

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Walter E. Hussman Jr.
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
January 18, 2012
Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Walter E. Hussman Jr. on January 18, 2012, at the home of Marilyn and Robert Porter in Little Rock, Arkansas. The first part of the interview was conducted on December 13, 2011.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Well, here we are. This is January 18, and we're doing—uh—part two of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History interview with Walter Edward Hussman. And Walter, good to see you again, and . . .

Walter Hussman: Thank you.

SL: . . . thank you for agreeing to give us some more, and . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . I felt like we had a pretty good time last time—um—but we just kind of ran out of time.

WH: Sure.

SL: So this is great that you're giving us a—another chance to get together.

WH: Sure.

SL: Um—we talked a lot about—uh—uh—growing up. We talked a lot about your father, and also in the earlier interview, we had to kind of cover stuff for the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame event and . . .

WH: Mh-hmm.

[00:00:47] SL: So we got pretty good detail on the newspaper wars
[*camera clicks*] and some career stuff. You know, the . . .

WH: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the business stuff that—um—they would be interested in
primarily. [*Camera clicks*] But—uh—I don't—uh—I—we did talk
about your dad and about your grandfather [*camera clicks*] on
your mother's side pretty well.

WH: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—I feel like we didn't really talk about your mom that much
and we certainly didn't talk much about your sisters.

WH: Right.

SL: And—um—I think we ought to if . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . if—if you'd like.

WH: Sure. Great.

[00:01:23] SL: I'm not even sure if I remember asking what your
sisters' names were.

WH: Yeah. Uh—oldest sister is—uh—was—uh—Gale Ann Hussman
and—uh—then—and she married—uh—Richard Arnold, so she
became Gale Arnold. And—uh—then my—uh—younger sister,
who's eight years older than I am, is—uh—was Marilyn Clyde

Hussman—Clyde from the Clyde Palmer, her grandfather . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: . . . and—uh—she married a fellow named Jim Augur, so she became Marilyn Augur.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, she didn't go by Clyde, did she?

WH: No. [*Laughter*] She went by Marilyn. That's right.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's almost like a boy named Sue, in a way.

WH: Yeah.

[00:02:06] SL: That's funny. Well—um—so, big age difference.

That's kind of like my family. There's ten years' difference between me and my next—um—younger sibling—older sibling—and—uh—but I still had some times with them. Do you remember them being around the house when you were . . .

WH: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . young?

[00:02:26] WH: Yeah, I do. The—I want to mention something first

before we go into that. You know, I recently turned sixty-five and had a lot of friends who are my age—uh—with me, you know, and I was re—reflecting on that and reflecting on how much of life is just chance. And—uh—you know, when I think about—my si—oldest sister's twelve years older—Gale's twelve years older, and Marilyn's eight years older—basically my mother

and father were finished having their family. And then when my father came back from World War II, I came along. [*SL laughs*] I was a war baby. And—uh—you know, I probably wouldn't ever have come along had it not been for World War II . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh!

WH: . . . and—and—and millions of other people in my generation and my age, you know. So World War II was probably the worst thing that happened in the last century. But for some of us, it—it was a blessing, you know. Sort of interesting way—way to look at it. [00:03:31] But—uh—yeah, my—uh—we grew up on—uh—a street in Camden called Clifton Street in a—a small house—maybe sixteen- or eighteen-hundred square foot house.

SL: Mh-hmm.

