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

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Arkansas Memories

G. David Gearhart

Interviewed by John C. Davis

November 1, 2023

Fayetteville, Arkansas

Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at 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 ten 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 17th 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

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John C. Davis interviewed G. David Gearhart on November 11, 2023, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

John C. David: Today is Wednesday, November 1, 2023. I'm John Davis, and here with me is Dr. David Gearhart. Uh—we're conducting this oral history in the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Uh—David, on behalf of the Pryor Center, I wanna thank you for sitting down with us today.

David Gearhart: Thank you for having me. It's my pleasure.

JD: The Pryor Center's mission, as you know, [*DG clears throat*] is to collect Arkansas stories and preserve them for posterity—uh—and connect them to the public. And over the next few hours, you and I plan to discuss topics ranging from your family, childhood—uh—growing up—uh—particularly growing up in—in Arkansas and memorable moments in your life and work in order to capture your Arkansas story. Uh—so we'll—we'll start—uh—at the beginning. Uh—you were born in Fayetteville, that correct, on June 9, 1952?

DG: That's right. Yes.

JD: And—um—did you have—you have siblings, is that correct?

DG: Have three brothers. Uh—the ages are kinda crazy. Uh—a fourteen-year gap in my oldest brother and youngest brother. Um—youngest—uh—came along sort of as a mistake—uh—which we like to remind him of. But—um—yes, the—uh—three brothers, four boys. No girls in our family. My mother, I think, was holding out for a girl, but just four boys.

JD: A rambunctious household.

DG: It was indeed, yes. You know—uh—people talk about neighbors letting their dogs out in the morning. Well, they used to say the Gearharts let their boys out in the morning. [*Laughter*]

[00:01:38] JD: Uh—i—could you tell me wh—I'm sure we'll come back and discuss your—your siblings, your—your brothers, but could you tell me a little bit more about them?

DG: Sure. Um—my oldest brother—um—went to law school, went to the University of Arkansas undergraduate, then to law school at the university. And then—uh—practiced law—uh—here for a while in Fayetteville, and then went to Mountain Home, Arkansas. And he practiced law over there for many, many years and then ran to be the city judge or the, what he likes to call it, the—um—the—uh—judge that took care of parking. But it was actually—not district judge, but a judge there—uh—in one of the courts. And he did that for a number of years and retired—

uh—as a judge, and then moved to Florida. He lives in Florida now. [00:02:29] And then—uh—I have two younger brothers. The one that's five years younger than me is Doug Gearhart, and he had a wonderful career—uh—in New York City, where he worked for a Canadian, high-end—uh—women's clothing company called Lida Baday. Ran the—it's a Canadian company, and he ran the New York, American operations and did that for thirty-five years in New York City. Moved back here and is now retired. [00:02:56] And then my youngest, the mistake that we like to call—uh—him, Jeff Gearhart, worked for Walmart. He actually went to the—all of us went to the University of Arkansas—uh—got one degree or another. I didn't go to undergraduate here, but my—uh—siblings did. And my youngest brother, Jeff—uh—went to the university, got his degree, then went to law school and practiced law for a number of years, and then Walmart hired him, and he became the general counsel of Walmart, and then became an executive vice president over several things, and retired at age fifty-three. Uh—we like to say he's the smartest brother, but we don't tell him that. And he lives in Florida as well. So that's the—the Gearhart household.

JD: All very successful, professional careers.

DG: We were fortunate. We really were. And it's worked out very well for us.

[00:03:48] JD: Well—uh—if you would, please tell me about your parents.

DG: Well—um—my dad—um—was born in Fort Smith. Um—he grew up there until he was in about high school age. They moved here in 1940 to Fayetteville. My grandfather—uh—ran the *Southwest Times Record*—uh—a newspaper in Fort Smith, Arkansas. And as a matter of fact, he helped to start that paper back in the early part of the twentieth century. And—um—he came to Fayetteville to work for the Fulbright family, which owned the primary interest in the newspaper—uh—here, the *Northwest Arkansas Times*. And—um—so that's what got my family here to Fayetteville. Dad, born in Fort Smith, but pretty much grew up in Fayetteville, went to high school here in Fayetteville, then went to the University of Arkansas.

[00:04:38] My mother was from Webb City, Missouri. And she decided to come to Fayetteville because it was a safe environment. It was closer to come here from Webb City than it was to go to Columbia, the University of Missouri, or to Kansas City, or St. Louis, and her parents were looking for a safe environment. So she came here and went to the university, and

that's where they met, I believe, in their junior year. Uh—my dad—um—had a beautiful singing voice. He—um—he had a—um—Italian tenor voice. Um—the background of the family is that my grandmother—uh—is Italian. Uh—her parents, both of her parents immigrated to United States. She came here when she was—uh— actually she was born here—uh—but she was very, very young when she started speaking English. Uh—she spoke Italian for the first several years. And they came over to Fort Smith. They were working the mines in Oklahoma and—uh—her parents were from Rivarolo, Italy, which is very close to Turin. And—uh—so anyway, they came here. [00:05:55] On my grandfather's side, their heritage is—um—uh—from—uh—uh—Germany—uh—German area and some Italian and a mix-in of other things. And—uh—they'd been in this country for many, many years, even going back to the early 1700s. [00:06:14] But talkin' about my dad, he had a beautiful singing voice, and we have one record of him, actually a 78 record, of him singing the Lord's Prayer. And—um—we actually played it—my mom died recently at age ninety-seven, and—um—and—uh—we played it at—at her funeral. And—uh—wasn't a dry eye in the—in the place. So—uh—but they met here, got married, and—uh—that's really the heritage of how we—how we ended up in

Fayetteville.

[00:06:46] JD: What was your father's name?

DG: George.

JD: George. And . . .

DG: George Anthony Gearhart. I'm George David, and we've carried that George—we named our son George Brockmann. Brockmann is my wife's maiden name. And—uh—he goes by Brock. And then he named his son George Brockman Jr. and calls him George. So George—and then my—I guess it would've been my father's grandfather was named George. So the George name has continued for several generations.

[00:07:20] JD: That's wonderful. And—and your mother's name?

DG: My mother was Joan Van Hoose. Uh—Joan spelled *J-O-A-N*, which caused problems my whole life [*laughs*] in spelling. And the same thing when she gave me George David and I go by David. You know, that's been a problem, you know, also. But—um—sh—her name was—uh—Joan, *J-O-A-N*, Van Hoose, born in Webb City, Missouri.

JD: Mmm. And we discussed how they met at the university. And—and what did your parents do for a living?

[00:07:59] DG: My dad was the publisher of the newspaper here. Before him, his father ran the paper as general manager for the

Fulbright family. My family had a small interest in the paper. Uh—actually there was some closely held stock, and they had purchased some of that. [*Clears throat*] And so we had a minor interest in the newspaper locally, but the Fulbright family owned the paper. Uh—most of the stock in the newspaper. So he—uh—he came here to run the paper for the Fulbright family. Mrs. Fulbright, Roberta Fulbright, was the publisher at that time, and my grandfather ran the paper. Then Grandfather died in 1959, and my father took over as the—uh—uh—general manager and later—uh—was given the title of publisher. So from 1940 till about 1977—uh—the family ran the local newspaper.

JD: Mh-hmm.

DG: *Northwest Arkansas Times*. And my mother was a homemaker and raised four boys, which was a big job in itself. [*Laughs*]

[00:09:06] JD: Absolutely. So you—you're born in 1952, so you—you come up in Fayetteville in the [19]50s and [19]60s. Uh—for those listening or watching this—um—if they're looking at—at present day or even into the foreseeable future, Fayetteville's a very large town in—relative to other towns in Arkansas. At the time, though, when you're growing up, it would've been most notably, right, the host of the flagship university.

DG: Mh-hmm.

JD: And it would've been a relatively small town. Um—if you would, spend some time talking about your memories growing up in the—in that [19]50s, [19]60s ya—in that era of—of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:09:54] DG: Fayetteville, really, in those days, was a little mountain town, basically. Um—it was hard to get here. We didn't have any interstate into Fayetteville. We had to come over the mountain if we were comin' from south Arkansas or Little Rock. Most everything that had to do with the economy of Arkansas or the political environment was in Little Rock. I mean, Little Rock was the place. It was the capital and—um—that's where pretty much everything took place. Uh—at the time that I was a youngster, we didn't even have television from Little Rock area. That came later. Our stations were from Oklahoma or from Missouri. And—uh—in some ways we almost felt like we were a part of Oklahoma 'cause we'd get their weather reports, which would find it's way, you know, across into [*laughs*] Northwest Arkansas. But it was isolated. Um—a few hotels and motels—um— but not really that many. As a matter of fact, there's a great story that they didn't put lights on the Razorback stadium for many years because they couldn't accommodate—they didn't have night games because they wouldn't have—we

didn't have enough hotels to accommodate people that would come to the games.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:11:05] DG: That all changed as we know, historically and dramatically, when Walmart came into being. And not overnight, but within a period of fifteen years, the whole of Northwest Arkansas changed. And in terms of population, when I was growin' up, we had somewhere around ten to twelve thousand people. And of course now, you know, it's well over 100,000. And the surrounding area, you know, what, 600,000. So Walmart and of course Tyson's, J.B. Hunt, other companies locally have really boosted the whole environment. But growin' up, it was a little mountain town. It was as good a place as any to grow up, but there wasn't a whole lot to do here. We had one or two movie theaters. I think one when I was growin' up, and then we finally got a [*laughs*] second one. You could go to the movie theater for a quarter, and usually we did that, and most times it was a Western. That was the old Palace Theatre on the square here. In fact, where this building is right now was where the Palace Theatre was. So it was a good place to grow up. It was very sort of laid back environment. But I enjoyed bein' born and growin' up in Fayetteville. It was a good place to be.

[00:12:29] JD: Do you have any memories of—you know, I imagine you had to make your own fun in a lot of ways. Were there things you enjoyed as a child growin' up, extracurricular activities, hobbies, that sort of thing?

DG: I enjoyed sports. I played baseball and football and pretty much all the sports as I was growing up. I went to St. Joseph's Catholic School from kindergarten all the way through ninth grade before I went to high school, public high school, so I got to play all the sports because, you know, there wasn't a whole lot of competition. [*Laughs*] We didn't have a lot of students in the classes. So consequently, you know, they needed people to play the sports. So I was fortunate in that I got to play 'em. I played some in—when I went into high school as well, but most of my athletic activities happened when I was at St. Joseph's. And it was great. It was wonderful. I mean, we had coaches that weren't paid coaches. [00:13:33] I remember an incident where we won the conference title playin' teams—we'd play, you know, Gentry, and we played places—you know, Rogers and Springdale and that kind of thing. And I member we won the conference, but they took the trophy away from us because we had a paid—we didn't have a paid coach. It was a volunteer coach. And I'll never forget the priest, Father Maloy, calling us

all together and saying, "Are you all okay with this? You know, this is what's gonna happen, we're not gonna accept the trophy," and nobody was really happy with it, but what could you do? [00:14:07] But growin' up in Fayetteville, goin' to St. Joseph's, it was great. And I still have some friends that went to St. Joseph's during that time I stay in touch with, one in particular that came here in the, I guess, fourth grade, that I have stayed in touch with now for over sixty years. So it was a good place to be, a good school. And then when I left there in the ninth grade and went to high school, it was a little bit traumatic because I didn't know anybody except the classmates that I had at St. Joe's. So for the first few weeks, it was a little tough navigating without, you know, knowin' very many people.

[00:14:57] JD: So you mentioned St. Joseph's and then goin' into high school. Were there subjects in particular or parts of school that you really enjoyed the most?

DG: I did. I always liked history, the humanities, all of the social sciences. The hard sciences not so much. In fact a great little story that I tell is that Mr. Krie was our chemistry teacher. And I knew him because he was one of the sponsors of the student government association, and I was involved in that, so I knew Mr. Krie. And I had put off taking chemistry. It was a required

subject. You couldn't graduate without it—until my senior year. I was the only senior in class taking chemistry. Had to have it to graduate. And I didn't like it. I mean, I didn't enjoy it at all. And I remember Mr. Krie calling me in after class and saying, "All right, Gearhart," he said, "I know you can't stand this. I know you're about to graduate, and I'll tell you what. If you promise me you won't come back to class, I'll give you a D." [*Laughs*] It was the only D I got in high school. And I said, "You know, I'll take you up on that offer," and I did. [00:16:14] So I wasn't really fond of the sciences, you know, cuttin' up frogs in biology and all that, so I thought at one point I might wanna go to medical school, but that wasn't my bag. It just wasn't—it wasn't interesting to me. I loved the courses in history and government and social sciences, that kind of thing. And I think I got a decent education in high school. I thought the teachers were very competent, were good teachers. [00:16:45] So you know, it worked out really well. But it was hard the first, I'd say, at least three or four months because I had not gone to public school, and I didn't know very many people in high school and had a whole new set of people to get to know. So that wasn't easy. But you know, you get through it, and you hunker down, and it turned out fine.

[00:17:13] JD: So backing up perhaps a little bit in regards to family and home life, and you mentioned St. Joseph, a faith-based, Catholic school. Was faith important in your family growing up?

DG: It was. My father had the Catholic heritage. My mother was a Protestant, and she, you know, she decided she didn't wanna follow the Catholic faith, which was fine. Course, you know, having a grandmother that was a Catholic and grew up in the Catholic church, you know, that was maybe a little difficult. [00:17:56] I remember when I was dating my wife, who's also Protestant, Methodist. My mother was Presbyterian. I remember my grandmother said, "Well, we just love Jane, but we wish she were Catholic." [*Laughs*] I'll never forget that comment. And but faith was important. I was involved very much in the church. And at one point, frankly, I thought I might wanna be a priest. I gave that some consideration. I served as an altar boy and did all that kinda stuff, and at one point, I thought, "Do I have a calling to do that?" But that quickly dissipated. But my father was the Catholic from a—very much a Catholic family, and mother Presbyterian, and so there was a little bit of a divided loyalty there, if you will, in which church to go to, but it all worked out fine. Yeah.

[00:18:55] JD: And you mentioned your wife, Jane. Did you all

meet in high school?

DG: We did. She—Jane actually was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, but she came back here. Her father—her father's parents had a farm in eastern Arkansas, and she came back—he came back to be involved in the farm and work in the general store that they had, and obviously she was a young child and came. So they lived in eastern Arkansas. And then he decided he wanted to go to law school, and so he did. And they ended up living in Fort Smith, they lived in Harrison, and he came, then, to Fayetteville to be a professor at the law school here when she was, I guess, in junior high. And she, course, came when they moved here to Fayetteville. And so we met, I guess it was our junior year, maybe, in high school. She could tell you exactly. [00:20:04] We have a little bit of a dispute as to where we met in the high school, but yes, we met in high school, and dated through high school, and then dated sort of off and on through college. I went to Westminster College. She stayed here at the University of Arkansas. But we dated through college, and then got married my first—at the end of my first semester of law school.

JD: And we'll talk more about your marriage, that is, like all successful—long marriages are partnerships, and we'll talk more about that, certainly . . .

DG: Absolutely.

JD: . . . later on. You mentioned Westminster. So upon graduating Fayetteville High, you go to Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Explain that decision. So how—you know, what led you to want to go to Westminster?

[00:21:01] DG: Well, my older brother, Van, had gone to the University of Arkansas, and I think my parents thought I'd follow in his footsteps, but I really wanted a smaller college environment. I just—you know, I had enjoyed my time at a small parochial school before going to a larger high school, public high school, and I told my parents, you know, "I'd like to explore some other places." And we looked at several other institutions, private, mainly, institutions, and picked Westminster. And the reason, frankly, was that my parents were at a press convention where the governor of Missouri was speaking, Governor Dalton, and they were seated at the table with him for a dinner, and they started talkin' about schools, and he was on the board of trustees, at that time, of Westminster College. And so he said, "Well, I'll send you some material." And he did. And we got phone calls and went up there to visit, and they rolled out the red carpet 'cause he was a trustee and all that stuff. And I got a little bit of a scholarship, and next thing I

know, I'm goin' to Westminster College. And that's really the only reason, I guess, is because, you know, they reached out, and we had that connection. And course my mother was from Missouri but—and then I liked also, I must say, the environment there, the small environment, but also the fact that it had a very strong connection, historical connection. That's where Winston Churchill gave the Iron Curtain Speech in 1946. They had just opened a beautiful church as a memorial to Winston Churchill, and that sort of history appealed to me, and so I decided to go. [00:22:54] The plan was I was gonna stay two years and then come back to the University of Arkansas. But I fell in love with Westminster, and I got to know a lot of guys there, friends. And at the time I went, it was an all-male school, and that wouldn't change until, you know, later. But so you know, I stayed there four years, graduated, then came back to the University of Arkansas to law school. But it was a great education. The professors there were first class. Now it's had issues and—mainly financial issues like so many very good private, liberal arts, small colleges have had. but it's got a great new president now, relatively new, and I think it's on a good path. But it was a great place. Beautiful, idyllic atmosphere. The campus was beautiful, and I'm—I feel proud to be an alumnus of

Westminster.

JD: So your time there was obviously very influential and very meaningful to you. [00:23:59] Were there any particular people there who, you know, looking back, had significant influence on your career and your life?

DG: Yes. I got to know one of the vice presidents because I was involved in student government. And I told him that if there was ever a chance later to see a college university from the inside, to work at a college university, I'd love to do that. Well, I left, graduated, went to law school, and on my birthday in 1977, I get a phone call from him. And he had become the interim president of Westminster. And he said, "I need an assistant. Would you come work for me as my assistant?" And I said, "Well, you know, I'm in law school." I said, "You know, I don't wanna disrupt that." And he said, "Well, hey, I'm not gonna hire you if you can't finish law school." And so what I ended up doing was petitioning the dean to let me miss the last—I had another semester. I think I had maybe fifteen hours left. I'd gone in the summer. And so I was, you know, ahead of the game. But I had maybe, I don't know, fifteen hours left. And you're supposed to spend your last semester in residence. That's part of the rule. And the dean has the option to waive

that, and so I went to the dean and told him that I wanted to take this job. And he said, "Well," he said, "if you can get accepted to the University of Missouri, finish law school there," said, "I'll waive the requirement." And my degree—the last few hours, would come from Mizzou, but the degree would come from Arkansas. [00:25:47] So I had to go through all the rigmarole of getting accepted at Mizzou and fortunately it worked out. I did my last hours at University of Missouri, which is only thirty minutes from the campus of Westminster. So I'd drive over there early in the morning and sometimes on the snow-and-ice roads and [*laughs*] and take the last few courses at Missouri. And so you know, I look back on that. His name was Bill Stucker. He just passed away recently. He was in his nineties. He lived—actually he'd moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas. And he's kind of the person who got me, you know, a leg up on getting into higher education, and so I have a lot of good feelings about him. But also the other people that I worked for there, the president of the college and so many of the faculty that I got to know and some that I still stay in touch with.

[00:26:45] JD: So all during this time, you're going to law school. Did you ever have any thoughts of, you know, a more narrowly

sort of focused legal career, or was it an idea that this degree would give me this—some skills that I might use in other ventures?

DG: You know, I didn't really have a clear path when I was in college as to what I wanted to do with my life. I thought maybe I wanted to be in politics. [00:27:14] And as a matter of fact, when I was in law school, I had contact—Bill Clinton was teaching. I took some of his courses, as I did Hillary's. And President Clinton was about to run for attorney general, and I was involved in that campaign and helped a little bit in that. And I told him—I said—you know, when he ran for congress, lost, then ran for attorney general, I said, "Look, I'd be delighted to, you know, to work for you in the AG's office if there's a possibility." He says, "Well," he said, "contact me, you know, about a couple months before you're gonna graduate, and I'll see what we have available." Well, I never got that chance because the Westminster thing came along, and I decided to go that route. At one point I thought maybe I might wanna be in politics. I don't know. But definitely I thought maybe higher education was something that would be, you know, something I would be interested in. And I look back on it now, and perhaps I should have—instead of going to law school, maybe gone into an

academic area, history, political science, gotten my doctorate degree. 'Cause I came along later, after I got my law degree, and ten years later got a doctorate, and I always wondered if maybe I, you know, should've gone that path. But it worked out okay for me. [00:28:44] But yeah, I really went to law school because my brother did. And you know, he took that path, and at some point we had talked about maybe the possibility of working together and forming a firm. That never happened, of course, but so you know, that's—I didn't really have any great interest in practicing, to be honest with you. I mean, I didn't wanna be, you know, in a library studying cases and what have you. That wasn't my bag. So it's amazing how things just work out. That phone call that I got to go back to Westminster and work there really got me into higher education and in some ways may be a fluke. It just happened. You know, I knew the right person at the right time, and the dean allowed me to do my last work at Mizzou, and everything seemed to work out.

