

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Lawrence Dale Nicholson Sr.
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
January 19, 2012
Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed Lawrence Dale Nicholson Sr. on
January 19, 2012, in Little Rock, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: All right. Dale Nicholson. Uh—we're here with the Pryor Center. I'm Scott Lunsford. We're at your home in Little Rock, Arkansas. Today's date is the [camera clicks] nineteenth . . .

Dale Nicholson: Nineteenth of January.

SL: . . . of January.

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: The year is 2012.

DN: Right.

SL: And—uh—you've agreed to—to become our latest person or victim.

DN: I'm delighted.

SL: Uh—we're gonna—we're gonna spend [DN laughs] all day with you. Um . . .

DN: Great.

SL: Let me tell you a little bit what our intentions are here. We're gonna try to get your life story, from your earliest memory to today.

DN: Very good.

SL: And—um—we'll—uh—we're recording this in high-definition video and audio. Uh—we will transcribe it. We'll send you the raw footage on a DVD.

DN: Wonderful.

SL: And we'll send you the first draft of the transcript. And we're gonna ask you to look at that stuff, read it, make sure you're comfortable with everything that's there.

DN: Sure.

SL: And if there's anything, I mean anything, that you are not comfortable with or you don't want to share with the rest of the world, we'll—you tell us, and we'll take it out.

DN: [*Laughs*] Very good.

SL: The whole deal here is that this is your story.

DN: All right.

SL: This is not ours. It's your story, and you're gonna—we—we want you to share it with everybody that has any interest in Arkansas history.

DN: Wonderful.

[00:01:18] SL: Once you've looked at all that stuff and you're comfortable with—with content, we will continue to processing. We'll—um—make a regular DVD, a full-fledged DVD. It will contain not only all the interview, video of the interview, it will

also contain all the scans that we're gonna do from your family photos.

DN: Kay.

SL: Uh—it will—uh—and you'll be able—if you put that in a computer, not only will you see it on a slideshow on TV, but if you put it in a computer, you can get to those scans in the original scanned resolution, so you can make prints, and your family can have that forever.

DN: Wonderful.

SL: Uh—there'll be an electronic version of the transcript on the DVD, so you can bring that up and—and print that out. On the web we will post all the audio. We will only post what we call highlights from the video.

DN: Understand.

SL: And it's just a huge file, and so . . .

DN: Sure.

SL: . . . we just do the highlights. Uh—we will post the transcript, and we'll encourage people to use the material. Uh—we have a—we're developing a partnership with the education department. We're doing a part of the Arkansas history lesson plan now, and they're integrating our interviews into the Arkansas history courses that'll be taught in the public schools.

DN: Wonderful.

[00:02:36] SL: Uh—we'll encourage documentarians, any researchers that have any interest in Arkansas history, we'll want them to look at the stuff that we do with you. So all that being said—and we're gonna preserve it forever. We'll make as many copies as you need us to make of this. And we're—and with all that, if you're okay and comfortable with all that, we're gonna keep goin'. If you've got any questions or any concerns, we can talk about it right now.

DN: I have no questions. I'm honored.

SL: Okay. [*Laughter*] I am honored, too. It's—I have the best job in the world. [*DN laughs*] I do.

DN: We'll have fun.

[00:03:09] SL: Uh—this is gonna be good. You know, we usually start with—uh—when and where you were born.

DN: Okay, let's start there. Uh—I thought it was ironic. Uh—Elvis Presley and I share the same birthday, January the eighth.

SL: Uh . . .

DN: I was born in 1939 . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . in Warren, Arkansas, and happened to be the only child of William Cecil Nicholson and Rachel Lanelle Mitchell Nicholson.

And I just have to tell you I was spoiled beyond belief. I can't remember a time as a youngster when my mother didn't live within a block of her mother, and her mother lived with her mother. So those three ladies made very great commitments to seeing that this young man grew up the right way. [SL laughs] I—I jokingly say my father had a son, but he really didn't because these three women became so big in my life. I remember I wanted to join the Boy Scouts, and Mother was afraid for me to get away because she was afraid I'd get lost in the woods.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And so, they just smothered me with love, and it was just—it was a wonderful, wonderful time, and they—they gave me the confidence that I had later in life to do the things that I did.

SL: You know, you—uh—you were very fortunate in that—um—not only did you have your—uh—uh—your mother and . . .

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . but your grandmother . . .

DN: Grandmother.

SL: . . . and your great-grandmother . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . that close. So there's some generations there. And—uh—

I'm always looking for the oldest story. So you know, we might wanna go ahead—uh—we'll get back to your mom and dad.

DN: Okay.

[00:04:54] SL: But let's go to your great-grandmother. Now, what was her name?

DN: Rebecca Coon, and she was a—she was—uh—part Cherokee, and a large part Cherokee. And I remember that when I would go—come home from school in the afternoon, she would save me the lunch that they had, and she called me Daley. And it's—they'd laughingly called it Daley bread because [*laughs*] I'd—I'd have a cold porkchop when I came home from school in the afternoon, and bless her heart, I remember at a [*unclear word*]*—the only time I was in the hospital until much later in life—I was taking a paper to her, and I was riding a stick horse. And I fell down and broke my arm, and I blamed it on her . . .*

SL: Oh.

DN: . . . and she cried, and I was so sorry later in life that I—you know, it wasn't her fault. I just made a mistake. I was ridin' the stick horse and fell down. I didn't get on a horse after that.

[*Laughter*]

[00:05:52] SL: Well—uh—so do you member any—um—so would you—would she be at your house when you came—came home

from school?

DN: She was normally at my mother's mother's house . . .

SL: Okay.

DN: . . . my grandmother's house, and I'd go over there because it was across the street . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . or down the block.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: But I mean, they were—they were such a tight group of those three ladies . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . that just—they looked over my shoulder constantly, and—uh—I—I guess that's the reason when I finally grew up, I wanted to get away because I had just been in a—wrapped in a cocoon all of my life . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . you know, and I—I wanted to strike out on my own and do something that was different.

[00:06:32] SL: Mh-hmm. Do you member—uh—was your—uh—great-grandmother [*camera clicks*] a storyteller?

DN: She was not a big storyteller. Uh—I know she taught my mother how to count to ten in Cherokee, and my mother taught my g—

my children to count to ten in Cherokee. And I really don't know that much about her—uh—but I remember she just looked different than other people in Warren, Arkansas . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . in the year that I was born, in [19]39.

SL: So her husband had already passed by the time . . .

DN: Yes.

SL: . . . that you came around.

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . never got to . . .

DN: And I ne—never . . .

SL: . . . know him.

DN: . . . knew him.

[00:07:07] SL: And—uh—what about—uh—did she have any siblings?

DN: She didn't that I—that I know of. She never . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . she never referred to 'em.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: Yeah.

SL: And—um—I guess we could—uh—um—if you think of something that she said—I mean, I . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . it—I—it—it could just be something really incidental.

[00:07:26] Did—did she—uh—um—did your grandmother and your great-grandmother, did they have their own garden?

DN: Yes, they did. And I remember, you know—and living in Warren, Arkansas, you—you raised tomatoes. And they had a little tomato garden every year and stuff like that. They had a very small—I mean . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . we—we lived in—in Warren. It was not a big city, but it was a little town.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And—uh—they had a small garden, but that was it.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:07:53] DN: Uh—they were—they were—they were deeply religious people. I remember that. High moral standards. Uh—you didn't do anything wrong. Uh—you know, when the church door was open, I was required to be there, and I was there. And it—whether it was Wednesday night or Sunday morning or Sunday school or a revival or whatever, you know, I was

exposed to that because they were—they were very, very spiritual—um—people.

SL: This Baptist?

DN: Yes. No, Assembly of God.

SL: Assembly of God.

DN: Right. Mm-hmm. My mother played for the same congregation, played piano for 'em, for seventy-five years, and—uh—she was still playing piano when she died at eighty-seven, and she had Alzheimer's and the—and the one thing that she still could remember was how to play that piano. And she was self-taught. But I mean, she—she was there every Sunday, and so was I.

[Laughs]

SL: That's good. Um—let's—uh—before we—we leave your great-grandmother—and we can go back to her if something comes up . . .

DN: Yeah, if it comes out I will.

SL: Yeah, I—I think you'll find as we're—as we go through this, things will come up that you hadn't thought of before, and . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . and those are golden. [00:09:13] I mean, that's—that's—that's good stuff 'cause it's in there and—um—the—uh—was there electricity? Did y'all have electricity there in Warren?

DN: Yes, we did. We had electricity.

[00:09:25] SL: And was the street paved?



DN: Uh—no. The street was gravel.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:09:29] DN: And in fact, it was—the house we lived in, the house that I grew up in, was owned by the Bradley Lumber Company because Warren was a sawmill town, and—and—and we lived in—uh—a company-owned house. They had a company-owned store called the Bradley Store.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And you could go charge your stuff there and then pay for it at the end of the week. And—uh—yeah, it was a—it was a town when I—and when I was growing up there, it was a town of probably seven or eight thousand people. And—uh . . .

SL: Hmm. Pretty good size.

DN: . . . lumber was primarily it. I mean . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . that's what drove the economy of the town.

[00:10:08] SL: Uh—so there was a railroad there.

DN: I'm sorry?

SL: Railroad . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . was there . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . by the mill.

DN: Yeah. Railroad came through there. Oh yeah.

SL: And—uh—was there a lot of train traffic? Do you remember the trains?

DN: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: More than a couple a day or was . . .

DN: Yeah, I'd—I'd say—I'd hear it four or five times a day.

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: And I—and I remember when they were burning wood . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: . . . you could smell the ashes. Uh—I don't know what they call that—uh—but it would get all over the cars, and they called it soot . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . because [*laughs*] it was just the outflow of the—uh—burning of the wood that they were not using at the time.

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

DN: My dad worked there at the mill . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . and he worked in what he—he—he called it the hardwood

flooring company, and I know that they made hardwoods for floors. And Mother worked for the Forestry Commission, and—uh—she wouldn't—she didn't go to work for them until I went to school because she was not going to let me come home alone. In fact, she walked me to school every day because she was afraid something might happen to me.

[00:11:08] SL: Well, now, I wonder—uh—I mean, you've—you've said this a couple of times now that there's—there was this unprecedented attention. And you probably weren't aware of it until as you got a little older that—that these—uh—women were really lookin' after you. I [*DN laughs*—do, well, do you know of anything in—in their lives where they had lost children or . . .

DN: My—my grandmother had lost a child at about four months.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: Uh—she—she lost her husband and her ch—and this child within about a three- or four-month period.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And they—they had a difficult life. And I think because of that and I was the newborn child and the only child in the family . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . they just smothered me with love. They—they had—their—their outside interests were very limited, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: They were housewives . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . and they were grandmothers, and they were grandparents, and their—their whole goal was to see to my well-being and to spoil me rotten [*SL laughs*] and to take—make sure that nothing happened to Dale. Uh—we had a YMCA in Warren, and Mother wouldn't let me go take swimming lessons until I was, like, fourteen because she was afraid I'd drown.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: I mean, it was—it was just a—it was a fearful thing for them that something was gonna happen to me, and I didn't realize it at the time. You know, I just—I thought every child got that much attention.

[00:12:37] SL: Mh-hmm. [*DN laughs*] Now, what was your year of birth again?

DN: I'm sorry?

SL: What year were you born again?

DN: Uh—January 8, 1939.

SL: [Nineteen] thirty-nine. So . . .

DN: [Nineteen] thirty-nine.

[00:12:46] SL: Um—had your parents been in Warren for a number

of years before you were born?

DN: They met in Nashville, Tennessee. Dad was in Nashville, and he was thirteen years older than my mother. He was thirty-one, and she was eighteen when they married.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And—uh—she would have it no other way, I'm sure, than to come back to Warren and be with her mother. And so, after a short while in Nashville, they moved back to Warren, and she pretty much was at her mother's side all the way to her death.

SL: So they met in Nashville, Tennessee, but . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . your mother was—was from Warren?

DN: She was from Warren. Mh-hmm.

SL: And was your father from Warren, or was he . . .

DN: He was from Warren, too, and he had moved to Nashville to do something, and I can't remember exactly . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: . . . what it was. But it—I—to me, I, later in life, I thought, "Thirty-one and eighteen! That's a large difference."

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: Now, you know, you don't think that much about it but . . .

[00:13:42] SL: Yeah. Well, I wonder what—how did—how did your

mom end up in Nashville? I wonder what she was doin'.

DN: I—I really can't tell you. I really can't tell you.

SL: That's interesting.

DN: I've got a—I—I—I have a beautiful picture, a black-and-white picture, of the two of them in Nashville when—and what they looked like in 1939.

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: And—uh—and I know he was—he was working in some kind of related incident in Nashville, and it was easy for him to move from Nashville to Warren, and I'm sure, never told this, but I'm sure that Mother insisted on that. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, I mean, that's . . .

DN: She was a—she was a strong-willed person . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: . . . and her mother was even much stronger willed than she. And my Grandmother Coon, Rebecca Coon, she was very ca—very meek and mild and had very little to say. She was just a—just a very quiet person, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: I just didn't know that much about her.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: I wish I knew more now.

[00:14:40] SL: Now—uh—this is your mother's mother or . . .

DN: Mother's mother. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay. Um . . .

DN: Mother's mother's mother.

SL: Ah, your great-grandmother.

DN: Right, great-grandmother.

[00:14:50] SL: Okay. And so—um—I guess—uh—before we get a little bit further into that, we should talk about your father's side . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . his mom and dad. And if you—did you ever know your dad's folks at all?

DN: Oh yeah. Yeah, I knew Grandfather Nicholson very well and Granny Nick. And Granny Nick lived to be ninety-six years old, and she was the most wonderful person. They had ten children, and they lived outside of Warren by about seven miles on a farm. And—uh—she—I never heard her complain about anything, even to the point when they put her into the nursing home when she was aged. She just always had this beautiful smile and just never complained. She loved to fish, and she fished with a lady called Mrs. Taylor. And how she found time to do that and raise ten children is beyond me. But I remember

going to their farmhouse and—uh—drinking well water . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . and watching 'em cook on a wooden stove . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . and—uh—and—and Grandfather Nicholson—uh—he was a—
he was a character. [00:16:05] He—he called himself a—a
farmer, but he was more of a peddler.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: And he would take—he—I remember—the biggest thing I
remember, his sausage was the best sausage anyone ever
made, according to him . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . in his lifetime. And he would somehow get a ride into
Warren, Arkansas, which is seven miles south of there, and he
would peddle his sausage or whatever he had at the time. He
also trapped. I remember seeing—uh—animal's hides, you
know, on the floor of the house at Grandpa Nicholson's,
Granddaddy Nicholson. And—uh—he—uh—he would come and
spend the night with us on occasion, and he—he didn't bother.
He'd just talk to himself. I'd—I'd wake up at three or four
o'clock in the morning and hear him just rattlin' on and on and
on. He was pretty much of a salesperson.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:16:57] DN: And I remember I was probably in the ninth or tenth grade, and one day at lunch we got a call that they thought my grandfather had died, and they found him on the grounds at the First Methodist Church in Warren. And well, there was considerable anguish, and we rushed up there, and he'd just stretched out and taken a nap. He was resting beh—under tree, and that's the kind of person he was. He never got excited about anything. Life was very simple, and—uh—he was—he was a very pleasant man and charismatic. He was—he was—he was a—he was a talker. I think I got my sales side from him, to tell you the truth.

[00:17:37] SL: Well, I wanna talk a little bit about that—about the—that set of grandparents and—and their farm. Um—do—were you ever present for, like, a hog day when he was—uh—doin' the hog—killin' the hog . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . and slaughtering the hog?

DN: I remember those days. And then they would—they would hang that hog and skin that thing, and it was just beyond me. I mean, I—I—I'd—I'd never seen anything like it until I had gone there.

SL: Uh-huh.

DN: But you know, they had smokehouses, and they would hang those hams up, and it would smell so good. [00:18:12] And I—I remember the—the thing that I remember most about goin' to Grandmother and Grandfather Nicholson's is that every morning we had salmon and eggs for breakfast.

SL: Salmon.

DN: And I thought that was very unusual. And I don't know whether that was a—some European custom that came over with the early, early, you know, family or what. But . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . I got to where I liked it. But it was just [*laughs*] salmon and eggs and biscuits and gravy every morning and a huge breakfast. And with ten kids around—by the time I came in, you know, four or five of the children had grown up and gone on and moved to California . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . and here and there and the other—uh—and there weren't that many around. But—uh—it was just Grandmother and Granddaddy Nick and my mother and my daddy and me and a cousin or two and that sort of thing. [00:19:01] But . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DN: . . . it was—it was—it—it was always an experience, and I—I remember that my mother, for whatever reason, was just mortified—she was afraid within an inch of her life of anything that had feathers. And in Warren we didn't have chickens in the yard, but at Grandpa Nick's they had chickens in the yard.

SL: Sure.

DN: And one got to chasing her one day, [*SL laughs*] and she ran and ran [*laughs*] and ran and fell down, and I mean, she never wanted to go back to the farm.

SL: Hmm.

DN: But to tell you how bad it was—I told you it was seven miles out of Warren. Well, the bus would take us to within about two miles of the house. And Mother wouldn't let me, and I was four or five at the time, she wouldn't let me walk. She would have Daddy carry me the three or four miles from the highway to Granddaddy Nick's house because she didn't want me to get tired. That's the kinda life I [*laughs*] lived.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:04] SL: Well, what river is it that's close to Warren?

DN: Saline, the Saline River.

SL: So was that—did that come off the Mississippi somewhere down in Louisiana, or how does that . . .

DN: I don't know where the—you know, the Saline runs through Benton and all down through there, and I don't know really where the mouth of the Saline is, but it's a small river. And the boys would go down there. I remember their children would go down there and swim when I was a kid, and I'd watch 'em swim in the river. And Daddy loved to fish. Grandmother loved to fish, and they spent a lot of time in that river. And they were—and Granddad was a big trapper. I mean, he trapped mink, coons, and he'd sell the hides and that sort of thing. So he was really kind of a frontiersman, you know.

SL: Pioneer stock.

DN: Yeah.

[00:21:02] SL: What's remarkable is the salmon on the menu.

DN: Salmon and eggs.

SL: Eggs. I mean, I . . .

DN: I haven't had it since. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . I just wonder how they got the salmon. I mean that . . .

DN: I'm sure it came in a can.

SL: Ah, okay.

DN: [*Laughs*] I'm almost . . .

SL: All right.

DN: . . . positive it did. [*Laughs*]

[00:21:17] SL: Okay, okay. Okay. So how big was the farm?

DN: Oh, I think it more—ten acres. No, it wasn't either because it had to be about forty acres because I think at their death each of the kids got four or five acres. So it was about a forty-acre farm. Not big at all, you know, by standards in those days. They grew a lot of pine trees because pine trees were very important to the economy down there, and they sold timber off of the land. And you know, they raised chickens and hogs and the whole nine yards, and so, they fed the family pretty much off the farm.

SL: Had a cow.

DN: Yeah, had cows.

SL: And . . .

DN: Had a horse named Nelly, and [*SL laughs*] that horse was—oh, it had to be as old as my grandfather. But he'd say, "Whoa, Nelly," [*SL laughs*] and she'd stop. I remember that. [*Laughs*]

[00:22:13] SL: That's funny. So probably didn't have a—any—you didn't have a car? You probably didn't have tractor.

DN: No. No car. They used kerosene lamps, and I remember there was one big fireplace, and I remember two houses. The early, early house that I had went to as a very young child, it had a cedar-shake roof on it. And you'd go to bed at night, and you

could see the stars because there were actually cracks in the ceiling. And we had big feather beds because that's how you stayed warm.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And then Grandmother and Granddaddy slept in the room where the fireplace was. And over where I slept, which is across the porch, there was no heat over there. So you had to snuggle up to stay warm.

[00:23:02] SL: So it had a . . .

DN: Had a breezeway . . .

SL: A breezeway.

DN: . . . and a long porch, you know . . .

SL: A dogtrot.

DN: . . . and a long back porch. And then over here there were two rooms. There was a—I guess what you would call a livin' room where the fireplace was and a very small kitchen back there. And then over here you had two bedrooms, and that's where all of those ten kids grew up.

[00:23:21] SL: Well water. No running water.

DN: Well water. I hated the taste of that well water. I remember asking my mother—I said, "Why does it not taste like the water at Warren?" And she said, "Well, I don't know, but I think

animals get in that well." And I never wanted to drink the water after that. I was a little bit timid after that. [*Laughs*]

SL: It wasn't the sulfur or iron?

DN: Aw, it coulda been any of . . .

SL: It probably was.

DN: . . . those things, you know . . .

SL: Yeah, it probably was.

DN: . . . and probably was . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . or all. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah, they . . .

DN: But I remember pulling up a bucket of water out of that thing. It had a concrete culvert in it, you know, and I thought that was cool that you could crank up a bucket of water.

SL: Sure.

DN: But I remember them washin' clothes. And getting together on a holiday when the boys would come back to see their parents, and they'd make ice cream, and they'd put it in a—just a metal bucket and put it in a big tub of ice and just turn it with their hands, you know, like that. And oh man, we had ice cream and cake, and [*SL laughs*] it was a big deal.

SL: You bet . . .

DN: It was good.

SL: . . . it was a big deal. I bet . . .

DN: But . . .

SL: . . . they kept their milk down in that well, too.

DN: Yep, they did. They did. And I, you know, I don't even remember them having a radio. I don't believe they did. I don't think I ever heard a radio at my grandparents' house.

[00:24:41] SL: Did they ever get electricity at the second house?

DN: The second house, they did, yeah. Yeah. But the first house had no electricity, and it was—it—I mean, when Grandmother cooked a meal, it was cooked with wood on an old iron, you know, stove, and you'd take the burner—the top off and stick wood in there and . . .

SL: Yep.

DN: . . . that sorta thing. I don't know how she did it, but I mean, she never complained. She'd just raise those children. And every one of 'em turned out well, you know. That's—that was pretty remarkable in those day—dysfunction was a word that we didn't know.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I mean, it just hadn't come to be in those days, and you know, none of the kids ever were arrested or anything like that. They

didn't do anything bad. They just all married and had children and went on with life.

[00:25:27] SL: What about—I'm gonna stick at your grandparents' house, their farm. What about music? Did anyone in the family play any music out there?

DN: You know, they didn't. My mother was the only one and none of the—Daddy, I remember later, Daddy, he was—I wouldn't call him the—he was a song leader in the church. He was a deacon in the church, and Mother played the piano, but that was it. I mean, the rest of the family, I don't remember any musical history for them at all.

SL: Even the family gatherings or what . . .

DN: Yeah. No music.

SL: No singing. No hymns.

DN: No, no, we'd just sit around and talk and, you know . . .

SL: See who could tell the biggest lie.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: You know, we call that porch talkin' [*unclear words*].

DN: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[00:26:20] SL: Well, I guess—did you ever get to do any trapping with your grandfather? Did you ever go with him on any of that—you probably weren't allowed.

DN: No, I never did. I never did. I mean, he'd come to Warren but I—I'd—all I would hear is stories about him but—and he was a grand old fellow, I'm tellin' you.

[00:26:39] SL: Yeah. Well, let's go back to those family gatherings out there. Do you remember any stories from those? Remember them talkin' and—was there anything that kinda caught your attention?

DN: I remember them talking about—the family had moved early on from Watson, Arkansas. A large part of the—of my—the Nicholson side of the family had lived down there near Watson, which is, what, far southeast Arkansas, I think? And I remember them talking about that sort of thing and—but other than real stories, you know, I just don't remember any. And they would let me tell the stories because I was the center of attention so [*laughs*]*—and I'd—they told me that I would preach at some of these gatherings when I was five or six years old and to take up an offering. And so, I think that's a little bit about where my sales background [*laughs*] came from. Mother had me in church constantly, and she was absolutely convinced that I was gonna be a minister. And I—of course, it didn't work out that way.*

[00:27:54] SL: Do you know if any of your grandparents or great-grandparents had any education beyond . . .

DN: I . . .

SL: . . . elementary?

DN: . . . yeah, I think eight or nine—eighth or ninth grade. I believe my grandfather was along in that era. Mother graduated from high school in Warren, Arkansas. Daddy probably went to the tenth or eleventh grade, but nobody went away to college or anything like that. That was—and none of my uncles or aunts did either that I'm aware of.

SL: Now, your Grandfather Nicholson . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . went through eighth or ninth grade?

DN: William Mayberry Nicholson.

SL: William Mayberry Nicholson.

DN: William Mayberry Nicholson. [00:28:32] And my grandmother was Cornelia Nicholson—Mayberry Nicholson. So yeah.

SL: And you'd go . . .

DN: Great lady.

SL: Great lady?

DN: Yeah.

SL: Talk to me about her.

DN: Well, what I remember about her was she was so quiet and such—she just, as I said earlier, she never complained. And I

remember one Christmas we were out there and their—all the kids were shooting fireworks. And somehow Mother lost control of me that night, and I shot some fireworks, and one went off in my hand. [*SL laughs*] And I thought they were panicky. You know, they—you know, there were no helicopters to get me to Bradley County Hospital because a helicop—I mean, a firecracker went off in my hand. And my grandmother very calmly came over and took my hand and put it in egg—an egg batter, and it just quit burning quickly. And I thought, "How did she know this?" But there were so many things like that that she knew that my mother didn't understand because they had to deal with that when they were growing up, you know. There were not a lot of prescription drugs . . .

SL: That's correct.

DN: . . . in those days. [*Laughs*] You had to make do with what you could. And she knew [*claps hands*] that by putting my hand in egg that it would make it quit burning where the firecracker had gone off so . . .

SL: Sealed it off.

DN: I remember that very well. [*Laughs*]

SL: I bet those firecrackers were probably a little bit heftier than the ones now, too.

DN: [*Laughter*] Yeah, yeah, they were. And . . .

SL: Probably more like a . . .

DN: . . . and you know, we only did it one time a year. I don't even remember the Fourth of July being a big firecracker day. But at Christmas, boy, firecrackers were big and especially out at Granddaddy's house.

[00:30:17] SL: Well, when you were at your grandparents' house and it was time for a meal, was grace always said?

DN: Oh, always. Yes, yes.

SL: And who usually said grace?

DN: Granddaddy. He would say it, and he would—he was brief. He was—he didn't wear his spirituality on his shoulder, but you knew that he was of faith, and he led all of the—there was a quick blessing before every meal. And you know, then it was breakfast, and it was di—and it was—and it wasn't lunch. It was breakfast, dinner, and supper.

SL: Right.

DN: You know, those were the three meals that you had. And the big meal, and probably rightfully so, was at lunch where they would go back into the fields and work in the afternoon, and then at night they would have what was left over, basically, from the lunch, which is better than eating a huge meal at night.

SL: Yeah.

[00:31:07] DN: I remember that when I was in the—oh, I probably was ten or eleven. They were gonna teach me a lesson. And we had some cotton, ?now?, probably no more than four or five acres. But they wanted me to pick cotton. And I went out there, and I found out very quickly that was a difficult job. They gave me that sack, and it took me all day to fill it up. And at the end of the summer, they gave me fifty cents. And on the way to Warren, I lost it [*SL laughs*], and I knew then I did not wanna pick cotton for a livin'. [*Laughs*]

[00:31:43] SL: So when you say they were workin' out in the fields at your fa—grandparents' house, was it the cotton that they were workin' at?

DN: It was cotton, and then, you know, they raised tomatoes and just vegetables. Basically, what they raised were things to feed the family with, you know. And then Granddaddy would take—he would take his meats, and he would peddle 'em into Warren because he was a good salesman. You couldn't turn him down.

[00:32:09] SL: So did you ever see your Grandmother Nicholson do any canning, or was that . . .

