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

University of Arkansas
1 East Center
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

Arkansas Memories Project

Dick Bennett

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

December 4, 2013

Fayetteville, Arkansas

Copyright 2013 Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas. All rights reserved.

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 and video highlight files, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at https://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; and
  - annotations for clarification and identification.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

Citation Information

See the Citation Guide at https://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.php.

Scott Lunsford interviewed Dick Bennett on December 4, 2013, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: All right. Dick Bennett—uh—it's a great pleasure to be across from you. I've—uh—I've done some investigation and—in your work and I've talked with some folks that—um—have—uh—known you, and—uh—it's good to be finally sitting across from you. Um—I—my name is Scott Lunsford. I'm here with the Pryor Center, and we're gonna—you're gonna be our latest—uh—newest victim of a Pryor Center interviewing process. We're gonna spend all day with you and talk about everything f—that you can remember from your earliest memories to the present day until we just give out. Um . . .

Dick Bennett: Thank you. Thank you.

[00:00:42] SL: Today's date is—uh—December 4, 2013, and we are at your residence in Fayetteville, Arkansas. And—um—we're gonna be recording this in high-definition audio and video. And I guess I wanna make sure that you're comfortable with us doing this.

DB: Oh, absolutely.

SL: Okay, good.

DB: I'm—I'm very pleased to . . .

SL: Good.

DB: . . . for you to be here.

SL: Good.

DB: And honored to be interviewed by the Pryor Center.

SL: Well, it's the—it's a mutual arrangement. I mean we—we feel very good to be here, too. Um—we take a little time to get set up, and you've been very patient, and I really appreciate that. But we're about ready to go now. Usually, Dick, what we start with was when and where you were born.

[00:01:28] DB: I was born in Harrison, Arkansas, in 1932. March 15, 1932. My father and mother had come from Bentonville—uh—where my grandparents lived—uh—in the late [19]20s, and—uh—dad—uh—purchased or made a down payment on a pharmacy . . .

SL: Oh, good.

DB: . . . there. He went to the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, which was a two-year—um—course.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: This was his college education.

SL: What name did they give you?

DB: They gave me James Richard Bennett. And it has no connection whatsoever to my—to either one of my families.

[00:02:14] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, now, what was your father's name?

DB: Uh—Volney. And I'm trying to think what—I can't for a moment remember his other—his—uh—third name. My brother was named Joseph Volney Bennett after dad. So . . .

SL: Now, how do you spell Volney?

DB: *V-O-L-N-E-Y*.

SL: Okay.

DB: Uh-huh. It's a—a French writer. How that happened, I never could find out. [*SL laughs*] Dad didn't know. [*Laughs*]

[00:02:38] SL: And what was your mother's name?

DB: Mildred Mae Dickinson.

SL: Uh-huh. And—and where was she from?

DB: Um—she was—uh—she was from there. She was from Bentonville. Right.

SL: Okay.

DB: I paused for just a moment. It's—her mother was from Iowa.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: Her mother and dad came there from Iowa. But mother . . .

[00:02:58] SL: And so—h—h—how did y'all end up in Harrison?

DB: Um—well, this is as I understand it. Dad worked in a

pharmacy—worked in a drugstore. And that's a—that's an interesting thing. What—what is a drugstore, that wonderful conglomeration of all kinds of services and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: . . . and—uh—things to purchase, commodities. Um—he worked in Bentonville. And that made him interested in being a pharmacist. And out of that, as a very young man—uh—after he had worked at—uh—after high school for a while, he went to St. Louis and got his two-year degree. And then a man, I think from—a doctor from Prairie Grove, and I think his name was Mock, Dr. Mock, loaned him the money to open his drugstore in—on the square in Harrison, Arkansas.

SL: In Harrison, Arkansas.

DB: Mh-hmm.

[00:04:04] SL: Do you remember, or did you ever know, your grandparents on either side?

DB: I did. Um—I knew them for many years, and this was a great blessing to me. My grandmother Dickinson is, though, the only grandparent on my mother's side. I never did know my grandfather.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Um—he died—uh—uh—earlier in his life. And—uh—grandmother

had to have a—um—a boarding house from her home in order to—to live and raise her—uh—three daughters. Um—m—on my father—father's side, Marshall Bennett—um—and Emma Bennett, they lived there after moving from Gravette, where he had a—it was either a furniture or a hardware store. When I knew him, he was—he was a—a justice of the peace. That was sort of his retired—uh—livelihood or life.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: And so that every summer, I spent considerable time in Bentonville, knew a great deal about it—uh—enjoyed it, course, because—uh—if you had grandparents, you know that—uh—grandp—uh—grandchildren are treated so well and that I was—I could do no wrong, and—uh—I had everything homemade for me. And we went to Bella Vista often—uh—too when I was in Bentonville, and that had a lovely lake, and it was very pleasant over there.

[00:05:43] SL: Did they live in—did your grandparents live in town in Bentonville?

DB: They did. Um—my—my Grandfather and Grandmother Bennett lived—uh—n—uh—north of the—uh—square very close to where Crystal Bridges is now.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Um—in a—a two-story Victorian house, and my grandmother [DB edit: Maternal grandmother, Grandmother Dickinson] lived on the other side of the square. It would been southwest of the square off of Center Street, I think, not too far from the Methodist church. Not too far from the square. And so that this—these are places I grew up in and a town that is as—uh—close to me—uh—almost as Harrison itself.

[00:06:34] SL: It's—uh—it's fairly unusual to have both sets of—uh—grandparents—uh—in the same town.

DB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you being able to grow up with them. Do you remember much about each of the houses? Were there—was there—did they both have electricity? Do you member if . . .

DB: They did.

SL: They did?

DB: They did.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: It was a—they were modern homes.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Um—the—the thing that stands out [DB edit: in the Bentonville home] that might be—uh—antiquated even then was a—um—the toilet—uh—had the water tank way up at the top of the ceiling,

and this is—this was a Victorian house with a very—a very high ceiling . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: . . . um—probably for the temperature. And—um—so that always tickled me when I went over there to visit with them. But with my other grandmother, the house was basically the same as I have here. I don't think—I don't think plumbing has changed as—as a science as much as maybe other things have changed.

SL: I think you're right.

DB: Mh-hmm.

SL: So it was a pull chain to—to—to . . .

DB: In this one house, yeah.

[00:07:42] SL: And—um—the—uh—I—I'm just wondering what about radio? Was there a radio in . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . all the houses?

DB: Oh yes, uh-huh. And they listened to radio—uh—a lot. It was very, very important to them for their—for their news and as—for their—their entertainment.

SL: And th—that was carried on with your parents, too. You . . .

DB: Absolutely.

SL: . . . grew up with a radio in your house.

DB: I—um—I would come home from elementary school to listen to *The Lone Ranger* . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: . . . and what was some other horror film that—uh—a mild horror film after—after school on the radio.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: We listened to the radio constantly, and of course—um—uh—this is way before TV so . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . uh—I can remember my mother-in-law talking about the importance of listening to Franklin Roosevelt all during the [19]30s and into the Second World War on the radio, which he apparently was a master of.

[00:08:46] SL: So you remember *The Lone Ranger*. Were there any other radio programs that you were fond of?

DB: This one and—and another one.

SL: *The Shadow*, maybe, or . . .

DB: Oh, the shad—*Green Hornet*.

SL: *Green Hornet*. There you go.

DB: *Green Hornet*. It was this one is about people that were in cage—it was about—it was a science fiction program, and I'll

think of this man's name. It's—I think it might have started with Buzz something. And I wanna say Buzz Sawyer, but that's—that's not it. Does it ring a bell with you?

SL: Yeah—um . . .

DB: Uh-huh. But . . .

SL: . . . it's a space—was it a space . . .

DB: It was a space program.

SL: Yeah. I know who . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I know—I can't think of it either. I'm . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . horrible about that, but I know . . .

DB: But those are the three that I can . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: . . . that I can remember.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:09:31] DB: For entertainment, my grandfather played—uh—checkers and chess with me.

SL: Ah.

DB: Um—for my—over at—that's Bennett—um—family—what we—what entertained—he had his own garden, so I could enjoy being with him out in the garden. Every day we would walk downtown

so that he could check in at his office. And—um—and we would get an ice cream cone and have that walk. These were really slow motion entertainments for a little guy, but—uh—I don't remember being bored over there. And then I—during the day I would go from one grandmother to [*SL laughs*]—to another. And the a—over at—uh—my Dickinson grandmother the—my aunt would, every day, take me up to the lovely cemetery they h—they still have there. It's not far from Walmart.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: Um—with a huge pine trees. And we would take—she would take oranges, and we would eat an orange up among the tombstones.

[00:10:35] SL: Do you remember your aunt's name?

DB: Uh—yes, now that was Juanita. Juanita Wyman. Juanita Dickinson Wyman . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: . . . was her name.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: Uh-huh. And—uh—her husband [DB edit: Charley]—ah—was much older than she—uh—and he died. Uh—I did—I think I did meet him.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: But it was so young that I had no real sense of him, so he must have died awfully young. But then the city gave her his position, and then from that time forward, she won the election. So she was the clerk of Bentonville for a long, long time.

SL: City clerk.

DB: City clerk, uh-huh.

[00:11:20] SL: Um—what do you remember about Bentonville? Were the roads paved at—in that . . .

DB: Roads all paved, uh-huh.

SL: Lot—typical n—early [19]30s, mid-[19]30s.

DB: I can't think of anything distinctive about it. And as I—as I do think about it, the architecture—still building houses like those houses . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: . . . that I remember. No, no. Wi—with a big exception. My grandmother's—my grandparents both had porches. One was not so functional, but my grandmother Dickinson had a porch with a swing. So we were out on her porch a lot. We were out there for the obvious reason that it's hotter inside. And—and out on the porch you could talk to your neighbors. The sidewalk—there was a sidewalk.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: And you could talk to your neighbors as they passed. You could wave at the cars. It was a—an entertainment place. You—your friends would come over, and you would—you would have iced—uh—you would have lemonade out on the porch rather than inside house during the—during the hot of the summer, and that's when I was mainly there. Uh—otherwise the—the houses—everything about them, design and—uh—were really—there's a continuity, a close continuity, with the housing today.

[00:12:54] SL: Do you remember—um—much about Bella Vista? You said that you would go to Bella Vista . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . as well?

DB: I remember that my mother as a teenager, as a young woman, loved it. It was a glamorous place to her. People came there from St. Louis and—and Kansas City and Chicago. People had cabins there. It—it was a molehill of a mountain, but apparently it was cooler than down in the—in the valleys.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: So—so the Bella Vista hills are still covered with houses, but they were covered with houses in 1920s. People from all over the United States—or—r—Midwest, probably—had their summer homes there. And that still is true. I know—uh—have met

people with summer homes over there, and those houses are still—um—are still employed. And then there was swimming there. Um—there was paddleboats. Uh—in that—there was a lake there. I don't know if that lake is still there. The last time I passed. But it's small now.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: I think it's diminished in size.

SL: Was there a big dance hall there?

DB: Underground.

SL: Oh, the—y—Wonderland Cave?

DB: Oh I—Wonderland Cave. I was—uh—I was responding to your question as a child.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: 'Cause I didn't go to the cave I don't think. But then later on, when I was a student here—uh—my wife and I and friends would go there for dancing. That would be in the [19]40s and early [19]50s.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: And it was just always th—a thrill to be [*SL laughs*] inside there. And cooler.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Uh-huh. Very nice.

[00:14:37] SL: Seems like I member they had a—uh—it may have been earlier, but seems like they had a large dance hall above the lake as well where . . .

DB: They—oh, they did. They had a pavilion . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: . . . it was called.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: And—um—I don't remember dancing, ever, there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: But I'm sure it was. And Mother—um—gained a fondness for lovely shoes, high heel shoes—uh—from Bella Vista. I remember that. And—and lovely clothes. So that her special joy was to drive from Harrison to—uh—M.M. Cohn's down in Little Rock . . .

SL: Yep.

DB: . . . for shopping.

SL: Yep.

DB: And there's another department store there, Pfeifer's.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Uh—were—were—im—important trips for—for Mom.

[00:15:27] SL: So it—um—travel was always by car then, growing up, as . . .

DB: It was.

SL: . . . you remember. Mh-hmm.

DB: It was. However, Harrison had a raid—a railroad when I was a child. It was north—North Arkansas and Missouri, I think.

SL: Yes.

DB: Something like that.

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

DB: And it connected—um—Harrison with maybe Monette. Could that be? And then on—went on over to Berryville and Eureka Springs. And I do remember and went out to see the accident when, finally, the remnants of the—of the freight trains—uh—ha—the freight trains had been—the railroad had been reduced to one small, aluminum, I think—I member it as silver lookening—looking. And it carried—uh—minimal—um—uh—baggage and—uh—but it had passengers. And one day, it struck a milk truck.

SL: Mmm.

DB: And the railroad, which was just about to go under, I think—uh—collapsed about that time, and there was a strike, and the railroad ended. The president of the railroad was a neighbor of my parents, and I played with his children, so I—I remember some of that.

[00:16:50] SL: Now th—that's in Harrison.

DB: That's in Harrison. Uh-huh.

SL: So do—were you—but you . . .

DB: Did you ask me about Harrison?

SL: Yeah. I . . .

DB: Okay. [*Laughs*] Or the . . .

SL: Well, the railroad . . .

DB: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and your mom traveling down to . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . shopping in Little Rock . . .

DB: Yeah. Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and I—I know it—that—train was a more active—uh . . .

DB: Sure.

SL: . . . pedestrian or public transportation than . . .

DB: Yes, it was. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . um—than it is now. Um . . .

DB: Not everyone had cars, and—um—it was just a cheap way to—to travel and transport goods.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Well, I guess it—that—it's still a cheap way to transport goods.

[00:17:28] SL: So—um—what is your earliest, earliest memory of

your mother?

DB: Mh-hmm. Hmm. I—um—okay, I remember her in our kitchen in our first home in—in Harrison, and how she cooked there—now it's all coming back—how she cooked there, how there—how the linoleum—the linoleum had become worn where she stood by the stove—uh—until finally Dad had enough money to have the—the floor—uh—redone.

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: Um—and this was something, then, was lasting and true of her. Um—she l—she loved to—to dress up and—and—uh—have teas and go to teas and do all those things in the s—that you—as your entertainm—entertainment, but I always had three meals—uh—that she would get up and get no matter what. 'Cause every summer when I was big enough, I worked—uh—on the railroad crew—on the road crews, highway department, on the rock quarry, baling hay. Uh—and she got me a—a sack lunch every morning at—all summers for five summers. And she would get up and fix me that. So she was a good cook and really did her duty of making sure we were all fed.

[00:19:14] SL: Okay now, I'm gonna ask the same question about your father. What . . .

DB: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . what is your earliest memory of your father?

DB: Now that's easier.

SL: Okay.

DB: Uh—Dad was a h—really hardworking business man. And what I remember about him particularly is that every morning, and I saw this because in the summers, I mean, especially in the summers because I was getting up in the su—uh—getting up early also, but he was up early and going down and opening his store. And I—I'm thinking—uh—seven to seven thirty. Every morning.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: And in the—in the early years, it was a seven-day-a-week business. You—you had your drugstores open early and late at night. And they were—they were complicated because he sold all kinds of—of—uh—from—from candy and—and cameras to all kinds of patent medicines to liquor to magazines, and then he was a pharmacist also. He did that. And then we had a fountain.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:19] SL: I was gonna say, I bet you had a soda foun . . .

DB: And the fountain was lovely. It was big. It had a beautiful black and white marble top. And he had to manage that, too. All

those things had to be managed, but he was a man of infinite energy and would get up there and go and go on into the night and come home for lunch. Oh, here's something I remember about him. He would come home for lunch, and I won't say this happened every time, but it's vivid in my memory. He would come home. Mama would be fixing lunch. He would read the newspaper or magazine. He subscribed to the Pharmaceutical Journal, and that's about all he read, all that he had time to read. And then sometimes he would peck on the piano. I remember that. He would play "Moon Over Miami."

SL: [*Laughs*] That's great.

DB: Which is a lovely song.

SL: It is. It is.

DB: And then we would have lunch, and he would go in and sit down in the living room on the couch and put his head back and [*claps*] go to sleep. Just like that. No matter what else was going on. And that would be—I'm remembering—ten to fifteen minutes. And he would rise up and put his hat on and walk out the door. [*SL laughs*] Now, how often he did that, I can't swear, but it was such a powerful vision that it's almost as though he did it every time.

SL: Maybe a routine. Yeah. Yeah.

DB: But it was, and he restored himself for the rest of the day because it was a stand-on-your-feet job and—which is hard.

[00:21:58] SL: So it's great news that you had a piano in the house.

DB: Yes.

SL: So was music a central role in the home? I mean, were there—did your mother play the piano?

DB: No, she didn't.

SL: It was just for your father's . . .

DB: Mother did play and—I take that back. She read music. Yes. But it's not as though this were an im—a central activity of her life. See, I remember more Dad playing "Moon Over Miami" than what Mother played, so I don't think she played that much. This was partly class. Having a piano . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . was a part of your status, I think, your financial status. We never talked about that, and course, it probably didn't ever occur to me when I was a kid. Why do we have a piano when we really don't use it very much? And then my brother and I, and this may be a result, my brother and I in high school became members of the band. And so my brother learned how play the saxophone, and I learned how to play the clarinet and saxophone. [00:23:15] And Harrison was—Harrison educational

system was poor. Teachers paid low. The ancient building we went to school in. It was—it was not a very inspiring s—con—place. However, everyone had an instrument. They had gotten the money to—for those who couldn't afford an instrument to play an instrument. I remember they owned a b—an oboe. And the—one of my best friends, a girl in school, in high school later, she played that oboe because her parents were poor. And so I, looking back now, I realize that this was a fine gift. That they might have cut the band. And we had a football team, but it was taught, as I now believe, properly, by the history teacher. That is, they didn't turn that into—they didn't have a lot of money to have a proper chemistry lab, for example, or course, even. They couldn't do many things academically to prepare us for college and maybe even for graduate school, as it turned out for me. But they did have a band and they—for music and to give people an opportunity to perhaps discover themselves and their musical—even if in an amateur way.

SL: Well, sure.

[00:24:52] DB: And it was wonderful for me because I played in an orchestra and went to the Silver Star nightclub in Flippin, Arkansas, to play my saxophone and clarinet. Well, this was just a glorious thing for a sixteen year old to do.

SL: Now is that—was it . . .

DB: Out of Harrison.

SL: And I'd—a jazz group, or was it a little dance band or a big band?

DB: It was a little dance band. With Count Basie tunes.

SL: Yeah.

DB: It was the standard bands of the [19]40s and [19]50s. And it was organized by the smartest man in my class, I think, smartest person, maybe, in the class. He organized the band and then got all the music. You could buy these cheap scores. But he scored them himself. He worked on them a lot. And it was—I felt that it was really his score after he'd finished.

SL: Do you remember his name?

DB: Gil Stacy.

SL: Gil Stacy.

DB: I've kept up with Gil. He and I correspond. He lives—he became a radiologist and lived his life in California.

[00:25:53] SL: And . . .

DB: And is still there.

SL: . . . what about the name of your band?

DB: Gil Stacy Band.

SL: Gil Stacy Band, of course.

DB: Yeah. [*Laughter*] And you could buy little cardboard stands, so.

SL: Yeah, sure.

DB: And they would personalize them, and there was GS on the front, I remember.

SL: So was there a drummer and a guitar player, acoustic guitar player?

DB: No, we didn't have that.

SL: Upright bass or . . .

DB: We didn't have that. Trombone . . .

SL: It was all horns?

DB: . . . piano, when we needed it, drums, clarinet, saxophone, three of us. Cornet. Trumpet. Uh-huh. That was our major size. That was it.

[00:26:39] SL: Well, did you get paid for playing?

DB: Yes. They paid us at the nightclub. [*SL laughs*] I suspect it was negligible, but I think we got paid when we went to—went over to Flippin. It was a big dance hall.

SL: Big doin's.

DB: Yeah.

[00:26:59] SL: Well, let's get back to your earlier years. What was your neighborhood like in Harrison where you lived?

DB: We were—the first house we lived in was the last house west.

That—the last road west that went north and south. One block away was the auction barn. Sold a lot of cattle there. There was another road going east and west that went past our house, but we were pretty well at the edge, west edge of Harrison, because everything else west of our house was woods and farms. And this was the glorious thing of living in a small town. Everyone who's lived there or read about it in a nostalgic fashion knows it's a wonderful opportunity that your parents gave you—paid no attention to you. I was just free to roam as the tiniest little kid. There were no restrictions on me. I would get out with the big boys in the neighborhood, and off we'd go. I learned how to swim from them, to ride bikes, shoot rubber guns, make rubber guns. Ah—does that—do you know what rubber guns mean?