[00:29:43] JD: Well, there must have been people that were around you during this time that saw a great deal of promise in you, even if maybe you didn't yet recognize that.

DG: Well, yeah, and I never, I guess—I appreciate you sayin' that. I'm not sure that I did [*laughs*] recognize it. I was a hard

worker. I—you know, I think it's Woody Allen who said, "Ninety percent of life is just showin' up." And I, you know, tried to always show up and be on time and get the job done, and I think that's worth a lot in a person's career is to be able to be relied upon. So you know, if anything, it wasn't so much my intellectual capacity as it was just hard work and being diligent and being there and being available and staying late at the job until you got the task done. I think that's worth an awful lot. And I think anybody that does that is gonna be recognized for having a commitment to their job, a commitment to their work, a value system. I've tried to do that. I don't know that I've always done it, but I've tried to.

[00:30:59] JD: So you're, you know, at this point at Westminster in the earlier phase of your career in higher education. What roles were you most involved in during these early years?

DG: I was very involved in student government at Westminster. I ended up being president of the student body and I was president of my fraternity, and so that kinda, I guess, got maybe the political bug, you know, early on, in me. But I was always very involved in activities at the college. Now when I graduated and came to law school, that was a totally different thing. I knew that, you know, I wasn't gonna have time to spend doin' a

lot of that stuff. And so I pretty much hunkered down with my studies. I can't really tell you I enjoyed law school. I mean, I don't know that a lot of people do like law school. [*Laughs*] I mean, you know, I did okay. I wasn't a great student. I think my first year I got on the dean's list. And I tell my wife that then I got married and my grades went, you know, [*laughs*] from there. But I, you know, I was an okay student, an average student, maybe a little above average, but not a super student. And so I really didn't know what I wanted to do after law school, and frankly, had this Westminster College situation not worked out to where I went back to my alma mater to work the for the interim president, and had Bill Clinton not wanted me to come work in the AG's office, I probably would've just opened an office and practiced law, either somewhere or maybe with my brother. [00:33:01] I don't really know. I mean, I didn't have a plan B. And so—and incidentally, the person who hired me at Westminster ended up staying only one year as interim president. New president comes in, and they didn't have a development officer, and I applied for it, and I'll—I mean, you know, amazing grace, they hired me for that job. I didn't know—have a clue what I was doing. I'd done a little bit of fundraising, development work when I was there for the interim

president, but the new president decided that, you know, he would give me a try. And so that got me further into higher education from there, you know, and went to other places. So I guess luck—there's a lot to be said for, you know, luck and bein' at the right place at the right time. But I've often wondered had I not been asked to come to Westminster to work there, what would've happened? Where—you know, where—how—where would I have ended up? Who knows? [*Laughs*] It's just kind of interesting to think about.

[00:34:11] JD: So you mentioned that you and Jane married while you were in law school. Was that before the Westminster position had opened up this opportunity for you, or . . .

DG: It was.

JD: . . . were you back here at that time and then . . .

DG: Yes.

JD: . . . moved to Fulton?

DG: Yes. I graduated from Westminster in 1974, came immediately to law school. Jane and I were dating. And after my first semester of law school, we got married in December, kind of in between semesters. And then it wasn't until—that would've been 1974. We got married in [19]74. It wasn't until [19]77 that the Westminster situation came about. And I was in my

senior year. I had another semester to go. And the—and that's how—when that worked out. So yeah, we'd been married three years. And as a matter of fact, you can do the math. We'll have our fiftieth wedding anniversary this next year.

JD: That's wonderful. Congratulations.

DG: Thank you.

[00:35:20] JD: So you and Jane move back to Fulton. Does she—at this point is she working? Is she developing her career after college?

DG: Jane had—yes. Jane actually put me through law school. She worked as a teacher. She worked in the Springdale—in Springdale, the high school, as a journalism teacher. But yeah, she worked pretty much most of my career until, I guess, we—well, actually, until I became chancellor. She did some part-time work, you know. She worked for various different places. Mainly teaching in the early years, as a journalism teacher, mainly at high school. She worked for the Methodist Church, she worked for an Ecumenical Ministries program in Missouri. She worked as a newspaper reporter. So she's had, you know, a number of—she graduated with a degree in education with an emphasis in journalism. But she worked pretty much up until I became chancellor. And then, you know—she enjoyed working.

She liked to work, but there were so many activities that she had as first lady that, you know, it was almost impossible to continue working. She was actually working at the university during that time but had to give that up because of the new responsibilities that I was gonna have.

[00:36:56] JD: Certainly. At this, you know, point in your—I mean, you're finishing up and then just—have just concluded law school. You're taking on considerable responsibilities at your alma mater. As—you know, I'm assuming here you're in your mid-twenties?

DG: Mh-hmm.

JD: And we'll talk more about your, you know, your career movin' forward, but you had a great deal of responsibilities and duties with your work at a young age. And looking back, did you ever feel that that was—that there was a perception there that—did you ever feel that you had to sort of prove yourself differently, maybe, than some of your colleagues who were probably considerably older in some instances? How does—I'm curious about that. How does that . . .

DG: Yes.

JD: . . . play out?

DG: Absolutely I felt that way. As a matter of fact, to this day I don't

really know why Harvey Saunders, the new president of Westminster, hired me. I mean, I was, you know, twenty-four, twenty-five years old, I didn't have much experience at all in development. They needed a strong development program. And I guess he just liked the way I parted my hair. I don't really know. I mean, we hit it off, and I worked for him for about a year before he asked me to be the director of development there. So you know, I did feel that I—you know, a huge level of responsibility for my alma mater, that, you know, I had to work even harder to try to prove that I could do the job, but not just that, to do the job so it would benefit Westminster and make a difference. And so yes, it was a tough time, you know. I mean, I knew that people were watching me. I knew that there were probably some people that couldn't believe that I would be hired into that job at that young age. I had a couple of people even say to me, you know, "Gosh, you know, you don't have a lot of experience for this job, do you?" [*Laughs*] And so you know, I knew that people were kinda—had their eye and wondering if this guy's gonna be able to perform.

[00:39:15] JD: You eventually, you know, leave Westminster, and you go to Hendrix. Is that next?

DG: Yes.

JD: Hendrix College in Conway. You know, leaving your alma mater for another private, liberal arts institution with a really strong reputation, this time in Arkansas. What led to that decision to move on?

DG: A couple things actually happened, John. First and foremost, my father passed away. He was fifty-one years old when he died. He knew that he had serious heart problems when he was forty-eight. He was actually playing tennis at the Fayetteville Country Club and started having some pains in his chest, went to the doctor, and they did a whole workup on him and concluded that he had some very serious problems with his heart. And back in those days—this would've been 1973, [197]4, [197]5, in there, they really weren't doing very many open-heart surgeries at all. He would've been a candidate for a bypass and probably, you know, a major bypass. But they just weren't doing very many of them at all. So at that point, what was prescribed was to lose weight, not that he was a heavyset man, but you know, he could have stood to lose a little weight, and to just try to eat the right foods and those kinds of things. And he did. He lost about forty pounds and went on a very strict diet, tried to lower his cholesterol and all that. [00:40:58] But he and my mom went down to a funeral—excuse me, a wedding in Dallas of a dear

friend's son who was getting married, and they went down in this wedding in Dallas. And about eleven o'clock in the morning, he was having some pain in his chest and said he thought he needed to maybe go to the hospital. So they drove him to the hospital. Walks into the hospital, and by six o'clock, he was gone. And they just couldn't save him. I mean, he just had so much occlusion and what have you that, you know, it just wasn't possible. So when that happened, we started thinkin', you know, should we go back to Arkansas. You know, my mother, you know, was by herself there in Fayetteville. And I had gotten a little bit, I don't know, unhappy with the leadership at Westminster. I mean, I liked the person that was president, but I didn't really feel that maybe we were progressing as much as we should, and I just out of the blue applied for the development position at Hendrix College. And not really knowing if I would take it, but you know, it's just one of those things I thought, "Well, you know, I'm—let me just apply and see what happens." [00:42:18] And sure enough, they interviewed me, and I absolutely thought the president there was the greatest person I'd ever met. Roy Shilling was his name. Incidentally, he just passed away a few months ago, and I actually gave his eulogy. We stayed in touch for many, many years, and he hired me to

come to Hendrix College in my twenties, and I just can't say enough good about this person. He was just an extraordinary human being, a wonderful person, and he taught me so much about development and development work and what it takes to be a good development officer. And I worked for him for three years, and then he ended up going to Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. Invited me to come with him as his vice president. And the hardest decision Jane and I really ever made up to that point was whether or not we go to Texas and leave Hendrix. [00:43:24] And my mom—you know, again, my dad had passed away, and even though she was in Fayetteville and we were in Conway, it was, you know, a quick trip up there. And we decided to turn Roy down and not go. And I've often wondered how my life would've changed and what would've happened had I gone to Southwestern University and worked for him. But I didn't. I stayed at Hendrix. And only stayed about another year. New president came in, and then the opportunity to go to the University of Arkansas came. And so that's how that worked out. But I felt very fortunate in—that I was able to work for Roy for just three years, but they were good years where I learned a tremendous amount about how to manage, about life itself, about, you know, how you treat other people.

He was a wonderful person, just an absolutely wonderful person. And as I say, just passed away recently.

[00:44:31] JD: So you know, we're getting into a hallmark, if you will, of your career, which is development. And if you would, take a moment and explain what that entails.

DG: Well, it's interesting. When I first started doing some development work, I was the assistant to the president at Westminster. And mainly what I was doing was writing proposals for him, and I would watch him. Sometimes I would accompany him on calls. When I became director of development, then it was sort of my job to run the program. And I guess I was confident enough or maybe cocky enough, to think, "You know, this doesn't look like it's that hard. You know, this isn't rocket science. I oughta be able to do this." [*Laughs*] And so I guess I felt that the main ingredient to being a good development person and being able to ask people for money and raise money was establishing relationships. I mean, it's a relationship business. And I tried to read everything that I could about fundraising in those early years when I became director of development at Westminster. Every book I could find about it, I read. And that sort of helped me to start forming, you know, my thoughts about how you can be successful in this kind of work.

And one thing that—I remember listening to somebody give a speech about development. And this person said, you know, "There are five rules about being a good development officer. The first rule is to ask. You have to ask." And then he paused and he said, "And I've forgotten the other four." So you know, that stuck with me that, you know, what is important is the formal ask and putting it in writing and looking the person in the eye and asking for the order. And it's not that different than a sales job, to be quite honest. In a sense you're selling your institution, you're, you know, trying to promote what you believe in. [00:46:53] And I was fortunate in that I worked for places that were easy to promote. My alma mater, law school alma mater, University of Arkansas. Hendrix College was a wonderful institution. I loved the person that I worked for. And then Penn State, powerhouse place. So I always felt that I could be proud of the place that I worked for, and I could represent it and wanted to find resources for the institution. To a certain extent, it was a challenge for me, and by that I don't mean it was challenging. It was challenging, but it was kind of a personal challenge to find resources for those institutions. And as I said, it's not rocket science, but it is forming relationships and following through and following up, and that's what I've tried to

do in all of these jobs I've had.

[00:47:58] JD: And we're almost to the point where you make your first stint at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, but before we go there, just hearing you talk, I wonder—you know, in higher education, and correct me if I'm wrong, but if you're at a private institution, you know, you're really one leg of the three-legged stool shy in that a public institution would have tuition and fees, endowment and/or, you know, some sort of fundraising mechanism, but then it would also have state revenue dollars. Whereas if you're at a Westminster or Hendrix, you don't have that state support. Coming up in development at institutions where—fundraising is important and essential to any American college or university, but particularly so in those private institutions. Do you think that trained you in a way that was advantageous for you movin' forward?

[00:49:03] DG: I do, indeed. I think, you know, when I started working for a private institution, the first job I had at Westminster, I recognized that the work I was doing was absolutely critical. We had to raise a certain amount of the operating revenue for that institution because, as you say, we didn't have public support. We weren't getting tax dollar. Now like many institutions, and the same here at Arkansas, there

were some scholarship programs that were sponsored by the state that our students were able to participate in, and that helped, no question about it, as it does here for private institutions that get some state support through the lottery and other scholarship programs. But we didn't have that steady revenue flow that public institutions had. So you know, we were really required—we had to get out there and beat the bushes to balance the budget. And I frankly had a goal that the vice president for finance expected me to bring in in order to balance the budget at Hendrix or at Westminster, the places I worked. You look at that obligation, and you then think about public higher education and development. The hardest part about that was convincing some people that a public university needed private funds. I had many conversations in the early days with people that would say to me, "You mean you raise money, private money, for a public school? I don't understand that. How, you know, how can that be?" And so there was an interest factor. I think that's dissipated through the years. [00:50:51] Over the last thirty, forty years, I think people now realize that every institution of higher education, public or private, depends on private-gift support. But back in those days, it really was—I mean, I know at the University of Arkansas, they had one person

with a secretary that was shared with another person to do development work. And you know, it just wasn't a priority. They weren't really counting on it to help balance the budget. And it didn't really become a priority for a lot of public universities until maybe twenty-five, thirty years ago. Now there were some. Ohio State, Michigan. There were some institutions that were involved in development early on. But most public schools really didn't get into the fundraising arena till, you know, probably the 1970s, maybe 1980s some of them. And some still haven't, quite frankly. So it was a real task to convince people that you needed a strong development effort. And the funny thing about it is I've had people tell me in my career that work at colleges, other officers of the institution, particularly at public schools, that development isn't all that important for a public institution. And it used to just chaff me. Well, look at the University of Arkansas that, you know, has had two billion-dollar campaigns and the transformation that it has done for the University of Arkansas, and just look across at other institutions, public and private, the impact that private-gift support has had. Most of the buildings on the campus at Fayetteville were transformed, were renovated, through private-gift support, or at least part of it was through private-gift

support. [00:52:53] So bottom line is, it is important. It's important for—and of course, now, you know, public schools, grade schools, kindergartens, high schools, they're all in fundraising, and it's just exploded over the last many, many years. But early on it was difficult to convince people the need, particularly for a public school, to raise private support.

[00:53:21] JD: So there's a period here where you're leaving Hendrix. You had previously decided to stay in Arkansas and had passed on an opportunity in Texas. What leads you to take the job at the University of Arkansas? And if you would, too, paint us a picture of—sort of explain the lay of the land, so to speak, during this . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . this phase in the university's history here.

DG: Well, Roy Shilling, who had hired me at Hendrix, had left. I had worked for him for over three years, and he had left to go to Southwestern University. He had invited me to come there as his vice president for development. I turned that offer down, stayed at Hendrix, and new president comes in. And it wasn't that I had a problem with the new president, it was the fact that he wasn't Roy. And that was more my problem than it was his problem. But you know, I would compare him to the person that

was my mentor. And I just started thinkin', "You know, I don't know if—you know, maybe I need to be thinkin' about leaving." And the job came open as director of development at the University of Arkansas. And I'll never forget Bill Clinton calling me, and they had asked him to call me, and said, "Hey, you oughta look at that job. It's a great job, blah, blah, blah." And I thought, "Well, that's kinda neat, you know, that the governor was calling." And so we went up and interviewed. And it was amazing the number of people that I interviewed that were donors to Hendrix College. You know, there was a lot of crossover and a lot of people that I knew even on the search committee. And make a long story short, you know, it was going back home, even though, you know, we were in Conway, it was getting back to Fayetteville, and we thought that kinda—you know, might kinda be neat to do. And so we did. We went back, and I worked for the University of Arkansas after I was at Hendrix College. [00:55:34] And frankly, it was fine, but [*laughs*] I only stayed there a couple of years, two and a half years, because at that point the University of Arkansas was going through a lot of difficult problems. It had . . .

JD: This is in the mid-[19]80s, 1980s?

DG: This would've been in the—yes. I went there in [19]82, was

there from [19]82 to [19]85. And they hadn't had a system for very long. And they couldn't—I like to say they couldn't decide who was supposed to crown the homecoming queen, the chancellor or the president. And of course you may recall that back in those days, the only reason they created a chancellor position at Fayetteville was because the system got crosswise with the powers in Little Rock because they fired the chancellor of UALR, the system president did. We didn't have a chancellor at Fayetteville. The president of the system—they didn't even call it a system at that time—was over the Fayetteville campus with no chancellor. So the legislature got involved, and the powers that be in Little Rock got involved and decided they need to have a chancellor like Little Rock has a chancellor, and the system head, you know, will be over all of that and will not be over the Fayetteville campus, you know, directly. So that's how that all happened. [00:57:05] And it was a mess. And I literally had, from 1982 to 1985, five different chancellors that I worked for. One of 'em was interim. And you know, again, I started thinking, "Well, golly, I mean, you know, do I stick it out here? Do I stay here? Is it time to think about something else?" And Penn State comes along. And I thought, you know, "My goodness, to be able to go to—work at a place where Joe

Paterno is, wouldn't that be cool?" [*Laughs*] And so that's how that happened. But the two and a half years when I was at university the first time were—they were difficult years because of the leadership and the problems that we had. And it was a system versus campus problem. And quite frankly, we still have those problems to this day, you know. I mean, just look at—you know, they hired a new chancellor at Fayetteville, somebody that the president of the system, you know, didn't want. And so you know, there's still those issues. And we can talk about that later. But it's—it still raises its head, some of the problems, with systems versus flagship campuses.

[00:58:26] JD: So during this time you and Jane have children as—during roughly that time period?

DG: Yes. We did. We had our kids when we were at Hendrix College. And they were both born in Arkansas, both born in Little Rock at Baptist Health. And so, yeah, they were small, little babies. [*Laughs*] And we decided to leave the job at Hendrix and go to Fayetteville.

JD: And what are their names?

DG: Brock is our son, youngest, and he is George Brockmann Gearhart, and he manages a investment company here in Fayetteville, does very well, very proud of him. And then our

daughter is Katy. And Katy has two kids, boy and a girl, and Brock has three, two girls and a boy. And Katy went to Penn State, graduated from Penn State with two degrees and is a speech pathologist. And she practiced for a while but now she's a stay-at-home mom. And we're proud of both of 'em. They're both—they never gave us any problems at all. You know, great kids. And you know, we've been very fortunate.

[01:00:00] JD: So you have an opportunity to take on a role at Penn State, which I can imagine would've been a very exciting opportunity coming from, as you said, an institution that was, in some ways, struggling to find its way, here, a flagship with a lot of history and pride. But you look at Penn State and—one of the, sort of one of the model institutions, if you will. Explain how that evolved, that opportunity.

