

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

University of Arkansas
365 N. McIlroy Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

Arkansas Memories Project - Event

Dale Bumpers and David Pryor
Pope County Democratic Party Banquet
October 8, 2009
Arkansas Tech University
Russellville, Arkansas

Event Description

On October 8, 2009, Olin Cook, a representative to the state Democratic Committee and past chair of the Pope County Democrats introduced Senators Dale Bumpers and David Pryor as the guests of honor at a Democratic Party banquet at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. Both Pryor and Bumpers shared stories about their political careers with the attendees. Dubbed "the Arkansas version of The Antique Roadshow" by Senator Pryor, they entertained the audience with anecdotes about Orval Faubus, J.W. Fulbright, Robert Byrd, Bill Clinton, and others.

Transcript:

[00:00:00]

[*Introductory music*]

[*Conversations in audience*]

[*Applause*]

[00:00:23] Jim Kennedy: Now I've got a—a special thing. I'd like a lady to come up here and just tell a quick little story, and we're going to get on with our program. This is a historic event, and I'm sure thankful y'all are here. This is Lynn Wiman. Miss Wiman, I'll let you have the podium.

Lynn Wiman: I'm Lynn Wiman, and I have Vintage Books on Parkway, and I am very much the most unlikely participant in a political banquet, so excuse me, I'm very nervous. But I wanted to tell you something about Senator Pryor.

David Pryor: Uh-oh. [*Laughter*]

[00:00:57] LW: Last Monday—and this is Garrett Oates, and Garrett is a student at Pottsville High School, and last Monday my husband, Steve, and I were in Little Rock at the River Market Books and Gifts, and we were eating lunch, and there was no one in there except us and this man and his friends at another table. And I called my friend Rita over, and I said, "Rita, that man looks like David Pryor." [*Laughter*] And Rita said, "That is

David Pryor. You want to meet him?" And I said, "Yes." I said, "I was raised in the Delta, and—and he did a lot for farming, and—and what he did there for farmers there was legendary. So I'd like to meet him, but more than that—do you think he might sign a book for Garrett?" And she said, "Oh, I think he would." So I went and asked him if would sign a book for Garrett, and I just said, "Garrett—I want to get this book for Garrett because he works at my bookstore, and he is a young man who's sixteen years old, and he knows probably more about you, Senator Pryor, than you know about yourself [*laughter*] because he loves politics, and he loves history." And so I said, "Do you think he would personalize a book for Garrett?" And he said, "Yes, I'd be glad to." And as he was signing the book for Garrett that I was going to give him for Christmas, he said, "Do you think Garrett's coming to see me Thursday night?" And I said, "No, no, that's an exclusive Democratic Party banquet, and the tickets are expensive and—and, no, I'm sure he's not." And he said, "Well, I tell you what, if Garrett wants to come, I'll buy his ticket." [*Laughter*] And so we were stunned. [*Applause*] We could visualize Garrett jumping up and down, and that's exactly what he did when I got to his farm Monday night. He was hugging that book and jumping at the same time and saying, "I'm so

honored. I'm so honored." And he got to school the next day with his note, and his history teacher wasn't able to get a ticket to this banquet tonight. *[Laughter]* So he was—he was thrilled to show that to his history teacher and all of his teachers, too. Senator Pryor, I want to thank you for such a generous gesture. It was so generous of you. You bought this young man a ticket to be a part of the history that he loves. You made him a part of it all. You did it without knowing anything about him. You didn't know or care about his social or economic status. You didn't know about his family history or his grade point average. You didn't even know if he was a Democrat. *[Laughter]* You just knew that he was an Arkansas boy who was interested in history and politics in your state, and you gave him a chance to be a part of the history that he loves this night. And we thank you.

DP: Thank you.

[Applause]

[00:03:52] JK: It's now my opportunity as—I have the opportunity to introduce Mr. Olin Cook, who's going to introduce our guest. Olin, as you know, was the past chairman of the Pope County Democratic Party. He was a—one of—our representative. Olin, if you'd come up here.

[Applause]

Olin Cook: We—we're honored to have people from the University of Arkansas here tonight from the Pryor Center who helped with a lot of different things. And they're getting these two young men in place, and we'll get under way. I've been wanting this to happen in Pope County for two years. I had the honor when we lived in North Little Rock of working for—uh-oh—working for both of these gentlemen when they were governor of our great state. And I don't know of any two men that I know of—of any stature that's more honest, want to do the right thing, and did so when the governor. We know that Dale Bumpers is a native of Charleston. He came out of the woodworks to run for governor—only had—his only elected office was as a school board member. And we know the history—we—of how he became our governor. And during that time, he did a number of things for—for higher education and state parks—all kinds of things. And following—after that, he went to Washington to become one of our US senators, and following him as governor was David Pryor, who did some of the very same things. David was a native of Camden, went to Henderson for a while, graduated at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville there at law school. And then he followed Dale to Washington to be our other senator. Both of these men were highly respected. We

were—we were great to have these two people represent us in Washington as well as our governor. So it's my pleasure tonight to welcome them to give us some little entertainment about the past. Take it all.

[*Applause*]

DP: Thank you, thank you.

[*Applause*]

[00:06:34] Dale Bumpers: That's the first time I have heard what we were supposed to do tonight.