SL: Well . . .

DB: Now that's an old art. I don't think that's going on anymore.

SL: Well . . .

DB: You get—you buy a tire inner tube . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . and cut it into strips. You cut a board that's shaped like a gun with a handle. And you bind this rubber strip with other rubber, I think, around the handle, or with wire, maybe, or

string, and then you stretch the rubber. Oh, and a clothespin!

SL: Yes.

DB: That's it. You tie it with a clothespin, and you stretch it to the end of your gun. And the longer the gun, of course, then the harder it—or the farther it will shoot—that you have to stretch it. And so we all had those. We all made them. [00:29:16] And we played endless hours of rubber gun in the neighborhoods when I was little. That would be in the first to the sixth grade.

SL: So what did they shoot? Was it the rubber itself that . . .

DB: The rubber itself. Yeah.

SL: . . . self. Okay.

DB: That was the projectile. You [*SL laughs*] wrapped the rub—the clothespin in that, and you had to double and triple and quadruple wrap the clothespin to mug [*claps*] it—make it hold tight. And then you'd put your projectile, and you'd push the handle, push the clothespin, and off it would go. But we all had BB guns too, I remember. And we killed birds with those BB guns, and I think, as I look back now, it's probably extraordinary that none of us were blinded. [00:30:15] I was shot more than once [*SL laughs*] by goofy friends that would—you know, I . . .

SL: Well, sure.

DB: . . . [points to right side of chest] remember being shot right

here one time, which was a little scary. But you see, it was really low key. It was just playing with your buddies in the neighborhoods. [00:30:33] Oh! We had a creek, and it was called Crooked Creek.

SL: I was gonna ask you if it was Crooked Creek.

DB: And infinite hours playing in that. I would just—Mother and Dad just didn't worry about me. They knew I'd come back when I was hungry. And I would—I'm sure made my way back [*SL laughs*] for lunch and dinner. But otherwise, I was just off everywhere. Dad had a horse, too, for a little while. But that wou—didn't become a big part of my life when I was that little. It was a big horse. [00:31:07] I played out west of Harrison in the fields. There were ponds. We made boats and played in the ponds.

SL: What would you make the boats out of?

DB: Everything from paper and cardboard to what we would find in our parent's kitchens. And you'd—so they would probably soften up and sink pretty quick.

SL: Yeah.

DB: But—and maybe we bought some, too . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . down at the Woolworths store. But we—it was—so much of

my time was spent out playing. Playing war. Playing Indians.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Way out in these fields where there was so much—so many ravines, too, and tall grass. And the woods. [00:32:03] Which, later, the woods were purchased, and the fields beyond were purchased by another pharmacist in town named Robert Sims. And he subdivided it, and now it's a lovely section of Harrison with tall trees from the old forest. He didn't cut down the forest very much. He left the trees, and so it's very nice there.

[00:32:28] SL: What about fishing? Did you fish, too?

DB: I did. That was part of being on the creek and swimming and keeping cool, and I fished with bobbers, especially. And crawdad tails.

SL: Yep.

DB: And the sun perch—I think they call them bream, now, but I always call them sun perch, and maybe it's a distinctly different fish. But they were beautiful, colorful fish. And you could catch them. And I, of course, knew where all the holes were. [*SL laughs*] That's the advantage of fishing often in the same river. And so that was a very important in my life. [00:33:15] And there was a girl in town named Nancy Cralle. Nancy was the best fisherperson I ever knew. She could always catch a fish

where the rest of us couldn't. [*SL laughs*] So she taught me a lot about fishing. See, my brother was four and a half years older, so we were always in a different time frame.

SL: Right.

DB: I was running around with people my—kids my age in that lovely little creek. And as far as I know, it was pure, crystalline pure, at that time. I don't remember there was ever any doubt about us swimming there all the time. It may be now that it's not as accessible to the kids. But of course, now, they have a splendid, large, pool . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . for everyone.

[00:34:08] SL: Right. So . . .

DB: Oh, and let me mention about the—above the Crooked Creek, there were caves. Now, I didn't do this very often, but it's a powerful part of my memory, of spelunking and—just on my own or with another boy. And our parents never gave it a second thought. As I look back now, it was really a free childhood. Maybe dangerous at times. I remember one time swimming in the—it was called the Sims swimming hole. And I dove off and went down to the bottom—wasn't very big place—came up, and one of my buddies above me, naturally, as I appeared under

him, pushed me down. And that was—I got down to the bottom and started ba—pushed back up, and it happened a second time. And that was a moment . . .

SL: Panic.

DB: . . . that has never left my consciousness that I thought, "I can't make it back to the top." But I did. But I was in great pain and laid on the ground, on the beach, for a while after that.

[00:35:27] SL: Did your family also have a garden out there?

DB: No. Mama didn't garden.

SL: Okay.

DB: And Dad was gone all day, every day. And but I don't remember a garden at all.

SL: No chickens, no . . .

DB: I remember a pen, but I don't remember the chickens . . .

SL: Rabbit hutch or anything like . . .

DB: . . . there or rabbits or anything. [00:35:50] One time Dad, out hunting, brought home some baby ducks, and we kept them there. And one time—and I thought they were pets, and Dad was trimming their wings so they wouldn't fly away. And I don't remember why we kept them. It was maybe for me and my brother. But one time, one flew away, and I had apparently become attached to those ducks. So I spent, I recollect, a whole

afternoon going out west, crawling through the—going out to the farms calling for that duck. [*SL laughs*] And couldn't find the duck and came back full of woe, I remember. Course, those things are so enlarged in your imagination, but when I got back there, there he was. He'd come back for his mate, or she had come back for her mate, whichever, but there they were—the two of them were again, and so that was a joyful time.

[00:36:55] And one of the first essays I wrote as a little kid was of my experience with those two ducks. I remember doing that.

SL: So . . .

DB: We had writing in my schools, and I look back now as—that's first class education.

[00:37:10] SL: It is. Your brother's name.

DB: Joseph. Joe.

SL: Did he have a middle name?

DB: Dickinson. He was named after my grandparents Dickin—on the Dickinson side.

SL: Okay. Okay. So you all were . . .

DB: He became . . .

SL: You all were . . .

DB: He . . .

SL: . . . pretty close growing up or . . .

DB: Well, we—I just . . .

SL: Four and a half years . . .

DB: . . . suggested we were so far apart that when he was in high school, I was in elementary school and junior high school. And that's a gulf . . .

SL: You bet.

DB: . . . in those ages.

SL: Yep.

DB: And then, when I was in high school, he went to college. And so we never overlapped in our educational periods. He was gone then—he was not in my life at all. I had a completely different life. And I can't even remember what he did in the summers. I think he worked for Dad in the drugstore some when I was working outdoors which—I wanted to build myself up. In high school—I was sick a lot in junior high, about the junior high ages, was sick an awful lot. So I was very skinny. I was a hundred and sixteen pounds when I was in high school, so I was tiny, and I wanted to work outdoors and be strong and emulate my larger buddies.

SL: Right.

[00:38:37] DB: And so I can't remember what my brother, Joe, was doing during the summer. He would've been to college—in my

latter years of high school, he would've been in college. So he was probably doing something in the summers connected to his college life.

SL: Getting ready.

DB: Or maybe in the earlier years. I know one summer I remember him making ice cream. Dad had an ice cream maker. And he had a good business in the summertime for his fountain.

[00:39:14] SL: I was just—let's see. I was going to ask you about life at home. Were you or your brother—do you remember ever being assigned chores or duties that you had around the house?

DB: I don't. No pressure there. Least I don't remember them. I think it was appreciated, but I don't remember even Dad putting pressure on me when I got to high school. But I tell you, with a dad who, and a mother, who's so hardworking all the time, you just—you imitate your condition, your environment, I think. And I member I chopped wood for a neighbor for her full woodstove. It didn't last very long. But starting real early in my life, all through high school, I had a man's job outside. And in the summers.

SL: So your mother would cook, and she would also do the dishes.

DB: She did, yes.

SL: And what about—did you ev . . .

[00:40:27] DB: Now that's over in our first house when I was young and in elementary school. Later on, in our other house, where there was an attic, there was a lady from out in the country who wanted to be in town for some reason. I can't remember. Maybe school. She lived with us. I remember her name was Walsie. She lived with us for a while. And then after that, a really fine lady worked for Mama occasionally. Became a member of the family. I can't think of her name for the moment. [DB edit: Her name was Millie.] But she became a family friend, I remember. So Mama had help as—in later years.

SL: So d—were you—did you ever—were you required to make your own bed?

DB: I don't remember doing that. [*SL laughs*] It was . . .

SL: You had a great, great, no pressure . . .

DB: I did!

SL: . . . childhood.

[00:41:33] DB: I did. And then Dad was gone during the war for at least two of the years. He was too old, but he volunteered, and they needed pharmacists. So he spent the years of the war at the big pharmaceutical warehouses [DB edit: In Oakland, California]. I think it was—the way Dad described it, it went on and on for miles—that serviced the Pacific campaign for

medicines.

SL: So where was he stationed?

DB: That was at Oakland.

SL: At Oakland. In California.

DB: Yeah. And then Mother took over the drugstore. And this was transformative in her life, as in the lives of so many American women. They discovered their lives had possibilities beyond just making three squares a day and cleaning house and . . .

SL: And laundry and . . .

DB: . . . and laundry and—Mother kept up the book club, the garden club, the places where she could go to tea. She play—she loved bridge. My dad is much easier to remember. Mother had a more varied life because she had a social life. But Dad had a minimal work—not a—a maximum work life. And so that he was early morning off to work and back late. But Mother had all of these different activities in her life that she maintained when she took over the drugstore, but she became the manager of a very busy drugstore and just took over from Dad. And my grandparents came over from Bentonville, the Bennetts did, and lived in an apartment and helped Mother. And Mother found a retired pharmacist to come and take care of . . .

SL: The . . .

DB: . . . the pharma—the prescriptions. [00:43:38] And so she discovered she was competent in other worlds than that. And with my mother and dad, I think that was disruptive so that when Dad came back, life was not what it was when he left. And that probably happened to millions of Americans.

SL: Well, sure. So you were probably—you were, what, in . . .

DB: I was twelve.

SL: . . . fifth or sixth grade . . .

DB: I was twelve . . .

SL: . . . when he left?

DB: . . . when the war—when he left I would have been te—about ten, nine or ten. [Nineteen] thirty-two to [19]42.

SL: Right.

DB: It would be ten. And he left, maybe not [19]42. It was [19]43 when they were running low on pharmacists, and he decided to join up.

[00:44:27] SL: Earlier, were—do you remember if there was an expectation for everyone to be present for the meal at the table.

DB: Yes.

SL: And this was in a dining room?

DB: Yes.

SL: Was it always served in a dining room? Or in . . .

DB: Yeah, I'm thinking. In the first house, there was a separate dining room, and we had our breakfast—there was a nook in the . . .

SL: Kitchen.

DB: . . . kitchen. In the next house, there was a separate dining room, but the breakfast table and lunch table were in the kitchen. It was one long room, in other words.

SL: So maybe not always—or did you always—I guess your father came home for lunch, so . . .

DB: He did.

SL: . . . you were expected to be at the—you weren't really expected to be at the lunch table though, were you 'cause you were out playing?

DB: Not when I was working. I took my lunch to all those jobs. Far—baling hay or whatever I was gone. But school days, you could walk home from school. It was one mile, it was twelve blocks, and I could get home and have lunch and . . .

SL: Walk back.

DB: . . . get back in time. But Mother was expected—she expected herself to provide a regular meal there, and she tried to have it when we all got there. Now I remember that this was a contention because that was so important with her that she was

preparing the meal, and then if Dad, for a hundred reasons, didn't get there on time, then that would be upsetting, and I can member her being upset about us getting there when she had the food warm.

SL: Well, of course.

[00:46:19] DB: And I—well, I say of course now because now I cook.

SL: Right. [*Laughs*]

DB: And I understand this much more. I took—as little kids—I—well, at least I took her for granted far too much. I mean, this was something that the Lord had given the world for me. And I was to have my lunches and dinners and breakfasts, and that was the way it was. [*Laughs*] I didn't have to do anything for it.

[00:46:49] SL: Well, at the table, at the dining table, was grace ever said?

DB: No. My parents were regular members of the Methodist—Central Methodist Church. South engraved in the front of the church. But they were nominal Christians. They were social Christians, you might say. I wonder if a sociologist has a name for that. Mama went fairly regularly to church. Dad not so much. But other than that, it wasn't a deep commitment or a deep feeling about the church. I don't remember at all feeling any pressure there.

SL: But were you expected to go to Sunday . . .

DB: Up to that . . .

SL: . . . school?

DB: I was expect to go and—probably was. I probably was expected to go to Sunday school, and of course when they went to church, they were—expected me and my brother to go also.

[00:47:51] SL: Do you remember if you ever joined Methodist Youth Fellowship?

DB: I did. I did.

SL: And that was w—you'd gather on Sundays and maybe even . . .

DB: On Sunday night we gathered to—for a service and for singing. But to be frank, I went there because of Betty Jo more than for anything else.

[00:48:13] SL: Betty Jo.

DB: Betty Jo Godbold was her name. I'll never forget her.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, let's talk about her.

DB: As a little boy.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Well, she was just a gorgeous girl in every way, and just stunning in every way, and a most attractive girl. And I was in—just beginning to be—I was just ending childhood.

SL: Right.

DB: And so this was a great thing. This was an event in the church I never missed.

SL: Well, I think that was probably true for most Methodist youth.

DB: I suppose it was. [*SL laughs*] It was a pretty easy going . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . church. And I remember if you—if it's relevant. You stop me if not. [00:48:56] But two things about the church with contrast. There was a minister who once invited me to go with him out in the country. He wanted to show me something, he said. And it was wintertime. And he taught—he brought me to what was literally a chicken, an old chicken house. And I remember vividly to this day—it really is stuck in my mind—the vertical planks. But they hadn't been caulked.

SL: Right.

DB: And there was no stove inside that. So these—this family of four, who were very sick, they had a severe colds or might have been getting the flu. I don't know what happened to them. But he took me out there, and he said he just wanted me to help him minister to—and I am imputing words to him. I don't remember what words he said to me, but he talked me into going. I don't remember being forced to go. And well, it was horrifying. I had been—I bro—I'd been brought up complacent,

as I was just saying, in this comfortable family with a te—with a father who was making sure I was gonna have more money than I ever needed and a mother who took care and made sure I had all the food and clothing that I ever would need, and here was this destitute family starving and freezing. And so to me, that represents one pole of Methodism, and that goes way back to the Wesley brothers, who were humanitarians. That's one important side not only of Methodism but of Christianity.

SL: Sure.

DB: And of all established religions for that matter, I suspect. Then, on the other hand was the great organization of the church for social activities. And the more I learned about Jesus, the more I found it incongruous. And it—and of course, Christianity is—places their members in hypocritical position all the time because Jesus had such a high standard. [00:51:16] But I remember gradually becoming aware that the minister would start out pretty strong at the beginning of his sermon on the, say, ethics of Jesus or some passage from the Bible.

SL: Right.

DB: Let's say the Samaritan's story.

SL: Kay.

DB: But at the end, he would dissolve it, and it would be smiles.

Everything would be sort of okay. And I gradually began to dislike that. I began to be aware of it, and it was an alienating factor for me, whereas I remember people saying, "Ah, he was too harsh today," or something like that. I began to be a—to feel that, well, we've got this biography that we're supposed to be following in the text, and that makes some pretty stern demands upon a human being, and the preachers are not following that very well. This is a little kid's awareness growing. But it did result in my departure, eventually, from a member of the church.

SL: So . . .

Trey Marley: Scott, can we take a break for a second.

Unknown Male: Break.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[00:52:37] SL: Dick, we're starting a second segment now. We've had too much food for lunch from Thai Diner. I know I have. I've—I'm almost miserable I ate so much. But we're gonna keep going. We're still in Harrison. I know you're anxious to move on past the childhood, but there's a couple of things I wanna talk—I wanna hear from you about Harrison. You mentioned in both houses that you lived in Harrison—your mother had two different

ladies helping her around the house 'cause . . .

DB: In—no, it was in the second house.

SL: In the second house.

DB: Right.

SL: Okay. And . . .

DB: Can't remember if it was . . .

SL: . . . were both of those ladies Caucasian? Were they white?

DB: They were because this was an all-white town. Blacks weren't allowed to spend the night in Harrison then.

SL: So you—were—you were aware of this as you were growing up? Was this—or was it just not ever—it was never mentioned because there was not a diverse . . .

DB: Actually, that's a good question. To live in an all-white town means you're really not aware or thinking about Blacks. They're just not there. It's an absence, so you don't think about that very much. It didn't strike me until later at the university I took a course on minorities in America, which turned out to be a course on Black Americans. And a Black, middle-aged Black man, took the course from outside the university. Maybe he was visiting. That's the first time I'd ever been in a room with a Black person. I—so that was a transformative course I took. You try to imagine. Everything that the professor was saying, I

had this alien being in the course he was talking—in the class he was talking about. It was education at its finest.

[00:54:38] SL: Well, when you say education at its finest, was it difficult for you?

DB: It—no because I was never challenged or I was never pushed to do anything more than come to the class with this gentleman. And he wasn't seeking out anything beyond that. But he was probably asked by that professor, who was from Europe. He was a refugee from Europe. He was the one who created a course that was so innovative and so challenging to the students. And I'm glad as a little kid that I was able to take that course with him there. [00:55:14] But back in Harrison, your question about was I aware, not at all. They were just inferior persons. There was no way to change the system. You can't legislate morality, was the motto of my town. That old myth is still going on. No, the intense prejudice was against Japanese during the Second World War. And it was intense. My sweet grandmother [DB edit: Grandmother Bennett] from Bentonville violently denounced the Bentonville schoolteacher who went to Jerome to teach the Japanese families, the internees, in—down at McGehee . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . at Jerome and—what's that other town where they had them. And she was just—she thought the woman was a traitor to go down and teach those traitors. Even though the traitors were citizens of the uni—well you know. And kids! Kids—this woman—and this was a dark side of my grandmother, but it was a—it's a dark side of people during wars. It transforms them into shrieking, hating people.

[00:56:44] SL: So as the war was ramping up, how aware of it were you? And were you—were you actually—were you reading newspapers by then, or were you seeing it in newsreels in the movie theaters or—how were . . .

DB: I'm glad you asked that. I can't remember reading the newspapers, but I know I must have been reading the newspapers. They—I learned how to read early, and so I was reading that. But I remember Pathé News. And that gave the war news. So that that preceded just about every film. Just as a Disney cartoon preceded a film, you'd get a news. And I think it was Pathé. Might have been other companies. And so we learned about the vicious Japanese frequently from the papers and from the movies. It was all a propaganda reinforcement system. They backed up the government here just [*phone rings*] as they did in Japan. They were just as vicious as we

were in their propaganda. There's a book [*phone rings*] entitled *War Without Mercy*, and it's about the two propaganda systems and the way we fought the wars. And it was bloody on both sides. In Harrison [*phone rings*] that was all taken for granted. It was—but I can't remember it being a subject of conversation very much, but it was in the news all the time. [00:58:08] I do remember, as a little soda jerk, that'd be when I was about ten or twelve, and I remember it 'cause I couldn't reach the top of the counter. A lady came in—just yesterday I knew her name. Dixon. Mrs. Dixon. Mrs. Dixon's son was lost at the Battle of Midway, I think, and—or one of those big, air-naval battles. And she would come in often to daddy's counter to get a Coke, I think. And we would, all of us there, would ask about her son. And it seems to me like a year or more, she was still hopeful that he would be found somewhere. And it was highly unlikely in that battle, but she kept hoping. So I member that about the war. And other things—I'm sure if I kept thinking, I would remember tidbits. [00:59:08] My mother managed to drive all the way to San Francisco on retread tires by saving up tire coupons from all of her friends. You could circumvent the laws that way. And she wanted to go see Dad, so she got my brother and me in a car, and we drove all the way out there, stayed two

or three days, and drove all the way back. So she was a gutsy lady, I guess. I didn't think of that at the time. I just thought, "Oh, I don't wanna go."

[00:59:41] SL: Well, do you member the day your father left for the war?

DB: I do. I member the night before, he came in—and now he was not a family man. He was a working man. But the night before he left for the war, I think it had hit him that he was going to [*laughs*] leave. And so he came in and sat by my bed, woke me up, and he was leaving in the morning, I guess, and talked with me for a while. And sure, I never forgot that. But I have some pictures of him in his navy uniform. And of course we went out there and saw him in San Francisco. Spent several days there. And I fug—I remember all of that. And but what are you thinking of more than I've told you about the war? I'm trying to think what else I might . . .