DG: I just noticed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* publication that most people in higher education read—and back in those days, they used to have, in the back of the *Chronicle*, all the ads for jobs all over the country. And I noticed that they were looking for a vice president for advancement at Penn State. And I knew a little bit about Penn State because of Paterno and, you know, all of that. And I was looking for—you know, it was a vice presidency. I was a director of development at Arkansas. You

know, all the changes that were going through at Arkansas—I just started thinking, you know, is it time to maybe think about another place? And so as I had done with—when I was at Westminster and came to Hendrix and put in my application, I thought, "Well, what would it hurt? You know, I'll put in my application." [*Laughs*] And I did. And I get a phone call from a fellow by the name of John Glier, *G-L-I-E-R*, John Glier. And he was one of the principles of the Grenzebach—that's a mouthful, I know—Grenzebach Glier consulting company in Chicago. And they had been doing consulting work in fundraising for Penn State University. And John said, "I'd like to interview you. Could you come to Kansas City? I'm gonna be in Kansas City." So I drove up to Kansas City. Interviewed with him. I had no idea if the interview went well or not. But next thing I hear is that I'm one of the finalists in the search for vice president at Penn State. [01:02:26] And they invite me to come up for an interview. And I'll never forget. It was—we were at a bowl game. This would've been 1985, [19]84, [19]85, and we were in Memphis at the bowl there in Memphis. Arkansas was in the bowl game. And we left from there and flew to Penn State and flew into a snowstorm. They had like ten inches of snow on the ground. And I member that had le—we got in late that night,

and I remember they left me a car at the airport, you know, to drive on in and stay at the hotel there on the campus. And I came around a curve and almost, you know, went into a culvert, I mean, 'cause it was ice and snow and everything. But anyway, we went up and interviewed. Jane went with me, and the interview seemed to go well. And I had listed on my resume Bill Clinton as a reference. And he'd helped me, you know, go to the University of Arkansas, and I'd gotten to know him a little bit. And I'll be darned if the president of Penn State, Bryce Jordan, doesn't call Bill Clinton, who's the governor of Arkansas, to talk about my candidacy. And Clinton gave a good review, I thi—I guess he did. I think he did. [*Laughs*] And I was told later by one of the vice presidents that Bill—that Bryce Jordan, president of Penn State, came back into his cabinet meeting and said, "Well, I found my man. I just got off the phone with the governor of Arkansas." Bryce was the kinda guy that those kind of things impressed him, you know, to be able to pick up the phone and the governor would come on the phone. And so they offered me the job. [01:04:13] And we left home. I mean, you know, it was—my mother had remarried, so I felt pretty secure that she was in a good place now. And so we headed to the Northeast. Big move. I mean, we had been living in

Fayetteville, which was our home, and loved it there. Had a lot of wonderful friends. It was hard to leave. But I felt that this was an opportunity that—you know, to work for a major institution like Penn State. I liked the president a lot when I met him. He had come from the University of Texas, and so he had a Southern background, and he was just a very affable person, and I got along with him great. You know, sort of an immediate, you know, connection. And so we pack up and take our kids, who are two and five years old, and move to the north and become Yankees all of a sudden. [*Laughs*]

JD: Overnight.

[01:05:27] DG: Overnight. But I'll never forget, we went there. When we got there it was like April and Easter, and it was snowing ferociously on Easter. And I'm not sure I'd ever seen snow on Easter, you know. [*Laughs*] I'll never forget the president's wife, Jonelle Jordan, called us. And of course those were the days before cell phones. She called our phone, and first thing she's—does was—when I answer the phone, she's laughing. And she says, "Well, I guess you've never seen snow on Easter, have you?" I'll never forget that. But yeah, our kids were two and five when we went there. And it was a big, big move for us to make. I remember I had meetings, after I

accepted the job and we were goin' up there to house hunt, I had meetings during the day, and I met Jane for lunch. And I'll never forget she sat down, and she just starts crying and just sobbing. And I said, "Well, what's wrong?" She says, "Well, I don't know that we're gonna be able to afford a house. I've been lookin' for houses and"—anyway, she was homesick, and you know, I took her away from, you know, family. Her parents lived in Little Rock, and of course my mom and stepdad were in Fayetteville, and it was a big move. It was a tough move for us. But it was a good move, and we loved Penn State. We ended up staying there for thirteen years. And it was a great place to be. And in many ways, the campus and the environment are very much like Fayetteville. You know, the campus is right there close to the town. Bigger school, obviously, but a lot of similarities in terms of topography and what have you. [01:07:19] And it ended up bein' a great move for us. We loved Penn state. We still do. Our daughter has two degrees from Penn State. We still have tons of friends there. So it was hard . . .

JD: So . . .

DG: . . . you know, to leave.

JD: . . . your kids really grow up in Happy Valley and . . .

DG: They grew up . . .

JD: . . . that area.

DG: They grew up in Happy Valley. They did, indeed. And when we ended up leaving there and coming back to Arkansas, we—it was tough for them because our son was still in high school. Daughter was at Penn State, so that wasn't so bad. But it was tough on our son, really, because he was moving into his senior year and had a ton of friends. And we told him that he could stay there. And we had set it up for him to live with a family and finish his senior year. And he decided that that was not what he wanted to do, that—you know, after a lot of talk—at first he said, "Yes, that's what I wanna do." And then what happened was he was late to football practice, and he had overslept. He has gotten in his car, a car that we had just bought him. And he was going really fast to get to football practice, and it flipped over. And it completely demolished the car, but thank goodness, he had a little piece of glass under his thumb. That was the only thing that happened to him. He—it was unbelievable that he wasn't seriously hurt because we saw the car, and it was just crushed like this [holds one hand above the other about six inches apart]. [01:08:58] So after that happened, I think he had an epiphany and decided, you know,

maybe I need to be coming to Fayetteville. The first semester when we came back was very hard on him. I'm gettin' a little ahead of us here. But then after about six months he—a girl invited him to a Sadie Hawkins thing [*laughs*], and it all turned on a dime, and of course then he ended up staying here and going to school, met his wife here, and everything's worked out. And so you know, we've got both our kids here and our grandkids. It's worked out. It was a blessing.

[01:09:33] JD: Can you describe the—not just the cultural differences between the University of Arkansas and Penn State, but just your experiences at that institution? I imagine it was a considerably, you know, bigger job that you were taking on, a larger university. And if you would, take time talking about that—just the scope of the endeavor. And then it must have been something that you quite enjoyed. You, as you said, you were there thirteen years.

DG: Penn State is an amazing institution. It's, of course, Big Ten institution, one of the top public research universities in the country. At the time I was there, they had on the main campus about 30,000 students, which was over twice the size of the University of Arkansas at the time. They had something like twenty campuses spread all over Pennsylvania. It operated

much differently than Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas, in that the president of Penn State was the president of all of the campuses. They had what they called campus executive officers at the two-year institutions and the other campuses. And the person who headed up the medical school, the medical complex, in Hershey, his title was senior vice president. So you had one president that was over all of the campuses. And I think, frankly, that was a better model than what we had at Fayetteville. And it seemed to me when I got there that they always had money, that—not that they were flush with money. No institution ever is. But they always seemed to be able to have money for, you know, the things that were needed—needed to be done. The physical plant was always pristine in just perfect condition. You'd see people out there early in the morning picking up trash and mowing the lawns and cleaning off the sidewalks, and they rarely ever shut down for snow because they had all the equipment to clean everything off, you know, very quickly. [01:12:02] So I just—I always had the sense that this was a well-funded, well-managed institution, and I think it was. And of course, their sports programs were, you know, the best anywhere, from wrestling to baseball to track to, course, Paterno and football. That didn't end up good, as everybody

knows, and that's another story. But it was a great place to live. State College was a wonderful community about the same size as the university, for—thirty, forty thousand. We had a lot of very, very close, dear friends there. And it just—it always seemed to me that it was a place on the move, and we had a great president who came from the University of Texas, had been the interim president at the Austin campus and then was president of the Dallas campus. And he was a first-class administrator and a good person. I enjoyed working for him very much. So you know, we had left Arkansas, which wasn't as well funded and seemed to always have a need for something, to an institution that was able to keep their buildings secure, renovated, in good shape, to what seemed to be a well-funded institution. [01:13:37] And just a quick little story. As one of the senior vice presidents there, I was—got certain perks that went along with that. You could use the university airplane to go places, what have you. But one of the things I liked the most [*laughs*] was every Monday morning when you got to work, you'd park your car close to the building. You had a nice parking spot. And they would come pick up your car, take it, clean it, vacuum it, gas it, and put it back in your parking space. That was a nice little perk that I [*laughs*] had in those days. And they

just seemed to know how to do things and how to do it right. And anyway, it was a great experience for that, for us. And we loved it there. And you know, I could've stayed there the rest of my career. But you know, after a number of years, I knew I wasn't going any further. I was never gonna be president of Penn State. I didn't have the academic credentials, the background to do that, so it probably would not have happened there. New president comes in, and he decides that he wants to change the reporting relationships that I had under me. He wanted to take public relations and move it directly to him, which I understood. And I just started thinkin', "You know, maybe it's time to do something else." We'd been there a long time, and a firm that had really gotten me to Penn State, the Grenzebach Glier firm, offered me a lucrative job to be a consultant, and that's how we ended up leaving Penn State and doing the consulting job. And that was a wonderful opportunity, too. I made a lot of money and—first time in my life. [*Laughs*] And that wasn't all bad. And so that's why we ended up, you know, doing that. [01:15:43] And we actually stayed in Happy Valley but—and I could fly and go anywhere. I had clients all over the country. Some of my clients—University of Alabama, University of Connecticut, University of California I did some

work for, Drexel University in Philadelphia, I mean, a number of—University of Miami, the University of Washington. Many weeks I'd leave Seattle and fly to Miami, and all across the country. And so I had like sixteen clients spread all over the United States. And I was on the road five days a week. And interesting thing. I never missed a plane the entire time. And I never got delayed because of weather. I mean, you know, I flew outta State College, and they had direct flights to Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, several places, so once I got there I could go anywhere. And I just would set up my schedule to where I could get home Friday evening and leave out on Monday morning.

[01:16:58] JD: And so during that time were you—so let's say you're at the University of Connecticut, and the university would contract with you and the firm, and would you consult on matters of maybe a capital campaigns . . .

DG: Yes.

JD: . . . that sort of strategic—the strategic component of the campaign? Is that primarily . . .

DG: Exactly.

JD: . . . what you were doin'?

DG: Most of them were capital campaigns they were running. Some

of them were just helping with their development program. A few were to help establish foundations or set up a planned-giving program or more specific. But most of 'em had to do with capital campaigns. And I would go there usually two days. I would fly in and stay two days and fly out after two days. And I did that for three and a half, almost four years. I had a lot of frequent miles. [*Laughs*] They had what they called Chairman's Preferred on the old US Air—went to US Airways, and I don't even know if it's even around anymore. But and I was a Chairman Preferred. And you had a phone number that you would call, and they'd come on the phone, and they'd say, "Mr. Gearhart, how can I help you?" And you got, you know, first class seats and the whole thing. I mean, it was pretty easy to—and that was before all the security measures. And I remember, John, early on that we lived about fifteen minutes from the State College airport. And if I was runnin' a little late, I called Dave at the desk, who I got to know well, who ran the airport, and I'd say, "Dave, I'm comin'. I'm—I'll be there." And he'd say, "Well, we won't leave without you!" You know, the [*laughs*] good old days. Don't do that anymore. [01:18:53] But you know, it was not near as heavy, you know, security as we have today, you know. A different time. But it was good. I enjoyed it. I had no

personnel issues. I had nobody that worked directly for me. I had a staff, but they were central staff, and I would dictate letters, you know, on a telephone system that they had, or I'd use the computer. And of course, in the early part of those days, you know, cell phones were just coming into, you know, their own, and so you know, I set all my times and my—you know, with when I was gonna be there and kept all my calendar. And I actually loved it. I mean, it was a whole different set of circumstances than I had at Penn State where I had a very large staff and had a lot of people I could turn to. The one thing I did miss was not having the Penn State airplane to get to places. [*Laughs*] But it was a good three and a half, four years that we did the—working for the Grenzebach firm after I was at Penn State.

[01:20:06] JD: How did the family adjust? I imagine that would've been a change having you fly out Monday morning and then come back on Friday. How did—how old were the—your children at this point?

DG: They would've been in high school, junior high and high school. And I remember our son s—I would bring him a t-shirt from all the places that I would go. And I member [*laughs*] him sayin' to Jane, "I think I'm gonna like this new job Dad has," you know.

It didn't really affect them that much. I mean, they were in school. They had their activities. I was not able to go to a lot of their events while I was doing that, but I'd try to make up with it goin' to events on the weekends when they had those. And of course, you know, I didn't have many events anymore on the weekends, so I was kinda there and captive, and that was, you know, nice. But they were old enough to where they had their sort of own set of things they were doing that involved with, and Jane had a, you know, large set of friends. And the weeks went pretty fast. I mean, some days I'd have to leave—some weeks I'd have to leave on Sunday, but most of the time I'd leave early Monday morning. They'd have flights at seven o'clock in the morning, and they'd take me to Pittsburgh or Philly or Washington or Chicago. And so I could get to work at most of the campuses by nine o'clock in the morning. And a good week was when I did that and got home, you know, mid-evening on Friday. Most of the time the people I was consulting with, you know, they'd let me leave three or four o'clock in the afternoon to catch a flight. You know, it was Friday, and they were wantin' to go home. And they didn't wanna listen to, you know, a boring consultant talk about things they oughta be doin'. [01:22:11] So it wasn't bad, you know, it was—you know, and the airport

there in State College was a great airport. They cleaned the runways of any snow immediately. And never had any problems, as I said. Now you know, it does take a toll on the body, you know, because sometimes you get in late at night. Particularly if I was flying from Seattle to Miami. I'd do a couple of days with the athletic department, actually, at the University of Washington, and then I'd fly down and do the athletic department at the University of Miami. For some reason, and this doesn't make any sense at all, I became sort of the athletic consultant, fundraising consultant, for the [*laughs*] Grenzebach firm. And that's unlikely because, you know, I mean, I love athletics, but I'm not the one that you think would be doin' that. But somehow I just—I guess because I had been at Penn State and, you know, their athletic prowess. So several of the places I consulted were athletic programs wanting to raise money. [01:23:12] And you know, a good week would be to go out Monday morning and get back, as I say, Friday evening and then have the weekend. And the funny thing was I always had a system to where when I got home on Friday—sometimes Thursday, but on Friday I would repack right then, immediately. I'd go—you know, I'd put my stuff down, and I'd put new shirts and clothes and all and repack immediately so that when I left

Sunday I could just pick it up and—or Monday and go. It was just a routine that I got into so I didn't have to face, you know, repacking. And I [*laughs*]—I still have it today. I had—I put together a list of things not to leave behind, you know, and every time I'd pack I'd go to that list, and I'd just go down the checklist. All right, do I have this, this, this, this, and this. And it helped me so I didn't end up, you know, leaving something behind that I needed like a tie or a belt or whatever. [*Laughs*] I still had that same list. It's pretty dog-eared now, but it's helped to sort of look at it and helped me not to forget anything when I was traveling.

[01:24:19] JD: Well packing right upon arrival home may have also allowed you to have a weekend. You know, this is—because I can see how if you're on the road like—even if it's work you enjoy, it sort of all consuming, or can be.

DG: Yes.

JD: And so there—maybe there's a way there to have those boundaries on those weekends.

DG: Absolutely. That was kind of my—I guess the thinking was that if I got it out of the way, then all I had to do was pick up the bag and leave. And you know, later in my time there, after about maybe the second year or so, you know, cell phones started

becoming used more often, and that helped me tremendously. Had the old flip phone where, you know, I could take care of business. And I had a computer, I mean, a—that I would travel with, and that helped as well. But we weren't, at that point, quite into cell phones and the use of email and all that. I mean, it was there and people were using it, but it wasn't widespread. And so—and what I would've given to have Google Maps. I mean, you know—I mean, everything had to be written out in terms of directions. How to get to the campus, where to park. If I was doing a feasibility study and I was interviewing constituents of the institution at their home or office, you know, they had to write out the directions. I mean, it was awful. [*Laughs*] Whereas I've had Google Maps, I could've just gone right to it. But again, that was, you know, before the time.

[01:25:54] JD: So thinking back to, you know, Penn State, your time there, your time in consulting, you must have—and even before that, you must've developed a very expansive network of individuals both inside and outside of higher education. Were there people at this point in your career that looking back still—you think back to that played instrumental roles in where you would then go in the coming years?

DG: Absolutely. We got to know so many wonderful, wonderful

people in high-level positions at Penn State. Penn State liked to say that one out of every seven college graduates went to Penn State. You know, it was a massive institution. And they had some phenomenal alumni. Give you an example. One person that we—he's not living now—that we got to know very, very well was Bill Schreyer. Bill was the chairman and CEO of Merrill Lynch. And wonderful man. Penn State graduate. Class of [19]48. He ended up giving a lot of money to Penn State over the years. And he was the chairman of our capital campaign. So I got to know, Jane and I got to know, Mr. Schreyer, Bill, and his wife, Joan, very, very well. We were in their home in Princeton many times. We—they had a place on the Jersey Shore. We were there many times. When I did my Fulbright during my time at Penn State at Oxford University, he found out that we were over there, and he invited us to go to Wimbledon. And I'll never forget I needed to go out of the arena, and he said, "Well, let me give you a ticket"—I don't remember what it was—to get a Coke or something. And I looked at the ticket, and the ticket was $10,000. [*Laughs*] And anyway, he invited us, you know, on behalf of Merrill Lynch and Penn State. And we did a lot of traveling together in his jet. And he was just—Bill Schreyer, just a wonderful, wonderful person. [01:28:18] And

our son actually went to work for Merrill Lynch when he graduated from Penn State, and Bill was instrumental in helping with that. He told me he wasn't, but I know he was. And at the time, the president of Penn State's son was applying to Merrill Lynch and wasn't asked to join the firm, but our son, Brock, was, and we were kinda pleased about that. And we—Bill had told me that he was gonna be offered a job and—but asked us not to tell our son, Brock, that, to let him find out about it when they make the offer. But we spent a lot of time with Mr. Schreyer, Bill, at his headquarters there in New York City in downtown Manhattan. They also had a office complex in Princeton. Spent a lot of time there. And just a fantastic, wonderful person. And you know, a lot of other Penn Staters were heads of major corporations. The chairman of Saks Fifth Avenue was a Penn State graduate. Wonderful man. You know, I could go on and on. You know, USG [DG edit: U. S. Steel] president—chairman was a Penn Stater. So we got to know a lot of really wonderful, good people, Penn State graduates, and developed a network there that—and it was a wonderful place to be. I mean, it was truly a good, good place to work. And you know, I thought about, you know, stayin' there my whole career, but—I don't know, I started wondering, you know, would I have the opportunity to go

further, and I don't know. I just—after I'd been there so long, it just seemed time to, you know, maybe do something else.

[01:30:09] JD: So after several years in—whether it be with Penn State or at least living in that area [DG coughs] and consulting, an opportunity presents itself in Fayetteville. Before we talk about that, were there other times when you felt compelled—I'm sure there was interest expressed in you applying for positions. Were there any other you had considered before taking this U of A job that we'll talk about shortly?

DG: Yes. I had applied for a number of presidencies when I was senior vice president at Penn State. I'd actually applied for the presidency at Arkansas State University and was one of three that they brought in to interview and thought that we had a chance at that. And I would've taken that job. I would've gone to Arkansas State in Jonesboro. But at the end of the search, they brought out a person who had not been in the search and anointed him. And you know, I think that had been their plan all along. And what kinda gave me the idea that I probably wasn't gonna be selected was when I met with the board of trustees in a public meeting, I looked up and two of them had fallen asleep [*laughs*] during the interview. So I figured, "Yeah, I'm not sure that this isn't, you know, all staged." And I think it was staged.

[01:31:40] And I applied to be chancellor at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock while I was still at Penn State. And that didn't come about. University of Tulsa, I was a candidate. McMurry—or not McMurry. Oh for Pete's sake, I've kinda forgotten the name of it. But I did get an offer to be a president of—at a school in Kentucky, and we decided we wanted to stay at Penn State and didn't go there. But yeah, I was a candidate a number of places that I probably would have gone had the, you know—had lightning struck. So yeah.

[01:32:21] JD: So how does that happen? Are you called and encouraged to apply for this administrative position at the University of Arkansas at this point, or did you see the listing and pursue it on your own? How did that work?

DG: All of the above. Sometimes you get called by a headhunter. I had gotten to know some of the headhunters, particularly during my development work, and would call me about particular candidates and people they were looking at. And then I got to know some of them when I applied. And you know, the best is when they call you and ask you to be a candidate, but that doesn't always happen. And back in those days, usually what would happen is you'd see it in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, an ad for the job, and you'd make application for it.

