

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

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

Arkansas Memories Project

Johnnie B. Hunt and Johnelle Hunt

Interviewed by Dan Hendrix

May 19, 2006

Fayetteville, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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**Dan Hendrix interviewed Johnnie B. Hunt and Johnelle Hunt on
May 19, 2006, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Dan Hendrix: We're here this morning with J. B. and Johnelle Hunt,
and I would like to ask Johnelle where you were born.

Johnelle Hunt: I was born in Heber Springs, Arkansas. I was born—
um—on January the fourth, 1932, and I was born at home
because we didn't have hospital in that town when I was born.
And so I was born at home, to a family of the—one daughter
before me, so I was the second child. Later there were four of
us.

[00:00:31] DH: What are some of the early memories of your mother
and your father?

JH: Oh my goodness—early memories? That's—when you go
 back—um—I have such good, good memories of my childhood.
Had a wonderful family. Have a wonderful family. My mother
and daddy are both deceased. My dad died at the age of sixty-
three and my mother at almost ninety-three. But—um—I had
a real happy childhood—fun family. When we were all
together, we would sing if we were traveling in the car to my
grandparents' house. And they lived in the country, so on
Sundays, you know, you went there for lunch after church.

And—uh—we always sang when we were together. Later, my sister played the piano, and we'd gather around the piano and sing—um—my mother was a great cook. We didn't have a lunchroom program at school, so—uh—till I was a senior in high school, so we always went home for lunch. We walked home for lunch. We lived close enough we could walk home. Or—uh—we would take our lunch on rainy days when the weather was too bad. And I can still smell that wonderful aroma of walking into the house with Mother's hot meal on the table and a—maybe a warm chocolate cake and all those good things—a pie—those things that you never forget about home. So—uh—it was just a good family. Lots of fun. [00:02:02] Lots of relatives. We had cousins, aunts and uncles. And we always claimed third, fourth cousins. It didn't matter how far back in the generation, they were cousins, and we were close. And—had the opportunity to live with a large family—extended family—get-togethers. Christmas was wonderful. Christmas Eve we were all together with the extended families and those type of things. So—when we were growing up, there were three of us. And—uh—my sister's three and a half years older than I am, and—uh—my brother, David, is two years younger. [00:02:38] And then when we were fifteen, seventeen, and

twenty, we were blessed with a baby brother. And he has been the joy to all of us because at that age then to have a little baby come into the house that we all thought was ours. So we all told him what to do. He's always said he didn't have one mother and one dad, he had several and—uh—because we all thought he was ours, and we still do. So . . .

DH: That's good. So were you—were you closer to any of the siblings—uh . . .

JH: No, we're all very, very close. Johnnie will tell you, we're—we're very close—always have been. And—um—just when we're together we tell—now that we're older—we tell stories of the past when we're together. We keep all the memories still going because that's what we talk about is our past and our mother and our daddy and the things that we did. And we have lots of fun stories—um—[clears throat] I also grew up with a lot of fun people my age—friends. [00:03:40] And—uh—I had a group of girls that we were very close. We were called the "Dirty Dozen," and I think that they named that movie later on after us because we came before the movie. And—uh—we went everywhere together. We hiked on—uh—in the summers or when the weather was nice. We were fortunate to have the mountains around us, and we hiked—

uh—we would walk to the river to swim—uh—we just—we just were—had a lot of fun. We were always together. And when a boy first started dating us, he had to take all of us. So the—when Johnnie was with me the first several times, he had the whole bunch. I didn't go by myself with him, he had th—he had all of us. And that's kind of the way we were. They had to take all of us if they took one, you know. So that was a lot of fun. Our—uh—our times were going to the movies, you know. We didn't have TV and all those things. And so we went to the movie a lot. We did that. On Satur—as a child growing up, you would go to the movie on Saturday afternoon and—uh—see the Westerns. And then on Saturday night, as you got older, you could go on Saturday night. But when we were growing up as a child it cost ten cents to get in after you were six years old. I think that was right. [00:05:05] So it was just a small town. I think there's nothing like growing up in a small town. I wouldn't take anything for [*clears throat*] growing up in a very small town because you know everyone—um—you can walk everywhere. We walked everywhere. Of course, there weren't a lot of people with cars, and so you walked everywhere. And—um—you're close to everyone there. Church is very important. You never missed church. You

know, we never missed church. When—if—uh—I could—we had a late movie [*laughs*] that started, like, at ten thirty and got out at twelve when I was older, you know, when I was dating and all. And you could go to that late movie, but you would never have mentioned not goin' to Sunday school and church the next morning because you just wouldn't have gone the next week. So those things—church was very important, and—as it always has been in our life. And—uh—I could just go on and on with memories of growing up there. [00:06:00] There were forty-two in my graduating class, so when you talk about these graduating classes in our area here, and then you think about we had forty-two—we were very close. We—uh—the big majority of us went all the way through school together, which was fortunate that—we started in the first grade, and we went through the twelfth. And—uh—we got to go on a senior trip, you know, to New Orleans and Galveston and all that. But we worked and made the money for our trip, though, so . . .

DH: What did you do to earn that money?

JH: Oh, we—we picked cotton, which he says I never picked cotton because he did. I picked cotton one day to make money.

[*Laughter*] We picked—uh . . .

Johnnie B. Hunt: Wash cars.

JH: . . . pears. We—well, that was really—we didn't have enough cars to wash [*laughs*] back then.

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: They wash cars now to make money.

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: W—that—that didn't—wasn't part of our life. Um—we just did—uh—different things like that that we—we always had a school play. We had a—ju—when you were a junior and a senior you had a school play—uh—like I say, you know, there was no TV, so plays in a town was—was a big thing—in a small town. And I was fortunate to have the lead in my junior play and in my senior play. And—uh—so we made money that way. So there were different things that we did like that to make money.

DH: Well, it sounds like you had a wonderful childhood.

JH: I had a wonderful childhood. I've just—like I said, I just wouldn't—and I have wonderful memories, and—of a loving family.

[00:07:37] DH: Well, J. B., where were you born?

JBH: I was born at Heber Springs, too. But I was really—grew up out in the rural area. Uh—I was thinking about that the other



day. I think the first thing I remember—I was about one or two year old, and—uh—my daddy had a—worked on the oil well there at Heber. And—uh—then the schoolhouse was up the road about two blocks, and—uh—the schoolteacher stayed with us—I mean, in a bunkhouse—that's where—the oil well had a bunkhouse. So I had—uh—my two older brothers. And course, when they went to school I wanted to go. So the teacher just started takin' me with them when I was four year old. So I went from the time I was four year old till I was about ten or eleven year old. So I graduated and went on about my business workin'. [00:08:34] But—uh—I had five brothers and a sister. And we farmed and worked in the woods and—and stuff like that, and then—uh—we had a lotta cousins that lived near us around there, you know, like they did. But—uh—I imagine that their folks a lot closer than we was, but boys a little bit different, you know. They had one daughter—uh—one sister. But—uh—but we worked—picked cotton, like everybody else. Worked in the log woods, sawmills, and raised a garden and milked cows and did everything that everybody else did. But—uh—World War II came by, and I was eighteen year old, and that was World War II. So I went off to the army and stayed a couple years and came back. And—and I was

working at four dollars a day when I left, and I got back—I got my old job back at four dollars a day. So that was what was so bad about takin' her to the show. You know, she'd eat five—five things of popcorn, and that got expensive, you know, after you're working four dollars a day. And we worked twelve hours a day. And—uh—so from that, I got in the sale barn business, and then I think I lost about three or four hundred—uh—three or four . . .

JH: Three thousand dollars.

JBH: . . . three thousand dollars, and that would be like \$30 million now.

DH: Mh-hmm.

[00:10:03] JBH: So I bumped into her when she was sixteen and I was twenty-one. And—uh—my uncle had the sawmills and the planer mills and everything, and he cut lumber for house patterns. But after the house pattern was all cut, the mills would have extra lumber that was not sold, you know, 'cause people just said, "I need so many 2 X 4." So I—I guess I was about—uh—nine—uh—twenty, wasn't I? So my uncle would load all the surplus lumber up and give me the count on it and tell me how much money he wanted, and I'd leave about Monday, and I'd go up through Arkansas, Missouri, Indiana—all

up in there—and I peddled that lumber off the truck or sold it any way I could get rid of it. But all I knew, I had to be back with the amount of money or—or stay up there. So—uh—and you know, you know when people say they won't lie and all that? Well, they've never been in Centralia, Illinois, on Friday night with a load of lumber. [*DH laughs*] So I was—I did that, what, about a year or so?

JH: Yeah . . .

JBH: Maybe two years.

JH: . . . two or three years.

[00:11:17] JBH: But I peddled all the stuff that they couldn't sell. So I pulled into Centralia one night up there, and I had two loads of lumber, and this friend of mine up there—or he became my friend—on this big lumberyard, and he says—uh—"I can't take your lumber." Said, "It's four o'clock, and everybody's done got the gate shut. We can't—you know, we just can't take the lumber." He made a terrible mistake sayin'—uh—he knew I was datin' Johnelle. He said, "When you're getting' married?" I said, "Tomorrow night if I can get rid of this lumber." And he said, "Boys, open the gate." [*Laughter*] He bought two truckloads of lumber off of me. So I say, don't—be careful about sayin' you won't lie. [*Laughs*] But he said . . .

JH: But then he had to—every time he went back, he had to ask him how his wife was, and we were not married. And we didn't
[laughs] . . .

JBH: But anyhow, but—uh—I got a master's degree in marketing right there. Uh—I could sell that lumber sometime, but if you didn't get it sold this week, you didn't bring it back because you had to stay over, you know. So I got a real good education there at selling. But—uh—then I went off to war and stayed a couple years and come back, like I say, to the same old job. [00:12:35] But—uh—I—I turned a truck and trailer over a bridge, and—about a thirty-foot drop. About cut my hand off—stuck a—a hole plumb through there. And—uh—so I wa—had a ha—arm in a cast. But my uncle had a s—a horse that had to be rode every day—it was a stallion. So I—I couldn't work, so he decided he'd just let me ride the horse every day. So I rode the horse by her house. And I guess—was you even sixteen then?

JH: Probably fifteen.

JBH: Fifte—fourteen or fifteen.

JH: It was before I met him.

JBH: So I'd ride that horse by there, and she'd be out on the—on that lawn whirling baton—but I said cartwheels, so maybe it

was both.

JH: I was twirlin'—he always says that I was turning cartwheels out on the lawn, and he was riding by . . .

JBH: That's how . . .

JH: . . . and I was twirlin' my baton.

JBH: But anyhow, [*JH laughs*] that's how I got a—I saw her. I—um—I didn't meet her. Then, later, I bought the sale barn, and her brother is—two older than you are?

JH: Younger. Two years younger.

JBH: Young—two years younger. So he goes to work for me helping me at the sale barn. And when I did, well, that's how I got acquainted with her. And she was—uh—sixteen and I was twenty-one.

[00:13:58] JH: Yeah, it's—um—uh—funny how, you know, we didn't know each other, and yet we lived in the same—he lived in the county, and I lived in town. And—uh—after I knew who he was, then I did remember him riding that horse by the house and seeing him, you know, because I guess he caught my attention, too, even that far back and all—but you know, when I was talkin' about my childhood, as I sit here I think of things that I would like to have said and didn't—um—a big part of my childhood too was—uh—my grandparents lived on a farm in the

country, and going to their house—uh—was a big thing, and especially in the summers, I loved to go there in the summers and stay a week or two at a time, and—and—um—lunch—uh—oh my, I can remember, you know, waking up, my grandmother havin' that big breakfast on the table and everything, and then my grandfather would go out to work in the field. And about the middle of the morning, we would go out to the well and draw the water and—um—fill the jar of water. [00:14:56] And we would go down—my sister, my brother, whoever was with me there—and we would go down, and we would go down to the field where he was plowing. And we would sit there, and we would watch him as he would go around with that—that mule or that horse—the horse and the plow, you know. No tractors. He didn't have a tractor, you know, to plow with, and here—and we would watch him as he would go all the way around the field. And we would sit and wait, and then he would come, and he would sit down there by us. And we would sit there with him, and he would drink his water and talk to us and visit with us. And that's just memories that you can never forget because that was . . .

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . such a special time, just sitting in that field with him

drinking that water. And—um—and so it was—we loved to be there. And—and neighbors would come on Sunday and make ice cream, but we would always go there and have—there would be all the family—the big family would be there, you know, on Sundays for lunch, and—um—I can even remember [*laughs*] my grandfather had beautiful black hair, and we loved to—um—uh—have him out—in the summer, you know, out on a—he'd sit out on a stool. And he would let myself—and my cousin, especially, liked to wash his hair. Now is that not a funny thing to remember about your grandfather? [*DH laughs*]

But he had such beautiful black hair, and he would let us put all the soap on it and play with the soap and everything, you know, and—and do his hair and wash his hair. And—um—I just—those memories of—uh—being at—my grandparents were a very big part of my life—my grandparents on my daddy's side. My mother's grand—parents died before I was born. But—um—they were very, very special and dear to us, and we loved our times with them and being at their house and all and—then when Johnnie does talk about—um—how we met and—like the time he went off the bridge. [00:16:43] My grandparents lived across the—what is now the lake at Heber Springs, but it was the river then. And—um—the Tumbling



Shoals bridge was really in *Believe It or Not!* because it was the only bridge in the world that you saw the end that you were going off of from either side before you saw the end you were going on.