SL: Well . . .

DB: And it might be different . . .

SL: I mean, you were . . .

DB: . . . than anybody else.

SL: You were . . .

[01:00:36] DB: I do have that insight about the camps, the Japanese

brought here. And are you all aware that we have a first-class museum down in McGehee . . .

SL: I am aware of that.

DB: . . . and that the city created. And it's just a tiny town of about 5,000. But it's a first-class museum. The displays are really excellent, and the curator was a learned person who knew that he had to tell the truth. I couldn't find any whitewashing or dilution of the truth of that story. So we're—I'm proud of that museum being here and being in Arkansas and being there.

[01:01:18] SL: You were ten or twelve years old when your father left for the war.

DB: Yes, about that.

SL: Were you aware of any other folks in Harrison who—or any of the—your brother's older friends, maybe, that had gone to the war? Was . . .

DB: Here's the thing about my brother's age. I was be—I was prewar. My brother was just old enough not to be drafted until the last year of the war, and they sent him to a some kind of a school, and the war ended. So he never had to go off to the war. His age. See, he would have been—well, I don't know what he would have been. If I were twelve, then he would have been eighteen. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. No.

SL: Sixteen or seventeen.

DB: Sixteen or seventeen. And then just barely inducted into the war.

SL: Okay. Can we pause for a second?

TM: Yes.

DB: Uh-huh.

[Tape stopped]

[01:02:14] SL: So, Dick, we stopped recording for a moment because I was hearing this sound that I thought—at first it sounded like a truck or a some kind of vehicle that had its warning signal going that it was backing up.

DB: Right.

SL: But you're telling me they're peace chimes that were made for you.

DB: Yes.

SL: Ca—you wanna talk a little bit about those peace chimes?

DB: Well, my yard has several objects of—for peace, advocating peace. And this was made by a ceramicist at Terra Studios. The son of the founder of Terra Studios. And he appeared one day with twelve of them. And they're each individual casted ceramic chimes. And I—and they were for people in OMNI. And then I got a carpenter to come and build that pagoda for it—to hold

them up.

SL: Right.

DB: And so I'm very pleased to have them there, and they remind me when I go out and I hear them of a purpose of life. And then if you want me to go over here my whole—my yard has many things like that. And you wanna talk about that now? We could do . . .

SL: No, no, no.

DB: . . . do that later.

[01:03:43] SL: I just wanted to hear about the sound that we'll hear from time to time while we're—while you and I are talking.

DB: Okay.

SL: Way back in the background.

DB: Okay.

SL: And y—may—you might wanna brush your hair over this way.

DB: Did it get . . .

SL: There.

DB: . . . blown?

SL: There you go.

DB: Blown a bit? Okay.

SL: It was . . .

DB: I got a haircut for you all.

SL: [*Laughs*] My dad would've said you got your ears lowered. [*Laughter*]

DB: Right.

[01:04:05] SL: Well, we're talking about Harrison and some of the culture there in Harrison, and it was an all-white town. It was one of Arkansas's sundown towns that—it had a history of African American flight . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . on two different occasions, I believe, around the turn of the century. So you weren't really aware of or . . .

DB: I wasn't.

SL: It was really not . . .

DB: As I said, it was an absence, so I didn't give much thought to it. This was some other world, an alien world.

SL: Now you were—you stayed in Harrison until you came to Fayetteville to go to school here.

DB: I did, yes.

SL: But you were there all the way through high school. And . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: Talk to me a little bit, describe to me the sk—was there one school in Harrison, or were there an elementary school and then a high school, or how was the . . .

DB: There was an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school. The elementary school and the high school were adjacent to each other, and the junior high school was across Crooked Creek, but all three in easy walking distance to my home.

[01:05:28] SL: Were you a good student?

DB: I wasn't. I was interested in all—some of the things that I've told you about before, and I was not a conscientious student at all. I didn't flunk out of school. But it was mediocre grades all the way through high school. I did not take interest in education. And yet, teachers tried. We had a Latin teacher. We had a woman who had a master's degree from Boston University. And she thrust books in my hands, which I read, but at the time they didn't have an impact. Only later. For example, she gave me a book by—a novel by Thomas Hardy in high school, and I remember her doing it. I remember the library in the high school building. *Far from the Madding Crowd* was the name of the novel. Eventually, I taught 19th century British novels [*SL laughs*] and taught Thomas Hardy, and he became a favorite writer of mine. So to my teacher, don't give up. Something might happen later on. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, the seeds were planted.

DB: Yeah.

[01:06:48] SL: So were you in—I know that you were in the band, and . . .

DB: Yeah, in the band.

SL: . . . I'm assuming that—was that a marching band?

DB: Yes.

SL: And was . . .

DB: We had uniforms.

SL: Uniforms. And you marched at football games.

DB: I was a cheerleader one year, and I was in the band, and I tried to do all those things. And I—but I don't remember my parents pushing me at it, but probably they did under the table. They just made sure it was all available. And my buddies were doing it. You know, my girl friends were doing it. I mean girl friends, I mean . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . boy friends. They—my buddies, my friends. We—they were there, so I wanted to do things with them. And they had trips, and it was a social opportunity [*whistling sound*] and fun to play music. I learned to read music, so this was all very desirable. [01:07:43] But there were no Catholics, no Episcopalians that I knew. There was no church, I mean. There were—you can go

through a whole list of "there were no." They weren't here. It was pretty culturally limited. Which I understand now it's cosmotal—cosmopolitan town like any town of Arkansas size. But this is the forty—[19]30s, [19]40s, and—[19]30s and [19]40s that I'm talking about.

[01:08:13] SL: The movie theater there? Was that that the Lyric?

DB: Lyric. And Apollo.

SL: And Apollo.

DB: Was there an Apollo? I just blurted that out . . .

SL: I don't . . .

DB: . . . didn't I?

SL: I'm not sure, but if you . . .

DB: Lyric on the north side, and it's still there. It's still functioning. They have plays and show special movies and variety shows there.

SL: What did it cost to go there when you were growing up?

DB: Well, I can almost remember that by accident by this story. I was down at my dad's drugstore on the south side of the square one night, and I said, "Dad can I go to"—or something like this, "Can I go see the movie?" And he gave me—it was either a dime or a quarter. It wasn't more than a quarter, and it might have been a dime for me, for a kid. And I climbed the chain-link

fence of the park—yard around the county courthouse and dropped the coin. And I can still remember this. It's just a terrible dilemma. It's awful for me to have to go back and tell Dad I'd just lost this coin. [*Laughter*] But it was a lot more money then, you know.

[01:09:23] SL: Well, sure it was.

DB: You know, it was a big deal.

SL: Sure it was. [*DB laughs*] Well, I'm sure you could get in and have your popcorn and your pop and . . .

DB: Didn't have money for that.

SL: You didn't?

DB: That night.

SL: That n—well, on that night, of course not.

DB: But popcorn and pop . . .

SL: But a quarter would probably . . .

DB: . . . of course, was always fun. Maybe a quarter would pay for the whole thing.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Yeah. Now it's what, ten dollars, maybe.

SL: Oh, eighteen.

DB: Is it? Oh, really?

SL: Yeah.

DB: Oh, good Lord.

SL: I mean, for a date . . .

DB: I don't go to movies anymore.

SL: . . . I think you'd probably pay twenty anymore.

DB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: So . . .

[01:09:53] DB: It was a violent town. There were murders there. I remember feeling about that—you asked me about Blacks. That's an absence. But the number of people who were killed there—I have never studied the statistics, so I don't know if my impression amounts to anything. But if it doesn't, it means there a lot of killing going on in Arkansas [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . at that time. For example, I was walking back over Crooked Creek from Crooked Creek—on the other side of the Crooked Creek to see—after having seen Jo Bennett, my former wife, who was my neighbor. After seeing her after she had just moved into town, the second night. New girl in town.

SL: New girl in town.

DB: And [*SL laughs*] another boy and I, we had to go check this out.

SL: Of course.

DB: And I think that's what you do in a small town, particularly

because there's no other entertainment. You make your own. And so I was coming back—we were coming back from cross the creek, and this was loud report, a bang. And I remember looking up and seeing smoke up above me. And then we heard a cry. And here was this man in a car in front of the pool hall clutching the side of the door and crying, crying out. And an assassin at the top of the Miller Hardware Company had shot across the street and killed this man. Later on, everyone realized that this man was a pro. His nerves were steel because he waited for the partner at the pool hall to come out the door. He waited long enough for me and my buddy to finally get us to my daddy's drugstore, and then he murdered the second man, the owner of the pool hall. So that was just two instances. [01:11:52] The mayor and another man had a shootout in the alleyway next to the Lyric, and one of 'em was killed. Another man hunted down his son-in-law, his new son-in-law whom he hated, for several days. It was as premeditated as you could get. And he went to prison, I think, for a year or two. [*Laughs*] My impression of Harrison was that it was a frontier town, practically. But I don't know, statistically, that it was. I never found out. But that was an impression of mine.

[01:12:29] SL: Was the Hotel Seville there . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . back then?

DB: It was. It's 1928, I think. And quite an enhancement to the city. It's still there. They've kept it up. Although I've heard that lately it's—it hasn't been doing so well financially.

SL: Right. I think they just shut it down.

DB: Oh, they did.

SL: I believe so.

DB: Oh, what a shame. You'd think it could become a nursing home or something or a—but they had a good dining room, a beautiful dining room, and a chef, and a place to go for Sunday dinner. And . . .

SL: So it was an enhanced . . .

DB: It was elegant for us.

SL: For Harrison.

DB: Yeah. Really special.

[01:13:18] SL: Do you member any of the Hammerschmidt family?

DB: I do, but not from then.

SL: Oh.

DB: 'Cause then he was older than my bro—the congressman Hammerschmidt was a little older than my brother, so he was way beyond me. My kin. But he had a younger brother, but I

didn't know him, either. So I'm not—and he had a sister. And but I didn't know them, no.

SL: Okay.

DB: They were up and gone away from Harrison probably. The younger brother took over the lumber company. Now I remember that. But I was gone.

SL: Right.

[01:14:03] DB: What happened to the congressman, John Paul, between his graduation from high school and his becoming a politician probably meant that he was off in college somewhere. So he probably went to college when I was in elementary school . . .

SL: Right. Right.

DB: . . . could've been.

SL: Well, I just know that . . .

DB: And they lived across the street, John Paul lived across the street from Mother and Dad.

SL: Oh, is that right?

DB: It's a small town.

SL: Small town.

[01:14:30] DB: Yeah. The—that's the thing about a small town. The rich and the poor live together. The next-door neighbor of my

parents started a business—it was to sell, stock and sell, the unit of merchandise that you see as you're exiting a grocery store. And he turned that in—that idea into a business like Mr. Walton turned his idea into Walmart. This man developed these vans and trucks going out, all radiating out from Harrison. And they're bi—huge buildings over there where he sent his merchandise out to these small stores and filling stations around, I guess, the Midwest. I don't know whether it became a national business or not. But see, what was your question there?

SL: Well, no, I'm—we're—I'd asked you about the Hammerschmidts because I knew that they had a lumber business in Harrison.

DB: Yeah.

SL: And then course there was Sheridan Garrison had the trucking firm. [DB edit: The Garrisons lived next door to my home on Oak Street from 1932 to 1940, when we moved.]

DB: Yes.

[01:15:53] SL: I was just kind of searching around for . . .

DB: Oh, I know . . .

SL: . . . families and . . .

DB: . . . I know what I was saying was that the next-door neighbor became our first millionaire.

SL: Oh!

DB: I think. And he's the man, not anyone else, he's the man who developed this truck, this van, servicing of small shops all over Arkansas and then in the region and made a lot of money off it. Well, he lived next door to my parents, who were of middling income, and he had a million dollars. On the other side of us was a man who worked in a feed store, and his wife taught elementary school. And then beyond them was a three-bedroom—I mean, a three-room house. So—this is Rogers Avenue. So there was quite a mix in my hometown. There weren't sections of the town of the rich and the poor. That class demarcation hadn't happened in Harrison, anyway. Maybe it had in Little Rock at that time. But there was quite a mix. [01:16:57] Right—just behind this millionaire, where I played basketball everyday on dirt, was a man who was a—who just was an employee in a wholesale grocer company, and his wife worked too, and their two salaries barely managed to get by. Well, no one—it just—no one thought about it. The selection of houses wasn't class based. But now it is. I mean, we have the neighborhoods that you'll see with gates, and not entirely . . .

SL: The mansions and—yeah.

DB: Mansions. Yeah. And you didn't have that. It is true in Harrison

now, today, though, I understand, that there are subdivisions that are just rich houses.

[01:17:48] SL: So is there anything else about Harrison.

DB: Yeah, I want to—I wanted to say something about class. More—well, something else about class.

SL: Okay.

DB: Whereas, on the one hand, economic—there wasn't any economic demarcation. And Miller Hardware, he became a millionaire, and he was just a half a block up the hill from Mother and Dad. So—and then the—on the other side of them was the sales barn. So there was really a democracy of location of homes. On the other hand, there was power. And I remember, and it's a tiny thing but builds up—built up in my mind. My brother and I were one block away from home, and we ran a stop sign. Da—Joe—must have been Joe driving. I was too little. We stopped—stop sign. And there happened to be a policeman there. Happened to come by or something. And he stopped us. And he asked Joe for identification and asked us who we were, and Joe told him, "Well, we're Volney Bennett's sons." And he said, "Oh. You're Volney Bennett's sons. Well, now, listen boys. I don't wanna have to talk to your dad about this. And I want you to stop and pay attention to the signs.

Now get along." Now, I knew sitting there in the car that had it been somebody else, they would have gotten a ticket. I could tell that. That—real early. And that has been on my mind all my life that it's not going to be a just world out there, it's going to be connections, often. And without making it melodramatic, I have seen some evidence of that as I've grown older. [*Laughs*]

[01:19:54] SL: Well, sure. And I think your perceptions just within the church, too, the two different examples you gave us of the Methodist Church started your mind thinking of the . . .

DB: And I can't think why that is because Mother and Dad did not have discussions with me and my brother. We—they—we weren't a discussing family about ideas. Mama did take the *Reader's digest* reader, I think, something like that, but as I said, Dad didn't—read only a pharmaceutical magazine. So I don't know where this came from. I think they were just fairly decent people that, themselves, didn't say hateful things about races or other people. Maybe individuals [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . who hadn't paid their bills or had been nasty or something, but in general, I didn't grow up with generalized hatreds and prejudices. I di—I wasn't a bigot when I left Harrison, and I think you could call Harrison a bigoted town. But I wasn't that

way, and I think they sheltered me from that 'cause I wou—except that my dad did say often, as a phrase, "Jew down." That was a . . .

SL: Trying to get something cheaper.

DB: Negotiate.

SL: Yeah.

DB: And he—I'm sure he just felt it meant negotiate.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Did—probably didn't occur to him that a Jew might not appreciate it. And—but I can't remember Mother ever saying anything like that about a group, saying "I hate Catholics" or anything like that, just 'cause I'm a Methodist or—I don't remember that. So I think I was prepared to come to University of Arkansas, and I was able to really respond to the greatness of an arts and sciences college that we had then and we have now.

[01:22:02] SL: So ho—why was it—why the University of Arkansas. I mean, why did you come . . .

DB: Taken for granted. You know, just . . .

SL: It's the only place that you really ever considered going?

DB: Never discussed anything else. It was just taken for—oh, I can't even member that they mentioned it, that we ever discussed where I would go. I can't remember it.

SL: But did . . .

DB: I never applied anywhere else.

SL: Did . . .

DB: My brother went here.

SL: What did you know about the University of Arkansas before you came?

DB: Great place to party. My brother and the veterans were here. And I was—and they were in the PiKA fraternity house. And it was maybe not any more a drinking paradise than the other fraternities, but they were just having one hell of a good time. And that's what I heard about. My parents had no educational ideal. Except that I was—I knew they wanted me to have a degree. I knew they wanted me to have an education. Mama didn't go to college, and Daddy had two years. And he might have been hoping that I would take over the drugstore.

[01:23:07] SL: Yes.

DB: I know he did. That either my brother or I would, and my brother decided to be a doctor, so then it was for me. And I know it was a heartbreak. He never told me, but I know it was a heartbreak that he—he had to finally give up that drugstore that he spent so long . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . getting it together. So I just came over here because it was expected. And it was eighty-five miles away. And I could hitchhike, see. It was just—everything was just easy.

[01:23:38] SL: Did it have a football presence that you were aware of?

DB: It did. Oh, yes. And that was important to many people. And I was playing football. I haven't told you about my heroic career as a football player.

SL: No. [*DB laughs*] I thought you were in the marching band, and you didn't get to do any football. [*DB laughs*]

DB: No, I followed all my buddies wherever they'd go. I'd go with 'em and I . . .

SL: Well, what—so did you start playing in junior high school.

DB: Oh, I was—I tried to stay in the band, and I was a cheerleader. And I tried to do those two things together, but they clashed.

SL: Right.

DB: You can't do them both at the halftime ceremony.

SL: Right.

DB: So I finally gave up cheerleading, which I enjoyed for the girls [*SL laughs*], and joined the football team and became a benchwarmer. And but the band—I kept on in it. I think they must have let me not be in the marching band but be in the

concert band.

SL: I see.

DB: That's probably what they did 'cause I kept on playing all during that time because it was only that way that I kept up whatever tiny skill I had . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . to play in that orche—in the orchestra. [01:24:59] And in the football, everyone could play. They didn't have enough. Everyone could play, so that was a blessing. Little shrimps like me—I was the littlest person out there. I got to play and—after the first year of practice. They made—they—I got along with all those guys. And the bigger guys—we were friends. And they named me Bruiser. [*SL laughs*] And through an interesting vocabulary, linguistic process, years later, some of those boys called me Bruce. Called me Bruce at home—at high school reunions, they would say Bruce. And somehow [*laughs*] it evolved in their mind that I was Bruce Bennett. [*Laughs*] They would say that. So funny. But I was tenacious and determined that I would be all high school—do everything, and I couldn't run, pass, kick, or punt. [*SL laughs*] It was pathetic, really. And so they made me a guard. [*SL laughs*] And I just had a whale of a time being out there with my friends. And so, even

though I was playing football, I don't remember that I paid any attention to the university football, like coming over here to see it.

SL: Or hearing it?

DB: But I bet I did.

SL: Did they have it on the radio?

DB: Yeah. Oh, sure. That's what happened. We'd listen to it on the radio. [01:26:40] And then when my brother came over here to school, I probably followed him over. I mean, I probably came over to visit him . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . and went to a game some 'cause as a student, he would have some tickets. But I don't explicitly remember that.

[01:26:56] SL: So what was your first impression of Fayetteville when you got here?

DB: I loved it. I always have loved it. And I loved the university. It was all exciting. It was a major change from Harrison, Arkansas, and Harrison High. And I joined a fraternity, so that meant—it was partying. A lot.

SL: Which f . . .

DB: Well, at least the PiKA was.

SL: Okay.

DB: And I began then, for the first time, to pay attention to school. I can remember such things as this in my first semester of English. I wrote a paper, which we didn't write papers in high school. It—classes were large and teachers were few and underpaid.

SL: Yeah.

DB: It was—that was just not a—that's a privilege to get your papers read and have somebody respond.

SL: Sure.

DB: It takes so much time. And so he wrote me back an explanation of why paragraph, let's say, paragraph two didn't logically follow from paragraph one and didn't lead into paragraph three. Or something like that.

[01:28:11] SL: Right.

DB: And it was a thunderstruck. I was thunderstruck. What? I don't think clearly? [*SL laughs*] I never learned—I never was told that or prepared for that. And so I got to work in that class, and I made some real developments in that class. I began to learn how to read and think and write in that first semester beginning. Now, he was not a genius teacher, but he did his duty. He did what any English teacher would do. He was a graduate—he might have been a graduate assistant, but I think he was an

instructor, a temporary teacher.

SL: Do you remember his name?

DB: I don't. And I'm sorry I don't . . .

SL: That's okay.

DB: . . . because he made a big difference in me. [01:28:59] But let me tell you another thing that was very important for me, if you'd like for me to go on on that tack.

SL: Absolutely.

DB: At that time they had a new program for new freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences taught by five teachers.

SL: Oh. I kinda remember that.