DN: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. Boy, they would put up beans and pickles and all of that, and [*laughs*] I remember that Granddaddy liked

pork brains. Now, I don't even know where they came from [*SL laughs*], but [*laughter*] I remember he liked 'em and that he liked pickled pigs' feet. And I know you can buy those in a store now. But I don't know where they developed a taste for it. And my mother, who was from Warren, just thought that was the worst thing she had ever heard of in her life. And of course, Dad thought it was fine. And we'd eat squirrel and gravy, and I loved squirrel and gravy. Didn't think anything about it. But Mother was not gonna have anything to do with any kinda wild game. [*Laughter*]

[00:33:03] SL: Well, I'm tryin' to think—I'm guessing that your grandparents didn't have a vehicle. Did—was there a rolling store that would go out into the community? Did the . . .

DN: No. In fact, they pretty much lived off the farm. Now, there was a little store up the street, maybe four or five miles, and they—I—I'm sure they would walk up there, and they had a wagon.

SL: Okay.

DN: And they had a—and old Nelly would . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . pull the wagon, and they could go up there and get their staples. But that probably happened, you know, once a month.

SL: Right.

DN: And the rest of the time, they lived out of what they got outta the store on that day and what they raised in the garden.

[00:33:50] SL: Did you ever get to ride in the wagon?

DN: I don't remember ever ridin' in the wagon. I really don't. But I remember the wagon, and it was a rickety, old wagon, too.

[Laughs] It was not comfortable. [Laughter]

SL: Okay, well, let's get back into town.

DN: All right.

SL: And we can go back to the farm anytime.

DN: Anytime.

SL: Anytime you think of somethin'.

DN: I'm with you.

[00:34:12] SL: So I'm going to guess that the faith and religion played a big part in your home in Warren, as well.

DN: Very much.

SL: And was it your father that usually said grace at the meal?

DN: Yes, he always said grace. He did.

SL: And was there a Bible in the house that you studied at all or . . .

DN: There was probably twenty Bibles in the house. And Mother was a Sunday school teacher, and she read the Bible to me every day and every night. And I wish I had digested more of it than I did,

but she was ver—she wanted to be a missionary. But she—and she really wanted to travel. But at the same time, she was—she didn't wanna get awa—very far away from her mother. And her mother, I remember, had a twenty-five-year pin, never having missed a Sunday school class. She was a teacher for twenty-five years. So the spiritual part of that family was really, really, really big in my house. Very large.

[00:35:23] SL: Now, were your—were the Nicholson grandparents—were they also Assembly of God?

DN: No, they were not. They were Baptist.

SL: Baptist.

DN: Baptist.

SL: So there was no dancing or drinking . . .

DN: [*Laughs*] You got it.

SL: . . . in that house.

DN: No dr—dancing, drinking, or smoking. None of those things ever went on at either house, to tell you the truth, you know. I'd—and I remember asking my dad later in life—I said, "Did you ever have alcohol?" And he said, "Before I met your mother." And so, I think when they got married, Mother pretty much ended all of that.

SL: Laid the law. Yeah.

DN: That was the end of it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

DN: She—he was a very amenable person and whatever Mother, who was the stronger-willed person in the family, whatever she wanted to do, we pretty much did, and he went along with it.

[*Laughs*]

[00:36:21] SL: Okay, well, let's talk a little bit about the house that you grew up in in Warren.

DN: Okay.

SL: Now, were you in—was it in downtown Warren? Was it . . .

DN: Well, it was—we were in the city, yes, yeah. We lived on York Street in Warren, Arkansas, and the house was owned by the Bradley Lumber Company, as I mentioned earlier. Later, we bought the house. [00:36:44] Mother bought several other houses. She was pretty much of an entrepreneur, and she was renting these houses out for income, and she remodeled ours and fixed it up very nice, and it was a very comfortable house to live in. And there was just the three of us, Mother and Dad and myself, and that was it so, you know.

SL: That's a—that's very, very interesting 'cause I'm not sure what—how many women were playing entrepreneurial roles back in those days.

DN: There were few. Yeah.

[00:37:14] SL: And especially—you know, they had survived the Depression before you came along so . . .

DN: Right.

SL: I know in my parents' case they became very conservative. And they . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: As far as finances go and risk-taking and general entrepreneurial . . .

DN: Well, Mother had lost her father at a very early age, and so, it was she and her mother. And her mother was working in a store and was a nurse at the Bradley Lumber Company and that sort of thing. So they had to carve out a living of their own. And Mother probably watched all of this play out, and she knew that Dad was never gonna make a great deal of money by working at the mill. So she started kinda planning for the future so that when they got older they'd have income to live off of. And she was just—she was that kind of person and work—and later she worked for the Forestry Commission, and she did the books for them, and so she was pretty good with money. She paid all the bills. I don't think Dad ever knew of anything that we had that he had to pay for. [00:38:22] We didn't have an automobile in

Warren until I was, like, a sophomore in high school. And we bought a used car, and it was a Ford, as I remember it, and I learned to back in and out of the driveway and all that sorta thing. But they were so proud of those—you know, once we got to that level, it was really an accomplishment. So . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . I would say we grew up as a middle-income family—lower-to middle-income family. But boy, you talk about love. There was plenty of that to go around for everybody.

SL: Well, you know, most everybody that I interview says, "You know, we may've been poor, but we really didn't know it."

DN: We didn't. No.

SL: 'Cause . . .

DN: And you know, and when you went to Warren High School in the years that I went, we all wore the same kinda jeans. We wore Levi jeans. All the kids, you know, we wore—it was just—it was simple life. I didn't know anyone was wealthy there. And later I—one of my best friends who I got into radio with at a very early age, I looked at him one day and realized his parents owned the funeral home, a bank, and a large amount of lumber. And they nominated him most likely to succeed, and I jokingly told him—I said, "Well, surely [*laughs*] you will because you

have an advantage on the rest of us."

SL: Right.

DN: But he was the only child that I even ever thought about being wealthy. The rest of us were pretty much all in the same class.

[00:39:57] SL: So the house that you grew up in—Warren had a water system, so you . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . had running water.

DN: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: You had sewer.

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: You had electricity.

DN: Right.

SL: Did you have gas? Did they run natural gas . . .

DN: Had gas.

SL: . . . in there?

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you guys were pretty much set.

[00:40:13] DN: Yeah, we were, and I remember when we got our first electric—now, I re—early on we had an icebox.

SL: Sure.

DN: And the iceman would bring a twenty-five block—pound block of

ice and put . . .

SL: Yes.

DN: . . . it in there. And I remember one night, they delivered from Montgomery Ward a refrigerator, and Mother made ice cream that night in that refrigerator, and that was the grandest event I can ever remember in my life. Getting rid of the icebox and getting a refrigerator [*laughs*] was a big deal.

SL: Well, yeah, and—so that's a good point. Ice—manufacturing ice and delivering it was a big . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . big deal before . . .

[00:40:55] DN: I remember going to the ice plant. You know, when it'd get hot in the summer, you'd go down there and hang out and [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Was it built on a spring, do you know?

DN: Yes, it was. It was. Sure was.

SL: Most of them usually were.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And the railroad track ran right past there that went into the Bradley Lumber Company and hauled wood in and out of there, you know.

[00:41:16] SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Did the train take on the ice, too?
Did they . . .

DN: Not that I know of. It may have, but I remember walking in there and it being so cold, and they'd have fifty-pound blocks of ice and . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . twenty-five and a hundred pounds, and you would chip that stuff away, and it'd last for a considerable amount of time. Old handles you had to turn like that. [Makes twisting motion with his hand]

[00:41:39] SL: What about the local dairy company? Did they deliver milk?

DN: You know, they didn't. I think we were buying milk at the grocery store by then 'cause there was a grocery store within a block and a half of my house and their—the owner of the grocery store was—their son was my best friend, one of my best friends, growing up.

SL: And what was his name?

DN: And we'd walk down there and buy the groc—buy the milk and things like that. I re—one time, and I don't even why—know why. There was some kinda illness in the family and Mother or—it was Mother, I think. They took her off of milk and put her on

goat's milk. And Dad would go out and find somebody that would milk these goats and bring in goat milk. And I never knew the difference in goat milk and cow milk, but I remember . . .

SL: There is a difference.

DL: . . . that somewhere in my mind that that happened. Wasn't for a long period of time, but for, like, a year. And I remember Granny Nick's. When you'd go out there and drink milk at her house, sometimes it would be just bitter. You could barely stand it. And that's 'cause the cows were eatin' bitterweeds.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And it affected the taste of the milk.

SL: Sure.

DN: I didn't know that. [*SL laughs*] I was a city boy. [*Laughs*]

[00:42:59] SL: Did you ever see your grandmother, you know, skimming the top of the milk or . . .

DN: Oh, churn.

SL: Churn?

DN: Boom, boom, boom.

SL: Did you take turns?

DN: Making butter and doin' all of that or those . . .

SL: Did you help her do that?

DN: And the ceramic jars and . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

DN: Yep, I sure do. Yeah. I thought that was neat. How in the world could that happen? But yeah. [00:43:16] And then making lye soap, you know, and washin' clothes by hand and . . .

SL: Washboard.

DN: . . . all—yeah, washboards. There were no washin' machines in those days.

SL: Well, you know, even in town the washing machine you had was probably a . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . a crank . . .

DN: At best, it was a crank.

SL: That dry—you . . .

DN: And I remember when we got that. You squeeze a little bit of water out of it, and that was about it, yeah.

SL: Uh-huh. And the laundry was put out on a line.

DN: Yeah. Absolutely. You . . .

SL: And did you . . .

DN: And it's . . .

SL: Were you a participant in doing the laundry? Did you hang or

bring the load in?

DN: Oh no, they wouldn't let Daley do [*laughs*] anything like that.

SL: Really?

DN: That would be work! [*Laughter*] [00:43:56] And I remember that my mother would say—she'd say, "Now, honey, you need to mow the yard this weekend." And he said, "Well, let Dale do it." And she said, "No, he gets peaked." Now, I don't know where that word came from, but I guess I got heated or whatever.

SL: Sure.

DN: And poor Daddy came in and mowed the yard every weekend while this kid who was a sophomore in high school [*unclear word*] rode around town in his little car, you know. But she just—no, she didn't want me to do anything that was—that would be heavy on me.

SL: Push mower. It wasn't a . . .

DN: Push mower. Oh, I hated . . .

SL: No motor. Just . . .

DN: . . . those things. And it had those weeds that grew up, and they had some kind of old sticky top in 'em, you know, and . . .

SL: Yep.

DN: . . . I remember when we first got St. Augustine grass and put it in the yard. Oh, those weeds were gone for good, and it

was . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . wonderful, you know. I didn't mow it, but I watched Daddy mow it. [*Laughs*]

[00:44:54] SL: Well, you know, you were so protected.

Expectations were—I mean, was there any pressure put on you to perform as far as schoolwork goes and your activities at the church? I mean, were you expected to . . .

DN: Oh yeah, yeah. Mother really, really pushed me. I, through the sixth grade, I made straight As, and she expected that, and I knew that, and I delivered on that. And she had me take piano lessons from one of the very best teachers in the city at that time, and the very meanest, and we played nothing but classical music. And I wore shorts and little, pointed, cotton shirts, and boy, she saw that they were perfectly ironed. And we'd do recitals, you know, in the high school auditorium. And then when we went to Sunday school, I had to be perfectly dressed. And she'd comb my hair everywhere we went to make sure it looked right. And in her mind I was going, I guess, to become what her father was, who was a preacher, and she saw me being in that role. I sang in the choir. Dad led the singing in the choir. And then about the seventh grade, I discovered that I

thought piano was sissy. You know, it was just too sissy for me.
And so, I left and got in the band against her best wishes.
And . . .

[00:46:34] SL: Like the school band?

DN: Yeah, in the high school band. And I played football for one year, and I remember praying one night on the bench, saying, "Lord, if you'll let me get out of this football game without getting—having to play a down or getting hurt, I'll get in the band next Monday." And I got back on there, and I went to the band director, and I told him, and he called me "Clyde Scott" Nicholson in those days because I was a fairly good trombone player but not—I weighed 120 pounds. I couldn't have played football for anything. And so, he made me march around the school for about a week and a half. He let me back in the band, and I found out there were girls on the band bus, and there weren't on the football bus. And that was the end of my football career. [*Laughter*]

[00:47:22] SL: Okay, so I'm going to assume—did y'all have a piano in your house?

DN: Oh yes. Oh yes, yes, yes. From the time I was born, we had a piano in the house. And Mother would play, and we would—we'd get a—gather around the piano and sing. And her brother would

come to town occasionally, and her mother would come across the street. And it was always gospel songs, you know. That's what we grew up on. And she knew 'em all.

[00:47:50] SL: Mh-hmm. What about revivals?

DN: Oh, I remember those things and some not with great—not great memories because the preacher would go on for hours and hours and hours. And it was hellfire and brimstone, and it was kinda scary to go to a revival, you know, because they all—it—everybody needed to be converted, and I didn't feel that I needed [*laughs*] to be converted. And I would see people—and—being in the—in that side of the religion, you know, you'd see people go into trances and do things like that and it . . .

[00:48:35] SL: Speak in tongues.

DN: Yeah, speak in tongues, and it frightened me. I mean, I just—I never saw my parents do it, but I saw other people in the church do it. And it just—and I was amazed that they were so spiritual and so deeply rooted in religion. But I never—I don't remember ever hearing my parents speak in tongues or go into any kind of a trance or anything like that. They were just, you know, steady-as-you-go Christians.

SL: When—this is very, very interesting. The—and the—it wasn't necessarily revivals that the speaking in tongues happened.

It . . .

DN: No.

SL: . . . it also happened in the church.

DN: They'd do that in church on Sunday.

SL: On Sunday and . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the congregation would just be thrilled.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: I mean, it was a big celebration.

DN: It was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as they'd say.

SL: Yes, yes.

DN: You know, that was a blessing. Yeah. I never did it myself, and I'd—I can truthfully say I never understood it. But I know it was preached.

SL: So how did they deliver the trance state? How did someone slip into a trance? Was it the cadence of the sermon or how—did they set aside a time for folk . . .

DN: No, there wasn't a time or anything. It could happen during the middle of the service or at the end of the service. And oftentimes, you know, they'd take prayer requests, and people would get caught up in praying for help for someone in their family who was ailing or dying or whatever. And I'd just see

'em—I have—I've seen people fall on the floor, and I don't—I didn't believe they could fake it. I mean, that was my . . .

SL: Right.

DN: In my opinion they couldn't. But I never did understand it, and like I say, my parents never did it, and I just didn't—I couldn't equate to it. I couldn't understand it.

SL: That's such a remarkable thing. I mean, I—I've only seen film . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . of that stuff and, of course, reenactments of it. But . . .

DN: Well, we had revivals every summer. And you know, they'd . . .

SL: They'd go for a week . . .

DN: . . . come to town . . .

SL: . . . at a time?

DN: . . . and they'd—yeah. And they'd last for a week or two. And a lot of times they'd do 'em outside the church on outside grounds.

SL: Yeah.

[00:50:58] DN: And you know, it was an—it was the entertainment in Warren, Arkansas, when I was growing up. You went to church, and you went to revivals, and you went to Sunday school, and you went to Bible school, and you went to . . .

SL: The youth group.

DN: Youth groups. Everything, you know. And I was blessed with ability to sing a little bit, and Mother would insist I do a solo in the church, and I'd do it and kinda be embarrassed by it [*SL laughs*] and all that. [*Laughs*]

[00:51:30] SL: Well, so when—let's get back to the Bibles in the house. Were you—of course, initially, she read to you. Right?

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: And it was always your mother that read to you.

DN: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: And—or maybe your grandmother. Would she . . .

DN: Grandmother, yeah, Grandmother would read to me because she was a deeply religious person, and she's the lady that I mentioned that went to twenty-five years of Sunday school without missing a Sunday.

SL: Right.

[00:51:59] DN: And she married a—she married—her last husband was a pastor, and her first husband was a pastor. And her name was Sarah Belle Leona Coon Mitchell Clary Wagnon [*SL laughs*], and there was never a divorce. These guys, she just outlived all of them, and [*SL laughs*] at least two of 'em were ministers. So I mean, she just—you know, she migrated toward those kind of people.

[00:52:23] SL: Uh-huh. Well, when did you—do you remember when you first started to read?

DN: When I first . . .

SL: Began reading.

DN: Oh, at a very, very early age. I, you know, I—because of the Bible and the fact that Mother would read to me, and I'd read back to her and this and that and the other, and so, you know, that's basically what I grew up with. I mean, the—my—our present pastor at First United Methodist Church is Reverend Michael—Reverend Dr. Michael Maddox, and I had lunch with him one day. And I said, "Well, how did you get this title?" And he said, "Well, I grew up in a small town in an Assembly of God church, and there was nothing to do but read the Bible." And I said, "Well, you must have spent more time with it than I did [*laughs*] because they don't call me Dr. anything. [*Laughter*]"

[00:53:22] SL: Well, do you remember any of those early stories out of the Bible that maybe impressed you, or were there—what—did you have a favorite story or . . .

DN: I never understood that Jonah and the whale story. [*Laughs*] I had trouble buying that. And the parting of the Red Sea, and I guess I came along at the time when you were first allowed to question—you know, have questions in your head about what

you had read . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . in the Bible. And you felt guilty about those—raising those questions . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . because you were to accept it as it was.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And that's all there was to it. And then all of a sudden, I began to say, "How could that have happened, and how could this have happened and"—so . . .

SL: It's a fine line when you start challenging . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . faith.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I bega—and there was—I think it was probably happening all during my generation because we were the generation that had first come along when times were not quite so hard. There was no Depression. Things were beginning to rebound in the economy of the country. We were getting refrigerators instead of ice ma—you know, re—iceboxes. And so—and having papers and reading about things and hearing—we had radio.

[00:54:53] We didn't have a telephone in our house until I was a junior in high school and I—we'd go next door and use the neighbor's telephone. And you know, it was in two- or three-digit—call 5-6-7 or whatever it was.

SL: Right.

DN: But . . .

[00:55:06] SL: Did it have a—did you go through a switchboard . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . operator?

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: You'd call . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . the operator.

SL: Most every . . .

DN: Talk to a real person . . .

SL: . . . every . . .

DN: . . . which you can't do now. [*Laughs*]

SL: Everything was probably on party line, as well.

DN: All party line.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Absolutely.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

[00:55:20] SL: Well, that's good that—I mean, I think it was—I'm not sure—I think Magnolia may have been the last town to get telephone service . . .

DN: Really?

SL: . . . in the state. Yeah, one of the last. And it seemed like it was in the [19]30s . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . that they got their phone. Well, so . . .

[00:55:38] DN: I remember my—I'll just throw this in. Dad was—he was not a big—he was not into farming or doing anything like that. And I remember that he had a chicken one day, and Mother insisted that he wring the chicken's neck. And Dad couldn't do it. And the neck was just slipping in his hand, and when he dropped the chicken, the chicken ran off.

SL: Sure.

DN: [*Laughs*] And he was not big . . .

SL: He was done.

DN: . . . into that. [*Laughter*] But that—to tell the s—the other part of the story about how spoiled I was. If Mother had the preacher over on Sunday, which was a common practice in those

days, she would always take the best piece of meat and put it on a separate plate so the preacher couldn't get it. It was reserved for Dale.

SL: Oh!

DN: [*Laughs*] I oughta be ashamed to . . .

SL: Man, I . . .

DN: . . . admit it but I . . .

SL: I don't see how you made it outta Warren.

DN: [*Laughter*] I don't know how I did, either, because I remember her telling me when I came out of my sophomore year in A&M in Monticello, and she said, "Son, if you don't wanna leave here, don't worry. Your dad and I will take care of you for the rest of your life." And I—she didn't know, but my button was to go.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I was ready to move on . . .

SL: Sure, sure.

DN: . . . because that cocoon had just gotten a little bit too tight, you know. I was ready to go give it a go on my own.

[00:57:04] SL: Let's talk about the radio for a little bit in the home.

DN: Okay.

SL: So I would assume that the programming was pretty selective by your—and probably done by your mom. Is that . . .

DN: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . that right?

DN: Yeah.

SL: I mean, there—you didn't listen . . .

DN: No.

SL: . . . to music . . .

DN: We didn't listen to daytime serials. We listened to news, H. V. Kaltenborn, and names like that stick out in my mind, and the Grand Ole Opry.

SL: We [*unclear word*] . . .

DN: We would listen to . . .

SL: . . . to the music.

DN: . . . the Grand Ole Opry . . .

SL: Is that right?

DN: . . . on Saturday night. Dad loved country music, and we would listen to that. And we did—and Warren didn't have a radio station until, oh, bout 1954. And so, anything we got was, you know, it was staticky, and even Granddaddy Nick had a radio. I do remember now goin' back and listening to them sometimes on Saturday night, being able to get a lot of static with a little bit of country music drawn in there from the Grand Ole Opry.

[00:58:02] SL: What about sports?

DN: Nah.

SL: No fights?

DN: Nobody was big . . .

SL: No . . .

DN: . . . into sports. No.

SL: Boxing? Nothing like that?

DN: No, nothing like that.

SL: That's kind of surprising that you got to listen to the Grand Ole Opry.

DN: Yeah, I—and I don't remember enjoying it, either.

SL: Really?

DN: I did—I was not a fan of country music. But they—it was a Saturday night, and they did it.

SL: That was [*laughs*] kinda [*DN laughs*] cuttin' loose.

[00:58:28] DN: And then when television came on board, I just thought that was the grandest thing in the world, you know.

SL: Well . . .

DN: And I . . .

SL: . . . for good reason.

DN: . . . I remember all the problems with the Kennedys when John was killed and all of those sorts of things and watching—and I was at my mother and daddy's house on York Street and had

just come back from church when Jack Ruby took Lee Harvey Oswald's life.

SL: Now, this is [19]62?

DN: Yeah. I had already left home.

SL: Uh-huh. Okay.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: But you just happened to be back . . .

[00:59:03] DN: Because I graduated in [19]57, and in the fall of [19]58, I enrolled at Henderson State University as a speech major. I wanted—I didn't wanna be a speech teacher. I wanted to be a game show host [*SL laughs*], and then I realized that you had to have hair, and I didn't have hair.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

DN: So I couldn't be a game show host. Steve Stephens had the hair, not me. [*Laughs*]

[00:59:25] SL: That's funny. So you didn't have hair comin' out of high school, huh?

DN: Well, I didn't have much. [*Laughter*] I had to work at gettin' a flattop. Remember that was big in those days?

SL: Yeah, sure. Yeah.

DN: And you put some kind of wax on it or whatever to get it. Nah.

[00:59:39] SL: Okay, well, we're kinda jumpin' ahead. I . . .

Trey Marley: Hey Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

DN: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:44] DN: I remember hearin' Francis Cherry on the radio for the first time as a young man, and I thought Orval Faubus just had to be the worst person in the world. And he—and was it Francis Cherry that labeled him as having gone to some kind of college that had Communist connections?

SL: He—well, yeah, his dad was a Socialist, I think, or maybe . . .

DN: Was he?

SL: . . . maybe com—it was—yeah, there was a . . .

DN: Something.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I remember that.

[01:00:10] SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. Yep. You know, David Pryor was Governor Cherry's driver during that campaign.

DN: Yeah. Really? Gaw! I can't remember Arkansas without a Pryor. *Pryor Commitment*. [Laughter] Camden, Arkansas; Warren, Arkansas. We grew up in the same area of the state. Boy, his mother was a delight. I remember that. David's mother.

SL: Susie?

DN: Yeah.

SL: She was great.

DN: Just wonderful.

SL: She was great.

DN: Yeah.

SL: You know, it's so serendipitous. Walter Hussman managed the Palmer paper in Camden.

DN: Yeah, that's right.

SL: And . . .

DN: The Palmer paper.

SL: . . . Barbara and David were both—both of them taught Sunday school, and Warren was in their classes.

DN: Oh, they did?

SL: Or—yeah, yeah. [*DN laughs*] Walter . . .

DN: Well, that—it—well, I mean, reli . . .

SL: Small world.

DN: . . . religion was a large part of life in those days.

[01:01:10] SL: Mh-hmm. Okay, so we're back.

DN: Okay.

SL: Dale, we're on tape two.

DN: Okay.

SL: You survived your first . . .

DN: Roll tape two.

SL: . . . you survived your first hour. We really haven't gotten you into public schools yet.

DN: Okay.

SL: We've been talkin' about your mom and dad and the town of Warren and the facilities that were there and built in. And really, as far as that era goes, Warren was in pretty good shape. And I suspect that the timber industry helped facilitate having electricity, having running water . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . have—you know, it was a bus—there was a business there that kinda drove the community and . . .

DN: It did.

SL: . . . provided for it.

DN: It was . . .

SL: You know . . .

DN: . . . it was vital to Warren at the time. [01:01:57] It—we had the Southern mill and the Bradley mill, so there were two mills there in town.

SL: They were competing mills.

DN: Competing mills.

SL: That's even better.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

[01:02:06] SL: So—and your father worked for the Bradley . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . Company.

DN: For the Bradley mill.

[01:02:10] SL: And it is interesting that they had their own houses
that the employees lived in . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . and I guess they rented.

DN: You paid a rent.

SL: Paid a rent.

DN: Right. Monthly rent.

SL: And then the company store.

DN: Company store.

SL: Did they have their own money? Did Bradley—I mean, some—
and
the . . .

DN: They . . .

SL: . . . company store stuff, they would issue stuff that they could—
that the employees could spend at the stores.

DN: The—I remember they got a check. They got their own money,

but they could go spend it at the company store. But you, largely, you could charge it at the company store . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . and pay it at the end of the month or whatever. We charged groceries, you know, and didn't think a thing in the world about it, and there were no computers, so they had to write down what you bought and what it cost for a can of coffee and all that sorta thing. And at the end of the month or end of the week, you'd go settle up with the grocer.

SL: Yeah. They'd give you . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . a carbon copy . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . of the receipt.

DN: And there's still one in Little Rock that does that.

SL: That's great.

DN: Hestand's market up here in the Heights.

SL: They'll let you charge the stuff.

DN: I see young people go in and get a candy bar and a Coke, and they'll write it down [*SL laughs*] and send their mother and daddy a bill at the [*laughs*] . . .

SL: You almost have to be at the country club to be able to charge

something [*DN laughs*] on your account now.

DN: Hard to believe anymore.

[01:03:22] SL: Yeah. [*DN laughs*] Yeah. That's fun. So—and you talked about—you know, I—we're always interested in environment—in the environment . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . that you grew up in and how that influenced you. And you mentioned the soot getting on things in the town because of the wood they're burning, and I would assume that your mom and your grandmothers had to kinda plan when they did the laundry. They probably couldn't hang the laundry out there . . .

DN: That's exactly right.

SL: . . . when they were burning the wood . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . 'cause it'd ruin the . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . the laundry.

DN: And boy, it smelled so good at night. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, they were burning oak, I guess, and pine.

DN: Yeah.

SL: I gue—was—you mentioned that your . . .

DN: They would. They would let us know. I remember that.

[01:04:05] And you know, most of us in those days had what we call window fans.

SL: Yep.

DN: That's how you cool the house.

SL: Yes.

DN: And you would have it in one window, and you'd raise all the other windows a couple of inches and draw that . . .

SL: To draw.

DN: . . . that breeze across there.

SL: That's right.

DN: And the night that they were burning that ash, it'd just smell like an outdoor campfire. It was really [*laughs*] good. And then the older you got, you got a car, and you were dating, and you could be out there and roll the window down, and it'd just smell like you were around a campfire. I remember it bein' good [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . not bad.

[01:04:35] SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [*DN laughs*] You know, you were born in 1939. Your family had survived the Depression.

DN: Right.

SL: And you know, it's been said many times that folks of pioneer

stock that had their own gardens and had their own livestock and all that stuff, they did pretty well through the Depression. They didn't have to count on going out and buyin' the staples.

DN: Right.

SL: They'd produce their own food. So—and I'm assuming that's probably the way it was for y'all's . . .

DN: Yes.

SL: Did you ever hear any Depression stories? Did your . . .

DN: Oh, I heard . . .

SL: . . . dad or mom . . .

