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

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# Arkansas Memories

Mike Huckabee

Interviewed by John C. Davis

January 30, 2024

Roland, Arkansas

## Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at 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 ten minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first ten minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

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

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

**Citation Information**

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**John C. Davis interviewed Mike Huckabee on January 30, 2024, at the Huckabee residence in Roland, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

John C. Davis: Today is Tuesday, January 30, 2024. I'm John Davis, and here with me is Mike Huckabee. We're conducting this oral history at the Huckabee residence. Uh—Governor Huckabee, on behalf of the Pryor Center, I wanna thank you for sitting down with us today. The Pryor Center's mission is to collect Arkansas stories, preserve them for posterity, and connect them to the public. Today you and I plan to discuss topics ranging from your family, childhood, growing up in Arkansas, and memorable moments in your life and work in order to capture your Arkansas story. [00:00:36] So, Governor, you were born on August 24, 1955 in Hope?

Mike Huckabee: Yep.

JCD: Your parents were named Dorsey Wiles Huckabee . . .

MH: Yes.

JCD: . . . and May Huckabee. And you have a sister named Pat.

MH: That's correct. Yeah.

[00:00:50] JCD: First, tell me about your parents.

MH: Well, my father was a fireman. He—uh—worked on his days off at his own little generator shop. He rebuilt generators when cars

had those. They don't anymore, but they did in the day. And you know, he was a guy who just knew hard work. That's all he knew. Heavy lifting, hard work, standing on concrete floors. Uh—the fire department—in those days you worked twenty-four hours on, twenty-four off. So the twenty-four off, that's when he did his generator shop work. And he—he would bil—rebuild generators for all the local car repair places in Hope. And so—uh—my dad never finished high school. Uh—neither did his father or his father before him or his—I'm the first male in my entire family lineage to ever graduate high school. So—uh—you know, sometimes people talk about first-generation college. I'm first-generation high school. So that's kinda where, you know, my roots are. Um—my dad was a good, decent man. You know, he was hard working. Um—he was very—uh—honest. [00:01:53] You know, I didn't think of it at the time when I was growing up. Uh—kind of, you know, you think, well, my dad's not a high-school graduate, you know, he's not well educated—um—you know, he didn't own a suit, you know, any of those things. So you—you don't necessarily think that he's all that smart. But as I look back, you know, pretty smart guy. And I've learned through the years there's a difference between education and intelligence. A lot of people are well educated;

they're not real smart. Other people are smart, but they may not be well educated. He was not well educated, but he was very smart. And he taught me a lot of stuff, a lot of phrases that I can still recall that were life changing for me. And I look back—I mean, things—here's one: "Son, always tell the truth 'cause when you tell the truth, you don't have to remember what you said. It's still gonna be the truth the next time you tell it." [00:02:43] And you know, that's a simple little statement. But you can build a life on that because it's a very powerful—uh—truism about learning to tell the truth. And so there were a lot of things like that that were imparted into me as a kid. He was also a strong disciplinarian. You know, we were—we were expected to toe the line. And I tell people my father was an exceptionally patriotic man. Uh—he laid on the stripes, and I saw stars. [*Musical tone sounding*] Uh-so stars and stripes were a very integral part of my growing up—uh—in that sense. And I say that with great affection because my father was not abusive, but he was stern. And you know, I can remember many times when there were things that I could've done I didn't do—uh—not 'cause I didn't want to. I thought, "Well, doing that particular activity could be dangerous. I could get hurt." But I looked at it this way—if I do it, I might get hurt. If he finds out I

did it, I will get hurt. Great motivator. [*Laughs*] So there were a lot of things in my life I probably was protected from out of sheer terror, which was—in the long run, that was good for me. [00:03:55] But you know, I look back—he had a great sense of humor. Um—you know, he—he basically had a pretty good outlook on life. I—you don't think about that when you're growing up. You don't even appreciate a sense of humor. But my sister certainly inherited it. She's funny as heck. Was a lifelong teacher of drama and English. And I think I got some of that as well. You know, I look at life with—with a sense of sometimes warped humor, as my children like to think, but I know where that came from. Came from my dad.

[00:04:30] JCD: Tell me 'bout your—your mother.

MH: My mother was the oldest of seven children. She grew up in—when I say dire poverty, I mean—uh—you know, it—it's hard to even imagine, but when she grew up, the house she grew up in didn't even have floors. It was just dirt. And because she was the oldest of seven—um—and she had an abusive father who was alcoholic and not a—not a decent person. She ended up having to do a whole lot of things for her siblings, including, you know, going to work at a very young age and, you know, helping to put food on the table. It's just the way life was in the

Depression. So you know, my mother had a much tougher upbringing in her life. Um—my dad, you know, he grew up poor, very poor, but you know, it was a stable home. Mother and father's—father was—did not drink. My dad didn't. My mother didn't. Um—so it was a very different atmosphere. [00:05:31] But she also certainly understood hard work and deep responsibility. She graduated high school, went to work immediately afterwards, and worked all her life. Um—you know, it was a different kinda world. But she—I—I think she buried a lot of those childhood things within her. But she was a very devoted mother. She—she wanted for her children to do better than she did. She wanted us to have a better growing up, that—she was very committed, as was my dad, that—you know, they couldn't provide us things. They didn't have the money to give us stuff. Um—but they instilled in us a strong work ethic that whatever we ha—we had to work hard. We had to earn it. We had to provide for it. That was a godsend. You know, I look back, and I'm so grateful for having that life rather than an—being a trust-fund baby where if I needed something, I said, "Hey, Pop, open the wallet," you know. "Get me a baseball glove." Didn't work like that at my house. He and my mother were both very focused on us doing well in school. They insisted

that education be something that we took seriously. They wouldn't tolerate us making bad grades. And—and by bad, you know, beneath what they knew we were capable of. They had expectations that not only would we do well academically, but they had an insistence, no matter what the academics were, that we respected authority. And if—you know, the standing rule in our home, my mother and dad both, was if I got in trouble at school, that wasn't my problem. My problem was the trouble I would be in at home for getting in trouble at school. [00:07:20] So I can remember as a kid if I got in trouble, I'd say, you know, to the teacher or the principal, "Look, do whatever you need to. I don't care what you do to me." And in those days corporal punishment was absolutely the rigor of the day, so that was common. But I'd say, you know, "Pop me as many times as you gotta. Just don't let my parents know I got in trouble." 'Cause I knew I'd survive, [*laughs*] you know, what they did to me at school. I wasn't sure I'd survive what'd happen at home.

[00:07:48] JCD: Were both of your parents from—from Hempstead County, from that area?

MH: Yeah, they both were born there and grew up there. Um—my mother's family had originated in Illinois, but her mother moved to Arkansas before my mother was born, so that's really the only

place that my—my parents, my—my father's family go generations back all the way to the late 1700s. Um—I would love to tell you that I have a very noble—uh—ancestry, but [*laughs*] the truth is, best we can tell, the Huckabees were dumped outta debtors prisons in England—uh—dropped off on the shores of Georgia in the late 1700s and—you know, if—if you understand about American history and the migration patterns, if your relatives and your ancestors started in Virginia or Massachusetts, you were probably nobility and blue blood. If your ancestors started out in Georgia in the swamps—uh—they were scallywags, and they were pretty much put there 'cause nobody else wanted 'em. [00:08:49] But what they had to do was to learn how to survive, and so they were maybe not well educated, and they scattered all over the place—um—but they were hardworking, hardscrabble people that learned how to survive and, you know, just didn't—didn't give up. So that's really—my DNA from my father's side of the family is one of really hard work and—you know, my dad used to say to me, "Son, don't look very far up your family tree 'cause there's some stuff up there you don't need to see." Course when that makes you curious, you look, and you find out the old man was right. There's some stuff up there probably shouldn't see. But you

know, you also have gratitude for, you know, a life that comes to you by virtue of people that didn't have a choice. They had to work hard.

[00:09:43] JCD: And that resourcefulness is passed on from generation to generation, you hope.

MH: I—I sure hope it is to my kids. [*Laughs*] It was to me. My kids have had it a whole lot easier than I ever did, and maybe that's—uh—not all good. But you know, even with my own children, when they would go to church camp in the summer, I would insist that they work in the cafeteria or the concession stand at camp. And they were s—oh, they hated it. "Dad, seriously, you can afford this. You know, it's not—you don't"—I'd say, "It's—that's not the point. Yeah, I could afford it. But you need to understand and appreciate that for you to go to camp it costs—it costs somebody something. And it needs to cost you something 'cause you're the one getting the benefit of it. Not me." So you know, there was some of that that I did impart to them that I think has been helpful, and they've even, thank goodness—um—recognized it and acknowledged it as such.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:10:35] JCD: Before we move on a bit, do you know how your

parents met?

MH: I know a little bit about it. My dad's father, my grandfather, worked at the Hope Brick company, family-owned brick company, for many, many years. And my mother worked there. My dad had a lot of different jobs when he was in his teens and in his early twenties and—one of which—he worked for a time at the brick company, and he first met my mother there when she was working there in the office, and he saw her there and took her out on some dates. You know, I don't know all the details of that, but they ended up getting married on the day before Halloween in nineteen—gosh, I guess it would've been 1948. Yeah. I think that's right. Yeah.

[00:11:35] JCD: And then tell me a little bit more about your sister, Pat. You'd mentioned . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . she's now a retired educator.

MH: Yeah. My sister—two years older than me. She tried to kill me when I was first born. I came home from the hospital, and she tried to feed me potato chips. I was two days old. So I survived several assassination attempts by my sister. That was the first of several. Later she would pour Bactine, which is a medicine that I don't even think exists anymore, but poured that in my

chicken noodle soup tryin' to assassinate me that way. I turned out to be a tough kid 'cause I survived several assassination . . .

JCD: You had to be . . .

MH: . . . attempts.

JCD: . . . tough.

MH: Yeah. [00:12:13] My sister was a hard-working person, great sense of humor, very studious, and always wanted to be a teacher. And so she became a school teacher. She taught English, taught theater in junior-high, high-school levels. Spent the—most of the last, oh, twenty-five years or so as primarily an English teacher in middle school, which I think there is a special place in heaven for people who teach middle school, especially who teach English in middle school. She was runner-up to statewide teacher of the year one year, so she was very good at what she did and was acknowledged for it in that way. You know, she has two children, grandchildren and—retired now and living a good life. And we're still very, very close.

[00:13:06] JCD: So take me to your childhood home and your neighborhood in—you know, what was it like growin' up . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . in Hope in your community in that time period, the 1950s, 1960s?

MH: Yeah. Hope was Mayberry. You know, if you watched *The Andy Griffith Show*, it's like, "Oh, that's Hope." People didn't lock their doors. Everybody knew each other. It's a small town. If you got in trouble halfway across town, did something you shouldn't've done, before you could get home, seven people had called your parents and told on you, and five of those seven people probably spanked you before you ever got home. [*Laughs*] People felt totally free to do that kind of thing. I lived in a little rent house. It was an orange brick rent house on Second Street in Hope. And you know, it—very modest. Saying it was modest is being charitable. We didn't have air conditioning. We didn't have carpet on the floor, you know. We had little space heaters for heat. We had an attic fan for surviving hot summers in Arkansas. [00:14:15] And I don't think I was aware of, really, that we were impoverished until I was probably in junior high or something. You know, you finally start lookin' around and sayin', "Gah, other kids, they have nicer cars, they have new clothes." I never felt deprived. I didn't feel like that I was, you know, a victim of anything. I just accepted that's who we are, and I was okay with that. But you know, growing up—neighborhoods were different then. You didn't have so much subdivisions. So neighborhoods were very mixed. You

know, there were people around me, across the street, and in the neighborhood who were much more affluent, who lived in much nicer homes, in the same neighborhood. Nobody thought much about that, really. I knew they got to go on vacation. We didn't. I knew they'd get new cars. We never did. But I didn't think, "Oh, gee, life isn't fair." My parents would never have tolerated me going around whining about how things weren't fair 'cause their attitude was, you know, life isn't fair. Get over it. And if you don't like the things that are goin' on in your life, it's up to you to fix it. So I appreciate that that's how I was raised. [00:15:27] But in that neighborhood, it was, you know, the kind of place where, especially during the summer when we were out of school—we'd wake up in the morning. We'd go out in the neighborhood, ride our bicycles all over town, and as long as we kinda started heading home when the streetlights came on at night, we were considered okay. There were no cell phones. There were no pagers. You know, we were gone all day. And we'd ride our bikes to the public swimming pool at the Fair Park, you know, in Hope, and it cost a quarter to swim. So we'd collect enough soda bottles to take those to the local store and turn 'em in for three cents a bottle. Maybe started out as two, then three, and eventually got to a nickel a bottle. And that was

big money, then. And if I needed a baseball glove or something, I'd sell greeting cards door-to-door, which was miserable because you'd knock on a door and, "You wanna buy greeting cards?" "No." You know, you do that all day. Ended up, like a lot of kids in my town who came from, really, I guess, not affluent families, we'd get hired to work in chicken houses. It's a miserable job. You go at ten o'clock at night. Hope was one of the early places in Arkansas where the poultry industry really flourished. [00:16:50] And so this was the day before OSHA. There was no child labor laws that were enforced. They probably were in place, but nobody paid any attention to them. So we'd be eight, nine years old, and they'd take us to a chicken house—ten o'clock at night. We'd go out there and catch chickens all night long, stuffin' those chickens into the wooden crates. Off to Colonel Sanders they would go, I guess. All I know is that it was the most miserable, smelly, nasty, filthy work in the world. So much so that when we would come out of those chicken houses like at six in the morning, before our parents would let us even get in our house, they'd make us strip down, hose us off in the yard, then we could go in and take a shower 'cause it was just that nasty. But it was also terrific 'cause it motivated me. I mean, as a kid, I'd come out of those chicken houses—"What do

I have to do so I don't this for the rest of my life?" Well, gotta work hard, get a good education, and treat people right. By gosh, I don't know what else I'm gonna do, but that is on the agenda. I am not gonna spend the rest of my life doin' this. [00:17:51] We'd haul hay back in the day, and a lot of local farmers would, you know, harvest their hay in August, which is the hottest time. Triple digits. And you'd grab those old square bales of hay and throw 'em up on a flatbed truck and, you know, get a little bit of money for it. Pick strawberries, whatever it took. But it was that kind of stuff that we did—again, it was great because that's how we bought baseballs or BBs for the BB gun or money to go to the movie. And yet at the same time it was a great reminder that you don't get stuff by just wishing it or by asking somebody to give it to you. You get it when you work, and work has rewards, and the rewards is what gives you the capacity to do the things you wish to do.

[00:18:46] JCD: We'll discuss your ministry work shortly, but as a child, was faith an important part of your family life?

MH: It was to a degree. My father did not go to church. He had gone—I didn't know this story till I was almost grown, but he went with us, you know, as a—when we were all very young. I was probably an infant, maybe. And somebody made fun of him

'cause he didn't have nice clothes, you know, and they kinda got onto him 'cause in those days people would wear suits to church and dress up. He didn't have any dress-up clothes, you know. He just didn't. He didn't have a suit, he didn't have dress-up clothes, he had working-man's clothes. And somebody—you know, I don't know that they even thought about it. Maybe they thought he was doin' it just to be funny. I don't know what they thought 'cause this was long before I understood. But anyway, it really hurt him deeply. So he—that was it for him. He didn't go back to church. But my mother would take us every week to Sunday school. So we grew up in an atmosphere of a very small but stout, Bible-believing church. You know, Sunday school and go to church and, when I got older, get involved in the youth group and all that stuff. It was a, you know, a vital part of our lives growing up. [00:20:02] But it wasn't until I was almost in—out of high school, headed to college, when my father came back to church and was baptized. And it was a pretty big event. And he really made some significant changes in his life. And whatever it was that had happened, he was able to put that behind him and say, "You know, I'm—I wanna be in church with my family." It was a big deal for our family when that happened.

[00:20:31] JCD: What church did you typically go to as a child?

MH: The church we went to was a little Missionary Baptist church called Garrett Memorial Baptist Church. It relocated since, you know, I grew up there, and it's out, now, near the interstate. But it was a small, little working-class church over in a nondescript neighborhood at the time.

JCD: What extracurricular acti—what activities did you do out of school as a kid growin' up in Hope?

[00:21:01] MH: In Hope there wasn't a whole lot to do, but playing baseball was probably the big thing. We had Little League. And before that they called it Doctor's League, but then Little League, and so you know, I played baseball in the summer. In addition to the leagues, we played every day, you know. There was a big, empty lot behind my grandfather's house, which was across the street from where I lived. And in that lot, all the kids in the neighborhood would go and play baseball every day until it got so dark we couldn't see the ball. And [*laughs*] when we knocked the cover off the ball, after we finally got to that place, we'd take black electrical tape, wrap around, and that was the baseball. And it was a lot harder to see when it got dark than the white ones. And then eventually we got where it just wouldn't work, and we'd knocked the tape off of it, and then we'd collect

enough money to go to Western Auto and get a new baseball. But pretty much our lives revolved around that. In the wintertime, we played football. Same vacant lot, you know. And our lives were filled with that kind of stuff. We rode bicycles everywhere. You know, we had a pretty idyllic kind of growing up. It was, you know, looking back, magical. But we didn't know it. I mean, we just thought we were very lucky to get to live in a town where nobody had to lock a door. There just wasn't a big crime rate. It was the kinda place where people looked in on each other. In the evenings you'd sit on your front porch 'cause it was too hot to be inside and shell peas in the summer. And also if you could do something other than shelling peas like play guitar, then you could play guitar while the other people shelled peas, so it was part of the motivation for me to wanna play guitar. [00:22:47] The Beatles were the other one. [*Laughs*] We can get into that a little later, but that was a transformational moment for me, seeing the Beatles on Ed Sullivan in February of 1964. That launched what would be for me a lifelong passion of music. But you know, growing up was—it was an innocent time. And the [19]50s and [19]60s were largely a time of great innocence anyway. You know, we didn't hear about—I know there were people, I'm sure, who were

alcoholic, we just didn't talk about it. Divorce was rare in Hope at that time. It was scandalous when it happened, and it didn't happen that much. It was a very calm kind of life where people tried to raise their kids in a way that was honorable and decent. It was a good time to grow up.

[00:23:40] JCD: So you touched on your love of music.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: When did that begin?