DB: And I stumbled into that. And some initial advisor—I wasn't promising. If I'd been the advisor, I would have gotten me into—what would be the easiest thing [*SL laughs*] that you can get into? [*Laughter*] And—'cause I had no record at all. And but anyway, I got into this thing, and it was amazing. Mr. Osborne the teacher—Mr. Osborne the organist was one of the teachers. To have a professor in music begin to talk to me about philosophy and political science—and Mr. Harris in philosophy and Mr. Hantz in philosophy. Now those were two real dudes [*SL laughs*] that I remember so well because they were always asking me philosopher's questions. Why? [*SL*

laughs] And the textbooks were very unusual from anything I'd read before. And then I had an English professor, of course. And there's another one, but I can't remember now who that—we had an artist. So it was artist, musician, philosopher, literature. And I think there's even another one who [*unclear words*] probably political science or something like that. [01:30:37] Well, in two years—and they wrote a lot of papers 'cause the classes were small, and these guys were probably teaching this extra. And by the end of the two years, I was no longer going to pharmacy school. And I would've been, I'm sure, quite happy and could've adjusted to being a pharmacist and staying back in Harrison. But not after those two years. I just had entered a new intellectual world that just seemed to me worlds ahead. Worlds to be opened that I wanted to know about. It just clicked for me. It's a mystery, really, except that, concretely, I had this unusual and luxurious opportunity to watch five teachers dialogue and to read material that they will question from beginning to end. It wasn't for me to read it and tell the teacher on an objective test what's in it but rather to actually ask questions about it and to question the author, the authority. So that was the real turning point. And by the time I graduated in four years, I'd gone 180 degrees change, not from

bad but for much better, I thought, of . . .

SL: It sounds like from . . .

DB: . . . intellectual life.

SL: . . . indifference to excitement.

DB: It was that, yes. I was indifferent to excitement. That's right—I was—it really was a terrific opportunity for me, and I treasure the College of Arts and Sciences here, and course, I'm prejudiced. I came back here to be a professor. I went through school here, got my degree—two degrees here.

SL: Two degrees.

DB: And I got my master's here, too.

SL: And they're both in English?

DB: Both in English. And then came back here, so sure, I'm prejudice, so I'd be the same way at any other school. It's the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas. I should always say that. [01:32:50] But there were other things about the University of Arkansas that I'm sure were influential in my life, but mainly it was in the arts and sciences college, which we now call the Fulbright College.

SL: Well, so did you still have time to party?

DB: Oh yeah. [*SL laughs*] I was the pledge chief.

SL: Chair?

DB: What do they call that? Pledge chair. That's it. My freshman year. But by the time of the second semester of my sophomore year, I was no longer enjoying it. It happened pretty fast, and I wanted to do something else. That was a lot like high school. And I wanted to do some other things and learn more rapidly than there. There were fine fellows there who made lifelong friendships. I could have, but I kept going in another direction. [01:33:49] Joe Pete McNeil from—who lived always in Little Rock. He was in advertising. My daughter knows him. He was one of my best friends. And several others on the tip of my tongue, but I can't call them forth right now.

SL: Do you remember some of the professor's names and what they taught?

DB: Okay. You mean beyond the five that I mentioned. Yes.

SL: Yeah.

DB: In English, I remember them very well. Ben Kimpel was here when I was an undergraduate. I came back to be his colleague. Duncan Eaves.

SL: Ah, Duncan Eaves.

DB: Leighton Rudolph is still alive.

SL: That's correct.

DB: And we're friends.

SL: And he won't . . .

DB: I see him regularly.

SL: He won't acquiesce to an interview, by the way.

DB: He didn't?

SL: He will not do it. We have tried. We've tried to do just audio only. We've tried to have . . .

DB: I'll talk to him.

SL: . . . Marty Burghoff . . .

DB: Burggraf!

SL: . . . do the—Burggraf do it for us, and we've tried to have Barry Herzog do it for us.

DB: How odd.

SL: And he just does not want to be recorded. I—it's just—it drives me nuts.

[01:34:57] DB: We were in a Shakespeare play-reading group together, which still goes, and he quit when he became blind. He said if he couldn't read the play with us, he didn't wanna be there.

SL: Yeah.

DB: And we wanted, begged him, to stay with us and talk about the play. He could hear it, or he already knew it. See, he has a photographic memory. It's the most amazing thing.

SL: I—that's—this is what I understand.

DB: Ben Kimpel had the same thing and . . .

SL: Well, I went to school with his daughters.

DB: Did you.

SL: And with Duncan Eaves's daughters.

DB: Did you?

SL: Yes, so I know these folks.

DB: Did you know bee . . .

SL: Juliet sold our . . .

DB: And Juliet.

SL: Juliet sold our hou . . .

DB: She sold everyone . . .

SL: . . . we bought our house from . . .

DB: Everyone bought her—their house from Juliet.

SL: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

[01:35:42] DB: Yes. So all of the professors who were there I've—I remember vividly because they were my undergraduate professors and then my colleagues. So it was two wonderful, pardon me, perspectives.

SL: Really fine, remarkable folks.

DB: Remarkable.

SL: Ben Kimpel in particular I—seems like I've . . .

DB: Both a genius and an utterly moral person. Generosity, kindness, keen—but keen intellect. Demanding the best from the students and getting the best. The students just flocked around him. But Duncan Eaves, too, had—he was a vivid personality and a good scholar. And Claude Faulkner was the chairman of the department.

SL: I remember him.

DB: And he was my teacher in several classes and then became my chairman when I came back here after many years, fifteen or more. [*Laughs*] [01:36:48] Well, all of these things—and I had mentioned earlier this class in sociology department about minorities in America. That was very formative for me. I made some real strides reading a book called *The Negro in America*. It just demolished, page after page, every one of my false beliefs. It was the most amazing experience.

SL: Well, now, was—were they false beliefs, or were they just assumptions that you had lived with?

DB: Well, they were beliefs that I had embraced all my life. They turned out to be false. What shall I call them? [*Laughs*]

SL: Well . . .

DB: And I just sat there day after day just, you know, saying goodbye to one thing and the other until I really felt this was one

of the most impressive courses anybody from, anyway, my background could ever have. And I took a course in political science from a red-haired professor whose name I've forgotten. It was on propaganda in the—in America. And he—that textbook—course I could take courses, and whether the teacher was really outstanding or not, if I had good textbook, that's all I needed. I've always been rea—text oriented, too. But the two of them together, great textbook and a great teacher, about propaganda in ma—in America, which I'd never heard in my high school. There was never any course or any teacher who said, "You've got to be doubtful about advertising. You've got to question what the politicians say. You've got to have a critical mind." And this course—well, all the courses in—at the university ought to be that way, and most that I had were. These were trying to train us in critical thinking so we'd be autonomous and mental individuals. [01:38:59] And there was maybe one more courses but I—course—but I've named the most outstanding, but of course, literature is a course that—literature takes you outside of me, Harrison, Boone County, and puts you in Russia. South Africa. It forces you into the consciousness of somebody else. I'm giving a lecture here, of course . . .

SL: I—I'm . . .

DB: . . . for becoming an English major.

SL: I'm lapping it up. [*Laughter*]

DB: And it deeply affected me that what I look back now and think I see is that imaginative literature put you inside the feelings and the thoughts and the lives and the griefs and the joys of people totally different from you, and maybe vicious people too. You get inside them, too. They're not quite the cardboard villain that maybe that they seem to be when you learn all about them.

SL: Right.

[01:40:05] DB: And this is what we call empathy. And I was just yesterday reading another chapter—rereading another chapter in one of Fulbright's books. Page after page he uses the word empathy. His Fulbright exchange, college exchange program, is based upon a precommitment to the need of empathy, international empathy, if we're gonna have world peace. And I was just really pleased to see it because recently a group has formed in town to perform what they call compassion games. I had never heard that phrase before.

SL: I hadn't, either.

DB: And it startled me. Compassion games. Well, they mean empathy.

SL: Okay.

DB: I have—I got involved in them and—just to find out what they meant. And went to one of their events, and they were people who wanted to encourage people to do physical acts of kindness. And that's behaviorism, isn't it?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: If you act kindly, you might begin to actually be kind, be a kind person. And so reading this chapter from Fulbright and putting them together with this local—new local movement and having recently read Albert Schweitzer's little, short, little book on *Reverence for Life*. And in so many ways, empathy has been seen as a fundamental principle if we're to have peace in individual life and in international life. And it was—and we have plenty of people who talk about individual life because our preachers do. But internationally that's not so common. And for Fulbright—he was a thoroughgoing citizen of the world. He didn't talk about small towns. He talked about nations. [01:42:25] By the time I graduated, I was a different person, and I think of it as a—well, a religious person might call it a religious conversion. It was a gradual conversion based upon knowledge. Knowledge about the world. Knowledge about people. And I was very, very pleased that I could have had that.

As I look back. I really didn't realize what was happening. As I look back. And so I took both my undergraduate degree and my master's degree here and went immediately—was drafted or called to service immediately into the air force because I was in the ROTC here.

SL: And that was a very common thing to be in back—after the war and going into college was the ROTC program.

DB: It was required, I think.

SL: Oh, it was?

DB: I had to take it. I wouldn't have taken it if I hadn't have had to.

SL: Oh, okay.

DB: But it might have been—we had a choice with phys ed.

SL: Maybe that's it. That's it.

[01:43:27] DB: And I took ROTC for two years. You signed up for two years, freshman and sophomore. But then I—when I found out I could get paid my junior and senior years, then I . . .

SL: That sealed it.

DB: . . . I decided I'd do that. Not that my dad expected me to. My dad told me I would—he would pay for all college—as long as I wanted to go to college, he'd pay for the whole thing. But I guess I was—I'd imitated him, and I'd got jobs my undergraduate years. And he would have paid for the whole

thing. But that was probably an attraction to me, and I went on through ROTC.

SL: Before we go . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . get to the air force, I wanna take a break.

TM: Okay.

DB: Yeah.

SL: Okay?

DB: Yeah.

SL: All right.

DB: Y'all stand up?

SL: We should stand up and . . .

DB: Let's stand up. Yes.

[Tape stopped]

[01:44:15] SL: You talked about going to see Jo, your future wife, is that right? When she moved to Harrison? Is that . . .

DB: Oh, yes. Yes, I walked through across the river that night . . .

SL: Yes. And so whatever happened . . .

DB: . . . she visited here.

SL: . . . with that relationship?

DB: Well, we were high-school sweethearts, and at graduation I came here, and she went to Denver, University of Denver. She's

from Colorado. And then but in our sophomore year, middle of our sophomore year, we got married.

SL: While you were . . .

DB: Here.

SL: . . . here in Fayetteville.

DB: And I left the fraternity, and we finished school together. We both got master's degrees here. And then . . .

SL: Both in English?

DB: Both in English. No, she was also—no, no. No, I was in the English. She was in art and sociology.

SL: Okay.

DB: A double major.

SL: Okay.

DB: And then we went in the air force.

[01:45:08] SL: And did you have any children?

DB: We did. We had a—well, later on, now, quite a lot later.

SL: Okay. Well, we can—I just want to keep that parallel . . .

DB: But we did . . .

SL: . . . story going—'cause—so now you have a partner with you when you're going to the air force.

DB: Yes.

SL: Okay.

DB: Yes. And all—and through the junior and—through the junior and senior years of high—of college.

[01:45:33] SL: Okay. Now befo—also, before we leave Fayetteville, before coming back, what was the social scene in Fayetteville? I mean, newly married couple or—you get together, and what do you do in Fayetteville?

DB: Well, it's easy to answer, and it won't be much of an answer. During the first year and a half, in my fraternity life, I was engulfed in social life. In fact, it was ruinous to some of my friends who [*laughs*] spent too much time doing that, and they were making very poor grades. But I managed to hang—do reasonably well grades and just play a lot. And so that was social life. And I was here by myself, and Jo was in Denver.

SL: Before Jo gets here, walk me down Dickson Street in your first year and a half here.

DB: Yeah. Sonneman's was there, so that—the theater. There was a theater there on the right. Mr. Sonneman was the name of the man. Was that—am I right?

SL: Yes, that's correct.

DB: As I remember who built those two buildings on the . . .

SL: Yes, be . . .

DB: . . . facing. And there . . .

SL: . . . became the UARK Theater.

DB: UARK Theater. And there were apartments up above, and Gil Stacy stayed up there, lived up there. Gil Stacy, the band director, was my roommate the entire first year of school here.

SL: Okay.

DB: We s—we lived in—we rented one room together at Mrs. Holloway's on Ila Street.

SL: On Ila.

DB: On Ila.

SL: Okay.

DB: And so it was in walking, easy walking distance. Neither one of us had a car, so this was what we had to do. We had to get close. So . . .

[01:47:19] SL: Dickson Street?

DB: Dickson Street. I'm walking my mind down—George's was there, of course.

SL: What was George's like then?

DB: Sa—oh, George's. I was down there recently, and I hadn't seen the auditorium in the back with the ceiling on. I'd been down there when it was open. But that's a—well, a total transformation of George's. It was just the small bar up front. [*Coughs*] And I may have to stop and sip some water, I see,

suddenly.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:47:56] SL: We took a little break, and we're back now. And we're talking about—we . . .

DB: Dickson.

SL: . . . brought you up to date with marrying Jo, and we're talking about your first couple of years in Fayetteville and the social side of Fayetteville at that time.

DB: And PiKA house was just around the corner from Dickson Street.

SL: Yes.

DB: Which they're—the fraternity—they're demolishing at the present moment.

SL: Yes.

DB: So I was on Dickson Street quite a bit. We . . .

SL: Was there a . . .

DB: There was a pool hall down near the railroad tracks.

SL: Roger's Rec?

DB: And there was Roger's Rec, of course, up the hills a piece. And I played pool in there with my friends.

SL: Bowling alley across from the theater?

DB: Yes. The bowling alley—I wasn't a bowler, but it was there. And

there was a ballroom up above.

SL: Correct.

DB: And PiKA rented that ballrooms several times while I was a student here for big bashes, big parties. Probably quite a few times, it was so handy. And it was a capacious ballroom for us. We had bands from all around the region. Can't think anything—Collier's was there, I think.

SL: Collier's, yeah.

DB: Was it? That early?

SL: There was . . .

[01:49:17] DB: I can't think of anything else that's drastically different.

SL: Was the Scott Hotel there?

DB: Don't remember a Scott Hotel.

SL: And City Lumber?

DB: City Lumber. Oh, yes. It is changed quite a bit. The Ice House. The lumber company. It's changed a lot on that side of the street down there. All of West Street has changed.

SL: Jug Wheeler's?

DB: Right. And Jug's was a very important part of our lives for quick food and for . . .

SL: Beer.

DB: . . . ordering in.

SL: Beer, too.

DB: And plenty of beer.

SL: Is—I've been told that they were able to deliver beer back then.

DB: Was it a dry county then?

SL: No, but no one else I've ever heard of actually delivered beer. I mean, you could order beer by phone, and they'd bring it to you.

DB: I know people swore by Jug Wheeler. [*Laughter*]

[01:50:20] SL: And let's see. Was the D-Lux Cafe . . .

DB: I don't remember that.

SL: Okay. That's probably not.

DB: There was a record shop. Orlis Wheeler. Or am I—I might—oh, that's before . . .

SL: Metcalf?

DB: That's before Orlis's time. Was Metcalf on Dickson?

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: That's what I'm thinking about, then.

SL: And then Fayetteville Bottling Company? That was a Fulbright company.

DB: Yes. I can't remember where that was.

SL: It's where French Metro is now.

DB: Oh.

SL: Right below Colliers.

DB: Oh.

SL: I member being able to watch them bottle Coca-Cola.

DB: Same building?

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: I watched that in Harrison. Fascinating invention.

SL: Trying to think what else was on that street.

DB: I don't remember from those years, 1950, what else was there. Let me try it—up above the railroad tracks there wasn't much. But there was Sonneman's, so that meant there were shops down below—would go back that far. And George's. And I don't recall other . . .

[01:51:29] SL: Well, the Ice House in and of itself was a pretty large building.

DB: It was huge. Right.

SL: And I guess—was it . . .

DB: That's where the parking—the . . .

SL: Deck is now.

DB: The parking . . .

SL: Or the . . .

DB: . . . lot.

SL: . . . lot is . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . now.

DB: Yeah.

SL: And then was Campbell's Soup . . .

DB: I don't remember Campbell . . .

SL: . . . behind it?

DB: I don't remember that.

SL: It became the—part of the McBride properties.

DB: Was it down there where the—where McBride was?

SL: Mh-hmm. [01:51:58] Well, okay. So let's see, what about the—that was—probably predates the Red Lion, I guess.

DB: Perhaps.

SL: That's later. Okay. All right. Well, I just wanted to—do you remember much about . . .

DB: I . . .

SL: . . . Fayetteville and the downtown square?

DB: . . . seem to be clearer about some ancient [*laughter*] information. I can't . . .

SL: Well . . .

DB: The city square of Harrison in 1930s and [19]40s seem to be clearer to me than Dickson in 1950. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, I think you may have been in a somewhat of a blur in that

year and a half or two on Dickson Street.

DB: Oh, I wasn't paying attention, I think, to that. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, the main . . .

[01:52:36] DB: My roommate in PiKA will interest you. It was Jim Faulkner, and he became a very successful advertiser in Little Rock and recently gave $3 million to the university for the new fine arts auditorium.

SL: I know . . .

DB: Where the old gym . . .

SL: I know Jim. I . . .

DB: Do you know Jim?

SL: I have—I interviewed Jim years ago.

DB: Did you?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: Well, he was a splendid fellow, but I haven't kept . . .

SL: Funny, funny guy.

DB: I haven't kept up with him.

SL: Funny guy. He would call me, and he'd be impersonating in a different voice.

DB: Did he.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*] He was funny guy.

DB: Well, I don't remember that aspect of him so much, but I

remember him as a very decent guy. We were roommates for at least a semester in the fraternity house.

SL: Well, I'll mention that next time I get to see him.

DB: Please.

SL: I haven't seen him in at least three or four years, but . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . I'll try and mention that. I'll remember that. [01:53:35] Well, okay. So are we ready to . . .

DB: I . . .

SL: You and your bride, your wife, go—where do you go to the air force? Where . . .

DB: We . . .

SL: You leave Fayetteville.

DB: Yes. We were—I was sent to Florida [DB edit: Panama City] to be trained for a few months as a rado—radar control officer. [DB edit: Combat control]

SL: Okay.

DB: And that enabled us to live on water, on a coastline, for the first time. Now I'm lowering my voice because I am getting hoarse, and it's . . .

SL: Okay.

DB: . . . hard for me to talk.

SL: All right. That's fine.

DB: So how we doin' about that?

SL: We'll be fine.

DB: Okay.

SL: Yep.

DB: And we had three lovely months down there going to—military schools are easy, and so you'd go only a few hours a day, and the rest of the time, we could play on the beach. And I had a lieutenant's salary, which was just huge to us. [01:54:42] Then we were transferred to San Francisco, and that sounded great. We thought we were going to able to live in or near San Francisco. But as it turned out, I was actually assigned to a radar station in northern California. I mean, northern California . . .

SL: Ah.

DB: . . . almost to Oregon. It was at the mouth of the Klamath River. It's—Klamath, Oregon, is way upstream from it, but there's also a Klamath, California, at the mouth of the Klamath River, and the radar station is overlooking it up above. And I spent two and a half years [DB edit: one and a half years] there as a radar control officer.

SL: Is this mid-[19]50s?

DB: This is nineteen—no, it's later than that.

SL: Oh.

DB: It's 1954, [19]55, [19]56.

SL: Okay.

DB: [Nineteen] fifty-four. [Nineteen] fifty-four and [19]55.

SL: Okay.

DB: I graduated—I left here at the beginning of [19]54. But I had actually finished my education, so I say that I was here in 1949–1953, and then I immediately got my papers to report and went to the school and then went out to California. So that would be middle 1950s, something like that.

[01:56:01] SL: How . . .

DB: The . . .

SL: . . . how aware of you at the time—were you of world politics and, you know, the things that were going on cold warwise or . . .

DB: Very ignorant. I had just gotten through taking two degrees in literature, and I was preparing to go to graduate school somewhere in literature, so I was reading about that still. So I was abysmally ignorant. At Stanford, I remember going—well, now I'm leaping ahead just a little bit. Yeah.

SL: You go to Stanford after the air force.

DB: Afterward.

SL: Okay.

DB: Afterward, yeah. So I was, to answer your question, just terribly ignorant and paid no attention, and yet the military base was very influential on me for reasons that go back to Harrison.

SL: Okay.