Sometimes you'd have a person that would nominate you that, you know, knew about you and knew about the job and thought it'd be a good fit. You know, that happened some. But all of the above. And you have to be careful because the only job that I applied for that got in the newspapers—I think it was the only one—was Arkansas State University. And you know, it was a public meeting, and so my name got in the papers of the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* and ended up getting in the papers in State College, Pennsylvania. And that created a little bit of a problem for me. Some of the trustees thought, "What is Gearhart"—you know, and of course, I had to explain to 'em I was goin' back home and looking at a college presidency, but I would've just preferred that [*laughs*] it not been in the newspapers. So and then, you know, you get to the point, and I think I probably got to this point, that it's saturated, that, you know, you apply to too many and you get your name out there too much, and the headhunters started—you know, and a lot of 'em use headhunters—start wondering, "Well, is there something wrong with this guy? Why he's not landin' it." [01:34:21] I will say this, that getting a presidency, a chancellor position, is a crap shoot. It's, you know, lightning strike. There are so many wonderful, wonderful people that should've been a president that

never made it there. Lightning didn't strike for whatever reason. And I might say on the other side, there are a lot of people that did get to be a president that probably should not have been. And didn't do the kind of diligent work to be a good university president. So the way we pick our presidents may not be the best selection process. And it's probably better than all the others, but it's probably not all that great. Because most places it tends to be a consensus. The faculty, the students, the alumni, all have a piece of the action. And that's hard to find. You know, they want somebody who walks on water, and you know, they're not gonna find somebody like that. Sometimes they end up with a compromise. And I think that's why many institutions have gone to smaller committees, maybe just board committees, to try to keep tighter control. That's very hard to do in this day and age with, you know, Freedom of Information, where we have that in most states now, particularly in Arkansas. Where, you know, the pool of candidates is out there and is gonna be out there. And so you know, that was when I decided really maybe it's time to do something different and make a little money, go into consulting and not try to, you know, go for presidencies anymore. I'd kinda gotten to the point when I was at final years at Penn State, right before going into consulting, I

wasn't sure lightning was gonna strike. I'd gotten a little frustrated that some of the jobs that I was interested in—you know, it just didn't happen. And so I thought, you know, maybe I need to do something different and maybe it's time. And then my firm that I knew, that I finally went to work with, had offered me a really good job at a good salary, and first time in my life I got bonuses depending on how much work you did. [01:36:51] And you know, in February I'd get a big, fat check, you know, that we, you know, would usually put into savings. And I never had bonuses, you know, workin' for any institution, obviously. So you know, it was kinda nice to be in the private sector and working to make money, frankly, not just for yourself but for your firm. And I was fortunate in that because of my Penn State background, I had a lot of people that asked for me when we were, you know, doing the consulting, and you know, they thought that because I'd been at Penn State and we'd had a big capital campaign that I knew what I was doin' even if I might not have. [*Laughs*] And so you know, I quickly developed a pretty large clientele base. As I said, I think at my high I had sixteen or seventeen clients spread all over the country. And I really got to be good friends with s—in fact I stayed friends with several of 'em that I worked with as a consultant. And that's been nice to,

you know, follow their careers and what have you. And I did some headhunting, too. I got to know a person that was with a headhunter company that did some work with our firm, and so I partnered with him on a few headhunter opportunities at colleges and universities for development people. And I enjoyed that as well. [01:38:24] One of the things that I did was there was a—we do a thing that we call program reviews. We'd go in and we'd spend a number of days interviewing staff, and then we'd give them a written report on what we felt needed to be done with their development program. And it was laborious. I mean, you had to write it yourself, and it took a lot of time. So what I'd do is I'd try to work out my schedule to where I would write the report, which usually took about a week to ten days, over the holidays. So I'd be home for Christmas and home for Thanksgiving and that kind of thing. And I'd be writing the report during the time I was home. And it worked out, you know, really well. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed consulting a lot. Now it's tough on your body. I mean, you know, gettin' up early and catchin' planes and haulin', you know, stuff and, you know, briefcase and laptops and all that stuff, you know, it's [*laughs*] tough on the body. But it was good work. And the firm I was working with, John Glier and Martin Grenzebach were just good,

decent people. And they didn't care—I asked one time John Glier, the president of our company—I said, "Well," I said, "I don't hear much from you about the job I'm doin'. I hope I'm doin' okay." And [*laughs*] he looks at me. He says, "Gearhart, you're makin' us money, you're doin' great." You know, it was all about—it was a whole different thing, you know, in those days, for me. It was about makin' money. And so I made 'em money, and everything was great. I never had a bad word with any of my partners. Never had a bad word with Martin or John at all, and still have stayed good friends through all these years.

[01:40:15] JD: And then at this point, you're given this opportunity to come back to Arkansas, back to the University of Arkansas. And this is—what was this, roughly fifteen or so years after you had previously left?

DG: This would've been 1998 that we had the opportunity. I got a call from a headhunter that I had known and—previously who'd tried to get me involved in other jobs. And we weren't looking to leave. I mean, I didn't apply for the job or anything. I knew about it. But I wasn't sure I wanted to go back to Arkansas. I, you know, I left there in [19]80—let me think here—in [19]85. And so it'd been thirteen years. And I just wasn't sure that I wanted to go back. I didn't know about what had happened

administratively and all of that, and you know, do I really wanna go back to, you know, Fayetteville where I grew up? And but the headhunter called and been hired by the university. And he said, "Listen, if you want this job, I think, you know, it's yours." And he said, "Obviously you'll have to interview, and you'll have to be sure that the new chancellor"—John White had been chancellor for about six, eight months. And he said, "You know, you're gonna have to get along with that person, but he's dynamic, he's a good person. Do you have any interest?" And we debated it. I mean, you know, as I said, our son was in high school, and we didn't really want to, you know, move while he was still, you know, in high school. And our daughter was at Penn State in college. And so we debated, you know, whether or not, you know, this was something we wanted to do. But I thought, "Well, okay, I'll throw my hat in the ring. Why not. You know, what's it gonna hurt?" And I wasn't concerned at that point about my partners knowin' about it. In fact I told them. And you know, they were nice about it, and you know, didn't want me to leave but yet understood it was goin' back home. [01:42:37] And I came and interviewed, and I really was enamored with John White and what—the plans that he had. We met in Washington, DC, at a hotel restaurant. Closed the

restaurant down. They had to tell us to leave. I mean, we ate at like seven o'clock and didn't leave until close to midnight. And he just told me all about the plans they had and everything and offered me a good salary. It was less than what I was making, but it was a decent salary. And we almost turned it down. I mean, I member sitting there with my wife, with Jane, and saying, "Do we really wanna do this?" We did—we had built a house in State College, we loved our house. Our kids were in school. And then I get a phone call from John White. And he says, "Well," he says, "have you made up your mind?" And I said, "Well, no, sir, I'm still thinkin' about it." I said, "I really haven't made up my mind." He says, "Well, let me throw something else in the pot." He said, "How would you feel if we gave you tenure in the College of Education?" And I'd gotten my doctorate by that time. And I said, "Well, is that a possibility?" And he said, "Yeah," he said, "I think it is." He said, "I think I could get the faculty to agree to that and get the system president to sign off on it." And I said, "Well, that might make a difference." And my thinking was that I'd go to work at the University of Arkansas as the development officer and work there for, I don't know, maybe eight to ten years, and then go on the faculty and teach for a few years. 'Cause I had done

some teaching at Penn State. I was an adjunct professor there. [01:44:25] And this would give me the opportunity to do that by having tenure. And you know, at that time if you were an administrator and you stopped your t—you stopped your administrative role, you could go on the faculty at 80 percent of your salary. So I knew—they've changed that, by the way, but at that time that was the rule. So I thought to myself, "You know"—and at that point I didn't have any thoughts I was gonna be the chancellor or any of that. You know, I kinda had put that on the back burner, and you know, that didn't happen then. So I was thinkin' about, you know, what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Work at the university as development officer for a few years and then be a faculty member and maybe retire early. Maybe—you know, I was thinkin' about my finances and could I retire at sixty-two, sixty-four, sixty-five, whatever. So that's, you know, what he offered. And that kinda, you know, clinched it for us. And we just thought, you know, my goodness. He's gonna give me tenure, you know, I don't have to go through all the tenure, you know, stuff. And that's a pretty big deal. And then I got encouragement from other people, you know, to come back that I had known previously. And so we did. We went back. And it was great. [01:45:51] I mean, Dr.

White could be frustrating at times. He was powerhouse. He was ver—one of the smartest people I've ever worked for. One of the smarted people I've ever known. But tough. He could be tough. He was a taskmaster. He held your feet to the fire. I got along with him very well. Never had a bad word with him. But he could be tough on some of the other staff. [*Laughs*] I'll never forget. He—at his staff meeting, he called—he had us all together for his cabinet meeting, and he said, "I'm gonna give each one of you a grade on how you're doing." And there in front of everybody he went down the list of all of his vice chancellors and direct reports and said, "I'm gonna give you a C. I'm gonna give you a B." And fortunately, I got an A, but I mi—I think I might've been the only one that did. And all the other vice chancellors were pretty upset about it, you know, he was givin' 'em Cs and Bs and all of [*laughs*] that. And that was how he was. I mean, he expected you, you know, to do the job and get it done. And anyway, make a long story short, we got along well. I worked for him for ten years. And then of course had the opportunity to, you know, to be chancellor. [01:47:16] But I don't think—you know, had I not—if I—I look back on my time and you know, it's kinda like everything kinda fell into place. I would not have gotten to Hendrix had I not started at

Westminster. I don't think I could've gone to the University of Arkansas the first time had I not been at Hendrix. You know, I would've never been able to go from Hendrix to Penn State. But to go from the University of Arkansas to Penn State made it a little easier. I was at a public institution. So it just seemed like things worked out. Now I don't mean to suggest that everything always worked out. There were problems along the way. But it—you know, I've been fortunate. I've really been fortunate in my career. And the places I've worked, I've loved every one of them. They've been great institutions to work for.

[01:48:17] JD: Tell me about the Campaign for the Twenty-First Century at the University of Arkansas and its significance to the institution?

DG: When I met with Dr. White in the hotel in Washington, DC, before I accepted—before he'd offered the job, he told me that he wanted to raise a billion dollars. And at that time the university was raising, athletics and all, somewhere around $25 to $30 million a year. And I looked at him, and I said, "Dr. White," I said, "I—that's a big leap." I said, "You're talkin' about, you know, taking, you know, 25 million and jumpin' up to over 100 million to be able to rai—a year—to be able to raise a billion dollars." I said, "I don't know. I don't know if that's

possible." And I remember going home and going back—I was staying in a hotel there. I remember going back to the hotel and calling my wife and saying, "I think the guy's crazy." I said, "I don't think there's any way that we can raise that kind of money." And I told John that. And he said, "Oh, I think we can." And so we started planning it. We, you know we had a development program, and we had good people there but had not put the money into the development program that we really needed for a major university. And that's one thing that John White enabled us to do was to use some of the money that we had raised—what we ended up doing was we took a part of the earnings on the endowment to pay for our development program. And that helped us tremendously in giving us a flow of resources to be able to build the program and add more staff. And so that was what really got us the money. It wasn't really any new state appropriation or any money from the university, it was private money that we were using to hire staff and build our program. [01:50:26] He had in mind that he wanted to raise a billion dollars. I convinced him not to start with that. Let's start small. And let's start, you know, at 300 million, and then we can always raise the goal as we go along. And at first he wasn't sure he wanted to do that, and then he finally said, "Okay." He said,

"I'll agree to that. We'll start at 300 million." And within a year or two, we raised it to 500 million, then we raised it, I think, a third time to 900 million. And we did that because we wanted to have a splash in the last years of the campaign and finally raise the goal to a billion dollars. And [*laughs*] we probably would've had a hard time reaching that goal had it not been for the $300 million gift from the Waltons. We worked long and hard on that gift. The Waltons wanted us to be able to prove to them that if they invested $300 million in the University of Arkansas, that it would be an economic development for the whole state, that putting that money into the university, hiring top-rate faculty, bringing top-rate students, it would have an impact on all of Arkansas. So we had to prove that in the reports that we did. They hired an outside firm to look at our proposal. Fortunately, that firm agreed with what we were putting in writing for the foundation. Of course two of the Waltons went to the University of Arkansas, Jim and Rob. That helped. [01:52:13] The people that were running their foundation were graduates of the University of Arkansas. But I have to say, it was not an easy thing that we went about, I mean, it was a tough process. And they held our feet to the fire more than I've ever seen. If I go to lunch with one of the people with the Foundation, I never was

able to buy their lunch, you know. They wouldn't let me do that because of conflict of interest. So there were a lot of rules and regulations and a lot of things we had to do in the proposal. But that $300 million enabled us to, you know, get over the billion mark. [01:52:51] The other thing they did which was really marvelous was we were able to convince them to let them—to let us use the $300 million to match gifts. So we could go to a donor, and let's say that we were tryin' to raise a million dollar endowed chair. We were able to get $500,000 from the individual and have it matched with $500,000 to create a chair. And that helped us unbelievably to be able to, you know, raise the kind of money that we wanted. And people were able to make major gifts at basically half the cost of what it was to endow a program. And that was a tremendous—of tremendous value to us. We even had the Tyson company—John Tyson was on our campaign committee, and he said, "I've got a"—when they bought the meat company, they had an excess airplane. King Air. Nice plane. University still has it. And he said to me—he said, "I'm wanna give you that plane," and he told me what it was worth, and I said, "That's fantastic. We'd love to have it." And he said, "Okay. There's one hitch. I want it matched." [*Laughs*] And I said, "Well, you want the plane matched?" He

said, "Yeah." Well, we were able to convince the Waltons to let us do that. And he ended up getting an endowed position for, you know, the plane and the—and I think the plane was, I don't know, worth a million dollars or a million two or something like that, and we were able to create a program in his name an—because of the gift of the plane. So that was a wonderful thing. [01:54:31] And then one of the other things that was such a—of such importance to us was I was able to hire two people from Penn State that I had known that I'd actually hired there, and that was Sandy and Clay Edwards. And they worked, you know, diligently helping with the campaign and helping manage the day-to-day operations. And they were fantastic. Unfortunately, Clay, in the final days of the campaign, died very suddenly at his home early in the morning, and Sandy felt that she needed to do something different. She'd, you know, come to work and left work every day with her spouse. Now no longer was he there, and she just said, "I just have to do something different." So she went to work for Crystal Bridges and just retired from there, and is now back working at the University of Arkansas in kind of a limited capacity. But the Edwards were fantastic in terms of helping us. [01:55:29] Another person that was just incredibly important was Judy Schwab. Judy worked for me and ran my

office and was very much involved in the campaign activities. And wouldn't have happened without, you know, those staff people. And there are a lot of others, you know, too numerous to mention, but we had a good staff. We had a good program, and we were able to hire people who really wanted to be there, and we had some longevity with people that were there. And it's been really great. Now I will say, unfortunately—we can talk about this later. The development program is not what it used to be. This year they've raised, you know, half of what they've been raising. And what happened was the chancellor that took over after me changed the reporting relationships. And the building that we were occupying that we had used to renovate with private gift money, University House, was given away to another entity on campus. And all of a sudden, all the development staff, central staff, didn't have a building. They had to work from home. So over the last few years, the development program at the university's really declined precipitously. And Sandy has come back to help. We have new leadership there with Scott Varady. But making that reporting relationship change and making the change of not having a central focus place to be has really hurt the program dramatically. So unfortunately, what we built, which we really

had a pow [DG edit: power program]—we were raising well over $100 million a year, and some years a lot more than that. And the year of the 300, we were the third—we had raised—in terms of public and private universities, all universities, we were number three on the list with what we raised that year with the $300 million gift 'cause all $300 million was given at once. [01:57:34] So you know, we would put, you know—what does University of Arkansas have in common with Harvard and Stanford? And we were—you know, it was Harvard, Stanford, University of Arkansas. So we really built a powerhouse machine in terms of fundraising, but unfortunately a lot of that has gone by the wayside, and they're now just trying to build it back.

JD: So I think to anyone, we hear 300 million, we hear a billion, and that is a significant sum, but it's particularly important to an institution, if I could speak on this, that probably had not been—had not seen significant fundraising focus or success. And we're in a state, as we know, that is relatively poor. And in a state that has a relatively low college-attainment rate. And so I wonder if you would speak on, you know—the numbers are huge. But also just what exactly did those funds do to the University of Arkansas, and as the Waltons were interested—and

to the state?

[01:58:49] DG: They were big numbers. And we were so fortunate in that, as I mentioned previously, we had a great staff that were—that we were able to bring in to help us, you know, build the program. We had a great chancellor, John White, who didn't have a problem—he used to say—he'd sound like the old West, Wild West. He'd say, "They load my gun, and then I go out and fire it." And he was a great fundraiser. He was—he didn't mind, you know, lookin' a person in the eye and askin' 'em for the order. And he really did a wonderful job. Sometimes he asked for too much. [*Laughs*] And that would cause a little bit of a problem, but most of the time he was great. [01:59:33] I believe very strongly that the Campaign for the Twenty-First Century put the university on the map. And I think John White's tenure did that. You know, John was controversial. He didn't always get along with the board. Neither did I, you know, in my last year. You know, he could be abrasive, he could be difficult, but he was very smart, he was very, very savvy, and he knew what it took to be a great university. He knew what we needed to do. And he had the background as the dean of a very prestigious school, Georgia Tech dean of engineering, that he knew what it took to get us there. And we were trying to get to

be in the top fifty of all public research universities. That was sort of our phrase, our goal, if you will, that we used. You know, we wanna be a top fifty public university. And we got down to—during my time there, to sixty-two. We're now way up in the nineties, and part of that is they changed the criteria on it. *US News and World Report*. Lot of people don't agree with *US News Report*. I think, you know, the chancellor after me took the emphasis off of that. We spent a lot of time trying to determine, all right, what will get us into that top fifty? I thought it was important. Not sure that leadership now thinks it is as important. And a lot of universities have discredited *US News* and said, you know, it's not important. So to me you have to have a benchmark, and this was a benchmark that we used. [02:01:20] But I do think it changed the character of the university and the state. We started getting, really, the top students from Arkansas and beyond to come to the University of Arkansas because we had scholarships. Many of the scholarships came from the $300 million gift and others. I know Hendrix was pretty concerned because we were getting scholarship—giving scholarships, high-end scholarships, that attracted students away from Hendrix. I actually had one of their people tell me that. So it was a good time for the

University of Arkansas. We were building a name brand. We increased the—our prowess in research considerably. And we brought in a number of new faculty from very prestigious institutions. A little bit later we renovated a number of buildings on campus and built some new facilities. And so I think that span, and I include, you know, the time when John was chancellor and then my seven years, I think during that seventeen years, I'm proud of the fact that we did a lot of really good things for the university. We didn't get everything done by any means. Lot more to do. But I think it was kind of a golden time for the university, particularly during John White's tenure where people really felt like, you know, things were on the move. We had the movers and shakers in Arkansas on our campaign committee. You know, we had the J. B. Hunts, and we had the, you know, the Don Tysons and John Tyson, and we had the, you know, the Waltons. And we had—really if you look at the number of people that were on our campaign committee, they were the movers and shakers from all across Arkansas, not just from Northwest Arkansas. And it was a good time. [02:03:27] The economy was doing fairly well, although we had a couple of interruptions there, but you know, the economy was pretty strong, and it was a good time to raise money for

programs like we had at the University of Arkansas. It was fun to be a part of it. I mean, it just felt like the university was moving.

[02:03:49] JD: Yeah, I imagine it would be a very exciting time.

DG: Yeah.

JD: Especially to play such an integral role in this significant moment in the university and the state's history. I believe—was the Honors College also a part of . . .

DG: Yes.

JD: . . . part of this as well?

DG: It's interesting.

JD: The creation of it?

DG: Yes, John, what happened was that—the way we got that idea actually came from Penn State. Penn State created an honors college—and I mentioned the name Bill Schreyer, who was the former chairman of our campaign and a dear friend and chairman of Merrill Lynch. He endowed, with a $30 million gift, the honors college at Penn State became and is the hon—the Schreyer Honors College. And he sent me a bunch of materials about it. And I read them all closely, and I thought, "You know, that's a pretty good idea." 'Cause we had to have something to appeal to the Waltons, you know. What were we gonna create?