DN: Yeah, yeah. [01:05:16] I heard some Depression stories, and I really couldn't equate to it because at that point in time we were outta the Depression, and things were—we were gettin' ready to go to war, you know.

SL: And we're gonna talk about that.

DN: Yeah. And that was coming up. And in fact, the day, I believe, that I broke my arm that I mentioned to you earlier, ridin' a stick horse, was the day I took a picture in of Mussolini being hanged.

SL: Wow.

DN: And that was when? Nineteen—wasn't it . . .

SL: [Nineteen] forty . . .

DN: . . . [19]43, [19]44? Somewhere . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . along in there? And I was, you know, I was four or five and was ridin' a stick horse and my—I'd gone to pick up the paper at the end of the sidewalk and was riding it back and tripped and broke my arm. Yeah, yeah.

[01:06:00] SL: So radiowise, do you remember any broadcasts talking about the war?

DN: I do. I remember that, and I remember—at that point in time, I thought, "Boy, that sounds like a great job. I would love"—and I remember their voices being so impressive. You know, I mentioned H. V. Kaltenborn earlier. There are few people that would remember him, but he was a war correspondent and, you know, all of those great names—and Edward R. Murrow. And people talked to me and we—they used to smoke—if you can believe this, commentators smoked on the air during a live broadcast. Walter Cronkite smoked cigarettes while he was explaining to us what had happened in Dallas to Jack Kennedy that day, and it was just . . .

SL: I remember.

DN: . . . you know, it was something that—in television it's almost like the series *Mad Men* but it—if you've ever seen it, because [*laughs*] they smoked; they had three-martini lunches; they did

the whole nine yards. And that's pretty much the way it was in the [19]50s and [19]60s.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Well, so you were only a—I mean, you hadn't even—you broke your arm when you were four or five years old.

DN: Right.

SL: And so, this is pretty early stuff for you. [01:07:21] I mean, is that one of your first memories is breakin' your arm? Do you have a earlier memory before that?

DN: Yeah, that one stands out in my mind. And the other stuff that I mentioned earlier about, you know, just always they saved the best food for me, and they made sure I had plen—they just smothered me, and they loved me, and they read the Bible to me, and I read the Bible back. And I learned to do all of those sorts of things, and I was a pretty good kid up until I was in the sixth grade or so. [*Laughter*]

[01:07:57] SL: Well, okay. So as far as the war goes and—did you see—maybe by the end of the war, were there casualties that you were aware of, local casualties?

DN: Yes, yes. And there were—and they would write about 'em in the local paper, and you know, then they would always—there

would be a monument erected in the—on the—and on certain—
on Memorial Day and et cetera, we would go downtown, and
there would be a large parade and things like that. And even in
Warren now, there is—they have built a museum down there,
and they keep askin' me for a picture, but my involvement in the
war was limited to, you know, the National Guard so . . .

SL: In the Korean War.

DN: Yeah, yeah, to avoid the Korean conflict. Yeah.

[01:08:46] SL: And within the congregation of the church, were
there casualties . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . of World War II . . .

DN: Yeah, there were.

SL: . . . that you were kind . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . of aware of?

DN: Yeah, I remember those. And what I remember most was the
mournful way of death when I was a young child. [01:09:03]
And I can't even remember who it was, but there was some
member of my family that they brought the casket and put it in
our house.

SL: Yes.

DN: And it just—it was a nightmare for me until they got that thing outta there. And I just—I was mortified at being around people who had died or going to funerals because they, you know, they would kiss the deceased. They would bend down into the casket and kiss the deceased and do these sorts of things, and I just found it—you know, something that spooked me.

SL: So they'd—or this—they brought the casket into your home there in Warren.

DN: Right.

SL: And they opened the casket . . .

DN: On York Street . . .

SL: . . . and . . .

DN: . . . and they opened it, and . . .

SL: . . . and f—and people . . .

DN: . . . they had a little veil that went over the open part of it, and the family would come by there and talk about Aunt whomever. And I can't remember who it was. And that was the only time I remember it ever happening but I—that just stands out in my mind as a memory that I would just as soon not have.

SL: You know, your, I bet, your mother and your grandparents—grandmothers were aware how that affected you, you know.

DN: I hope they were. I . . .

SL: I bet they were, and I . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . bet they decided they would never do that again.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughter*] And I was glad, I gotta tell you.

SL: Well, you know, in the old days, that was the common practice . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . before your time. And in fact, they'd keep that body in there for a while. They used to fill up jugs—jars with cold water to keep the body cool.

DN: To keep it—ooh. [*SL laughs*] And I remember stories about cats maybe getting in caskets or something like that.

SL: Oh, I don't know about that.

DN: I don't [*SL laughs*]*—*anyway, it was just . . .

SL: The worst. [*Laughs*]

DN: . . . it was somewhere I didn't want to go. I [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . can tell you that.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

[01:11:00] DN: And because we were such a large part of the congregation, any member of the church that died, there was a big funeral. And I don't mean twenty or thirty minutes. It

wasn't a celebration of life. It was just mournful music, and I'd have to go because Mother, you know, insisted . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . I go. And as a child they were just unfavorable memories to me. And then I thought it was ironic that my best friend in high school turned out to be a funeral director and still owns the funeral home in Warren today.

[01:11:39] SL: [*Laughs*] You know, we didn't—this is your best friend that—you'd mentioned him earlier.

DN: John Frazer?

SL: John Frazer.

DN: [*Unclear word*].

SL: And let's see, now. What was it that his folks did? Seemed like . . .

DN: His folks owned Frazer Funeral Home in Warren. They owned the bank in Warren.

SL: Okay.

DN: And they owned most of the land in Warren.

SL: Okay. [*DN laughs*] So he was . . .

DN: And he was an only child. [01:12:06] And his mother, Miriam—I would go over—it was big and—you know, when we were sophomores and juniors in high school, we would go spend the

night, we called it, with each other.

SL: Sure.

DN: I mean, guys would go over there, and it was—you know, that's the way we'd do things.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And his mother was a—he was an only child, and I was an only child, and my mother, Rachel, and his mother, Miriam, kind of felt that both of us needed extra protection because we were the only boys that they had.

SL: Right.

DN: And when I got my [19]40 Ford after the James Dean movie, his mother would not let him have one because she thought it was dangerous for him to drive a used car, so he got a brand-new 1957 Chevrolet.

SL: Oh, that's sweet.

DN: And he was the envy of the town, you know.

SL: Well, sure he was. [DN laughs] He would be now. [Laughter]

DN: Yeah, well, yeah. [Laughter] He was the big boy.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: But he stayed with it, and now his son works with him, and they're still the only funeral home in Warren that I'm aware of.

[01:13:09] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about the neighborhood . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . that you grew up in. Now, it was not uncommon that a community—it's almost like a—the Hillary Clinton thing. It takes a village, you know.

DN: Right.

SL: The neighbors and the friends . . .

DN: Everybody knew everybody.

SL: Everything. And they knew everything. They . . .

DN: You bet.

SL: If a child comin' home from school was doing something they shouldn't be doing . . .

DN: My mother knew about it before . . .

SL: When you got home.

DN: . . . [*laughs*] you could get it on the party line.

SL: Yeah, yeah. And so, was that the way it was in Warren? I mean . . .

DN: Oh yeah. The Haneys lived to the north of us on my right side. The Burks lived on my left side. And I remember the Haneys had two beautiful girls. They were older than me by probably five years, but I thought fifteen at the time. And they were just gorgeous, drop-dead beautiful. And the Burks had boys, and we'd play bag tag at night, and you know, we had fences in

those days, and you'd walk along the top rail of the fence. And it would be wooden on top and then wire underneath there. And we'd chase each other all over the neighborhood and play until, you know, until dark o'clock, and they'd call and say, "It's time for you to come in and have your supper."

SL: Yeah.

DN: And then we went in 'cause there was no television to watch, so you know, you did what you could.

SL: Those were great times. [*DN laughs*] They were great times.

DN: It was a good time.

SL: Yeah, it was really good. Well, what about—so let's get you into school . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . at this point. I mean, I—we've pretty much set a benchmark at you breaking your leg on the stick horse.

DN: Right.

SL: And we identified that kind of with a World War II event and . . .

DN: Right.

[01:14:54] SL: So did you go to—was there a public kindergarten that you went to?

DN: They did not have. No, I went to the first grade. Mother walked me to school every day. And she met me after school was out

and walked me home. And the Warren Middle School was really in the heart of the downtown area. It was probably a mile and a half, mile and a quarter, to my house. But I knew when I got out of class in the afternoon, my mother would be waiting on me on the corner. And she'd hold my hand and walk me home. And I—gosh [*laughs*], I'd get embarrassed because . . .

SL: Well, sure.

DN: . . . other kids were going home by themselves, and Mother was there to pick up Daley and . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . make sure he got home [*laughs*] safely.

SL: Yeah, well, that kind of—that probably grew, too, as you grew older.

[01:15:45] DN: Such great teachers. I mean, people that just took—they took an interest in you in those days. And I remember Sam Smalling, who was the principal at Warren High School, and Perry Herring, who was the superintendent. His wife was also a teacher. And in those days my friend, Bill Hedrick, blew the trumpet every morning as we raised the flag, and I read the scripture reading because she selected me because she thought I had a good voice. And I read it over the intercom, and that's how every Monday through Friday went in my, you know, in my

junior high school days and even in my senior high school days.

Nicholson was expected to read the scripture every morning.

[*Laughs*]

SL: So you were doing closed-circuit broadcasting . . .

DN: [*Laughs*] I was, early on.

SL: Early on. [*Laughter*]

DN: Didn't know it. [*Laughter*]

[01:16:36] SL: Well, could you hear yourself over the PA system, or were you in a room isolated from the rest of the speakers?

DN: I was pretty isolated.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And I didn't have a great voice. I mean, it was just that I could read. I mean, that came very easy to me and probably all the way back to the fact that my mother had me readin' the Bible when I was two or three years old, you know. But she would pick out the scripture; bring it to me. I read it; he'd play the trumpet; we raised the flag. And that's how the day began.

SL: That's great.

DN: [*Laughs*] It was a good time.

SL: Yeah. I mean, you know, it doesn't happen anymore.

DN: No. Doesn't happen that way.

SL: That kind of stuff is gone.

DN: And if you did anything bad at school, Mother knew about it before I got home, you know.

SL: Sure.

DN: So I knew that. So you were pretty careful about what you did.

[01:17:26] SL: So let's talk about the Warren school, and you said middle school. Was there—were there two . . .

DN: Well, it was called elementary school and then junior high school and then senior high school. I think that's what it was. There was no kindergarten in those days.

SL: And so, was the elementary school by itself?

DN: Yes. Yeah.

SL: And was it one story or two?

DN: It was one story, and it was the first, second, and third grade. And, you know, and that was it. And we had a playground, and it was on a lot by itself where the post office is at Warren now. And I remember it was white, and it looked like a huge building to me, and it really wasn't that big at all. I bet there weren't more than sixty or seventy of us in those three grades at one time. But yeah, it just . . .

SL: Did each grade have its own classroom?

DN: Yeah, it did. It did. And the teachers in the early days, I don't remember them. And then later in life, they—there's some

stand-out teachers that I remember that, you know, really got on my case and tried to make me—academically, I coulda been a lot better than I was, but I loved the social part of school, you know.

SL: Well, sure.

DN: If there was a party, I was there. [*Laughs*]

[01:18:52] SL: Well, so did—was there a cafeteria in your grade school . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . or was there a cafeteria that kinda served all of 'em?

DN: Cafeteria that served all of 'em, and I remember you goin' down, and it was kinda like a basement.

SL: Yeah.

DN: You know, it was a one floor, but a basement. And I remember you could smell what you were gonna have for lunch before you got there. You knew it was either gonna be turnip greens or sweet potatoes or whatever [*laughs*] they were serving . . .

SL: Oh, that sounds good.

DN: . . . in those days.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Pretty good. Ate off a metal tray . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . with little divided compartments.

SL: Yeah.

DN: You had a little thing of milk.

SL: Yeast rolls.

DN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it wasn't that bad.

SL: It was great! [*DN laughs*] What—and little cartons of milk?

DN: Oh, yeah, yeah. And occasional ice cream . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . you know.

SL: Fudgesicles.

DN: Yeah. With a wooden spoon. [*Laughter*]

SL: Oh yeah [*unclear words*]. So let's see. There was another thing I was gonna ask you about lunch. Hmm. Well, I can't think of it right now.

DN: I know I was in senior high school before I went home for lunch. And you know, it wasn't very far at all. And they were still serving cafeteria food because even those days some children were being bused into Warren who lived out, like, my father's—my grandfather's farm, and they'd bring them in.

SL: Yeah.

DN: But at that point in time, I got to where I'd go home for lunch, and I'd—I was a pretty big guy by then, you know. Go home

and have lunch with Mother and Daddy.

[01:20:24] SL: Yeah. So a mile and a half to the school, and you walked . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . there and back . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . each day.

DN: I got me—got my exercise in.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Walked along the railroad tracks where that train ran. It ran almost directly from Warren High School to my home on York Street, and I'd just walk right along that railroad track. And then we'd lay things down on the rail, you know, to see the train wheels run over it and crush it and . . .

SL: Pennies and—yeah.

DN: Yeah. That sorta thing. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. I mean, that was gonna . . .

DN: And always the story about, you know, stickin' your tongue to it . . .

SL: You're gonna derail . . .

DN: . . . and . . .

SL: Oh!

DN: . . . couldn't [*laughs*] get it off because it would freeze and . . .

SL: [*DN laughs*] Freezing. Yeah, yeah. yeah. Here comes the train.

[*Laughter*] So—but it—that was later on . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . doin' the railroad track stuff . . .

DN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . when you're in high school.

DN: Yeah.

SL: In grade school it was on the street and . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . you and your mom hand in hand . . .

DN: We walked right along the sidewalk. Walked right down Main Street to the post office, took a right to the Methodist church, took a left, and headed home.

[01:21:28] SL: Did it—so did your mom do any errand-like stuff on that walk? I mean, you've mentioned the post office. Would she pick up the mail or . . .

DN: She'd do that occasionally. I remember that.

SL: . . . drop some mail off and . . .

DN: Yeah, and she would drop—she would visit with a lot of the merchants on Main Street because she knew them. And of course, I was just a tag-along kid, you know, lookin' up, saying,

"Boy, I sure would like to get home." But yeah, she would visit people all the way home.

[01:21:54] SL: Did you have a favorite store there in downtown Warren?

DN: Yeah, there was a five-and-ten-cent store there, and it was called French's. And I later worked for the guy selling firecrackers on the street at Christmastime.

SL: That's so crazy.

DN: And he would give me these bunches of firecrackers, and I would go sell 'em to people on the street for a nickel or a dime. And my father even played Santa Claus for extra money at French's five-and-dime store on Warren Street—in—on Main Street in Warren.

SL: It sounds like Macy's. [*Laughter*]

DN: And his wife had, two stores down, she had Imogene's, and that's where my grandmother, Sarah Belle Leona Coon Mitchell Clary Wagnon, she was a clerk in that store, and she wrapped the most beautiful Christmas packages, and everybody wanted her to do Christmas packages. And later when I married my wife, she said, "I was afraid to go in that store because your grandmother was awfully gruff and mean." [*Laughter*] And in the pictures I see of her now, I can see where she was a bit

testy. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, was Imogene's a clothing store?

DN: It was a ladies' clothing store. It was . . .

SL: Yeah, is that kind of a famous clothing . . .

DN: . . . a high-end ladies' clothing store.

SL: Is that not a . . .

DN: And she was married to Bill French, who owned French's five-and-ten-cent store.

SL: Okay.

DN: So they both came outta Hot Springs. How they got to Warren, I don't know, but they both, for whatever reason, liked me, took me in, gave me an opportunity to do a little bit of work occasionally, and mainly it was selling firecrackers at Christmastime. So . . .

SL: I don't know why I think I've heard of Imogene's before. Did people kinda—was that kind of a destination store . . .

DN: It was.

SL: . . . for women?

DN: It was. I mean, if you had enough money to afford their clothing, you were gonna go out lookin' pretty good to the YMCA dance. And there was Ederington's there, and there was Imogene's. But Imogene's, that's where you went—that was

where you went if you really wanted to dress up. The sophisticated ladies in town that went to the Presbyterian and the Methodist church on Sunday, they bought their clothes there. Small store.

[01:24:03] SL: You know what? We kinda glanced over, and I just wanna go back to your mom and your grandmothers again. I'm assuming they were great cooks.

DN: They were what?

SL: Great cooks.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: That they could cook.

DN: Oh [*laughs*] yes. Yes, yes, yes. And I know—I don't even know where they'd learned the craft. I guess from their mother.

SL: Well, sure.

DN: But I mean, every Sunday it was pot roast or fried chicken or—you know, we never—I don't remember us ever not eating very well. You know, as I said, we were a middle-class family, but boy, I mean, we had meat at every meal, you know, and that sort of thing.

SL: You . . .

DN: I remember going home on Sunday night after church, and I don't know why, but Dad would always have Mother open a can

of butter beans and warm 'em up on the stove, and we would eat butter beans before we went to bed. And there'd be corn— cold corn bread left over from an earlier meal . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . and so, you had corn bread and butter beans and a glass of milk, and you went to bed. And that was it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that may've been something that he had as a kid . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . growing up and . . .

DN: Probably so. Hangover.

SL: And it may've been after church. I mean . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know, it could've been a tradition that . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . he grew up with 'cause that . . .

Joy Endicott: Scott, let's stop there.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:25:25] DN: [*Sings*] "More than the greatest love the world has known."

TM: Speed.

SL: Maybe you should just do a little tune [*DN laughs*] for us.

DN: I wish I could.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, you sound pretty good to me.

DN: I did—I—they asked me to do Christmas karaoke year before last because I was retiring, and we did it at Wildwood, and we had a full auditorium. And I can't sing, but I was better than Beebe [*SL laughs*], and he sang. And so I did, "I did it my way," Sinatra.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And I've got that on a DVD and it—the words were so true. You know, I—"Regrets, I have a few" . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . "far too few to mention." So . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . it worked out good.

JE: Can we turn off the phone, please.

DN: But . . .

SL: Is your phone . . .

DN: . . . Frank, I'm not.

SL: Is your telephone on?

DN: No.

SL: It's not?

DN: Cell phone? Nope.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Nope.

SL: Someone's cell phone is.

DN: Don't even have it on me.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Nope.

[Tape stopped]

[01:26:21] SL: So we're halfway through our second tape. We just had a great lunch. We had a . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . break. We're getting back into this. We left talking about cooking and how the women were such great cooks.

DN: Wonderful.

SL: And you know, what kind of brought that up to me was you mentioned the YMCA dances and Imogene's clothing store and . . .

DN: Right.

[01:26:42] SL: But I was wondering, were there pie sales at the . . .

DN: Oh, I remember . . .

SL: . . . Assembly of God . . .

DN: . . . bake sales.

SL: Bake sales.

DN: They did those as a church a lot, you know, because that was something every, I guess, about every female could do. And they'd bring those to raise money for building churches or auditoriums or schools or whatever. Yeah. Pie sales. Bake sales.

SL: And your—the women that raised you, they participated in that?

DN: Oh yeah. Oh, you betcha. Anything in the church, they participated in.

SL: And were there—was there a favorite pie?

DN: I [*laughs*—yeah. Coconut.

SL: Really?

DN: [*Laughs*] It is to this day.

SL: Coconut.

DN: I love [*laughs*] a good coconut pie. And my daughter, strangely enough, bakes a wonderful coconut pie. And it's—she's better than her grandmother was.

SL: Is that right?

DN: Yep. She's got it down pat.

SL: I may have to hold you to a piece of that sometime.

DN: [*Laughs*] It's good. I'll get it for you. [*Laughs*]

SL: Okay. All right. [*DN laughs*] Well, I, you know, I just know that bake sales were also parts of . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . communities, growing up—folks that I've interviewed—that those were major events. And . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . they . . .

[01:27:48] DN: Well, you know, we didn't have concerts or anything like that, and there were so few things to entertain you other than church, goin' to the YMCA dances. And boy, that floor looked so big to walk all the way across there and ask a girl to dance for fear of rejection. Whoa! One of the most frightening things in your life. [*Laughs*]

SL: Was that a basketball floor?

DN: Yeah.

SL: What—yeah.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, gymnasium floor.

DN: Walk across the gym floor. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh. You bet. Now, all the girls lined up on one side.

DN: All the girls on one side. All the guys on the other. Right.

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

DN: [*Laughs*] Just lookin' at each other, almost like, "I dare you to go ask her." [*Laughs*]

[01:28:22] SL: So was it—those YMCA dances, were they on records? They played records, and you danced to them?



DN: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, they'd—I remember the first 45 record player I ever saw in my life, and I thought it was the coolest thing in the world. You know, little bitty spindle, 45 record. And we listened to Randy's Record Shop out of Gallatin, Tennessee, on the car radio all the time. That's where I really got infected with radio. I wanted in radio really bad because I wanted to be him.

[01:28:57] SL: So growin' up, radio really had an effect on you.

DN: Yeah, it did. Yeah, from early, early days, it did. Yeah. It was kind of something that I felt like I was, you know, predestined to do.

SL: Uh-huh. That's interesting. You know, most folks thought of it only as an entertainment . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . piece or, you know, maybe news. And . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you know, I assume that your mom and dad and you and the grandparents maybe sat around the radio, much . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . like people sit around and watch TV . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . to get the news and . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . and programming. [01:29:41] Well, back in the public schools, you don't—you said that you don't really—can't remember an elementary school teacher that really kind of . . .

DN: Stood out in my mind.

SL: . . . turn on—turned it on for you.

DN: Uh-uh. No.

SL: And—but you made straight As through grade school, through elementary school. You were . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . you were a great student.

DN: Made straight As. I was a straight-A student, and I had no problem with it, you know, until I got to that sixth-grade mark.

[Laughs]

SL: And the girls started to . . .

DN: Girls became . . .

SL: . . . enter the picture.

DN: . . . a big part of my life. [Laughs] That and the band, you know.

SL: The marching band.



DN: Yeah, marching band. And then when I went away to Henderson, I played in a jazz band with them. And we played at different little old clubs in Hot Springs. And I—it was a toss-up about whether I wanted to be a musician or in radio or TV. And I found out that musicians' careers were shorter, normal, than radio/TV people, and so I moved into radio. But even in my freshman year in Arkadelphia, I went out to the radio station and volunteered to be a disc jockey in the afternoons so I could play requests for girls who called in and wanted to hear Johnny Mathis or whomever. And then I would pursue them to get a date, so it worked out really well.

SL: You were leveraging your career early. [*Laughter*]

DN: Yes. [*Laughter*] I knew what I wanted to do.

SL: Well, okay, let's talk a little bit—let's back up a little bit now.

DN: All right.

SL: So you're going into junior high school. You discover girls and the social life that is available to all teenagers about that time.

DN: Right.

[01:31:20] SL: You said you joined the marching band. I saw a photograph of you playing a trombone.

DN: Trombone.

SL: So that was your instrument . . .

DN: I was good enough to make all-state trombone, so you know, I wasn't a—I was not a slack. I was a first-chair trombone player in the Warren band.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And at the time, even in a school that size, we had about seventy-five or eighty people in the marching band. And when you're in the—when you're in a marching band, you're a trombone player, you're in the front line, so you're right behind the majorettes [*SL laughs*] and all of that, so it was really good. My only bad [*laughs*] days, Scott, were when we went to the southeast Arkansas parade down in Pine Bluff. And it was always in late August, early September.

SL: Oh.

DN: And the horses went right before the band. And when you're playin' a trombone, you can't look down, and at the end of the day, it didn't [*laughs*]*—it was hot and miserable. [Laughs]*

SL: White shoes?

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: They had you wearin' . . .

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . white shoes. Yeah.

DN: The spats and the whole thing. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DN: Wool uniforms. Hot, my Lord!

SL: Yep.

DN: Feel like you're gonna die. I'd lose five pounds, and I didn't have five pounds to lose.

SL: That's funny. So as a band you got to, band member, you got to go to all the football games.

DN: All the football games. Yeah.

SL: And was . . .

DN: And I was the show-out. I was the guy that, you know, played the loudest and dated the cheerleader and the whole thing.

[01:32:41] SL: Yeah. Let's see. [DN laughs] What about basketball? Was—were you—was there a little band for the basketball?

DN: Oh, you—the band didn't play basketball—for basketball games then. Curry Martin was the band director, and he was a wonderful person. Just recently passed away. And he had—he was *Mr. Olland's—Holland's Opus* to me. I mean, he saved a lot of kids from going astray by being so rigid and such a disciplinarian in the band. And [laughs] basketball, I remember I was not—I told you I wasn't very athletic. And I remember us playing El Dorado one night at the YMCA in Warren, and the final

score was 84–8. And I was—and El Dorado had the 84. Warren had fo—8, and I had—I was high-point man for Warren and was proud of it with 4 of the 8 points.

SL: Scored half . . .

DN: So I was not very good.

SL: . . . half the points.

DN: [*Laughs*] I knew there was no career for me in basketball or football, quickly. [*Laughs*]

[01:33:48] SL: Well, what—so the basketball team didn't do very well. What about football? Was football kind of a way of life? I mean . . .

DN: Yes, and it—and to me it was a different way of life. It meant getting on a band bus on Friday and going to Eudora or Dermott or Fordyce. And we just had a huge time. And you know, the parents of the band members, they ran the concession stand, sold drinks, popcorn, hot dogs, et cetera, at all the games. And that was really the social life in the [19]55 to [19]57, [19]58 era because you knew everybody by their first name. They knew you. Their mothers rode on the bus with us as chaperones. And I can remember sitting with their mothers and just talking my head off all the way to Eudora, which—I loved Eudora because it was a long trip from Warren.

SL: Yeah.

DN: It took an hour and a half to get down there. [*Laughs*] Yellow school bus. [*Laughs*]

[01:34:49] SL: Well, so did your mom ever chaperone a trip?

DN: No, she never did. I mean, she appreciated the fact that I like music, but that piano meant everything to her. And when I left that piano and went to that trombone, she didn't oppose me being in the band, but she didn't—she—and I think she worked some, you know, doing things, but not a whole lot.

SL: Well, she probably was very grateful for you to be in the band . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . instead of on the football team.

DN: I remember I played a trombone solo at one of the concerts, and I played "The Holy City." And she was there, and she was quite impressed with the fact that I could play that on a trombone and make it sound pretty good.

SL: Yeah.

DN: [*Laughs*] And I was, too.

[01:35:36] SL: Well, so you know, when I say razor—or football way of life by that time were the Razorback football games being broadcast on the radio yet?

DN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, they were, and I'd listen intently to Wally Ingalls and Bob Cheyne and people like that. Listened to every game. In fact, our son was born on the day of the disputed field goal, Arkansas versus Ole Miss at War Memorial Stadium. And I—they won by three points. And the referees—I remember the commentator saying, "They're leaving the field quickly to get away from the crowd."

SL: Yeah.

DN: [*Laughs*] So yeah, it had become a way of life. And it probably—we didn't have winning—Fordyce Redbugs were really big when I was there because Red Parker was over there. And Warren Lumberjacks, which was our little group of kids, we weren't very good compared to them and—but now, you know, the last three big receivers at the University of Arkansas all came from Warren.

SL: That's what I was thinkin'.

DN: And they've got another one on the way that they say is better than the three they've had up there.

SL: Wow.

DN: So Beau Hembree's the coach down there now, and it's big for a small town. I guess Friday night football is big everywhere, you know.

SL: Well, you know, for the state of Arkansas, Razorback football . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . was big—a big deal everywhere, . . .

DN: Oh!

SL: . . . all over the state.