DB: My parents were thrifty. And you didn't waste. At the military base, everything was wasted. We were under control. We had regulations. The officers and the men were conscientious. But the whole system was wasteful. In the first place, the base was unnecessary, and I gradually became aware of that, and that became very offensive to me. Hell, we—all the rest of the people from all my hometown—everywhere else I'd been, we were trying to save a little bit here and a little bit there to make our lives and the world a little better and to apply the money in useful ways, or at least for our children, for food and housing, and so on. But there, millions and millions and millions of dollars were squandered because we were playing at protecting the United States from the Soviet bombers and fighters that were going to attack us. That's how paranoid the country was.

SL: Sure.

[01:58:09] DB: Fulbright talks about this over and over again in his

books. The paranoia of this country. The fear, baseless fear, of this country that we're willing to do anything, including invade countries illegally out of this fear. Well, there, we were being trained—I was being—on-the-job training after the school, which wasn't enough—to lock on an enemy fighter and shoot it and—or and direct the fighters, our fighters, to shoot them down.

SL: Right.

DB: Well, we all knew that the Russian fighters were jets, and we were trained with propellers. And hell, we couldn't do worth a damn with the propellers, and the planes would be going pa—the enemy planes would be going double the fast, so it was a joke. For all of us. And we were—we just didn't—weren't very conscientious because of that, and all of us were—it's a bad taste in my mouth. It probably hit me worst of all, looking back at my trajectory afterward, 'cause it really offended me, but everyone felt it and knew it. So this was a deep influence of the service which was negative, that the people of the United States, deluded by the propaganda system of enemies and fearful and wanting—clutching their safety at home, which is still going on today just as much, were willing to pay any taxes and let any money go to any nonsense, and I have never gotten over that. This just deeply offends me. And I don't think you—anyone can

feel it until they've actually been on a military base when it—comparable to mine. And I don't mean that all military bases are like this. It just so happened that mine was.

[02:00:07] SL: It was an antiquated program . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that was of, really, no service.

DB: Just a complete falsity that they couldn't drop and couldn't give up.

SL: Well, you know . . .

DB: Vested interests that—all the corporations that fostered it. The—all of the air force divisions using it. It was just built into the military-industrial complex so solid that . . .

SL: Something that eisen . . .

DB: It's finally gone, I think.

SL: . . . Eisenhower warned us about.

DB: [*Laughs*] He did.

SL: Yeah.

DB: He did.

SL: That it was going—that was going to happen.

DB: Yes.

[02:00:41] SL: I was visiting with Randy upstairs, Randy Dixon, upstairs who's scanning your images, and there were a couple

that he came across that had something to do with your service. And I think one was a photograph of where a house used to be. Is that—was there a flood or . . .

DB: Oh. This was the mouth of the Klamath River. And it had a major flood.

SL: And—now where is this at?

DB: Now, this is northern California.

SL: Okay.

DB: Way north. South of Crescent City, California. Klamath, Crescent City, Oregon border.

SL: Okay.

DB: We're that close. And then this huge livel—river that had wonderful fishing. Steelhead. Trout.

SL: Oh. Yes.

[02:01:30] DB: Well, it flooded. And one night, in the middle of the night, a deputy sheriff knocked on our door and said, "Just get what you can carry and leave. The road is almost cut off by a flood." Just like that. So Jo and I grabbed our cat and, I don't know, two or three silly things. [*Laughs*] I wish I could remember that. It's so laughable. And we rushed away. And lived in an empty house we found up on the side of the mountain because the road had also washed away back to town. The

apartment we lived in was second floor. It avoided being flooded. Other houses—all the houses there were flooded all the way to the top of their attics, but this one—and I have a picture of that. But where we lived, we were saved, and that was fortunate because the owner of the house lost his house, so he and his wife and his children moved in with us as soon as they could get to our house. It was their apartment after all. And then as soon as I could find a place to live in Crescent City, Jo and I moved up there so they could have their place—their places back. [02:02:51] Now, I'll tell you a story that will interest you, too. This—my commander was an alcoholic, and he and I clashed a lot. When this flood occurred and the waters receded, he was sure that the Indians up the river were going to float down and steal everything and maybe kill somebody in the process.

SL: The Indians?

DB: The Indians. [DB edit: There was a reservation upstream.] I knew that was just a crock. I just couldn't stand it. But I knew I was in the service. But I was not a reckless person. I was a conformist person, as I've tried to describe to you, although I was changing. But it was so awful. It was so stupid that I reported for duty down at a bonfire that the master sergeant,

who was a good guy, had been ordered to set up. And the three worst soldiers, worst airmen on the base, were down there armed with pistols and rifles. And I was ordered to stay down there with them all night to protect the community from the Indians. And I just left. After a while, I just left, and I told them—I said, "This—you know that this is stupid or that this is not going to happen and is a slander of the Indian people." And I just left. Well, pretty soon—and then I spent the whole week AWOL. But I didn't think of it as AWOL, I don't think. I just knew it was wrong for us to sit there while all of our neighbors' houses were full of mud. So I scooped mud for a whole week, all day, every day, and made a lot of friends, I discovered. [02:04:53] So one of my buddies came down fully dressed in his uniform and said, "Dick, get home, get your uniform on, come on up to the base. You're being court martialed." And I said, "Yes, sir. I'll do it." And that's—I did. I obeyed that order, and I went up and to his office and saluted. And he had the papers there to court martial me, and I had to sign it right there. Well, I was guilty. No question about it. And so I thought I was to be court martialed. But the people down in the valley heard about it and sent a group up to the base to tell them that he shouldn't do that, that I was down there helping them. And

because he was an alcoholic, partly, maybe, but mainly because he was not a man who really had genuine convictions—I was guilty. It was his duty to court martial me . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . for a week. I didn't doubt—I didn't question that. He changed his mind. Just like that. Tore up the papers. So I wasn't court martialed. I was very reckless, and I would have ruined my life and my wife's life. But I just couldn't go along with that particular thing in the air force, and it wasn't the only thing that I saw that was revolting. But it was mainly had to do with waste and doing things that didn't have to be done. [*Laughs*] Now, I don't wanna gener—I'm not generalizing this about the military entirely. Not at all. Although recently the air force lost two planes or—with armed nuclear weapons that—they took these nuclear weapons ready to bomb off to some other place they didn't know. That sounds pretty bad. But this was just—generally it's the lack of necessity of any of it that I experienced for a year and a half. I'd never had—in Harrison, it was a business community. Everything you did, you know, had a purpose. Maybe a bad purpose but—or not a noble purpose, but it had a purpose, and [*laughs*] this one didn't. And I think we all were in on the game.

SL: Yeah.

[02:07:15] DB: Well, anyway, that's my war story. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, so you spent two years . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the air force as—to honor your commitment from ROTC.

DB: Yes.

SL: And after that you left the air force and went to Stanford, is that right?

DB: I did.

[02:07:34] SL: And let's talk about that. What did you do at Stanford?

DB: It was an astonishing experience because not only the teachers—the teachers were no better than the ones I'd had here. These were good teachers. But they were superstar scholars. In fact, some of them weren't half as good as the ones I'd had here because they were spending so much of their time just working on their scholarship. For example, my Carlisle seminar professor was the president of Phi B—United States Phi Beta Kappa. Hell, he was on the road half the time.

SL: Right.

DB: And others were very busy doing stellar things.

SL: Everything but teaching.

DB: Yeah. I—but I was around brilliant students, students from the best schools in the country, students who knew several languages. Boy, that really threw me because although I'd tried to catch up here, I wasn't prepared from high school. But I did study French here. Did a little bit. And that helped. That was a big help. The school was just high powered, and I was scrambling the whole time to catch up with knowledge, world-class, international literature, that I wasn't prepared for. But it was all to my benefit. I mean, I was learning not only, that is, from the teachers but from the students there. And it was a wonderful university with guest lectures of the most brilliant and outstanding people. They had money for things like that. [02:09:31] We had some here. I heard Eleanor Roosevelt speak here. I heard Ralph Bunche speak here. I—there were some good things going on, good speakers, but it takes a lot of money to do that, and they had more of that at Stanford.

[02:09:48] SL: Well, now, what degree were you working on at Stanford?

DB: It was a joint Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies and British literature, so going way back to my freshman and sophomore experience with those—that team-taught . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . series of courses.

SL: Yes.

DB: I think that must have really attracted me because at Stanford I had the option not to do the American literature-British literature combination which is so common and to . . .

SL: Do the interdisciplinary . . .

DB: . . . and to do a course that was literature, religion, philosophy, and history. And I really enjoyed that. I had teachers of—fr—again, from all different kinds of disciplines, and I enjoyed that. Course, I loved just studying American and British literature, too.

SL: Well, sure.

DB: So—and which is what I taught here. But that really suited me and was a great experience. And when I gradu—when I was ready to graduate and write my—I mean, when I'd finished my course work and needed to write a dissertation, my dissertation advisor helped me find a—an original topic and—that fit the requirements of that interdisciplinary program.

[02:11:16] SL: What was it?

DB: It was a intellectual biography of the brother of Cardinal Newman of the nineteenth century, who was a free thinker and—in contrast to the cardinal. Their other brother was a drug

addict. And I was, by then, becoming a free thinker, and so I managed to write my whole dissertation on his intellectual life—what he studied about and wrote about Bible, about language, history of language, about literature. He was a versatile scholar, a brilliant man, and it was just fun. I woke up every morning, every year—during the year I wrote it eager to get going again. I was very fortunate because some people write dissertations that I've heard them say that it—"Well, it, you know, this is something to get a requirement done," but for me it was a part of my education.

SL: You loved it.

DB: I was—yeah, I did. I did, and I was very fortunate.

[02:12:21] SL: And Jo, what was she doing during this time?

DB: She kept us fed. California is wonderful. A lot of employment at the time. Military-industrial. She was not a mathematician, but she passed a test at a cour—at a Lockheed Martin test to be an assistant to an engineer. So she became a mathematician. [*SL laughs*] And the pay—the salary was great. So I had an assistantship salary, that is, a part time teacher. I had the GI bill and Jo's salary, and we made more money than we'd ever had, and more money than I was to make at my first professor's job [*SL laughs*], so it was nice there for us. I mean,

economically, whereas some of my fellow students, they—hell, they were just barely eating.

[02:13:26] SL: Well, sounds like by the time you got to Stanford or at Stanford, diversity, cultural diversity, had peaked for you.

DB: It really had. I was lucky to go there because they put—made an emphasis upon that. There were a lot of Asiatics there. I met people from all over the world there.

SL: All . . .

DB: Let me see if there's anything that's—else that stands out about Stanford. It was just California, you know. It was the speed. It was just so different from, not so much the University of Arkansas, but from Arkansas and from Harrison and—not necessarily better. It was just a whole different tempo of life. And . . .

SL: Lots of things happening all the time.

DB: All the time. Yes. And then the ocean, the beautiful ocean.

SL: How close were you to the ocean?

DB: It's just over a hill, really. [*SL laughs*] [*Clanging*] Whoa.

SL: Whoa.

DB: Oh, dear. I did that.

SL: That's . . .

DB: The water—and the water won't matter.

TM: We're fine.

DB: Let me finish it.

[02:14:33] SL: Okay. Now, was the water approachable where you were or . . .

DB: It's too cold.

SL: Yeah, it was too cold there. That's what I was think . . .

DB: But we picnicked when we could get away. And that—you take heavy clothes and make a fire and . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . and enjoy the bracing air and the salty ocean. And then there was San Francisco, which was a thrill to us. We never had—well, Jo had gone back to Denver, but I had not had a city life.

SL: It's a magnificent city.

DB: Isn't it?

SL: Yeah.

DB: And that was the time of the beatniks. The beats.

SL: Ah!

DB: And so we and—were able to enjoy . . .

SL: Now this is late [19]50s.

DB: . . . music and literature. So this would be—we started there in [19]56, so it's late [19]50s, yeah. [Nineteen] fifty-eight,

[19]59. La—leaving in [19]60. It was a great experience for us. It was just wonderful. And it was so great we wanted to stay there. I couldn't find a job there. And everyone, I think, was trying to find a job there.

SL: Sure.

DB: Or at least that's my excuse. I applied at schools in the Bay area, and I couldn't find a job. [02:15:51] So, I got a very nice job, as it turned out, in Missoula, Montana, which is not anywhere I wanted to go. [*Laughs*] At all.

SL: Now where is Missoula?

DB: It's . . .

SL: What is it close to?

DB: It's—Spokane, Washington.

SL: Okay.

DB: East of Spokane, Washington. Boise, Idaho. [DB edit: North of Boise, Idaho]

SL: Yes.

DB: North . . .

SL: East . . .

DB: . . . of Boise, Idaho.

SL: Okay.

DB: Yellowstone National Park.

SL: Yes.

DB: West of Yellowstone but over the Rockies. It's on the western side of the Rockies.

SL: Of the Continental Divide.

DB: Uh-huh. Continental Divide. And they call it the tropical part of Montana. [*SL laughs*] And by that they meant that it was only fifteen degrees below zero one month [*SL laughs*], whereas Billings was thirty degrees below zero for one month.

SL: Yes.

[02:16:47] DB: And a friend of mine, and everyone who had been there for a while, they didn't think it was very cold. A friend of mine wore sandals there during the entire year.

SL: My gosh.

DB: First year I was there. Just crazy man, I thought. [*SL laughs*] Thought they were insane people. [*Laughter*] But it was nice place because it was so isolated, the faculty members were extremely cordial and congenial to new people and tried to bring them in. The head of the forestry department asked Jo and me to his Christmas parties. It was just a place where people knew people were isolated and lonely and separated from their families, and so everyone tried to reinforce home. And so I—we really got along there and liked everybody, but I didn't like the

cold. I just didn't like the cold at all. So I looked for another job after two years and . . .

SL: So you . . .

DB: . . . found something.

SL: . . . you were a professor there.

DB: Professor of English. Assistant professor of English.

[02:17:51] SL: And the name of the school was . . .

DB: It's the University of Montana . . .

SL: At Missoula.

DB: . . . at Missoula.

SL: So how large a town was it?

DB: Oh. A small Fayetteville. I'd say 40,000, 50,000, maybe.

SL: Well, other . . .

DB: Something like that.

SL: . . . other than the cold, it sounds good.

DB: It is. It was. And another Stanford graduate took my place, and he stayed his entire career there and just loved it. And I was probably a fool. But—and Jo and I felt later on that had we enjoyed winter sports, if—had we been skiers, we probably would have stayed. But our parents were . . .

SL: Aging.

DB: . . . were getting old, yeah. So we—however, we didn't move

back to Arkansas because I didn't apply here and ha—no one had order—offered anything. [02:18:48] And so we went to Bellingham at Western Washington State university. And after being there three year—and that's a peachy place, too. That's a beautiful place.

SL: Okay now, so . . .

DB: It's just north of Seattle and south of Vancouver.

SL: Oh my gosh.

DB: And Seattle and Vancouver are wonderful cities.

SL: Yes.

DB: And Bellingham is on the—and bell—the university is on a—and Bellingham are on a hill overlooking Bellingham Bay. It's just beautiful. The ships coming in and out. And we got a—managed to get a house there with—overlooking the bay and we just enjoyed it in so many ways. But the—my old teacher here, who was chairman, called me one night and asked me to come back, and Jo's mother was very ill and getting worse, and my mother was just beginning dementia, and we decided we'd take the opportunity. And it was a good choice because otherwise—I mean, because their illnesses were lingering, and it was a good thing we got back here and were with them.

[02:19:54] SL: And so which chair was it that invited you to come

back.

DB: Claude Faulkner.

SL: Claude Faulkner.

DB: He was the chairman then, when I was a student, and when I came back.

SL: And so you pack up the car and . . .

DB: We did, and we took—got our kids. We had two kids by then, and . . .

[02:20:14] SL: Oh, okay, well let's talk about the kids.

DB: And . . .

SL: So when did those happen?

DB: Johnny was born at Stanford.

SL: Okay.

DB: Just before we left. And Michelle was born in Missoula. And we lived our first year in a farmhouse owned by the dean of the forestry school.

SL: In Missoula.

DB: In Missoula.

SL: Okay.

DB: Yeah. Excuse me. And that was also an astonishing experience, to live suddenly in such cold in an ancient farmhouse and try to keep it warm. So that took us a while to get accustomed . . .

SL: Acclimated.

[02:20:59] DB: Yeah. When we arrived in Missoula, they hadn't moved entirely out of the house yet as they had promised, so we said fine. We just got in our—I had a station wagon. And we traveled, always, in a station wagon because it was a portable hotel and four of us could sleep in the back. And so we drove up into a park in the mountains not far from Missoula, I think. And it was—there was snow up there, and it snowed on us while we were there. This is August. [*SL laughs*] And I said, "This has been a mistake." [*Laughter*] Now, it's in Missoula I'm talkin' about.

SL: Yeah.

DB: And so we stayed there about a week until they moved out—came back down there. But it was a lovely place and wonderful teachers, and the teaching opportunities were splendid. It was just really great, but there were several reasons that forced us—caused us to leave there. [02:22:00] There was a man named Leslie Fiedler who taught in that place, and Leslie was one of the most prominent and notorious teachers of American literature in the United States at that time. He wrote an essay called "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" in which he closely examined the language of *Huckleberry Finn* to suggest that there

was a sexual relationship between Huck and Jim. Well, no other scholar in America believes that. However, it was a very interesting case. I mean, he was not a fool. He knew Russian. He was a brilliant lecturer. He was really a wonderful guy, and I think he wrote that just to pull some beards. [*SL laughs*] But he's—he wrote several influential books at that time. *Love and Death in the American Novel* was the name of one of his books. So I took his place there while he went on a series of visiting lecture jobs. He was invited to go everywhere. He was such a outstanding person. [02:23:17] And then the second year, we lived in his house.

SL: Oh!

DB: And took care of his house.

SL: So that was better than the . . .

DB: He was gone two years.

SL: . . . farmhouse.

DB: Much better. Much better than—the farmhouse was difficult for us. The—there's just not much more to say about Missoula.

SL: Well . . .

DB: There's wonderful—oh, the students were much like Arkansas, some of Arkansas students. They were hungry for learning. They'd come from ranches, and they're from nowhere, little, tiny

towns. And—"These writers were really good. Why aren't they—[*unclear word*] interesting and so different from the life I've had." And I really had good, fun, interesting classes. I enjoyed them so much because the student response was good there in Missoula. And we had a faculty-student organization opposed to the Vietnam War. We—the three years I was there, we publicly demonstrated.

SL: Ah.

DB: That was doing all over the United States . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . so that would be [19]61, [19]62, and [19]63, just as things were starting. Kennedy.

SL: Martin Luther.

DB: Eisenhower actually sent the first advisors, I think . . .

SL: Oh yeah.

DB: . . . and then Kennedy expanded them. By—but then I went over to Western Washington and—well, I've just had a—I've just been lucky. I've had good jobs.

[02:24:53] SL: How was fatherhood?

DB: I think I enjoyed it. [*SL laughs*] I was busy.

SL: Yeah.

DB: And I probably imitated my dad a lot. I worked hard. Like—I

just—I can't separate Dad from the drugstore. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

DB: But I have a lot of photos—actually, I've forgotten a lot of that time, but we went on the usual weekend picnics, and I think I liked it pretty well. But the person who made our family was Jo.

SL: I was gonna ask. She was . . .

DB: Jo was a very loving and considerate and person that took a lot of time, which child—which children need. They need time, affection, attention. And she gave that even though she worked. She always has worked. [02:25:58] We had a house in Bellingham that wasn't far from a park, and I member we went over there often. And then, Washington state has all kinds of parks.

SL: Right.

DB: So we camped out a lot. But our best friends, several of our best friends, didn't have children, but they didn't seem to mind. We would go on picnics and campouts with the little ones. And when they were first born—now I remember. When our son was first born—that would be at Stanford—we would put him in a cardboard box for student parties. And he seemed to get along. Everyone seemed to fancy that. So I guess we took him everywhere we went. Whether that was good for them or not

[*SL laughs*], I'm no—I don't . . .

SL: Well, that's probably much better than . . .

DB: I'm not quite sure.

SL: . . . leaving them . . .

DB: But we did try to . . .

SL: . . . you know, with someone.

DB: . . . try to do that. Enjoyed that.

[02:26:56] SL: [*Laughs*] That's good. So you get a call from Claude Faulkner.

DB: And saying—offered me a job. And given the—our concerns about our parents and the fact that this would be more of a graduate school, I thought it might—I'd—that would be okay. I'd make that change. The Western Washington school was a wonderful place to be—teach undergraduates. I'll just quickly tell you what that means. The president was the former head of the Great Books program in the west coast. He had never taught in a college before. He had a Ph.D. in philosophy, but he'd never taught in a college. He went directly into the Great Books Program. This guy was as loose as you could get. [*SL laughs*] He was not down any disciplinary line. So as soon as he and his—he was young. And soon as he and his young and attractive and energetic wife—they were both just ready to do

anything. As soon as they got there, they set up a two-year program so that all incoming students—see, it wasn't a university. It was a college. And they didn't have engineering students, agri students. It was all a liberal arts college. It's called a university now. It was called a college then. All incoming students at the beginning of their freshman year had to have read a play, a designated—they all had to read the same play, the same novel, the same nonfiction prose. They then had to [*claps*] participate in a discussion by two professors on those three works of art in which we—our job was to connect the three. And then they were supposed to come to our homes for tea.

