was setting people in this country up to welcome—to pull the blinders off and accept the Russians after the fall of the war—wall—as people because even th—thousands saw them. Not just thousands. I'm not sayin' a million or anything, but thousands of women saw them in one place or the other in all these sixteen different cities and—but talked about 'em because it was big news—I mean . . .

SL: Sure.

[04:29:07] BB: . . . these Russian women. And so I think it did—that was our greatest contribution, probably, aside from the awareness that—of—that we need to do something instead of wringing our hands and accepting, you know. And so—and that's kinda what Diane Rehm said the other night about the demise of our newspapers and the demise of our public school.

SL: Yeah.

[04:29:32] BB: That we've lost our way, and we need to find it. We need to get busy and subscribe to those newspapers even

though they cost us money, you know, that they're expensive. We need to support 'em. And we just need to do something—support leadership that makes sense, and you know, I thought it was inspiring. The next day, Brent had that luncheon that David and Barbara came to, and I, after it was over, I said, "Brent, for God sakes, don't let this group leave here with their mouths turned down and thinking there's no hope." I mean, you gotta give people hope 'cause she also addressed when we our lost our way is after the assassinations of Kennedy and Martin Luther King . . .

SL: King.

BB: . . . and . . .

SL: Bobby.

BB: Yeah—that we lost our hope . . .

SL: Well . . .

BB: . . . you know, for the future—I mean, of—and I think she's really right on that, too.

SL: Yeah.

BB: So, I mean, it's the—we've gotta keep our hope up and gotta keep our tru—faith in that we can do something about this situation. But people need to be told to keep their daubers up.

[04:30:45] SL: Well, so are you—what are you doing now to

currently stir the pot? I mean, are you . . .

BB: Well, I'm talkin' about . . .

SL: . . . organizin' folks and . . .

BB: . . . I'm—no, I'm not organizing, and I don't, you know, I don't have the energy anymore to really get that involved. And I'm too involved in our life right now.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[04:31:05] BB: And, like I say, if I start they want to do a fund-raiser for stuff. And we made a promise to each other we wouldn't get involved in that because once you open the door, then you're inundated—just like Barbara and David have had to learn that you have to, you know, put limits.

SL: Right.

BB: You have to—and—but I—but my talkin' . . .

SL: You've got one motor goin', don't you?

BB: I do.

[04:31:31] SL: [*Laughs*] That's good. Well, let's talk a little bit about—we kinda got you to Washington. Did we even get you to Washington, DC? I don't think we got you out of the Governor's Mansion.

BB: No, but . . .

SL: I think we kinda morphed into Washington, DC . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . because of the immunization program. But let's see, now Dale was in the Governor's Mansion—how long were y'all there?

BB: Four years.

SL: Four years. And then y'all took on Fulbright.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And what a great campaign that was and . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . what a . . .

BB: But you know, that—there again—I mean, I—he and I had both campaigned through every Fulbright that I can remember—campaigned in Franklin County—and supported him and worked for him.

SL: Sure.

[04:32:20] BB: And you know, did what we could do on a county basis. And—but it's like—I'm sure he mentioned, you know, that he was gonna be taken out.

SL: His polls—his numbers were . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . not good.

BB: Yeah. So, I mean, that was an agonizing decision Dale made on that. And—but anyway, then he was—for two years he was

totally inundated with, you know, learning the ropes there, but he liked it so much better than he did in—being governor, because it was a—joint decisions. It was a group decision. He does not deal with stress or with pressure. That's why he didn't run for president 'cause he knew he'd die prematurely, and he would have 'cause he just doesn't deal with . . .

SL: It's too much.

[04:33:15] BB: Mh-hmm. He takes everything too—you know, he's—too seriously and—but anyway, he was, course, paralyzed for two years while he learned the ropes, as all of 'em have to.

SL: Sure.

BB: And—but he just—like everything else, he stuck to his guns. He knew directions. And it's like he said, you know, so many people get into trouble, you know, financial things. And I've heard people ask him, "How have you avoided all that scandal?" He said, "Simple as pie. You just play it straight all the way. It's just as simple as that. You just play it straight, and you don't get into trouble." So that's what he's always done—just played it straight and hung—stuck to his values and—so that's the good role that a church helps you—that's—I fight with my children. They were at church and Sunday school all of their lives, you know, but not one of 'em belongs to a church anymore. And

I've—nag and rag and get after 'em all the time, but I don't quit. [Laughter] But I said—you know, it's not that I am such a devout anything. It's just that I support the institutions because they do a lot of good, and they do have good—the Bible gives us very good concrete values, and you know, we should pay attention to it. I mean, it's all part of—and one thing about mine and Dale's relationship, you know, while we grew up—both grew up in—you know, with the same church and the same values of—simple values. I mean, the Methodist church is not complicated. As I said, it's just—we learned the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes and the—you know, a few good values. And value the fact that we feel like God gave us a mind and set us free to use it. So that's what we should do. But his family only saw black and white. Now there was a little gray in mine. I mean, there are, you know, a few gray areas. But I quickly understood that black and white is a good way to raise children. [SL laughs] And until, you know, they . . .

[04:35:37] SL: Until they can . . .

BB: . . . they develop . . .

SL: Until they can see the gray themselves.

BB: They . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . reach the age of discretion, you know. [04:35:53] But if they're raised in black and white, it's hard to find the gray areas—any workable gray areas. And so that's served our kids very well, and it is a good way to raise 'em. So, you know, that's sort of the way we've always lived, and same thing in Washington. I did the same thing in Washington I did as the wife of the governor. Same story. Got involved in things that, you know, I felt like I could make a difference in. And as I've told my doctors—and I've had two or three serious bouts of illness—that—don't want heroic measures. Don't want to live debilitated. If I reach a point, you know, that—let me go. I've lived a good life, done a little good in the world, and I'm not afraid to die. But I don't want to live a diminished life, you know, a—whatever.