DH: Hmm.

JH: So as you were going down this steep, winding mountain, you could see the other end of the bridge and the other—same for the other side. So—um—he came down the mountain, and—um—with a truck and a load of feed on the trailer, was it, or . . .

JBH: Seed.

[00:17:18] JH: Ste—seed. And as he gets down there, his truck gets on the bridge, but his trailer didn't, and he dropped thirty-seven feet. Well, my . . .

JBH: Upside down.

JB: And hit just at the edge of the water. My grandfather lived across the bridge, see, so he came by, and this had all happened, and I'll never forget—didn't even know him, you know, then—but I'll never forget—my grandfather came in our back door, and he said, "Johnnie Hunt just went off the Tumbling Shoals bridge." And you know, that just always stayed with me, and then when I—and I met him later. So

there were times when it seems like that we could have almost—I mean, we almost knew each oth—my daddy had a—when I was a young, wh—till I was about six years old, my dad had, like, a general mercantile store. And—uh—people back then, of course, didn't have scales in their house, so they brought their babies or their children to the store to weigh—to weigh them. You know, I can remember, as a child, getting on those big scales to weigh because that's how you did it. Well, he had the scales then that he would weigh the beans in or the seed or whatever, so he weighed—Johnnie's family traded with my daddy—you know, traded—bought at his store and all—and when he was six months old, my dad weighed him on those scales. And—um—so he always knew the family and all. And um—so—uh—the way—when he says that I met him—that my brother. My brother takes credit for introducing me to him . . .



DH: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:49] JH: . . . but there's sort of a funny story about that, too. He really didn't. He was working for him, and my dad had bought my brother and I an older car. And—um—like I said, I was just—uh—had turned sixteen, I guess, and my brother was fourteen. And we were driving it one night, and he was in front of us or something, and we passed him, and my brother

stopped, and he stopped. And my brother gets out and visits with him and didn't introduce me to him, and I was very angry with my brother . . .

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . because he didn't introduce me to him. Well, after that—um—I had a friend—one of the friends in my Dirty Dozen gangs—uh—knew him, and he had this new, red Ford truck. Johnnie had this new red Ford truck that had a bed on the back that he hauled cattle—because he had the sale barn and all, and so he hauled cattle. And—uh—so it had—and on the side of that truck was "Johnnie Hunt, Heber Springs, Arkansas." Now here . . .

JBH: "Johnnie B. Hunt."

JH: "Johnnie B. Hunt, Heber Springs, Arkansas." Okay. [*DH laughs*] Here's this guy that, you know, really is barely starting out, and he puts his name on a truck. [*JBH laughs*]

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] JH: Now who would ever think that later on he would have his name on a truck—you know, on a—several trucks. [*Laughter*] So this was a big deal. And so he—like I said, we walked everywhere, and we were out—we had been to a graduation at the high school that night, and we were

walking—and I'll never forget—you know, we were walking down in front of the courthouse, and he drives by. And the friend that knew him said, "If he comes back, do you want me stop—to get him to stop, and let's see if he'll take us, you know, with him to ride with him?" And we all, "Oh, yeah, yeah. Get him—ask him if he'll stop." So he did. She waved at him, and he stopped, you know. You can imagine all this gang of girls—all of us out there, you know, and here he is. And so we all got in. Some got up in the back of that big truck, you know, and—I happened to get inside, but my best friend sat next to him. And so he had these air horns. So here we ride around town blowing the air horns and everything. You can imagine sixteen-year-olds, you know. We had a lot of fun. So then later he starts taking everyone home. Well, it just happens he takes me home last. And he had just gotten back from auctioneers school, and I couldn't understand anything he said, he talked so fast. *[JBH laughs]* And so he took me home last. [00:21:18] So the next night we're out again. We're all out again together, you know, and then it's again, "If he comes by, are we going to ride with him? You know, are we going to stop him?" and all this. "Oh yeah, we were." So then you can imagine—now we all get in this big argument about who's

gonna sit by him. Well, my best friend had the night before, and she was just like I was. She was real tall, and we both had the real long legs, you know. So she was sure she was goin' to. Well, when he stopped, I ran faster than she did, and I got in beside him. And the next day, she was so mad at me, but do you know what? I kept that place from then on. I felt like if I could outrun all my friends, I could stay right there with him, and I did. And that's how we met and how it all started.

DH: What impressed you most about J. B.?

JH: Oh, he was so handsome. [*Laughter*] He was tall!

JBH: But she couldn't understand me. [*Laughs*]

JH: He was tall. I didn't need to understand him. I could see him. He was tall. He was slender. He had this beautiful, blonde hair with waves in it, you know, and he was just—and I guess he had that red truck with his name on the side, and I guess I maybe could see the future. [*JBH laughs*] I don't know what it was, but I did. I just—from then on, that's exactly how it started. So we kind of stayed together from then on, but we didn't marry then till I was twenty. I had to finish high school. I had to go to college one year, and then we got married after that—later on after that. So it—I think I made a pretty good choice.

[00:22:51] DH: I think so. J. B., what impressed you most about Johnelle?

JBH: She was pretty. I thought she was rich.

JH: [*Laughs*] You married me for my money? No.

JBH: But, no—well, I had a cousin I was living with then, and he thought she was the real stuff. That encouraged me a little bit. But she was kinda young, you know. You can imagine pullin' up in front of your house and blowin' the horn—a twenty-one-year-old truck driver, a sixteen-year-old girl. [*Laughs*]

JH: That just happened once. My mother said, "Never again. He comes to the door." Just one time. [*Laughter*]

JBH: But I can't imagine someone would let a sixteen-year-old girl go with a twenty-one-year-old truck driver who couldn't read and write.

JH: I'll say this: I think he won my family over pretty fast, too.

JBH: Well, she—her mother had a little trouble with us gettin' married. She—I think she liked me, but she didn't think I could ever support her. So that was her big holdup right there.

JH: My mother always liked him. She really did very much. But my mother wanted me to, of course, finish college. She wanted me to go to college—you know, it was a must in our family that you go to college, and you graduate. And so when

I didn't go back that second year, my mother was very upset with me, but I can understand now. I could understand then, but I can especially understand more, I guess, having children, that it was important to her that I go to school. And it really—he, by that time, had—was drivin' a truck and making more money than the four dollars a day. So we were smart enough to know we couldn't get married until we had the money to get married. You know, some people just think that they can just go and get married, but we did know that he had to be able to support me. We had to have enough money to—he bought a car three weeks—no, about—it'd be [*unclear word*] . . .

[00:24:55] JBH: Well, first I hitchhiked out of town with ten dollars of borrowed money. I had lost all my money in that . . .

JH: Sale barn.

JBH: . . . the sale barn.

JH: But later on, after the sale barn, he—you hauled lumber for your uncle again. You did that. You went through all that. And then . . .

JBH: But I's still broke as a convict.

JH: Mh-hmm. And then he hauled chickens. My daddy was in the poultry business, and he had the growers. And so he bought the chickens and hauled the chickens to Dexter, Missouri, to

Swift packing company.

JBH: Live chickens, now . . .

JH: Live chickens.

JBH: . . . not the kind that the refrigerator was runnin'.

JH: Yeah, live chickens. So he did that for some time.

JBH: About a year, I guess. Then I went to east Texas—I stayed in the YMCA, the first night I was there, and I had ten dollars. . .

JH: That he had borrowed.

JBH: And they kept seven bucks, and I had three dollars. And I got me a job and started drivin' a truck for East Texas Motor Freight, which now Arkansas Best bought.

DH: Right.

JBH: So that's how I got the . . .

[00:25:59] JH: And I'll just say this about him. Johnnie such—has such determination about everything he does, but he went to Little Rock—he did—and he—with that ten dollars borrowed money, and hitchhiked out of Heber Springs on an oil truck that was going to Little Rock to get fuel. And he—they sent him to Texarkana, and if you lived in Texarkana, you could not stay in what they called their bunkhouse if you were domiciled out of there, which he was. But if you were a driver going through there, like, if you were—lived, like, in Houston, and you were in

Texarkana, you could stay in their bunkhouse. They had a bed for you . . .

JBH: A company bunkhouse.

JH: Company. The company owned it, and they had a lady there that took care of it—cooked their meals and all that. Well, with his persuading ways and all—rather than him—because you first were in Little Rock, and then he went to Texarkana—so he just stayed—he got acquainted with this lady. She let him stay there even though he was not supposed to, and have his meals there and all when he was in Texarkana. But he was gone a lot. You know, he was traveling a lot—I mean driving a lot. And so he didn't have to pay for an apartment. He didn't have to pay for very many meals and all—well, when he was in Texarkana. [00:27:13] So she sa—he says that every so often they would come in and say, "Anyone domiciled in Texarkana has to get"—and they would come to, like, raid the place. Well, she would know that they were coming, and she would tell him, "Take all your things out—everything you own out."

JBH: And go in her room.

JH: "And then go in my room and then come back in," you know.

JBH: I'd move back out. [*Laughs*]

JH: Well, in six months' time, he had saved enough money to buy a car—put a down payment on a car because he didn't have a car. And to put a down payment on a car and for us to pay the first month's apartment—we had a nice little two-room apartment. We had a bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom. But we were in a nice home with an elderly couple that had this apartment on the side—and for us to get married. And so we—that's when we got married, then, in January. And I moved to Texarkana in our little black car and everything we had in it.

JBH: And it wasn't full.

[00:28:13] JH: [*Laughs*] And so that's how we started, is a two-room apartment, and he was gone most all the time because he didn't have a regular run, and if anyone—you know, he was always ready because he needed the money. And he would leave home, and he would maybe go to Houston, and then they'd send him to San Antonio. We never knew when he was coming back. And we lived there for about ten months, and then he—we moved to Heber Springs for about—for a short time. And he had a run out of Tuckerman, and we lived in Heber Springs, and he could kinda drive back and forth to take his run. And then later moved to Little Rock.

JBH: I switched companies there.

JH: He went to . . .

DH: How many years did you drive for East Texas—and then you went to—with another trucking company after that?

JH: Two years. Two years.

JBH: I drove for East Texas two years . . .

JH: Two years.

JBH: . . . and then nine years with . . .

JH: Ten years with Superior Forwarding Company. And that's when we moved to Little Rock.

JBH: So I drove for the big boys twelve years.

JH: Twelve years.

JBH: And—but I actually drove, altogether, twenty-one years.

JH: Drivin' for his uncle when he was young and . . .

JBH: And then for myself.

[00:29:22] DH: Well, what were some of the fun times you remember from early married life?

JH: From the day we were married it was fun. It's been a roller coaster all the way. *[DH laughs]* And it still is.

JBH: Well, first thing, her mother thought moving to Texarkana was like going to Russia. *[Laughs]*

JH: You know, for her little girl to go so far away was a big thing because . . .

JBH: Big deal.

JH: . . . our family really took care of each other, and we were close and everything and all, but he was—and like I said, he was gone a lot, and I was there by myself, but we always—all the time he drove a truck—we made the most of the days he was home. And when we lived in Little Rock, then, for ten years—we lived there nine, ten years, but he drove for Superior Forwarding Company, and he drove from Little Rock to St. Louis. He would leave home late in the afternoon, and he would be gone that night and the next night and come in early the next morning. So he was always—and he would just be home during the day. And he'd come in early in the morning and leave late in the afternoon, and then he would be off either Saturday or Sunday or Friday and Saturday and go out. Any—it switched, you know, every week 'cause it was an every-other-day thing that he was home. [00:30:41] But Johnnie and I have always had a lot of fun with what we've done. He worked all the time. He always had several jobs at a time. He sold cement; we sold lawn sod; we sold flagstone rock. We've sold so many things. He always had other things that he was making extra money, so he spent a lot of time working. But you know, we've made the most—the best out of

the time we were together and had—and with our children.

And just, you know, it's been a lot of work. We—it's taken a lot of work to get us to where we are now.

JBH: We had fun working, though.

JH: But we had fun working. And we—and even when he did the tr—drove the truck, you know, and I was home with the children, I didn't work. When we moved to Texarkana and I had thought, "Well, he was gonna be gone all the time," that maybe I should get a job or something. But he said, "If you do I'll never see you." And he was right because we never knew when he would be home. So he didn't want me to work, and I would've—we wouldn't have been together that much. So when he was home I was always there. And then all the time we lived in Little Rock I didn't work because, again, I stayed home with the children—took care of the children because he was gone all the time. [00:31:56] I've always been the one, you know, if something goes wrong, I called the plumber, I paid the bills, I managed all that. I've always felt like that that was my part to do because he drove the truck, and I did everything else, or he sold the cement or whatever, and I could take care of collecting the money for it or whatever. But that was my part to play and let him spend all his time just



working. And then he did—with what he said he was selling. Did you tell about selling the wood shavings—he was—with the lumber mill? And so he got that idea—when I first met him, he was working on this idea to package wood shavings because he was selling the wood shavings to the poultry growers, the poultry people for litter—poultry litter for their house—chicken houses, you know. For—in a—and with poultry you have to put something on the floor for the chickens, and they were using wood shavings. And so with that, he had this idea. So now here I am dating him, and he is having me typing letters to these companies like Richardson Scale Company—people that built packers to—for machinery and all—to see about starting a business to package wood shavings. [00:33:16] Now you have to think back, now. This is in, like, about 1948, [19]49—along in there. Now fifteen years he works on this idea. He never gave up on the idea of packaging those wood shavings. He would drive a truck—he would sit at the dining room table, and he would draw, and he would plan and everything how he was gonna do it. And he never gave up that someday he wouldn't have that company. And I've always said, you know, he had a dream—he had vision—and he stayed with it all the way through. And then in 1961, we started the rice-hull

company in Stuttgart. But he drove this truck to Little Rock/St. Louis. [*Telephone rings*] And then later he got a run—and now, this was—you know, he was just gone all the time. If the dog got sick and had to take it to the vet to be put to sleep at two o'clock in the morning, he wasn't there. If the children got sick, he wasn't there. He was always gone when anything happened like that. But he was workin'. And then when we—he got a run that took him down through Stuttgart, Marianna, Forest City, all that area—and he saw them burning the rice hulls in the fields around Stuttgart. And he thought, "Well, why can't I package rice hulls and—like I was goin' to the wood shavings, since they're burning the rice hulls." They're a waste product that—no one had ever been able to find anything to do with rice hulls. They had had engineers—all these people with those big rice mills—and they could not find a way to use the rice hulls. They were just a waste product. So he saw them burning the rice hulls, and he decided, "I could do that." And that's how he came up with the idea to switch from his wood shavings and to package rice hulls. And it was 1961 before we actually formed that company. So you have to think from all those years he stayed with his plan.

