

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Tim Massanelli

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

September 29, 2009

Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Tim Massanelli on September 29, 2009, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, Tim.

Tim Massanelli: Good morning.

SL: It's gonna be you and me today.

TM: Okay.

SL: And my name is Scott Lunsford. You're Tim Massanelli.

TM: Right.

SL: We're at the Massanelli residence in Little Rock, Arkansas. Um—today's date is the twenty-ninth of September. The year is 2009.

TM: Right.

SL: And—uh—Tim, I've got to ask you if it's okay with you that we're here, both audio- and video-recording this interview and that we will archive this in the Pryor Center archives in the Special Collections Department in the Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville Campus.

TM: Sure. Do you wanna just deposit my million dollars or—or send me a check for it? How are we gonna handle that?

SL: You—we—actually, you know, you could let me have that . . .

TM: Uh—yeah.

SL: . . . and I'll handle it for you.

TM: Well, okay. [*Laughs*] All right. You're . . .

SL: I—I can manage that.

TM: I'm authorizing you to do that.

SL: I appreciate that. [*TM laughs*] I'll hold you on that. [*TM laughs*] I appreciate that. Well, thank you. Listen, it's an honor to—to be sittin' across from you. I appreciate you givin' us your day to . . .

TM: Thank you being here.

SL: . . . to do this.

TM: Yeah.

[00:00:56] SL: Well, thank you. Now I'm gonna ask—first of all, what is your full name?

TM: Full name is Garland Edward Massanelli.

SL: All right. Now . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . just for everyone else, let's spell Massanelli.

TM: *M-A-S-S-A-N-E-L-L-I*.

SL: I've been misspellin' it.

TM: Is that right?

SL: Yeah, I've been sayin' one *S*, and I think I've been . . .

TM: Okay, two *S*'s. Yeah, okay.

SL: And I've been usin' an *E* instead . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . of the second *A*. So . . .

TM: Well, ba—back in the—those early years when I was born, there was a popular cowboy named Tim McCoy . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: . . . was his name. And one of my uncles—uh—started when I was a baby—started callin' me Tim, and I've been Tim forever. But Garland—uh—uh—my dad was a friend of the sheriff's, and his name was Garland Brewster was his last name.

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: So my dad named him—named me after the sheriff, and my uncle gave me the nickname Tim, so—so I've been Tim—nine people out of ten that know me or more won't know that Garland is my name. They don't have any idea who that'd be.

[00:01:57] SL: Now—uh—what—when and where were you born?

TM: I was born in Pine Bluff in a area, like, south of Pine Bluff—an area called Goat Shed. It's close to a place called Tamo, so it's—it's out on the River, and I was—I was born there—had a—they had a general-merchandise store—uh—there. And back in those days, general-merchandise stores handled ever—bout like Walmart now—saddles and—and aspirin and just anything you

wanted. And—uh—general-merchandise store clerks, by nature, was rather—they were rather lazy, so my dad sent me to the store one day when I was about [*SL coughs*] six or seven years old to get a dime's worth of asphidity. And most folks don't know what asphidity is. You probably don't. You're . . .

SL: Hmm.

[00:02:47] TM: . . . too young for that. Well, it's a resin. It comes off a tree, and rural folks would put that in a little bag and—with a string and tie it around their neck, and it was supposed to help ward off diseases and all those kind of things. So my dad sends me to get a dime's worth of asphidity, and the ol' clerk is rockin in that chair about like I am here, and looks up—says—uh—you know, "What you want, boy?" And I said, "Well, my dad wants a dime's worth of asphidity." So he gets up and gets a little paper sack and puts a dime's worth of it in there and hands it to me. He says—I said, "Dad wants you to charge it to us." So he [*SL coughs*] turned back on a shelf there and got a little, dog-eared ticket book and a blunt pencil and a—kinda touched it on his tongue like this [*touches his tongue*]—he said, "What's your last name, son?" And I said, "Massanelli." So he looked at me, and he took that book and tossed it back up in that bin and threw the pencil back up bin—said, "Yeah, go ahead and take it for nothin',

son." Said, "I ain't gon' try to spell Massanelli and asphidity both for no dime." [*Laughter*] So . . .

SL: That's good.

TM: Well, that was at Tamo, Arkansas.

SL: Tamo.

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay, now what was the year that you were born?

TM: Nineteen thirty-three.

SL: Nineteen thirty-three.

TM: January 6, 1933.

[00:03:58] SL: And—um—who were your—what were your parents' names?

SL: My dad's name was Evo—*E-V-O*—and my mother's name was Cezira—*C-E-Z-I-R-A*—and she later ch—dropped the *Z* and had a *S-C-E-S-I-R-A*. So she was *C-E-Z-I-R-A*. Her maiden name was Aureli—*A-U-R-E-L-I* was my mother's maiden name.

SL: Now where did your Edward in your middle name come from? You don't know?

TM: Gosh, just somethin' they came up with, Scott. I—you know, I [*laughs*] just [*laughter*]—that wasn't attached to anybody . . .

SL: Okay.

TM: . . . or any particular persons.

SL: Oh.

TM: But the Garland was. It was the name of the sheriff there in Jefferson County.

SL: So—and—uh—the river that you mentioned—what river?

TM: Arkansas River.

SL: Arkansas River, right there . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . at Pine Bluff.

TM: And this community called Goat Shed, which is just a name . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: . . . it was right close to the river there. We were—we were country folks—lived on a farm.

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: Farmin'.

[00:04:52] SL: Um—so let's talk a little bit about—um—your dad's side of the family now.

TM: Okay.

SL: Uh—do you remember his mom and dad at all?

TM: Yes, I remember his dad. His—his mother was dead when—when I—when—uh—I was born.

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: His dad's name was Augusta—*A-U-G-U-S-T-A*—and his mother's

name was Assunto—*A-S-S-U-N-T-O*. And she died before I was born, or maybe when I was little, but I never knew her.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:05:25] TM: I did know my grandfather on my daddy's side. On my mother's side, my grandfather died before [*swallows*] I was born, and I knew the mother. His name was Matthew Aureli, and her name was Catherine Aureli.

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: *A-U-R-E-L-I*. They all came from a sm—I—small town in Italy called Pesaro—*P-E-S-A-R-O*. It's on the Adriatic Coast. And they came from there—uh—came to this country wanting to farm and buy land and—uh—had made arrangements with a man that owned a lot of land over in the area that's still—town still carries the man's name—Alzheimer, Arkansas, and his name was Ben J. Alzheimer. So they came to work and buy land from Ben Alzheimer. Well, when they got here, things weren't exactly like they thought they were gonna be, so instead of them bein' able to buy land, they were put as just workers. So my dad—uh—came over—they—he was a—he was about three, and my mother was just barely born when they came here.

SL: Okay, so your grandparents—[*vocalization*]*—both sides—uh—your grandparents came over . . .*

TM: At the same time.

SL: Did—same time.

TM: Yes.

SL: Same boat?

TM: Yeah.

SL: And from—where they from the same community?

TM: Yeah.

SL: And they had heard about this place, Arkansas . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . over in the United States. And did—did they come through
New York City?

TM: Yes, Staten Island.

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: Uh-huh. Yeah.

[00:07:04] SL: Uh—and—uh—how—um—um—how did they—once
they got to New York, how did they get to Arkansas?

TM: Well, the arrangements were made for them to—to come to
Arkansas, and I—I—I really don't know. I think someone either
came to pick 'em up, or they—they—they got there somehow.

I—I . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: . . . I—I'm sorry. I don't know the answer to that. Never did

really ask 'em that question. Never—I never thought about it. But that—that destination was the Altheimer farm there at—at Altheimer. And the arrangements weren't—it was—sorta equates, I guess, to the—to the—uh—uh—uh—this country's gold rush. Everthing looked good for everbody rushin' [*beeping sound*] out there. Then when you got there, it was a little different.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:07:51] TM: So it was a little different. So my dad's—but he grew then his first job was carpenterin'. He—he was kind of a carpenter, and he'd work for fifty cents a day from—from what they used to refer to as "can till can't." That meant [*SL laughs*] from the time you can see till the time you can't see." That's what "can till can't" means. And he—he—he worked at that. And then they—then they become sharecroppers, and so the definition of a sharecropper is a person owns the land, and—and you provide the work and the—and the—and the—uh—crop, whatever it is. And then the owner of the land gets a share of it, and you get the rest. Usually it was a one-fourth share for the owner of the land and three-fourths share for the producer. So they sharecropped for a long time and then—and then began to buy a little—a little land and a little property. And—and when I

was born, the country was just comin' out of the Depression—
1933. So . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:08:49] TM: And things were still kinda tough. My—my mother
tells a story of when I was a little boy—uh—livin' in a house, and
[swallows]—and she'd go in and—and shake the snow off the
blanket because of the—when it snowed real hard, snow would
come in . . .

SL: In the house.

TM: . . . would come in the house. Yeah. And . . .

SL: Well—um—so when did they—do you know when they got to the
United States and to Arkansas?

TM: Uh—yes, it was about—uh—1900.

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: Somewhere along in there.

SL: And—um—so now let me get this straight. Your—your mom and
dad—did they come over on the same boat . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . as their parents?

TM: Yes.

SL: And then they—so they got to know each other while they were
in Arkansas.

TM: They knew each other—they knew each other from the "old country."

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: Uh-huh. Yeah.

[00:09:40] SL: And—and then they ended up getting married in Arkansas . . .

TM: Yes. Yeah.

SL: . . . and starting their own—their own family.

TM: Yeah. Well, other families came, too, and so there was a—a—a high degree of intermarriage between the families that came over on the boats because most of their activities and whatever were centered around—uh—the Italian community. And—and those were the days when—when the priest was heralded so much as a—as—almost as an institution because he was a doctor, lawyer, interpreter, and everthing else for the families 'cause they couldn't speak English. And—and—and—and so the families sorta stayed together, and so this guy liked that gal and that gal liked this guy, and, course, they ended up—ended up marryin'. So there was a lot of intermarrying between the—between the friends.

[00:10:29] SL: Well, was there a—did—did—uh—your cran—your grandparents—did they establish an Italian community, or was

there already . . .

TM: No, they lived . . .

SL: . . . one kinda in place?

TM: . . . pretty—they lived—lived pretty close. You know, I mean, when they came over here and it—those that went to—some—some went to Lake Village to—call—called Sunnyside. Some went there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: And about the same arrangement. They had a—a houses to—what we call—refer to now as tenant houses . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: . . . and they lived in those tenant houses, and you were—uh—you know, under the—uh—watchful eye of a—of the landowner, you know. So they—then they knew each other because they lived—the communities were there. They weren't set up as communities. They just happened that way because "You live in this house, you live in this house, and you live in this house," [points in various directions] and that's kinda the way it was. Yeah.

[00:11:20] SL: Um—and what about the—uh—the church in all this—in this immigration?

TM: Yeah.

SL: I mean, did the—did the priests come over with—on the boat or was there already a Catholic church in the . . .

TM: It—there was already . . .

SL: . . . area?

TM: . . . a Catholic—uh—communities here.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:11:36] TM: And the priests were assigned by the bishop to those various—uh—areas, and—and—and—and the—and the—the Italians were very strong Catholics, and—and—and they followed the faith very closely. So there was an attraction to the priest because he was hierarchy. And—uh—and—and so that just—and he would be invited to folks' houses for dinner, and he performed the weddings, and—and he gave them advice—uh—that—uh—that—was anything had to do with anything legal, they didn't know any lawyers or whatever. So the—almost for everything, you go to the priest. That was—he was the—he was the catcher of everything and the solver of problems and whatever. So—so that caused the—the faith to be even—even stronger. And a—the other—a kind of a funny thing, I guess—one—one of the reasons that we're not—we, being the children that came along—are not bilingual is because our parents and grandparents suppressed that. They didn't want any talking in

the Italian language because they wanted to fit in with the community and with the people there, so they restrained themselves from—from—from speakin' the language. And, course, you know, we—we lost in that because I—would be great now for me to be able to speak English and Italian both, and all the Italian I know is the bad words. I don't know any [*laughs*]—much of anything else. I can say milk and water and [*SL laughs*] those kind of things but [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

TM: . . . that's about it.

[00:13:09] SL: So that started with—uh—the moment that—that—uh—they got to America, they started to want to immerse themselves into the American . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . culture.

TM: Very well said. Exactly. They—they wanted to be a part of what was goin' on in their—their language and their dialect and all would give 'em away, so they were tryin' to restrain as much as they could, you know, and not—and not—and not speak the—the—the Italian language.

[00:13:40] SL: Well—um—do you know—um—about what education level your parents . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . achieved?

TM: Yes. Uh—my mother—uh—went all the way through high school and sh—it's an ironic thing—she was a very good speaker, and she won some oratorical contests. And, gosh, I don't even know what I did with 'em anymore. I wish I—that I could find 'em. I'm sure she won some medals for speaking. And so she graduated. My dad just went through the fifth or sixth grade.

SL: Mh-hmm.

TM: But he was a mathematical genius. I mean, he could just add numbers in his head, you know. You'd say a twelve, ten, eight, sixteen, twenty-four, and he'd just give you the answer, you know, just—just like that. I mean, just—just—just—it was amazing. Amazing. But he—he was about fifth grade, and my mother—my mother graduated from high school.

SL: Well, and—uh—maybe e—even when you were growing up, it seemed like—uh—school days—weeks were also related to whatever crops were . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . being grown and harvested.

TM: Yes. I went to school in the first grade in a—at a—at a one-room schoolhouse that was close to that Tamo community. It

was called Cottondale. And I went there in the first grade. Bus picked us up and took us there. Second grade, I went to another school that was a place called Hill Acres, and Hill Acres then was bought up by the federal government, and they turned it into an airfield for—uh—practice for World War II pilots, and it's called Grider Field. And so I went to Hill Acres in the second grade. Well, after the second grade, they—they was destroyin' the school because they were gonna make way for that—uh—airport to come in there, and so I was transferred to a school in Pine Bluff, then [swallows] called First Ward. And I went there in the third grade, and I stayed in the third grade about a week, I guess, and they moved me to the fourth grade. So I never have actually had a third grade. And then I went from First Ward to a wa—school called the Annunciation Academy, which was a parochial school—a Catholic school.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:15:57] TM: And it went through the ninth grade at that time, so I went for—graduated from there, and then I went on to high school at Pine Bluff High School. Then I went off to college for a little bit. I didn't—I didn't stay very long. It's—it was—I went to Drury in Springfield, Missouri.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:16:12] SL: Um—well, let's talk a little bit about your—your grandparents. It—uh . . .

TM: Kay.

SL: So you—uh—you got to see and meet your grandfather on your father's side and your—no.

TM: Yes, you're right. And my grandmother . . .

SL: And then your grandmother on your . . .

TM: . . . on my mother's side.

SL: . . . mother's side.

TM: You're exactly right. I never knew the other two.

SL: Uh-huh. Do you remember any conversations you had with either your grandfather or your grandmother?

TM: Not really. Not very—what [*coughs*—I remember [*clears throat*—excuse me—my grandfather on my dad's side was a very quiet gentleman, and he was—uh—uh—very compassionate, and he'd lived with my dad's youngest brother after his—after his—my grandmother died. And he helped my uncle raise his children, and I remember seein' him in a—in a rockin' chair holdin' my cousin, who was a baby, and—and he liked that. He—he—he—he was drawn to children, and—and I remember that about him. My grandmother on my mother's

side—uh—was an excellent cook, and somehow, she transferred those outstanding characteristics to my mother, who was also just an outstanding cook. And we went to their house a lotta times, and I can barely remember the great meals. And—and the kind of meals that we had were, you know, two or three entrees, you know, like fried chicken, pot roast, and spaghetti and meatballs, and then, you know, things like lima beans and—and corn on the cob and those—and I could still remember a big table—big settings and—and [*clears throat*] a nationality that encouraged people to eat. I mean, there was a lot of [*coughs*] love and emotion shown around the—the—the dinner table.

[00:18:11] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about the—life at that time in your earliest memories. Um—can you describe the houses that—that house that you lived in . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . growin' up and—and the houses that you visited? And this is . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . basically rural.

TM: Yes, it is.

SL: Okay.

[00:18:29] TM: First house that I can really remember living in [*SL*

coughs] was [*clears throat*] we had moved from Goat Shed to a place called Atkins Lake, and my dad was renting a farm. That's when he started sharecrop—he was renting a farm from—from some—a family name—the German people named Schnable *S-C-H-N-A-B-L-E*—wonderful people. Wonderful pe—and this was a very—pretty luxurious, two-story home that we lived in, and it was right on a lake called Atkins Lake, and—uh—uh—it burned down while we were liv—one night they—they—we—we just barely got out of it with ourselves—pajamas on and all—that's all we had—all we had left. It burned down. But, ironically, we moved into another two-story house that was right fairly close to it, within [*swallows*] a quarter of a mile or whatever. So the—the answer to your—to your—to your request is that I grew up on that lake—couldn't have had a better boyhood in my life. I fished on that lake. I knew where all the fishing holes were. I knew—I could go catch fish on that lake anytime. I swam there. They had a—they had a beach that was a—that was a public beach where you—they charged people to—to use the beach. It had a high diving tower and a [*swallows*]—uh—and a raft-like thing. Uh—people would come in from town, and they had good-size boats. And back in those days, the popular thing was surfboarding. It's a flat board that you surf

on.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:00] Skis were not—hadn't quite made it—uh—into the lifestyle of—of—of people foolin' with the water, so I surfboarded a whole lot. Uh—without soundin' egotistical, you know, pretty good at it because [*SL laughs*] you know, when you're that age, and you get—you're limber and—well, I could swim they'd say, my—my family and all say like a duck. And I remember one time I swam, and I was so exhausted, and I came home; and for some reason or other, I went under the bed—uh—and went to sleep. And, course, they couldn't find me when dark came, and so they thought that I had drowned and . . .

SL: Whoo.

TM: . . . and this again stirred up a lot of emotion and whatever, and I finally crawled out from under the bed [*SL laughs*] with sleepy-eyed and wipe my eyes, and when they got through huggin' me and kissin' me and doin' all those things, then my dad gave me a spankin'. [*Laughter*]

SL: For scarin' 'em half to death.

TM: Yeah. But that was a wonderful, wonderful boyhood. I—I—my oldest sister—I have three, one older and two younger than me. My mother was pregnant with another baby when we lived in

that house, and there was a storm, and we slept upstairs, and so she came upstairs in her pregnancy to check the windows and to pull 'em down so it wouldn't rain in there, and she fell down the stairs . . .

SL: Oh!

[00:21:17] TM: . . . a-goin' back down and killed the baby, and it was a boy.

SL: Oh.

TM: And he would've been my brother right under me. And my oldest sister, and I rode a school bus to school, and the bus driver—we had cattle back then, too. We were—my dad was doin' pretty good. And so the bus driver told the story about him comin' in one evenin', and both of us are cryin' about the time he was supposed to let us off at our bus stop. He asked us, "What's wrong?" And so we said, "The cows are out," which meant we knew we were gonna have to go round 'em up, and so we were—we had started cryin' in advance of goin' to do that. So the—I had a great, great life there. Yeah.

SL: You wanna move the mic?

[Tape stopped]

[00:22:05] TM: But, anyhow, friends came down [*beeping sound*] from Pine Bluff. [*Door squeaks*] The parents owned cottages on

the lake and all, so I developed some great friendships with the quote "city folks" and we—you know, we'd ride those boats together—and those surfboards together, and we'd fish, and I'd show 'em where to fish. We would what we call a trotline—put out a trotline there. We would frog gig. Just—you name all the activities you could do around water, we did 'em all. And I was just blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed to be able to live on the lake most of my young life. And we moved from there—I guess I was probably nineteen or twenty when we moved from there. And I can remember bein' there when I was six years old, so . . .

SL: That's really great.

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: I got to have the same kind of thing when I was young. We had a cabin on the Illinois River . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . and we did the frog gigging.

TM: Oh.

SL: We did the trotlines . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . and we did the fishing and swimming.

TM: You knew where they were.

SL: Knew where they . . .

[00:23:04] TM: Yeah. I could catch 'em anytime.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

TM: And I would always get praise for that. My relatives would say, "Well, we—maybe we oughta have some—try to cook some fish next week." Said, "We'll get Tim to go out there and catch us a mess," you know. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: And I could do it, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: Bream and crappie.

SL: Yeah.

TM: And, course, the trotline were catfish. Yeah.

SL: That's right. Flathead.

TM: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

SL: [*Beeping sound*] Well, these two houses that were there on the lake—did they have electricity?

TM: Yes.

SL: And . . .

TM: Yeah. We didn't have inside bathrooms at first. They—we had a

outside toilet, and we didn't have runnin' water.

SL: You had a well.

[00:23:40] TM: Had a pitcher pump. And my mother had—the stove was what we called coal oil. It's—you just—it's kerosene. And so then butane began to get popular, so we got a butane stove for the kitchen, and then we began to heat with butane. At first we heated with wood—just had wood heaters. And one of my responsibilities as a young kid was to get up and build a fire in the mornin' for the rest of the family to get up, and that was cold, and you were sittin' there shiverin' and whatever. But it was a fond—my mother washed clothes on what we called a rub board and boiled 'em out in metal pot. And my sister and I's chores—we were farmin' with mules, and we had six mules, and one of our chores every afternoon was to fill—pump water for three barrels—fifty-five-gallon drum barrels of water that the tops were cut out of, where the mules could come in and drink. And so we'd have to pull on that pitcher pump, and oh, we learned to sing while we were doin' it, and we learned to count while we were doin' it and all, but it was a chore to pump those three fifty-five-gallon drums of water every day. And those mules would come in, and they would just drink it all up, you know, real—pretty quick because they were hungry from—I

mean, thirsty from the day's work.

[00:25:10] SL: So it was you and three sisters?

TM: Yeah, at that—at the time, we lived there actually, it was me and my oldest sister. My other two sisters weren't born yet. Finally before we left there, my next sister was born, so she lived there some. My youngest sister wasn't even born there. She was born—she came along much later in life, and she was born at the house that we finally bought some land and some property and had a house on there, and we moved there, which was—then when I married, I built right next door to it, so I lived right next door to my parents the whole time they were alive.

SL: How much acreage was the farm?

TM: Oh, that particular place there was just forty acres. We owned some others away, but it was a home site on—there on the highway, right outside the Pine Bluff city limits. The city limits line came right down on our property line.

SL: Now I—I'm talkin' about the property out on Atkins—on Lake Atkins.

TM: Oh. Oh, it was about [*SL clears throat*] two hundred acres, I guess.

SL: And . . .

TM: Bout two hundred acres.

SL: . . . so your dad worked that . . .

TM: Farmed two hundred acres. Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and . . .

TM: Yeah.

[00:26:19] SL: . . . did the—all relatives work it, or did y'all
have . . .

TM: Just us.

SL: Just y'all.

TM: Just our family. And, see, it was right on that lake, and this is
before irrigation ever was even thought of, and my dad came up
with the idea to pump water out of that lake. So when we'd
have a dry year, he would pump water out of that lake to irrigate
the cotton. And we did all the shovelin' all by hand and, course,
made some pretty monstrous crops with the irrigation when a lot
of other people were failin'. So it was a part of our success to be
able to pump that water out of that lake and irrigate our crops.

[00:26:55] SL: So was the main crop cotton?

TM: Cotton. Mh-hmm. And some cotton and some corn and some
hay.

SL: And would you get out of school . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . to work the cotton?

TM: Exactly. Oh, yeah. I—when I was little—well, I learned to drive, like, when I was six, and so what would happen is I'd—when we'd be in the field way away from the barn, and we had an old Model B Ford truck, it was called, and my dad would put it in low—well, he would crank it, and he would put it in low gear and had some pillows in there, and I would sit and steer it all the way to the barn. And then when I got right there to the barn, I would just turn the key off, and it would stop. And so I learned to drive pretty—'course, it didn't take me long to learn—start learnin' to shift it and all that . . .

SL: Right.

TM: But six years old I was drivin'. I was drivin' a truck.

[00:27:43] SL: Well, did your dad ever bring in any help?

TM: Yeah. We had some help, and we had some African Americans who lived there on our farm. And part of my early childhood life was livin' right there with African American people whom I learned to love, and they were part of our family. And sometimes they'd come eat with us. Sometimes I'd spend the night with a—one of the boys. And we had two or three families that lived there, and they grew up. They loved my family, and we loved them. We were just—it was a very special time for us all. The sad part about it is, you know, they didn't go to the

same schools we did 'cause the bus would come pick us up and take us to one school. Then it would come and pick them up and take them to another school. And we never could really quite understand that back in our time. We didn't—we couldn't—didn't know why that was happenin'. [*Laughs*] Still don't know why it was happenin' . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . but we knew that it did.

[00:28:40] SL: Well—and so Lake Atkins was still close to Pine Bluff.

TM: Yes.

SL: You were . . .

TM: About six or eight miles outside of Pine Bluff.

SL: Uh-huh. You were . . .

TM: About six or eight miles outside of Pine Bluff. Could see the . . .

SL: Uh-huh. And so there was a fairly healthy African American community . . .

TM: In Pine Bluff, too.

SL: . . . in Pine Bluff.

TM: Yes, yes.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yes. Oh, yeah.

SL: And . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . in fact, it was—seems as though [*telephone rings*]*—oh,*
there's the phone.

TM: Hmm. How did that happen?

[Tape stopped]

[00:29:04] SL: Okay. So now we were talkin' about Pine Bluff
and . . .

TM: Right.

SL: . . . and Pine Bluff was kind of unique in that it had its own black
community and black businesses and . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

TM: Separate entrances for restaurants and separate drinking
fountains, which we couldn't always understand. And
sometimes—and we'd quote "go to town," and we would run into
our African American friends there, and we'd be at a restaurant,
you know, and it would have maybe a drinkin' fountain, and
they'd go drink out of that fountain, and we would, too. And
then we'd have people come tell you, "You're not supposed to
drink out of there." And we didn't know, you know, why, and we
never could quite figure it out, so we'd do it anyway. Yeah.

SL: So—just one minute.

[Tape stopped]

[00:29:59] SL: The—so you really had a—kind of a—almost a bipolar social life. I mean . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . you had your home life out there at the lake where everything was wonderful.

TM: Right.

SL: Had great close friends that were . . .

TM: Huh.

SL: . . . African Americans and then . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . you go to town, and they split you guys apart.

TM: Yeah.

SL: And you have—you had to learn to abide by those town rules.



TM: We had our own discrimination problems ourselves—the Italian Catholics did. We weren't that popular in the white community. In fact, you know, they referred to the Italians as "dagos"—*D-A-G-O*. I'm not sure what that's ever supposed to mean, but—in fact, there was one area there close to Pine Bluff that had a road, and I don't know, two or three Italian families lived there, and they would farm there. And they—the reference to that road was "Dago Lane." That was how it was referred to by

all the townspeople in Pine Bluff. So when we went to school there—'course, when I went to the Annunciation Academy, which was a Catholic school—even though there was a black Catholic school also—they had two separate—Catholic schools, too—there were some black children that attended the same school that I did. So we didn't have as much segregation there, if you will, as we did. And then when I went to Pine Bluff High, there wasn't—there weren't any blacks there at Pine Bluff High. And—but we were treated almost in the same situation as black, so I learned to grow and sympathize with their situations.

[00:31:52] SL: So was this a very vocal prejudice that you faced as a Catholic?

TM: Yeah. Yeah, I—it was vocal enough. I mean, that's—the South, as you well know, is really Protestant or so-called "Baptist country," and so we were pretty well looked down upon as Catholics. And coupling that with being Italian, too, and that made us Catholic foreigners, so to speak. And so, yeah, we had a—it was not pleasant.

[00:32:39] SL: Did you ever run across that out of—[*vocalized noise*] from, you know, your teachers or . . .

TM: No.

SL: You—it was . . .

TM: No.

SL: That was . . .

TM: Never ran across . . .

SL: . . . a safe haven.

[00:32:52] TM: . . . it in the school system. It was always outside on the grounds and callin' slur-y names and all and, you know, just that kinda thing. And where you'd hear 'em and—or, like, I'd have a friend there in high school maybe, and somebody just walk by—said, "Well, hey, Joe. You associate with that dago?" You know, just passing phrases like that or—I'm tryin' to think of some other Italian . . .

SL: Was it mostly the older generations that were vocal like that, or did . . .

TM: Well, these were kids at school.

SL: . . . their—they pass it on to the kids?

TM: These were kids at school. Yeah. The older generations were—I think the prejudices were there. They were somewhat quieter about 'em, you know. They separated themselves systematically by just not associatin' with you or whatever, and cor—and that caused our community to be tighter because our relationships were with our pe—our—I can remember our—my aunt on my dad's side—his youngest sister—her name was Mazanti—Amelia

Mazanti? And she had two sons, or they did—and they would come and spend a weekend with us, and me and those boys would socialize. And I taught 'em how to swim and fish, and we had a basketball hoop, and we [*tapping sound*] played basketball. So we had a relationship among ourselves. We—and we just—and my parents and uncles and aunts, and all were extraordinary card players. I mean, they played a lot of cards. They played penny poker—like, a nickel limit and whatever, and they'd play up in the night till two or three o'clock of the morning, and then they'd spend the night, and we'd get up the next morning and have breakfast with us. The kids'd go play. This was on the weekends most of the time. [00:34:39] But those were some real pleasurable moments. My—I've had a lot of great times with my cousins. And they were just—my cousins were as good of friends as anybody that I could have. I always looked forward to them comin' to our house, and we'd go there. Also, a thing the Catholics—it kinda still goes on a little bit now probably in some of the communities. They'd have a—some people'd call hog-killing time. We all raised hogs—pigs. And so, like, people would come to your house, and we're gonna kill four, five, six, seven, eight hogs to prepare food for the winter. And so this whole entourage of people would come and help you

clean the hogs and kill 'em and help to, you know, cut up the meats and so forth. So they stayed a whole weekend, and then maybe next weekend you'd go to another one of my uncles' house. They'd have a hog killin' at his house, and so it was work and party. It was nice.

SL: They used every part of that hog.

TM: Yes, sir. You got that right. And they knew what to do with it, too. And my mother just knew how to prepare everything with it and—along with—we grew our own chickens. My mother would go out there and just wring the neck of a chicken just like a man would and then put 'em in boilin' water and pick the feathers off of 'em and all that. They were just live right [*SL coughs*] off the chicken yard.

