

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

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

Arkansas Memories Project

Ronnie Hawkins

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford and Jim Blair

August 12, 2005

Johnson, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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Ronnie Hawkins was interviewed by Scott Lunsford and Jim Blair on August 12, 2005, in Johnson, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Jim Blair: Well, Ronnie, as I understand this, this is a—a piece for the oral history at the University of Arkansas. And in spite of yourself, you've become a very famous Arkansan. [RH laughs] And—uh . . .

Ronnie Hawkins: Infamous.

JB: . . . and—uh—I am—uh—I'm gonna do a part of the interview till Spook can get here because Spook knows—uh—things I don't know. And—uh—but let's start—uh—kinda back from the beginning. You were born in Huntsville on January the tenth, 1935.

RH: Yes.

[00:00:31] JB: Now, how did you get to St. Paul?

RH: Well, see, my folks was from St. Paul on . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . both sides. My mama's folks, my daddy's folks. So I went back to St. Paul many, many times, but I was born in Huntsville. And then I—I went till the fourth grade in Huntsville. Then we moved in a—to the—on Ida Street. They got an apartment down

there in the—it—it was those little apartments that used to belong to Doug's uncle.

JB: Yeah.

RH: The—what . . .

JB: Was it . . .

RH: Fulbright.

JB: Jack Fulbright.

RH: One of the Fulbrights.

JB: One of the Fulbrights. All right.

RH: And I went to school at Leverett then till the eighth grade, and then we moved across the street—uh—across the bridge and that means you go to Washington School. And then we went . . .

JB: And I remember you showin' up in Washington School. I was there when you showed up [*RH laughs*] in the eighth grade.
[00:01:22] Well, before we get too far into that, tell me about Hawkins Hollow.

RH: Well, the last time I was there they did a documentary. That was a few years ago, and my Aunt Annabel Hawkins was still alive. She—she retired, like my mother did, she retired in Arkansas as a schoolteacher. Then they went to New Mexico—a whole bunch of ladies. I mean . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . half a dozen or more of 'em . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . went to New Mexico when that big—when they were startin' that big government thing for the—White Sands.

JB: Yeah.

RH: You know, the atomic energy and all them ba—unbelievable people out there and a lotta kids. So she retired out there and then came back and—uh—retired back in—uh—Springdale, Arkansas.

[00:02:02] JB: Well, your great-grandfather—uh—whose name, I think, was Edward Hawkins—uh . . .

RH: I think it was.

JB: . . . uh . . .

RH: You know way more about it . . .

JB: Well, I may know . . .

RH: Do you remember him? [*Laughs*]

JB: . . . I may know more about it than you do. Well, I'm se—I—you're seventy. I'm gonna be seventy fore the year's over. Uh—but he—he'd moved into—uh—uh—that Madison County area, and then—uh—your grandfather's name was Billy, I think.

RH: Yes, it was.

JB: And then your grand—your father's name was—uh . . .

RH: Jasper.

JB: . . . Jasper.

RH: Yeah.

JB: And Jasper was a sometime barber, sometime—uh . . .

RH: Outlaw.

JB: . . . sawmill worker.

RH: Yeah, that's right.

[00:02:38] JB: Uh—some—eh—now, tell me about the musicians in your family before you became a musician.

RH: Well, babe, just about everybody on the Hawkins side—uh—all my aunts, cousins—I was the only one that couldn't play anything.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Everybody else played everything, you see. And my sister did a lotta research before she died about the Hawkins name and all, you know, just for somethin' to do. And she found lists—in a—in an old trunk somewhere was a song list that my dad and his three brothers played . . .

JB: Okay.

RH: . . . called the Hawkins Band. And it had the name of the songs that they'd play when they go out and play and make a

little moonshine money.

[00:03:20] JB: Okay. When did you first pick up a guitar?

RH: I started tryin' to play early but I never—'cause I was a little slow. Girls kept [*laughs*—I couldn't . . .

JB: Kept gettin' in your way.

RH: . . . I couldn't get anything else on my mind hardly but girls.

[00:03:32] JB: When did you figure out it was better to have other people play the guitar and you do the singin'?

RH: Well, I knew—I knew that I was short on talent, pecker, and money. But I was long on nerve. [*Laughter*] So what I had to do is, like—you had figured it out a long time ago. I found them cats that could play.

JB: Now . . .

RH: I hired the very best young musicians around me I could find, man.

JB: One of the things I've always heard about you, Ronnie, is that maybe you weren't the best musician in the world, but you had the best ear for a good musician in the world.

RH: Good. I was lookin'—when you sing like I do, you need a good band. [*Laughs*] That's what I tell 'em in Canada when they ask me that.

JB: Uh-huh. [*Laughs*]

RH: "How come you've always had the greatest bands in the world?"
I said, "Have you ever heard me sing?" [*Laughter*] "You have to have a good band."

[00:04:22] JB: So you wound up in Fayetteville, and you wound up—uh—in Washington School in the eighth grade. And—uh—in those days it was eight grades of grade school and four years of high school.

RH: And that was it.

JB: And then you started to high school in the—uh—in, I guess, the last class ever to go to the old high school in Fayetteville.

RH: [Nineteen] fifty-two.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I didn't know that.

[00:04:43] JB: Yeah. And—uh—you know—uh—uh—in high school—uh—we—uh—you became a fairly accomplished diver—a swimmer. Did you ever have any professional training? How did that happen?

RH: No, no, I had professional training. Doug Douglas.

JB: Yeah. [*SL laughs*]

RH: He was my coach.

JB: Okay. [*RH laughs*] Uh—if—if I recall right, one time you and Doug spent the whole summer in Florida lifeguardin' at the

Fontainebleau Hotel.

RH: But we had—I told some exciting stories about Doug [*laughter*] to the president—ex-president. Those are true stories. [*JB laughs*] I don't know, but Doug—he—he just shuttled it off. We—I went down there with Doug. See, I always hung around them guys that had a little money.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: And Doug always had a little money. And we went down there to seek our fortune and become professional divers for the Esther Williams swimmin' pool company. [*Laughs*]

JB: Well, you had a little clown divin' act . . .

RH: Yes.

JB: . . . at one time.

RH: We did. We did a little clown diving. Made sometimes two dollars a day.

JB: Yeah. [*RH laughs*] [00:05:47] Now, you coulda been a good athlete. I think everybody admits that. Why did you never—never really get involved in athletics?

RH: I just, you know—uh—uh—as—as you know, Jim, to be a superathlete or a superstar or Olympic gold medalist, you have to give up a lotta stuff.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I didn't wanna give up all that to be—I'd rather be second-string center and make out with all the cheerleaders as make the first team.

[00:06:12] JB: Well, now, you [*RH coughs*] hung around—you hung around with Donnie Stone and . . .

RH: Oh, he was the athlete.

JB: . . . and Billy Ray Smith and . . .

RH: Oh, they were athletes. [*JB laughs*] I hung around Billy Ray. I'd kick sand in people's faces when I had Billy Ray with me. [*Laughter*] That was the—one of the greatest, toughest . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . guys I've ever seen is Billy Ray.

JB: I gotta tell you a story I heard and ask you to verify it. But I heard, you know, when—uh—we were in high school that one day—uh—you decided to take your divin' prowess to the—uh—track-and-field events. You came out and asked the coach—uh—how high his best high jumper could jump. And he said, "Well, not very high." And [*RH laughs*] you said you could jump six feet. And he said, well, he didn't have anybody could do that, so could you prove it? And so, you [*RH laughs*] had 'em put the bar up at six feet. You ran at it head first. [*RH laughs*] Hopped off both feet. Did a perfect jackknife. Did a [*RH laughs*]

tuck and roll. Cleared that bar . . .

RH: How'd you know about that, for cryin' out loud.

JB: . . . cleared that bar, and the coach said, "Gee, Ronnie, that's great, but the rules say you have to do it off one foot."

RH: Yeah, I couldn't do that. [*Laughter*] I'd been used to bouncin' to do . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: That's why some of those great Russian . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . gymnasts of today can go over a bar higher than any high jumper.

JB: But now, you could . . .

RH: It's training to—to jump.

JB: . . . you could do a backflip. You could do a forward flip.

[00:07:31] You used to do a backflip off the stage, didn't you?

RH: Yes.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Yes, I did. And I—and I'd learned how to do the camel walk . . .

JB: All right.

RH: . . . which is Michael Jackson's moonwalk.

JB: Okay.

RH: I learnt that from that—remem—can you remember when that—

uh—I bu—I—I'm sure you—you remember. It was a—I don't know what they call one of them shows—minstrel shows . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . they—they called . . .

JB: Minstrel shows.

RH: . . . 'em way back there.

JB: Vaudeville.

[00:07:55] RH: Vaudeville-type things. And I saw one of them, and I saw one of those—they—they had talent in them days. I mean, the blacks didn't have anyplace to play, hardly, you know what I mean. They were . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: So they—they had that great talent all in that one show, and I saw this dancer doin' that.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And I went around behind to ask him if he could show me a little bit, and I learned how to—to do the m—the camel walkie, they called it then.

[00:08:16] JB: So somehow you got through high school. I mean—uh . . .

RH: Yeah.

JB: . . . and you . . .

RH: I'd been sittin' behind you every year, you know. [*Laughter*]

JB: Well . . .

RH: I passed all them times I was sittin' behind you. [*Laughs*]

[00:08:28] JB: And—and by the—and then you started at the
University of Arkansas.

RH: Yes.

JB: And—uh—you were at the University of Arkansas a long time.

RH: Yes. I was slow. [*Laughs*]

JB: Uh—five years, if I remember. [*Laughs*]

RH: I—I think so. I think I did . . .

JB: And I don't think you graduated, did you?

RH: No, no, I still lack . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . I think thirteen hour . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . or credits or whatever they call it.

JB: You're—you're probably not gonna come back and do that
anytime soon, are you?

RH: You know, I thought about it, though.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I thought about if I ever got to retire . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . I would like to come back and finish 'cause you know what your mom always says.

JB: Yeah.

RH: "You need to finish school. Finish college"—before I got into the rock-and-roll business. "Try to finish." Yeah.

[00:09:04] JB: Well, your mom was a schoolteacher.

RH: Yes, she was.

JB: She valued education.

RH: She knew that if you had an education, you might have a chance.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

RH: She came from a times when nobody had educations, you know.

[00:09:15] JB: But—but your uncle—you had an uncle named Delmar.

RH: Uncle Delmar. When—when I look back on it, he—he woulda been one of the greatest musicians. I mean, he woulda been a David Foster.

JB: Yeah.

RH: David Foster's a big-time musician that played in my band. But my Uncle Delmar was—was—he was just so gifted. But you . . .

JB: You fired David Foster for puttin' too many chords in "Bo Diddley," didn't you?

RH: Well, he'd've been [*JB laughs*] fired—Mozart would've fired him, too, if [*JB laughs*] he'd've been messin' with his compositions. [*Laughter*] David—David said that on the biggest show in the world.

[00:09:46] JB: No. The story I've heard with you and David Foster is you told him he was too good a musician . . .

RH: He was . . .

JB: . . . to be playin' in your band.

RH: . . . too good to be in a bar, baby.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I mean, this cat wa—had a ear.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I member one time I got in an interview with one of them . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . hot ladies, you know, that—they—the women, when they do your interviews—the big girls that got three or four million listeners? They're tough old girls.

JB: Yeah.

RH: So they throw curves at you in an interview, you know. And I got to kinda braggin' on David Foster and sh—and she started doin' this and doin' that. "Who's the best musician you ever heard?" Well, David had the best ear, but he couldn't go out and

make a livin' playin' piano and singin'. He has to do it with his ear and arrangements and stuff like that. So she kept on and kept on. Finally, she just leaned over. She said, "Well, just how good is David Foster's ear?" Kinda cocky, you know. I says, "Ma'am, he can hear an amoeba fart in a typhoon and tell you what key it's in." [JB laughs] "How good is that?" [Laughter] That's a good ear.