[00:35:16] DH: So did you leave Superior Forwarding at that time

when you . . .

JH: He did.

DH: . . . in [19]61?

JH: [Nineteen] sixty-one.

JBH: Yeah, let me tell you about leavin' Superior. I was the oldest man on the seniority list, and I was the youngest man in age.

JH: In Little Rock.

JBH: In Little Rock. So if any truck left there, I was the guy to drive it. And I was makin' about—well, I was working twelve, thirteen hours a day—but I was makin' about thirty dollars a day or something.

JH: He was makin' thirty dollars—he was making really . . .

JBH: I had the . . .

JH: . . . for that time, he was making good money.

JBH: Yeah, that was big bucks. And I had to—I walked in there and told my boss I was quitting, and everybody thought I was crazy. And I really was. [*JH laughs*] [00:35:55] And we f—but Johnelle and I got with Rockefeller's group, and—'cause I'd been sellin' lawn sod for him, and so he decided that—I take this idea to him about goin' into the poultry litter business. So when I did, I talked to his president, and he told—he put two or three guys—one guy and one girl on it to figure all of the stuff

out that I'd been doin'. So when he got it all together, it was about twenty-five pages—that thick [indicates one inch with his fingers]. And I didn't even know what was all in there ex . . .

JH: The prospectus that they wrote for us to sell stock.

[00:36:35] JBH: Yeah. So Johnelle and I—I'd taken a week's vaca—two weeks' vacation . . .

JH: One.

JBH: No, we had two. One, regardless. We got that off the printer at twelve o'clock midnight, and we got in the car and drove up here to Springdale—got here. There was no room, so we slept in the car. At eight o'clock the next morning, the girl come out and got—woke us up and said, "Well, there's someone left, but the room isn't done—fixed." So I said, "Well, that's good." So she laid down on the couch, I got a shower, and I started calling—selling that stock. And I really didn't even know what I was selling. I just got it at midnight, and here I am selling it the next morning. And then—so I went to Peterson, George's, Tyson's, and all them. And I had, what, one—less than a week, then, to sell all this stock. And I was tryin' to raise \$135,000, which would be like 13 million now. So she stayed in the hotel, and I went around, and I guess we was here about three or four days, and we just couldn't get it all sold. I mean,

these people didn't know me. They'd never heard of J. B. Hunt. And so I went over here at Mr. Peterson's, and I g—he bought some. The George's—maybe the George's hadn't bought then, but I'd sold some anyhow. Bill Simmons had bought some. So I went over at Mr. Peterson's, and he did. I get back home, and I'm short about four or five buyers.

[00:38:12] So I called Mr. Peterson, and I said, "Mr. Peterson, I have done everything in my power to sell the rest of that stock." Well, see, when you start sellin' stock, you get the money and put it in escrow, and you say, "I've got options, and I've got this—contract," and they put a deadline on you. You've got to be—you've got to have all the money by this time. If you don't, you have to give all the money back. So I was getting my head in a vise there. So I called Mr. Peterson, and I said, "I think I need to stop and give everybody more stock for a little more money." And he said, "No," said, "I wouldn't believe I'd do that." Said, "I tell you what you do. Why don't you just be still today and see if somethin' will happen." Well, what he did was picked up the phone and called about six or seven people. Mr. Peterson did. And when he did, few days later, six or seven guys called me, and they all bought the stock, and that's how we got in the business.

JH: We had decided that with the help of Winrock enterprises that the best way to raise the money was to sell stock to our potential customers because here he had the idea, and he was able to, you know, get options on land in Stuttgart and all this, but we didn't have the money to start a company. So by coming here to the people that we would be selling the rice hulls to for poultry litter and going to these places, he was able to do it. That was a pretty stressful time. I'll say there's been a lot of happy times in our life, and that was a stressful time because when you got so close and our options were running out, I think that was one of the lowest points I've ever seen him in my life and—when one day—because he never, never says he can't do something. That's just not in his thinking at all or in his vocabulary. But there was one day when he said, "I'm not going to be able to get it all." And I think he—at that point, he thought . . .

[00:40:14] JBH: That's when I called Mr. Peterson.

JH: Uh-huh, and you know, he—just somethin' says, "Yes, I can do it," and he did it. We have so many great stories of people that helped us during that time, though, that we had a man, Earl North. And Earl North started National . . .

JBH: Well, he told me he'd buy \$5,000 worth.

JH: Uh-huh. He started National Old Line . . .

JBH: Yeah.

JH: . . . Insurance Company in Little Rock. He and Jess Odom—you maybe have heard of . . .

DH: Yes.

JH: Okay. And they started that. And Earl North and his family went to church with us in Little Rock, and so we knew him. [00:40:51] And so he told Johnnie that he would buy \$5,000—put in \$5,000 into the company. Well, Earl had had a very serious heart attack, and so he called us. Now here we are, right down—I mean . . .

JBH: I mean, we're down to the wire.

JH: . . . we're to the finish line. We're to the, you know, we are selling our house and putting our equity into the house in . . .

JBH: Well, we put twice as much money in it as we asked anybody else to.

JH: Mh-hmm, 'cause we put—sold our house, put our equity into it. We'd borrowed all we could borrow, you know, to put in it. So Earl calls and sa—wants us to come out to his house, and we go out there, and he said he'd just been to his—to the doctor, and the doctor had told him that he could not get involved in any type of business in anything. He'd had this serious heart

attack. He just couldn't get involved in anything, and he said, "I'm not goin' to be able because," he said, "if I put my money in it, I would want to be involved in it. I would"—that's just the way—the kind of man he was. And you can imagine—two hearts sank right there. I mean, "What are we going to do?" This was like taking the whole thing away from us at that point. But he said, "Here's what I'm going to do. I want you to take the money, and if you make it, you pay me back. If you don't, you don't owe me anything." Now you think about someone that believes in you that much that they'll turn that money over to you and say, "You won't owe me anything."

[00:42:14] Well, as we could we started paying him back. And we would send him—you know, we'd send him a check. I sent him the final check, and we went out of town on a business trip of some kind. And while we're gone, we get a call that he has died. He was in Little Rock for—to see the doctor or something and died in the hotel in Little Rock, and he had died. We come back. We go to his funeral. We get back home, and we have a letter from him that he had written that night from that hotel room thanking us for the check he had gotten and all. And you know, my first thought—I mean, one of the thoughts with him dying was that he never knew we paid

him back, but he did. He knew we paid him back. And that was just important to us that he knew. And we just had several stories. We borrowed money—to finish it out, we needed thirty-five thousand that we had to borrow at Farmers and Merchants.

[00:43:12] JBH: Now you gotta remember, now, J. B. Hunt was a truck driver that couldn't hardly read and write, so you know, we're not in [*laughs*] the limelight anywhere. And I had to go to Little Rock—Stuttgart and borrow the money, so I did have a pretty good suit. So I got cleaned up and went down to this . . .

JH: He always put on his best suit when he was borrowin' money.

JBH: And so I went down there, and I didn't know that—I'd never been to the bank in my life. And I went there and talked to Mr. Diggs, and I told him what my deal was. And he says, "Well, what's your phone number?" And I sa—give it to him. He said, "I'll call you tomorrow." So the next day, he called, said, "You're on. Got the money." That was a big lick because, you know, a guy from outta town—walk in town, borrow money, that—and this guy wo—so that happened. So we go back down to Stuttgart, and Johnelle is with me, and he said, "Get in the car." Drove around a little bit, and he said, "Well, you're going

to need a house." Do you remember that?

JH: Mh-hmm.

JBH: "You're going to need a house." We said, "Mr. Diggs, we don't have a penny. We've sold our house. We borrowed all the money. We don't have a penny." He said, "I didn't ask you that." Said, "You need a house." So he had taken us to a house and said, "You can have that house right there."

JH: He—they'd loan us the money to buy the house.

JBH: They'd loan us the money.

JH: I think it was about \$12,000, and they'd loan us the money.

JBH: And I'm telling you [*laughs*] . . .

[00:44:41] JH: And we said, "No, no." We didn't—you know, we didn't wanna do that. So we had [*coughs*—I will say by Johnnie always working like he did, we always had a nice place to live. We lived—like I said, when we moved to Texarkana, we had two rooms. We moved back to Heber Springs, we had a three-room apartment. We had a living room, bedroom, and a kitchen. And we moved to Stuttgart—I mean, to Little Rock—and we had a five-room apartment—a real nice apartment there. And then we bought our first home when our daughter was six weeks old. And . . .

JBH: Brand new home.

JH: A new home—just been finished, and it was \$12,000 [sneezes]—excuse me—and for this pretty little red brick home—two bedrooms and one bathroom. And then when—after we had Bryan four and a half years later, when Bryan was a year old, we bought a larger house. So we had a three bedroom, two bath. So we were moving up all the time. [00:45:38] But when we moved to Stuttgart, we did not feel like it was right for us to borrow money. We had borrowed all we could borrow—that we felt like we should borrow to start this business. And that first we needed to get our feet back on the ground and moving up again, so we actually just—with him having this good job driving a truck, which was very hard for me to give up because we—I knew that check was comin' every week, and I knew we were gonna be provided for and all, and we're going into a business no one has ever done, that everyone has been told that cannot be done with these rice hulls. And we're going to move to Stuttgart and leave Little Rock, where we were so happy and start all over, you know. That was a big, big step for us. But he kinda brings things to me easy. He kept telling me, when we were getting close to getting the company, you know, and it was going to be in Stuttgart and all. And he said, "Well, we'll live in Little Rock,

and I'll just drive back and forth, but we'll still live in Little Rock." Well, you know, that didn't last long till . . .

JBH: Got the plant built.

JH: . . . we were—yeah, we were on our way. We were—when we started the company, by then I think we knew we had to move. And one thing he's always—he always did—I said dri—if he hadn't been a truck driver, he probably never would've gotten anywhere. It was the best thing that ever happened to him, and I've always told our drivers, "When you're drivin' a truck, you can think of the things to make your life better, or you can think of the bad things in your life." And his was always how to make things better. And he would tr—because he had all that time by himself to think. [00:46:11] And he would come home, you know, he would ring the doorbell, like, at four o'clock in the morning or whatever, and I would get up and go to the door to let him in. And I would open the door, and you cannot imagine how many times I would open the door, and he'd say, "I know how I'm gonna do it. I know how I'm gonna do this. I know what I'm gonna do." And he had driven all night—two nights, you know, away from home—and he had his plan and knew what he was gonna do. And so I guess one of those mornings when I opened the door, he probably said,

"We're gonna move to Stuttgart and sell the house," you know, and so we did. But we started over, and we started back in a rent house, you know, and we rented for five years till we got the company going good and thought we could afford to, and then we built a house.

JBH: Lost \$19,000 the first year.

JH: The first year we lost \$19,000, and all the accounting firm and everybody—we were still working with Winrock Enterprises at that time. They were still helping us, and the president of Winrock Enterprises says, "You have to close the door. You can't make it, you know. You've lost all the money." Well, everything we had and ever dreamed to have was in that company. And we said, "Un-uh. This has got to work." And that's the only time we ever lost money in that business. It— from then on we made it work. [00:48:23] And [*coughs*] I will say this, I never had to work until we started our own company. When he was drivin' a truck, I stayed home and took care of the children, I played bridge, I had my friends and all. And we started that company, and [*clears throat*] I found out I had to help.

DH: What was your role in the rice hull venture at that time?

JH: My role for—excuse me just a minute. [*Coughs*]

JBH: Well, the first thing we had—I had one secretary, one white boy, and three white boys . . .

JH: Three . . .

JBH: . . . colored boys.

JH: Black boys.

JBH: Black boys. That was my entire crew.