[00:35:54] SL: Well, now did y'all have a smokehouse?

TM: Yeah, sure did. Mh-hmm.

SL: And did you have a—any kind of fruit cellar?

TM: No.

SL: No?

TM: No, we had a cellar that we kept canned goods in, but we had—it—we had it where it would—it had at least some room temperature to keep those jars from burstin' if they had liquid. And my mother would can tomatoes, and she would can string

beans, crowder peas, corn—all those kind of things—and then we would have those for the winter.

[00:36:26] SL: What about refrigeration? When—did you ever see . . .

TM: Well, when we first—my first memory was what we referred to as an icebox. It was a refrigerator on the lower level, and the top level was blocks of ice that you put in there. An ice man ran every day or every two days. And he had a square sign like this [draws a square with his finger], and it would have here—it would have twenty-five, and here it would be fifty and here it would be seventy-five, and here would be a hundred. And you would hang that sign up out in a certain place, and when the ice man came by with his truck to deliver the ice, you—whichever number you had up that was readable, then that was the poundage that you wanted. So he would bring you in a fifty-pound block of ice and put it in your refrigerator, and then you'd pay him, and then he'd go on. And then, course, when we got electricity and—that was before we had electricity—when we got electricity, then we got what we referred to as an icebox.

[Laughs] It was a refrigerator, but it was an icebox. And it made ice in the trays, if you can—I mean, you may not have ever . . .

SL: Oh, yes!

TM: . . . experienced that.

SL: Oh, yes.

TM: Yeah. Okay.

SL: I can remember . . .

TM: Okay.

[00:37:42] SL: Well, so y'all had cattle and cows.

TM: Yeah.

SL: You had your own milk and . . .

TM: Yes, sir.

SL: . . . stuff.

TM: My dad was sick—pa—the reason—one of the reasons why I left college—but anyway Dad was sick, and he was committed by a doctor to drink nothin' but goat milk. And so we bought a goat and—for the farm. And that goat was a problem [*SL laughs*] for me and my sister. We had to milk that goat every day. We had a big barn—it had hay in it—and she would just climb up there and go right to the top of that hay. And so we'd start up there and try to get her down, and she'd go down the other side and, you know, it—she was just a battle every day. We'd milk her, and sometimes she'd step in the milk pan, and so we didn't know what to do. So my sister and I came up with the ingenious

idea of just gettin' a white cloth [*beeping sound*] and strainin' that milk through there, so my dad wouldn't find that trash in it that the goat's [*laughs*] foot had put in there. But we had that.

[00:38:38] SL: That's somethin' else. The—I'm tryin' to think—what were some of the other chores that you did around the house?

TM: Well, I started off with heavy men's chores early in my life. My dad would put me to doin' responsible things. I never did really pick too much cotton. We had cotton, and we was doin' manually. I never really pick too much. I was the—the phraseology at that time was "sack-toter." And I had a mule, and so you were out there pickin' cotton way away, and you'd yell, "Weigh man!" And I'd get on that mule and come and pick your sack up and put it across that mule and carry it to the scale. And then as I got older, I was the weigh person, too; but before I got older, my dad or somebody else weighed that cotton, and then the people were paid by the pound at how much they had picked. So I started off doin' those kind of things. Then I—then when we became mechanized, I started off drivin' tractors, and then we finally bought a mechanical cotton picker. There's a picture around here of one back there somewhere of me up on a mechanical cotton picker, and we did that. [00:39:56] That place I talked to you about earlier about

the federal government had bought a place and turned it into Grider Field and was—they used it for practice for trainers. Well, when the war ceased, and there was a—hundreds of acres of land that—'cause those trainers just landed [*SL coughs*] all across out there—well, the city planted that with a brand of hay called lespedeza. And so they put it up for bids, and my dad bid on it, and he got it. So in the summertime, we didn't do anything but bale hay. And, again, it was sorta like "can till can't." We'd bale it up until it got dark, and then we'd start haulin' it. [*Squeaking sound*] And then we would also do what we call sellin' it in the field. You were—there's a guy that need hay, and you'd come out, and you say, "I need fifty bales of hay." We'll say, "Well, okay. Well, there they are right down through there. You just go ahead and pick 'em up and pay for 'em." So we baled hay and did that, oh, I don't know—four, five, six, seven, eight years. And thank God, you know, it was profitable. I mean, we—it was work, but we—and we stored all we could, and then in the wintertime, we would sell it to people who wanted to buy hay.

SL: So it was probably a good, nutritious hay. I mean . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . it sound like a . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . a preferred . . .

TM: Oh, it was.

SL: . . . hay.

TM: It was. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Sweet smellin'. Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh. Let's talk a little bit about the—religion in the home.

TM: Can we stop? Can . . .

SL: We can stop.

[Tape stopped]

[00:41:36] SL: Tim, we were gonna [*clears throat*]—excuse me—we
were gonna talk about the—religion in the home . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and how that affected . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: I mean, I—I'm assuming that y'all went to service—mass—every
Sunday.

TM: Yes, sir.

[00:41:51] SL: Did you do anything else with the church through the
week?

TM: Well, not through the week because we were a farming

community, and [*SL shuffles papers*] my dad was the kind of guy that—we had somethin' to do all year round. I mean, like I told you, the summer when you did what they referred to as "lay by the crops," which means you've got 'em ready for them to open up for cotton or whatever and harvest 'em—well, there was a lag time in there. That's when we were in the hay business. So we were workin' all the time, and we had somethin' to do, so we didn't do very many things durin' the week. If there was some situation that existed, like, maybe a marriage, and certainly there were funerals—we would attend those durin' the week. Marriages were less frequent than funerals, and we would go to those. We had a very, very, very strong Catholic faith. The only time that we didn't go to mass mainly was when there was ice, and we couldn't, you know, get out on the roads. We—and so we would miss mass. But we had our so-called Sunday clothes. Had a—you know, little slacks and a little jacket—and I can remember those things—and shoes. And we'd go to mass, and when we got back, well, generally there were some chores to do, so we took off those Sunday clothes, so to speak, and we put on our play clothes and our work clothes and, you know, we were okay. I never do remember, Scott, ever suffering from the loss of a meal. We always had food. I never do remember ever

suffering from loss of something to wear. Our jeans and overalls sometimes had patches in 'em, but they were always clean. And then our—and we had that Sunday clothes that we wore. There was just one pair of those, you know. We'd wear the same thing—but we knew how to protect that kind of stuff and how to use it, and so we came up in rather frugal conditions, but at the same time, they were pleasant and enjoyable. But I like to just stress—the mass and our faith was a bond that—nothin' shook it loose. We prayed the Rosary at home a lot of times.

Particularly my mother was very interested—if it was stormin' outside, and the winds were blowin', and it was hailin', well, she'd get us all down on our knees, and we'd pray the rosary.

We've done that many times. Yeah. And . . .

[00:44:41] SL: What about at the dinner table? Was . . .

TM: Prayer.

SL: . . . grace always said?

TM: Just prayer. Oh, yeah.

SL: Well . . .

TM: Just prayer before meals. Uh-huh.

SL: Did your father always conduct . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . that prayer?

TM: Not always. As we kids got older and particularly when I started goin' to the Catholic school, then he would get me to do the prayer sometimes. If we had company, he would work out with them—maybe one of my uncles or one of my aunts. And before we started, he'd work it out with them. But he was the person in charge of that, so either he did the prayer, or he picked somebody to do it. But we had it all the time.

[00:45:21] SL: Did y'all ever have any kind of Bible study or . . .

TM: No.

SL: No?

TM: No. In fact, Scott, back in our time, Catholics—the Bible was foreign to 'em. Was just here within the last two or three de—well, since Vatican II, 1964, you know, the Bible then sorta became somethin' that we focused on more, but the Bible was somethin' they put on the coffee table. It has everybody's birthdays and that kinda stuff in it. That's about all we [*squeaking sound in background*] used it for when I was growin' up. I just didn't ever—when I went to the Catholic school, you know, we broke it out there some, in school—in religion class. But we were not really into the Bible too much.

[00:46:09] SL: So I would assume that your mom and maybe your older sister prepared the meals.

TM: My mom and my older sister helped her, and she learned to be an excellent cook herself, but my mom was the one that prepared the meals.

SL: And then what . . .

TM: And . . .

SL: . . . about the cleanup after the meal?

TM: Everybody helped with that. Uh-huh. Yeah, it was—the girls and the—you took your own plate to the sink. And we had a—two kinds of garbage places. One place was for things like meat or bread or whatever, and the other was if we had paper or cups or whatever. They went in a different place.

SL: Uh-huh. Let's see. What about technology in the home? What about radio? Do you remember when radio hit?

TM: Had a radio in my early years, and it was battery operated—had a battery that went to it. And my dad controlled the radio. We didn't have much control over it. There was a correspondent that was highly regarded [*geese honk in background*] at that time, and his name was Gabriel Heatter . . .

SL: Okay.

TM: . . . was his name. And my dad would listen to Gabriel Heatter every night, and then he would turn the radio off to save the battery. And then when we got older, he'd let us listen to it

some, and we would listen to stories on the radio, like *Mounted Police* and first one thing. They'd have a code that you'd listen to, and you'd keep it down, and later on, it'd give you a clue as to what was happenin'. And he'd let us in on that, but that was a lot—that was when we were—you know, that was probably when I was ten or twelve years old or thirteen or so forth. But when I was in my early ages—I can remember when I was six or seven or eight years old, we never listened to the radio. That was Dad's thing.

[00:48:14] SL: What about music in the house?

TM: Yeah. Well, we had a—what we called a Victrola. It was a thing that spun records and had a few records. A lot of 'em were Italian, but one of my uncles was a—was an accordion player, and so every time we got together—his family or whatever—he'd always bring it, and he'd get the accordion out and play it. And then we—you spoke about church thing—we would go to—there'd be a dance every once in a while. Maybe—I'll just say two a year or somethin', and they would be at someplace associated with the church. Maybe a hall or whatever that's close to the church. And then my uncles would come and play, and other people would come and play. And, course, the kids just ate and ran around and whatever, and the older people

danced and so forth. That was a—it was one form of entertainment along with the cards. So they were the main form. [*SL laughs*] Yeah.

[00:49:21] SL: What about alcohol and . . .

TM: Yes. My parents and grandparents, too, made both beer and wine. And we were offered beer and wine when we were sm—very small and we—they took it at almost every meal, but it was certainly done in a very restricted way. We kids were given a little goblet with a sip of wine or sip of beer, and thank God, none—I mean, none of my people are alcoholics and my own s—I have three sons, and they don't even drink—oh, they'll have a beer two times a year or whatever or maybe a cocktail sometime, but it—I guess if you wanted it to be this way with the adage of sayin', "When you got it before you and all, you know, you won't abuse it as bad as you will if it's restrained—if you're restrained from doin' it." So I guess I could apply that to our situation, whether it's true or not, I guess.

Yeah.

SL: That's interesting. So you all then had grapes. You grew some grapes.

[00:50:37] TM: Yeah. Yeah, grew some grapes. And they would buy some, too. And grew—they would make muscadine wine,

and they'd make that. And beer was—I'm not sure how they made it. It was some hops. I don't know whether it was barley or somethin' they—or they would either grow the—grow that. The things that they usually used for the beer and the wine, they grew those separate. I mean, you had a little area out here with some grapevines on it and muscadine vines on it and whatever. That was always for the beer and the wine and so forth. But almost all the families had some. Now there were families that made more of it than others did, and so if you were a family that you didn't make any wine or beer at all, they'd just go buy it from the other person, you know.

SL: Yeah.

TM: And my uncles would buy from each other or whatever, you know. Yeah.

SL: So what about newspapers and things like that? Did y'all ever have any of that layin' . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . around or . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . books . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . any books that you can remember . . .

TM: Books were from . . .

SL: School.

TM: . . . from school. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. And—yeah, my parents would look at the books and help us if we needed. Particularly my mother was very, very intell—my dad was, too, but she was astute at reading and so forth, so she helped us with that stuff. But we never subscribed to any magazines or whatever. I jokingly say the only thing we had around there was a Sears Roebuck catalog, you know.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

TM: We knew about it. [*Laughs*]

[00:52:19] SL: Uh-huh. Well, did your parents stress homework and schoolwork? [*Unidentified sounds in background*]

TM: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And those were times—you know, we hear a lot now about children goin' home and parents runnin' back up to the school and gettin' in a confrontation with the teachers and the principals and all—right, wrong, or indifferent. [*Laughs*] If we went home and told our parents that we'd had a confrontation with the teacher at school, that was a whippin' because they respected the teachers and particularly with the nuns. The nuns would make you open your hand like that and [*claps hands*] slap it with a ruler, you know, like that and just

different things. So . . .

[00:53:02] SL: How close was your closest neighbor?

TM: Closest neighbor probably were the black families that . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . lived there with us, and they were within a quarter or a half a mile of us and lived along—they were strolled along the lake like we were. Like, our house would be right here [gestures to show distance between houses], and then a quarter of a mile down there would be a house, and these African Americans would live in there. And another—be a quarter of a mile down there, and the African Americans'd be there, and another house'd be down there past it. Maybe one of my uncles lived there or somethin' like that.

SL: You know, in urban living in the days, they—if a neighbor saw a—someone's child doin' somethin' they shouldn't do, why . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . it—news would spread and . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . by the time you'd get home . . .

TM: They knew it.

SL: . . . your parents would . . .

TM: Waitin' on you.

SL: . . . be waitin' on [*laughs*] you.

TM: Sure.

SL: Knew what had happened.

TM: Been there.

SL: Is that . . .

TM: Been there.

SL: Been there.

[00:53:58] TM: Yes, sir. And also, too, neighbors and particularly relatives—I mean, they would even reprimand you—somebody else's kids. Like, my uncle would say, you know, "You quit that. You stop doin' that. If you do that anymore, I'm gonna spank you." And then if I did it and he spanked me, there wasn't no repercussions from my parents towards my uncle. And now I think maybe—probably not the case now. And I'm not gonna argue that point one way or the other. But there was a degree of respect and a degree of control among ourselves, and my dad didn't mind my aunts and uncles correctin' me, and my mom didn't either. And so that's just the way it was.

[00:54:43] SL: Well, did you ever get in much trouble, growin' up?

TM: Well, you know, I probably didn't get as many spankings as I probably needed, but I [*SL laughs*] think I was a bit mischievous. And my sister was older than me, and I had an

uncle that was a character. And he would just put us up to wrestlin', and he'd say, "Okay, here, I've got this dime now. And y'all get right here, and whoever throws the other one gets this dime." And, course, she'd throw me down evertime. [*SL laughs*] And I'd just bounce [*claps hands*] right back up again and ready for some more. And eventually she'd start cryin' because I wouldn't give up, you know. I was just persistent. I figured, "One of these times I'm gonna throw her." Course, I did finally get to an age where I was able to [*laughs*—able to throw her down. But in our early years, she'd win every time. Yeah. But my uncle would put us up to it. He'd bribe us with a coin, you know. And that beach area that I talked to you about over there—it had a pavilion [*claps hands*] that went with it, and the second floor of the pavilion was a skating rink—maple floor skating rink.

SL: Wow.

TM: And I learned to really, really skate. Roller skate I'm talkin' about. And so that was another form of activity. We did that a lot in the winter and the fall when it was colder. And so my sisters and all—we all skated, and my friends from Pine Bluff would come down and skate. It was fun.

SL: That's great.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Sounds like a great thing.

TM: Yeah.

[00:56:19] SL: What about athletics? Any organized sports or . . .

TM: I never was able to get in organized sports because we lived out in the country, and we rode the bus. And so when the bus came by to pick you up after school, well, we had to go home on the bus. So my parents couldn't come and pick us up, so sports usually entailed some activity after school. In my senior year, I was the sports editor of the school newspaper. The name of it there in Pine Bluff was *The Pine Cone* [SL laughs] was the name of the school newspaper. And I was its sports editor. But by that time, my dad was lettin' me [SL clears throat] have the car maybe one time a week or whatever, so it—so I would plan it if I knew that the paper had to get out. I think we got it out on Thursday afternoons and Thursday evening, and he would let me take the car on Thursday, and I would get the paper out and all, and then I would come home. [00:57:16] But I loved sports, but I never would—and the coaches was just constantly on me about wanting me to play because in my early days, contrary to what I look like now, I was pretty fast. I could run real, real, real good and very athletic [SL clears throat] and whatever. And

they wanted me to play, but I never could play. The coaches wanted me to get in track, for one thing, and football. But the answer to your question is no; I never played in any organized sport. When I got a little older, we had a baseball team that we formed down there and us country folks, and the name of it was Cottondale. That was the name of our team. And we played a—I guess you would refer to it now as amateur or semi-pro or one of those kind of names. But we would play other teams from other areas—somebody—a team from Stuttgart or maybe a team from Hot Springs or wherever they might be. So I played there, and I played second base and right field there.

Kris Katrosh: Hey, Scott, we're out of tape.

SL: Okay.

TM: Good.

SL: We're gonna switch tape.

[Tape stopped]

[00:58:23] SL: Okay. Now I'm tryin' to think where we were. We were talkin' about the role of religion in your childhood and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and what you witnessed around the house and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and let's see now—we talked about grace at the table. We

talked about some dances . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . every once in a while.

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . at one of the halls there and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and the Catholicism was really a binding . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . force . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . in your community.

TM: Our faith was equally strong among all of our relatives and all, and it was an important factor in our relationships and all. So, yes, it was binding. Very—and that's why I mentioned to you earlier about the role of the priest, and he was at the center of that—the priest was.

[00:59:10] SL: And even though the Bible was around the house, there was no real Bible study.

TM: No.

SL: And this kind of points to the faith in the church and the structure . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . of the church and the mass.

TM: Yes.

SL: It seemed like you . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: The benefits . . .

TM: Exactly.

SL: . . . you got from your faith all centered around the church.

TM: Right.

SL: And you also just kind of mentioned that you and your fellow Catholics suffered some prejudices, and that was compounded that y'all were from Italian heritage as well.

TM: Exactly.

SL: Did—was there ever any kind of violence propagated?

TM: No.

SL: It was just harassment.

TM: Just harassment. Yeah.

SL: And kind of an attitude that tried to suppress . . .



TM: Yeah. Yeah, the only violence that I ever witnessed was—it was such a strange thing—and the property that I told you that we finally moved on—my parents and I built my home there, and there was a—[*SL clears throat*] acreage right next to us where we lived there. And I was married, and all of my kids were born

at that time, and they had one of those cross burnings in the field right joining my property, and we were absolutely astonished—I mean, frightened and whatever. And so my dad came over, and, truthfully, we loaded up our shotguns because we didn't know—because they were all in those white robes, and they're burnin' the cross out there in that field. And, finally, somebody came, and they went away. But that was the closest to any violence that I ever got. The rest of it was all among kids—name-calling and all those kind of things but no—never any violence.

[01:01:09] SL: Well, let's go ahead and talk about the African American segregation and the prejudices that . . .

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that went on when you were growin' up. And you talked a little bit about the separation of the water fountains and the . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . dining areas and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and—Pine Bluff is a little bit unique in that it had a pretty robust and thriving . . .

TM: Black community.

SL: . . . black community.

TM: Yes.

[01:01:34] SL: Business community as well.

TM: Yes, it did.

SL: So I don't know what the ratio was to black and white back then, but of all the communities in Arkansas . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . it probably . . .

TM: It's probably 50-50 or maybe a little bit more overweighted black now than it has been the last decade probably. Yeah. The college is there. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is there. It has—you know, it's a drawing card for people to attend from all over the country. It's a great school.

SL: It was Arkansas AM&N . . .

TM: Yes, exactly right. Mh-hmm.

SL: And it was the only black college . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . in the state.

TM: Yes.

SL: So that's . . .

TM: That was an acronym for Agricultural, Mechanical, and Normal—whatever that's supposed to mean.

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

TM: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[01:02:23] SL: Yeah. [*TM laughs*] So I want—let's just go ahead and get back to this rally that happened. And that was . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: . . . in the [19]50s or [19]60s?

TM: Well, yeah, I was tryin' to remember. Randy was born, and he vaguely remembers it. So he's about forty-eight now. He probably was five or six, anyway, so that would've had to been forty-somethin' years ago. So we're 2009—it was probably in the [19]50s. We did—we moved in that house—let's see, we married February 6, 1954, and we moved in that house probably a couple of years after that—[19]56, so it was somewhere in there—[19]57, [19]58 or somewhere along in there. And it was a frightening thing for us, and we didn't know that they weren't gon' come over. And, course, there was a fence that separated our property and that property, and I don't even know who owned the property at the time, but we were concerned that they might come over 'cause we were very partial to African American people. And, course, as you know, the Klan, if that indeed is what it was, their three things [*SL clears throat*] were blacks, Catholics, and Italians, and particularly, blacks and Catholics. So we fit right into all that, so we . . .

SL: The profile.

TM: . . . didn't have any idea what the provocation was for them being out there in that field or why they chose that field, but they burned a cross there.

[01:04:21] SL: Was it a big crowd?

TM: Yeah, it was. They had a big crowd. There was probably—I'm gonna guess and say fifty, seventy-five people. All of 'em in white. All of 'em in white robes.

SL: So could you hear 'em preachin' their stuff or . . .

TM: Oh, we could hear 'em talkin', but you couldn't—I couldn't understand what they were sayin'. They were a good hundred yards or more away from us, so we couldn't hear, you know, what the exact words were. Yeah, they were—there was some—they were doin' some talkin', and then they would cheer and stuff like that. So we assumed they were saying some flammable things against the blacks and the Catholics and the Italians and whoever.

SL: [*Coughs and clears throat*] Well, let's . . .

TM: But they didn't . . .

SL: . . . get you back . . .

TM: . . . they didn't do anything. I mean, they never ventured from their spot where they were burnin' the cross, and then they

just—they faded away. And we weren't just standin' out there watchin' 'em, but we were on guard, so to speak, 'cause my dad was concerned. Yeah.

[01:05:28] SL: Let's step back to your childhood. Did you ever witness any actions against the black community?

TM: No, I never witnessed any. Uh . . .

SL: Did they—were you ever—did you ever see any of your friends' families suffer because of any . . .

TM: No, the black families that lived there with us—I mean, we were just that. We were family and so, you know—I told you those exam—they'd go when we killed those hogs and did all those things, you know. They'd come and help, too, and we'd give them part of the hogs. Some of them had hogs themselves, and we'd kill those. We shared our food and our resources with them and was glad to do it. I mean—yeah. Yeah.

SL: Their living conditions, though, weren't quite as nice as yours.

[01:26:27] TM: Not quite as but not bad, either. My dad was interested in seein' that—you know, that the roofs didn't leak, and that, you know, the holes were all plugged up, and so forth and so on. Now we got electricity before they did. In fact, we went and wired our own houses. We wired 'em up for electricity. We had to put what was called a meter loop up and then tie off

of it, so we put—they just had single-string pull lightbulbs in the rooms. But we fixed all those up, so they could get electricity, but we realized, you know, that that carried with it, you know, a price because then you had a bill that you had to pay every month—that electricity. That wood and stuff, we were cuttin' it from the woods that was back there in the fields, and so it really didn't cost anything as such, where the electrical bill was. And so we, in some cases, had to help some of our black friends with their bills—their light bills and whatever. Yeah.

SL: But it really made a big difference in the quality of life, though.

TM: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. And there were so many opportunities that associated itself with it. I mean, my mom used to iron with a regular hot iron that you had to put in a fire to hu—well, when we had electricity, she had—they had electric iron, and so that was one of the things. And then we also was able to get running water then because we bought a pump from Sears and Roebuck that we hooked up out there to our pipe that was in the ground. There was a well in the ground, and it'd pump that water out of the ground, and then we just had—we didn't have—we had faucets goin' to the kitchen and faucets goin' to the bathroom and that was all that we had. And so that was a great thing, too, and we didn't have to haul that water in and didn't have to

pump it [*unclear words*], and course, that provided us with an inside-the-house toilet. And bathing—we used to have to, you know, warm my water up and bath in a—what was referred to then as a #3 wash tub. And you probably've heard that. Well . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:08:37] TM: . . . we bathed in many of those and—but we were able to grow—and then when we got [*SL clears throat*] those resources ourselves, then we helped our black friends to get theirs, too. So they were shortly behind us with 'em.

SL: There were other folks that were supportive of African community as well—white folks that around, weren't there? I mean . . .

[01:09:07] TM: Yeah. You know, I think there were plenty in the city of Pine Bluff. We never really had the occasion to associate with them as much because we weren't really in the segregation/integration fight, so to speak—we were just the victims of it. [*Laughs*] I mean, we were just—we—you know, so we never looked for people, and they never came to look for us. But when people would come from town, and they were segregationists or whatever, they would frown on our relationships and our closeness and our protection of each other

and so forth and so on and not ever do anything drastic or whatever, but you know, they'd drive by and use the "N" word. "N lover" and that kind of thing, you know—particularly, if we happened to be standin' out in the yard, and it'd be, you know, some African Americans there with us that worked with us or whatever. You know, they were—and we referred to them as rednecks, so—and it was kind of a even swap, huh?

SL: Yeah.

[01:10:13] TM: But there—again I said earlier—there was never any violence that I'm familiar with. I'm talkin' about fighting or guns or those kind of things. There never was that cross-burnin' in the pasture was—or the field next to us there was as close as I ever came in my whole life to being frightened by violence.

SL: Well, you know, that's what those meetings were all about . . .

TM: Oh, I think so, too.

SL: . . . was to scare people.

TM: I think so, too. My dad said that. He said "They're just tryin' to scare us." And he said, "We own this, and we're gonna stay here." Said, "We're gonna put these shells in our guns, and if anybody comes across here, we're gonna ask 'em to stay over on the other side where they are." He said, "And if they keep comin', they're gonna have a decision to make." And I said,

"Okay." Now, course, I was right there with him, and course, I had a family at that time, too. I had a wife and three sons. And so—but nothin' happened, and I thank God for that.

[01:11:05] SL: Let's get you through school now.

TM: Okay.

SL: So you started goin' to public schools when you were six years old?

TM: Yes. Cottdale.

SL: Cottdale.

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: And what kind of student were you?

TM: Oh, you know, I think I was a good student. Well, as—at the— on the other end of it, I [*SL coughs*] was a member of the National Honor Society in both the eleventh and twelfth grades.

So that's an accomplishment that's a high level of learning and is measured in the schools. I was a member of the debate team. I won—and following my mother, I guess, I won two oratorical contests that were held there at Pine Bluff at that time. One was called the Russell Patterson Declamation Contest. And one was called the Sibernigel Oratorical Contest. Those names were taken from people who sponsored those—who paid for the trophies and whatever. I won both of those, and I was

on the debate team, and I took a year of Latin. I wish I woulda taken more than that. And I had a great time at school. I was never really—I never remember being threatened by the homework or those courses that were before me that I didn't understand 'em and appreciate them and conquer 'em, in a sense. So I thought I was a pretty good student.

[01:12:42] SL: So the first school you went to was a one-room school?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: How did they do that? How did they teach all . . .

TM: Well . . .

SL: . . . the grades in one room?



[01:12:50] TM: . . . the teacher—my best recollection, and I was, you know, real young, but the teacher would have other things for other kids to do when she was doin' somethin' with other kids, so unless—a hypothetical situation—let's just say she was teachin' the first graders how—their ABCs. So while she was doin' that, she had the sixth graders doin' addition and subtraction privately and whatever, and then when she'd finish with the ABCs, then she'd go over there and check theirs and have—so it was just kind of a [*unclear word*]. And I was tryin' to remember. I don't think there were students there that were—

that filled every class, so I think maybe—like, it might have—I'm just guessing here now 'cause I don't remember—it might've had the first, second, third, and fourth grades. There may not have been anybody in the fifth grade. There may not [*SL coughs*] have been anybody in the sixth. And then there mighta been one person in the seventh and three people in the eighth and that kind of thing. So it was a—I—my recollection is it wasn't over twenty-five kids. It wasn't—it encompassed the fa—the kids of the families that lived in that rural area that that the bus—that bus route was on. So that's the way they taught it. They just—I refer to it sometimes as "spot teachin'." She'd teach this spot over here and teach this spot over here and teach this spot over there.

[01:14:12] SL: Do you remember your first grade teacher's . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . name?

TM: No, I don't.

SL: And so . . .

TM: No.

[01:14:17] SL: But you—then you went to a different school your second grade.

TM: Went to Hill Acres for second grade.

SL: And it—was it a one-room school?

TM: Same thing. Same thing. Uh-huh.

SL: And same—bout—class size?

TM: Yeah. Then when I went to First Ward, the classes were separated there—had a first grade and a second grade and had teachers for every one of those grades, so I . . .

SL: So they had their own classrooms.

TM: Yes, I went to the third grade, as I said earlier, and they had a third grade classroom, and I . . .

SL: Okay.

TM: . . . stayed there a week or two, and they told me, "Go to the fourth grade." So they had a fourth grade classroom.

SL: So you gotta owe that to your first two teachers that got you . . .

TM: Well, and I . . .

SL: . . . and maybe your mom.

TM: . . . think my mom—my parents. I think they were—yeah, I think—yeah, we—but my parents were kinda—well, I don't know—constant teachers. My dad—I mean, he taught me so many things about the farm and discipline and just—you know, the real important things—forgiveness and those kind of things. He was a very—he was a hell of a guy.

[01:15:24] SL: Do you remember any particular conversation that—

with your father—that really kinda stuck with you?

TM: You know, I guess the biggest conversations that I can—biggest things I can remember—they're mostly were surrounded out of pride. Like I remember the first time I drove that truck up there. I gave an example of him puttin' it in gear, and me drivin' up there and then turnin' the key off, and he was comin' behind me with a team of mules bringin' those up there. And I remember him comin' over to the truck, and I was still sittin' in it, and he came over to the truck and pulled me out of there and hugged me and told me, "I love you, and you did good," and so forth. It was those kind of thing. And he would come over and watch me swim some, and he would fish with me some. And I'd show him where the fish were, you know. [*Laughter*] And just—those are the things are I remember about him. Yeah.

[01:16:24] SL: It's—you know, you had a worth—a work ethic ingrained in you before . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . you knew what was goin' on.

