

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Johnelle Hunt

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford and Dan Hendrix

May 23, 2011

Rogers, Arkansas

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The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, University of Arkansas
Arkansas Memories Project, Johnelle Hunt, May 23, 2011
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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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Johnelle Hunt was interviewed by Scott Lunsford and Dan Hendrix on May 23, 2011, in Rogers, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, Johnelle. Today's date is May the twenty-third. The year is 2011. You realize it's been five years since we've had an interview . . .

Johnelle Hunt: I can't believe it, but I guess so.

SL: Um—we're here. I'm Scott Lunsford. You're Johnelle Hunt. We're at your residence in Rogers, Arkansas. The Pinnacle Hills Golf Course. And—um—we are going to—um—kind of do a couple of things—uh—that first interview that we did with you was—you were really kind of a—a guinea pig in a way. [*JH laughs*] We were—you were very early. Y'all were at the top of our list to interview at the Pryor Center. And—uh—we have since developed some templates that are pretty reliable in gettin' really good—uh—information—really good history. Uh—so I'm gonna—um—talk a little bit more about—I'm gonna ask you a little bit more about your earliest, earliest memories. And I'm gonna ask you about your parents and your grandparents and your relatives and the town of Heber Springs. Uh—just the really earliest stuff. And then later on—uh—this afternoon, Dan's gonna help, and he's gonna talk with you about some of

the business landmarks that—that you and Johnnie went—went through and—and established. [00:01:19] And—um—so—um—with that in mind, I'm gonna tell you that we're gonna be recording this both in audio and video. And the Pryor Center will archive this forever. We will preserve it forever. And you will get a copy of all—everything that we do. We're gonna be scanning your family photo albums. Um—you can have access to all that. Your family can have access to it—we'll make you copies. Uh—some of this stu—we'll have copies—uh—in the Special Collections Department at Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Um—you will get a transcript of both the interviews. You'll get all the raw footage. And we'll want you to look and read that stuff and have—maybe have someone help you, and if there's anything that you don't like or anything you're uncomfortable about in either one of these interviews or in that transcript, we'll take it out. Uh—'cause this is your—this is your story the way you want it told. I mean, it's you telling it, so we wanna make sure that you're comfortable with it because, once you're comfortable with it, we would—[*camera clicks*] we will take highlights from the interview, we'll take all the audio, and we'll take the transcript, and we'll take those scans, [*camera clicks*] and we'll put all that

stuff on our Pryor Center website. And so historians, documentarians, students, researchers will all have access to this. The way—the Arkansas public schools that are teaching [camera clicks] Arkansas history—they'll have access to it. So—you guys are a big part of Arkansas history. And I can tell you, lookin' at that—uh—first interview, those are some of the most wonderful stories that we have ever gotten on any of our interviews.

JH: Oh, thank you.

SL: It's just such a—just such a great time that you-all had when you were growin' up around Heber Springs. So if all that's okay, then we're gonna keep goin'. Now if you have any questions or concerns, we can talk about it now. But if you can tell me that's okay, then we're just gonna start.

[00:03:24] JH: You go ahead. And you understand that I ramble?

SL: Yes.

JH: I get started, and I just go, and I don't know where I'm goin'. So you can stop me at anytime and get me on some other subject [laughs] if you want to . . .

SL: Well, let me tell you, that's an interviewer's dream. Tha—the—the—th—the least amount of interference that I can do, the better . . .

JH: 'Cause, you know, it's just what thoughts come into my mind, and then that takes me to another one, you know.

SL: Yeah. Well okay, now you were born in Heber Springs in your—your parent's home.

JH: Yes.

SL: And I know the year was 1932. Now what was the date and month . . .

JH: January the fourth, 1932.

SL: And—um—you know, what was your maiden name?

JH: DeBusk—*D-E-capital B-U-S-K*.

[00:04:03] SL: Okay, and did you have another name besides Johnelle or . . .

JH: Terria.

SL: Terria?

JH: Uh-huh. Terria.

SL: *T-E-* . . .

JH: *T-E-R-R-I-A*. Spelt a little different.

SL: Yeah.

JH: But I'm named after an aunt. I was supposed to be a bo—a boy. They ha—my parents had a—a—a girl. My sister's three and half years older than I am. So of course, the second one should've been a boy, I guess. So my grandfather's name was David. My

da—uh—my daddy's name was Johnnie. *J-O-H-N-I-E*. And then Johnnie, my husband's, was *J-O-H-N-N—N-N-I-E*. [*SL laughs*]
And—uh—so—uh—I was goin' to be John David. So when I was born—because then you know, they—you didn't know until the baby came. And so then when I was a girl, my daddy named me. And I have an aunt named Nelle. And then—so he named me Johnelle—*J-O-H-N-E-L-L-E*—because my aunt's name was spelled that way. And my other aunt—uh—saw the birth certificate and saw what it was—or something—you know, when they were filling everything out. And she wrote above where it said—it said "Name," and then it had Johnelle DeBusk, and she wrote Terria. [*SL laughs*] Her—her own name because I was gonna have her name, too. And actually, they always said that I was just like her. We both talk a lot and talk loud and have ?plenty?—and busy, busy, busy people. [*SL laughs*] So I turned out to be like my Aunt Terria.

SL: Well, let's . . .

JH: But I've always gone by Johnelle.

[00:05:29] SL: Let's talk a little bit about—uh—your mom and dad.

Now what was your—wha—first of all, did they also grow up in Heber Springs? How did they get together?

JH: My daddy was born in Nashville, Tennessee.

SL: Okay.

JH: And he was si—when he was six years old, his—uh—family came to—um—Arkansas in covered wagons. And—um—his—uh—his—uh—father's family and his mother and his mother's family all came. And they came to Cleburne County to Pearson, Arkansas, just outside of Heber Springs. And started sawmilling, you know, cutting timber, and s—milling and that kind of thing. And that's how they—and they just kinda all—most of them—not all the, you know, family, but most of them—several members of the family came. On both sides of the family—came to—at the same time. And then my mother was born—uh—near Shirley, Arkansas. In that area and—um—then she later lived in heb—they later lived in Heber Springs.

SL: Now what was her maiden name?

JH: Uh—Johnson. My mother's name was Ollie Jane Johnson.

SL: And so—how—now how did they meet? Do you know?

JH: Uh—teenagers I'm sure, you know, gr—in Heber Springs because she was more of a teenager when they moved to Heber Springs.

SL: Uh-huh.

JH: And—um—so they met that way.

[00:06:49] SL: Okay. Now—uh—do you remember either set of

your grandparents?

JH: My mother's parents were—had died by the time I was born.



But yes, my mother—uh—my dad's parents lived, yes. And I was very, very close to my grandparents. The day I was born, they moved from Heber Springs to a farm outside of Heber Springs. It's just across from where the—uh—dam is in Heber Springs now for Greers Ferry Lake. And—um—and so we spent our—every Sunday—you know, go to church and Sunday school church, go to my grandparents out in the country—um—to—uh—and across the—the bridge that was a very dangerous bridge. [00:07:30] It was Tumbling Shoals Bridge. It was the only bridge in the world that was ever in *Believe It or Not!* because you saw the end that you were going off of before you saw the end you were going onto from either direction. So it was real winding and curvy and went down. Scared me every time. A swinging bridge—old-time swinging bridge. And—um—but we would go there and have Sunday—um—have, you kn—the family would all gather there on Sundays. And many times, we would get on a wagon, and we would go out and go to the—to the place that they were going to build the dam. And this one—when—from the time I was a little girl, I heard this. And of course, they didn't build the dam until, you know, the si—late

[19]50s and [19]60. Uh—President Kennedy dedicated it in October before he was assassinated in November. So—uh—but we always knew where it was gonna be. All those years, you know, that it was goin' to be right there at that location. And so those are some of my memories that I had.

[00:08:26] SL: So—uh—to get to your grandparent's house, you had to go across that bridge?

JH: Yes. Uh-huh. We went across the bridge. And of course, later when the dam came in, well, then the bridges were gone and all. But yes, you had to go across that—um—swinging bridge. And then also, that was where we would go to swim. It had an area that was like a sandy area that we called our beach, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: And we could even walk from town. It was just, like, three miles out, but when I was a little girl, it seemed like a long ways to my grandparents. [*SL laughs*] But—uh—and the transportation we had in those days, too. But—that's where we would go to swim and all—was across that bridge. And then there's another story that goes with that because—uh—before I knew Johnnie—before I ever met him, although we had grown up in the same county—but before I ever met him—um—he was hauling—he had been to Missouri to get a load of feed for his uncle that had a store. And

he was coming—he—he had a tractor and—a truck and a trailer, and he was coming down the mountain and—um—[*thunder rumbles*] with that load of feed on. And someday, it just—you know, making that sharp turn to get onto that bridge—um—the truck got on, but the trailer really didn't make the turn. And he went off the bridge, and he dropped thirty-seven feet and landed at the edge of the water. And—um—had a piece of glass that went through his arm, and he always—you know, and—um—had a little scar there from it. And that's—um—and I remember as well as anything—um—that my grandfather—because lived on the other side of the bridge. And my grandfather came to our house, and he—I remember he came in the kitchen door, and he said, "Johnnie Hunt just went off the Tumbling Shoals Bridge." [00:10:07] And that was the first time I ever heard his name. [*SL laughs*] And—um—so then after that, I was out—um—he always told that I was turning handsprings on our lawn, but I was actually out on—we had a big lawn, and I was out—um—uh—twirlin' baton. And his uncle had a horse that—um—needed to be ridden. And Johnnie had his arm in a cast and all, and he couldn't work—couldn't do anything much. So this horse—he would ride this horse every afternoon. And he would come by our house, and I remembered after I met him, seein' him. And I

would be out there twirling my baton, and here's this good-lookin' guy on this horse that goes riding by my house. [*SL laughs*] And then it was after that before I ever met him.

[00:10:51] SL: He was probably out there markin' his territory, I bet.

JH: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yep.

SL: So let's talk a little bit about your grandparent's home. Um—do you remember much about the house that they lived in across the river?



JH: I remember the first house they lived in. It was like a two ro—a living room—you would call—you know, and a bedroom and a kitchen. You know, just a small, little house. Course, there was bed in what you would think of as a living room. There was a bed in there . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . because my grandmother's mother lived with 'em for a time, but she died when I was very young.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: And then there were, I think, two beds in the other bedroom—in the bedroom.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: And then there was the kitchen. No electricity. And they had—

uh—what you called a wellhouse—they had outsi—outside the kitchen was the—um—they had dug it in the ground, and they could keep their milk and their butter and—and ever—eggs and all in there. And so they—you know, and it was cold because it was down in the ground.

SL: Yeah.

JH: And—um—when you made ice cream, you know, you had to get that at the ice plant because you didn't have—you didn't have ice in your refrigerators and all. So I remember that. I remember they—um—they had—um—chickens, hogs, cattle, and—um—grew everything. Gathering the eggs in the chicken house—you know—in the henhouse. And—um—um—the cows coming down the lane at the end of the day—and—uh—they getting up early to go and milk. And I can—and then later on, they built an—a house. They built a three-bedroom house, a nice home, and got electricity later on. But so much of my years—my first years that I remember were in that smaller house with no electricity. And—um—the—the thi—things you remember, you know, as you get older—you remember the smell of breakfast cooking.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:44] JH: The sausage and the ham and the eggs and the

coffee. And I never have liked coffee, but I can still smell that coffee at their house and the biscuits. And there was always plenty of food to eat at their house. And—um—when we would go there, and sometimes we would go maybe late in the afternoon or something. And—um—uh—we would go in, and the—every time we walked in the front door, my daddy went right to the stove [*SL laughs*], and he opened it, and there was always a plate of biscuits and sausage in there or ham and sausage or something left from breakfast. And all of us little children just followed along and got our little treat, too. And my grandfather plowing in the field with a horse and a plow. And—uh—they had a well, and this was just like one of the best parts of our day, when we—my brother and myself especially spent a lot of time there. And my sister some, but she was three and a half years older. And—and—uh—we would do so much—you know, we more or less were kinda like the two partners in crime together, so much of the time . . .

SL: [*SL laughs*] Uh-oh.

[00:13:48] JH: But we would draw the water out of the well. And we would go down through the—to the field where he was plowing, and we would sit down under a shade tree. And we'd take water to him and maybe a little snack of some kind. And

we would sit there, and we would watch him. I can very well remember watching him going around that field with that horse and that plow. And he would come around, and when he would get to where we were, he would sit down. And we would sit under the tree with him. And we would talk, and he would talk—share stories with us and all that. And that was just—that was just a special thing—times like that.

[00:14:21] SL: Do you member any of those stories or anything that your grandfather impressed upon you? Other than, of course—it sounds like he was a hard worker and a great provider.

JH: He was a hard worker and—and loved his family and that—that kinda thing. He—one thing that I can remember—you know, funny things you remember is that I had a cousin that was same age as my sister, and sometimes I can remember the three of us being there together. And—um—uh—we—we'd caught—catch rainwater to wash your hair in, you know, because like I said, no electricity and all. And we'd wash our hair out [*thunder rumbles*] when we were at their house in rainwater—whatever. And I can remember, my grandfather had the prettiest black, curly hair.

SL: Hmm.

JH: And—uh—he ha—wavy hair, you know. And he would sit on a

stool, and we would wash his hair. And we would shampoo his hair. And make all sorts of designs with the—his hair and the shampoo. [*SL laughs*] And he would just sit there for—you know, didn't—he didn't care how long we wanted to play with his hair and shampoo [*thunder rumbles*—and that—just the fun things like that you did. And—and then he always—um—he love—he had a radio . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . you know, they—they had a radio in their house. And he loved to listen to the things there. And so at night—and you had the lamps that—this was after they had moved into the other house—when it was the larger house. And—um—they didn't—still didn't have electricity. But I can remember sitting in the living room in a rockin' chair and rockin' my baby doll. And—uh—he had the radio on, and you would be v—very quiet, you know, so that everybody could hear the radio. [*Device chimes*]

[00:15:50] SL: Well, you know, the radio probably was—really the first bit of technology that all of America had. And—uh—it was—uh—you know, people gathered—the family would gather around the radio.

JH: And neighbors came, and when we got our first TV, I can remember when friends came to our house to watch TV.

SL: Mh-hmm.

JH: So we went through the same cycle with that, I guess, but—
and—and Johnnie always talked about goin' to—they didn't have
a radio. And goin' to a neighbor's house—the one neighbor that
had a radio—and goin' there and listening to the radio. And—
and the Joe Louis fights . . .

SL: You bet.

JH: . . . and the things like that that they—they heard that he always
talked about with his . . .

[00:16:29] SL: What about—um—um—tell—talk to me a little bit
about your grandmother.

JH: Oh, my grandmother was just—um—she was the best cook, you
know. She was just a wonderful cook, and she—but she got up
every morning. They had dairy cattle. And she got up every
morning and went with my grandfather to milk the cows. And
she took care of the chickens, and she did all of that. And she
was a hard worker and—and—um—um—but just happy, sweet,
loving, kind. And she did tell sto—uh—stories more. I got more,
you know—uh—I can remember as I was older and I wanted to
hear more of the family stories—and even when she was not
able to be up that much anymore. But I would get her to tell me
the things, you know, that—that—I've—about the family more

that I could remem—know tha—know that we—I needed to remember later.

SL: Uh-huh.

JH: But—um—yeah, my grandmother was—we all—we called 'em Ma Bussie and Pa Bussie.

SL: [*Laughs*] Ma Bussie.

JH: For the DeBusk side.

SL: Uh-huh.

JH: Uh-huh. And we'd—and—uh—that's just the sweetest name you can hear, you know, is a name like that that you called your grandparents. But—um—always—um—cooking and having lot—all the family and everybody come in and—and all.

[00:17:48] SL: Had—uh—um—I guess—uh—a washtub and board for doing the clothes?

JH: Oh, sure. Uh-huh. And my mother did, too, you know, in the be—I can remember when my mother washed that way, too. And my grandmother did. And made your butter—I loved to help her make butter. Everybody liked to churn that butter . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

JH: . . . and then put it in the mold and do the whole thing, you know. And—and I liked that. Getting to do that and—and—um—the sewing and the things she—that she would do. The

crochet and the things like that that she did. All the people that did—things that people did that were raised on farms—um—canned—you know, everything was canned. And—and—um—all the good vegetables and goin' out to the garden—they always had the big garden—going out to the garden and pulling up the green onions or the—diggin' up the potatoes or whatever. And—um—they ha—always had that and . . .

[00:18:38] SL: Did you help 'em in their garden at all or . . .

JH: Yes, I liked that. I liked being outdoors. I was always one that liked to be outdoors. My sister was the one that was the—she was the smart one and—and—um—uh—uh—you know—uh—I was the outdoors type, and she co—cooked and loved to cook, and she pl—music major in college. Played the piano and did all those things. We were a family that sang—I can't—I don't—I can't—I mean, I don't have the voice she has or my brother's. But—um—and when we were driving to—we'd go to the farm, like I said, on weekends. And we would come back late at night, or late at night, it seemed like to me. It probably wasn't but—for a child. And we always sang. Mother and Daddy always sang. And I still sing the songs that we sang back then as we were driving. And then another thing that we did in our home was—um—play the pia—my sister played the piano, and we all

gathered around the piano, and we sang a lot. And—uh—we—
we just were like—fact that that was somethin' ?major? . . .

SL: So in your home growing up, y'all had a piano?

JH: We had a piano.

SL: That's pretty big stuff, actually.

JH: We had a—yes. And we all took piano lessons. Um—that was just a must in our family, I guess. And in—in Heber Springs, the kids there pretty mu—a lot of them took piano lessons. The piano teacher lived a block—we had more than one pia—piano teacher, but—in the town, which was really something—I mean, and really good piano teachers, you know.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] JH: But they just—one was just a block from school.

And you could—you had your time during school that you went for your piano lesson. So you left school, and you walked the block, and you took piano lessons, and you walked back. And so we all did—had our piano recitals, which were big, you know. I mean, you had your long dress on. And the—we'd have 'em at the First Methodist Church, and it would be packed. And my daddy sat through more piano recitals, you know. [Laughter]
Every time, he had to go to piano recitals. And with having three children takin' piano lessons at the same time, it was kinda

expensive. And we had a cow, and this—we lived right in town, but we had a cow. And so we took milk to our piano teacher to help pay for the three children takin' piano lessons. And so every morning, we would walk through the alley to school. The way—there was an alleyway between our house and hers. And we were on one corner, and she was on another corner. And we walked through there, and we left two quarts of milk on her back steps. And we walked on to school 'cause we were just a few blocks from school. And then when we came home in the afternoons, we came back by, and we picked up two empty bottles. And the next morning, we took—so that helped pay for . . .

[00:21:17] SL: Sure.

JH: . . . when you have three children taking piano lessons, you know.

SL: So let's talk about your brother and sister. You had one brother and one sister?

JH: Growing up.

SL: Growing up.

JH: And then when my brother was fifteen and I was seventeen and my sister was twenty, we had a baby brother. That was the highlight of our life, you might say. He was like the baby for all

of us. And mother was forty, and dad was forty-three. So when I—so basically, when I was growing up, there were three—three children.

SL: Bet he had a really late fall—they had a really late fall crop there.

JH: Yes. Yes.

SL: Fifteen year spread.