SL: [*Laughs*] That sounds great.

DB: Think of that. So that everything—well, a great deal was done, more than at Stanford. Well, no, I didn't go to Stanford as an undergraduate, so I can't say what program they had there. But here [DB edit: Western Washington], it's as good as anything I've ever read about to try to set the student's mind that you're here, now, to be a mind. You're not here to develop your social graces. This is not p—they didn't have fraternities and sororities. This is not a place to do that. You're here to discover how smart you are. And I just loved it, and I taught in that

program the whole time. Now, some of my friends hated it because they wanted to do publishing scholarship.

SL: Right.

DB: But at the time I thought of myself as purely a teacher. And that's what I was expected to do at Montana, what I enjoyed doing, and what I did there. [02:30:00] So I did that for three years, and Jo and I made the best friends we've ever made in our entire lives. We've just come back from the—from visiting with the wife of a man, of an artist at Bellingham who recently died, and he and she were among our best friends. And he and I drank many a beer together on Friday afternoons. And but here—how long as that been? That's [*bell, thump*] . . .

SL: That's all right.

DB: I cannot remember how many years it's been since we've been there, but we've kept up with him all this years because we liked them, and I kept up with many of my—of our friends we had there. It was such a congenial place to teach and teach together and think of yourself as a teacher who shared the love of learning. And that's—that cliché was really being acted out remarkably well there.

[02:31:04] SL: Now this is early [19]60s.

DB: This is—this would be [19]62, [196]3, and [196]5—[196]2,

[196]3, and [196]4, and [196]5. Yeah. It was two years in Missoula, so that's [19]61 and [19]62, and then Bellingham is [19]63, [196]4, and [196]5. Yes. And then we came here in [19]65.

SL: So really, really major events in history are taking place . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . while you're there.

DB: Yes, the Vietnam War accelerating.

SL: Kennedy assassination.

DB: Mh-hmm. That.

SL: Martin Luther King.

DB: Which was just on—oh, it was a volatile, intense time for our country. A great time for our country.

SL: Kent State. The whole . . .

DB: Sure.

SL: The Beatles.

DB: Culturally, it was a great time. [02:32:01] As far as foreign policy is concerned, a disaster. That's the—catastrophic is the word Fulbright uses for that war.

SL: Well, you know, all that, though, I mean, that—the catastrophes that are happening politically, internationally, were really set up after World War II or at the end of World War II. I mean, the

seeds were sown . . .

DB: Surely.

SL: . . . for this stuff that . . .

DB: Surely.

SL: . . . blossomed . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . in the [19]60s. The imperialism and the anti-Communism, the domino theories, the . . .

DB: Right.

SL: All that stuff.

DB: Right.

SL: And the paranoia and the . . .

DB: It grew into—under that umbrella word of . . .

SL: Military-industrial complex.

DB: . . . cold war. And that's when I was in the middle of my life and teaching here. Well, it's—well, Bellingham and—well, all three of those places then. The war was actually wu—approaching and then fren—in its fullness here at Arkansas.

[02:33:18] SL: It sounds like that last program before you came here would lend itself to really examine what was going on in the current time.

DB: Yes.

SL: Even though you're maybe studying a play that was written [*laughs*] a long time ago or material that was—is classic in nature . . .

DB: Yes.

SL: . . . those same elements could be exercised looking at what was going on currently.

DB: I think it happens when you get teachers together from different backgrounds. One of my best friends was an economist. He and the artist and I met Friday afternoons at a particular pool hall. And it's not only those. There was a minister in town. Getting us together was constantly opening new doors to each of us. We were all thinking and examining our nation from this point of view of expanding knowledge, of understanding, of growing knowledge. We weren't static. I think that really did help. And so that we had constant protests or frequent protests of—against the US foreign policies and of course Jim Crow in the South. Let's see, [19]64 is the civil rights bill, 1964. So . . .

SL: You know, I . . .

DB: . . . that was just as I came here, you know.

[02:34:56] SL: I forgot to ask you where you were, what you were doing, at the time of the Central High School crisis, the inte—the desegregation deal in Little Rock. Where were you?

DB: So that would be . . .

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-seven.

DB: [Nineteen] fifty-seven. I was at Stanford, and I was at Stanford from [19]56 to [19]60, and I kept up with the South because I was the only southerner in my class at Stanford. This is getting a Ph.D. in literature. And so people wanted to talk to me.

SL: That's what I was wondering.

DB: And I then kept up with politics more, probably, there than I had earlier in my life. Well, definitely, than I kept up in my life because people wanted to know. And I member, for example, having an argument with some of my classmates, and they were—they had stereotyped the whole South. We were all Jim Crow down in the South. And I had recently read an article about a group of Christian Brothers in New Orleans who had done wondrous things, courageous things, to oppose Jim Crow in New Orleans. Well, they never had heard of that. [02:36:24] So I've spent quite a—probably quite a bit of my life trying to prevent them from thinking that everything was like the worst in the South. And I did write at least one letter to the school newspaper making that case and giving—citing examples of how people were resisting in the South, and there were plenty of resisters . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . in the South. Single women to Christian Brother organizations. They stood up and fought that at great risk to their lives. I'm not talking about the ones who came down. They were really taking risks, too. But Southerners who fought. And so that was interesting to people at Stanford and interesting to me.

[02:37:15] SL: All right, so you come back to Fayetteville. What do you find in Fayetteville when you get here?

DB: Let's see, that's 1965. [*SL coughs*] So that the concerns of my life, the broad and general concerns of my life, and the individual and personal concerns of my life were identical. So that there's not—so there's going to be a continuity there. My politics are the same. I have the same kinds of family lifes and joys and sorrows that everyone experiences. We were glad to be here. We had our parents, and we spent a lot of time on the weekends going to them and seeing about them. My mother was advancing Alzheimer's or Alzheimer's symptoms, which lasted a long time with her. And Jo's mother had a slow-growing cancer. So we spent a lot of time doing that and—which made us very—feel that we'd made a good choice in coming back here although both of us loved Bellingham. It was just so perfect and so

beautiful out there. The . . .

SL: So you were traveling to Harrison to . . .

DB: Traveling to Harrison a lot because both of our families lived there.

SL: Right.

DB: At that time. Jo's parents finally moved to Flippin, and her father bought the KOA Campground at the Cotter—Flippin bridge.

SL: Is that right?

DB: Uh-huh. And became a great fisherman. He maybe already was. We encountered old professors here who were good to us. The students were smart and interested. And my colleagues—I liked my colleagues, made good friends with my colleagues. So now I'm trying to think—your question—it just seems like we made a good choice, and it was a good time for us to come back here. And the kids were small, still small.

[02:39:30] SL: Football was still reigning.

DB: Of course. Of course, and because of my relatives, I had six tickets. For several years I had six tickets. My colleagues would give me their faculty . . .

SL: Tickets.

DB: . . . permits or whatever.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Their tickets. Yeah.

SL: Right.

DB: They would get the tickets, I guess, and give me the tickets. Ben Kimpel, I think, always gave me a ticket, and David Hart, I think.

SL: David Hart.

DB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DB: I see him regularly.

[02:40:00] SL: Did you know Dick Knowles?

DB: Knowles.

SL: He was the art historian in the fine arts department.

DB: I didn't.

SL: He and David were good friends.

DB: Were they?

SL: Uh-huh.

DB: I know they were. Now I'm remembering him. But no, I never got acquainted with him.

SL: Okay. He lived down the street from where I grew up. He was a big influence on me. But . . .

DB: Yes, I've hear—I remember Emily talking about . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . Dick Knowles. But I didn't know him. [02:40:27] We had frequent parties here before and after the game. Before or after the game, you'd see that. With—some of our high school friends would come. And my—I hadn't mentioned my uncle who lived across the street from my parents. And he l—he wanted to go to the games some. And Jo's dad liked games. My brother liked games. And my brother's children liked games. So we were always able to use the tickets. Fill them up, I mean, and then have a houseful here of people who were on their way to the games.

SL: So you were Razorback football hosts.

DB: I not only was that [*SL laughs*] but I even, once, bought one of those plastic hog hats. [*SL laughs*]

SL: The Uncle Heavy Hog Hat?

DB: What do they call it?

SL: Uncle Heavy Hog Hat.

DB: Is that it?

SL: Yeah.

DB: Oh, I'd forgotten the name. And because my oldest friend from Harrison, who also recently died. I'm reaching the age where my high school peers are dying. He loved football. He loved it.

He was insane with love for the football. So was his wife. [*Laughter*] She, though, to keep from going insane, she decided to join him and enjoy the games. [*SL laughs*] Other—up to that time, she couldn't stand it. And he gave me a sweater with a big hog on it once. So I got this helmet—it was a helmet, [*unclear words*]—one time to wear it here to surprise him when he was eating our lunch or dinner right over there. [02:42:06] Yeah. I enjoyed the skill. I was lucky in that way that I was never upset if we lost. He was always upset when we lost, and he never did even go to school here. [*SL laughs*] But I just wanted to watch the players. It was always fun to see the perfect pass . . .

SL: Sure.

DB: . . . and catch and the great runs, and that was fun for me and him.

SL: It's still amazing to me that the mood of the state or the mood of those around you are kind of—it kind of ebbs and flows on how good the football team is.

DB: It does.

SL: Or how good the basketball team is or . . .

DB: Yeah, I think people are deeply affected by the—especially the football team. It's sort of a . . .

SL: What is the cultural . . .

DB: . . . a down year.

SL: . . . explanation. What is the sociological explanation of that. I don't know what that is.

DB: Well, lots of explanations. The obvious one is that Arkansas ju—we just have an inferiority complex [*SL laughs*], and so we've got to have a team and . . .

SL: We've got—need to . . .

DB: . . . beat up on somebody and win. [*Laughter*] And so if we don't win, then it's tough.

SL: Yeah.

[02:43:22] DB: This—the athletic director here fired a coach after the first game one time.

SL: Yeah. Jack Crowe.

DB: That his name? Isn't that awful?

SL: Yeah.

DB: And he had a . . .

SL: I was working for him at the time.

DB: Did you? And he had a [*SL laughs*] $3 million contract or something that . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: It was just crazy to me. The whole enthusiasm for it seems

crazy, especially when I know what we could do with the money for education. That's the—or any other social services. And that's one of my main arguments about US militaries and empire is what we could have done with that money. And the empire seems to me comparable to my base [DB edit: radio station]. That would be the miniscule example, but the whole damned operation was not necessary, too, I think, if the history is read properly. The invasions, I mean, and the interventions. And Fulbright thought that, too.

SL: All right, let's take a break.

[Tape stopped]

[02:44:28] SL: Okay. Dick, we're coming back from another break. We've gotten you and Jo and your two children back to Fayetteville. You've come back for a number of reasons. Both your parents are getting older, and you've been spending your time traveling back and forth to Harrison. You are becoming more and more integrated into the campus life here. You're kind of acting as host for football games for your friends and families that come into town. Tell me about the students that you're finding when you get back to Fayetteville, and what is it that you're teaching now when you come back to Fayetteville?

DB: I'm a assistant professor of English, then associate and full

professor. From the very beginning, I taught nineteenth-century British literature, which was my specialty. I taught romantic poetry, British romantic poetry, the British novel of the nineteenth century, British nonfiction prose. I also taught world literature, which I enjoyed doing. That was for freshman—introductory course. So it was just basic departmental disciplinary courses, all of which I enjoyed very much.

[02:46:01] SL: And these were all undergraduate programs?

DB: No, some of the courses, because we have a Ph.D. here, so I was teaching both undergraduates . . .

SL: And graduates.

DB: . . . and graduate students. So a lot of our courses—'cause we don't have that many students, a lot of our—some of our courses on the junior and senior level are open to both undergraduates and graduate students.

SL: And did you find the quality of student to be good here?

DB: I did. And especially the undergraduates were like those that I'd seen before in Missoula and in Bellingham. Kids who had entered another world. And their parents weren't compelling them to go in any particular direction. They were open. And that is the immense expense of the US system but the immense delight and liberality of the American system that you don't have

to enter college with your degree already determined. You don't have to, at the age of—around junior high on the basis of a test determine or decide what you're going to do for the rest of your life. So the students are—were open to learning as they were trying to discover who they were. And as I say, that's expensive business, and it's late in life in—compared to some countries.

SL: Right.

DB: But it's good for teaching. Good for a teacher. It was fun, the extent to which there were students like that.

[02:47:53] SL: Now, had the creative writing program began . . .

DB: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . about the time that you . . .

DB: Oh! No, they came a year or so later.

SL: Right.

DB: And I—Jim Whitehead and Bill Harrison.

SL: Yes. Did you become friends with them, too?

DB: They were good friends of mine.

SL: And I know the quality of their students were quite remarkable, too. I just wonder if . . .

DB: Excellent. They've had—well, I couldn't count the number of students who have left here and written their own—had their own novels published or collections of poems.

SL: Well, did you all kind of share students? It would seem to me that the . . .

DB: Well, we had to.

SL: . . . level of expertise that—or your . . .

DB: See, it—they weren't—the students were in college. So they had to fulfill the college requirements. So the students were shared. They're not a sep—they were never a separate department at all.

SL: Right.

DB: Now, on the graduate level then, if they're taking an MFA when we started that here, then that's—that does separate the students considerably. I think they're taking only their courses on the MFA level, and our Ph.D. students are taking only their courses. But on an undergraduate level, the writers and the other students are just mixed together. We have creative writing courses, and we have the history of literature courses.

[02:49:25] SL: So how [*TM coughs*] long did you teach here at the university? From when to when?

DB: Thirty-three years.

SL: My gosh, Dick.

DB: I taught from 1965 to . . .

SL: Ninety . . .

DB: . . . 1997.

SL: . . . seven.

DB: Does that come up to thirty-three years?

SL: I think that does. [*Laughter*]

DB: I don't know. I oughta recount it to make sure I'm saying the right length of time. And then I taught two years at Missoula and three years at Bellingham. [02:50:01] And then during that time, I taught one year—so when I say thirty-three years here, cancel one year because one of those years I taught in Macedonia. I had a Fulbright teaching award to teach in Macedonia. And I'm glad I remembered that before we got completely away from this period in my life because that was maybe the happiest year of all of our lives. We were—I chose this place because it was different. It was ruled by a communist and a communist dictator who was benign. This was a combination of features that were unimaginable to me. I hated dictators. [*SL laughs*] And communists, of course, I was plenty wary with, having lived—grown up in this country.

SL: Brainwashed against . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . Communism from the beginning. Yes.

[02:51:00] DB: And then there was a huge Muslim popula—and

the—there were Caucasians there, and their religion was eastern—Byzantine, Eastern Catholicism. And they were the rulers. They had control. And—but a lot of Albanians, a lot of Muslims from Albania and other places. Kosovo almost entirely Albanian. Was—that was one province. And they were—that was a mix and a clash that just enthralled me. I just never had seen anything like that. It was so different from my world in Harrison and Fayetteville and Missoula and Washington that it was a [*SL laughs*] dig every day. And the children liked it too. They agreed to go to a local school, but learning the Cyrillic alphabet and learning that language, Macedonian, was too much for them, so we homeschooled them that year. And then we learned that we could do that. We did a good job. They were able to go right on into their next year here.

[02:52:29] SL: Now, how old were they when you were there?

DB: In—they would have been—oh, let's see, what would it have been in—that was nineteen—what'd I say? [Nineteen] sixty-eight and [19]69 . . .

SL: Okay.

DB: . . . when we were there. So Shelley [DB edit: Michelle] was something like six, and John would've been nine, something like that. They were just little kids.

SL: Very formative.

DB: And they had—we lived—I deliberately chose not to live where the other Fulbrighter lived in a—what looked like a mansion to me. We chose to live in a prefab house that had been brought in. Skopje was destroyed by an earthquake about ten years before we arrived. Other countries had given them prefabricated housing. So here we were in a working-class neighborhood with lots of kids, whereas the other Fulbrighter was down the center of town with this really nice home, but the kids weren't happy. There weren't any other kids down there. This was an older neighborhood. Well, they didn't know that. And I didn't know what we were getting into, either. But we were lucky. So our kids had a good time playing all the time. I've got a picture in one of my albums—and maybe that's what Scott will find. I hope he got the right album—of our kids playing in the yard, playing cars in—'cause we took a bag of toy cars with us that our kids liked to play with. And there they were. And Shelly told me, my daughter told me, just the other day when—at Thanksgiving that she remembered having so much fun day after day playing in the back yard with kids she couldn't speak to. But they played together, had a good time, and sign language and grunts and groans, and however little children

worked it out. And they would come outside our apart—our little prefab early in the morning and cry, "Mee-shell!" I can still hear the voices for her to come out—and John—to play. [02:54:49] So this was good for me. Jo has said many times it was the best thing for her because it was so unstructured. I was a Fulbrighter. I wasn't having to go to faculty meetings. I didn't have to advise students. I didn't have to teach many courses. So I could just prepare as much as I wanted. And of course, I'm a—just a—I read all the time anyway, and it was just a wonderful teaching job and a wonderful social life. The faculty members were very nice to us. And the chairman was a young woman married to an artist who—he was very nice to us. They took us around. And one of our neighbors, he'd come by once a week to help us shop. It—they were all just very friendly and helpful there. We felt welcome there. And the school teachers were going to do with Johnny what ours do here. I mean, and Shelley—do here. That is, help 'em.

SL: Yeah.

DB: They were gonna take 'em. There's a lot of extra work . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . in taking a foreigner . . .

SL: Well, of course.

DB: . . . who can't speak the language but they . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:56:03] DB: So we had a really positive experience there. I can't think of much—the only thing that I can think negative was that we were arrested six, eight, nine, ten times out on the highway by the equivalent of the highway police. And I think that was because they kept the fine. They fined you right there, and you had to pay 'em in cash, and if you didn't have cash, you were in deep trouble. And I remember one day we were stopped—there was a whole line of cars. And they had a little—a wand, we called it, said stop on it in Macedonian. And the man came up to our car, and he was holstered. He had a weapon. And Jo called him some names that made me cringe. [*Laughs*] And she was so mad at him she called him some names. But maybe she knew that he couldn't understand what she said because he didn't whip his gun out and shoot me. But that's the only—isn't that—that's a good year, see, if that's the only . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . bad thing I can think of. [02:57:21] No, here's another bad thing. I met an artist and bought one of his paintings and brought it back here, and my daughter has it—who had been put in prison for two years, as I recall, because a snitch had turned

him in for saying something bad about Tito. You know, calling him a fraud or whatever he called him.

SL: Right.

DB: And called him dictator. And this—there were snitches all around. It was a police state. So that's bad. That's bad, but all my students seemed to be free and thinking and enjoying life and looking forward to a future and looking forward to getting out of their parents' homes. 'Cause they were all poor, so they had to bundle up there.

SL: Well, that's . . .

DB: But they were a good bunch who really wanted to learn. I took over and taught *On the Road*, Kesey's *On the Road*. They just thought this was wondrous, and I did, too. I learned it was a good novel. I just took it because it told about America.

SL: It was a travelogue.

DB: It was a travelogue, yeah. [*SL laughs*] It was a good novel. They liked that. It was a really good teaching year. [02:58:41] And we learned all about Macedonian and Yugoslavian art because of the—because of my boss's husband. His son painted that [points to the right] painting there. And over in that corner you see [turns in chair to point to the back corner]—am I turning around and I shouldn't be?

TM: No, you're fine.

SL: That's fine.

DB: Over in the corner is a wooden statue—he not only did marble, huge, gigantic marbles, but he did wood, too, and that's the story of the tsar called Samuel of the area of Macedonia who took off a hundred thousand troops and was defeated, and on the march—and the enemy—that'd be Persia, probably. Yeah. Blinded every hundredth man.

SL: Oh!

DB: No, that's backwards. Blinded ninety-nine out of every hundred and left one person to lead the others home. It's really a ghastly story, so I think that's what it is. And they—somebody had written an opera about it. And they had an opera house in Skopje, and we went to the opera. We couldn't understand a word, but it was wonderful to be there. And we were—even though they paid us in dinars, which meant we didn't have much money, we were rich, so we could go and get a box. This cost a dollar or something like that. So things—so that was probably a part of the enjoyment that we had a lot of flexibility. We bought a lot of art there. And that was pleasant. Which over here, we were unable to buy art.