[04:36:52] SL: Yeah, it is interesting. That's everyone's fear, but there's—until you get there, it's, you know, it's hard to let go.

BB: I know. I know.

SL: It's hard to let go.

BB: But you know, it may be—I may be one tough sell on it, but I don't think I would be.

SL: Yeah.

BB: 'Cause I have, you know, been around the nursing home and

people and my own family members and . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . and, you know, the—I think the one thing that—the only thing that really bothers me, and that's that anxieties, you know, of debilitating illness. I don't wanna live with anxieties.

SL: Right.

BB: I'd rather go. It's too bad we weren't born with a button and socialized to know when to push it. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah.

BB: But I may [*laughs*] leave here kickin' and screamin' like [*laughter*—who—like you said, Scott, that you never know how you're gonna turn loose.

SL: Yeah. The—well, you ought to just go ahead and make a to-do list for us . . .

BB: Oh! [*Laughter*]

SL: . . . so the work continues.

BB: Yeah. Well, I have. I . . .

SL: I mean, I think some people hold on because they feel like they're just not quite done yet. There something more they could do.

BB: Well, I don't feel like I'm done yet.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Of course, I don't.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And I would like to live to see what happens with a lot of things. And I tell people all the time—I—"Well, we're not any good for anything anymore," and I said, "Yeah, you are. There is some—the only benefits I see of old age is I do feel like I have developed a tiny measure of wisdom—a little wisdom."

SL: Experience will do that for you.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: But—anyway, so there is some counsel that we can give and some value, you know. It's hard to get kids to listen but . . .

[04:38:51] SL: You know, there's one thing that we—I kinda let slip, and I'm sorry to do this to us, but I was thinking we, you know, we were mentioning segregation and integration and how Charleston was the first to integrate all the way.

BB: Yeah.

SL: The whole gamut. And so you were there in Charleston when that happened.

BB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And was there any—were there any problems or issues with the integration in Charleston? Was it . . .

BB: We had a very wise superintendent. We had a lot of good leadership. Archie Schaffer, course, who was the Pennsylvania Dutchman I was talkin' about, came there without—I mean, growin' up in Pennsylvania—in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and pit—and Philadelphia. He had no—even concepts of—I mean, he did, but he—not never having been in the South, you know, he was—offered great leadership on that and guidance to some of the board members and some of the people. And Dale, of course, who grew up without prejudice, and his father, who had exercised some strong anti—feelings. And Woody Haynes, who was the superintendent there, and he came around to all the teachers. He saw it purely—I mean, more than anything—he and his wife were wonderful educators.

SL: This is the Haynes?

BB: She was my principle. Ruby Haynes, his wife.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

BB: Financially, it was so smart to do, and that's kind of the way Archie presented that to Woody Haynes. Financially, it's stupid to keep payin' the money to bus these children past this school into Fort Smith. [04:40:37] It's a drain on, you know, the finances and keepin' the school up and—you know, running two schools and all that. Plus the fact that Woody was smart

enough. He understood the, you know, the morality of it, too. And when they made the decision—and Dale was, of course, the attorney—and with that kind of leadership—and they had one or two other board members who were not racist—and managed to get it—the decision made. And Woody came around—called a teachers' meeting. He said, "Now we're gonna do this, but I do not want one teacher, not one teacher, talking to the press—anybody. *Time*, *Life*—any kind of publication that comes around wanting to do an interview with you. No. No. No." In fact, he just said, "You're instantly fired if you talk—if you give an interview to any member of the press."

SL: Wow.

[04:41:36] BB: And he said, "We're gonna handle this, and, you know, that's the smartest way to do it. You start talkin' about it, and all you do is get in trouble." So boy, we were on alert that we were not to mention the fact that we were integrating—that we were doing anything unusual or givin' an interview of any kind. And so that kept any publicity down. And so, I mean, that plus the fact that, you know, there were some little incidents and stuff that—but I don't remember even bein' particularly concerned about it.

SL: Mh-hmm. Kids were fine with it.

[04:42:12] BB: And—yeah, the kids were fine with it. I mean—and the—last year—year before last, when we dedicated the—at a class reunion—at their regular all-class reunion thing that they had, one of the girls that was in my class, Sylvia—she has a Ph.D. now in somethin'—anyway, she has told the story two or three times that Ruby Haynes—that she complained to Ruby when she got off the bus, that somebody called her a nigger, and that she complained to Ruby about it. And Ruby said, "Well, that's what you are." So I confronted her at that thing. I said, "Sylvia, the best friend you would ever have in your life was Ruby Haynes, and you have told that story, and I know it did not happen 'cause I was in that line when you came off that school bus that morning. I did not hear that conversation—standing next to Ruby, and I did not hear that conversation. And you have either dreamed up or misquoted yourself or something, but that did not"—I just took her on. I said, "That did not happen, and she's the best friend you ever—will ever have in this life." And I said, "If there's any way you can change that or rectify that press—you know, bit of press you gave or so—you ought to do it," because Ruby Haynes would never ever have said that to her. But that was somethin' that got her a lot of attention.

[04:43:38] But two of the girls that were in my class—and only

two of 'em even had a—could read when they started—but they were smart, and we divided—I had forty-three kids in that third grade.

SL: Wow.

BB: And so we divided—we tested 'em. That's one of the things—I'll have to say I forget what her name was that taught in early childhood education at the university, that taught testing—diagnostic and somethin' somethin' and testing. Anyway, I used that course, and we tested all those kids and sawed the legs off of tables and made eight round tables with ten chairs around 'em. And I put those kids in reading groups, and then I used the kids in top reading groups as teachers for some of the lowest—you know, ones that couldn't read. And . . .

[04:44:33] SL: So you drafted some of the students to help.

BB: Oh, I had a teacher at ever table.

SL: That's smart.

BB: Yeah. Well, I mean, you know, again there I had a problem, and I had to solve it somehow.

SL: Well, first of all, you had forty-three kids to begin with.

BB: Well . . .

SL: That's too many.