DP: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

DB: David, that young man that all those accolades were given about a moment ago—I was reminded—most of you don't know it, but I ran for the legislature eight years before I ran for governor and got soundly trounced. [*Laughter*] But in that particular race, we were having a little, oh, to-do north of Ozark. And the—the guy who was in charge of it called on somebody there, and he—he asked this candidate—he said—no, the candidate—I take that back—the candidate handed his literature to a man. The man looked at it, and he says, "Well, what—what's your religion, son?" He said, "I'm a Methodist." He said, "Why are you a Methodist?" Said, "Well, my daddy's a Methodist. [*Laughter*] My granddaddy's a Methodist. My mother's a Methodist."

"What's your political party?" Said, "I'm a Democrat." "How come you're a Democrat?" Said, "Well, my daddy's a Democrat, and my [*laughter*] granddaddy's a Democrat, and my mother's a Democrat." He said, "What if they'd have been Republicans?" He said, "I guess I'd been a horse thief." [*Laughter*] David, let's see you top that. [*Laughter*]

[00:08:16] DP: Well, I—I am glad that Garrett and other young people are here tonight. And I—I just want to tell you a little story about what happened in this very room in 1974. This man was running—as governor. He was running for the United States Senate, and there was a very formidable opponent by the name of J. W. Fulbright that he was challenging in the Democratic primary. Senator Robert Byrd, the Democratic majority leader, came down from Washington to endorse Senator Fulbright, his longtime friend in the Senate. Governor Bumpers was somewhat unhappy about that during [*laughter*] this particular evening. I'll never forget the consternation on his face as he sat there. I was running for governor—wait a minute—yeah—against Orval Faubus and Bob Riley and maybe one more. I'm not sure. And—but we all spoke. And there was a huge crowd. No—no larger than this. I was just want to compliment you, Olin, and all of you—and Jim—all of you for making this crowd

possible tonight. And—but in this very room—in this dining hall at Arkansas Tech, the—the meeting was over, and people were getting up and tired. We’d been listening to speeches, and Robert Byrd played the fiddle and all kinds of stuff. And, finally, somebody said, “Wait a minute. Let’s stop just a minute. I know everybody’s ready to go, but there’s a young man who didn’t get called on tonight, and he’s running for Congress. And, young man, what is your name?” And he says, “My name is Bill Clinton.” [Laughter] And Bill Clinton got up and spoke for two minutes. Dale, do you remember that?

DB: Sure.

DP: And he lost that race, Garrett. And he lost it, but in the end he won. So you don’t have to win every race every time, but just to be around politics and politicians and people who care about their communities and their political parties—I—I just am so proud that you’re here and so proud all of you are here.

[00:10:24] I call this—when Dale and I get together like this, and we just kind of reminisce. I call this the Arkansas version of “The Antique Roadshow.” [Laughter] And so here we are again and who knows, this may be the last “Antique Roadshow” we do. But we have a good time doing these. We’ve done several. And when Olin asked us some months ago to go to do it, well, we

were, of course, very, very honored to not only be asked but also to oblige.

[00:10:53] DB: You know, [*clears throat*] my father served in the legislature one term, but he wanted his sons to be politicians, believe it or not. You never hear that nowadays. And he wanted my brother and me both to go to law school, which we both did. But because he thought we needed to go to law school, he also thought we needed to learn Latin in order to be a lawyer, in order to be a politician.

DP: Yeah.

DB: And we were taught at the dinner table we had certain responsibilities and so on. And I can tell you that he was—I guess, when I ran for governor, I felt that I was—that I was really being true to him, and I know that I was. When I—I went to Northwestern in Chicago to law school, and one night I got this phone call to hurry home. My father and mother had been in a wreck and they were both killed . . .

Unknown female: Oh.

DB: . . . while I was a freshman in law school. I had to drop out of law school because we were all just devastated. And I think when I decided to run for governor, I was trying to keep faith with my father and because he was gone. But he convinced

me—and I can tell you, it's very hard to cling to the principles that he taught me. It's very hard to cling to those now because politics is so different. But, anyway, I wanted to say that I came here forty years ago the first time. I wasn't running for anything. And the women were having this to-do in Pope County, and it was a splendid evening, not nearly as big a crowd as—as this was. [00:12:33] But when I decided to run for representative, people'd say, "Have you heard Dale Bum—" I mean, gov—for governor—people'd say, you know, "Have you heard Dale Bumpers is going to run for governor?" "Well, I heard some people laughing about it." [Laughter] And I started out with one percent name recognition, and I don't know what I was trying to prove, really. It was just so insane. I tell people I ran to get off the school board. That's the worst job I ever had. [Laughter] But, anyway, so it was. I called my sister, who by this time was very wealthy. I called my brother, who was a Harvard lawyer and really climbing the ladder at a fast pace. And I told him—I said, "Carroll, I want to run for governor." And he was pretty excited about it. My sister was not. So, anyway, Carroll was living in Chicago—in Winnetka, a Chicago suburb. He said, "Come up there Sunday afternoon. I'll get Margaret to come over from Cleveland, and we'll talk this over." So I said,