WH: Had four bedrooms and two baths, and my mom and dad had a bath downstairs with their bedroom, and my two sisters and I each had—uh—we each had a bedroom upstairs, but with one bath that all three of us [*laughs*] shared. So yeah, we were—we were pretty clean—pretty close quarters there. And—uh—but again, you know, they're a good bit older than I was, so it wasn't really much of a problem. But—uh—and we lived there until I was—uh—ten years old, you know, and—uh—then we—we moved to another—another house that . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

WH: A—a larger house there in Camden. So—uh—anyway—uh—yeah—uh—you know—uh—I guess my sister Gale was—uh—you know, when I was—uh—ten years old, she—she got married. So—uh—anyway, you know, she—she was married when I was at a fairly early age. But—uh—but I knew her pretty—pretty—you know, we were pretty close, and—uh—I remember when I went away to—uh—summer school and I was thirteen years old—for the summer up to Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and—uh—she took me up there, you know, and rode the train with me up there and—uh—got me all settled and everything, and—uh—actually I can remember before that—uh—right after they got married—uh—they were living—she and—uh—Richard were living in Washington. They had an apartment there, and I—my parents—I guess I was about ten years old—I guess it was pretty soon after they'd gotten married, and—uh—they put me on a plane here in Little Rock, and I flew to Washington by myself. I was ten years old, you know. [Laughs] And—uh—she met me at the airport, and I remem—remember going up there and—and visiting them, and—uh—you know, I—I may have been eleven years old. They—anyway, pre—pretty early age. [00:05:36] And—uh—so you know, we—we were

pretty—pretty close—uh—and—uh—the—uh—so—and Marilyn—uh—she—uh—she went away to—uh—boarding school, I think one year, may have been two years to—uh—All Saints Academy in Vicksburg, Mississippi. So—uh—and—uh—she was eight years older than I was. So you know, by the time we moved to this new house, I was the only one there [*laughs*], and they had a—they didn't really build a bedroom for me. They built a—a—they had a den, and I had a little place I could sleep in the den, and—uh—my—my two sisters had bedrooms, but they didn't really [*SL laughs*] need to have a bedroom for me because by the time we moved out there, both my sisters were gone, and I . . .

SL: Gone. Uh-huh.

WH: . . . I—I stayed in Marilyn's room [*laughs*], basically.

SL: Yeah.

[00:06:26] WH: And—uh—so anyway—uh—and then, of course, they were in college, and—uh—I can remember my sister Marilyn—uh—graduating from University of North Carolina. And my parents and—and I and my grandmother had just come back from a—a trip to Europe. And we drove down there, and I member—member going and—uh—my sister Marilyn—uh—smuggling me into the Tri-Delt house . . .

SL: Uh-oh. [*Laughs*]

WH: . . . the night [*laughter*]*—*the night before graduation, and—uh—
a lot of the girls had—I guess it was the night after graduation—
a lot of the girls had already left. So she [*laughs*]*—*I guess boys
weren't supposed to stay there, but I was thirteen anyway. So
I—and there was hardly anybody else in the house. [*Laughs*]
So I ended up staying over there with her. And—uh—so
anyway, just a lot of good—lot of good memories of my sisters
growing up.

[00:07:22] SL: Did they—um—um—did they help around the house?
Were there responsibilities that . . .

WH: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. We were basic—you know, at that time we
were what you would probably consider just a—a middle-cl—
middle-class family, you know. I mean, my dad owned the
Camden News, and *Camden News* didn't make a whole lot of
money, but—but we—we, you know, we lived a pretty decent
lifestyle and—uh—the—uh—uh—I can remember a trip that we
made to New York when I was nine, and we drove, you know,
the whole way.

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: And it was my mother and dad and Marilyn and I, you know.
And—uh—and that—that—that—that was a—that was a great
trip. Uh—but yeah, yeah, everybody helped out doing chores

around the house.

[00:08:08] SL: Yeah, you know, it usually—I mean, my experience was that the women kind of cooked and cleaned and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: Uh—did y'all have to—uh—did—did you make your bed every morning or . . .

WH: Oh yeah, yeah, absolutely. And then—uh—my mother did a lot of—a lot of the cooking, you know, and every Sunday after church, we would always have lunch, you know, and a tablecloth and all that, you know . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: . . . and everyone'd sit around the table. I remember those lunches that—on Clifton Street. And it was kind of just kind of a little ritual we'd do every—every Sunday.