MH: It really was February [19]64. I watched the Beatles on Ed Sullivan, as did about 70 million Americans. Most of the country was tuned in. And I was hooked. I mean, from the very beginning, I thought, "I'm gonna be the fifth Beatle. That's my ambition." Somehow, that never happened. They never called. I don't understand that. You know, I've waited all these years, and now there's only two of 'em left. But it was a music like we'd never heard before. And you know, the sound of the electric guitars and the exuberance with which they performed was just something I'd never seen. So like every kid, I think, in that generation who remember that, you know, my reaction was, "I want an electric guitar." So when I was eight years old, I asked my parents, "I want an electric guitar." They said, "We can't afford that. What else do you want?" And I'd tell 'em

somethin' else. And I'd get what else that year. Next year, same thing. Next year, same thing. When I was eleven—"What do you want?" "I want an electric guitar." "Son, we can't afford that. What else do you want?" And I realized that if I gave 'em a what else, I'd get a what else. So I said, "I don't want anything else. I want an electric guitar. That's all I want. I can't have that, I don't want anything." I was an adult when I realized how close I was that year to getting nothing 'cause I had put myself in that box. But my parents, to their credit—I guess they finally realized how serious and dedicated I was to this notion of playing guitar. So they got for me a guitar when I was eleven years old at Christmas. It was one they ordered from the JC Penney catalog. Came with, you know, a little bitty amplifier and the gear with it. The whole packet was $99 outta the catalog. It took them a year to pay for it. They paid a little bit every month. [00:25:39] You know, you look back and you think—I mean, I realize $99 given inflation and everything else is a lot more money today. It's significant. But for them it might as well have been a gazillion dollars. It was way outta their range. So the sacrifice they made to get that guitar for me is something I look back on with extraordinary appreciation because it really, genuinely was a sacrifice for them. And like I

said, it took 'em a year to make it happen. But when I got that guitar—and I still have it. I still have the guitar, the little amplifier that came with it from 19—what would that be, [19]66. Yeah. And man, you know, I was so taken by it that I'd play till my fingers would almost bleed. I'd just play and play and play. I never got great at it, but you know, to this day I play. I play on my television show every week when I—in Nashville playing with artists that I grew up listening to thinking that I'd never meet, never see 'em even with binoculars at a distance. And I get to stand onstage with Dionne Warwick and Lynyrd Skynyrd and Mark Farner from Grand Funk Railroad and Gary Lewis and, you know, the Turtles. And I look back on all these bands—Peter Noone from Herman's Hermits. I mean, dozens and dozens and dozens of artists. The Beach Boys. I played with them. I can't even begin to name all of 'em. And you know, it is never lost on me, even to this day when I'm onstage with some of these people that I am living out a dream I had when I was eight years old, you know. [00:27:22] And I'll sometimes will even try to tell the artist, "You know, I bought your records, and then later as a radio disc jockey, I played your records. You helped me go to college 'cause I s—would spin your records as a disc jockey." And I said, "You know, "To stand here and to play

your music with you—you have no idea how cool this is for me." And I'm sure they look at me like, "Yeah. Okay, great." But it really is an amazing thing, you know. And sometimes people come and say, "Wow, I saw you playing with Toby Keith or Willie Nelson," and people I've played with. "I didn't know you were that good." And I always tell 'em—I said, "Heck, I'm not that good. But it's my show. I get to play." [*Laughs*] So you know, maybe I'm not ready for prime time, but I get the gig anyhow.

[00:28:10] JCD: So are you entirely self taught? Did—is there ever a point where you were takin' lessons?

MH: Yeah. When I first got the guitar, there was—the only person I knew in Hope that taught guitar was a Pentecostal pastor named Joseph Geno, *G-E-N-O*. And he was a really a excellent musician, and he taught guitar and horn and different things, just—you know. And so I would work, save my money. I'm tryin' to remember—I wanna think lessons were $2.50 per lesson for a thirty-minute lesson, and he would sketch out a chord chart on a piece of paper. I'd go home and learn those chords and would come back. And first song I ever learned to play was "Home on the Range." That was a real rocker. You know, everyone in the neighborhood really wanted me to hear—hear me play that. But it was the beginning, you know, and I

had to learn from the fundamentals. And I was very glad I had a teacher because as he taught me something about not just what to play but why to play it that way. So he was a great teacher, better than I understood at the time 'cause a lot of those lessons I've continued to live with. But after the guitar for maybe a year, he suggested, and I really wanted, to play bass. And part of the reason was is because a lot of kids my age were playin' guitar because we were all tryin' to be the Beatles. But very few kids were playing bass, and every band needs one, but a lot of bands didn't have access to one. So I figured, "You know, if I learn to play bass, I'll always have a gig. I'll be able to get in a band 'cause there's just a big demand and not that many people playing." So I got my first bass guitar. And that really became my primary instrument. I still play guitar a little bit, six string, but mostly I'm a bass player, and that's what I play when I play on the show and just goof around and play in my own rock band called Capitol Offense that we started back when I was governor, so mostly a bass player.

[00:30:18] JCD: As a teenager, if I understand correctly, you began workin' broadcast.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: Somethin' you continue today. And you di—at that time you

were working for a local radio station. Tell me about that experience.

MH: When I was eleven years old, I was playing baseball. Little League. I was the catcher. And you may wonder, what does that have to do with radio? It has everything to do with it. So I'm behind home plate. I'm on the worst team in the league. **Century Bible Class** sponsored by the Methodist Church, and that was the team. I don't think we won a game all year. Anyway, we were terrible. We were bad enough that I was the catcher. That's how bad it was. So I'm behind home plate, and a kid named **Mark Cathey**, who later would become a neurosurgeon, he was batting. And he hit a foul tip, and I did what catchers are never supposed to do, and that's put your exposed hand outside your mitt. 'Cause normally, you know, you wanna get—let the mitt absorb the force of the ball. But I was so determined. I wanted—and it's a split-second decision. I wanted to catch it. It'd be an out if I caught it as a foul tip. And I put my right hand out like this. I misjudged the placement of the ball. It took this index finger and just shattered it and bent it back pointing back the other way. I mean, it was grotesque looking. And I member holding it up and lookin' over at my coach and saying, "Hey, Coach. I think I broke my finger." You

know, I could've been a, you know, orthopedic diagnostician with that kind of capacity to see that, yeah, I think I broke it. [00:31:51] I mean, it really messed it up. So obviously that ended my baseball season. And the coach for my team said, "You know, why don't you go up in the press box, and maybe they can use you to do the PA announcing." In the little town of Hope, Little League baseball—I mean, the world revolved around it. So I thought, "Okay. I get free popcorn and Cokes, and I can sit up there, and I'll say, 'The batter is'"—I'd announce the batter. "On deck"—and then I would announce the score at the end of each half inning. Not bad. [00:32:27] So the town of Hope is so small that the local radio station, KXAR, broadcast Little League baseball games. You know, I didn't think about it at the time, but I look back, and I'm thinking, "Who on earth would wanna listen on the radio?" "Hey, honey, hold it down. I—eleven year olds are playin' baseball here. I wanna hear this." But they broadcast every doggone Little League baseball game on the radio. I mean, I'm just amazed, looking back, that that ever happened. Well, the guy that normally did the play-by-play, a high-school student, was sick one night, and the manager of the station, Haskell Jones, came, and he was gonna have to do the ball games. Obviously, I don't think he really

wanted to sit there for three hours and do play-by-play of little boys playing baseball, so half jokingly, he turned to me, and he says, "Hey, kid, would you like to call a few innings of a baseball game on the radio?" "Sure." He slid the microphone down to where I was, and I did play-by-play at age eleven on the radio. And he said, "You know, kid, you're not that bad." He didn't say I was good. But that wasn't the criteria to work at that radio station. [*Laughs*] All you had to be was not bad. And he said, "When you get fourteen and you can get your FCC license, if you come see me, I'll give you a job, and I'll put you to work." So within two days of my fourteenth birthday, I passed my FCC test, and I went to work at KXAR radio at the ripe old age of fourteen. And I did sports. I did play-by-play of football, basketball, baseball. I was a disc jockey. I worked weekends. I would open up the station on Saturdays and some Sundays. [00:34:10] You know, I look back—he gave me a key to the radio station. I'm fourteen years old. I can't even drive. I'd either ride my bike or my parents would have to drop me off. I'd open up the station. I'd sign it on, turn on the transmitter. I'd run the place. I'd be the only one there on the weekends. And in the summers, I'd work extended hours. I worked my way through junior high, high school, college, and grad school.

Radio. It was life changing. You know, I realized I was not a great athlete. I figured out fairly early in life I was never gonna quarterback the Dallas Cowboys to a Super Bowl. These days I'm not sure anyone else is, either, but I knew it wasn't gonna be me. But radio put me in every ball game there was. I got to go to every game. And while my friends were goin' to the doctor the next day to get their knees looked at, I was goin' to the bank to deposit my check. And this was how I was able to, you know, put gas in a car. It's how I paid my way through college. You know, I worked forty hours a week at a radio station in Arkadelphia when I went to college and paid for every dime of my education. You know, all of this was because I broke my finger when I was eleven years old. So I take it back to that point because it's a great reminder to me and a story I love to tell people is that sometimes what you think is the worst thing that ever happened to you will be the best thing that ever happened to you. Breaking my finger—I thought my world had ended. Baseball. That's it. That's all you got in Hope. There's nothin' else. You can't play, what are you gonna do? Your life's over at eleven, you know. But it wasn't. And that situation led to the radio station job. [00:35:57] And Haskell Jones became not just a boss. He became a mentor to me. You know, when

people say, "Who are the great influences in your life?" he's always number one, number two, you know, 'cause immediately he comes to mind because he was such a patriotic, wonderful man. One of the greatest communitarians I ever knew. He loved working for the community. And I thought that's just what you did. I thought everybody did that. You know, I was overwhelmed by how much he invested in the town of Hope, how much he did for other people. And he was a very vibrant, positive gentleman. He had a daughter who was severely developmentally disabled, had the capacity of like a two-year-old. Never let that stop him. You know, he and his wife never complained or whined about the difficulty of raising—she at that time was in her twenties and still had two-year-old capacity. They just lived life to its fullest. But he loved America. Oh, my. He was the ultimate patriot. You know, this country had been good to him, and you know, he imparted a lot of that to me, that sense of duty to country. [00:37:17] But all that to say is that that whole experience of working in radio, that and music helped me more, in part, because it got me to where I was comfortable in front of people. I grew up very shy. I know that's hard to believe for people who know what I do for a living. But I did. I grew up very shy, feeling inferior, just not feeling good enough,

you know, that I didn't have what other kids had. I just didn't feel comfortable. And I know it's gonna sound crazy, but to this day I'm often uncomfortable in settings where, you know, maybe I'm surrounded by people who are influential and affluent. You know, I suddenly have to remind myself it's okay, you know, you're okay to be in this room with these people. But my instinct is to be that little kid in Hope, you know, who has holes in his shoes and one pair—well, two pair of jeans every year that we'd get at the beginning of school. In the spring my mother would iron patches where we had worn through the knees, and that was embarrassing, but I wasn't the only kid that had to have that. And then at the end of the school year, she'd cut off the jeans just above the knee, and those were my shorts for the summer. So I had two pair of jeans, two pair of shorts. And then the fall we'd go to, you know, the local department store. Two new pair of jeans, three or four shirts. That's my wardrobe for the new year. [00:38:48] But radio was so—it was a wonderful opportunity. I mean, it just opened up so many doors. I learned everything from how to communicate, how to speak—I learned timing. So much about broadcasting is timing. You know what thirty seconds feels like. You know what ten seconds feels like. And in radio, dead air is dead. It's deadly.

It'll get you fired. So you understand you keep the show going whatever you gotta do. So there were so many lessons of life that were imparted to me, call it accidentally, whatever, but it was the osmosis of lessons of discipline, never being late, always being on time because in broadcasting, you know, you can't be late. If you're supposed to sign the station on at five a.m., you don't do it at 5:05. You did it at five a.m. As soon as the second hand sweeps and hits twelve, you know, you push the mic button, and you're talking. So it—I don't know. Those were great, great parts of my life that I wouldn't trade for anything. Things that are hardwired into me. And the funny thing is I still remember the entire sign-on and sign-off of the radio station in Hope. You know, when they'll say—when I'm doin' TV and they'll say, "Gimme a sound check. Count to ten." I think it's boring to count to ten, so I'll say, "The time"—let's see, how—let me start it. [00:40:24] "This will end our broadcast day here on KXAR. We've been on the air since five this morning, broadcasting on an assigned frequency of 1490 kilocycles. We will return to the air tomorrow morning at five a.m. Thank you for joining us. On behalf of the Hope Broadcasting Company, this is Mike Huckabee. Have a good day. Ladies and gentlemen, our national anthem." And we'd play the national anthem and

the end of the day and at the beginning of the day. And I still remember the—"This is a test. For the next sixty seconds, we will conduct a test of the Emergency Broadcast System. This is only a test." We'd play the little tone. "This has been a test of the Emergency Broadcast System. Had this been an actual alert, you would have been instructed as to where to tune on the dial for news and official information. This concludes this test of the Emergency Broadcast System." And we would do that when we were told to do the test. [00:41:15] I'll tell you a little story. Kind of a rabbit hole here, but I was on the air one day. I was fifteen, and I was by myself at the radio station. It was a Saturday morning. And when the test signals for the EBS would go off, the teletype machine, old-fashion teletype with this very coarse, dry paper—but the teletype machine in the little off room from the control room would go ding, ding, ding, and you knew, okay, go rip it off, come in there, do the EBS test. And it would only ding if there was a news bulletin or something like that. This time it just kept dinging, and I thought, "Must be broke. What's wrong with this stupid teletype?" So I got a record going, walked out there. And on the teletype it says, "This is an alert. This is not a test. The Emergency Broadcast System has been activated. America is under attack. Begin immediately the

procedures for the EBS system." I'm thinkin', "Good gosh, the Ruskies have—comin' over here. They're gonna drop a big one on Hope, Arkansas. I'm gonna be vaporized, but by gosh, I gotta run the protocol." So I did what I was supposed to do. You know, you turn the transmitter off five seconds, back on five seconds on—you know, you do this—there's a whole list of things. I did every bit of that. Turned out that some goofball in Colorado Springs at NORAD put up the wrong trigger tape, and instead of putting the one for the test, he stuck the real one on there accidentally and sent this all over the country, and every radio and television station in America was trying to decide should they believe it and follow it or ignore it and figure it was nonsense. Well, only about 20 percent of the radio and television stations took it seriously and did it. And that's when they realized that the whole EBS system was worthless because most people didn't even believe it. Well, good thing they didn't. [00:43:15] Anyway, it was kinda like, you know, *War of the Worlds* comin' on.

JCD: That's what came to mind . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . as you're tellin' me this.

MH: It really was. And it wasn't Orson Wells. This was some air

force—former air force guy. I'm sure he was [*laughs*] dishonorably discharged after that. But you know, it was—I still remember, though, the just sheer terror thinking, "Good gosh, you know, I'm in here by myself, and I gotta run the EBS system." Anyway, things like that, though, that you look back and you think, you know, what a level of responsibility that I was given at that age. I can't imagine it now, you know, that I'd say to a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old kid, "Here's a key to the radio station. Be sure and unlock it and turn it on in the morning at five while I'm still sleeping, run all those commercials, and make us some money, and I'll come in about ten and check on you." [*Laughs*] That's crazy. Utterly nuts.

[00:44:13] JCD: Do you happen to remember the reaction in the community? Do you remember people when this alert, emergency alert system went out? Do you recall?

MH: I mean, there were a lot of people calling in. And of course, I wasn't tryin' to answer the phone right then 'cause I was following all these—there were very specific protocols, and it involved turning on and off the transmitter. And the reason you did that, you know, the technical reasons were that they always believed that if a, let's say, an enemy airplane, where it's gonna come in and bomb something—the way they do, they'd lock in

on a radio station tower. They knew where those towers were, and they could lock in on the signal and fly to that and then bomb whatever they were needing to bomb nearby. So if you turned the transmitter off for a few seconds, turned it back on, that alternating would supposedly—I mean, this is how primitive it was. Think about how utterly nonsensical this is that, you know, the enemy airplanes are gonna, "Oh, KXAR is on the air. No, it's not. Oh, now it is. No, it's not." I mean, [*laughs*] you could make a whole comedy routine out of this. But it was the—that was the sophistication level of our defense system in the [19]60s. Good gosh, how crazy that is. But—you know, and I look back, and I remember as a kid in school, you know, we had duck and cover drills, where they would say in the event that we have a nuclear attack, get up under your school desk. You know, later you think, "Okay, let me see if I get this right: A nuclear bomb is gonna be dropped on Hope, Arkansas, which is pretty unlikely. I'm not sure what they're gonna drop it on us for. What did we do to 'em? But if it hits Brookwood School, do I really have a shot of not being vaporized 'cause I'm under this little wooden desk? Yeah, that makes a whole lot of sense." And why did we think that that ever was gonna matter? I mean, we might as well just go out there and watch the big one come

down because we're all gonna [*laughs*] be turned into particles. But that's the mindset. And you know, we did a lot of stuff in the country then that—it's laughable now, but we took it with dead serious attitude in the [19]60s when we thought on any given day Khrushchev was gonna, you know, light us up. [*Laughs*]

[00:46:34] JCD: It strikes me that, really, since your early broadcast days, you've—and we'll talk more about sort of early career and college, but you've had a rather public life since then.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: I mean, as a shy kid in Hope . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . you were still on the radio. So you were broadcasting, you were communicating with a lot of folks in your community. And then we'll talk about other ways that you've done this through the years. And you touched on this a little bit, but that's extraordinarily rare.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: That's a really uncommon opportunity, but also for you to have the skill sets and the willingness to develop those tools at such a young age. Have you ever thought about that that, even in the world of broadcast today, you're probably the only person in the

room that started at fourteen.