They'd already endowed, with a $50 million gift, the College of Business school and named it after Sam. And so you know, we had to have a hook. We had to have something that would appeal to them, and so we ended up with floating the idea of an honors college for $200 million of the $300 million gift. And the graduate school about $100 million. There were some others. There was like $40 million for the library and several other things in there, but the main two things that we tried to endow was the graduate school, 100 million, and the honors college, 200 million. [02:05:29] And out of those funds, we created endowed professorships, endowed chairs, scholarships, honors college scholarships. And that made a tremendous amount of difference at the university and being able to attract faculty and to attract students. But the initial idea came from Penn State. And basically what we did was we overlaid a college over all of the other colleges. So basically you had—a student could be an engineer in the engineering school, in education, whatever, and also be a part of the honors college. So you had a student in engineering and the honors college depending on what their grade point was, depending on, you know, how they did in school. And they all got scholarships. And it's grown tremendously over the time. The endowment has gone—they

made the $300 million gift all at once. One gift of $300 million was transferred to us. And they hit the market—of course, they're experts at this. [*Laughs*] I mean, why should I be surprised? They hit the market at the right time. And it was right when the market was starting to go up. And within not very much time, that 300 million was now worth 400 million, and then as time went by, 500 million. And I don't even—I've lost track of what was. I know it's crass—it's crossed the billion dollar mark. And our endowment grew tremendously because of the matching program. So all of that came together at a time that, you know, we really were able to, you know, I think do some great things for the university and put the university on the map.

[02:07:18] JD: Before we move into Dr. White's retirement and your ascendance to the chancellorship at the University of Arkansas, is there anything during this period of time we've neglected?

DG: No, I think you've done a great job in asking the questions. I can't think of anything. Again, you know, it was a real special time. We had wonderful deans that we worked with. I think there was a sense that we were all pulling together for the same thing. We put together what we called the TAP Report, and TAP stood for Transparency and Accountability to the People of

Arkansas. And we published that every year. Well, in the beginning every six months. But we'd come up with a document that we would hand out, and the deans were heavily involved in coming up with the items that we had as priorities. We had fifteen priorities across the spectrum, across the university. You know, keeping tuition low, increasing our academic research prowess. Just—you know, renovating buildings, you know, having more students of color. You know, we had these fifteen priorities that we listed, and the deans bought into 'em. [02:08:47] And I always felt that—this was during my tenure. I always felt that the deans were behind the university in this and really wanted to make it a better place. And so, you know, we were fortunate in that I think we were all pulling, you know, the same way. And I think you can feel that as an institution, you know, that there's a camaraderie there, that people want to make the university a better place.

JD: I think when people talk or think about culture—I think it's used a lot, but it sounds like that's what you're talking about as well.

DG: Yes. No question about it. And that started happening during John White's tenure, and I was fortunate to be able to carry on. And you know, very little problems, dean problems. I mean, we had a few problems and issues, but for the most part, I think we

had an excellent group of administrators, deans and central administrators that were really workin' hard to build the university. Not completely, but most. [*Laughs*]

[02:09:57] JD: Let's use this time to break for lunch, and then we'll pick up . . .

DG: Okay.

JD: . . . with the transition in leadership and your role as chancellor.

DG: All right.

JD: Does that sound okay?

[Recording stopped]

[02:10:10] JD: So David, you had mentioned earlier that while you were at Penn State, you spent time in Oxford with a Fulbright. Would you care to share that experience?

DG: Sure. I had heard that they offered administrative Fulbrights, which were, instead of like a year or more, they were usually anywhere from four to six months. And I had grown up around the Fulbright name 'cause my grandfather and my father had worked for the newspaper that was principally owned by the Fulbright family. And so I thought, "Well, you know, I think I'll just, you know, submit a proposal to get a Fulbright." And the administrative Fulbrights were in the UK. And they were four months long, usually in the summer. Excuse me. And I put in

there about my family contact with Fulbright and that kind of thing, thinking, well, don't know if that'll make any difference. Probably didn't. But sure enough, I was asked to—selected to be a Fulbright Scholar. [02:11:17] So in 1992 I was at Penn State, and the university gave me a sabbatical for four months, and I went over there a month before the kids and Jane because they were still in school. But it was a wonderful time for the family. I had a good friend, who by the way is now the vice president for development at Penn State who I hired—came over and we did kind of a dry run to the places that I wanted to take my family. And our kids were—let's see, they were thirteen and ten at the time. And Oxford gave me—I was connected with Merton College. And Merton College gave me a flat to stay in, a really nice house. And we stayed there—I stayed there for four months and with the family for three months. And my mother and one of my brothers came over. My stepdad, and then Jane's family came over, too. And we toured Europe and did all that. It was a great, great thing for us. [02:12:24] [*Laughs*] I remember when we decided we were gonna leave Penn State to come back to Arkansas, leave consulting and State College, we called our kids down, and my daughter—she said—we said, "We've got something we wanna tell you," and she blurts out,

"We're not goin' back to Oxford, are we?" She had—she was thirteen and missed her friends, you know. But anyway, it was a great time, and I was, you know, pleased that I was able to do it and we—the kids got to see Europe. I remember when they came back, they were talkin' about Paris in class one time, and the Eiffel Tower. And the teacher said, "Has anybody ever been to the Eiffel Tower?" and nobody raised their hands. And I said to our son, "Well, you've been ou—why didn't you raise your hand?" And he said, "I didn't wanna look like I was tryin' to be cool." [*Laughs*] But it was a great experience for them to get to see Europe. And we actually went all over Europe. We went to Germany because that's where Jane's parents—her heritage is from. And we got to see where all the Brockmanns are buried. I think we went to every cemetery in Germany. And so that was great for the kids to get to meet, you know, their heritage. It was a great trip. Sorry, John.

[02:13:46] JD: What all did it entail, an administrative Fulbright? What kind of work did you do with, presumably, Merton College and . . .

DG: At that time, Oxford University was undergoing their first capital campaign. And I had actually been invited, along with other vice presidents of big universities, to come over and talk with the

folks that were engaged in the capital campaign and tell them how we did it in the United States. And they—I think they had Ohio State, Michigan, maybe—there were a couple of other schools, a couple of privates that—we went over independently through the year and talked to 'em about our campaigns and what we were doing. And at that time Penn State was one of the top five capital campaigns in the country. So I'd been over there and gotten to know some of the people there at Oxford. And I chose Merton simply because you had to pick a school to be—a college within Oxford to be engaged with. That's how it worked. And I think I picked Merton simply because it was the oldest. And I probably should've picked Pembroke because that's where Fulbright studied when he went there at Pembroke College. But anyway, I didn't. I picked Merton. [02:15:01] So my job was to help them, Merton College, within the capital campaign of Oxford, put together their part of their program. And that's what I did for four months and met with their staff and guided them in starting the pre—they had—basically had nothing. They had received a lot of gifts, estate gifts, but the estate taxes and the—and philanthropy works differently in the UK, or at least it did then, where you didn't get deductions for annual gifts. You did get some deduction for making an estate

gift, but the tax ramifications were much different than we had in the United States. So my job was to help them put together an annual fund, a planned giving program, and a capital campaign within the context of the whole university. And it was great. I got to meet a lot of Brits that—I've stayed in touch with a couple of them to this day. And it wasn't heavy lifting. They gave me an office. They gave me a house to live in, and it was great. [02:16:11] The only problem we had was that my mother and stepmother couldn't remember that we had a seven-hour, six-, seven-hour difference in time. So they would call me in the middle of the morning. [*Laughs*] The phone would ring, and I member one time my mother called, and she said, "Well, you sound like you're sleepy," and I said, "Well, Mother, it's three o'clock in the morning here." But anyway, it was a great experience, and I'm glad I got to do it.

[02:16:37] JD: Earlier you also mentioned at a point where you'd earned your Ed.D. So you'd earned your Juris Doctorate while you were working at Westminster, and then a few years later went back to graduate school. When was that?

DG: I—when I came to Arkansas the first time in [19]85 after I was at Hendrix, I figured that if I'm gonna stay in academic life at a college university, even though I had a law degree I needed to

get what they like to call the union card. I needed a doctorate. The only problem was that I hadn't been—I didn't go through the ranks in terms of getting a master's degree in an academic discipline. So naturally it followed that I should probably do my doctorate in higher education 'cause I was interested in going into high—staying in higher education. I thought, well, you know, maybe I need to get my doctorate. At that time, the University of Arkansas did not offer a Ph.D. in higher education. They do now, but at that time they did not. So I went and did the Ed.D. And interesting thing I—so I started it as soon as I got to the University of Arkansas. Maybe six months after I got there in [19]85. And they gave me credit for my law degree like it was a master's degree, so that helped me with not needing as many courses. And again, when I decided to leave and go to Penn State in [19]85, I mean, I—let me back up. I got to the University of Arkansas in [19]82. Excuse me. And so I started in [19]82 on my doctorate. And then in [19]85 when I started to go to Penn State, I still had a few classes left that I needed to do and to write my dissertation. So once again, like I did when I was in law school, I petitioned them to allow me to finish my doctorate at Penn State and take my last courses there and do my dissertation there. And they gave me permission to do that.

So just like I did in law school where I finished it at Mizzou but I got the degree from Arkansas, I finished my doctorate at Penn State, but the degree transferred the credits back to Arkansas. So that's just the way it worked out, and I was, you know—I member I had not done my—some of my work that I had to do in order to graduate. I had sort of put if off. And so when I would do the classes at Penn State, they would actually do a proxy for me. And a couple of the classes I actually did by having somebody tape the classes at Arkansas and mail me the tapes. And then when it came ready to do the test, they made me have a proxy to do them. [02:19:44] So you know, it was all above board, and it worked out, and I was glad that they allowed me to do that. So I got the degree actually in [19]88. Now my diploma says [19]89 but that's only because I graduated early, and it actually—I didn't go through the ceremony or I wasn't up for graduation until the fall rolled around, I guess it was, or maybe the vice verse. But anyway, that's what happened. So I think the degree says [19]89, but it was really [19]88.

JD: The year. And that's the interesting way that you earned—fully earned two University of Arkansas degrees.

DG: Yeah.

JD: That's great.

DG: Yeah, I'm proud of it. I mean, I think it, you know, it gave me at least the union card, if you would, to—a combination of the doctorate with the law degree, I think, helped me. I would've never been chancellor without the doctorate. And I would've preferred it to be a Ph.D. but—not anything against the Ed.D, but I think it maybe carries a little more clout in the academic circles. But that wasn't available. So.

[02:20:59] JD: Then moving forward, back to where we were earlier a few topics ago. So we had discussed that you'd worked with Dr. White in his tenure as chancellor. We had discussed the university's Campaign for the Twenty-First Century and the impact that that project, as well as others had on the—just the overall betterment of the institution and, as a consequence, the state of Arkansas. So you were vice chancellor during a really pivotal time in the state's—the university's history. And then in 2008 Dr. White announces his retirement, and you are named his successor. If you would, share how that . . .

DG: Sure.

JD: . . . took place and just the—your thoughts during that momentous time.

[02:22:00] DG: I really owe a lot to the president of the university

system at that time, Alan Sugg. I had a wonderful relationship with Dr. Sugg even though I didn't report to him directly. He was over the entire system. And I liked him very much. We got along well, and he would call me from time to time and ask questions about certain things, or he'd say he need some money for some project, and we'd find the money for him. And we just developed a good relationship with he and his wife, Jeannie. In about, I'm gonna say, 2005, maybe 2006, he asked me—he call—mem—I'll never forget. He called me on the phone and he said, "Have you ever thought about bein' a college president?" And I said, "Well, actually, Alan, I have thought about that, and I applied for a lot of places," and reminded him that I had applied to be the president—or the chancellor at UALR while he was president of the system, and I didn't get there. And I kinda laughed, and he said, "Yeah," he said, "that was a bad—that was a mistake I made," or something like that, and I thanked him, and he said, "Well, Dr. White has started talkin' a little bit about how long he wants to go as president"—or as chancellor, excuse me. And he said, "I'm even thinkin' about, you know, retirement down the road. Not imminent, but maybe within the next two or three years. And would you have interest in that?" And I said, "Oh, golly." I said, "I, you know, I don't know." I said, "I

probably would, but I don't know about goin' through a search and then not gettin' the job, and you know, then feelin', you know, should I end up leaving?" And I said, "I've always thought that I wanted to retire early. I've saved my money. I've made some money consulting." Had continued to consult while I was at the university. And so he said, "Well, let's just keep the conversation open. Let's keep talkin' about it, and we'll see." [02:24:05] So Dr. White—I remember I got approached by a headhunter to interview at Harvard University to be their development officer. And I knew the guy pretty well that was doing the search, and I had worked with him when I was at Grenzebach Glier, and he called me, and he said, "I can get you an interview if—will you go to do it? And they have interest." And I said, "Well, I'm not sure I wanna go to Harvard University, as prestigious as that sounds. I mean, I'm in my hometown at my home university." I said, "I'm not sure that's something I wanna do." And so I said, "Well"—he kinda, you know, wanted me to go on the interview because he promoted the idea and all, and he said, "You just gotta go up there to see what you think and talk to the president and blah, blah, blah." And so I went in and told John White that I was gonna go interview. And he got pretty upset about it, and he says, "Well, why do you wanna go

do that? Stay here and be chancellor." And I said, "Well," I said, "John, I don't know—you know, I don't want you to retire. I don't wanna put pressure on you." He says, "I'm ready to retire. I'm thinkin' about retiring. And probably within another year, I'm gonna retire." [02:25:33] And he called Alan Sugg, and Alan Sugg called me and said, "You know, we don't want you to leave. We, you know, have you kind of in mind to be the next chancellor." And so I went on the interview anyway. And I thought, "Well, you know, I've already told 'em I'm goin' to," so I did. And it was a wonderful, you know, interview to go on because they took me on a tour of the university and showed me where John Kennedy lived when he was there and where Roosevelt lived when he was there. And I member going into the president's office, and on the wall behind her desk was a portrait of Teddy Roosevelt. [*Laughs*] And you know, I mean, it—it's just history. And I had a good interview. I have no idea if they were gonna offer me the job. I came back home and told them that I had a good interview. And that's when John said, "Well, I'm ready to announce." And about six months later, he did announce. And then what happened was Alan Sugg said, "I'm gonna put you up"—I had a lot of board support. I was close to a lot of the board members and—'cause of the campaign

and knew them and felt I had a good relationship with all the board members. And the chairman of the board was Stanley Reed, who I went to law school with. And he was promoting me. And John Tyson was on the board and a couple of other people that I, you know, all of 'em I knew well. [02:27:10] And so he said, "I've already talked to the board, and they're 100 percent." But he said, "I've gotta get you through the faculty." He said, "I can't just appoint you without, you know, gettin' the faculty on board." And he said, "I'm gonna talk to the leadership, the faculty senate, and I'm gonna talk to the deans." And he literally came to Fayetteville and interviewed every one of the deans, faculty senate, other faculty. And few weeks later he calls me back, and he says, "Okay. I got it all set." And said, "I'm not gonna do a search and—not gonna put you through that." He said, "There are a few people that think that we should, but the majority does not," and so that's what happened. And so I became chancellor in 2008. And John White retired. And that was how that worked. [02:28:04] And so I was fortunate. I mean, in the right place at the right time. And of course, they—you know, I don't think they would've ever looked at me had we not had a major capital campaign. The $300 million gift certainly [*laughs*] didn't hurt. And I had a great

relationship with Alan and with the board. And so it kind of just all came together. And so, you know, they asked me to do it, and I did.

[02:28:30] JD: Do you think it meant—you're reaching the pinnacle of a career in higher education at this point. Do you think it meant more to you being a native Arkansan and from Fayetteville, as you said—you're working in your home town.

DG: Yeah.

JD: What were your thoughts, your feelings about that?

DG: It absolutely did. You know, I had tried a presidency. I had one opportunity—it's now just come to me. As I'm getting older, I'm—my memory slips, but Murray State University. I'd had the opportunity to go there. And we'd gone up there and interviewed, and it just wasn't—I don't know. It wasn't the place. It wasn't like the University of Arkansas, and so we didn't do that. But I'd applied several other places to be chancellor or president, and it hadn't worked out. A couple here in the state, Arkansas State University, UALR. [02:29:33] And I actually thought when I came back to Arkansas that those days were over. I mean, I didn't start, you know, applying—the only job that I looked at while I was here was Harvard, you know, when they invited me to come up there, and I didn't apply for that job.

They—a headhunter called me and got me involved. And so we were happy here. And I actually thought that I would retire early and go on the faculty after, you know, John White was chancellor. I really didn't have it in mind until Alan Sugg called me and asked me if I had thought about it. And I [*laughs*] said to him, "Yeah, I've thought about a lot and applied a lot and, you know, it hadn't happened." And so to have the opportunity to lead the university at that point was really, in some ways, a dream come true that I had hoped had happened earlier in my career. I'd hoped that I could've gone from Penn State to a presidency, but that wasn't to be. And I, you know, I was starting to get a little older and, you know, I was in my mid-fifties, and I thought, "If this is gonna happen, it needs to happen, you know, soon." But I frankly sorta given up on thinking that I was gonna be a university president. And this opportunity came along, and I'm, you know, honored and thankful to Dr. Sugg, who I've stayed in touch with these many years and a wonderful mentor to me. A wonderful man. I think he was a great president. Alan Sugg had the thinking that the president was there to serve the campuses, not the other way around. You know, he didn't put the emphasis on the system, he put the emphasis on the campuses. And he looked at the

most important people in the whole system were the chancellors, and that he was there to make their life easier. That was his way of thinking. [02:31:31] And frankly that's the only way that works. And there are a lot of places these days, as I'm sure you know, that have had problems with the system versus the main campus. And we've had those issues here at University of Arkansas. And it only really works if the head of the system understands that it's the chancellors, it's the campuses that drive the program, not the other way around. [02:31:57] But anyway, I was pleased to be asked to do it, and you know, enjoyed it. I won't say I enjoyed all of it, but I enjoyed most of it. It's a way of life, John, to be a president of a college or university, a chancellor. If you do it the right way, and frankly, not everybody does it the right way, but if you do it the right way, it's all consuming. You can't get away from it. It's 24/7. You know, we had events pretty much every night that we were there. If they weren't in the chancellor's home, they were at some other, you know, place. And we had activities on the weekends. If you put in sports activities—you know, there's something to do that you really need to do all the time. Now Jane and I went to all of the sports activities on a regular basis, but we didn't go to every one. John White and his wife, Mary Lib

White, went to every one. And to this day I'm amazed at how in the world they did it, how they accomplished it. They literally didn't miss a men's or women's sporting event if they were in town. Jane and I weren't quite that crazy about it. And we tried to spread it around a little bit. If there was a concert or a, you know, musical performance or a play, we'd try to do that as well. [02:33:21] But literally it's an every night, every day and night, weekends, too, situation. And again, if you do it the right way, it wears you out. I mean, it—you get to the point—I can remember Sundays were the days that usually I didn't have anything. We'd go to church, and then the afternoon was usually pretty open. Saturdays I was almost always working. I was either at the office or at an event. Sunday nights we did have events, but we tried to keep as many Sunday evenings open as we could. And somebody said, "Well, what do you do on Sunday?" I said, "I sleep." [*Laughs*] I'd take naps. 'Cause it is exhausting. Now there are a lot of presidents that don't put that kind of time into it and don't have that commitment. The prestige of the job is maybe more of what they're after. I've known a few of those. But I think most people that get to that position, you know, they put in the time, and it's a tough job. And I think that's the reason why, you know—the average used

to be, and this may have changed, but when I was there, the average tenure of a college or university president was four years. I did seven years. I could've gone longer, but you know, I got to the point where things had changed. [02:34:44] Alan Sugg had retired, and I don't know. I just felt, "Have I done most of what I wanted to do?" And I did wanna do some teaching. And the thing that I think—I'm jumpin' ahead a little bit here, but just to finish this thought. The thing that caused me primarily to retire as chancellor a little bit early—I think I was sixty-three—was they changed—Dr. Bobbit changed the way they compensated somebody that left administration that had tenure and went back to the faculty. It used to be 80 percent. You got 80 percent of your salary. And the reason for that—and that was pretty standard across the United States, between 70, 80 percent. And there were a lot of reasons for that. The biggest reason was that it allowed you to move a dean or an administrative officer over to the faculty with ease because they knew their compensation was not going to be, you know, lessened very much. And so you never really had a lot of fight when you moved a dean out of a position or a vice chancellor that had tenure because you knew they were gonna be taken care of financially, and that made it a lot easier. [02:36:01]