[00:08:45] SL: Sure. Um—what about—I mean—I'm trying to imagine—I guess when you were in grade school, they were—at least Marilyn would have been in high school, I guess.

WH: Right, right. Yeah.

SL: And Gale was probably already—was she already—uh—in college somewhere by the time . . .

WH: Yeah, when I was . . .

SL: . . . you were in grade school?

WH: By the time I was probably—uh—six years old, she was in college. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

WH: Yeah.

SL: So she—you really didn't get a whole lot of time with her.

WH: Yeah, yeah.

[00:09:17] SL: Um—were the—uh—meals—um—were you expected to be at the table every morning or every evening at a certain time or . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . was it regimented like that, or was it more . . .

WH: Yeah, and the—the—mainly it was that thing Sunday, and—uh—no, every—no, everything else was not—not nearly as regimented, you know.

SL: Okay.

WH: And of course, by the time my sisters were—were gone—by the time we'd moved and I was ten years old, my mother basically was just feeding me every [*laughs*] night . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . you know.

[00:09:48] SL: Right. Um—well, is there anything else you want to say about—uh—Marilyn and—and—and Gale? I mean, I know

that—um—uh—growing up, you didn't get to—you probably don't have a whole lot of memories of Gale.

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Um . . .

WH: Uh—Marilyn—uh—got—uh—married to a fellow—married a fellow from—uh—Wisc—uh—Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and they—they settled in Dallas. And so—uh—when I was in, you know—uh—college, yeah, we'd go over to Dallas. And I remember going over and staying with Marilyn and sometimes we'd go over there and stay with friends, you know . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[10:26.27] WH: . . . and she was always real welcoming, and—uh—so—uh—we had some—some good times. And Marilyn still lives in Dallas. She's lived there much—basically most of her life. And so Camden—uh—people from south Arkansas would go to Dallas a good bit, you know.

SL: You bet. Mh-hmm.

WH: So anyway—uh—trying to think of anything really unique or particular about—uh—uh—about events with 'em. I member when I—uh—the—uh—when I went to—uh—away to boarding school to Lawrenceville when I was in tenth grade, my sister Gale again took me up there, too, you know, and got me settled

and everything. So—uh—I think she—she was—uh—you know, she was excited about me trying to get a good education, and—uh—so—uh—and course, you know, her husband had got a—gotten a great education, and—uh—so—uh—that's really the main things about growing up.

[00:11:26] SL: M'kay. Um—let's see, now I think we—I think we did cover—uh—the technology side of stuff in your house growing up—about the black-and-white and then color TV and radio.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Um—and you know, I know that the newspaper was, you know, really, really important in the household. I mean, it was just kind of understood that that was—that had to be concentrated on—that that had to be paid attention to. And—and—um—uh—I know that you—uh—um—when you did go to college, I think you decided journalism, didn't you?

WH: Yeah.

SL: But you were more interested in the writing side of stuff.

WH: I was.

[00:12:11] SL: So—um—do you want to talk about—any more about—uh—the boarding school that you went to?

WH: Uh—yeah—uh—before I forget—one other thing about my sisters that I just—probably ought to mention that—um—you know,

growing up—uh—my dad would always say, "You know, we need to really—you know, the news—the newspaper needs to come first. We need to take care of the company, and the company's interests ought to come first. And if the company does well, then we'll all do well, you know."

SL: Uh-hmm.

WH: And so he—he always emphasized that. And then he sort of had this feeling that if—uh—if he gave his children too much money, it would ruin 'em.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:59] WH: I mean, my dad grew up, you know, in . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . in—uh—kind of a—a, you know, lower—uh—lower- to-middle-class—uh—family in St. Louis down in the—uh—German section of St. Louis. And—uh—and—uh—so I guess he—you know, just sort of his philosophy and—uh—uh—so you know, when—when—uh—he was running the company and as—as, you know, children got older, I mean, you know, my sisters were now out of college, and I was gonna be in college, et cetera—he was very concerned about, you know—uh—as the company grew and was doing better, you know, financially, he was concerned about—uh—giving his children too much money and ruining 'em.