“Okay.” So we all gathered Sunday afternoon in Winnetka—just my brother and sister and me, sitting around the kitchen table. They had the money, and they, therefore, had their claws on me as to whether I was going to run or not. I had to sell them. And when I got through making my presentation, my sister said, “I want to get this straight now. You’re going to run for governor with seven other people in the race besides you?” “Yeah.” “And Orval Faubus is one of them?” “Yeah.” “And you have to run in the primary, and if you win that, then you have to run against Governor Rockefeller?” “Yeah, that’s right.” She said, “I ain’t putting a damn dime in this ego trip.” [*Laughter*] But about a week before the election, I had been climbing in the polls, and my guru, who did all of our tellers and everything, called my brother and said, “We’ve got to have another thirty-five thousand dollars.” So he naturally picked up the phone--called my sister. [*Laughter*] That’s all we knew to do. And she just threw a fit. She said, “I’m not putting any more”—she’d already put a lot of money in it. When I left Winnetka that afternoon, I had fifty thousand dollars in my pocket, which was not anything much more then than it is now if you’re running for governor. But in any event, that all worked out, and Carroll called Margaret, and he would not let her off the phone until she said

she'd give the other thirty-five thousand dollars. And you know where the first speech was I made after that election? The Cleveland, Ohio, Chamber of Commerce. [*Laughter*] She got her money's worth right then. David?

[00:15:31] DP: This guy has the best memory and the best recall of any political person I think that's ever—and that includes Bill Clinton—of any political person ever produced in Arkansas. I have gotten where—honestly, I hate—I'm sometimes embarrassed to go out the front door because I'm going to meet someone that I'm supposed to know, and I don't know them, and I've known them forever. I know none of you have that particular problem. [*Laughter*] But the other night, for example—I'll just give you an example—the other night my wife and I were watching a football game, and she said, "I'm trying to remember who Eli Manning's brother is." And I said, "Oh, yeah. Okay, I know—let's see, is it John, Frank, Bill, Tom"—whatever—we thought and thought and thought—we—for an hour we—I even went and tried to Google, which I can't do very well [*laughs*], and I never could find Eli Manning's brother. And so finally about two thirty that morning [*laughter*], Barbara kicked me, and she says, "It's Peyton!" And I said, "What?" She says, "It's Peyton!" I says, "Peyton who?" And she says, "Peyton

Manning." I said, "Well, who is Peyton Manning?" [*Laughter*]
She says, "I don't know, but he's got a brother. I can't think of his name." [*Laughter*] That's how bad—we drive down the road, and all we're trying to remember is who this was and who that was and, "Boy, don't they look old?" and whatever.

[*Laughter*] But, man, I look out in this crowd tonight and—for example, Nathan George, I went to see the great friend of mine in all this—the—Lloyd George not too long ago—I need to go again—in the nursing home in Ola. And I—the nurse said to me as I walked into Lloyd's room, Dale—she said—and, boy, he was a great ally of yours and mine, too, in Yell County and in the legislature. But as I walked in the room, the nurse said, "You know, he's not going to know you." I said, "I understand that. I can deal with that." But as I walked in, he was sitting there in a wheelchair and had on a baseball cap. And I said, "Lloyd," and I never told him my name—I said, "Lloyd," He said, "Governor, I'll be in five minutes in the governor's office, and we'll sign that bill you wanted me to get." [*Laughter*] He knew my voice and he—and, you know, I was just so—I was just so impressed. And once again, it reminded me of—of the great opportunities that we have in—in public life and whatever to meet the best people in—on the face of the earth, and I—I have enjoyed every bit of

it. I—Dale, I’m going to yield back to you because I can’t remember what I was going to say next. [Laughter] So, anyway, the . . .

[00:18:22] DB: Join the fraternity. Right after I was elected governor, the governor of Missouri, who was chairman of the National Governors Commerce, called and said, “How would you like to go to the Soviet Union [DP laughs] and spend about ten days?” And I said, “I’d really love it, but I—you know, I don’t want folks here to think I’ve already defected.” [Laughter] And bear in mind, this was 1971. So, anyway, I called Bob McCord [unclear word]—I said, “Bob, what do you think people will think about me going to Russia here right after I’ve been elected.” So I called McCord, and I said, “How would you treat it?” He said, “I’d treat like it ought to be treated. It’s an educational thing. You ought to do it. Of course, you ought to go.” So I thought it over, and I decided, “Well, I got two years to make up for anything anybody says about it.” [Laughter] But the best part of it was there was a radio station in Little Rock who had a roving reporter. He’d get out on the street at noon every day at some fairly busy intersection, and he had a question every day. And he would interview people who come up—put the microphone in front of them—say, “What do you think about

this?" And the question that day was, "What do you think about Governor Bumpers going to the Soviet Union?" And I was listening. [*Laughter*] And I remember this old man. He was about—they told me later he was up in his eighties—had a cane—came hobbling down the street, and they stopped him. "Sir, what do you think about Governor Bumpers going to the Soviet Union?" "I don't know what he wants to go to Russia for. He ain't been to Cabot yet." [*Laughter*]