[01:37:05] DN: One of the biggest days of my life was negotiating a contract with the University of Arkansas for the broadcast rights for KATV in 1994. And we took it away from Learfield Broadcasting. And I remember asking a lady in the administration—I said, "Do they owe you any money?" And she said, "They haven't paid us in a year." And I said, "Well, if given the opportunity to have the rights, I will see to it that you're paid fifteen days after the date of invoice," for the entire length of time we had the contract, which was eleven years. And I don't know—I didn't cause that to happen. I don't—I—it just happened on my watch. And I love the idea that we developed the Arkansas Razorback Sports Network, which at one time was second only to the Notre Dame network in the number of stations that carried the games. And then we graduated and moved into football, and so, the station and the university had a great relationship . . .

SL: Yep.

DN: . . . for a long period of time, and just loved every minute of it.

[01:38:12] SL: Well, back in the—you mentioned the Ole Miss game.

I mean, back in those days, Ole Miss and Arkansas, that was . . .

DN: That was the rivalry.

SL: . . . that was the Arkansas-Texas . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . of the time.

DN: Absolutely.

SL: I can remember my parents getting on a train and going to the game in Mississippi. And I member one time they came back, and Dad had been in a fight . . .

DN: [*Laughs*] Oh really?

SL: . . . in the end zone [*DN laughs*] after the game. I mean, it was a fierce, fierce competition [*unclear words*].

DN: Wonder if the Grove was big even then.

SL: I don't know. I guess it wa—I don't know, but apparently, it was a—some disputed call [*DN laughs*] over in Mississippi, too, and . . .

DN: It was Ole Miss and Arkansas. You're right.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: Absolutely.

[01:38:54] SL: Yeah. That's funny stuff. Well, so I guess we

oughta talk about the social life in Warren now.

DN: Okay.

SL: I guess—well, first of all, what was the—was there an African American population in Warren at all?

DN: There was because of the mill. But they lived in a certain area of town, and everybody else lived in a different area of town, and it was called the quarters. And as a young man, I delivered groceries there for—in the summer. And I would take groceries from the store and take it to their home. We'd play basketball together. We were friends. There was no animosity. We didn't know there was such a thing as integration or segregation or whatever. They were just of one color; we were of another. And I don't remember any kind of—and they had their own Main Street and . . .

SL: Their own businesses.

DN: . . . the white people had their Main Street. And—but there was just never any anger or animosity or any shootings or anything like that going on where I grew up.

[01:40:07] SL: Mh-hmm. And did Warren have a movie theater?

DN: Oh yeah. We had two downtown and a drive-in.

SL: That's big.

DN: So you take a town in 1957 that had two downtown theaters,

the Avalon and the Pastime, and a drive-in theater and a YMCA, then by [19]56, [19]57 there was plenty of opportunity for social life. And it was like the teenage club in El Dorado.

SL: Right.

DN: You know, everybody would go there, and I ended up hosting a dance party at the teenage club in El Dorado for KTVE.

[01:40:41] SL: Uh-huh. Well, so back to the racial setup in Warren, were the blacks allowed to go to the theaters and . . .

DN: No. No, no.

SL: No?

DN: I don't remember that at all. I never remember seeing anyone. And I remember us taking senior trips in 1957, and it was all white. And you know, we'd load the school bus and take off to Florida and stay three or four days with our parents as chaperones and all of that. [01:41:11] And then probably three or four years later, the senior trip disappeared, and I wondered why, and it was because the schools had become integrated and parents were more concerned and, you know, probably unreasonably so. But that's the way it was in those days.

SL: Yeah, you know, of course, Fayetteville had African American football players in their high school, and there were towns that would not play Fayetteville because . . .

DN: Because of that?

SL: . . . because the team was integrated and . . .

DN: I didn't know that.

SL: . . . and . . .

DN: We didn't have any African American players on the team. Yeah.

SL: What about—were there ever any—did you ever see any Whites
Only signs or . . .

DN: Yeah, I remember seeing those. And you know, at the time,
didn't think much about it.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I just thought it was a way of life, you know. Colored People
Here or Whites Only. And you'd see it mainly at a bus station or
someplace like that. It wasn't prominent. Maybe three or four
of those signs in all of downtown Warren. But I re—yeah, I do
remember seeing 'em. Sure do.

SL: You were gone at Warren by the time the civil rights movement
was taking . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . shape . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . so . . .

DN: I was gone.

SL: . . . you didn't get to . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . see how it affected the town then. [01:42:32] Before I forget about it, there's a photograph that we've got that I think that's of your grandparents maybe out at the farm. And you mentioned that the location was called—what was it called?

DN: Ignorant Bend. [*Laughter*] And how it got its name, I do not know. But I sent some photographers down there to do a story on my hometown of Warren. And they came back, jokingly, and they said, "You've been lying to us all these years. You didn't live in Warren; you lived at Ignorant Bend." Now, my grandparents lived at Ignorant Bend, and I assume it was a bend in the road. They probably had a little bitty schoolhouse there. And as you and I have talked, you know, third or fourth grade was pretty good.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Now, why anyone would take the audacity to name it Ignorant Bend is beyond me, but I've talked to friends who had grandparents that lived in the same area, and they said, "Yeah, it was called Ignorant Bend."

SL: It was called Ignorant Bend. That's [*DN laughs*] interesting. That's so interesting. I've never heard of [*DN laughs*] anything

like that before.

DN: I don't think you'll find it on the map, either. [*Laughs*]

[01:43:38] SL: No. That's good, though. All right, so there were the movies; there was the YMCA; there—what else was the other entertainment in Warren? I guess the football games.

DN: Football games and . . .

SL: Athletics.

DN: . . . and that sorta thing. It was, you know, for a senior in high school and a junior, [19]56, [19]57, it was—there was plenty to do. And by then I'd already gone to work at the radio station, so that was—that had become my entertainment.

[01:44:10] SL: So how old were you when you started work in the radio station?

DN: I started to work at KWRF in Warren when I was fourteen years old. And Senator Lee Reaves was Speaker of the House for a long number of years. And he put on a daytime only, 250-watt radio station in Warren. And John Frazer, whom I mentioned earlier, was interested in the technical side, and I was interested in the other side. I wanted to be the H. V. Kaltenborn and that [*unclear words*]. So I'd go out and they—Dino Nichols was an announcer there. He was a great basketball player at the University of Arkansas and lost his legs when they were tryin' to

change a tire.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I remember that story. He was there and Dick Gregory, who was later with the Game and Fish—they had some beautiful voices. And I'd hang around as a fourteen-year-old, and they'd—they would let me—it was a daytime-only station. So I would read, "KWRF in Warren has reached another con—the conclusion of another day of broadcasting."

SL: Sign off.

DN: I didn't get paid for it, but I got on the air. And all of a sudden, my mother and father who—I was the only boy—"Hey, did you hear my son sign off the radio station yesterday?"

SL: Of course.

DN: So all of a sudden, they had a good bit of pride in the fact that I worked in radio. And [*laughs*] I did, too. I loved it. People would say, "I heard you read the sign-off last night." Huh. Signed off at five o'clock in the afternoon. [*Laughs*]

[01:45:40] SL: Well, by the time that you were—by fourteen, had your parents stopped renting the house and had started to purchase the house?

DN: Yes, they had purchased the house by then.

SL: And . . .

DN: And Mother had changed it all up and fixed it up very nicely for what it was. And yeah, yeah, it was a comfortable place to live by then. And we had a refrigerator and electricity and all of that sort of thing.

SL: Life was good.

DN: Yeah, life was good. [*Laughs*] And I had a car.

[01:46:10] SL: So also, you were startin' to hear maybe something called rock and roll . . .

DN: [*Laughs*] Oh yes.

SL: . . . about then?

DN: Oh, we'd listen to—oh yeah. I still have 78 records of—I've forgotten who the artists were. But you know, we'd listen to it on radio, and rock and roll was taking over. And my mother, being the spiritual person she was, rock and roll wasn't really big during her life. She thought it was bad music, except it was ironic that Elvis Presley grew up in a Pentecostal church, as well, and sang in a choir, and we share the same birthday. And I sang a little bit [*laughs*] in the church choir, so it all kinda fit together, you know, nicely.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: But at the local radio station, we didn't play any rock and roll. It was news; weather; those people who died that day; those

people who were admitted to the hospital that day . . .

SL: Sure. Someone's . . .

DN: . . . this and that and the other . . .

SL: . . . visiting someone from . . .

DN: . . . you know. Yeah. It was just . . .

SL: . . . somewhere?

DN: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Yeah, it was . . .

SL: Kind of a social calendar.

DN: It was a social calendar. You got—exactly right.

[01:47:18] SL: Well, s—but you had your short—around that time
you came upon your car. I mean, you got a car . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . a few years later. And you had your car radio, and so . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . you were probably—what were you listening to in the car?

DN: Gene Nobles, WLAC. And I thought—and Memphis, WMPS and
WHBQ in Memphis. And Elvis was there and Sun Records, and
you know, it was becoming a big thing, and I was glad to be a
part of it. [01:47:53] I must confess to you that I was fired at
the age of fifteen, not being paid any money, by the general

manager of the radio station because I was late one afternoon, and I was dating his niece, and that was the reason I was late. And I walked in, and he said, "You're fired." And I said, "Mr. Reeves, you can't fire me. You're not paying me anything." And he said, "You're fired." I got on my bicycle, rode home, cried all the way.

SL: Oh.

DN: He called my mother, and he said, "I'm gonna hire him back, but he needed to learn that if he's gonna be in broadcasting, he has to be on time." And he hired me back at a dollar an hour, and I think that's the biggest wage increase [*laughter*] I ever got. I went from zero to a dollar! [*Laughs*]

SL: That was 1,000 percent increase.

DN: Wow!

SL: Yeah.

DN: It was good.

SL: Yeah. That's great. That's a good story.

DN: Oh, it was fun. Learned a lot.

[01:48:47] SL: He probably saw how crushing that was to you.

DN: Yeah, he did.

SL: Called your mom to . . .

DN: He did. And he had been a hospital administrator, and he had

been in the legislature, and he was a very well-respected man in Bradley County at the time. And Mother knew him, and he knew Mother. And she worked with the Forestry Commission and was just around the corner from the radio station. So they could all keep—they could keep check on Daley pretty easy. [*Laughter*]
Between a wall.

[01:49:16] SL: Well, now, your parents—your mom—they called you Daley. Do your friends call you Daley?

DN: No. They call me Nick.

SL: Nick.

DN: I was Nick from day one. I don't know why, but that's the way it was.

SL: Stuck. Somebody called you that, and it stuck.

DN: Yep.

SL: Okay, so I'm tryin' to think what else is going on. I guess the—when you're in junior high and gettin' into high school, you're still in the marching band in high school.

DN: Right.

[01:49:49] SL: Now, the—someplace called Korea is probably heating up, isn't it?

DN: It did. It popped up, and I remember the afternoon, and I don't know why, but I remember the three of us that decided to go

after high school without telling our parents to the National Guard Armory and join the National Guard so we could hopefully avoid the Korean War. It was John Little, Jim Neely, and myself, and we joined the Thirty-Ninth Infantry that afternoon, and we had no idea what we were doin'. We were seniors in high school.

SL: Were you eighteen?

DN: Eighteen. Yep.

SL: So it was binding.

DN: Yeah, it [*laughs*] was. And we were there. And it was a tank battalion, and I don't know whether you've ever driven or ridden in a tank, but it's not fun. [*Laughs*]

SL: No, it's bruising.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughter*] It's bad. Rough.

SL: Well—yeah. So really, was there a draft . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . for the Korean War?

DN: Yeah, there was a draft for the Korean War. Sure was. And you know, there was nothing to the—that woulda kept us from being, all three of us, from being 1-A or whatever they called it in that day and being sent to Korea. And we all at least knew we didn't want to go there if we could avoid it, and so we went to the

National Guard instead.

[01:51:08] SL: Do you—you know, let's backtrack to World War II just a little bit. Do you remember when the nuclear bombs were dropped in Japan?

DN: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: Do you remember where you were when you heard that news?

DN: No, I don't. I really don't. But I remember thinking, "Oh man, this is the end of the world, you know. This is big." No, I don't remember where I was.

[01:51:34] SL: So you know, around that time there was a rash of bomb shelters being built. People . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . would . . .

DN: And how about civil defense every Wednesday at school when we were taught to dive under the desk . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . like that's gonna keep you from—save you from an atomic blast. Yeah. [*Laughs*] Sirens went off and all of that sorta thing. And we had CD monitors in school. I mean, they, you know, they were lookin' out for anything like that to alert us to trouble coming our way. And yeah, civil defense was—it was big in those days. Really was.

[01:52:14] SL: What kind of movies did you get to see growin' up?

DN: Oh . . .

SL: And when did your parents let you start going to movies?

DN: Well, they weren't too happy about that because they didn't believe in dancing or drinking or going to movies or, you know . . .

SL: Having fun.

DN: . . . being from [*laughter*]*—yeah, having fun. So I slipped off and went to the movie.*

SL: Uh-oh.

DN: And I'd—I always loved John Wayne movies and westerns, and I don't know what it was, but I love love stories, you know, and then the—whether it was *The Glenn Miller Story* or anything connected with music and love and girls, I just loved to go to it. And I'd slip off and take my girlfriend. And then I think it was, you know, it was, like, a quarter to go and popcorn was a dime. So it really wasn't very expensive to go to the movie. And they had a balcony [*winks and makes a clicking sound*]. That was good. [*Laughter*] Sit up there with your girlfriend in the balcony. [*Laughs*]

SL: So how long was it before your folks found out that you were doing that?

DN: It didn't take long. [*Laughs*]

SL: [*Unclear words*].

DN: Word got around in Warren pretty fast. [*Laughter*] [01:53:19]

And my girlfriend was Presbyterian on top of that. And so, I started leaving the Assembly of God church and going to church with her at the Presbyterian church. That did not set well at all.

SL: Right.

DN: So there was a bit of tension at home for a while. But you know, it all worked out. So [*laughs*] . . .

[01:53:40] SL: Well, shou—I mean, this was a—this sounds like a fairly steady girlfriend. This—was this your . . .

DN: It was.

SL: . . . was this your first girlfriend?

DN: She was the first. She was. She was the first girlfriend, and I'm, I mean—first of all, when you're an only child, your mother doesn't like for any other girl to home in on their territory.

SL: Right.

DN: And that was a problem. And the fact that she was Presbyterian, that was a problem. So we had some discussions during those days. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

DN: But I never left her church. I just would occasionally go to

church with her. And then I started meeting some girls who were at the Methodist church, and they had UMY or United . . .

SL: YMF or . . .

DN: . . . Meth—or Fellowship UMF.

SL: MYF. Yeah.

DN: And you know, we would go downtown in Warren and watch *Bonanza* because color TV had just become alive, and nobody had a color TV set. And they had one displayed in the department store, and we'd drive our cars up there and park on Main Street and watch *Bonanza*.

SL: What a great show that was.

DN: And then get a buttered bun and a cherry Coke for about a nickel and go home. So [*laughs*] we weren't bad kids.

[01:54:53] SL: So did your parents ever get a TV set?

DN: Yeah, they did. Yeah, they had one but it . . .

SL: Were you in high school then?

DN: By the time—yeah, I was—by the time I was a sophomore or junior in high school, we had our first TV, and it was a . . .

SL: Black and white.

DN: . . . green and white Motorola in black and white. Yep, yep. And then later when I went to work in El Dorado and started doin' the weather, they'd set the cl—they'd set the alarm clock and get up

and watch me do the weather.

SL: That's great.

DN: And you know, I don't know whether I'd do that for my kids now or not. [*Laughs*]

[01:55:24] SL: Well, you know, of course, early on it was all over-the-air . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . broadcasts.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: So you'd get the . . .

DN: All live.

SL: So it originated in local . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . stations.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And all of a sudden, they had to come up with a bunch of programming . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . as well, to make it work.

DN: There wasn't—network—I remember when I came to KATV, we signed on at four o'clock in the afternoon and signed off at, you know, eleven o'clock at night. So there wasn't anything during

daytime to fill up the hours so . . .

SL: That's kinda crazy.

DN: Different.

SL: Yeah, it's very different.

DN: Different world.

SL: Well, early. Just early stuff, finding the way. So after the—how long did you work at the radio station at a dollar an hour?

DN: Okay, I worked the radio station through my senior year in high school, so I was there about three years, you know.

SL: That's pretty good.

[01:56:20] DN: And I hired back at a dollar an hour, and then the last year of my senior year, my dad did something really smart. He said, "Now, you're goin' away to college this fall, and I want you to come in to work at the mill this summer." Well, they put me in that mill, and I mean, I was operating a machine, I remember that, and it was drilling holes in a headboard or something. And I'd put a piece of wood up there, and it'd go, "Wooooow, wooooow." Well, I thought, "Well, this is easy." So I built me a stool so I could sit down. And I remember the foreman came by, and he said, "Do you like your job?" And I said, "Yeah." And he touched a button, and all of a sudden that thing was goin', "Meow, meow, meow, meow." And I [*laughs*]

couldn't keep up with putting the bedstead in there fast enough. And then they put me in the glue factory, and it was hot, miserably hot. And boy, in sixty days I knew that Warren, Arkansas, and the mill were not gonna be part of my life.

SL: Right.

DN: It was gonna be radio or something, but I was getting out of Warren, and I was getting away from the mill. So that's—television was beckoning. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, so you think your father did that primarily to get you some more money to go to college, or do you think . . .

DN: I think primarily to get me more money to go to college, but the real lesson to me was, "This is not something you want to do for the rest of your life." And you know, the black people and the white people worked together, and we didn't think anything at all about it.

SL: Right.

DN: I mean, you just worked until the whistle blew, and you went home. But the lesson I got out of it was, "Don't plan on making a livin' doin' this. This is not a good way to live."

SL: Okay. So you managed to graduate outta high school.

DN: Right.

TM: Scott, we should probably change tapes right now.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:58:13] DN: Tape three.

SL: Tape three. Yep. And . . .

DN: Rollin'.

SL: . . . we were—I think we were about to get you out of Warren, but I also want to reiterate. Anything that you—that pops up in your mind over the timespan that we've covered so far, bring it back up. And I'll . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . get us back to where we are. But . . .

DN: Okay.

[01:58:34] SL: So at eighteen years old, you got out of—after high school day—one day you went down and signed up with the National Guard.

DN: With the National Guard.

SL: And you had no idea what you were getting into.

DN: Had no—absolutely no idea. [01:58:51] And then in my freshman year at Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, I got a call one night, and they said, "You're going to Little Rock." Nineteen fifty-seven integration crisis, and they called out the National Guard. And I never had to do anything, but I got a

check every month. Well, that just added to my social activities, so it worked out [*laughs*] pretty well.

SL: So did you even go to Little Rock or . . .

DN: I did. I came up here for about two or three days. And I think they put us over in North Little Rock at—what is that called?

SL: [*Unclear word*]

DN: Fort—I don't know. I've forgotten what it was but—and . . .

SL: Yeah, I know what you're talking about.

DN: They didn't train us very much or anything. We just . . .

SL: Pendle—no.

DN: . . . had a helmet and uniforms on.

SL: Yeah.

DN: No guns or anything like that, and we just kinda walked the perimeter of the school. And we did it for two days, and they sent us back home.

SL: Camp Robinson.

DN: Yeah, Camp Robinson.

SL: Yeah.

DN: There you go.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Camp Robinson.

SL: Well, you were lucky . . .

DN: I was.

SL: . . . 'cause you didn't get in the . . .

DN: I was fortunate.

SL: . . . middle of all that. Yeah.

DN: I avoided all the major wars, and you know, and that was it.

The closest thing I had to war. [*Laughs*]

[01:59:55] SL: So now you're in—well, first of all, were your parents—what—when they found out that you were in the National Guard, did they say that . . .

DN: They thought that was . . .

SL: . . . was probably an okay thing?

DN: . . . they thought that was pretty dumb.

SL: They did?

DN: Yeah. Yeah, they didn't think I was very [*laughs*] smart in doing it, and especially 'cause I didn't tell 'em. I didn't ask for permission. I just went out there with two friends one afternoon, and we signed a piece of paper. That was it.

[*Laughs*]

[02:00:20] SL: Well, I would get—it sounds like to me that after fourteen or fifteen years old, you were really kind of steppin' out from . . .

DN: I was.

SL: . . . from the upbringing that you'd had to that point.

DN: Yeah, from the up—from the cocoon I was beginning to move out. I was seeing things in a different light and interested in going to larger markets and getting out of Warren and meeting people and—yeah, my interests had shifted, and I had begun to leave. Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And I guess at some point your folks probably just knew that was inevitable.

DN: Yeah, they knew . . .

SL: And they kinda . . .

DN: . . . it was inevitable.

SL: . . . backed off a little bit.

DN: And they didn't—and at the same time, they had some pride in what I was doing and being in radio and then later in TV in El Dorado and setting the alarm clock to watch me do the weather. And so, it—I didn't disappoint them terribly. I know it disappointed my mother in that I didn't become an evangelist or a preacher or something like that. But Dad was pretty proud of the fact that I was in radio because he'd tell everybody. "Did you hear my son on the radio?" So he . . .

SL: Well, there you go.

DN: . . . he liked that a lot.

[02:01:28] SL: Yeah, yeah. Well, okay, so you go to arka—Fordyce?

Arkadelphia?

DN: Arkadelphia.

SL: Arkadelphia.

DN: Arkadelphia. Henderson State.

SL: Henderson State.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Now, that was a teachers college then.

DN: Yeah, Henderson State Teachers College. And I went up there to get a speech degree. Why, I don't know. I mean, it—I didn't intend to be a teacher. I wanted to be a game show host, as I told you earlier, but I ended up being a speech student. Did "Inherit the Wind" up there and just fell in love with theater and fell in love with all—every aspect of that, and you know, from there I moved to Monticello my sophomore year. And I didn't like Monticello. It's not—wasn't nearly as much fun as Arkadelphia. [02:02:16] And I made application at KTVE in El Dorado. They were just getting ready to put a full-power TV station on the air in El Dorado, and they hired me. And Mother and Daddy, all of a sudden, could see me on television every day and—and she had me rooming with a former pastor of hers and his wife. So she was even—even at that age, she was reaching

out to make sure that I was in the right place in her own way,
getting things done. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, how was living with the pastor and his wife?

DN: It wasn't too exciting. [*Laughter*]

SL: I would think that . . .

DN: She was not as a good a cook . . .

SL: . . . probably interfered with your . . .

DN: . . . as my mother, and I wasn't there very often. And no, it was
just a place to hang out. [*Laughs*] It was a place to sleep.

SL: Okay. So now, what year is this?

DN: This is 1959, I guess, about 1959.

SL: So . . .

DN: Nineteen fifty-nine, [19]60.

SL: . . . civil rights is still brewing.

DN: Yeah, still brewin'. Mh-hmm.

SL: El Dorado, bigger town.

DN: Bigger town. Oh yeah, and I liked it. I mean, there was more
things to do in El Dorado than there was in Warren. And I, even
then, I was driving back and forth. You know, a lotta times I'd
go home two or three nights a week and, you know, just—so I
wouldn't have to stay with the minister and his wife. And I'd go
home and stay at our house, and then I'd drive back because I



didn't go to work until four o'clock in the afternoon, and I got off at eleven o'clock at night, so I had a good bit of time on my hands. [02:03:49] So—but while I was there, as fate would have it, they decided I needed to do a kiddie show. And you know, they had to fill up—like you say, there was no content, so they had to fill it with something.

SL: Right.

DN: And I played *The Three Stooges*, and I was *Captain Nick and his Puppet Pals*. And about six months into that, I started gettin' fan mail, and my head got bigger and bigger, and the station had letterhead printed with my picture on it. And I had a little captain's hat, and we had a live audience in the afternoon. And if you can believe this, we played *The Three Stooges* cartoon. Can you imagine now? Where all they did was punch each other and all this . . .

SL: Oh, and, "I'm gonna kill you!"

DN: That's horrible for a kid.

SL: "I'm gonna murder you."

DN: Yeah!

SL: Yeah.

DN: Terribly inappropriate.

SL: But that's what we all watched.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughs*] And I—we did it every afternoon, Monday through Friday, for a full hour. So [*laughs*] I got . . .

SL: It wasn't the . . .

DN: . . . I got the big head during that era of my life. [*Laughs*]

[02:04:49] SL: Yeah. Well, and so, you were a local celebrity.

DN: Yeah, I really was.

SL: . . . in El Dorado.

DN: I mean, I'd go to the grocery . . .

SL: And El Dorado was a happenin' town at that point in time.

DN: Oh yeah. And you'd go to a grocery store, and they'd say, "Hey, I want my kids on your show." And I had a new Chevrolet convertible by then, and things were lookin' up. And I was makin' about \$85 a week [*laughs*], you know.

SL: Yeah, well, that was somethin' back then.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

[02:05:15] SL: So you're still—I'm assuming that you're dating women and . . .

DN: I was. I was dating a—I was dating, and I came home for the holidays, and my mother had suggested I date this girl whom turned out to be my first girlfriend, really, my first—I'd dated her in high school. She had moved to El Dorado and come back home. And we had split ways, and then she suggested I meet

this other girl. And she worked in a shoe store, and I knew her, but I had never had a date with her. [02:05:55] And I dated her, and we got married about a year and a half later, and we lived together for fifty-two years . . .

SL: Wow!

DN: . . . before she passed away. And we had a lot of common interests and got to see a lotta the world. We went to Africa together. We went to Asia together. We went to China together. We went to Europe eight times together. And we had the two kids, and life was really very, very kind to both of us.

[02:06:22] SL: All right. So now, this is a girl that you—that was from Warren, and it was someone that you kinda knew, but you had never dated.

DN: Right.

SL: And this was a suggestion of your mother's . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . to take her out on a date?

DN: Right.

SL: And what was her name?

DN: [*Laughs*] Her name was Patsy Outlaw.

SL: No!

DN: Yeah, yeah. [*Laughs*] I always said the same thing.

SL: Nah.

DN: Not only that but she—her whole family was kin to the Savages.

[*SL laughs*] The Savages and the Outlaws, and they were all from south of Warren, down near some little town. I can't remember the name of the town, even. But yeah, Outlaws and Savages. Yeah.

[02:07:01] SL: That's so great. So you developed—you started dating her while you were working in El Dorado.

DN: Right.

SL: She had been to El Dorado but had moved back.

DN: Right, right.

SL: So how did this work out? You were still going over to El Dorado working, and then you'd come back . . .

DN: I'd go to El Dorado, and I'd come home and date her on the weekend. And fine—we started dating in—at Christmas. We got married in August. And I had already left El Dorado. I had been asked to leave, pretty much. [*Laughs*]

SL: We'll talk about how you went about burning that bridge . . .

DN: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: . . . in a minute but . . .

[02:07:41] DN: And so, I was hired by Plough Broadcasting in Memphis, and I was thrilled to death because Elvis was king; I

was on the way to be a disc jockey in Memphis, Tennessee, where I might see him. And I went over there and worked one afternoon for a guy who was ill that day. And Harold Krelstein, who was the program director, came in, and he said, "You sound pretty good." [02:08:05] He said, "We'd like for you to go to work for our station in Atlanta." Well, my wife, Patsy, who was eighteen at the time, and I was twenty, I guess, we jumped in our car, and we drove to Atlanta, and we stayed in an Admiral Benbow hotel for about three months because that's where the radio station had a trade out. And I looked at that Admiral Benbow menu until I got so sick of it, I didn't know what to do. But I had a radio show in Atlanta for an hour and forty-five minutes a day, Monday through Friday. And I had a music secretary, and it was—I—it was a good life. We took everybody who ever came to see us to see all the trappings of Atlanta. In those days it was pretty good. And my wife hated it. She just—she hated it from the day we drove there. We arrived at Peachtree and Five Points at five o'clock in the afternoon in a new Rambler automobile pulling a U-Haul trailer. And for kids from Warren, Arkansas, that is a real wake-up call. And we lived in a little town outside of Atlanta called Hapeville, and I was there about fourteen months, and I just got tired of fighting her

wanting to come back home. [02:09:22] So we came back to Little Rock, and I went to work for KGHI, and I was Johnny Deaux, if you can believe that, on the radio [*rolls eyes and makes clicking sound*]. And they had me sit on top of the Village tower at the Village Shopping Center. University Avenue was only paved to Asher Avenue. At that point in time, it was called Hays Street. And I worked with some people of some note, you know, and I did that for about a year. [02:09:51] And I went back to El Dorado, and I told 'em—I said, "I know we left on bad terms the first time, but I was young and impetuous, and I'm older now, and I'm married and got a child." And so, they hired me back. And I—this time, I was doin' everything from the weather to the teenage dance party on Saturday, the whole thing. And the general manager walked in one afternoon, and this was after a snowstorm. In El Dorado they didn't get many snowstorms.