[Laughs] So anyway—he even set up the company in an interesting way—he set up the sh—the—uh—stock in the company—interesting way—he ended up with three different classes of stock. You typically hear a lot of companies have two classes of stock.

SL: Right.

[00:13:58] WH: A—a voting and a nonvoting. Well, he had a voting and a nonvoting, and he and my mom had the voting stock so they could control the company, but he also had a—a C class—A, B, and C class. Well, the—uh—the C class paid dividends, but the A and B class didn't pay dividends. And—uh—most of the stock was B stock, and—uh—very little of stock was A stock, but that was the voting stock.

SL: Right.

WH: And—uh—so he kind of set it up—well, there can be some dividends, but not too much dividends [laughs], you know.

SL: Right.

[00:14:31] WH: And so anyway, that's—uh—you know, and that—that's kind of the way it—way it ran until probably around 1981, et cetera. And then—uh—by then my dad retired, and I—I started running the company. And at that point I realized, you know, "This is—my sisters [laughs] are my—quite a bit older

now, you know. And I'm not their parents, you know. [Laughs]
And you know—uh—this philosophy of too much money could ruin people is probably a pre—pretty good theory, but it probably is not applicable now that my parents are in their seventies" . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . "you know, and I'm now running the company." So we—we abolished the—uh—B and C stock with just one class-B stock, and we started paying dividends on all the shares, A and B shares, et cetera. And by then, you know—uh—but anyway, that was—it was an interesting theory that my dad had, and it was probably a—a pretty good theory, you know.

SL: The—yeah, I don't think that's unheard of.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Or not uncommon.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Um . . .

[00:15:32] WH: So anyway, I just thought I—that was something I—I want—wanted to mention. But—uh—you're talking about the boarding-school experience. Uh—so, yeah, that was—uh—you know, that was a really great, great experience for me. Uh—the—uh—I remember I looked at—uh—we looked at three different schools. One was St. Stephens, I think, down in

Austin. And one was Castle Heights Military Academy in—uh—
Lebanon, Tennessee. And the other was—uh—was
Lawrenceville. And—uh—I don't know if in our other interview
we discussed how I ended up at Lawrenceville but—uh—
but . . .

SL: I—I'm not sure we talked about how—I think—wait—it was at
Lawrenceville that you kind of got your moral compass reset.

WH: Yeah, absolutely.

SL: Is that right?

WH: Yeah.

SL: But I don't know if we've talked about exactly how . . .

WH: Yeah, how I got there . . .

SL: . . . Lawrenceville was . . .

WH: Did . . .

SL: . . . selected.

[00:16:24] WH: . . .did we talk about how when—uh—I went away to
Exeter I had to take Latin and English and algebra, and when I
got back to Camden they wouldn't have recognized the credits?

SL: Yes.

WH: Yeah, okay.

SL: Yes, yes, yes.

WH: So that's how . . .

SL: Yes.

WH: . . . I ended up . . .

SL: Yes.

WH: . . . there.

SL: Yeah.

WH: 'Cause my dad ended up going—talking to the guys at Exeter, trying to get me in a year earlier, and they couldn't take me a year earlier. I was supposed to go in the eleventh grade, and they got on the phone, and they got me into Lawrenceville, basically. They said, "Yeah, we'll take the—take—we don't have anybody from Arkansas." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[00:16:52] WH: Geographic distribution worked in my favor. Again, chance. You know, I ended up at Lawrenceville instead of one of these other two schools, instead of Exeter. I ended up meeting a lot of people, you know, who have been lifelong friends. Two of 'em I was just with 'em on my birthday—one from Iowa and one from Texas, you know. [*Laughs*] And—uh—so anyway, yeah, it was a great experience for a—for a person like myself coming from Arkansas because in those days Lawrenceville had a program they don't have anymore—and they had this program where they had for tenth graders—'cause most of the kids came