JB: That's a good ear.

RH: Yeah. [Laughs]

[00:10:41] JB: Well, anyhow, D—Delmar had a big influence on you, didn't he?

RH: Oh, I wanted to be like—uh—my Uncle Delmar, man. When my dad—I re—I remember he was makin', like, two dollars a day or a dollar a day or somethin', and my Uncle Delmar would come in, and he'd have a new car, store-bought clothes . . .

JB: He went to California.

RH: He—he—he was in several big-name bands. But . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . women and drinkin'. You know . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . how that—what that happens there.

JB: That—uh . . .

RH: [*Unclear words*] . . .

JB: . . . that's kind of a Hawkins legend . . .

RH: Yes.

JB: . . . or a legacy, isn't it? [*Laughter*]

RH: Yeah, cigarettes and whiskey and wild, wild women.

JB: [*Laughs*] So—uh . . .

RH: But he—but he was a very gifted, gifted—uh—ear, you know. He could play really, really good. If I could've ever played . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . as good as him, Hollywood wouldn't've had enough money for me 'cause I had to bluff my way through.

[00:11:26] JB: Well, and your—your dad, Jasper, wound up—uh—uh—uh—for a while as a barber down on Dickson Street—uh . . .

RH: Yes.

JB: . . . at the—uh—U of A Barber Shop.

RH: Yes, he did. With Buddy Hayes.

JB: They had a shoeshine guy in there.

RH: Yes.

JB: Tell me about Buddy Hayes.

RH: Well, Buddy, I'm tellin' you, when I look back on it, he was a—see, he came back a decorated soldier from World . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . War II.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And that was goin' on strong. [00:11:51] And he—Buddy was like the underground mayor of . . .

JB: Tin Cup.

RH: Yeah. Yeah, he was a good—he was a good one. And—and the boys played in the back of the barbershop. You'll remember 'em—Half-Pint and Pint, Little Joe—uh—and they'd let me come back and listen to all that stuff, you know. And that's when I really got to wantin' to try to learn how to do the b—it wasn't called blues then. It was—whatever that music was, you know. It was twelve-bar blues is really what it was. But . . .

JB: But it was black music.

RH: Black music and it had funny and good lyrics.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And happy. Boy, it had some good stories, you know.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: And I always listened to the story. I mean, I—I don't know anything, so I listen. If it's a good story, I like it. And they—they helped me out a lot, teachin' me. Buddy Hayes taught me a little music. You know, he played trumpet, if you remember.

JB: Yeah, I do.

RH: And they did a takeoff on Louis Armstrong.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But they played blues, too, in the back of the—the barbershop.

And it was Buddy that showed me a lotta things. I mean, he had a lotta connections in—in the holler.

[00:12:48] JB: So when is the first time that you actually went out and performed music for money?

RH: Well, that was a while. I performed a lot. [*JB laughs*] But you said perform for money. [*Laughter*] That—that was a while. I went to Memphis, you know, to seek my fortune after graduation—1952. I'd made my plan. I'd saved up my money, you know. I don't know if you remember that old [19]26 T Roadster I had with . . .

JB: I do.

RH: . . . the little V8-60 engine in it. Well, it took about three and a half days to get to Memphis [*laughs*] in those days, and—and I was goin' down there, and I stayed and just—all that great music.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But I, you know, I was seventeen and green. I mean, you know how green we were. We didn't know—uh—Memphis was a city.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Fayetteville was just a little town, you know, compared . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: And they—we didn't have all the troubles here . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . that they have down there, boy. [00:13:39] And they'd had some kind of a race riot and about seven or eight hundred blacks were killed and somethin', you know. And so, it was a little—but I didn't know anything about it. But I'm down there on Beale Street, you know, just goin' from bar to bar, learning, seein'—seein' if they'll—there's—there's stories down there now how I—how I swept through Memphis and just created a storm?

JB: Yeah.

RH: I mighta started them rumors myself. If the truth was known—I mean, the real truth is sometimes I had to buy 'em a beer before they'd let me get up and sing one with 'em. [*Laughter*] I don't tell that story very often, you know. I want it to look like I was such a success.

JB: Yeah.

RH: So my mind had been made up. If I could be—go down there and be discovered and be a teenage idol immediately—uh—and all it was—if I could just make a livin' and pay for room and board, but I couldn't. So that's when I came back and went

back to school.

[00:14:28] JB: So you came back to the University of Arkansas, and you started doin' little gigs around the—the university area.

RH: Anywhere they'd let me. [*Laughs*]

JB: M'kay. [00:14:38] Tell me about some of the people that you played with or played with you.

RH: Well, one of the most famous one at the time—we created quite a sensation—was Cowboy Ray Thornton. [*Laughter*] Boy, we went around and promoted him and—for—and he become president of . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: . . . the student body on a inde. . .

JB: . . . he's—he's . . .

RH: . . . independent . . .

JB: . . . he's now a justice of the state supreme court. He's about to retire.

RH: By God, I—I . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . wish he'd—I'd like to see him again.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:15:02] RH: Gr—great story about Cowboy Ray. It's a true story. He'll tell you. He become—what's the big lawyer of—of the—of

the state? You know, the crown attorney?

JB: The attorney general?

RH: Attorney general down th—he was attorney general for . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . a while, right?

JB: He was.

RH: All right. Well, I don't know anything about that kinda stuff. I just know him as Cowboy Ray. So I'm up there with a—a young cat that I think's gonna be big time sometime. He's playin' right. We're runnin' around [*unclear words*]. His name was Gordon Lightfoot. And so, we went out one night from Gordon's house and went to a bar to watch the girls—you know, go-go girls a little bit. And they overserved us at the club.

JB: Yeah, it's their fault.

RH: They overserved us, and we went back [*laughs*], and I thought, "Well, I want Cowboy Ray Thornton to hear this song." It's three o'clock in the morning. [*JB laughs*] I called him, and his wife answered the phone and all this. And she got him, and he got on the phone, and Gordon Lightfoot sung "Early Morning Rain" [*laughter*] on the telephone 'cause he was as drunk as I was, Gordon. And that—that's a—that's a good story because he—he'll tell you it's absolutely true.

[00:16:02] JB: Well, tell me about Pink.

RH: Harold Pinkerton?

JB: Yeah.

RH: Oh lord. Let me tell you somethin'. What a dynamic band we had. We had Killer Tuck on drums—Herman. We had—uh—
[laughs] old Pinkerton on rhythm guitar. We had a kid—uh—oh my gosh, and my mind's gone, Jimmy. And we had—holy smoke. I can't think of that. See, now I can't—all-timers is meetin' at my knees, son.

JB: [*Unclear word*]

RH: I'm tellin' you. Oh.

JB: It happens to be best of us.

[00:16:32] RH: Billy Kee—kuh—Keen. *K-E-E-N*. Keen. He was a good little guitar player. And of course, Claude Chambers.

JB: Yeah. Claude Chambers.

RH: Claude Chambers. Now, Claude was the only one that—that could read anything. Uh—he could read music. [*Laughs*] The rest of us couldn't hardly read anything.

JB: That was an unfair advantage, wasn't it?

RH: He had an advantage on there, you know. And that's the whole story to—oh, there's so many stories I can tell—us playin' crazy and wild and all. Herman used to say, "You're the only guy in

the world, Ronnie, that could play a three-hour dance, and you only know seven songs." [*Laughter*] There was a lotta repeats.

[00:17:10] Scott Lunsford: What about Herman? How does Herman figure in your history?

RH: Oh man, Herman Tucker. I'm tellin' you what, he was [*microphone static noise*]*—he was . . .*

SL: Just a second now. Let me . . .

RH: . . . that's Killer Tuck.

SL: . . . see if I can get this right.

RH: There's a million stories about old Herman.

SL: This is backwards here.

RH: He ran with the big, big league, you know. He was ahead of me . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: . . . a little bit, you know.

JB: . . . well . . .

RH: And he . . .

JB: Herman is about seventy-six and, I think, gonna be seventy-seven in . . .

RH: Yeah . . .

JB: . . . January.

RH: . . . he's . . .

JB: So he's seven years older than you are.

[00:17:34] RH: That's it. So he ran with a bunch—Don Logue.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Remember Don Logue and all that upper bunch there? They all become—they were athletes. Old—old Herman was a good boxer. He—I sa—I saw him win a few fights.

JB: But—uh . . .

SL: But he was a drummer, too, wasn't he?

JB: . . . but he was . . .

RH: Oh, he was a drummer. He played with a lot—you know, he played with Jerry Lee Lewis. He played with me. He played with a lotta those western-swing bands. They'd put bands together for the—like, Gaibilee and all that stuff they used to have at the university. They called it Gaibilee, I think.

SL: Hey, John, why don't you come here just for a second. This is kind of a problem.

RH: But old Herman, though, was a classic. And then he got down there in that ribhouse and became a legend. [*Laughs*]

JB: Well, he, you know, he mighta been a legend before then. He tells me that he used to take these Benzedrine inhalers . . .

RH: Oh my God.

SL: [*Unclear words*] yeah.

JB: . . . take the strip out of 'em, and soak it in a glass of Coke and drink it so they could play a little longer.

RH: He—he could go to the drugstore there—up there. They had them little pink hearts. I don't know what they're called now, but he'd take a handful [*laughs*] of them and throw a couple of beers back and break three dumb—drumheads. [*Laughter*] He'd—he'd break three or four drumheads a night, man. [*JB laughs*] [00:18:42] We kept Guisinger's out of drumheads. [*JB laughs*] And what was the drugstore there that had beautiful little girl that I liked so much . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: . . . who wouldn't have nothin' to do with me?

JB: . . . it was either Collier's or Fayetteville Drug.

RH: It was Janie Collier.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Janie Collier.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Oh, I used to have fantasies about . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . Janie. But she was from that upper—the . . .

[00:19:00] JB: So—uh . . .

RH: . . . the aristocrats.

JB: . . . so there—somehow along about this time, you started showin' up with a little cash.

RH: Oh, that was the Missouri . . .

JB: And—uh . . .

RH: . . . you talkin' bout that—runnin' the booze into Oklahoma?

JB: Well, that cash didn't come from music, did it?

RH: [*Laughs*] No, but it supplemented it. You know, you could make a hundred dollars a day takin'—uh—whiskey from Missouri to Oklahoma. And I found out some cats over there—said, "Every time you bring a load in, you make a hundred dollars." I wore a Model A out goin' back and forth from Missouri, and that's how come I had the money for Dayton and them to get the Tee Table.

JB: M'kay.

RH: I know you couldn't—you couldn't run around here—I—you wanted to buy—I coulda bought a brand-new Cadillac, just about, by the time I got through. But you couldn't buy a new Cadillac [*laughs*] in a little town. I mean, where'd I get that money?

JB: Well . . .

RH: So I just got a—another deal.

JB: . . . you—you wanted to be in the entertainment business.

You . . .

RH: I figured if I had my own place, Jimmy, they couldn't fire me.

JB: Yeah.

RH: [*Laughs*] And I got up and sung . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . with every band that would come through, everywhere, if they'd let me.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:02] RH: And I was gonna do a little thing tonight. You'll hear it tonight. "Are those—is there anybody here in the audience still alive" . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . "that remembers when Carl Perkins came through the Tee Table" . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . "and played that night?"

JB: Yeah.

RH: Can you remember when he came through?

JB: I do. I do.

RH: Oh my gosh. It was the wildest party. Beer cans and beer was knee deep in that—they couldn't shovel 'em outside enough. It was wild, boy. And . . .

[00:20:24] JB: So after the Tee Table—there—wasn't there the
Bubble Club or somethin'?

RH: The . . .