[00:20:09] DP: You meet some real great people along the way, especially out on the campaign trail. And I was out campaigning one time for office—I can't remember which office I was running for, but I think I was in Washington already in the Senate. And I'd—I somehow or another I was going to El Dorado on a weekend—a Saturday or a Sunday. And I—folks down in Calhoun County and Hampton got word I was coming through town, so they said, "Would you mind stopping by the VFW lodge and saying hi to Miss Lily so-and-so. She's having her hundredth birthday. And I said, "Oh, yeah, that'd be good." So we were driving down the highway, [*phone rings*] and we pulled over to the left and drove into the VFW lodge and walked in there. And here was this lady in a wheelchair, and I said, "How are you? I'm—I'm David Pryor, and I wanted to wish you a

happy hundredth birthday.” And she said, “Oh, have you met my baby daughter yet?” And I said, “No, I haven’t.” Well, I—she said, “Come over here, Mary Jo. I want you to meet Senator Pryor.” She came over on her walker, and she was eighty-two years old. *[Laughter]* That was the baby daughter. Well, this lady—I didn’t know what to say to anyone who was a hundred, so I said, “You’ve sure seen a lot of change in your hundred years.” “Yeah, I been against all of it, too.” So *[laughter]* you’ll—you—you—those little things—those little memories that you take with you all your life and they really—they just really have a special meaning to you as we go—especially through the campaign trails. And I’ve enjoyed—some people said that Pryor liked to campaign more than he liked to hold office. I don’t know, I always enjoyed holding office, but the campaigns were a special time to me because you were always thrown out there in various situations all over the state with different types of people of all walks of life, and that’s what—that’s what makes Arkansas a very, very unique state.

[00:22:11] DB: When the first—we had two primaries, you know.

You had one in, I think it was, April and one in May. And I can remember in the first primary, I—I had been told that some of these mountain counties up north could not be relied on *[laughs]*

to bring the ballots in the way they were really voted.

[*Laughter*] And so we were really apprehensive about what . . .

DP: Now why would you have heard a thing like that, Dale?

[*Laughter*]

DB: Well, I didn't believe it, of course. [*Laughter*] But I did call the judge at two o'clock in the morning [*laughter*], and I said, "Judge, I've got nine hundred votes in that county up there. All I want is nine hundred votes. I don't want one that belongs to anybody else, and I'm depending on you." Now this was two o'clock in the morning—I said, "I'm depending on you to make sure that those ballots are counted right." "Dale, don't you worry about it." Says, "Only thirty-two votes out in a little old country church out here five miles from town. [*DP laughs*] Don't you worry about a thing." And, sure enough, when the votes came in, I was four hundred short. [*Laughter*] And it turned out just the way everybody had said it probably would. And, of course, I—wasn't anything I could do about it, but it turned out. I got in a runoff anyway and won. I rented a suite in the—what's the tow—the one on the interstate down there?

DP: Quapaw Tower?

DB: Quapaw Towers. I rented a suite there, and we started inviting people from all over the state that had voted wrong and giving

them a chance to make up for it [*laughter*] by hitting the drum with a little money. And so here comes the judge with four of his underlings. And they came in, and we had a room set back, and people would come in, and they'd throw their money on the bed, and that—that was their atonement [*laughter*] for having voted wrong in the first place. [*Laughter*] So we're back there, and the judge throws this money out—twenty dollar bills, skewed—I said, "Judge, I cannot believe you." I said, "You know I called you at two o'clock." "Oh, I know that, Dale. I know that." [*DP laughs*] "I called you at two o'clock in the morning and asked you to save those votes, and you promised me that every vote would be counted." He said, "We'll do it for you next time." [*Laughter*] I don't think he ever got a chance to but . . .

[00:24:55] DP: We've got a—we've got a special friend here. Dale's nephew is Archie Schaffer, who, as you know, is from—reared in Franklin County in Charleston. And Archie now—if you ever go to the Tyson corporate headquarters—the Taj Majal of the mountains [*laughter*—and you go into Tyson headquarters and you look up Johnny Tyson and John—and Don Tyson, the office right between these two individuals is Archie Schaffer's office. He has to sit between these two icons. But Archie was Senator Bump—governor—then-Governor Bumpers's staff—chief of staff

while Dale was governor for a period of time. And one day in 1973 during the gasoline crisis and the energy crisis, Dale drove up in his big Lincoln to the—to the state capitol and got out and came in and huge press conference. Everybody knew there was a big announcement. Dale got up—Governor Bumpers did—and says, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m just here to announce that we’re going on a huge gasoline-saving binge in Arkansas, and I have today ordered Pintos for all the state agencies of government [*laughter*—the health department, pollution control, ecology,” and whatever. And somebody—John Bennett of the Commercial Appeal—old John was pretty sour. You remember him, don’t you, [*unclear word*]?”

DB: [*Laughs*] Oh, do I remember him! [*Laughter*]

DP: And I remember that we—he was in Little Rock, and we got elected to the Senate to get away from John Bennett. And then he came up there.

DB: Yeah.

DP: Remember that? [*Laughter*]

DB: Oh, yeah.

DP: Followed us up there. But, anyway, John Bennett says, “Well, Governor Bumpers, we were looking out the press office window and saw you drive up in that big old gas-guzzling Lincoln with

that state trooper at the steering wheel." Says, "What are you going do about your own car?" He said, "Oh, we've ordered a—a—a Pinto. We're going to start driving a Pinto, and we've ordered a Pinto." So we walk back—they walk back in the office, and Archie walks back in and closes the door—says, "Uncle Dale, we hadn't ordered any Pinto." He says, "You have now!"

[*Laughter*] So we—Archie, is that a true story or not?