in the tenth grade—they had S classes. S as in Sam. These were special classes that met six days a week instead of five days a week. And they took—uh—people like myself—uh—kids from Iowa, kids from [*laughs*] various parts of the country where they hadn't really had a very good education so far. And they would try to catch us up in one year to where we were caught up with the other students that had gone to really good schools in Connecticut and New Jersey . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: . . . and places . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: . . . like that . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:18:00] WH: . . . you know. So I was in several S classes my first year, and so that was great, you know, because it really did help me get caught up. But the best part of it was just, you know, broadening horizons, you know. Meeting people from—other students from all over the United States, you know, 'cause they had a pretty good geographic distribution. My—my roommate my first year was from San Francisco, you know. And—uh—we were roomed right next to—to—a—a—a fellow who was Chinese, and—uh—he was a fascinating guy, very smart. Uh—anyway, so

you know, just meeting people from different backgrounds, different perspectives, and—uh—and the whole just boarding-school experience of—of being independent and learning, you know, you gotta, you know, you gotta get yourself to class on time. You gotta, you know, do the athletics. You gotta get there on time and—and everything. It—it—it—it—it—it was a great experience and—uh—and I—and a—and a really great education. [00:19:00] Uh—you know, I can remember an algebra teacher I had named—uh—Thomas [WH edit: William] Wyman.

SL: Mh-hmm.

WH: And Thomas Wyman was a pretty eccentric—uh—unusual teacher but—and we had these round—uh—oval-shaped tables—uh—at—at—at school. Uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

WH: They were called Harkness tables. And—uh—you'd have about fourteen or fifteen people sitting around one of these tables.

SL: Yeah.

[00:19:27] WH: So I can remember going into this algebra class, and—uh—Wy—uh—Wyman, the teacher, would—uh—sit there, and he would have a—maybe a map pulled down over a blackboard, and he would pull the black—the map up . . .

SL: Map up.

WH: . . . and there would be maybe fifteen questions. Did we—did I talk about this?

SL: No, huh-uh.

WH: Okay. [*Unclear words*] fifteen different algebraic, you know, equation things to work on. So you would sit there, and you'd do the—you'd do the first one, and you could go [*unclear words*] and you'd put your paper right there on the table right in front of you. And he had this long stick with a rubber point on it. He would reach that stick over and pull your, you know, your piece of paper with your answer on it, and he'd look at it. And if you got it right, he'd put a big check mark on it. If you got, you know, if you got it wrong, he'd put a big X and—you know, with his—with his . . .

SL: Right there at the time . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . during class.

WH: Right there in front of all the other students . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: . . . you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:22] WH: And he'd take that rubber pointer and put it—and he'd just shove it, and the piece of paper would kind of fly up in the air [*laughs*] over to—and you'd kind of grab it, you know. And if you got it right, he'd say, "That's good, kid," you know. Or if you got it wrong, he'd say, "Gad! What ability!" You know. [*Laughter*]

SL: Oh my gosh.

WH: You know, so anyway—and then you'd go on to the next question, you know, and the whole process would go on with every—everybody around the table, you know. And it, I mean, it was—it looked a little—if you walked in the room, it looked a little bit chaotic. But what it really did is it created all this peer competition to see, you know, who could do it really well and who could get ahead and finish, you know, the fifteen equations before anybody else. And it was ter—it was a terrific class, and I loved it, you know. And most of the other students did, too. He was always voted one of the best teachers in the school, so it was interesting. And I remember one of the things about Lawrenceville—I started out in Wyman's S class. You know, we'd—we met six days a week. And the next year I was in the regular, you know, mathematics class. I don't know if it was alge—probably algebra II. And the next year, you know, I was

in the honors class in mathematics. So you know, I really felt—
"Wow, you know, I've gone from being way behind these other
kids to being in a really advanced class." So . . .