JB: Didn't you have [*unclear words*] . . .

RH: . . . yeah, the Shamrock.

JB: Sha—well, the Shamrock they called it.

RH: Yeah, it was the old Bubble Club.

JB: The old Bubble Club.

RH: Yeah.

JB: And . . .

RH: Then the Rockwood.

[00:20:38] JB: And how come Dayton Stratton was your partner?

RH: Well, Dayton was a real good hustler. He was, I mean, he was—
he wasn't very big, but he was tough. Dayton Stratton, oh man,
he was a—he handled—he could handle the football players
when they got drunk, you know.

JB: And you were underage.

RH: I was underage for . . .

JB: You couldn't have a liquor . . .

RH: No, I couldn't have a liquor license . . .

JB: Well, they didn't have a liquor license, anyhow.

RH: . . . until the Rockwood.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

[00:21:00] JB: Okay, when did you buy into the Rockwood?

RH: I can't remember years, Jimmy, but I . . .

JB: But you started playin' there before you bought into it.

RH: Yes, I played for the people who owned it. I can't even remember their names right now. Man, I . . .

JB: Now, for the . . .

RH: But I bought the Rockwood Club. Didn't have any partners, but I put Dayton in charge of . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . everything, you know, for—with a high percentage . . .

[00:21:19] JB: For the purposes of this tape, the Rockwood Club is on the hill that goes up to the Fayetteville Country Club. And Dayton Stratton, who, you know, unfortunately got killed in a plane crash . . .

RH: Yes.

JB: . . . Dayton wasn't very big, but he could hit harder than anybody you knew, couldn't he.

RH: He could really hit. He had a left hook, Jimmy.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, I—you know, he was just—he had that natural

quickness.

JB: So if he had to . . .

RH: Really tough for a little guy. He only weighed, when he was in his prime, he only weighed about 180 . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . pounds. But he could drop a tough football player if he was outta control.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And as you know, you mix girls and booze, and somebody's . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . gonna get outta control.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Me and you have a coupla times, hadn't we?

JB: Broke his hand a [*RH laughs*] half a dozen times puttin' those football players out.

RH: Always out. Oh, he had . . .

JB: But he put 'em out, didn't he?

[00:22:05] RH: He hit so hard that he always broke a bone in his hand.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: That happened two or three times.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Old Dayton.

JB: Yeah. Broke a Coke bottle over Billy Ray Smith's head one day.

RH: He wasn't afraid of anybody.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Dayton was fearless, and that's dangerous. [*JB laughs*] If you're ever gonna be afraid of anybody, you'd be afraid of Billy Ray Smith [*JB laughs*] 'cause he was a natural [*laughs*] strong man. Boy, I mean, a natural toughie.

[00:22:30] JB: But—okay, so when you got to the Rockwood—when you got to where you could buy the whole thing, Dayton didn't have his share of the money, as I remember.

RH: No, no.

JB: So you had to buy the whole thing.

RH: I bought—had to get—somehow or another [*laughs*] figured it out. They helped me. But yeah . . .

JB: And . . .

RH: . . . Dayton didn't have any money. He'd . . .

JB: And . . .

RH: . . . done somethin' with his half or whatever it was.

[00:22:49] JB: The story I've heard is that you had a guy that stood at the door and collected a dollar apiece from people comin' in, and that guy's name was Don Tyson.

RH: The best doorman I've ever had in my life, baby. He would buy all the girls—he had all the—he'd pay for all the girls that come in. *[JB laughs]* And he didn't steal nothin'. We always had more money than the people that was in there in that bag. *[JB laughs]* I'm lookin' for a doorman like that. *[Laughs]*

[00:23:14] JB: Okay. So now you own your own club.

RH: Oh . . .

JB: Now they can't fire you. What do you do?

RH: Well, what happened then—if you can't be at your own business, you know . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . what happens. And we got to clickin' a little bit in Canada, and then I got a coupla albums out, and our best place to play . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . was Canada then. It was easier, and I'd come back when we'd come back, but I couldn't get as many jobs back here—I mean, in Arkansas or all over—and make the same amount of money as I could in Canada. [00:23:44] So I stayed in Canada most of the time then. And then, course, things—one thing led to another. So finally, just—I'm not there. We just sold it 'cause it got to . . .

JB: You were havin' to support it long distance.

RH: I was . . .

JB: That didn't work too good.

RH: You can't support nothin' long . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . distance. You just can't do it.

JB: Yeah, not a bar anyhow. [*Laughs*]

RH: See, you're a lawyer, and . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . you knew that.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But I'm second-string center.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I didn't know that. [*Laughs*]

[00:24:08] JB: Well, when did you meet Levon Helm?

RH: Well, I don't know if you know the one story about it. I went—
you know, Doug Douglas and I joined the army. You member
that?

JB: In 1957.

RH: That's when the country was safe.

JB: Well . . .

RH: There was no trouble goin' on when—they were afraid to try

anything in the Middle East when me and Doug was in the army.

[*Laughter*] You know, we were natural Audie Murphys.

[*Laughs*]

JB: Yeah. Yeah. And Doug. You were stationed at Fort Chaffee for a while?

RH: We took our basic at Fort . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . Chaffee. And then I—then we went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

JB: Okay.

[00:24:41] RH: There's where I put the Black Hawks together, a black band that I played with and tried it for a little while. But black wasn't beautiful in 1957.

JB: Yeah. Had some trouble with the rednecks?

RH: Oh, we had some trouble, I mean, you know, with everything. It was awful. But anyway, it was more experience for me. I learned a coupla more songs. [*Laughter*] [00:25:00] And then we came back, and I had a—they were tryin' to get ahold of me that the Memphis Sun Records session boys—there was about seven of 'em that played on all the records of everybody at Sun. They had been in bands that had seen me play in Fayetteville here and wherever they let me play with 'em. And they—they were gonna give me a hundred a week and all expenses to be

the front man. So boy, I had—I told everybody in the state of Arkansas twice, "The Memphis boys want me."

JB: Yeah.

RH: [*Laughs*] And Jimmy, typical thing happened. By the time I got packed and told everybody for the third time, "I'm goin' to Memphis to front for the Sun Record boys," the band broke up over who was gonna be leader. [*Laughs*]

[00:25:45] JB: Now, that was about the time you were beginnin' to get some legs under your career, but Conway Twitty was, too. Harold Jenkins . . .

RH: He was startin'. It was a . . .

JB: He was startin'.

RH: Yeah, it was Harold Jenkins and the Rock Housers.

JB: Yeah.

[00:25:56] RH: But we'd already—and the guitar player that I had, Jimmy Ray Paulman, had played with Conway for a little while. But when I—I didn't wanna go back to Fayetteville, so I had a chance to stay in West Helena, Arkansas. Jimmy Ray Paulman, the guitar player that I met over . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . there, he had a cousin [*unclear word*] outta high school, Willard "Pop" Jones from Marianna. And then he knew a little

drummer that had played in his band from Marvell, Arkansas, by the name of Levon Helm. He didn't even own a set of drums.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But he had been in the marching band of the . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . of the [*laughter*] . . .

JB: Of the Marvell whatever.

RH: Of the Marvell, Arkansas, marchin' band.

JB: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

RH: And—but he—but Levon had that rhythm.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And he was a guitar player.

JB: Yeah.

[00:26:41] RH: I mean, Levon, you know, he'd played all them Miss Arkansas Pageants and all that stuff. So anyway, to make a long story short, I got a job working [*phone rings*] at the motel there, the Rainbow Inn motel, for room and board and a few bucks, and we'd practice. That old radio station down there in West Helena where the Sonny Boy and the King Biscuit Boys played down in that basement, and they had that *Flour Hour* . . .

JB: Yeah . . .

RH: . . . thing . . .

JB: . . . the *Flour Hour*.

RH: . . . or whatever it was.

JB: Yeah.

RH: We didn't have any equipment, you know, and . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . Levon didn't have any drums. So we slipped down in there from a friend that had the radio station—that ran the radio station and practiced all night long many, many—dusty, dirty but we'd practice day and night.

JB: Yeah.

[00:27:20] RH: It was Jimmy Ray Paulman doin' most of the teachin' then . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . 'cause he had more experience . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . than any of the rest of us. He'd played with some—the big-name bands . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . around. Billy Lee Riley and Sonny Burgess . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . and Conway Twitty and a whole bunch of 'em.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And they were—they—I thought then that all of 'em were pretty good.

[00:27:39] JB: Now, I heard a story, and you don't have to confirm this, but the president of the United States before this current president was up at Camp David, and he went—he goes to church every Sunday mornin' when he's at Camp [RH laughs] David. And he's at church, and the minister is preachin' this sermon, and he's tellin' about a story about a young band that is playin' in Tulsa, Oklahoma [RH laughs], and the nightclub owner wouldn't pay him, and the nightclub owner apparently had a pretty bad reputation. And one night that nightclub blew up [RH laughs], and there was some young kid out there pretty scorched and singed.

RH: No eyebrows. [Laughs]

JB: And the policeman that picked him up started to arrest him, and he said, "You know, that guy was a real bad guy, and I don't wanna know whether you had anything to do with this or not. If you'll behave yourself the rest of your life, I'm not even gonna mention you were here." Who would that singed person have been?

RH: Oh, I don't know. I mean [JB laughs], I heard about it. What's the statute of limitations on somethin' like that? [Laughter] Is

the statute of limit . . .

JB: Oh, they even used your name in the sermon. They said it was Ronnie Hawkins.

RH: Well, when the—when President Clinton told me that story, I could—he said—it wasn't what I did. It was where he heard it. [JB laughs] That's what made it [laughter]—he heard it from the head chaplain of Camp David. I mean, and you know, just jokin', that went on forever. [00:29:15] And then I went through kind of a little miracle healing, as you know. [Laughs] I mean, I don't know why I'm still alive here. I'm just lucky. But anyway, the healer—and so, I said something in an interview. I said, "There's a young Indian kid out there that did all this stuff, you know. He's supposed to be one of them, you know, one of them guys with the mark of the healer." And anyway, I don't—I never did pay a lotta . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . you shouldn't criticize what you don't understand. [Laughs] And I never did understand Oral Roberts and them cats that healed them people by hittin' 'em in the head. I mean, that looked like it was a . . .

[00:29:49] JB: Well, I heard a Oral Roberts story, too. [RH laughs] I heard that your mother took your daddy to hear Oral Roberts

one time.

RH: [*Laughs*] Oh, what an awful—but anyway . . .

JB: Do you wanna tell that story?

RH: Oh. But I was tellin' you—this is a good story. The—in the paper I did an interview, and I said in there—I said, "This healing kid out there healed—he mighta healed me from Vancouver." I said, "I don't even know if Jesus healed long-distance or not."

JB: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

RH: I mean, I didn't know. Well, a few months went by and Mary Berry, Paul's wife . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . sent a copy of a paper of the preacher where he told me in—one of them scriptures of the Bible where he did heal long . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . distance. [*Laughter*] But I—but I'm in a church sermon again. That's two. [*JB laughs*] I mean, who'd ever thought that?

[00:30:33] JB: Yeah. [*RH laughs*] Well, the story I heard is your father offered Oral a chance to heal him.

RH: Yeah. He did. [*Laughter*]

JB: He got thrown outta the church. [*Laughter*]

RH: Yes. Yes, he did. [*Laughter*] Dad—somebody overserved poor old Dad again. He went in there, you know [*laughs*], because he didn't believe in that stuff either, see? Puh—and my poor mom, she gave 10 percent of everything she ever made to the church since she was sixteen years old. She just did it. And boy, and it really pissed my dad off, you know. Oh, he just—"Them preachers," he said, "Son," he said, "if you're too—ain't got enough balls to steal, and you ain't too lazy to work, you either become a preacher or a politician." [*Laughter*] You know, he was pretty—for a third-grade education . . .