SL: Right.

DN: And I—apparently, he had heard that I had said something, and at about four o'clock in the afternoon, he said, "You know," he said, "you think you're so good. You probably oughta move to a larger market." And I mean, I was stunned. I had a one-year-old child and a wife and a home in Murmil. I think they called it

Murmil, a little subdivision in El Dorado. And I couldn't think of anything to say, and I said, "May I borrow your phone?" And he said, "Yeah." [02:10:51] And I picked up the phone and called KATV in Little Rock and didn't know a soul and asked to speak to the program director, a person I didn't know, and I said, "Do you have any openings for au—announcer auditions?" He said, "No." I said, "I'll be there Saturday." And I hung up the phone. And the general manager overheard this whole thing, and he said, "Did you get an audition with KATV?" I said, "Yes, sir." And he slammed the door and left the building. I quickly got back on the phone, and I called Mr. Bomar. I knew him by name then.

SL: Bomar, yeah. I remember that.

DN: And I said, "Mr. Bomar, I have made a serious mistake." I said, "I have let my mouth overload me here." And I said, "I have a son and a wife, and I don't think I'm gonna have a job much longer." And he started laughin', and he said, "You know, we are gonna audition two weeks from Saturday. And if you'd like to come up, audition, that's fine." So I got in my car, came up here with my wife. No videotape. They did it live. And Bill Mitchell, who was the guy I replaced, he portrayed a punch-drunk fighter, and I had to interview him. And Bob Doubleday was the general manager, and he saw the interview,

and he called me up to his office, and he hired me. And makin' a \$1.89 an hour. And I went to Dumas Milner Terry Pontiac and bought me a new Pontiac LeMans, a color TV set, went back to El Dorado and said, "See ya!" [*SL laughs*] And I haven't been back since. [*Laughs*]

SL: All right.

DN: And that will be fifty years March the twelfth.

SL: Okay. Now, we [*DN laughs*]*—*you just covered a lot of stuff really quickly. And we need to get to back to . . .

DN: Okay. [*Laughs*]

[02:12:37] SL: We were talking about—what was your wife's name? Pat?

DN: Patsy.

SL: Patsy. Meeting—getting hooked up with Patsy and . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . marrying Patsy—or driving back and forth to El Dorado.

[02:12:51] But there was something that happened in El Dorado that—early on . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . you were doin' the kids' show, right?

DN: Right.

SL: And . . .

DN: I didn't finish that. You're exactly right.

SL: You didn't finish that. You were—we—and . . .

DN: I walked in that afternoon and asked for a raise, and they told me that they didn't have it in the budget.

SL: Now, this is in nineteen . . .

DN: This is in [19]59, somewhere . . .

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-nine. Okay.

DN: [Nineteen] fifty-nine, somewhere along in . . .

SL: All right.

DN: . . . [19]58, [19]59 . . .

SL: All right.

DN: . . . [19]59, I guess. [02:13:16] And so, I'd—I don't know why, but it was a live show, and I opened the show; I did thirty minutes of the show; and I turned to the camera, and I said, "Boys and girls, Captain Nick loves you. I love the fact that you love to come and see me and—but I asked for a raise today, and the management here refused to give it to me, and I'm gonna leave you now." And I took off my Captain Nick hat and walked out of the studio. And the camera followed me out of the door, and they had nothing to do to fill for the next thirty minutes except play cartoons. And so, I left under bad circumstances. And so, the second time I had to go back and repent, and that's

when they got rid of me instead of me getting [*laughs*] rid of them. So it's just kind of—I mean, it shouldn't have worked out the way it did. And then when I got to Little Rock, Bob Doubleday, he just took me in. He was my mentor. He—I called him my business father. He taught me everything I knew about television. And I started doin' the weather. You get \$3 talent fee for doin' a weather show. [*SL laughs*] Three bucks! So if you did the six and ten, you made that extra \$6 a day. Well, that was \$6 a day, five days a week, \$30. And you only made, you know, \$100 to begin with. So . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . it was big.

[02:14:38] SL: Big. Well, now, you say that you learned everything you know about the television business there, but that's not entirely true. You did have television experience already . . .

DN: I did.

SL: . . . in El Dorado.

DN: On air.

SL: On air. And then—but you—when you went to Atlanta, that was—let's see, now. Did you go to Memphis first?

DN: Went to Memphis and worked one day.

SL: Just one day.

DN: One day. One afternoon I substituted for a guy who was ill, and they came in and said, "We want you to go to our station in Atlanta."

SL: Now, this is radio, though.

DN: Radio. Radio. And I was in Memphis to meet Elvis. You know, that [*laughs*] was my dream. And I was there one afternoon, and that was it.

[02:15:20] SL: Did you ever get to meet Elvis ever?

DN: Nope.

SL: Never did?

DN: Nope. Never did.

SL: Any of those Sun Records stars, Johnny Cash or . . .

DN: Nope, nope.

SL: None of 'em.

DN: Never did. Missed that great opportunity. [*Laughs*]

[02:15:30] SL: Hmm. Okay, and so, then you go to Atlanta. And what is it they have you do in Atlanta?

DN: I—it was a—I think at the time there were thirteen radio stations in Atlanta, which, you know, was quite big because in El Dorado and Warren there were two or three or one.

SL: Right.

DN: And I did the *Dale Nicholson Radio Show and Drive Time*. It was

the afternoon show.

SL: That's big time.

DN: And so, that's big time.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And I did that for about a year and a half, and I . . .

SL: And what . . .

DN: . . . I just worked an hour and forty-five minutes a day. I thought it was wonderful, you know. Versus the saw mill and the other life that I had lived, this looked . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . pretty good.

SL: Yeah. And how was the pay?

DN: She hated it. She just . . .

SL: Well, Patsy, I know Pat—but how bout the pay? I mean . . .

DN: Oh, the pay?

SL: Yeah, the doll . . .

DN: It was, you know, it was good. I was makin' \$160, \$170 a week.

SL: That's pretty big.

DN: And—yeah. And it was big in those days. But we didn't know how to operate. We'd run out of food from payday to payday.

[02:16:32] And the other interesting story that I'm gonna

mention here. When I got to Atlanta and we had moved into a really nice apartment and had a really nice car and it was just the two of us, and we'd run out of money to buy cigarettes. And so, in the afternoon I'd bum three or four from my coworkers at the station and take 'em home, and the wife and I would share those three or four cigarettes. And we ran outta food, and it was during the holidays, and we'd gone two or three days without eating. I mean . . .

SL: Oh!

DN: . . . we just didn't have any. And this record distributor invited us to dinner, and I thought, "Well [*laughs*], hey, we're gonna get fed tonight." And he took us to this nice place, and I can't even remember the name of it. But he gave me three record albums. I remember that, and I thought, "Well, this is nice," you know. And we took 'em home, and remember these kids—these are kids from Warren, Arkansas, living in Atlanta, over their head, who were starvin' to death, and I open those record albums and \$20 bills began to fall out.

[02:17:43] SL: Oh, payola.

DN: You got it! [*Laughs*] Payola. And I said, "Thank you, Lord. I have arrived. I'm in a city big enough where a record guy wants his record played so badly, they'll slip you money to do it." And

it wasn't two days later that the morning news in Atlanta reported that the government had shut down payola. So
[laughs] I got one payment of payola before it went away.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And that's what I was lookin' forward to. [Laughs]

SL: Well, and—but the thing is, you also didn't get in trouble.

DN: No, I didn't get in trouble. [Laughs] That's right.

SL: You got the last . . .

DN: I didn't make enough money to get in trouble.

SL: . . . the last drop of payola.

DN: [Laughs] That's right.

SL: And you didn't—and there were no contracts anymore . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . 'cause the government was bustin' people.

DN: I wasn't slippin' records on the air because they wouldn't let me.

[Laughs]

SL: There you go. [DN laughs] That's a great . . .

DN: That was a . . .

SL: . . . that was a great piece.

[02:18:34] DN: It was a fun time. It really was. Car would only go
in one gear, so I couldn't back it up. So I always had to park it
at a place where I could go forward. [Laughs] And in Atlanta,

even in those days, it wasn't . . .

SL: That's not . . .

DN: . . . easy to do. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, I . . .

DN: I tore the transmission out pulling the U-Haul from Arkansas to Atlanta. [*Laughs*]

SL: Lost reverse. So fourteen months.

DN: Yeah, fourteen months.

SL: And finally, you decided . . .

DN: Gave in to the wife.

SL: . . . that Patsy was . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . probably right . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . that . . .

DN: I didn't decide she was right. I really fought it. I didn't wanna come home, but she did and I . . .

SL: So it was love.

DN: Yeah. And I said, "Okay." [02:19:16] And so, I came back to this job at KGHI radio, and that's where I sat on the tower. And that's when I went back to El Dorado and begged forgiveness and went back. And from there, then sinned again down

[*laughs*] there. But they threw me out that time, and I came to KATV, and I've been here now forever.

SL: Okay. So now, what do you mean by sat on the tower?

DN: [*Clears throat*] They had just paved the parking lot at what is now the Village Shopping Center . . .

SL: Okay.

DN: . . . at the corner of Asher and University. And I sat on—they built me a little house up there, and I had to sign a waiver. If I fell off the house, it was my fault, not theirs. And they sent my food up in a bucket, and every night at six or seven o'clock in the evening, I started a record show. And I had speakers on the tower, and the kids would come out there and dance.

SL: Now, you're kidding me!

DN: I mean, huge, and it was just—it was a blast! And I agreed to do that for a whole week, and they sent my food up, and again, it was Howard Johnson's this time in a bucket. And you got tired of eatin' that Howard Johnson's food after about three days. And so, I'd slip down the tower, climb down on my own, at three or four o'clock in the morning and run home and get breakfast and go climb back up the tower [*laughs*] before they'd catch me so I'd be there for the next night.

[02:20:40] SL: So you were literally living in this . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: On a tower.

DN: I did. I did.

SL: How high up in the . . .

DN: It . . .

SL: . . . air were you?

DN: Oh Lord, it probably wasn't more than a hundred feet off the ground, but it looked [*SL laughs*] like it was three thousand feet . . .

SL: A hundred feet!

DN: . . . when I was up there.

SL: I've never heard of such a thing. [*DN laughs*] So—and the—it wasn't like a—this isn't a broadcast tower, is it?

DN: No, no. No, no. It was . . .

SL: This is just a . . .

DN: This was a sign . . .

SL: . . . sound reinforcement . . .

DN: . . . that said, Village Shopping Center. And it was a marquee for them, and they put me a little house up there and moved all my radio equipment up there and put speakers on the side of it. And the kids came out, and we had a sock hop, is what it—you remember? That's what they called it.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And they just danced on the—in the s—in the parkin' lot at night.
And it went on for two or three hours, and I did it for a week.

SL: Wow!

DN: "Johnny Deaux on the radio." Boy, that was a different time.

[02:21:35] SL: So what'd you do after that week?

DN: After that I went back, and I worked with the Morgan twins, and they were on RCA Record at the time. And I've forgotten what song they did, and they only did one. And then after that it was back to El Dorado, and El Dorado back to KATV, and that was where I finished out my broadcast career. I haven't finished it. I still go down there every day.

[02:22:02] SL: So you get back to El Dorado, and you're—you just kind of, like, beg for forgiveness?

DN: Mh-hmm. I did.

SL: And they said, "Okay."

DN: I did, and they said, "Okay."

SL: And so, how long were you there this time?

DN: It was a little over a year, bout a year, year—bout fourteen months. My wife said we never stayed anywhere long enough to earn a vacation, and that was pretty much the way it was. We were gypsies, you know, and if you're that age, you don't have

any ties.

SL: Right.

DN: It's just the two of us, and we're out and should've been enjoying life. We didn't even know that we should've been enjoying life.

[02:22:39] SL: So how was your money-management skills by the time you got to El Dorado? Were you more careful and . . .

DN: They were good enough that I knew that on payday I needed to buy fifteen or twenty pot pies because if we ran outta food, we'd eat a chicken pot pie. And I've had those for breakfast before. It's not very good.

SL: Yeah, they cost a nickel or a dime back then.

DN: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: The Banquet pot pie.

SL: Yeah.

DN: The chicken pot pie.

SL: Yeah. Sure.

[02:23:08] DN: So—but I had learned, and by then the first son had come along, and—our child, and so, you had to be a little more careful with money. But you know, we'd—we both came from very humble beginnings, and our parents didn't make a lotta

money. And we thought we were making pretty good money at that time, and we spent it rather foolishly, you know.

[02:23:29] SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm. And your son's name?

DN: He now is the president and general manager of ta—KTVK in Phoenix.

SL: And his name is . . .

DN: Is Lawrence Dale Nicholson Jr.

SL: Lawrence Dale Nicholson . . .

DN: Yep.

SL: . . . Jr.

DN: Yep. And he came home from the University of Arkansas. He graduated in three years with a banking and finance degree. And his mother said, "I don't think he's happy." And I talked to him, and he said, "I don't know why I got that degree." He said, "I don't wanna do that." And I said, "Well, I know some people at the *Dallas Morning News*. They have an intern program, and I'll call if you want me to." He said, "Okay." And he has now worked for 'em for twenty-plus years, so. [Laughter] We—both of us had—and it's funny because we both can talk the same lingo, you know, HUTs and . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . PUTs and shares and ratings and all of that sorta thing.

SL: Yeah.

DN: We bore everybody to death around us, so.

SL: [*Laughter*] Well, that's good. The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

DN: Yeah, it didn't in this case. And he loves it as much as I do, so.

[02:24:33] SL: Okay, so let's get back to El Dorado. And you're there for a little less than a year, about a year, and one day the manager comes in and kind of is saying, "I'm about to let you go. It's time for you to move on."

DN: He just said, "I think you'd"—and I'm sure what he meant to say was, "You're too big for your britches." And he said, "You think you're so good. I think you should move on to a larger market." And so, that's when I seized the opportunity to call KATV and was thrilled to death when they agreed to hire me. And I never left after that. I was through. My nomad days were over.

[*Laughs*]

[02:25:17] SL: So what was KATV like that first . . .

DN: Oh my gosh.

SL: . . . year?

DN: We signed on at four o'clock in the afternoon because there was no daytime programming to fill it up. One of my jobs was to do *The Venable Quartet*. They had a fifteen-minute gospel show

every afternoon, and we didn't even have a half-hour newscast, so news ran from six to six-fifteen. Oscar Alagood was the anchor. Bob Hess did the weather. And then we had a fifteen-minute gospel show. And then I don't know what we did at six-thirty but—and then we had network at seven, and we ran to ten. We did the ten o'clock news, play a late movie, and that would be it. But we did a live kiddie show in the afternoon, and I was not into kiddie shows any longer. That was Mr. Specs. [02:26:05] And I had to substitute for Bozo two or three times, and I said, "I just don't like kids that much." [Laughter] So I didn't wanna be Bozo, I can tell you. [Laughs]

SL: So you actually put on the wig and the makeup . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Bozo.

DN: I just hated it. It—I wasn't made [laughs] to be a kiddie host. [Laughter] I'd walked out on the air on my first one. So you know . . .

SL: Well, now, *Bozo*, that was a syndicated thing, wasn't it? I mean . . .

DN: It was a syndicated thing, and you had local talent doing it. And

the guy who syndicated the show was out of Chicago. And the local Bozo, who is a good friend of mine, his name is Gary Weir, he negotiated the rights for him to become the *Bozo* franchise in Little Rock. And he had not told the president of the company that he would no longer be negotiating with the former company, but him personally. And he asked that I tell him, and that didn't work out well. The manager, Bob Doubleday, was not very happy about that at all. And Gary would confirm to this day, life was not easy for him after that. [*Laughs*] *Bozo* was a great thing for a long while but it—nothing lasts forever.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

DN: And I remember the afternoon that KARK took the show away from us, and I saw 'em—I was—at that time I was vice president and general manager. And I saw 'em pushing the *Bozo* set down the street, and I thought, "Oh my God, what have I done? Here I am, the second in command here, and I've told *Bozo* goodbye," because I was told to tell *Bozo* goodbye. And KARK took it. Well, they didn't keep it more than a year because by then Nintendo was coming out and Atari and . . .

SL: Market had changed.

DN: . . . all those things. And kick the balloon in the can just wasn't

what it used to be. [*Laughs*]

[02:28:01] SL: Right, right, right. Huh. Well, so now, what was it that you'd—that you did do at Channel 7 initially?

DN: Okay. I did the sports, and I did anything they asked me to do, to tell you the truth. But I was an announcer, and I did sports on top of that. And I wasn't very good, and Mr. Doubleday called me in one afternoon, and he said, "You're no longer sports director here." And I thought, "Why?" Because it just came out of the blue. And he said, "Because we've hired Bud Campbell from KARK." And he said, "You don't know anything about sports to begin with." And what I didn't know at the time was that was kind of a package deal. With Bud Campbell moving from KARK, the Coach Broyles show moved with it. And so, that was our first beginning to become the Razorback TV station in Little Rock. [02:28:57] And the relationship grew and developed and just—you know, we had marvelous parties, and ABC would come in here for the Arkansas-Texas A&M game, and they'd send their commentators in. And we'd have lavish cocktail parties at the Pleasant Valley or Country Club of Little Rock or whatever. And it was a great, great, great time to be in television.

[02:29:21] SL: So no longer sports director. What are you?

DN: They named me public affairs director. They always gave me a title, and that meant that I was just in charge of putting PSAs on the air, and there was nothing to that. So . . .

SL: These are station-produced . . .

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . PSAs?

DN: Yeah.

SL: Were you responsible for making them?

DN: I had to screen 'em and make sure that all the local requests for, you know, public-service needs, charities, et cetera, got on the air. And it was really a very simple job to do, but he gave me a title, you know, to make up for the fact that I was no longer sports director. [02:30:00] And then later I did the weather, and I came in—Bob Hunt—Bob Hess—and did the Safeway Weather, and I did the Rebsamen Friday Night Movie and I, you know—and then one day he walked in, and he said, "You know, if you ever want my job, you're gonna have to go into sales." [02:30:21] And I abhorred the idea of going into sales because when I came out of school, every friend I knew was an insurance salesman, and they all had me buyin' a policy. And I bought more policies than I should have, as all of us did in those days. And I quit every Monday. I'd go in, and I'd say, "Mr. Doubleday,

I can't do this. I can't do this. I don't wanna do this." He said, "Get outta here and don't come back for a year." And so, eventually, I got the Walt Bennett Ford account, and I got the Frank Lyon account. And I got Entergy—AP&L. And so, I grew into that job and became sales manager, and I was a better sales manager than I was a salesman. And I liked it.

[02:31:04] And all of a sudden, I woke up, and I was forty-two, and I decided, "Well, it's time to start my own business." And so, a friend of mine in the same station with me, Bruce Smith, and I decided to leave and form an advertising agency. And I went home that evening, and I told my wife. She said, "Anything unusual happen today?" And I said, "I quit my job." And boy, I mean, it got frosty around our house for a long time. And I stayed out there six months and knew I hated it from day one. And Bob Doubleday, bless his dear heart, he stayed on me. He took me to lunch three days a week, and I came back as vice president and general manager under him. And then when he retired, I took over that job and just, you know—that's why I call him my business father because I did what he told me to do, and it worked out right, so.

[02:31:59] SL: Well, I would assume that was probably a big jump in pay.

DN: Yeah, it was. Yeah, by then I was makin' pretty good money.

SL: And were you—you and Patsy had kinda settled down on how you handled your money and . . .

DN: Yeah, [*laughs*] we'd gotten better at handling finances by then. We each—we, in fact, bought a second car, I mean, which was—that was gettin' on up there. It was a used car.

SL: Yeah.

DN: But she had an old Dodge, and I had a Pontiac LeMans, and so, we tooted around Little Rock and had a boy and a girl. And . . .

[02:32:36] SL: Oh, now you have . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . you have your second child.

DN: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And her name is . . .

DN: Kelli.

SL: Kelli.

DN: Kelli, and she's just a wonderful daughter, and she lives here in—with her husband, Charles Miller, and Charles worked—he's worked in politics for Winston Bryant and Blanche Lincoln and several people. And now he's a—now he's in a company called Capitol Partners, and he's a lobbyist for people who need help in the legislature or something like that. So they live here in Little

Rock, and she has two daughters. And one daughter is a senior at Ole Miss and she—we love her. She was president of the Pi Phi organization there. Kelli was a Pi Phi at Fayetteville and our other—last granddaughter is now at the University of Missouri, and she's a Pi Phi. So we've got a family of angels.

SL: Is the granddaughter in journalism at the university?

DN: Yep. She's in grad—she's in journalism. And I'm asking her why. [*Laughter*] I'm telling her it's changin'. Randy is telling her it's changing. But they're—you know, the University of Missouri recognizes it, and they're teaching social media as one of their four—first courses in journalism now. [02:33:48] And then my son has—he had three boys and the middle child just—is a graduate school from SMU, and he's into computer gaming. Just took a job in New York. And then the other one is an SAE, which his dad was at Fayetteville. And the other one works at the television station here, and I didn't hire him. I—and I remember telling him explicitly—I said, "Just because we have the same name, you have no more reason to come in my office than any other employee. And if you're in here, it's because you're invited." And he did weekend sports, and then he and his wife were gonna have a second child, and he came to me, and he said, "Granddad, I can't make it on this money you make as a

weekend sports guy. I'm goin' into sales." And I said, "Well, I think that that's what you should do." [SL laughs] And so, he's done that a year and a half now. So we kind of followed along in the same background, you know.

[02:34:46] SL: And what—as—when you became the general manager, were your folks still alive?

DN: Yes. Yeah. Yeah, they were. Oh yeah, they were proud because I—I'd go back to Warren and do various charities for them and the tink—Pink Tomato Festival was big and all that sorta thing. And they were—yeah, they had a lot of pride in the fact that I was actually—and the local paper would write about the local boy who was running the . . .

SL: Doing good.

DN: . . . big, old, powerful Channel 7 in Little Rock. [02:35:21] And it was a heady time. It really was. And I was only about, oh gosh, probably thirty-five, thirty-six years old when I took that chair. And I had so much to learn, you know, and so many egos to deal with and—but I had been taught by the master, and so, he taught me what was right and wrong. And I remember very distinctly him telling me one thing. He said, "You know, if you make a mistake and you're the first to come and confess it to me, I can't be mad at you." But he said, "If you make a mistake

and don't tell me and I find out about it, that's gonna be the end of your time here at KATV." And so, that was a lesson—life lesson that stuck right in my brain, and I always expected the employees, if they'd made a mistake, couldn't get mad at 'em. Confess your mistake, but don't tell me and let me find out about it the hard way, and we're gonna have problems.

[Laughs]

SL: Yeah. It's not like sneakin' off to a movie . . .

DN: That's right. [Laughs]

SL: . . . [laughs] with a girlfriend.

DN: No, it's not. [Laughter] Not at all. Oh . . .

[02:36:31] SL: Well, so this is what I—what I'm kind of formulating here is when you got put into sales, didn't that kind of connect you with the community?

DN: Yes, it did. Yeah.

SL: And that kind of opened up a different . . .

DN: A whole different life.

SL: Life for you.

DN: Whole different life.

SL: I mean, even though you weren't enjoying it.

DN: Yeah.

SL: And even though you went out there, and you were gonna try

and do your own agency, and all that stuff . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . you still had kind of entered a different realm.

DN: Well, you met the head of the—all the advertising agencies, and you knew them. You went to dinner with them. You went to dinner with the people at the Frank Lyon Company and people like that. And you got to know people who controlled big businesses in Little Rock. And so, it was a whole new lifestyle. And Bob Doubleday insisted I become a member of the Country Club of Little Rock, which was, you know—for a kid from Warren to become a member of the Country Club of Little Rock, that was a big to-do. And Bill Gulley and other people, you know, signed off on me joining that club. And I was the only television general manager that ever became a member up there, and I don't know for what reason. Maybe they didn't apply. I don't know. But I enjoyed it.

[02:37:49] SL: So were your—I guess your sales were pretty good. I mean . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . there was something that Mr. Doubleday saw in you that—and I guess he was—what he was seeing that—was the future of the business . . .

DN: And you know, the—and I think—and I thought about this before I visited with you. He, Mr. Leake, who then owned the company, he—Bob Doubleday was the first graduate of UCLA, the communications department. Not a journalism degree, but a communications department. And he took off to be an announcer. And he was a tall guy with a booming voice. He looked like Lee Marvin. He was handsome. He had snow-white hair. He was intimidating. And we always called it ba—Snow White and the seventy dwarfs 'cause [*SL laughs*] there were seventy of us that did whatever he told us to do. And then he left announcing and went into sales, and I think he saw me in that same manner. And he said, "You know, I'm not gonna let this kid hang out there and just be an on-air guy. I'm gonna force him into sales so he can have my job." So he pretty much groomed me for his position. For twenty-two years we went to Los Angeles every year, and we flew first class, and those were the good days. And we stayed at the Plaza Hotel, and Howard Cosell and names like that we were very familiar with. And I served on the Board of Governors for ABC. Bob served on the Board of Governors for ABC. And that's when they really appreciated the network-station relationship. We were the distributor of their programming.

SL: Sure.

DN: Now they don't really need you because they got satellite and all the other things . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . so . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . the—so times have changed. But it was a great life, really a great life. And we got to start making client trips, and that became a big thing, and you know, and we'd go to Hong Kong, and we'd go to Europe, go to Ireland, Africa. And we'd take these heads of the companies that did business with us along with us if they'd buy a certain amount of advertising. So the both of us just got to travel a awful lot for two little kids from Warren, Arkansas, who didn't know how to get out of Warren, much less arrive in Atlanta.

[02:40:05] SL: So the owner of the company was a Mr. Leakes?

DN: Leake. Leake Television.

SL: Leakes—Leake Tel . . .

DN: And we owned two television stations, KTUL in Tulsa and KATV in Little Rock. And his plan was to own Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Little Rock. He wanted the three cities up and down what he saw was gonna be the navigable Arkansas River.

SL: Yeah.

DN: And so, that's what his intention was. And in 1983 his children just—they abhorred the business. [02:40:36] They didn't like it at all, not interested in it, so they sold it to the Allbrittons in Washington. And Mr. Allbritton was a banker in Houston and then went to Washington. And he owned the *Evening Star* up there, and he owned WJLA. And they bought KTUL and KATV at the same time. And didn't know what to expect because I'd worked for Bob Doubleday and Jimmy Leake for all my life. Twenty . . .

SL: Right.

DN: . . . twenty-plus years. And when they came to Little Rock, I knew they probably would not have a good impression of us. And so, for whatever reason, I hired the symphony orches—string orchestra of the symphony, and I had a big party for 'em in what was the Excelsior Hotel.

SL: Right.

DN: And the governor came and welcomed them to Little Rock, and they were, of course, from Houston to begin with, so they liked any old boy from the South. They felt very comfortable with me. And so, we grew to like each other and got along great. And then their son came along and some—they wanted someone to

teach him television, and I volunteered. I said, "Please, let me have him." And so, I took Robert Allbritton, and they sent Leonard Firestone, the grandson of the Firestone Rubber Company, with him. [02:41:56] And Randy Dixon, the news director, met 'em outside Little Rock on a Sunday evening. We had 'em for about eight weeks, and I told the people here—I said, "When they leave here, Robert Allbritton should remember that this is the best television station he has of the eight he owns." And I had a staff working really hard at that, and they believe it to this day. So it worked out. That's the way it worked out. [*Laughs*]

[02:42:25] SL: Well, you know, we've got to talk about your archive at some point.