[00:22:00] SL: Do you think that the—there's a couple of questions
that come up—do you think that the public-school education that
you got in Camden was lacking, or was it that these other kids
that were in the normal classes or advanced classes to begin
with had come from private schools or schools that, you know,
that were more equipped . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and more focused?

WH: Yeah. Yeah, I think my education in Camden was pretty good. I
mean, back in those days, the teachers—a lot of the teachers
you'd have were very intelligent me—women—very dedicated to
teaching and everything. So I thought the—but the fact of the
matter was it—just the education at schools in other states—it
was just superior, you know. They probably had more exacting
curriculums, you know, and in general, you know, maybe some
of their—some of the teachers I had in Camden were just as
good as some of the teachers they had, but those were the
exceptional teachers. Not all the teachers were as good,
probably. So . . .

[00:23:06] SL: You know, it kind of reminds me of a team—a sports thing. It's like you've got all these kids around a table competing, but they're all experiencing the—they're all going through the boot camp of it all . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . or the two—it's like two-a-days.

WH: Right.

SL: You know, a shared experience. And so I would guess not only was there competition, there was great camaraderie just from surviving that kind of . . .

WH: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . scrutiny.

WH: Yeah, there was. Yeah, yeah. And it made it fun, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:23:38] WH: And so Wyman would say, "Okay," he said, "now, I'm gonna do some—put some equations up here that we aren't gonna do in class and"—but he said, "they'll be available before class. And if any of you want to come in and work on those, you can, but," he said, "we won't be doing those in"—I started going to class early, you know.

SL: Yeah.

WH: And so did some of the other students, you know. Not all the

students but, and so, you know, we'd just go early so we could do 'em, you know. It was amazing, you know. He didn't, you know, ask us to come in early. He didn't [*laughs*] force us to come in early. But he made it an option, you know. And so it was an interesting psychological way to engage students.

[00:24:27] SL: Well, it sounds like you got kind of lit up educationwise there at . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . Lawrenceville.

WH: Yeah. And I, you know, I was good in math. I was better in math than I was in English and history and everything, and I kind of struggled with that, I mean, because my writing skills were not nearly as good as they should have been, you know. And my studying skills weren't as good. But over time I got better at that, too, and I really—[00:24:52] when people say, "What did you get the most out of your boarding-school experience academically?" I would say, "History." We took—the tenth grade, we took early European history. In the eleventh grade, we took modern European history, and the twelfth grade, we took American history. And the history courses were just outstanding. They had unbelievably good teachers, and I mean, really, by the time you finished those three courses, you had a

great grasp of the sweep of western civilization. And I know European history has kind of gone out of fashion a little bit in the academic world today, and you know, people study Asian history or African history or other, you know, Latin American history or whatever as much as they might emphasize European history. But you know, European history is still very important 'cause that's the origin of a lot—the majority of Americans, you know. That's our background, and a lot of our political institutions, our cultural institutions, a lot of those things derive from Europe.

SL: Sure.

WH: And so to learn about that and learn how it all evolved, I thought, was very valuable.

[00:26:17] SL: Well, there were certain—there were lots of movements in Europe that—I'm thinking of the printing press, for one thing.

WH: Right, right.

SL: That's a European-based . . .

WH: Right.

SL: So all of a sudden, you know, you've got books that are coming out of that part of the earth and . . .

WH: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . that culture and . . .

WH: Well, just like studying extensively the Reformation—the Protestant Reformation—studying the Renaissance and all that. That was not the type of thing I probably would've gotten in the public schools in Camden, you know. And I was able to get it in that experience, so it was a—to me, it was very valuable.

[00:26:59] SL: Well, so they had an ability—your history instructors had an ability to kind of make history come to life . . .