JB: Well, that's right . . .

RH: . . . that's pretty smart, ain't it? [*SL laughs*]

[00:31:18] JB: All the Hawkins . . .

RH: But it was a . . .

JB: . . . all the . . .

RH: . . . it was a fact, ain't it?

JB: . . . all the Hawkins women were religious, pretty much.

RH: And all the men were rednecks, boy.

JB: All the men got overserved.

RH: Everybody was a redneck. The women for some reason were just like saints.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Every one of 'em.

JB: Yeah.

RH: My aunts, oh, they—but those rednecks, you know, those were different days over there in "Booger" County.

[00:31:36] JB: So you met Levon Helm. How old was Levon?

RH: I think Levon was eight—eighteen. Seventeen . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . or eighteen.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: They were young. They were just outta high school.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: Diamond Helm said that "We'll not—you cannot take him away from school." He says, "He's got to have something to fall back on."

JB: Yeah.

RH: "So he cannot leave and travel until he gets his" . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . "high school diploma." [*Laughter*] Well—but he got it.

[00:31:59] And—but Levon had a natural rhythm. I mean . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . when I look back on it, he could—he coulda done anything, Levon coulda. Levon coulda been anything.

JB: Think he's the best drummer you ever had?

RH: Well, you know, he was the best feel it—feel drummer.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I've had three or four good drummers in my time. They're Julliard School of Music precision. But you know, Levon played with feel.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And it just felt good.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I'm gonna give you a record I brought down. Nobody's ever had it 'cause I've never—it's never been released. But I got Robbie and Levon playin' on it together in separate studios, like I told you. But you can hear Levon. He set off the tempo.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Some of these little funky—just little funky songs, you know.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But it feels good because he set the groove.

[00:32:44] JB: So you got up—when did you get up to Canada?
When did that happen?

RH: I guess we went up first in [19]58. I started . . .

JB: [Nineteen] fifty-eight.

RH: . . . playin' in 1958.

JB: [Nineteen] fifty-eight.

RH: [Nineteen] fifty-eight. [00:32:52] Then we got a record deal with Roulette Records . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . and . . .

JB: So you were twenty-three years old.

RH: I was twenty-three and a mental giant.

JB: Yeah, I bet.

RH: Super intelligent. [*Laughter*]

JB: Well, one thing about it, you were good lookin'.

RH: Oh!

JB: I'll give you that.

RH: I was a rockabilly front man. [*Laugh*]

JB: You were a good look . . .

RH: That's a good one, boy.

[00:33:13] JB: So when did you figure out that you were gonna be out in front and everybody else was gonna be a sideman. When'd you figure that out?

RH: As soon as nobody else would sing.

JB: Yeah.

RH: [*Laughs*] Nobody else wanted to sing. [*Laughter*] So boy, that's what I wanted to do. Show off.

[00:33:31] JB: And so, you went to Canada, and what happened?

RH: Well, we just chiseled out a little circuit up there. You know, only thing I knew about Canada—I just thought of Mounties and Eskimos and igloos and stuff like that. But boy, when we crossed that border from Detroit and everything was burnin' and, you know, and all that stuff and got into Canada, it was like going into Eden. It was like a promise land. So clean. So nice. And every—and all the clubs, the bars that I played in, you know, they were—it's all government controlled, and you know you was gonna get paid at the end of the week if you didn't mess up. Not . . .

JB: Now . . .

RH: . . . not down here, you know. [*Laughs*]

JB: . . . the story . . .

RH: Sometimes you got paid, and sometimes you didn't.

[00:34:10] JB: The story I heard is that at that time—government control—they weren't allowed to dance. Is . . .

RH: They—it's changed. Two things happened in [19]58 when—I meant, [19]58 or [19]59 or somewhere in there, which really made Canada the promised land. They opened up where they could play rock—they started playin' rock-and-roll music.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Clubs—some clubs could have dancing and drinking, which was—goes together in that era—that rock and roll just to dance by for young people. And the other one is that great Premier Douglas put in Medicare . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . where anybody can go to the doctor and a hospital and get anything done.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And I mean, it saved my life 'cause, you know, I had about
[laughs] . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . I have had about three major operations. I got more scars on me than the Frankenstein monster. [Laughs] So Canada saved me. All them . . .

[00:35:04] JB: Where did—when . . .

RH: . . . all them expensive operations.

JB: . . . when did you become the master of the one-liner? You're reputed to be, and I believe it, one of the world's funniest human beings and . . .

RH: Well, you want me to tell you? You know where I stole all my material? It was all funny. Can you remember J. C. Cox?

JB: I do.

RH: He was one of the funniest cats you've ever . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . seen in your life, you know. [*Laughs*] I know I'd go down there and trade for a car, and I'd know he was gonna cheat me.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But it was worth it.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But it was worth it. The show was worth it. [*Laughter*] And then, you know, remember Charlie Banks?

JB: I remember Charlie.

RH: He had some funny one-liners. But the funniest of all was a—I had an uncle on my mom's side—it's just those ridiculous exaggerations . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . is what it was, you know, and all that. And I thought that was the funniest stuff. So I'd try to steal and pick up everything I could to . . .

JB: So . . .

RH: . . . become that character that . . .

JB: . . . so when you were singin' in a club that can't dance, you told one-liners to . . .

RH: I'd tell . . .

JB: . . . entertain 'em.

RH: . . . I'd tell [*laughs*] stories. Anything to keep people there. Sometimes they didn't stay long, but [*laughs*] that's what I tried to do.

[00:36:03] JB: Yeah. Yeah. And so, Canada was good to you.

RH: Canada was the promise land for me, I'm tellin' you. Everything—it's still the promise land, but you know, cities that, you know, got twenty million immigrants . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . or somewhere around there, you know, it's different. You know, there's . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: But I kept record one time—Toronto was the cleanest, nicest, most beautiful city I'd ever seen. I'd played a few, you know. But now—I kept record one time here a coupla months ago. I couldn't run around, so I was watchin' the news, and there was more killings in Toronto than there was in Iraq. And it went on for about four weeks that more people got killed—it's a—the drug dealers, you know . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . the Jamaicans and there—there's an area up there now, boy, Evel Knievil on Benzedrine'd be afraid to go into.

JB: Yeah.

RH: It's dangerous.

[00:36:51] JB: But they put your hands and feet in cement and put a star on the sidewalk in Toronto. And they had Ronnie Hawkins Day and . . .

RH: Oh . . .

JB: . . . gave you the key to the city.

RH: You know what? I've had two big honors up there. They gave me the key to the city, and it wouldn't open nothin'. They gi—made me an honorary doctor, and I can't write out a script for myself. [*Laughter*] What kinda—I started to call you and see if that's legal. [*Laughter*] I can't write no script out with the doctor's degree I got. But it was an honor. I mean, a big one.

[00:37:25] JB: But is it fair to say you probably can't walk down the street in Toronto without somebody recognizin' you?

RH: There's a few policemen that might. [*Laughter*] No, Canada was good to me and, boy, and I—everything I g—about my life when I look back on it is unbelievable because, you know, I was, like I said, I was short on talent, pecker, and money. But I wanted to do it so bad, I just kept doin' it. [00:37:51] But in Canada it clicked, and I got—it was timing, Jimmy. When I got there, there was no bands. They wasn't playin' rock and roll.

JB: Yeah.

RH: They had country, and they had all this stuff, and there wasn't any stars. One star, and he left Canada immediately, and that was Paul Anka. He was from Ottawa, and he had that—"Diana" international hit, and he had been big ever since. And nobody else then. No bands. And Paul—what we call the uptown music. So we had a year or two before—ahead of everybody—before the other bands could get together and be competitive whatsoever. And by that time I had three or four records out, and we'd played everywhere. So boy, I was a kind of a teenage idol on Yonge Street, you know, for a little while. But . . .

[00:38:35] JB: So you took Levon with you to Canada?

RH: Yes, Levon.

JB: Who else did you take to Canada?

RH: I took Jimmy Ray Paulman and Willard Pop Jones. I didn't take a bass because the bass player that we had was—had a few habits that wouldn't work. And so, we went up. I got a chance to go, so I said, "I'll go without a bass." Just turned that left hand up on the piano, and Levon loosened his bass drum a little bit where it would [*laughs*] sound like a thump of the bass, and we had a monkey act. I had me a monkey act together. I could do them backflips and front flips and all that stuff. And we went

up—the first place we played, Jimmy, was a place in Hamilton called the Golden Rail. And we set up there, and it had about seven people in there. It had been a jazz club.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And all of a sudden, you know, it had that electric piano [*laughs*], that loud—it wouldn't be loud today, but it was loud for then. And we started rockin', and I started jumpin', and them seven people ran outta that place. They thought they had some lunatics. [*Laughter*] And then I knew we was in trouble. I heard the club owner talking to the agents back there. "Get these hillbillies assholes outta here. They've run all my people off." And what—another story that I gotta tell you 'cause it's flashin' on me now. You know, Willard would jump down on his knees and do . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH : . . . all that stuff. Okay, we were rockin', and I'm jumpin', and Levon's rollin' and Lou—and Willard jumped up and jumped on his knees. His feet was out like that [*indicates feet pointing backwards*], and there was a hole in his shoe about that big around [*indicates size with both hands*], man. [*Laughs*] I said, "Boy, I hope nobody saw that or we—they might not think we're in the big time." [*Laughs*]

[00:40:14] JB: Well, you hired some musicians in Canada.

RH: Yes, as the other boys would go back. All the boys always went back for them women, see?

JB: Yeah.

RH: Oh, I had some great guitar players. Fred Carter. He was a great one. That's the—you know his daughter—what's her name?

Bob Baucom: Deana.

RH: Dee—Deana Carter.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And she was a big star. But he was a great guitar player.

[00:40:38] Robbie was my roadie at that time. Robbie came in—long stories about how Robbie came up. It was his mama that talked me into takin' Robbie in and—for—as a roadie . . .

JB: Now . . .

RH: . . . 'cause he played a little guitar.

JB: . . . for, again, the tape, that's Robbie Robertson?

RH: Robbie Robertson. Yes. Robbie Robertson—I'm gettin' ready to play a powwow at Six Nations in September. That's where Robbie's mother was born, and that's where he was born. Robbie is half Jewish and half Indian, but he was born on the reservation. And he came in as a roadie 'cause he was a sharp

street kid.

JB: He . . .

RH: Eighth- or ninth-grade dropout.

JB: He's the vice president of DreamWorks now.

RH: Well, he's a—he's got a vocabulary that's nine words more than Webster. [*JB laughs*] And I don't know where—boy, I'm tellin' you. [*Laughs*] He's a—he's self tr—he's come a long way since that reservation, baby.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But he was always hustlin'. Robbie—I, you know, I had a little nickname for him. What was it I called—the Dude 'cause he always dressed good, even on the streets and stuff.

JB: Yeah.

RH: 'Cause he always wanted to be somebody. I said, "Always read everything you can 'cause the only one gonna look after you, Robbie, is gonna be you. Somethin' can happen to anybody else." And he just started learning in leaps and bounds. There's a lotta stories about how Roy Buchanan and Fred Carter was teachin' him. And one time—there's a one good little story. It was—it's exaggerated a little bit, but it was still a good story 'cause, see, I had everybody in the band teachin' the cats who wasn't quite good enough.

JB: Yeah.

RH: It was their job in the band to teach 'em an hour a day each.

JB: Yeah.

RH: That's how Richard Manuel—Richard Manuel wasn't very good on piano 'cause Stan Szelest was the piano player.

JB: Yeah.

[00:42:19] RH: But I—and I hired Garth Hudson to come in and teach. So he's teachin' everybody, and Robbie's learning in leaps and bounds. And so, one day he told Fred—he said, "I'm gonna cut you one of these days." And Fred said, "Your lessons have just stopped." So he'd turn his back when he played the lead. [*Laughter*] But he was teachin' him an hour a day and everybody—and Garth would teach an hour a day.