What Dr. Bobbitt decided [*coughs*] was—'scuse me—he decided that he thought that was too lucrative. And he was probably right. I mean, it had gotten to the point where salaries had ballooned, and so a chancellor was maybe making, you know, $4- or $500,000 a year, and so that was a pretty good salary to go back to the faculty. So he decided that he wanted to change that and did change it. I was one of the last people that came under the old way. And I knew that he was gonna change it, and I knew that if I waited very much longer that my salary as a faculty member would be the average of the top three salaries in my academic area. So that would've been a huge, you know, decrease in my salary. Frankly, I probably wouldn't have retired had that been the case. So I knew that he was on the cusp of changing that, and so I made the decision to retire and go on the faculty. And I tell you what, it's the best job I ever had being on the faculty. I absolutely loved it. I did it for seven years. And when I turned seventy, I told my class I didn't want 'em to, you know, tell me that I was drooling and that it was maybe time to, you know, stop. And I could tell I wasn't quite, when I turned seventy, quite as sharp, you know, remembering things. It wasn't a serious issue but—and course that was during COVID, and we'd had two years of COVID and I was

teaching remotely, and that was a little bit of a hassle. [02:37:40] So Jane thought that I should keep goin'. She said, "Well, you're, you know, you're in great shape. Why do you wanna stop?" 'cause she knew I loved it. But you know, I think there comes a time when you just—you know, you can't stay forever. And I just felt that it was time to, you know, to hang it up. And the other thing that got me out of the chancellor's role was when I became chancellor, I asked to have a contract. They'd never given a contract to any of the chancellors. John White didn't have one, Dan Ferritor didn't have one. To my knowledge, none of them had one, not even the president of the system had a contract. They had tenure, and that protected them. But I said, I—you know, I had had a contract at Penn State, and I said, "I'd like to have a contract if you're gonna ask me to be chancellor that protects me." And primarily because, you know, a new president comes in and makes a decision that, you know, they want somebody else. I wanted to be protected. So Dr. Sugg gave me a contract. And he was still president when I became chancellor and—gave me a five-year contract. And then five years into the role, he had retired, and Dr. Bobbitt came in. And I sent a note to Dr. Bobbitt, and I said, "My contract's about to expire." And he said, "Well, you don't really

need a contract. You know, you can work witho"—by the way, they'd given all the other chancellors—because they gave [*laughs*] me one, they felt they had to give all the other contracts, so they did. [02:39:25] So anyway, make a long story short, I couldn't get him to come to closure on a new contract. And I can't really tell you why, you know, you have to ask that question. I never really had a bad word with Dr. Bobbitt. We didn't see eye to eye on everything. I was opposed to eVersity, and I was invited by the chairman of the board to give my thoughts about it, and dumb me got up in front of the board and told 'em what I thought. And I know he didn't like that. And I probably should've been more judicious and said, you know, "I don't have any comment," but I was just tryin' to be helpful, I guess. But there were some things, communication issues. You know, and again, you know, it wasn't so much Don as it wasn't Alan Sugg. And we always had a pretty good relationship, but I just—I didn't feel the communication was very good. And then I'd had a couple of administrative problems, administrative issues, one in particular that I had to fire somebody, ask 'em to resign, and that created a huge firestorm. And interesting, when Alan Sugg retired two years into my tenure, I was asked to be the system president. And I member

John Ed Anthony was the chairman of the board, and he called me, and he said, "I've got the board support," and said, "We wanna name you president of the system." And I said, "John Ed," I said, "I've only been chancellor for two years." I said, "You know, I just now started to get things where I want it." I said, "I'd feel like I was abandoning the campus and the team I put in place," and he said, "Well, what if you—we allowed you to do both jobs? You know, you could stay as chancellor for another year, and that would give you three years, and then after that—and you could be president of the system as well, and then you'd have to move to Little Rock and be just system and give up chancellor." [02:41:33] And so I thought about that, and I said, "Okay, I'll do that." So I committed to, you know, being the system president. And went home that night. Jane and I stayed up till two in the morning, literally, talking about it. She did not wanna leave Fayetteville. I really didn't, either. I felt like I had not been chancellor long enough. And the next morning, I was at my desk early, and John Ed Anthony calls about eight o'clock. And he said, "All right, here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna announce you as president, and I'm not gonna have a press conference. I'm just gonna announce it, and then we'll have a press conference at the next board meeting."

And I said, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait." I said, "John Ed," I said, "I can't tell you how much I appreciate your confidence in me, but we've decided we're not gonna do it." Well, he wasn't very happy with that and—but he was nice, but I could tell he was pretty, you know, perturbed. And so I ended up staying there as chancellor. [02:42:38] And we didn't really wanna move to Little Rock. I didn't have anything against Little Rock, we'd lived in Conway. But Fayetteville was home. And you know, we just felt that this was the place that we oughta be. And so I helped 'em to try to find somebody to be—they had a tough time finding a president. They interviewed several people and never could come to closure on it. And I was in the interview process. They—when they did the interviews, they asked me to interview. And anyway, there at the end, they decided to look at Don Bobbitt, who had been at the university and had been one of our deans. And he had left to be provost at University of Texas, Arlington. And I'll never forget, I was on vacation. I was in Kennebunkport, Maine, with some dear friends, and we'd gone up there on vacation. And Alan Sugg calls me and says that he's gonna—what do I think of Don Bobbitt? And he said, "Can you live with him?" And I said, "Alan, I can live with everybody." And at that point, I felt

genuinely bad about getting out of it and not taking the job, so I said, "You know, absolutely," I said, you know, "if you think he's the guy and that's who they"—and he said—and I member he said to me—he said, "Look, if you don't—aren't comfortable, I can kill it." I said, "No, I'm fine with it." And so that's who they elected. [02:44:10] But they interviewed a ton of people. They interviewed—Stanley Reed was one of 'em they interviewed, and tragically he left the interview and I guess had a heart attack and was killed on the way back home from the interview for the president of the university. There started to be a lot of board politics at the end of my tenure. The board had changed rather dramatically, and some of the old guard board members that I had gotten to know well had now left the board, 'cause you know, we change a board member every year. So after about six or seven years, it was a changeover. And then I had a—I mentioned earlier. I may be gettin' ahead of myself, but I had a very serious personnel issue where a person that I had hired that I had known earlier in my career and had worked for me at Penn State I had brought to be my replacement as vice chancellor for advancement. And I'll never forget telling him when he came, "The one thing you need to do is be sure you balance your budget. That's important. In Arkansas you can't

have, you know, a—you can't deficit spend." And I said, "We watch very carefully so that, you know, we can't—we don't ever deficit spend in our university coffers." And at that time, when I took over as chancellor, we had very few reserves. Our reserves were very low. We built 'em up to about $50 million over time, but when I went in, literally when I went to see Alan Sugg and took Don Pederson, my finance vice chancellor, and showed him our finances, he looked up from the papers we showed him and said, "You guys are broke." And literally, we had no reserves. And we were. We were, you know, livin', you know, like paycheck to paycheck. And so anyway, make a long story short, Brad Choate, who I had brought—he'd been with me at Penn State. He was at that point the president of the Minnesota Medical Foundation. Big job, University of Minnesota. [02:46:25] We discovered at the end of the fiscal year that he had overspent his budget by about 50 percent. And we didn't have a deficit at the university. We had plenty of money to cover it. But it was gonna create a problem for us in giving raises the next year. I mean, we're talkin' about a $4.5 million deficit on a, you know, $11 million budget, $12 million budget. And it was a huge, you know, hole that we were gonna have to fill somehow. And I was in a real tough position because I had

brought him there. He was a friend. I had not really felt that he was—I felt a little bit like he had come there to retire. He played a lot of golf. I mean, big, big time golfer. Good golfer. But he loved the game of golf, and it was almost a problem, you know, that he was always playing golf. And I had to talk to him about it. [02:47:30] Anyway, what happened, long story short, the board got pretty upset about it and wanted me to make a change. And I did. I said, "Brad," I said, "I can't save you." I said—you know, and it became a public issue. Brad had gone to a meeting and told the development officers that there was a deficit, and somebody reported that to somebody, got to the press, so it was out in the public domain that his department had a big deficit. And so I said, "You're gonna have to resign." And I said, "I'll let you stay till the end of the fiscal year to find a job." And at that point, he was okay. I mean, he never apologized, but he knew that it was his problem. When we went to talk to him, sent in my people to do an audit, he didn't have a budget in his office. He didn't have anything—in his drawers he had no budget. You know, there was no way he could be monitoring what was happening. And he also had given his PIN number to his assistant to make all the—to give the authority to pay the bills in all of his department. So he had given up,

illegally, you know, authority over his budget and wasn't monitoring it, wasn't watching it at all. [02:48:51] So he couldn't find a job. I mean, he couldn't find anybody to hire him. Thought he'd be able to do it immediately, but word got out and he di—he wasn't able to. And then John Diamond, who was the person he brought in from Maine, was our PR person. He took up on Brad's side of the equation and started giving the person that I had put in the job to replace Brad trouble. And the—it got worse. And he went to the legislature. And Brad—and I'm making a long story short, but it's an important part of my life. They basically told members of the general assembly that I had not released all the documents that I should have under a public information, FOIA, request. It was totally bogus. It was not an ounce of truth in it. But at that time I had upset a few Republican legislators over my support of undocumented students and gay students. And I had come out very strong in supporting those students. And I'd gotten some pretty nasty letters from Republican legislators. You know, "Why are you doing this?" You know, "This isn't any of your business," you know, that kind of thing. Some awful letters. One letter was addressed by seventeen or eighteen legislators, Republican legislators that excoriated me for supporting same-sex, you

know, gay students. And it was tough. It was hard. And so some of those same legislators decided they were gonna figure out a way to get Gearhart. And they hauled me down to Little Rock and had several—I say several. Two or three hearings about the issues. And then that got involved the legislator—well, I actually asked for an audit of him because I wanted to clear the air. And then the district attorneys in this area, prosecuting attorneys, got involved, did their own, you know, deal. So for about three or four months, I was really under the gun with all of these hearings. [02:51:29] And anyway, long story short, nothing came of it. The prosecuting attorney dismissed it. Said there's nothing there. Clean bill of health. The board of trustees voted a confidence in me. They actually had a vote resolution of confidence. But it was a tough, tough time. And it took a lot out of me. I mean, I was in the newspapers. The newspaper played it up big time. That was around the time that they'd gotten rid of the president of the University of Central Arkansas. Two presidents. And I was told by a person I knew well at the *Democrat Gazette* that at a meeting, they said, "We can get rid of a third one." So it was pretty, pretty rough. And I was on the front page of the newspaper, you know, constantly. Every morning we'd wake up—and it was hard on the family, it was

hard on Jane, it was hard on me. But anyway, we got past that, and a couple of years later—I stayed for a couple more years. [02:52:32] And I thought, you know, it's time to—I'll never forget. My—we had a little place up on the mountain up in Winslow. Had a beautiful view out the back of the Fort Smith Lake and all. And I went up there a lot on the weekends when I had time, or sometimes we'd go up there Sunday and drive back early Monday morning for work. And I went up there on a Sunday night. And I don't remember Monday—I think we maybe had Monday off or maybe—I don't know. We weren't meeting my staff Monday, so I spent the night up there only by myself to think all this through. And came to the conclusion—I called my son. I called my daughter. Talked to Jane multiple times. I called Alan Sugg, who had retired. I called Roy Shilling, former president of Hendrix. And I told them that I was tired and I was worn out and I was thinkin' about maybe retiring. And all my family members said, "Absolutely, Dad." Said, "We can see the stress on your face. You know, it's not worth it. You know, get out while you're ahead, blah, blah, blah." And Roy Shilling and Alan Sugg tried to talk me out of it. [*Laughs*] I'll never forget. Although I remember distinctly what Roy Shilling said. He said, "You know, in the final analysis, it's not what you are, but it's

who you are. And you know, you can be a good person and not be chancellor. And if you think it's time"—you know, and so then—I didn't call any board members. The ones that I had a good relationship with—there were a few that I did not have at that point. I would say maybe three or four of them. I had not developed a very good relationship for one reason or another. It's in my book. Anybody interested, you can read my book. [*Laughs*] But I had some issues with a couple of them. And I don't know, I just felt like the support had waned a little bit. And so sittin' up there on the mountain looking out the view, smokin' a cigar, I thought, "You know, it's time. I'm ready." [02:54:39] And I did wanna teach. And they were gettin' ready to change, you know, the compensation factor. And I couldn't get a contract. Not that I had to have one to work, but I couldn't. So I called Dr. Bobbitt, I guess it was Monday, and said, "I should probably"—I tol—I'll never forget, I said, "I probably should tell you this in person, but I'm decided I wanna retire." And there was silence on the phone. And he said, "Oh, really?" and I said, "Yes," and he said, "Well, that's not the call I thought I'd get this morning." And I said, "Well, I realize it, but" I said, "you know, I've done this now for seven years, and I wanna teach, and I wanna do that." And he said, "Well, I

respect your decision." He said, "You know, give me a week to talk to the board. I need, you know, a week to check it out with the board." And I said—he said, "I'll try to call you back Friday at the end of the week." He called me back the next day [*laughs*] and said he talked to all the board members. And then I started gettin' calls. And I got calls from a few of the board members that I was close to tryin' to talk me out of it. [02:55:55] But I had not told them because I didn't wanna be talked out of it. I mean, I had made the decision and I—and I've always felt that once you make a decision, stick to it, you know, and I just didn't want to. And I was ready. And so I did. I retired and—a little early. But golly, am I glad I did it because my time seven years teaching was glorious. I mean, I wrote—well, let's see, I wrote five books during that period of time. I love the students. They're all graduate students. And I got to know a number of the faculty, colleagues. And it was great. I mean, I was invited to come to China and speak about college and university presidents, so got to do that during my time there. And I was on a board at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia, and that was a fun thing to do. So anyway, it worked out, and I'm glad I did it. And I could've stayed longer, and I had a lot more to do. But on the other hand I felt, you know, it's

time. And I actually think, John, I actually think it's probably added years to my life. You know, I—my dad, as I mentioned, died at age fifty-one. Now my mother lived to be ninety-seven. She died this past October. Or a year ago October. But you know, even though my health is good, you never know. And I think—you know, I mean, I haven't missed a beat in terms of retirement. [02:57:34] A lot of people go into retirement and they hate it. And you know, they don't know what to do with themselves. That hasn't been the case with me. I love to read. I like to play golf. I'm not any good, but I like to play. Play twice a week, sometimes three times, and just do what I wanna do. And I'm on a few boards and few, you know, things that I do, but life is good. And I'm—I really am glad that I did what I did. There are days that I wonder should I have stayed a little bit longer. And occasionally I'll have dreams that, you know—I wake up and—you know, "Why did I leave early?" But all in all it was a good decision to make and, I think, good for my family. And the best thing about it is I've gotten to know my grandchildren really well. We've got five grandkids. We go to all their football, basketball, baseball games, their dance, you know, concerts and choir. And that's been very fulfilling to be able to be involved with the grandkids.

[02:58:42] JD: You touched on—you know, certainly you could've stayed longer. But seven years, as you pointed out, is a significant period of time in that level, right, with that level of scrutiny and responsibility. And Arkansas is unique in that we do not have a lot of other—there's not a parity. There's not another university in the state that really compares . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . to University of Arkansas down to sports.

DG: Right.

JD: We don't have pro teams. So the emphasis, I think, is heightened.

DG: Yeah.

JD: And so you're in that role during, you know, a seven-year period, which is a significant amount of time in that sort of position, but also you're in that role in a series of really transitional points in the state where you're entering the office in 2008 during a recession. And in a minute I'll ask you to speak on just the fiscal strain that that would put on an institution such as the University of Arkansas. [02:59:57] You're also taking, you know, very public, as you indicated, public stances on culture issues and policy issues that affected and still do affect students and others in our state in a time of political transition in

our state as well at an institution where governmental relations is a really important part of the job. So I wonder if you could speak to that, just this period, those seven years . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . are very eventful, and not entirely based on things within the environment of the university, but . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . the university's affecting some of those points, and then some of those variables, of course, are also influencing the university.

[03:00:41] DG: I've always tried not to take myself too seriously. I mean, I just—I've been told that by my father and other people in my life that I respect. And it may be that I didn't take the position I had as serious as maybe I should have. Because you know, you do have a big pulpit, a big club when you're chancellor. And it may be that I was a little bit too verbal. I mean, I don't know. I probably would deny that I said that [*laughs*] because I felt strongly that if you're in a position of authority, you've gotta be able to support things that are the right thing to do. You gotta be on the right side of history. And I never could get—I had a wonderful relationship with Governor Beebe. But one thing that we disagreed wi—on was in-state

tuition for undocumented students. When he was the governor he—or, excuse me, the attorney general, he had an opinion written that said if you gave in-state tuition to an undocumented student, you had to give in-state tuition to any student. [03:01:50] Well, we did a briefing, University of Arkansas law school did a briefing that showed that was not really good law. And I gave him the briefing in a very nice, appropriate way. I member goin' down to see him. I asked if I could see him, and I went into his office, and [*laughs*] there were nine other people in there that he had in the meeting with me. I thought I was gonna meet with him myself. Naive me. But I never could get him to agree. And I said, "Governor, you need to be on the right side of history." I knew how he felt in his heart, but he didn't wanna reverse himself on an AG opinion that he had given. And but my—I felt that it was my duty to speak out about issues like that. And I did. And you know, it wasn't very popular with, particularly, members of the general assembly that were in the Republican Party. I mean, that—and I don't figure—really think of myself as being either Democrat or Republican. I like to tell people the first time I ever voted was for Richard Nixon [*laughs*] as president. So you know, I tend to look at the person and—but I got on the bad side because of some of the positions that I

took that I thought were right and I still think are right. [03:03:06] A lot of people—I would put it this way, John. A lot of people want to be chancellor or president. Not a whole lot of people wanna do chancellor, the work that it takes to do it right, the constituencies that you have to work and deal with. And quite frankly, I don't know how people do it in the last ten, fifteen, twenty years. I mean, the only thing I can figure is they must turn over a lot of the administrative work to other people and—I mean, I think I'd go crazy if I was in a job that long like that because it's constant. It's always—you're always on. You're always there, either on the telephone, on the computer, meetings. I mean, it's—there's no gettin' away from it, and it does wear you out. And I do feel that we made a contribution during my time. I feel that we tried to stand up for some things that I felt were important. People ask me, "Well, why did you support undocumented students?" Well, because when the state deci—we used to give in-state tuition, and during Beebe's administration, they changed that to say that you had to have—used to be that if you graduated from a bona fide high school, you could come to a university in Arkansas—in-state tuition if you graduated from an in-state, bona fide, in-state high school. They changed that to where you had to have a social security

card. And so basically what happened—and it didn't have anything to do with the high school you came from. So basically what happened with—was that all these students that wanted to come to the university or any public university in Arkansas couldn't come anymore because they'd have to pay out-of-state tuition, which was more than double the cost. And I had meetings with hundreds of them, literally hundreds of them, that wanted to come to the university and couldn't afford to come. And so I went on a crusade to try to get that changed, and there were a lot of people that didn't like that. [03:05:14] The other things that happened is that we started taking a lot of students from out of state. And if they had a high board score, twenty-eight to thirty on the ACT exam and a good grade point, 3.20, we would give them in-state tuition. And we had done that before I was chancellor. We did that during John White's tenure and before. We expanded it a little bit. But we started getting an enormous amount of students from Texas. The reason for that was because Texas put a limit on going to the University of Texas and Texas A&M—only ten percent of the high school graduating classes were able to go to those institutions. Well, you can imagine there were thousands of students that wanted to go to Texas A&M or UT and weren't able to do so. So they

could go to another institution in the state, but maybe they wanted to be at an institution with big-time athletics, they wanted to be at the flagship. You know, there were a lot of reasons. And we got a lot of those students. We weren't the only ones that got a lot. University of Oklahoma got a ton of them, more than we did. University of Alabama got a huge number of students from Texas. And the legislature, some members, some influential members, got upset because we were takin' so many students from Texas and clobbered me about that, and I went before a couple of hearings. And I asked the question—I said, "Why is this a problem? Why"—I knew what it was. It wasn't—the only problem was it was Texas. [*Laughs*] They didn't want students comin' from Texas. And but I thought to myself, "What difference does it make where the student comes from?" We were not keeping any student in Arkansas from coming to the university and taking a Texas student over an Arkansas student by any means. But—and we had plenty of room to grow, so that wasn't the issue. You know, we had tons of room to grow. And but that became a little bit of a lightning rod with some of the members of the general assembly. So I had a few times during those years that I wasn't makin' a whole lot of friends. [03:07:33] And I remember we had an event at

the Town Center. Ended up havin' over 1,000 people come to it. About—I think we called it Out of the Shadows—about undocumented students. And we'd really planned it and had a panel of people from all over the country come in to be on the panel that were undocumented and weren't able to go to college. And at the end of it—and the governor sent representatives. We had legislators come. We had one particular legislator that rushed the stage and wanted to speak after we had concluded it. And our police had to say, "I'm sorry. It's over," you know. And so you know, my position on a few things was a tough position to have. And on top of that we fired a pretty well-respected or well-known or well-liked football coach in Bobby Petrino. [*Laughs*] And that didn't sit well with a few people, but it was the right thing to do. And I don't wanna come across as though, you know, I'm sacrosanct and what I do is right. I've always felt, though, growin' up that you wanna stive to be on the right side of history. You wanna strive to do the right thing, and sometimes that's painful and costly. And I think it cost me some friends, particularly in the general assembly, some members of the board of trustees, I think, you know. [03:09:07] Two of them, two members of our board—or actually three were not in favor of firing Bobby Petrino. One in particular said to me—