Archie Shaffer III: I don't know. [*Laughter*]

DP: But Archie was my great chauffeur down tonight from Fayetteville. I came down from Fayetteville, and Dale not only came from Little Rock, he came all the way from Washington, DC today to be here with you tonight. That's the depth of his caring, so he's come a long way—probably longer . . .

[00:27:26] DB: One other story . . .

DP: . . . than any other [*unclear word*] person.

DB: . . . that happened not too many years after I came here the first—well, it was during the campaign when eight of us were running for governor in the Democratic primary. And there was a fellow running that was called Bill Cheek. He was an oil distributor from over in West Memphis. Now bear in mind there were eight people in this race, including him. Orval Faubus, the attorney general, lieutenant governor—everybody was in the

race. But, anyway, we were outside someplace in Pope County, and Bill Cheek was a pretty clever guy, and there was another man in the race who was a very prominent lawyer from Texarkana, Bob Compton.

DP: Bob.

DB: You're—not Texarkana but . . .

DP: El Dorado.

DB: El Dorado. And so every place we went, Bob Compton'd get up there, and say, "I'm one of you. I was just born five miles right out here." [*Laughter*] And every place we'd go, you know, he's just born five miles right out here. So Bill Cheek was going down the list of all the candidates. And he had different—oh, Orval Faubus—he really cut loose on him. But he got down to—he got down to Bob Compton. He said, "Bob Compton has been born all over this state." [*Laughter*] His mother either had the longest labor, or his daddy had the fastest covered wagon I ever want to see." [*Laughter*] It was just [*clears throat*]*—*politics is a fascinating business, and things like that happen constantly. And there—let me tell you, there are a lot of things that happen that are traumatic to you, and I was new to it. I mean, I loved politics. We were taught that when we died we were going to Franklin Roosevelt [*laughter*], and we really believed all those

things. It was an extremely fascinating time, and it—it made it so easy for me to finally make a—to tell you the truth, Orval Faubus so totally dominated politics in the state, and he was a totally different politician from what I was going to be. And—but I knew I couldn't compete with him. He was—he was just the icon in the state. After all the things in Little Rock High School and everything, people were still really attached to him, and so I had to wait until some of that wore off before I could get in the race. [00:29:54] And it really—it was a fascinating story because I—for example, I remember the day before the first primary—David, we were down at Pine Bluff and the—it was Labor Day. It was Labor Day. We were down in Pine Bluff, and I had told one of my staffers—I said, "I hear that—that Orval Faubus has a big announcement he's going to make, and I want you to go up there to it, and you call me on the phone because I've got to speak down here at one forty-five." There were a thousand, two thousand people there. And I said, "You call me and tell me what he said." And it happened that morning because Orval Faubus was there on the podium with me at that moment. So I called him. Ed Lester . . .

DP: Mh-hmm.

DB: . . . was the guy who attended the press conference for me. And he said—he told me—he says, “This makes no sense, but here’s what he said. He says that if he’s elected governor, he’ll be assassinated within six months.” I said, “Well, I don’t—I don’t get it. What’s the deal?” He said, “Beats me.” I said, “Did he actually say that?” He said, “Yeah. He said he’d be assassinated.” And I said, “Well, I can’t figure out a single rationale for that statement.” But I was next on the program following Orval Faubus. And I said, “Orval Faubus has made an announcement this morning that if he is elected governor, he will be assassinated within six months. I’m here this afternoon to save Orval Faubus life.”

[Laughter and applause]

DP: I have never heard that story. I’ve been around this guy all my life, but I’ve never heard that story. *[Laughter]* That’s a great story.

DB: Thank you, David.

[00:31:59] DP: You think that—I tell you what, you think we’re these two nice guys—humble guys. Not a word—not a bit of truth to it. We’ve got egos as big as a barn. *[Laughter]* We were not long ago at the International House of Pancakes having breakfast, and Dale was here from Washington, and I was in

Little Rock, and we were over in the corner. We noticed these waitresses over at the cash register. They kept staring at us. And the longer they stared at us—they were talking about us. And I knew and Dale knew that they were talking about us, and the longer they talked about us, our—we just swelled up, you know, like a [*laughter*] big toad frog. Boy, our egos were real—Mark Wilcox knows about this. He knows how that feeling is—when you know somebody’s talking about you and maybe saying some nice things about you. Finally, one of the waitresses came over—says, “Say, can we interrupt you just a minute?” Said, “Sure.” Says, “We’ve been having an argument over here at the cash register. Which one of y’all used to be sheriff around here?” [*Laughter*] Do you remember that, Dale?

DB: Yeah.

DP: Boy, that’ll—that’ll take your ego down. Nothing wrong with being sheriff. My mother—I mean, my father and grandfather and great-grandfather were all sheriffs down in Ouachita County, where Rozzy and I are from, so nothing wrong with that. We’re just proud of all the county officials who . . .

[00:33.22] DB: David, tell them the story about your father coming and getting you out of school to take you down to the post office, and he wanted you to see something.