JH: Yeah. Fifteen years. And my sister—twenty. He was born in October, and my sister married in December. So mother had a baby in October and had to have a big church wedding in December. [*Laughter*] And then the reception—it was at the church, and then the reception was at home. And when everybody came to the house for the reception—came to the reception—the first thing they did was go in and see the baby.

SL: Well, sure. Stole some thunder there from the wedding, yeah.

JH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[00:22:18] SL: Well, so when you were first growin' up in the house, did you-all have electricity?

JH: Yes, we did. And we lived—like I said, we lived right in town. And we lived in the house I was born in until I was six years old. My daddy had a general mercantile store where he just sold, you know, everything that anyone would want. I guess about like

stores were then . . .

SL: Did it have a name? Uh-huh.

JH: And then, in fact, he weighed Johnnie when Johnnie was six months old because people didn't have scales, of course, in their homes at all then. And you took 'em to the store to have them weighed. [*SL laughs*] And Johnnie always knew this from his parents telling him this, I guess. And so that was another little connection from way back that we didn't make until later. But my daddy had this store and, of course, he—all the people in the county traded with him. And then Depression came along, and people couldn't pay. And they were just not able to pay, so we ended up having to just close his store. Because, you know, he just lost everything because of that. And so at that time then, we moved from that house into my aunt's house because they were up in Washington working—in the state of Washington, and so we moved into their house. And we lived there for a time. My daddy went to work for the Ford Motor Company as a bookkeeper for thirty dollars a month. And so then we lived there for a while, and we moved to another house, you know, and rented. Rented for years, until I was about thirteen. And then when I was thirteen, I believe, they bought the house back that we had—that I had been born in.

SL: So that's three different places that you lived around Heber Springs?

JH: I lived in one, two, three, four.

SL: Four.

JH: Well, and just a very short time in another one, but it was just—I don't even re—I mean—barely remember it because we barely moved into that house when they bought the other house. So really bout . . .

[00:24:26] SL: Well, how big a place was Heber Springs then?

JH: Well, there were forty-two in my graduating class. So I say three thousand, you know. I don't know back then if—there were not that many then, but later on by—as my—at that time, you know, we never did—I guess I never thought about the population; I just knew how many was in my class.

SL: Yeah. And gravel road, dirt roads—no . . .



JH: Gravel roads, yes. And I can remember we had a railroad that went through Heber Springs. And I can remember them taking the cattle to the farmer—the people, farmers, and all—people that raise cattle and all—taking the cattle herd. Going right by our house—taking them to the . . .

SL: Stockyard.

JH: . . . railroad station to put 'em on the trains to ship 'em out. I

can remember that and going—you know, seeing the cattle goin' by. Driving 'em just like you see in the westerns on TV, but they were going down our little street—dirt roads and whatever. Then I remember when they paved the streets—started paving streets, which was really big—something. Had something to skate on [*SL laughs*—had something to ride my bicycle on—later on, you know.

SL: Well, all right. So y'all had a radio; you had electricity; you had a piano. Any other musical instruments in the home?

[00:25:44] JH: Well, later on in band, my brother played the trumpet, I believe, in the band. And when we were more, you know, high—farther up in school and everything . . .

SL: I guess we oughta get your brother and sister's names while . . .

JH: Oh, my bro—my sister is Gloria Duckworth and David DeBusk. And then my baby brother is Dennis DeBusk.

SL: Okay.

JH: And my sister and my brother both still live at Heber Springs.

SL: They still . . .

JH: They didn't—now my sister and her husband—my sister went to UCA, which at that time was Arkansas State Teachers College . . .

SL: Teachers College. Uh-huh.

JH: . . . where we all four went there to school. And then my brother-in-law was from Dumas, Desha County. And then he went to—he—she met him in college, and they lived in Little Rock for a time, and then he opened his own insurance soc—agency in Heber Springs. And they moved back there. And then they've lived there ever since. And then my brother has always lived there. Well, no, he lived here for a time—I take that back. He lived here for a number of years and was like our business manager for our farm and all. [*Thunder rumbles*] And lived here and then they moved back there. So, yeah.

[00:26:53] SL: Tell me a little bit about the school in Heber Springs.

JH: Oh, the school was—you know, when I was in elementary—grade school, we called it—it was a big, two-story building. And as we hear the thunder goin' with the storms goin' around us as we're sitting here today. They had a bad tornado in Heber Springs in 1926. And just—more or less, just wiped out the town. And this house that we lived in was the location where my grandparents lived. And it was Thanksgivin' afternoon, and so my parents and their other—all the family was there together. And the house was blown away, and just that whole town was just about wiped out. And so later then, they built that—the house back. And that's the house then that we lived in. They



had let—built it back. It didn't have any closets in it. And I said to my grandmother one day, "You know, why did you not build closets, Ma Bussie?" And she said, "Honey, we didn't have a house to live in. We were just tryin' to build a house as soon as we could." And you know, it was a two bedroom, livin' room, dining room, kitchen—five-room house. But—and then later, Mother and Daddy built onto it. But when we had a storm—when growin'—when I was growing up—and everyone had storm cellars in Heber Springs—I mean, after that, everyone had them. And when we had storms like a day like today, you knew your parents—someone was gonna come and get you at school. And the parents came to school and got you. And you—and if the neighbor kids were there, they took them, too. But you just—when a storms—they watched the clouds. They didn't have—we didn't have the TV and the warnings and the sirens and all that. So they knew. They watched the clouds and could pretty well read that, and then you went home. [*Thunder rumbles*] But it was a big—and I remember it as just big, high ceilings—school and all. And when I started to school in first grade, we went half-day. And just went morning or afternoon—the first and second grade, I believe. I know the first grade, and that was the way . . .

[00:28:56] SL: So the school building was really two stories?

JH: It was two stories.

SL: That's a pretty big school.

JH: It was—to me, it was big because it was such a big, tall building.

It had, like I said, the high ceilings and big rooms. We had cloakrooms—we called it, you know. You had to put your coats in. You didn't see anything in the hallways like you do now.

They—you put your coats and you put everything in there. And everyone walked to school, you know. We walked to school from wherever we were. And except for one house—one place we lived, we could walk home for lunch. We did not have a lunchroom program until I was a senior in high school. So you either brought your lunch, or you walked home for lunch. And you know, after Depression years and all that, I went to school with kids that didn't have—really didn't have lunch—you know, didn't have much. It was—I—my memories are—some of the sweetest people I've ever known, but they were children that were—didn't have very much to—as far as material things at all, you know. But they came to school. I had two boys especially that—they were not brothers, but they were just—I just loved them. And they helped me with my schoolwork or whatever, but they had a really, really hard life. But they were your friends.

There was one girl that when I was in fourth, fifth grades—along that way—and she rode the bus to school, and we walked home for lunch, and she went home with me every day for lunch. And later on, years back—I mean, not many years before my mother died. My mother died in 2002. She came to see—and we never knew what happened to her—they moved away. She came to see my mother, and she told my sister that—we had to buy books and all, and she said if it hadn't been for my mother, she couldn't have gone to school. And we never knew that.

SL: Yeah.

JH: And that she had helped her. And you know, my mother and daddy were just real giving people and helped people. If anyone needed to go to Little Rock to the doctor, my daddy took them or my mother took them. And later on, when we were old enough—like, my grandfather—I drove him or my brother did. But anyone out in the county because Daddy—later on, he kept books for Ford Motor Company, and then he sold tractors for them. They got into the tractor business. And then he started in that—the poultry business. So my daddy was in the poultry businesses later on as—while I was in school and all. And he had—like a feed mill, and he had the growers out in the county and . . .

[00:31:33] SL: Is thi—when you were in college or . . .

JH: No, that was when—no . . .

SL: When you were in grade . . .

JH: . . . that was as I was growin' up and all. And so he always dealt with the people out in the county, and so the people—then he was in the poultry business, and they were—grew chickens for him. And he sold eggs—you know, their eggs or whatever. So he always de—had those people as customers, and they—everybody loved my daddy. [*SL laughs*] They really did. And if salesmen were there, my—whoever was there, Daddy brought 'em home for lunch. Mother cooked a big lunch, and she didn't know how many she was cooking for. And some days, you know, if you have pork chops, you don't buy ten pork chops for a family of five. But she would jus—who—if he brought somebody home that day or two or three people, well, she'd say, "Well, I just don't like pork chops." And she just would give 'em to somebody else. [*Laughs*]

[00:32:20] SL: That's sweet.

JH: But she was just a—but they did. He took care of everybody and helped 'em.

SL: So the school in Heber Springs there, was there a separate room for each grade?

JH: Yes.

SL: That's pretty big.

JH: Yes. Yes, we had a separate one. Now Johnnie just went to a one-room school all of his seven years in school. That he just went seven years. And he was in a one-room school. But no, we had separate grades for each one. And see, we had the—like the kids—the children that lived out all in the county around—that for several miles came. They had school bus, and the area that Johnnie grew up in came to Heber Springs to school. But when he was in school, he was out in the area that they just had the one-room school. But later, I was in school with his cousins, and they came by bus. Now that was changed later. When I was a senior in high school, they built a school at Greers Ferry, which is called West Side School. So the ones I had gone to high school with, that had come to high school there, came—graduated from West Side, so they didn't graduate with us. But they had been with us all the way through. And then his younger cousins that came to Heber Springs to school—before they had school there. And I knew all them—of them, so I went to school with his relatives.

[00:33:41] SL: So you mentioned Greers Ferry. Now, how far is that from Heber Springs?

JH: Well, Greers Ferry area is about—see, I still think it—of it before the lake and the dam came in, and it . . .

SL: Right.

JH: . . . was like fifteen miles there. And now you have to go around, so I guess you would count it about thirty miles.

SL: Now.

JH: Yeah, now. Because you have to go around, so I never think of it in that. Just . . .

SL: But—there was actually a man named Greer that had a ferry.

[00:34:08] JH: Yes, and he had a ferry. And the place that we used to go to when I was a little child and talk about the dam—sit out there, have a picnic sometimes on the ground there, and talk about the dam they were gonna build and all. And he had a ferry that ran across there. And his name was Greer. And that's where that came from. And it changed the whole as—I still think back on so many things. And like I said, the swinging bridges. Every way you went out of town except one—except to the south, you had to cross a swinging bridge. And when I was dating Johnnie—and his uncle had a lumber mill out in that Greers Ferry area at Edgemont. And he was hauling lumber to Missouri and Illinois and everywhere for his uncle. And I would go out there with him sometimes to pick up a load of lumber,

because he would leave—be goin' out that night to Missouri or Illinois—wherever he was going. And I would go with him to get that lumber—load of lumber. And after the truck was loaded, his uncle would drive me back across the bridge because I couldn't ride in the truck with him across 'cause it was so dangerous. And we would sit over there, and you could hear him coming across the bridge. And a swinging bridge, you know, will go down and come up. And you could hear that popping and . . .

SL: Oh.

JH: . . . whatever. And I played basketball, and you know, you had to go to cross these—if you went three ways out of town, you had to cross those bridges. And we would get off the bus and walk across the bridge, but we didn't ride the bus across the bridge. And it was just—they were just dangerous.

[00:35:42] SL: Man. Well, back in the—back in school, in elementary school, did you have a favorite subject or a favorite teacher?

JH: I had a favorite teacher in the third grade.

SL: Okay.

JH: You know, everyone has a favorite teacher. And her name was Helen, and I've forgotten the last name now. Thought I would never forget it. But I don't know—she was beautiful, she was

blonde, and she was just so sweet, I guess. But we all have favorite teachers. My first grade teacher—I think that all of my teachers—I just really—I had great teachers and loved 'em all.

SL: Was . . .

[00:36:20] JH: I'll tell you a little story about me in the first grade.

I don't like to tell it 'cause it's [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Well, this is good. [*Laughs*]

JH: But I'll just go ahead and tell you.

SL: Okay.



JH: When I was in the—started in the first grade, we had a girl and—that was in the second grade. And she was just a really mean girl.

SL: Yeah.

JH: She did things—she did some dangerous things with animals and things like that. And she had a knife at school, and she told me out on the playground that she was gonna cut my ears off. And I knew she would, but I was afraid to tell anyone. So I was so afraid I wouldn't get to go out on the playground. And I was afraid to walk home after school and—'cause I walked home from school, you know, and to school. And so I would get sick, and I would have to go home before school was out. And so I would go home. And the teacher would let me, you know,

because I would be sick, and she would let me walk home. And I would go home, and then my mother would—you know, I would get in trouble because I had—because I wasn't sick. And so the next morning, my mother would take me back to school, and I would cry, and I would—didn't want to stay. And they didn't know what my problem was. And this went on for a while. And—oh, and we had water monitors, like they called the row to go to get to—a drink of water.

SL: Sure.

[00:37:45] JH: She let me be water monitor. She just was treating me so special. Letting me be all—the special child and everything. But that wasn't working, and so she had a niece that was in my class. And her name was Minnie Belle. And I was one day older than she was. Same size—we were always the same size, same heighth, long skinny arms, long legs, and all that. And so she told Minnie Belle to stay with me every minute on the playground. Not to let me out of her sight, you know. For her to just be my caretaker more or less. And so she did and becam—we became inseparable. [*Thunder rumbles*] I think I was about in the fourth grade before I ever told anyone why I was afraid to go to school. And this girl finally moved away, but I was—I really was. But Minnie Belle was the one that

came in and took care of me and took over. And it—we did—we just—from then on, we were—all through our school years and forever, we were just the very best of friends. We were just—everybody said we were just alike. We laughed; we had a good time; everything was just fun.

[00:38:47] SL: So she was probably one of the Dirty Dozen?

JH: She was one of the Dirty Dozen, yeah.

SL: You want to talk a little bit about the Dirty Dozen?

JH: You know, I guess we may have been in the—maybe eighth grade, who knows—somewhere along in there. When, you know, these little girls all get together and decide we need to have a club. And I guess we were the Junior League of Heber Springs. [*SL laughs*] And so we formed what we—and then we got our group together, and then we decided we would be the Dirty Dozen. So that was—and I have found minutes of our club meetings. And we met at Johnelle's house, and she served cookies and Cokes and—you know. It was what we served and what we—you know, our club—[*thunder rumbles*] but we took minutes. We were really a big club. [*SL laughs*] We had more fun. We were just—we did everything together; we went everywhere together; we went to the movies together.

Whatever we did, we did it as a group. And we really did have

more fun than anyone. And we got accused of things. If anything happened, we got accused of it. We were never—we didn't do anything mean. We were a little mischievous, I guess. But we really didn't do anything that, you know, was mean or would hurt anybody—anything like that. We learned how—that after they came out with the drink machines, that you could slide the drink across this way.

SL: Oh yeah.

[00:40:10] JH: Uh-huh. Well, we learned that if you carried a bottle opener and a straw, you know, you could open up the top. [*SL laughs*] And it was just little things like that. But the whole thing is, everybody in town knew who we were. And they knew what—you know, they knew all about us and everything. But we did—we—and we would say, "Okay"—and this is like right after we were in high school and all. And we would say, "Okay, we're all"—movies was our thing—you know, that was the thing you had to do was go to the movies, and you walked everywhere. And so we would go to the—we'd say, "Okay, we're going to the movie tonight. Let's all dress up." Okay, we might really dress up or, "No, we're going to the movies. Let's wear jeans"—whatever. My mother went to Little Rock, and I had wanted a pair of—there were some red—what I called baby doll shoes—



they were red—prettiest red, little, wedge heel shoe that I had wanted so bad. And Mother went to Little Rock that day, and I knew that she was gonna bring me those shoes back. And we were going to the movie that night, so I told the girls—I said, "Okay, let's all dress up tonight and wear hose and all to the movies," 'cause I was gonna wear my new red shoes. So sure enough, we would walk like—whoever lived the farthest this way would stop and make—pick up the one on the way, and then they'd get to my house and I would join them, and there would be—you know, we'd go along like that. Well, the friend lived—one of the friends lived just across—around the corner from me. So when we got to her house, some said, "Well, we'll go in and get Virginia." And the rest—the others were standing out front, and we said, "Okay, now here we are—we're all dressed up and lookin' pretty. Let's run and hide." So we ran down the street, and there was a service station on the corner. And we ran behind the service station to hide, so that when they came by, you know, we would jump out and everything. And it was dark by then. And I stepped up on what I thought—I was stepping up on a rock, and I stepped into a can of black oil with that new red shoe on. And just—that was the end of my pretty red shoes, and I didn't get another pair like that.

[00:42:13] SL: [*Laughs*] I bet you didn't.

JH: So it went from being grown-up girls to kids in a hurry with us because we did—we had a good time. And when a boy would start—when we finally—you know, we got to the age to start dating. [*Thunder rumbles*] And when—first time they started dating us, I mean, they had the whole—we all went together. First several times, I—with John—was with Johnnie, first several times was—we were all together. [*Chime in background*] And when I met Johnnie, I'll tell you that little story . . .

SL: Okay.



JH: . . . of how I met him. We were—we'd been to graduation that night. And I was a—had just finished my sophomore year. And so we were walking down Main Street. And we had—we were in front of the—and he had come by, and my—oh, he had the sale barn at Heber Springs, and my brother was working at the sale barn for him.

SL: Okay.

JH: But he—I had never met him. And my brother and I—Daddy had bought us this old car. [*Laughs*] And we were out in this car one night, and Johnnie s—and my brother stopped, and Johnnie—and went back and talked to Johnnie. And I was really fussed at my brother later because he didn't introduce me to

him. Well, it was just a few nights after that when we were walking and Johnnie came by. And he had this red—new, red Ford truck with sideboards on it that he could haul cattle and hogs and everything in. And we said—and he went by, and we knew who he was by then and all. And so we said—and one of the friend's sister was married to his cousin. And so she knew him, and so she said, "If he comes back by, do you want me to stop him and see if he'll take us all for a ride in this big truck and everything?" "Yeah, let's do." So when he stopped and she asked him and he said, "Sure," we all ran and got in. And Minnie Belle got in beside him. And so then, I know I was in the front, some were on the running board that we had then—some were up in the back. And he had air horns, and he was driving us around town blowin' those air horns. And then we found out that the—we realized that we might get in trouble for that. And it was time to take us—for making noise—you know, time take us home. So when he started taking everybody home by the—where everyone lived, I happened to be the last one that he took home. [00:44:25] And he had just come back from auctioneer school in Mason City, Iowa—and to be an auctioneer. And I really couldn't understand what he said [*SL laughs*]*—he just talked so fast, you know. And so then the next night, we're out*

again. Out walkin', and we were long—'bout the courthouse— and we had said again, "Okay, if he comes by, are we gonna ride with him?" And then everybody started arguin' about who was gonna sit by him. Well, of course, Minnie Belle says, "I did last night, and I'm goin'—I get to sit by him." Well, sure enough, we were right in front of the courthouse when he drove up, and that's one time I outran—she was a better basketball player than I was, but I outran all my friends, and I got in next to him, and I stayed there from then on. [*SL laughs*] Now my best friend didn't speak for me for several days. She was very unhappy with me, but we got past that. So that's how my story started with him—was in a red Ford truck that said, "Johnnie Hunt, Heber Springs, Arkansas," on the side. I said, "Back that far, he must have known he liked his name on a truck."

[00:45:27] SL: Let's go back to your home growin' up in—what about homework? Did anyone help you with homework at . . .