JB: Yeah.

[00:42:42] RH: And then when Ricky Danko came in, the whole band voted not to use Ricky 'cause Ricky was green.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, green. I mean, holy smoke, he didn't know anything, except he was a good-lookin' kid . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . that could sing harmony with anything. And all that other stuff you can learn. You have to be born with what he had.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I mean, ain't many people got that.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And so, he was green, so what I did—I had him practice all summer at this summer resort place that I had two people workin' on him an hour a day. That's two hours a day.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And two hours of rehearsal.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Well, you take young kids. We're playing six and seven days a week, and we're practicing five.

JB: Yeah.

RH: They get good quick, like any other—like a team—like a football team. I—if you play together enough and you practice together, you get better. And they got really tight and really good quick, and boy, they were just legendary through the areas . . .

[00:43:34] JB: Lotta people don't realize that you practiced every day.

RH: Every day. Because you needed somethin' to do because you give a young cat a little bit of money, which we didn't have much, and time off, you know what's gonna happen. You're gonna look for some excitement.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Somebody's partyin' somewhere all the time.

JB: Yeah.

RH: So we just worked hard, and we partied on Sundays if we didn't play.

[00:43:55] JB: So when'd you do your first international tour?

RH: The first one, I guess—well, I went over—I—the first time I went to England, I guess, was [19]59. I—Levon went—I took Levon with me as a musical director because they had—they were havin' union problems at that time and the promoter—I went over—the promoter that took me over—I had a record, I guess it was "Mary Lou," that was gettin' airplay in England, and the promoter took us over. Took myself, Gene Vincent—can you remember "Be-Bop-A-Lula"—Gene Vincent?

JB: I do.

RH: And oh, the California kid—he was really from Oklahoma. You can tell I've got that photographic memory.

JB: Well . . .

RH: It just hadn't been workin' for about seventy years.

JB: . . . the developer's gettin' old. [*RH laughs*] But you were twenty-four years old when you do your first inter—I mean, when you go to England.

RH: I guess I was.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Levon, he was youn—oh, that's another whole chapter of what happened to us over there. I mean, Lum and Abner in London.

[Laughs] It was somethin' else. Quite a character.

[00:45:02] JB: Okay. And is it—it's pretty fair to say. I mean, rock and roll was just beginning to be popular when you started playin' it.

RH: My timing was everything . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . for me. I mean, if I tried to go to Canada right now like I did back then, there's so many unbelievable . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . musicians today.

JB: Yeah.

RH: There wasn't that many. I auditioned 300 guitar players to find one that might . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . play what we want. [00:45:26] Jimmy Ray Paulman, for the Memphis-style stuff that we really liked, he was one of the best.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He was just rural, you know. He had a third-grade education and, you know, had them old ways. You know, the Garrett's Snuff rules 'down there?'. [00:45:39] And course, every one of 'em went back to marry them fourteen-year-old girls that were pregnant.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And that broke up more of my bands than anything else that ever broke anybody up. [*Laughter*] Everybody had to go back and get married.

JB: The pill just didn't come along soon enough.

RH: No, no. [*Laughs*] Those boys, I'm tellin' you. But then slowly, it was gettin' hard to get somebody to—you'd have to come down here to practice, or we'd have to take 'em up there. It was just too much. So I—or—I was startin' to see some real good musicians around Toronto and different areas that we played 'cause when I played all the young musicians came out back then.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And every now and then you'd find one that's, you know, that's good. And I . . .

[00:46:21] JB: When'd David Foster start playin' for you?

RH: Bout 1970, I think.

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: I think we—I think it was in there because that . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . John Lennon and Yoko lived with me. That was [19]69. And that's when I heard names. I was tryin' to put a band together as soon as all that excitement settled down. And then I went to Edmonton, Alberta. I wanted to get away from the Toronto scene. I—there was a great musician that lived out there. Y'all might not know him down here, but he's one of them big-time musicians, you know. Gosh almighty, I can't remember nothin'. [00:46:53] But anyway, he had orchestras, and he's the one that conducts orche—Tommy Banks. He's a senator or somethin' now. But he was known as one of the great musicians, uptown musicians, of Canada, and he had an orchestra, and I told him I needed a good musician that could write, read, and arrange. I always pick one that can—knows everything, and he can teach . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . everybody else. You can't put two or three of them geniuses in one band. I tried that. They don't agree on anything.

[*Laughter*] It's a—it was hard to get the right arrangements.

[*Laughs*] But anyway, David—I saw David, and ah, it's a classic

story there, too. So we picked out musicians. He picked 'em out. Most of 'em came from BC, and these are real good musicians. And then a young lady that we—I auditioned. Her name was B. J. Cook. She came in to be my lady singer, you know. We had to make a variety of thing for them big 200-seat bars I was playin'. [*Laughs*] Had to have your group. [*Coughs*] Scuse me. But anyway, he put a band together. We rehearsed just like I always rehearse. And that got to be the slickest band. It was rea—too good for a bar.

JB: Yeah.

[00:48:04] RH: I mean, they were doin' Four Freshmen.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, Four Freshmen doesn't go over in a honky-tonk.

[*Laughs*] I mean, that—that's uptown music, you know, and that harmony is—you know, all that great stuff he could do. He had an ear, baby. But I—one of my sayings is—and it's on film. I said, "That band up there—you boys look like a bunch of damn cadavers." [*Laughs*] They didn't have any action in 'em. They just, you know—and they looked like they's mad all the time. In a bar you gotta act like you havin' a good time no matter how bad you feel 'cause you gotta get 'em . . .

JB: So the . . .

RH: . . . laughin' or you gotta get 'em doin' somethin'.

[00:48:36] JB: So they called you Stompin' Ronnie, Rompin' Ronnie.

RH: Oh . . .

JB: What else'd they call you?

RH: Here's a good one. Levon called me back, I don't know, last year or sometime. He says, "Ronnie," he said, "I just saw your picture in the paper—in that New York paper." He said—he says, "Ronnie Hawkins. Icon."

JB: Icon.

RH: I said, "Well, they called us morons in Arkansas [*JB laughs*] all of our lives. This is a step up, isn't it?" [*Laughter*] All my life they called me a moron, so that's better. But it was funny. I—gosh almighty, it was a lot [*laughs*—how many years now? Gosh almighty.

JB: Well . . .

RH: Don Tyson's seventy-five.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Boy, I didn't think anybody'd live to be seventy. You all set a blisterin' pace.

[00:49:22] JB: Well, to get there you survived a lotta different things. What was the best thing that ever happened to you in your life, Ronnie?

RH: Well, I had three or four things that was really exciting for me as far as music and stuff goes. I got to play with The Band in the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. And it—and I lucked out, and it went over real good, so that was—got good press over that one. And then I got to rehearse—I went out a month early for *The Last Waltz*. See, I'd never seen any of them heroes, Jimmy. I mean, I'm playin' in a bar seven—six . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . seven days a week. You don't see anybody if you're playin' every night.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I didn't know any of them heroes. All I knew about just, you know, readin' about 'em. So I got to go out there and meet 'em. And they were rehearsing for the show at that place called Shangri-La. You probably know the story behind—this is reverse Shangri-La. You come in there at nineteen; you're seventy-three in about six months. [*Laughter*] This was a fast [*laughs*] Shangri-La, boy. But anyway, they were rehearsing out there, and I got to see all those stars comin' in, and that was the—you know, those were the days when everybody was into everything. That was fro—you know, the [19]60s—it just breakin' into the [19]70s there, boy, and they're—all that wild stuff was goin' on

in California. And everybody was livin' pretty hard, and a lot of 'em died.

[00:50:42] JB: Well, you had a few movie appearances, too, didn't you? Tell us about your . . .

RH: All right.

JB: . . . movie appearances.

RH: If Sir Lawrence Olivier had've been alive, he'd've been worried sick. [*Laughter*] I thought I was gonna be in the greatest movie that ever happened. One was the *Heaven's Gate* that—they called it the first \$60 million flop. [*Laughter*] I, boy, I had visions of sugarplums goin' through my head because they told me—they said, "Oh, Ronnie, you—this is gonna be it for you. They're gonna use you in everything from now on." But I don't think anybody worked after that movie [*laughter*] for a while. I still like it. I thought it was a great [*JB laughs*] movie and all, and I learned a lot . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . about the movie business. I was in Kalispell, Montana, seven and a half months out there on location.

JB: Yeah.

[00:51:27] RH: And it was interesting to see 'cause I never did know what was goin' on in these movies. It's a big con. I'm—I can

tell you that. A lot—too much waste in movies. There's somebody makes a lotta money, but sometimes the shareholders don't because they waste too much.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But anyway, I did a buncha movies. I did a big one called—a great big one. I had a big part in it—the—that—you know, bout three or four lines. *Snake Eater*. Did you ever see that one?

JB: I didn't see *Snake* [laughs] *Eater*.

RH: Oh! Fernando Lamas. [JB laughs] [Telephone rings] Lorenzo Lamas. Fernando was his dad, right? He was the—but yeah, and it—it's a dandy. You gotta see that. [00:52:07] I did the first movie with Jim Carrey. In fact, I got him the part. I got him a Nissan commercial. Back then it was Datsun. And I got him a part in this movie. It was one of them—a drive-in movie that—it didn't stay long.

JB: Yeah.

RH: But since he became famous . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . they're showin' it all—everywhere, all the time.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And I—and it helps me 'cause I'm in it. I'm doin' all—I'm doin' about nine numbers in it and all that. So—and oh, I've done—

and I did one, *Hello Again, Mary Lou*. That was one of them zombie movies, you know. [*Laughter*] And what else of those Academy Award winners was I in? And I've done—I—I've done thirty-two movies, somebody told me, but I can't remember but three or four. They said I had a wonderful time. [*Laughter*]

JB: I'm glad to hear it. [*RH laughs*] [00:52:56] Well, so there's some of the best times. What were some of the worst times, Ronnie?

RH: Ah, well, the worst time is when you can't make your band—ends meet, you know, and the band leaves. Some member of the band will leave, and then I had to go into rehearsals for six weeks again because I couldn't afford to go anywhere without a tight band.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Because even when the band went out on their own and with Dylan and that, I had to prove over and over to a lotta places that the bands I had could hold up to the deal, and they did.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I don't know if it's gonna happen tonight. It might be some kind of a miracle if it does. But I—and I wasn't even going to tell anybody, but I'm gonna tell you right now. [00:53:36] I got five kids down there, from eighteen years old to twenty-three,

and they're way better than The Band was at that time. The Band got better as we went . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . along and these kids—it's too hard. You can't play seven days a week, but . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . but they'll hire you for one nighters [*unclear words*] . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: You know, we can't go in for a week of practice and play every day . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . so it's hard to get together. So I had a friend of mine help me get into the Kitchener-Waterloo area in a little 200-seat theater so my—as Robbie and Levon call it, the boot camp, Ronnie Hawkins boot camp. [00:54:10] They were only in it a month, this group you're gettin' ready to hear tonight. And we couldn't play every day and practice every day, either. But they were already advanced enough that those seven or eight songs Herman and me sang together, I'm gonna do 'em tonight . . .

JB: Are we gonna hear "Forty Days" tonight?

RH: You're gonna hear the songs played exactly like they were played in the [19]50s.

JB: Hey, hey.

RH: Every note is gonna be the slapping . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . bass, but I needed two more months to heal up a little bit and have the band a little tighter, but I didn't know when—I may not ever get a chance [*laughs*] to come to Arkansas again, so I said, "We better go this time," because—but I wanted to come down and show off these guys in about two months, but we'll show off anyway.

[00:54:49] JB: Well, when you say you needed a little more time to heal up, tell us about your near-death experience here.