[01:16:31] TM: You're exactly right. And it was just a part of the daily flow, and we didn't really know any better. You know what I mean? I mean, we thought, in a sense, that everybody did that. I mean, we didn't realize that it was just a few. I didn't

really realize—didn't—never thought about it really that local kids in Pine Bluff that were goin' to school—I was goin' there—they were goin' home from school in the afternoon with, you know, basically nothin' to do, I guess, unless their parents got 'em to mow the lawn or do those kind of things. We had specific things—and like I told you, we had to fill those three barrels full of water. That was a must. We had a garden, and we had to work in the garden when it was gardening time. And just stuff like that. We'd—my mom would have the clothes hangin' out on the clothesline and my sister—well, anytime there were clothes on the clothesline, and it was gonna get dark, it was her responsibility to go bring those clothes in and to fold 'em if there were towels or whatever. It was just stuff that we knew we had to do and, you know, like, you did it today, and you really didn't question it tomorrow 'cause you knew you had to do the same thing again tomorrow. If there was clothes on the line, you take 'em off tomorrow, just like you did yesterday. And you're gon' do it again the day after tomorrow and so forth. [01:17:46] So it's just—so we kinda grew up with it, and we were working, but we really—it wasn't really like work in a sense. I mean, it was a sense of communication and cooperation and family and embracing. And everybody did their thing. My mom chopped

cotton in the fields every day with the hired hands up until eleven o'clock. [*SL coughs*] At eleven o'clock she would go home from the field and prepare some lunch. We would come in at twelve and eat lunch, and then all of us would go back in the field at one o'clock. And then she'd stay there until quittin' time—until five—and then she'd come in—and particularly in the summer months when there's more light—she'd come in, and then she'd do washin' and ironing and those kind of things and then cook supper. That's stout. And now look at all these appliances we have—go up and push a button here and push a button to do all those kind of things and—hey, man, it was tough with her.

[01:18:44] SL: It's almost like "I've got this done. This is what's next." There was never any—you never ran out of things . . .

TM: I . . .

SL: . . . to get done.

TM: Well said. I wish I woulda thought of saying it. You're exactly right. The chores were never really finished 'cause I—the example I gave you of pumpin' that water for the mules—they were gonna drink all that water up. I mean, there was no question about that. So the next day you had three more barrels of water to pump. I mean, it was just the—hey, and that

was Sundays, too, okay? So I told you about goin' to mass. We'd come back from mass—we'd go over there and pump those three barrels of water. Oh, yeah. I mean, that was just—and you knew you had it—when we had a garden, you know, and it was—it needed weedin' or whatever, you know—well, Dad would say, "Well, the garden's gettin' grassy. Y'all need to go out there and"—and once we were told what to do and how to do it, and they didn't come out there and particularly supervised as they came back around and sometimes checked to see if we had done a good job or whatever, but we didn't have that much supervision. We just knew it was the thing to do, and we—you just did it.

[01:19:43] SL: I wonder if that attitude and that ethic that you got so early that—that you applied that without ever even thinkin' about it to your schoolin'.

TM: Oh, I think so.

SL: That you . . .

TM: I think . . .

SL: . . . you learned this, what's the next thing?

[01:20:00] TM: I think so, too. I think everything I did. There was—at one time in my early life when I was married that I had three job responsibilities goin' on at the same time. I was

workin' at International Paper Company as a pipefitter during certain hours—owned a liquor store. [*Geese honk in background*] I was workin' in there keepin' it open certain hours, and I was farmin' and was, you know, haulin' cotton to the gin or doin' whatever things we needed to do—drivin' a cotton picker or so forth. So I had two or three things goin' at one time, and I'd just go from one to the other knowing that I had to do 'em.

SL: Back when—back in your grade-school years, was there—do you remember any of your teachers that you—that really kind of—I mean, I have a feeling the light was already turned on before you ever walked . . .

TM: Well . . .

SL: . . . into that schoolroom. But . . .

TM: . . . yeah.

SL: . . . you know, it seems like some people had favorite teachers, or they remember . . .



[01:21:00] TM: I remember the nuns more than I did my other teachers. I remember the principal of First Ward School. He was Mr. Moore. And he was a fine gentleman, but he was strict. And we knew that, and we respected him and admired him for that. I don't remember—seems like one of my teachers' name

was Miss Snyder. I think that was one of 'em, but I can't be sure. But the nuns—if I [*SL clears throat*] thought here for a few minutes, I could give you the names of a—the—they just used the first name, like Sister Maria . . .

SL: Sure.

TM: . . . and Sister Charles Benedict was one of 'em, and Sister Lucy was one of 'em. I remember them well. They had—Scott, they had one of those little things. [*Scratching sounds in background*] I don't even know whether they sell 'em anymore now or not. You had little clickers—had little, frog-type . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . clicker thing. You just push it in—it'd go click, click, click, click, click—and that's what they used at mass in the church. So you—when it was time to march in the church—marched in—well, see, we went to mass every day when I went to the Catholic school. [01:22:00] Every mornin' they had a special mass for the school kids, like, at eight thirty or whenever. So she'd hit that clicker, and you'd walk in the church, and you'd stand in your pew. And she'd hit that clicker, and you'd kneel. And she'd hit that clicker, and you'd stand up. And [*laughter*] "Amen." [*Laughter*] You talk about discipline. I mean. And we knew what the clicker meant and knew what you was supposed

to—if you got out of rhythm on it or whatever, then as you were filing out, you had to walk right by her—she'd stand right—she—as you were filin' out, she'd touch you on the shoulder, and she'd say, "Wait outside the door. Wait outside the door." So she'd file everybody—'course, then everybody went by you, you know, knowin', you know, that you were there, and she was gonna tell you, "When I pushed that clicker, you didn't kneel down" or "you didn't do whatever. Tomorrow I want you remember that." And, course, you'd always remember it, you know what I am sayin'. But I had some great times there with my cousins a-goin' to school there and friends that I met, so I had a good time.

[01:23:03] SL: Did you have a favorite subject when you were in school?

TM: Well, if I did it was probably—history and civics were probably two things that I was extremely interested in. And then when I got into the speech part of it, I liked the oratorical contests, and I liked the debate team and those kind of things.

[01:23:26] SL: Was there any part of history that you were—that you really liked readin' about?

TM: I liked both world history and American history. I liked 'em both for the reasons that I was anxious to know what went on in the

world, and then I was anxious to know what went on here in our own country. And those—I concentrated on them quite a bit.

Yeah.

SL: So let's see—I'm don't—I'm not quite ready to leave the schoolin' behind yet.

TM: Okay.

SL: Did you get a whole new set of friends when you got to the Catholic school?

TM: Yeah. Well, yes and no. Some of my cousins were already going there. They lived in town or whatever, and they were already goin'. So then I—naturally I knew [*SL clears throat*] them. But then they had friends, and they would introduce me to their friends, and then they became my friends. So it didn't take me very long to—well, it was a small school, and I want to say we probably—in our grade as—with their—we probably didn't have over fifteen people in our grade. So you usually kinda ran with and played with the guys and gals in your grade mostly. And the gals played separate, and the guys played basketball [*gestures arms in opposite directions*] and a little—had a little patch of grass where we played a little football on those. Yeah, I made some new friends, but a big part of 'em were my own relatives.

[01:25:03] SL: Now is this, like, late [19]40s?

TM: Well, let's see—I was born in [19]33—six years . . .

SL: Mid-[19]40s.

TM: First grade woulda been [19]39, and I'm—let's see—five more grades would be . . .

SL: [Nineteen] forty-five.

TM: [Nineteen] forty-four. [Nineteen] forty-four or [19]45. Yeah.

SL: So . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . did y'all keep up with the war?

TM: Yeah.

SL: And did you . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . did you listen to the radio to get your updates on the war?

TM: Daddy did. Uh-huh. Yeah, and he would talk to us about it some tryin' to explain it. [01:25:37] We—I had a—I remember I had a hard time figurin' out [*SL clears throat*] what the people were fightin' for, and I couldn't quite understand, and [*laughs*] I still don't really [*laughs*] understand why they were fightin'. I mean, "Why don't you just, you know, quit and whatever." And I could never really fully understand the desire for power and control and whatever—it's what—it's generally what I defined

war is all about, you know. And I never could get—I didn't never get that straight in my head real well, so he used to talk about the war. And then in World War II, a number of my cousins were drafted to World War II. And one of them died in the European Theatre. We never heard from him anymore. He was with Patton's group as they were crossing Europe and he—they were in the transportation—he was in the transportation division, and we've had to assume that his vehicle was blown up because they never found him or anything about him. Another one of my cousins died after he got home. He was injured—wounded—in there [*SL coughs*] with shrapnel, and he never could get it well. It continued to have—he had poisoning in there, and he died from that. Then a number of our friends—family—sons of our families died there. One family that I'm kin to on one side, but another side I'm not, and their name is Turchi—*T-U-R-C-H-I*. And some of those boys got killed, and some wounded over there. So we had a—I guess, a closeness of the war by our relationship with our own people that got killed, and we couldn't understand why, you know, our cousins were gettin' killed over there somewhere, which we didn't even really know where it was or what it was. But Dad would tell us, you know—he said, "You know, we've gotta win, and then we'll stop this, you know." And

that's kinda the way we brought up and the way we looked at it.

[01:27:48] SL: I know you were kinda young when the war started, but did you notice a change in the community? Were there—do you remember, you know, gas stamps or . . .

TM: Yeah. I remember . . .

SL: . . . gas lines or . . .

TM: . . . I remember sugar bein' rationed. And we all used sugar, and so my mother would—you know, we would be allocated just a certain amount of sugar for our coffee, and she used just a certain amount in bakin' pies. She made those lemon meringue pies with the meringue up there that tall [uses both hands to show height] and all. And then I can remember gas being rationed. I can remember tires being rationed. I can remember gas stamps. They gave us some stamps, and you'd go—they'd tear 'em off, and you could get so much gas with that. That wasn't money. I mean, you had to pay for it anyway, but that was an allocation determination. I remember that. I remember the phraseology of black-market goods. I remember that and I—you know, now I know what it was. Now at that time I didn't know, you know, those things were rationed, and some people had gotten a hold of 'em, and they'd sell 'em for an inflated price or whatever. I remember my dad talkin' about that kinda stuff.

He'd—if somebody'd say, "Well, they've got some tires down here at Jim's place." And my dad would say, "Well, yeah, but they're black market" you know, he'd say. You know, and so [*SL clears throat*] he wasn't gonna buy 'em because they were black market.

[01:29:18] SL: Did y'all always have a car as you—long as you can remember?

TM: No. Well, you know, [*SL sniffs*] as far as I can remember back in my younger times, we did. Yeah, we had a car. I can remember that [*laughs*] we couldn't hardly afford the license, and so what my dad and my uncles and all would do is whichever car was goin' to town or whatever, they'd take the license off the other car and put it on that one. [*SL laughs*] So if you were [*laughs*—and then when they got back, well, they'd give the license to the guy down the street. So they had one license that was [*laughs*] . . .

[01:29:55] SL: It was a community license.

TM: It was a community license for four or five vehicles. I remember that. And we—the car was a—and then our vehicles—all of our stuff was all treasured stuff by my parents, and we were taught to take care of 'em—a change of oil on schedule—keep it clean outside and inside—all those things that is sometimes a little bit

disregarded nowadays, but we—there were certain times when we'd wash the car—when we were gonna—you know, we'd—like, maybe every Saturday mornin', you know, we washed the car. I mean, we cleaned it out inside, brush it and dust it and all those kinda things. The trucks the same way. Yeah. And when we got tractors, they were the same way. Yeah, we had a lubrication schedule in the shop—put a thing up on the wall there and tractor A, you know, and so forth and so on, and you were responsible for doin' that.

SL: That's pretty good organization.

TM: Yeah. Yeah, well, it was my dad. Yeah.

SL: [*Clears throat*] So when the war was over, did you see an influx of people coming—veterans coming back from the war and . . .

[01:31:10] TM: Yeah, and I—the biggest thing that we had goin' there was our kin were comin' back—some of those that hadn't gotten killed—and that was a time for enjoyment and then—so I can remember that. I remember specifically when the war was over—when it was announced it was over. My cousins—the ones I talked to you about earlier, the Mazanti boys [*unclear words*], and their family were spendin' some time with us, and we were out—had a basketball goal, and we were out shootin' basketball, and my dad came outside of the house, and he said, "The war is

over." Yeah. Said somethin' about Franklin D. Roosevelt, I think, was the president—or whoever it was—he said, "He just announced that the war is over." And I remember us kids clappin'. I can remember that and throwin' the ball and hit it on the rim. We didn't really know what we were doin' . . .

SL: And . . .

TM: . . . it for. We were just happy. And then our relatives began to come home. They were in their military outfits, and we had dinners and parties and stuff for 'em.

SL: Now do you think that was the European Theatre?

KK: Hey, Scott . . .

SL: Yeah.

KK: [*Unclear Words*]

SL: Great. Go ahead and pause.

[Tape stopped]

[01:32:30] SL: So we were talkin' about [*unidentified voices in background*] World War II, and your cousins comin' back home, and you remember them comin' back home.

TM: Yes.

SL: And the celebration . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . that happened. I mean . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: Reflecting back on it now, those families had to be really relieved . . .

TM: Overjoyed.

SL: . . . to see their kids comin' back.

TM: Overjoyed. There's a place there in Pine Bluff called Oak Lawn Park. And it's a park, and they have a pavilion there at that park. And I can remember when my cousins—different ones of 'em—came back from the war. My dad and others of—my uncles and whatever—organized the group, and so they rented the Oakland Park place, and it was a—you know, just a big, shelter-type thing. And I can remember goin' there and havin' meals and dancing and all that, and it was in honor of our cousins that were all back. And then—and it was a remembrance of those who didn't come back. And we had . . .

[01:33:42] SL: You know, while we were on—had a little break here, you mentioned that there were five Massanellis . . .

TM: Brothers.

SL: . . . that they—brothers—that came to Arkansas. Now did they all settle in at Altheimer? Did any of your family move north up to Tontitown . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . or northwest Arkansas?

TM: No.

SL: Did you . . .

TM: All of our people stayed right there . . .

SL: Stayed right there.

TM: . . . in Jefferson County. Uh-huh.

SL: But were there other Italian communities or families scattered around the state that y'all were aware of?

TM: Yes.

SL: And . . .

TM: Tontitown, and I mentioned earlier Sunnyside, which was actually at Lake Village is where it was. And they got there by sort of the same program that my folks did. Landowners wanted workers, and so whoever the ones at Sunnyside wanted some workers, and the ones at Tontitown wanted some workers, and that's how they got there. And by and large, they stayed wherever they were.

[01:34:48] SL: That's interesting. So those communities—did they ever intermingle? I mean, did y'all ever . . .

TM: No, not really. One thing—travel was [*laughs*] difficult then. I mean, to go from Pine Bluff to Lake Village was, you know, [*laughs*] a day and a half, two days' journey, you know. And

Tontitown woulda been even worse. And so I think the [SL *clears throat*]—I think there was a little communication by letter or postcard that I've seen some that some of my uncles and aunts have had in scrapbook that so-and-so wrote 'em a postcard and said, you know, they—a lot of times, it was announcing things that weren't too good. It's—maybe some baby had died of malaria, which was pretty bad back in that time, too, and those kind of notices, and whatever would come through the mail, and that's why we would know it.

SL: I would've thought that maybe the church and the priests would've been aware of the different communities and but . . .

TM: I don't have any recollection . . .

SL: . . . just didn't happen.

TM: . . . of that at all.

SL: Yeah.

TM: The priest would—generally the—my recollection of that—the priest that was stationed there where we were—he had his hands full with everybody he had there, so he wasn't too worried about what they were doin' in Lake Village or Tontitown or whatever. It's a—rather a regional thing and . . .

[01:36:10] SL: Mh-hmm. So let's talk a little bit about travel when you were growin' up. Do you remember goin' anywhere

besides . . .

TM: Yeah. Oh, do you mean on trips or whatever?

SL: Yeah.

TM: Oh, no. No, we never went anywhere. No. Now when we all got older and all, you know, we took trips and some of my relatives—my mother's—on my mother's—sorry—on my grandmother's side—on my daddy's mother's side—her maiden name was Raggi. *R-A-G-G-I*. And some of her folks settled in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

SL: Okay.

[01:36:52] TM: And they're still there. And they were miners—coal miners and whatever. Now when my—when we got up older [*SL clears throat*] or whatever, my folks and them communicated back and forth. The Raggis would come down and stay a week or two with us—with my parents 'cause I was already married then. And then my parents would—next year or whenever, they'd go to Atlantic City and Wilkes-Barre and stay with them. But that was about all. [01:37:20] But back in the times you're talkin' about, when—I don't really remember a time when we didn't have a car. I mean, even when I was six or seven years old, we had a car. But it would—we—you had to buy gas for it, and we didn't do anything but—go to church was—one of my

uncles—one of my dad's [*SL coughs*] five brothers owned a grocery store uptown. It was [*laughs*—would you believe Massanelli Grocery, you know. [*SL laughs*] And so we all traded there with him, so on Saturday evenins [*evenings*]—it was a routine—we'd come to town. My mom would shop—very seldom ever bought anything, but she shopped up and down the streets and took us with her. My dad went to the pool hall—very good pool player—and he'd stay in there for two or three or four hours till he got ready to go, and we'd be sittin' in the car—Mom and us'd be sittin' in the car. And then we would go to my uncle's grocery store, and we would go back in the back, and at that time—I still can taste it—somebody said they thought they still make it—I can't find it anymore—we referred to it as boiled ham. Boiled ham. And it had an aroma about it that was just so wonderful. I can still smell it. But we'd go there in the back of his store—he had a meat block and all, and my dad and mom would buy a pound or so of boiled ham, and they'd get a loaf of bread and mayonnaise—and we'd make sandwiches right there. And then they'd go play cards. But then we bought our weekly groceries right there from him and put those all in the car, and we weren't ever—hardly ever buyin' anything that would spoil, you know. We—it was canned fruit and—I mean, canned food

and sugar and whatever. And then they'd play cards, and then we'd go home. And we—we'd do that every Saturday, and that was the extent of our travel right there. And then I went and played with my cousins 'cause my uncle had boys and girls both, and we played. It was kind of a family thing. [*Laughs*]

[01:39:28] SL: Well, did you ever have any produce out of your garden that went through that store?

TM: No.

SL: No?

TM: No, we didn't ever—all the produce we had in our garden, we used it ourselves. He had produce and he—my uncle—and he ran a little garden himself on some land he had, so he'd grow a garden himself, and then he'd sell that produce out of his store. But we had our own, and we never really—I can't remember ever buyin' any produce from him. We grew our own radishes and, you know, our own tomatoes and our own lettuce. And my mom and dad were really into lettuce, boy, and they had some beautiful, little lettuce patches—have a square area maybe big as this livin' area here would be nothin' but lettuce, and it was—and they'd go cut it and so forth and so on—doctor it up, and it was great.

[01:40:19] SL: Hmm. That sounds good. So what about telephone?

TM: Now we didn't have a telephone until I was probably ten or twelve years old, and it was what was referred to back then as a party line. And so there may be six or seven people on the same line, and so you might go pick up to use the phone, and someone would be on it. So you had to—'course, that created a lotta listenin' in on other people's conversations and all, which I never did do, but my mom and them used to talk about it, and [SL laughs] I think they used to listen in on the neighbors. The neighbors listened in on them. And sometimes when it was an important [SL coughs] thing, and they was just jabberin', well, you'd have to ask 'em, "Would you please get off the phone? We need to use it." And then they'd get a little—"Well, I'm not through yet," or whatever, you know, so there was a little tensions rose in there.

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:17] TM: And so—but I remember the party lines. And then later on, the lines became singular, and then we had our own phone. But I guess I musta been ten or twelve years old before we had a party-line phone. See, besides the lack of these conveniences being available, you know—as I talked to you earlier about electricity and butane—you know, they carried with 'em a price tag, because then you had to pay for it. So when we

didn't have a phone at all, we didn't pay anything. Well, when we got a phone, even if it was a party line, it was x number of dollars a month. And then when you got your straight line, it was x number of dollars a month. So you took the phone, and you took the butane gas, and you took the electricity, and you took the gas in your car—what it—those four—not to mention groceries—those five things were, like, once you got 'em installed, they were a must every time around, so you had to generate enough funds and enough capital to be able to pay for those things. And my dad was the kind of guy—he was gonna pay for it. He didn't believe in gettin' anything until he was pretty sure he could pay for it, so we were always a little bit—a lag behind. Only time we weren't lag behind is when [unidentified sound] mechanical cotton pickers came out. In our area, which I've determined to be, let's say, a fifty,sixty-square-mile area of people that we knew and the farm and all—we owned the first mechanical cotton picker—our—my dad did. And, course, they caught on, and generally everybody came along and got one, but that was a real boon back then. That was the first thing that he ever got out in front on, and back in those days, I think that thing cost, oh, I don't know—I'd say fifteen thousand dollars or more. Now they're a hundred and

fifteen thousand. And, you know, he was just frugal, and boy, he plopped that fifteen thousand dollars down—you know, we was gon' make that thing work. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

[01:43:14] SL: But it paid for itself.

TM: Yeah. Well, yeah, we picked our own crop, and then we'd go help—we'd go pick other people's crops—so much a pound. Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: That's a smart investment.

TM: Yeah, it was.

[01:43:39] SL: Did you ever have jobs outside the home, growin' up? Or was all the work that you ever did . . .

TM: Not growin' up, I didn't. No.

SL: Okay.

TM: Yeah.

SL: And one thing we haven't talked about is health care.

TM: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

TM: [*Laughs*] What about it? [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . what happened when someone got sick? Did you go to the priest?

TM: Well, mainly they were treated using just home remedies. I mean, we always had—around our house we had castor oil. We had somethin' called black draw . . .

SL: What's that?

TM: Well, it was a kind of a medicine that you'd—it had a drawing effect. You'd put it on boils—stuff like that—it'd make 'em come to a head. And castor oil—'course, you know it was for bowel movements and whatever. We had aspirin, and let's see, what else? Oh, [*laughs*] Vicks salve.

SL: Sure.

[01:44:26] TM: Oh, wow. My grandparents and my mom—I mean, they thought, "Anytime you're sick, boy, go get that Vicks salve, you know, and put it all on your chest. Sleep with that warm thing on your chest and all." That's mostly—but, you know, Scott, I—I'd have to sit here and recollect—I don't remember goin' to the doctor when I was a young guy. I [*SL coughs*] remember I fell off of a chicken house. We had a chicken house, and I was up on top of it. I was playin' like that there was a ball game goin' on out there, and I was announcing the ball game. I was the announcer up in a high-level place, which was on top of a chicken house. And I fell off of that chicken house, and I broke my arm, and my arm stayed broken for—oh, I'm—my best

recollection is a week or two before anybody ever did anything or said anything about it. I just—It just hurt, and I didn't do anything to it. [01:45:27] And I vaguely remember a doctor [*SL coughs*] who was my family's friends who liked to play cards like my family did—he and his wife—and they would come to our house and play cards. And so my mom said to him—his name was Dr. Reed. She says, "Dr. Reed, would you look at Tim's arm?" And he checked it out. He said, "Well, yeah." Says, "I think his arm's broken." And so Mom said, "What can we do?" He said, "I'll"—so he got some wood splint stuff and some bandages and cloth—just stripped off cloth and tied around the thing. He said, "Just keep it like that for a while, and it'll be all right." And for a while—along—when I was younger, it was kinda crooked. And that's the only rememberance I ever had of any doctor ever dealin' with me at all when I was younger. And my parents the same way. Now when they got older, then we did have doctors for them and medicine. I used to kid my parents—my mother particularly—about—"Mom, are you takin' all these pills?" I mean, she [*unclear words*]. Well, now I'm takin' thirteen, you know, so [*laughs*] I know I'd—I'm finally beginnin' to realize what it was all about. I couldn't understand why she was takin' so much medicine. But then we—but we—

you know, we didn't know what insurance was, and we didn't really know much about what the hospital was. None of us were born in hospitals. Well, my youngest sister—the baby [*SL coughs*] was. The rest of us were born at home by midwives.

[01:47:08] SL: What about funerals? Do you remember funerals at all and what that was like . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . when you were growin' up?

TM: Yeah. I remember some funerals of some of my relatives that—and they were more impacting, of course, when it was somebody that I knew better or whatever. We actually went to [*laughs*]—I don't know how to put it—we went to all funerals. I mean, if they were any kin to us at all, we always went to the funeral. The degrees [*SL coughs*] of kinship and the degrees of association and relationship varied, and my sentiments sorta paralleled those. I mean, if it was one of my fond uncles, well, then I—you know, I suffered through that. If it was just somebody, you know, then I—we'd just go to the funeral, and it was a—just an act of, you know, charity, so to speak—bein' kindness—act of kindness.

[01:48:09] SL: Did they—when someone died, did they keep 'em in the home . . .

TM: Yeah, they—yeah.

SL: . . . for a while?

TM: Yeah, we've had some—we never had anybody in our own home. But I have gone to some of my relatives' homes where the deceased were in the home in the casket. Yeah. Uh-huh. And we would say prayers. The priest would come, and he would give a little homily about, you know, about resurrection and—which we believe, you know, that Christ rose from the dead. So, yeah. I can remember those. But we never had any ourselves. But I went—I've gone to them.

SL: And did . . .

KK: Hey, Scott . . . ,

[Tape stopped]

[01:48:55] SL: Well, I don't want to be—spend a whole lot of time on the funerals but, you know, nowadays it's so mechanized and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and kind of out of families' hands. But in the early days, families kinda did this themselves. They

TM: Exactly right. And we—and there was some ceremony associated with—or might—a better word'd be celebration. I mean, you know, we would in a sense celebrate the death of

someone, you know, that we felt like was saved and, you know, strong in our faith and whatever. So they'd have meals, and you know, activities and whatever, you know. Yeah, I've been to—but then they'd have stuff at people's houses—mostly if it—person had died, and he'd belonged to this house, well then, you'd all go there, and they'd have all kinds of food. And then, you know, there would be some humor—stuff—they would tell stories on the deceased and those kind of things. And—but we kids sat around and listened to some of those, you know. So, yeah. I remember. So it was as—and you said—there was a funeral home there, and it's still there. And whole generations of these people have operated the funeral home, and it's Robinson's. Ralph Robinson and Son is the name of the funeral home. It's still there in Pine Bluff. And they were great friends of my parents and whatever, so we dealt with them in the so-called funeral business, with everything we did—relatives and friends and whatever—they were the top-notch funeral people there. So they knew how to quote "participate" in a Catholic funeral. They knew the moves and the actions that the priest would take and all, so it was just like a glove in hand [*rubs hands*] and hand in glove, so—and they were the—we liked them for that and they—we all would generally always have rosaries

preceding the burial. If the burial was gonna be tomorrow mornin' at ten o'clock, we'd have a rosary at night, and we'd do it over there in their chapel and just stuff like that. It was somewhat routine.

[01:51:01] SL: Was there a community or a Catholic cemetery . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . that everyone . . .

TM: Still is.

SL: Still is.

TM: St. Joseph's Cemetery. I own eight lots in there now, but since we moved up here to Little Rock, I also bought two spaces at the columbarium here at Holy Souls, so I think we're gonna be buried here at Holy Souls. But I have eight lots down there that I bought just for that purpose. But none of my kids are comin' home, and we're not down there anymore, so I'll just give 'em to the church. But it's called St. Joseph's Cemetery. And then there's one—it's basically got full or—except for the lots that we hadn't used yet, and there's another place over there adjoining that's nothing but a Catholic cemetery. It's called Graceland Cemetery. And then there's a cemetery at St. Mary's at Plum Bayou, and there's another one down south of Altheimer there where the early settlers—a lot of them are buried there. Gosh, I

forgot the name of the—of that little ol' community. But there's a Catholic ceme—and the Catholic church keeps it up. And it's still there, so there are actually four Catholic cemeteries there. They're only burying in two of 'em—in St. Joseph's and Graceland.

[01:52:23] SL: So your parents and your grandparents are at St. Joe?

TM: Yes. Sure are. And my little brother that got—died in the pregnancy. He's buried there, too. Mh-hmm. And my grandparents on my mother's side are there in St. Joseph's and my uncle—all of my uncle—not all of 'em—a big part of my uncles and aunts are there. Some of 'em are in Graceland. But a big part of 'em are there in St. Joseph's.

[01:52:51] SL: Well, Tim, if you had somethin' to say about your early life back then and the community, what would you say to sum up your—I know you had a wonderful life there on the lake and all that, but lookin' back on it now and goin' over the memories that have kinda come up, what would you say was the best thing about that?

TM: Well, I think—first of all, I think it was just so absolutely blessed and I—you know, I don't know how that came about. I—you know, I guess you be in the right place at the right time by

havin' great, great family and my parents and their brothers and sisters—I mean—and we really—never really had any dissension. I guess I take a lotta pride in that for—families usually got some kinda little internal battles goin' or whatever, and I don't have any recollection of any of that. We all communicated well. We spent time together well. And it was just so blessed. I mean, I would just hope every child in the world could have—just a—an enormous amount of love, not only from my own parents, but from my uncles and aunts. And, I mean, they were just—some of my aunts—I mean, I could just tell 'em to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge, and they'd just do it. I mean, they just—they were just those kind of people. I mean, they would do anything you wanted to, and I just—I spent time with 'em. I—since I was a deacon, I preached and helped conduct the service at one of my aunt's funerals, and I don't wanna do that anymore. I . . .

SL: Too hard?

[01:54:39] TM: Yeah. Yeah, I really couldn't. She was one of my favorite aunts, and she was the wife of the mo—uncle that I told you named me Tim. She was his wife. Her name was Esther. And then my dad's youngest sister, Amelia, and his oldest sister, Theresa—they just—I don't know—I don't even—I'm not intelligent enough to put into words the kind of love and

compassion that was shown by them. I mean, just—it was—you just felt right at home with 'em all the time—was [*SL coughs*] never threatened or anything. And it's just so beautiful that it's even hard to describe. I—so I can't—I have to continue to say it was just blessed in every aspect that I could think of. And if you told me right now—you said, "Hey, I can poof [*throws his fist forward*] you like that make you go back to your childhood. What would you like to do?" And I'd say, "I'd like to do it just like I—like it was before, with the same people surroundin' me and their—I couldn't think of a thing that I'd change.

SL: You'd take the broken arm.