JH: My daddy helped me. Yeah, he did. My mother was plenty smart—she could have. But Daddy was just the one that helped me with homework. I—the only thing I can remember needing help with was math. And I never was and I still am not the best one with math—when it comes to math. And Daddy was, and so I can remember that he was the one that helped me with math

more than anything else. But my sister was, you know, valedictorian of the class and all that, and I was just an average student. I had rather be out ridin' stick horses with my brother and playin' in the woods and—with he and his—the other boys and all that. Or like I said, I played basketball, and I was cheerleader. And I liked doing those things. And they were more important to me, I guess, at that time. I think back now and think, "Why didn't I spend as much time as I should have?" [SL laughs] You know, about—like the piano. I didn't—my sister was a music major because she practiced. And because I was more the outdoors one and doing those things. But I made good grades. I didn't have any problems with my grades. But I wasn't the smar—the top of the class.

SL: Well, outdoorswise, did you do much fishin' or huntin' or any of that kind of stuff?

JH: No, my daddy hunted and all, but I never did do that. And never did care that much for fishin'. Think it—probably a little too slow for me—I was [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.



JH: . . . we hiked. I grew up hiking. [00:47:01] Living in the mountains in Heber Springs, 'cause, you know, it is so beautiful. It's down in a valley, and mountains on each side. And so our

pastime, our Saturdays and our weekdays through the summer and everything, we were always hiking. And we had beautiful places to hike to. We had waterfalls—big—you know, a beautiful, big waterfall. And I mean, it would be the boys—sometimes, it'd be just the girls that would go, and sometimes the boys would even go with us. It would be the boys and the girls. And we would take picnic, and we would spend our days hiking. And then before the lake was in, the river was there. And then we had Sugar Loaf Mountain—that's a big, beautiful mountain there. And still is there—it's on the east side of town, and the lake is on the west side. And we would all go there, and at—even our classes in school and everything—go at night and have weiner roast and all that at the foot of mountain. So I was—I would like that. I liked hiking and walking and those kind of things. Going to the river to swim and . . .

[00:48:05] SL: What about church?

JH: We were—went to First Baptist Church, and church was very important. You knew—you never did ask on Sunday mornin', "Are we goin' to church?" You got up on Sunday mornin', and you were goin' to church. And you—we went to church on Sunday mornin', and then we went to church on Sunday night. And you know, you went to Sunday school. You had your

Sunday school classes. And that's where—just the special part of our lives. And always—whoever the minister was we had at the time became a part of our family. My parents just took them in and their little children and whatever. And we were always close to whoever our pastor was. They had meals at our home. My mother was a great cook and loved to cook and have people in, and they always did. So the church was very much a part of our lives. Singing in the choir and all. I remember when I was dating Johnnie and the first Sunday night that I was—I met him on Thursday night, and I was with him on Friday night and on Sunday night and—some of the friends were along, too, and I didn't go to church . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

JH: . . . on Sunday night. And my mother let me know that I—if—that I would be going to church from then on on Sunday night.
[*SL laughs*] She—we never had . . .

SL: Is it time for Johnelle to break, Joy, or . . .

Joy Endicott: Yeah.

SL: It is?

[Tape stopped]

[00:49:28] SL: All right, Johnelle, we're on tape two. It is still stormin' out there. We've had a wonderful meal from Panera—

thank you very much . . .

JH: Well, glad you enjoyed it.

SL: . . . for feeding us. Breaking bread with us—I love that. We were on tape one—we—before you had to break, we had been talking about the role of church growin' up. And you had talked about goin' to church every Sunday and Sunday night and Sunday school, and I think you—we kinda cut you off. You were about to tell us a story. I think you had an evening—a date with Johnnie, maybe, and did not go to Sunday night church? What—now, te . . .

[00:50:08] JH: Yes, it was like about the third time I was with him, and I didn't go to church. And you know, and so my mother just said, "You know, you will not miss—you can, if you go out, you know, you go to church." We had a—what we called the midnight show at home or the late movie. And on—just on Saturday night, the movie started at ten thirty, and it got out at twelve o'clock. You know, [*vocalized noise*] movies go to late now, but, course, we didn't stay out late when I was growing up like that. And so we—I knew that I could go to the—that late show on Saturday night with Johnnie. But there was never a question that I wouldn't get up and go to church the next morning because that would have been nothing. And Mother

wouldn't have had to have said, "You can't do that." You would have just—you just—you knew. You know, we—Mother and Daddy always said—people would always say, "You have the best children." And Mother would say, "Well, we never tell them no." And they really didn't tell us no. But we knew what we could do, and we know—knew what we should not do. We knew the rules. And we just didn't put them in the position, I guess, that they had to tell us no. And so that's just kind of the way we were raised. And we—that we all just knew Mother and Daddy were not—they were very gentle, very kind people, very easy with all of us. And—but we just always knew what we were supposed to do and what we were not supposed to do. And we knew about church, we knew about school, we knew the things that we were supposed to do and all, and that's the way we did it. Other than givin' my mother such a hard time when I was in the first grade about going to school in the first grade and cryin' everyday and going home and her taking me back the next morning and . . .

SL: Well, you were worried about gettin' your ears cut off.

[00:51:52] JH: I—she didn't know that I couldn't go to school 'cause someone was gonna cut my ears off. So I had to go home.

[*Laughter*] And now, you know, think about a child taking a

knife to school, what would happen now?

SL: Oh gosh.

JH: But we lived in different times.

SL: Yeah.

JH: We lived in easier times as far as the outside world was concerned.

SL: Nobody locked their doors.

JH: No one locked the doors so . . .

SL: Left the keys in the car.

[00:52:13] JH: . . . so I don't even know if Mother and Daddy had keys to the house. And I remember after we lived away, my sister and I lived in Little Rock. And we would go home, and you know, we were in the habit of taking the keys out of the car—and everybody's cars in the driveway at Mother and Daddy's. And Daddy would go out to get in his to car to leave, and somebody would be behind him. And he—might be early in the mornin' when he was goin' to work, and he couldn't move the car 'cause the key was out of the car. And he was like, "Why do you take the keys out?" because they didn't even take the keys out of their cars at home. And why do you take the keys out? Well, we were in the habit of it, and at their house, we didn't need take keys out. But it was—you had no fears about things

like that. And walking—just like I say, walking—all of us walking to the movies and walking home and walking everywhere we went. And when we had sleepovers, we did sleep outside on the grass. And we had a lot of those. And we would sleep outside or on the porch or something. And just an easy time of our—I would not take anything for my years of growing up in a small town, where you knew everyone when you walked up and down the streets. [00:53:19] And you know, there was one time when our Dirty Dozen group had—we were always having sleepovers—always at someone's house—so much. And we were—by then, you know, we were old enough to stay alone, I mean, and this one friend's parents were at her—at—out of town. And we were at her house one night, and we didn't really have police in our town, but we had what we called a night marshal. And he was just kind of the one that looked over things. He took care of things. And we were all in one room, and we popped popcorn—always had popcorn. And I could eat more of the popcorn than anyone else [*SL laughs*]*—still can. But we—you had dishpans then, and that's what you washed the dishes in. They were actually big dishpans that you washed the dishes in. And so we would pop a dishpan full of popcorn. So they popped a dishpan full of popcorn for all of my friends and*

then a dishpan for me. [*SL laughs*] Because I ate as much popcorn as they did. So we had our popcorn, and we had our soft drinks 'cause that's—we never drank. None of us ever drank, and we never smoked. We—none of our whole group did—we just didn't do those things. And that wasn't a problem at that time, you know, in a town like that. [00:54:35] And so we were loud. You take that many girls in a room and all, and we were loud. And a lady across the street—down the street a ways must have called the night marshal. There was a knock on the front door, and we all—when the knock came on the front door, we all jumped up, and we all started running, you know. And someone dropped one of the Coke bottles and broke it. And I kind of ran through some glass—didn't cut my foot, though, that much. But—and he said, "Jean, come to the door." And there was something wrong with the front door, and she really couldn't open it, and she said, "I can't open the front door. It's broken. I can't open it." And he said, "Jean, you girls have got to be quiet. You're just making too much noise, and you need to be quiet." And he said—she said, "Okay." And so the next day, you know, we're all out again. And he told our mothers that he didn't see anyone that was there that night. But when he—we walked down Main Street—met him on the street, that he knew

everybody was there because we had that sheepish look.

[*Laughter*] I know that—okay, I was one of 'em that was makin' all the noise last night.

[00:55:40] SL: Do you want to try to conjure up all those Dirty Dozen names? Do you think you can do that?

JH: Oh my goodness. Well, there was Johnelle. And we had—most—in that time, there were so many—everybody had double names. And one of my children's favorite things used to be, "Mother, tell us all your friends' names." Minnie Belle, June Ellen, Willa Jean, Emma Louise, Zelda Ray, Winthsee Louise—I believe was hers—and oh goodness gracious, I can go further than that. I may have to come back to that one.

SL: Okay, well, we can come back.

JH: 'Cause I know them all. [*Laughs*]

SL: I know you do. I know you do.

JH: I do know them all.

SL: I'm the same way.

JH: It's just, all of a sudden thinking. Who have I left out? [*Unclear words*]

SL: We can get back. I mean . . .

JH: We may go over those again.

SL: . . . we'll get back to it because we're not done with the Dirty

Dozen.

JH: We may go those again.

SL: Yeah . . .

JH: I mean . . .

SL: . . . I'm sure there's going to be more Dirty Dozen stories,
so . . .

JH: Francis Louise.

SL: Yeah.

JH: Yeah, I'll think—I'll come back to that 'cause I can't believe I
can't—normally, I can just go through 'em like that. I'm get—
I'm a few years older. [*Laughter*]

[00:57:15] SL: Okay, so I want to go back to the house a little bit
growin' up. And we know that, you know, you're expected to go
to church every Sunday and Sunday night and Sunday school.
And did y'all ever study at home any Bible? Did you ever spend
any time with the Bible at home in the family?

JH: Yes, we did. You know, we weren't just a family that sat down
and studied the Bible together like that. But we all had our
Bibles, and we read our Bibles and all like that. And church—in
a town like our—a small town like that. People—the people in
the town did just go to church—whatever church it was. And
your friends were in—some of our friends in Methodist church

and some in the Baptist church. And you visited everybody, you know, I grew up visiting all churches because that's—we just did. You went with friends to church or whatever. And the Methodist's didn't have church on Sunday nights, so the Methodist kids came to our church on Sunday night—would even sing in the choir and all. And then we had—when I was growing up, we had like an afternoon GA. We called it Girls' Auxiliary, that we went to one of our ladies in the church that—we went to her house after school one afternoon a week. And we had Bible study there, and that was called Girls' Auxiliary. And then on Sunday nights—on Sunday morning, we had Sunday schoolin'. On Sunday night, we called it BYPU—it was Baptist youth organization, you know. And so we had other things with the church other than just the Sunday morning. So that pretty well took up our Bible studies and church activities.

[00:59:00] SL: Yeah, you know the . . .

JH: And in the summertime, we had Vacation Bible School, and you always went to that.

SL: Now did you go out of town for that, and did you . . .

JH: No, we had it at our church.

SL: You had it at church.

JH: And I—Baptist church would have it; the Methodist church would

have it—everybody—you know, all the churches had. And it would be like two weeks, and you would go every morning—you know, in the mornings for Vacation Bible School.

SL: Well, did—when it came time for the meals at home, did—would—did someone always say grace over a meal . . .

JH: Yes.

SL: . . . were y'all—was that usually your father or your . . .

JH: My mother, I believe, would more—been—done that. Or as—or kids—as children you would.

[00:59:49] SL: Well, what about chores around the house? Were you ever assigned things that you had to do around the house?

JH: Yes, like I said, my sister was more the little homemaker and all. And she did when she was older. She loved to cook and everything, and then we were supposed to—my sister and I would be supposed to wash and dry the dishes. [*Laughs*] And I never did—I'd rather wash the dishes than dry the dishes. I think everybody was kinda one or the other. And she would wash—want to wash the dishes. And we have laughed later and said that I would just complain and fuss and everything about it until she would be saying, "Mother, come and get Johnelle out of the kitchen. You know, I'll just do it." [*Laughter*] And so I kind of had my way of getting out of that. And then later on—but

we—our—Mother always cooked a big lunch—you know, she cooked breakfast, and then she always had a big lunch at noon. And Daddy came home, and we all came home from school and had lunch. Mother always had a cake baked or a pie or whatever. There was always desert and all. And then—at night—you know, but we had our meals together that way. And then later on when—I didn't—when—after Dennis came along—well, I would—Mother said I could—I didn't go back to school, because I was goin' to get married. And so I didn't go back to school that next year—that next semester because we got married in January. [01:01:26] So I didn't go back, and so Mother said, "Okay, you can either go and work at the store for your dad, or you can help me here at home." And so I had a choice, and my choice was to help Mother at home because I really and truly have always liked tak—keeping my house and taking care of my house and keeping it clean and everything. So I helped Mother in the house rather than choosing to work at the store, and then look at where I ended up. Because never—never did I want to work in the business world at all. And it was funny—after my sister went away to college, and my sister graduated in three years and graduated when she was sixteen, and so she went to college, you know, young. And Mother would

write her and say, "Well, Johnelle baked a cake, or Johnelle did this, and Johnelle did that." And she'd say, "Well, she never did any of that when I was home." Well, I didn't need to because she did it. But after she was gone, then I started in cookin' more, and I started in, you know, doing the things that she had been doing, I guess, and all. And found that I liked that. And I learned to cook, and I did always—I took—I had four years of home ec. So it wasn't that I couldn't do it because I took—you had to take four years of home ec. And then—but I chose to take—I mean, you had to take two years, and I chose to take four years because we had a wonderful teacher—a really good teacher. And we learned to sew; we learned to cook; we learned table setting; we learned all the things that you later needed to learn—know in life. And I loved to sew, and I really did like to cook. And then there's nothing that gives me more pleasure than to pull a beautiful pie out of the oven or to make sure that every cabinet is washed in my house. And the things that go with cleanin'. Jane has always said, "Mother, while I'm talking to you, you're scrubbing on a cabinet [*laughter*] top." But I do like keeping house. That's important to me is how my house looks.

[01:03:23] SL: When you say you like to sew, would you-all get patterns and buy the material and actually make your own

clothes . . .

JH: Had patterns and bought the material. Uh-huh. That's right—
 we did. And when my daddy was in the—had—after he had his feed store and all that. Well, the feed came in—and all—came in beautiful sacks. And they were like a fabric that you would go to the store and buy. And so you would send those, you know, out with the feed and whatever. And then the women would wash them, launder them, and iron them and bring them to his store, and he would sell 'em. And you could go to his store, and there would be just stacks of these, what we call feed sacks, just stacked up. And they sold 'em, I think, for thirty-five cents for one, and they were big sacks, see. And people would come there and buy them. And at that time, we had a lady that sewed for us. And I would go pick out my favorite ones, and she would make dresses for me and all. And she made—you know, she'd make things for us. So I loved my clothes that were made out of feed sacks, because they were just beautiful fabrics and all. But yes, we—you learned to sew with a pattern and having—and getting to buy your fabrics and cut your dress out and sew it. And I never did really like to sew for myself. I could, and I would, but I didn't really like to. But I liked to make clothes for Jane—after I had Jane. And I alway—I liked that.

[01:04:54] SL: Did your mom have one of those pedal Singers?

JH: My mother had a pedal sewing machine—she did. And of course, that's what I learned to sew on was a pedal sewing machine. Later on in years, she put a little motor on it so that it was—became an electric sewing machine. And I had that and all.

SL: And it kind of folded down and stored and had a . . .

JH: It fol—yes, and made a pretty little cabinet . . .

SL: Little—Yup. Uh-huh. Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yeah, I remember those, too.

JH: Yeah, that's right. That's what we did and learned with that pedal sewing machine—how to [SL laughs]—yeah.

[01:05:26] SL: Well, I was gonna ask you about—you were born in [19]32, so do you remember much about [thunder rumbles] World War II, and did it play a role in the community at all?



JH: I do remember it. I remember very well the day of Pearl Harbor because, you know, such a tragic thing happened. And of course, you had your radio, and you got—you know, you heard it on your radio, and then you went to church. And—one thing that was pretty profound about that for us in Heber Springs was that we were in church and heard there was a fire. And—because, you know, we had a volunteer fire department. And it

turned out that our theater—our one movie theater was on fire and some other buildings there. And one man that—in our choir's—wife taught us in seventh grade. She was always schoolteacher there. She was one of the most important people in Heber Springs that died just a couple of years ago or so at the—maybe at the age of a hundred or a hundred and one or anything. But everyone just loved her. And they had two little boys. And he was a volunteer fireman, and he left the choir. And I remember this because some things, just as young as you are, they stand out in your mind. But I remember that he left the choir to go to the—when he heard the sirens and all. And so as soon as church was over, we went there. And one wall of a building fell on him and killed him. And so we just like—okay, Pearl Harbor was horrible—terrible thing for the world. But for our town of Heber Springs, this bad fire and losing this man was another just tragic thing that happened on that same day.

[01:07:13] SL: That's interesting.

JH: And then, you know, Johnnie died on December the seventh. And that morning when we knew it was gonna happen, Jane said, "Mother, many good men died on this day."

SL: Yeah.

JH: So it was just like another day that has always had a real

meaning to me in my life came back with another one—another meaning to it that day. And then, of course, I remember World War II. I remember my mother being so involved in wrapping—doing the bandage—all that. And then the people from our area that went away. My two aunts and my—one aunt's husband had died when her children were young—when I was five years old. But she and her two children moved to Long Beach, California, for her to work in a factory. And my other aunt and uncle that had worked before in Washington state went back there to work again. And so family members that moved away to go and work in the factories or whatever. And then soldiers that—the men that went to war—your friends, your neighbors, their fathers. My father had an accident in [19]42 before the war started. He was in the—like I said, in the poultry business and all. And he got a carload of what they called Servall. It was like—they put in the chicken houses for the bedding. Like we later used rice hulls for.

SL: Used rice hulls. Uh-huh.

[01:08:49] JH: My li—our life has made full circle so many times. And so he—it came in by rail, and so his brother that was ten years younger worked at the store with him. And so he went over, and he came back, and he said, "We can't get that car

open—the boxcar open." And so Daddy was one that could always do everything. He could work on anything—fix anything. So he went over, and when he opened it, one of those bags of Servall came off the top and hit him right on top of the head. And it broke his neck.

SL: Oh.

JH: And so for a long time, my daddy was in a big—it looked like ropes around his neck—the kind of cast he was in. And he had to sleep and sit in a platform rocker. Sleep in a big platform rocker. He couldn't lie down, and we went through all that. So he was not—he was . . .

SL: Not eligible.

[01:09:39] JH: . . . could no go to war, see. Could not go to the war because of this injury he had had. So he didn't go, but so many people did—uncles and all that that did go, so—it really—and going to the movies when—this is one thing I always think of is when we went to the movies, that they always started off, you know, by showing the war . . .

SL: Newsreels. Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . the film from the war and all that. And they always started off with the American flag. And when they—that American flag came on that screen, everyone stood up. Everyone stood up. I

think of how patriotic we all were during that time. And when I see the things happen now, it really—it hurts. It really breaks my heart to see the way that we do not have the feelings to the—to our flag and to our country that we had during the time of World War II. Everyone pulled together. They were so close, and we were all just one nation that was together in that and cared so much for our flag and for our people that were in the war and all.