JH: And what I first started doing was just going out—his assistant did not like to type. This was a new business, and you know, that was before email and all this stuff you could do—and we had to do a lot of correspondence to get—to let people know about our business, to know what we were doing. [*Clears throat*] So I started typing all the letters and sending out mailing to potential customers. And so I would go and just do letters. I would do the financial statement—type the financial statement at the end of the month, and it was just part time. And I never intended it for it to be more. [00:49:45] It was just when I was needed for things like that, and I'm telling you, I would work as fast as I could work because I was not gonna be there any longer than I had to. And it was just because I loved home, I loved cooking, I loved cleaning my house, I loved taking care of my children. I loved home life and with my children. And so mine was just to be a part time. And then

the time finally came when—you know, it grew—the business grew, and we had more people in the office. And—but our main person there—our executive assistant, I guess we would say, or whatever now—left unexpectedly—had to leave unexpectedly, and I had—and I was working more by then. I had become more involved in it. And so I had to just step in and take over. And he was traveling all the time. He was in Northwest Arkansas so much of the time and all over. He was selling, and by then we had started the business. [00:50:47] See, we had the rice hulls in Stuttgart, but the poultry—the people were here. The customers were here. So we opened a place in Springdale soon after we started or in Fayetteville first, weren't we?

JBH: Fayetteville.

JH: And so we had the distribution place here. So he spent so much time here during the week. And so I was there. And so the first year—and so I just kinda had to take over and start doing everything—doing the selling from there, the shipping, taking the orders, getting the trucks, though we shipped a lot by rail. We shipped all over the United States. I mean, we shipped to Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to New York. By then we were using rice hulls for other things than just poultry litter.

And so I would—I just kinda stepped in and started doing all those things. So for the first year, I was always looking for my replacement. I never intended to stay. And I know just before my daddy died, I think he said, "Johnelle," he told one of the family members, "Johnelle will always be there. She's too far"—you know, I think he realized I had gotten so deep into it I would probably stay with it. And I think then I realized, too, that Johnnie was gone all the time, and one of us needed to be there with it. [00:52:11] And so I learned by doing. I didn't have any education for the things I did. I—when I was growing up I always wanted to be a teacher. When I went to college, I was going to major in elementary education, and that's the direction I was going in because that's—had been what I had always—after third grade and having that favorite teacher, I knew I wanted to be like her. And so here I am—I have to—I knew how to pay bills because I'd been paying bills for a long time. But I took over paying the bills. I would take the—back then, you know, we did all of our bookkeeping in big, black journals. You know, big, black book binders and all, and we posted everything by hand. And with my daddy having a business, he had taught me how to post credits and debits and do a little bit of that. But I had, at one time, after Dennis, my

baby brother, was born, my—and I guess it was that summer and then I didn't go back to school, and so it was kind of like, "Okay, did I want to help my dad at the store, or did I want to help Mother at home?" And maybe I tried it—I don't know—but I know Daddy did teach me about debits and credits—a little about that. But I chose to stay home and help Mother take care of Dennis and help with the housework because that was what I felt best with and what I loved most. So I did that. And so, I mean, I just had to kind of learn by following what had been done before me—copying kinda what someone had done before me—and I would take the books home at night, and I would post the invoices and all. I would take the bills home at night after I would get my children to bed, and he was away during the week. And I would pay bills at night after the children went to bed because during the day I was taking orders, and I was shipping, and I was doing all those other things. So I did a lot of my work at home at night after the children were settled in bed. [00:54:14] So you know, you do what you have to when the time comes, and it's amazing what you can learn because I would never have thought that I could do those things when I was—before I had to because I would've said, "I'm not qualified. I can't do it." But when the

time comes, you know, you can just do anything you have to do. I don't care what it is. If you have to do it, you'll do it.

[*Clears throat*]

DH: Well, that's a unique relationship, to be a team in business and a team in marriage.



[00:54:41] JBH: One of the things that we did—we hired this big company to make this press that we spent our money for, and they never did build the press. They built the press, but it only did about a 50 percent what it was supposed to have done. And a guy came by one day and said—and I was havin' a pretty bad time sellin' my product 'cause I had a return bag, and the bags was big and hard to handle. And a guy come by one day and says, "You know, I know a guy down in Louisiana that you need to go see." And I said, "Why is that?" He said, "That guy's buildin' a press I think might work for you." So I got the guy's name and called him up. He said, "Yeah." Said he'd talk to me. So Johnelle and I got—New Year's Day, wasn't it? Anyhow, we had an Oldsmobile, and we went and got a U-Haul—no, we didn't—we rented a U-Haul trailer. We get down there and this ol' boy, he had done thrown this thing out in the junkyard, and it wouldn't work. And I asked him—I said, "Well, what would you think about me just gettin' a U-Haul

trailer, puttin' this in a trailer and takin' it home with me and lettin' me fool with it a while?" He said, "Well, I'll let you do that." So it wasn't nothing but scrap, you know, just—so we got it up there, and he had about three-fourths of it designed right, but he didn't know where to go to the rest of it at. So I had an ol' boy that couldn't read and write, but he knew how to work on equipment. And I—we unloaded that thing, and we started to work on it. And I guess we was six months of work. [00:56:34] But we developed a machine from that piece of junk that would put out seven bags a minute into a paper bag. That was better than anybody had ever dreamed of puttin' up rice hulls. And we was putting 'em in—we was compressin' 'em 4:1, and Joe Louis, the boxer—and he was a real key to the thing—when we's little boys, we'd listen to him on the radio, you know, the fights? And he said one night that if you would give him a inch from your shoulder, he couldn't knock you down. But, "If you give me two inches, I can"—you know, 'cause force has to have space. So I got to thinking about that. So we'd taken a stainless steel tube and put on this press, and we made a bag just barely went on it—slipped up real—fairly tight. I mean, just a little bit loose. And we could press them huge, big blocks into a little paper bag, it wouldn't bust

because it'd been pressed [*claps*] this way, and we'd slide it down this way. And we shipped them all over the country, and I think we sold them for \$40,000—the presses—sold one—but the rice mills saw 'em, and they said, "Whoa, we've got to have one of them." And I wouldn't sell 'em one because if I did, they'd be my competitor. So I made a deal with the rice mills. Let's see, I had two in Memphis—I mean, two in . . .

JH: DeWitt.

JBH: DeWitt, one in Memphis, [*JH clears throat*] and two in [*JH coughs*] Stuttgart. So I had five of 'em running, and they was spitting out seven bags a minute. So that would be thirty-five bags a minute—was how many bags of 'em. [00:58:28] And I made a deal with them 'cause they had to haul the hulls off and burn 'em, which was a big cost, and I'd give them a nickel a bag for baggin' their hulls in my sack, and I'd furnish the machine. And when they did, they'd put them in a boxcar, and I had twenty-five cents in a bag, a nickel for the man puttin' them in there, and I had a penny—so I had thirty-one cents in 'em, and we'd load them out and sell them for a buck in carload lots, and there'd be one thousand of them in a car, so we'd make \$700 a load and never see 'em. You know, just bill 'em. And then we had two runnin' there and one in Memphis.

And then we was runnin' two there at home . . .

JH: In Stuttgart.

JBH: . . . in Stuttgart, [*JH clears throat*] so all of a sudden, the sales would slow up, and fore you'd know it, you'd have ten or twelve carloads of rice hulls on a bag, and I wouldn't say "stop" because, you know, if I didn't I had to go burn 'em. So that cost us money.

DH: Sure.

Scott Lunsford: We've got to change tapes.

DH: Change tapes.

JBH: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:32] DH: J. B., tell us some of the early memories that you have of your mother and father and growing up and . . .



JBH: Well, we—when we lived on the farm—the first farm I can remember we lived on—it was a nice house with a new—with a porch all the way around the house on all four sides. And in the summertime, you'd get your quilts and pallets when it was hot, and that's where you'd sleep at if you wanted to. That—you have that option, at least. [01:00:04] But I was just thinkin' the other day—when we first moved to that farm, we didn't have a wagon. If we wanted to move something, we did

it on a sled—you know, pulled it behind a team—like haul wood or anything like that. And then later, the next step was gettin' an iron-tired wagon—you know, with the big wheels on it. So you'd haul the corn—went to the bottom and got all the stuff like that, and that's where you took your cotton—you'd take it to the cotton gin. And then times come by, and we started a wagon where you'd go get the axles out from under a car, and you put front and back, and it had rubber tires on it. Now that was like goin' from a car to a airplane—prop, and then the jet was when you had the rubber tires on it. It was so easy and didn't rattle and all that stuff. So I think I got to see the—from the beginning of time to almost the finishing time in my life, because, you know, from a sled to jet airplanes, it's a long ways, tell you the truth. [01:01:20] But you was talking about the family—we had the gardens. Everything we raised was practically eat. We raised—it was a cow or—killed hogs. Well, there's no refrigeration then, so what—if anyone killed hogs or a beef, all the neighbors came and got, you know, their portion of it, ever what it was, and then I'm sure we eat that up in a week or two. And then somebody else would kill somethin'. We'd do the same way. And the deal we had, which was my uncle's—he had a moving—we called 'em

peddlin' trucks.

JH: Rolling store?

JBH: What?

JH: Rollin' store?

JBH: Yes, rollin' store. So he come once a week. Well, you know, that was only way you bought anything. So if you missed somethin' or if he didn't have it, you'd have to go borrow it from your neighbor—if it was coffee or sugar or somethin' like that. So you had to have neighbors to survive back in those days, and we did. We did, and they did, too. But I think the meat thing was—killing the meat, and then in the—when the hogs came by—time to kill hogs—there would be one guy that'd have a smokehouse. You know what a smokehouse is?

DH: Yes.

JBH: It's a big thing, and you'd keep hickory going, and you cure the meat by smoking it and, I'm sure, putting salt on it. But, anyhow, if you had smoked meat, you was a little bit above some of them. So that's how we did that. [01:03:01] And we's talking about—our grandmothers and stuff lived quite a ways from us, but we'd walk up there, and they had all—of course, all those times, when decoration come or these events, everybody'd go clean the graveyards off. And we would make

the flowers ourself by takin' a piece of baling wire and crepe paper, and we'd pull the crepe paper and make roses and, you know, cover the stems. And when lunchtime come, the table would—looked like to me it'd be four or five hundred foot long—maybe it was seventy-five foot, I don't know, but a little ol' boy looking down that table. And they'd have squirrel, chicken, rabbit, and every piece of pie that was possible. And that was what you call dinner on the ground. And you know, they'd sing and all that stuff. But that's how we got the cemetery taken care of. You know, everybody worked for nothing. And then years gone by, and the last time I was there, preacher walked up to me, which was my age, but he's an old man now. He said, "J. B., you member when we used to do the cemetery—make the flowers—big dinners on the ground?" And you know, "I member." And he says, "Now we have to hire the church painted and somebody to clean it up. There's nobody works anymore unless you pay them." And I said, "Well, how much is that going to cost?" And he said, "That's just going to cost you ten dollars." [Laughs] So he went around to everybody—clipped 'em for ten bucks, you know—and I guess everything's changed like that now.

[01:04:56] But they was five of us boys—well, six boys and

one girl, but—and we was kind of scattered from young to ta—to old. But we wasn't as close knit as them, but maybe it was so many of us boys. But I do remember one thing that our family lost us a farm—a homestead, we called it, with some acres and everything. And when he died, I think my daddy had \$127 for me, and I guess he left everybody else about the same, and—which wasn't much. But I—we bought him a headstone with what he left. And the home was paid for, and all the sons signed over the home to our sister, which was next to the baby. So she still lives there. So she's kinda kept our family together since they passed on, and then [*JH coughs*] I had one brother that got sick, and he came back and lived with 'em. But my older brother went to Indiana, and he built jet engines, and he died up there. Then I had another brother just older than me that done the pipeline—all that—never did marry, and he passed away. And then I had a younger brother that did body work and all that in Little Rock, so he's passed away.

JH: And then Aubrey.

JBH: So—what?

JH: And Aubrey.

JBH: And then I had another one that married a rich woman,

[laughter] and he never did work. And he died first, and then she died next. But my other brother said he earned every bit of it, but he didn't have to work for sure. [JH laughs] And that's kind of where my family—so I've got one brother left at Brinkley that's a—he's an accountant with an accounting firm, and my sister's a schoolteacher. She just retired from forty years, and . . .

DH: Now does she still live on the home place?

JBH: Yeah . . .

DH: The old home place?

JBH: . . . still lives on the home place. I call her every day—sometimes two or three times a day if she's around. But she's kind of kept everybody together. And so one time we gave her a ring, and each one of us put a stone in it.

JH: A diamond.

JBH: And that's been really precious to her that all the brothers would get—which was six stones in a small ring, you know. But she still lives there at the home place and . . .

[01:07:24] JH: She built a new home there.

JBH: Yes, and she—well, she went and . . .

JH: She kept the old home place.

JBH: Yeah, she did it and totally redone our home that was—they

left, and then she built a big house. So she's—her husband died, and she's remarried. The guy that was our—grew up with us, and she was in love with him when she was twelve years old, and he must have been fifteen or sixteen 'cause he was the only child, and he run with us ol' boys all the time, and he married, and his wife died, and my sister's husband died, and then they got married. So this has been over a long period of time. But she just retired from teaching school forty years there. So that's kind of where our story is at.



[01:08:27] DH: Okay. Johnelle, you mentioned something about the building of the dam over in Heber Springs, and that was a big deal, I think, at that time.

JH: Yes, when I was growing up and my grandparents did live out in the country, and they lived across the river from Heber Springs—across the bridge and all. And all the time, I—as far as I can remember back when I was a little girl—that we would—on Sundays especially—we might get in the wagon and we would dr—go in the wagon out through the woods and all, and we would come to this place. And my grandparents would say, "Someday they're going to build the dam right here."

JBH: They had stakes drove up.