MH: I—it—no, it's not lost on me. And I—it's something I think about a lot, and every time I meet somebody who started, maybe, as a teenager—one of my very good friends, Keith Bilbrey, who is the announcer on my television show—but he was the announcer for Grand Ole Opry for thirty-five years. He was their announcer, and he was the weatherman on WSM in Nashville forever. And he started when he was sixteen. And we talk about, you know, the impact that that had workin' in radio, and it was his career path as well, but you know, he always reminds me that I got a two-year head start on him 'cause they wouldn't let him work at fourteen. I said, "Well, they're stricter in Tennessee. I don't know." But in Arkansas I don't guess anyone cared. You know, and I could get my license then, and that's what mattered. In tho—you don't have to have a license now to do a radio station, but you did in those days. [00:48:10] No, but it occurred to me then it was an incredible privilege and how blessed I was to have that job as opposed to catchin' chickens. Wow, did I ever appreciate that. But you know, I've been involved in some form of broadcasting nonstop since the age of fourteen. And it's been amazing how that particular part of my life has been a thread that is woven through every chapter. And there've been quite a

few chapters in very different endeavors, but it—there's always been a component and a part of it that involved broadcasting.

[00:48:48] JCD: Changing gears a bit, you meet and marry Janet McCain in, I believe, 1974. If you would, please tell me about how the two of you met.

MH: We knew each other since we were probably in elementary school. We went to different elementary schools, but once again, in Hope everybody knew everybody. So you'd see people at ball games and the swimming pool, movies. So you know, I went to Brookwood, she went to Garland Elementary, but everybody knew each other. So from junior high—there was only one junior high, one high school. From junior high on, we were in the same class. We didn't start dating until the second semester of our senior year in high school. Janet was a great athlete. She was all-district basketball, she was just really, really good. You know, I did the play-by-play. Here's the irony. Usually it's the, you know, the guy that's the jock, and the girl who's the cheerleader. I'm over there on the desk doin' play-by-play, and she's the basketball player. But we had our first date. She'll be so proud—oh, gosh. It was yesterday. Yeah, January 29, 1973. Yeah. First date. Gosh. I'm gonna tell her, "Hey, did—you missed our anniversary." But we went to the Fulton

truck stop after one of her ball games 'cause it was the only place that was open. There was nothing else in Hope open at nine o'clock at night, so that was our first date. We dated the rest of high school, that summer, we both went to Ouachita, and we married after our first year. Got to celebrate fifty years of marriage this May, which is hard to believe. We married when we were eighteen, a couple of months shy of our nineteenth birthdays, hers in July, mine in August. And you know, I look back. I'm thinking, "What were—we were nuts." [00:50:43] But at the time, it didn't seem as crazy. I guess both of us had to do a lot of growin' up early in life. You know, I grew up as I did, and we had an uncle of mine who was a bachelor, lived in Houston, had cancer. In the seventh grade—when I was in the seventh grade, he had to come live with us 'cause nobody else'd take care of him. So my parents were consumed with their work and then havin' to take care of him, and my sister and I ended up having to do a lot of caretaking as well when they were at work. But I think all of that plus workin' at the radio station and startin—it—you know, we had to grow up kind of young. Janet was one of five kids raised by a single mom. She had to do a lot of growin' up, too. So it didn't seem that out of character that we would get married at that age. But you know, looking back if

my kids had ever come to me at age eighteen and said, "Yeah, I'm gettin' married," I think I'd've killed 'em. [*Laughs*] You know. "Are you crazy?" But you know, obviously it's worked out. Fifty years later, we're still together so I guess it's . . .

[00:51:47] JCD: That's a wonderful partnership.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: That's . . .

MH: Turned out okay.

JCD: Congratulations on fifty years.

MH: Thank you. Yeah. Big deal.

[00:51:54] JCD: So you both attend Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia at the same time. Tell me about that experience at Ouachita in the [19]70s.

MH: Yeah, it was a dream to get to go to Ouachita 'cause, you know—I mean, for some kids maybe it'd be, you know, Harvard or something. But you know, Ouachita was, in many ways, an unreachable star for me. Dr. Daniel Grant was the president of Ouachita. I was on the debate team in high school, and I was in a lot of plays and drama and stuff like that, but they wanted to start a debate team at Ouachita. And so I got a partial presidential scholarship at Ouachita, a local Rotary Club scholarship. It was $500. Wasn't a lot, but it was a lot at that

time. And then I got a job at the radio station in Arkadelphia. So I, between the two scholarships and working, I was able to go. And you know, it was a phenomenal experience. Ouachita was just a great place to be, great atmosphere. Peer pressure there was to excel. I always say you can get in trouble at Ouachita. It's not a monastery, not a convent. But you had to kinda go outside the norm if you wanted to do crazy stuff like most college kids do because the peer pressure there was to excel not only academically, but it was to excel in your character, in your life. That was the—sort of the atmosphere. And it was, you know, a perfect atmosphere in which to be. [00:53:31] I would—I took twenty hours a semester, and in those days, you paid by the semester, not by the hour. So it was sorta like going to a buffet. You could get everything you could put on your plate and pay one price. Well, I figured out that if I really piled it on, I could get through a lot less than four years. And I got finished in college in two years and three months. Got my B.A. degree. And I did it because I was paying for it, and I figured, you know, hey, I ain't got time or money to do this in four years when I could do it in two and a half. So I did. And once again, it was that necessity breeds the capacity to do what you don't think you can do. But I graduated *magna*

*cum laude*, you know, in two years and three months. It was just an exceptional time. [00:54:23] Got married in the middle of all that. The last year I was at Ouachita—this is a whole different chapter, but Janet was diagnosed with spinal cancer, and we weren't sure she was gonna live through that. That was a very horrible period of our lives. We were barely a year into the marriage. After our first year at Ouachita, we got married. She was gonna work and help me get through, and then she'd go back and finish. Well, all that got interrupted. She was workin' as a dental assistant in Arkadelphia. Had back trouble. Thought it was just from leaning over a dental chair all day. Went to one doctor, then another, then another, and it kept getting worse and worse. And finally an orthopedic specialist said, "Ah, you—textbook case slipped disc. You know, textbook. If it doesn't get better, we'll have to operate and fix the disc." [00:55:18] Well, it didn't get better. It kept getting worse. This went on for seven months, eight months. And they were gonna do surgery in Little Rock and repair the disc. So they did a test called a myelogram, which is injecting a dye into the spine to see which disc needs to be repaired. And the surgery was scheduled for the following day. And this was bad enough, I mean, you know, you're in college, you're tryin' to get through,

now this is the last thing we need. No money, all this stuff. But the doctor comes down the hall, and they take me to this little room off the side. Well, whenever a doctor takes you to the private room, it's never to announce good news. They announce good news in front of the whole waiting room. They want everyone to hear how good the news is 'cause then they think, "That doctor's great, you know, it's good news." If it's bad news, they take you by yourself. So they took me in the little room. He came in. His face was as white as his lab coat. And he said, "Well, we're not gonna do the surgery tomorrow." "Okay. How come?" "Your wife doesn't have a slipped disc. She has a tumor inside the canal of her spine. It's cutting off her spinal cord. I can't operate on that. I've called a neurosurgeon who'll come in and talk to you tonight." [00:56:32] Well, he did. And told us—he said, "Because it's in the canal of the spine, we may not be able to repair this. We may not be able to get to it. We'll make her as comfortable as possible." Basically, she's gonna die. He said, "If we can get to it and remove it, we'll probably sever her spinal cord in the process of getting the tumor out. She'll be paraplegic for the rest of her life." Well, that's great news. So the best outcome that he gives us at that time is she's gonna be paralyzed from,

you know, from the middle of her back down for the rest of her life. Worst case scenario she's got less than a year to live. So you know, at barely twenty years old, you're thinkin', "My God, this isn't supposed to happen to us." But like all the chapters in our lives, it becomes that part of your journey that you learn from, you grow from. They schedule surgery on, you know, her to see if they could get to the tumor. They were able to get to it, remove it, and then she had to go through six weeks of radiation therapy. Every day I'd drive from Arkadelphia to Little Rock, build a little bed in the back of the car, drive up there, four minutes of radiation, back home. Hospital bed set up in our little duplex that we lived in. Forty dollar a month apartment. Grossly [*laughs*] overpriced at forty a month, I can tell you. And it took up the entire room—the hospital bed. And then we do that every day for six weeks. And she had to learn to walk all over again. They told us because of the radiation she'd never have children. You know, it would—you know, those days radiation therapy was primitive. It was essentially microwaving your insides. There was not the targeting that now is part of radiation therapy, which is very precise and—it was nothing like that. [00:58:29] So anyway, quite to the doctor's surprise, you know, she got pregnant a year later, and our first son was born.

We lost one child after that, then our second son, and then the now governor of Arkansas was born after that. All of which were never supposed to be. It's a great reminder that, you know, God has bigger plans for us than we have for ourselves. Never accept somebody's dire news as the final word 'cause it may not be. So that was a part of, you know, our process that was life shaping, to say the least. But you know, also you look back and you realize—'cause you think at the time you'll never get through this. But you do. And then over the years, you know, you're able to use that experience to be a comfort and help to other people who are going through something similar. And I think that's the great value is that you learn that there is—there's life after crisis.

[00:59:33] JCD: So you had extraordinary challenges, Janet and you, thrust upon you in your very early years of marriage. Is there anything else during your time at Ouachita Baptist that you think had a significant influence on who you became, who you are?

MH: Oh, without a doubt. Ouachita was one of the great transformational periods of my life in part because—for the most part, I was surrounded by kids who were, for the most part, from more affluent families, kids who were academically well prepared. They'd come from much larger high schools and—you

know, so you feel a little bit like maybe I don't belong here. But I realized, you know, I'm as good as these other kids. And then participating in forensic events with other colleges. That was also—I'd done that in high school, and that was a real confidence builder. You know, I was state debate champion senior year in high school and then goin' to college and, you know, bein' up against University of Texas at a forensics festival in south Texas at San Marcos University. You know, you kinda come away sayin', "You know what, these kids aren't any better than me. They may have a little easier to get here, but they're not better, and you know, I'm not inferior." So those were great lessons. But I think the biggest lesson from Ouachita was the atmosphere. [01:01:04] Ouachita was a place where the student-to-teacher to ratio—very, very small. So you had extraordinary interaction with and relationships with professors. They were very caring. They were invested in the students' lives. After a couple of months on campus, even if you didn't have a class with some other student, they would know your name and call you by name. It was a very friendly atmosphere. That is so uplifting and li—I think life building, you know. "Hey, Mike. How you doin'?" "Cindy, how are you?" There was a very conducive atmosphere there. And the professors would know

who you were even if you didn't have them in class. That's pretty remarkable, and I think I took for granted a lot of that 'cause I realize most students go to a campus, and they don't know everybody. They don't have that kind of relatio—people don't speak to them that boldly and cordially. But it was a great environment, and it was academically challenging. You know, it was not an easy place to go. But I have often said from that environment at Ouachita, I felt like my education was up to the standards of anyone. And I have been in debates politically on a national stage with people, every one of which was from Harvard or Yale or some Ivy League or prestigious school. Never, not once, did I ever feel like I was outclassed by those, you know, other people on the stage. Some of them had remarkable adult careers, but I never felt like, "Boy, my Ouachita education just didn't cut it to be on the stage with these people." I'd come away sometimes thinkin', "Those Harvard boys just aren't that great. You know, they [*laughs*] just aren't that—they're not any brighter than I am." And in some ways I think they were less because they lived in this very isolated world, and they certainly were given a world view of what I would call more globalist view. [01:03:09] But they had no clue to understand middle America. None. And I think I was able to learn. "Okay, I understand

what is being taught, what's being believed at an Ivy League school, but I also have the perspective of flyover country." I think it was a much better preparation for life than it would have been had I lived in this very protected and kind of isolated environment.

[01:03:37] JCD: So you graduate from Ouachita Baptist two and a half—or shy, really . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . of two and a half years, a very expedited path through college. At that time what did you think you would be doing for a career?

MH: Well, I was planning to go into some type of Christian broadcasting. That was my career goal. All those years that I'd been in radio. I thought, you know, this is great pathway and I—strong believer, and I thought, "Perfect fit. Broadcasting, faith. Go into some form of Christian broadcasting. Radio and/or television." So then I went to seminary at Fort Worth. Started there in January of [19]76. I completed my degree in [19]75, but they didn't have graduation. So technically I'm a [19]75 finisher. I'm a [19]76 graduate. I should've been in the class of [19]77. So it's kind of a weird path as I look at that. [01:04:32] But started at Southwestern. And you know, my

goal—everybody thinks that I was planning to be a pastor. I wasn't. I—that was not on my radar at all. I was fully committed to being in religious broadcasting. But I thought the seminary education would be very helpful, and there were courses in communications and stuff that I was able to take. One of the first things I did was to get a job doing freelance radio spots. So that's how I was beginning to pay my way for seminary. Once again, broadcasting is still the underpinning. And you know, I got the attention of some people that told me about a Christian organization in Fort Worth. They said, "You should be doin' radio spots for them." "Yeah, I'd love that." So I started that. They hired me to be a part of what they had as an in-house ad agency that did everything from concept to completion in graphic arts, everything from billboards, radio, television, newspaper ads, the whole gamut. And so I became their radio guy and did all the radio spots, wrote them, produced them, voiced them. I placed them. You know, I learned placement. That was a whole new world in the advertising business. [01:05:49] And the guy that directed that agency in May of [19]77, he left to go back to Alabama where he's from to open a business, and so they said, "We want you to take over the director of communications role with the organization and be

the director of the advertising agency." So I—let's see, I would've been twenty—not quite twenty-two, a few months away from being twenty-two, twenty-one years old, and suddenly I'm over twelve people who are graphic artists and placement people, and I'm running the ad agency. I'm the youngest guy in the room. But you know, what a great experience that turned out to be. And then I did all the radio and television stuff for the organization, was the on-air announcer for the television program, which gave me a whole new foray into, you know, how TV works. And so I thought, "This is great." [01:06:54] After a few years of that, 1980, I was coming back to Arkansas. I opened—created my own ad agency. I was gonna—I just wanted to be back home. And I thought, "You know, one of these days, I'm gonna run for Congress. I'm gonna run for office." So that would be, you know, get home, get established. So I did. And in the midst of that while I was getting my ad business going, and I was ghost writing books for people, doin' a whole gamut of communication things, a church in Pine Bluff asked me to come and fill in one Sunday. They knew I was, you know, a Christian, and so they asked me to come. I did. And they said, "Can you maybe come every weekend and be interim while we look for a pastor?" Well,

yes, I could 'cause I could still run my business during the week and come over here on the weekend. I—that'd be all right. And after—I said, "Just let me know when you've found your new guy, and you know, give me a couple of weeks notice, and I'll be on my way." So they came to me in December and said, "Well, we've found our pastor." I said, "Great. When's my last Sunday?" They said, "Well, we need to explain it to you. You are our new pastor." I said, "Oh, [*laughs*] no, no way." I said, "That's no—no, I'm not your guy. You know, I love being interim, and that's been wonderful, but this is not a full-time gig for me." And they said, "Well, we think it should be." Anyway, that's how I ended up being pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pine Bluff. [01:08:24] And so I didn't come to that with this ambition to be a pastor, nor did I come with a typical background. What I knew was I knew advertising. I knew communications. So the first thing we did was we built an ad campaign. The church had been a—it was an old, hundred-year-old church. Had been in decline for thirty years. So I said, "We need a new image. We need to reach out in the community." So you know, I designed graphics. We did bus benches. I went on the radio. I did a daily feature. I didn't wanna do a like a preaching program. That's—every—nobody wants to listen to

that. So I did a program called *Positive Alternatives*. And every morning in drive time and every afternoon in drive time, I did a sixty-second kind of a thought for the day, uplifting, motivational message that was not hard hitting and grab you by the lapels. And it just had immediate impact. People started comin' to the church 'cause they would hear these very positive messages, and it wasn't what they normally were hearing from churches, which was, you know, "If you don't come to church, Sonny, you're gonna go to hell!" We weren't doin' that. And so then we started our own television station at the church for the community. [01:09:39] So it wasn't just to do church services. We did high-school sports. I started a local talk show, recruited other people to do shows on the local channel. We operated it twenty-four hours a day. Affiliated it with a Christian network called the American Christian Television System, became the community television channel. There wasn't one. That was it. So you know, I was there for six years, and then a church in Texarkana said, "We want you to come be pastor here." I said, "Well, you don't understand. I'm not a traditional kinda guy and, you know, what I really—what I know to do is utilize broadcasting." And they said, "Well, but that's why we want you. We want you to come and do that here." So that was the

understanding. And I went, started a television station in Texarkana. It became the local community station. They had, really, a lot more resources. So we were able to a lot more. But you know, once again, it was using the tools I knew. So my pastorate was, in so many way—it was my graduate-level education into humanity. I experienced life with people that I never would've known. And I look back, and I realize this was the preparation that I needed if I ever was gonna do public service, serve in public office. [01:11:02] As I tell people—they would say, "Yeah, you know, pastors. What do they know about government and dealing"—I said, "Let me explain something. The pastor in your community can put a name and a face to every social pathology that exists in your town. Nobody else can do that. You wanna talk about elderly people who are havin' to cut their medicine in half 'cause they can't afford the full pill. You know who knows that couple? Pastor does. You know who takes food to the family that doesn't have any food in their cabinets and takes the box of food? It's the pastor. He knows the people who are hungry. He knows what hunger looks like 'cause he sees it. You know who's standing at the ICU bed holding the hand of a person who's passing away in front of their family at two a.m.? Pastor. He's the one who's seen that. Or

the couple whose child, two years old, is run over by a car. Who knows the grief of that? He does. He's been there. Fourteen-year-old girl. She gets pregnant. Before she tells her parents, she goes and pours her heart out to the pastor." I said, "So you know, you can say pastors don't know anything. Actually they are well familiar with human grief. But they're also familiar with the joys of the birth of a baby or a marriage. So they see it all, but they see it more close up and personal than anybody else in the community." So I look back and I—it was not just that, you know, I had opportunity to lead churches and see them grow. I grew as a person a whole lot more than I ever would've at anything else I could've done. And it brought me to a deeper understanding of how fragile life is, how much of a struggle people have. And as I tell people, you know, you look at people sitting in church, and you think, "Now there's a person who really has it together." You know what, the pastor knows that guy doesn't have it together at all. And he looks at somebody else, and they'll say, "That person's a ne'er do well. Boy, just—what a tragic life." Pastor knows that person has some qualities that nobody's ever really appreciated. [01:13:13] So I wouldn't take anything. It was my twelve years of graduate school. And I look back on that, and it was the best preparation I could've

ever had to ultimately be, first, lieutenant governor, governor, and on from there.