DP: He did. [*Laughter*] My—we—that was in the old days, and my dad was a Chevrolet dealer and the sheriff of the county. And one day I was—I'd gotten out of school and walk across the railroad track and walked over to the Chevrolet place. Dad says, "Come here. I want to take you across the alley and go to the post office and get the mail." So we did, and you could go in there and work the little combination, you know, and he always would let me work the combination and reach in there and get all the mail out of the mailbox. And so I was in there, and one day I looked over there on the side, and my dad and I were standing there getting the mail. And I saw this man in this black suit and this black hat—tall man—must have been six-five or - six—tall—standing there getting his mail. And I said, "Dad, who—who is that man?" And my dad said, "Oh, no, you don't want to know about him." I said, "No, no, who—who is he, Dad?" "Well, we'll talk about him [*unclear words*]." I said, "Well, I'm just curious—curious, Dad. Who is that man?" He says, "Well, son, his name is Skidmore Willis." And I said, "Well, who is Mr. Willis?" And he says, "Son, he is the—he is a Republican." [*Laughter*] And I said, "Well, Dad, what is a Republican?" He said, "You'll know soon enough." [*Laughter*] So, anyway—so, anyway, that was the first Republican I—that

was the only Republican that we had in Ouachita County.

[*Laughter*] And that was Skidmore Willis. That's the honest-to-goodness truth. Do you remember any Republicans in Franklin County at that time?

DB: Yeah, the banker. [*Laughter*]

JK: [*Unclear word*]

DP: Most bankers—not all bankers, but most bankers seem to be. A lot of bankers are.

[00:35:06] DB: We had—you know, the Republicans in Charleston—there must have been about thirty of them, but everybody knew who was a Republican and who wasn't. I was going to tell you one other story about Dan Quayle. It's the best story I have.

DP: Oh, yeah. [*Laughter*]

DB: Dan, believe it or not, sort of encouraged me to run for president. You know, he was later vice-president. And I liked him a lot. He was not considered a Socrates or anything but [*laughter*]*—[pauses and clears throat]* one day Dan and I were having a conversation, and I've forgotten exactly what it was about. But I said—oh, I know what it was. He was chiding me about being a lawyer. He said, "You know, Dale, the problem with this country—we got too many lawyers." To be frank with you, his words were "too damn many lawyers." [*Laughter*] And

I said, "Well." He was asking about my children. I have three children. They're all lawyers. My brother and I were both lawyers." He said, "That's the problem. We got too many lawyers." And I said, "Well, Dan, I—I have a little trouble with that, but let me ask you this. This is a kind of a lawyer riddle, but let me ask you this riddle. My mother had a baby. It wasn't my brother, wasn't my sister. Who was it?" He scratched his head, and he says, "Well, I don't know." I said, "It was me." [Laughter] He said, "Boy, that's good. That's really good. [Laughter] He went rushing over to the White House to see George H., who was president. Dan was vice-president at the time. "Mr. President, I've got a riddle for you." "What is it, Dan?" "My mother had a baby—wasn't my brother, wasn't my sister, and so who was it?" And George H. said, "Well, it's you." He said, "No, it's Dale Bumpers."

[Laughter and applause]

[00:37:06] DP: Oh, that is a great story. [Laughter] Tha—that—that's a—that's what we call an inside Senate story. [Laughter] I'm going to tell you another inside Senate story. The Democrat—the Democrats, when we were in the Senate—I—they may have changed it since that time—but we had three elected positions in the Democratic Party in the Senate. We had the

majority leader, the—I mean, we had the Democratic leader, the whip, and the secretary of the Democratic Conference. Well, one thing led to another. An opening came up in the secretaryship of the Democratic Conference, and so I said, “Heck, I’m going to run for that.” And there were two or three other of my colleagues wanting to run, and so they announced, and I announced, and we campaigned. I went to every United States senator’s office on the Democratic side—sat down at—in their office and asked them for their vote. I did it for everyone except one senator. In a minute I may—who that was. But, anyway, the night before we—the Democrats were going to meet in the caucus, and we meet in the old Senate chamber. The beautiful, old Senate chamber—the ornate chamber. And we would go in there and have our election for our Democratic officers. So I called Dale up the night before, and I said, “Now, Dale, I’m running for secretary of the Democratic conference. And I’m calling on you, my friend of many years, to get up in the conference and place my name in nomination to be secretary of the conference. And, Dale, I’m asking you to make one of the great speeches you’ve ever made. I want a barn burner. I want you to tell every good thing that you’ve ever thought of about me and let my colleagues know why I’d be a good secretary of

the conference." He said, "Great." I could hear—on the telephone I could hear his pen going over his legal pad, [*DB laughs*] scratching on his legal pad. [*Laughter*] And he said, "By the way, let me ask you one thing before you go any further." I said, "What?" He said, "What does that position do? What do you do?" I said, "Absolutely nothing." He said, "You'll be perfect for the job." [*Laughter*] So, anyway, that was going on. [00:39:22] But I want to tell you, this is why it's so important—anyone ever thinking about running for public office, don't ever hesitate or fail to ask someone for their vote. A lot of politicians make this mistake. Ask people for their vote. I did this Democratic conference leadership thing, and I knew that there was one senator who didn't like me. And I said, "I'm not going to go to his office and waste my time and waste his time and embarrass us by sitting there, knowing he's not going to vote for me." So, anyway, going over that morning to the vote in the Democratic conference, who would I get on the elevator with in the basement of the capitol to go up to the old Senate [*DB coughs*] chamber but this senator? The two of us are standing there. We're not saying much to each other. "Good morning," or something. He said, "By the way," he said, "aren't you running for secretary of the conference?" And I said, "Yes, I

am.” He said, “You’ve not asked me for my vote.” I said, “You’re right.” So I swallowed, and I said, “I would really hope you will vote for me. I’m asking for your vote today in a few minutes for the secretary of the conference.” He said, “You’ve got it.” I won by one vote. [*Laughter*] I want you to know that. And that’s the story of one vote. And we’ve seen some elections in this country and in this state in recent years. And this state and this country—maybe not this state, but this country is divided fifty-fifty like we’ve never seen it divided now, between red and blue. And I hate red and blue connotations. I hate all that because I think we’re one country. But things are not—anyway we can—may want to talk about that in a little bit, but I just wanted you to—I wanted to tell you about how important it is to ask people for one of the most precious things that they have, and that’s their vote. So Dale . . .