[03:00:40] SL: I wonder if it might be time to talk about the

Fulbright program.

DB: If you wish. I'm ready.

SL: I mean, you were able to be a part of it. You got—you have to talk a little bit about Fulbright and his vision to sponsor or to get that through Congress, right? I mean, this is a—this used—a United States government program that was authored by Senator Fulbright.

DB: He deserves the approval that he has here in the United States just for that program alone. And it's the one that is always mentioned, and when they built the monument on the campus and brought the statue in . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . that was the only thing that was mentioned. And that's appropriate because it was an ingenious idea, and it did contribute to world peace. He's—throughout his books, he's proud of it, and justifiably so. And it's because of an underlying principle of empathy that I might have mentioned to you before, or compassion, that we will have peace if we can ever understand our enemies, if we can ever understand anyone who's different from us. We won't want to kill them as easily and readily if we can just understand them. And you l—can understand them if you live with them. And it's such a simple

idea. And I think it's such a true idea. And the government of the United States and the congress of the United States went along with the idea.

[03:02:33] SL: Did you ever get to meet Senator Fulbright?

DB: No, I never did. And I—it was my fault because he came to Fayetteville, but I don't think I ever went to him and—to shake his hand. But you know, he may not have been back here after I went to Macedonia. Nineteen sixty-eight. But anyway, it would be in such a circumstance at the chancellor's house or something in a circle that I didn't ordinarily associate with. And so—but anyway, I missed it. But I'm one of his great admirers here.

SL: I know that. I know that.

DB: The Fulbright program put in action the idea that we can have world peace if we just will get to know another person. Other persons, and especially enemies. So it's not too—it's sort of attached—it's a little bit connected with Jesus' idea of loving . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . or trying to love your enemies. [03:03:44] I'll tell you a story . . .

SL: Okay.

DB: . . . out of one of his books. He—this was ten years after the

Fulbright program. This was twenty or thirty years after the Fulbright program. It occurred to him during the height of the cold war that we would tone it down if Russians and Americans would get together. Not just US and Turkey, and US and Macedonia, or US and England. Especially US and England. They're not our enemies. US and Soviet Union. If we could bring a lot of them over here and if a lot of us would go over there, it would maybe end the cold war. He was very hopeful with the idea. But Scoop, Senator Scoop Jackson, hated the Russians so intensely that he—well, according to Fulbright, he engineered the defeat of the bill, so that was never tried. And I know he was right, and we have seen that play out. I have seen that play out. I've read about it being—happening that the knowledge of another country blunts the eagerness to kill them. And like the Vietnamese war is a wonderful example of this that we gradually went into that war. It wasn't that all at once. Gradually—like Iraq. We gradually went into that war knowing absolutely nothing about those folks, and not at the University of Arkansas, either. [*Cat meows*] And not in a ten year war did we have a single course at the University of Arkansas on Vietnamese culture or history or literature. I was in the literature department. We could have done that. Something

like it. So we let down, the whole country let down, in trying to do what he believed in is to know your enemy. Not to know your enemy in order to kill the enemy, but to spare the enemy, to understand the enemy.

SL: And you spare yourself.

[03:06:08] DB: And you spare yourself. Yes, think of it. Over 50,000 of our own troops and 3 million Vietnamese. Well, this has really stuck with me, and it was an idea that—it seems so commonsensical that I didn't know that Fulbright had said that in a book that I didn't read until later on. *The Price of Empire* is one of his last books, and he describes this conflict with Scoop Jackson and his sadness that he wasn't able to get that a—made a part of the Fulbright program, that is, that you make a point to have Fulbright exchanges to countries that are your enemies. So we should be exchanging with North Korea. We should have been exchanging with Iran and all along. And who are the other—what's the other axis of evil and—Iraq.

SL: Sure.

DB: Although we might have had a Fulbright program with Iraq. I don't know. I'm not sure about that.

SL: I'm not either.

DB: But we didn't with the others. And well, especially with Iran

since we overthrew their prime minister, president, I guess it was called. So this was a great thing that he did. But what I'm getting to is that he did so much more. And to only acknowledge his Fulbright exchange program is to leave out so much of his peace program. [03:07:52] For example, he was a strong admirer of the United Nations. And he laments as he watches the gradual erosion of support for the United Nations in our country by leaders, which has then trickled down to, I think, to the people in general. I haven't seen a poll about the United Nations, a poll of the populace, but I suspect it's not very high. And it's been under attack, and it came under severe attack under Bush and Cheney when they appointed Mr. Bolton to be our representative. He did everything he could to sabotage the United Nations. A terrible man. And terrible policy. But Fulbright loved the United Nations, as he would.

SL: Sure.

DB: United Nations was a place, he says, to help the weaker nations deal in a—with a world in which it's ruled by the strong nations. And he added to that.

[03:08:57] SL: I guess the Security Council is really the—a problematic area . . .

DB: It is.

SL: . . . for making the United Nations do its work.

DB: It is, but Fulbright thought that even with that that it was a glorious—it was a wonderful organization. He thought we could work that out with the Security Council in individual cases and—for example, the response of the United Nations to the British and French and Israeli takeover of the Suez Canal. Well, that was a good thing that they rescued Egypt and its canal from the depredations of these violators of the UN Charter. So he—so Fulbright was not so put off by the Security Council as I had always been and, really, still am. He thought that despite that it was such a good organization that we ought to fund it and we ought to support that in every way we could, which we haven't done.

SL: We haven't done. We still don't pay our dues, do we? Our fees.

DB: I'm hoping that we finally did. The Russians paid and . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: But that's back to the [19]80s, so I don't know what we're doing right . . .

SL: I don't think we do.

DB: . . . at this moment.

SL: I don't think we have been.

DB: But that's only one example of the multifariousness of Fulbright's

peace program, peace and justice program. It affected and it was directed—it reached out in many directions to bring about peace in addition to his exchange program.

[03:10:49] SL: Well, as you're working at the university, your interests start to expand outside of the university community as well. You start to get involved in the idea of world peace. I—maybe the ACLU, is that right? And—I mean, there are a number of efforts that you . . .

DB: Well, I'm glad you mentioned the ACLU. I separate it a little bit because the ACLU is devoted to strictly our national league of affairs about rights. The Bill of Rights.

SL: Yeah.

DB: But sure, that's connected 'cause it's a subdivision of human rights, and Fulbright is a person deeply committed to the rights of people everywhere. All people. He's—often is—when he's referring to humans and all and people, he's referring to all the peoples of the world, all the nations. He admires the United Nations. So he was somebody who you could count on, and I'm—I've lost my train of thought there for a moment—what you were asking me.

[03:12:09] SL: Well, I—your home is here in Fayetteville, and while you were—have—before you retired, even, I think that you were

starting to get more and more involved . . .

DB: I was.

SL: . . . with . . .

DB: I got off the ACLU.

SL: Yeah.

DB: I am a cofounder of the ACLU affiliate of Arkansas and a cofounder of the chapter here in Fayetteville, and so that my support for human rights and against Jim Crow for the civil liberties and these—and the liberties of people in the United States and everywhere was forming long ago. It was gradually developing. But I guess one of the things about teaching here was that I was pushed very strongly to keep within my disciplinary boundaries. I taught twenty years—not just literary art but literary style, which was linguistic. So we call it stylistics. I spent twenty years editing a magazine that had to do with the minute study of sentences and word choice in works of art. And that kept me very busy. I was teaching full time, and I was editing a magazine, and it had to do with literature and not peace and war. [03:13:48] However, we did have a master's program, an interdisciplinary master's program, in the College of Arts and Sciences. And through it I was able to start a course I called, in the 1970s, World War III in which I brought in people

from all over the university, including the ROTC professors, to talk about US policies and our bases abroad and the Pentagon budget. To talk about the causes and the prevention of war. And that was a course I created. And just before I retired—and that course lapsed. Before I retired, I taught a course called Peace and War with professor Mark Cory, a very smart person who cared . . .

SL: I know Mark.

DB: . . . about peace and war. And very smart. And he, unfortunately, then retired, too, so it's not going on that I—up there. But I managed, here, to teach other courses, and the university, that is, was flexible to me. And I was able to teach courses that especially concerned me in addition to my regular discipline in—which I was hired to do, and which I enjoyed doing.

SL: Yeah.

DB: So while I was here, that's what I—that's—it was a limited attention to the world affairs that have become so important to me now. We just—when you're in a discipline—when you're in a department at a university, it's pretty binding. It's a little bit difficult to get—unless you have interdepartmental programs, and they're expensive. They're more expensive. It—to—

multiple teaching, two teachers at a course, it's just very difficult to do, and they're intended to be for small classes and so on.

SL: Yes.

[03:15:55] DB: So I didn't have a lot of opportunities, but I had some, and I appreciate the university for permitting that. Now that master's program in interdisciplinary studies, it was cancelled eventually, I'm sorry to say. I hope some day they'll bring that back so that peep—teachers like me will have a way to teach outside their department or connecting their department to other departments 'cause I liked that. But then when I retired, I decided, although I had had such a happy life as a teacher in the traditional way that I've described, I decided I would explore another life. And so I turned away from my teaching to explore, even though I brought home all—not all my books. They're at the library, Mullins, but many books and all my notes thinking I would return to it, maybe teach at a junior college or something like that. Go move somewhere else. I knew some people did that. And so I became a board member of several organizations. Boards are always short of people who will help them. Desperately short, often. And so I was on the board of a theater that was here. It's no longer here. Of the television station, the community access television, and several

other boards, and enjoyed them. They were all worthwhile activities that ought to be done. [03:17:49] But not one really grabbed me as something that I might turn to for the rest of my life. And I'd been thinking a long time about the lack of a book that put together all the peace organizations in America. And what would it be like if we all communicated with each other? What kind of power we might have. Would it be enhanced if we could all know about each other and have their phone numbers, and the names of their officers, and their locations, the mailing addresses, a photo. And that's what I did for the next four years. I prepared a book, compiled a book, called the *Peace Movement Directory*. Mexico—North America. Mexico, United States, and Canada. I was on the phone and on the email every day talking to people and finding out what they were doing, getting what their mission was, getting photographs, finding monuments. I have [DB edit: describe] over a hundred monuments for peace that I had found from Mexico City to Toronto. And it was a wonderful four years. It—pretty confining. But I could get up and do activities. And that book was published in 2000, and I was very, very pleased at—I had a sense that the peace movement was strengthened because they could get together, they could communicate with each other so

well. I have no proof, though, that that's what actually happened. I mean, I can't measure a great uprising for peace [*laughs*] after it was published. But at least they were able to communicate and share ideas and explore together if they wish to do so. That was 2000. [03:19:49] And then I started OMNI in 2001.

SL: Well, let's talk about OMNI. This is the OMNI Center for Peace?

DB: Yes.

SL: Let's talk about that organization. What is it that happens there? What is their thrust?

DB: A doctor—a medical doctor and I—who'd been a doctor at—who was retired tired from being a doctor at Native American in—reservations. What you'd call a public health doctor was what he was. I had known him at the Unitarian Fellowship for many years. And he and I had the same complaint about the militarism of our country and the imperialism of our country that we had both—we're about the same age, and we had both watched develop since World War II.

SL: And what was his name—is his name?

DB: His name was Copp. *C-O-P-P* was his last name. Doctor Copp.

SL: Kay.

DB: And I'll think of his first name . . .

SL: Okay.

DB: . . . in a moment, I hope.

SL: That's all right.

[03:20:53] DB: So we had talked too much, too long [*SL laughs*] in which we finally said to each other, "We can do this." We never had, either one of us, done it. We hadn't organized a peace organization. And we didn't know what this would turn out to be. So we just did it. And maybe good things sometimes happen by fools. [*SL laughs*] We just did it, and the wonderful Presbyterian church on campus, Presbyterian Ministry, it's called, on Maple Street . . .

SL: Maple.

DB: . . . a beautiful, beautiful building.

SL: Yep.

DB: They did not have a large program, so they had space for us there. And they gave us—we rented at extremely reasonable rates—they—we—they rented a room to us and a big meeting room downstairs outside our office room and a kitchen and the whole building when we needed it if we were having a big meeting or a rally or something like that. And the kitchen was essential because I intuited—'cause I had no experience, but I intuited that we oughta cook a lot. We oughta eat a lot

together, that this would just be basic and helpful to us, and it turned out to be really helpful.

SL: It's—there is something placing your feet under another's table.

DB: Really good. Really good, it turned out to be. [03:22:34] You may have known Marion Orton.

SL: Absolutely.

DB: Did the two of you know Marion?

SL: Absolutely.

DB: She was on our board, and she came every month, loyally, with a dish—cooking—with her son, Billy . . .

SL: Yep.

DB: . . . who helped her make films of our activities. She would film them, and he would do the editing for it. They were quite a team. I loved her.

SL: She was also on the board of Open Channel, Fayetteville Open Channel.

DB: Yes, she was, and very influential in city affairs. I went to the wonderful celebration of Marion down at the recycling center last month.

SL: Well, now, was she mayor at one point?

DB: She was mayor for a little while.

SL: Yes.

DB: Yeah. She was. She's extraordinary lady. Open to all kinds of new experiences. Trans-Siberian Railroad, you know. I think she took that. Yeah, that was it. [*SL laughs*] She just did so many things. Or anyway, if it wasn't that, she did things like that. She was amazing person. [03:23:43] So we [DB edit: Dr. Copp and I] began it. And that was before the invasion of Afghanistan. So for several months we were simply getting organized, getting our philosophies together, the two of us giving talks. The news media were interested. It's news. We were news. And so we got some coverage that I had not expected and was grateful for. And then I can't remember that first summer what we did, but we had plenty to do. We—the nation was already at war, had been at war, and they wanted—our leaders clearly wanted to get rid of the Vietnam syndrome. That was being talked, and Clinton had bombed Serbia against the UN constitution, the UN Charter. Killed a lot of innocent people. People have forgotten that here. And so we had plenty to do as a peace organization. And then we invaded Afghanistan. That was illegal. That's against the charter. The nation of Afghanistan—the Nuremburg trials and the UN Charter, done about the same time, both said that the worst crime that can be committed is one nation invading . . .

SL: Invading another.

DB: . . . another nation illegally because of the ramifications of it, the numbers of people killed and made homeless, and so on. [03:25:24] And so we opposed that war. And we've opposed all the wars because they haven't been legal. First place—and they have been inhumane, unjust, and in every other words that we could think of, we've opposed these—we opposed the wars. So September of 2001, OMNI had really plenty to do, and we had lots of people joining us then because people do get exacerbated and more committed when there's super outrages . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . like that. We did what a peace organization was supposed to do, and obviously the majority of people in America didn't agree with us. That invasion of Afghanistan was popular at the beginning. So we tried to stand for peace, world peace, that is, justice, that is, social and economic justice that is against racism, against inequality, or at least egregious inequality of wealth, which—it continues to develop. From what I'm reading, it's just worsening.

SL: Yeah.

DB: And so Mr. Copp, Dr. Copp, and I had plenty to do and it—we felt, both of us, very happy that we had found something to do

after a lifetime of doing something we were happy to do. But we wanted to do—well, he couldn't continue, I think. [03:27:08] I probably could have. I have a colleague over there who's still—who was still teaching last year. Lyna Lee Montgomery had served the department and helps at Montgomery, and Professor Leo VanSyke, he worked for several years after he retired just for the department. I could have done that. But I was looking out for something different. And so Dana Copp . . .

SL: Dana.

DB: . . . and I got along very well [*SL laughs*], and the organization just grew in itself because I had a philosophy not of running an organization from the top down but to see if we could find people who were very strongly committed to something and knew about it. I mean, they were the pros. And people who would come to us and say, "OMNI should," then I started saying, "You're the person. I can't be committed and knowledgeable about everything. You can do it." And sometimes, not the most of the time, but sometimes, they'd say, "Okay. I'll try it." Because I'd always say I, that is, and OMNI when I was president there, "We would back you up." [03:28:34] So I didn't run the anti-Afghan war and the anti-Iraq wars protests, demonstrations. I didn't run them. Other people did it. I would sit in on the meetings,

maybe. But other people took it over and became OMNI. And to this day we still have, to a large extent, that. We have a president, a wonderful president, named Gladys Tiffany. She can't do all the things that we do. We have now dozens of programs. But there are lots of people who have come forward and said, "I will do it. I will take care of it, I'll organize it, if you'll help me, and if I don't know how to help—how to do it, if you'll help me learn how to do it, then I will do it." And some of it comes from the top down. I've started programs, and she has started programs, but we couldn't do it all and—but others, then, have done it, and that's the way I think OMNI has been strong, and no one has received any money. No one has ever been paid a dime. It's all been volunteer, and as I mentioned to you earlier, it's been volunteers who are of the middle-lower class income . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . levels. Not Marion. She was a part of more of the—she had her own income and retirement. But it wasn't a lot.

SL: Right.

DB: It was a retirement income. But that's—somehow that seems to have worked. And you give trust. You trust people to do it. You don't think that you've got the idea, entirely. Somebody else

can have the idea, but you're there to help and intervene if something really goes bad. But I've made more mistakes than [*SL laughs*] anybody else who's—who has volunteered to do something that—things happen that weren't foreseen. So that's the way it's gone. And I'm—I think that's been a very good i—very good approach. [03:30:45] Like, we have a committee on global warming, climate change.

SL: Kay.

DB: We started way back around 2006 . . .

SL: Kay.

DB: . . . meeting. And it was under several people who were really concerned about environment. Not Gladys. Not me. I think I was president when it started. And we met at a folk singer's house, and we found a climatologist down at—down south of Fort Smith. Haxton—let me think. [DB edit: Hackett] No. Some little tiny town . . .

SL: Mm-kay.

DB: . . . south of—but he [DB edit: Robert McAfee] was a graduate Ph.D. and climatologist living down there with his family, out of work. And but then everyone just started gathering. Here was at the beginning of the national protests, and we were a part of that, and we did a good job, and I'm very proud of it.

[03:31:48] The—we pushed, with an organization in Little Rock, we pushed the governor to form a commission to recommend to the legislature. So our—we pushed hard, and our representatives went down there, and there was big meeting and—with the electrical companies on the commission.

SL: Right.

DB: They studied thirty, forty different ideas. They recommended, finally—they had a consensus and agreement for eighteen. That is, groupies for gas warming up here and environmentalists and representatives from the electrical company and corporations, and we agreed on eighteen recommendations. And it went to the governor, went to the legislature, and they took three, admittedly the most innocuous, the easiest, mildest of all. So we didn't accomplish a lot. But in the context of the United States at the time, we did a lot. And we continue that, pushing local officials to be informed about what climate change is and to do their duty for the citizens of the state because climate change will affect us all even in safe-seeming little Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[03:33:16] SL: [*Laughs*] Yes, it does. I—it's amazing how the weather has changed and continues to change.

DB: Yes.

SL: The dynamics are so broad now.

DB: It's so obvious now.

SL: Yeah.

DB: I don't see how anyone can deny it. But by 2005—that's the first book I read published in 2005 called *The Weather Makers* by Tim Flannery. And in there he described the island nation, Pacific island nation, of Tuvalu, and already the salty ocean was rising high enough, not to submerge them yet unless there's a big wind . . .

SL: Right.

DB: . . . at the time of a tide, but submerging their water. It was getting' that high, and they were already beginning to talk to New Zealand about dual citizenship when they had to leave there. Now that book's published in 2005. So knowledge was out there for, say, the people on The Weather Channel who call themselves meteorologists, and they're just stand-up voices advertising goods as far as I can see. But now they're using the word—well, not warming yet. [*SL laughs*] That seems to be something that's touchy about them, but that there are weather changes, and they're extreme weather changes, and they're presenting them. [03:34:42] So that's just one thing. Our na—our—the title of OMNI was Peace, Justice, and Ecology. And for

the first few years, it was Peace and Justice with those invasions. But by nin—by the middle of that decade, there were plenty of us in OMNI who had read enough books or even one good book about this, and we knew what was going to happen because these scientists gave us the evidence that early, just wonderful scientific evidence. Art Hobson, a local scientist, has been telling the public that in the newspaper for a long time.

SL: Decades.

DB: Just as long as other.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Well, certainly for the . . .

SL: At least a decade.

DB: . . . last decade.

SL: Yeah.

DB: About warming.

SL: Yeah.