BB: . . . up to fifty-three. Up to fifty-three. Some of that [*unclear*

words].

SL: Up to—that's too many.

BB: Well, of course it's too many. I never sat down all day long.

SL: Right.

BB: The most exhausting year I ever put in.

SL: And it's not fair to the kids to have that many kids and one teacher.

BB: Oh, it isn't fair, but you know, I'd—the—some of the reading groups—and they'd read—I'd—they couldn't read, so I'd send 'em out under a shade tree or out in the restroom. We had a restroom, big ol' restroom, in the gym there where the—you know, it was heated, and I'd send that reading group out to the—some reading group out to the restroom, and they'd—the reader would—the teacher would read the play to 'em, and they'd act it out, and then come in the room and act out that book, that story. [*Laughs*] They thought they were the stars.

SL: That's good.

[04:45:30] BB: And they thought they were reading, you know. But all kinds—devised all kinds of ways of—some of 'em'd go out under a shade tree and learn and, you know, it just—and some of the teachers—I remember some of the teachers complained about my noisy classroom 'cause sometimes I'd—and they'd

work sittin' under the table or on top of it or someplace else, you know. But they were—I'd say, "It's busy noise, so don't grief me."

SL: There you go.

BB: "It's not disruptive noise. It's busy noise," you know.

[04:46:01] SL: Well, now what about the community of Charleston?

Was it—were they at ease . . .

BB: Well, we only had one or two little incidents. No, they were proud. They were proud.

SL: Good.

BB: Because the churches—the Catholic church had already—they were ahead of the Methodist church of inviting them into their church. And then the Methodist church—Dale had two of 'em—two beautiful voices of—in his choir. And as he said—he told the story in the book, you know, that two of the women that would've—older women that would've objected, you know, it was that they wouldn't have missed comin' to church for anything in the world 'cause they were afraid they'd miss somethin'.

[*Laughter*] So—no, they were proud of themselves.

SL: Good.

BB: Yeah. Well, you always have a few, you know, crazy nuts, but you know, you're gonna have that in any situation.

[04:46:51] SL: So let's see, now. Okay, that's—is there anything else you wanna say about that—about the . . .

BB: No, and I think—you know, Charleston's still proud of it. And they, you know, they've—they're proud of their community, and it's always been a very progressive commu—'cause they've always had good—pretty good leadership in a lot of areas, you know, that they've taken care of. Dale's dad was—and the Hiatts and the—they've had—always had some good leadership—good people. So—and it's still a good town. You know, as I go up there—I mean, it's amazing—when I was up there—we were up there to a contemporary's funeral two weeks ago, and it was astounding how many of—not many of our con—although there were three or four people who are older than I am [*laughs*] that still come to church. And then their kids or their gra—you know, our contemporaries are still there. It's where we're gonna be—we've helped Archie's family and several others. We've—doin' a columbarium which—there—and where we'll be put.

SL: Goin' back home.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Makes sense.

BB: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

BB: It's where we belong. [*TM clears throat*] [*Laughs*]

[04:48:16] SL: Is there [*laughs*] [*TM coughs*]*—*what about Washington, DC? I mean, did you . . .

BB: Well, I loved every . . .

SL: . . . did you feel . . .

BB: It was a fun, exciting city to live in, you know. And I enjoyed everything about it and*—*but as I told Dale, I don't want to grow old and decrepit in Washington, DC. I want to go home.

[04:48:39] So it took me two years to extricate him but [*SL laughs*]*—*because he just couldn't envision himself without an office and a secretary and his colleagues. He had developed in the law firm*—*he had developed a "lunch bunch" of former staff members and former senators that are still there in law firms or in other endeavors. And every day he had lunch with either former staff members or former senators or sitting senators or*—*you know, he's still got lots of friends there.

SL: It's hard to let that go. Mh-hmm.

[04:49:10] BB: And you know, one of the things that*—*an ex-senator, who came back there that we have a lunch group with that we have*—*switch around, you know, different [*unclear words*] host the group of eight of us, and he moved away, and then he moved back, moved his family back. And so I said to

him one day, "Why did you come back?" He said, "I'll tell you why. Because you can't go home again because they're not interested in your conversation. You have to join theirs."

SL: There you go.

BB: Now isn't that profound?

SL: Yeah, it is.

[04:49:50] BB: And it's not that you're smarter. It's just that you— for thirty-five years, you have had a different life, different conversation, and you go back, and they're not interested in your conversation. They want you to be interested in theirs, which is natural.

SL: Sure.

BB: But it's tough.

SL: Yeah.

BB: But it—but Dale stayed so close here. He was home so much. It's easier for him. And then we've got two kids here, and he is—I think like Barbara and David—I mean, you have to learn to kinda protect yourself. And he's been out there and pleased people. While he still likes people and wants to—and was proud of—to serve 'em, he's ready for some privacy and—not that he wants to be isolated or anything but—I mean, that sounds kinda arrogant to say that you have to join their conversation

because . . .

SL: Not really.

BB: . . . it makes—it sounds like you're sayin' "They're not smart enough to join my conversation."

SL: No, I don't . . .

BB: That's not the . . .

SL: . . . no, I don't . . .

BB: . . . case at all because, as I've told my—a lot of friends, I said, "You know, the people in Arkansas, most of 'em are more sophisticated than the people here in Washington, DC, that I know because they live a easier, simpler, less expensive lifestyle. They travel more. They go to New York to the theater. They go to—you know, they have the Broadway Theater League. They have good rep theaters. They have—you know, their kids have traveled the world, and most of 'em are more sophisticated than the people who live in Washington, DC, 'cause they're right here at the foot of the Kennedy Center, yet they don't ever go. They don't take advantage of . . .

SL: All the culture . . .

BB: . . . what's here . . .

SL: . . . that's there. Yeah.