[01:10:51] SL: You know they [*coughing in background*]*—there was rationing, different . . .*

JH: Oh, I remember the rationing part. Yes, because I was always really hard on—I could wear out shoes really fast and still love shoes. Just, you know, that's just my—one of my faults. [*SL laughs*] More than have—but one of my faults is loving shoes too much. But I really was—and we—you could just get—you know, you just got coupons. You could just get so many shoes for the family, and it was hard on Mother and Daddy because I needed more shoes than you could get. And yes, kids wore cardboard in their shoes because they maybe couldn't afford to buy shoes. But we had to do that because we couldn't get enough coupons to get the shoes sometime that you needed. And that—you know, you'd put a little piece of cardboard in

there. And you would just keep wearing those shoes—and then the sugar rationing. And that was hard for everybody in our family that loved the desserts and the sweets and all those things. And to get the—and the sugar was rationed and the Cokes and the gum—chewing gum. And the man at the grocery store that—you know, he was a friend to everybody. And he would save Cokes for us or something like that, maybe. But I remember doing—going through that time when you couldn't get all those things. [01:12:08] Then there were people like one man in town that at one time—and I think this may have been the war thing—I don't know if this—I always connect it back. It was during that time that—he had a kinda like a mercantile store like—well, it was like my daddy had had before. But he had things from forever back. I mean, he had the—and [*thunder rumbles*] you would go to his store, and the Dirty Dozen, our group, would go there all the time after school. And it was a big store, but it was real dark in there. And he would only turn on the lightbulb in the ceiling—pull the string—turned it on for the area you were in. And we were all in there just lookin' anyway. But you know, it would be like the old-time shoes and everything like that he had in there. And he bought a carload of baby blankets and might—he might buy a carload of cereal or

something like that—and when I'm talking about a railcar. And we needed some new flooring for the kitchen, and it was like linoleum that they put down in the kitchen. But Daddy went there to get it, but to get it, he had to buy baby blankets, you know. [*Laughter*] So some people used some times like that to make an extra sale.

SL: That's funny.

JH: That was just smart marketing.

SL: It is smart marketing.

JH: Smart marketing, now . . .

SL: That kind of stuff still goes on.

JH: . . . but to us—that we ended up—we didn't need a baby blanket then. Later we—Dennis came along, and I guess we did.

[*Laughter*]

SL: Well, maybe that's the reason.

JH: We didn't know then that we were gonna need it.

SL: Had to use that. Yeah.

JH: Yeah.

[01:13:34] SL: That's funny. That's good. Do you remember that guys name that . . .

JH: I do. His name was Howard Bridwell.

SL: Bridwell?

JH: Bridwell.

SL: Bridwell.

JH: *B-R-I-D-W-E-L-L*. And I very well remember the end of the war. My aunt lived in okla—in Shawnee, Oklahoma. And we were—the three children were going to visit her. And we didn't know the war was gonna end at that particular time—that particular day. And so we had the bus that went from Batesville to Little Rock everyday. One-way. One—Little Rock and then back. So Mother was taking us to Little Rock to put us on the train to go to Shawnee that night. We would get on the Rocket. [*SL laughs*] And it was Rock Island station in Little Rock. And we would leave at ten thirty at night, and we would get to Shawnee at five thirty the next morning. And it was what they called a real fast train. And so we were going on the train. So we were on the bus for—goin' to Little Rock. And as we get to North Little Rock—I mean, everybody is out in the streets. Everything is happening. And that was when the war had ended. So here we are on the bus going into Little Rock, and it is just—people all over the place. Well, she had a room at the McGehee Hotel, which was on the corner of Markham and Main. [01:14:53] Right across from the bus station in Little Rock. And to spend the night and then she would go back home the next morning on

the bus. And so we—when she walked in with three children—you know, I mean, we were—I don't know—was I thirteen or so, but we walked in, and he said, "Lady, what are you doing in Little Rock tonight?" And she said, "I didn't know this was gonna happen, or I would not be in Little Rock with my children." And so she told him, though, that we were goin' on the train and all. And so he gave us a room on the mezzanine—right on the side of the bus station . . .

SL: Ahh.

JH: . . . right on the corner of Markham—Main. I mean, we had the whole corner there up on the mezzanine level. And so we could just see—sit in those big windows on those big windowsills, and we could see everything that—all the—you know, throwing the confetti all out of the windows. The soldiers on the cars and all the soldiers out there. It was just like the very best spot to be to see what was going on. And so we just watched it all. And finally, we opened the door, and there was the piano right outside on the mezzanine. And here was a soldier sitting out there playing the piano. So we went out with him—went out and sat around the piano with him. And he said, "That is their way of celebrating, and this is my way of celebrating." And he was sitting there quietly playing the piano.

[01:16:13] SL: That's beautiful.

JH: And so we stayed there with him until time for us to go. And she had to get a taxi, and he had to go through the alleys—the back alleys to get to Rock Island station with us. And then she was so worried about us and getting on—putting us on the train and all, and we were worried about her being there by herself. But we got on the train, and do you know that everybody was always—when we went on that train—there were—people would always sleep all the way. And it was just as quiet, and everyone was asleep. But at that same time that I was coming through North Little Rock on that bus, Johnnie was walking guard duty at Camp Robinson right there in North Little Rock.

SL: How bout that.

JH: Yeah.

SL: Small, small serendip . . .

JH: So like I said, if you hear me—my stories—you will see. Six months old, my daddy weighed him. He went off the Tumbling Shoals Bridge, you know. Here I am—I mean, so many times, we were so close together, you know.

SL: That's good—so—but—so he didn't have to go overseas or . . .

JH: No, he went in closer to the end. He was drafted when he was eighteen. And he went to Camp Chaffee, and later, they sent

him to Camp Campbell, Kentucky. And he was there. Truman was—President Truman was in a parade in Chicago, and they took them from Camp Campbell, Kentucky, to Chicago. And he said he shined on those boots for days and days and days to get those boots lookin' just right. And he said when the president went past him, the president was lookin' up at the airplanes. [Laughter] And then he came back to Camp Robinson, and that's where he was at the end. So he did not, but his two older brothers were overseas. They were in Germany, and they were over in all those—I mean, in that area over there—in the European part. My brother-in-law was in the Pacific—was in japa—in there. He was in the Pacific when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

[01:18:20] SL: Wow. So you were talking about seeing the war newsreels at the theater that—do you remember any of the other—do you remember any of the feature films that you saw growin' up? You member the first movie you went to?

JH: I may remember about the first. I did not like the movies. They more or less frightened me. I don't know why—what it was about them, but I don't think I did. That's what they tell me when—that I—when I was small. But I remember going to see *The Wizard of Oz* with my sister and my cousin. And I did not

like it at all. And I still have not been a fan of *The Wizard of Oz*. The monkeys scared me. And I was just—it frightened me. And I hid my head, and I wanted to leave and all that. So when I was a child, I didn't really like going to the movies that much. Of course, when I was older, I did. But oh my goodness, all the movies that were out at that time—I guess I saw them all because we had the movies that were on the midnight show and Sunday afternoon and Monday night—the same one. Then they changed Tuesday, Wednesday, thur—and thur—Tuesday and Wednesday, and then they may have changed Thursday, Friday. Then we did it again. And on Saturdays, we saw a double feature. We saw two westerns, which they called a serial in the middle. And so we'd go on Saturday afternoon, and we would sit through that. And then we would go home, and we would play whatever the serial was, you know. We would play that—we would be the actors. And I remember hiding and . . .

[01:20:01] SL: Cowboys and Indians . . .

JH: Oh yeah, and play all that, you know. But you did—you went to all of those. And when we first started going to the movie, it cost a dime if you were at—once you were six years old, you had to play—pay a dime. [*SL laughs*] And then when we were older—when I was dating Johnnie, it was a thirty-five cents to go

to the movie. But I ate five bags of popcorn every time I went to the movie. And they were a nickel a bag. And Johnnie was working for four dollars a day. [*SL laughs*] And he said, "You know, it was one thing to buy that movie ticket for thirty-five cents." He could come up with that, but to buy that popcorn for me just about broke him. But I had a system—that when I went in, I always got two bags. And a friend that would hold one for me, and I would get one. And then our popcorn machine was outside the theater. And then you had to go just half a block or less down the street—just down the street to the drugstore to get a Coke—to get something to drink 'cause they didn't sell those there. And—but someone would like to go out in the middle of the movie to get the popcorn for me to get me another bag. Because they could see who was going up and down the street—if there were any boys that weren't at the movie—if they were goin' up and down the street. [*SL laughs*] And then at the end of the movie, they would—the guy that popped the popcorn would come down and walk through the theater and sell the popcorn. And I would get two then. So I had my routine. I did it just exactly right every time. And then, you know, for a while, the pop—the guy that did the popcorn was my boyfriend. So I got the extra butter.

SL: Ooh.

JH: Yeah, that was really good. [*SL laughs*] I paid for the popcorn, but I did get extra butter on it.

SL: You and your popcorn.

JH: Oh, I just . . .

SL: How'd that happen?

JH: . . . I just was always like that. I remember one time for Christmas—you know, at Christmas, you got a Christmas gift. You didn't get Christmas gifts; you got a Christmas gift. And one of my best Christmas gifts one year was a popcorn popper. And I may have been ten, eleven years old—something like that. But it was one of the popcorn poppers that had the top that went around like this [*moves hand in a circular motion*]. And oh, that was a great gift.

[01:22:13] SL: That's fun. Okay, so now you talked about being on the basketball team. In—was that in high school?

JH: High school. It was in high school.

SL: And tell me a little bit about that basketball team.

JH: Well, we were the Panthers. And we had the little—we were red and white, and we had the little short shorts [*SL laughs*] and the pretty little white top. And I have always had these long skinny legs and long arms. So I didn't have the—maybe I wasn't the

best lookin' one in 'em, but I didn't look too bad in that—my little uniform. But I was not the best player on the team, but I was a part of the team, and that's all that really counts as long as you're a part of something like that because it takes the ones that aren't so good to help the good ones to practice and all. And—but I did actually play. I wasn't like the star player, but I did play. I got my nose broken twice playin' basketball . . .

SL: Oh boy.

JH: Not because I was so tough or anything. But I played guard, you know. Then we played half-court and had forwards and guards. And I played guard. And actually, both times was at practice. And the first time, I ran up to guard someone, and she ju—she started to make a shot, and when she came up, she hit my nose. And I had a concussion—broke my nose. So I didn't get to play for a couple weeks, and then the first time I went back to practice, the ball came down and hit me on the nose and did it again. [*Laughs*] So I . . .

SL: That hurts, too.

[01:23:41] JH: . . . yeah. I could say that, you know, I was playin' so rough in the game—it really wasn't. [*Laughter*]

SL: It really wasn't.

JH: It was just one of those things that—yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, now, so did y'all travel to different schools to play?

JH: We did. We—yes, we did. We played the schools all around in the county. We went to Oil Trough once over by Batesville, that area, to a tournament. We played in a tournament there. And— but mainly, it was just, you know, our county schools or—in our district—whatever it was, yeah. We really played basketball—I mean, we had the big . . .

SL: Did you have a good team?

JH: . . . whole big thing. We had a good team. We did. We had some girls that were really good—Minnie Belle, my friend, was just—she played forward, and she was good. And we had some good players. But it's just part of being—being a part of something I think that's important. Being a part of the team and being in the middle of whatever's going on and all. Like I said, I was a cheerleader, and you just did all those things, you know.

[01:24:38] SL: Were there any other school organizations that you were a part of besides the cheerleaders and the basketball team?

JH: Well, I was in 4-H Club. We had plays all the time. Because, you know, people didn't have TVs and all. And so we actually had plays, and people came to the plays. We had 'em from the time I was in the ninth grade. And I loved being in the plays.

When—and we had a sen—when you were a junior and a senior, you had what you called your junior and senior play. And I mean, we really worked on those. And they were like the big performance. The junior class did one and then the senior class. And people paid to come and all that. And we had them for two nights. And I had the lead in my junior and my senior play.

[01:25:27] SL: What plays were they?

JH: I remember the senior play was called *Susie the Siren*, and I was Susie. [Laughter] And I said [unclear words]—you know, the play opens. And here I come down the stairs, combing this long, blonde hair. I will say, I can't remember thing—I can't memorize anything now, but I was in my—I had the lead in my junior and senior play, and I never missed a line. So back at one time, I could memorize pretty well. And—but that was fun. But it was a big part of our school—of what we did. All the classes, you know, did it. And we made money. We were actually making money for a senior trip. Ever—all the senior classes got to take a trip. But you had to earn your money. You had to make the money to go on your senior trip. So we started our freshman year. We went to freshman—freshman was ninth grade. We started our freshman year doing whatever we could to make money. If it was—pickin' apples and sellin' 'em, or

pickin' cotton. It's the only time I ever picked cotton, and Johnnie talks about pickin' cotton. And he and Johnny Cash became friends. And they—and Johnnie and his family used to go over to eastern Arkansas and pick cotton for a living. And the whole family would go, you know, and stay all during that time. And a lot of people from our area would—kids wouldn't come to school until about the first of October. And it was just every—it was okay because that's what everyone did. And they would go there and pick cotton. So when he and Johnny Cash became friends, they found out that they picked cotton in the same areas. But one thing, Johnny Cash could pick more cotton than Johnnie Hunt. *[SL laughs]* Well, I picked cotton one day, and we did it for our—to make money for our class. And I picked with a friend that had before. And I think we picked fifty-one pounds of cotton, and I thought we had done great, and I found out that that wasn't anything at all, but I thought I had worked hard all day long. But we did all these different things to make money to take a senior trip. So we worked our whole four years, and part of the money from the plays went for that. You know, we had a junior and senior banquet like they do now. They have these . . .

[01:27:33] SL: Proms.

JH: . . . [*unclear word*]. We had it our junior year and our senior year. But the—and then the juniors put on the banquet for the seniors and did—I remember that we did that. But when we took our senior trip—most of the time, the classes would go like to Rockaway Beach—that was fore Branson was anything, but from Heber Springs, they'd go to Rockaway Beach—that's where they always went. Well, we decided, you—that we were goin' away. We were really gonna—going on a big senior trip. And we were the first ones to go on a trip like this. But we went to Baton Rouge, New Orleans; Galveston, Texas. We did the whole round. We took our school bus. And there were only forty-two in my graduating class. And so we—and we were very close. We were all very close. We were just a group that loved being together and doing everything together—the boys, the girls, and all of us. And our song was, "I'll Fly Away." And we sang it all the way on that trip and coming back. And even at our graduation, we were all crying because we had just been such close friends that we didn't wanna part from each other. So—but that was a big trip for us.

[01:28:44] SL: So you went to State Teachers College . . .

JH: Arkansas State Teachers College.

SL: . . . after graduating from high school in Heber Springs. But you

just went for one semester?

JH: I went one year.

SL: One year.

JH: Mh-hmm.

SL: And did . . .

[01:28:59] JH: Johnnie and I were dating, and we had been dating for two years. And we—for graduation, he gave me an engagement ring, which was a big surprise. He picks me up to take me to graduation. And we're a little early, so we're driving around. And they have a beautiful park in seven-acre park, you know, with sulphur springs and Heber Springs, you know. It's—has all the different waters that people go there to drink the water because—for health and all. And I remember that we were driving down Main Street, and we would—you would drive around the park and all up around the park and come back around. And the high school was on the other end of the town. And we were driving—we were right down by the park. And he says, "Well, I got something for you, and I'll get something better later." And opened it up, and here was this diamond ring. And he had borrowed eighty dollars from his aunt—I found out later. And went to Little Rock that day—Stiff jewelry store in Little Rock and bought this ring. And you know, it was just a

little, tiny diamond, but to me, it was bigger than one Elizabeth Taylor ever wore. [*SL laughs*] It was just the—and it was a surprise and—but I had to go to graduation, and I wore it, but I had to keep my hand—I turned it around, and I kept my head—hand hidden because I couldn't let anyone see it until we told Mother and Daddy.

SL: Aah.

[01:30:24] JH: See, I would never have told someone else before we told them.

SL: Right.

JH: So here I sit through graduation, and now, how am I gonna tell—how are we gonna tell Mother and Daddy? And what are they going to say? Am I gonna be able to keep it? What are we gonna do here? [*SL laughs*] And so when it was over, we couldn't wait to go to their house. But like I said, we always became such close friends with our ministers. And the one that had been there previously was now livin' in Conway—was pastor of a church in Conway. And he came back to speak at our graduation. Well, when it was over, he and his wife went home with Mother and Daddy. And they stayed, and we would drive by, and they stayed, and we would drive by. And we were so ready for them to leave because we didn't want to go in until we

could go in and tell them about the ring. And I don't know if we waited or if we finally just went in. And we just—you know, and we told them. I showed it to them or whatever—I don't know exactly how we did it. And I know my mother said, "Well, if it takes you as long to get the next one as it did this one, I guess it's okay." [SL laughs] And so sure enough, it did—it took me another two-and-a-half years, you know, to get the next one.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

[01:31:28] JH: But—so then I went to college. Well, and the reason we had to wait another two and a half years—we didn't have the—Johnnie didn't make enough money for us to get married. And we knew we couldn't get married until we had enough money to get married—you know, to have a place to live and everything like that. So we—when—in June—let's see, I went to college then that year. And he would come over to Conway to pick me up in that red Ford truck again. And I was at UCA last Saturday night for an event there. And there I saw McAlister Hall that I lived in. And I thought about there he—I would be there in that dorm, and he would come, and it had a circle driveway, and he would drive up in that red Ford truck and come and get me and take me out on a date. And once in a while—he didn't come very often, but he did some. But I went home most

every weekend because I had a reason to go home.

SL: Yeah.

[01:32:28] JH: I had to go home—see him. And so then after that year in June, he borrowed ten dollars from a friend and hitchhiked out of Heber Springs on a oil truck—a truck that was going to Little Rock to get oil—I mean to get gas—gasoline, you know. And he borrowed ten dollars and hitchhiked out of Heber Springs, and he went to Little Rock to the YMCA and paid seven dollars for a room and—for seven nights—and he got a job with East Texas Motor Freight driving a truck. And then later, they sent him to Texarkana. And from June—and he didn't have a car. He didn't even have the truck anymore. And by—from June until January, he saved enough money to make a down payment on a [19]49 Chevrolet, and this was [19]51 when he went to Little Rock—and on a [19]49 Chevrolet. And first month's rent on a two-room apartment, and I'm talking about a bedroom and a kitchen and a bathroom. It was not a living room and a bedroom—it was a two room and a bathroom. And—for us to get married. So then by—so I knew we knew—see, 'cause he was saving money like he was. And we knew then that we were goin' to be getting married. And so I didn't want to go back to school in September. And—because we were just kinda counting

the days . . .

SL: Right.

JH: . . . till he got that bank account up enough. [01:34:04] And it was just—you know, Mother—I mean, with our family, you—it was—you were supposed to go to college. And so I would not tell Mother again. We didn't tell—we didn't say things we weren't—you know, knew they didn't want us to do. And so I called Johnnie 'cause Mother was buyin' my clothes—my new clothes. She was getting me ready to go to school, and I could not tell her I wouldn't go to school. There was just no way I would tell her that. And so I told Johnnie, I said—he called, and I said, "You know, Mother's gonna take me to school." And he came home. He came home that weekend, and he went to my daddy, and he said, "Johnnie, Johnelle's not going back to school, and if you-all make her go to school, I'll go and get her and take her with me," or something like that. He really stood up there, you know. Oh, my daddy was so easy and all. [SL laughs] But Daddy had to be the bad guy and tell Mother that I wasn't goin' back to school. And so then it all worked out. And that's when I—Mother—you know, I helped Mother in the house. But she had Dennis by then. And so it was really a help to her when I was home for that time. But then, here Dennis was—just my

baby brother that was—had been born in [19]48, and by now, we're into [19]51. And oh, he was just like the idol of our eyes. All of us, we just loved him to death, and so I got to do so much to help take care of him. And he was—you can imagine how we all spoiled him.