TM: I'd take it. Oh, yeah. That broken arm. [*SL laughs*] Yeah. That broken arm.

[01:55:54] SL: You know, I asked you about anything that your dad may have said and some particular instances you had with your dad. What about your mom? Do you remember anything—any . . .

TM: My mom was always our protector. Dad was a very stern and authoritative person, and my mom always took up for us—whatever—I mean, we—Dad was, you know, on a rampage or whatever, you know, she'd somehow or another quell him and calm him down, and I missed a lotta spankins based on her

intervention. But she was just so loving, and I can remember—we talked a minute ago about Vicks salve—I can remember times a-layin' there kinda sick, and she would just put that stuff on me and just hold me. "You're gon' be all right. You're gon' be all right. Mama's here with you." And I can hear that now, and it's—she was just so, so special and a great, joyful person—oh, could—humorous, witty—like I said, greatest cook in the world and, you know, just great parents. You know, and I sympathize with people throughout the world who haven't had the benefit of loving parents and a loving relationship. I had it, and I'll guarantee you, it helped to make me what I am.

[01:57:26] My family consists of three boys, and their wives were all non-Catholics, and without any spurrin' from any of us on, they all joined the church. I have seven grandchildren. Not a one of them have been to anything but a parochial school all their lives. We—we're that strong in the faith. And I've got two girls right now in Mount St. Mary's. I've got one grandson in Catholic High. I got one that graduated from Jesuit in Dallas. I got a granddaughter that graduated from Ursuline in Dallas. I got one over here at Immaculate Conception. And they're all in the Catholic Church. And I think that part of my mom's relationship with me, it helped me spill off on my own kids. I

coulda been a—probably a little bit better father. I was tryin' to, as I say, carve out a living. I must say Dottie, just some excellent mother—would go to those ball games and sit out in the car while they practiced—would go to a concession stand and work the early game for one of 'em and go to the next concession stand and work at the late game for another and just loved 'em every minute of their lives. And it's just—it's sorta shown. I mean, they're all right here with us, and it's just a great life, you know.

[01:58:55] SL: You know, you said your mom had a sense of humor but . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . did—wasn't your dad—did he have a sense of humor, too?

TM: Yeah, I—yeah, he had a sense of humor. It was a little bit drier [SL laughs] than my [laughs] mother's and it—well, it wasn't on near as many occasions. She would—she was into it all the time. I mean, she just was gung ho with it. He picked his places and whatever. But, yeah, he had a sense of humor, too, and he was a very compassionate—and if you came to my house for dinner, you know, he would almost just choke food on you. He'd—"Oh, here, here! Get some more of this. Oh, here, get some more of this." And he'd just—he'd almost make you take

it. I mean, he just—he wanted to be the perfect host, you know. [01:59:46] And he was the same way with us. I mean, if he—we got what we needed and basically my wants in my lifetime have never been—in my self-proclaimed way—have never been overbearin'. I've never, you know, wanted ten-story houses and five Mercedes and three yachts and all that kinda stuff. I mean, we just wanted to be blessed and have good health and happiness and peace amongst the—and we've had it. We've had it. Nothin's greater than peace. The greatest thing in the world you have is peace in the family, and we always had peace in the family that I grew up in and the family of my own kids, we have peace. We don't fight. My parents died and had some assets. I had three sisters. We never had a quarrel word about the disposition of those assets or anything else. I mean, hey—I said, "Hey, girls, you know, y'all do what you wanna do," and whatever. And we just get along. I mean, we just—we had no fightin'. And I know that some families have faced that reality and gotten mad and still mad and won't speak to each other and all that. Well, I'll speak to all of my family. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's a great blessing.

KK: Out of tape.

SL: Okay.

TM: Okay.

SL: [*Claps hands*] Good. I bet it's time for lunch.

TM: Whatever.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:00:58] SL: Okay. Now I've had my cup of coffee after our
lunch.

TM: Okay.

SL: I'm gonna be fine here for a while . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: . . . but if you start to see me [*KK coughs*] . . .

TM: Nod . . .

SL: . . . drift off, you . . .

TM: . . . we'll just get another cup of coffee.

SL: . . . you get me another cup of coffee.

TM: Okay.

SL: Or take . . .

TM: All right. We got it.

SL: . . . just politely say, "It's time for a break."

TM: [*Laughs*] Okay.

[02:01:13] SL: Well, we kinda—we pretty much finished up, but I
wondered if there was anything—we finished up with your

younger years—growin'-up years—but I—I'm just wonderin' if there's anything else that you can remember about the parochial schooling that you had that is good or what . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: Was there anything about it that you didn't like?

TM: No, I can't think of anything. I can think of somethin' that I forgot to mention that was good about it. But attendance there at the school offered boys—it was limited to boys back at that time—an opportunity to be altar servers, and so even the fact that I lived away where I couldn't—you know, didn't have the accessibility of the places [*SL clears throat*] that Pine Bluff town people did, I still was allowed by the nuns to train and learn to be an altar server. So as we got up a little bit older, well, when we had those morning masses, then some of us were selected to be altar servers. And the priest there was named Monsignor Joseph Gallagher, and sometimes after mass he'd say, "Well, y'all come over to the rectory. We'll have some orange juice or some apple juice" or something like that. And so we'd say, "Well, you know"—we'd say, "They told us that we gotta get right back over to school after mass." And he'd say, "Who told you that?" [*Chair squeaks*] And then we'd say, "Well, so-and-so and so-and-so." "I'll take care of that." He'd pick up the phone.

He'd say, "This is Monsignor Gallagher. The altar servers are over here with me. They'll be over there at some convenient time. Thank you." [*SL laughs*] And he'd hang up. Course, we would sit there and sip orange juice and apple juice, so that was a kind of a favor, you know, so it was a good thing. And then the opportunity to serve mass as an altar server was somethin' cherished by most Catholic boys. Yeah. And I was one of those. I served with my cousins and my friends and whatever, and it was a pleasure. I can't think of anything that was [*SL clears throat*] negative. I—you know, I suppose at the time, I didn't totally appreciate all of the nuns' authority as much as I did maybe when I left there, and certainly, as I got older. And they were an authoritative group. They had rules and regulations, and you knew what they were. And you followed them, and if you got outta line, they had consequences for that, and you paid the consequences of whatever they were. And . . .

[02:03:37] SL: You ever—remember what kinda consequences they were?

TM: Well, I told you earlier about they'd slap your hand with a ruler. Well, yeah, they'd make you sit in a corner, and that was kind of embarrassing to do that. Didn't put a dunce hat on you, but it was almost the same thing. During recess, maybe they may

make you pick up paper on school grounds. You'd have to go with a sack or bag and go pick up paper. Course, everybody knew what was associated with that discipline, so you were sorta razzed by others even though they may have just had to do it yesterday. Still, you know, it was your day to do it, you know, so I remember those [*unclear word*]. But those didn't hurt us. [*Rustling noise in background*] I mean, those were just things that you remember, and in a sense, you cherish 'em in some way because it was a form of discipline that—you know. And we needed it. I mean, we were—vertime you had to do something extraordinary like that—you had gotten across the line or had violated some policy or principle of theirs, so they were fair—actually fair but dedicated to their work. Course, they spent their whole lives in that. I mean, they lived right there at the convent, you know, and so, you know, they were twenty-four/seven, you know, is what they were givin', and homework and gradin' it all those kinda things, so—and they took time with you. If you—it was a problem—I remember, like, in math sometimes, you didn't quite understand a formula or whatever—I took algebra in the ninth grade, and I wasn't that good at it. [02:05:06] And you could just go to her, maybe on the playground—say, "Sister, I didn't understand what that was,"

and so she'd say, "Well, okay." She'd either maybe explain it to you there if she could remember it, or else she'd say, "Well, now we're gonna have recess this afternoon at a certain-certain time, and you just come by the desk there at recess, and I'll just talk with you a few minutes, and we'll get this." So they applied some extra time for you. And I remember all of that. Yeah.

SL: You had your lunch there.

TM: Yes.

SL: They served you lunch.

TM: Oh, yes.

SL: And I forgot to ask you bout lunch when you were out goin' to the one-room schools. Did you bring your lunch then or . . .

TM: Yeah, we brought it. Mh-hmm. Yes. [*SL Coughs*] And we brought our lunch at First Ward, too. The first time that I had lunch that we didn't bring was at the Catholic school.

[02:05:57] SL: So let's see—you were finishing up with that school about when?

TM: In the ninth grade.

SL: Ninth grade.

TM: Stayed—went through the ninth grade, so whatever age I woulda been in the ninth, having skipped the third. I'm trying to figure out. Let's see. If I started when I was six, and nine

grades'd be fifteen and skippin' one—I was probably fourteen. And so I went over in the high school at fifteen and graduated over there when I was seventeen.

SL: [*Clears throat*] All right. So let's talk about the transition from the Catholic school to Pine Bluff Public Schools.

TM: A pretty tough transition as far as—I had to make some more additional friends besides the ones we had. Some of the people that were goin' along in my class were my cousins—females and males. They were—we were kin, so we—you know, we knew each other and whatever—and we got over there, we didn't know that many people, so we had to organize, if you will—develop more friendship—what—which wasn't a real easy thing to do. I'd have to say that the records indicate that the people that transferred over to the high school from the Catholic school, by and large, made better marks than the others there, which equated into maybe gettin' a more solid education at that parochial school. And like I said, a number of us, including myself, made the National Honor Society two years in a row. When you make the National Honor Society as a junior, that's pretty good in high school. Yeah.

[02:07:37] SL: Mh-hmm. Was there—what was the more difficult thing about that transition for you?

TM: Oh, I don't know. I—some of the things that we treasured—I mean, we didn't go to mass every Sunday—I mean, every morning anymore, I mean, you know, 'cause we were over at the high school. I remember—I forgot somethin' I was gonna tell you. Back when I was going from these different schools, like Cottondale and Hill Acres and First Ward, and then when the—Catholic school, I was forced—I wanted to go to the Catholic school sooner, but would you believe they had a restriction—school district had a restriction that the school bus couldn't pick up anybody and drop 'em off at any school except the ones they were goin' to, which were public schools? There was a school right across the street from the Catholic school, which was Sixth Avenue School, it was called, and it was just right across the street [*SL coughs*], and the bus would drop kids off at Sixth Avenue, but they wouldn't let 'em drop 'em off at the academy. So we couldn't ride the bus and go to the Catholic school. And then my daddy got involved in that with the leadership and whatever, and he had that changed, and then they dropped us Catholics off at the Catholic school and so forth. So I had forgotten to mention that earlier.

[02:09:03] SL: Was there a dress code at the Catholic school? Did everybody wear the . . .

TM: No.

SL: No?

TM: No, not in our time it wasn't.

SL: Okay.

TM: They later had one. But it wasn't at our time.

[02:09:12] SL: Did you—did the prejudice and all that stuff kinda resurface when you entered into the public schools?

TM: Oh, it was so small, but it did. I mean, you know, we were—talkin' bout—"Well, the—them Catholics comin' over here," and, you know, that kind of thing. "Them Italians are comin' over here," you know, and those kinda things. We heard some of that but, you know, those are the kinda things that you learn when you're kids. I mean, the kids' mouths propelled some things that don't need to be said, and we learned that later on. So—and nothing had ever affected me [*swishing sound in background*] emotionally or whatever. I didn't—I did—I have considered myself a rather strong-willed person, and I didn't really let a lot of those name-calling, such thing called—but I was just about as good at name-callin' as they were, you know. [*SL laughs*] They'd call me a sloppy Italian, and I'd say, "Well, you lazy hillbilly," or somethin' like that. I mean, we just exchanged it. It was kid stuff, you know.

SL: Yeah.

TM: And so I was able to—so I don't have any recollection of any—of anything significant that happened and any prejudices there. I just don't.

SL: Well, so the bottom line is you enjoyed your studies . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . as a student.

TM: I enjoyed school. I enjoyed school. We jokingly—my sister and I jokingly said—which was not true—but we jokingly said, "Well, goin' to school, we were gettin' outta work." [*Laughter*] 'Cause we had so much work and so many chores to do that school was a vacation for us, you know.

SL: I . . .

TM: Yeah, and I'd be—probably was a lotta truth in that to a certain degree. We've said it as a joke, but it was a pleasure to go to school. And I didn't mind studying. I didn't mind homework. Why, I'd just—I just cannot conjure up any regrets in my mind about school. I just don't have any regrets about school. It was all good. Yeah.

SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about Pine Bluff.

TM: Okay.

SL: So, I mean, once you started goin' to the Catholic school and

then went into the public schools in Pine Bluff—tell me about the town of Pine Bluff and what it was like.

[02:11:34] TM: The town of Pine Bluff was in—this is my opinion—was somewhat cliquish. Relationships and associations and all almost had [*SL clears throat*] to be developed. They're old-line families that were there and the—either identified by other people as being high on the social list or either self proclaimed, high on a social li—they didn't just eagerly jump at relationships with the so-called ordinary folks, and I was definitely in the ordinary folks' class. [02:12:16] So it took a little time for me to be able to develop friendships, but I'll have to say one thing—for people or people, and after a while they understand—when you're dealing with somebody that's a—has a pretty good understanding of what's goin' on—has some degree of intelligence and all the other good characteristics—I mean, you don't have any reason not to associate with 'em. And so, I guess, in some cases the people that I ended up associatin' with and become friends were, in some sense, kinda—I guess forced to associate with me, you know. I—if I was on debate team, the—you know, I made the team—they had to be on there, too, you know. I mean, so we had to sit beside each other. If I was in the declamation contest, and ten more was enterin' it, well,

you know, they were in there, too. And so when you won or when you placed up there high or whatever, then you were respected for that, and it was much easier to embrace you. So I—my answer to that would be my association, [*SL coughs*] I guess, with the kids over at the high school and all was, say, slower than it woulda been had I been identified as one of the social groups or whatever. But it happened anyway, and so I was—I stood in well with my school and my schoolmates and whatever, and I never had any particular arguments. I had some, as we do in all almost all walks of life. I had some better friends there than others, but it was nothing but just—I don't know, association and attitudes and points of view and whatever, I guess, what cultivates that.

[02:13:56] SL: Well, again, probably that work ethic that you had that you didn't realize you had at the time, and you applied it without ever thinkin' about it to your schoolwork. That broke down some barriers for you.

TM: I think you're right. I certainly do. Yeah, and it was an unconscious thing, in a sense, but it evolved strictly because of what happened. Yeah, and I think that work ethic that was imposed on us by us by—beginning with our families and then—and it continued—our families and then the nuns and then over

there—I mean, so we had that continuity there of authority and discipline and whatever, and we carried it right over there. And, you know, by and large, most people like discipline, and I think when we went over to the high school, and people saw that we were disciplined, I think they liked that as opposed to just runnin' roughshod and whatever. So I think it was a characteristic that the people that we associated with embraced, rather than rejected.

[02:14:59] SL: Now I would assume—like most towns in that period of time, and really even still today—there were predominantly black neighborhoods . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and white neighborhoods.

TM: Yes.

SL: And did you see—were those divisions very clear?

TM: Geographically, they were. I mean [*SL clears throat*], we knew that, you know, western/southern Pine Bluff was an affluent neighborhood, and we knew that northern/western Pine Bluff was the black neighborhood. But, see, that really never affected us because we didn't live in either one of those neighborhoods. I mean, we lived out in the country, and so our neighbors, in some cases, were our—people that helped us on the farm—the

African American people—and maybe on the other side there were some Caucasian family that was farmin' the land right next to us or whatever, so we had neighbors of all—we was just right out in the middle, so we knew the definition of the areas strictly because of the way the town was laid out. But we never knew it because of association. I mean, I didn't have any problem goin' through or driving through the area that was considered black as I did that was white. Fact, I'd probably—I guess, if I had to boil down and say it, I probably felt more comfortable goin' through the black area than I would the high socialite area really. I never did have to confront that, but I felt comfortable either way I went there, so I didn't—that didn't bother me any.

[02:16:38] SL: What about the river? What kinda role did the river play?

TM: Well, the river didn't play much of a role until I was later on in life when Senator John McClellan and Senator Robert Kerr from Oklahoma developed the McClellan/Kerr Navigation product for the river. And when it did, of course, that sped up cargo and handling on the river and it—we became one of the primary ports there in Pine Bluff, identified as the Port of Pine Bluff. And a lot of soybeans, and those things were all shipped outta there, so it was a part of the success of Pine Bluff at the time. The

paper mills were there, and they shipped roll paper out by barges and whatever, so it was an important part. And the river provided some entertainment, too, far as tourism for fishing and boating and those kinda things, so it was an asset.

SL: You know, I can remember when I used to go to Camden, I believe I smelled the paper mill . . .

TM: Sure. Oh, yeah. No question.

SL: . . . from Pine Bluff . . .

TM: Oh, no question.

SL: . . . all the way down to Camden.

[02:17:46] TM: Oh, I don't doubt it. Course, you had one in Camden, too. You mighta smelled it, too.

SL: Oh, maybe that was it.

TM: Yeah. Well, you had one there. Yeah. Uh-huh. International Paper Company had a cam—a mill in Camden, too. Yeah.

SL: . . . what a thick, sweet smell. I mean, it . . .

TM: Yeah, we used to say it smelled like money.

SL: Uh-huh. [TM laughs] Well . . .

TM: Because it provided jobs . . .

SL: I hear that about chicken houses, too.

TM: . . . jobs and opportunities and whatever . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . for a lotta people there in Pine Bluff. Yeah. Yeah. And sadly to say, you know, it's on a low ebb right now.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Productivity is down because of requests for paper and that kinda thing, so it's not good. When the railroad was there, it was a hub there in Pine Bluff for repairs and whatever, and that moved to—and I'm sorry I can't remember where it is—it was some town in Texas—that moved there. And the paper mill's lack of orders and ?stood ever? diminished. And that was there, and then the Arkansas Power and Light Company was headquartered there, and it moved to Little Rock. And I can—Central Transformer was there, and it moved somewhere else. And little by little, the big manufacturing outlets and job-hiring people—entities—sorta left there, and it's left the town in—right now, you know, in less-than-good conditions.

[02:19:05] SL: So you're in Pine Bluff Public Schools in the early [19]50s. Is that . . .

TM: Yeah, I graduated in 1950.

SL: Nineteen fifty.

TM: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Talkin' [*SL clears throat*] about accomplishments in school a minute ago, and I mentioned National Honor Society—I was picked to serve in Boys State in

1949. And I went to Boys State. And I was elected speaker of the house at Boys State [*SL laughs*] in 1949.

SL: How bout that?

TM: And I think if I'm not mistaken, I think Governor Sid McMath, I think was the governor about that time.

[02:19:36] SL: How aware of politics were you at that time?

TM: Probably a little bit because I had probably gotten some of it [*SL clears throat*] with the debate team, and we debated issues, and some of those issues were things that you don't normally think about as a sophomore or a junior or senior, but when they're placed in front of you as an issue to discuss or whatever, then you begin to penetrate it—highlight it more than you would normally, so that sorta waltzed me into politics, I think, just facing issues. Just like right now—you know, we got the healthcare issue in front of us. And, you know, anybody that doesn't know we got the healthcare issue out in front of us right now are not payin' attention, you know. And that's what—it was this kinda thing. It . . .

SL: Do you remember what the questions were?

TM: I really don't. I don't because they were so different—so many. I stayed in that debate team class for two years, and so just every month or so, you know, we'd have a different question to,

you know, take the pros and cons. So there were a variety.

Well, I think I remember one of 'em, which has been an age-old tradition was "Shall we do away with the Electoral College?"

[*Clunking sound*] Okay, you know, so that was one of 'em for sure. I don't remember some of the rest of 'em, but there were a multitude of 'em. But they did, I think, make me focus on the issue more—at a deeper level than I would have just in—just like right now—some people are focusing in on the healthcare issue just because it's blown right in their faces all the time. Some are penetratin' it for what's that thing really got in it, what's it gonna do to me, and those kinda things. So the depth of it sometimes depends upon where you fit in it. Yeah.

SL: That's right.

TM: Yeah.

[02:21:22] SL: Well, did you—did the debate squad ever travel and do tournaments?

TM: Yeah, it was limited. I think we went to Fayetteville once or twice. I'm tryin' to think of—I think we come to Little Rock once or twice. Seems like we went someplace else. The teacher of that debate team [*laughs*] was a woman—gosh, I've forgotten her last—Miriam Jones—and she was from Smackover, Arkansas and a girlfriend of Clyde Scott's, and she ended up there,

marrying a man from Pine Bluff named George Makris, and right now his son is the Budweiser distributor for that area down there. But she was the speech teacher—a beautiful lady—had the greatest personality you ever saw. Still livin' here in Little Rock. And she made my years. I mean, she was just so special, and I looked forward to goin' to her class. I mean, it was just—and she had it all, you know. She was just special. So it was special to me.

[02:22:37] SL: It's—it is quite remarkable when a teacher connects.

TM: Yes. Yeah.

SL: . . . and, you know, that debate stuff—it teaches you to think.

TM: Penetrate the issues. You gotta go down there . . .

SL: And you got to be able to . . .

TM: . . . and . . .

SL: . . . argue both sides.

TM: I was gonna—just gonna tell you. See, one week—if we had it for a month, you know, whatever—one week you took one side of it, and then the next week you took the other side, so you had to know it what we called "inside and out," you know. You had to know what was goin' on. And then your presentation and your forcefulness or whatever dictated maybe the outcome of whether you were gon' quote "win" the debate or lose it or

whatever, but you had to know what was goin' on both ways.

SL: Well, and it not only taught you speak, it taught to listen.

TM: Oh, yeah. Sure.

SL: 'Cause you had to . . .

TM: Pay attention to what they were sayin'.

SL: . . . refute . . .

TM: Counter.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Sure. Oh, yeah. You're exactly right. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:23:25] TM: Well, that was all training my part, and she was just such a jewel and a very young lady—had just gotten outta college [*SL clears throat*] and just had every characteristic you'd want in a teacher. She was just—she was phenomenal. Took time with you, and I don't know, I could sit here and think of every adjective there is, and it'd all fit her, you know. She was just special just bout like my wife.

SL: Now this is a—you mentioned a little bit of travel earlier, but this is the first time that I'm hearing you—that's fairly extensive traveling. I mean, you're talkin' Fayetteville, and you know, different . . .

TM: Yeah, we didn't do that very much. You—I think you noted [*SL*

coughs]—I hope you noted I said we went once . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . or twice maybe. And then Little Rock was not considered anything spectacular 'cause we'd drive up here and drive back. When we went to Fayetteville a time or two, we had—they'd have a—if I'm not mistaken, up there they'd have something—I think it was called a speech festival or something like that. And they would have debate teams come in from all over the state, and you would—we'd spend one or two or nights there. We didn't do that very much. And then I can't remember—it seems like to me we went to El Dorado one time. But I—my best recollection—any of the places that we went to besides Fayetteville that we never spent the night. We would just go and debate in the afternoon or early evenin', then come on home. And we would ride with chaperones, like Miss Jones, and maybe she'd get one of her friends and take another car, and we would go.

[02:24:58] SL: Was that your first time in Fayetteville?

TM: Probably so. Yeah. I never approached it from—I never thought about it that way, but I suspect it was because I—yeah, we didn't—as I mentioned to you earlier, my family didn't travel much. We didn't really know what vacations were. I mean,

we—that was nothing that we ever—we didn't talk—vacations were for the rich people. We didn't have any vacation. We had too many chores to do. We couldn't leave. We had livestock. We had—you know, we had cattle. We had mules, and we had all those kind of—heck, I even had a Shetland pony. Dad bought me a Shetland pony, and he was my responsibility to keep—a mean little rascal, too. He'd bite you.

[02:25:42] SL: Did he have a name?

TM: Huh?

SL: Did you name him?

[02:25:44] TM: Timmy. [*SL laughs*] Tim and Timmy. Yeah. I couldn't get any more creative. I named him Timmy. [*SL laughs*] Yeah, he was mean, and I'll tell you—I told you bout livin' on that lake. Well, one time—and we had a pasture there that bordered the lake where they could, you know, drink water out of the lake and eat out of the pasture, you know. Well, one time my dad noticed him, and he was swimming the lake.

SL: Wow.

TM: He swam all the way across that lake, which was—that lake is probably over a quarter of a mile wide and maybe even half a mile wide. And he swam over that lake. And when he got back over on the other side—next day—it was the next day my dad

sold him. He said, "He's gonna swim across that lake with you on his back." Sure as the world. He said, "He gon' drown you in that lake." So he said, "He's gone." And at that time I had had him for a while, and it was a . . .

SL: The novelty had worn . . .

TM: . . . a little bit of missin' him or whatever, but I was intelligent enough to understand what my dad was talkin' bout and had a little bit of fear in me that he probably would do it—that he'd swim across there with me on his back, and that's—that happened. Yeah.

SL: You know, some of the folks I've interviewed from Pine Bluff—they noticed the population change . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . the further north they went.

TM: Yes.

SL: And by the time they got to Fayetteville, why, the African American population was almost nothin'.

TM: Diminishing. Yeah. Yes.

[02:27:17] SL: Did you—was there anything you remember remarkable about going that far out of Pine Bluff? I mean, was that the biggest trip that you had done out of Pine Bluff . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . to that date?

TM: Yeah, and you know, I never really noticed that at the time. I— I've heard these comparisons mentioned since then without ever thinkin' bout it, but at the time that I was doin' that, I was never really—you know, it's sad to say, you know, we were in a segregated white high school, and the African Americans were in a segregated black high school, and it's sad to say this, but I mean, you know, we never did meet or mix or anything, and so you didn't—you weren't subjected to any real prejudices. I mean, and [*SL coughs*] no action of any kind, you know, bad or whatever. And so I guess my summary of that could be, you know, we were existing in our environment and the ca—black African Americans were existing in their environment, and nobody was really doin' anything or paying any attention except that it appears, of course, that they were gettin' a—somewhat lesser of education opportunities than the whites were, and that's, you know, one of the big problems we've had all the time.

SL: Well . . .

TM: But we weren't really aware . . .

SL: . . . you . . .

TM: . . . of that, I don't think.

[02:28:37] SL: Yeah, when you were on your way up there,

Fayetteville was quiet—tryin' to quietly—University of Arkansas
was already . . .

TM: It was . . .

SL: . . . starting to . . .

TM: Yes, it was.

SL: . . . to look at the . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . future of what was going to happen . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . with those separate by equal doctrine . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and how that wasn't working out.

[02:28:54] TM: Yes. That was just a—maybe it was beginning along
about there.

SL: It was beginning.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Right.

TM: But we never . . .

SL: When you were in there.

TM: It never impacted us really, I mean. Well, to think that we were
sittin' there debatin', and we were debatin', and we weren't—and
then there wasn't a African American on the other side, you

know, it was just somethin' that you just didn't think about.

SL: Right.

TM: I mean, it just—it—and then when you stop to think about it, it's a tragedy. When you stop to think about it, but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, okay. It sounds like the speech and debate side of that experience for you in the high school was really somethin' you . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . you latched onto.

TM: Good years of my life. Yeah.

[02:29:36] SL: All right. So you graduate in 1950.

TM: Hmm.

SL: And do you immediately go to Drury College . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . the next semester?

TM: Next semester.

SL: And that was in Springfield . . .

TM: Missouri.

SL: . . . Missouri.

TM: Exactly. Mh-hmm.

SL: Now is that a Catholic . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . college?

TM: No. I think—it's Congregationalist, I think.

SL: I—yeah.

TM: I think it is. I'm not sure. Well, I can tell you how I got there.

A friend of mine [*SL clears throat*—some people there in Pine

Bluff who owned a tire company—Roberts Brothers Tire

Company—and his name was Gene. He was a year older than

me in school, and Gene was goin' there, and he and I were just

real big buddies and continued to stay buddies throughout our

adult lives and married lives, and [*SL coughs*] you know, is a

great friend of mine right now. I never—don't get to see him,

and he's not in good health either, but we were inseparable guy.

[02:30:22] So he was goin' to school up there, and lo and

behold—I don't know—I doubt if he had anything to do with it—I

don't know—they offered me a scholarship.

SL: Well, it had . . .

TM: And so . . .

SL: . . . everything to do with . . .

TM: . . . I was lookin' for a scholarship, and so I went, and I took

that scholarship. The sad part about it is it's such a blimp—a

blip in my life, and it don't even need mentionin'—I didn't go but

a semester. [*pats arm of chair*] So while I was there that

semester, my dad got gravely ill. Gravely ill. And so he never told me to come home, but I knew that he wanted me to. And I was doin' good. I was makin' good grades, and had made good grades for that semester. I worked on campus and then—and they had a thing—it was leaf-sucker that you drove around there. It was a forty-acre campus, and it sucked up the leaves like a vacuum cleaner. And here I was, a student there, you know. Course, I had that background—that equipment, you know. We had it on the farm and whatever. Shoot, they found out I could operate that tractor and that leaf-sucker—shoot, they put me right over on there and I—they payin' me money. And I would dig ditches around there for 'em. I'd just—I worked in the evenin', and I was makin' me some spendin' money. We just didn't have that much money. And my dad was—got real ill, and so we had a right sizeable farmin' operation. We had one African American guy who was just like a son—another son to my dad, and he would come to my dad's bedside—my dad was so sick—and take instructions from my dad on, "Well, what should I do about this?" or "What should I do about that?" And that sorta got the best of me, and I thought, "Well"—and his name was Charlie. And I said, "Well, I'll just come home, and me and Charlie will run it," and that's what happened. I came home and

took over the farmin' operation.

[02:32:16] SL: What illness was it that your dad had? Do you remember?

TM: Well, he had emphysema, was the basic thing. He couldn't he couldn't breathe.

SL: Breathe.

TM: Yeah, he couldn't breathe. He couldn't walk sometime from here to the front door. He stayed on oxygen, ah, 95 percent of the time.

SL: Was he . . .

TM: And it was new back then. We had the—had those big tanks that they'd bring in the house, and we were afraid of igniting, you know, and all . . .

SL: Sure.

TM: . . . those kinda things. But—and he had stomach problems. He had about—he ended [*SL coughs*] up havin' to have about two-thirds of his stomach removed, and I told you earlier that the doctor had prescribed him to get on goat milk. That was a part of his digestive problems. So he had emphysema and digestive problems. And he just got down to—I think—well, when he died I think he weighed about ninety pounds. And even before then, he never got below a hundred and ten—somewhere along in

there—just . . .