BB: . . . you know. And so it's not that at all, I mean, because

people are just as smart and as well educated and—except I will say one thing. There is a sophisticated black society in Washington that is outstanding, really outstanding. So, I mean, they've been, you know, and they've been educated from—for generations, you know. And that's wonderful to see. So—and they're people—a lot of them are some of the people I'm gonna miss the most because they've worked—I've worked with 'em in public health and immunizations and in the theater and with Peace Links, and so I'm gonna miss some things about it, but I'm glad to be home. So . . .

[04:52:46] SL: Well, I know that Barbara and David are thrilled that you guys came back.

BB: Yeah.

SL: They really were hoping that you'd do that.

BB: And we've got a state full of old friends and supporters and our children and youngest grandchildren 'cause we've spent the last—you know, with Bill and his family, their kids are both—older kids are—two in college, and one that's—a daughter that's fifteen goin' on twenty-one and, you know, [*SL laughs*] she has a long—I mean, a lifetime of—so far of history with us 'cause they've lived about a—ten minutes away from us. And I've babysat and been a big part of their lives. And my youngest

grandchildren are here, from nine to thirteen, so I wanna spend . . .

SL: That's good timing.

BB: . . . more time with them. It is.

SL: It's good timing . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . be back here. Yeah.

BB: So . . .

[04:53:41] SL: Well, is there anything else you wanna say about your kids?

BB: Well, I've got three wonderful children that have been—have lived up to everything I expected to live—expected 'em to live up to. Always knew they were gonna be great and wonderful, and they are. [*Laughs*] And they're raising good families, and they're good, generous, involved kids and active in politics, active in community work, and I just couldn't ask for much more from 'em. I've always—I mean, I've always felt like they were gonna turn out wonderfully, and they have. [*Laughs*] I expected 'em to.

SL: That's good.

BB: So . . .

[04:54:33] SL: That's good. Well, is there anything else you wanna

talk about? I—we've—I feel like I've kind of danced . . .

BB: Hop, skipped around.

SL: . . . around a little bit, but is there something that I—that I'm—there's all—I can tell you this, Betty—there's—after we finish these, the next day or two, you'll probably think of something that you wish that . . .

BB: Oh, I'm sure I will.

SL: . . . we had talked about. As long as we've been talking here . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . we do get—have a tendency to get lost . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in where we are and what we're talkin'—but . . .

BB: And I have a terrible tendency to ramble and skip-hop around. I'm sure there a lot of things that, you know . . .

[04:55:16] SL: Any personalities you wanna talk—any people you wanna talk about that you've—I know we talked about your family pretty extensively. We certainly . . .

BB: Well . . .

SL: . . . we certainly did a lot of genealogy with your family. I—we didn't really talk about a whole lot of conversations that you had . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . with your family.

BB: Well, we were all—we were a very close family—both, you know, sides. And so—as well as Dale's, and we've stayed in close touch with all of 'em. And so, no, it's—they're just—it's a good family. Good people and . . .

[04:55:56] SL: What was it about Dale that was so attractive to you and kept y'all thinking or knowing that y'all were gonna be together eventually? What was it that—and how . . .

BB: I don't—I knew he was—for one thing, he was not lazy. He was hardworkin'. He was—had good character. I don't know. I just—you know, it was just one of those things.

SL: Just felt right, didn't it?

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: It did. Well, I had, you know, other experiences, and he did, too. Nothing serious, not like the world today. I mean, I grew up in an era of chaste women.

SL: Yes.

[04:56:45] BB: And I sort of envy the lifestyle [*laughs*] of today. I

think it mighta been more fun. [*Laughter*]

SL: Maybe not.

BB: Maybe not. I . . .

SL: No, I don't think it's all it's cracked up to be.

[04:56:53] BB: No. And—but anyway, I don't know. I just knew he was the right one, that I'd be—he'd be a good father and a good, you know, husband and a—and, you know, the things that Dad always said. "He wasn't lazy, and he wasn't—you know, you could say a lot of things about Dale Bumpers, but by God, you can't call him lazy." [*Laughter*] And he laughed—he—all the time. He was a great fan in a lot of ways and exasperated because he laughed a lot of times, and he said—one time he said somethin' about it, sayin, "Well, if he's not directin' the choir, he sure as hell ain't gonna sing in it," [*laughter*] which was true . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . but he was willin' to come down, and it was tough money at the time for him because he'd had a couple of heart attacks and cattle prices were not too good and blah, blah, blah. But he was willing to give him the gate money, as he called it . . .

SL: That's good.

BB: . . . and had a lot of faith in him and his . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: And they enjoyed—I mean, we spent a lotta time with Mother and Dad 'cause we lived there, you know, and we've—a few times—we've laughed a lotta times 'cause I used to make him go there after we'd be out or be someplace, go by and visit 'cause I thought they were lonely, you know, and we'd go in there with all three kids. [*Laughs*] I look back now, and I think a time or two when we've got grandkids a little more than we want 'em or at a time when it's not . . .

SL: Oh yeah. [*Laughs*]

BB: . . . too handy. [*Laughter*] "What made us think Mother and Dad were so lonely [*laughter*] to see us come in there with three kids." Interrupt their Sunday night or, you know, peaceful night.

SL: Their peace. Yeah.

[04:58:44] BB: 'Cause my dad kept a-workin' up until he was—died. [*Laughs*] But we're very family-oriented people, and we, well, we like people and, you know, go out with 'em. It's families that are important, like everybody.

SL: Yeah.

BB: That's—it's what we're all about, is making sure our families are taken care of and, you know . . .

SL: In better . . .

BB: . . . have a future.

SL: . . . shape than the . . .

[04:59:12] BB: No, just have a future. I don't . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . worry about—we don't worry about providing for them particularly. It's just that the opportunities are there for 'em to, you know, make it their own 'cause, I mean, I don't worry about—he's always chidin' me about [*laughs*] givin' away his hard-earned money. You know, can't give it away fast enough. [*Laughter*] But you know, I don't really worry about my kids as long—they've got a good education that we paid for, and it was the greatest gift we could've given 'em.

SL: Yep.