[*laughs*] well, I'll never forget it. Said to me, "What fifty-year-old man doesn't wanna, you know, get a little on the side?" I'll never forget that. A board member said that to me. And so you know, that was tough. I'd lost a little bit of support there. And don't get me wrong, I felt I still had the majority of the board, even when I retired, but I had a few of 'em that—you know, the deficit issue was a problem. And it kinda wears you out. And you sorta get to the point—I member Alan Sugg told one board member after I tried—after I decided to retire. Board member says, "Why does he wanna do that?" and Alan said to him, "Well, you gotta understand he's not a potted plant. You know, he's—he doesn't have to have this job. You know, this job's not that important." And I never felt like I had to be the chancellor. I felt it was a great job, I loved it, I loved doing it, most of it, but I never felt that that defined me, you know. I mean, it wasn't something that I had to continue to do. And I think there are a lot of people in these days that, you know, they go along with whatever they have to go along with to maintain the position that they're in. I don't think that's the right way to do things. And you know, you gotta stand up for the things that you feel are right and fair. And you know, in the case of Bobby, I liked Bobby Petrino. I got along well with him. You know, he was

always nice to me, as you would expect he would be nice to the [*laughs*] chancellor. I had a lot of complaints about his language on the sidelines and those kinds of things. But what he did was so egregious, you know, lying to his AD, paying $15,000 to, you know—in hundred-dollar bills, hiring this person without, you know, going through the appropriate—you know, I mean, on and on and on. No reason to go back through it. But you know, there wa—we didn't have a choice if we're gonna stand up and do what we felt was right. You know. [03:11:34] I remember the students who were very supportive of the decision had printed up t-shirts that said, "The University of Arkansas: We're Long"—Jeff Long—"We're Long on integrity." And but we did get—we got a lot of nasty letters from people. And every now and then, it'll crop up [*laughs*] again in the media, you know, "We shouldn't've let Petrino go," you know. Crazy stuff. [*Laughs*]

[03:12:01] JD: So you know, still talking about your time as chancellor. It's a big job, it's a hard job. What are some things that you really enjoyed about it? And my next question will be what are the things you're most proud of 'cause they may be different.

DG: Yeah.

JD: Right, it may be that there were some really hard-fought things where you had to stand your ground, and you've—you're very proud of that. What are things that you would—that you just enjoyed . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . about the job?

DG: I loved working with the student government presidents. I was fortunate in that I had really good presidents of the student government. We got along. We didn't always agree on everything. But during my time there, really eight years because when I came in I had a holdover. And all of them—and I still stay in touch with all of 'em to this day. In fact one of 'em I did the marriage ceremony for them. And I don't know. I just—I—we had a good relationship. And when I retired, they all came back to a meeting that we had and spoke at my—you know, this retirement meeting, which I appreciated. I think a couple of 'em couldn't make it. But I really enjoyed that part of it. I would meet regularly with the student government officers, the president. And that was, you know, a really good time for me. [03:13:31] I enjoyed working with the deans. We had great deans during my tenure. You know, we had a couple of bumps along the way, but basically we had good continuity. I

enjoyed working with my vice chancellors. Don Pederson, who was a holdover from John White's time, I kept him as my finance vice chancellor. He was superb. We had a great relationship. He tried to retire, you know, when I came in, and I said, "You're not retiring, you know, I need you." And my provost I had brought in from Auburn University, and she did a wonderful job. And so you know, I really—I enjoyed the team. We had a good team, and I thought we were pulling, you know, in—all in the same direction, basically, as much as you can, you know. I'm very proud of the work we did with the physical plant. We built new or renovated about a billion dollars worth of physical plant during my tenure. And we did it with a combination of private gift money and with a facility fee that we put in place. [03:14:43] And that's an interesting quick story. What happened was in John White's last few months as chancellor, he was approached by the Fayetteville school board, the school district superintendent, to buy the Fayetteville High School property. And there was also another school on that property. I think it was maybe Holcum, I believe, was the name of the school. It was a primary school that was on the property over there by the Fayetteville—the old Fayetteville High Shcool. And it included the stadium. It included where the Boys' Club was.

It included, you know, about forty acres of property. And he had decided that he thought we outghta buy it. Now the only problem was they wanted $60 million for it. And at that time, we didn't have any money. We were broke. You may remember that was 2007, 2008. We were going through a terrible downturn in the economy. A few months after I became chancellor, we almost didn't have enough money to make payroll. We literally had to have a check that we got driven down to Little Rock and deposited in order to make payroll. Because they were freezing our assets and our foundation accounts and university accounts because they were underwater. They were worth less than what had been put into them. [03:16:12] So it was a bad time, and so the only way to do it would be on the backs of the students. We would have to borrow the money or bond the money and pay it off over, you know, thirty years on student fees and increase the student fee to pay for it. And it was gonna be hefty to get $60 million. On top of that, we hired a firm to tell us what the property was worth. [*Laughs*] And they came back and said it was worth $7 million. And the buildings were basically in tear-down condition, the old high school, the old primary school. So when I came in as chancellor—they didn't get the deal done while he was still

chancellor. When I came in, I took a bunch of deans and others over there to look at the facilities. And I had our staff, physical plant, do an inventory, and they told me that the infrastructure was in bad shape. There was asbestos in some of the buildings. The heating and air units all had to be replaced. They told me that in order to get it in the shape we would need it—and at that point we really didn't know what we were gonna do with it—we would need to spend probably another $50 million. So it was gonna be a $100 million deal. [03:17:35] So make a long story short, we pulled out of it. I mean, I went to the board and got the board and—the superintendent at the time's name was Bobby New. And I got along with him, knew him well. And he wasn't very happy with me. It was controversial because what they wanted to do was they wanted to move the high school to property they had bought away from the present high school. And a lot of people didn't want 'em to do that. They wanted 'em to tear it down and build right where the old one was, which is what they ended up doin', as you know. So I kinda got in the middle of that controversy. And their thinking was, "Well, if the university will buy this property for $60 million, then that'll make the decision for us 'cause we'll have the $60 million, and the university will take that property, and we'll have to go build

elsewhere." So we were kind of the decision maker on it. And after I'd been in the job for a month or two, I thought, "I shouldn't be in that position. They need to make the decision themselves on where they wanna be." And so we pulled out of it. [03:18:41] And I'll never forget. I got a phone call from one of the senior people at the school district and said to me, "Chancellor, you don't have the authority to do this." And it kinda angered me, but I didn't show it. And I said, "Well," I said, "I think I do, and we'll have to see," and hung up the phone. [*Laughs*] And I'd already talked to the board and with Alan Sugg. What we did and the reason I'm telling you that story is we then convinced the board—they were gonna give us a certain amount of money to increase a fee on the students to pay for the 60 million for the building. And they had agreed to let us do it if we could—they didn't wanna do 60 million, and we weren't gonna do it for 60 million. We wanted to do it for something much less. And they wanted the 60 million, and they had held firm on 60 million. And it was gonna cost the students, you know, a pretty good penny, and they really weren't gonna see much benefit. It was gonna be a facility that was, you know, adjacent to campus, but you know, a little far away. And we didn't know how we were gonna use it. And it was probably

gonna be tear down. We knew we could use it for parking, maybe, but it would be remote parking. [03:19:53] So anyway, what we convinced the board to do was let us keep a fee that was going to be used to buy the high school to renovate buildings on campus. Only renovation, not new facilities. And they agreed to that. Over a period of ten years, we would raise it a certain amount every year. And that—it was called the facility fee. And we used that to renovate all of the iconic buildings, most all of them, on campus. And it was a tremendous thing for us to see these buildings. You know, Ozark Hall was a—now Gearhart Hall. Sorry—was renovated with some of that money. We also used private money from the Waltons to do that because we had the graduate school and had Honors College in there, which was what they had supported. The old library, you know, became the architecture—was architecture, and we completely renovated that with that money. I mean, I could go down the list, but there were multiple buildings that we were able to renovate that we would not have been able to do had we bought the high school. So a combination of the facility fee and the private gift support that we got from a lot of people, donors, enabled us to really completely refurbish the campus. [03:21:20] And they're not

finished. We still have other buildings that need to be done, but we're in so much better shape than we were before we started that program. I mean, it's—just was life changing. And I'm very proud of that. I mean, I'm proud of the stance I took on, you know, the—some of the other issues. But I'm very proud that we were able to really put our campus in first-class shape. And I'm grateful to the board that they let us do that. They still are using a facility fee. That's how they're, you know, building new things, and it's been proven to be a great asset. And of course, the great thing about it is, it hits a student for four years, but when the student graduates, then another group comes in, and the facility fee helps to amortize bonds to pay off, you know, doing these renovations.

[03:22:13] JD: And you did this during a time when we were seeing, of course, revenues tighten during economic—the great recession and the economic downturn as you mentioned when you began your time as chancellor. It's also during a time, though, when we see the state funding for higher education, particularly here at the University of Arkansas, is effectively flat, which if you really think forward—think about it is a . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . decrease in funding. So you're doing more with less state

revenue.

DG: Yes.

JD: And you're also doing it in a way—the state doesn't fund or have really a mechanism to fund deferred maintenance, so you're . . .

DG: Yeah.

JD: . . . having—you have a building, and you're having to then figure out a way to maintain that building or to even expand that building for increased student needs.

DG: Right.

[03:23:07] JD: So I can see how that was significant—continues to be a challenge and an undertaking and a point of pride.

DG: We didn't get—except for the first year. Well, actually the last year of John White's tenure. We got no new money for—from the legislature my entire time I was there. And even during John White's time, except for that last year, we got very little new money. And so the percentage that the state was giving the University of Arkansas to operate and the number of students that we were getting—we were the seventh fastest growing university in the country during my time when we were adding students. We went from, you know, a student body of 15,000 to a student body of 27,000 in a very short period of time, getting no new revenue for that growth. And so the only

thing we could do is, you know, is use that revenue to help pay for new professors and whatnot. And so we were really, in some ways, building the university on the backs of the students with that facility fee and tuition. [03:24:15] One year I had a board member who was sort of a curmudgeon, and he called me one day, and he says, "Gearhart," he says, "I'm gonna be goin' off the board before long. I just want one year where you don't raise tuition. Just one year." And he was a good board member. We got along well. And so I thought, "You know, maybe we oughta try that." So one year we did not raise tuition. Most of the tuition raises that we had when I was there were 2 or 3 percent, within inflation. But that year we did not have any increases in fees or in tuition. And you know, John, I'm not sure it did any good. I mean, the parents and the students liked it, certainly. But we never got any kudos from the legislature or anybody, really, that I recall. So every year was a constant challenge. And you know, you can't run a university and keep it solid if you don't have an appropriate revenue flow, particularly when you're increasing the student body by leaps and bounds. [03:25:23] And one of the things that I disagreed with Dr. Bobbit on—we all wanted to keep tuition low. You know, there was no question about that. We wanted to work

hard to keep it low. And I think when the—this one particular year, I wanted a 3 percent increase, and he said, "No," he said, "I'm not gonna give you more than a 2—I don't wanna go to the board with more than a 2 percent." And so I said, "Well, okay, if you feel that way, you're the boss. Fine, we'll go with two." And come to find out when they get ready to vote on it, UALR had gotten 5 percent. UAPB had gotten 4.5 percent. UA Fort Smith had gotten 7 percent, and we had gotten 2 percent. And I said to Don—I said, "Don," I said, "We're the flagship. We're leading the way." I said, "You know, we've got—we're doing a great job with bringing in students. These other campuses are losing students." I said, "It's like we're being penalized because we're healthy and doin' a good job." No real answer to that. So there were some times where, you know, it was stressful to know whether or not we were gonna be able to pay the bills. We did build a good reserve. [03:26:34] When I left we had about $50 million in reserve. When I came in we had zero. We didn't have any money. We wer—as Alan Sugg said, "You guys are broke." And it was true. And we had a—you may recall we had a catastrophe in that we had an ice storm right after I—when I came in in—when was that ice storm? In December . . .

JD: [Twenty] oh nine?

DG: February maybe? Yeah. Six months into my tenure, they had this terrible ice storm that cost the campus $2 million, you know, with burst pipes and with all kinds of other things that we had cleaning the campus up. It was just horrible. So you know, that added to our problem with not havin' resources. Then of course, when the system—I'm gettin' to make a point here about systems and campuses, as I [*laughs*] said I would—then the system decides they wanna take some of our money to form eVersity. And eVersity was all online program. Dr. Bobbitt had been very successful at University of Texas Arlington in putting together a nursing program that was basically online. And it was a big moneymaker for the university. Different than what he wanted to do here. He wanted a full-fledged undergraduate baccalaureate program, not just nursing. And he called all the chancellors down to Little Rock. I had heard nothing about it. Knew nothing about it till I got down to this meeting with the chancellors. We had no discussion. He told us that he was forming a new campus. It was gonna be a system campus. It was gonna be on the system grounds there in Little Rock, and it was gonna be called eVersity. And we all asked tons of questions. You know, what does this mean? Every one of the campuses had electronic delivery. We had a huge program. We

had like fifty degree programs and several thousand students that were taking, you know, their courses online. And we had—I don't remember how many, maybe twenty-six programs you could get, you know, completely online, you know, going to school online. So we had a very substantial program, as did some of the other campuses. [03:28:52] And I member I said, "Well, Don, why"—you know, in this open meeting I said, "Why not just give this to one of the campuses? You know, let UALR have it, you know. Let one of the other campuses, you know, run it. Why do we need a separate campus to do this?" And he didn't really have an answer to that. They borrowed—well—[*coughs*] 'scuse me. He said the way that he wanted to finance it was to have each of the campuses put in money. And we were gonna be the lead because we were the biggest by far. And some campuses would put in 100, 200 thousand. But our take on it was over $2 million. And you know, we're talkin' at a time when every bit of money is important to us. And anyway, I said, "Well, why"—I said—at that point interest rates were, you know 3 percent. I said, "Just go to a bank and borrow it." "Well, we don't wanna do that. We don't wanna be under the gun to have to pay it back." So anyway, we gave them the $2 million. Other campuses pitched in depending on their size. I think the total

was around 7 or 8 million that they raised. The governor gave 'em a little bit of money. They got a little bit of money from John Tyson, as I recall. Maybe a half million dollars. And they started eVersity. I think at the—don't hold me to this, but what I've been told—and they were able to get the legislature to not require them to have to give a lot of information out about their program. So you never could determine how many students that had. Even if you FOAI'd 'em they were, you know, immune from that. [03:30:41] But I had a friend who worked for them, and he said they never really had more than about 700 students that were taking at least one course. It went on for a few years, and as you know, it folded, and they folded it into another campus that they bought in Kansas or Nebraska. I've kinda forgotten where.

JD: Kansas.

DG: Kansas. To this day, none of the money has ever been paid back. So we lost 2 million and then ended up giving a little more. I retired and [*unclear words*] track. I heard we may have given them another million. So I don't know if it was 2.5 or 3 million that we finally gave. But anyway, it was in that realm. And never been paid back. That money now would be, you know, worth well over $10 million and—you know, if you—price

of money. [03:31:37] So anyway, I, you know, I was—I wasn't opposed to the concept, but I was opposed to us paying for it. Why would you take money from a flagship campus that was a high-powered, ongoing program that needed the money—why would you take money that was coming from tuition and fees and—or money that was private that, you know, we used a combination, that had been given to the campus from alumni of the campus—why would you take that money and give it to another organization that wasn't even related? To me, it just made no sense. Now there's precedent around the country. There was a huge firestorm at the University of Miami, I believe it was, a number of years ago, where they took money from the law school and gave it to the medical school because the medical school was havin' trouble. And they actually sued, as I recall. And they declared that the board of trustees had the authority to do that. So you know, I never thought about filin' a lawsuit, certainly. I wouldn't've been that stupid. But I thought it was patently unfair to do that and to take money that had been given to the University of Arkansas Fayetteville and use it to start up some other program when they could've borrowed it or could find some other way to do it. Anyway, lost revenue, lost money, and now, you know, eVersity doesn't even exist. So.

[03:33:12] JD: So you've been out of that position—of course, you continued as faculty, so you've been very involved with the university for years. You've been at the top leadership position on the campus. And the university celebrated its 150th anniversary just quite recently. Lookin' ahead—and I should add, you're a scholar of higher education as well. So lookin' ahead, what do you think the University of Arkansas has to do in the relative short term to ensure its success in the future for generations to come?

DG: Well, that's a very good question, and I honestly think that the future for the University of Arkansas is good. I think it's a bright future. The reason I say that is primarily because we are the flagship. And because of that I think we're gonna—we may suffer a little bit with enrollment. You know, there's gonna be a huge decline in the number of eighteen-year-olds that are even available to go to college, and we're sort of in the—at the cusp of that, and we'll be moving in that over the next few years. And there are a lot of universities—you know, West Virginia University is a great example that has declined—you know, huge declines in their enrollment. I'm not sure we will suffer that as much. I mean, first of all, we have a wonderful staff, you know, that is doing our admissions programs, and they're really good.