JH: In the early years, way before the bridge was put across the

river, there was a ferry, and the man's name was Greer, and so they called it Greers Ferry. And he ran a ferry back and forth across there, and so they—we always knew where the ferry had been because that was—there was the bridge by the time I was born. And—but there was always going to be this dam built there. Now when I was about six years old, I believe, and my sister—I may have been seven or eight—and my sister, like I said, was three and a half years older than I am then—all the people in Heber Springs—a lot of people in Heber Springs went to Little Rock on the train to try to get the dam. They were always trying to get the dam put in at Heber Springs, you know. So they all—the business people went to Little Rock, and my daddy took my sister with him on the train. And you know, we just knew they were going to start it every day—I mean, when they came back, it'd be ready to go. Well, we always heard that that's—that the dam was going to be built there, and you know, you just get used to hearing it, and by that time—finally, you think, "Well, it'll never happen," but people talked about it. [01:10:16] And then in 1962, just before—they finally built the dam and John F. Kennedy—President Kennedy came and dedicated that dam just about—just a few weeks before he was assassinated.

JBH: About two weeks.

JH: Just a few weeks fore he was assassinated. And we were livin' in Stuttgart, and we took our children out of school and went there for the day. My dad was on the chamber of commerce, so we were able to have, like, front-row seats for the whole event. And it was a big event, not only to finally have the dam that we had heard about all of our lives, but the other, for the president of the United States to come to a little town like Heber Springs and everybody get to see him, and we were able to have lunch with him. They had a big tent set up that—some of the people there had lunch there and all, and that was just a big event. And I've always been so glad that we did take the children and go to that. That's a memory that they'll always have. We all will. So that was a lot of excitement for that small town, you can imagine, with everything. It changed the town. [01:11:28] You know, when we were growing up and we had the river, and we swam in the river, we didn't—no one had a swimmin' pool, you know. And if you went swimmin', you went in the creeks. We had lots of beautiful creeks to swim in and the river and all. And that changed everything, and it brought in a lot of retired people to the area, which it's a beautiful place for retiring to, you know, beautiful area. And

the mountains and the town is down in a valley, and I've always thought that when I got to the top of that—after I'd married and moved away, and I got to the top of that mountain, and you could see down over the town and that valley and looked down through there that—I thought that God had surely created that for us. It was always comin' back home, and it still is. And it's a beautiful place, but—there— I have lots of fond memories growing up. And as I've said, in our family it was a lot of fun. I think I was the one at the— every time we sat down for a meal—I have—I had a bad habit of kicking. I think I still do. And that was before Dennis was born and with five in the family, someone had to sit across from me, and my brother and my sister would get so mad at me because every time we sat down for a meal, I was kicking one of them, and I was always in trouble for kicking. So I learned to keep my legs crossed—kinda tied around each other to keep from getting in trouble.

[01:12:56] JBH: Tell him about goin' to Edgemont to get the lumber.

JH: Oh, with you to get the lumber—that was when we were dating? Oh yeah, when we were dating, and he was hauling lumber from—now if you go there, you know, there's a lot of people go to Heber Springs or Cleburne County—Greers Ferry



Lake. And now there's the bridge that goes across at Edgemont—they call it Greers Ferry area, and his uncle's planer mill where he hauled the lumber from was right across that bridge, right at the opposite end of it from town. So when we were dating he would take me with him out there to get a load of lumber to go back to—because he'd be going to Illinois, Missouri, or wherever to sell the lumber, so I would go with him out in the truck to get it. Well, after they loaded the truck, his uncle wouldn't allow me to ride with him across the bridge. These were swingin' bridges. [01:13:50] Any way you went out of Heber Springs, you had to go across a swinging bridge. There was only one way out, and it was south to Little Rock, that you didn't have a swinging bridge. So when I was—as I was growing up playing basketball, if—and we played the teams in the county, so three times, you know, every time we went three ways, we had to cross swinging bridges. Well, you would get off the bus, and you would walk across the bridge because it was too dangerous to ride the bus across because that's how bad those swinging bridges were. And I hated walking across those things because you would get just about to the middle of the bridge, and all the boys would start jumpin' and making the bridge swing. And they will swing.

They'll go up and down and all, and it just—I'm very afraid of heights. I'm still very afraid of heights, and I know that's what it's from. It's from all these guys scaring me when I was growing up with having to cross the bridges. [01:14:52]

And—but when I would go out with him to get the lumber, his uncle would never allow me to ride in the truck back across, so his uncle would take me in the car across the bridge, and then we would sit on the other side and listen and watch him come across the bridge because as he came across with that load of lumber, the bridge would start—it would start—see, it was—he would—the truck would take the bridge down, and it would start rising up. So here the truck would be goin' down, and we'd see the bridge coming up like this. And then it was not unusual at all to hear a few planks falling from underneath into the water.

JBH: I mean, this was a scary deal. [*Laughs*]

JH: I mean, and here I am over here waiting for him to come across and listening to all this and watching all this as he comes across the bridge. And I remember at one time when my daddy had a man from—actually from Stuttgart that was buying his—the chickens, you know, from the growers there. And he came to buy chickens one night, and he was out across

the Winkley bridge, we called it, and that was one that went east of town. And about twelve o'clock the phone rang, and this man had a load of chickens and was coming back across that swingin' bridge with that load of chickens, and the bridge fell through with his—him. And he got out of the truck, and he crawl—he swam to the bank—to the edge of the river, and there was a couple parked down there by the river, and they heard him and got him to the hospital, and he lived. But it was just a—those were very dangerous and all, and pretty scary, but that was part of our growing-up days, is having those bridges. Course, the dam came along and the—and it did away with two of 'em. [01:16:36] The Winkley bridge was still there because it was below the dam, and later it—several years ago, there were some young people out there—they'd had a picnic there on a Saturday or something, and they got out on the bridge, and they started the bridge swinging, and the bridge fell, and several were killed.

DH: Oh my.

JH: And so it is no longer—you cannot, you know, go out on it. It's gone now. But back to times of growing up and all and spending time with the grandparents on the farm and the things of the fun times in town and all and—my mother was



just so much fun. She was always president of the PTA. She was involved in everything that we did. And one thing she always taught us is that we could do anything we wanted to do, and we could do it better than someone—like, if I was in a play, she would say, "You can do it better than anyone else, or they would be doing it." And so I think she gave us—built a lot of confidence in us and gave us confidence with all that. And—but, now, as Dennis came along, and Mother would take Dennis, my baby brother, and his friends, sh—out on Halloween night, and she would get one of the trucks, you know, the pickup trucks—the smaller trucks, you know—and she would put—and my dad was into, like I said, poultry, eggs—all that sort of thing. So she would get cases of eggs out of his store and put them in the back of the truck, and she would let the boys get back there, and on Halloween night they'd drive around town—she'd drive around town and let 'em throw eggs. [*DH laughs*] And she was just that kind of person that she would do that. [01:18:18] And there was a time when [*laughter*] David and I would go—were at the movie, and Mother was coming to get us—pick us up, and she drove up in front of the movie, and we had—back then, you know, we didn't have—it wasn't—the town wasn't big enough for

policemen and all that, so we had what we called a night marshal that kinda thought he was in charge, and I guess he was to some point. And so Mother's there in front of the movie theater, and he comes up, and he gets—and he comes up to my mother's car, and he says—her name was—my mother's first name was Ollie—"Ollie, you have to move. You can't park here." And she said, "Well, I'm waiting on Johnelle and David to come out and pick them up, you know." He said, "No, you can't do this. You can't wait here. You have to move." And she says, "They'll be out in just a minute, and I'm goin' to wait for them." And we had running boards on the car, you know, that you could step up on fore you got in the car. And he stepped up on that running board and kind of stuck his head in the window, and he said, "Now, Ollie, you have to move right now." By about that time, David and I had come out, and we had gotten in the back seat, and with that, and we slammed the door—Mother just takes off with him up on the running board, and she just goes down the street. And back—we made U-turns, too. She goes down to the corner, and she makes a U-turn, and she just throws him off in the middle of the street, and she just takes us on home. [01:19:40] Well, the next morning the mayor called [*laughs*], and he said—my daddy's

name was Johnie, just like his—and he's, "Johnie, we've got a problem." [*Laughter*] Told to—called the man's name, and said, "He says that Ollie threw him off the car," you know, and said, "We've gotta, you know—he's pretty upset about it." And my mother told the mayor that when that man came in and paid my daddy the money that he owed him, that she would pay a fine. And that ended that little incident right there.

[*Laughter*] So we had another time with Mother. Lots of funny stories about Mother like that. She just took charge and did what needed to be done. And there was a time when we all went to Harrison, and back then, our roads were not very good. We didn't have blacktop roads to go from Heber Springs to Harrison, you know. But again, this was a different night marshal. I don't know why we—[*laughs*] she kinda had a problem they—with these people. I didn't think she did. She got along—Mother got along with everybody and loved everybody. But he drove our school bus—I guess the regular school bus driver drove the football team, and then this other man drove the pep rally—I mean, the pep squad and all and cheerleaders, and I was a cheerleader, and David was, and he drove all of us to Harrison to the football game. While we—and Mother—my daddy's cousin and my mother were just best

friends, and so she was along—they went along as chaperones. So, while we were at the football game, I guess the night marshal had a little something more to drink than he should've had, and by the time we got back to the bus, my mother and Katherine decided that he wasn't able to drive the bus. So you know, rather than call the school and get everybody all in an uproar in the town to see what's going on, they just took charge. And Kat—they put him in the back of the bus, and Katherine sat back there with him, and Mother drove the bus. And every time he raised up, Katherine just hit him over the head with a purse and just laid—put him back down. [*DH laughs*] And Mother drove the bus all the way back home. And do you know there was nothing said about it—nothing done about it? She just took care of the situation and got all of us home safely. So there—anything like that, my mother could handle and she could take care of.

[01:21:51] DH: She took control.

JH: And my dad was just a real fun person. He just—he made all of us happy when he walked in the door. He—my sister loved to cook as we got older, and she liked to cook. And Dad would come home for lunch, and my sister would make a chocolate pie and make rolls or whatever, you know. And he would walk

home for lunch. And he would—you know, we would have lunch, and Daddy would start back to work, and my sister would let him get all the way up the block to the corner, and she'd holler, "Daddy!" And he would turn around, and he would come back, and he'd say, "That sure was a great lunch." [Laughter] And you know, if he forgot to say it, she would wait until he came back. And I—he was the kind of person that—like, when we were dating, and I would come in, you know, at night, and it would be cold wintertime—and he would be asleep. And I would go in, and I'd say, "Daddy, would you come and warm a hot towel for my feet?" And he would get up out of bed and warm that towel and wrap up my feet, and I would be able to go to sleep really good because Daddy had tucked me in. [01:23:06] And you know, people say their children are perfect and will never do anything wrong. And that's one thing I think I learned from my parents, don't ever say that about your children because, you know, just about the time they do—you say that—they'll do something to change your mind. And Halloween was a fun time in Heber Springs. It was different than towns are now. But at Halloween, we could just—anything that was out, we could just pick it up and take it and block Main Street. And no one minded, you know, if there

were lawn chairs people had out, you just picked them up and you took them and you blocked off Main Street. That was the kinda things we did—that, and soaping windows. The man that had the cleaners gave out soap. Everybody that came by, he gave out soap, and then you soaped all the windows in town and just drew on 'em, marked on 'em. So my daddy always had salesmen that called on him that would be there from out of town, and we took 'em in as family members, you might say. So it was Halloween night, and so he told this friend from Morrilton that had no children—just he and his wife, and he was an older man, and they didn't have children—"Let's go down and watch the kids." You know, the parents would go down and watch what the kids were doing on Halloween night. So they were down there watching it all. [01:24:23] Well, my friends and all had found a wagon up by—up on a corner there, and it had really nice tires on it. They called them caissons then—caissons were tires on tra—on trail—wagons . . .

JBH: Rubber tires.

JH: Rubber tires. So we had found this wagon up there, and so we just, you know, proceeded to push that down the street. Well, we went right down by my daddy's store, and we were takin' it down there to put in there, and my daddy saw this group

coming with this wagon, and he said, "Oh, my lands. They have someone's good wagon." He said, "Oh, I am so glad my children won't—are not involved in something like that." And about that time I hollered, "Hi, Daddy!" [*Laughter*] So he learned not to do that. [01:25:08] There was another time that—oh, this was just, you know—all of us. I mean, there were a lot of kids involved in this. And we had a railroad through the town at that time. And they had, like, the push car, you know, that they went up and down the railroad on. Well, this took a—just, you know, lot of kids in town. I guess most of us were involved this. But one Halloween, we just went over to the railroad tracks, and we just all got that. And we had to push it a quite a ways back to town, but we all were—'cause that thing was iron steel—I mean it was heavy. But we pushed that all the way back to town, and as we go down Main Street—and I know one father that worked for the railroad was standing out on the street, and he was like, "Oh, my lands! This is a federal offense. They'll all go to the penitentiary." Because we were all, you know, "Hey, Daddy! Hey!" You know, "Here we are." We pushed that thing all the way down there. But you know what? It was just like—I guess somebody got it back the next day. We never heard any more

about it. So we had a lot of fun doing things that we were never—we never did things really mean, we just were mischievous. When the—my Dirty Dozen gang—did a—we did a lotta funny things. But you know, when Coke machines and all first came out, and you slid the drink across like this, you know.

DH: Yes.