SL: Yes.

JH: And I remember that Mother told me—once said, "You need to take Dennis and get his hair cut." And I took him to the barbershop and took him in, and he wouldn't get his hair cut. And I took him back home, and I said, "Mother, he wouldn't get his hair cut." She went out to the tree in the backyard, and she got one of those little switches that they—we used to us—people used to use . . .

SL: Yes.

JH: . . . that now they can't, but they should be able to, I think.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: And she handed that to me, and she said, "You take him back and you get his hair cut, and if you don't, when he comes back—when you come back, I will use this on you." So we went back, and Dennis went in and got his hair cut. [*Laughs*] So I did have that time at home with him, which was special.

[01:36:13] SL: Did—so you—did you ever have to be switched?

JH: Oh, I'm sure I did. I would say I was the perfect child and didn't [SL laughs], but my daddy has told—they used to tell this about that when I was a child, and I'm sure I was—that David probably caused me to do something I shouldn't. You know, it wasn't me. I was probably chasing him through the house or something. And Daddy was going to spank me, and Daddy said that I fought him. I fought him so hard, and he said he never would do that again. And Daddy never did spankings. He never did that. Mother was the one . . .

SL: Yeah.

JH: . . . and it was the same way in our family. Johnnie was the one that was the—always the good guy with the white hat.

SL: Right.

[01:36:56] JH: And Mother took—did the discipline of the kids, you know.

SL: Yeah, that was the way it was in ours, too.

JH: But if I—if we did, it wasn't anything that ever both—they were so—they were not strong with their spankin'—their little switch or whatever.

SL: Right.

JH: She probably got the switch off the tree more than she ever used it.

SL: That was enough.

JH: That was enough.

SL: Straighten you . . .

JH: Oh, when she did it, yeah, you knew. You knew that was it.

[01:37:16] SL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's good. So were—
now, your first apartment was where now?

JH: Texarkana.

SL: Texarkana.

JH: Yeah, we moved to Texarkana. I thought I was movin' to China, I guess, or Mother thought I was. She thought we were—you know, it was like we were goin' so far away. [*Thunder rumbles*] I had always saved—after the new Roosevelt Dimes came out, they came out at some time along then. And when they came—I started saving those dimes, and I had a matchbox. And I would put them in that, and I would—could mash it down and put 'em under a brick in the fireplace. And Mother had what they called whatnot shelves—you know, with all the little trinkets on it and all.

SL: Sure.

JH: And she collected shoes—the little, china shoes and all that.

Well, I think I had those about filled with my dimes and everything. So the morning we were leaving to go to move to

Texarkana—to go to Texarkana. Mother had my sack of money, and she was trying to give it to me, and Johnnie said, "No, no, now Ollie, you can't do that. I'm gonna take care of her. She doesn't need your money. I'll take care of Johnelle and all." You know, and she said, "But this is her money." And he thought that she was trying to give me money to leave home, I guess, so I could come back on. [*Laughs*]

[01:38:34] SL: You know, your parents had to just be crazy about Johnnie.

JH: They were. You—people say, "What in the world?" I was sixteen, and he was twenty-one.

SL: Yeah.

JH: And, "What in the world did they mean letting her date someone twenty-one years old?" Johnnie was very young looking. I say—I've always said he had a baby face. But he was very young looking, and he was just—he just immediately—he became best friends. And he—it just didn't seem like that age difference. You didn't think about that age difference like that—of us. From the time I met him and—we played cards with them all the time. We would play cards with them so much at night. One time I thought, "You know, I just wish he would just take me out for a Coke [*SL laughs*] instead of just playing cards with my parents

all the time," but we did. And my daddy was like his best friend, and my mother just—he loved and adored my mother. But she did him—I would always say, "I would hate for my mother to choose before jo—between Johnnie and myself. I know who would be the one that would be out the door." Because they did—they just loved Johnnie, but he did them. He just dearly loved my parents and my daddy and my mother. He did. When my—after—my daddy died when he was fifty-three—sixty-three. [01:39:52] And do you know that Johnnie called my mother every day—every Sunday mornin'—I don't mean every day. Every Sunday mornin', Johnnie called my mother and talked to her before we went to Sunday school every Sunday mornin'. And he did that until she had had congestive heart failure. And after that, she could not really talk well. She knew what she wanted to say, and she always knew us, but she couldn't . . .

SL: Communicate, yeah.

JH: . . . speak real well. And so it finally just beca—came to the point that he couldn't talk to her on the phone that well because he couldn't understand her. And it was sad for him. I don't care where we were, if we were on a trip or wherever, he called her every Sunday morning. And she knew he was going to. And I would listen because it was like they talked about the same

things they did last Sunday, but they had that conversation.

[01:40:41] SL: He loved it, didn't he?



JH: And Daddy was one that Johnnie would always call when he was going to do something like—if he had to go to Atlanta for—to call on people to work or something. And he'd call Daddy so many times, and he'd say, "I'm goin' to Atlanta, why don't you go with me?" And he'd say, "Oh Johnnie, I'd really like to, but I am so busy. I don't think I can leave." Then a little while he'd call back, and he'd say, "Now when are you goin'?" [*SL laughs*] And so they did a lot of that. And he actually went with him to Prescott, Kansas, to buy this five trucks and seven trailers that became J.B. Hunt Transport. And Johnnie wanted it, and it was just before Christmas—just a few days before Christmas. And he—in December of [19]69, and Daddy went with him, and they came back, and I was in Stuttgart, and I met him—I met them in Heber Springs because we always went there for Christmas. So the kids and I met them there, and I asked Daddy because Johnnie would—he always was coming up with these new ideas—these new ventures and everything that would scare me to death. And I could say, "Daddy, what do you think?" you know, and so I said, "Daddy, what do you think about this trucking company? What do you think about these trucks he's buyin'—

starting this trucking company?" He said, "Johnelle, I think that's gonna be a really good thing." [01:41:55] And that was in a Christmas of [19]69, and my daddy died on January the sixth of [19]70. And so he—and he—before he died that night, he called us. And he wanted to know what was going on about the trucking company and—I mean, about the trucks and how things were going. He called to talk about that. And it was just—he was the one that we—if we got something, he was the one that we'd call. And it would be—I would be—after that happened, I would be driving to work, and I'd think, "Oh, I need to call Daddy and tell him about this." And every time something big would happen with us, up until Johnnie was gone—every time something big would happen, it would be, "I wish we could call your daddy, or I wish we could call Johnnie"—he called him Johnnie. Each called the other John—"I wish we could call him and tell him about it." And especially after we were able to have a plane. My daddy loved to fly.

SL: Yeah.

JH: And we went to Germany once on a business trip, and he went with us. And he was like, "Oh, if he could just be on this plane," you know.

SL: Yeah.

JH: But I know he was seeing us doing all these things. And that the thing he said, "This truckline's gonna be a really good thing." And look at what happened with it. And that was the last trip he made with Johnnie.

[01:43:10] SL: That's so strong. You just don't—you don't hear many stories like that these days—modern-day stories of son-in-laws and father-in-laws . . .

JH: So being—so close and so involved.

SL: . . . traveling together and being that close and . . .

JH: You know, the one thing Johnnie said. We didn't have money. We—he was driving—we were working week to week, you know. But he said he—we always had the security that if we needed something, we could call Daddy. And you didn't have printed checks—you could pick up a checkbook and write a check, you know, in any store or whatever. And he told Johnnie one time, he said, "Johnnie, if you ever need anything, just write a check." And he said, "I never had to," but he said, "the security of knowin' you could do that." And we had a problem one time with selling a house in Little Rock, and it was our first house. Jane was six weeks old. We'd been married two-and-a-half years. And Jane was six weeks old, and we wanted to buy a house—our first one. And Mother and Daddy came to hel—to

look at it with us and help us and all. And we bought a little two-bedroom house that was like the biggest mansion I'll ever see. *[SL laughs]* And just beautiful, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:44:34] JH: Eight hundred and twenty-five square feet. Twelve thousand dollars and all. And they came there to s—with us, helping us—I mean, to—looking at houses. And we bought that. And so then five years later, my sister and her husband had built a new house. And they had a three-bedroom, two-bath home out in—on Markham—off of Markham and Markham Manor. And they decided to move to Heber Springs for my brother-in-law to go into business there. And so we wanted to buy their house, so we put our house up for sale. But we put a stipulation in the contract that if their house sold first, ours was off the market. Well, someone bought our house. So then it was getting close to time to close. And I even—they even had checks printed that came to our house with their name on 'em and everything. So we start moving our—and all. The next—then I called them and say, "You know, you've had something that's come here—it was actually those checks," and I said, "you may want to come by and pick it up." And she said, "Oh, I was going to call you. We've decided not to take the house." And here, you know,

here is Johnnie driving a truck, I'm not working, and we're—ended up with two houses. Called the real estate comp—office and tell 'em, and they said, "Oh, you go ahead and move. They'll have to buy it." Well, they didn't, so we had to go through court. Well, my daddy stepped in like he always did, you know. And when we needed help—and he ste—and he said, "You go ahead, and I will make the payment on the other house. And you go to court with this." And it took us—we went through court. We won. They took us supreme court. We won there. It took us eighteen months. Daddy made the payments on that house.

SL: Wow.

[01:46:15] JH: Course, they had to pay us back with interest. But if they ha—you know, we would—where would we have been? That he would . . .

SL: Yeah.

JH: He stepped up, and he got paid back. We had a time when, Bryan, our son, was very sick. When he was five months old, he got staph pneumonia. And for twenty-two days, the doctors told us that he would not live. And gave us no hope at all. And we went through all that time, and he was so sick that I stayed with him. And we were in the isolation at Saint Vincent's Hospital in

Little Rock—the children were both born in Little Rock, and we lived there for nine years—and we had to have private nurses around the clock 'cause he was so sick. Well, Daddy paid for the private nurses, too. To help so that we could have that, and it was such—during that time. And so then when we were goin'—when we fir—started our company in Stuttgart. And we were raising money to start the company. And we got—and we sold to all these people—future customers or whatever to raise that money.

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:47:20] JH: Well, we—Johnnie got some stock for it because he had the options—and for the work he had done on it and everything. And so he—and he gave Daddy some stock from that. Because it was like, "Okay, look at what he's done for us" . . .

SL: Yeah.

JH: . . . "and now we can do something back for him." And that stock, of course, didn't seem like much at the time for what he had done for us. But at that—but it turned out that through the years—it turned out to be a pretty good gift for him.

SL: Yeah.

JH: So the gifts went both ways.

SL: Is there anything that your father and/or your mother ever told you that just really has stuck with you all these years? Is there any advice that—did your dad ever sit you down and say something to you that just really grabbed you?

JH: I know one thing my mother always told us when—being in these plays and things like that we did. And Mother would always say, "You can do it better than anyone else or they would be doing it." And that always just stayed with me with things that you came up against. You know, "Okay—this is—I'm supposed to be doing this, and Mother knows that I can do it." And that meant a lot.

SL: Confidence.

JH: Gave you—they always—yes, they gave us confidence. They gave us confidence, they gave us the love, and they gave us the things that we needed to be who we are today. And I just think that with Daddy—just the—all the things he did to support us. That he—we knew he, you know, he believed in us. And he knew we could do it. And never to be—never would have been critical—either one. No matter what, they would never have been critical about anything that we did. Even—they may have to themselves or to each other, but they would not have criticized us about something that we did. Another thing that

Mother—and I'm this way with my children. They never put pressure on us to be at home for certain things after we were away from home and after we were grown. And I know, I hear of people that feel they've got to be here for Mother's Day, or they've got to be here for this and that. [01:49:45] And although we were a close family—and we used to go there every year for Christmas and take the children and all until the children got older. And we'd said, "Okay, we need to"—it was after Daddy died. Until Daddy died, we still went home every year for Christmas and took the children. But—and we were there for all these important occasions, but Mother would always say, "You don't need to come now. If you need to do something else, if you need to be somewhere else, if you need to be with your family, do that. You can come here anytime." And she always said—and I do that with my own. I tell 'em, "Just because it's my birthday that"—Jane wanted to come for Mother's Day, and she called, and well—and they'd just been here that week. And they were gonna come back, and I said, "No, you aren't comin' for Mother's Day. In fact, I'm comin' there on Sunday afternoon. [SL laughs] You don't need to be here Sunday when we're with the other part of the family." And I just—they never put pressure on us about anything like that. And I think just giving

you the freedom of knowing that, "It's okay—we love you." And they knew I—they had our love at all times whether we were there or not. And that we had theirs wherever we were.

SL: Kind of made you want to be with 'em.

SL: Yes.

Trey Marley: Excuse me, Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:50:57] TM: All right, Dan, we're ready.

Dan Hendrix: Okay. Well, Johnelle, you know, we—everyone knows that you and J. B. were partners, of course, in the business, which became such a tremendous business and still is today in the trucking industry. I think that it's important to know some of the defining moments. Those defining events that led J.B. Hunt Transport up to becoming the largest publicly traded truckload carrier in the nation and has grown just tremendously under the leadership of both you and J. B. in those years. And I know that, earlier you were talking about one of those—kind of one of those defining moments that started the—kind of the rice hull business. And what allowed J. B. to be able to do that, because he was working nights—and allowed him to do some of those things during the day. But maybe you could kinda talk

about some of those early defining moments that got you to where you are, and then maybe how the Motor Carrier Act, 1980, really kinda pushed things forward. And some of those things that you did, and you might even want to talk a little bit about J. B. and you pioneering the intermodal, which has become just a tremendous part of that business.

[01:52:28] JH: Do you want me to start back with the truck . . .

DH: Yeah.

JH: . . . with the rice hull company . . .

DH: That'd probably be good.

JH: . . . or with how that started?

DH: Sure, yeah. I think that'd be good.

JH: And I maybe have told this before. I've told this—this is kind of my story that I love to tell. Johnnie was working, as I've said many times—you know, he quit—started school when he was four years old. One-room school. He cried to go to school with his two older brothers, and so the teacher said, "Just let him come and—to school," so he did. So when he was in seventh grade, he had to quit school and start working in the timber cutting—the wo—the timber and all for—and logging and helping his dad. It was Depression years, and seven children in the family. And times were hard. And so it was just the nature of

the way things were. [01:53:17] It wasn't that he was the only one that was like that. When you think, "Oh my goodness, ten years old, seventh grade, quit school, start working in the woods"—that's what the people in that area—in many areas did. And—but his uncle had a lumber mill, and later on when he was workin' for his uncle, and he was older and all. Well, and my daddy, like I said, was in the poultry business and had the growers and all. And the people would—that had the poultry houses would come there and buy the wood shavings—and—for the poultry—for their poultry litter. So Johnnie built a bin up that the shavings went down into and then would open up and dump 'em into the truck. And so he got the idea then of trying to package the wood shavings—doing something with shavings to make it easier for the people to buy the shavings and package them. And I was in high school, and I started dating him, and he had me typing letters—writing letters to people like Richardson Scale Company—people that built machines to build—if they could build a packer for this. Now this is like 1949 and—[19]48—[19]49 that he's working on this idea. Even that far back—and so then when he got this—so he always—he never gave up that plan, that dream that someday he would have a machine that would package poultry litter and sell that. Then he

drove for East Texas Motor Freight and then later for Superior Forwarding Company. And he drove for Superior Forwarding Company. After he went to work for them, we moved from Texarkana to Little Rock, and we lived there nine years. And he drove back and forth to Little Rock and St. Louis. Up one night, back the next. Every night. Back and forth. Five nights a week. [01:55:08] Then he got a run that took him down through Stuttgart, and Marianna, and Forrest City and all through there. And he saw them burning the rice hulls, and he thought, "Well, why can't I use the rice hulls rather than the wood shavings?" And so he started with that plan. He didn't know that they had had all these engineers and everybody trying to figure out a use for the rice hulls. Riceland Foods producers, all those big companies, had never found a use for the rice hulls. And they just put them out in the fields—had to hire somebody to haul 'em to the fields and put 'em out in the fields. And they just sat out there and just smo—they—rice hulls do not flame, they just smolder. And they just smolder and smoked all day. And that's what he would see burning in the fields. But he got the idea to do that—to use those rice hulls. And so he started his thinking on that. So actually, he would drive at night. He would get up in the daytime, and he would sit, and he would draw and draw

and figure on how he could do this. And then he got the idea to go to Winrock Enterprises and see if they would help him raise money for this. [01:56:16] And I'm like, "Johnnie, why do you think they would help you?" If I ever should have learned that the one thing that made him get a deal done is for me to say, "Johnnie, why do you think they would do that?" [DH laughs] Because that just fired him on. And he was goin' to do it in spite of all, I guess. And so he went there, and sure enough, they said, "Okay, we'll work with you." They helped us do the prospectus, which we didn't even know what the word meant. And we came up here, he took a week's vacation, and we came to Springdale. Got there at four o'clock in the morning. No rooms to be had because they were havin' a banker's convention. Stopped at the Springdale Motel, and they said—it was four o'clock in the morning 'cause we had worked till midnight to finish the prospectus to come up here. And he just had a week to do it all in. So we had to get that all in in one week. Sell all—do what we could in a week. So we couldn't afford to wait till the next morning; we had to drive all night. So they said, "As soon as someone checks out, we'll let you have the room." So they came out about eight o'clock and told us someone—we slept out in the car until then. And he went in and

took a shower and dressed. And he went out to call on all these people like Gene George and Lloyd Peterson and all those people to sell stock. And they would say, you know, like, "Three thousand three hundred thirty-three dollars, you'll get a block of stock," which was a dollar a share for the stock. Now here is a young truck driver coming in with a crazy idea of using rice hulls that has never been done for poultry litter—to all these big poultry people around here. And wanting you to give me this money, and I'm gonna make this company work 'cause I'm gonna be able to do something with these rice hulls and I'll ship 'em to you. And it was just that salesmanship that he had and maybe the honesty he had that they—that came through and all. And those are the people that invested, and then through Winrock Enterprises and Winthrop Rockefeller and their contacts, they did get other people that invested too—in the company.

[01:58:16] And so we raised the money to start that company. I can remember one very low point when we were so close, and we had stock options on the rice hulls. We had stock options on the land that we were gonna build the plant on. And it—we were so close. We were just so close. But we didn't have enough. We had borrowed the money. We had some—little equity in our home, so we had borrowed the money at the bank until our

house could sell because we would put that equity into it. We'd borrowed everything we could to put into that company ourselves. But we just didn't have money—and to get it. And he—we got so close, and I can remember so well one day when he was there and he was just—he just kinda was lying on the bed and those big tears came that you never saw from Johnnie. [01:59:08] Because he was a strong man that always knew tomorrow is gonna be better than today. Today's the greatest day that ever was, and tomorrow will be ten times better. And that was the way he was—the eternal optimist. But he was like, "I can't do it. I can't do it. Our time has run out, and I can't do it. We're not gonna get it." And he was just so close, and he—and I thought, "This is it." It was just, like, give-up time. Keep drivin' the truck—forget about this plan. And you know, he just got up off of that bed, and he just went out, and he started again. And when we were standing in Stuttgart for the groundbreaking—this was in 1961—we had our first organization meeting and—of the stockholders in August of sixty—of [19]69—[19]61. And we were standing out in that big field in Stuttgart and having the groundbreaking, and this feeling came over me that I still remember from head to foot. That it was like, "Oh, my goodness." Fifteen years he has worked on this plan.