[01:13:30] JCD: So I think of people I know or have read about, and almost all of 'em felt a call.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: Some sort of call to ministry.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: Your call came from congregants. Your call came from . . .

MH: Well . . .

JCD: . . . you know, South Arkansans. [*MH laughs*] And maybe God spoke through them, perhaps, right, or circumstances.

MH: Without a doubt.

JCD: It's unique.

[01:13:51] MH: You know, I mean, it was God's call, but it first came through people that kind of told me it was his, and then I had to say, "Well, I better pray about this myself. I can't take your word for it." And that's when the affirmation comes from above. You really believe, yeah, this really is God speaking. But it wasn't something that I originally initiated and said "Man, I hope they ask me to stay here," 'cause that wasn't—that's not what I was thinkin' at the time. But it turned out—you know, I have no doubt at all that it was in fact God's call. You know, I sometimes

think—church people are very much of the thought if you are called that you have to get your paycheck from a church or a mission board. You know, it's like that's the only way God calls you. I think, "Why do you think that?" 'cause, you know, God calls people to be police officers and teachers. I really believe that. I mean, there are people who—teachers. They're called for that. That's their life work, and it's as much a call as is the pastor or the missionary. But we've sort of created this—and it's very American. It's not biblical, and it's not even historical, but it's very American that vocational ministry is the only real God-called ministry, [*chimes sound*] and everything else is something less than that. But that's just not biblical. Our ultimate call is to follow Christ and to serve. I saw that—you know, in my life I never felt when people—I got into politics—people say, "I'm so sorry you left the ministry." And I would just say to 'em, "I didn't know I had. I thought that there was a ministry in governing." And I still believe that. So I've never felt that it was a, somehow, an abandonment of my faith to do what I did.

JCD: Let's go ahead and take a break.

[Recording stopped]

[01:15:47] JCD: So we took a short break. We were, when we stopped momentarily, we were talking about your work in

ministry, your call to ministry, and you touched on the power of vocation and how your interpretation of it is broader than maybe the traditional sort of ministerial, pastoral work that you said isn't really rooted in anything other than just maybe its cultural norms.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: I wonder if you would touch on that again briefly.

MH: Well, I think American Christianity has sort of expanded beyond a biblical norm and has gone into a cultural norm. And the cultural norm is that ministry is a full-time job or it—or even if it's a half-time job, you know, the bi-vocational pastor, it's this sense that there is a different level if you're a minister than if you're not getting your paycheck from a church. And it's really not a biblical concept. You know, if one looks at the scripture, you realize that our calling is to follow Christ, to follow in his direction and will, but it's not to be vocational as much as it is to be intentional. So you know, the idea of a multi-tiered Christian faith, that the missionaries and the pastors, they're the real faithful followers of Christ, and then you've got the lessers, you know, the Sunday school teachers or the deacons, and then you just have the people who show up. [01:17:27] Where did that come from? You know, you can go through the entire New

Testament, and you will not find that as being some kind of a way in which people are supposed to be elevated. Now elevated in their sense of authority within the church, yeah, I get that. But not that one is a call and the other is a less-than-Christian pursuit.

JCD: So if we were to think about your life and career to this point, we're sort of in 1980s . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . I believe.

MH: Yeah [19]80 to [19]80 . . .

JCD: So . . .

MH: . . . yeah, to [19]91 or so. Right.

JCD: You were in Pine Bluff . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . and then Texarkana. So during this time all three of your children would have already been born.

MH: Oldest son born in [19]76, middle son [19]80, Sarah in [19]82. Yeah.

[01:18:20] JCD: So tell me a little bit about being a parent and a father and, again, a public figure in these communities. How was that to be a parent as someone who has a spotlight on them in the community? How did that affect your children's

upbringings . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . as well?

MH: I think it had an affect on my children in that they have lived their whole lives sort of in the public spotlight, either as a pastor's kid or as a political figure's kid. The light is a lot hotter and more intense in the political arena than it is the pastoral. My wife one time made a comment—I think she's probably right. She says in both cases you're placed on a pedestal. But the difference is in the church world, they put you on a pedestal, but they kinda wish you could stay there, and they want you to be there. In politics they put you on the pedestal, and the game is tear him down, get him off of it. So it's a transition to accept that. But in both cases, you're being viewed differently. There's an expectation that your behavior will exceed that of everyone else, and that your kids will be, you know, exemplary in everything they do. [01:19:30] I think we tried to deal with our kids more honestly and have expectations for them that would be no different whether they were in the public eye or not. We knew they were kids. They would do kid things. It would break our hearts sometimes. But we also accepted that, you know, kids will be kids, and they will do some dumb things, and we're

not gonna say it's the end of the world if our kids get into some trouble 'cause they will. So I feel like we were fortunate enough to approach this with a realistic attitude about how this was gonna turn out. And I think my greatest joy in life—when people say, "What's your greatest accomplishment?" it's really not getting elected to something or having achieved, it's that my kids all turned out pretty decent citizens. And they're all responsible. And they all have accepted a world view that they grew up with. It would break my heart if my children all turned 180 degrees from the worldview in which they were raised. I would accept it. You know, they have their own mind, they can do what they want. But it would also make me wonder what did I not show them in either my life, what I believed, how it played out that they rejected it out of hand. It would hurt. It would hurt deeply. So it's not that my children have embraced my ideology, but it's that they haven't rejected it, if that makes sense, that they grew up, had full access to seeing everything behind the scenes and on the stage, and they still came away being believers, first of all, in their Christian faith, pro-life. They embrace a more conservative approach to political issues, all of which I'm grateful for, not because I wanted them to be like me, but because I wanted 'em to believe that the world in which they

grew up was not unacceptable, undesirable, or phony. I just wanted them to believe there was authenticity in what they lived with and grew up with.

[01:21:49] JCD: So at this point, explain the transition from the ministry and broadcast work into politics.

MH: When I ended up going into the pastorate, I really had abandoned the notion that I would ever run for office because I thought it will be a very awkward if not impossible transition to go from pastor of a Baptist denomination in Arkansas to running for office. So I just assumed that was off the table. In 1989 I was elected president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention, which is a very high-profile position, especially during that time. There was a lot of controversy going on in Southern Baptist life, in Arkansas Baptist life. Some fairly deep division amo—in the denomination. And I was elected hopefully to be a healer and somebody who could conciliate the factions and get us back on track. [01:22:53] So I was elected and then re-elected. I had a very, I think, decent two-year term as president of the convention, and we did get back together. The convention saw some real healing. And it was during that time—and again, a very high-profile position. The state's largest denomination. It was like one out of five Arkansans were Southern Baptist, so

that's a pretty big impact. And I started having people come to me, people that I didn't expect, who said, "Have you ever thought about running for office?" They had no idea that that's sort of my childhood dream here. And I always think, "Why would they say that?" But it's because of the tenure that I had during that period, and maybe they saw certain skills. And so it became increasingly that I would get this. So I started putting out some feelers. In some cases, I would actually talk to somebody that I was convinced would tell me, "Good heavens, don't do that. That would be awful. Why, it would be a dereliction of faith for you to do that." Much to my surprise, some of those very people were the ones who said, "You know, if it were anyone else, I would say absolutely not. But I sense that, for you, this could be God's direction for you." Whoa. Who though that? [01:24:06] So I began to seriously explore this and during the course of the year 1991 just casually talked to friends and others and began to feel out what would be the potential and made the decision. Announced in January of [19]92 that I would step away from the church 'cause I knew I couldn't do it while I was pastoring. That would not be realistic. And you know, announced my candidacy for the US Senate in [19]92. So I dove into the deep water and darn near drowned.

[*Laughs*]

JCD: Well, it's—it was a very, as we would say, I guess, grass roots campaign.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: You were running against an entrenched incumbent. You know, not just an incumbent, somebody who'd been there quite a . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . a while, was popular. And Dale Bumpers, a Democrat in a state that is solidly Democratic . . .

MH: Solidly.

JCD: . . . in most places . . .

MH: Yeah.

[01:25:01] JCD: So explain to me how you even get going when you've got all of those hurdles in front of you.

MH: It was a huge challenge because Dale Bumpers had been a popular governor for two two-year terms, four years, and then elected Senate, having knocked off a very powerful senator, J. William Fulbright, and then served there ever since in three terms in the Senate, even toyed with running for president two different times, in [19]84 and [19]88. So he had a level of national prominence as well as local. [*Chimes sound*] But in many ways, Dale Bumpers, like a lot of people, I think had

become so very connected to Washington and its ways that, you know, I thought he was vulnerable from a state that was far more conservative than maybe Dale Bumpers had become. Good man. You know, I didn't fault him that he was a horrible person. It was a little bit of irony. I was elected governor of Boys State 1972. Dale Bumpers was governor at the time. And Dale Bumpers had said, "We need young men like you in politics." So when I ran, I would say, you know, "I'm only here because Bumpers encouraged me." [*Laughs*] I don't think he liked it. I thought it was funny. But it was a tough challenge, and I knew it was gonna be. I had no illusions that it was gonna be easy. What made it more difficult was that was the year Bill Clinton was on the ballot running for president. Arkansas had never had a serious contender for president before. And I don't think I anticipated the impact of that, which was huge, and in large part because even people who were not necessarily avid voters, they would go out and vote for Clinton, kinda give the, you know, hometown team all their boost. [01:26:49] So we had a record number of voters in [19]92. Arkansas had never had that level of participation. I look back, and we met most if not all of our vote totals to win an election in most any year in Arkansas, but we did not anticipate that many more voters going

to the poll. I'm not saying I would've beaten Bumpers had Clinton not been on the ballot. Don't know. But I'd've been a lot closer. The interesting thing was at 40 percent of the vote, that was far more than most Republicans would ever get, and especially against a popular incumbent. So while I didn't win that race and it was heartbreaking to lose, had I not run that race, I would not been in a position to run for lieutenant governor in the special election of [19]93, so once again, tragedy is what creates the platform to take the next step.

[01:27:46] JCD: So you run a hard-fought race in [19]92, and explain the events that led to the special election . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . campaign in 1993. I recall from an earlier conversation we had it involves, I believe, Asa Hutchinson and . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . you talking about the road forward.

MH: I had finished [19]92, I mean, not only broke because I had taken a year off from an income—so I'm sitting there thinking, "What am I gonna do? I gotta, you know, make house payments and take care of a family." I was able to pick up some work doing consulting on television projects and stuff, so you know—my wife went to work as a unit clerk in ICU in Texarkana

at the hospital. And you know, we kinda were rebuilding our lives. I developed a terrible case of pneumonia right at the end of the campaign in [19]92. I was in the hospital for two weeks. Honestly didn't know it till later, but almost died from it. I had the same kind of pneumonia Jim Henson had, the guy that did the Muppets, who died of it. And it was a very serious case. My lung—one was totally filled. The other was almost half full. Got through that, but pneumonia leaves you weak. I mean, it's a tough thing to overcome over time. [01:29:04] But in the early part of [19]93, Asa Hutchinson, who was the state party chair for the Republican Party of Arkansas, called me, and he said, "Special election is gonna be coming up for lieutenant governor because Clinton's become president, Jim Guy Tucker has ascended to the office of governor, and there'll be a called special election. You're the only person right now in the party that has a statewide organization. You've run. You've built a strong constituency. You've got the name I.D, having just run in the Senate campaign. Would you run for lieutenant governor?" And my first thought was, "No. You know, I don't wanna be lieutenant governor. Heck, I just ran for Senate. I don't want this job. I'm exhausted. I'm broke, and I'm not sure that a per—anyone can win as a Republican." And he said, almost,

"Would you take one for the team?" [*Laughs*] It was sort of like, would you be our sacrificial lamb? I didn't wanna be a sacrificial lamb, but I did think that the organization that I had—and I had a real devoted group of followers. I mean, the people who were with me were really with me. And so you know, I gauged whether there would be support, anticipated there would. Knew there would be some aus—some opposition, and there would be others who might run but determined that that was a reasonable course. So I don't think anybody but me and maybe Asa thought I had a shot at winning because they still believed, rightly so, that it was a hardcore Democrat state from top to bottom and that Republicans just don't win statewide elections. [01:30:45] But we ran a very low-key, grass-roots campaign. Didn't have a lot of money. My primary opponent in the general election was Nate Coulter, who was Dale Bumpers' former chief of staff, had been his campaign manager. He was kind of the fair-haired boy to be the next Bill Clinton, the next Dale Bumpers, the next David Pryor. You know, he was the future of the Democrat Party. Prominent young attorney, smart, Harvard educated, the whole bit. So Nate beats, I think, seven or eight candidates in the Democrat primary. He amasses a fortune for a lieutenant governor's race. Well over like million

and a half dollars. That's never been done before in that kind of race. And everybody assumes he's unbeatable. I have a hard time raising money. Nobody wants to be on my campaign finance reports 'cause it's bad for business. "You're supporting Huckabee? Are you kidding? I'll never shop with you again." I mean, it was that kinda thing people were worried about. So people would come to me and say, "Look, I'll give you $99, but that's a dollar less than the reporting threshold. I can't give you more than that 'cause I can't afford for anyone to ever know that I've given you money." That's what I was dealin' with. [01:31:56] Coulter—you know, hey, I'd do it if I could've. But Bill Clinton's money guy, Mark Middleton, was raising a lot of Coulter's money right out of the bottom of the White House. How do you think it went over when somebody'd call and say, "Hey, this is Mark Middleton. I'm calling from the White House. The president wanted me to be sure to just check and know that you were gonna be supporting his good friend Nate Coulter and that we can count on you for, you know, a $2,000 contribution." Whatever the limit was at the time. What are they gonna say? They're gonna say yes. They're gonna write the check. I mean, it was tough. But there were people at every county level that just went to work. And you know, it was extraordinary the level

of commitment that my volunteers put in. [01:32:46] And on election night we were sitting in what was the old Camelot Hotel, now the DoubleTree, in Little Rock, and Asa and Susan were there, my wife, Bill—no, Dick Morris, who was—you know, he had been in and out as Clinton's campaign guy, a pollster. Dick's a brilliant pollster. And we're sitting on the bed, and ten minutes after the polls closed—he's sitting there. He's ferociously scratching on this legal pad. And he looks over at me in his typical New York way. He says, "Well. You're gonna be elected. You're gonna win." I said, "Dick, there's no way you could know that. I mean, the polls have been closed ten minutes." But he had had just a few counties reporting in. And he says, "You're gonna win. It's gonna be a fifty-one—or fifty-point something to forty. You'll win by just a little over a point." [01:33:34] And I thought, "There's no way you could know that." Hour and a half later, that's exactly what happened. And he had—polling is a science. It's a real science and an art. And he has both of 'em pretty well. But we got some results—I'll never forget this. Came in from St. Francis County, Forrest County. And I carried St. Francis County, which no Republican had ever done ever. Ever. And Susan Hutchinson looked over and says, "Well, you're gonna win. 'Cause if you carried St.

Francis County, you're going to win." And I—and it suddenly started sinking in that we had a shot. That night when Nate had conceded and it was time to go out and make the victory speech, the moment I'll never forget—I—a lot of it is a blur 'cause it was so overwhelming, but the one moment that I will never forget that is clear as can be. I walked into the ballroom that night at the Camelot, and there was an older gentleman in his seventies. And as I came in he was just bawlin'. Tears fallin' down his eyes. And he looked at me, and he grabbed me by both shoulders, and he said, "I've been coming to Republican Party events for forty years. This is first time I've ever been to a victory celebration." Wow. And you know, it's one of those things that—it was a turning point, it truly was, for the party. So it was bigger than just my winning. It was a shocking election to the political establishment of Arkansas and left them, I think, gasping for air. What happened? That of course led to the infamous nailing of my door shut at the capitol when I was sworn in and some of the indignities that I experienced, some of which people have tried to forget and tried to pretend didn't happen, but they did happen.

[01:35:29] JCD: Let's talk about some of those. So you come in as lieutenant governor under unusual circumstances . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . in a state that is largely Democratic. Constitutional officers, general assembly overwhelmingly so.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: What was it like coming in? And what are those examples of some of the, now, seemingly bizarre hardships and . . .

MH: Right.

JCD: . . . behaviors that were exhibited but that nonetheless occurred?