[02:33:13] SL: How old was he?

TM: He was eighty-one. He died in bed at home.

SL: Well, he had had a really good, full life.

TM: Yeah, he had. But the last fifteen or twenty years of it were pretty dreadful because . . .

SL: Oh.

TM: . . . of his inability to breathe and couldn't—He loved food and loved to eat, and course, he couldn't eat very many things because of his digestive problem, so he was really kind of existing, you know, 'cause he had those deficiencies that were pullin' him down.

SL: Now did your mom survive all of that?

TM: Yeah, she just hung right there . . .

SL: She was right there with him.

TM: . . . with him. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. We had—we—and we finally had a maid that came to help her—a friend that we hired to come to help her.

[02:33:59] SL: So you and Charlie ran that farm then.

TM: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

SL: All those . . .

TM: Oh, for years.

SL: . . . fifteen—those two . . .

TM: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . decade and a half.

TM: Uh-huh.

SL: Two decades.

TM: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. [*Swishing sound*] Yeah, we sure did.

SL: I bet y'all got closer and closer as you . . .

TM: No question about it. He was a guy—and when we finally quit farmin', well, he—'course, he was ready to quit, too, and he moved to Detroit, Michigan, or somewhere. And then shortly after, he passed away and . . .

SL: Hmm. That's really . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: That's quite remarkable.

[02:34:40] TM: So I came home and [*SL coughs*] was showered, if you will, with the responsibility of really doin' a lotta things like, you know, running the farm and making it productive and progressive. But also I had an additional responsibility, in a se— of taking care of my parents. So I lived right next door to 'em. There was thirty, forty yards between our house, and so I was [*snaps fingers*], you know, right there, Johnny-on-the-spot for everything.

SL: Now is this still there by the lake?

TM: No. No, this is . . .

SL: This . . .

TM: . . . up on Highway 65 now.

SL: Highway 65 now.

TM: We—yeah, we bought that place for a home place.

SL: I see. And so is—what about Dottie? What—how did Dottie come into your . . .

TM: Okay. Dottie's family moved here from . . .

SL: Now Dottie—let me say first—Dottie is your wife.

TM: Right. Dottie's my wife. Right. Dottie's . . .

SL: Okay, and what was her maiden name?

TM: Walters. *W-A-L-T-E-R-S*.

SL: Okay.

TM: Her family moved here from Lexington, Kentucky. Her father was a regional manager for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and he got transferred to Pine Bluff to be the manager for that region, which encompassed most of southeast and south Arkansas.

SL: Kay.

[02:36:03] TM: And so they were Catholic, and I met her at church. And I don't really remember this, but she tells a story—there

was an organization at that time, and it was called the CYO, and that was an acronym for Catholic Youth Organization. And so we would meet Sunday evenings in the parish hall, and there were festivities or meetings and whatever, and I was the president of the CYO. And she and some other girls were back in the back gigglin' some—and she claims that I got onto them and told them to sit down and be quiet and [*SL coughs*] whatever. I really don't remember it, but I feel sure that I did. She said she just didn't like me for that, you know, so . . .

[02:36:44] SL: Okay, now is this [*TM laughs*] after you're comin' back from Drury?

TM: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

TM: Yeah, that's right.

SL: All right.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

TM: Kay. And so anyhow—I don't know how that changed or whatever, but you know, I—in the back of my mind and all of my training and everything that I'd had, I kinda wanted to marry a Catholic girl. And then when I ran into her, I mean, [*swishing sound*] she had everything, you know. Not only was she

Catholic—and I mean, she was beautiful and a lotta fun and whatever, and so we hit it off pretty good. So we married, and I was twenty-one, and she was just nineteen. And I need to stop right there just for a minute.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:37:25] SL: All right. So now we're talkin' about how you and Dottie got together.

TM: Right.

SL: Okay.

TM: And so I started dating her, and one of my good friends was tryin' to date her, too. And bottom line is I got lucky, and I won out on him, and she was and still is, you know, a gorgeous woman—has the greatest personality you ever saw and is just such a—you know, a dedicated mother to those kids and a wife to me. She's—I can't explain my devotion to her. But, anyhow, I—she was nineteen, and so I asked her dad if I could marry her. And I never will forget what he said to me. He said, "Well, son, you think you can support her?" And that stayed with me most all of my adult life because at every juncture of something happening, like the birth of my oldest son, Steve, and I knew then in my mind that I had a spouse and a son to raise—to keep

up and all. Then I had a second son, Chip, my middle boy, and that was another milestone in our life. Then I had a third son, Randy, and all the time I was tryin' to—I've used this phrase before—"carve out a livin'." I didn't devote as much time to them as I should have, and as I said a minute ago about my own early life, that I would go back and do it exactly again—well, my married life, I'd change that some. I think I'd try to find a little more time for her and the kids. I found some, and I guess maybe [*unclear words*] an adequate amount but not really enough. But she hung right there in there with 'em, and she hung in there with me and just—it's been a beautiful lifetime.

[02:39:35] So—but that phrase that her—or that question that her dad asked me, you know, "Do you think you can support her?"—it's surfaced in my mind many times as each one of these milestones occurred. "I got—now I got one boy." "Now I got two boys." "Now I got three boys." "Now I got her." And then—so, you know, I guess you feel like when you're out there, if you're single, and you're alone, you know, man, you can sleep on a rock pile if you have to, you know. You can do a whole lotta things if you have to. If you got that wife and that child or whatever, then there's gotta be some productivity along the line. Somewhere, somebody's gotta do somethin'. I was a very frugal

person when we married. I had bought all of our furniture and paid for it. I had livin' room furniture, bedroom furniture, a washer/dryer, stove, refrigerator—the whole works—and a brand new car. So I had saved my money from the farm and whatever, and I bought everything in cash. I paid for the—for all of my stuff right then in money that I had saved up. That gave us an enormous start. She was a long-distance operator at the telephone company when we married and previous to that, too. And she worked a little while until Steve's pregnancy—came along with Steve—bein' pregnant with him. [02:41:00] And then once she had Steve, then I never wanted her to go back to work anymore because I wanted her to be a mother to those children and she lived up to my expectations more than I could ever say. So that's kinda the way it happened. It was a whirlwind-type thing. She hadn't been livin' here but a couple of years, I guess—three years. I think she came here—if I'm not mistaken, I think she came here in her junior year. She—'cause junior year—I think she had two years of high school here. It was rather traumatic for her to leave her friends in Kentucky and come here and move to a new place—Pine Bluff, Arkansas, you know. They didn't even know it was on the map, you know leaving Lexington, Kentucky, which had high recognition, you

know. And she had wonderful parents, and I respected and admired them, and I guess—as I said, her dad's statement probably drove me to some of my little successes—whatever they were. That, coupled with that discipline and the stuff that my own folks had, I was determined to take care of 'em. And, thank God up to this point, you know—nothing at all extravagant, but we've been fortunate enough not to miss any meals and stay fully dressed and have shelter.

[02:42:20] SL: So how shortly after your return to take care of the farm did you meet Dottie? I mean, was it all . . .

TM: Shortly after 'cause I was goin' to these church meetings and—at—and on Sunday evenings is when they were, and then I was head of CYO, as I mentioned to you, and I was involved in—became the president and whatever, so we began to see each other there, and then I started callin' her for dates and all that kinda stuff. And so it just get started—got started from there.

SL: So the—here's what I'm—let me take an inventory here.

TM: Great. Good.

SL: You [*laughs*] get back. You come home to—because you know your dad's in trouble . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . with his health.

TM: Yes.

SL: You take over the farm.

TM: Yes.

SL: You and Charlie manage the farm.

TM: Yes, sir.

SL: You're takin' care of your mom and your dad.

TM: Right.

SL: You become president of [*laughs*] CYO.

TM: Yeah.

SL: You volunteer at the church.

TM: Yeah.

SL: You meet the—your dream girl.

TM: Right.

SL: You marry her.

TM: Right.

SL: You start to have a family.

TM: Right.

[02:43:16] SL: I'm seeing you split about half a dozen ways . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . within a few years . . .

TM: No question.

SL: . . . of comin' back home.

TM: That's right. And then . . .

SL: And you continue in this mode. And now was the farm the only thing you did in those decade, decade and a half?

TM: No. Well, I bought a liquor store, and we ran it, and it was sixteen hours a day, six days a week. We kept it open. So between me, my parents, and one employee, we kept it open there. One year or almost for [*SL clears throat*] a year, I—when they were buildin' International Paper Company, I worked there as a pipefitter. So I worked all that in. I'd work—go to work at the paper mill for the pipefitter, and I'd get off maybe at four o'clock, and I'd come and keep the liquor store till midnight when we closed it up. And then if I had somethin'—farm work to do—if it was in the fall and we were gathering crops or whatever [*snapping sound in background*], I had people doin' that. And then I would [*SL coughs*] let my mom or my wife stay in the store that evenin', and I'd go deal with the crops and whatever. It was just kinda managin' it all—work—weavin' it and workin' it all out. So at one time I had—more than one time I had as many as three things goin' at one time. [02:44:33] And then when I left the paper mill, then I started workin' for a company named Wilcox Amusement Company. It was a coin-operated amusement machine company. And the father that owned the

thing, and me and my dad and him were all big friends, and so he died, and I went to work for them. His son was runnin' it, and I went to work for them to—mainly to help 'em out—and I ended up buyin' half of it, and then later on he'd want—my partner, who was a great guy in the world—Charles Wilcox was his name—he wanted to sell out and move, so I ended up ownin' it all. So I ended up ownin' a coin-operated machine business that was music machines and pool tables and pin-balls. Video games were comin' out about then, and so I was operatin' equipment in five counties—in Jefferson and Lincoln and Grant and Desha and Arkansas—had stuff spread all out there. Had two-way radios in the vehicles where we could [*sniffs*]*—*and it was a twenty-four-hour-a-day/seven-day-a-week job because if those machines broke down on the weekends at some of these nightclubs and stuff that like to stay open in the late hours at night, you had to jump out of bed and go fix 'em. And so I was doin' a lot. I was doin'—I had myself spread pretty thin.

[02:45:52] SL: How many folks did you have workin' for you, between all the—all those enterprises?

TM: Oh, all of 'em?

SL: Yeah.

TM: Well, let's see. I had one person—just one person workin' at the

liquor store, not countin' my parents, who were two more and Dottie, which was four, and countin' me there. Five people of us worked in the liquor store in and out. I'd like to tell a story bout that, too, while I got . . .

SL: M'kay.

[02:46:15] TM: Mentioned we had family interchange, you know, and so my mother was keeping the store one day, and Dottie went over, and she said, "Mama, I need to go to town," and said, "I need—could I borrow twenty dollars?" My mother said, "Well, sure." So she goes over and opens the register and gives Dottie twenty dollars out of it. So a week or two later, Dottie's over there keepin' the store, and my mom comes over. She says, "Oh, Ma, just a minute." So she goes to open the cash register and gets twenty dollars out." She said, "Here. Here's this twenty dollars I owe you." So they messed me out of forty dollars is [*laughs*] what happened, but they had their business straight, you know. [*SL laughs*] They didn't—there's nobody owe anybody anything. [*SL coughs*] But I told that story a many a time. But we changed around, and different people took different hours, and we worked that liquor store. Then [*SL coughs*] in the daytime [*laughs*] we had some help there, and I would work in the coin machine business in the daytime—take

service calls at night and on the weekends and whatever. And then the farm was a seasonal thing. I mean, work came with it, sometimes hard, and then it would slack off in what we call "lay-by time" and whatever, so I muscled it all in there. Yeah.

[02:47:27] SL: That's a lotta people you're really responsible for.

TM: Well, you had asked me—okay, so then up in the coin machine business, it was me and my partner, Charles, and two more people, and it ended being three. So at one time, a total of five of us were workin' up there and five of us in the liquor store—and me—that's countin' me twice. So we're talkin' nine people. And then the farm, which—and Charlie had gone by then, and so I had different people from uptown—usually two or three.



[02:48:00] I never will forget one time we had the mechanical cotton-picker, and I had this fellow from town that was operatin' it, and so I had came over in the truck to see how he was doin', and the engine was runnin', and the picker mechanism wasn't. And so I thought, "Well, you know, maybe he had to use the bathroom and went off into a little wooded area" that was behind there. So I got on top of the machine and just started drivin' it myself and pickin' it until I filled the basket. And so when I filled the basket, I went over to the trailer to dump it, and there was about seventy-five or a hundred pounds of cotton in the trailer in

there, and he was layin' in there asleep—the driver was. And so I sorta dumped the basket in there on top of him. He come flurrying out of there, and so I told him, "Well, you just get out of here. You just go home. Go ahead and just"—said, "You can just walk." We were about, oh, three or four miles from town, I guess, or where he lived. Anyway, I got up on that picker, and it was in the fall of the year and it was kinda cold, and I wasn't really dressed for that and all, and the further away he kept gettin', the more my mind was turned on. I said, "I'm runnin' him off, and I'm ge—I'm gettin' myself a job here is what I'm doin'. I run him off. I've got to do this." So I stopped the machine and went and picked him up. I said, "Come on back. I'm gon' forgive you now, and you can sit up here and then run this machine." So I [*laughs*] learned a lesson right there, you know. "Don't run 'em off too quick if you're gon' have to do it, you know." So I thought that was always a pretty funny story.

[02:49:27] SL: Yeah, but he got a lesson.

TM: How's that? Oh, yeah. Well, yeah. I mean, sure he did 'cause he knew that I—next time I probably would go on and—and then he was a nice guy. He was African American guy, but he was a nice guy. Anyhow, I—since I brung him back [*laughs*] in the fold. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, you know, not only are you takin' care of your own, but you had a commitment to other folks around you, too . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . that were helpin' you run those businesses . . .

TM: Yes, sir.

SL: . . . and make 'em work.

TM: Oh, yeah. And they were being provided a living . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . out of there, too. Yeah, sure. No question about that. They wanted to see—the guys that worked with me in the coin machine because I eventually sold out to one of 'em that worked for me. And they had a determination to make things right and make it go and whatever, and they worked hard at it, too, and they knew, you know, that—I'd say to 'em, "Hey, you know, this is ours. If we make it, we're all gon' make it. If we don't, we're all gonna go under, you know. So this is where we are."

SL: Now is this mid-late [19]50s?

TM: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

TM: Mid-[19]50s, early [19]60s.

[02:50:40] SL: So what were you doin' when the crisis at Little Rock

went down—Little Rock High?

TM: Nineteen fifty-five? Is that when it was?

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-seven.

TM: [Nineteen] fifty-seven. Okay, I was doin' those things there. I was farmin', and I was in the coin-machine business, and I owned a liquor store and then had—by that time had purchased some real estate around town there. I had some rental property that I was collectin' rent on. I was doin' those three things.

SL: Surely by then, you were startin' to be more aware of politics.

TM: Yeah.

[02:51:17] SL: So what kind of impact did the Little Rock crisis have in Pine Bluff and that community? Was there . . .

TM: I think it probably, you know, polarized the community some. I think a lot of people there—and this is my terminology—you know, probably chose sides. I mean, not that that they were always the same colors. I know some white people chose side with the African Americans. And I—but I think it polarized the community, I think. They said, "Hey, you know, we—we're either gon' be acceptable of African American people, or we're not." And those were the two sides, and I [*swishing sound*] think the crisis up at Little Rock highlighted that, and I think the people—whoever they may have been—that were classified

"rednecks," you know, stayed redneck and the people who were classified as those who were wantin' to live and let live, I think they were that way. And so the town kinda was in that kinda fix right there.

SL: Did you know any of the citizens of the area that got up and went to Little Rock?

TM: No, I don't. No, I don't know of any.

SL: Kay.

TM: I—I'm not saying there weren't. They probably were. I don't know 'cause that thing got pretty emotional there some, and—but no, it—you know, again we were kinda on the [*SL clears throat*] outskirts of that again. I'm still livin' in the country, okay? So I still . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:52:55] TM: . . . I'm still not livin' uptown. I lived uptown for about a year and a half of our marriage. And then we—I built that house out there next to my folks, and I moved out there.

So I just wasn't really into that kinda thing, and I was just again tryin' to survive and to make it and whatever, and just a big part of my coin-operated machine business were African American people, and they were as good a friends as I had. And I could walk in places that was nothing but African American

people there, and nobody would say anything to me. And, on occasion, when somebody would make some little smart remark like, "Who's that white guy?" or whatever, they usually only would say, "Hey, look. You go over there and sit down. This guy here's my friend. He got the machines in here. You go sit down," or what. So I never had not even one ounce of trouble, and I went in and out of white and black places on a reg—with regularity every day.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Did . . .

TM: And—but what—think we all understood each other.

[02:54:05] SL: Did you ever know, or do you know Randall Ferguson out of Camden? Did you . . .

TM: Say again.

SL: Randall Ferguson.

TM: Uh-uh. No.

SL: He had a pl—he had a little place in Camden.

TM: Never heard of him.

SL: Okay.

TM: What was his role?

SL: Well, he had a bar . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: . . . in Camden in the black community.

TM: See, I didn't go that far—that would be in Union County. Okay, see, mine were limited to Jefferson and Lincoln and Desha and . . .

SL: Okay.

TM: . . . and Grant and Arkansas.

SL: Okay.

TM: So I didn't go that far . . .

SL: Okay.

TM: . . . and I didn't know him.

SL: Oh, I just thought there might be . . .

TM: No, I didn't know him.

SL: . . . some little connection.

[02:54:38] TM: I didn't know him. I belonged to an organization called the Arkansas Music Operators Association, and many of us belonged to that. I don't remember him—his name belonging to that, you know, it was a lot of people didn't just jump to belong to it 'cause we paid dues into it . . .

SL: Right.

TM: . . . and they were sorta lobbyists for us, see—the association was and—but I don't remember his name.

SL: So when—how—did you hold on to the farm for ten or fifteen years?

TM: Yeah, I'm tryin' to think of when we [*SL clears throat*] quit that farm. I'd say that we probably stopped farmin' maybe right around 1960, and I'm guessing there—just one of the—you know, I told you earlier, sometimes I lose perspective of these years, and they—but I think about 1960 we quit farmin'. And so . . .

[02:55:37] SL: And so you developed these businesses, and then you eventually sold all of 'em?

TM: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

TM: Sold everything.

SL: And . . .

TM: Little by little.

SL: And you were building your family.

TM: Yeah. Well, and I . . .

SL: Oh, and I want to tell you this. I don't know a father that I've ever talked to that doesn't feel like he wished he'd spent more time . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: . . . with his kids.

TM: I'm not alone, huh?

SL: You're not alone. I . . .

TM: Okay.

SL: I feel the same way. Every father I've talked to, they're—the—
it's the price that we've paid to honor and to put a roof over our
families' heads.

TM: Yeah, and it's . . .

SL: And if it keeps the . . .

TM: . . . decision—you make it, and somethin' drives you—makes
you wanna . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:56:21] TM: . . . be sure you go ahead and do it. I don't know
how much time we'd be skipping here, but I'll go to 1973 'cause
I'm in the coin machine business, and I've got some rental
property, and I still got a liquor store. A friend of mine from
Pine Bluff named G. W. "Buddy" Turner, who was in the
legislature in the house of representatives got elected speaker of
the house. He was gon'—be start serving on the second Monday
in January of 1973 [*SL coughs*], which is when the session was
gonna start. So he sees me one day, and he's aware of my
background with the debate team and parliamentary procedure
and the declamation contests and oratorical contests and all. He
said, "Hey, why don't you come to Little Rock with me and be
my parliamentarian?" And I said, "Well, I—you know, I never

have been parliamentarian for anything but just meetings or whatever." "Oh, you'd do just great." So I said, "Well, let me think about it." Well, I had the fact—the guy that I eventually ended up sellin' my business to, I had him runnin' the coin machine business. See, I was just managin' him. I'd—bout that time I'd bought my partner out, and I owned it all, and so I had people runnin' the liquor store. I thought, "Well, heck, I can—I think I'll just try that." So when I came up here, it surfaced that he had unknowingly and off the record, kinda like, promised an old gentleman that hung around the house there a lot named Armitage Harper—he had promised [*swishing sound*] Armitage Harper back—a few years back that if he ever got to be speaker, he'd let Armitage be his parliamentarian. So he was goin' up here, and he's bout to have two parliamentarians, and so I got up there, and I found out about it. [02:58:01] I said, "Well, Buddy, you know—gentleman's old and whatever, and I don't wanna, you know, have any conflict and all." I said, "Just let him—just go ahead and name him the parliamentarian." I said, "And I'll just—I'll help you anyway." So he said, "Okay." I said, "Okay." So they [*SL coughs*] put me down on the sound system, so I was operatin' the sound system by turnin' the microphones on and off, but I was givin' him parliamentary advice and all that

other stuff at night and when I needed to and whatever. Well, so we survived that session that way. And so I did that, and then I went on home—went back to my business or whatever. Well, in the next biennium, a man named Cecil Alexander was elected Speaker of the House, and Cecil wanted to know maybe stayin' on about—I said, "Well, I don't want to bump Mr. Harper." I said, "You know, I went through this with Buddy." He said, "Well, I want you to do the same thing you did with Buddy. You help me," and so forth and so on. So, okay. Well, somewhere in Cecil's term there, Mr. Harper passed away. And then I got pushed up to the parliamentarian's job. When I went there with Buddy, I just intended to go up there and stay a term with him. But when I went with Cecil, I definitely just meant to go stay there a term. Well, here it is, you know, thirty-six . . .

SL: Is that . . .

[02:59:16] TM: . . . years later, and I'm still there. So I served under, like, eighteen or nineteen speakers, and that's how I got up to the legislature that way. And kinda—you know, definitely enjoyed it, and I had things like I wanted 'em to at home. And finally I—this guy was workin' for me—I said, "Let me sell you this." "Oh," he said, "you know I don't have any money to buy

it." I said, "Well, you don't need any." So what I did with him—I said, "What my salary's been bein' out here, you can make the payments." I said, "I hadn't been comin' here much. I'd come on the weekends and do the books and whatever." I said, "You can do that." I said, "You can make the payments with my salary, and the thing'll just run just like it's running right now. There won't be an additional expense at all. Your payments won't be an expense. You gon' get it for nothin'." [SL laughs] I said, "And not put anything down." So he said, "Well, I think I'll try it." So sure enough—well, I just actually gave it to him really. And then I sold him some of the real estate that we—that I had, too. Some of it was clubs—bars and whatever—that I owned the property and all the equipment in 'em. Well, I sold the whole thing to him. So he bought it and paid me off. And I had him set up on ten or fifteen years. I can't remember which. [03:00:29] Anyhow he paid me off. And then eventually [SL coughs] I sold my liquor store to a person who wanted to buy a liquor store. My folks were gettin' old, and Dottie didn't wanna fool with it anymore. And we'd had a robbery there and guys beat my clerk over the head and just stuff that was distasteful, and so I finally—and I sold it. So then that didn't leave me with anything but the homestead property that we had left there

where my house and my dad's house and had—the liquor store buildin' was on there, and a commercial buildin' was on there, so it was stuff like that. So I stayed up here thirty-six years and still here. But that's how I got here. Buddy Turner brought me up here.

[03:01:09] SL: Well, when the house is in session, would you just have an apartment up here?

TM: Yeah. What I did in those years before we moved up here is I commuted some, and I stayed up here some. During the session itself, I would stay up here. Like, I'd come up on Sunday afternoons 'cause I had to make preparations for the next Monday's calendar, so I 'd come up on Sunday afternoons, and I'd stay Sunday through Friday about a—you know, Friday afternoon. Then I'd go home at Friday afternoon. I'd spend Friday night and Saturday night home and then come back again on Sunday afternoon. And I've had apartments down in various places. One of 'em here over at Vantage Point, and then me and a senator friend of mine named Senator Nelson had an apartment over in the . . .

SL: That would be Rex?

TM: . . . Quapaw Towers.

SL: Is that Rex Nelson or . . .

TM: No, no.

SL: No?

TM: This is Knox Nelson.

SL: Knox Nelson.

TM: Knox Nelson.

SL: That's right. Okay.

[03:02:00] TM: Yeah. And then I—and then along—later on I bought this apartment—this condominium right here and stayed in here some. I stayed in the Capitol Hill Buildin' some, which is right across the street from the capitol. I had an apartment in there, so I've had four or five or six apartments up here. But I stayed up here a lot, and I commuted a lot. And finally the commute was gettin' me when my vision was gettin' pretty bad—my reflexes not like they used to be, so I—it was either gon' quit or move up here. That's when this guy comes along one day and says, "Would you be interested in sellin' this property?" And I said, "Well, yeah." He said, "Well, I've got a vehicle out here." He had one of those things called a mule—four-wheel terrain vehicle on a trailer—and he said, "I'd like to drive around it." So I told him what the boundaries were. He stayed gone—hour or two, I guess. He come back—said, "Well, you wanna sell this?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I would." I hadn't thought about it that

much and—'cause I was worried about sellin' it all. You know, I had my mom and dad's house over there. I had a commercial buildin' over there. Findin' somebody take all those things, you know, they—I knew they'd wanna bust it up and, you know, all those kinda things. So, anyway, make a long story short, well, we were about fifty thousand dollars off in what he thought it was worth and what I thought it was worth. And so I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do." I said, "You come up twenty-five thousand, and I'll come down twenty-five. We'll meet in the middle," and he said, "Okay." So then I looked at him, and I said, "What do you think would be an adequate amount of grace money—earnest money—that would be put down on a deal like this?" And right quick like that he said, "Twenty thousand dollars." And I said, "Well, me, too." He sits right there and writes me out a check for twenty thousand dollars and leaves. He said, "I'll see you in a few days." [03:03:46] I walked in the kitchen. I told Dottie. Said, "Dottie, you can start packin' this stuff up, honey." I said, "This guy's done give us a twenty-thousand-dollar earnest money." I said, "He ain't gonna leave twenty thousand dollars layin' on the table. He might leave two hundred or five hundred or a thous—but twenty thousand dollars, he'd leave—he's comin' back." And I said, "We're gon'

be gone." And sure enough, well, he came back and we—he owned a truck drivin' school in Magnolia. And the school was needin' the property that he was on, so they bought it from him and bought his truck drivin' school and ever—and he wanted to start another truck drivin' school up here closer to a more metropolitan area—close to Little Rock and all—and that thing was just—made just right for him to build a track around it and all this stuff, so he's developed it up down there now. And I hadn't been down there in quite a while, but he turned it into a truck drivin' school. He used my house for some of those people—overnighters stay in my parents' house. He made that into dorms for [*SL coughs*] female truck drivers, and oh, he renovated the whole thing down there. [03:04:49] So, anyhow, I sold out, and we moved up here—gon' just live in here rather temporarily and—'cause Dottie didn't like the lesser amount of square footage that we had. We left about—oh, I think close to three thousand square feet, and we came up here to about eighteen hundred. And I said to somebody today—we got a storage room rented down there for a hundred and twelve dollars a month, and everything in there is not worth a hundred and twelve dollars a month, but it's keepsakes for her and she . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . we wanna keep 'em. So, anyway . . .

SL: Sure.

TM: . . . this—that's how we're here.

KK: I'm out of tape.

TM: And so ended up here and . . .

SL: Oh, out of tape.

[Tape Stopped]

[03:05:23] SL: Well, let's go back a little bit. I wanna go back to Pine Bluff, and while you had all these enterprises goin' on—all these responsibilities [*belches*—excuse me—you also had three children with your wife.

TM: Yes.

SL: And you had your parents livin' next door to you . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and you were takin' care of them.

TM: Exactly.

SL: So let's talk about the quality of life that your family was having while you were so anxious about providing that quality of life. What were the fruits of your labor at that time? I mean, what was it like for the . . .

KK: Wait. I'm sorry. If we can just stop for just a second.

[Tape Stopped]

[03:06:15] SL: So what I'm tryin' to get around to is what was goin' on with your family while you were so engaged in all these different enterprises? And what was happening with your kids and your wife and—'cause I have a feeling there were some relationships building that I—there were things—other things—there were family things going on, too.

[03:06:39] TM: Yeah. Well, the kids were born. Steve's the oldest one. Chip, the middle one. Randy, the third one. In their early years of their life, Dottie was the main cog in all this. She [*SL clears throat*] devoted all of her time to them and to my mother and father—so to speak—phraseology—on call, if you will, to them all the time. As I've mentioned somewhere earlier, I think she would take 'em to Little League practice. One of 'em at one field, one of 'em at another. Working concession stands at one field and then another—do everything that they needed to do—take 'em to school, pick 'em up—just all those kinda good things. I mean, she was—no question about—the drivin' force in keepin' things together. When the kids got a little older and they began to become involved more in sports, then I began to take—I was relieved a little bit more of responsibilities [*SL coughs*]—I'd gotten things in a little better shape here, there, and

everywhere—and so I would go to their ball games—their football games. For example, I was the announcer for the ball games, so I did that at every ball game. When they had an out-of-town trip, I went on the bus with 'em. And of all things, you know, you can't hardly imagine that your kid bein' pleased that you'd be on the [SL laughs] bus with 'em, you know. And my kids were ecstatic about me bein' on the bus with 'em. Now there were some rewards that went with that. Usually after the football game, well, I'd get the bus driver to stop at some McDonald's and buy everybody a hamburger or milkshake or whatever, you know. So all the kids liked me, so to speak. [SL laughs] But my kids, so they tell me, were glad that I was there and glad that I was part of that. Basketball games the same way. So I became an integral part of their lives more as they got older. My parents—somewhat the same way. [03:08:28] But I just—you have to say again—I can't say enough for Dottie's application to all of the needs that they had. She was just right there, Johnny-on-the-spot, and responded to everything, and she kept the family together. And as I mentioned earlier, you know, I look back and wish, you know, that I would've done more. And I think I instilled—or she did [zipping sound in background], probably from her efforts—

instilled in our kids, you know, the importance of parents being associated with what they do. And all of my kids—all three of my boys are just absolutely great to their families. I mean, they're involved in their activities, and they're interested in their exploits and whatever, and it's just great. Again—I have to say again, you know, I think she is—was the drivin' force in all that, and I was just lucky to be able to tag along.

[03:09:41] SL: Well, now did the kids—did the boys all go to the Catholic schools?

TM: Yes, they all went to . . .

SL: Did it start at—in kindergarten all the way through or . . .