Fifteen years he's never given up, and today his dream is coming true. It's kinda like that you, you know, you—I think Susan Barrett said that he said to her one time, "Susan, don't let anyone build a fence around your dreams." [02:00:24] And he never gave up for that long. Although he drove a truck, we did other things. We sold lawn sod for seven years in the summer, and there's stories with selling that lawn sod.

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: We—we'd go down to Texas, and we would buy this St. Augustine grass. And we would ha—we found someone down there that was going to St. Louis to pick up Pennzoil—he was a Pennzoil distributor. And so he—that gave him a haul one way, and he would bring the sod to us, and then Johnnie would get out and sell it. And it would come in, and I could get it delivered. And then when Johnnie came in on Saturday, he would go out and lay all these yards all around Cloverdale, Mabelvale, and Little Rock and those new areas. And he would go, and he would lay—they came in square blocks. And he would go out, and he would lay all that sod. And he would wash everything down—edge it and all before he left on Saturday afternoon. Drive a truck all night Friday night, come in early Friday mornin', and do that all weekend. And I would go down

to the corner of Markham and Main, and if men wanted to work that day, they would just line up down there. And I would go down there—down—and I would say, "I need five, and we're—five people, and we're gonna unload sod. And this is what I'll pay you." And they would just almost fight to get in the car to work. And I would drive them around, and I would go to Hocott nursery, and I would unload there and count it off, and they would unload it. Mr. Hocott would take me into—his house was out behind his business. And he would take me to his kitchen table, and he would pay me in cash. I'd put it in my purse, and I would drive those guys to another place. End up over North Little Rock at night—late at night, and I would get them back to the cor—to Little Rock—to the corner of Markham and Main about nine o'clock and pay them. And would I do that now? I don't know, but back then, I wasn't afraid to do that. It was a job that had to be done—that was what it was about. I left my little children with someone, and I did that all day. But we made extra money. [02:02:33] We call that—you know, that was like your little bonus you got every summer when you sold—we sold twenty-two trailer loads the last year we were living in Little Rock before we went to Stuttgart. So we did that, and he always worked at other—he drove a truck, but we sold flagstone

rock—we sold cement. We were always sellin' other things—just for that—makin' that extra money. So we got the plant in Stuttgart, and the first year, we lost nineteen thousand dollars. And the President of Winrock Enterprises says, "You have to close your doors; you can't make it; you can't go on; you've lost this much money." And we kind of looked at each other, and we have put everything we have into this company. We've invested everything we have—and other people too. We can't quit, and we kept workin', and we never lost money on that company again. We had some—a terrible tragedy that happened to us in 1970, we lost—1971—we had a distribution place in Bentonville, and one night it all burned. We lost all of that, and it was just, like, panic time and all. And then—and you get so afraid that something like this can happen. [02:03:51] I even had the insurance company come out and talk about insuring my accounts receivable. And he gave me the figure, and I said, "Well, let me think about it." And I thought, "Now what is wrong with me? Just because we've had a fire there—this has happened—that could never happen again. You know, I don't need to spend money for that." Three weeks later, we lost everything in Stuttgart. We had another fire. And with that, it was when we watched that—we think it was from a motor. We



never did know. There was a state trooper nearby, and he saw the big flame come out of the top. And we were not people that had enough insurance on anything. And so it wasn't insured for enough and all to really cover the expense of building it back. And so it's like, what are we going to do? And I rem—we went home and early that morning, and we were sitting there, and I was thinking, "We've got to go back to Little Rock. Johnnie's got to drive a truck. We can't do this again." And we sat there and kind of looked at each other, and I—we can't do this—can't start over. We've come so far, and we've worked so hard. And ten years we've put into this. And we had a good business, but we can't do it. [02:05:02] We kind of sit there and felt sorry for ourselves for a little while, and Johnnie says, "Come on." He says, "We're going out here, and we're gonna get a mobile home, and we're gonna put out on the property." It was on a Saturday—it was—and it was the Easter weekend. "And we're gonna put it out there, and we're gonna build that plant back." And you know, we got up, and we went there—we went out, and we got that mobile home, and I called the man in Pine Bluff that we bought all the office supplies from. And he said, "I'll be there Monday morning." And I went by the bank on Monday morning, and we didn't have anything. And I got pencils and pads—

scratch pads. [*DH laughs*] And our customers were all over the country but not in Stuttgart. The closest one was a hundred miles away. So no one knew we had had a fire. And if you could—had told me the day before to write down all my orders that I had to ship out, I could never have done it. And do you—I sat in the middle of that mobile home before the guy got there with the furniture and some desk and all. And I sat in the floor, and I wrote out all my orders, and I didn't miss a shipment. [*Thunder rumbles*] And we had all of our billing going out. And it was Easter weekend, and we went to my parents for the weekend, and we were there when it caught on fire. And someone forgot to take the mail, and so that was all the billing. And I was able to go back and recount all that. It was just amazing the things that came from it. But that was another start-over part—time. When you almost gave up, but you started over and you—we built it back. And we grew the business, and it went on. So then we bought the seven trucks—five trucks and seven trailers in December of [19]69. The way that came about—Red Hudson was head—was with Ralston Purina in Rogers.

DH: Hmm.

[02:06:52] JH: And Johnnie was coming up here so much—he was

up here during the week so much of the time, and I was really managing the plant in Stuttgart. Shipping all over the country by rail, by truck. So many people think that the trucking had something to do with the rice hull company. It didn't. It never did. It came later. And later on they hauled some, but that was not really—they were two separate entities. And so he—one day when he was here, he and Red went to lunch, and Red said, "Johnnie, we have this man that's hauling our dress poultry to the West Coast and all"—and said, "why don't you—he wants out of the business. He's ready to retire. Why don't you buy him out?" And he said, "Red, I don't have any money. I can't do that." And he said, "Well, maybe we can help you. We'll go to the bank and help you." [02:07:40] And with that, we bought the five trucks and the seven trailers in December of [19]69. And started—we already had the distribution place here. And even though we'd had the fire, we'd moved to another place. And we had that. So we started that from here, and it was refrigerated trailers. So then we built the new building over on 71B and moved into it in February. And we built that building because we were gonna start a premix plant for Pfizer. Pfizer drug company wanted us to start a prem—build a premix plant for them. So we—they helped us borrow the money again to

build that plant—that building. And we built that, and so we moved the rice hull company to there, and the trucking company was there. [02:08:33] In de—[19]72, Johnnie called me and said—he was here that week, and he called me, and he said, "Johnelle, sell the house. We're movin' to Northwest Arkansas." Jane was graduating from high school that year. Bryan would be going into the ninth grade—he was finishing eighth grade. And I said, "Oh, Johnnie, not now. You know, we can't now, you know, and all." And he said, "No, we're going to move." Because the man he was working with was pf—with Pfizer, said, "You need to be in northwest Arkansas all the time," because of this premix plant and all. And he said, "We need you here." And like I said, we had a company in Stuttgart that was making money, and we were—had a nice home—I'd finally, after starting over with rent houses again—after owning our own home in Little Rock and starting over with rent houses for five years and all. We had been able to build what I called my dream home. It wasn't anything so—but it was a beautiful home, and it was ours. And we'd built that. And I just didn't want to leave, and so I said, "Give me a little time." And he said, "No, they—the man with Pfizer says, 'If you'll move up here, I'll never let you go broke.'" And so that was a big statement . . .

[02:09:49] DH: Yeah, sure.

JH: . . . for him to make, you know. "So we'll help you." And so he—we moved. And we started with that. And oh, my pr—he promised me though. One thing he said—I told him—I said, "Johnnie, you know, I've never wanted—I never planned to work." I love staying home, taking care of my children. Doing the things that I did all the time he was drivin' a truck. I didn't work—I said, "When"—I had—when he was a truck driver, I had the life of being home with my children. And after we started the plant in Stuttgart, I found it necessary to go to work and to help him. And so once I did—the first year, it was always till I could replace myself. And my daddy said to even—I think the night that he died, he said to my sister-in-law—he said, "Johnelle will never quit." He said, "She already too involved in it." And I was still looking for my replacement, I thought. And so I told Johnnie, I said, "Johnnie, when we move, I don't wanna work." I said, "Your—all the people are there, they've been there, and I don't know anything about what they're doing. And this is just a good time for me to quit." And he said, "When you—when we move, you don't have to work." And so we moved in the house that week, and on Tuesday, I think—and on Thursday, they called the office, and they said, "You—they've brought all the

accounting from Stuttgart up here," because we were gonna make this more like home office and do all the accounting and everything here. And just do shipping out of there, taking orders and shipping. And said, "They brought all this on a truck, and we don't know what to do with it." And I said, "Well, just give me till Monday. Jane's going to college on Sunday and give me till Monday, and I'll come in and help you get started." So I went in, and they took me into an office, and so they came in with my calculator. And I said, "No, I don't want that." I said, "I'm just gonna be here for a few days, and I don't need that." Well, after two weeks, I said, "Bring me my calculator." Because I knew . . .

[02:11:47] DH: You never left.

JH: . . . I needed to stay. It just took me—and I never left. [*DH laughs*] I knew—it took me two weeks to find out, "Ah. I believe I better stay." And so with that, I never left from then on. But we were in that premix plant, and it was just—it—we got in it at a good time, but then things like things do, they turn around sometimes. And it was just not going well, and we were losing so much money in that. And it was like, "How do we keep on—you know, keep going with this?" And finally, Johnnie walked in one day, and he said, "This is it. We're closing the

premix plant." And it was just like that, and we did. And then we were able to lease it out to another premix company out of Ohio. So someone else came in and leased it, and then later, SmithKline did. And so we actually were able to keep all that going until they moved out. And by then, we needed the part of the building that it was in, because we were doing some warehousing for Walmart at that time. We started that, so we needed it. And later, took it over and needed it ourselves. But—so we got out of that business. But it was still just a struggle with that truckline. We just couldn't—well, it was refrigerated trailers. And the first thing when I started paying the bills, the first thing that hit my desk was a load of frozen strawberries that we had hauled for Willis Shaw—a forty-five-hundred-dollar claim on it. And that was a lot of money. And I looked at that, and I decided I didn't like that business one bit. [02:13:26] And we stayed in the trucking—in the refrigerated part for a time—oh, for several years. And then we figured out we weren't smart enough to run that kind of business. And so we went to all dry freight, but there were just struggles with that before deregulation. Because we did have to haul for everybody else because we didn't have the authority. We worked on the Walmart Authority for four years before we actually got it.

DH: Yeah.

JH: And Walmart wanted us to have it, but the other trucking companies fought us in the courts to keep us from getting it, just like we would've, too, if we'd been in their place, probably. And you—so we had to trip lease for other trucking companies and mainly broke—we had to do so much with brokers. And they collected, but they didn't send you the check. And I collected—I started collecting immediately. I'd always collected in Stuttgart, and I remember in—when we were in the sod business. And the first time Johnnie told me I had to call this man that had this big nursery in Little Rock. And I had to call him and get the money, and I said, "Johnnie, I can't do that. I can't call and ask that money—man for money." And I always said that I was a nice person until I started having to be the collector. And that kinda changes your personality sometimes, but we—it would be people all over the country. And sometimes, the brokers would just be—maybe in their home and have a phone. And you might . . .

[02:14:52] DH: Yeah.

JH: . . . call—like I remember very well—five loads out of California because you've got these trucks out there, and you can't move 'em. And so they would say, "Well, can we take these loads?" And I'd say, "Well, it's better to move the trucks. You haul it,

and I'll collect it." But then this broker would change his phone number and move, and you couldn't find him. But I came—I turned out to be—get pretty tough with all that. I learned pretty fast because I paid the bills. And I sat with a stack of bills here, and I sa—driver's checks here. And I knew if that money didn't come in, I couldn't pay any of those bills. [02:15:31] And so that was my—that put a lot of pressure on me. And we even—I had to work with people because I couldn't pay after it—I got all—I came up here, and everything came to me like that. That I found out, "Okay, let's start with this." There was so much that hit my desk. Pay everything like fifty dollars and down. Pay everything hundred dollars 'cause they took as much time as a big one. And work off of 'em. And then, you know, you've got a plant manager in Stuttgart because I've left there. He's doing the buying. He buys three loads of paper bags for the plant there, because they gave him a nickel a bag off. Well, if you don't have the nickel—if you need—if your cash—if you're kinda short on cash, which we were here, you're better not to save the nickel at that time than to buy three loads that you didn't need for a time. So then I had to work with the people we bought the bags from to—"Okay, you've got a good salesman that sold him this, but now you've got to give me time to work through it till I

can pay you." So things like that. One thing I didn't say about the Stuttgart plant while we were there though. When we started—Johnnie—we were buying—putting the hulls in a burlap bag. And Richardson Scale Company made the machine for us to put them in it. We sent the bags out to the chicken houses, and then they sent 'em back, and then we cleaned them, and we had to resell 'em. And it was just—it was a big, you know. And they were bulky and all that. And Johnnie actually—here's this kid with this seventh grade education that's never been to college, and you know, an engineer like all these other people that said it—nothing could be done with 'em. Invented a machine to package the rice hulls, and it compressed 'em 4:1. Rice hulls are very expandable. If you hold 'em in your hand, you will feel your hand expanding. And no one ever could come up with a way to pre—keep those to—because they're so light that they're bulky. So if you just haul them, there's just so much bulk that you can't get much on a truck and all. But once he came up with this machine, and we got a patent on it and all and built more of 'em. And we compressed those 4:1. And then you could get more on a truck and more in a railcar and all that.

[02:17:49] DH: Weren't hauling air all the time like your . . .

JH: So that—yes.

DH: Yeah.

JH: That's right. So he ended up with—coming up with a really good thing, and I said, "Well, the reason he did it—he never did go to college and learn that he couldn't do it."

DH: That's right. If you don't know you can't do something then . . .

JH: If you don't know you can't do it, you do it. And of all the drawings and all the work he did to do all that. So there were things like that that came along. But then through our collection days, I would use our drivers. I would use them to go to somewhere—I had one in particular that was out in California. And I'd say, "You know, you just go and don't let them know who you are. Get in there" because he would—I would have 'em sometimes even make another sign. 'Cause if you were truck leasing, you had to put their sign on your truck.

[02:18:32] DH: Right.

JH: And you didn't run with yours on it. So—put a piece of cardboard on and name it something else and go in and don't—and say you're there to get a load. You know, just ask for a load. And then whenever you're can—get to this particular person, then tell 'em who you are—and you're not. And I'd pick out—I picked out—one time I remember—two of the toughest looking ones. One was the biggest and the toughest looking, but

he was meek as a lamb. But the other one was really uptight guy. And those two guys come in and say, "Look, she told us to get this money, and we can't leave here until we do." And one—another time, a guy that—I mean he still—one of those guys just died recently. It was so dear to us—so dear to us—one of our oldest drivers, and one that is still with the company works in the office 'cause he's not able to drive anymore. And I said—I always said, "He's gonna get it." I'd say, "Bill's gonna get in jail, but I'll get him out." And he went to this place of business, and he blocked the driveway. And I told him, "Tell them you're going home with them for dinner. You're gonna spend the night at their house. We can't afford a motel. You're gonna stay there tonight, and they're gonna feed you until you get the check. You can't come home." Well, he just blocked the driveway so no one could leave. So we did a lot of things like that. [02:19:45]

Lotta calls at home late at night. I would call people and—when you say, "It's against the law—you can't do those things," I never had anybody question me on the other end of the line because they knew they owed the money, and I was right.

DH: They knew.

JH: But if we hadn't—if I hadn't—I always try to tell people, "If you don't collect your money, you'll never stay in business." 'Cause

you can't. So—but there were a lot of struggles with that trucking company through the years. And there was one time when we decided—I just say, "Johnnie, we can't do this—you know, we just can't do it." It was so—"and let's go back to Stuttgart where we had a bet—you—we had—we were able to pay the bills better and all those things."

[02:20:24] DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: And so one time—once, we met on a Saturday with Jim Cypert, our attorney. And we talked it all over, and we just realized that there was nothing we could do but just file bankruptcy on the trucking company. We had to get out of that. We could keep the truck—the rice hull company, but we had to get out of that.

DH: What year was that?

JH: You know, I don't really remember the year. But I would say it was up in the seventies. It was—it could have been [19]76, [19]77 . . .

DH: Okay, later seventies.

JH: . . . we'd been in this for some time. [*Coughs*] And we all agreed on it on Saturday. Monday morning came, Johnnie and I got outta bed, dressed, went to work—never was mentioned again. Later on in years, we've said, "What really happened then?" It's like you make your decision you're gonna do it, and

Monday morning, we just went to work, and we didn't mention it. We just kept working. There was another time when we—our CPA firm—our accounting firm was in Little Rock. It was Russell Brown Company in Little Rock. And Harry Erwin and Charlie Hanson that was with Russell Brown, two of the main partners, you know, were here. And we all went to Heinie's for lunch that day in Springdale. And we talked to Johnnie, and we said, "We just can't keep goin'. We're taking all the money from the rice hull company. We're trying to keep this truckline going. And we just can't keep goin'." [02:21:49] And so we talked to him, and so we made him agree that if by the end of the next quarter, if we didn't make a profit, we'd just get out of the trucking business. So we had a nice lunch, and we went back to work. And they went in Johnnie's office, and I went in my office, and I typed out this sheet of papers said, "If we do not make a profit by the end of the next quarter, we will shut down the truckline." And I took it into Johnnie's office, and they were sitting there, and I—Johnnie was sitting behind his desk, and I put it over in front of him, and I said, "Sign this." And he looked at it and read it and handed it back to me and didn't sign it. When we were going public and we had all of the people that were our original stockholders—see, the people that invested us and—

invested with us in the beginning were the stockholders when we went public. It all carried through to the trucking company because it all came from that first company.

[02:22:40] DH: Were those some of the people from the rice hull company? That were the same . . .

JH: The same people.

DH: . . . investors. Okay.

JH: Same investors. Some people along the way got out. And some stayed in. Some bought more and all that. When we were so close—when we couldn't get all the money, you know, we were just so close to getting it and all. And Johnnie called either Lloyd or Gene. I don't know which one. And one called the other and said, "We need to step up and put in some more." So they put in more money and stayed with us all the way through. Kept their stock all the way through. But some people that maybe just had one block of stock, sold. And some didn't. So it changed, but it didn't change a lot. A lot of 'em were the same ones all the way through. And when we were goin' public, this was an exciting thing that I said I got the best part of all of it. Johnnie always—I mean for years he want—several years—he started talkin' about going public. I didn't know what the word meant when he started talking about it. *[DH laughs]* And I

never was a part of business and all. And never took that in—never thought I'd find myself in that place, so I didn't go—when I was in college, I studied elementary education. And like I said, I had four years of home ec. So that's where my love was. And never wanted to be in the business world. And so he started talking about goin' public and everything. Well, deregulation came along in [19]80. And that's—after that is when he started talkin' so much about it. Deregulation came along, and we were able to haul. And we hired young, energetic people right out of school. Right out of college—some right out of high school. They had never been in the trucking business. They didn't know anything about it. They didn't need to, because we kinda took off in a new way. And deregulation came, and they were all excited and everything. And we just kind—got it goin'—got things goin' good. And I give all those people credit because they—we were not the choice place to come to work.