BB: And it was a real sacrifice, but it was a wonderful sacrifice. And so, you know, to—but they didn't have to come out—you know, a lotta parents say, you know, the best thing in the world happened to 'em was they had to earn—you know, pay back their debts, which I think is good, but I mean, the—that we could sacrifice to some deg—and that we had a sister-in-law who helped us. But we, you know, managed to pay her back most of it . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:00:26] BB: . . . to help us through tough times because when he was governor, you know, we got ten thousand dollars a year and . . .

SL: I know.

BB: . . . [*laughs*] kinda hard to live through that, but we did. And I mean, it's—we've had a great life.

SL: You have. You-all have made a difference . . .

BB: Well . . .

SL: . . . in a lotta people's lives.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: I guess we have.

SL: You have. It's a great honor to live with you for three days here.

BB: Well [*laughter*] . . .

SL: I can't thank you enough for puttin' up with us.

BB: Well, I—it's been a delight. I've—I don't know that—as I say, I don't know that it's worth too much, but anyway . . .

SL: Well, I . . .

BB: . . . it's been fun.

SL: This—I can promise you it'll be worth a lot to your family . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and to the kids. And it's gonna be worth a lot to the state of

Arkansas.

BB: Well . . .

SL: And I think there's some inspiration here for everybody
anywhere.

BB: Yeah.

SL: And we'll—you—we're—you'll be hearing from us. We'll get you
a package . . .

BB: Okay.

SL: . . . together, and it'll take us a while. We're a small group
but . . .

BB: Well . . .

SL: . . . we've got it now, and so we'll get it back to you.

[05:01:33] BB: Well, if I think of somethin' else I wanna say, I'll call
you, and you can [*laughs*] . . .

SL: That's right. Well, I—and I—we'll come back.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Or—you know, we're hoping to move into a building soon.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Get us a building, and if you got somethin' to say, I'll sit down
with you, and we'll get it done. No problem.

BB: Well, you know, there's—you do, as I say, you do feel like
you've—through all the experiences you've had that—gained a

wee bit of wisdom at eighty-five. Not a lot, but—I'm still learnin', too.

SL: That's the good thing.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: So . . .

SL: That's worth living for right there.

BB: Yeah. Yep.

SL: Keep learnin'. Well, okay . . .

[05:02:16] BB: Well, I'm proud of David that he's put this together.

I think it's a fabulous thing to do.

SL: Absolutely. Of course, I have a feeling I'd be preaching to the choir, but I can tell you that everyone that we sit with is thrilled that this is happening and gets it . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and realizes that . . .

[05:02:39] BB: You know, it was a wonderful thing—Bill Bowen, you know, put together that Arkansas leaders, you know. And I remember one time when we had—at the Mansion that we sponsored a dinner and—what was the man's name that headed up Boeing? He was from Arkansas.

SL: I don't know.

BB: Put Boeing together, Boeing Aircraft, I think. Anyway, Dale was sitting at the table with him. [05:03:03] Wilson, I think his last name was.

SL: Okay.

BB: Somebody Wilson. Anyway, of course, he's a saltaholic, you know. And [SL laughs] he—when the dinner was served, Dale took his salt shaker, and [vocalized noise] you know, and this man, who is, I think, head of Boeing Aircraft—was—grew up in Arkansas. He said, "You know, if I was lookin' to hire somebody, I wouldn't hire you." And Dale said, "Oh? Why not?" [Laughs] He said, "Because you salted your food before you tasted it."

SL: There you go. [Laughter] He learned a little somethin' there.

[05:03:36] BB: Yeah. [Laughs] But that was a great group. I forgot—Hathaway, from Hathaway Shirts.

SL: Hathaways. I remember . . .

BB: You know . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: What was his name from Magnolia?

SL: Gosh, I don't know. I just came from Magnolia this . . .

BB: Yeah. Dean . . .

SL: . . . past couple . . .

BB: . . . and Nancy—Dean and—oh, that's one thing I hate about this

old age.

SL: You know, I just—I went to an event down . . .

BB: He was president of Hathaway Shirts.

SL: Okay. I don't know—I can't tell you that name.

BB: Yeah. He was a successful Arkansan, and oh, I don't know who all was in that group. [05:04:10] Dale's brother, Carroll. He was president of Greyhound Financing and Leasing at the time. He was a member of that Arkansas—and who else? Bill Bowen could sure tell you.

[05:04:23] SL: And what were they doing?

BB: He put together this group of Arkansans—successful—sorta like this is only it's a—and then the—we had 'em for dinner at the Governor's Mansion. They met every year through Commercial—wasn't it Commercial?

SL: First . . .

BB: First Commer—or that—Bill Bowen. Did he—what bank was he president of?

SL: No—I'm not sure.

BB: He was in the law firm.

SL: I'm not sure. We're . . .

BB: But anyway . . .

SL: I think we're about to run out of tape.

TM: We got one minute.

SL: Got one minute. [*TM clears throat*] Anything else you wanna say on this tape? You wanna go another hour?

BB: I don't know what we'd talk about. [*SL laughs*] Looks like my yardman's not comin', doesn't it?

SL: Well, he may be out there waitin' on you.

BB: [*Laughs*] I doubt it.

SL: Well, why don't we go ahead and cut this off here and . . .

TM: [*Unclear words*].

SL: . . . if we think of somethin' here [*sound of tapes being changed*]
[*TM coughs*] in just a few minutes, why, we'll do some more.

But I think we're okay. I think we've covered quite a . . .

BB: Yeah, I can't think of anything else that we need to talk about.

SL: Okay.

BB: I can think—I mean, there are a lotta things I did as a Senate wife, but most of it was—had to do with immunizations or with Peace Links. And we didn't talk about the training and some of the stuff we did in Peace Links but—and the trips that we made and the groups that are still together. And, course, the immunization thing is still goin'. We still—I still have an office and three employees there that we still work with that and have—with Rosalynn Carter and have board—two board meet—

three board [*TM coughs*] meetings a year or is it two? Two board meetings a year. And . . .