SL: Let me change tapes.

JB: All right.

[Tape stopped]

[00:54:58] RH: I mean, you know, I—they gave me ninety days to live. Well, what I did in those ninety days woulda killed a superathlete. I'm tellin' you, I did ever—I started snortin' and tokin', [*unclear words*] pokin' and puttin' pills up my ass. Fuckin' everything. [*SL laughs*] Everything I'd ever heard about. [*Laughter*] So you know, I—if I'm goin', I'm gonna go happy. [*SL laughs*] Hell with this shit. And it—and all of a sudden—a lotta things happened at once, but I went in to get that last CAT

scan, and seven doctors stood there, and they had to do another one. And then they took me to another machine, and they could not believe there wasn't even a trace of that pancreatic cancer. See, they can tell you how long you're gonna live 'cause they caught it in the CAT scan. Then it doubled in size. Well, that's how long you—they can tell you just about guessin', you know.

SL: Yeah.

RH: And it disappeared, and there wasn't a trace that anything had ever been in my pancreas. But I did end up with diabetes.

SL: Yeah.

RH: The pancreas stopped puttin' out, you know, insulin or whatever it is.

SL: You'd take that trade.

RH: Hmm?

SL: You'd take that trade, though.

RH: Oh hell, in a minute, boy. I'm tellin'—well, you know, I was drinkin' medicine men shit [*laugh*] from all over, you know. I'd've eaten a goat turd if I thought it'd heal me. [*Laughter*]

SL: He'd eat anything.

RH: [*Laughs*] Yeah. [00:56:20] But anyway, that happened and then all of a sudden all this good luck. You won't believe the luck I've had. Boys, I've had good luck since day one, though.

That's why I told Jimmy Blair, there—timing. I got there and didn't have any competition. Hell, I can do good when there ain't no—any competition. And then I had these rich guys that liked me, and I got to playin' where there's free girls, free dope, and free booze. I can outdraw the Rolling Stones [*laughter*] with a deal like that.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

RH: [*Laughs*] And we got . . .

SL: [*Unclear word*]

RH: . . . and we got a name, and I got records, and the radio stations started playin' me and it just—it give me a chance to play in, you know, in Canada for a—well, forty-seven years.

[00:56:57] SL: Now, on Yonge Street, that's where—didn't y'all do two shows a day? Didn't you do an afternoon show for . . .

RH: We . . .

SL: . . . like, kids . . .

RH: . . . well, we did that . . .

SL: . . . or for underage . . .

RH: No, we started—I started that because I was tryin' to figure out a way how we could make a few more dollars. And we started a Saturday afternoon deal at this place that had dining on one side, and then I told the owner—I said, "If you open this to kids

just on Saturday afternoon where these musicians and everybody can come in and watch us play, they spend—they'll spend more money"—they made more money on the Coke side than they did on the booze side because, you know, the hamburger and hot dogs and fries or, you know, popcorn.

SL: Yeah.

RH: And they made more money over there. And that started that, and then a lot of great musicians—now, one of the great ones just died. But they'd come in at that time to see The Band, and they went on to be big time—you know, bigger than a—most bands.

[00:57:48] SL: So Robbie was just kinda hangin' out with you guys there. What—tell me . . .

RH: He . . .

SL : . . . how you got him down to—I've always heard he showed up at the Fayetteville bus station in black leather pants . . .

RH: No.

SL: . . . black leather jacket . . .

RH: No, that's [*unclear words*—I've heard a million rumors, too. I called Robbie and said, "Come on down. This may be your chance." We'd—we were in West Helena, Arkansas. [00:58:07] And he came down with a piano player I was gonna use, and I

said, "Now's your time to start because I need a bass player, and you'll have to work your way up real quick." I put him on bass, and he learned bass and got it, and I put him on rhythm guitar when I brought in those—Roy Buchanan and Fred Carter for him to study from . . .

SL: Yeah.

RH: . . . for a while. And he absorbed like a sponge, man. I mean, just knowledge. And it was within a year, he was just, you know—people were comin' to see Robbie play.

SL: Yeah.

RH: Somethin' else. He was strong. And—big Jim. [Jim Blair steps onto porch] [*SL laughs*] And anyway, they were—they got good, just like these little boy—the—these—this band here. If I had ever got any money or if I could find somebody got some money, this band that I got tonight, they're the right age where you can groom 'em, and they're way above average musically. We're just not real tight, and we don't know enough material yet because I, you know, I wouldn't ordinarily come down here this loose, but it might be [*laughs*—you never know when it might be the last trip.

SL: Yeah.

RH: So I wanna come down and see everybody one more time and

[*coughs*] . . .

SL: This is the first time I'd ever heard that Don was your doorman.

[00:59:13] RH: Don was the best doorman you ever had and the—
and this—the heavysset kid that's road managin' me. Have you—
you met him in there.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He's another multimillionaire, and he's my road manager. He
has the hottest club and theater and stuff in Ontario. He's a
showman, you know, promoter-type thing.

JB: Uh-huh. Now, the story about the doorman I heard from Don
himself. [*Laughs*]

RH: No, Don did it. Don did it, boys. He did it two or three times.
[*Laughs*] He'd go out there . . .

SL: But now, was . . .

RH: . . . and it was funny, but he let all the girl—he paid for all the
girls. [*SL laughs*] And he always paid more than what we had
customers. [*Laughs*] He—not only wasn't the door light, it was
heavier than it shoulda been. [*Laughter*] Boy . . .

JB: He . . .

RH: . . . those kinda doormen are hard to find, boys.

JB: . . . he said if there wasn't enough money to pay the band, he'd
kinda supplement the door.

RH: And he did every time.

JB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

RH: And so, it's hard to find a doorman like that.

JB: Yeah.

SL: It is.

RH: I think he's bout the only one [*JB laughs*] that ever did. And this other one, my road manager, he's the only one that was road managin' when, you know, he's in the—he's kinda the big-time.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:10] JB: [*RH clears throat*] Well, old age ain't for sissies.

RH: It ain't for sissies. But I've been the luckiest man, probably, alive from since day one, man. Timing was everything.

JB: Well . . .

RH: I was just at the right spot. I never did anything myself. But I was at Sun Records in 1952 when they were all black.

JB: Yeah.

RH: It was all black acts. And then the music ch—I was learnin' that same music that two or three years later some of the artists, Elvis and some of 'em, had semilittle hits on it. But I'd learned those songs from the blacks. "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog"—that's Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton. "Lawdy Miss

Clawdy"—that's Lloyd Price, 1948.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And all of 'em you could name—"Whole Lotta Shakin'"—that was a lady—a girl. Beh—all the girl singers in those days were named Bessie. [*Laughter*] Everybody was called Bessie that sung the blues.

JB: Yeah, a bunch of 'em were.

RH: But that was—all those songs I'd learned.

JB: Yeah.

[01:01:02] RH: And I came back here and did—then we did the—we—when we put that little other band together, Sun Records had started recording a lot of white acts.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And they had little local hits, as you remember. Sonny Burgess and the Pacers and Billy Lee Riley—oh, a bunch of 'em. There was dozens. And . . .

[01:01:20] JB: Did you know John Tolleson?

RH: I was so jealous of John Tolleson. I still am. Shit, he was a triple threat. Good lookin', could sing, and play the piss out of a piano. I hated him. [*Laughs*]

JB: You know, he cut a record for Sun Records, and they lost it.
And . . .

RH: Oh my God.

JB: . . . and somebody found it just a few years ago, and they say if it had really surfaced, he mighta been a star.

RH: Well, he shoulda been.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He had all the makings.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He had everything.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Good—he could sing good and play piano good and smart. He was a good one, but . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . I think—you know, women—he fell in love early, and then he got a good job with—playin' organ or somethin' or . . .

JB: Yeah, Baldwin Piano.

RH: Baldwins.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Yeah.

[01:02:05] JB: Well, lemme ask you, Ronnie. Some of the low points here—a few—couple years ago they diagnosed you with pancreatic cancer.

RH: Yeah. That's one of them miracle things. You know, it is a little

bit of a miracle. I don't know. The—there's a lotta things involved. You know, when they found out about it, I had three months to go, and that's when I partied and, oh man, I—a healthy person woulda died in that three months 'cause everybody was comin' by, and I'm on a roll tellin' stories, and we're doin' every drug known to man. Whiskey, cigarettes, pot. [Laughter] And I wish I coulda saved all this stuff to have showed you. And one of the things they—when they asked me, "What do you think's that—saved you, Ronnie?" I said, "It has to be that good whiskey and marijuana is the only thing I can think of that"—[JB laughs] and they put it in the paper.

[01:02:56] JB: Well, a bunch of your good friends had a last supper for Ronnie Hawkins in Toronto.

RH: They did.

JB: Do you remember that?

RH: Jim, that was biggest-time party I've ever seen in my life.

There's another time I wish everybody'd just sent me the money. [Laughter] Everybody flew in and ever—had their own jets, and everybody come in from everywhere. I walked in there, and Paul Anka, David Foster, and the president was singing "I Did It My Way" with the words changed. And it's a masterpiece.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Paul Anka put this together. He fit everybody in and told a story about when we first met in 1958. He had the number one song across the world, "Diana." And it was a—Morris Levy, who was a big wheel, got us on this show. It was like—you know, it was—ten people was on the show. But we got us on—got us on it, and course, Paul Anka's the headliner, and we were super intelligent, you know, me and Levon. So I'm showin' off, and I said, "Look at that little ol' cat up there. Number one song. Gettin' all the girls. ?I'm goin'?' act like I don't even know who he is." [01:04:03] And they stopped the rehearsals, and what drew more attention than anything, and this is the truth. Old Herb Hatfield had let me have a [19]59 new Cadillac [*JB laughs*] before it was time to be released, about three or four months. [*Laughs*] I said, "Well, Herb, I'm goin' back to Canada. Hells, there ain't nothin' up there but Indians and Eskimos. They don't know nothin' bout Cadillacs. They use dogsleds." [*Laughs*] But anyway, I played that one job before I went back to Canada, and that was in Chicago Civic Opera House, big place with a big show, and like I said, Paul Anka was the headliner. And when I pulled that Cadillac in there with that white trailer, they had The Coasters—all those black acts that was there circled that car. [*JB laughs*] It outdrew anything there. This car was somethin'

else. There—I had that white Cadillac with them batwings on the back and a white trailer all customized [*laughs*], you know. We was workin' for the cat—for the—I was workin' for the payments on the two of 'em. [*Laughter*] But I hope nobody knew that [*SL laughs*] except in Fayetteville. [*Laughter*] But anyway, the car was drawin', and here come Paul to see what was goin' on. And I said, "Hey, kid, are you the roadie or are—you know, we need somebody—are you the doorman, or what the hell are you? Come out here and help us get these drums in here." Just bein' ignorant, you know. And Paul didn't say a word. I knew then he was sharp. He didn't say a word. He just come over there and took the drums in. [*JB laughs*] And that's what that song was about. I was hopin' he'd forget that, you know. [*JB laughs*] I just did a show with him here. He came in—they honored him, and I was invited to go, and he's sittin' there with ex-Chrétien—the ex-premier was sittin' over there . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . with Paul at this place, you know. [01:05:41] They had a bunch of 'em went in, but right now I, for a ignorant Arkansas boy, I have won every award that there is to win in Canada now, except one, and I'm up for it, and that's the Order of Canada.

JB: M'kay.

RH: They said they gonna [*laughs*] put me on it, so I've—but all I've ever done . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: . . . is play honky-tonks. Just—there's a lotta people go through honky-tonks [*laughs*] is all.

JB: If you win the Order of Canada, will we have to call you Sir Hawk?

RH: Yes, I'll have to be—insist on that. Right now, I insist on Dr., to tell you the truth.