DN: Yeah.

SL: You know, and this affects the Pryor Center, of course, dramatically.

DN: Oh!

SL: And . . .

DN: I'm so happy, so happy, that it's in your hands.

SL: Well, let's talk about—I mean, that stuff goes back quite a ways.

DN: Yes, it does.

SL: I mean, there's even film in there that we don't really know

what's on those reels.

DN: That's right.

SL: Is that . . .

DN: Right.

SL: That's right.



DN: That's true. Twenty-four thousand hours of Arkansas history on the air, including Wilbur Mills and the incident in Washington with Fannie Flagg.

SL: Fannie—yes.

DN: The Hope Watermelon Festival before anybody knew where Hope was, unless you lived . . .

SL: Fanne Foxe.

DN: Fanne Foxe. You're right. [*SL laughs*] Exactly right.

SL: Fannie Flagg's a different deal.

DN: That's right. [*Laughter*] That's right. She was a comedian, right?

SL: Yes, yes.

DN: Yeah, yeah. You're exactly right.

SL: A good one.

[02:43:18] DN: And Senator Pryor, Governor Pryor, I had just had nothing but total respect for he and Barbara and the family and knew the boys and all of that. And so, he had mentioned to me

about the possibility of capturing those archives because KTH—the other primary competitors had thrown theirs away because the economy was going downhill. We had no place to store that stuff. It was expensive to tape every day's show and just get excerpts from it, et cetera. And Randy Dixon came in behind Jim Pitcock as news director, and he maintained that thing. And it was difficult. I mean, everybody—nobody supported him. Everybody thought it was foolish to keep records like that. "Just let 'em go, you know. It's history. Forget it. We'll remember it. We'll read about it in the paper." But he fought it tenaciously and kept 'em and kept 'em alive. And then my boss was on the Reagan staff for twenty years as chief of staff, and then he got to know President Clinton, and it was Republican versus Democrat, and that kinda got in the way and kinda slowed things down. But eventually, he said, "Okay. Once David and Barbara are gonna get them and I know it's going to the University of Arkansas, it is fine with me. Let's do it." And we had a ceremony in Washington and turned 'em over, and thank the good Lord, they're in your hands now [*SL laughs*], and I know you'll take good care of 'em.

SL: We're—we—it's priceless.

DN: Well, it's . . .

SL: And you know, I have to say, you know, newspaper or television reporters, camera guys, ENG guys, they don't—I never thought of myself when I was in that role as being a historian or capturing history.

DN: No.

SL: You just had to go out and get the story or get the footage.

DN: Right.

SL: Do the voice-over. Get it out there.

DN: Yeah. Exactly.

SL: Spit it out.

DN: Exactly.

[02:45:17] SL: You don't think that you're actually doing anything that has any more value than getting the job done and . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . getting it over with and moving to the next one.

DN: Moving to the next.

SL: But when you look at the breadth of the content over twenty-four thousand [*laughter*] hours, it's a different thing. It's . . .

DN: You're exactly right. And I didn't—I looked at it exactly the way you did. It was something that we had covered. We'd done a good job or a bad job on. We were, you know, thrilled to death with the coverage, or we were unhappy with the coverage. Let it

go. But I—now you can look back and see the implosion of the Marion and whatever other hotel it was along the river and things like that, and you're just glad—I remember—and I remember talkin' to Governor-then, I think, Pryor, and the Arkansas history book that I studied in Warren High School was about that thick [indicates width of an inch with thumb and forefinger]. There was really not much in it. It talked about how they hunted bear here and how settlers moved through here, going somewhere, but not many came here to build a better Arkansas. And that was the history of Arkansas. [02:46:26] And now that you guys have this stuff and you're doing with it what you can and will be able to make it available to schoolchildren of the future—and think of the politicians we've had. I mean, John McClellan, Bill Fulbright, Wilbur Mills, David Pryor, Dale Bumpers, and it just goes on and on and on. And in the future if they wanna see what they looked like during that period of time, they'll be able to see it. They'll be able to see the press conferences. It's—I think it's gonna be a teaching tool. They'll probably know more about 1957 than any of us knew even when it was happening, just from those archives.

SL: Well, and it'll be a different light.

DN: Oh yeah.

[02:47:10] SL: That's what's interesting is it's Arkansas talking about Arkansas.

DN: Right. Yeah.

SL: That's the difference.

DN: It's us. We're on display.

SL: Yeah.

DN: We're on display for the world to see.

SL: It's not New York or . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . Hollywood or DC . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . talking about Arkansas.

DN: Not someone else speaking for you. This is what happened.

SL: It's an Arkansas guy holding the camera.

DN: It's unbiased.

SL: It's an Arkansas guy [*DN laughs*] at the mic. It's an Arkansas station that . . .

DN: Yep.

SL: . . . kept it. I mean, it's really something you guys should be really proud of. And I know that it—I guess it started with Jim Pitcock startin' to save . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . stuff. And you can't thank him enough . . .

DN: No.

SL: . . . to get it goin'.

DN: Absolutely.

SL: And of course, Randy stepping up . . .

DN: Just . . .

SL: . . . and holding true . . .

DN: Yep.

SL: . . . to it. Yeah, it gets us . . .

[02:47:56] DN: And out of . . .

SL: . . . to where we are now.

DN: . . . out of a staff of 140, I'd say there may've been 4 or 5 people that thought that important to continue, and thank God they were, and we held on to it.

SL: Well, it just goes to show you that there's—sometimes . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . the right thing happens.

DN: Sometimes we don't know what we're doin' . . .

SL: Yeah . . .

DN: . . . but it works out.

SL: . . . but it's the right thing. [*DN laughs*] It's still the right thing.

DN: That's right.

SL: No harm.

DN: That's right.

[02:48:19] SL: And you know, the Allbrittons have . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . to be thanked for allowing it to continue.

DN: Yeah.

SL: I mean, they could've said, "No more."

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: It could've been . . .

DN: Absolutely.

SL: . . . someone out of touch with Arkansas and just saying, "It's a dollar thing. It's a business decision."

DN: Well, I'm thrilled to death you have it, and everybody else is as well.

[02:48:38] SL: Well, we can't—we are so st—we're already seeing—Randy's already in there finding the gems, and you know, we're workin' on it.

DN: There's some gems in there, and there's some stuff that's not very important.

SL: Well, you know what?

DN: But . . .

SL: I'm not so sure about that. You know, some people say, "Well,

what about the commercials?" And I'm goin', "Well, as far as I'm concerned, those mom-and-pop commercials" . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . "are priceless."

DN: [*Laughs*] Some of 'em are pretty funny.

SL: Well, they don't even have to be funny. I mean, it's—you look at the clothing.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: You look at the cars they're selling . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . or the TVs they're selling, or whatever it is that they're—that's—they're advertising out there, it is a slice of what was going on . . .

DN: Slice of . . .

SL: . . . that day in history. I mean . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . it—so . . .

DN: You're absolutely right.

SL: . . . it's just priceless. There's no end to . . .

DN: Well, it's . . .

SL: . . . its value.

DN: . . . it's just wonderful it ended up where it did, and I know that

you guys will take care of it. And I—I'm just glad to have been some small part of it along the way. Just thrilled to death. It—it's—whatever legacy you leave in life, that'll be part of it for me.

SL: Okay. Well, we can always go back and talk more. I can go on forever about the archive. [*DN laughs*] And I'm sure you can, too. [02:49:44] But I wanna get back to your career at Channel 7. Now, you mentioned, you know, the deal that brought the Razorback athletics . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . essentially into the fold and Bud Campbell, and I can't tell you how many times I watched Coach Broyles's show with Bud Campbell.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: I mean, we had the—we were—it was just—it was like going to church . . .

DN: Shot it on . . .

SL: . . . and . . .

DN: . . . black-and-white reversible film. [*Laughs*]

SL: Is that right?

DN: Yep. We sure did.

SL: Now, see, that's the kind of stuff that I'd like to know. I mean . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's so interesting. You know, and those—both of those guys were always so prepared. I mean, it was a good show.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: It gave you—it—Coach kind of explained what it was about coaching and why he was doing the things that . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . he was doing and how it worked and . . .

DN: And he . . .

SL: . . . why it didn't work. And . . .

DN: And he was good from the get-go.

SL: Yeah.



[02:50:44] DN: You know, he's—he was—he could—Frank Broyles was always a great communicator, you know. We mimicked his Georgia accent a little bit and all of that in the business. But he gotta po—he got his point across very well. And [*laughs*] to have him move from KARK to KATV and have Bud come along with him, that was the beginning of the—of a relationship that lasted thirty years, you know. And just recently when we gave up our interest to ISP, who later sold it to IMG, and now it is the eighth-most, what do they call it, eighth-most-profitable football program in America, as identified by *Forbes* magazine. Well,

that's something to be proud of.

SL: Yeah.

DN: That is something to really be proud of.

[02:51:34] SL: Well, you know, I mean, we can—maybe we should talk about Coach Broyles just a little bit and . . .

DN: All right.

SL: Because, you know, he could've gone into the broadcasting business . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . after he stopped coaching.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: He got . . .

DN: He did a lot of ABC work, you know. He did several football games.

SL: Well, you know, he was offered a job to move to Atlanta, too, to . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . coach, I believe.

DN: Yeah, I think so.

SL: And his wife said [*laughs*] . . .

DN: He liked it. [*Laughter*] Barbara didn't wanna go.

SL: Yeah, right.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right, right. Well, what, you know—did you get to spend much time with Coach, as far as . . .

DN: I—we spent a lot of time in tryin' to negotiate a future, to find a future, for that program because we knew that signage was coming and all of these other things. And other programs were making bigger dollars, and how we could get to be there. But you know, we got along just fine, and I normally agreed with him on most everything, and I tried my best to accommodate him. He, in turn, accommodated me, and it was a mutual-relation society. And we just got along famously. I mean, we went through coaching changes, you know, Eddie Sutton to Nolan Richardson, from Ken Hatfield to Lou Holtz, and all these different things that were—that affected both of us, him as athletic director at the university, and me as having inherited a new coach's show. And at one point in time, we gave—the station gave the coaches new cars, and they were Mercedes, to drive. And you know, those were the good days when we all wanted to get along well together and make sure everybody was happy and content in their jobs. And it was a . . .

[02:53:22] SL: Now . . .

DN: . . . good time.

SL: . . . but didn't—was it Jack Stephens or . . .

DN: Jack Stephens.

SL: Now, he was a player in all . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . this, wasn't he?

DN: Yes.

SL: I mean, he kinda would line up sponsors and . . .

DN: He kinda would come to you and say, "Scott, we got a new coach here, and we need to have you as a sponsor. And you need to pay us this certain amount of money 'cause this is what it cost to clear the show on KATV in Little Rock." And he was of such a presence, you couldn't say no. [*SL laughs*] And if your name was Bill Dillard or whatever, you said, "Yes, sir, Mr. Stephens," and you signed on. And at one time I know we had thirty-three sponsors, and it was an hour show. And if each [*laughs*—you know, they would draw for which game they got, and we would have those big parties at the Country Club of Little Rock and, you know, and made a huge deal out of it.

[02:54:12] SL: Well, now, wasn't that a Jack idea . . .

DN: That was a Jack idea.

SL: . . . that the sponsors would rotate . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . that they would draw for the . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . the games?

DN: That was his idea.

SL: That way you got—you sold—you had more sponsors that way.

DN: Right. That way . . .

SL: More dollars.

DN: You couldn't run thirty-three in one show.

SL: That's right.

DN: But if you had thirty-three drawin' for eleven games, you only had three per game, then it worked out fine. [*Laughs*]

SL: Nobody else in the country was doing that, right?

DN: No, no.

SL: I mean, this is . . .

DN: No, this was new ground.

SL: . . . this is brilliance. This is . . .

DN: This was fertile ground. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

DN: And Jack was a great supporter of the university . . .

SL: No kidding.

DN: . . . you know, and Frank and he and—they played golf together at Augusta and all of those sorts of thing so, yeah.

[02:54:51] SL: Well, you know, the whole—I mean, the—I've always heard that one of the things that really cemented Coach's efforts statewide was that he and Orville Henry did a tour of all the small towns and set up the Razorback Clubs everywhere.

DN: They did.

SL: And Coach got to know all the high school coaches. It was just . . .

DN: He had his pick of whomever was in Arkansas that wanted to play football. I mean . . .

SL: There's just no end . . .

DN: . . . is that not smart?

SL: It—it's just like one brilliant decision after another in this whole gamut.

DN: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

DN: And they just fell into places, and it worked.

SL: And you guys hit at just the right time. [*DN laughs*] I mean, it just—it was just amazing how quickly and how successful that became.

DN: Yep.

SL: And it still is to this day.

DN: Yeah, it is. It's just—it was a great time. I don't know how to

tell you. It was just a great time. [02:56:01] And you know, you'd go over and talk to Mr. Witt Stephens when he was still alive or Mr. Jack Stephens. And I have letters from Witt, who supported me on various editorials that I did over the year—period of years. Always loved to hear from him. He was—I mean, the Stephenses have been big, active members of this—of our station—of our television station for years and years and years and years.

[02:56:24] SL: So let's talk about your editorials.

DN: Okay.

SL: Those are kind—how many of those have you done . . .

DN: I did quite . . .

SL: . . . or did you do?

DN: . . . a few. [*Laughs*]

SL: You did.

DN: The one that I guess I will be remembered for, and I don't mean this with great pride, is that the FCC had just changed the ruling. It used to be that if I had—did an editorial on Scott, I had to give anyone who was opposed to my idea . . .

SL: Equal time.

DN: . . . an equal amount of time. So they changed that ruling. You no longer had to do that. And with the close relationship the

Allbrittons had with the Republican Party—this came along after they had purchased the station.

SL: Yeah.

[02:57:09] DN: It was suggested—and I think mainly because I was an earlier on-air performer and I could say things in a fairly succinct way and say it with forcefulness and et cetera, that they thought that it would be nice if we would become the first television station in America to endorse a candidate for president. And I learned of this when I was on vacation in Florida, and I had time to think about it, and I told 'em—I said, "Well, the problem you have in Arkansas is you've got about 50 percent Republican, 50 percent Democrat in this upcoming election," which was Bush. And I said, "So we're gonna make half of the people angry, and we're gonna make half of the people proud, and so, I don't see a win-win here for any of us." And they discussed it, and they discussed it, and they sent me copies of editorials, and I'd change 'em and send 'em back. And I kept thinking it would go away, and it didn't. And so, I did a s—an editorial endorsing George W. Bush for president of the United States, and of all my Democratic friends, and I had more Democratic friends than I had Republican friends, they thought I had lost my mind, and I thought I had, too. But somehow we

survived it, and everyone forgave and forgot, and we moved on,
and the world didn't change because of my little editorial.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott. We need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:58:50] SL: Okay, I believe this is tape four. Is that right?

TM: That's right.

SL: Dale, I've asked Randy Dixon to sit here beside me.

DN: Wonderful. I've had him beside me for thirty-three years so

[*laughs*] . . .

SL: Well, and you know, he's here because I know he's got all the
incriminating stuff. [*Laughter*]

DN: He does. You're right, Scott.

SL: So I decided I bet—you know, I'm about to wade into [*DN*
laughs] things that I know nothing about and that he does. But
we only have him for a short time.

DN: Okay.

SL: So I've asked him, if it's all right with you, to sit with us and . . .

DN: Love it.

SL: . . . maybe help you remember and maybe prompt me so we

don't miss some big stuff.

DN: Absolutely.

SL: And then after he leaves, maybe you and I can try to salvage the rest of the day.

DN: Salvage it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

DN: We'll pull [*unclear words*].

SL: Yeah.

DN: He didn't like on-air work, anyway.

Randy Dixon: No, I didn't.

[02:59:35] SL: Well, thank you, Randy, for . . .

RD: Sure, sure.

SL: . . . for joining us. So we were talking—we had just talked about your Bush editorial.

DN: Right.

SL: And your—I . . .

DN: The . . .

SL: Your reasoning . . .

DN: . . . angst over that.

SL: . . . your reasoning was so excellent on that. Half the people you're gonna make happy; half the people are gonna be really, really thrilled. And so, you decided—you had to go ahead and

do it anyway.

DN: Right.

SL: It was a test of a new FCC ruling . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . and there is something to be said about bein' the first station . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . to do it and . . .

DN: And we did it.

SL: . . . and all that. So—and in one way it's a feather in your cap; in another way it was kind of a headache.

DN: Oh yeah. Very much.

SL: And . . .

DN: Still have the mail.

SL: Well [*DN laughs*], you know, but as you said, you got over it. People moved on.

DN: Right.

SL: You still have your friends and . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . life is good.

DN: Didn't lose a friend.

[03:00:30] SL: But I—you know, this whole idea of editorials on

television is fascinating to me. And it's my understanding that 99 percent of your editorials were locally, community-based concerns. And you supported the—as a spokesperson for Channel 7 in Little Rock, you supported many worthy causes.

DN: Well, I thank you. I hope we did because I was always a big advocate for downtown. [03:01:02] And my theory was that Little Rock was the urban center of Arkansas at the time, and we needed to keep it together. The capitol was here. I wanted young people from towns like I grew up in Warren to be able to come to town, be able to go see a zoo because they don't have 'em in Dermott and McGehee and Monticello, et cetera. So we supported the zoo. I supported the Diamond project, which was the first, big grand plan. Jimmy Moses and Rhett Tucker and Allen. And I just wanted downtown to do something. And then the River Market came along, and we supported that. And if you can believe, there was quite a bit of opposition to the Clinton Library being built here, and I thought at one time it was gonna go to Hot Springs. And I thought, "We've already lost FedEx to Memphis. We can't afford to lose this." So I was a big supporter of keeping the Clinton Library here. And it worked out well because my boss is the head of the Reagan Library in California, and he realized how—what it could do to the city of Little Rock

for the library to be located here. I don't remember really many negative editorials. We did some, I know, and we cau—we ruffled a few feathers, but we were the only station in town that was taking a stand on something and putting our mouth where our foot was, probably. [Laughter] [03:02:31] But I have so many letters from Mr. Witt Stephens, which I cherish. And he agreed with me on 90 percent of my editorials. A few he disagreed on. But in the large, he agreed with me, and he, in fact, appreciated the position that somebody other than the newspaper had an expression—I mean, had a—they had something they wanted to express to the public. So he was very supportive.

[03:02:57] SL: You know, you mentioned newspaper. That was quite a big story for a long time, the newspaper wars between the . . .

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . *Democrat* and the *Gazette*. And it was kind of a . . .

DN: Yes.

SL: . . . liberal/conservative battle that was going on. Were y—had y'all started doing editorials at that time, or does that predate . . .

DN: I believe that predates it. We—had we, Randy? We had already

started?

RD: Yes.

DN: Okay. But the editorial wars—I mean, the newspaper war did not cause it to slack off. In fact, I was in the *Gazette* building the afternoon that one of the large, large local advertisers called the *Arkansas Gazette* and decided to move all of their advertising to the *Arkansas Democrat*. And we saw that. And they began to write about us a lot during those days. Newspapers realized that television was coming on and that we should be part of the story. And I think we were in the paper . . .

RD: Oh . . .

DN: . . . most every day.

RD: They both had full-time media writers.

DN: They both had full-time writers, yeah. Yeah, yeah. It's really—and I couldn't imagine us becoming a one-newspaper town. I—that was a shock to me that it would happen.

SL: Yeah. It was interesting. Of course, we just finished interviewing Walter Hussman for a . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . couple days, and it's a fascinating story.

DN: Fascinating story.

SL: Fascinating.

DN: Absolutely.

[03:04:24] SL: You know, we should probably—before we get into the—into Channel 7 just exactly and personnel and the—all the stuff that y'all've done, what about a presidential candidate coming out of Little Rock and the whole Bill Clinton and . . .

DN: Oh. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . Hillary Clinton stuff. I mean, what was that? How'd that impact your all's business?



DN: That was the most wonderful time of my soon-to-be fifty years with KATV. We had foreign journalists all over our building. We accommodated them and putting 'em on the third floor, and every evening at five o'clock, the Rose Law Firm, which was located immediately to the north of our building, floodlights would just light up the whole thing because this whole story was about Hillary Clinton and the Rose Law Firm. And you would hear ger—you'd hear all different dialects in the building. And I was so concerned that they would think that Little Rock was such a hick town, and I remember with great pride them saying, "You know, we had dinner up in the Heights, and it reminds us a little bit of Georgetown." Do you remember that?

RD: Mh-hmm.

SL: Sure.

DN: I mean, they enjoyed their stay here, and what a thrill for us.

And for coverage that night—and I know you had worked it out with someone at Union Life where we had a balcony shot of the Old State House, and I mean, for the president to walk out there in Little Rock, Arkansas, press from all over the world on bleachers and security and everything else, it was Christmas. It was just another world. And to have been there and to realize that that's probably the only time it's gonna happen in a good long while, you know, it's—it was ec—oh, can't tell you how exciting it was. I got a call one morning, and my secretary paged me to come to the office. [03:06:20] And I go to my office, and Diane Sawyer is sitting there, and I am in awe! I mean, she was beautiful. And she's a little, old—she was a former weather girl at Kentucky, and she sat there, and she said, "I just wanted to take a few minutes and tell you that if ABC had anywhere near the brainpower that your people have and they had archives like yours, my life would be so much easier." She said, "What you have in those archives is unbelievable, and I want you to tell your people how proud I am to work with your staff." And I was—whew! You know, you go home with a big head that night.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: "Hey, Diane Sawyer came to see me today and sat in my office, and we had a nice little chat." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: But she knew what those archives were worth. [*Laughs*] Yeah.

[03:07:13] SL: That's great. That's great. Well, what about—did y'all—did you develop a relationship with Bill Clinton as governor? I mean, he's such a colorful figure. I mean, he's . . .

DN: I did. I had gone to so many dinners with him, and toast and roast, and all that sorta thing, and I'd see him at the country club, and someone asked me the other—one day. They said, "Did you know him?" And I said, "Yeah." Because I was teeing off on number nine one day, and he was teeing off on number one, and I hit him with a golf ball. [*SL laughs*] And I walked over [*laughs*], and I apologized. He was governor at the time. And I said, "I'm so sorry, Mr. Clinton." He said, "Oh, that's okay. I'm unharmed." And I chipped it in for a birdie, even after hitting him. [*SL laughs*] And so, they thought that that was funny that I did that. [03:07:59] But I—the great Clinton story, and I may have told you this earlier. If I do, cut it out. But I'm in Washington, and he got outta that limousine, and he spotted me. And I do remember telling you the story now, but

he said, "Hello, Dale." And I mean, when the president of the United States is walking along Pennsylvania Avenue and he recognizes you in the crowd and waves at you and calls you by name, that's a day you're not gonna forget. And Mrs. Allbritton—they had huge parties, and she wanted to have all the recipes from Arkansas from my wife. And we worked at night puttin' duck recipes together [*laughs*] and rice and all the products that we grow in Arkansas. And catfish was on there, as well [*laughs*], and they . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . served catfish just as well. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's good.

DN: It was a heady day.

[03:08:50] SL: Yeah. Well, what other major, in your tenure at Channel 7, what other major events do you recall that just really . . .



DN: Gosh, the—one of 'em that stands out that was really to our detriment was the tornado that went through Wrightsville. And wasn't that in January or some date like that? It was a winter month, I believe. And Randy and I were in constant communication, and our tower was at Redfield. And KTHV's was out here on Shinall, and we went off the air, and we could not

get a signal out, and they could get a signal out. And everybody turned to KTHV. And it took us a long while to turn that thing back around. And now we're both colocated on Shinall Mountain, so it doesn't make any difference, and we all have generators and that sort of thing. But they had a new process called street tracking, I believe, and they could narrow down to where the tornado was gonna be, and I just sat there that afternoon and wanted to cry. And Randy and I talked all weekend, and we decided that we were going to put together a fund to raise money for those people. And we called it the Spirit of Arkansas Fund, and we set up a bank account, and we raised I've forgotten how many hundreds of thousands of dollars for people to rebuild their homes and do that sort of thing to kinda reestablish ourself as someone who had no control over going off the air, but we certainly cared about the people that had lost lives and family and homes and that sort of thing. [03:10:31]



So that was big. And the other big thing, really, is—and I don't say this braggadociously, but we have hired so many people that left here and went to bigger markets, and you look back with great pride. Greg Hurst came to work for us. He had been an intern at KTHV, I believe. Came to work for us as an intern; left us, went to California, ended up at WABC in New York as the

anchor there, and that's just as big as it gets. It doesn't get any bigger than that. And then we have Kate Sullivan, now, and Rob Johnson, who both anchored at our station. They're at the CBS station . . .

RD: Chicago.

DN: . . . in Chicago. Chuck Gaidica's at WPBI—no, he's in Detroit at—I can't remember the call letters. But so many people like that—Karen Fuller, who was just a great female anchor of ours; Gina Kurre; Chris May, he's in Philadelphia. And both of us had just great pride in seeing our people move on into better situations. And when you sit down at the end of life and you think that you had a hand in giving these people an opportunity to hone their craft and become good enough, and you selected people with the quality that it took to move on to a major market, those are things that you go to sleep with at night and are very proud of.

SL: Well, you know, it also speaks well for anybody that's looking for anchors or looking for—to fill spots. If it's got KATV . . .

DN: We . . .

SL: . . . on that resume . . .

DN: . . . we do have a good reputation. We haven't sent many people out there that didn't do very well on their own, including

David Shuster, who went to CNN and is over at MSNBC, now, I believe. And I know I've . . .

RD: Christina McLarty.

DN: . . . missed people. Who?

RD: Christina McLarty . . .

DN: Christina McLarty.

RD: . . . who's on . . .

DN: Yeah.

RD: . . . CBS.

DN: CBS.

RD: Randi Kaye on CNN.

DN: Regina Hopper went to CBS. Randi Kaye went to CNN. We've put some good ones out there. And they were good to begin with. You know, we just happened to have a good enough—good sense to have an eye to see that they had the ability to do that. And this young man, I give him credit. He hired some very nice-lookin' people. [*Laughter*]

[03:12:57] SL: Oh, what about the hard stuff? I mean, the difficult, painful stuff.

DN: Oh! You know, the loss of Anne Pressly, I think that impacted Randy as much as it did anyone because she was just a wonderful, wonderful person. Had a terrific personality. Could

light up the room. I mean, all she had to do was just walk into it, and everybody just stood in awe. And he had called me the morning after her vicious murder and—to suffer through that. And then *Good Morning America* was so interested in it, they came down, and they sat in my living room and talked to me about what she meant to our company and all of that sort of thing. To go through the death of a Paul Eells, a Bud Campbell, and when you lose someone of notoriety like that, the community kind of follows it at, like—larger than they would my obituary or someone else like me. [Laughs] But it's just painful because it was family down there. I mean, we weren't a big enough company that everybody didn't know everybody and had respect for most everybody. And it—so the loss of those people was just—it just—it felt—it was a bigger impact on us than a lot of other companies because we were small in size.

[03:14:21] RD: And then there was the tower.

DN: Oh, oh, thank you. Randy, we talked about the loss of the tower. We went through just—at one time KATV was licensed to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. And later the FCC—we declared hardship. We could not make enough money in Pine Bluff to stay on the air. Declared hardship. They allowed us to move to Little Rock, but the tower had to remain located in Jefferson County,



Arkansas. We moved the tower to Redfield. One leg of the tower was in Jefferson County; the other two were in Grant County on the way to Pulaski County. And we got as close to Little Rock as we could get. That thing was the largest, tallest structure in the world for a while, and it served us well for many, many, many years.

[03:15:14] SL: How tall was that?

DN: Eighteen hundred and some feet, right?

RD: About—yeah, right at two thousand.

DN: Taller than the Empire State Building, I know that . . .