JH: You could open up the top and then just slide it across. Well, service stations and all would have 'em out in front of the station. Well, you know, you could take a bottle opener and a straw and just go through town. [*Laughter*] And gas—you know, to get gas, you could always—we'd all—of course, not that many people had cars, so there would always be a one—bunch in one car. Just—all you did was drive around at night or something. And you could go by different gas stations, and you could just get—just drain a little bit more to go a little bit farther. We did a lot of fun things like that.

DH: Well, Johnelle, you . . .

[01:27:04] JH: Now I think that they maybe took some watermelons out of fields. Isn't that what you-all did? You took the . . .

JBH: Now you was talking about how . . .

JH: You didn't really steal them, you just took watermelons out of

fields.

JBH: Halloween night, that's what we did out—but we did stuff like that, too. But anyhow, one time—like, we was, say, twelve years old or fourteen years old, and another group about four years older put dresses on like women. And so we run into this group, you know. And we was gonna run those girls in. And I knew one of the little girls, that I could handle her. Well, they had one short guy, but he was about four years older than I am. So we was gonna run those girls in, and the first time he hit me, I mean, it was like a top. [*Laughter*] "Whoa, there's something wrong here." They beat the tar out of us because, you know, we was just big ol' boys. [01:28:01] But the worst time on Halloween night that I've ever been in—there was a young couple got married, and once they got married, they just kept running with us ol' boys, you know. So Halloween time come—Dalton and Jetty Nard said, "Let's go over to Uncle John's and get his wagon." And he—Mr. John was kind of the up guy around in the community, so we go over there and cow manure was about a foot deep. [*DH laughs*] He gets over there, and he gets about ten or twelve of us ol' boys and his wife, and we were tryin' to get this wagon out of this cow lot and take it down the road. And we didn't know he'd went over

and told Mr. John that we was gonna—he was gonna come out and shoot the shotgun, you know. So we're all bent over pushing as hard as we could. He came out and shot the gun, and the guy that was with us hit us with whippoorwill peas, you know. *[DH laughs]* We thought we was shot. *[Laughs]* We—some of them run. You know, everybody was scared to death.

DH: Right.

JBH: And he fell over like he was shot, so we didn't know whether to run—well, it was a wonder we hadn't had a heart attack. But we'll never forget that, I tell you. You know, when you—a guy backs off with a handful of peas and just splatters all of you after that gun gone off.

[01:29:25] JH: *[Laughs]* It kind of makes me think about my brother that was two years younger than I am, David. And David and I played together all the time. Now my sister was the smart one, you know. She was the one that made straight A's and played the piano. We all took piano. That was a must in our family. You had to take piano. But my sister practiced, and I just took the lessons, you know. And I was always out with my brother, we were riding stick horses, we were playing cowboy and Indians or whatever. But we were—I was just more an outdoor person. And David and I were out with—and

one of his friends was along. We were there in the woods by our house playing one day. And David had a BB gun, and he and this friend started wrestling. They were not mad, they were just playin', and they started wrestling, and the BB gun went off [*laughs*], and it shot me right here, [JH points to the middle of her chest] and I ran all the way home [*JBH laughs*] because I knew I was going to die, and I wanted my mother to see me before I did. I guess I wanted to tell on David before I died. [*DH laughs*] And I never forget—I still tease David about that, that I ran all the way home to tell Mother. [*Laughter*] Lots of fun with—growing up with a sister and a brother, but my brother and I sort of had that—because we were closer in age, and we kind of had the same friends and did a lot together that way. [01:30:45] And my sister, being that much older—seems like that I was always doing everything with him rather than her. And then after we married and we moved to Little Rock, and she lived in Little Rock, and we became so close. And we lived a block—after we bought our new house we lived a block apart, and I just became dependent, I guess, on her for suggestions as what to do, as I'd been with my mother because I had her so close to me. And from that time on, we are—my sister and I are very close. We love to be together.

We can just never have enough time to talk and visit. And one time we were goin' to New York, and my brother-in-law said, "I don't know why you're going to New York." He said, "You could go to Quitman," which is fifteen miles from Heber Springs and a very small town. He said, "You know, you could get a motel room over there and save a lot of money because you're gonna do the same thing in Quitman that you'll do in New York. You're just gonna sit and talk all the time." [DH laughs] And sure enough, we went to New York, and it's about noon that day, and we're still sitting in the hotel room talking. [JBH laughs] And I said, "We've gotta get out of here. We're doing just what he said we would do." But it's—there's nothing like havin' brothers and sisters that you can just never get enough time with.

[01:32:04] DH: Very true. So you played basketball . . .

JH: I played basketball.

DH: . . . and were in drama and . . .

JH: Oh, I did. I mean, you know, just did a little bit of everything—I did. I played basketball. I certainly was not the star player, but I was on the team, and that's all that matters, you know. I say it's just to be part of something. You don't have to be the best; just be part of it. And I loved those times

of playing basketball. And with—I had my nose broken
[laughs] twice playing basketball, and really—both times at
practice, not in the game. I said I wasn't a star player. I knew
how to sit on the bench, but it was fun when I did get to go in.
And I was an outdoor person.

DH: J. B., were you involved in any sports at all growing up?

JBH: No, no. We just had basket—but we did it on the dirt floor, you
know, the grounds. You know, we didn't have a court. We just
had—well, like you would have out in a yard with rocks on it.

[01:33:05] JH: And you know, when he was talkin' about the rollin'
store and everything coming by—and everybody—the people in
the country all came to town on Saturday. And just like you
came to town—now whether your parents always there or not,
but you might get a ride with somebody else. But in a small
town like that, Saturday was like being in New York City.

JBH: Everybody came to town that could go to town.

JH: And it was like the streets were crowded with people, and I
know that's hard to imagine for anyone now, but the streets
would just be crowded with people on Saturday to walk up and
down the streets because all the people in the country came to
town to do their grocery buying—their shopping. And, I guess,
a lot of visiting because they would spend the day. And they

would come in wagons . . .

JBH: Yeah.

JH: . . . or maybe on tractors or whatever. But they would all come on Saturday. And I can remember that so well, how you just knew you would see everybody. And that's when the men got their hair cut.

JBH: And people come to gossip, like the women would . . .

JH: Visit.

JBH: . . . visit with each other. Relatives all meet there on Saturday.

JH: And they'd go to the . . .

JBH: Yeah.

JH: . . . movies on Saturday. 'Cause that was the only . . .

JBH: That's the way it really . . .

JH: Really, they didn't go to town during the week.

[01:34:20] JBH: But I think all small towns were the same way, though, back in those days.

JH: Yes, they were. They were all that way. That—they didn't go to the—they didn't go to town during the week, you know.

JBH: Everybody was workin'.

JH: Everybody worked all week . . .

DH: Sure.

JH: . . . and then came to town on Saturday.

SL: What about Sundays?

JH: And Sundays—everybody went to church.

JBH: Went to church.

SL: Were the churches in the town, or . . .

JBH: No, communities—still are.

JH: Everybody had—still have their own.

JBH: Yeah.

JH: So they went to church, and he went church, and . . .

JBH: The neighborhoods, you know.

JH: Area—everybody had their little church . . .

JBH: Maybe a dozen farms in a area or two dozen—they'd all go to one church.

JH: And everybody went to church on Sunday, and then everybody had a big Sunday dinner.

JBH: Yeah.

[01:34:58] JH: Sunday and—and that's when families got . . .

JBH: And the preacher went home with somebody.

JH: Yeah. You always did. You had—you took . . .

JBH: Yeah. And you know, I remember where we was at—and I—everybody was poor. Don't get me wrong. But our preacher—I think he worked, too—but we would have a—what did you—we

call that where everybody brought somethin'?

JH: Pounding or—when he came new or . . .

JBH: No, no, I mean to keep from starvin' to death. They used a word, anyhow. But everybody—maybe some guy would bring a gallon of molasses or somebody would bring a ham of meat. And—was it poundin'?

JH: Well, that's what you did for someone when they got married. You had a pounding when someone got married.

JBH: Well, that's what they did. 'Cause he had a . . .

[01:35:42] DH: Was it a potluck?

JBH: No, no, no. This was just raw . . .

JH: Just to bring food to them.

SL: Food drive.

JBH: Uncooked. Uncooked.

JH: To take care of . . .

DH: Uncooked food.

JBH: Yeah. But it might have been a bushel of peas or somethin'.

JH: Well, you did. You just took care of your pastor.

JBH: Yeah, that's the way we did it.

JH: You took care of him. You brought him food or whatever they needed, you know. And you did because they couldn't pay him very much—and they did, normally . . .

JBH: I don't know whether we paid him anything.

JH: In the small communities, they would have another job, and then they would be the—a pastor on Sundays or whatever. Now ours was full time in Heber Springs. But when someone got married, they would have a pounding, and they would bring 'em . . .

JBH: I think that's what we called it, too.

JH: . . . bring 'em food—bring 'em whatever to help them start out, you know, and it would be a surprise.

JBH: It might even be canned goods that you'd canned yourself.

JH: Yeah. Yeah. Jars or whatever.

[01:36:33] DH: Were there several denominations represented in each one of your communities, or was it . . .

JH: Oh yes, in mine there was . . .

JBH: Not in mine. Mine was all Baptist.

JH: But in Heber Springs, you had all denominations, you know.

DH: Okay.

JH: And you had, you know . . .

JBH: I'd say there'd be a church about ever six to eight mile—maybe ten mile.

JH: And your churches were used for so much. You had graduation at the church, you know. You had, oh, piano recitals at one of

the churches. So they were used for civic things—for the things in the town.

[01:37:11] JBH: But now, we had one-room schools, and everybody went to the school with one teacher. So she taught from eighth—from first to the eighth.

JH: First. And then the people—I would have known him if he had not dropped out of school to start working, you know. But he had to start—that was Depression days, and he had to drop out of school and start helping make a living for the family, and that was not unusual for boys his age to start working in the woods cutting timber and all.

JBH: No, everybody worked, though.

JH: But the people from the—kids from his area came to Heber Springs to high school. They didn't have a high school there, and so they went to these smaller schools till the eighth grade, and then they came to—and so I knew his cousins. I went to school with all of his cousins because they came to Heber Springs to school, and they came—that was before the dam. They didn't have to come but about fifteen miles, you know. They were bused there for school. And then when I was a—my senior year was the last year those came to our school because they opened a school at Greers Ferry, and they all went to

school there.

JBH: But my younger—went to college and then one of them—like, my sister went to college—went to become a teacher. My younger brother—he went to college and become a accountant. So there was a lot of variety in this ol' bunch, I tell you—and all of our cousins.

JH: Yeah, he has a lot of cousins—lot of relatives in that area.

JBH: But we all kind of lived like a strip of Hunts—you know, along the road. I think there was about four of us—one, two, three, four—about four or five of us lined up on this—what, about a two-mile strip?

[01:39:03] JH: And after he came back from the army, he pretty well lived with an aunt and uncle.

JBH: Yeah, at Heber then.

JH: Well, no, I was talking about Ruth and Dee.

JBH: Oh—yeah, but I lived with my cousin at Heber there after the war.

JH: Later on. Mh-hmm. You did. He did. He lived with his cousin, and that's when I met him. And he never did really live at home after he came back from the service.

JBH: From the army.

DH: From—so you . . .

JBH: But they lived out in the country.

JH: They lived farther away.

JBH: Yeah. But I stayed with my cousin, and he was a cow buyer, and that's how I got in the sale barn business.

JH: He lived with an aunt and uncle—he was living with an aunt and uncle, too, for part of that time, and they loved him. And he did them.

[01:39:45] JBH: But one big mistake I almost made—my uncle had—I mean, my cousin—and he and I was real close. And see, he had three brand new trucks and trailers, and one day he said, "I'm gonna make you a deal." And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "If you'll come go to work for me, I'll give you half of them trucks." Well, boy, that was temptin', but I was drivin' for East Texas Motor Freight then, and I almost done that. I mean, here we are, got a chance to come back home and drive for myself. And she—we'd've been living at Heber, and if I had've, I'd just been another cattle hauler. Well, maybe not.

JH: You never know what life will bring.

DH: What . . .

JH: But there's been so many times in our lives that things could've gone in a different direction, and you make the choice. And we've made choices along the way and . . .

DH: Well, you still would've had that vision of the . . .

JH: Of what he wanted to do.

DH: . . . the shavings and which . . .

JBH: Yep. But you know . . .

DH: . . . finally became the rice hull business.

JH: And I can remember that was a very big decision for him to make at that time because we had moved back to Heber for just that short time before he went to work for Superior Forwarding Company, and he was still driving for East Texas Motor Freight. And you know, to think about we could be there at home with all the family and . . .

JBH: Well, I could've went to work for your daddy.

JH: . . . he had an opportunity. He could've worked for my dad.

[01:41:06] We'd been married three weeks, and we had taken all of our—you know, everything he had saved for us to get married, and we had—he could not—driving by the mile like he did, you don't miss a day's work. You do not miss a trip. When you have an opportunity to drive that truck, you go, you know. And East Texas Motor Freight went on strike. They were not union, and they went on strike to join the union. And here we were—that meant he didn't have any work. And we had to go back home. We left our little apartment, and we

went back home. And we . . .

JBH: It was two weeks, wasn't it?

JH: . . . lived with Mother and Daddy for about two weeks, and he worked for my dad and—during that two weeks' time because we couldn't've have bought groceries if we hadn't've gone home, I guess. And then they settled the strike, and we went back to Texarkana.