JB: Or Lord Hawk.

RH: Lord Hawk. [01:06:13] We—oh, this lady, this doctor, she's the boss of this big university up there that, Laurentian University or whatever it was, that give me the honorary doctorate. And what that was was I—all those rich cats, the Eatons and the Bassetts and all those people that are now retired, used to come and see me play, and they got enough power 'cause they build hospitals, and they build schools, and they build all that stuff. So they're the ones who set me up for that. But there's a good story [*voices in background*] because the lady who was the big boss of the school, the doctor, she's one of them girls, you know, that was—had gone to debutwat school. [*Laughs*] I mean, she'd

gone to finishin' school, so this was a educated lady and was one of them girls that was—I mean, went by the book. I mean, you could just tell, I mean, the way she dressed, and her hair looked like the royal family. [*Laughs*] Looked like part of the royal family. So I didn't really know who she was, you know. I'm—I don't know nothin'. So for—and she came in there. I said, "Well, hello, babe. How you doin'?" "Okay." They didn't say—nobody said nothin'. So when she went on to make her speech, they introduced me. She said, "Mr. Hawkins is the only person we've ever had here that has called me babe [*laughter*] in front of her students." [*Laughter*] And then she just sent me, just before I came down here, pictures of the thing, and she signed it, "Babe." [*Laughter*]

JB: Well . . .

[01:07:32] RH: I've been very lucky, Jimmy, all my life, man, and to do all this stuff. And here I am, still, seventy years old. And I got a slim chance. I'll know the eighteenth of this month, Jim. They're gettin' ready to—it looks too good to be true, and when it is too good to be true, it usually ain't, right? But there is a big-time company gonna want my life rights for everything—for three books, three movies, three scripts, and a Broadway play. It—I'll sign the eighteenth, when I get back, of this month, if this

works. And it's big time for me.

JB: Boy, I hope it works.

RH: It's—well, it—I'll have a lot—we'll have a . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . lotta fun.

[01:08:14] JB: Well, at the last supper, Bill Clinton was there.

How'd you get acquainted with the president of the United States?

RH: Well, see, I didn't know Bill like you all did. I mean, I'd met him—them up here at some of Don's parties when he was goin' to law sch—teachin' law, I think. We got pictures of Hillary sittin' there in Don Tyson's party by everybody, and it doesn't look like the Hillary today, I'll tell you that.

[01:08:36] JB: You never heard him play the sax?

RH: Yeah, I've heard him play the sax. Yeah.

JB: So you didn't offer him a spot in your band?

RH: No, but I didn't know anything about him [*JB laughs*] then, you see. I only knew about him big is when he became governor.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And we'd play down there at this little old place and it—I guess it was his first term, but never had I ever seen a politician where the security had shoulder-length hair there for a while.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Had, you know, hair to the shoulder but still looked like Secret Service, you know, cops or somethin', but [*laughs*] they had long hair. But anyway, he came in and what a guy. That's one of the smartest guys I think I've ever seen, man. He can . . .

JB: Well . . .

RH: . . . he can carry on a conversation with anybody about anything, and he's really helped me out a lot before 'cause he'd call me up when he was doin' those speeches in Canada.

JB: Right.

RH: And you know, him bein' there and then me comin' to see him, that got me the front page every time he came.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I mean, that's—and then you all throwin' that party. I mean, that was a Hollywood party, boys. That was big time. That's . . .

[01:09:37] JB: Well, Whoopi Goldberg was there. Where'd you get acquainted with Whoopi?

RH: Well, you know what? She told me that we'd gone somewhere and done somethin' in California. I don't remember it.

JB: That's what she told me, too. [*Laughter*]

RH: I don't remember it. But you know, I didn't act like . . .

JB: She said it was in California when you were out there on some movie thing or somethin'.

RH: Well, I was out there doin' a movie or doin' [*laughs*] somethin'. I mighta been on somethin' else while [*laughs*] I was out there 'cause I don't remember. And I think I'd've remembered Whoopi 'cause she's a—she looks a little different than the average girl. [*Laughter*] But—and she said we had a wonderful time. And course, I thought, well, maybe David or the president—you know, the president, he knows everybody . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . for cryin' out loud. I went down to see U2, and he'd been in Ireland drinkin' with the leader of U2.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He's everywhere.

JB: Yeah.

RH: I—and when he was governor, he used to get to those—when they was burnin' those churches, he could get there before the fire department. [*Laughs*] But he's a mover.

JB: Yeah.

RH: He's one of the smartest men I ever seen. He should be ruler of the world. It'd be a better place, boys. [*Voices in background*]

[01:10:39] JB: So you thought you were gonna die.

RH: Yeah. Well, I'd been told by seven doctors and everything else. I felt all right and I never—they gave me pain pills. I wouldn't take 'em. I just doubled up on the grass. My metabolism—smokin' pot eases my arthritis. It eases everything. It's a great—it's a miracle drug for me, but it's not like that for everybody. But they say that's all in your head. I don't care where it is. I mean [*laughs*], you know? So—and that's somethin' else up there. I'm smokin' a joint in every picture—with the police, with the doctors, with everybody. And it's not—still not completely legal in . . .

[01:11:14] JB: You . . .

RH: . . . Canada yet.

JB: . . . you remember the story of the dog and the miniature horse and the marijuana?

RH: No. What is that one?

JB: Well, you said it made you sleepy. You were at some woman's farm pettin' a dog when you went to sleep.

RH: Oh no, what a story this was. I think it's what you mean. This lady is a hippie, a—but a educated hippie and wrote—writer and stuff and she went for the folk cats, like Ian Tyson of Ian & Sylvia. Gordon Lightfoot was there. All these big-time folkies was there. You know, the hippie types. And anyway, these two

friends of mine, who are master carmakers—they're square johns. This is like takin' one of the farmers around here. I mean, they didn't ever do anything, but they knew who Gordon Lightfoot and Ian Tyson and everybody was. So I said, "Let's go over and see what's goin' on, you know." So we's sittin' down on the couch and Harry Sherry—you'd have to know him. He's a genius-type cat, but I mean, straight as a string. Straight as anybody ever come and so was his brother. [01:12:16] So this old girl had all kinds of odd pets around that house. She had a, like, a three-legged dog and had a—we found out later—had one of them horses with legs about that long. It wasn't—it looks like one of them—what was that word they had? Thalidomide? [Laughs] What was them babies they had? But it was bred to pull sh—through the coal mines.

SL: Yeah.

RH: Short, strong . . .

JB: Shetland pony?

RH: Yeah—no, it was . . .

JB: Smaller than that.

RH: . . . a small somethin'. It was a special breed.

JB: Smaller than that.

RH: And whatever it was. It, no, it had the body of a horse and

eleven-inch legs. I mean, that looks funny anytime. But anyway, we're sittin' there, and here come Gordon Lightfoot and Ian, and I said—Harry Sherry was his name. I said, "Harry, let's try one of them marawiener cigarettes and see what it does for me." They're all smokin' out there. He said, "I never tried one." And of course, his brother was—he was really [*laughs*] square john. So we—anyway, long story short, we got one of them, and "Here's how you do it. You [*inhales deeply*] and you hold your breath as long as you can. You hold your breath." We took about three tokes. Well, what happened was that that dog—that three—that dog was standin' there in front of us there, and then all of a sudden, when we leaned back holdin' our breath, it went out and that short-legged horse—it come in right where—in front, just some kind of a coincidence, right? But when [*laughs*] we opened our eyes, we saw that horse. And this is what Harry Sherry says. He says, "Ronnie," he says, "if that horse ain't standin' in a hole, I ain't never gonna try this again." [*Laughter*] I mean, it—that's not funny to the ordinary cat, but if you knew the people involved and what really happened. I mean, I—there was a dog, and we took a hit, and then there was a horse with eleven-inch legs. [*SL laughs*] I mean, that makes that—you might not wanna try that again. [*Laughs*]

[01:14:02] JB: So your doctors say you're cured from pancreatic cancer.

RH: Yeah, no—the only thing . . .

JB: Do you wanna tell us about the cure?

RH: Well, all it was—you didn't see the documentaries and stuff yet, have you?

JB: Yeah, I hadn't seen those.

RH: Haven't seen them.

JB: No, but I'm—I've read the *Rolling Stone's* article.

[01:14:18] RH: Oh yeah, well, this—all of this—you oughta see—they got ninety minutes of documentary. They stayed with me a year—almost a year and a half. Like I told you earlier, the—it was gonna be just for three months because I only had three months to live. So when I didn't die, they had to change the ending. [*Laughter*] The whole film crew was mad. Everybody was mad. [*Laughter*] But anyway, with all the medicine and all the time, a lotta those extra sharp doctors up there think because of the fun I had and the laughter we had, that had a lot to do with me not dyin' because I laughed, boys, for three months. My stomach was hurtin', and we were doin' everything. I mean, it was a party like you don't ever go to, except it lasted for ninety days. But we had music, go-go girl—I had everything

goin' on in my livin' room. And I never did feel bad. I never did—the doctors couldn't believe I wasn't takin' any pain pills, and I said, "I don't have to. You know, I don't wanna take one of them things, you know, unless I'm hurtin'." And anyway, it just kept gettin' better. And then all of a sudden, they checked it out. They couldn't find anything. Then they put me in the CAT scan. Gone without a trace. [01:15:27] So that's when that healer got a lotta publicity, boy . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . you know. People dyin' wanna hear about things like that.

JB: Yeah.

RH: And he's a—he's gonna be one of the richest boogers in the world. He got three books out now. He'll finish med school in half the time . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . it takes for a doctor to finish med school. He finished high school in—you know, just nothin' to it. He was blessed with smart genes, you know.

[01:15:51] JB: His name's Adam . . .

RH: Adam. I don't know—I never did ask because he was makin' it so mysterious because they didn't want his name really known. They always called him Adam. Now, he's gonna have to let

people who—on this new book deal, he has to go out and make speeches, and they're gonna film that to promote him 'cause they gave him multimillions of dollars to have the rights for his books—the big publishin' company. So he's gonna have to come out behind his—always before they wouldn't show his face.

[01:16:19] SL: So [RH coughs] how did he cure you? I mean, what . . .

RH: Well, I don't know how he cured me. He just said, "You lay down and rest, and it's"—what—he got into it—he—here's a kid fifteen or sixteen years old, talkin' about quantum physics. I said, "Shit, I couldn't—you know, I just barely could add and subtract." [Laughter] I don't know what quantum physics is. I couldn't handle fractions. [Laughter] But anyway, he's one of them cats that's blessed. They said Copernicus was way back there. Isaac Newton—a lotta them geniuses was in—were into this and a coupla astronauts. It's the old story you've heard forever, you know. If you could use your—all your brain, you could heal yourself. I mean, you could tell you—and that's what it is with him. He took—what'd he call it? A—he took a picture and made a—where you put that reality stuff. Now, what'd they call that where you go out and you see—God almighty, I can't . . .

TM: Virtual reality?

RH: It's like a vision . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

RH: . . . thing that you see if you put, you know, the earphones on and stuff. Anyway, that's what he did. He made a deal like that, and he knows the human body. And so, now, I don't know—I'm always goosey of healers, you know, and tricks and everything else. But he did say—he says, "Ronnie, you gotta quit smokin'." He says, "I'm goin' through your body, and it's cloudy as hell down there." How'd he know I smoked?

[*Background noise*] So then, you know—but that's like them cats that can, you know, read your mind and shit. But anyway, and then he said, "You lay down, and I'll"—he went through the thing, whatever he goes through. But he worked on me for two or three months, accordin' to his parents. I didn't know anything about it all, but then they came and stayed with me . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . for a few days and everything, and I got to meet him and everything. And he's just a sharp, young kid, you know. And I don't know anything about quantum physics, boys, and I don't know really how much he helped. But he's getting the credit for

healing me, and it's doin' him good.