RD: Yeah.

DN: . . . because you have records to indicate that.

RD: Yeah.

DN: It was way up there.

SL: Two hundred stories.

DN: Yeah.

RD: Yeah. It's two thousand.

DN: Yeah, and [*SL laughs*] it was—you know, when you're on your way to Pine Bluff, you'd know where you were when you saw the tower lights [*laughs*] at Redfield. And Randy and I were having lunch one day at a local cafeteria and got a call—a beautiful day, spring-like day, blue sky. And they said, "Your tower is on the

ground." And I said, "What?" And they said, "Your tower fell this afternoon, and no one was killed." There were workmen on the site. We were trying to strengthen the tower with building new cable. That thing crashed and fell to the ground, just the way it was designed to. It just crumbled straight down.

SL: Oh, that's [*unclear words*].

DN: We had an employee in the building, and he escaped injury. Not an injury. And we got back on the air with—oh, I guess, within three or four hours, we were back on the air with a large part of our audience. [03:16:17] And so, suffering through that, and then three days later they called, and my mother had passed away, and it just all hit at one time. And then to go through the rebuild and the getting permission to move the tower to Shinall and goin' through all of that. It was a five- or six-year struggle. I mean, it was a day-to-day struggle. He—the two of us took off to San Francisco one day because we didn't have any reporters left. They had decided they didn't want to have anything to do with KATV any longer, and Randy and I went out and met with a group of people out there and hired three or four and brought 'em back home with us, and they all worked out, didn't they?

RD: Mh-hmm.

DN: [*Laughs*] So those—it's, you know—guy had an eye for talent.

[Laughs]

[03:17:05] SL: Wow! So you pretty much just had to replace all your reporters . . .

DN: Yep, we have . . .

SL: . . . at one point.

RD: But . . .

DN: . . . we have suffered all the emotions, I do believe.

RD: Yeah, that was in the early [19]90s that we went out . . .

DN: Early . . .

RD: . . . to San Francisco.

DN: Was it [19]90s?

RD: Yeah, yeah.

[03:17:16] DN: Yeah. And we've forgotten the lady who came to work for us as a female doctor, Dr. Nancy Snyderman.

RD: Oh, Dr. Nancy Snyderman.

DN: And listen to this. Nancy worked for ABC, and she was very, very good and then went over to NBC. And they argued—Jim Pitcock was the news director at the time, and they argued whether she was gonna get \$15 a piece or \$8 apiece, I think. For every piece she produced, she was gonna get a talent fee . . .

RD: I think she wanted \$25.

DN: Twenty-five dollars. Oh, I'm sorry. I lowballed that.

RD: Well, and Jim wanted to pay her \$8 and she [*DN laughs*]*—they settled on 15. [Laughter]*

DN: And she would—goes to ABC and NBC [*laughs*] and ends up as being a medical del—television medical doctor. [*Laughter*]
That's fun.

SL: That's fun.

DN: Oh, good times.

[03:18:05] SL: Well, what about—how bout some stories, some kind of inside stories of what it—what it's like to really be in the broadcast business here in . . .



DN: You know, I used to tell reporters when they came here—I'd say, "Now, if you were in New York and you were a television reporter, that's all you are is just a television reporter. But in Arkansas we're such a small town, such a small state, small population, if you come here and you're on television, you're pretty much gonna be a star. And so, if you can't handle people saying hello to you in the grocery store and askin' about your children and you can't treat 'em with respect and kindness, you shouldn't come to work here because if you're here two or three years, people are gonna know who you are." [03:18:53] And Randy came up with this idea of doing a bus tour, and we loaded

all of our talent on a bus, and we took off to all of the small towns in our coverage area. We arranged it so we spoke at dinner that night, and we'd speak at the Kiwanis Club the next day. We'd speak to the high school auditorium, and we'd go to dinner the next night, and we'd crawl back on a bus and go to another town. And we did that for about ten or twelve days in a row, I think. And it was—that was an experience to be on there with anchors and to get off. And I remember getting off in Prescott, Arkansas, one afternoon. It was late when we got there, and the cafeteria at the school had made little sandwiches for us. And you know, nobody cared particular for a sandwich at that [*laughs*] time of the day, but we had 'em, as I remember. We were on the way to Magnolia. Yeah, yeah. Good times. [*RD laughs*]

SL: That's a crazy idea.

RD: Yeah.

SL: Was that . . .

DN: It was a crazy idea. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . this guy's idea?

DN: It was his idea, too.

SL: How . . .

DN: I didn't take any credit.

RD: We came up with a lot of crazy ones. [03:19:57] The e-partment.

DN: [*Laughs*] Yeah, the e-partment. He decided . . .

SL: What's that?

DN: . . . that we would put Kate Sullivan—and really, that's what put her on the market here. He put her in an apartment with nothing but a computer. She had to learn to order food on that computer, get any help she needed, make phone calls, do anything, I believe. Right?

RD: Mh-hmm.

DN: And you . . .

RD: Furniture and . . .

DN: . . . put her in there . . .

RD: . . . these were in the early days of the Internet so . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: Living online . . .

DN: Yeah.

RD: Right.

SL: . . . kind of.

[03:20:21] DN: Yeah. We wanted to show the world that, you know, you could take a computer and learn to live and get—live along fine with it.

RD: And we kept her in there for two weeks.

DN: And we did.

SL: Two weeks?

RD: Mh-hmm.

DN: It was fun. Other crazy things? You remember 'em better than I do.

RD: Well . . .

DN: I was just the guy that had to report how much money you were spending. [*Laughter*]

[03:20:44] RD: Well, we probably were the only local station here in this market that did international travel on a . . .

DN: Yeah.

RD: . . . fairly regular basis.

DN: Yeah. Oh, I—there's no question about that. We sent Ned Perme to Alaska . . .

RD: The Arctic.

DN: . . . didn't we, to find out he—how he could throw water out of a cup, and it would freeze in midair and stuff, crazy stuff, like that. And you were on that trip, too.

RD: Mh-hmm. [*DN laughs*] Yeah, it was one of the first . . .

DN: He's been to Bosnia. He's been everywhere.

RD: . . . reports about global warming. Yeah.

[03:21:10] SL: Well, you know, maybe we should just go ahead and talk a little bit about Randy Dixon here [*RD laughs*] while we've got him [*DN laughs*] in the room.

DN: Well, all I know is he was a busboy up at a little restaurant called Baird's.

RD: Bard's.

DN: Bard's . . .

RD: That's when I was thirteen.

DN: . . . up here in the Heights when he was thirteen years old. And he ended up with us when you were eighteen, right?

RD: Nineteen. Yeah.

DN: Yeah.

RD: Close.

DN: Nineteen years old. And he was just always a trooper and a great producer. He could put pieces together that would make you so proud. And then when Jim Pitcock left as news director—we've only had three news directors in the fifty-year-plus history of that television station. And it was you and Bob Steel and Jim Pitcock, and that's it. So we've not had a lotta turnover at the top. And the beautiful thing was that I—he was on my leadership team, and there was about five of us, and Randy, thirty-one years; the guy who replaced me, twenty-three years;

the CFO, twenty years. I mean, we had worked together, and we just all felt like family, and we could open up and say anything we wanted to say and not offend each other, normally. [Laughter] But it was—it was a good run. Good run. Wouldn't take anything for it. Very few things I'd do different, you know? That's—and that's somethin' when you get to be seventy-three years old and look back on your life and say, "I wouldn't change very much."

[03:22:34] SL: Well, you know, it just seems to me that the broadcast business is just a high-pressure, stressful business to be in. I mean, you've got to react to what's . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . going on around you. You've got to make sense of it and get it out and then stand by what you do.

DN: Right. You do.

SL: So . . .

DN: And . . .

SL: . . . you know, for fifty years . . .

DN: Fifty years of it.

SL: . . . you've been doin' this at this place. I—it's just—that's gotta be some kinda record.

DN: Well, I think it probably is, and the beauty of it was I got to do

several different things. You know, I wasn't trapped into one part of it. I got to do on-air, so I can understand—I can understand why when the talent came to us and said, "I'm tired of working mornings or weekends or whatever." I've been there. I've done that. I sat there and had my Thanksgiving dinner in the audio booth and then—you know, when my family was home celebrating. So I had some kind of empathy for talent. And at the same time, I was forced to learn sales. The one thing I never did get out of it was engineering. I never did understand it. *[Laughter]* And I just finally said, "I don't wanna understand it." And now we've gone to high-def, and we got these beautiful signals on the air and flat inch screens—you know, flat screens and . . .

SL: Hard drives instead of tape.

DN: Isn't it amazing?

SL: Mh-hmm. It is.

[03:23:56] RD: What would you say is the biggest change you've seen in the industry that's made the biggest impact?

DN: Probably our move to high-def. I mean, and once we relocated the tower and we moved our channel position and we got to where we had a beautiful, bright signal on the air and graphics—we used to put together—when we did the horse races at



Oaklawn, we had little magnetic numbers for win, place, and show, 350, 360, 310, and you would do that, and I remember this one particular cameraman. He looked at me one day, and he said, "This the cheapest company I've ever worked for. We have all of these 6s and no 9s." [*Laughter*] I'm—"Turn it up, Pard. Make a 9 out of the 6. Come on!" [03:24:50] Charles Cella almost ran me out of Oaklawn Park one day. We did the Arkansas Derby. We were the first ever to do the Arkansas Derby. And Cella called me in his office, and he said, "If you think for a minute you're gonna come over here and sell a bunch of T-shirts for \$1.50 with Channel 7 logos on it, you're crazy. This is a class organization, and we don't want you to muck it up." And I think that was one of the most tense afternoons I've ever had in my life. And we got the Arkansas Derby on eight television stations in Missouri, Kansas, and in Arkansas and Louisiana, I think. And Paul Eells did not know anything about horse racing. They flew him—the Stephenses flew him on one of their jets from Fayetteville, where he did the Red-White Game, to Hot Springs, and he called the Arkansas Derby that afternoon. So . . .

SL: What a guy.

DN: . . . the—that was a big day for us, I [*laughs*] wanna tell you. I

didn't wanna do the Arkansas Derby ever again. That was enough. Once was enough.

[03:25:49] SL: You know, we probably oughta talk about Paul Eells.

DN: Yeah.

SL: You—did you—you hired him, didn't you?

DN: Mh-hmm.

SL: And he—was he in Nashville?

DN: WSMV in Nashville.

SL: Well, talk about how that came about.

DN: Okay. He was working at the National Old Line television station, WSMV in Nashville. Married to Vickie and he—I asked him if he would come and consider replacing Big Sam Smith, who quit on the air one night at ten o'clock, and Bob Doubleday was on my phone and said, "What in the hell is goin' on down there?"

SL: Well, he took that lesson from you on that.

DN: Yeah, I [*laughter*]*—that's right, my earlier—leaving El Dorado.*

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

DN: And I said, "I don't know. But obviously there's something involved here that we don't know about." [*Laughter*]

[03:26:37] And so, someone had recommended Paul, and I called, and I got this beautiful voice on the other end. And I

asked him if he would consider coming down and meeting us. And he said, "No." He said, "I'm happy here," and I understood that 'cause Nashville's market size number thirty-two, something like that, and we're fifty-six, fifty-seven. And I stayed after him until he agreed to come down here and spend a weekend. Picked him up at the airport, and his wife was just drop-dead gorgeous. And we had a boat on the Arkansas River where we entertained clients at that time. And it was owned by the Coors family earlier. It was a forty-eight-foot boatel, and we had our captain and the whole thing. I had no idea she was deathly afraid of boats and water. She couldn't swim. And we put her on that boat, and my wife was out there and Bob and his wife, Patty, and all of a sudden, I'm standing there by Captain Snyder, and I hear him say, "Mayday! Mayday!" And I look up, and the furniture was floating in the back of the boat. A hose had come unclamped, and I thought that lady was going to lose it. And I knew at that point in time we had lost Paul. I didn't hear from him for about three or four days, and I called him, and I said, "Paul, I haven't heard from you. I have to assume you're not interested in coming to Arkansas." He said, "Oh no, I'm coming." He said, "I was out cutting the shrubbery." And that's just the kinda guy he was, you [*laughs*] know. And he came,

and God, it was a good, long run. We had some wonderful times together. Went to the Masters, and we signed a five-year contract with him at the Eisenhower hut at the Masters in Augusta. And still have a picture of that—the—all of us standing there and having a big time. Hmm.

[03:28:30] SL: I was just tryin' to count how many coaches he went through.

DN: Oh! Well, it—Jack Crowe was there for a very [*laughs*] brief time. Ken Hatfield was there. Lou Holtz was there. Frank Broyles was there. Who am I missing?

TM: Nutt.

SL: Houston.

RD: Ford.

DN: Who?

SL: Houston.

RD: Ford.

SL: Ford.

TM: Ford and Nutt.

SL: Ford and Nutt.

DN: Yeah, yeah. That's six.

SL: And that's just football.

DN: Yeah.

[03:28:58] SL: What about basketball?

DN: Basketball. He went through Eddie and . . .

RD: It started with Eddie Sutton.

DN: . . . and . . .

RD: Nolan.

DN: . . . who was the guy before Eddie that won every game—or lost all those games by one point. I can't remember his name now. But he [*claps hands*] was the first to start a coach's show, and then Eddie really wanted it big. He got into it big time. And of course, he started winning, and we had a suite at the Bud Walton Arena, and you know, we were king of the hill for a while. [*Laughs*] It was great.

[03:29:31] SL: Well, you know, I think the entire state became endeared to Paul.

DN: Yeah.

SL: I mean, he—his character, his personality, was just there, and even though the faces around him were changing, he was like the one constant.

DN: He was a constant. Absolutely. And he would do anything you ever asked him to do. Didn't have an ounce of ego. And I had worked with so many people that had egos bigger than their life. And you could ask Paul to go shovel snow off the front deck, and

he'd be happy to do it, never complained, just—he was always there. Just wonderful. And I'd—looking back on it, you know, that afternoon he had called the station after he did the five o'clock report, if I—correct me if I'm wrong on this—and asked Sullivan—he said, "Did my story make any sense?" And I think he knew something was going on in his mind. He was either on the way to a stroke or something was wrong, and he probably got about halfway home, and it hit him. And—because they said he never touched the brake on the car. But great guy. He'll always be remembered, Pard. [*Laughs*]

RD: Babes.

[03:30:48] SL: Well, what about—there—was there some kind of lawsuit that you guys were involved with, too?

DN: Oh yeah.

RD: The Razorbacks.

DN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: Let's talk about that while Randy's still here.

DN: Randy was a—you were assistant news director at the time to Jim Pitcock. And we had an employee who had tried to talk about moving to another position. And it was alleged that he ignored her request, and so, we go to court and . . .

RD: That's a different lawsuit.

SL: Hmm. Different one. Go ahead.

RD: Oh good.

SL: Keep goin'.

RD: Okay.

DN: But—what . . .

SL: Oh well, there's another lawsuit we wanna talk about. Let's talk about . . .

RD: Yeah, the Razorback one.

[03:31:30] DN: Oh, oh, oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. Anyway, we go to court, and her lawyer represented her, and he asked me why I had a problem with moving her. And I said, "Well, she talked about someone being funeralized the other day." And so, I thought I was pretty cool, and I went to lunch, and there was a large dictionary on the desk. And he said, "Would you read from page 3,413?" And funeralized was in there, and I was too dumb to know it. So anyway, that's the one lawsuit. [03:32:03] And the other one was Judge Eisele, and that was the biggie because KAR—we had already signed a contract to carry Razorback basketball, and some other company came in and sold it out from under us to KARK. And to me it was like, you know, whether the world economy was gonna crash or not because we had been the Razorback station, and I intended to be for the rest

of the time I was there. And Bill Bridgforth represented us, Louis Ramsay's law firm in Pine Bluff, and Judge Eisele was the judge. And we walked in, and at the end of the day, Judge Eisele said there was no car for sale. The car had already been sold. And he award—he ruled in favor of KATV. There was a celebration that was undeserved, but I mean, it was a big, big win for KATV, and I was thrilled to just to—I wasn't happy to be there, but a thrill to be a *[laughs]* part of the victory. So we've had our little legal problems along the way, and people requesting our footage from the archives. Every time there was a serious accident or a death or anything, you know, Randy's gonna be subpoenaed, and he'd be up in the office, and they'd be grabbin' the archives and pulling tape from our coverage of the event to see if, you know, if they could glean anything from it, I suppose.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Yeah.

SL: You're about to have to go, right?

RD: I'm good for about another ten, fifteen minutes.

SL: You are?

RD: Yeah.

SL: Okay. Well, is there somethin' that has come to mind that I've—

that I'm missing here so far or . . .

RD: Well, I don't know how many of these stories you can tell, but you have some of the best stories from the early days of back when TV was just . . .

DN: Unimportant.

RD: There were no rules.



[03:33:59] DN: [*Laughs*] I did have—well, there were so few people watching, and you know, it didn't really—wasn't—it wasn't big business like it is now and—are you talkin' about *Three Coins in the Fountain*?

RD: Yep.

DN: Well, I was hosting a movie for a local automobile dealer, and we had just gone color. And the director said, "We need to have some kind of fancy close for this thing tonight because we're in color now." And so, I was the host of the movie. And I said, "Fine. Whatever you come up with, you know." And we had a couple of camera people that climbed up on a ladder, and he put one of those plastic birdbaths out there, faux birdbath, and one of the guys climbed up on the ladder and was using the bathroom in the fountain. Another guy was on the other side pitching pennies in it. And we had a yellow gel on it. And I'm standing in front of the fountain, and I say, "We hope you've

enjoyed our movie, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, starring Jean Gullely, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da." And we thought that was the coolest thing in the world that we had done something like that and no one caught us. And Bob Doubleday did catch me.
[Laughs]

SL: Oh!

DN: The phone started [laughs] ringin' like that, and he said, "It looks like that was shot in a urinal!" "Well, you're very close."
[Laughter] But we did some crazy things like that in the early days. No more, I hope! [Laughs]

[03:35:29] SL: That's pretty good. [DN laughs] Now, see, what year was that that you went to color?

DN: Gosh, when we went to color? I have that poster in there with Bozo the Clown.

RD: Yeah, but it doesn't have a year on it.

DN: Nineteen-seventy . . .

RD: Third.

DN: . . . four

RD: Was it?

DN: I don't know. [03:35:44] Oh, I remember, you know, we did *The Vic Ames Show*. We were the first one to do a live variety show. Henry Shead, boy, that was big time. Live every day,

one hour, from the National Old Line building down at Fifth and Main or Fourth—Third and Main. And that was in color.

[03:36:07] SL: Now, you guys had a—what was it? A thirty-foot, thirty-five-foot production truck?

DN: Yeah, it was huge. Mr. Leake had had it built, and it was to go to Lake Placid and help ABC cover the Winter Olympics. That's what—the kind of relationship we had. And boy, they worked their tail off on that. It came out lookin' pretty good, and now you could take the equipment that you have in the corner and shoot a better picture than that thirty-five-foot truck with all of its equipment could possibly shoot.

SL: Well, now, you know, a thirty-five-foot truck's not that big of a truck now, right?

RD: It was then.

DN: Not—it was then . . .

SL: It was then, but not now.

DN: . . . it was then, but now it's—you know, you can load everything on the back of a photojournalist now [*laughs*], and they could bring home beautiful pictures.

[03:36:50] SL: Well, were the other TV stations in the market, or were local television stations . . .

DN: We were the only one that I remember that was chasing those

remotes, and that largely was created by the fact that we were doing coaches' shows out of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. So we had to have a truck to get—take care of those facilities. And Mr. Leake said, "Okay, that's"—he knew that was a good thing, and so, he agreed to build a truck out for us. And we had it, and then we had seven—well, we had Channel 7 News Star, which was the first and only live uplink truck that was the smaller version. And then we turned that over on its side, and then we got a new one. And then we had an arson fire, and if you look around the corner, I have a flag from the 1994 championship at Charlotte. Arkansas beat Duke there, and I had to come home because there had been an arson fire. Set the new truck on fire. And Randy and his people, when they got through the crying of having lost it, they called it Seven on Its Side or whatever.

RD: News Char Seven.

DN: Char—News Char Seven. [*Laughter*] But the companies have always been good to us in giving us the kind of equipment we needed to get the job done. And we had a jump on the competitors, very definitely.

[03:38:08] SL: Well, you were talkin' about doin' that live show, variety show.

DN: Yeah.

SL: I mean, that's multicameras, right?

DN: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: You're talkin' three, at least three, cameras.

DN: We ran three or four cameras.

SL: Three or four cameras.

DN: Absolutely. Yeah.

SL: And to my knowledge there wasn't another TV station . . .

DN: No.

SL: . . . that had that capability . . .

DN: No.

SL: . . . to do that.

DN: There wasn't. No.

[03:38:24] SL: And you were usin' the same small stuff to do the
Razorback games . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . right? You were . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . broadcasting the Razorback games 'cause I . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . I member carryin' those cameras up those stairs in Barnhill

[*DN laughs*] Arena. No elevator in Barnhill Arena.

DN: That's right. No elevators.

SL: And those hard cameras, all the way at the top.

DN: And you know, the one . . .

SL: It's a big deal.

DN: . . . thing that I think Robert Allbritton will always remember.

The night they blew the lights out at Barnhill, and we moved over to the new arena, and we played LSU that night, and I had that young man pulling cable. And I think when he got home, he convinced his dad that he had learned a lot about television [laughs], maybe not all good, but he had learned a lot about it in a short period of time. And Randy had taught him a lot.

[Laughs]

SL: Yeah, I, gosh, was I running handheld that night? I can't remember. I was probably workin' for you guys.

RD: Yeah.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: Oh, I—there's no question it did. Yeah, it was good.

[03:39:25] SL: Well, okay. Anything else you wanna do before you have to leave?

RD: I think you're good. Yeah.

SL: We're pretty good?

RD: Yeah.

SL: Okay. Well, I'm gonna keep stumblin' th—drilling this guy [*RD laughs*] on these stories [*DN laughs*] 'cause I want some more stories . . .

RD: Okay.

SL: . . . on his career.

RD: Well, he's got a bunch of 'em.

SL: Okay. Well, I'm not gonna let him off the hook just yet. [*DN laughs*]

RD: Okay.

SL: Okay.

RD: All right.

[Tape stopped]

[03:39:44] SL: Okay, Trey, this is, like, tape five?

TM: We're three hours and forty-one minutes in. We've kinda done some tape shuffling but . . .

SL: Yeah, but . . .

JE: [*Unclear words*].

TM: Yes.

SL: It is tape five? Okay. We just lost Randy Dixon. He had to . . .

DN: Right.

SL: . . . go pick up his kids. He sat in on this . . .

DN: And I'm so happy for him.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*] He's, you know, he's a great, great guy and
I . . .

DN: He is.

SL: We didn't really talk much about him 'cause I can sense that he
was kind of uncomfortable about it. But . . .

DN: But . . .

SL: . . . he's a real treat to work with. He's helping us with the
archive now, and we didn't think there was any better person to
kinda spot . . .

DN: I couldn't agree with you more.

SL: . . . the best stuff, and he's [*unclear word*] . . .

[03:40:22] DN: He is—he's got a lot of Arkansas history in him, as it
says, "Arkansas runs deep in me."

SL: Yeah.

DN: It—Arkansas runs deep in Randy because he knew what affairs
that we had to cover, which ones we needed to emphasize, and
he could get his way. I mean, he got everything done in a
fashionable manner. Class . . .

SL: Yep.

DN: . . . is what I called it . . .

SL: Yep, yep.

DN: . . . you know.

SL: Well, we're very blessed to have him among us.

DN: Well, thank you. I'm glad to hear that.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DN: It's in good hands.

[03:40:55] SL: I think we are. [*DN laughs*] Okay, so now, we've been talkin' about Channel 7. You know, fifty years there, Dale. There's probably about fifty great stories every year. I mean, there's probably a great story every week you were there. And I don't know—I don't—you know, we talked about some of the uncomfortable stuff, the hard stuff, and some of the great stuff. Is there anything that—how is it that you have been able to—how were you able to do that for fifty years, when most everybody I would know would've burned out [*DN laughs*] or had to leave or was forced to leave.

DN: Forced to leave.

SL: But—and especially, you know, in your early career, you had a pretty big head . . .

DN: I did. I was very cocky.

SL: . . . and you would bow up and . . .

DN: Very.

SL: . . . and you know, you walked out. You were asked to leave

[*DN laughs*] because of this [*unclear word*] . . .

DN: All of those things.

SL: . . . and you know, I mean, I feel like it was probably kind of an attitude thing and . . .

DN: Yeah.

[03:41:59] SL: But somehow or another there was something about you that folks kept comin' back to you and wanting to have your expertise, and you had the stamina and the will to stay this long. How [*DN laughs*]*—*what's the secret? What's the . . .

DN: Well . . .

SL: . . . secret there?



DN: . . . you know, I think the secret is that I just love people, period. And I always objected to people that say, "I did this," or "I did that." I always wanted to say, "On my watch so many good things happened," because I didn't do anything great myself. I mean, it just didn't happen. It happened while I was there, and it was caused by coworkers around me who were smart enough to know that we needed to do this or we needed to do that. And so, if you treat people with respect, I find out they treat you with respect. And I—I'm—I was always on my people, "Don't ever let me hear you scream at anyone in the hall. That's what offices are for. And you shouldn't be

screaming to begin with. You should be explaining to them where their deficiencies are, what you need them to do, what you need them to work on correcting." And so, I always preached that slow-down thing, and I was always taught, and Bob Doubleday taught me this, "If you ever feel compelled to write a hate letter [*SL laughs*], write it. Leave it on your desk overnight. Come back and look at it tomorrow. And if you need another day, take another day. Because if you put something in writing and send it out, you're not gonna get it back, and you're probably not gonna get the response that you wanted to begin with." And so, I have always been a practitioner of that.

[03:43:44] Don't say things in haste, or don't say things when you're angry. Find time to let things cool down, and let your head come to rest and say, "We need to correct this. We need to fix this. But let's not do it while we're all mad and angry and dysfunctional, you know." So that's worked well for me. And I've had good people around me all of my life and my parents and friends and acquaintances. And I just—I guess the fifty years just went by like that because I got to do what I wanted to do, and I've told people this before. [03:44:23] I would've done it without pay because that's what I wanted to do so bad, and to be paid for it on top of that was just an absolute joy. And

when I talk to young people now, I tell 'em—I said, "You know, the first thing you need to consider is if what you're pursuing is something that you really want to do. If you're doing it for money, you're doing it for the wrong reason. If you're doing it because it's something you love to do and you're gonna get paid for it, then you got the world by the tail." And I believe that with all of my heart because I saw—you know, I don't think my father enjoyed going to the mill every day and getting a little bit of overtime, making a little extra money, and all of that sort of thing. It was something that he didn't choose to do. It was something that he had to do to support Mom and me and the family. And I felt just blessed beyond belief that I didn't have to make that choice. I got to do something I wanted to do, and they paid me well to do it. So you know, it doesn't get any better than that. [*Laughter*]

SL: I guess if you, you know, you knew you wanted to do this, be in this line of work.

DN: I absolutely did.

SL: And I mean, and I guess it really started with radio broadcast.

DN: It did.

SL: You kind of got the bug then, and it kind of just stayed with you.

What would you say to someone now that—I mean, this

business—your business has changed.

DN: Yes, very much.

SL: It's not the same thing.

DN: Like banking, like everything.

[03:46:06] SL: Yeah, it's different now. I mean . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . what would you say to someone that is considering taking your path into this business? What . . .

DN: The young man that has come in behind me, and I mentioned Mark Rose is his name, and he—we have worked together for twenty-three years. And he started out after college selling insurance, and he came to work for us as a local account executive. So he had that sales background. And he had a personality, a very good personality. He is the kinda guy that didn't sit in the office. He walked up and down the halls, talking to people. [03:46:42] And I always call that Management by Walking Around, MBWA . . .

SL: That's Sam Walton.