MH: It was such a shock to the—I think to the whole political atmosphere of the capitol. So I'm elected, and I'll be the only Republican that's a constitutional officer. The first in thirty-something years. Only the fourth in 150 years. So nobody is prepared for "What's this guy doin' here? How did he get here? How on earth did he win?" I mean, it was—there was anger and hostility. Deep anger. Because there was such an assumption that I wasn't gonna win. And the fact that I did—I mean, everything from I must've cheated. How could I have done that? Every county in the state was controlled by Democrats. It wasn't like they were stuffin' the ballot box for me. So it was a remarkable shift in the political landscape. [01:36:49] And on the day that I was to be sworn in—it was another one of those

weird things. I went down to the swearing in. I came back, and the door to the office of the lieutenant governor wouldn't open. And I thought, "That's weird. We were just in here a little bit ago." And one of my two staff members that I was gonna have had left her purse, and she couldn't get in there. And so we asked some of the workers for the capitol who worked in the secretary of state that oversaw the capitol. [*Chimes sound*] "We can't get in." And they kinda said, "Well, yeah, we know." Said, "We were told to go and nail the door shut." I said, "What?" And we looked, and sure enough. Physical nails in the door jamb that nailed the door shut. So I mean, we were in disbelief. And we said, "Well, you know, my staff member needs to get her purse out." There was another entrance around the other side. They went and got it. But said, "The secretary of state has decided that they're gonna use this office space for the Martin Luther King commission instead of lieutenant governor." It'd always been the lieutenant governor's space. [01:37:54] So I knew what was happening, and I could see this set up. If I protested, then it would be that I was, you know, a racist throwing out the Martin Luther King commission from the space that they were supposed to have at the capitol. It certainly wouldn't be reported or told that I was simply trying to get the

space that had been the lieutenant governor's office until ten minutes before I was sworn in. So we made a makeshift office out of a vault. All the furniture had been stripped out of the office. All the computers, business machines, everything, copiers. It was empty. And there was no furniture, no equipment. All that was left in the lieutenant governor's office was a wrecked Ford car that had been assigned to the lieutenant governor's office at some point, and it was the only asset that was left. So there was someone in state government who understood enough about state procurement law and said, "You know, you can trade that car in and use it and get a—you know, some office equipment." A local office-equipment dealer donated the use of furniture from Galaxy Furniture in North Little Rock, let us use furniture, which was borrowed. I—we sold the car, got some computers and printers and at least some level of stuff. And then tried to get letterhead printed. And for weeks, "Ah, we lost that order. We can't find it. Yeah, we've got it on—we're workin' on it." And finally we went and got it printed privately and just had some political dollars pay for it 'cause we couldn't get anyone to cooperate with us. [01:39:51] And it was that kind of experience. I'd get on an elevator and people would get off the elevator and refuse to ride the elevator with

me. I know that sounds bizarre. It sounds childish. But that's what would happen. I would, you know, say hello to someone, and they'd turn and go the other way. Now there were wonderful exceptions. The capitol police, you know, the people that were—they were working for the secretary of state, but they were the, you know, the security force there. They were very nice and respectful. The cleaning staff, you know, the custodians of the capitol, very nice and respectful. In fact, one of them I later hired to be on the governor's staff 'cause she had treated me and treated my daughter so well at a very kind of tender moment. But the legislators and the legislative staff—the early days were tough. To their credit, there were some of the legislators that accepted the fact that I was elected lieutenant governor, and they wanted to work with me, and I will never forget that, Jerry Bookout from Jonesboro being one of them. You know, it meant a lot to me. And he came to me—and I'll tell you another one was Lloyd George. Longtime house leader. He was Mr. Budget. [01:41:06] There were people like that, and their attitude was totally different. You know, and they were—these were hardcore Democrats. You know, these weren't people that voted for me or ever would. But they were also true institutionalists when it came to the integrity of the operation of

government, and they respected that if the voters made a decision, they were to accept that and to cooperate with it. And there were some others, but you know—I'll never forget—and some of the senate staffers—'cause I was the presiding officer of the senate as the lieutenant governor. Some of them wanted to take me under their wing and kinda help me know the ropes and stuff, and that was very helpful. Over time, I think I built trust with even the Democrat senators and ended up having an excellent relationship with most of them. Not all. Not Nick Wilson, not some that, you know, were always very unhappy that I was there. But quite a few of 'em were genuinely respectful and kind, and that grew over time. But the early days it was tough sailing. And it was that way going out into the communities and, you know, the experiences going to even local parades and being put in the very back of the parade. All the other elected officials, all the other candidates for office right after the grand marshal, you know, where candidates and elected people usually go. And my car would be held, physically held back, until the bands, the floats, and the horses have all gone through. And so then I would be allowed to go. So basically I'm drivin' through [*laughs*] as you can imagine, the dumps from the horses. It was just a way to sort of say, "We

couldn't keep you from being here, but we can make you unhappy and make it as unpleasant as possible." [01:43:01] And honestly, it was, in a way, a good thing that happened because I got to where I looked at it as sheer comedy. And I thought, "If I'm this big of a threat to the political establishment because I'm a lieutenant government, then, gee whiz, these people don't have much of a life." So chalked it up for sort of the experience. And one thing I learned was never to react in anger over it. I had people that said to me, "You should just get a crowbar and pull the nails outta that door and go in there and say, 'By gosh, I'm goin'.'" Well, I didn't do that, and I knew that if I did it would be a mistake, affirmed to me by some of the secretary of state's people, who didn't agree with what was being done. And they said, "Just know that if you break that door open and get in, we've been told to arrest you for defacement of state property." Which I thought, "Yeah, that's about what I would've expected." 'Cause that's the way they would've played it out. Mike Huckabee didn't get his way, so he goes and breaks the door down to take over the Martin Luther King commission space. So I said, nope, I'll just work out of the office of this little vault. And we'll borrow some furniture and—but outside that I put an easel. And every day that I was there,

I'd put the number of days elected lieutenant governor, not provided an office. And when it got to day fifty-nine—for fifty-nine days, that's where I worked. On day fifty-nine, so many people, mostly Democrats, from around the state had called and told not just the secretary of state, but said to the state party, "You make us look like doofuses. This is embarrassing. You know, we didn't vote for the guy, but he got elected, and it's not right to treat him this way. We would never expect to be treated like this. Give him the office." And in the meantime my public statement was, "Why, I'm perfectly fine with this little vault. Why, I would never wanna take over the space for something as important—I'm just so disappointed that the best they would do for the Martin Luther King commission is this tiny little office that they want to allocate for them. I think they should have far more space than this. I'm willing to take it as lieutenant governor, but they certainly deserve better space." So it totally messed 'em up to do that. Anyway, it was the game we had to play. It's what we had. [01:45:26] People I know—I've had people that try to deny it happened. It did. It's documented. In fact, I'll tell you one of the interesting things. The *Wall Street Journal* had heard that the door was nailed shut, and they thought that it was an apocryphal story, that it wasn't actual.

So they had flew John Fund, who was with 'em at the time, flew him to Arkansas to see if the story was true. And he reported, it's in the *Wall Street Journal*—that yes, indeed, there were nails in the door. Now fast forward twenty years, fifteen years. I'm at a dinner in New York with Steve Forbes, John Fund—tryin' to remember who else was there. A couple of other prominent Republican financial types. And while at dinner, John Fund said, "Yeah, I remember comin' down and doin' that story." I said, "Yeah, John, you were the one that validated it because a lot of people wouldn't believe it." And he said, "And you know who ordered that done." I said, "Well, I guess Bill McCuen, secretary of state." He said, "Well, actually, it—McCuen was ordered to do it by Webb Hubbell, who was working at the White House at the time. And Webb called McCuen and said, "You've got to do something. You know, we can't just let this guy walk in and take this office over. You know, it's an embarrassment to the president. He just got elected. He's in his first year of office, and the first big election that happens in the state once he leaves is a Republican?" And course, quite frankly, the national Republican Party was makin' hay out of it. They were pushing it big, as you could understand. [01:47:03] And I had never heard that before. I did not know. And I said, "John, what?"

He said, "Yeah, it was Webb Hubbell who called McCuen and basically, you know, as we would say from the movie, ordered a code red." [*Laughs*] I thought it was funny. And I still do. You know, it didn't make me mad. I mean, I'm just thinkin' gee whiz. I was kind of honored to be on the receiving end of such attention. But it was just—you look back, and you think, "My gosh, that was petulant to behave that way." You know, just say, "Okay, the guy got elected. Let's beat him next year." What they did, because they treated me like that, when I ran for re-election in [19]94, I got over 60 percent of the vote, which was the largest margin of victory in the history of Arkansas for a Republican of any office. So it's kinda like the whole story of Joseph in Genesis 50 being thrown in the well and left for dead by his brothers. And Joseph says, "What you intended for harm, God used for good." And I've told that story in that context before. It's what was intended to be the strike to end me turned out to be the best thing that ever happened. Because I went from being the guy that, "My gosh, how did he possibly get elected?" to the guy that stood up against the system and promised to unplug the political machine of Arkansas. That was my campaign plug. "Let's unplug the political machine." And that's what made a lot of the institutionalists mad because

everybody knew there was a political machine, but nobody wanted to say it out loud. I said it out loud. That's why I got elected. There's no doubt about that in my mind. But it also exposed the political machine. Their reaction certainly validated it. And so the next year my victory was, in many ways, the beginning of an extraordinary sense of the transfer and the beginnings of a rebuilt Republican Party.

JCD: Do you wanna take a break for lunch there? Okay.

[Recording stopped]

[01:49:10] JCD: We took a short break, governor, and we were discussing, before we stopped, your being elected lieutenant governor in amspecial election in 1993, some of the hardships that many people probably don't know about and many wouldn't expect of being a Republican newcomer in a Democratic establishment, in this case being the out party, if you will, and some of the treatment that you received and your staff received. [01:49:43] Moving a bit from that, tell me about the role and the duties of the office of lieutenant governor.

MH: Constitutionally the lieutenant governor has, really, two jobs. One, he is the acting governor when the governor is out of the physical presence of the state and becomes the governor if something happens to the governor. And the other job is he's

the presiding officer of the state senate. That's pretty much it constitutionally. It's considered a part-time job. But because I was the only Republican in a statewide office, my lieutenant governor's office kind of became a clearinghouse, a constituency service center for people across the state who did not feel connected to the political establishment. Republicans, to be sure, but even people that just did not feel connected to—I'll use the term political machine. Didn't feel like that it was there for them. So it turned very quickly into an office where we were fielding requests for people needing help with their VA benefits, or they needed help with a state agency, you know, getting through a regulatory issue. There were all kinds of things like that that were happening. And so you know, we got very busy very quickly. [01:51:01] And I also, as the only elected Republican in a statewide office and the highest ranking elected Republican, I was traveling all over the count—the s—well, the country, too, but particularly the state of Arkansas at all these political events and business events. So it really was a terrific job. The great thing about being a lieutenant governor, you know, you're not voting on stuff, so you don't make a lot of people mad. And if all you do is help people and then go and present speeches to people and give 'em a rah-rah, it's the best

job in politics in Arkansas 'cause you're makin' lots of friends, but you're not makin' enemies. And if you're the governor, you make enemies every day. [*Laughs*] If you're the lieutenant governor, you don't make any enemies. You just don't. It was a good gig.

[01:51:51] JCD: So you're elected in a general election in 1994.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: Re-elected, if you will, right. And then explain—and we're building up to some rather dramatic events in Arkansas political history, particularly very important events in your professional career—explain what's going on during that era. You're lieutenant governor. Your primary role is to be there in case the governor is not able to carry out those duties. What's going on during that time?

MH: Arkansas is going through some pretty serious transition. Bill Clinton has gone to the White House so he's out of the picture. He'll never come back and be a part of Arkansas politics again, officially. David Pryor announces his retirement. I think it was in either late [19]95 or early [19]96, but he did not choose to be back on the ballot in [19]96. That was—would be his term. And so that was gonna change the landscape. David Pryor would've always been elected no matter what he ran for. I mean, it was

just a given. Incredibly beloved political figure by everyone. So that was a huge announcement that he was not gonna run. So that's an upheaval. [01:53:10] We're beginning to see not significantly large but—Republican Party is starting to grow, little by little, but it's starting to grow, and people will run as Republicans. And part of it was that there was a very landmark court case that said that the state had to run the elections. Prior to that the parties had to run the elections. It was great for the Democrats 'cause everybody ran as a Democrat in the state. Ninety-four percent of elected officials were. So that meant all the filing fees for everything—including judges 'cause judicial elections were also partisan. You ran as a Democrat or Republican. Nobody ran as a Republican for judicial office 'cause they'd never get elected. So the Democrat Party in Arkansas had a lot of money 'cause all the filing fees piled up. The Republicans didn't even have presence in some counties. And they would have to have a bake sale or a car wash to get enough money to have one po—one ballot box in maybe an entire county. So if you wanted to vote for a Republican—first of all, there wouldn't be any local candidates. So that'd be a waste of, probably, your vote, you'd think. And then if you—you might have to drive forty miles to the polling place. So it was a self-

defeating kind of situation. Democrats loved it. Republicans hated it. [01:54:31] Asa Hutchinson, when he was party chairman, filed a lawsuit. They won because it was blatantly unfair, and they were ruled unconstitutional. So that changed the landscape. That was a huge thing. Most people don't even think about that. But it meant that now the elections would be public elections, and wherever you had a ballot box for Democrats, you'd have to have one for Republicans. And it also meant that when the judicial elections became nonpartisan, you didn't jack up those filing fees, and all the money would just go strictly to the Democrats. So it was a big part of what was happening.

[01:55:13] JCD: And then as lieutenant governor, explain your—the circumstances in which you found yourself in 1995, 1996 in regards to the then governor Jim Guy Tucker's administration.

MH: Jim Guy Tucker and I actually got along quite well for the most part. I didn't get in his way. I didn't try to pretend that I was gonna usurp his role as governor. I was cooperative, respectful. When he went out of state, I didn't pull any stunts. You know, there were some Democrats in the past that had. When Clinton would leave the state, you know, they would appoint someone to a board or do something—I mean, utterly ridiculous, but

basically just to stick it in Clinton, which was, I thought, inappropriate. I never did any of that 'cause I knew he could come and undo it, and secondly it just wasn't good government. So generally he and I got along. But he was facing two things. Health problems, some of which were far more serious than people realized. In fact, a month after I was elected lieutenant governor, he was rushed to Mayo Clinic, and none of us knew at the moment, but later we found out that he almost died. He was in a very critical condition. And I look back, and I'm thinking, "My gosh, if that'd happened, I'd've been elevated into the governor's office a month after taking the office as lieutenant governor." I mean, that would've been a shock for all of us. But then he was indicted and tried on Whitewater related charges. [01:56:53] Quite frankly, I never thought there would be a conviction. And to be blunt, I said, there's no way that an Arkansas jury in Central Arkansas, largely—probably 100 percent Democrats on that jury—would ever convict a sitting Democrat governor when a Republican is on deck to take the job. Ain't gonna happen. So it never occurred to me to think that I better, you know, be prepared to be governor. So when David Pryor announced that he was retiring—I would never have run against him. Just wouldn't've. Wasn't that stupid. I ran against

Bumpers. That was dumb enough. But when he said he was out, I was really in the best position for the Republicans to run. So I announced that I would run for the senate seat and was in the middle of the candidacy. I was polling way ahead. The candidate for the Democrats was Winston Bryant, the sitting attorney general. And you know, I feel very strongly I would've been elected to the Senate. And in May of [19]96, Tucker was convicted. And I remember I was on my way to do a campaign event for Senate in a van on the way to Texarkana from Little Rock. And at the Friendship exit—I still remember exactly where this took place—I got a call on my cell phone and was told that they just announced that there's been a verdict in the Tucker trial. We were shocked. What? So we turned around, headed back to Little Rock, worked on getting my wife on the way to Texarkana to go make the speech that I was supposed to make. And by the time we got to Little Rock, we found out that he had been not only convicted, but he had already announced that he would resign on July the fifteenth and vacate the office, which was a seven-week period, a long interim. [01:58:56] But I went from being a guy running for Senate with no thought that I'd be governor to suddenly finding myself seven weeks away from being sworn in to be governor. It was a shock. So

obviously my world changed. And now the decision—do I continue the Senate race, serve as governor temporarily from July until, let's say, January, if I would've won—win the Senate race? But that would mean that Arkansas would go through four governors in the space of three years. And you know, I just didn't feel that was good for the state. I really didn't. I was getting an enormous level of pressure from Republican senators in Washington. I got calls from Al D'Amato and Bob Dole and, gosh, I can't remember. Trent Lott. All the senators were calling. "Stay in the Senate race. We need your Senate vote." And you know, it would be a flip of a seat, so they were very interested in seeing that happen. But I told 'em all—I said, "Guys, I appreciate it. And I thought, you know, I'd be joining you next year. But I feel like my obligation is to fulfill the duties that I have." I said, "There's one job as a lieutenant governor, and that's to become governor if something happens. Well, something has happened. And I owe it to the state to give them continuity in the office." So I never wavered on that. I mean, it was never a thing of, "Oh," you know, wringing my hands over it because I felt I knew what my duty had to be. And so I started preparing to take office in July of that year.

[02:00:34] JCD: So we'll get to that day here in a moment. In the

seven weeks—that's not the same amount, but not that dissimilar from if you had—say if someone wins in November and the session and everything begins, you take the oath of office in January. So was it sort of—did it almost feel unusually like a normal [*MH laughs*] building of an administration? What all went on for the, you know . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . nearly two months there.

MH: Well, there was nothing normal about it. First of all, it happened abruptly and suddenly. If you run for office, you have a year of running for the office, anticipating the what if, and sort of putting a transition plan, at least in your head, of what would happen if you win in November and then getting ready for the time two months later. This was very different. You know, we didn't sit around and have a plan. So I had to very hurriedly start assembling a team for the transition and ultimately to take office. And keep in mind, there's a fairly shallow pool of people to start picking from because it's not like the Republicans had a deep bench. It's not like there was hundreds of Republicans who had been in state government. Most all of them, anyone I could get to work with me, had never been in state government because all the players were Democrats. They were part of the

Bumpers-Pryor-Clinton era, and there just wasn't anyone with institutional knowledge that had been a Republican. [02:02:07] So it was very tough. I mean, it was a scramble. And then we had a lot of places to fill, not only in the governor's office but cabinet positions and so on. I knew that the smart thing would be not to fire everyone and to try to replace everybody in state government 'cause, number one, I didn't have people to put in their place who knew what to do. And the other, there needed to be continuity and stability. That was, to me, the most important thing. It was tumultuous enough to have a governor who was forced out of office because of a felony. I mean, that's a gut punch to the state. It's not just about him. Our whole state felt, deeply, a sense of anguish, and you could sense it. It was an embarrassment. You just don't wanna have to deal with that. So what can I do? What can we all do to make this as painless as possible to make a transition, to not make it look like this is a partisan celebration, like, "Oh, boy, the Republicans are taking over," but rather that this is an orderly transfer of power, and we're gonna make state government continue to work. [02:03:18] So that's how I tried to look at it and how we all kept ourselves focused. But the intensity of that—I mean, these were twenty-hour days. You know, I'd call somebody. "Could I

count on you to serve?" "No, no, 'cause I—you know, you may not be there but a—you know, two and a half years." And the consensus was that even if I became governor, I'd never get re-elected 'cause the Democrats would regroup, and they still had the big numbers, and you know, in fact—it was funny because all the Democrats in the state legislature would call me the temporary governor, you know, and the—there's another term they used. I'm tryin' to remember what it was. Wasn't transition governor, but it was basically, you know, I was the temp. And they would get the full-time guy in there, you know, after the term ended. And they kept saying this, and finally, I think at some press conference, I—you know, when some reporter said, "You know, you're being called, you know, the temporary governor," and I said, "Well, just ask the Democrats, you know, whose fault it was that I'm temporary." So they quit using that term because it just brought up what had all happened. [02:04:37] But you know, we started putting our staff together. Most of Tucker's—well, all of his senior staff, obviously, left. And the only people that were still gonna be around were, you know, people—some of the what I call the foot soldiers, you know, the clerical positions, administrative. And it was at one point—and this was a big moment in the transition.