[02:24:38] Tyson's, George's—was better than Hunt. Hunt was kinda the bottom of the list because we were new up here and a smaller company and everything. And they—I hired Kirk Thompson when he was nineteen years old. And Wayne Garrison had come there right out of college in [19]77, I believe—[19]76, [19]77, [19]78. When Wayne first came, we

took him—sent him to Stuttgart for a couple of years, because we were needing a plant manager there . . .

[02:25:04] DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . and then he came back. And so we were—when—then he started talking about going public. And a man from Alex Brown was coming in all the time to see him. And Wayne would come to my office, and he'd say, "Bill Leg is here again, and he's gonna talk him into going public." And I'd say, "Oh, we don't need to do that," because we were finally making a profit, you know. Finally after all those years, we were making a profit. Well, why would we want to give that up now if we were making money now—we were gonna just do so well, and why did we need to do that? So we'd go through that again with Johnnie. And one day, Johnnie came into my office, and my dad had died, and I mentioned that we had—my daddy had gotten some stock in the company. And so Mother had that stock in the company. And through the years, we couldn't pay dividends. And so what we did, we'd just do stock splits. So we just kept giving stock for dividends—and giving stock and giving stock. Till people had a lotta stock that they had paid a dollar a share for, but it had multiplied. [02:26:13] And they had gotten quite a bit by then. And Johnnie came to my office one day, and he said, "Johnelle,

let me just show you this." He said, "Look—just take your mother's stock. Look at what your mother's stock is worth. If we took this company public, this is what your mother's stock could be worth." And you know, that's all I had to see. Because not only my mother—but I could think of all of our other shareholders that had taken a chance on a lil' ol' guy driving a truck with no education. And invested in us. And look at where these people could be if we would take that company public. And that sold me on the idea. So then I had the pleasure being—I was secretary of the company. So I had the pleasure of calling all these forty-four stockholders. And I would just do it. And see, we knew most of 'em. We really knew our stockholders. And Buddy Ledwell in Texarkana—Ledwell & Sons that builds all the big feed beds . . .

DH: Mh-hmm.

JH: . . . and everything you see around. Buddy had a trailer out—Johnnie had been there once and said, "Buddy, I need a trailer. Just an ol' trailer of some kind for Stuttgart plant." And they went out in this field, and they found one, and Johnnie said, "Well, how much is it?" And Buddy said, "Five hundred dollars," or something like that. And Johnnie said, "Well, Buddy, I don't have the money, but I'll give you some stock." So he got the

stock, and we got the trailer. Well, then they had done very well. And some other in—but they had made some investments that had—like a lot of us today, that didn't turn out so good. So things were little—they were in a struggling time of their lives when they had been, you know, just doing so well for so long. But they were just going through a struggle there, and we were aware of that. And so I called Buddy, and I said, "Buddy," and I told 'em all the same story, all these stockholders, and I said, "we've decided we're going to take the company public. And you have this much stock. And if we go on from thirteen fifty"—we thought we would go on somewhere in that range. [02:28:19] We went on that day. We went on the market for fifteen fifty—it went up to eighteen fifty that first day, which three dollars is pretty good jump the first day. But we thought somewhere at thirteen. We were not going to for less than thirteen fifty. And I said, "Your stock will be worth this much." Well, you can imagine. He said, "Johnelle, you just saved our lives." You know, they were really kind of in a tight. Well, of course that night, Buddy calls me back. "Johnelle, you've got to tell Buddy—Betty—she just can't believe this." And I can tell you stories and stories and stories of—just like that, that I called people, and it would be like, "Call me back. You've gotta tell me this again."

So it was such a thrill, and it was such an exciting time to think of what we're gonna be able to do for these people that have trusted us, believed in us . . .

DH: Yeah.

JH: . . . stayed with us all that time. So we had a—people didn't come to our stockholder's meeting, you know. We just weren't that—I mean, we didn't have all the entertainment or anything. We just had a little stockholders meeting every year. And our—it really wasn't that big a thing, and so they hadn't. But when this one—when we were having this stockholders meeting to tell, you know, about the going public and all that. I mean, they all showed up for that one. We had a room full of people. So I had to tell them the story about giving Johnnie the sheet of paper to sign to say we would shut down the trucking company, and him handing it back, and I said, "And here we are today."

[02:29:46] DH: It's one of those defining moments.

JH: One of those moments that you got—you know, so many times, you get so close. And so there were struggles along with it. People sometimes look and think, "Oh, you know, you just fell into all this." But they don't realize the times you stayed awake at night and tried to figure out how you're gonna make this work—how you're gonna collect this dollar. I mean—and the

drivers would always call me. Someway or another, they had the word out on the road, "If you have a problem, call Ms. Hunt." I think part of that comes from—I knew the life of a truck driver. I lived with a truck driver.

DH: Mh-hmm. Sure.

[02:30:21] JH: And I've always—they've been the dearest people to my heart because—I felt they're moments away from home. I felt the life of a wife and the children with a husband away from home all the time. If the dog got sick and had to be put to sleep, Johnnie was gone. If the plumbin' went wrong, Johnnie was gone. He was never there. He wasn't there for the birthday parties. He wasn't there for the first twenty-five years of our anniversary. I don't care what day it fell on, he was always—had to be gone. But you know something; it didn't matter. Because it didn't matter if it wasn't on the day of our anniversary—it was the day he was home that we celebrated the anniversary. And so I always tried to talk with the spouse when they called in and they would be so upset with us because their child was having a birthday or they were having an anniversary or there was something, and they wanted them to be home. And I would listen, and then I would say, "Wait just a minute. Where is he? He's out on the road. He's got a tough job. He's

away from the family. He's not there with you everyday to be a part of what's going on. He's making the sacrifice." And before cell phones and all that, you couldn't even stay in touch that much. [02:31:27] "Celebrate the day he's home because any day is a birthday when he's home." So I always liked to—I liked to be the ones that dealt with those calls. And so with that, two o'clock in the morning, driver have a problem, think he wasn't getting the right load out of the Atlanta terminal, they'd call me. And I would get up, and I would call the—listen to 'em—listen to what their problem was. I'd call the terminal in Atlanta, and I'd see what it was all about—what was goin' on. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they were right in what—how they were treating the driver. But they just needed someone to listen and know that they cared and get back to 'em and say, "It's okay. This is the rea—why it's this way." I have had them call me. I've had drivers call me and—they might—a day like today when it's storming and raining and you'd think that they were driving a truck, and if they had a problem, they had to stop at a pay phone to call.

DH: True.

[02:32:25] JH: And to get a load and all those things. The things that they went through. And call and be so mad—be so mad. I

have listened to everything anybody can say to someone on the phone and—from my drivers. And I would sit there, and I would go ahead—I might be signing checks, I might be paying, but I always—I multitask really good. So I would always be doing this and listening. And just saying the right words to keep them talking—that's it—just putting in a word or two to keep them talking. And let 'em talk and talk and talk. Because the main thing they'd get—it's a lonely place out there, and they need someone to talk to. And they get frustrated and get mad and get upset. And they don't have anybody to talk to. And I would listen to 'em, and I'd let 'em say it all—get it all said. And when I thought they were finished, I'd say, "Okay, now I've listened—now, you listen." And I could turn it all around and talk to 'em. And before they would hang up, they'd say, "I am so sorry. I'm gonna"—'cause they were gonna—"I'm gonna leave the truck. I'm gonna leave it. It's just gonna be right here," you know. But if you just give people time. As I've always said, "Give 'em time. Listen to 'em. Listen to their problem, understand it, and care about 'em. Really care about 'em." And that was the thing I always tried to talk to dispatchers about is, "Listen to them, and be careful what you say because they can build a little bit when a person gets out on the road by themselves. And it's hot,

it's—waiting on a dock tryin' to get a load. You can say a little bit, and it can build into a monster." And it's just treating people with love and care. And they know you do. That's the whole thing. So that's always been the part that I miss now. I miss that kind . . .

[02:34:03] DH: That's the reason you were successful is because you had that compassion in the—the trucking industry is a tough industry, as you know. And on both sides, the management side and on the employee side . . .

JH: It is.

DH: . . . the drivers, and so you had that ability to manage that. And it's the reason why J.B. Hunt Transport is where it is today . . .

JH: Well, I feel like it is because it really is—is people do not realize. And when they get irritated at trucks on the road and this and that and the other. And I'm not saying that there aren't some that don't deserve to be pulled over. Because they—there are wildcats out there . . .

DH: Mh-hmm. Sure.

JH: . . . just runnin' wild and drivin' too fast and everything. But the majority of 'em are—and if people just could understand what it takes to get that freight to their house. But—and Johnnie always cared so—because he had been in their place. He had set in a

truck stop, and when we were—when we traveled—when we were on the road, we always stopped at truck stops. [02:35:00] We stopped at truck stops, and sometimes, he would have 'em get on the mic and just say, "If there's any J.B. Hunt drivers here"—or then if they have the uni—when they—after we went to the uniforms, we could see 'em, you know. We always liked to gather 'em up, or if there was just one there, sit there and have a lunch with them or drink coffee with them. And—or be on the road. And I remember one time when we—after we retired, and we had this ?parade going?. We were going over to Asheville, North Carolina. And we were driving over through there, and we were pulling our horse trailer with our motorcycles, I guess. And it had J.B. Hunt on it—you know, J.B. Hunt Ranch or somethin'. And we passed this driver, and I always just loved to pass 'em and wave at 'em or somethin', you know. And waved at this driver or somethin'. Well, we got on down farther, and we didn't have cell phones, and so we—I stopped to call the office because we—I don't care if we've retired or whatever. Wherever we were, we called the office several days—times a day. We—if we were on vacation, we were never on vacation. We were always calling the office. We were a very accessible—made sure everybody knew—call us—

get in touch with us. We were very connected to the company all the time. And he saw that we'd pulled off there, and he did too. And he got out, and he was so glad to see us. And he wanted a picture with us to take home to his wife and children. You know what, he thought he was getting a big thrill out of seeing us. We were getting the thrill of standing out there at that chu—spo—roadside park and having our picture made with him—that was the best time of that day for us.

[02:36:37] DH: Yeah. So what was the thing—the—I guess the event that started you thinking about—we need to get into this substitute service business with the intermodal . . .

JH: Intermodal?

DH: . . . and how that started.

JH: That all—as you know, the truckers and the railroads just didn't mix.

DH: Right.

[02:37:03] JH: Didn't go to the same conventions, really, you know, for so long. Didn't—they were kinda enemies. I mean, they had—they were big competitors—big time competitors and all. And he and Mike Haverty, that was president of Santa Fe Railroad at that time, became friends. Got acquainted—became friends—just kinda hit it off. And with that, they started talking.

I think Johnnie had had this idea. He came up with ideas way before somebody else—many times, you know. 'Cause his mind was always on a new venture, a new vision, a new something coming along. And he saw—and they decided about this about putting the trailers on the trains. And I think when he came to us—came to the company with that idea—the people there is, "What are you doing? Build containers to put on the—and this is how many we need to order? We need to order this many containers and all?" And it's like, "Here we go again with another one of his ideas. What in the world are we gonna do with this?" And it was that kind of thing—they would usually think when he came up with this. And it was just another vision of something that was better—would work better. And make the industry better and—if these two men agreed on. And they actually just did it with a handshake. And we started with that and . . .

[02:38:27] DH: How did you feel about it?

JH: [*Laughs*] I was probably like everybody else—just another one of his dreams and his ideas. [*DH laughs*] I was so used to 'em. And I would—I was one that I would question, "Why are we doing this, and what are we gonna—how are we gonna do it?" So many times, we were—when we were in Stuttgart—I

remember him one day, someone called me and wanted to order feeder lids. And I went to a lot of the conventions with Johnnie, because we actually worked there. We sold an automatic hen's nest that we actually showed at the convention, or we had our rice hulls, and we had a booth. And it was actually a long day of work. But that time, I did not go. And he was up here, and I was in Stuttgart at the plant, and someone called and said—they wanted to place an order for feeder lids. And that's something that you put in the chicken houses for baby chickens, and you put the feed in it. [02:39:15] And I'm like, "Okay, give me your name and number and let me call you back." And I called Johnnie, and I said, "Johnnie, I had someone that just called and ordered feeder lids. What is this about?" And he said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. We're going to sell them." And I said, "Now, Johnnie, what am I gonna do with that?" And he'd say—this is always what I heard, always—"Johnelle, that's your problem. I got it—now you take care of it." And that was just the story of our life. And when this happened to him and—this accident and everything. And I thought I had retired, and he started all these new things. He just couldn't start a new business or a new something fast enough. And I decided, "I've always worked, and these are his deals, and I'm gonna let him do 'em. And I'm not

going to be a part of them. I'm—this—if he wants to do it, he can, but I'm not gonna get involved." And then when he had his accident, and he died, and I was left with all these different ones. And it's like, I keep hearing that little voice, "Well, Johnelle, I started it; that's your problem. You take care of it." And I think, this is what I always heard. And I knew when it happened, I thought, "Okay, this is where we are." [02:40:30] Because he would be—and I would come home at night, and I would go to the office, and I would be there all day, and I would come home at night and—because it was so many different things, you know. We had the rice hull company, and I didn't know—I knew how to post—my daddy had taught me that. I knew the di—dad posted by hand. I knew the difference in a debit and credit. And I learned just by doing. I didn't have any education for it—any training—I just learned by doing. But I knew how to do—I mean, I learned how to do it. And I would take the bills home at night and write checks at home at night in Stuttgart. And after I'd get the kids—feed the kids—get them to bed. I would pay bills. I would post my books. Because at—during the day, I had to take orders; I had to ship; I had to, you know, do that kinda thing. So I learned by doing. So I learned about the rice hull company and then—I didn't know a thing

about the trucking company, and I didn't want to. So I didn't want to be involved, but once I was, I just learned day-by-day as I went along. [02:41:32] No training for it—just had to learn. So when I came into all this other, it's like, "What am I going to do?" Because it's so many different things. From a rock quarry in Honduras to drilling for gas in—for oil in Texas that he had just ordered three drilling rigs. And when he was in the hospital, and they said, "One is ready." And I thought, "I can't take the drilling rigs—I've got to cancel them." And I said, "Can we get a contract?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "Okay, we'll give it a try." Well, we have six. And it was just rock quarries and all this construction up here—all these buildings and a new mall and all these things. And I came home one night and—he always carried—everybody knew about his notebook . . .

DH: Yeah.

JH: . . . and his little slip of paper in his notebook that he would pull out and have to unfold, because it was so long with all of his list. And I thought, "How many things am I dealing with?" Because I'd moved from one to another all day long. I'm talkin' about one, then I'm talkin' to another and it was just so much. And I sit down one night, and I thought, "How many things am I

dealing with?" And I got that out and counted. I counted eighty-nine. Jerry Walton says now that I had a hundred and fifty. But I thought, "Well, no wonder—you know, I'm so confused and all." And then there were times that I would come home and be totally exhausted and thinkin', "What am I gonna do? I can't do this." And I would sit there, and I would look at his picture, and I'd cry for a while and say, "I can't do this. You started all this—it's yours. You've got to come back and handle it. I can't do it." And then I'd look at him a little while, and I'd say, "It's okay. You've told me before" . . .

DH: All right.

JH: . . . "I got it. I sta—I found it; I got it; now you go take care of it." And that's what I'm trying to do today . . .

[02:43:20] DH: Sure.

JH: . . . I just keep getting up and going and trying to take care of what he started.

DH: And that's why the partnership has worked so well, because he had the vision and he had the ideas and you executed 'em.

JH: As Johnnie said . . .

DH: You made it happen.

JH: . . . he said he looked out the windshield, and I looked out the rearview mirror. Because he was always lookin' for something

new and something—a better way to do it and something exciting. And I never could have come up with a plan for anything, because my mind doesn't work—I'm—you know, I can get in here and make a pie, or I can get—go over to the office and do something that needs to be done. But I'm not one to start thinking about, "Well, now, how can I go and start this?" But that's what he thrived on. That's what made him who he is, and I would never have wanted to have changed that. As many things as we got into, I would never want to because that's what he thrived on was that excitement of finding something new and starting something new. [02:44:13] And then it really was—he didn't like problems. He did not like problems. He didn't like detail. That's—and that's why he got—after we retired, why he got other partners in. Because he had to have a Johnelle, and Johnelle wasn't gonna be there. So he got partners—in to deals with partners—see, that would do the things he didn't like to do like that. And he didn't like—if there was a problem at the office, it was always—I always said, "Why can't these people learn?" When they ask him something and he would say, "Well, you need to go to talk to Johnelle"—that meant no. Why didn't they learn that if it was a yes, he was gonna take credit for it. [Laughs] He was gonna do it. But if there was a problem, it

was like, "You need to go talk to Johnelle about that," because he didn't like controversy. He would take him out—himself out of a situation before he would—he would never argue with someone or fight about somethin'. But he just didn't do that kinda thing. So if it came to the tough things, then it was like my job. [02:45:13] He would go—he walked in the building every morning into the basement and then four floors above—five floors. And he went through the building, and he spoke to everybody in the building. If they were on the phone, which most of 'em were, he would squeeze their shoulder or something, and they'd turn, look up—"Hello, Mr. Hunt, how are you?" or "Hello, J. B.," or something like that. And he—but he would tell them—you know, just let 'em know, "You're doing a great job, and I'm glad you're here." And before he came to his office every morning, he made that whole round, and he saw everybody in the building. [02:45:46] And then in the afternoons, he would most every—I think every time—every day, he would do that again. But now as he did that—those rounds, he—before he went to his office, he'd come into my office, and he'd say, "Johnelle, so-and-so's coat is on the back of their chair. You need to go tell them to hang it up," you know. Now, he wouldn't have told them that. He wouldn't have told 'em

anything. But if there was a problem anywhere along the way, he would come tell me, and then that was my job. But I felt like—I work here, and this is what I'm supposed to do. Because he is the boss, and I'm working for him and if I'm supposed to do that. And so it was like, this is what I'm—so I did. I did what I was supposed to do. So we worked good together that way. I did the things he—never paid a bill, never carried a check, carried a little money because—and I'd say, "Do you need any money?" But he loved to be in McDonald's and get someone in there to buy him a cup of coffee, and I . . .

[02:46:43] DH: Right. [*Laughter*]

JH: But he just—I did—that was just my part. We played two roles, and he was a good man that made a good livin' for his family— took care of his family and all that, and then I tried to do the . . .

DH: And you're carrying on . . .

JH: . . . other side of it.

DH: . . . carryin' on today.

JH: And now I'm trying to carry on what he started.

DH: Right.