[01:18:14] JB: But you know that now that you got another shot left in you, so what're you gonna do with your life?

RH: Well, I hope and I'm prayin' to the Big Rocker that this deal comes through on the eighteenth.

JB: Kay.

RH: If it does, it's everything that you ever dreamed of. I mean, it's big time for me.

JB: Yeah.

[01:18:33] RH: I mean, the—they're real—they're gonna do three books, three movies—I mean, that may not ever happen. But when they told me that, I said, "Well, I must be worth a lotta money, then, if you're [*laughs*] gonna do all that, you know." It's like when they started braggin' on me, and I'm gettin' all these write-ups and all this unbelievable press, I said, "Well, folks, I wanna tell you somethin'?. If I ever get a job, I'm gonna ask for a raise." Remember that's what I said when I first come in with all you heroes sittin' in there? The president—I said, "Boy, with a crowd like I had"—David Foster was gonna have the biggest party he ever had there. I mean, he gonna bring 600, 800 people. And I said, "Nah, I don't want none of that stuff. I've been in them parties all my life. If you can just bring up a

few of them rednecks and a few, you know, a few people that we had laughs with." And I named off, you know, old Doug Douglas. He's fun. And I didn't know Don was comin'. I think Don was in England or something other. But boy, it was unbelievable when I saw everybody.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Jimmy came in, and boy, there it was. But the deal was was after that one. Did you—you went upstairs after—in my room.

JB: Yeah, I did.

RH: Oh, that's where the party was.

JB: I did.

RH: See, I had everybody—all them mooches and all them people that hang around [*laughs*], you know, when you got a suite of rooms that—no tellin' what the—I never be—I never seen—I didn't know Toronto had a suite of rooms like that—like this. Unbelie—they had a piano there that a Cessna could land on. [*SL laughs*] 'Cause I—David sat down and played, and they were singin' and doin' everything, right? [01:19:56] But anyway, I went in, and when I went in there, I thought the—everybody had two joints, and I thought that the fire alarm was gonna come on, you know, the sprinkler system. [*Laughter*] So okay, we're roarin', boy. We're havin' fun, and we're doin' this,

and everybody else, we thought, had gone to bed. I—we get a phone call, and it's the Secret Service. And they said, "Ronnie, the president would like to come up and party a little bit with you, if you don't mind, right?" Baby, you talk about removin' roaches from ashtrays [*laughs*], openin' windows and [*unclear words*] [*laughs*]. And I left a—bout a half an ounce in my bedroom sink, and the president asked to use my washroom. And there it was, layin' there. [*SL laughs*] And he went in there and stayed about ten minutes. I said, "Oh boys, I'm gonna get"—and when I went back in there, he'd just moved it over, and I had all—he put all his phone numbers down. [*JB laughs*] Every phone number that—Harlem, Little Rock, everywhere. I—but I never called any of them big wheels. They're busy, man. But anyway, it was somethin'. And he had a ball. He'd be just entertained and laughed and joked and sang songs and had—but Don wasn't—Don didn't—wasn't like he was feelin' too good that night or . . .

JB: Yeah.

RH: . . . somethin' other. He was down a little bit or somethin'.

JB: Well, he was down 'cause he thought his friend was dyin'.

RH: Oh my goodness.

JB: Yeah.

RH: Well, he shoulda—that's the time he shoulda partied 'cause
he . . .

[01:21:20] JB: Well, we all thought you made millions of dollars,
and you don't have any money. What'd you do . . .

RH: I didn't have any—I couldn't—I never had any. I bluffed
[laughs] . . .

JB: . . . what'd you do with your money?

RH: [Laughs] That's what I told that girl. I spent 90 percent on
everything I made on whiskey, drugs, pussy, and cars. And they
said I just wasted the other 10 percent. [Laughter]

[01:21:44] JB: Okay . . .

RH: Oh my goodness!

JB: . . . here—here's a . . .

RH: Here's John!

JB: . . . new interviewer. Okay.

John Tyson: So you're not spittin' tobacco and peein' in the
corner around here, are you? [Laughter]

RH: Hey, what're you doin', John? Goddang.

SL: No [unclear words]. We kept him under control.

JT: How are you, buddy?

RH: Would you all loan me that little car or that little plane you all
got for a while? I could—I need that for a coupla months.

JT: I'm sure glad I didn't have access to that when I was still drinking . . .

RH: Oh . . .

JT: . . . 'cause there's no tellin' what kinda trouble this . . .

RH: . . . my . . .

JT: . . . boy coulda gotten into.

RH: . . . word. What a plane! [*JB laughs*]

??: Spook?

JT: Yes, sir.

RH: Who'd've ever thought that Springdale, Arkansas . . .

JT: That's a Canadian airplane.

RH: Yeah, I know. They make them good ones up there.

JT: Yeah.

RH: Dandies. But that's the best one I've ever been in for—as a private plane.

JT: Yeah.

RH: I've been in them 707s and stuff like that, but this was a dandy. Smooth, quiet. Made it in two hours.

SL: Yeah.

RH: We woulda—if we'd've had to drive, we'd've been at Peterborough, and I'd've been just on my way to Kitchener in two hours. I wouldn't've even been . . .

SL: [Unclear words]

[01:22:33] JB: Well, tell him what you said about the cost of flyin' you down here.

RH: Oh yeah. I said—you mean about me sayin' I'd rather . . .

JB: You had rather . . .

RH: I said, "What it cost to put this plane and them pilots up there and get us and bring us back, if Don and John had just give me that money, I'd've hitchhiked down. [Laughter] I bet there ain't been a rockabilly front-man bar act ever had one of them sent for 'em. Jerry Lee Lewis gets one of them little Lears sent for him now and then, but I don't know anybody else. They can't believe me in the Peterborough. I said, "Aw, yeah, it's one of my buddies sent one of his little planes up here to get me up. But I wish he'd've sent the big one." [Laughter]

??: The airport where Ronnie lives is so small [laughter], when they took off they went—they musta went full force and [laughs] put her up as quick as they could 'cause they didn't have enough room . . .

[01:23:20] RH: Well, the greatest thing of the whole trip was those five young musicians that I have that have never seen nothin' like that. I mean, they're—two of 'em's just outta high school and they . . .

JT: They got somethin' to aspire to now.

RH: Baby, they couldn't believe this. [*SL laughs*] They couldn't believe everything. This is—this was the big time. I said, "Well, boys, don't get used to it 'cause I don't know how"—[*laughter*] "this might not happen again for another decade."

JT: All you need's a number one hit.

RH: That's it. That's it. [*Laughs*]

JB: Well, Ronnie . . .

RH: Thanks for bringin' me down one more time, John, you and Don. You're the only ones who bring me down, so that's the only time I get to come home. So I didn't think I was gonna get to come this time. We're a little under the weather, but my gosh, it's a—who knows? We may not be here next year. [*Laughs*]

[01:24:04] JB: Anything you wanna . . .

RH: I just . . .

JB: . . . tell us about the 1957 Gullwing Mercedes [*RH laughs*] before we sign off?

RH: Oh boy, that was the finest car I ever had but . . .

JB: It's the finest car anybody ever had. When—where'd you get it?

RH: A friend of mine who knew the cat in California. I met him. He was a master-machinist mechanic from California, and he retired early at forty-nine or fifty years old and came to Arkansas for

some reason to kinda have a house here and retire—different houses—he was pretty wealthy. And he—I met him. He was—he—and he—fact, he bought one of them houses off one of those Charlie Banks—Gene . . .

JB: Davis.

RH: . . . Gene Davis projects. [*Laughs*] But it—but I met him and he—I bought Porsches off of him. He'd bring 'em in from California just like brand new. And then I'd bought a brand-new, wide-track Pontiac triple-carb somethin' or other in Detroit. It was brand new. And when I came in, he had this 300SL Gullwing that he'd driven in from California, and I traded. And that's how I got it. And I drove it, and I'd've still had it. I—but—it was the greatest car I ever had. But at that time you couldn't get anybody to work on it. I—you had to drive to Tulsa, and then they messed it up a couple times tunin' it up, you know, and all that stuff. [01:25:24] And so, the only one I thought of that could look after this car right no matter what happened would be Don because I know he might let too many people drive it and bang it up for a while, but he'll realize real quick it's worth restoring. And it is. You know, and some of those cars are over a million now, you know. I sold it to Don, I think, for eighty-five—eighty-six hundred dollars—eighty-five or

whatever it was I owed somebody. [*Laughter*]

JB: He still has it.

RH: [*Coughs*] He told me he did. He told me I could drive it, but I'd be afraid to drive her now. [*Coughs*] But I, oh, I never did, you know, never did do anything but just a bar act, right? But you know me. I had the car disease since I was twelve years old. I loved old cars. I wanted to own every car in the world. And I spent everything I made on old cars. But I have had—I've had the Porsches. I've had 300SL Gullwings. That's a rare car. I had some of the rarest Ferraris ever goin'. Lamborghinis. I've had all kinds of wonderful cars. I just sold—I'm sellin' everything I got, you know, to keep things goin'. But I sold about twelve cars, but these weren't the exotic ones. These are the muscle cars of the [19]60s and [19]70s, you know. [01:26:35] I still have four or five of them, but I'm sellin' everything because I can't afford to keep everything up. It's expensive to keep a buncha cars up. But I was tryin' to trade for those where in a few years I could make a few bucks on and play with 'em at the same time, right? But I still have some rare, old sports cars that's—you'll know about. You know what a S600 is?

JB: No.

RH: Okay. The S600 was the first attempt by Mr. Honda to make a race car in 1960. I didn't know nothin' about 'em. I just got to readin' the books I read on 'em, you know, and see everything and how rare they are and that. I found two stored in a barn, right, and bought both of 'em. I still have them, but they need restored. And then Nissan made in 1990 to ninety—oh my goodness! [01:27:21] Look at that handsome brute coming! [Paul Berry enters the room] [*Laughter*] It's Rudolph Vaselino. [*Laughter*]

Paul Berry: It's nice to see you.

JB: Hey, Paul.

RH: Don't bug me for autographs.

??: What do you say, ?Linden?

RH: Don't bug me for autographs.

PB: How are you [*unclear word*]?

RH: You handsome brute.

PB: Yeah, I'm ?workin' hard? [*unclear word*].

RH: You're lookin' good, kid. I'm sittin' here talkin' to the—to . . .

PB: Are you off or . . .

[01:27:43] JB: Well, we're done unless you're ready to tag team . . .

RH: Yeah.

JB: . . . and take it over.

RH: Yeah.

JB: But Ronnie's gotta . . .

RH: Yeah.

JB: . . . have a cigarette.

RH: I need to go back—I gotta go home and rest.

PB: Actually, it's . . .

RH: We gotta . . .

JB: Actually, he needs to quit.

PB: [*Unclear words*].

RH: Yeah, I gotta quit now. You can catch me in the mornin'.

[Tape stopped]

[01:27:59] SL: Right.

RH: Well, thanks for everything.

??: You know, one of the things . . .

SL: Thank you, Ronnie.

??: . . . I wanted you to tell him about—if I mighta lost my bearings and my memory, right across the street over here, across the highway, was the guy that had the watermelon patch [*unclear word*] . . .

RH: No, Mr. Winters was down that road towards Lake Wedington.

PB: On 16—off 16.

RH: Yeah, but we used to bring it down here to that . . .

PB: Greathouse Springs.

RH: Yeah, and cool the watermelons.

PB: It's right there. That's right.

??: Did you tell 'em about how he—you stole the watermelons and
the . . .

RH: Oh no, they know the story. [*SL laughs*] Hell, Paul mighta been
in on it.

PB: No, I wasn't in on it. [*Laughter*]

[End of Interview 01:28:29]

[Transcribed and reviewed by Pryor Center staff]