We always anticipated that we would try to keep a number of the people on the staff that were—you know, they weren't political appointees. These were career bureaucrats if you will or—they were staff members, and they didn't really go to work every day with an ideology, but they were good at their jobs. And so we had told Tucker's people to let the staff know that any of 'em that wanted to be considered to stay on, please let us know and fill out an application so we could see. We were shocked that we weren't getting any. Well, later we found out that Tucker's chief guy never told 'em that and basically told 'em they would all be fired. So I asked for a meeting with all of his staff that was still there, and I wanted to personally say, "Guys, if any of you are interested"—so I tell them this, and they're sitting there, and everybody's very quiet. And finally one of the staff members—a really special person, became a great staff member of ours, Robyn Doyle. She worked in the corrections department—not the department, but she was the Jim Guy Tucker liaison to the corrections department. And after several minutes of awkward silence, she says, "Well, I thought you were gonna get rid of all of us." And she just broke that [*laughs*] silence and said what they were all thinking. And I said, "Why did you think that?" And she says, "'Cause that's what we were

told." And I said, "Then you weren't told the truth because I specifically made clear we wanna hire as many of you as are willing to work with us and feel good about it, feel comfortable working with us, because we need a lot of you. We can't fill all these spots immediately. And if you're wiling to work for me and do it with the same enthusiasm that you were willing to work for another governor, why wouldn't I want you?" [02:06:49] And you could literally feel in that room just this total transformation of attitude and spirit. It was dramatic. And then suddenly we started having these folks say, "We'd love to stay and work." So most of our initial administrative clerical staff were all people that we kept. And they were great. They were some of our best staff people. To this day—I mean, I love these folks, and I'm very close to them on a personal level, not just from a professional—because they were very good at what they did and they were willing to serve with me. [02:07:25] The receptionist, Angela, who was just a pistol, she was one of the best staff members I ever had. She was the first person anyone saw when they came into the governor's office. And she was such a delightful spirit. I ended up performing her wedding. She invited me to Malvern, where she had grown up, to have dinner at her mother's house, which was some of the best food.

Oh, gosh. So it became, you know, where that these were some of our most entrusted and, really, most valuable players in the office. But a lot of that was what was going on in the lead up to the day of swearing in.

[02:08:06] JCD: So you have several weeks of just hectic hurry and scurry. You wake up July 15, 1996. Explain what you're expecting and then what happens.

MH: We had a big prayer service at the beginning of the day, and we did that out at First Baptist Church in Little Rock. We had a Methodist pastor, friend of mine from Jonesboro, couple of Baptist pastors, H. D. McCarty from Fayetteville, and you know, some others that were there. Beautiful music. It was a very powerful service, and it was kinda to set the stage for the day. I look back, and I realize that service was so incredibly important to us 'cause it gave us a framework for kinda getting our heads in the right place. [02:09:02] And from there we went on to the capitol. And the idea was that the swearing in was to happen in a joint session of the legislature at two o'clock in the afternoon, so the senate and house would come together. And there were over a thousand people that came from all over the state into the capitol that day to witness the swearing in. Mostly Republican people, supporters of mine. I mean, obviously

Democrats weren't having their best day. But for Republicans across the state—first time they'd seen a governor since 1980 and only the second time in history, so they were pretty pumped. And it was, you know, a pretty festive day for most all of us. The staging was all placed, and it was not gonna be a full-blown inauguration like you would have after an election, but there was, you know, enough pomp and ceremony and a reception that night at the Camelot Hotel. So I'm in the office of lieutenant governor meeting with the incoming staff, and we're kinda getting everything ready. And at five minutes until two, just before I was to be escorted down to the chamber for the swearing in, the phone rings. My assistant says, "Governor Tucker is on the phone." Oh. I'm sure he wants to wish me well and kind of a "Good luck. I left a note in my desk for you" kind of thing. [02:10:26] So I pick up the phone, and he says, "I've decided I'm not going to resign." I mean, this is five minutes before the swearing in. Place is filled with people. "I'm not gonna resign. I'm gonna appeal my sentence, and I'm gonna wait till after the appeal before I make any final decisions." And I'm dumbfounded. I mean, I'm just in disbelief. And I realize this is not Allen Funt and *Candid Camera*. He really is serious. And so I tell him, "Governor, I don't think this is acceptable. I

don't think people of Arkansas are gonna be willing to abide by a decision like this. Your people have left. They've gone on to other jobs. I have people that have sold their homes and they've moved to Little Rock expecting that today is their first day on the job. It's too late to turn back. You promised the people of Arkansas you would vacate the office today at two o'clock, and going back on your word is not gonna go over well. And it's just not the right thing to do." He said, "Well, that's for you to worry about, but I'm not going to step down till after the appeal." And even said, which I thought was bizarre, "You know, if you wanna move into the mansion and"—you know, it's like, really? For two months? I don't think so. I mean, the whole thing was surreal. It was like something snapped, and it wasn't—it was not rational. I mean, it really wasn't. [02:11:57] So I told him—I said, "I'm just unable to accept this. And you know, I regret very much you making a decision like this at this moment." So he hung up, and you know, I looked around the room, and I said, "He says he's not stepping down." And it's all on video. You can see the faces of my wife and staff members and all these people in the room just—their jaws are on the ground. "What do you mean? Huh? How can he just say at the last minute he's just gonna hang on?" So there was a big

discussion—again, all of it's on tape—about whether I should go down there and speak to the general assembly, 'cause they think I'm gonna come down there to be sworn in, or just send a message down to them. I said, "No, I need to go in person. This is important. I don't wanna send a message down there. They need to hear it directly from me." So that was the decision we made. At this time, now, we got an escort group from the house and senate, you know, like probably fifteen people, senators and house members that are—to do the ceremonial escort me up to the chamber and walk me in and all this stuff. So I have to tell them, "Well, you're not walking me to the swearing in just yet." They're dumbfounded. Word gets to the speaker and to the president pro temps. So the whole capitol now is in almost meltdown, just shock. And it starts reverberating. It was—I mean, a surreal moment for all of us. [02:13:30] Anyway, so I go to the house chamber, and I tell 'em, "Look, there's been a little change of plans." I said something that was, again, an off-the-cuff, humorous remark to try to bring some levity to what was a very, very tense situation. Can't remember exactly what it was. I mean, it's on the tape so we'll figure it out. But anyway, I said I would like to meet with the senate president and the house speaker as soon as we're

finished, and they came down to my office. And we huddled in a little room, and I said, "Guys, look, I don't have to tell you that this is gonna be a disaster for the state, but it's especially gonna be a disaster for the Democrat party. I don't think you will disagree." I said, "I'm not here to try to mess up your political life, your political future. There's much more on the line. But," I said, "this is unacceptable. Certainly is to me, and I think it is to you." They all were nodding their heads. And I said, "I need you to stand with me and—that you will stand with me and let it be very clear to Governor Tucker that he must resign as he promised, and he must do it today, and it must be unconditionally, and that if he does not that we will, in the morning, start impeachment proceedings against him." And, "Hmm," you know, they swallowed hard and said, "We'll be with you," which was monumental. I mean, this is a Democrat house speaker and a Democrat senate president. Bobby Hogue, Stanley Russ. They could've easily said, you know, "Hey, you're on your own, pal." But they—to their credit, they did not. Winston Bryant, the attorney general, announced that he would file a lawsuit against Tucker to force him out if need be. So suddenly I'm surrounded by every Democrat leader in the state capitol who are on my side of this. [02:15:24] And you know,

whether it was because they thought I was in the right or 'cause they [*laughs*] didn't want the disastrous consequences, I'm gonna give 'em the benefit of the doubt. And I really do believe that they were lookin' after the best interests of the state. Good and decent people, you know, so I don't wanna disparage anything there. [02:15:44] So then we go back. We announce that, you know, Tucker has to resign by that afternoon. And the first words—we've got nothing. And then that, no, he was not gonna resign. He was sticking with his plan. As we're sitting watching TV in my office—this was, again, kinda crazy, but Larry Audis, who was the lead anchor for Channel 11, the CBS affiliate, is standing on the capitol steps a little after five doing a live report. No, it would've been a little after four. Yeah, 'cause at five I did the speech. So a little after four. And I think the timeline is right on this. Believe that's right. Sharon Priest, the secretary of state, comes running up the steps, and Larry sees her and turns and says, "Madame Secretary, is there any news that you can report to us?" And she's got a paper in her hand, and she says, "Well, actually, Larry, yes, I have in my hands Jim Guy Tucker's resignation. He is resigned effective five o'clock this afternoon," or whatever it was. And that's when I first heard that he had officially resigned. I'm watching it on TV.

[02:16:58] And I saw Larry afterwards. I said, "You do realize that you had the scoop of the day, I mean, in this." But that's what happened, and it was just bizarre. So I was supposed to do a speech. I was supposed to do a fifteen-minute address to the state, my first opportunity to address the citizens of Arkansas as the governor. And that was to go live at five o'clock. I had it scripted. I had written it carefully, timed it, loaded it in the teleprompter. You know, I was ready to deliver it. Well, in the light of all this stuff, that speech was worthless. So I said, "Well, we can't use that." And they said, "What do you wanna do?" I said, "I'll use the five o'clock time 'cause all the"—every station in Arkansas was carrying it. Channel 7 was the pool for distributing it, and it was their camera people and their production team that was gonna be set up to do it. So we basically scrubbed the prompter and moved it out. We don't need that. And I said, "Here's what we'll do. I'll have to just ad lib it, but I know we're on the time, so put a time clock up, and give me a countdown. Let me know when we're at a minute away, thirty seconds, and I'll land the plane on time, but just tell me what the timing is, and I'll just deliver the speech." And I did. And you know, there are moments in life you feel like you're uniquely prepared for it. And you know, all those years of

radio and television and even in the pulpit when I was doing messages on TV, you know, and I had to hit the post. So you know, at an exact time, you had to be out. [02:18:43] So I was used to that. And had I not been, I mean, it might've been a total disaster. I might've spoken for two minutes instead of fifteen or thirty instead of fifteen. But anyway, it was just a heartfelt message. I just pretended I was looking at one person across that camera and talking to one of my fellow Arkansas citizens and explaining what had happened that day and what we were gonna do. So that's exactly what went down. And it was a pretty crazy moment. So when Tucker announced that he was resigning and it was unconditional, everybody started scurrying around and saying, "Okay, you know, we think that chief justice has already headed back to Fort Smith where he lives. So what if we can't get him back?" And I said, "It doesn't have to be the chief justice. Any judge in Arkansas can do the swearing in." I said, "Just go out in these hallways and find somebody who has a black robe and who is a judge of anything, and get 'em down here, and let's get this done before he changes his mind again." So everybody got a good laugh out of that. But they got ahold of **Bradley Jessup**, who's the chief justice, and he was able to get back. So at around, I think, six

o'clock, six thirty, somewhere in that time frame, we all gathered back in the house chamber, and we did what we should've done at two o'clock in the afternoon. [02:20:10] In the meantime, it was a crazy afternoon because there was a period of almost five hours in which you had two people claiming to be governor. And I had the adjutant general of the national Guard asking me, "Who do I—who's my commander in chief?" State police director—"Who do I answer to?" You know, and it was mass confusion. Chaos in the capitol because I can't tell you how angry the crowd was. It was electric. I mean, I honestly feared that it could be an explosive situation where people were just livid. He left the capitol to some very unpleasant yelling and screaming, some of which was from Democrats, not just Republicans. It was a pretty remarkable and memorable day. But not since probably the 1850s, I guess it was the 1850s when they had the Brooks-Baxter war and all of those moments where there was a constitutional crisis. But this—I mean, unabashedly was, in fact, a constitutional crisis for the state.

[02:21:15] JCD: How did you—I mean, you've talked about how, really, since you were fourteen you had been sort of training on the timing of an ad-libbed speech, but not an ad-libbed speech

that wasn't without historic significance. What was goin' through your head? What did you feel like you needed to communicate to Arkansans in that pivotal moment?

MH: I felt I had two jobs. One was to simply tell them what was happening. Be as honest and as transparent as I could about what had transpired that day and that Tucker had decided not to step down. And the other thing that I needed to assure them was that we're gonna get through this. We're gonna be okay. We're not at a point of collapse. This is a transition. We're going to weather through it, and we're gonna get back to business, and it's gonna be orderly, and it's gonna be fine, and to reassure them and encourage. Because there was a sense of—combination of outrage and bewilderment in the public. And it was truly statewide. It was—I mean, the whole state pretty much had a massive heart attack that day. I mean, I don't know how else to describe it. I've had people say, "You know, I was in my truck up in Mountain View, and man, I couldn't believe it. I just stopped and listened the rest of the day." So wherever people were—and they were callin' their friends and sayin', "Have you heard what's goin' on at the capitol?" So word got around very quickly. And it just—I mean, it was the story—and then it was also the story nationally. [02:22:53] That day was

the day that MSNBC went on the air. It was their first day on the air. And they had sent Gwen Ifill down from—I guess she was in Washington, and they sent her. And this was—there wasn't a whole lot goin' on in July, you know, to cover politically. So MSNBC decided their big news story—"Let's just go to Arkansas. We'll just rang into this Republican governor." But they had no idea the story they were about to walk into. So it became a national news story, not just a statewide news story, with the whole country focused in on this bizarre set of circumstances going on in Little Rock.

[02:23:31] JCD: So July 16 . . .

MH: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

JCD: . . . you wake up and you're governor of Arkansas in 1996. Tell me about those initial weeks and months. You—as we've touched on, you didn't get the normal acclimation period . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . to the role. So explain how that first, you know, first few months went.

MH: Well, it was incredibly intense because I was still tryin' to fill out slots in employment. I was very much trying to, you know, make sure that the state was being operated appropriately. And there was just an enormous level of responsibilities to take on.

It was also an election year, a presidential election year, and an election year for the US Senate, so it wasn't statewide offices that year, but it was all of the other national offices. Clinton was on the ballot, of course. This was the [19]96 re-elect for him. So the political atmosphere was intense enough, and then the governmental atmosphere was even more intense. But it was also in the midst of that that I made a couple of what I thought were pretty major decisions. [02:24:47] One of which was—there had been a proposal, and it was already scheduled to be on the ballot for November. And it was to designate 1/8 of a cent of sales tax for Parks Tourism, Game and Fish, Arkansas Heritage, and Keep Arkansas Beautiful. The funny thing is, earlier in the summer, a delegation of people from Game and Fish and Parks and Tourism and some leading businessmen had asked to have a meeting with me. This was during the transition period when I was supposed to be governor, but I wasn't. And basically, they were gonna meet with me because they wanted to just simply ask me to not openly campaign against the amendment 'cause they just figured that I probably would. I'm a Republican, I don't like unnecessary taxes, and so I'll probably be against it. And so we sat down, and I could tense—I mean, sense the tension in the room, that, you know, they were kinda,

"Well, we need to talk to you about something." I said, "Well, guys, before you do, you know, I'll"—course at this time, I didn't think about all the things that would happen with Tucker. But I said, "You know, I know this ballot initiative is out there, and I hope you'll let me know how can I help get this passed." And it was dead silence. [02:26:06] They looked at each other and looked back at me and says, "Do what?" And I said, "Well, I'm for this. I wanna see this happen. I think it's very important to Arkansas. Our natural resources are the greatest asset we have, and how can I help get this passed?" And they looked at me again, and I think it was Richard Davies that spoke up. He was the head of Parks and Tourism, and he said, "Governor, we were here to ask you just please don't be against it." And I said, "Well, you don't have to ask me that. I'm for it. I wanna know what can I do? How can we get this passed?" And that was kind of the beginning of—I mean, it was a shocking thing for them, but then I said, "You know what we should do? Let's campaign statewide. Let's get the word out about it." And I said, "I'll get in my bass boat and go from Fort Smith, which is the headwaters where the Arkansas River comes into the state, and go all the way down the state, 308 miles, to the Mississippi down in southeast Arkansas, and we'll put campaign stops all along

the way and campaign for this proposal." They said, "That'd be awesome." [02:27:11] So we ended up doin' that. It became a lot of fun. I got to really connect with a whole lot of not just Arkansas people but all these state agencies that really thought I was the guy they were gonna be afraid of. My wife, to I guess, you know, kind of outdo me, she got on a Jet Ski. While I was on the bass boat, she was on a Jet Ski the whole way. So we campaigned for the whole thing, and it passed, not by a huge margin, but it did. And that was a big, big moment for Arkansas. So I, you know, I felt like I had an opportunity to relieve people from their sense of anxiety and doom that I was gonna somehow come in and do these draconian things that would be hurtful to the state. You know, I certainly didn't wanna go and raise a bunch of taxes, but this was, to me, good stewardship of our assets as a state, and I've always been as proud of it as anything I ever did as governor was to help get that passed.

[02:28:11] JCD: And you might—I'm tryin' to think of another instance of someone—we've heard of whistle-stop tours.

MH: Yeah. That's what it was.

JCD: I don't know what you—it was a boat-ramp tour. I don't . . .

MH: Boat-ramp tour.

JCD: . . . know what you would call that.

MH: You know, we did—I wanna—I kept tryin' to—I can't remember how many stops. I wanna say it was like twenty-five, twenty-six. Took us a couple of days to do it, two or three. 'Cause we would stop. We'd have rallies. We would, you know, explain to people. It was highly organized. We had a bathroom boat. We had what we called the bologna boat which was a, you know, like a party barge that had food and—you know, 'cause we had to be self sustained all the way down the river. And you know, we had people from Game and Fish, Parks and Tourism, the various agencies. But everywhere we went, people from the local community piled out, in part I think the curiosity of this new governor, and I'm goin' down the river in a bass boat, but the other part was, you know, they kinda wanted to hear why should we vote for this thing. It was a very special time, and one that, you know, I had the time of my life gettin' to do it. [02:29:15] I've told people that you cannot really appreciate Arkansas's beauty until you see it from the water because there are things you can never see from a highway, you'll never even see from the air, that really are up close and personal. And the only way you see parts of the extraordinary beauty of Arkansas is to see it from the water. Because there's no other access to

some things. We saw eagles, we would see every kind of wildlife imaginable along the way. It was, you know, incredible. And just the beauty of the landscape and the bluffs. And you know, you see every kind of landscape we have, from the beauty of the Ouachita and Ozark Mountains all the way down to the prairies and the hardwood timbers. So again, it's just a one-of-a-kind way to see Arkansas is down that river.