JH: I'm trying to do the best I can to carry on what he started. One thing I do know though, and we've had some mountains to climb along the way—but one thing I do—I always question myself,

"What would Johnnie do?" I always do. Because I know his heart, I know how he felt, and I know how he would treat people and what he would do. So I always bring that into my thinking is, "What would he do?" And I try to do—carry on. [02:47:39] Because he—I knew enough about the businesses—even though I wasn't involved, he talked about 'em. We—when we were—all of our years, when you work together, that's what you carry home and talk about. The kids said, "Well, they heard the rice hull business all the time. And then they heard the trucking." And that's what they heard at home, but that's what your life is, so that's what you talk about. Well, it was same thing with these other business. When he came home or when we were together, when we drove together—and we liked to dri—our driving trips. I miss my driving trips, because we loved our driving trips. And just reaching out—driving. I drove a lot. Reaching out and holding hands and driving and talking and all, you know. And I really miss that. But we—I knew enough about the business. I knew the people involved. [02:48:23] And I knew his thinking. And it's given me a lot of guidance to where I am now. That's helped me. So like I said, I try to carry on. We may do things, in some ways, different, but basically, I feel like—I know I'm doin' what he would be doin' if he was here. I

know I'm doin' the same thing, because I know his heart. And that's important to me that I carry on.

DH: Very good.

[Tape stopped]

[02:48:53] JH: You know, one of the things I think of is that, when you look back on Johnnie and I, where we came from and the education we had and the things that we've done. And the way we've been able to do those is to hire the best people. And the people that make us—I guess I could say they make us look good because they fill in the parts that we can't do. And Johnnie had all the dreams and all the visions and all that. But you gotta have someone to ke—to make it work. And I could talk to the drivers, and I could deal with the employees. And Johnnie always said I was the psychologist in the company. You know, if they had a problem, I could do that. But there were so many things I couldn't do. But we were very fortunate that we were able to hire good people and then—don't look over their shoulders. Johnnie never—he didn't—he never told someone what to do really. But he would be in a group of people—a group—a meeting with all of the—maybe the executives and all, and he would say, "Well, have you thought about this?" And you just kinda plant seeds and put thoughts out there. "And have

you thought about this?" And so it was more just like, everybody workin' together. And then you give 'em—you lay out those thoughts for 'em, and then they'll go and make it work.

[02:50:19] And it's true in everything I'm doin' today, because I'm certainly not qualified to do any of this. But I am so fortunate to have good people. Good people that I truly trust that can help me with these decisions, because I can talk to 'em, and they can look at all of it. And then they always say, "Well, the ultimate decision is mine." It's mine to make. But I have those people to talk with about it, and then it just mostly comes down to common sense—what you end up doing with things.

One thing—part that's really hard for me though, and I know that every spouse finds this true, is that—not having Johnnie to talk to. Because there are things that you just—a husband and wife talk with about—with each other that they wouldn't with anybody else. And not that it's anything personal—maybe be what somebody said today that I didn't think sounded right. And I couldn't tell anybody else about that. But he'd come home, and I could tell him, "Well, you know, so-and-so said so-and-so." And he didn't have to make a comment or say anything. I just got to say it. Or I got to—whatever . . .

DH: Right.

JH: . . . it was that was bothering me.

DH: Yeah.

JH: And—because someone else would think it was foolish if you said it. But a spouse never thinks that's foolish, so you can say those things. That's been the really difficult thing that I miss having that person to talk with so much. But in all of our years, I think that most of all, we've been blessed with people that now I can talk to about my needs of things—businesswise. And they give me information, and they give me support. So that's . . .

DH: Yeah.

JH: . . . where I am with that.

DH: It's not the same, but you have people that I can . . .

JH: I have people that can . . .

DH: . . . fill some of that void.

JH: They can fill those places . . .

DH: Right.

JH: . . . that I need that . . .

DH: Fill the space.

JH: . . . someone to back me up.

[02:52:02] DH: Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about the—about philanthropy—let's—and the generosity that you and J. B. have been so adamant about with your resources and giving back—

and giving back things that are visible, but there are a lot of things that are not visible that you've done to help people to leave legacies. And you know, one thing that comes to mind, of course, is the J.B. Hunt Center for transpor—Center for Excellence. And J.B. Hunt Transport Center for Excellence at—on the university campus. I mean that's a building that will be there in perpetuity forever. And so maybe you wanna just—maybe you can talk a little bit about your philanthropy and your philosophy on philanthropy and giving back, and then maybe talk about the Memorial Gardens and . . .

[02:53:00] JH: We've been so blessed. As I said when we'd drive. We would drive and reach out and take the other one's hand or whatever and say, "Why us? Why us? What did we ever do?" Because we surely weren't prepared for the things that came to us. You know, I didn't have—make preparations [*unclear words*] whatever. But why us? Why did we—why were we in the place we are today? For some reason, we were so blessed, and we feel like that with that—this was given to us, and that we should give back. We should give back—we should help others just as we were helped. And the people that helped us along the way that made us what we are. Like, I named some of 'em while ago that were investors and all. And they all helped us to get to

where we are, or we would—never would be there. And have these—have what we have today. So with that, we feel like, "Yes, we should give back." [02:54:00] And you know, you can hear over and over—we get the joy of giving; we get the joy of doing. You truly do get the joy of giving. And sometimes when I'll try to do something for somebody, and maybe it's just a little somethin', you know. Maybe it's just giving somebody some [unclear word]. And, "No, I don't want you to do that." And I said, "Don't you realize that I get more from giving this to you than you get from receiving it." And you really do because when I'm able to give like that, I feel like, "Oh my, I am so fortunate that I am in a position that I can do this." So it really does give you that back. And so the things—there are so many needs, and this is the hardest thing is—because there are needs everywhere we look around in this whole country. And you want to be a part of all of it, but you can't. There are just things that keep you from being able to do everything. And the hardest thing is, people don't know what you are giving to. And so . . .

[02:54:56] DH: Right.

JH: . . . when their organization is just as supportive to another—as another. And it's, "Well, why are they giving to that one and they are not to this one?" But—and it's not that I don't want to

give to all of 'em—I don't want to be a part of all of 'em, but you have to choose what is—you feel like is the need that you need to fulfill today. And tomorrow, it may be this other one, but today, it's this one. And so when we've been able to give to something and then see what has come of it—just like you said, the building on the university campus. And when I see someone that says, "I go through—I'm in that building—you know, I go through that." Oh my, you realize how great that we could even be a part of that—have a part of it at all in that building and other things that have come about. And . . .

[02:55:45] DH: Well, the World Trade Center Building—we wouldn't have a World Trade Center Building . . .

JH: The World Trade Center buil— . . .

DH: . . . were it not for your and J. B.'s generosity.

JH: And the hospitals that we've been involved in and all. And I'm just—the whole thing is—it just makes us feel like—so blessed that we could do these things and be a part of them. And they're all important—and just like from the university—when I think of the university. And I said I'd hired Kirk Thompson from there. My children went to college there. Wayne Garrison came from there. I could name people over and over and over that came to J.B. Hunt that were graduates of the university or went

to the university or whatever, as well as some of these other colleges that they did. And so that's what keeps that company goin'. It has to be the people like that.

DH: Right.

[02:56:31] JH: And they've gone there, and they've gotten that great education that they can do things that Johnnie and I never could do. And they're all carrying on and making that company better every day, and it's because they were more prepared to step into that place than we were even at that time. And when this happened, Johnnie and I had never made plans for this time. We were always too busy tryin' to keep everything else goin' and working every day and all those things that—we didn't think about later in life and where we would be buried [*device chimes*] and things like—times like that. And after our dear friend, Red Hudson, died in August before Johnnie's accident in December, I said to Johnnie, "Do you think we need to start making some plans? Maybe it's time. Johnnie we need to decide, you know, where do we want to be buried and all these things," and—"Yeah, we do need to talk about it. Johnelle, come on, let's go out to the rock quarry. Let's go see it." So wh—every time we'd start talk about it—no, it was the present he was in. He was not in thinking about a time like that because he

was for what can I start new today [*DH laughs*] that would be better for Northwest Arkansas or somewhere else that he was planning. So when this happened, my children and I found ourselves without a funeral home—a cemetery—any of the things that should be preplanned. And I am gonna be the biggest advocate for preplanning. But I'm gonna venture off from that a minute, because another thing that is so important to me is that the day when—he fell on a Saturday, and he was in a coma, but he was—lived for five days. And when it happened at the last there, the nurse came to me, and she said, "It says on his driver's license that he's goin' to—wants to be a donor." She said, "How do you feel like that?" And I said, "Absolutely." [02:58:36] And I was so glad that he had already done that, although I know I would have. But I didn't have to make that decision—he had made it. And I'll tell you how he did it. He—it was so funny how this came about that that was even there. He got a motorcycle, and he had to get driver's license to ride the motorcycle. And so he went down, and they took him in, and I think they kinda helped him with the test and so forth and so on. 'Cause he had probably never taken a driver's test in the past—I don't know. You know, he got his first one so young. And he came home, and he said, "Johnelle, did you know when you

learn to drive a motorcycle that they ask you if you want to donate your"—you know. And he thought that was because he was riding a motorcycle, or he told me that. And I said, "No, they ask everybody that." So that's the time he put that on his driver's license. Well, I am so thankful that he had done that and that that was on there and that they asked me about it. Because I think that was one of the greatest things we could have done. Is because I heard later, who—I didn't hear who, although you can, but we went to a big—they have something every year in Little Rock for the donors. And when you see all the names on the walls of people that received, and then you think you were a part of that. And my grandchildren said, "Wonder who will get his heart?" And I said, "I don't know, but they'll sure get a good one."

[02:59:59] DH: Aw. That's right.

JH: And so that was just another step that we took at that time. That somebody—there are other people that are living today because of something that came from him. So he continues. But with the cemetery, we realize then that we—I knew the funeral home was easy, because it was the one I was most familiar with. No reason other than it was just the one that I had had more connection with—living in Springdale for

seventeen years. So I started thinking about where to bury him. And we had lived in Springdale seventeen years. We had been at the—at Goshen, east of Fayetteville, for all those many years. And still have our home and our farm and all. And we had been there, and then we'd been in Pinnacle, and he had started all this in Rogers. And so I started thinking about him, and I thought, "He was always moving forward. It was always the next deal—the next venture—the next moving forward." [*Thunder rumbles*] And I thought, "You know, this was his last big deal. In this area of Rogers, Pinnacle Hills was his last big venture."

[03:01:05] DH: Mh-hmm. Right.

JH: So we needed to be here. So nothing feels right at that time. You can't find the place that you like because it's—you don't want a place like that at that time. So we went to one cemetery, and we's like, "Hmm, doesn't feel right." And I called Steve Womack, and he was, of course, mayor. And I says, "Steve, I have a problem." And he said, "We've already been talkin' about it." I think the Pinnacle Group had already talked about—this area was growing, people were moving in here, and they were building new buildings. Everything was happening, but no one had thought about they needed a new cemetery. [03:01:40] And he said, "We're just about out of cemetery space, and we

had already been talking about—we were goin' to need to have a new cemetery in the area." And he said, "There's a mausoleum over at the Rogers Cemetery, and if you would think about that. And then someday there will be a new cemetery here, and you could move him." I said, "Oh no, no. I couldn't do that." I said, "You know, I'll go with the Rogers Cemetery and look and see if we can find a place there, but I don't think that would be right." And we drove up, and we drove right up to these mausoleums. And we were sitting there and—the kids and myself in the car. And I got on the phone, and I called Steve and I—"Steve, if you'll get behind me in this, we'll start a new cemetery for Northwest Arkansas." And he said, "We'll do it." And I said, "My family and I will provide for a new cemetery in northwest Arkansas." And then I got off the phone, and Jane said, "Mother, Dad hasn't been gone twenty-four hours, and we're starting a new project." [*DH laughs*] And we were not the ones to start a new project. I didn't think I ever wanted to start another project, and here we were. But we are building the most beautiful cemetery. [03:02:47] And it's goin' to open pretty soon. And it's Pinnacle Hills Memorial Gardens. It's goin' to be trees and flowers, and the sidewalks just wind through it—meander around through it. We're building a new—a beautiful

chapel that Maurice Jennings and Walter Jennings have designed. And Maurice is Johnnie's second cousin.

DH: Oh.

JH: So when we said we're going to build—we said, "Let's build a cemetery." And Bryan immediately said, "Mother, we need to get Maurice to design the chapel." And that's how we came to build the chapel at the cemetery. And so it's going to be one of those new, beautiful Fay Jones type chapels. And we feel like it's going to be another destination point in Northwest Arkansas. [03:03:35] That people from all over the country are gonna hear about Pinnacle Hills Memorial Gardens because we want the beauty of it to draw people there. And then when people come there and they have family there, like we're goin' to have because Johnnie will be moved soon—very soon. And we'll have benches along the way and just the beauty of it all. And it's gonna feel good, so we're excited. So that is a big project that's taking a lot of funding. I didn't realize at the time what a project we were taking on because we'd been—all this time. And—but there—we wanted to make sure that we had hired the right people to do the master plan. And we hired the people from Roselawn in California. And we wanted to make sure that we did it all right. But it has taken a tremendous amount. So that's

big—my—been big—my big contribution to the area these last four years or so.

[03:04:33] DH: Well, that's wonderful. That's gonna be a—as you said, a destination for a lot of people. So that's wonderful to carry on that. And carry on that tradition of—even though that's a little different entrepreneurship—but it is.

JH: And we would never have thought about that.

DH: Right.

JH: But then we realized the need for it.

DH: Right. Well, is there anything else, Johnelle, that you can think of that you'd like to talk about or anything—grandchildren or anything related to family at all, or do you think that . . .

JH: Oh, I had my two children and Bryan and Jane. And Bryan lives here and Mandy, my daughter-in-law—and Jane, my daughter, and Bill, her son-in-law in Little Rock. And seven grandchildren and, of course, I have a brother that lives here. And he has family here, and they've all just been—they—we were already a close family, and they were already just always there for me, but they have really been—the ones that have surrounded me, are with me in church on Sunday. Here for my every need. And Bryan calls me every morning. I think I've talked to him twice—three times today, I believe. But he calls me every morning,

"Mom, what's your plan for today?" And then he'll call me during the day. And then he always called Johnnie and I on our—on his way home from work and would talk with both of us. And now, he always calls me on his way home from work or late in the afternoon, "How did your day go?" He's the one that listens to me. He's the one that I can really talk to. And Jane is too, but Jane's in Little Rock, of course, and Bryan is right here.

DH: Right.

[03:06:13] JH: And so they're—my kids keep me goin', and my grandchildren just make life wonderful.

DH: Well, that's great. I know every time I'm—on Sundays when we're at the club, of course, you're there with . . .

JH: Oh, I'm there with a whole bunch.

DH: . . . a whole crew. A whole crew of 'em.

JH: I mean, you know. Yeah.

DH: So, yeah.

JH: Christmas—they were, like, thirty-five, I believe. And Mother's Day—twenty-five. And it's usually—there's a big crowd. But that's what makes it, you know. The more you can get. The boyfriends come in, and the girlfriends come in later.

DH: Yeah.

JH: So your small family grows into a big one. But the more there—

that's there, the better.

DH: That's great.

[03:06:47] JH: So that's what you count on when you get to the stage of life that I'm in now—is that the family that—they're the ones that cause me to touch my feet to the floor every morning and get myself ready and get to the office. And know that I'm carrying on what I'm supposed to. But the main thing I'm doin'—I'm trying to take care of everything for my family for the future. And people say, "Why are you still doing this? Why don't you just"—you know, they don't understand that you just can't walk away and leave it. You can't. But the main thing I'm doing is I'm trying to get it all in order so that it will be there for the family in the future—and easier for them, maybe, than it has been for me.

DH: Sure, yeah. Oh yeah. Well, that's great. That's tremendous. Thank you so much. This . . .

JH: Thank you Dan.

DH: . . . it's been wonderful.

JH: Well, it's . . .

DH: Wonderful time for me . . .

JH: . . . been fun. Well, it's been fun for me, thank you.

DH: . . . to be able to listen and . . .

JH: Worry you-all with my stories . . .

DH: Oh no, I mean, and—you know, it's just tremendous to—that this is—this will be available for generations and generations to come. So . . .

[03:07:48] JH: Well, I'm glad to do it, because Johnnie just wanted me to write a book. He was just . . .

DH: Well, this is gonna give you some good material. [*Laughs*]

JH: . . . always wanted me to write a book. And in the last few months before this happened, he would—he was saying, "Johnelle, I really want you to write a book. I really want you to write a book." I can't write a book; I can just tell a story. And I—it's just not me to sit down. I'm not that—I've tried, but the thoughts don't come to me. They come from being with people and tellin' it.

DH: Right.

JH: 'Cause that—because I get the joy of feeling the moment again. I relive it each time I tell something. I relive it—I'm right back where I was at that time.

DH: Yeah.

[03:08:27] JH: And it's just so dear to me when I get to tell anything about our past.

DH: Nothing like those personal experiences.

JH: No.

DH: Good and bad.

JH: They're all . . .

DH: Yeah.

JH: Good and bad, whatever.

DH: Good and bad, yeah.

JH: In the low times—and the whole thing is, there's—I could tell you lots of low times—you know, lots of times. And Red Hudson said to Johnnie one time, "Johnnie, everything you do works. Everything—you know, it's like everything you touch turns to gold." And he said, "Red, everything I do doesn't work." He said, "I just never talk about the things that don't."

DH: That's true. [*Laughs*]

JH: And that was exactly right.

DH: Yeah.

JH: He never talked about bad things, and he never talked about the things that didn't work. And some of 'em we did, you know, get out of because they didn't. And he never talked about 'em because he was always—tomorrow was gonna be better. And he was talking about the good things that were gonna happen.

DH: Yeah.

[03:09:14] JH: He never—once something was over and done with,

he never talked about it again. He never talked about—I know the kids said once, they said—or from time to time, they said, "You know, we know Dad had a tough life. You know, he had to of have—the time he grew up and all. He"—but said, "he never talked about it." And I said, "No, he never did. He never talked about anything"—he talked—when he talked about his life, he always talked about the fun things of it—the fun things with the people that lived in his si—part of the country. And he always talked about the best parts of everything, but he never talked about the—a bad day or a bad time or how something was wrong—never heard it. And yet, we knew they had to been there—they were for everybody.

DH: Well, I don't know if he . . .

JH: But he wasn't made that way.

[03:10:00] DH: I don't know if he ever read Norman Vincent Peale, but positive mental attitude. But he . . .

JH: And he had that.

DH: But he . . .

JH: And I believe he could . . .

DH: He lived that . . .

JH: I believe he was a step ahead of him.

DH: I think he was step ahead of him. [*JH laughs*] He probably . . .

JH: Because he was

DH: . . . could have written the book. [*Laughter*] Had . . .

JH: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. 'Cause his was always just what I would say sometimes—I'd say, "Johnnie, you need to worry just a little bit, you know. [*Laughter*] You need to worry just a little bit, you know." 'Cause he was such—I said the eternal optimist.

DH: Yeah. But he let you do that.

JH: But I—yeah.

DH: He let you do the worrying.

JH: He was, and he said—and you know, he said, "Worry's a sin."
[*DH laughs*] And that's the way he felt.

DH: It is.

JH: "Worry's a sin."

DH: And it is, yes.

JH: And it is.

DH: Yes.

JH: And it—what do you get from it? Nothing.

DH: Right, you don't.

JH: You don't.

DH: You don't.

JH: But he did not believe in that, so he did not—he didn't talk about bad things. He didn't talk bad about people. It's . . .

DH: No, he didn't.

JH: It was always the movin' forward and things that were good.

DH: That's right, exactly.

[End of interview 03:10:50]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]