[00:41:30] DB: I’m going to tell you one story dealing with Bill Clinton, and it’s the last one I’m going to tell, David.

DP: You mean forever or—or [*laughter*] . . .

DB: You know, the coon supper down at Gillette, Arkansas, is an absolute must for any politician. I didn’t know that—didn’t know much about Gillette or south Arkansas when I got into politics. But David learned early, and I soon learned that you have to go

to Gillette because there'll be a thousand to fifteen hundred people there for the coon supper. And they actually cook coon, and they serve it. And David loves to tell the story about somebody coming by with that stuff and I . . .

DP: You had the flu. [*Laughter*]

DB: Was that it?

DP: Mh-hmm.

DB: I was thinking you told them that I'd already had . . .

DP: No! No, let me tell this story. [*Laughter*] I can do it better. No, you go—you tell—you ought to tell them about that plane crash that you and Bill Clinton . . .

DB: I will.

DP: You tell . . .

DB: Okay. You tell them about the coon supper, and I'll . . .

DP: Well, I'll tell you . . .

DB: . . . tell them about the plane crash.

DP: . . . Dale was sick one year during the coon suppers in January—third Friday night or something like that. I'm not sure. And so I'd heard that he had a—a viral flu and was home throwing up and everything in his apartment. But I called him up, and I said, "Dale, you're up for reelection this year, and you're going to have to go to that coon supper." He said, "I can't. I'm sick. I

can't go. You tell them I really can't make it there tonight." So, I said, "No, you got to go, and I'm going come by and pick you up, and we're going to drive [*laughs*] down there to Gillette, Arkansas, and you're going to go there. We're just going to stay a short time. But, Dale, if you slight them—if you snub them, they'll never forget this on Election Day." So he said, "Well, all right. I'll be out in front of the apartment." So I picked him up, and we drive down. We get a—just about to Pine Bluff and you—and Gillette is still about thirty miles south of Pine Bluff or forty. And maybe—and we could smell that coon cooking from there. [*Laughter*] And I thought Dale was going to throw up in my car. [*Laughter*] And we were driving, and he was getting greener and greener, and I said, "Boy, this guy's [*laughs*] getting ready to be sick right here in my car." And I said, "Dale, we'll slow down if you need to get out or whatever." We finally got to the coon supper, and they brought this big thing of coon. They pour this coon out in wash tubs out in front of you, and you're supposed to sit there and eat it. They put it on oiled tablecloths, and they'd throw some cornbread and some stuff at it and, man, it—there's an aroma there that you can't quite describe. [*Laughter*] But Dale was sitting there, and I knew it was just—he was going to just, you know, become sick at his

stomach. And, finally, the Channel 11 new—news reporter came over and turned on the camera—says, “Senator Bumpers, we want to see you eat some of this coon. We’re going to put it on the ten o’clock news. So take a big old bite of that coon.”

[*Laughter*] And Dale looked down at it, and he got greener and greener. He said, “You know, I am so full I can’t eat any more. It’s so good.” And she said, “When did you eat it?” And he says, “Three years ago.” [*Laughter*] He got by with it. He got by . . .

[00:44:41] DB: Bill Clinton called me one [*clears throat*] afternoon.

We’d had a twelve-inch snowstorm, and it was Saturday, and the snow was still on the ground. And Bill called and said, “Are you going to the coon supper?” And I said, “Are you crazy?

[*Laughter*] How can we go to the coon supper? My God, it’s twelve inches of snow on the ground.” He says, “Well, I talked to county judge, and he—he said he’d swept it off. He swept the runway, so we could get in.” I said, “I don’t know.” And finally I agreed to do it, and I told him—I said, “I’ll meet you at Central Flying Service at six o’clock.” And we started to—you know, I didn’t think much more about it, but about five thirty, I began to think about it. And Betty was, as you might guess—any wife was saying, “I can’t believe this.” And when I walked out the

door, she said, "You know, you and Bill Clinton both need a saliva test." [Laughter] But, anyway, we went on and we took off, and sure enough, the county judge had cleaned the runway off. But what he had done was to shovel all the snow right up to the end of the runway. And so when we came in, the front landing gear hit the snow which had, by that time, turned to ice because the sun had been out all day, and it melted and turned the snow into ice. And the nose wheel hit it—blam! We went circling out through this corn patch or whatever it was—cotton field. And Bill was telling a story. I said, "Bill, open that door. This thing's going catch on fire." And he was so busy telling his story that he didn't know we'd crashed. [Laughter] So [laughs], anyway, the thing finally came to a stop, and I hollered at him again. He had a state trooper with him. Governors had security then. I guess they still do, don't they? And—but in any event, the plane was nose down, straight up. And finally the trooper reached over in front of Bill—turned the knob—got the door open—and we all jumped out. All of us got sprained ankles—it was so high off the ground. And we started running across that field in the snow, and Bill said, "Boy, I bet we never lose another vote in Gillette." [Laughter] Now that's the gospel truth. Every word of that's exactly the way it happened.