TM: Yeah. Yeah, they started kindergarten all the way through. Now Steve, the oldest one, went from the Catholic school there in Pine Bluff to Subiaco. Yeah, he spent three years in Subiaco. And the other boys didn't wanna go to Subiaco, so when they graduated from the Catholic school, they went to a private school there n—called Jefferson Prep, and that's where they finished their school—Chip and Randy—and Steve had one year there. But we exhausted all of the means that we could to send 'em to Catholic schools, and they started in the kindergarten at Annunciation Academy was the name of the school.

SL: This probably speaks well of Dottie's—Dorothy's faith as well. I

mean . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: Was the—so I'm going to assume as busy as you were, you all always went to Mass on Sundays.

TM: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

TM: Yeah.

[03:10:41] SL: . . . and what about your involvement with the church? Did that grow while you were in Pine Bluff?

TM: Well, I think it did. After Vatican II, which [*SL coughs*] was in 1964, the church reinstated what's called the Permanent Diaconate—a opportunity for married men to become ordained deacons in the church with a defined and limited number of ministries that you could do. There's a story behind that. The advertisement came out that the diocese was gon' send a team out across the state in different locales and explain the diaconate and maybe see if anybody was interested or what. Well, we saw an announcement of that in our church bulletin, and I guess we didn't know enough about the diaconate for to proclaim that it was a drawing card. But what was happenin' was the person that was gonna come and explain it was a personal friend, more of mine than Dottie's, but of both of us, and he was a Catholic

priest named Reverend Bobby Torres, and he had grown up there in Pine Bluff and had gone to the seminary from there. He entered the seminary and had become a priest. And so we went to the meeting as much to see him as we did anythi—and also to help make a crowd, so he wouldn't go to a meeting and come down to Pine Bluff from Little Rock or wherever and be three people there. Well, naturally when you attend those meetings as they do, they have you sign in, you know. So everybody signed in, so when we left the meeting I didn't really have any intention of pursuing the Permanent Diaconate.

Well, I started gettin' letters from 'em and this, that, and the other, and so forth and so on, and I was respondin' to all of 'em, and I'm—and from my own faith I'm proclaiming, you know, being driven by the Holy Spirit. Somethin' was driving me to do these things. And so there was an associate priest there, and one day I was in the church for some reason or other, and I was walkin' across the sanctuary, and he said, "Hey!"

SL: Hmm. [*Laughs*]

[03:12:55] TM: "Are you gon' get in that deacon program?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I don't know whether I'm worthy enough or not." And, of course, we Catholics believe in confession and reconciliation, and he pointed back to the

reconciliation room. He said, "You can go right back there and get worthy." [SL laughs] So I thought about that a whole lot. [SL laughs and claps hands] And so I was just kinda hangin' around the fringes. Well, one mornin' at home we got up—was havin' a cup of coffee there, and so I had gotten a letter—I was openin' up some letters, and I'd [SL coughs] gotten some—the letters where some—I needed to take care of some CD transactions or whatever, so I told Dottie—I said, "I think I'll just wait here a few minutes and call the office when my secretary comes in. Nothin's really goin' on up there down at the—I'll take a day's leave here and take care of this stuff that I need to be takin' care of down here." Well, lo and behold, I didn't get those words out of my mouth, and the phone rang. And I picked it up to answer it, and it was my priest there from Pine Bluff, who was a priest named Father John O'Donnell, who is a very dynamic priest in this diocese, and people just love him or whatever, and he jokes around and kids with you and all. And he calls me "main man." That's his [SL laughs] name for me. [03:14:03] He said, "Hey, main man," [SL laughs] said, "what are you doin' today?" Said, "What are you doin' today?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I got some bankin' stuff to do." He said, "Well, are you gonna be in town?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I'm gon' be in town.

Why?" I said—he said, "Well, I just got notification from the diocese office." He said, "This is the last day I've got to interview you for the diaconate." I said, "Well, okay." And so he said, "How bout you comin' up to the rectory about ten thirty or eleven o'clock?" And I said, "Okay." So, you know, I told Dottie, you know, "Me decidin' to stay home and bein' there and takin' that call. It was the last day—that was a step toward drivin' me there." So I went in for the interview and sometime shortly after that, we got a letter to both of us asking us to come to St. John's, to the seminary up here, for a meeting.

[03:14:55] Scott, we went up there, and there were people everywhere. And I thought, "Well, who in the world are all these people?" Course, a couple of 'em were from my hometown. I knew them. And we got—and then Father John was there. I saw him millin' around there, too. Well, we got an explanation. The bishop stands up in front of us, and he says, "Half of you all are not supposed to be here." He said, "We had two lists. We had a list of people that we wanted to recommend to pursue the program, and we had another list of people that we were gonna ask to maybe try at a later time." He just said, "The secretary melded both the lists together, and she sent an invitation for all of you to come. Half of you are not supposed to be here." [SL

laughs] And he says, "I'm not a-gonna stand up here and read out a list tellin' you which half of you's supposed to be here and which half of you's not. We can't handle all of you, so somethin's got to happen." And he said, "We gonna let time take care." So, golly, I'm just flabbergasted, you know. So Dottie and I thought—I was lookin' for Father John, and I couldn't find him, you know. So Dottie and I get in the car and that was back in 1978 or somewhere along in there, and we didn't lock up the churches then like we do now. [03:16:15] So I said, "Well, Dottie, let's just stop by the church on the way home here tonight and make a visit and ask the Lord to give us some direction on what we need to do." So we stopped by there and made a visit to the church and went on home. Well, about three or four days later, I thought, "I just gotta talk to Father John about this." So he's walkin' across from the rectory to the church one day, and he's always in a hurry, and I was pullin' up there for somethin', and I yelled at him. I said, "Hey, Father." He's a monsignor now. He wasn't then. I said, "Hey, Father." I said, "I need to talk to you sometime when I get a chance here pretty soon." And he turned around and looked. He said, "If it's about gettin' in that deacon program, I want you to stay in there." And he just kept walkin'. [*SL laughs*] Kept right on

walkin'. And so I stayed in there at—and I pursued it, and it was a three-and-a-half-year program. November the seventh, 1981, I was ordained what is called a permanent deacon for the diocese of Little Rock—that's my title—which allows me to do a lot of ministries. You—the bishop may or may not give you a faculty to preach. I was given the faculty to preach. I could baptize. I could have funerals. I could have rosaries. I could do everything but say mass and hear confessions in our faith.

[03:17:32] And as I may have mentioned to you earlier, or I don't remember whether we had it on tape or not—the blessing—one of the main blessings that's come along with it is, number one, Dottie was my strongest supporter and has hanged with me—the wives had to come to the meetings—had to come to up to St. John's one weekend a month. You'd come here and check in on Friday afternoons—evenings about six o'clock—and you left there at twelve, one, two o'clock Sunday afternoon. Had to do that once a month. We were leavin' our kids with our—my mother, which that opportunity of us livin' close together was a benefit to us, too, 'cause they went over there and stayed over there. But she was a driving force in me staying there and pursuing the diaconate. And I—I'll always be thankful to her for that. So I got ordained, and you know, I've done—opportunity,

as I said a minute ago, to baptize all seven of my grandchildren. And that to me is really a great thing for me. And I'm—you know, some people it wouldn't affect 'em or wouldn't bother 'em at all, but to me it's very touching. So I've helped keep 'em all in the faith and keep 'em with a Christian, loving attitude and that's—just means the world to me. [03:18:49] So that was a great experience. Again I highlight that by saying I think I was driven in those steps along the way by direction from the Holy Spirit and bein' pushed from one segment of it to the other and finally culminating into my ordination. And it's been great for me. I've had some wonderful priests that [*swishing sound*] I've worked with. And when I got ready to transfer to Little Rock, lo and behold, I was interested in Holy Souls because the priest from over there had lived in Pine Bluff—another priest—he was named Father David LeSieur and his parents still live there in Pine Bluff. And I asked the bishop for an assignment there, and he gave me an assignment to Holy Souls, and I'm still there. And when you're seventy-five years old, you have to turn in your retirement sheet, so I turned into my retirement letter—automatic retirement when you're seventy-five, but you can continue to minister if the bishop lets you. So we didn't have a bishop at that time, we had a—an administrator. And he wrote

me back a letter and said, "Keep on doin' what you're doin'." And [*laughs*] so I haven't been able to serve too much here lately with these various illnesses. I've had some eyesight problems and detached retina and a prostate operation and now this stinal—spinal stenitis. And so it's one thing or another, but Monsignor Royce Thomas is over there now. [*SL clears throat*] And he is a great guy—just befriends me in every way he can. So, you know, I'm just had—glad to have an opportunity to talk about that because that's been a pleasurable and a real milestone for me and my family in being . . .

SL: So . . .

TM: . . . a deacon.

[03:20:26] SL: . . . how many years have you been a deacon now?

TM: Since November the seventh, 1981, so that'll be twenty-eight years. It'll be twenty-eight years this November 7th. Twenty-eight years.

SL: Well, congratulations.

TM: Thank you very much. I appreciate that, and it's been—I . . .

SL: You should be proud.

TM: Well, I am, and I've had some great relationships with people. I've baptized—Scott, I get Christmas cards and stuff now from young kids that are twenty-four and twenty-five years old that I

baptized, and they'll have some note on there, you know, "Thank you for baptizing me" or just somethin' like that. I wish—you always look back on things—I wish I'da kept me a list of everybody that I baptized and everybody that I married and everybody that I buried, but I—in the flow of things I was just doin' 'em, and so there they were. I remember 'em when they send the cards. I remember who they are but if you told me, "Name 'em off," I couldn't do it, you know."

SL: Yeah.

[03:21:24] TM: That's great spiritually. That is extremely heartwarming to me, and I guess if this whole interview and anything is worth anything to me, it's worth the opportunity to tell that story 'cause I think it was a great story.

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

TM: I think it was a . . .

SL: It's a great story.

TM: . . . great story. Yeah. Yeah. "Don't feel worthy? You can go back" . . .

SL: Go back. [*Laughs*]

TM: . . . "there and get worthy."

SL: [*Laughs*] I love that.

TM: Yeah, okay. Yeah. [*Laughter*]

SL: I love that. Oh, boy!

[03:21:51] TM: So that took me to the diaconate, and that required a lot of my time. So in my whole lifetime I've sorta gone from one series of being deeply involved to another. I mean, I'd . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . get outta one boilin' pot and get in another pot, [*SL clears throat*] you know, that kinda thing.

SL: It's still that early stuff.

TM: And, you know, there's such a crisis out there [*SL coughs*] among people. I'll tell you another little story. After I was ordained for some period of time, our priest got sick. And so he had to go away to a hospital. And so we didn't have a priest durin' the week. We'd have one—I would bring one down from Little Rock with me on Fridays when I came home from workin' up here and on Monday mornings when I—and I'd stay till Monday then—on Monday mornings, I'd take him back, and he would say masses over the weekend. In the meantime, we had call forwarding on the rectory phone, and there were three of us deacons there in Pine Bluff [*SL sniffs*], and we would split the calls up. Like, on Tuesday night the call forwarding would go to my house, and Wednesday night it would go to yours, and Thursday night it would go to Brook's, or whoever, you know.



SL: Yeah.

[03:22:59] TM: So I never realized the kinda calls that the clergy gets all the time, all hours of the night.

SL: It's tough.

TM: We're talkin' about—yes, sir, it really is. People hurtin' out there, I mean—oh, just from one to the other—alcoholism, drugs, brutality, you know, spousal abuse. I mean, and they call you. They need some help, and it was an eye-opener. A real eye-opener. So you're always thinkin' those priests sit right there and watch TV like you do and go to bed and get up the next morning, okay? There were a lotta times they wasn't even goin' to bed. They were goin' to people's houses and meetin' 'em at the hospital and whatever. So I learned to really appreciate and admire the priesthood—from—in whatever denomination it is 'cause they're all . . .

SL: Servants.

[03:23:50] TM: . . . doin' the same thing alike. That's right. And there're folks out there hurtin'. And I've been fortunate enough to be able to help some of them in a small way. And then my association with the legislature, I've been able to help over there in the pursuit of some things that are necessary for mankind. One project that I help work on—it sounds so elementary if you

don't think about it a little bit—was getting the driver's license manual translated into Spanish. See, I mean, you never thought about that. A Spanish guy comes up here, and he wants to take the driver's test. Well, the book's in English, you know.

SL: Right.

[03:24:31] TM: He didn't know it, you know. So your question you ask yourself, "How would I like this if I'd gone to Mexico, and I need to take a driver's test, and they throw me a book up there with Spanish in it? What would I do?" And so I worked hard and worked hard with connections and contacts and all and finally got the driver's manual translated into Spanish. So now if you're Hispanic, and you wanna take the driver's test, you could come up and read a Spanish manual on the signs and all the other things that are there. Doesn't sound like anything on one hand—no tellin' how many people, you know, would've benefitted from that.

SL: Well, it's not just the people that benefit, it's the lives that are saved.

TM: Sure. That's another thing.

SL: [*Laughs*] Everybody knows the rules . . .

TM: Sure. Yeah, that's right.

SL: . . . that's drivin' out there.

TM: [*Laughs*] They know what that sign means.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

TM: Stop means stop. Yeah.

SL: Know when it's your turn.

TM: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: Know when it's his turn.

TM: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah, that's great.

TM: Yeah.

SL: That's big.

TM: That Italian word, "*Basta, basta*. That's enough, enough. Don't come any further. [*Laughter*] Stop!"

[03:25:27] SL: Well, now. [*TM laughs*] So let's talk a little bit about your parliamentarian role.

TM: Kay.

SL: Now so you came up here with a friend that—was he—had he become speaker?

TM: He was gonna be spea—he had been selected, but then they're officially nominated on the first day of the session. So the second Monday of January of 1973, he got sworn in as Speaker of the House and knew he was gonna be.

SL: [*Clears throat*] Now had he promised the position to two

different people?

TM: Yeah, in a sense he did—indirectly. This . . .

SL: Didn't mean to, but . . .

TM: Didn't mean to.

SL: . . . it came out that . . .

TM: The guy at one time had said, "If you ever get to be speaker, Mr. Turner, I wanna be your parliamentarian." He said, "Okay," you know, like that. And then . . .

SL: So he shows up.

TM: And then he comes to me and says, "I want you to be my parliamentarian," and then it surfaces, and there we got two guys. And he came to me and said, "Well, I'll just tell him, you know, I'm not gonna"—I said, "Oh, nah, nah, nah." Yeah, he was an elderly gentleman. Nice guy. I knew him, you know. I knew him. So that's the way we did it. And it was beautiful. It worked out just great 'cause I—you know, I didn't—I wasn't prizing the parliamentarian's position. I'm certainly not tryin' to belittle it by any means, but I didn't really come up here to grab a hold of it. I was comin' up here because Buddy Turner was my friend, and I wanted to help him and . . .

SL: Well . . .

TM: . . . he thought I could, and you know, I think I did.

[03:26:51] SL: Up to that point in time, had you ever been in the house?

TM: Well, yeah. I'd been up here.

SL: You'd seen . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . the house and . . .

TM: I—well, I was elected speaker of Boys State in 1949.

SL: That's right. That's right.

TM: Even though we didn't have sessions back then like we do now. Boys State now has a mock session.

SL: I know. I . . .

[03:27:08] TM: They didn't do it back then. But I went up to the podium and presi—you know, stood up there with some pictures and those kinda things, and so yeah, I'd been in the capitol, oh, I don't know, I'd—I'll take a guess and say three or four times by the time I came up here—half a dozen time, maybe. Oh, yeah, even more. I forgot. I had come up here some with my friend, Knox Nelson, who—to—who I spoke to you about earlier. He was a senator, and so he'd bring me up here. Sometimes I'd stay up here all day with him or somethin' like that, just for the heck of it. Kinda liked it and so . . .

SL: So . . .

TM: My responsibilities—you want to talk about . . .

[03:27:47] SL: Yeah, just tell me—what is a parliamentarian?

TM: Okay, well . . .

SL: What does he do?

TM: . . . first thing, I have about three titles over there, and [*SL clears throat*] they said titles are, you know, not worth very much and not—but they identify the things that I do.

SL: Okay.

TM: So until recently—until I passed this on to somebody else—I was called the coordinator of legislative services. We have a twenty-two-person staff over there, and so that staff was under me.

SL: Okay.

TM: And that staff does constituency services for members. They do media and press work for members. They take care of any charges that they've got over travel that's approved travel and all the kinda things that could happen. They got twenty-two people doin' that. Well, I was in charge of those, but in my old age here the last six months I've—I'm pushin' that over to somebody else. I'm what's called the administrative assistant to the speaker, and that means I help him with all speaker responsibilities—communicatin' with other state legislatures, communicatin' with other speakers, communicatin' with other

people about laws that they've passed that we might be considerin'—those kinda things. And then third, I'm parliamentarian. [03:28:56] And parliamentarian entails a knowledge of the house rules and preparing the—helpin' prepare the daily house calendar. Each day we have a house calendar of the items that we're gon' bring up. Those have to be prepared the evenin' before we start for the next day. I sit beside the speaker and advise him on the propriety of motions, whether they're proper or not, whether they're debatable or not, how many votes they take, and not that they wouldn't have the intelligence to finally work this all out themselves. It's kind of a two-person job up there. His focus is mostly on the legislation and the operation of the house, and mine is on the proper way to do it. And we wanna get—give everybody a fair opportunity and whatever, so to do that we gotta stay by the rules. So, you know, somebody'll say, "Motion," and I whisper to him a lot, and I'll just say—"Tell him, 'Let's hear it.'" And he'll say, "Let's hear your motion." And you'll say, "Well, I wanna move that we [*geese honk in background*] put this back on second reading." I say, "It's a proper motion, debatable." And he said, "That's a proper motion. It's debatable. You come down and explain your motion." So he'll come down explain it, and then we'll get

somebody else to stand up. And so I'm constantly talkin' to him and just really nothin' but bein' sure he doesn't say the wrong thing because when you get up there—and, like I say, when we start a session—each time we start one, I sit up there, and I said, "Mr. Speaker, odds are 99:2 [ninety-nine to two]." [*SL laughs*] "It's ninety-nine of them out there and me and you up here." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Be assured; they're all after us. You can bet your bottom dollar on that, one way or the other." So I tell the—and I also—I'm also in charge of orientation. And now under term limits, that has become a very important part of . . .

SL: Sure, it has.

[03:30:44] TM: . . . of what's goin' on—tryin' to teach the members what's happenin' and whatever. Orientation, I tell 'em, "Look, don't come up here and get all worried about changin' these rules because the rule you don't like over here today cuts you one way. Tomorrow it'll cut you the other way. Don't worry about changin' 'em. Learn 'em and learn how to apply 'em. Then you'll be a successful member. That's the way you do it. You can't change everything everyday where it's gon' fit what you want it to do." So I say, "The only person up here that's gon' vote like you want 'em to every time is you. You're the only one

that's gon' do it. So then you got to look at the rules based upon what's good for you and apply 'em that way and don't worry about changin' 'em." Most of 'em listen to me. Ever once in a while we get some that wanna change this—you know, well, those rules are not as easy to change as [*laughter*] people . . .

[03:31:35] SL: Well, now are the consequences if the rules aren't followed? Does the law get—can the law be stricken or . . .

TM: No.

SL: . . . can the vote be . . .

TM: If the rules are not followed, and nobody makes any objection, and we don't correct 'em, nothin' happens. It's just—that's . . .

SL: They get away with it.

TM: . . . referred to as a suspension of the rules is what it's referred to without really suspendin' 'em. The consequences of not following the rules would be if we didn't do something right, it could have—violate the constitution, or it could violate a state law, or it could do a lotta—for example, there are certain bills out there, depending upon what the subject matter of 'em is, that requires an extraordinary number of votes. Taxes on most things except the sales tax takes seventy-five votes. Well, if we declare a bill passed that got sixty-five, then there's—it's gon' be challenged somewhere, and then we're gonna lose.

SL: And you're gonna lose.

TM: You're gonna lose.

SL: Yeah.

[03:32:35] TM: So we're there to see that that doesn't happen. It's kinda like bein' a fire marshal. Well, you're tryin' to stop the fires before they start. I mean, you're tryin' to do things—the fire marshals go around and say, "Here, you need to do this. You need to do this." Keep you from havin' a fire. Well, we're sayin', "Hold on. You know, sixty-seven votes ain't—sixty-five votes not gon' get it. We need seventy-five. We'll just say that failed." "What do you mean, failed?" "Well, that requires seventy-five votes." Well, we gotta know that, and we gotta be prepared to do that.

SL: Sounds more like ridin' herd.

TM: Well, it is.

SL: [*Laughs*] And the . . .

TM: I guess you could put it that way in a sense.

SL: Yeah.



TM: But it's designed to make the process work, which is the same for everybody. That bill's gonna require seventy-five votes out there no matter who's handlin' it, and no matter what's goin' on, it's gonna require that. Motions that you make out there are

gonna require a certain number of votes no matter who makes the motion. Now occasionally, you know, somebody'll infer that something's partisan, and we show 'em the rule book here. "Here's where it says it right here. It says it takes sixty-seven votes. We don't care whether you're Republican or Democrat, it's gon' take sixty-seven votes. And if you get 'em, you got 'em. If you don't, you don't. It's just that simple." So it requires absolute vigilance. I mean, you got to stay right on top of all things all the time. You gotta stay—you gotta pay attention to what's goin' on, and you gotta know the priority of the motions, whether they're proper and whether they're not. The preparation of the calendar doesn't seem like much, but [*SL coughs*] Scott, there was a time when we didn't have a calendar. The calendar was in the speaker's pocket right in here. [*Pulls out envelopes from the inside pocket of suit*] And you . . .

[03:34:04] SL: And no one knew it.

TM: . . . said, "Mr. Speaker, I sure—I've got House Bill 1032, and I would like to have that on the calendar," and he'd say, "Okay." By the way, Scott, he said, "We"—and he's talkin' bout the leadership or somebody. "We've got this bill—House Bill 1210 that we need some help on," and said, "I'm hearin' that you can't help us on that." [*SL laughs*] "Naw, Mr. Speaker," said, "I

sure can't. My—I got some people talkin' to me. They don't want me to help on that thing." He said, "Whoa, I understand exactly like what you're talkin' about." And he'd put that piece of paper back in his pocket [puts envelopes back in suit pocket], and you ain't on the calendar, and you ain't gon' get on it, okay? [Laughs] That's the way it used to work. Now they're automatic there, but we've got to see that they're in a proper form, and they get—they got the right kind of committee report, the recommendation is correct—all those things gotta be right.

[03:34:53] SL: So when that gets correct, then they get applied to the calendar . . .

TM: Yes, sir. They—automatic.

SL: . . . in the order that they are . . .

TM: Yeah, exactly. All—the way they come off the sheets of the—we have what's called committee report. They read 'em across the desk, and the way they read 'em across the desk, if it's proper—if House Bill 1052 is right there [brushes finger across opposite palm repeatedly], and House Bill 1412 is right there , that's the way they go on the calendar.

SL: That's good news.

TM: Which is honest and fair for everybody.

SL: That's very good news.

TM: Yeah, that's right.

[03:35:20] SL: Now how did that come about? How did that change happen?

TM: Well, I guess we wanted to have—the members wanted to be more aware of what they were gonna be considerin' each day, and, then, so we get this—the rule is that the calendar for the upcoming day has to be on the desk the previous day before, upon adjournment. So we—when we adjourn on this day—today, for example—we gotta immediately get the calendar on the desks for the next day, so it gives the members all night long to look it over if they want to. They know what's gonna be on there the next day, and anything that's not on there, you're not gon' get 'em on there without passing a motion to suspend the rule and lie to get it on there, and we—a lot of times we don't even recognize you for that. You'll say, "Motion," and we'll say, "Let's hear it," and you'll say, "I wanna suspend the rules and bring up bill so-and-so," and he'll say, "I'm not gon' recognize you for that right now. We got a calendar. You get on tomorrow's calendar"—somethin' like that, see, and we just—we don't wanna surprise anybody because, generally, when you do that, you're tryin' to surprise somebody, you know.

SL: Well, at the same time though, the speaker—and probably you

are aware of—maybe you're hearing that everyone does want the rules suspended and you . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . suspect that . . .

TM: There are times that . . .

SL: . . . that this might be a good motion. There might be a reason to do this.

[03:36:35] TM: There are times that we know—there are times that we're in on what's goin' on, and we know that it's necessary to do it particularly toward the end of the session when we may have forgotten somethin' that needed to be done—maybe left an appropriation out for somebody, accidentally or whatever, and we know that's got to be taken care of, then we'll allow suspension of the rules. In fact we'll recommend it and recommend a person to do it. Most of the time we let those motions be handled by members of the so-called leadership team, and people recognize that if they know who they are. So if the speaker pro tem gets up there and makes a motion to suspend the rule to consider so-and-so, they're likely gonna let 'em do it because they know it's come from inside. You jump up there right out of the clear, blue sky and try to make one, and yours won't pass.

SL: Lesson learned.

TM: Well, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[03:37:27] TM: Yeah. So that's what I do, and that doesn't sound like much in one sense, but it requires a total concentration on what's goin' on and total knowledge of what's [*laughs*] allowed to be happening and what can't happen and those kinda things. And, like I say, it's 99:2. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, Tim, you came in, in what year?

TM: Nineteen seventy-three is when I came up there. I became the parliamentarian in mid-[19]75.

SL: And so you have seen [*TM laughs*] a lot of changes.

TM: Yes, sir, I really have.

SL: And we'll talk about fo—different personalities . . .

TM: M'kay.

SL: . . . in the house. But what in—what are the most dramatic changes that you've seen from [19]75 to the present day? And it—and I'm not talkin' necessarily about laws or rules or—but maybe things that are hard to define, like attitude or relation—how people relate or how the business is done and how that's changed. And number one, I'm assuming that you're a much better parliamentarian now than you were in 1975.

TM: Oh, we're all that way in anything we do.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah, no matter what it is. Sure.

SL: So you've gotten better.

Automated telephone caller ID machine: Call from . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: That's one thing.

KK: Hang on. [*Unclear words*]

[03:38:55] SL: So give me some examples of what you see.



TM: Okay. [*SL sniffs*] Well, the relationships among the members [*telephone rings*] are nowhere near what they used to be and simply because they don't have the time to develop 'em. I mean, you had people who stayed over there fourteen years, and they'd been around you for fourteen years—they know you better than they did when you were there four years.

SL: Yeah.

TM: And so those relationships between members have lessened. It is virtually impossible for a nonmember to come in there immediately and know and understand the whole process. It's too complicated. It's too diverse. It's just too many things. You can't—you have to take it in doses, and you have to understand it as most time as you're able to apply it because that's where

you get a better understanding of somethin'—being [*SL coughs*] able to apply it. So the members are—fall short under term limits, if you will, in knowing the process—knowing what to do—not makin' mistakes and so forth and so on. For example, one of the worst mistakes that a person can make over there is goin' down to the well of the house and talkin' the bill to death. See, those people over there, by and large, are educated people. You don't have to hit 'em over the head with a hammer. They understand. Those bills have been through committee. They've heard—they've read somethin' bout 'em in the press, and you don't need to go down there and do what we call overexplainin' it. So there's a certain time—I always like to say to the new members—there's a song out there, and it says, "You got to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em." You ever heard that song before?

SL: I have.

[03:40:22] TM: Okay. That's what you got to do on the house floor. You got to know when to talk, and you got to know when to shut up. And after—and you only have to be—you have to develop that. There ain't no written piece of paper that tells you how you do it. You gotta feel it [*slapping sound*], and you gotta know it, and you gotta know when to move out of there. You

gotta know when to stay there and take questions, and you gotta know when to walk off and leave 'em—all those things because it's difficult almost, Scott, on anything you present over there. Oh, the minimum requirement is fifty-one votes, and it's not easy to muster up those kinda votes unless people have some kinda understanding of somethin' that's goin' on. So you got folks that are against you and not for any reason except that they don't understand it, or they don't know it, or the guy that lives next door told 'em not to vote for it and just a half a dozen different things that would put you out. [03:41:33] But if you go down and explain it right, you know, and I may explain it a way where that you understand, and the guy next door to you's all wet, and he don't know what he's talkin' about, and maybe you better go ahead and vote for it anyway and then go home and said, "Look, ?lookey? what happened here." "Here—see, here's what this thing does." "Oh, does it? Oh, well, I didn't know that," because we get a lotta calls up there from people tryin' to call members that ask 'em to be against bills. And if a member calls 'em back, they'll say, "Well, what is it that you're against here?" "Well, I don't know. The AARP called me and told me to call in on y'all and tell you we don't like it." He don't know anything about it. Didn't know the first thing about the bill

or whatever, but he's just following somebody's direction or whatever. [SL vocalized noise] Well, a long time ago, they'd have time to penetrate those things, and now they're sorta stuck at takin' those people's word. They gotta listen to the lobbyists for whoever they're for—they're—that they represent. So . . .

[03:42:27] SL: Okay, so I'm hearin' two main points here . . .

TM: All right.

SL: . . . kind of shadowing term limits.

TM: Okay.

SL: One, it's virtually impossible for a newly elected official to come in and understand how the system works . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and to make use of it.

TM: Without a doubt.

SL: And they're gonna make mistakes . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and their constituents are gonna lose time.

TM: Yes.

SL: And then the second thing is they don't have the expertise or the time to know all there is to know about whatever . . .

TM: Whatever it is.

SL: . . . bill is out there . . .

TM: Exactly.

SL: . . . because they're still struggling to learn how to get it . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . how to relate.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

TM: Yeah.

SL: So that's two strikes.

TM: Kay. Then the lobbyists are over there, and contrary to what a lotta people think, they serve some good purposes. The good ones are good. They tell you what's good about a bill, and they'll tell you what's bad about it. They'll say, "Here's where" . . .

SL: Like Bob Lamb.