[02:30:09] JCD: And as you had mentioned, even looking back today, that was instrumental in not only the beauty of Arkansas and maintaining it, but also as an economic boost to the state and tourism. We can look now at dramatic improvements that have taken place from the—from today to that point . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . with the raising of that tax. So it was an incredibly important piece of public policy that you jumped into day one. And then there's others . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . that I can think of that you took stances that were not necessarily popular.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: But stances that I imagine you th—found were—you know, it was a good policy, good government. I wonder if you could give

me some examples. I'm thinking of school consolidation and some of the school funding reforms and these sorts of things that were—you know, schools are very personal to people and communities.

MH: Yes, they are.

[02:31:08] JCD: It would've been easier for you to probably sort of sidestep some of these more complicated and more fraught issues. And you didn't. You took 'em head on.

MH: I've always believed that if you have political capital, the only point in having it is to spend it. It's, to me, ridiculous to say, "I'm very popular as a governor. My numbers are up. Let me protect my numbers." No. You're not protecting your numbers. You're trying to produce for your state the best results you can. And I resent the idea of protect my reputation. So yeah, I took on some, you know, some sacred cows and went after 'em with a stun gun, you know, to make ribeyes out of 'em. But I did it because I believed it was the right thing to do. And in the case of the school funding, it was the constitutional thing to do. We didn't have a choice. We lost in court, and you know, it's one of those things when you read the court decision, which I did, I looked it, and I said—I read the constitution. I read their decision. They're right.

JCD: And you're referring to Lake View.

MH: Lakeview. Yeah, the Lake View case had lingered for twenty years. Every governor had punted the ball and, you know, kept playin' with it and sendin' it on down the line. And when the court decision came down with finality, it was time to do a gut check. And that gut check said constitution's very clear, court decision's very clear, okay. We can either pretend we didn't really see this and we're just gonna let someone else deal with it, or we can finally do it. And the reason we did it was not because it was a popular or a comfortable thing to do. It was—I was asking myself, "What's best for the kids in these schools that are so underfunded they're getting a pathetic education? These kids are not getting prepared even to work in a factory, much less go to college." We're seeing kids who end up not graduating high school. They go to college. They wash out their first semester. Oh, they were told they were doin' great in high school. They had a, you know, three-point average in high school. They were a one pointer in college 'cause they didn't have a curriculum to prepare them for a college experience. They weren't even ready for community college. [02:33:12] We were remediating 40 percent of our kids, which meant that 40 percent of the kids who even graduated high school were paying

college prices for high school courses just to catch up so they could start in college. Now they've lost a year of their life and a bunch of their money and their pride. Because you know, nobody wants to go and say, "I'm a failure at college. I couldn't cut it." That's what we had. We had a lot of kids who had basketball and football jackets, but they had no academic preparation for anything. So at some point you have to ask yourself, you know, are we doin' these kids a favor by lettin' 'em, you know, be Uncle Rico from *Napoleon Dynamite*, and they're still livin' their last high-school football game? Are we really askin' ourselves, "Where is this kid gonna be in ten years? You know, wearin' his letter jacket to Dollar General? Or are we gonna help him to have the next chapter of his life?" So that's where that whole process came from. It wasn't that anyone wanted to consolidate the schools. What we wanted to do was to consolidate administrative districts. We had 700 plus districts. You stop and think, we only have seventy-five counties. We had entire districts that had 110 students K-12. But they had a superintendent, they had a bus director, they had a dietician, a cafeteria director, I call them. All of which were making salaries that they would've made if they'd been in a school that had 1,000 students. They had a hundred students.

How do you justify that much administrative horsepower for such a small group of students? And then those students had a curriculum that was so bare boned. They didn't have the arts. They didn't have physics, geometry, Algebra II, I mean, they had a bare-bones, barely there curriculum. These kids'll never be prepared to do anything, you know, other than go fishin'. [02:35:16] And you know, they can't farm 'cause farming is a highly technical—you know, so this idea that, well, they can be farmers. No, they can't. Not in this economy. Not in this world. They'd better be doggone good at math and incredibly good at science if they're gonna be farmers and successful at it 'cause it's more technology than it is just sweat. Anyway, so the proposal that we made was not to consolidate the schools. It was to consolidate the administrative districts. Keep every elementary school in the state, and consolidate, where it was feasible, high-school campuses, but where it wasn't, keep the campuses but do distance learning, and even move teachers back and forth, but to enhance the curriculum. [02:36:02] But what we ran into was the buzz saw of all these superintendents who saw their jobs goin' away. So it became the superintendent protection act, you know, to protect 'em. We still thought—and we got the number down to 400, I think. I was—I'll forever be

grateful. There were three Democrats who stood with me through this whole process. Couldn't get many Republicans to wanna do it. Jim Argue in the senate, Robert White, who's an African American from Camden, and Calvin Johnson, who is an African American from Pine Bluff. And those were my guys. And the four of us, you know, stood and fought the battle. You know, we got more of it than most people thought we could. Didn't get everything we wanted, but we got a long way toward it. You know, I lost a lot of friends during that. But I don't regret it a bit because I felt like it was the—not just the right thing to do. I thought it was the only thing to do. And I wish we could've gotten more of it done, and I wish that we could have helped people to understand that we were not trying to get rid of their mascots and their schools, and we were very painfully aware of how important these things are. I'm not immune to understanding that if your grandfather had been, you know, a wampus cat, and your daddy had been a wampus cat, you wanna be a wampus cat, and you want your kid to be a wampus cat. I understand all that. But I also wanted to convey that at some point, you want the kid to have a successful life, provide decently for his family, and in today's economy you can't do that with an education that doesn't let you compete. And so that had

to be the decision. [02:37:46] But you know, in spite of those kind of things, there were also some, I think, some high moments. The ARKids First program, to me, was maybe the signal achievement in so many ways, and it happened in the very first session. In many ways, that was sorta like Nixon goes to China. That a Republican governor proposes a healthcare program for children whose families were too rich to be on Medicaid but too poor to be able to afford health insurance or self insure. And that was so extraordinary in what it did for people 'cause I—to this day I'm amazed. But I still have people come up to me in a store somewhere, and they'll say, "You know, my daughter had life-saving heart surgery at Children's Hospital because ARKids First covered it. And if it hadn't have been for that, we couldn't have gotten the surgery." You know, those are the wow moments, the ones that you just stop and say, whoa, it was worth it. It really was. [02:38:51] We did a lot to try to modernize the state. We were the first state in the country to put all of our basic state processes online. I know people are shocked to find out, but Arkansas was the leader in the country. First to do Game and Fish licenses online. We modernized the car tag system. It used to be the most arcane, horrible system in the c—world. It required seven different

pieces of paper from seven different localities. Insurance, car inspection, assessment, taxes paid, then go get your tag—I mean, it was just a monstrous, two-day ordeal. So we made it where it could be done online in four minutes. And it was a dollar cheaper than it had been before. The crazy thing is it was hard to get that passed through the legislature. You'd think that'd sail through like a hot knife through butter. But there were—this is where I kinda ran into the buzz-saw politics because there were—you know, a lot of Democrats were gung-ho for it. But there were some who said, "If we get—let him get this, it'll be so popular that he'll be, you know, undefeatable for re-election." And you know, I thought that was so ridiculous. They should've jumped on board and said it was their idea. That would've been fine. Which, you know, when we had Democrats that would come and be a part of some legislative proposal, my attitude was always, "Look, I'll go to your hometown, stand up in front of your Rotary Club, and tell 'em if it weren't for you, we wouldn't've gotten this done. I know that's odd that the Republican governor will come down there and make a wonderful stand for the Democrat senator in your town, but" I said, "I can't get this stuff done without you guys. I mean, I can count. I'm not a genius in math, but I can count and know that fifty plus

one wins and anything less than that loses, and we don't have fifty Republicans. Certainly don't have fifty-one. If I don't get most of you guys on board, we get nothin'." So I said, "Help me get it passed. You get the credit. I, you know, I don't care if you do. I want you to, and I'll help you tell your people back home what an asset you were to makin' it work. But you know, I need you to stand up." [02:41:06] So when we did the highway program, if it hadn't been for Tom Courtway in Conway—great guy. Great guy. Tom, Democrat, but you know, he knew we needed roads, and he championed that in the house. He shepherded that, he led it, he dogged it, he made it happen. You know, I give him more credit than me 'cause they weren't doin' me any favors. But Tom had some street cred with the house members, so he got that done. And that's how a lot of things happened. You know, I go back to the education stuff. You know, I give Jim Argue, Calvin Johnson, and Robert White the credit. You know, maybe the ideas came out of Ray Simon and me from Department of Education. But we couldn't get that passed in either place. It had to be those guys. They had to go to their peers and sell it to them because they weren't gonna listen and do it—"Oh, we'd love to help Huckabee. Gosh, we'd like to make him look good." I wasn't that naive to think that

that was ever gonna happen.

[02:42:02] JCD: And you go on to be elected in 1998, re-elected . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . in 2002. You serve just over ten years.

MH: Yeah. Almost eleven. Ten and a half. Yeah, between ten and a half and eleven because of the two and a half years that I served out Tucker's term before the eight years of my own.

JCD: So, and I know we've touched on some of these, but what—are there other moments—it seems that, and you've touched on this already, too, but you were well aware of the limitations, if you will, of your party brand, of the . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . just the simple legislative math. You were willing in, really—not only willing privately but publicly to acknowledge a sharing of, you know, of the blessings, right, of these benefits. You weren't going to try to take the credit yourself. And it seems to me that it strikes a certain level of pragmatism that Arkansas, any state, needs, Arkansas especially needed in that era of, as you said, fluidity in leadership in the 1990 into the 2000s. I just wonder if you ever were aware of that unique time that you were in. And did you feel that that was the role that you had to play. I mean, we . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: I'm sure you would do it different if you had supermajorities. But you seemed ideally suited for that period of time.

[02:43:34] MH: I think it was certainly fitting for my personality and makeup. You know, I don't like to fight. I'd rather avoid it if I can. And you know, if I can get people to come along from the beginning, that's better. Now if you put me in the corner and challenge me to the fight, I'll fight like the third monkey on the ramp to Noah's ark and wait till the rain starts, you know. So I'm good to go. But that's not my inclination to wanna start there. But I always looked at the role of governor as a pragmatic role. I don't see it, even to this day, as so much an ideological job as it is a practical job and a pragmatic job. It's about balancing your budget, doing what you can with what you have. It's about trying to grow your economy, grow your industry, building the road so that people can move product and services from A to B. It's about seeing education work for kids so that they come out—Ray Simon had a statement—he was the Department of Ed director for a good while while I was in—and Ken James, both of whom were wonderful. And Ray used to say, "There are two kinds of people. There are school people, and there are kid people." And he said, "We need to be kid people."

And I loved that. I thought that's very true. We need to be focused not on what's good for the school, but what's good for the kids. That's a pragmatic way of looking at it. [02:44:57] So I saw most of the jobs that I had, whether it was corrections or Parks and Tourism, agriculture, that it really—nobody cared whether it was a Republican idea or a Democrat idea. What they cared—does it work? Does it help improve the situation? So I'd like to think that it's still that way, that governors across the country have a job that is largely pragmatic. There are times you gotta take a stand. I mean, when it came to the issue of sanctity of life, I never saw that as, really, an ideological. I saw it as a bigger issue that transcended politics, that it was a moral issue. But to some people, that would be ideological. I understand that. So that might be something that could be more divisive politically, but for me it was a moral decision, not a political one at all.

[02:45:53] JCD: And I think that pragmatism—although that wasn't the initial, you know, motive or primary inspiration for the behavior, helped the Republican brand in Arkansas. It probably introduced . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . a brand of Republicanism—really, a party that was not

known to a lot of Arkansans in a leadership role. I wonder if you wanted to touch on that.

MH: Well, I think a lot of people were inherently fearful of Republicans, you know, because maybe what they had heard from their grandparents were, you know, "Well, those Republicans, they're for the rich people." Well, I certainly didn't come from that cloth. And I didn't govern that way. You know, I—honestly, I think I did way more for the people who were of less means than for the people with more. Some of the people got mad at me 'cause I didn't cut taxes faster and quicker. But frankly, we had needs. There were places in East Arkansas that were fifty miles from the nearest, not just hospital, from a community health center. One of the things that happened—I got 48 percent of the African American vote in 2002 when I ran for re-election, which to my knowledge, no Republican in any state has ever gotten that kind of percentage as a Republican in any race. I'm not aware of it, and no one else is, either. [02:47:10] And people said, "How did you do it?" I said, "Well, partly because I didn't govern with a sense of race. I saw a need in East Arkansas, where there was disproportionate levels of hypertension and heart disease and diabetes because you have an undereducated and under-medically-served population

who are miles away from a doctor or even so much as a, you know, a nurse practitioner. So yeah, we put a whole lot more money, disproportionate amounts of money for the population, in East Arkansas in places like Helena and Marianna, Dumas and Eudora. But we did it because those people had bigger needs. We didn't need to do that in Bentonville. We didn't have to do that in Springdale. But we had to do it over there. So people—they looked at that, and they saw—they knew that that's—you know, it wasn't like I was gettin' my votes outta there. But it turned out because I didn't care whether I got the votes outta there, I did it 'cause it was the right thing to do—ended up gettin' the votes outtta there. So I think—here's what we used to say in my office all the time: Good policy is always good politics. Policy first. Politics will follow. And I think sometimes in politics, people put their politics first and hope the policies will follow. I think when you're elected—as a candidate, yeah, it's all politics. But once elected, it's about the policies that you put into place. What's good for the people whether they voted for you or not? 'Cause you're then hired to serve all of them. And you know, sometimes you do things that may not help you politically, at least on the front end, but I think over time it has a way of all wor—washing out for the good.

[02:48:58] JCD: You term out after two four-year, full four-year terms. And so you leave office in January of 2007. Pretty quickly you jump into another contest.

MH: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

JCD: Tell me how that evolved, how you came to running for your party's, the Republican Party's presidential nomination in 2008.

MH: I had been the chairman of the national governor's association, which is peer selected. So out of all the governors in the country, I was elected to be the chairman. The vice chairman which—the way it works is you change Democrat/Republican each year. And I'd been the vice chairman of the National Governors, and then became chairman. And I had a good run at that. And particularly focused a lot on the area of health care, focusing on preventative health care rather than interventive. Lot of the things that we did in Arkansas became nationally known, nationally touted. And you know, I think it was from that experience and from the fact that we did a lot as governor of Arkansas. Welfare reform, education reform, huge things in the health-care forum. The ARKids was just one of the things. But using all of our tobacco settlement money for health-related rather than just blow it all on all kinds of little ticky projects. [02:50:22] There were a whole host of things that happened in

spite of doing it in the Democrat environment of the legislature. As I told people, Ginger Rogers used to say about her dancing with Fred Astaire, "I did everything he did, but I did it backwards and in high heels." And I said, "I had to be Ginger Rogers, you know. I had to do everything that other governors had to do, but I had to do it backwards and in high heels." Not literally, 'cause in this day and time, that could be misunderstood. [*Laughs*] But it's a great analogy of, you know, you accept that this is the challenge you have. I was frustrated with Washington in general and with a lot of the presidential politics in particular because I felt like that they were done without heart. They were done without concern for the vast majority of people, and they were done far too ideologically and not enough with the pragmatism that should be done. And I felt most governors had that pragmatism at heart. But in Washington what I saw was just an unnecessary and hurtful, damaging political atmosphere that didn't do anybody any good. So what I was hoping to do was to take, you know, that experience and that commitment and parlay that into a presidential run. [02:51:41] I think I overperformed from what a lot of people thought. Came in second to John McCain. Had it not been for some folks in South Carolina in, you know, I guess it was, March—he would've

dropped out if he hadn't won South Carolina. He had already announced that. And I would've been in a pretty clear lane at that point. But what happens, and this is the realities of presidential politics, is that once he won South Carolina, I had Iowa, he had New Hampshire, he won South Carolina. I went on to win more states than he did on Super Tuesday. But it didn't matter because by that point the press had decided that he was gonna be the nominee. And so they touted it that way, they sold it that way, they made it clear that way. And two things happened. You quit getting any attention because the press is giving it all now to their presumptive nominee, even though he hadn't gotten the votes yet, and the donors drop. And there comes a point at which it's hard to go forward when you don't have any money. So I stayed in, and I said I would stay in and told him this, you know, 'cause he tried to encourage me to get out. I got a call from President Bush, for gosh sake. I thought it was inappropriate, but I, you know—"How long are you gonna stay in the race? When are you gonna get out?" And I said, "Well, I'm gonna get out when I get beat." I said, "You know, I've come from nothing." I didn't wanna say—but I wanted to say, "Look, I didn't grow up, you know, the son of a president, son of a senator, nephew and grandson of a sen—you know, no

silver spoon here. No Yale background. I had to fight hard to get where I am, and I can handle it if I get beat, but I'm not gonna quit. You know, you can pummel me to the canvas, and if I can't get up, I can't get up. But you're gonna have to beat me. You're not gonna get me to just quit." [02:53:30] And that's what I told McCain, too. And I said, you know, "Once you get the delegates and you've got enough to secure the nomination, I'm out." So the night of the Texas primary—that's when he amassed enough to get—and I announced that very night. That's it. He wins. But I wasn't gonna do it before then. And you know, I have no regrets about that even though there were some people that I don't think ever forgave me. And I'm thinkin', "Why does that upset you? You know, let him win it the old-fashioned way. He has to win rather than just have everybody quit on him." So.

[02:54:02] JCD: You had a very strong run, as you said, and you resonated with voters, particularly—you were going for your party's nomination.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: So particularly Republicans around the country, but I wonder if you think there's something of being a governor of a state like Arkansas and in your style of governing that spoke to a greater

number of Americans, many of whom are not on, say, the Eastern seaboards. And . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . and we're a lot alike a lot of Midwestern states.