DB: That's true. He's some of the person who read books from—by scientists. [03:35:36] And so I'm glad that we've been part of all that, and that's only a fraction of the subjects that we have dealt with. Because of my system, we have—we've been open to everyone's suggestion. I mean, they'll come to us and say, "Well, now, what about homeless people? What do we oughta

be doing about homeless people?" Well, I didn't know anything about homeless people and almost nothing now. So I would say that is something we should be doing something about—homeless people and working with the organizations here that do such a good job, like Peace at Home. Peace at Home is not homeless, it's battered, isn't it? But there is one organization—well, the Salvation Army . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . you might say. And so we have that presence, that awareness, in OMNI. People who, at meetings, will say, "Have you thought about the homeless?" In considering this activity that we're doing—we're over here doing—organizing for something. "Well, what about the perspective of the homeless?" I—there are two or three people who never let us forget that. Well, that's good. I like that. [03:36:51] So we—peace, world peace, and all that it entails. Inspired by Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Jesus and all the peace makers of the world, we try to publicize them. And course, there are thousands upon thousands . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . of real peacemakers who won't kill. And we now are at a point where we can feel that we understand somewhat what

we're doing and why and can maybe build in new directions such as climate change, which is a major activity of ours now. In a nutshell, that would be OMNI. Now, what kind of questions might you have, if you wish.

[03:37:53] SL: Well, mainly I was interested in where you have gotten to in your life and what you have taken on. And OMNI seems to be so broad in its scope that really the questions are endless, I mean . . .

DB: Endless.

SL: . . . any . . .

DB: But now, most of us in OMNI tackle one or two projects. Maybe only one, and they will be counted on to make sure that that happens. Gladys, as the president, tries to not oversee, not to run, but at least to be . . .

SL: Aware.

DB: . . . aware of everything and to do some connecting and coordinating. Although she runs some. [03:38:49] Like she, herself, started a women's discussion group. And that's every Sunday afternoon once a month, I think, and other things like that. Our new president is named Fernando Garcia. He—now I got confusing—confused there—or confusing there because we always just had a president and a vice president. Now we have

a president and a director, and Gladys is the what we'd call CEO or something of us. She's the manager.

SL: Okay.

DB: And Fernando Garcia is the president, who supervises the monthly meeting. Well, he's Hispanic, by his name, and he is interested in justice for minorities . . .

SL: Well . . .

DB: . . . not just Hispanics, so he brings to us, here, that [*SL laughs*] emphasis of peace, justice, and ecology.

SL: Equality.

DB: Well, peace, justice, equality . . .

SL: Yeah.

DB: . . . you might say.

SL: Yes.

DB: Because all of us feel that a great evil is when you get rich and poor too separated. And as matter of fact there's more than one book that—by sociologists that spell this out that the—that a country is warped when there are too many really poor, and then there're just a few people running the country, and that's demoralizing as hell. And I think a lot of people believe that that's what's happened to us, people who keep up and study and are aware of how we've changed from World War II when—after

the Roosevelt administration, we had narrowed that gap considerably between the rich and the poor, and now it's just expanded and is expanding.

SL: Logarithmically.

DB: Yes.

SL: It's amazing.

DB: Yes.

[03:40:52] SL: Well, how many folks—do you have a count of how many folks are involved with OMNI?

DB: We do. We do, but it's always—and I . . .

SL: Fluctuates?

DB: . . . didn't do a very good job of getting this formalized. We . . .

SL: I'm . . .

DB: . . . we don't have a strict system of "You be a member, and you pay us money to be a member." We do ask people to pay us money to be a member. But some people can't afford the—to pay and then some people lapse. So I can't tell you exactly, but our last mailing list was 800.

SL: Oh, that's great. That's significant.

DB: And but we're always short of money because none of us in that—in this movement are trained fundraisers. We're not public relations people. I would like to have some of those people

come and help us. [*Laughs*] But we're not. And so that we never have had a very large budget. But since no one's paid, it doesn't take a very much money for us to function. [03:42:03] Now we do have our own house now. We have a building. And Trey, I think you mentioned . . .

SL: Lee Avenue. Yeah.

DB: On Lee Avenue. Didn't you say that?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DB: And so we have our own house, and that's used by all kinds of people. The Quakers meet there. I notice different groups meet there. We have a monthly folk song evening, although it tries to emphasize peace and justice and ecology. So that takes money.

SL: I would assume there's an email listserv or—where . . .

DB: There is.

SL: . . . folks can join, and their . . .

DB: There is.

SL: . . . announcements are made through that as to what happens when on your calendar and . . .

DB: Yes. Yes, it is.

SL: And then there's probably . . .

DB: And her new . . .

SL: . . . a website.

DB: . . . her newsletter is called *What's Happening?* [03:42:53] But it is so—it tries to cover—it tries to be so comprehensive that I set out after I—after Gladys took the presidency, I set out to create newsletters on diverse topics. And I do newsletters now on dozens of topics on the assumption, and this goes back to James Madison, on the assumption that only an informed citizenry can create a democracy and keep it. I'm adding in Ben Franklin there. It—yeah, it's a great democracy if we can only keep it. [*Laughs*] And we—and probably a lot of people today feel that after what has happened in the violations of our constitution and of the UN Charter that we're not keepin' it. And so the struggle now is to try to bring us back to adherence to the Bill of Rights and to end the fear that leaders who wish to manipulate the public have generated for all of us. War on terror. What is that? [*SL laughs*] Well, is it anyone who threatens any one of the one—I mean, who, say, bombs or kills anyone on the 1,000 bases that we have now put all around the world, partly to encircle China. And in fact, that's right. There's a book on that. All of these bases—and how government policy incorporates those bases into the United States hinterland or equates them there.

SL: Yeah.

DB: They deserve protection. So we're spread all over the world, and now anything that happens to them, we need to go to war over. Well, it's insanity, and I'm hopeful and heartened by the number of people, and influential people, who are saying this, that we have really gone down the wrong road. [03:45:03] Some of the most influential people in the world are also arguing the abolition of nuclear weapons. Mr. Kissinger, for example, has now joined with other former high executives, saying "We'll never have it controlled unless we abolish them. As long as someone has the technology, the knowledge and the technology and the resources, we're going to be in danger. So—of nuclear winter." So these are all good developments. And the so—the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the—and Russia can only be thought to be good things.

SL: Yeah.

DB: Even though we still have tenacious, hostile, aggressive people. Fulbright just—is just wringing his hands over, in book after book, how they have driven us into these thoughtless, wasteful, bloody wars. And he's from Arkansas. So I feel I'm in good company.

[03:46:17] SL: That's right. [*DB laughs*] That's right. You know, while I'm thinking about it . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I want to get back to your family a little bit.

DB: Okay.

SL: It's getting a little bit late.

DB: It sure is.

SL: You have a couple of children, and you have some grandchildren.

DB: I do.

SL: And you have a great-grandchild on the way.

DB: I do.

SL: Do you wanna talk about any of those folks at all?

DB: My son is dead.

SL: Oh, okay. I'm sorry to hear that.

DB: Thank you. My daughter is—has been in advertising in Little Rock. When she graduated from UALR, she started her own business, just like that, and called it Deadline Graphics.

SL: Okay.

DB: Which I thought was a cute name.

SL: That's a cute . . .

DB: But that turned out to be harder than she thought.

SL: Well, of course.

DB: I think I remember this right. [03:47:12] So then she joined

advertising agencies in Little Rock. And one of them is very well known, but it's a big agency, but I can't remember. Another one is Snyder—was called Snyder Something Something. Jim—I knew his—one of his partner's name. But anyway, she got a job with that company and married one of the owners of that company. And then for a while they were in together. And now they're back in together working out of their home in Maumelle.

SL: Okay.

DB: So she has had a career of graphics and advertising. Her last public job was for the city of new—of North Little Rock in which she helped them start a collection, trash collection, program at apartment houses.

SL: Kay.

DB: They had—they have a—like we have a—what do you call it?

SL: Recyclings?

DB: A home, individual home, recycling program.

SL: Yeah.

DB: But they hadn't tried to—and I think similar to us, we haven't really tried to organize the businesses and the big apartment houses here. Comp—big apartment complexes. So she did that and had a good time making all the—doing the organizing. That's been her professional life, then. And her husband's

professional life also. His name is Pat Snyder.

[03:48:51] SL: And they have kids?

DB: Just the one girl, and she's my granddaughter who's now going to have a grandchild.

SL: All right.

DB: They don't know what the sex is yet. I think it's too early to know.

SL: And did your son have any children?

DB: No.

SL: No. Okay.

DB: No.

[03:49:13] SL: Okay. Now tell me about Jo. What has happened with Jo?

DB: She became the librarian—I think is the—I was trying to think if there's anything before. I've already mentioned about her jobs in the aircraft industry in California . . .

SL: Yes.

DB: . . . around Palo Alto. When she—when we moved back here, she was raising kids at first. And then she went to—she got a library degree at the University of Indiana in the summers.

SL: Okay.

DB: And then when that was finished, she got a job at Springdale

High School and retired as the librarian of Springdale High School. So that was her profession for her life. She enjoyed being a librarian, enjoyed being a—working in education.

SL: Okay.

[03:50:14] DB: Since then she's—since then—and that's been ten or more years ago that she retired. That's been fifteen years ago that . . .

SL: Wow.

DB: . . . she retired, probably. She has been retired, and has just enjoyed her life and her many friends and women friends and clubs, and she loves to play bridge and to travel and enjoys her friends. She has . . .

SL: That's good.

DB: . . . quite a few women friends. And she's a member of A.A., and that is a big part of her life, and a most positive part of her life and of everyone she tells me about. That's—that is a great organization. [03:51:06] Now she's my neighbor. [*SL laughs*] She lives a block away.

SL: Oh, that's right. Okay.

DB: When we got divorced, we owned a piece of property here. Is this something you wanna know, this kind of information?

SL: No, I mean, there—if you're comfortable talking about it, I'm

fine.

DB: And when we got divorced, we sat at that table right there and divided everything up in an hour. And we had this lot that we jointly owned. Well, after we got a divorce, we exchanged that once or twice when the other one needed some money. [*Laughter*] So we were always amicable.

SL: That's speaks very well.

DB: And she's my best friend.

SL: That speaks very well.

DB: And now she finally ended up with the lot, and so she built the house there. That's how it happened that she is on this lot, so it's kind of a chance accident that she's there. [03:52:02] But we are very fortunate that we had a lawyer. It was Phyllis Johnson, a former student of mine.

SL: Yes, I know Phyllis.

DB: And Phyllis is trained as a mediation lawyer, a family mediation lawyer. And Jo felt co—very secure with her, and I always admired her from her student days. So we worked out a divorce without getting angry.

SL: That's good.

DB: And Phyllis said that she had read somewhere that 98 percent of people who get a divorce want to murder the other person.

[*Laughter*] But we were spared that. And we—it was a good relationship, and we just needed to divorce at that time. But we're very good friends here. I'm glad to have her as my neighbor.

SL: That's so—that a very, very good way to make that happen.

DB: Yeah, people hear that, and young people are glad to hear that.

SL: Yeah.

DB: I recently have heard three accounts of young people getting a divorce, and it's hurtful to me. I just hate to hear it. And I—but I think when people get divorced, or at least if they're older, they need to get a divorce, and it will be better if they did. You can always get remarried.

[03:53:29] SL: That's right. [*Laughter*] Well, is there anything else that we need to talk about? Is there something that I didn't get to?

DB: I think, gosh, you covered most of my life. Yes. I think that's just fine.

SL: Well . . .

DB: I was invited to go to a international peace meeting in Japan, and it was very, very influential in my life, but there are quite a few things that have been influential that we haven't talked about. I became what I experienced, I think, and I was guided

by so many people. I've mentioned my teachers. But in Japan, I saw Hiroshima. I was already against that bomb, but I went to Hiroshima, and I saw their museum and their—the diorama and the last—the one standing building in—but even more important I went to Okinawa. And I learned all about that hideous battle. It's beyond belief. But it's, in my imagination, as bad as Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or Tokyo was even worse in the number of people killed that we bombed, I mean. [03:55:05] But in—but what strikes me about Okinawa is not the—not only the extraordinary ferocity and mercilessness of the battle on both sides, but the peace monument that was built at the end of the war by the people of Okinawa. It's composed of a—by the way, this is the south end. The battle was fought all the way to the end. They didn't give up. It was fought all the way to the end, and the last soldiers remaining were in caves facing the ocean, and our cruisers out there bomb—shot bombs at them, bombed them—they—what they called point blank from—those are cruiser shells. They're big things. And there were women and children in those 'cause they were escaping too because the Japanese had brainwashed their poor people to tell them that American soldiers ate Japanese children.

SL: Ah.

DB: That's what I learned there. They were just desperate. And so they were all desperate. The women jumped off the cliffs. I saw pictures of them jumping off the cliffs there. [03:56:20] Well, but despite all that, that horror, the people of Okinawa built a peace monument in which all of the Japanese soldiers, all the American soldiers, all the British soldiers—there was some quite a few of them there, too. All of the Okinawans, all the civilian Okinawans, all of the Korean slave laborers, all of them are given equal attention on gigantic black slabs of marble taken from some special quarry somewhere. That probably has affected me as much as anything. The ability of the Okinawans to reconcile themselves. They were innocent. I mean the people of Okinawa reconciled themselves to an atrocity that is beyond belief. And I'm still physically affected of—from being there. And at the—and these monuments, these huge slabs, half circle around facing the ocean on this cliff, and then there's this circular, concrete area, and in the middle of it is a flame burning eternally. And nearby is a museum of what happened to the Japanese people there. Of—the schoolgirls and the schoolboys were educated separately, and the schoolgirls and boys dressed in uniforms. And there was one whole area, one whole museum, you might say, of this—of the Japanese schoolgirls who were

killed during that battle just—but the picture of them in their uniforms. [03:58:23] So that's a model of bringing peace after hatred. There's a book entitled *War without Mercy* and—by—about the Pacific war. [DB edit: By John Dower] And on both sides, the propaganda totally dehumanized the enemy. And the treatment, the killing of prisoners, the torture of prisoners—but just the ferocity of the battles. This book lays it all out. And I read that a long time ago. John Dower is his name. And at Okinawa the people had overcome it. So I can say the Japanese people, and in the Japanese constitution—I think it's Article 9—it says Japanese will never arm and never invade any other country so—and we can take credit for that constitution. I think that we insisted upon that addition. But what happened in Okinawa, that was the Okinawan people, that monument down there, I mean. So that's the sort of thing that we have to leave out of the things that—all the different, specific things that affected my life and give me motivation and determination to continue. And doing something that I can't say to anybody I'm making any progress.

SL: Oh.

DB: As a matter of fact—no. In the last decade, two decades, one has to say and be realistic, things have worsened. I mean, the

invasions of all of these countries. But that doesn't deter me because I can rationalize and say, "Well, it could have been worse." [*Laughter*]

[04:00:21] SL: Well, before I let you go . . .

DB: Yeah.

SL: . . . is there a—you know, in liberal and conservative politics, I've always believed in this pendulum, that it floats back and forth across the middle and, you know, after . . .

DB: I did believe in that.

SL: But you don't anymore?

DB: I don't. Because I have found too many s—nations and cultures that have ended. They haven't swung back. So you're not suggesting that God has given us this pendulum, but that rather this is a pendulum in human affairs.

SL: Yes.

DB: And there've been too many cultures that are gone, and it wouldn't take—it doesn't take five—one minute to remember some of them even though you don't study history—as I don't study ancient history regularly. But just name the Roman and the Greek. And they were wiped out by bad leadership. Fulbright thinks—Fulbright is one among the historians of—he's not a Marxist—leaders make the decision. One or two or few.

And if they're bad decisions, they have doomed a whole nation forever. And that has been true in history. So I find the pendulum—I've had, of course, plenty of people say this to me. But what I find with that is, and I don't mean with you, but I have found with more questioning that they really feel sort of complacent about what's going to happen when—really, let's read the cards right, and let's tell the truth and not be afraid of the truth. The darkest truth. [04:02:17] And back to Thomas Hardy. He wrote a poem once, and he said before you try to initiate anything of importance—I'm really paraphrasing. Before you try to build your ethic, take a look at the worst. And that has guided me. Don't be afraid of the very worst. And that doesn't mean that you're going to become a doomsayer, but by God, you be realistic about what you're dealing with. And right now, it's climate change.

SL: Yeah.

DB: All the scientific books—I don't even really like to say it, but to adults you have to say it that the scientists are saying if we haven't done—made certain changes in the CO2 quantity in the atmosphere, we are going to have seas rising into Manhattan, and we're going to have droughts all over the Midwest. And so on, all over the world. Islands that are going to be submerged.

And that seems to me to be the truth. And it may be too late. And so I don't believe in the pendulum idea anymore. It was comforting, but I don't believe it. [04:03:47] But you see, I believe in human energy, human imagination, which literature taught me. The human imagination is the great savior. It's up to us to do it, and I think it will. It hasn't in some cultures, but the United States culture has been resilient. It has been a place where imagination has functioned. We've been really down, and we're—we can get back up. But in climate change we really got to get serious now. At least that's what the scientists are saying, and there's a consensus now through the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change. That was as—that was started by the UN in early 1990s. It—that is the building of the consensus of the scientists that there is warming, it is from humans, it is CO2, it is causing climate change, the seas will rise, the forests will burn hotter than ever before, we'll have extreme cold and extreme warmth, and so on. This is well known now, and there's 98 percent of the scientists' consensus now about it. I mean, but ten years ago there was 92 percent. So this is where adults need to be adult now in our country, and we must work at that. And we can do this.

[04:05:31] SL: I believe that, too. I believe that, too.

DB: I think it's a patriotic, American thing to say. [*Laughs*]

SL: It is. It is.

DB: Face reality and then do something about it. We're problem solvers. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's good, Dick. Dick, I'm gonna thank you.

DB: Yeah.

SL: Look, there's . . .

DB: Thanks for spending so long. I . . .

SL: Oh, come on.

DB: My God.

SL: Come on. I'm sorry . . .

DB: Five thirty here.

[04:05:53] SL: It's all right. There is one thing that we do at the end of each of our interviews.

DB: Okay.

SL: And you don't have to participate if you don't want to.

DB: Whatever you want to do.

SL: Well . . .

DB: And I want to be agreeable.

SL: . . . let me tell you before you say that.

DB: Oh, okay.

[04:06:05] SL: [*Laughs*] I turn you over to Trey, and I ask you to

look right straight at this lens here.

DB: Yes.

SL: And say your name. "I'm—my name is Dick Bennett, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

DB: Okay. I don't mind doing that.

SL: Okay. Well, I'm gonna get out of this . . .

DB: I stayed here—I was here most of my life.

SL: Well, you were born here.

DB: Yeah. And that doesn't finish the sentence, you see. You—the—I can qualify that sentence in my own mind, and so can viewers in any way.

SL: That's right.

DB: I am glad to be from Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas. [*Laughs, claps*]

SL: Well, you could do Fayetteville, Arkansas, but you should be glad that you—you should be proud that you came from Harrison. Harrison's . . .

DB: I am.

SL: Yeah. Or Bentonville or, you know . . .

DB: My family.

SL: Family. It's Arkansas.

[04:06:51] DB: I'm okay with this.

SL: Okay.

DB: I'm okay with this.

SL: I'm gonna get out of this chair so you don't look at me.

DB: Okay.

SL: After you say that sentence . . .

DB: You want me to come up there?

TM: No, no, you just stay right . . .

SL: No, just stay right there.

TM: . . . stay right there.

DB: Okay.

SL: After you say it, if you'll continue to look at the camera for a count or two.

DB: Yeah.

SL: That gives us . . .

DB: I am glad . . .

SL: . . . time to edit.

DB: . . . to be . . .

SL: My name is Dick Bennett . . .

DB: My name is Dick Bennett . . .

SL: And I'm proud to be from Arkansas.

DB: And I am proud to be from Arkansas.

SL: Yes.

DB: Okay.

SL: Like that. And Trey will direct you.

[04:07:14] DB: Will that make the senator happy?

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah, I'm sure it will.

DB: Well, I liked him, too.

SL: Okay.

DB: He was a good senator.

SL: He was.

DB: I heard him—I saw a film. It was in a documentary of some sort. It might have been Bumpers. But no, I'm pretty sure it was him. It was he. He was talking to a general, and he laid it on that general. It was about the Pentagon budget out of—completely out of control.

SL: I think that was David.

DB: And I've liked him ever since [*laughter*] I saw that.

TM: Okay.

SL: Okay. Y'all do your work.

DB: I am Dick Bennett, and I am proud to be from Arkansas. I can remember that.

TM: Okay, let's do it.

DB: I am Dick Bennett, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas.

TM: Okay, let's get one more, and don't lean forward so much.

DB: Oh, sorry.

TM: We're gettin' outta line a little bit. There we go.

DB: Okay.

TM: And one more.

DB: I'm Dick Bennett, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas.

[End of interview 04:08:17]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]