[01:41:59] JBH: One thing I wanted to tell you, though—we was down at Stuttgart. And we was making money. Well, we thought it was a lot of money—it was some—but anyhow, a guy walks up to the—in the office one day, and he's got a handful of green shavin's, and the guy said, "Someone told me in town you might could sell these for us 'cause we've got a lot of them." And I said, "Well, where you got 'em at?" And he said, "Well, I've got them down here at a certain place." And I said, "Those are wet. You—I can't sell them for chicken litter." But I was kind of curious what the guy was doing, and he said—he told me where it was at, and I said, "I'll be by and see you." I go in there, and they've got this big place rented, and they've got these huge, big lathes—I'd say about six of them, I think—and they're makin' pegs to go in tunnel in Japan.

JH: Mh-hmm. That . . .

JBH: And these pegs are forty-two inches long, six inch at one end and eight at the other one. And then they was making another one twelve inches long, and it was, like, four inches in the middle, and it went to three inches, so they was dowel pins for big tunnels. You know, they built a big tunnel . . .

DH: Yes.

JBH: . . . at—in Japan. So every night I'd get off from work, I'd go by there, and I had a little ol' stopwatch, and I'm watchin' him make these pegs. So you know, I'm timin' him, seein' how he's gettin' along. [01:43:38] And one day I looked up there, and he had these executives runnin' these machines, the pilot was runnin' them, and they was from Racine, Wisconsin. And I said—some—well, they was gripin' to me about havin' to work there, I guess. And I said, "Why don't you get somebody to do that?" And he said, "Well, you think you could?" And I said, "I don't know. I might look at that myself." So we got to talkin'. And wasn't long, the president of the company came down there to see what was going on. And some way or another he called me, and I went out to the hotel where he was at, and he said, "Are you interested in doing these pegs?" And I said, "Yeah, I'd bid on those pegs." And he said, "Well, I've got a guy over at Memphis wants to do those pegs." And I said, "Is

that right?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "Well"—told—I said, "What did he want to do them for?" And he told me, and it was some figure that was pretty low. And I said, "Well, have you ever been around our town"—it was hot and sticky in Stuttgart. You know how it is. We get out, and I drive him around the little ol' town a little bit and got acquainted with him a little more, and he says, "You never did tell me what you was gonna do those pegs for." I said, "I'm ashamed to tell you."

[Laughs] He said, "Why are you ashamed of it?" And I said, "You better go back over to Memphis and get that guy to do them pegs." I said, "I'm way out of the ball park." And he said, "Well, what was your figure?" So I told him. It was about three times what this guy in Memphis—or he said this Memphis guy'd do it. And he said, "Well, you know what? I don't know whether that ol' boy at Memphis would do that or not, but"—says, "I know one thing—I don't want to come back to Stuttgart and get somebody else to do 'em." Said, "I think I'm gonna let you do [laughter] it." I said, "Okay. No problem." [01:45:34] So we moved the machines—that weekend or the next weekend we moved 'em. And they was—they was hard running. They sounded like a wi—a tiger ya—squealing because a lot of noise, you know. And this guy was

bringing me 4 X 4s—6 X6s—white oak, green, and we're goin' along there pretty good. But the sharp edges for a—a die has to cut them little squares off before you get down to—you know, and it takes the same length of time. So I called that ol' boy up one day, and I said, "You wanna save some money?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Why don't you bring me the log?" See, he was taking the logs to the saw mill and then loading them up and bringing me them. So I cut him a sweetheart deal, but I got more money, and so that really worked out. [01:46:24] And I was goin' along there pretty good, and he said, "Oh yeah, I want you to make these boxes for me." And I said, "Well, what kind of box?" He said, "I want you to make me a box, a 4 X 4. Go get you a piece of plywood." I went down to the lumber company, and I bought me a three-quarter-inch plywood. And he says, "Now I want you to build them, and I want you to put a plastic linin' on 'em. I want you to put so many straps around 'em." I did. He said, "Now what would you build—make them for me for?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." And I figured it up—you know, just—it'd taken—let's see, four piece—it had taken two 4 X 8s to do that. And I figured it up retail, you know, just like I'd bought 'em. I told him what I'd do it for. And he said, "Well,

sounds all right." So I'm goin' along, and I'm makin' these boxes. A guy come by one day and he said, "J. B., you need to go down at Crossett." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "They've got all that culled plywood down there, and you can get it for nothin'." You know, practically nothin'.

DH: Yes.

JBH: So we started goin' down there. So the plywood mills—when they make the plywood, if it's not perfect on top and bottom, it goes in stack two—you know, culls. And I went down there, and you talk about makin'—there's where I made my money is makin' them boxes and takin' the—switchin' from the square log to the round log. And I think we made \$100,000 in about three years, and \$100,000 back then was a lot of money, and that's how we . . .

[01:48:00] DH: What were those boxes used for?

JBH: Well, I had to—after I made the pegs, I had to . . .

DH: Oh, to put them in the boxes.

JBH: Yeah, I had to ship 'em.

JH: We had to put them—'cause he put 'em on containers.

DH: So you shipped . . .

JH: We put them on containers and shipped 'em to Japan.

JBH: Yeah, I think—did we make fifty-five thousand of them pegs?

We was about two or three years doin' it.

DH: And you were involved in the rice hull business at the same time?

JH: We had the rice hull business, and we did it in our own plant.

JBH: We had a big shed connected to it that we wasn't really usin', so we just put those big . . .

JH: Machines.

JBH: Done it right there in the plant. So that give us a good shot in the arm.

[01:48:34] JH: He always was working on some other idea, just like with the . . .

JBH: Well, we did the hen nests from Germany. We did the feeder lids, the light bulbs . . .

JH: We sold an automatic hens' nest that was made in Germany.

JBH: Germany.

JH: And—just like when we were livin' in Little Rock, and we sold lawn sod, and that's really what brought us to Winrock Enterprises, to getting the money to raise our—money in our company. So you know, there's a step to everything. Something leads you to something else. But we were—we had been on a first vacation. We had been married two years, and we'd never had—we didn't have a honeymoon when we

married. We had—and we married in the house that I mentioned I was born in. My grandparents and my—had this home, and in 1926 on Thanksgiving Day, and all the family was gathered at my grandparents'—and this was before I was born—and there was a bad tornado that came through Heber Springs and just blew away most of the town, and my grandparents' home, and my family members were all just scattered all over, you know. And so after that they built this—another house back there in the same location, and that's the house they—that I was born in because the day I was born, they actually moved to the country. And my mother and daddy had already moved into that house. And so I don't know, I'd just always had this—that I wanted to get married in the house that I was born in. Later when I was six years old, my—we—they sold the house, and we moved in different houses around town. We didn't live in the same house always. But when I was about thirteen, they bought that house back, and we moved back. [01:50:19] So we married in that house. And we had a—just family at the wedding and close friends because we couldn't have everybody in town. But the doctor that had delivered me had just built a new home, and he had this beautiful, new home, and so he had the—wanted to have our

reception, and invited everybody because we knew everybody. And so we had a really nice wedding reception and all. And so, we—when—then we just had—he just had a weekend off because he had to go drive that truck, or we couldn't have bought the groceries when we moved to Texarkana.

[01:50:59] So we went to Little Rock. We were going to Hot Springs, but we were going to Little Rock and spend the first night and go to Hot Springs the next day. Well, as we get to Conway, we have a flat, and we ruin a tire. [JBH laughs] So we didn't have a spare tire, so we decided—we were smart enough to decide that if we spent the night in Little Rock, that we'd better not go on to Hot Springs.

JBH: We didn't have the money to buy a tire. [Laughs]

JH: Yeah. [Laughter] So we went back to Heber Springs, and then we got a tire. Probably, Daddy bought us a tire, I imagine. I don't remember. And then on Monday, we left. We stayed there one night, and we went to Texarkana. But with that, we never did have a honeymoon. And so after we were married two years, Jane, our daughter, was born, and so when Jane was about six months old, we left her with my mother and daddy, and we went to Colorado Springs for our first vacation. And we were coming back down around Sherman, Texas, I



think—somewhere down in Texas somewhere coming back. We kind of circled back down through that way, and we got behind a funeral procession. And with that, there was so much traffic and all, we just—there was a nursery there, and . . .

JBH: Just barely movin'. It was not a fast-movin' funeral.

JH: No, so we just drove in there, and they had St. Augustine grass. It just takes one little stop to change our life. I mean, just—you know, I never know which one it'll be, that it will just change everything. [01:52:25] And we drive in there, and he sees this St. Augustine grass. With that, he—and we bought some and took back home. 'Cause we . . .

JBH: Yeah, I bought a yard.

JH: Uh-huh, 'cause we had our house by then, and he took some home. Well, with that, he decides, "Well, we should just be selling this in Little Rock." They didn't really have St. Augustine in Little Rock. So we go to Texas and—down south of Houston, and we look at little grass farms. And so we bought the St. Augustine grass, and with that, he found a man that had a truck running from Houston to—a truck and trailer running from Houston to St. Louis—Pennzoil Oil Company.

JBH: Empty.

JH: Empty.

DH: Empty.

JH: He was going up empty to pick up Pennzoil oil to—because he its distributor in Houston. So he lined him up to haul the sod. So we go to Texas, and we buy the sod, and we get our trailer load in, but now he's already been around to all the nurseries and the different people to sell the sod. So we sell a trailer load, and we sell another. And so that became a pretty good business for us. It was just extra money that we made during the summer. And he would go out and sell it and then the truck—he would be in St. Louis, and the truck would come in, and I would meet the truck. [01:53:42] And there was a place down on the corner of Markham and Main in Little Rock, across from the bus station in Little Rock, and these men that wanted to work would line up—just line up down there. And if you wanted somebody just to work for the day, you could drive up, and you could tell them what you wanted and what you would pay, and they'd just—you know, rush to get in the car because they were needing jobs. So I would have someone to take care of my two little children, and I would go down, and I'd—I would say, "I'm gonna—we're un—gonna unload lawn sod. I'm going to pay you this much money, and I need, like, five people"—six—you know, five people I could get in the car.

And we would go, and we would follow the truck—I mean, we'd go to nurseries, you know. One man I went to—and, I mean, I didn't know who these people were I was putting in my car. And one place I would go—one man—one nursery—one of the large ones in Little Rock would always when we'd finish—and I'd stand there, and I'd—they'd unload it, and I would count it off, you know, because we'd unload so much here and so much here and so much here. And he would always pay me in cash, so I'd have all this cash in my purse. And I ended up over in North Little Rock—it would be dark—it would be eight o'clock at night when we'd finish unloading that truck. And it'd be night—dark and all—and I'd take these men back down to Markham and Main, and I would pay 'em, and I'd go home. And you know, that's another thing—you just do what needs to be done.

DH: Right.

[01:55:06] JH: And so, that was my first—you know, I ended up being credit manager—collecting all those years for J. B. Hunt Transport—you know, and for the rice hull company and all. But that was my first experience with collecting money was one of the nurseries in Little Rock had not paid us. And he said, "You have to call them and collect—and get the money." And I'm, like, "I'm a nice person. I would never ask anyone to pay

me. No way. I couldn't do that." [*Laughter*] I think that was one of—the first thing that ever realized—this is a job I don't want to ever have, and it ended up being my biggest job. And, sure enough, I called the man, and I got the money. And so we—that—but with that, we were selling the St. Augustine grass, and then Winrock Enterprises was in the Zoysia grass business big time up on—at Petit Jean. So he decides he'll go up and talk to them.

JBH: No, they call me.

JH: Well, yeah, we were selling so much I guess they called you to come and sell their Zoysia grass. They were selling Zoysia. So he goes up there, and he makes a deal with them to sell the Zoysia grass. You want to tell them about that?

[01:56:15] JBH: Well, I get up there, and they got this nice office sitting in about forty acres of grass, and the grass was a year or two old—shoulda done been sold. And I go up there and talk to the president. And he said, "I—can you sell this grass?" And I said, "I don't know. I'm selling St. Augustine." And he said, "Well, let me give you a list of some people I don't want you to sell 'em because I'm already selling them," you know. And I said, "Okay." And he says, "Now, you gotta work on commission." I said, "That's okay." So, so help me, I got that

list, and I know who I'm not supposed to call on. But everybody I met from then on wanted a load of grass. They'd been going up there in pickups and selling a pickup load at a time. So everybody I seen seemed like they wanted to buy some of that grass. So I sent a truck or two up there and got a big truckload. But one guy said, no, he wanted a tremendous lot of it. I sent 'em a lowboy up there, and they put so much grass on this guy that the road would just kind of roll up behind him 'cause he was way overloaded, you know. *[DH laughs]*
[01:57:26] And right after that, I guess I'd been working about a week or two—they owed me \$1,000—they owed me eleven hundred and something dollars. And I get this big letter, says, "Your contract has been discontinued." So, boy, I said, "Okay." So I called him up, and he that said they're out of grass. They don't . . .

JH: He sold too much.

JBH: Too much. So I go up there, and I'm 'bout half mad, and I get there, and I see—well, they've still got lots of grass left. We had a bunch of it gone. I said, "Well, what's the problem?" "Well," he says—you know, something about they didn't wanna cut any more grass or something like that, you know. And they said, "Why don't you go to work for us?" And I was

already about half hot because, you know, I knew they had lied to me 'cause I could see the grass out there. [*Laughs*]

DH: Sure.