DN: . . . you know.

SL: Yeah, Sam Walton. Yeah.

DN: And I believe in that so much. And my son said the other day—he said, "You know, it's amazing. If you go to the engineering

departments, which are normally in the basements of a television station, they feel that they get no respect. And all they do is get chewed out if they go off the air or the bad—picture is bad or whatever." And he said, "You know, you go down there and find out that they're really real people. They've got lives just like you. They've got families they're providing for. And you act and show them any interest," he said, "they don't dislike you. But if you don't ever show up down there, they don't." And so, he has a chef come in about once every three months and prepares breakfast for those people on the morning shift. They just—it's an unexpected surprise when they get there, and they've got a fresh breakfast with omelets and the whole thing. He do—he'll do ice cream in the afternoon, being in Arizona, and it gets so hot. And I—I've said to him, "Where did you learn all that?" And he said, "Watching you." Hey, well, that's about the greatest compliment I could get, to think that somebody understands that people want to be appreciated. They really want you to like them. All you gotta do is reach out to them. But if you don't, they'll turn on you, and that's what you can't have, you know.

[03:48:06] SL: So really, that's—that advice could be applied to any field.

DN: I think so, too.

SL: Yeah, I mean, it's not—what you're tryin' to—what you're tellin' me or what I'm getting from this is that the broadcast business is not that different from . . .

DN: It's not.

SL: . . . any other business.

DN: It isn't.

SL: It's all about people.

DN: It's about people. And we had a manager at one of our stations who felt like because his title was chief engineer—I mean, chief—general manager, he had the right to—people had to look up to him. He wanted them to worship the fact that he and his wife were their bosses. And I never did that in my life, and I abhor someone who does that. [03:48:49] I'm—people don't work for me. I always made a point of saying, "They don't work for me; they work with me. You know, if we work together, we can make good things happen. But if I force you to do something that I want done, I'm probably not gonna get the re—end result than if we agree up front. You know, together we could make this thing happen." And that's what happened to Randy Dixon. That's what's happened to Mark Rose and so many other people at the station—Sarah Hugen. We have

worked together as a team to try to make that the best television station. And I te—and I said early on—I said, "Guys, we're gonna be the best. And if you want to play on that team, come on. Let's get together. But we're not gonna settle for being second to anyone. We may be second for a while, but it'll be a short while." [03:49:40] So I've—you know, we've had tough days when you had to make tough decisions, let people go that you loved, and you know, we had to downsize two years ago when we went through the terrible economy. It probably was the worst because I knew for two months before we were gonna have to lay off twenty-plus people.

SL: Wow!

DN: And you had to select the names, and you knew—many of these people had been there twelve or fifteen years, but the technology had changed so much those jobs were no longer needed. And you just had to make those decisions, and you go to bed at night, and you just don't sleep very well. And you don't sleep very well after you've let it happen, either. And even though it was something that had to happen, you weren't happy with it, you know.

SL: I was gonna say, when you get—when you become president of an organization, it's people's lives now that . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . that you're involved with. It's—I mean, if the—if it's a good shop, the business is gon—the business side of it's gonna happen. And barring any Titanic-like things . . .

DN: Right.

SL: But when there's stuff outta your control and you've got folks that you care about and have lived with . . .

DN: Oh!

SL: . . . for a dozen years or more, it's gotta be . . .

DN: I had a . . .

SL: I don't know. It takes a certain resilience to be able to . . .

DN: It does.

SL: . . . to keep doing that.

[03:51:07] DN: And I had one of my employees that had done everything and more than I'd asked for him more than twenty years, but that position was no longer necessary. And his was the only one. I changed the title three times to try to protect his job, and every time I told him—I said, "I'm retitling your position because you're the only program director left in the company." And I did all of that, and he knew when it came to it, but the day that we parted company, he cried. I cried. It's okay to cry . . .

SL: Sure.

DN: . . . you know.

SL: You bet.

DN: I've just—so many people think that's just the wrong thing for a man to do. I think it's kind of therapeutic, you know.

SL: I tear up watching commercials.

DN: Yeah. [*Laughter*] Yeah, I can, too. It's not difficult at all.

SL: No. Huh-uh. No, no, it's not.

DN: Oh!

[03:52:01] SL: Well, you know, as long as we're talking about jobs not being needed anymore, technology changing the roles and positions of people, what—where—how has this technology, the new technologies that are appearing all the time—like, for instance, now people—just your telephone is a high-definition camera.

DN: Oh yeah.

SL: You know, when I got in the business, you had to carry eighty pounds worth of stuff to get a standard . . .

DN: That's right.

SL: . . . definition picture.

DN: And the tripod alone weighed as much as you did.

SL: Yeah.

DN: I remember the old, wooden tripods.

SL: Absolutely.

DN: And you look back there today. That camera is probably twenty pounds lighter than the one that we used to carry. The signal is twenty times better. The picture is twenty times better. And now even at the University of Missouri, which is a school of journalism, they're teaching their freshman students to be able to go out and shoot, write, edit, and produce their own stories. You no longer have a cameraperson to go with you. You don't have a producer to go with you because in today's economy, you know, you just can't afford to send three people out to cover a little story. So they expect one person to be able to go out and do all of that in a timely fashion and have it look good on the air. And so, those things are going to continue to evolve. I look on our news a lotta times. [03:53:28] We're getting video from handheld . . .

SL: Phones.

DN: . . . mobile phones that are . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . outstanding. And I was one of the stupid ones that said, "People are never gonna watch television on a mobile device." And I was with—in New York two months ago and was visiting with a guy at ESPN, and that is a fabulous story. There's a book

out about ESPN if you wanna read it. But he was talkin' about that Little Rock was one of the few markets where you couldn't watch ESPN telecasts on your mobile phone, but he thought that would change within the next year or so. And if it does you can sit an airport and watch Arkansas play Kentucky in basketball. And it's just—it's amazing because that phone has become so powerful. I don't know about you, but I feel naked if it's not on me.

SL: Oh, all my contact—all my information, all . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: Everything I'm working on.

DN: Yeah.

SL: All the documents.

DN: Your notes, your calendar, everything . . .

SL: Everything . . .

DN: . . . is on there.

SL: . . . is on that phone.

DN: Absolutely. [03:54:26] And it's—and I believe that Steve Jobs was such a brilliant person that we'll still see his product coming forward five or six years into the future.

SL: I agree.

DN: I think he's got some things in the mill that we don't even—can't

even imagine yet that are gonna show up out there . . .

SL: I'm so . . .

DN: . . . in the future.

SL: . . . in total agreement with that. You know, and . . .

DN: And you know, people—my granddaughter said the other night—she was so upset, and she's so political. And she said, "I don't know whether it's the Democrats or the Republicans, but the fact that they're trying to tell me what I can and can't watch on the Internet just infuriates me." And you know, I understand the sensitivity of it with the government and terrorists and all the other things, but this is something that people have come to expect in a free America, that you can get on Facebook and say whatever you wanna say. Now, I think some of it is pretty damaging, but nevertheless, it's, under the First Amendment, it's your right to speak however you wanna speak. So I don't know what the outcome of that's gonna be.

[03:55:28] SL: Well, and what about sites like YouTube?

DN: Oh!

SL: You know, I mean, so you've got a guy staking out some executive in front of his building, and he's got his phone. The guy comes out; he sticks the phone up in front of his face; asks him a question; gets a reaction; sends it to YouTube.

DN: Sends it to . . .

SL: It's the biggest hit . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . for a week.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Millions . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . of hits. How does a television station, how does the old-school television paradigm—it no longer works, necessarily.

I mean, you . . .

DN: It doesn't.

SL: All of a sudden, you've got to accommodate this delivery, a different delivery. It's not—it's no longer just over the air.

[03:56:13] DN: We promote every day to get new Facebook followers. Last count there was over a hundred thousand people following KATV on Facebook. Well, that's kinda in competition with what we do, but at the same time, we hope we're developing a loyalty between that guy who's seeing us on Facebook who might wanna watch our news tonight and see an updated version of whatever we told him earlier in the day we saw. Tweet—Twitter, I don't understand it. I'll be honest with you. I know how it works, and I know my grandkids can do it

really [*laughs*] well. But it's—social media is here to stay, and it's—no one's gonna be able to take it away from you. And think about this: there is no foreign country that can't do something that is horrible that the world's not gonna see within thirty seconds. Tiananmen Square. Boom, you know. It's satellite. It's here. The world's gonna see that you're treating your people poorly, and you gotta correct it. So I think it works. It's a two-edged sword. It works for the good and for the bad.

SL: You're exactly right. I mean, I don't know what the—I forget what the population of the world is. Five, six billion.

TM: Seven billion.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Seven billion?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: There's like six billion mobile devices out there.

DN: Yeah, yeah. And they're so far ahead of us, it's unbelievable.

SL: No, I mean, all—the whole—on the whole world.

DN: Oh, the world.

SL: The whole planet.

DN: The world.

SL: There's like seven billion people . . .

DN: Oh . . .

SL: . . . but there's six billion mobile devices deployed.

DN: Isn't that something?

[03:57:41] SL: So now you've got, essentially, television cameras,
six billion . . .

DN: Everywhere. Yeah.

SL: All of 'em. All over the place. So . . .

DN: And in China they use it to buy soda pop with out of a drink.

They can use their mobile phone to do that. You can do it here.

We just haven't pushed that, you know. But you can click on an icon and purchase it at Macy's and try—this morning they had a thing on *Good Morning America* where you actually can—you see a sh—a suit you like at Macy's. You can push a button, and it'll show you trying on that suit and what you'd look like in it. Who would've ever dreamed that could've happened? [03:58:17]

The world has changed so dramatically, and I think the last—and that's why I think the archives are important because it does take us back to a place in history that we're not gonna ever go back to. We're gonna move forward from there, and someday somebody's gonna look at it and say, "You mean they did all of that just to get that? And I can take out my phone and click out the car window now and get that." But yeah, it's . . .

SL: It—I don't think there's any question that there are so many

things that—so many business models that are now evolving . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . because of technology.

DN: Yeah.

SL: It's just opened up a whole new thing. I mean, you know, it used to be when TV first started it was over the air.

DN: Right.

[03:59:03] SL: Then despite the fight with the major networks, cable came in.

DN: That's right.

SL: And then, you know, what're you gonna do with so many stations? Well, all the stations got put on cable. They're all profitable. They're all working. And so, now what're you gonna do with the Internet? I mean, now it's logarithmic.

DN: That's right.

SL: It's so . . .

DN: You can't put the genie back in the bottle.

SL: Right.

[03:59:26] DN: [*Laughs*] And the one thing I was gonna mention to you today. When I was on the board at ABC, they had me as a—the head of the promotion committee, and it was called VIE, Viewer Information Education, and it was all about, "Don't let

these cable companies get away with giving—charging you with what we're giving you for free." Well, that worked really well, didn't it? I mean [*laughter*], everybody subscribes to cable or satellite now and, in the norm, pay as much as I paid for my first mortgage payment . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . you know, and think nothing about it.

SL: Nothing about it.

DN: But you know, I can't live without that computer, without that iPad, or without that iPhone. And everybody else wants it, as well. So you know . . .

[04:00:12] SL: Yeah. But I will confess, even though I'm on satellite, I still have my Over-the-Air Module, and I still have my antenna on the top of my house.

DN: Do you? Well, I'm proud for you because . . .

SL: And it makes a difference in a storm when you can't see the satellite anymore.

DN: That's right. [*Laughs*]

SL: You can still get . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . the over-the-air stuff. [*Laughter*] And it looks fabulous.

DN: They tell me—and I don't have it yet, but the guy told me—he

said, "I'm gonna put up an antenna out here," because we're over at Chenal. He said, "I want you to see what your signal looks like when it's not compressed by the satellite company." He said, "It's brilliant."

SL: It is.

DN: It is beautiful.

SL: It is stunning.

DN: And it's free. But you know what? I can't get ESPN over the air . . .

SL: No, you can't.

DN: . . . unless I'm doing it.

SL: That's right.

DN: So I'm gonna subscribe to cable so I can get all that football, basketball, baseball [*laughs*] I want.

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

DN: Oh . . .

SL: Yeah. Well, I, you know, I can—I do watch TV on my phone all the time.

DN: Do you?

SL: Yeah.

DN: Yeah.

SL: I was watchin' Netflix last night on my computer in the hotel

room.

[04:01:15] DN: Well, we had a problem last night because we had to carry Tennessee and Georgia. And in order to get the Arkansas games, we're required to carry a number of Southeastern Conference basketball games, and the viewer doesn't understand when it's not an Arkansas game. They're fairly understanding when it's an Arkansas game, but if it's another SEC school and it's gonna run over, and it ran over last night into a program called *Revenge*, which is a hit with young people on ABC. And if you miss the first fifteen minutes of the show, it's hard to catch up.

SL: Right.

DN: And boy, the phones were ringin' off the wall when I went down there yesterday morning. They had already anticipated this was gonna happen—and "What are you gonna do about it?" And you wanna say, "Well, all you gotta do is click on ABC Shows and watch it online, but it's a day later."

SL: Right.

DN: But you don't have as many commercials, and there are many other features about it that are nice, as well. So the whole world's changed.

SL: It's changing.

DN: There's no question.

[04:02:12] SL: And you know, it'll—we'll eventually get to, I think, a place where anybody can watch anything they want to, anytime they want to.

DN: I—yeah.

SL: It just won't matter.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DN: Right.

SL: And I don't know what that does to the business.

DN: I don't either.

SL: But . . .

DN: I don't either.

SL: . . . but it's comin'.

[04:02:28] DN: But I'm glad [*laughter*—as Robert Dill, my friend at Simmons Bank, says, "I'm glad I lived the glory days," because [*SL laughs*] even in banking, Tommy will tell you, "Chan—times have changed" . . .

SL: Yep.

DN: . . . you know. Their business model is quite different than it used to be. I know of nobody's that isn't, you know. So adapt to change is a good thing to do because you're—you can fight it

as long as you want to, but you're probably gonna lose the battle.

[04:02:57] SL: Okay. So now, Dale, are you still—I heard you say that you're still going in to work.

DN: Yeah.

SL: Now, you're retired now? Is that . . .

DN: Well, the company has been so good to me that when I decided to hang it up—and I did that out of respect for the fact that I thought it was time for a younger person with newer ideas to come in and take my place. And Fred Ryan, who's my boss, said, "You know what? We're not gonna call you emeritus because that means you're retired. So your title is chairman, and we want you to maintain an office, come to work when you want to, stay connected." And they gave me oversight for KTUL, our station in Tulsa, because we had some anchor issues over there, and the general manager is a friend of mine who worked for me as general sales manager here. [04:03:46] So I'm constantly in touch with him regarding ratings and how they're doing, and yet it gives me the ability to—if I wanna knock off two or three days and go somewhere, I can do that. It's just the greatest combination they could've possibly given me. And . . .

SL: So it's not really retirement.

DN: Yeah. And he said, "Let's put it like this." I had written him a letter, and I said, "I wanna thank you for just giving me an opportunity to stay connected because I've never done anything but work in my life. It's my hobby. And television is my hobby, along with my vocation." And he said, "Well, until I get a letter from you telling me you don't wanna do it anymore, you got a job." And so, that includes, you know, insurance and all the other things.

SL: That's a blessing.

DN: And I am del—I am thrilled and honored that they would allow me to do that. And I told the guy who replaced me—I said, "Now, I'm coming in, and if you have a question, I'll be happy to give you my theory on how to deal with the issue. But I'm not gonna tell you what to do. And I'm not gonna tell you how to run your television station. It's in your hands now, buddy, not mine, and I'm available 24-7 if you wanna talk, but you initiate the call. I'm not gonna call you and say, 'Your anchor looks horrible tonight. Why don't you get their hair cut? Yah, yah, yah.' I'm just not that kinda guy."

SL: Mh-hmm. Well, that's good. You've . . .

DN: I think it's good for both of us. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . you've got a good stroke on that. [04:05:10] Yeah, yeah.

Okay. Well, if we—if you think of anything else you wanna say about Channel 7 and . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . your career there, we wanna get back to that. But I kinda wanna get back to your family a little bit.

DN: Okay.

SL: I mean, you've talked a little bit about your children, and we've talked a little bit about your wife, Patsy.

DN: Yeah. Right.

[04:05:37] SL: Is there anything else you wanna say about Patsy?

DN: You know [*laughs*], it was really weird because I didn't have a bad reputation. I don't mean that at all. But I was one of the few guys in Warren that was in high school that went on to doing television and et cetera that didn't have a—what they call a steady date? You know, they dated the same girl all the time.

SL: Right.

DN: And I didn't like that. I wanted to date around.

SL: Sure.

DN: And so, I dated different girls. And she told me that when she told her mother that she was gonna go have a date with me, that her mother said, "I had rather see you dead and in your grave than to walk out the door with him."

SL: Oh my gosh.

DN: And then she . . .

SL: So the mothers were not comfortable [*DN laughs*] with you in Warren.

DN: No! [*Laughter*] And then my wife had postpartum depression, and of course, we didn't know what that was, and we were in El Dorado at the time. And her mother was a nurse, and I asked her to come and help out. And she lived with us for thirteen years. So she didn't dislike me that bad.

SL: Yeah.

[04:06:45] DN: And Pat was a wonderful traveler, and she was a person that—she'd had a rough beginning in life, and she was raised by her mother. Her father had left. And I—it was something in me that I wanted to show her a better life than she had had. And that's the joy I had in taking travels with her and taking her around. And we did some wonderful things together, so.

SL: It was someone you felt . . .

DN: It was a good time.

SL: . . . like you could take care of.

DN: It was a good time.

SL: Well . . .

DN: Someone said, "What's it like?" And I said, "Kinda like losing your shadow. Fifty-two years, you know?"

SL: Yeah, I haven't lost a wife. I've lost some family members, but I can imagine.

DN: Yeah, it just . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: You have to go on.

SL: Yeah.

DN: We watched every basketball game. She would praise Nolan, be upset with Nolan. [*SL laughs*] You know, we'd . . .

SL: Just like every true Hog fan.

DN: And I looked at the dog the [*SL laughs*] other night, and I said, "Why don't you disagree with me?" [*Laughter*] Oh Lord!

[04:08:02] SL: Oh brother! Well, let's talk about your kids a little bit now.

DN: Okay.

SL: So you've got a son that's in the business. Is that right?

DN: He is.

SL: And he's in . . .

DN: In Phoenix.

SL: In Phoenix.

DN: And that's the thirteenth-largest market, and it was hammered,

of course, by the financial crisis, and more homes are upside down there than anywhere else, I guess, in the country. Plus, they have alien—I mean, immigration problems out the quazoo. But he has gone down there and taken the things that he saw me do and others, I'm sure, and has turned that television station around and is making money for 'em. He's happy. He got remarried after eighteen years. They're happy. They're gettin' to make trips together, and he's just a joy to be around. And he went to the University of Arkansas, and he loves Arkansas. He'll call me because he subscribes to the mobile app, and he reads Arkansas before I do in the morning. [04:09:03] And you know, he's on the phone to me, and my daughter, Kelli, lives just less than a mile from here over in Edgehill, and she married Charles Miller. And his grandfather was one of the original founders of Alltel, the telephone company.

SL: Okay.

DN: And so, they have two granddaughters, and they are just both wonderful. And Nick has three grandsons. He had all boys, and she had all girls. So ended up with five great, great, great grandkids, and then Dale III had our first great-grandchild, Natalie, two years ago. And now Dale IV is on the way and due here in March. [*SL laughs*] And so, when you've got five

grandchildren and two great-grandchildren and have been at one station for fifty years and have been blessed the way I have, you just get up in the morning and glad you're here.

SL: Yeah.

DN: You're thrilled to death to see the sunshine of another day.

SL: Well, you are blessed and I—you know, you have a lot to be grateful for and the fact that you can still go in at work . . .

DN: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you still have a job and—but you don't have . . .

DN: Love it.

SL: . . . that day-to-day responsi . . .

DN: What could be better?

SL: I know. I'm tryin' to think.

DN: You know, you get up in the morning—if I got up in the morning and all I had to do was to look forward to goin' to the grocery store, I just—I'd go crazy. [04:10:13] I love to be involved with people, you know. I'm a people person. There are people persons, and then there are people that are not people persons, and they'd rather be alone. I understand . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . that. But I don't like being alone. I like to be around people. I thrive on that, energizes me. And just to walk in the

office in the morning, and I know so many of these people, and I don't go to their desk and bother them. They'll come, and they'll unload their personal issues to me because they can. And they can't to the GM.

SL: Right.

DN: So I'm saving him [*laughter*—I'm giving him some downtime . . .

SL: Yeah.

DN: . . . and I can sit and listen and empathize with 'em because I've known 'em for twenty years, you know.

SL: Right. Right.

DN: So that's a good thing for both of us.

[04:10:55] SL: Well, now, you know, surely there's gonna come a time when—I mean, are you just plannin' just to stay there until it's . . .

DN: I'm gonna—I'm like Tommy May. I'll probably be there until the day they put me away. I see no reason to leave unless they run me off.

SL: Well . . .

DN: I like it.

SL: . . . sounds like a plan. [*DN laughs*] I mean, as long as you're happy doin' what you're doin' . . .

DN: And I love it.

SL: . . . I can't imagine why you would . . .

DN: I just love it.

SL: . . . not want to do that.

DN: The general manager of KTUL called me yesterday afternoon.

He had two or three questions he wanted to go over. I'll run over there and take a look at his station. And I don't—I, again, I don't try to force him to do anything. I said, "Just as an outsider, this is what I see is happening. You might wanna take a look at it. You know, it's your decision." And—but I don't try to force people to do anything. I just hate that. I don't want anybody to force me to do anything. If you'll ask me if I'll serve on your team and help you and I can—I'm convinced that what you're doing is right, I'll work my butt off for you. But that's the way I look at life.

SL: I'm gonna remember that. [*Laughter*]

DN: Good. Good.

SL: We—just imagine if we had both Randy and you.

DN: Oh! Oh God. [*SL laughs*] We coulda done ten hours.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

DN: This has been a delight for me and I—let me just say again, that for these archives to end up with David and Barbara Pryor, two

of the most special people in my life, I am absolutely thrilled to death. And you know, Mark—love him. I mean, we went to the Capitol, and the Allbrittons wanted to be recognized for the fact that they gave it, and they did such a grand job. And I mean, it was just—you know, the Pryors are so respected. The entire delegation turned out.

SL: I know; I was there.

DN: I mean, they were there.

SL: I was there.

DN: You saw it.

SL: Yeah.

DN: You know it.

SL: Yeah.

[04:12:44] DN: And so, you know, it's—I mean, but a guy from Warren, Arkansas, who grew up, you know, in a little 250-watt radio station, to be able to come to the capital city and know the governor and know the president and to do things that I never dreamed of doing. Never dreamed of going to Hong Kong. And I had that whole—I had open-heart surgery, and our station in Washington was gonna go to Hong Kong and then—and to go on to go to China. And I was goin', you know. No one told me I was not fit to go. I'd just had open-heart surgery. And Robert

Allbritton, the owner of the company, called, and he said, you know, he said, "I think you oughta go with me and my girlfriend." And I said, "Well, I'm okay." He said, "No, meet me in LA." We flew first class from Cathay Pacific in LA to Hong Kong, you know, and that's the way they've treated me since 1983. [04:13:41] They're the most wonderful people I've ever worked for, and Mr. Allbritton is now eighty-six years old, and when I spoke with him in—during Anne Pressly's death, I said, "How're you doin'?" He said, "I'm doin' pretty good." I said, "What're you doin' today?" And he said, "Mrs. Allbritton's cuttin' my hair in the kitchen." [SL laughs] And it just stuck with me, and I thought, "You know, when you get to be eighty-six, money—you got a Gulf Stream parked outside your door. You got a driver, but you're eighty-six, and what used to be so important to you is not really that important anymore." You know, things change as we get older. And I can remember my mother saying, "I don't have a need for anything." And I thought, "How could you not have a need for something? I want something new all the time." I've gotten to the point I don't really want anything new now, you know. What I got's great.

SL: Well, I gotta thank you for giving us all this time.

DN: Oh, hey, I'm thrilled to death.

SL: I know, but I mean, it's—it—David and Barbara Pryor's name brings a lot of respect for what we do, but when it gets down to the nuts and bolts, it means someone giving up their day, giving over their home. I mean, we're pretty invasive. [*Laughter*] We've come in and taken over your home.

DN: Glad to have you.

SL: And it's a great honor for us to be here with you, and I'm very humbled that you've let us have all this time. It's just . . .

DN: Well, you have been a delight to work with all day long. The day's gone much quicker than you would imagine it has for me because I love to visit with people like you and kind of remember what has happened in these seventy-three years of my life that have been really grand.

[04:15:24] SL: Well, I think we got some good stuff.

DN: Well, good.

SL: And I . . .

DN: If you need anything else, you let me know.

SL: Oh well, we will. Now, I'll—let me tell you this. We've—we started doing this thing where at the end of our interview, we ask the interviewee to say their name and that they're proud to be from Arkansas.

DN: Oh, okay.

SL: And it's a thing where you don't talk to me. You talk to this guy.

DN: Talk to the camera. All right.

SL: And so, I'm . . .

DN: I know that guy back there.

SL: [*Laughs*] I'm gonna get out of your sight.

DN: All right.

SL: And of course, after you deliver the line, you need to hold the pose for just a little bit . . .

DN: Okay.

SL: . . . so we have an out, you know.

DN: [*Laughs*] You got it.

TM: [*Unclear words*].

SL: You understand that stuff.

DN: You got it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Okay. All right. So y'all work together and just . . .

DN: We'll work it out, and if . . .

SL: Okay.

DN: . . . it's not what you want, he'll know it, and he'll tell me, and we'll redo it.

SL: Okay. You gotta love that attitude.

TM: And any time you're ready.

[04:16:15] DN: All right. I'm Dale Nicholson, and I've had the

pleasure of being president and general manager of KATV for fifty years, Channel 7 in Little Rock, this coming March the twelfth. And it's such a pleasure for me to be a part of the David and Barbara Pryor for oral and living history, and I thank you so much for taking time to be with me today.

TM: Excellent. Okay, now let's do a short one. Do a—just, "I'm Dale Nicholson, and I'm proud to be an Arkansan," or something more like that.

DN: All right.

TM: Just tie the—"I'm Dale Nicholson, and I'm proud to be an Arkansan." Just kind of tighten . . .

DN: Okay.

TM: . . . it all up.

DN: Okay. Da-da-da-da-da-da. Okay.

TM: Anytime.

[04:16:53] DN: I'm Dale Nicholson, past president and general manager of KATV, and I am so proud to be an Arkansan. I've spent more than—I—kick it.

TM: Kay.

DN: I'm Dale Nicholson. You rollin'?

TM: Yes.

DN: I'm Dale Nicholson, past president and general manager of KATV

Channel 7 in Little Rock, and I've spent all but two years of my life, and I'm seventy-three years old, in Arkansas. I'm so proud of this state and what it has accomplished over the past few years, and I'm looking for even greater things in the future.

TM: That's another great one, but let's just do one more with just the "I'm proud to be an Arkansan." You just . . .

DN: Okay.

TM: Your name and proud to be an Arkansan.

DN: [*Laughs*] All right.

TM: Anytime.

[04:17:35] DN: I'm Dale Nicholson, and I am proud to be an Arkansan.

TM: Excellent.

SL: Perfect.

TM: Very good.

DN: That's what you wanted.

SL: That's . . .

TM: Very good.

SL: . . . that's . . .

DN: All right!

TM: You know, most people don't have the skills to go off and do what you were doing, [*DN laughs*] which is great, too.

SL: Yeah.

DN: That . . .

TM: So we just ask for the short one.

DN: . . . that old sound bite. [*Laughter*] Well, I—I'm glad. That's all I wanted you to do. Tell me what you want, and we'll get it done.

TM: We got it.

SL: We got it. You were magnificent.

DN: Great day.

[End of Interview 04:18:00]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]