[03:43:16] TM: "Here—here's where"—Yeah, Bob Lamb's one of those. He'll say, "Now here's what [*SL brushes microphone*] this thing does. Now here's what my opponents are gon' say to you and blah, blah, blah," and here it is. Then you—then they'll look at you—you say, "You know, we appreciate you bein' with us, and we understand," and then he's leavin' it up to you to make a decision on what you wanna do. So they're gon' go out there and push for those things. You gotta know who the good ones

are and who's not. You can't learn that the first day. Can't learn it the first week because it depends on association and relationship and whatever, too. There's a lotta talk about lobbyists takin' people out and buyin' 'em a meal. You know what people miss in all that? [03:43:56] The purchase of the meal and all's got nothin' to do with what's goin' on. What they're tryin' to do is build up a relationship with this guy, so he'll at least listen to 'em. All they want is a door, so you let—"I want you to hear what I've got to say." Well, you do that a lotta times easier after you've been around a guy that you've had a meal with or you've socialized with, so you understand he's okay. He's not a bummer and whatever. And those relationships—those attitudes and stuff have to be developed. They're just not over there for you to walk in there and scoop 'em up like you would peanuts or whatever.

SL: Yeah. Well, and the lobbyists know . . .

KK: Scott?

SL: . . . more about the bill . . .

TM: Sure.

KK: Scott?

SL: . . . than anyone else.

TM: No question about it.

KK: You're leanin' in.

SL: I'm gettin' too excited here. [*Laughs*]

KK: I know.

TM: It's all right.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, it's exciting.

TM: Yeah, well . . .

SL: It's great material.

[03:44:43] TM: Well, that's good. Yeah. [*SL clears throat*] And so that's—those are some of the main things. The next thing, too, is they don't get to stay there long enough in six years to really capture hardly anything. We had an amendment—I say "we"—the legislature had an amendment out there one time that established [*SL coughs*] twelve years and twelve years, so you could serve twelve years in the House—a minimum of twelve years and/or twelve years in the senate. That was a good amendment. I wish we would've passed that amendment. That would have helped a whole lot. But right now without ?a reflection? on anybody or anything, we're out there with a legislature that's, you know, the most high-seniority guy out there now has got four-and-three-quarters years, you know. That's all he's got, and the lowest one's got one and three-quarters, and your expectation of them to pick up the budgeting

process and pick up the dynamics of the education formula—all those kinda things that go on—it ain't easy. It ain't easy. They can't learn—you can't teach it to 'em quick enough. There's just too much to it, and I suspect it would be the same way if I was thrown into physics. I mean, you could sit there and talk with me about it all day, and when we got through, I probably still wouldn't understand what we're talkin' about. And that happens over there until you can experience it, go through it yourself, and touch it, if you will.

[03:46:22] SL: Okay. Now here's a question. You've been parliamentarian for thirty-six . . .

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . years plus.

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: You came in—up there with somebody, and then you got asked again by the house . . .

TM: That's right.

SL: . . . the speaker . . .

TM: I serve at the speaker's . . .

SL: Pleasure.

TM: Yes, sir. I do.

[03:46:45] SL: So how is it that you've been able to serve so many

different speakers? I mean, it would seem to me that a speaker—well, first of all, the speaker of the house still is strapped to term limits. Is that right?

TM: Yes.

SL: So now you've got a turnover on the speakers that you . . .

TM: Yes, sir.

SL: . . . didn't used to have.

TM: Well, now what the speakers would do is they would serve that speaker before, but then when we didn't have term limits, they'd just run again and go back down there and sit in the body. They were—they would become an asset. Now when you're speaker you're not gon' be speaker over there until you're in your last term, so you're not gon' serve anymore. Once you get through with speaker, you're gone unless you run for the Senate, and those—there's not many—that many seats available over there.

SL: Well, I guess what I'm tryin' to say is is that all these speakers that you have served at their pleasure, you have somehow or another garnered enough respect and enough trust that they know that they can rely on you to be fair and to not favor one guy over another. And it would seem in almost every instance despite—now I've heard you say, "Now this was a good bill," which means to me that there's some bills . . .

TM: I very seldom . . .

SL: . . . there were some bills that were bad.

[03:47:50] TM: I ever seldom say that.

SL: I know.



TM: I would do that—I would say that to a legislator privately if he or she came into my office and closed the door and say, "What do you think about this bill?" Then I would say, "Well, just between me and you, I don't think it's too great." The reason that I do that in private is because I don't want to be talkin' against this guy's bill over here. I work for him like I do everybody else, and I certainly think—without expounding on it myself to any degree—I certainly think that honesty and integrity and respect and all are a salvation for a guy like me. I mean, you have to portray it, you have to live it, and you have to expect it, you know. My motto is I want my work to be valued by its service to others and not by its perceived importance. I want to be right. I'm a—"There's an important guy. He's a parliamentarian." Well, so what? And if you're wrong, and you're not servin' the people, what good does it do, you know. So I have—I think I have the respect and admiration [*SL clears throat*] of the membership over there, and strictly because I rule by the book and not by me and your relationship or whatever. I rule by the

book. I can—I jokingly tell the speaker sometimes—we're sittin' up there—we'll see a member or two on the back row or three, and they're back there [gesturing as if quickly turning pages in a book], and they've got a rule book leafin' through it and the— with the projection that they're fixin' to try to mess you up up there. And I said, "Mr. Speaker, I need to send a page back there with a note tellin' 'em if they'll tell us what they're lookin' for, we'll tell 'em what page it's on." [SL laughs] So in other words, you know . . .

SL: You were willin' to help.

[03:49:33] TM: . . . "You—you're either gonna be" . . .

SL: You're [laughs] . . .

TM: . . . "right or wrong. We're gon' help if you want to [SL laughs], but we're gon' cut your throat if you—if you're not. Well, we know what the rules are, and we're gon' stick with 'em." And you have to know 'em. You just have to know 'em, and it's just kinda like anything else, you know. Well, I guess you could compare—you take card players. There are better card players than there are others, and it's strictly because they concentrate. They know what's goin' on. They know what's been played. They know all that st—you sit there and jabber and fool around and all. ,They're gon' beat your socks off of you—that guy will.

He'll have all your chips whenever the sun goes down. And over there, we can't just play around and look around all like this.

[Quickly turns head in various directions] We gotta stay tuned in to what's goin' on and be honest about it, and I don't have a person over there, including the speaker or anybody else who's—[unclear words] that I would make a rulin' in favor of just because it was them. I wouldn't, and I'd tell 'em. [03:50:28]

Now there was an incident—I won't call any names—there was an instance one time when two guys were runnin' for speaker. Both of 'em were friends of mine, and normally over when they run, they're all friends there 'cause you develop some relationship with 'em. One of 'em was—could've been considered a closer friend than the other one simply by virtue that we lived in the same apartment complex, and we had some meals in the dining area together some. Just outright association and—but I [*SL clears throat*]*—we—I don't get involved in the speakers' races. I never recommended a person for speaker. Never will, you know, and didn't get involved in that one. But when it was over with, the guy that was supposedly my better friend—he lost. And the other guy who I was great friends with and still am friends—he won. So he comes in my office one day, and he said, "Do you mind if I close*

the door?" I said, "No." He closed the door. He said, "Have people been tellin' you that I'm gon' get rid of you?" I said, "Yeah, they sure have been tellin' me that." He said, "Well, I haven't been sayin' it." I said, "Well, no, I—you know, I didn't say it." I said, "I wouldn't know why you'd say it anyway." I said, "You and I have been friends, and we've never had any cross words." And I said, "I've never done anything to you or for you any"—but I said, "the choice for parliamentarian is yours." And I said, "If anybody up here understands that, it's me." And so, I said, "If you don't want to have me," I said, "well, you know, that's just the way it goes." And he said, "Oh, no," he said, "I'm not sayin' that." [03:51:55] And I said, "Well, let's get something clear." He said, "Okay." I said, "If I have to eliminate my friendship"—and I called the guy's name—"with the guy that you beat, so I can be parliamentarian with you, I don't want the job." He looked at me. He said, "I wouldn't have it any other way." I said, "Well, that's the way it is." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "If you want me, I'm here and whatever. But if you're tellin' me I gotta go kick him, and I gotta go stomp on him, and I gotta knock him, and I gotta lose friendship with him. No way. It ain't worth it. I'll just go to the house." And so he said—I said—and he is one of—I served with him, and he was as

good as it gets up there.

SL: Yeah.

[03:52:45] TM: Yeah. So those are the kind of things that I'm talkin' about. I'm saying you have to have some credibility, and the people have to know what it is and what you stand for. And your work's gotta be valued by its service and not by any other clutter, no matter what is, Scott. [*Claps hands*] What does it do? [*Claps hands*] Does it do it right? And that's it. I'm for bein' right. [*Laughs*]

SL: I know you don't wanna . . .

TM: I know this is self proclaimed—every bit of this, and I realize that.

SL: Still—you mentioned one of the favorite legislations—about the drivers' manual.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Drivers' test manual and . . .

TM: Right.

SL: . . . are there other landmark legislations that you're particularly proud of the legislature for? [*Claps hands*]

TM: Well, yeah. I—you know, I'm against abortion. And anything over there that keeps it that way, I support it. I do it privately. I don't get out and tangle on anybody's bills if they got one. I

don't hold anything against a person who puts a bill in there that's for abortion whatever, but I always have my hopes and my prayers. And my direction is to—I don't like it, and I don't want it.

SL: Yeah.

[03:54:03] TM: I'm basically against the death penalty, and I—we have it, and if we have it we're gon' live by it 'cause I'm a rules guy. I mean, that's what we're gonna go by. I wish we didn't have it. Those are just some things that I have some emotional feelings about but that I don't go out there and carry a flag or a banner, and I don't—they have a—I think our Catholic church, I think, sponsors—they have a anti-abortion walk or whatever every year or so, down from Main Street to the capitol—I've never walked in that. I don't think it's a place for me to walk in that. I'm over there, and I know where I am on it, and my walkin' down that street's not gon' help or hurt anybody one way or the other. It's just those kinda things. My helpin' with the drivers' licenses doesn't mean that I'm for illegal aliens, you know. That's—that not what that means. That means I—what it means is compassion for somebody who's in the proper position to be able to interpret what we're tryin' to do. It's those kinda things.

SL: Yeah.

TM: I could go on. [*Laughs*]

[03:55:11] SL: Well, what about stuff that the legislature has done?

I mean, are there things that you're really—I mean, are they—is there—what kind of other landmark legislation passes that you're really—you thought was really a good, good move for the state?

TM: Well, I think when we passed the lottery bill this time I think that was a good move. I know that there are people who say that, "Oh, that's gon' cause addictiveness among some people who gamble who are poor." And, you know, I have a—an opinion of that, and there are a certain amount of people that are gon' gamble no matter what. There's people who'll gamble on whether the sun's gon' come up tomorrow or not, you know, and just—and everything else in between. And you're not gon' stop 'em and as long as those availabilities are out there in some border areas where they either gon' drive there, or they gon' do everything—they run buses there, and so I thought that was good. I think it's goin' to help the scholarship situation. It's gon' help some kids that need—what's been happenin' really—this is a real quick summary—most of the scholarships been goin' a lot to the kids that didn't need 'em. I mean, the—they coulda kinda afford it anyway. And the poor folks down there on

the bottom—you know, they weren't gettin' 'em. Hopefully, you know, we're gon' be able to move that down [*SL clears throat*] some and pick up some kids who can get 'em, because now the only qualifications, I think, are gon' be a 2.5 [two point five] grade average. So if you've got a 2.5 grade average, you can get a scholarship. And that's the kinda thing we need to do.

[03:56:50] Now, admittedly, all the kids don't need to go to college. We—I think we know that. All of 'em are not gon' go, and some of 'em are gon' go and fall out or those kinda things. But the opportunities for a country that's a democracy—we need to make that available out there, and let's see what happens.

So that was good. The passage of the tax—tobacco tax to allow for the building of trauma centers to me was a very, very important thing. I think that's gonna reflect itself into life-saving, and we all look for great and wonderful care when it's us. You know, I was havin' prostate problems, and I had an operation, and it wasn't too successful, and I was—I had some clogging, and my doctor was releasing a cloggin', and there were some clots in there, you know. And I said—I looked down, and I said, "Wow!" I said, "That's a bunch of clots there, isn't it?" He said, "Oh." He said, "That's not many." "'Course, they're yours," he said.

SL: [Laughs] Yeah.

[03:58:00] TM: And [laughs] so that's the way we all are about anything. When our health is in jeopardy, then we want the best care. We want the best doctors. We want the best people. We want everything. And so why don't we try to provide that [SL coughs] out there in a open setting where it's available out there for everybody? If you need it, it's there, and if you don't, well, then God bless you for that. So, yeah, the trauma center—the tax was important. Tax on cigarettes—the smokers claim, you know, "You're comin' after us." Well, okay. You know, I'm one that—I smoked a lot in my life, and I've quit the last twenty, twenty-five years, and I don't think you oughta [ought to] be able smokin' to start with, so I'm not impressed by that argument. So . . .

SL: Right.

TM: And it depends on where you are. I mean, I think a person could sit here who smokes and try to make some good argument his way, and you know, we'd be bound to listen to it if we were the right kinda folks. We don't have to agree with it.

SL: That's right.

TM: Just tryin' to think. Those are some major things. I think we have a terrible school situation here, and I—I'm—all over the

state. I don't know what we're gonna do. We've got down to where schools have at least three hundred and fifty kids in 'em, you can't consolidate 'em. And that's good in one way because the schools in a lot of times are the life and breath of a community. I mean, everything centers around the school. The school shuts down, and all the other activity does, too. The other side of that is how do you provide the resources for classes and schools that's got a hundred and twenty-five or seventy-five kids in it, and one of 'em in there wants to take physics, and one of 'em wants to do something else? What—how do you get that kinda training to 'em and all? And it's a dilemma that I do not have—come close to anywhere havin' a solution for it. And it's terrifying to me because I don't know what we're gonna do. And we hadn't solved that yet by any means.

SL: Generally, though, we've gotten better, hadn't we?

[03:59:59] TM: Oh, yes. I certainly think so. I think we've raised the standards of our education. I think we've raised the standards of teachers up, and that's where it [*SL coughs*] all really starts right there, you know. Kids are not gonna learn any more than they get, you know, and you gon' get what you get from the discipline and the knowledge of who's teachin' you, you know. You know, you'd be much better off learnin' to play golf

from Tiger Woods than you would from me. [*SL laughs*] You know what I'm talkin' about? So that's kinda the way we are with the teacher situation.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a good way to put it.

TM: [*Laughs*] Yeah, well, you know . . .

SL: That kinda hits home.

TM: Yeah.

SL: I understand that.

TM: Well, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: And that nails it pretty good, doesn't it?

SL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

TM: I mean, yeah.

SL: It does. Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: That's good.

[04:00:40] TM: Yeah, he just got through winnin' ten million dollars, you know, and I—I've never won a dollar, you know, so . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Were you . . .

TM: . . . here we are, you know.

SL: Were—who would you want you to teach?

TM: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. But if you'll listen to me, I'll try to tell you how to play, but you better go talk to Tiger if you wanna play. That's . . .

SL: Now you might know the rules better.

TM: Oh, I might know. Yeah. [*SL laughs*] Well, I doubt that either. He knows the rules, too.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

TM: He's pretty well rounded.

SL: Yeah.

TM: [*Laughs*] That's good.

[04:01:05] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, do you wanna talk about—let's see now. So how many governors have you served through?

TM: Gosh, I—you know, I don't know. Let's see. I think—I'm tryin' to think—I think Pryor, I believe, was the governor, I think, in 1973 when I first came up here. And then—'course, then you can just name 'em. I've served in—under all the rest of 'em, so Bumpers was behind him, and then who was it—Clinton?

SL: Well, it went from Bumpers to Pryor.

TM: Oh, went from Bumpers to Pryor.

SL: Yeah.

[04:01:41] TM: Oh, Bumpers was first. Okay. Bumpers was here then when I came . . .

SL: Yeah. That's right.

TM: . . . in [19]73.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Okay. I know he was here in [19]71—in [19]73. So Bumpers and then Pryor, and then who was it then? Clinton? Was he next?

SL: I think that sounds right.

TM: Okay.

SL: No. Well, Frank White.

TM: Well, Clinton first though.

SL: Then Clinton. Yeah.

TM: Clinton served one term first.

SL: Clinton, then Frank White.

TM: And then Frank White.

SL: Then Clinton.

TM: And then Clinton again. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[04:01:59] TM: So I served under all of them. Had a outstanding relationship with all of them—with all the governors. I've had a—by and large, a good line of communication down there, mainly with the chiefs of staff. I—you know, we don't—peons like me don't get to [*SL laughs*] deal that much with the

governor, you know. I deal with the chief of staff, and he deals with me. And we're talkin' about process, procedure, you know, what's gonna happen and things like, "Are we gonna have a joint session?" You know, "Do we need one?" And "Are we gonna have us a special call session?" You know, "What do we need to go in to call? What do we need to be sure and stay out of it?" Just things like that. And we just talk just like you and I are talkin' right now, and then the decisions are made from those conversations. Take some of the recommendations and not take some of the others. And I'm used to that, you know, so I—we're gonna have a fiscal session [*SL shuffles papers*] this coming year, and I've already been a part of a team that's gone down and visited with Governor Beebe about it, and by and large, we're on the same page.

[04:03:13] SL: Now there's a pragmatic governor . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . I would say.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Wouldn't you? I mean . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . of all the guys that—he seems to be the most pragmatic . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . .of any of 'em that I've known or . . .

TM: Well . . .

SL: . . . been aware of.

TM . . . he's blessed with having a—just a superior knowledge of the legislative branch. And knows enough about the judicial branch, having been a lawyer, to be able to appreciate where they stand, and now he's in the executive branch, which is the other one, so I guess I would attribute to him that his knowledge of the three branches of government and how they operate are certainly a plus to him in knowing how far to get out there and where to turn left and where to turn right and so forth and so on.

[04:03:59] SL: He's also a guy that came from very humble beginnings.

TM: Yes. Yes.

SL: And earned . . .

TM: Yeah, it was like me.

SL: . . . earned his way . . .

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . all the way up. Worked hard.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

KK: We ?have to? change tapes.

[Tape Stopped]

[04:04:12] SL: [TM laughs] All right. So now, Tim, we've been talkin' about your role as parliamentarian. And before we fired up, you kind of gave a re-summary of that, and it was goin' down the lines of maintaining the integrity . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . of the house.

TM: Yes.

SL: And so let's talk about how that—maybe the—that has somethin' to do with the honored history of the efforts . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . that have been in that House, and at thirty-six years, you're really kinda the longest-serving [laughs] member . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . of that . . .

TM: That's correct.

SL: . . . institution.

TM: Correct.

SL: So let's talk about . . .



TM: Okay. Well, I think the—our democratic form of government that provides the three branches of government—equal

branches—and I think there should be an equal amount of respect and admiration from all people to all three of the branches, both the public and the membership of 'em and all. The legislature is an easy target, and it's an easy target because there's a hundred and thirty-five of them in the general assembly. So the phraseology can be used, general assembly, and you don't really know who you're talkin' about. If you say "governor," we know you're talkin' bout Beebe. And if you say "supreme court," you're generally talkin' bout Judge Hannah or one of the other six or the seven or eight members that are over there—whatever the number is. I think it's seven. Anyway, you kinda pin down a little more. [04:05:53] You say, "The general assembly," hundred members in the House and thirty-five in the Senate. Who are we talkin' about, you know, here? So it's easy to jump on them, if you will, for the public, the media, and so forth. But it's incumbent, I think, upon the membership to try to keep the integrity of that place to where you're not jumped on and don't do things that open the door for criticism and whatever. Admittedly, we can't do everything over there that everybody wants to do. I mean, it's just—that's just not the way life is. But when you know that you feel in [*crinkling sound*] your heart that you're doin' the right thing, that's okay. When

you do things over there out of spite or out of partisanship or out of any of those kind of things, then that degrades the integrity of the institution. And those are the things that I try to talk about and that I try to impose on the membership, that these are the things that you want to be aware of—that you don't want to get caught in these traps. [04:06:57] And I say a final thing. You're likely gonna stay here six years. Try to leave this place better when you leave here than it was when you came. If you'll do that, you'll be helpin' everything and everybody. Try to make it better when you leave than it was when you came. Not worse. Better. And to do that, then, you have to have some consciousness of what's goin' on around you and a fairness—doctrine of fairness, and you have to work towards that. And you—every once in a while, you need to step back and maybe take a look at yourself sometimes, you know. We're not always right. [*Geese honk in background*] So the integrity and the professionalism of the institution is extremely high priority for me, and I think it behooves every one of us—members and staff—everybody that's associated with it—to make that our number one priority to keep that level up there where it belongs and let the public have respect for you. Disagreement? Okay. Understand it. But respect—we need to have it from everybody,

and we need to give it before you can get it. I'm there. [*SL exhales*] That's as well as I can—I've devoted my life to that and—my adult life, anyway—and I'm not gon' change and, you know, I'm gon' stand for that no matter what, and I'm gonna stand up in my own way to any person or persons—members, nonmembers or whatever—who try to pull the place down unwarranted. Now if they got some reason or right or whatever to do it, then come on with it, and we'll just have to battle that out. [04:08:41] But just—well, you know, statements like, "Oh, legislators—they're a bunch of dummies!" Well, I'll tell you what, there's a lot of smart people over there—a hell of a lot of smart people over there, so they're not just a bunch of dummies. And so if we start wantin' to categorize the members' intelligence based on what they know, we could come up with subject matter that none of us in this room would have any intelligence on, but that doesn't mean we're dummies. It just means we don't know anything about physics, or we don't know anything about technology, or we don't know anything about environment or whatever it might be. That doesn't mean we're stupid. We might know a hell of a lot about taxes and, you know, how to run a convenience store or any of those kinda things. We might know plenty about that, so we all have a

niche—a place for us to be—and I think the house of representatives and the senate and the governor's office and the judiciary are what we're all about, and if we cut those up and splinter 'em and divide 'em and mess 'em up and all, we're goin' in the wrong direction. [*Makes clicking sound with mouth*] I'll quit there. [*Laughter*] I may start preachin'.

SL: Well, that's all right.

TM: Yeah.

SL: I like that. [*TM laughs*] I like that. That's . . .

TM: Well . . .

SL: I don't know if I'm just gon' let you get off quite that easy. I . . .

TM: All right.

SL: I—that—all that was well said.

TM: Thank you. It was from my heart.

[04:10:07] SL: You know, I was thinkin' earlier that you being in that room in the legislature—state legislature—sittin' up there next to the speaker, surveyin' that room and all the faces and all the things that everyone has worked on for all those years—there must be—there must've been moments in that cham—in that room that strike you as either the—just a really proud moment for them, for the room, and for the group.

TM: Yeah.

SL: I'm not talkin' about any one person . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . or maybe even any one bill, but there has to be some moments that really [*bumps microphone*] did something . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and you could feel it all across the room.

TM: Yes.

SL: Can you . . .

[04:11:10] TM: I can't really, you know, maybe identify any of those right now 'cause my memory is just not that good, but I know there have been times over there when everybody left there with a good feeling even if they—even if there were a few negative folks or whatever. And we normally don't allow outbursts out there of any kind, but there've been times when we've allowed applause for bills and not quelled it. Most of the time if it starts, we'll just say, "All right, let's quiet down. No applause." And the reason we don't like applause is because it's a reflection on—"They applaud for your bill, but they didn't applaud for mine," or this kinda stuff, so we don't wanna get that out there. But every once in a while, there's somethin' that touches us all out there that passes, or maybe it's even something that's gotten defeated or whatever. And it should have been, and it did that based

upon the integrity of all the people that were voting. And I don't—you know, some of those that we've named, like, you know, creatin' a trauma situation. That's one of 'em. You know, puttin' a tax on cigarettes—just had to do it, you know, and gettin' the teacher situation in a lot better shape—that—those kinda things. Those things have probably got some applause or were war—I wish I could, you know, think of some more of this, but I just—for some reason, I—nothin' really comes to my mind.

[04:12:34] But you're exactly correct. There have been times out there—when that day was over, you were proud that you were part of it. And the reverse of that is there's been some days over there when I wasn't too proud of the place and some—a bunch of its members felt the same way about whatever it may have been, and I don't have any examples of that, but you're exactly right. They've been there, and they're gon' continue to be there in an institution like that where there's openness and where there's democracy. That's what we gotta do. We gotta keep it open and fair for everybody and let everybody have their say, and then when we get down to the end of it, we can either applaud for its success or applaud for its failure, if that's what we tryin' to do. So I don't have a—

anything I can specifically identify right now, but you're exactly

right. That kind of emotion exists out there from time to time, and I have been fortunate to have been a part of that. I would venture to say that we have not gone through a session that I've been involved in that there wasn't some critical legislation that either needed to be passed or needed to be defeated, and both bodies of the general assembly came through with flyin' colors. That's happened about every session.

[04:13:53] SL: Do you think it's those moments that kept you there? I mean, what has kept you? I mean, you went up there, you know, it was kind . . .

TM: Yeah, come and gon' stay one term.

SL: . . . of a part-time thing . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you had all this other stuff goin' on back home and— but, somehow, there was something about being in that place got [*snaps fingers*] you.

TM: That had to be. That has to be it. I mean, the times that we do some good things and some things that are monumental for people's service to 'em, some way or other. Some—you've heard the statement—say, "Well, we got enough laws. They don't need anymore." Well, you know, you can make a case for that in one sense. In the other sense, the way times are

changing—the various technology situations that are being presented to us now, we've got to change with some things. We've got to do some things. And I've felt proud many times when the legislature has done what I thought was the right thing, and that kinda keeps you there. [*SL coughs*] I also—I guess, you know, you have to fess up, you know. [04:14:56] I think there's a certain amount of ego that's—creeps itself in there. You know, I feel like I know how to be the parliamentarian of the house. I feel like right now my health and my faculties, even though they may be waning, they're still at a degree where I can perform at the highest level. And many speakers have said to me, "I'd hate to think I was the next speaker, and you weren't sittin' up there." Whatever that means. I've heard that many times from many speakers. So I think maybe I feel like that I'm—again this is self proclaimed—I feel like I'm a credit to the institution, and I feel like people out there respect that I'm gonna be fair and that we're gonna have an honest shot at everything we'd doin', and I just think it's somethin' I wanna continue to do as long as my breath holds out. And I was sick there one time, and I came back a few after I'd had—I don't remember—some—I think it was some stent surgery or whatever it was. I don't remember what it was—so

the speaker was welcoming me back, and everybody stood up and applauded and whatever, and he said, "Do you wanna say anything?" And I said, "Well," [*SL laughs*] I said, "I guess I'm gonna die with my boots on." And I said, "I wear 'em best over here in the house." That was my—that was the way I felt.

That's—I guess that summarizes where I am, you know. I think that the institution deserves being run honestly and correctly and proficient and whatever, and I feel like right now that I can contribute to that. I can help it be that way, so that keeps me there. And I realize that, you know, a lot of that is personal, and it's a lot of ego, and you may find somebody that wouldn't agree with that, and that'd be okay, too. [*Laughter*]

[04:17:15] SL: Well, I think, keeping in mind that you serve at the pleasure of the speaker . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . and that you've been there this long.

TM: Yes.

SL: I think that record [*geese honk in background*] pretty much speaks for itself.

TM: Well, I hope that's some—there's some testimony involved in that.

SL: Yeah.

[04:17:30] TM: That story I told you about that speaker that I said I didn't wanna lose my friendship with the other guy.

SL: Yeah.

TM: He said, "I wouldn't have it any other way." And he kept me there, you know. So . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . that's . . .

SL: Well, what do you see in the future for the house and for you? Do you . . .

TM: Well, I'm still hopeful that one day—that we're gon' be able to change term limits some. I'm not speaking about doin' away with it, particularly 'cause I'm not sure that we—that we're in a state where we can do that, but I do think that we need to lengthen the amount some. And now that we've come into annual sessions, and one of them bein' a fiscal session, my concentration right now is really on that. I—we are not sure how that's gonna work. We realize that whatever [*SL coughs*] we do this upcoming fiscal session is gonna be precedent setting. We realize that we're settin' the road for the future so to speak, so we are—and we've had some meetings. Speaker has asked me to come up with some proposals for the . . .

SL: Language.

[04:18:45] TM: With carryin' out the language of the fiscal session, and most all of what I proposed, if not all of it, is extremely conservative because my attitude is—and a body's over there that big—a hundred and thirty-five people—that we need to start off on the conservative side. We can always loosen up. It's harder to tighten up. And this is gonna require the cooperation of the Senate in some of the decisions that we make because us doing something one way in one house and them doin' it another over in another house is gonna cause conflict. And so I have called to the senate under the speaker's direction, and I have talked with the leadership there, and they have agreed to pick a group of people like we have. We have an ad hoc committee of some members that are on the committee by virtue of the positions they hold. Like the pro tem and chairman of rules and so forth and so on. And invited them to do the same thing and "Let's us get together, and let's throw it all out here on the table. Let's find out what y'all like and what we like and what you don't and what we don't and whatever, and let's come up with somethin'." So I have an agreement that we're gon' do that. I'm wanting to do that before we get too close around to the session. I'm wantin' to do that, like, right now, you know. [SL *laughs*] Now when we're gonna do it, I don't know, and

hopefully, we will do it. But I think it's gon' require that, so the future holds for us a—an opportunity to do the fiscal session right. And if we figure out a—if they figure out a way where they can put nonfiscal bills in there without too much trouble or to amend bills that are in there with nonfiscal language or whatever, we're gon' run into a lot of problems because we've just got another session goin' is what it amounts to. [04:20:47]

So without divulging too many things—one agreement that the ad hoc committee that met with that I recommended was that every resolution that comes in there requesting the introduction of a nonfiscal bill is gon' get sent to Rules. It's a request to suspend the rules and let a bill go in. Rules is a pretty tough committee. They got some very penetrating people on there, and the negative thing you hear about it—they say, "Well, it's appointed by the speaker." Well, that's true, but it certainly doesn't say anything about the lessening of credibility of the people that are on there. I mean—so that's the point to argue, not who appointed him. It's whether or not they're credible, and they all are—all of 'em that are on there. So right now we think that's what's gon' happen, which means if you put a resolution there to introduce a nonappropriation [*SL clears throat*] bill, it may not get outta Rules is what we're sayin'. So we'll see. Now

if the Senate can agree to somethin' like that, it's okay. If they don't, we got problems. If they open a floodgate over there, we stop all the opportunities to put nonfiscal bills in on our end, and they let 'em flow through like water, what happens?

[04:22:07] SL: Nobody gets anywhere.