SL: Well, do you wanna talk a little bit about what you going to do from here on?

BB: Well, what we're gonna—yeah, I could talk about that—a little bit about that.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[05:06:11] SL: Okay, Betty, we've kinda glanced over the Senate years a little bit but—and we've talked quite a bit about the immunization program and the Peace Links, but we haven't really talked about—much about what you're doing from here on out, or if there was more that you wanted to talk about during the Senate years, we should talk about that now, too.

BB: Well, the only thing about Every Child By Two is it's still a very viable organization, and we're still working hard at that. In fact, I would promise that this year that during—or the next session of Congress, that I would like to work with the health department and with some of the people that are involved in the medical community in the law that was passed that gives parents a philosophical exception—exemption for not immunizing their kids. They have a religious, and they have an allergy—you

know, a medical exemption. And now last year or the year before last, they passed a law that would give them a philosophical exemption if they philosophically—have a philosophical reason for not immunizing their kids—passed a law that would allow that, which is absolutely ridiculous because they can only do that at the expense of all the rest of us who immunize our kids, you know. I mean, it is—it's—I would like to lobby with the state legislature against that.

SL: So . . .

BB: Against the religious and the philosophical exemption for immunizations.

SL: I'm not sure that you can really separate those two, can you?

BB: Well, I think that's the way the law reads. I'm not real sure. I mean, I—I've—missin' a few beats, you know, with the age. I think it's the philosophical. But we may need to revisit that word—the word that fits in there. [*Laughs*] [05:08:19] But it came about because of this scare about immunizations causing autism.

SL: I see.

BB: Which is—has no basis at all.

SL: In fact. Yeah.

BB: All the scientific communities worldwide have discredited that.

But it would give people one more excuse not to immunize their children, and they can only afford to do that because all the rest of us do, so it's unfair. And we know that in England, in Sweden, in all the different other developed world countries that had scares about this fraudulent researcher that said that immunizations had—were tagged to autism in Sweden—or in Britain—any time they cut out or give exemptions or people get fearful and don't want to immunize their kids, they—the diseases [*vocalized noise*] rear back up immediately.

SL: Sure.

[05:09:19] BB: And you know, one case of measles—we haven't had indigenous measles in this country in—oh, I don't know how many years, and no indigenous polio is in this country. And so—but—you know, and those people—if it—if we, you know, if we didn't have the herd immunity that's—'cause so many of us immunize children, you know, then we put all kids at risk. And—I mean, and that's just another foot in the door on those people not—you know, it's painful to all of us to take a baby in and see 'em given five shots—you know, four shots, but it's about eight different vaccines. But as doctor—the doctors have explained over and over again, you know, that the minute a baby is—exists in a sterile environment—the minute it's born, they have to

immediately develop—what is it?

SL: Defenses.

BB: Antibodies . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . against millions of germs. So I mean, the body can take I don't know how many thousands of times more immunizations, you know, than what they're given. So it's, you know, it's the greatest thing that's—it's the greatest boon in medical—in the medical field in the, you know, last two centuries.

SL: Well, as painful . . .

BB: That's why we live so long.

SL: . . . as it is to witness that immunization process, it's much more painful to watch a child die.

BB: That's right, or to know of a child that died uselessly.

SL: Right.

BB: And a lot of 'em do, I mean, from those childhood diseases. They're ugly, lethal diseases, you know, that—we just haven't seen any of 'em because we've been so well protected.

SL: So there's a—some folks out there that feel like because we haven't seen it in so long, it . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . must be okay.

BB: Yeah, and I think that's . . .

SL: And we can . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and we can do—we can commit our own philosophy . . .

BB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . on this.

BB: Yeah.

SL: So if it's . . .

[05:11:28] BB: So—and then at our last board meeting, which was in December, at that time we knew that all these scientific organizations had discredited the fact that immunizations have anything to do with autism. I told Amy—I made a little speech, you know, that we have—for the last three years we have spent too much of our time trying to discredit, knowing that immunizations have nothing to do with it 'cause the twelve scientific organizations in this country, including the AMA and the Academy of Science and, you know, CDC and all of these credible institutions—that we need to get back to what we were originally about, and that's seeing to it that children are fully immunized by the time they're two—that—or they're timely immunized. And so we need to really start pushin' that, because the—there are lots of 'em that are not immunized. I mean,

many, many, many. The levels are still up in the eighty percentile, but that's not high enough. We need to get it up higher. And that we need to get back to our original intent, and that was to see that children are immunized timely—you know, immunized. So that's what . . .

SL: So you're gonna get after that.

[05:12:48] BB: Yeah. And Arkansas is a little behind. I mean, we're—we are lower down than we are many times in our immunization levels for some of 'em. So I'd be willing to help out in any way I could with the health department. And I'm still willing to do, you know, some stuff on that issue. And—or on—I mean, I'd like to really do anything I can do that will support National Public Radio 'cause it is a vital voice that we all need to be hearing. It's unbiased. It's, you know, really a credible source of news, not like Fox, or what is the Democratic answer to Fox? The CNBC.

SL: MSNBC . . .

BB: MSNBC.

SL: . . . which I watch all the time by the way.

BB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] Well, so do I but NPR—I usually am tuned in to NPR because . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . they do have unbiased news.

SL: Yeah, every morning I wake up to NPR. Yeah, sure. Yeah.

[05:13:51] BB: And I would certainly like the entire state to have the privilege of listening to NPR.

SL: Yeah.

BB: The entire programming of NPR. And—simply because it is unbiased and very good information. So that I would be willin' to work on. I want to get involved in the theater—I mean, buying tickets for The Rep because it's wonderful to have such a viable—and some of the other little theater groups we have are very good. I've been to some of their performances. And I'd just as soon see those. I think the acting is just not as flamboyant as Broadway, but it's every bit as good artistically.

[05:14:39] In fact, you know, the Broadway Theatre League—why, I saw *Man From La Mancha*, the *Fiddler on the Roof*. In Fort Smith, Arkansas. And I've been to Broadway to see all of 'em at—you know, a lot of productions. And I enjoyed those just as much, you know, as I did Broadway.