DP: I backed out of that trip. I was at Central Flying Service, and I went home and built a fire right in . . .

DB: Oh, my.

[00:47:17] DP: Now, Dale, tell them that story. I love . . .

DB: Well, I . . .

DP: Are you through with that one?

DB: Yeah, I . . .

DP: Well, if you're through with that, I want you to tell another one that I like to hear you tell. Tell them that story about you and Rozzy up there in the hills one night, and you're coming back from a big dinner. I believe it was a Democratic dinner, and you ran out of gas.

DB: No, we were going to it.

DP: You were running out of gas.

DB: Yeah.

DP: What is that story?

DB: Well, we stopped, and we couldn't find a—it was dark—little old two-lane highway, and of course, we were just—actually, David, we were going to the dinner, and we—we thought we were going to be late. And we finally found this little old house which had a gas pump out in front, and we decided if we were ever going to get there, that's where we could maybe make it. So we

stopped, and this kid came out. He was just a kid. And I told him, "Fill it up." And so, he got over—took the pipe—the—the gas nozzle, and he didn't know what to do with it. He's just footsying around with it, and I knew he was retarded or something. [*Laughter*] And I said, "Son, is there—is—is your mother or father here?" He said, "Nope." I said, "Is there anybody else here?" "Nope." I said, "Do you have any brothers and sisters?" He said, "I got a brother." I said, "You've got a brother?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Where is he?" He said, "He's at Harvard." [*Laughter*] "You got a brother at Harvard?" "Yeah." [*DP laughs*] "What's he studying?" "He ain't studying nothing. They're studying him." [*Laughter*]

[00:49:07] DP: Olin told us at the beginning of this show tonight that we couldn't go over forty minutes, and we've already violated that, but I'm going to give one final one. Dale and I were campaigning [*laughs*] one time, and we stopped somewhere down around Lake Village one afternoon, and we were trying to get back to Little Rock for something, and we said—I said, "Dale, let's just stop right here at this nursing home right quick. I'm chairman of the Aging Committee, and they'll recognize me. I've tried to help seniors and whatever, so I'm going to give you a big introduction and me a big introduction,

and it'll tickle them to death for us to be here." Egos once again. And so we got [*laughter*] out of the car and went over toward the nursing home. And the lady was out on [*laughs*] the front with a walker. She must have been ninety-five or -six and she—I said, "How are you? Do you know who I am?" And she looked at me real funny and long. She says, "No, but you can go down to the information desk. They can probably let you know about [*laughter*]*—*they can probably tell you who you are." [*Laughter*] [00:50:09] Well, I'm going to—Olin and I and all of you—this has just been great. But I want—I want to say this, and this is on a personal note. To be able to serve—not only to follow a guy like this to become governor of Arkansas and follow in his footsteps has been a great honor in my life. But the real honor and the real privilege I had was to serve by his side when I had eighteen years by his side as a United States senator. And I'm going to tell you what, it was a great, great time in my life, and I will always be grateful not only for what he stood for—what he believed in our—about in our country and for our country but for the state of Arkansas that he loves so very dearly, and to have served with and by Dale Bumpers was the greatest privilege, I think, in my life. And I just wanted to say, Dale, in behalf of all of us—all of the Democrats and all of the

Arkansans and all the Americans, we applaud your service, and we're so grateful that you have given us of your life and your times during this period. Thank you, Dale.

[*Applause*]

DB: [*Unclear words*]

DP: Thank you. [*Laughter*]

DB: [*Unclear words*]

DP: Thank you very much.

JK: On behalf of Pope County Democrats, we'd like to thank you both for being here.

DB: Do I have to report this to the Ethics Committee?

JK: No, you don't. [*Laughter*] No. On behalf of everybody here, it was a true privilege for us to be here, and I'm just thankful that I got to be a part of it.

DB: Thank you very much [*unclear words*].

[00:51:50] DP: I—I want to make an announcement if I could. We have a new center at the University of Arkansas, and we're going all over the state, and we're recording lives of Arkansans. We're recording people who have made a difference in our state—not necessarily just politicians but businesspeople and musicians and homemakers and everyone that you can imagine. And we're—we're searching for new people to interview constantly, and

should you have an interest in not only your family being interviewed or know someone of special interest who's done something special for our state of Arkansas or for our country, we want you to contact the center at the University of Arkansas. Now just because it's in Fayetteville, doesn't mean it's not statewide. It's statewide. We're going to partner with Arkansas Tech. We're going to partner with AETN. We're partnering with all of the other institutions of learning all over the state, and we want all of us to be a part of it. And we think it's going to be an exciting venture ahead. So be looking on the Web site for it.

[*Background music*]

DP: Thank all of you so much. Thank you again. Thank you, sir.

[*Applause*]

[Silence]

[00:53:31 End of transcript]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce Riggs]

[Edited by Sheila Czech]

[Edited by Susan Kendrick-Perry]