TM: That's right. So I am—my concentration right now is on that fiscal session, and like I said, hopefully I think that we'd change term limits one of these times, but that's not on my front burner right now. My front burner right now is this fiscal session and to try to do [*cell phone rings*] what I think the public envisioned that it would be, which is budgeting annually instead of biannually.

SL: You know, you said one thing that really caught my attention. It's easier to start conservatively . . .

TM: Sure. I think so.

SL: . . . and to loosen up than it is to start loose and tighten.

TM: I think so.

SL: I mean—well, it—I sense that you've seen that—you speak that way because you've seen it.

TM: Yeah.

SL: That it flows that way. That it flows . . .

[04:22:58] TM: With a hundred and thirty-five people over there, if

you loosen it up, somebody likes the looseness of it, and they don't wanna change—they don't wanna tighten it up. If you tighten it up, and it's tight as it can get already, then we can kinda agree on backin' off a screw or two and then . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: . . . loosen up. So that's my attitude, and the speaker agrees with me. I'm not tryin' to speak for him, but he does. So, again, as I said [*SL coughs*] earlier, we recognize that this is gonna be precedent setting and that we need to be in the saddle. We need to be.

SL: Sounds like you're gettin' ready to dot every *I* and cross every *T*.

TM: Well, yeah. And that's a good way to put it. That's exactly what we're—that we're trying to—and naturally, we're probably gon' miss somethin' because it's almost impossible to think through every kinda scenario that could possibly come up, but we—those of us who've been around a day or two are familiar with some of 'em, and we smell 'em, and we know where they are, and we see if we can stop 'em up before they get—hit the floodgate.

[04:24:01] SL: Well, here you are again, you know, you've got all these years of work that you've done, and you've got some health issues right now and . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: But here you are—you're thinking of the next thing to do.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Just like you've done . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: Just like the way you were raised . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the way that you've performed all your life.

TM: Yeah.

[04:24:24] SL: It was just one thing after another.

TM: It's ingrained in me, isn't it? Yeah.

SL: [*Laughs*] It's just the next . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . thing to do.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: You've already got your . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . sights set on what's ahead . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . and how you're—and you're already workin' on it.

TM: Yeah.

SL: You're already at work.

[04:24:36] TM: Exactly right. That's exactly right. I—and I was doin' it in my own mind, and then it was capped by the speaker comin' to me personally and asking me if I didn't mind to dictate—I mean, to dedicate my thoughts towards that special session and come up with some plans, and I have done that, and we'll see . . .

SL: How it floats.

TM: . . . what happens. I'm not ready to expose 'em all yet, but . . .

SL: Well . . .

TM: . . . they're . . .

SL: . . . I respect that.

TM: We'll either see 'em sooner or later.

SL: I respect that . . .

TM: We won't . . .

SL: . . . and I also understand that.

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Well, let me see. I had another thought about this. Oh. Is there anything you want to say about your staff and the folks that you . . .

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . work with every day . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . no matter who's in the chamber, or you know, as the elections go, but your staff. And I know you probably have turnover in some of it may . . .

TM: Not very much.

SL: Not very much?

TM: Yeah.

SL: Well, see, that speaks well . . .

TM: Kay.

SL: . . . of the office.



[04:25:47] TM: Well, they're—well, right now [*SL sniffs*] the speaker is changing the communications office around some, and we have a consultant over there who's been runnin' an audit, and he's been interviewing some of our staff people and goin' interview members and whatever. Ironically that you would bring that up, he came and visited with me—I think it was one day toward the end of the week. He said, "I wanna tell you somethin'." He said, "I've interviewed a half a dozen staff people over here." He said, "I have never been in a place where the people enjoyed workin' any more than they do here and how much respect that they have for the institution, for you, and whatever." And I went over to tell him, "Look—you know, I think they know where I stand on everthing. [04:26:37] I try

to be as compassionate a administrator and co-worker as I could be, and when you start messin' up and violatin' things particularly more than one time and stuff that we've talked about, you're comin' in here, and we're gon' have a sit-down. And I'm generally gon' start off by saying, 'The reason we're in here is on account of you, not me. Now I don't get up in the morning makin' me a list of people that I want to come over here and rap their knuckles about, so you ain't on no scheduled list. But you've messed up [*SL laughs*], and here's what we got to do to fix it. And you gonna fix it, or we're gonna let you go.'" These are all privileged positions over here. There's no position over there that's got any merit deals to it or whatever. They're all patronage. Everybody over there works for the speaker and the House Management Committee. Everybody over there. And occasionally we've let a person or two go, and they deserve it. So I'm appreciative of the respect that they have for me, that I am considered over there, and I don't mind takin' this. I'm considered hard boiled, but I'm considered fair, and that's really all I want. I don't mind 'em callin' me hard boiled 'cause I am. [*SL laughs*] [04:28:10] With that House floor right there—when somethin' malfunctions on the House floor, we gon' find out why did it—we're gonna find out where the buck stopped and how

come it stopped—and simply because we're charged with the responsibility of dealing with the law out there that affects the lives of all kinds of people everywhere, and it's gotta be right. We're not doin' any guesswork, and we're not "maybe this" and "oh, okay to that" or "oh, that's all right. Let that go," and we just don't do that. We got a procedure to follow. We got the law to follow. We got the constitution to follow. We gon' follow 'em all. And when you drift from 'em over there, you make Timmy mad. [*SL laughs*] And when I don't like it [*SL laughs*], then we gon' have to talk about it. So that's kinda the way we are. But I am extremely proud of every single person who is over there workin' right now. There are some outstandingly dedicated people over there. [*SL sniffs*] And they're especially—all of 'em really but two of 'em, three of 'em especially. I mean, my assistant coordinator and my secretary, a gal named Kay Donham is unbelievable. We have a guy who's over—in charge of all the properties, and he's in charge of the janitorial aspect, and his name is Lennon Jones. He's unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. They do anything you ask 'em to do. They never gripe. They're always there early and stay late. I don't like clock-watchers. I don't like 'em. And I think we got a job to do. We're salaried people over there, and our salary says, "You

don't—we're gon' stay here till we get it done." And I have compassion for particularly females that have children that they need to go check on and do things sometimes when we're late. We work out—we try to work out everthing that we can do. And I respect every one of them. I think they respect me, and I think there's—most all of 'em out there have a certain amount of fear of me, and I think we need that. [*SL laughs*] I sorta fear the house of representatives and the speaker, so we all got that. That's a form of respect.

[04:30:10] SL: You gotta serve somebody.

TM: That's right. So, yeah, I—and I am extremely proud of them. I—and well, you mentioned turnover. We just don't hardly have any turnover hardly.

SL: Even from speaker to speaker?

TM: Oh, the speakers turn over.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah.

SL: But does . . .

TM: Oh, no. You mean people . . .

SL: Does your staff turn over . . .

TM: Oh, no.

SL: . . . with each . . .

TM: No. By and large, the speakers let us manage that.

SL: Manage their . . .

TM: And they just say . . .

SL: . . . your service.

TM: . . . "Hey, you know, [*SL coughs*] we want it to run right. Keep us out of trouble. Don't let us get in any problems." So we've picked the best people, and if we haven't, then we're gon' pass 'em by us first and say, "Hold it here. You gotta do a little bit of tightenin' up here."

SL: M'kay.

[04:30:54] TM: I know one employee—time we started the session out there, and they weren't there at their spot out on the House floor, so we progressed on there. And, course, I notice that stuff pretty quick, you know, so I started checkin' around to—where the person was. Well, they started lookin' for the person and whatever, and after a while they found the person. [*Ducks quacking in background*] And so then we went on and finished that day, and when the day was over I asked the person to come in my office. So I closed the door. I said, "What was the reason [*ducks quacking in background*] you weren't out on the House floor when we convened today?" Well, they gave me the reason. I'm not gon' tell you what it was 'cause it'd probably give away

who it was. So they told me. I said, "Well, you—do you think that's an acceptable reason?" "Hmm. Well, no. Not really." I said, "What would make you think that it would be permissible for you not to appear on the House floor when we start? Do you have something that you can show me that—you know, that you said, "This is a reason why I—I'm gon' tell you that for a reason," I said, "'cause when we start, the speaker's there, and I'm there, right?" The person said, "Right." I said, "Now you tell me why you shouldn't be there? I want to hear what you got to say." "Well, I don't have any reason." And I said, "Well, no. You couldn't have 'cause if the two primary people who are responsible for the function of the house are there, then you as a less functionary down here and then you—you're not here, you're just decidin' yourself whether you wanna be here or not." [04:32:31] I said, "Look, don't miss again because the next time you miss, you can go on home. I won't have to tell you. You can just go yourself. We'll mail you your check." They understand that, and you know, you can call that hard if you want to, or you can call it anything you want to. I'm sayin' that you can't operate an institution or a business or whatever unless you have perimeters and guidelines, and people understand what they are. They know out there they're supposed to be

there when that gavel ra—they know they're supposed to be there five or ten minutes before the gavel raps. They've been told that. That's part of their job. If you don't show up, what is it? It's defiance. It's got to be. What else could it be? You know better than us, so—"I'll stay there and come fifteen minutes late." Who's doin' your stuff while you're not there 'cause soon as we start, we're gonna start doin' stuff, and it's gon' pass all around in there and go to different folks and here and there, and it's just like a assembly line of automobile part. You know, if you ain't there to put the starter on, it goes to the assembly line—it ain't gon' have no starter in it, is it?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[04:33:38] TM: Huh? If you're out there and stuff passes around, it gets by you, and you ain't there, whatever your action was on it ain't gon' be there. So if we didn't need it to be there we would need you here. Inasmuch as you got you here, then we need you to be doin' what you're supposed to be doin'. They understand it, you know.

SL: Yeah.

TM: It just takes a little talkin' to. So I'll say it again—I mean, I'm—I think that there's something in that [*SL coughs*] book in there bout that, too, that—you know, that they think I'm hard nosed,

and I think I am, too. [*Tapping sound*] And I mean to be,
so . . .

[04:34:15] SL: Well, as long as you're hard nosed with everybody.

TM: Fair. That's right.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

TM: Exactly right. And it wouldn't make any difference who that person was, if they didn't show up the next mornin', they'd fall in the same consequence. They'd be in there, too. Yeah. And I've named you a couple of people there a while ago that are excellent workers and all, and it wouldn't be them because they're not that way. But if it was, they'd be there just like anybody else would.

SL: And they'd know it was comin'.

TM: Oh, sure.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Sure, they know it.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Sure, they know it.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Sure. Well . . .

[04:34:39] SL: Well, it is an honor to be in that chamber.

TM: Well, yes. It really is because we can find plenty of people that

wanna be in there, you know. That's not any problem. And those jobs over there are pretty well-paid jobs, and so we can find people to take them with the knowledge and the intelligence necessary to do 'em. So, you know, we're not scared that we can't fill our positions. So [*SL exhales*] . . .

SL: Well . . .

[04:35:08] TM: But you gotta be appreciative of the [*clunking sound in background*] place you're in. Like I say, you know, it's cool in here in the summer and warm in here in the winter. It don't rain in here, you know. Those kinda things so [*laughs*], you know, you got a lot goin' for you, you know. [*SL laughs*] Mh-hmm. [*Laughter*]

SL: I like that. [*Laughter*] Well, Tim, is there anything else about your job all these years or about the institution that you wanna say before we move on to . . .

TM: Well, I just wanna be emphatic one more time in my sayin' . . .

SL: Okay.



TM: . . . I want my work to be valued by its service to others and not by its perceived importance. That's—that statement is important to me. I didn't coin that myself. Like I said, one of those brilliant guys that's always comin' up with good words like Franklin or Winston Churchill or Thomas Jefferson or Abe Lincoln.

One of them might've said that. I think somebody else said it, but it fits where I am, and I want that to be the hallmark of what I'm all about. I wanna be a servant to those people that I'm workin' for—wanna do it right, and I want the value to come from that and not what—"Oh. Oh, he's the parliamentarian." So what? If you're a bum parliamentarian, so what? If you're not doin' anything to help anybody, so what? So I want my work to be valued by its service, not its importance.

[04:36:38] SL: Do you think that you—I mean, you got into this thing and—was there anybody that you could pattern yourself after? I mean . . .

TM: Well, not in the details of [*SL sniffs*] being parliamentarian as such. [*SL clears throat*] I think I could pattern myself out of some people and their characteristics, like the guy that brought me up here Buddy Turner. I mean, he's got—hey, he's deceased now, but he had some of the same characteristics I've got—that I claim to have. He was honest. He wanted to do things right. He was a man that wanted to play by the rules. He was chairman of the rules committee at that time. And I—he was certainly one—and he—I think—you know, I never really asked him this—I think he saw those characteristics in me, and sometimes when we see paralleling characteristics in other

people like, we have—we kinda like 'em, you know what I mean?
[04:37:41] We sorta embrace 'em or whatever. And so he and I just were always the best of friends. And his son and my son played baseball competitively and whatever, and they were always—he and his wife, who's named Sue—she's still alive—were just nice people. Got along great with Dottie and me and our kids and whatever. So, yeah, I think, you know—I think he was—he had a lot of the characteristics. And there've been many members who've come—and I don't wanna call, you know, too many of 'em, but there've been a many members—some of 'em that served there as long as thirty and forty years that were really top-notch people. Jim Shaver from Wynne and John Miller from Melbourne. Ode Maddox, who's deceased now, from Mena. Doc Bryan from Russellville—just folks like that that I—you know, they were institution folks, and they had high character. And if they told you somethin'—what's that—there's some kinda sayin'—how do they say it? Said, "If he told you that a rooster dipped snuff, look under his wing for the can 'cause it's under there." So that's kinda the way they were. Whatever they told
[claps hands] you . . .

SL: You could take it to the bank.

[04:38:54] TM: . . . you—yes, sir, that was it. That was it. That was

it. Yeah. [*Smacks lips*] And those're just a few. People that come to my mind, real quick—John Paul Capps, Ernest Cunningham [*raises and lowers both arms*], I mean, Lacy Landers, Bobby Newman. I could just go on. I'm talkin' bout—every one of those people I'm namin', I'm talkin' about high-caliber folks that you'd tie to any minute. Yeah. And if they're with you, you know, they'd stay till they bled. Yeah. [*Raises and lowers both arms*] My kinda folks and good, bad, or indifferent.

SL: It's—it must be hard to see the good folks have to step out 'cause of the . . .

TM: Sure.

SL: . . . term limits.

TM: Well, see, it's difficult for a person like me to make a case against term limits because the truth of the matter is it does bring in some new good people. I mean, who could argue that? Other side of it is it runs out . . .

SL: The same good people.

TM: . . . a bunch of good ones, too.

SL: Yeah.

[04:39:51] TM: That's right. So, you know—and so lettin' the experience be a criteria, we're better off with longer-servin'

people, then they'd have the experience and would probably do a better job. Well, I—you know, I try to equate it to a surgical physician. You know, when a guy starts to operate on me, I don't wanna be his first operation, you know what I mean?

SL: Or his fifth.

TM: I'd just as [SL laughs] soon be his thousandth or two thousandth or whatever.

SL: Right.

TM: I'd just as soon he'd done it before. And I guess it's the same thing with a legislator. I think we're better off when they've done some of it before.

SL: Mh-hmm. [Sniffs] Anything else you wanna talk about?

TM: I—nothin' particularly comes to my mind, I guess. I—you know, I guess it probably shows that I have been proud of my years over there, and again the stuff that I'm talkin' about, it's self proclaimed. I think that I've done [SL coughs] a good job. I think I've been fair. I think I've served every speaker that I've worked under to his or her—his satisfaction. Haven't served under any member—any females yet. And I think I am respected over there, and I respect the membership that's over there. I have different level of degrees of respect for different ones, but I respect 'em all because, one thing, all of 'em had the

courage to want to run, and then they had [*SL coughs*] what it took to win. And so, you know . . .

SL: That says somethin'.

TM: . . . there's some credibility that needs to be allocated to that no matter what happens. So, you know, I think it's a wonderful institution and I—I'm thankful to God for the opportunity that I've had to serve over there, and again, I thank—and, in fact, he's deceased—I thank Buddy Turner for havin' the courage, if you will, to bring me up there, and then I wasn't intendin' to stay, and here I am. So that's—you now, that says . . .

[04:42:06] SL: Well, Tim, I gotta say I don't think there's anybody that feel like they couldn't thank Mr. Turner themselves for what he did . . .

TM: Hmm.

SL: . . . for the state. I . . .

TM: Well . . .

SL: It just worked out that way.

TM: Yeah.

SL: Just worked out to be a good move and a good and a right man at the right time and . . .

[04:42:23] TM: Oh, I think—yeah, I think there was a lot of that in it. And I think—you know, I think—you know, I think we all

have a mission, you know. And I think you're—you doin' well in yours, and I think I'm probably complying with mine as best I can. You know, I've heard the statement before, and I would hope that me and/or you would fall in this category. You know, I think you probably heard this, too—they say, "Well, he or she was born for the job." [SL laughs] You've heard that before.

SL: Yeah.

[04:42:55] TM: Well, I hope that me and you both are considered being born for the job because I consider myself that way and you, too. You're an excellent interviewer.

SL: Oh . . .

TM: I've felt very comfortable sittin' here. I didn't think I was gon' talk very much when I was planning to do this, and I'm havin' trouble bein' quiet, so [laughter] . . .

SL: Well, see, that makes me look good, though.

TM: Well, you're doin' good. [SL laughs] You're squeezin' in there and gettin' stuff out of me.

SL: [Laughs] Well, you know, this is—you know, Barbara and David Pryor felt like it was time for . . .

TM: Hmm.

SL: . . . people from Arkansas to tell their own stories instead of someone else tellin' . . .

TM: Yeah.

SL: . . . 'em for 'em.

TM: Yeah.

SL: And that's all that we're tryin' to . . .

TM: Well, I'll say . . .

SL: . . . do is . . .

TM: . . . this to you. You called me, and I knew who you were. And I have the greatest respect and admiration in the world for David and Barbara Pryor. And I have an equal amount of admiration for Mark. And one of my sons works for Mark, and I'm not saying that because he does—I think they're a pretty good team. And—but the Pryor family and I have had some great relationship. I probably wouldn't have considered doin' this under maybe any other circumstances. I'm—I have not been out there seekin' attention. And I'll tell you a little story about that.

SL: Okay.

[04:44:27] TM: A TV—one of the TV stations—well, two things happened. One of the TV stations wanted to portray me out there in my responsibilities with the house and all that, and I told 'em that I didn't wanna be interviewed, that I left that to the members had to run for re-election. They had to satisfy their


constituents, and that they're the ones that you need to interview and not me. Well, they couldn't understand it. They had said somethin' on TV about it. Said, well, "First guy we ever ran across that didn't wanna be interviewed," or somethin' to that effect, you know. So that happened. So then not too long ago, this guy with one of the TV stations—I think it's Channel 7—I think his name is Ingram—Scott Ingram. Is that a name?

SL: Okay. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[04:45:10] TM: Okay. Well, he called me up, and he said, "Mr. Massanelli," he said, "Channel 7 has selected you as their person of the week." They have some kinda person-of-the-week thing. I'm not sure what he's talkin' bout. You—and he said, "We wanna come out and interview you." And said, "Well, you know, I appreciate it, Scott." I said, "I"—you know, I said, "I—I'm really not interested in that. I want the focus out here to be on the members." And, "Oh, Mr. Massanelli, this is a great honor." I said, "Well, I'm not denyin' the honor." And I said, "I don't wanna belittle the honor at all, and I don't." And I said, "And I appreciate it an all," but I said, "Scott, I'm not gonna do it." So I don't know, it was the next day or whatever. I'm in the speaker's office, and I said, "Mr. Speaker," I said, "Scott Ingram called me and wanted to me to be the person we"—"Yeah, you

get down there and do that." He said, "Oh, yes." "No. I already told Scott no, and I'm tellin' you no. [*SL laughs*] I'm not goin'." I said, "Now he can get you." And he said, "Well, they didn't pick me." I said, "Well, they will. Just give 'em time."

[04:46:09] But I—so my point in all this is I don't care for that kinda thing. I—you know, who am I tryin' to impress? Am I gon' be a better parliamentarian in the next session because I got selected as a person of the week? Am I gon' do a better job because I got interviewed by some TV station to show it out [*unclear words*]. No, I'm not—that's gonna help me, you know. Not that I'm lookin' for any help, I just don't think it fits. Wherein my role is not to be out front. When we're up at the podium, I don't do any—very little talking up there. On occasion when something requires an explanation that's maybe lengthy or whatever, the speaker'll say, "Mr. Parliamentarian, will you explain that to 'em, please?" And then I'll go ahead and ex—otherwise, I'm like this—"Proper motion," "Not debatable," "Two-thirds of a quorum," and just stuff like that. And that's where—



that's what my role is. I'm happy there. I never wanted—somebody said, "Well, you oughta run for governor." Why, golly, I wouldn't even run for constable. I mean, I've never run [*SL laughs*] for anything, and I don't intend to ever run. I never

had that desire. I liked a-workin' in the back. Some people jokingly said, "Well, if you ran for somethin', you'd have to give up power if you did that." [04:47:26] Well, I never really looked at it that way. [*Laughs*] It's not a matter of power with me. I don't know what rulin' on the rules in a correct fashion—how it becomes powerful. That's just truthful is all it is, and that's the way it is. So that's where I am, and I—I've enjoyed my role in being an advisor to [*unclear word*]. My advice is asked a lot over there. I'm just sharing that with you. It's asked quite a bit on matters that range from *A* to *Z*. [*Someone coughs*] And when I do give advice, I close the door, and it's just me and that person takin'—talkin', and I let them know that "This is a personal opinion of mine that has nothing to do with anybody else, whether you're a proponent of it or an opponent of it or whatever you're doin'. Whatever it might be, it's just me and you. You're askin' me what I think, and I'm gon' tell you what I think. Now if you don't wanna do what I think, don't think that's gon' make me lose any sleep because it's not. You just do then what you think's right. When you gather up enough information, asking various people's advice, including mine or whoever, then you make your decision based on that. If it happens to be the opposite of what I said, that's fine, too. As

long as you're comfortable with it, then I'm gon' be comfortable with it." And that's the kind of way I give advice. [04:48:47] If you come in and talk to me—and I've had this happen—people come in and say, "Tim, I've got this bill here on the calendar, and they're gonna try to do so-and-so to it. I've heard—I've heard they gon' do—try to do so-and-so. What do I need to do—stop 'em?" And I'll tell 'em, "Well, you need to—soon as we get there, you need to make a motion, and you need to do this, that, and the other." And it won't be five minutes—sometimes it just happens—just works this way—somebody'll come in, and they'll say, "Hey, Tim, ol' so-and-so's got this bill up here, and here's what we gon' try to do [*SL coughs*] to it. What do I need to do to do it?" And I say, "Here, you gotta do this." Then I always tell 'em all then—I said, "What this place boils down to up here is votes. When you got 'em you got 'em, and when you ain't you ain't. And so you gon' pull off your scheme if you got the votes. You're gon' block 'em if you got 'em, whatever it is. I'll give you both an avenue how to get there, and then you see if you can do it." [*Raises and lowers arms*] They always thank me . . .

SL: That's fair.

[04:49:46] TM: . . . and they'll come back later and say, "Now you

told me. You told me." You know, it's just amazing. I know there was one instance where some member was gon'—[unclear words] had some confusion about what he was gonna do in committee. I said, "Well, you need—to pull the thing down you need to do this, that, and"—"Oh, no! I'm not gon' do that, or they're gonna"—I said, "Well, do whatever you wanna do." I said, "You know, that's what I think you need to do." Well, he finally got to thinkin' about it, and he did it. He came—he said, "You know what?" [SL laughs] He said, "You saved my bill. You saved my bill." He said, "If I hadn'ta done what you told me to do—which I thought was dead wrong." He said, "Yeah, I woulda lost my bill." And I said, "Well, okay. Thank you very much. Appreciate it." So that's just an example of he was so right that he was right. And I'm not sayin' I am all the time, but he came back and said, "If I hadn'ta done what you told me to do, I'da lost my bill."

SL: Well, it—in all fairness, it's also—he did what you suggested that he do, and he had the votes.

TM: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

TM: Oh, yeah.

SL: I mean . . .

TM: Well, naturally.

SL: But . . .

TM: But what I suggest he do . . .

SL: . . . you opened the gate for him . . .

TM: . . . was the most sensible thing . . .

SL: . . . to use that power. Yeah.

TM: . . . for him to get the votes.

SL: Yeah.

[04:50:51] TM: I mean, a lotta times, you know, you're gon' get 'em based upon their sensibility, you know. And their practicality, you know. People don't just vote out there just 'cause, you know, you're a good ol' boy. That—that's not happenin' very much. But I can't think of, you know, anything else I've enjoyed all my years and I—you know, I feel myself I guess waning some. And I thank God for one thing. I am still in—far as I know, anyway, I'm still in complete charge of my faculties. I don't remember as well as I used to, but I know what's goin' on, and so my mind is okay. And as long as I'm physically able to go back and forth over there, and as long as I'm wanted, then I'm gonna continue to stay over there. And I've been told that that's fine with everybody over there.

SL: Well . . .


TM: Includin' the people that work with me.

SL: . . . I think it's probably fine for the rest of the state, too.

[04:52:00] TM: I had a nice office that adjoined the speaker's—had a door in there—and when I was tryin' to give up a few of these responsibilities, [*SL coughs*] particularly administrative ones dealing with the staff or whatever, and so I just woke up one day—I said, "Well, I think I need to do the right thing." So I called this guy that was right under me, so to speak, that was sorta understudyin' me. I said, "Buddy, I'm gon' trade offices with you. I'm gon' give you my office." He said, "What?" "Yeah, you move in here. I'll move in there where you are," which is just a little, small office. I told a story to somebody—I said, "You know, I felt good about doin' that because I think it's to help make a transition smooth and my regard for the House and whatever warrants that. I mean, I—that's what"—but I said, "You know, I guess I'm human like everybody else." I said, "After bout the third day, I'd done that, I said to myself, 'What the hell did I give up my office for?'" [*Laughter*] But I was—I shook that off pretty quick and anyway—but that goes to show you, you know, that it did cross my mind, you know, I—that I could've done everything that I was wantin' to do anyway and didn't have to give up my office, you know.

SL: That's right.

[04:53:08] TM: But I did. And I'm glad I did, and I think I'm showin' that I'm making room for some—I know that I'm not gon' be there forever, and I know—you know, one of the things that I—



when we have orientation, we have five days of orientation now. We used to have one, but now we have five. And part of the orientation on one particular day is a tour of the premises on the third and fourth floor, and it's the committee rooms, and it's first one thing and another. But I always manage to take the members down to about the middle of the capitol on the fourth floor, and there'll be a composite up there, and it'll be 1929 or somewhere along in there, you know. And I'll say, "Now all these people up here this composite are dead. They're all gone. Now when they were here, they thought this place wouldn't run without 'em." I said, "Here we are all these years later." I said, "She ain't missed a lick." I said, "So it ain't gon' miss a lick when you're gone. It ain't gon' miss a lick when I'm gone. What we're charged with right now is it's our time. Let's try to do the right thing what we're supposed to do with our time." And they come back to me two, three, four years later—said, "Boy, I remember what you told us up there that day," and they remember that. They remember. And it's so true. I mean, you

know, all of us think our importance is such a level, you know, and I'm—just like me. I'm—you know, the speaker said, "Boy, I'd hate to think, you know, I'm sittin' out there, and you're not sittin' there." "Well, one of these days some picture's gon' be sittin' out there, and I'm not sittin' there, and it's gon' run—oh, you know, different times, you know, I'd say maybe not quite just as good. There may be a little bobble over here or whatever, but it'll catch up, and everthing'll be okay. It ain't gon' go under, okay? So [raises both arms] I'm not gon' be the one to keep it afloat by myself, and I'm not gon' knock it under by myself." So I . . .

[04:55:09] SL: It's too big.

TM: . . . I like it. That's right. That's right. And it's us. It's our . . .

SL: Yeah.

TM: It's our people. Yeah. It's our people.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Yeah, like I say to somebody—you know, they say, "Oh, man, some of those legislators over there won't tell you the truth, and some of those legislators over there this and some of those legislators over there"—I said, "Hey, that's us out there. They represent us. What percentage of the people statewide or whatever won't tell you the truth? In the medical profession, in

the legal profession fine—they're out there." I said, "We got 'em on the House floor—somebody that will just do whatever. The medical profession's got 'em, the legal profession—we got—so we got our share of whatever minus-type characteristics there are out there in—among those people because that's us."

SL: Yeah.

[04:55:55] TM: Those are our representatives out there. [Raises both arms] [*Laughs*] Ha!

SL: That's good. [*TM laughs*] Anything else you wanna talk about?

TM: No, when we shut the camera off I'm gon' tell you a story that I don't wanna put on the camera, but I want you to know the story.

SL: Okay.

TM: But I'm not gon' put it on the camera.

SL: Okay, now—well, before I shut the camera off, what about—is there anything else you wanna say to family or friends?

TM: No, I wanna . . .

SL: Maybe not even work related?

TM: I want to publicly and openly thank my wife for all the support that she's been to me throughout the years and helpin' to raise our kids, bein' a wonderful mother—just such a great help to my parents and helpin' me really the cause of me gettin' in the

diaconate—helpin' me do that. In every kind of way in the world, she has been my partner, and she has been my friend. I want to acknowledge that openly because without her, I doubt if I would be sittin' here now talkin' to you. I'd probably be in jail or [*SL laughs*] in prison or whatever. But she has been a tremendous asset to this family. And my grandkids love her, and my sons love her, and I love her. She's special. Also, I want to acknowledge special recognition again to the Pryor family for all . . .

SL: Oh . . .

[04:57:22] TM: . . . they've been to this state, and all they've been—their friendship with me has been highly regarded, and I consider them top-notch folks. And they've done many, many, many good things for this state for all of us. And so I want to salute them [*salutes*], take my hat off to 'em, and thank 'em for what they've done. Dale Bumpers the same way—just an outstanding person. The people I've been—Bill Clinton. You know, I can just go down the line of all these people, and I've had just great relationships with 'em, and somewhere along the line there, Scott, they did some good, and that's kinda what we're all tryin' to do. [*Raises both arms*] You know, we're—some of us make it, and some of us don't.

SL: Well, thank you.

TM: Thank you.

SL: Thank you.

TM: I appreciate it.

SL: Okay.

[04:58:12 End of interview]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce Riggs]

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