SL: Sure.

[05:14:56] BB: And we're lucky to have those things and I, you know, wanna support 'em. So—and Little Rock is a very sophisticated city. Arkansas is a sophisticated state and we—I

mean, I hate to see anything that makes us—you know, harks back to the days of Bob Burns and the hillbilly state or the idea of the hillbilly state—our beautiful natural resources that are here, and I'd like to see our educational system get straightened out. I mean, the very idea that we have a acrimonious school board that, as far as I can tell so far in reading and knowin' about 'em and having kids in public schools and in private schools. They're not denominational but a private school anyway. I'd like to see all of that energy and—goin' into public school and really getting teacher pay. I mean, why are they not—they have the most influence on our children of anybody besides their parents—that we feel like that we can pay them such paltry salaries, when we pay football players and sports people and—you know, it is so skewed that it's almost nauseating to me. I mean, I think teachers should be the highest-paid professionals we have in the state, simply because they have such an influence on our children and on our future. Why can't people see that and understand it? [*SL sighs*]

[05:16:50] Sports is wonderful and entertaining and—you know, but what does it do to enhance our lives except entertainment? And, you know . . .

SL: You probably don't . . .

BB: . . . and to think that . . .

SL: . . . wanna get me started. [*Laughs*]

[05:17:03] BB: Well—you know, and to think—I mean, I remember when we were in Charleston—I mean, fighting to try to get more money and more attention to our band program and our—get a music teacher in our school system and a—an art teacher in our school system. And—but they continue to pour such a disproportionate amount of the money to benefit the superjocks in high school anyway. They don't even have good programs in—I don't know of any school that has a really good program that benefits those underdeveloped and—not the superjocks in the school. They support the superjocks that don't need support anyway. You know, I mean, to help them build good strong bodies, you know.

[05:17:51] SL: Marketable.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Make them athletically marketable.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And to spend the money. I mean, even in school—I mean, they have fancy, fancy gyms but, you know, no fancy band rooms.

SL: Or theaters.

BB: Or theaters.

SL: Or art rooms or . . .

[05:18:08] BB: And you know, I started a program here along with Bill Bond. I don't know if you remember Bill Bond.

SL: I kinda remember that name.

BB: At the Arts Center. But—a program of teaching, of taking that, the Children's Theater and Arts Center, around to schools to put on those children's plays. And along with that, a workbook that taught teachers how to put on a play. You know, every—if we have anything in common, it's theater 'cause every podunk school has a junior/senior play or has a pageant of some kind.

[05:18:46] Has a play that's staged and, you know, involves quite a big number of kids.

SL: Yeah.

BB: And yet how many of those teachers have ever had any theater training—that know how to stage a play and knows how to, you know, organize and how to do the makeup and how to do stuff? But he developed a book . . .

SL: Workbook.

BB: . . . a workbook that was given to the teachers, and they offered to come around, you know, to schools that wanted them and teach the teachers, you know, give a workshop on how you do

those things. And then I remem—if it was Title V when my oldest—when Brent was in high school. Title V allowed Charleston, Arkansas, to have teachers come up there to teach theater, art . . .

SL: Music.

BB: . . . music—you know, our—and I remember that we—I transported a bunch of kids to Paris to see Shakespeare—a Shakespeare put on by this traveling group. [05:19:56] It—Title—it was Title V, and a lot of money went into that. It was a fabulous program. And they put on *I Remember Mama*, and [clears throat] the person who came up there was from the Little Rock School District, but he was well trained in theater and built the stage out and, you know, I learned a lot working with the class on—from him. But we need—small schools need that opportunity—provided money to have these master teachers come in in the arts—in the humanities, you know. I mean, it was so great. I mean, it—the kids benefitted so much from that, and yet it was done away with in—I think, in three years' time because people were not willing to fund it—rather put it into a stadium or a football team. [Laughs] And they've got five coaches . . .

SL: Right.

BB: . . . or six coaches, you know. But they don't have . . .

SL: And not one art teacher.

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yep.

[05:20:59] BB: And I've taught art—the fourth, fifth—let's see, third, fourth—third, fourth and fifth grades—the years that they could afford to have an art teacher—could afford to pay me.

Otherwise, I taught, you know, fourth grade or—and third grade or certain subjects in two or three grades. But I think only two of the seven years I taught was as an art teacher only 'cause they couldn't afford to hire another teacher. And I still have kids that come to Charleston for class reunions, and they'll say, "Mrs. Bumpers, you"—or Miss Flanagan at the time. I think that was the first year. [*Laughter*] "Do you remember when you had us go out on the playground and pick up all that bunch of trash and stuff, and we made those collages?" And I'd say, "Yeah, I sure do." "I've still got that."

SL: There you go.

[05:21:55] BB: Now they've lost a household in a fire or movin' or somethin' else but a creation of their own they've protected, and they've still got.

SL: There's nothin' like it.

BB: "And you remember when we took that construction paper and cut out all these things and made a picture, you know. I've still got that." Or "When we did those things with crayons and pressed 'em with vinegar and water, you know. I've still got that." 'Cause it's a treasure. It's a creation of their own and—I mean, it's so needed for kids to have, you know, the art and music and—but yet we fail to see the value of it. [*Laughs*]
And—or the value of education that we need to put more and more money in, and good public schools.

[05:22:43] SL: Well, have you got—have you got anyone that's—that you can get this to carry on?

BB: I don't know. I've just been here since December permanently, so . . .

SL: Well, I mean, my gosh, how long's that been?

BB: . . . I'm lookin' around.

SL: That's [*laughs*] two and a half months.

BB: Well, I've spent three weeks in the hospital in that time.

SL: Oh, that's right. Okay.

BB: Two weeks in the . . .

SL: Well, I'll give you that.

BB: . . . two weeks in the hospital . . .

SL: I'll give you that.