It's a machine, and we're able to draw from a lot of the contiguous states. Our tuition has crept up, but we're still a pretty good bargain compared to some other schools out there. [03:35:04] So I think that our future is bright. I believe it is. In terms of some of the problems that we will have, obviously, continuing to raise tuition. Will it price us out of the market? I mean, there's two—I mean, I still do a lot of higher education reading, and there's a couple of different philosophies on that. One philosophy is that we will continue to raise tuition, and people will continue to pay it because it's been proven that getting a college degree is access to the American opportunity system. And so people will do less with other things, but they will pay for a person to go to college. Now there are some people out there that suggest to, you know, you and are pretty vocal that college isn't worth the time and worth the effort, but statistically speaking if you go to college, you're going to be healthier, wealthier, wiser. You're gonna be more engaged in civic activity. You're gonna vote. I mean, there're all these indications that says that an educated person is the way to go. And going to college is important for you to be well rounded, well—and understanding of the world that is around us. So I'm a huge fan, and you would expect that, of getting a college

degree. [03:36:25] Having said that, we've known a lot of people, some very dear friends of ours that dropped outta college and have done very well. You know, make a good salary, you know, are great people in the community. So you know, it's not for everybody. But I think it's for most everybody. And I'm a firm believer in, you know, what it means to a well-rounded individual. I do think one of the things that is a problem for flagship campuses is system operations. I'm not a big fan of system operations. You know, it used to be, John, that back in the I'm gonna say maybe [19]70s, early [19]70s, the president of the University of Arkansas was over the entire—all the campuses. They didn't have a system. They didn't call it a system. We didn't have a chancellor at Fayetteville. In fact, the first chancellor at Fayetteville didn't come until like 1980, [198]1, somewhere in there. Bill Nugent was his name. Didn't last very long. Got crosswise with the, you know, with the system. It used to be, of course, that the system president was in Fayetteville, was in the administration building right next to the chancellor's office. They didn't do a very good job when they established a chancellor of demarcation of authority. You know, who had the authority to do what. And so it was what I like to say—I've said before—you know, who's gonna crown the

homecoming queen? Is it the president or the chancellor? [03:38:02] We had some very major, serious issues trying to determine that in the early days of the system. Alan Sugg comes in. He moves the system operation to Little Rock. And really, in some ways, operates like a chairman of the board. He makes sure that his chancellors are the ones that are running the organization. Don't get me wrong, he monitors it closely and watches over it closely. And when I was chancellor, I talked to Alan when he was the president I bet, you know, sometimes two or three times a day. I kept him fully informed. And you know, we had a good relationship. But to me, the only way that it works is if the system is there for the campuses, not the other way around, not trying to build up a strong system administration, but having a campus administration that you're working very hard to promote. And I think nationally we've gotten away from that model. And all you have to do is Google presidents versus chancellors and systems versus flagships, and you'll come up with a ton of evidence all over the country. Texas A&M University, the University of Texas, the University of Alabama, University of Wisconsin, the University of Arkansas, where there's been a problem between the system and the flagship campus. And I think it's a real problem for higher

education, public higher education, that has those large systems. They were all established to try to save money. Thought was, "Well, we'll have a system, and the system will have joint purchasing, and we'll buy all the computers, you know, through one place. We'll have all of our other, you know, programs through one, and you know, we're gonna save tons of money." Never happened. It just never happened. [03:40:13] And now you have some system administrations that are huge. The University of Texas system—by the way, they call their system head the chancellor and their campus head the president. Sort of depends on how you grew up. It's a huge operation. Enormous. I'm just not sure, you know, it worked that way. So I think that's a real impediment to higher education in the future. [03:40:40] The other thing I would say in terms of private education, I think we're gonna lose a lot of very, very good private institutions, small liberal arts colleges in the next ten years. We've already started losing some, but I think they're in great peril, and I think that's very, very unfortunate. Having worked for two, they are excellent institutions. They're great for people that don't wanna be in a big environment, and I think they're an important part of academic life in the United States. Unfortunately they can't pay the bills. And you know, I think

we're gonna lose a lot of really, really good small, private, liberal arts colleges. You know, the really good ones that are well-known and well respected are gonna survive. I think we're probably gonna lose some public institutions. That's already started to happen. Henderson State, you know, is an example of having a really tough time the last few years. [03:41:37] So I don't think it's gonna be easy for higher education, but I feel pretty good about the University of Arkansas because I think we've—you know we've been able to renovate our buildings. We're not in huge debt. If we can get our [*laughs*] football program back to where it oughta be—I say that facetiously, but truthfully, too. You know, I think we're gonna be okay. We'll have some rough spots. The thing that has to happen is that the legislature has to understand that you can't operate these colleges and universities without resources, without revenue. And you're gonna automatically have a 2 to 4 percent increase in inflation every year, so you're already startin' off with—you know, more than that right now. But we used to build in at least 2 to 3, 4 percent every year that it was gonna take a toll. So your bills are gonna go up, you know, 2, 3, 4 percent. Your heating bills. You know, your travel bills. Your food bills. So you've already got that built in, so you can only get so much

from tuition. And so you know, where's the rest of it gonna come from? Well, it has to come from the state. And unfortunately, the state has not kept up with what is necessary. Now I do think our last governor did a fairly good job of increasing some of the revenue. I have to, you know, be honest. I think he did give more money to higher education.

JD: The incentive funding model, the performance based model.

[03:43:09] DG: Yes. Yes, yes. I mean, I think that that has helped higher education. But they're still far behind. When I was there, we were, by the state's own model, we were underfunded by $40 to $45 million a year in revenue, okay. By the state's own admission. And for, you know, all the eight years I was there, we didn't get any new money from the state, you know, for our budget. So the problem right now is that—a couple things. There's so many other needs in the state, from highways to prisons, you know. You can just go down the list. Health care—that when you start addin' it all up, higher education sort of, you know, takes the bottom rung. Part of that is because they know we can raise tuition. We have other revenue sources. We have endowment, and we have, you know, gifts that can help us. But I think it's gonna become increasingly more difficult if that state, you know, doesn't pay their fair share. And of course, part of

the problem, too, in the last several years, and it really kinda started even in my time, is that Republican legislatures don't appreciate the role of higher education. They don't here in Arkansas. And I—that's a general comment, but I think there's a lot of truth to that that they're mad at higher education. They think it costs too much. You know, we don't have a plurality of people in Arkansas going to higher-education institutions. They've got so many other things they have to deal with. There's a lot of issues, woke issues and other things on campuses that they don't like. They see us as a bastion of liberalism. And that has created a real divide with particularly Republican legislatures, which we have here in Arkansas. [03:45:21] So a lot of problems, I think, in the future. I think the University of Arkansas has wonderful leadership right now. The chancellor is a good person. He's—Charles Robinson. I actually hired him as an administrator when I was there. Did a wonderful job for the university. He's a good, solid person. He's smart as a tack. I think he will do a good job, if they let him. The other thing that I think can be a problem is that the board of trustees tend to get involved in the day-to-day operations. They did when I was there. They did [*coughs*]—'scuse me—when John White was there. Excuse me. Mainly a lot of it has to do

with athletics. You know, they want to tell you who to hire as the coach, the athletic director, athletics director, and what have you. And that's a problem. And so I think right now, higher education is under fire. And hopefully, you know, that will change. I don't know that it's gonna change any time soon. But we're fortunate in that we've got good revenue flow, good student body flow. And so I'm hoping that we'll escape some of the problems that we've had that, you know, people are thinking will be coming in the foreseeable future.

[03:46:50] JD: Switching gears a bit, you know, I've asked sort of things you've enjoyed about different moments in your career, particularly your role as chancellor, things that you're proudest of. Back to sort of thinking about family, home life or life outside of work, what would you say are some of your greatest personal accomplishments?

DG: Well, I think first thing you think of, obviously, are your children and your grandchildren. We were so fortunate with our kids. We never had a single problem. The only issue, and I told this story recently—I had to speak at a funeral—the only problem that our son ever gave us was that when he was in college here, he—I think he had a marijuana [*laughs*] cigarette. He was ahead of his time, I like to think. And he came home to tell us

that and, you know, sayin' that he had some marijuana and he shouldn't've, you know, and it was not a big deal. I mean, you know, who cares? [03:47:56] But I don't think—we never had a problem. We were fortunate—I should knock on wood—that our kids were great kids. And our grandkids—you're not supposed to brag about your kids and grandkids, but I am. They've just been wonderful, and they all do well in college. Our kids did well in school. And they've never disappointed us. As a matter of fact—and I say this in the book I wrote recently—you know, my son and daughter are better parents than I was. And I just know that by watching them. First of all, they spent more time with their kids than I did with my kids, which is a real regret I have. You know, I was so tied up in tryin' to do a good job and prove that I could do it—I mean, I'd go to their ball games and all that, but Jane really raised them. You know, she really was the one who raised the kids. And I was there, but I wasn't there as much as I should've been. And they have taught me the importance of that, how important it is to be there for your kids and to show up. And I say that in the book that, you know, I admire my kids because they're good parents. They really are good parents. Now sometimes maybe they spoil the kids more than we spoiled ours [*laughs*], but—[*coughs*] 'scuse

me. The bottom line is they're good parents. And we're very fortunate in that regard. And they've taught me to be a better grandparent. You know, I get to spend more time with the grandkids than I did my own kids. So we're fortunate they grew up right. They have good standards. They have good belief system. And you know, it's a real blessing to us that, you know, we've got 'em all right here in Northwest Arkansas. And it's fun to have 'em here. And it's fun to be able to go to all the activities and watch the grandkids grow up. [03:49:54] I can't believe that my—that I've got children that are now in their forties, and but we've watched them grow into really good people that give back to the community, are philanthropic and wanna do the right thing, you know. It's amazing how much they think like we do. I mean, not on everything on every subject by any means, but their thought processes about what's right and ri—and doing the right thing are very similar in many respects, so my wife did a good job raising 'em, I'll tell you that right now. She did an amazing job raising 'em.

[03:50:42] JD: Seems very much—we touched on this, I think, at different points in time that yours has been a very public life, a very public career, and as you said, a lot of the work that you've done over the years is almost all consuming. You know, there's

no on/off switch. You're not really punching a clock, and you're done for a while, and I'll go back to it tomorrow. And so I wonder if you wanna speak to the—it would seem to me that this has been a—very much a partnership with you and your wife, and I wonder if you wanted to elaborate on that a little bit.

DG: Absolutely. I dedicated the last book I did, about being chancellor, to Jane because she was there every step of the way. We'll be married fifty years this next year. And Jane—everybody loves Jane. I mean, Jane is the kind of person that makes friends immediately. She has tons of friends all over the country, literally. She just has a way about her of making friends. Not so much on my side. I have several really close friends, but she has very close friends, but a huge, you know, number of friends all around. And I find it more difficult. Because, first of all—a lot of people don't know this. I'm shy. I mean, I have a shy—you know, which is a terrible thing to be when you're a president or a chancellor, not to mention a fundraiser. [*Laughs*] I mean, you know, come on. But I have a real shy side to me, whereas she really doesn't. She's out there. She's, you know, a good communicator. She establishes relationships. [03:52:29] And having a spouse that is like that in the job that I've had is unbelievably, enormously important.

You know, I think about the people that we got to know. First of all, she can remember names, faces, and telephone numbers, and birthdays like no one I've ever known in my life. I mean, she can—you know, you tell her the birth date or a telephone number, and she's got an unbelievable brain for being able to remember things. Not so much me. I can remember faces, but thank goodness I had her alongside me when we'd go through a line and she—and I'd always have her go first, and she'd say the person's name. She was extraordinary at that. And even today people will come up to our table that have seen our picture or something somewhere and will say hello, and she'll call their name. People that she hasn't seen for six, seven, eight years. When we run into people—Bill Clinton is an example. He'd always go immediately up to her and give her a big hug. People gravitate toward her, and that has been unbelievably a blessing for me and my work because establishing relationships in fundraising is what it's all about. [03:53:42] And everybody that I can say, you know, has an appreciation for my wife, and that's been great for me in the job that I've been in. And even to this day she has stayed in touch, as have I, but even she has more so, with people that we've known for years at Hendrix College, at Westminster, at Penn State, certainly. I mean, she

just has a knack, you know. [03:54:11] And I asked her, I said, "Well, what is—you know, what gives you that talent?" And incidentally, our son and daughter inherited that talent from her. She said, "Well, I like people." She said, "I am—I, you know, enjoy people." And she said, "I'm interested in people, and I wanna know about 'em." She's just a good, good, wonderful person, and has been a tremendous spouse to me. And there's no way—I member her mother sayin' one time—I said to Katsy—I said, "Well, have you ever thought if, you know, I broke up"—we broke up one time, and I said, "Have you ever thought, you know, if Jane might've married somebody else what would've happened?" and she said, "Well, yeah, David, you wouldn't have been chancellor." [*Laughter*] And she's probably right about that. I mean, Jane has been a wonderful partner, and a real partner. You know, she was—worked as the first lady of the university for seven years. Was not salaried, was not paid anything. And we had multiple events. I mean, we had things at the chancellor's house, you know, practically every other night. We had what we'd call Dinner for Fourteen 'cause the dining-room table seated fourteen. And we'd have a formal served meal with waiters serving it. And we did it for people that gave over a million dollars to the university, and we had a

ton of those. And when celebrities came on campus, you know, we'd have events at the house. We used the house heavily during our time there. [03:55:46] I'm not so—not so much in the successor to me. I don't think they used the house near as much as we did, if—hardly at all. And there's a little regret I have—not really but—[*coughs*] 'scuse me. I'm overcoming this little cough problem I've had the last few days. We got a gift to build the chancellor's house. Paid for the whole thing, furnishings and all. And it was given by the Fowler family of Jonesboro, Wallace Fowler and Jama. Wonderful, wonderful people. They're deceased now, but just the best people you would—just generous, good-hearted, wonderful people. Toward the end of our campaign and the end of—not the end of the campaign, toward the end of my tenure as chancellor, I approached them to build a facility next to the chancellor's house that we could have dinners. And our thought was—we had a lot of dinners in the rotunda of chancellor's residence. We could seat maybe as many as fifty, sixty people in there. But we didn't have any place to have, you know, 100 to 150 people. So the idea was to build a building that would be connected by a walkway right next to the chancellor's house and use that. And the concept was that we would have a function, a cocktail

function, in the house. We would then walk over, you know, through the little thing, outside thing, to the other building and have dinner in that building. [03:57:26] I don't think it's really ever worked out that way. I think they've tended to use the new building—the Fowlers did pay for that, too. They gave another $3 million to pay for that. And frankly, I don't think they use the chancellor's house or haven't. Now Charles may be different. But I know Dr. Steinmetz rarely used it for entertaining. I know that for a fact. And I hate to see that because the whole purpose of that, of building that, was to build it to use for entertaining and for functions for the university. And I think we've gotten away from that a little bit. And you know, $6 million was a chunk of money to put into something that you don't use as much as I feel you should. So you know, that's just a little aside on that that I—and I'm hoping that Dr. Robinson will use it more. I think he will. But I'm not sure there were any—there weren't hardly any programs in the building during Dr. Steinmetz' time.

[03:58:32] JD: So we're near the end of our conversation. I—one thing that strikes me throughout your life—you were born here and raised here, but in many points of life where you left and came back and even had opportunities to leave here for another,

you know, another opportunity, another place. What is it, do you think, that has drawn you back to Arkansas? What is it that you would tell someone who is, you know, thinking of whether or not to start or renew a life in this state? I mean, what is it, do you think, that you would relate to them?

[03:59:18] DG: Well, for us, this is home. Now Jane, as I mentioned I think, was born in Cincinnati, but she claims Arkansas as home because she came here as a child and grew up in Arkansas. And so you know, even though she was born in Cincinnati, she thinks of Arkansas as her home state. I was born here. My family, my heritage is from here. I love Arkansas. I mean, I think it's a fantastic state. I think the people are wonderful people and salt of the earth. I think about some of the people that have lived here and grown up here and have built phenomenal organizations. You know, Sam Walton came here early and built an incredible business. I think of Don Tyson, I think of Johnelle and J. B. Hunt. You know, these are people that really built amazing organizations here in our home state. So I really do love the state. I love the Razorbacks. I love to watch 'em play in all the sports. I mean, this is home for me. When we left here and went to Penn State, we saw another side. Maybe, and I don't mean this to be critical, but maybe a little more

sophisticated side. Certainly a little more moneyed side. And that was fun. We enjoyed that. But we never left—lost track of our roots. And you know, when Clinton became president, I was at Penn State. And before he became president, we had Hillary come and speak, and I was sort of the one in charge of gettin' it all set up. I was a vice chance—or vice president at the time, senior vice president. And she came and gave this unbelievable speech. And we had 3,000 students out on the lawn of Old Main at Penn State to listen to her. Nobody thought that she would win, that her husband would win the presidency, but of course he did, and course, that further shined the spotlight. [04:01:21] And I member we had a campaign committee meeting in Princeton, New Jersey, at the Merrill Lynch headquarters there and—actually it was at Scanticon, which was another place there close to the Merrill Lynch headquarters. But anyway, I read in the newspaper—he was governor—that he was coming to Jersey to campaign to be president. And I read in the newspaper. And so I called his office. And I said, "Look, we've gotta have this campaign committee meeting. We've got the chairman of Merrill Lynch, we've got Joe Paterno, we've got all these, you know, people that are gonna be at this meeting. Why don't you stop by, and I'll introduce you?" I'll be darned if he didn't call me on

the phone—I was at Penn State—and said, "Tell me about this group." And I sent him a list of all the people. And he came. And I'll never forget. On the way in, they had New Jersey police officers, state police, you know, protecting him as a governor. All the way walking into this meeting, he was asking me questions about the people that were. And just in his style, the way he does things, he gave this fifteen-minute address that was absolutely unbelievable. He talked about "I'm gonna have to go back and tell my mother that I shoo—I'm not gonna wash my hands till I get back home because I shook the hand of Joe Paterno, and when I get back home, my mother's just gonna wanna shake that hand that shook Joe Paterno's"—you know, he was just perfect. He gave this wonderful—started out by saying, "I came up here to New Jersey to check on Gearhart," or something like that, you know. It was wonderful. [04:02:55] And then we had Hillary come and give a speech on campus. And when he became president, you know, that was a big deal because [*laughs*]—you know, in Pennsylvania because, oh gosh, you know, Gearhart took courses from him, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so it was—I was proud of my state. And I was proud that, you know, we had elected somebody that was from our state as president. So there was always kind of a pull, I guess,

back to the state. We've left Fayetteville and moved back five times. Five times, including my time goin' to college. And obviously this is the last time. We've bought our plots down at the cemetery and this is where we're gonna be the rest of our life. [04:03:41] When we went out to buy the plots, I remember I looked over and Jane was sitting on her plot at the cemetery. And I said, "Jane, what in the world are you doin'?" [*Laughs*] And she said, "I'm tryin' to see what kind of view I'm gonna have." [*Laughter*] [*Coughs*] Excuse me. It reminds me of when Bob Hope's wife asked him if he wanted to be buried or cremated, and he said, "Well, surprise me." [*Laughs*] But anyway, Arkansas's home. We love this state. Now it's gotten a little more red, maybe, even though I don't consider myself necessarily a Democrat nor a Republican. I try to vote for the person, and I think Asa did a pretty good job as governor, quite frankly, and so you know—but it's gotten a little more conservative than I would like. And that is a concern. But it's still home, and it's the place that we have chosen to be. And frankly, it's got everything here. And you know, the growth of this area has been phenomenal. And it's just a wonderful, wonderful place to live. And I don't think we've ever had people that have come to visit us from Pennsylvania or elsewhere that

haven't just commented on what a fantastic place it is to visit and to be. And you know, we've got just about everything you can think of right here. [04:05:13] And so we're Arkansans, and we're gonna die Arkansans. [*Laughs*] Two brothers, my oldest brother and my youngest brother, who moved to Florida after they retired, and both of them are now thinking about coming back to Northwest Arkansas. And my oldest brother, two years older than me—I said, "Well, why are you thinkin' about doin' that?" He says, "Because I wanna die in Arkansas." Says, "I don't wanna die in"—I mean, his health is good, but he said, "I don't wanna die in Florida." Said, "I told my wife, Candy, 'I'm not dyin' in Florida.'" [*Laughs*] So he's comin' back. And my youngest brother, who went down there mainly, I think, to play golf all the time, has figured out that it's a little better to play golf up here in the summer. [*Laughs*] So it's home. You know, my dad was born here. My heritage is here, even though my mother was from Missouri, she went to school here. We grew up in the shadow of Old Main. We were, you know, about five blocks from Old Main. I used to come over and jog on the campus all the time and—I don't know. I've seen the university thrive. I've seen it—you know, for sixty-five years I've watched it from near and afar. And that's our place. And you know, this

is where we're gonna stay, and this is where we wanna be.

[04:06:43] JD: I think that's a wonderful way to end our talk. Is there anything else you'd like to share? Something we might have missed?

DG: Gosh, John, I don't think so. You've been really thorough. If I think of anything, I'll let you know, but I think we've covered just about everything.

JD: Well . . .

DG: Hope my cough wasn't too much of a problem.

JD: No, no. Not at all. I would like to say on behalf of the Pryor Center, thank you for not only sitting down with us today, which was a gift enough, but of your service to the university through the years and your support of us, your support of the Pryor Center.

DG: Well, I believe . . .

JD: It means a lot.

DG: I think it was a great idea that David and Barbara had, and I couldn't be more supportive of it. I think it's a fantastic program. And I'm honored to be interviewed. I, you know, I put it off there for a while because I thought, "You know, not sure"—I mean, I thought I'd write the book and then maybe, you know, do it. But I'm honored to be asked to do it, and maybe

somebody'll watch it someday. Maybe my grandkids'll watch it someday. [*Laughs*]

JD: Thank you very much, David.

DG: Thank you. Pleasure. I've enjoyed it.

[End of interview 04:07:57]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]