MH: Absolutely. I think there were a couple of big factors. One, Arkansas is a state you cannot win unless you know retail politics. And I've always believed that one of the great things about Iowa, New Hampshire, and some of these early states is you have to retail. You can't—you know, Mitt Romney thought he could buy the top 500 feet of every radio and television tower in every state and buy his way in. Proved he didn't, he couldn't. And I think it killed him when I was beating him with—you know, I had a dime to his dollar all the way through. But it's part retail. And it is part having a message that really does connect to just ordinary voters. [02:55:16] You know, I was despised by the what I call the country-club Republicans and the Wall Street Republicans. They spent millions of dollars, particularly in South Carolina, which they had their—you know, they had a good moment. They did a good job of beating me up there. But they spent about $2 million just on TV ads rippin' me to pieces. They hated me, quite frankly for the same reason a lot of 'em hated Donald Trump because my Republican message was really

more for working-class people. It was not for the guy in the corner office in the high-rise of midtown Manhattan. It was for the guy standing on the concrete floor lifting heavy things all day. It was for the guys who were far more like my father than the father of the guy who's the third-generation billionaire who, you know, grew up flying Gulfstream jets to Europe and—you know I'm not disparaging people that enjoy that life. Good for them, God bless 'em. But that's not who I am, and it's not where my message was targeted. But that was a threat. And in many ways I think if people go back and hear what I was saying in 2007 and 2008, they read the book that I wrote in 2015, that it's almost like it was a prediction of Donald Trump's message and what he won with. You know, but his speeches were aired in full, all forty-five minutes of it. And I was lucky to get a snippet in the news. It's just the way it is. But it was the message of putting America first, bringing manufacturing back, respecting people in agriculture. [02:56:57] You know, my message was—I said, "There are three things a country has to do to be free. It has to feed itself. Has to fuel itself. Has to fight for itself." Has to grow its own food and fiber. You know, if we depend on food from somewhere else, we're a slave to them. Has to fuel itself. We need to be energy independent. I was

preachin' that hard in 2007 and [200]8. And it has to be able to fight for itself. Has to manufacture its own weapons of defense. You cannot have a country that doesn't manufacture. And we've lost our manufacturing base. We sent it to Mexico and to China. And we paid dearly for that. So as I look back, I kinda feel a little vindicated that things that I was saying for which I was being pilloried turned out to be pretty doggone accurate. [02:57:41] I'll remember one moment forever, and it was in Dearborn, Michigan. We were in the Republican debate, and I think it was down to McCain, Romney, Fred Thompson, Giuliani. Not sure who else was there, but I member all of them. And they went around the room. They asked, "What kind of shape's the economy in?" Maria Bartiromo was the moderator for the debate. She was still with CNBC at the time. And all of 'em were talkin' about, "Oh, it's wonderful. Our numbers, you know, look good, we have a strong economy." This was September of [20]07, so think about the time frame, what's about to happen. And they were all talkin' about how, you know, what a—stock market's great. Everything's lookin' really good. Strong economy, great Republican leadership. And they came to me, and I was like the guy that peed in the punchbowl because I said, "Well, you know, all my colleagues tell you how good it is."

And I said, "You know what, if you're talkin' to the guy who's the CEO of the big company, that's probably how he feels." But I said, "Let me tell you, if you talk to the cab driver, talk to the guy who's puttin' the bags on your airplane, if you talk to the guy who's meetin' you at the door at the hotel, talkin' to the guy who's buildin' the parts for your car, the economy's not doin' so great. It's hurtin, and it's hurtin' bad for those guys." And I said, "So I don't know why you guys are celebrating this economy." A month later it totally collapsed. I looked like a genius. But I got, I mean, destroyed. Wall Street Journal had a big editorial beatin' me up. All these organizations like Club For Growth and KATO. Of—I might as well have said that, you know, the pope is a pedophile. I mean, you just couldn't say anything that would be more inappropriate to be a Republican candidate for president and just basically say that the policies of your party were hurting working class people, but that's exactly what I said because it was the truth. And so, you know, that did not help me get donors, by the way. [*Laughter*]

[02:59:41] JCD: So you run again in 2016. What motivated you to do it? I mean, at that point, you had tried it once . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . you had had some success and just fell a little short. But

you also knew it was grueling.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: You knew it was a hard, hard task. So what compelled you to go back eight years later and try it again?

MH: Yeah, you know, I think a lot of people thought I should've run in 2012. And you know, who knows. But I was not financially recovered enough from [20]08 to do it by then. I was gettin' close. You know, I was very fortunate that after the [20]08 race, I mean, I immediately had some incredible opportunities. Take over the Paul Harvey radio franchise every day. Fox hired me to do a television show for them and be a contributor. Got contracts to do a series of books. You know, for the first time in my life, I started, I mean, really makin' some decent money and bein' able to invest and start having a financial security I'd never had before. [03:00:48] But by [20]12, I still needed to—I knew what it's like to run for president. It means givin' up every dime of your income for eighteen months or so. And I also knew that once you walked away, it's not like you could say, "Hey, hold everything for me. I'll be right back." 'Cause in the media world, nothing stays put, you know. They move on. You lose your slot. Somebody else takes it. And sI just wasn't there yet. [03:01:17] By [20]16, I thought the country was looking for

solutions. After two terms of Obama, I felt like they were looking for someone who had a different approach to life and government, but more importantly I thought it was the time for the pragmatist. I did not anticipate how angry the electorate had become. So by [20]16, quite frankly, I think many of us were in the race—Scott Walker from Wisconsin, Jeb Bush from Florida—most of us knew each other pretty well. We were friends, we'd served, you know, maybe overlapping terms, and—tryin' to remember all the other—John Kasich was in. There were several other governors, some senators and congressmen. I knew virtually every one of 'em. And it was a fairly good camaraderie. And I think all of us really thought that the voters were looking for someone who would come and solve a problem, you know. Okay, what've we gotta fix? And it wasn't too deep into that whole campaign that I realize that is not what they're lookin' for. They don't want someone to oil the machinery. They want someone to burn the place down. I mean, they were—there was an anger, and it was intense. And you know, looking back, it's quite justified. By then they'd seen more and more of their jobs shipped overseas and offshore. They'd seen their wages collapsed. So many things had happened to them. And you know, I came to realize that the message of pragmatism

was not selling, and it was not even about solutions. They wanted someone to really go after what we would call the deep state or the establishment or the uniparty. All of those are real terms, and they're genuine. So it was, you know, evident that it wasn't gonna happen. [03:03:06] But I heard in Trump a message that really was the message I'd been preaching at that point for, you know, ten years. But he was saying it so bluntly. And it was connecting. So I wasn't as surprised as a lot of people were that he was endin' up the nominee and the president. In fact here's what I told people. I said, "If you wanna understand Donald Trump, walk into a Waffle House any morning at ten o'clock and look around. There'll be at least one table where there are four grown men sitting there, mostly with camo hats on, and they're sittin' there drinkin' coffee. And if you watch for a minute, at some point, they're gonna look around, and they're gonna all lean in to the middle of the table. And one of 'em is gonna whisper something. The rest of 'em will nod, they'll lean back. And what that guy just said, Donald Trump'll go to the podium tonight and scream from the [*laughs*] podium into a loudspeaker, and that's when they're gonna say, "That's my guy right there," 'cause he's saying what they deep down feel, and that is nobody in DC cares about 'em, nobody's

listening to them, nobody is concerned that they can't afford to send their kids to college or that their life's work is being stripped away by inflation. Take any one of those issues. The border is open, and it's depressing the wages of American workers. And people were sick of it. And they were sick of the people that were livin' large at the expense of the hardworking Americans without whom we can't keep our country.

[03:04:43] JCD: So today, and I think you've touched on this already, you've been in politics now since 1992. A little earlier.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: What are some of the major changes you've seen in your time as not just a political observer but someone who's been actively engaged at both the state and national levels? What—you've touched on it, I think, a little bit.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: But what else do we need to know in terms of what you've seen, experienced in politics in the last thirty, thirty-five years?

[03:05:21] MH: I think the most depressing thing is that there's less interest in people working together to a common goal as opposed to those who just want to poke the eye out of the other side. That's tragic. And part of it is because the system itself has almost made it necessary, that people don't want you to

achieve a goal that requires compromise. They wanna grind your opponent's head into the ground with the crushing of your heel. Maybe that's what we've come to, but it's not a good thing for the country. It just isn't. And you know, I'd like to think that we could one day see a political system where people can win big things without feeling that they have to crush their opposition to do it, and instead they could bring their competition into the idea as opposed to making sure that nobody thought they had anything to do with it. It's the way it is. And it's not any one particular person or one particular party's fault. There are a whole lot of factors that have driven it, some of which is the way that the congressional districts are now structured so that the district lines are drawn for harsh ideological purity, not for general consensus. And until that changes, we probably won't see much change. [03:06:54] That is also transferred to the state legislatures, so you also have districts that are very hardened in terms of the ideological makeup of the voters of that district. So if you vary from that, then you'll be punished for it. If they were—if the districts were drawn up where they were more purple than they were hard red, hard blue, then people would have to sometimes find solutions that required a sense of compromise. And I don't mean

compromise of principal or convictions, but compromise of timetable, cost, implementation. That's not evil. That's honestly a good thing. It gives everybody a feeling that they've got a, you know, a finger in the pie. We're not there. And I can lament it all day, but because we're not there, the people that try to find a mushy middle are gonna get destroyed. It—so you know, in this environment, it's kinda kill or be killed. I hate that it is. But the solution is not the personalities or even the principles involved in it, it's the foundation that we have created by the alignment within the congressional and/or legislative districts.

[03:08:14] JCD: It would seem to me that it's—I think it's a safe bet that a majority, more than a majority of partisan, elected officials in the country fear a primary contest within their own party far more . . .

MH: Far more.

JCD: . . . than, you know . . .

MH: Yeah.

JCD: . . . anyone on the other side, and that compromise would invite the potential for that ridicule and that criticism . . .

MH: Oh, it . . .

JCD: . . . from within their party.

MH: It's the quickest way to get defeated as an incumbent is to show what would be conceived as, you know, weakness or a sense of capitulation to the people on the other side. And it goes both directions. You know, Democrats are the same. Republicans are the same. They all are protecting their ideological purity, and they stand on it. And you know, what's the solution? Well, if we don't change those makeups of the districts, there probably isn't one other than, as I say, it's kill or be killed. Somebody's gonna win. Somebody's gonna lose. The winner's gonna take all. The loser's gonna get nothing. And that's just kinda where we are. I don't like it. I don't like it at all. [03:09:18] I liked it better, even as a Republican governor who had to work with 90 percent Democrats but could get things done because people—you know, they were, I think, more afraid of not solving problems than they were of not satisfying somebody's idea of purity. That's not where we are.

[03:09:38] JCD: Switching gears a bit, you have had your own business and political successes. You and Janet have three children, and now you have one of your children that's in the position that you once held. Explain what that feels like to be the father of—of course, I'm talkin' about Sarah Huckabee Sanders—knowing that you've gone through a lot of the things

she's gone through, the opportunities, the challenges in political office, albeit with different partisan makeups . . .

MH: Right.

JCD: . . . in the state. How does that—I'm sure there's pride, but if you can, talk about the feelings of a father, but then the feelings of somebody who really can put themselves in this child's shoes.

MH: Yeah. Well, I am proud of her. I'm proud of all my kids. She's the one that's chosen to live in the white-hot spotlight of politics. But what I admire about her is that she has real core convictions that she stands on, whether they're popular or not. And I appreciate that in her. You know, she's not wishy washy. I think she's willing to listen to other ideas. She's not, you know, a person that is completely within her own frame. But she also knows that, you know, if people aren't willing to give her benefit of the doubt, then she's not gonna be able to achieve.

[03:11:14] I mean, I watched during this session where many of the people wanted the teacher pay raises. It's a dramatic increase. It was huge. From forty-seventh to fifth in the nation. But they didn't want school choice. And it's like, wait a minute. You want everything you want, and you represent a tiny minority, but you don't want anything that she wants. She gave you something bigger than what you even asked for. 'Cause the

proposals that were being touted were far less than the, you know, the amount that she put on the table. But it was like they wanted everything they wanted and nothing she wanted. And you know, I don't blame her for stickin' tight to her guns on that. Another standpoint I have is that, you know, it's kind of exciting for me to see her in the role because she went into it in a way no one else hardly ever does, with eyes wide open. She grew up in the shadow of it all. She saw it. [*Chimes sound*] She experienced it. Most people, quite frankly myself included, when you first get sworn in as governor, you're shell shocked for a while 'cause you are overwhelmed with all that's comin' at you. It's drinkin' from the firehose. It really is. She had a very different approach because she, I think, had a more honest expectation of what she was gonna face. She's more realistic about the criticism. Doesn't really get to her. I think for many of us it takes a while to get used to that idea that every day people are pounding you, and they don't even know you, but they call you everything from a criminal to, you know, an uncaring ogre, and you know, she kinda brushes all that off 'cause she's grown up with it. So that's probably a benefit that she has that most don't. [03:12:58] And then the great benefit is that when her kids try to hide from her, she knows where all

the hiding places are at the governor's mansion 'cause she [*laughter*] found 'em. You know, the historical piece of this is that it's the first time in American history when there's been a father and a daughter who have both governed the same state. There've been a couple of father-sons. The Cuomos, Sununus, Browns in California. Never a father-daughter. So that's kinda cool.

[03:13:27] JCD: And you and Janet now find ourselves, you know, surrounded by family in Arkansas.

MH: Yeah.

JCD: And I just wonder if you wanna speak—we focused, I think rightly, on a lot of your professional, political [*chimes sound*] aspects of your career and things you're proud of. I just wonder if you wanna speak to some of the personal accomplishments or achievements of a life in this state.

MH: Yeah. Well, the greatest joy I have is that, you know, I have three children. They're responsible. They're on their own. And as I said, I think, earlier, I'm proud that they have not rejected everything they grew up with in terms of the core values that were important to their family. My greatest delight now is to see my grandchildren. There're seven of them. And they range in age from three all the way up to twelve, so they're kinda

compacted in there together, all ages in that time frame. But to see them, you know, whether it's playin' basketball or baseball or wanting to learn to play guitar—which finally I have some, you know, grandkids that wanna do that—it's just a joy to be able to see them. And I have a lot of fun and personal satisfaction in hangin' out with 'em and observing, you know, their lives, and kinda seeing the traits of their parents in them. That's really special, you know, to sort of almost relive the lives of their parents in their lives. [03:15:01] You know, Janet and I love being where we are. We enjoy our church. God has been, really, better to us than we ever imagined. We live better than we ever dreamed we would. I mean, it's been a good life. You know, hard times. We went through tough times, hard times, when we weren't sure we'd have enough, you know, food to open a can of soup for dinner. I look at my life now—my gosh. How could I do anything but be overwhelmed with the blessings that have come? Worked hard to get there. Still workin' hard. But you know, I'm also grateful for the journey and the opportunity and the friends that I've made along the way. And you know, I've come to this season of life—I tell people, you know, I'm not ready to land yet, but I see the lights go out there in front of me. I mean, I know it's not forever. I've lived most

of my life at this stage. But I don't sit around regretting the way I've lived it, which I think would be a sad way to come to this point of life is to say, "Man, I really—I wasted so much." I could've done things different and better, I'm sure, in a lot of areas. But you know, I—at the end of life, I wanna hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." If that's what I hear, it's all been good. The one thing I'm pretty sure of is that I don't wanna move again. [*Laughs*] Janet and I tell each other the next move we make is Mount Holly Cemetery. We've moved around a lot. [03:16:37] You know, the—a funny little tidbit. We've been married fifty years this year. The longest we've lived in any one house in our fifty years of marriage was the governor's mansion. That's the longest we've lived in any one place.

JCD: Which by definition is a very temporary [*laughs*] residence.

MH: Yeah. Well, and the funny thing about that—I tell—it's the only place from which we was evic—we were evicted. And you know, it's kind of embarrassing to be evicted from government housing. [*Laughter*]

[03:17:06] JCD: To bring it back to the very beginning of this discussion, you're a son of Hope. You're a son of Arkansas, you're a son of committed parents who instilled some very

important values in you, but you're also a son of this community, this town called Hope. It's a town that can claim some incredibly successful individuals, both in political—in the political realms, business world, obviously including yourself. What is it about your hometown, really, that you think inspires what we might call a special type of greatness? Hope, Arkansas.

[03:17:49] MH: We had great teachers that cared about us as kids. It was a strong community of unapologetic moral standards. The churches were a big part of the fabric of the community. So there was a clear understanding of right and wrong. You know, it didn't matter if you were Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, or Jehovah's Witness, for that matter. I mean, there was still a sense of this is right, this is wrong, and these are the lines, and we're expected to live within 'em. That, to me, was important, and I think it was important to all of us growing up. It was a small enough community that people knew each other, that they looked after each other. People helped each other when they were in need. It was, in so many ways—I've said it before. I'll say it again. It was Mayberry. It was a place where people could grow up comfortably. And a kid could be poor but wasn't necessarily left out. That was important 'cause otherwise I would've been left out. It was a meritocracy, which was very

helpful. If you could do something well, if you were a great athlete, you could live in the poorest project in town, but you would be celebrated for what you could do. If you were a great student, you know, your family might have nothing, but you would be appreciated and celebrated for what you had achieved. [03:19:13] And as I look back, I remember there were kids who were as poor or poorer than I was, but they achieved things, and they dreamed great dreams. I like to think it's not just a Hope thing, it's an American thing. It's what I value most about this country. Where else on earth could a kid like me, my background, my ancestry, end up living in the Governor's Mansion? One of my favorite stories to tell—I'll tell it quickly, but it's—when I was eight years old, Game and Fish Commission was building Bois D'arc Lake down near Hope. And when they were ready to dedicate it, the governor was gonna come down and make the dedicatory address. Well, it's stuck off way down in southwest Arkansas, far from Little Rock. We didn't get a whole lot of attention from state government. And I remember my dad, and he said, "Son, they're gonna dedicate the lake down there, and we gonna go down there and hear it. The governor's comin' in. He gonna make a talk. And I'm gonna take you down and let you hear that governor talk 'cause, son,

you may live your whole life, and you may never see a governor in person." That was the world I grew up in, where my dad could not conceive that I would ever see a governor. If somebody had told him, "Oh, he won't just see one, he'll be one. And by the way, his daughter will, too," I mean, he'd've laughed out loud. Are you kiddin'? Right. Sure, that's gonna happen. You bet it is. That's where I came from. From the kid whose dad thought he would never see a governor in person at a distance to one who became one and fathered one. Pretty good country.

[03:20:55] JCD: Is there anything else we're leaving out?

MH: No, we've probably stuffed some stuff in there that didn't even happen. [*Laughter*]

JCD: Well, on behalf of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, Governor Huckabee, I wanna thank you for sharing not only your Arkansas story, but a classic American story . . .

MH: Thank you.

JCD: . . . with us today.

MH: It's been a pleasure. Good to relive some of this stuff.

JCD: Thank you.

[End of interview 03:21:23]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]