JBH: And he says, "Why don't you go to work for me?" And I said, "Well, I got a job." And he said, "Well, why don't you just go to work working for us selling grass." And, course, I was hot headed, and I said, "Mr. Reynolds, you don't have enough grass for me to sell today. You've done fired me because [*laughs*] you don't have enough." Well, he didn't want to pay that commission. He owed me \$1,100, so that was about the end of that. [01:58:57] So we go back down to Texas, and Johnelle's father told me somethin' was very important, and I guess you should tell all your children that. When we got married, he said, "If you ever get in a tight, you write a check on me and call me." I said, "Okay." So I'd never got in a tight. So—but Johnelle and I go to Texas, and we're buyin' this grass. And we run onto a farm of Zoysia grass—you know, the real stuff. And the guy said, "Well, that ol' boy can't sell that Zoysia grass." I said, "Let me go look at it." We went over there and looked at it, and man, I cut me a deal that was worth a fortune. I said, "Well, what would—what do you want for that?" And he told me, and I hired the guy that was—I'm

buying grass off—he's gonna cut it and load it for me. So I had to call Johnelle's daddy up, and I said, "Johnie, I'm down in Texas. I wanna buy a farm, and I wanna know if you'll let me have the money." He thought I was gonna buy the whole farm, you—[*Laughter*] He said, "What do you need?" And I told him, and I said, "I'm just buyin' the grass off it." So that's the only time I ever called him, except when my son got sick. But anyhow, that was a great feeling to live all them years knowin' that you can call somebody and sign a check 'cause back in those days, you just had a check in your pocket, and it didn't have nobody's name on it. [02:00:25] So I was makin' thirty-two dollars a night driving a truck, and on the fourth of July, I started sellin' to the Bell Telephone Company—they'd built all those big, nice, new buildin's—they had one at Conway and one at Searcy. On the fourth of July, three black guys or four and I went up there, and I made \$7,000 that weekend just doin' that one deal. So I mean, you know, I'm pretty goo—I'm out of debt or pretty much out of debt. I'd paid my money back. But we made money. That last year we was there, we moved twenty-two trailer loads.

JH: And he—it was hot, and he was down on his hands and knees, you know, and he would lay—it was in a square blocks, see, in

squares.

JBH: You had—like carpet, you know.

JH: And he would just lay those squares in there. And he did this in Little Rock—a lot in south Little Rock. They were doin' a lot of new developments, and he would on his days off, you know, when he came in he would go out there, and he would just lay—put a—when he finished, there would be solid grass—solid—there'd—have a complete lawn, and he would water it, and he would . . .

JBH: Mow it.

JH: . . . clean up the sidewalks.

JBH: We'd have it—and we'd guarantee the guy he couldn't see the ground, and he'd give me a check. We didn't have any—no dirt, no nothin'. We learned a great lesson.

JH: So that was really a good thing for us in the summer because it gave us that extra money, and we made good money.

JBH: That's how we paid this money off we owed, too.

JH: Yeah. And we did—the last year we lived in Little Rock—if—and we would've kept doing this, but we moved away—and we did. We sold twenty-two trailer loads that year, and I think when we moved to Stuttgart, he wanted me to keep doing that, and I think I did one year—one load the next year afterwards, but it

was too much trouble.

JBH: I think we was making six, seven hundred dollars a load off that. So . . .

JH: Mh-hmm. But that's just the way that—that he always worked, you know. Whatever came along, and you cannot believe the deals we've gotten into by just stoppin' beside the road to see what somebody's doin'. And next thing I know, we're doing it.

[02:02:26] JBH: Yeah, but—now that's when they poured the air force base in Jacksonville.

JH: Jacksonville.

JBH: All concrete. They absorbed all the concrete. You couldn't buy any concrete—cement—anywhere. So I'm driving to St. Louis, and I see this place on the side of the—in town in St. Louis that sells cement. So I stopped there and checked this woman, and this old—elderly lady—I guess fifty-five year old then—and I said, "Would you sell me a trailer load of whole—cement?" She said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, I need it wholesale because I'm gonna have to resell it." So she cut me a sweetheart deal, and I'd be goin' to St. Louis at night, and every time I seen a truck, like a cattle truck or somethin' I knew that more likely would—I'd stop, and I'd hire him to get my cement, and the next day he'd be back down to Little Rock and this—what—who'd I sell it

to?

JH: Kraftco.

JBH: Kraftco would buy it.

JH: They're still in Little Rock.

JBH: And then by the time he got it, the cement was worth about three times—he already had more than it was worth. And everybody started gripin', but he was the only one in town that had it. And one day somebody in the paper or somethin' said that he said that—somethin' about he had run an ad in the paper that his cement was there, and it was high, but it said, "You ought to see the guy that's sellin' it to me." [*Laughter*] Because I had to put the freight on it and then put my money. But I was making, I'd say, a couple hundred dollars a load.

JH: I'll tell you a story about that lawn sod, though.

SL: We're outta tape, here.

[Tape stopped]

[02:03:59] JH: One good thing I got out of that lawn-sod business, too—Kempner's Department Store in Little Rock was, like, our high-end department store, and they had the best shoes, and the prettiest shoes, and I love shoes—I always have all my life. When I was a little girl, it was during the war, I remember, you know, that we had—we were so limited to some things we

could get, and we had coupons to get shoes. There wasn't enough leather for the soldiers during World War II, so you had coupons to get shoes, and I've always been hard on shoes.

JBH: It was rationed, wasn't it.

JH: They were rationed, and I would wear shoes out, you know, and here my mother had this problem about getting shoes for all of us. You couldn't get sugar, and you couldn't get—you didn't have chewing gum. And the man at the store would be—that you—where you bought your groceries was really nice to you and would save, maybe, gum for you once in a while or Cokes for you, and that was a special treat because we—you didn't get that. So, but anyway, that's kinda may—I keep thinking that's where my love of shoes come in, maybe, because we went through a time like that. [02:05:02] But I told Johnnie one day that I had been to Kempner's, and I said, "They have the prettiest pair of shoes I've ever seen," and they were brown lizard—sling, you know—heel out, toe out—high heels. I said, "They're the most beautiful shoes, but they're twenty-five dollars," and we could not—you know, I could—I did—I knew I couldn't buy them. There's one thing that's always been—and I keep bringing in something else—but Johnnie says to me very often—he'll say, "Was there ever a

time when you needed a new dress or wanted a new dress that you couldn't buy it," or needed a new dress. I said, "Johnnie, there never was," 'cause I always paid the bills, and if we didn't have the money, I never wanted for anything we couldn't have. So you didn't want for a new dress, or you didn't want for shoes if you knew that you didn't have the money to buy it. So there was no way I was gonna go and buy those shoes. Well, he rings the doorbell one morning early, and I go to the door. And he says, "Johnelle"—when he comes back from drivin' the truck to St. Louis, and he comes back, and I open the door, and he says, "Johnelle, here's twenty-five dollars. As soon as Kempner's opens this morning, I want you to go and buy those shoes." And he had bought—he had—that was fore we, actually—had we started selling St. Augustine, or did you buy that somewhere else?

[02:06:16] JBH: I think it was—no, I bought it over . . .

JH: You bought it at one of the places you sold to. Anyway, he . . .

JBH: I bought one yard and paid four . . .

JH: Dollars.

JBH: Three or four dollars for it.

JH: For a yard of St. Augustine grass. He took it in the truck with him to St. Louis in a box in the seat of the truck . . .

JBH: To St. Louis.

JH: . . . 'cause it was nine squares stacked up. And tell him about how you did it?

JBH: Well, some way or another, somebody up and down the road found out I was selling lawn sod, and there was a guy called me or sent me word or something that he wanted to talk to me. And I said—I di—I called him—I don't remember what it was. And he said, "I want some St. Augustine grass." And I said, "Well, I'll see if I can get you some," and he said, "Okay." And I said, "Well, it'll be twenty-five dollars a yard." And he said, "That's okay." And I had to stop beside the road just fore I got to St. Louis and carry it up a steep hill because the driveway come in a different way. And I rung his doorbell about, I'd say, three or four o'clock in the morning. He come to the door, and I said, "I brought you grass." And he said, "What do I owe you?" And I said, "Twenty-five dollar." He tried to tip me a five dollars. I wouldn't take it. I said, "No, I want twenty-five bucks." And that's how I got the shoes.

JH: And I got the shoes.

DH: That's a great story.

[02:07:33] JH: And then when he mentioned to Mr. Reynolds, see— with—after this time of Winrock saying, "No, we can't sell any



more of their Zoysia grass," when we were tryin' so hard—and he had gotten acquainted with Mr. Reynolds that was the president of Winrock Enterprises . . .

JBH: Well, he sent me to Georgia with his grass man.

JH: Yes. But then when he—the time comes when we're tryin' to find a way to raise money to start this rice-hull company and didn't know where in the world—you know, no way we would have the money to do that—and one day he says, "Okay. I'm going up to Winrock, and I'm gonna talk to Mr. Reynolds, and I'm gonna see if they'll loan me the money to do that." And you know, the one thing I should never say to him if I don't want him to do something, is never tell him he can't do it. Because if you tell him he can't do somethin', he's gonna do it. And I said, "He's not gonna to talk to you about that. He's not gonna listen to you. You know, I mean, he—they won't do that for us." And he says, "I'm goin' up and talking—talk to him." And with that contact from the Zoysia grass, then Winrock Enterprises is the one after he listens to his story about what he wants to do and this whole plan, that they say, "Okay, we'll help you." And that's how the rice-hull company came about. So it's kinda like—I always like to look at the steps that we've gone through in our life, and that everything we've done has

brought us to something else along the way. And it's all just been a step at a time, but things that you would never think, "Where would this go from here?" And here we are, you know, from a process like that. And they did help us. [02:09:09] And the thing about the rice hulls, too—we keep talkin' about the rice hulls—but when I said all these engineers and all couldn't do anything about 'em—rice hulls are very expandable. When you hold 'em in your hand, they will expand like this. Your hand just goes out.

JBH: If you squeeze 'em, they all want to go back to their normal thing.

JH: So with his invention of that packer that we later—that we did have a patent on. I mean, we got a patent on it, the whole bit because he really invented it. And with that invention and being able to compress these things that no one had ever done with rice hulls was a big, big step. Big thing.

JBH: Never have since then, either.

JH: Because when we first started with 'em, we were putting a burlap bag—a big burlap bag, and they couldn't get near as many on a truck.

JBH: I'm talkin' about a big corporation didn't do it.

JH: No. No one did. And . . .

[02:09:57] JBH: But back to Reynolds—you're leavin' out part of it.

So I go up to Winrock's without appointment, anything, and I get there, and he's not there. The president's not there. And his secretary, which was a high-powered woman, said, "Well, what'd you want to see Mr. Reynolds about?" And I said, "I want to talk to him about a deal," and she says, "Why don't you tell me about the deal?" So I told her about the deal, you know. She listened, and she says, "I want you to do me a favor." I said, "What's that?" And she says, "I want you to go back home. I don't want you to tell another soul that you're lookin' for somebody to do this deal. You just go on back home, and Mr. Reynolds will see you next week." So I'm drivin'—I told her—I said, "Now I'm drivin' this truck. I'm just home every other day or somethin'." So one day she called me and said, "You go down to the Tower Building, and Mr. Reynolds wants to see you." She'd done sold him. I mean, the sellin' was over right there. [*Laughter*]

JH: And I will tell you something—the first person he starts with is the person at the front desk.

JBH: Yes, sir.

JH: No matter—in all of our years of the trucking company or whatever, he starts with the person at the front desk. Never

overlook that person at the front desk because they may be the key to it. You know, you never know who's the most important person in the place.

DH: Absolutely.

[02:11:20] JBH: And then, when I was peddling that lumber up there in Illinois, this guy at Carbondale got to owing us for about five trailer loads, and my uncle says, "Hey, go up there and take this load of lumber, and you bring back a check for all them other loads." So I'm not a very good collecting agent, but, anyhow, I go up there and get unloaded, and the guy jumps up and goes to St. Louis. And his wife and him lives in an apartment up over the lumber company. And I went up there, and I said, "Where's Ralph at?" And she says, "He's gone to St. Louis." And she says—I said, "Well, I can't come home until I see Ralph because I gotta have money for this load and them other loads, too." So she sat around there, and it got dark. She said, "Well"—they had an apartment. She said, "Well, why don't you come up and have—we'll cook somethin' to eat?" So she got up there, and she fixed me lunch. Bedtime come—he still hadn't got there. She says, "Well, Ralph looks like he's gonna be late." Says, "Why don't you sleep on the couch there." So I slept on the couch, she went in

the bedroom, and the couch must've been different because when he come in, I heard him, but he didn't come by the couch, so I heard her telling him—said, "Well, the driver's here." He said, "What?" She said, "Yeah, he's here." He said, "Well, what's he doin' here?" And she said, "Well, his uncle says that [*laughter*] he's got to have a check fore he comes home." And here I'm sleepin'. He gets up and writes me a check, and I come home. She did the collectin' because I heard her, you know, telling him what the deal was.

DH: Well, that's great.

JBH: Kind of like the—you know, her—Mr. Reynolds's secretary—she done a better job sellin' than I could've. But you know, I think a lot of that's more than luck. Don't you?

DH: Absolutely.

SL: Absolutely.

JBH: Huh? Well—I think I'm gonna say s—you—turn that off.

[*Laughter*]

[End of interview 02:13:37]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]