BB: . . . during that time.

SL: I'll give you that.

BB: [*Laughs*] And tryin' . . .

SL: I'll give you . . .

BB: . . . to get rid of all the junk . . .

SL: I'll give you that.

[05:23:11] BB: . . . stuff I've accumulated in my thirty-five years in Washington. But I'll find, if my health holds up, I'll find a place to—and I get my garden and yard shaped up.

SL: Yes.

BB: I'll find a place or the people 'cause I—it's like I say, I don't wanna live a debilitated life. I've gotta . . .

SL: Well, I tell you, the best . . .

BB: I can't be triflin'. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that's the best way not to become debilitated . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . is to keep . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . keep goin'.

[05:23:46] BB: That's right. And I've got Barbara here, and you know, we'll . . .

SL: Boy, I tell you what [*BB laughs*] she's got a broken toe, and that

doesn't keep her down.

BB: No.

SL: It's . . .

BB: So we'll get into somethin' [*SL laughs*] as soon as we have time to.

SL: Well, I think that's fair warning.

[05:24:01] BB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] And a lot of other real activist people that, you know, are busy. I'm so sorry to see—you know, so many of my friends have died. As I say, so many of my contemporaries that it's kinda scary. And I—but there are a lotta new young ones comin' on.

SL: There's more.

BB: My daughter's a real activist and my daughter-in-law. She helped get an art teacher, a permanent art teacher, at Fulbright by volunteering when her children were there and putting much, much time in it and got these auctions started—you know, the Stomp Swamp, helped get that goin', and now they have a—an art teacher, I think, at Fulbright that they didn't have before that's funded by some of the efforts that she helped instigate. We just need some good leadership and—but we need—more than anything else, we need a commitment to public education and a good school board that is not locked into whatever the

heck they're locked into, you know, with this acrimonious stuff I read about.

SL: Yeah.

BB: It's selfish.

[05:25:21] SL: Now are you talkin' about the Little Rock School Board?

BB: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

BB: Yes.

SL: Well, I can tell you, that's—it's not just Little Rock.

BB: I know. It's all—and, you know, I don't know—I haven't had a chance to get into who accredits and, you know, and who allows these unqualified schools to keep goin'—I mean, to be called a school. And I know—I do know that—through some experience—that some of the good colleges look at where kids graduate and . . .

SL: Why, sure.

BB: . . . it weighs in on whether they're accepted. I don't care what their IQ or their grade level—their grades are—they're looked into if they have gone to certain types of school.

SL: Sure.

[05:26:06] BB: I know 'cause I know some people who are on

college boards that look at acceptance. And I do know that parents need to know that sometimes they don't get in because of, you know, the . . .

SL: Grades aren't everything.

BB: No, they aren't. They aren't, nor are their LS—oh, what do they call those tests they give now?

SL: Well, the assessment tests.

BB: Yeah.

SL: There's—yeah.

[05:26:30] BB: So, I mean, that's a thing that some of 'em should consider, and I'm glad that they're looking at that.

SL: Yeah.

BB: So we'll get it right. We'll get it straightened out. I just wish it would happen faster rather [*laughs*] than slower because we're too—as I found out in campaigning here in Arkansas and in the work I've done all over the country, that we have far, far more wonderful people. And I have such faith in young people today 'cause they're so well educated, and they're so smart, and it's all a new world out there—this computer age. And they're good kids. There—there's a—I noticed in yesterday's paper, maybe, that there's a new resurgence of—what was the word they used? Of—do you remember seein' that in the paper? It's a new—of

concern, compassion and concern. And look how we send money to any victims and—you know, of other nations, like the earthquakes and the catastrophes that have happened. So that we are—we just need to . . .

SL: There is an awareness.

BB: Yes.

SL: A new awareness.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[05:27:57] BB: And the young people of today are just so smart and so well educated, and we just need—all of our émigrés that have come here, we need better educational opportunities for 'em and more attention because, I mean, they are the—they're the cream of the crop. They're like our pioneers and pilgrims. They were ambitious, looking—people looking for a better way, a better life. So we get the cream of the crop from all these émigrés that come in, whether they're legal or illegal. They're people on the move and are lookin' for—they're ambitious and want a better life. So we should look at 'em like that and try to deal with it some fair way and consider them treasures instead of . . .

SL: Threats.

BB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[05:28:47] BB: Although I do think they should find some way to make it more equal and fair because, you know, it's—the more that sneak in the country illegally, the less opportunity for the legal ones . . .

SL: Yeah.

BB: . . . that are there.

SL: Well, and even the natives. I mean . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . even—I mean . . .

BB: That's true.

SL: That's some—that's where some of that resistance is coming from.

BB: Yeah, yeah. And I understand that, too.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[05:29:10] BB: But there is a way we need to look at that and make it fair and to treasure those people that—and I don't understand why people are so resistant because, you know, they all—we all came here from somewhere.

SL: That's right. *[BB laughs]* We wouldn't be here if . . .

BB: Yeah.

SL: . . . if our great-great-grandparents hadn't been in the same . . .

BB: That's right.

SL: . . . same boat.

BB: That's right. Well, I guess that's about all we can think of to talk about unless I think of somethin' else, and we'll . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, we can cut—we can stop here. That's all right. And I guess I've gotta thank you again.

BB: Well, you're . . .

SL: Barbara and David, I know, thank you.

BB: Well . . .

SL: We were so pleased that you guys decided to let us do this.

BB: Well, I'm so pleased that they've put their energies into this. It's gonna be a great thing to have, and hopefully, it'll encourage more.

SL: Well, it's certainly changing my life.

BB: Yeah. Well . . .

SL: I love—I . . .

BB: . . . good. And I want you to look up that tape.

SL: Oh, I will.

BB: Don't forget that.

SL: I will.

BB: All right.

SL: Jim Borden Peace Link tape.

[Tape stopped]

[05:30:22] BB: I am Betty Bumpers, and I am proud to be an
Arkansan.

[05:30:29 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]