WH: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . in some way. I—what was their—do you kind of remember a typical classroom approach that they deployed?

WH: Well . . .

SL: . . . I mean, was it . . .

WH: . . . the main thing they did there was everyone sat around a table, you know. That's a—sort of a unique thing about the Lawrenceville school is everyone sat around a table, and ever—they expected everyone to participate, you know. It's like it made it very difficult to come to class . . .

SL: Not prepared.

WH: . . . unprepared. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

WH: So . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . anyway, if you were prepared you got a lot more out of it.

SL: Well, and everyone got more out of each other.

WH: Yeah.

SL: I mean, that's probably what—what's going on is that all the students had different points of view as well as on the material and . . .

WH: Right, right.

[00:27:52] SL: So the instructor just kind of maybe got it started, and then once it got around the table, it just—the table took a life of its own.

WH: Yeah, that's right.

SL: That's a great concept. I like that.

WH: Yeah, it's not—you know, it's difficult to do because it's hard to have that kind of class size, you know.

SL: Yeah.

WH: That number of students. But . . .

[00:28:18] SL: Right. Okay, so you finish at Lawrenceville, and you come back, and you do your—the summer deal—going over to El Dorado and being a beat reporter?

WH: Right, right.

SL: And you gave us some pretty good stuff on that.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And so what happens next after that summer? What do you do?

WH: So the [*unclear words*]*—*after that summer I, you know, went away to college.

SL: And . . .

WH: Yeah, went to col . . .

SL: And where did you go?

WH: I went to the University of North Carolina.

[00:28:48] SL: And . . .

WH: And . . .

SL: . . . how was it different than Arkansas?

WH: You know—well, it's a state university just like the University of Arkansas is, and most of the students are from in state—from North Carolina. About fifteen percent of the students are from out of state. But there were a fairly good number of students there who had gone to boarding schools like I had. In fact, I think I may have mentioned in the other interview—we had—normally we had more students—Lawrenceville would send more students to Princeton than any other college 'cause it was only five miles from Princeton. But the year I graduated, we sent eleven students to the University of North Carolina, and that was the most popular school the year I graduated. And so anyway, the—North Carolina had a really good journalism program. I

was trying to think of ways it was different than Arkansas. And it's a great place to go to school. You're kind of in the—a little bit in the middle of the state, and you're a coup—about two hours to the beach, you know, which is different than Arkansas and . . .

SL: Ocean. Yeah.

[00:30:06] WH: You were a [*SL laughs*] couple hours to the mountains. Course, Arkansas has got mountains, but in North Carolina they actually have ski slopes, you know.

SL: Yeah, it's the Appalachias, right?

WH: Yeah. So anyway—and back in those days—and still are—there were a lot of girls' schools around, and Duke and North Carolina had been, primarily, had been men's schools for the first two years, and then junior and senior years, women students attended. And there was a women's University of North Carolina in Greensboro, and it was all women. And so now, while I was at North Carolina, they started accepting women as freshmen, but that—and that was in the [19]60s. But prior to the [19]60s they didn't—then my sister went to University of North Carolina, and she transferred her junior year from Randolph Macon, and she went down there. But there were no—there were nursing students that were freshmen, but no other women. So that was

probably different than Arkansas, too.

[00:31:12] SL: You know, we haven't talked much at all about women and girlfriends and social—and dating and—now, I would assume and you—probably a little young in Camden to be dating, but did you meet girls at the theater or at the movies or . . .

WH: Oh, yeah. Oh, I had a steady girlfriend in Camden.

SL: Uh-oh.

WH: And that was when I was in high school. And even though, you know, I went [*laughs*] away to school, we would write each other every day and . . .

SL: Long-distance relationship.

WH: Yeah, long-distance relationship.

SL: Those are hard.

WH: And then she ended up going away to school—I guess maybe her senior year or something, and she went to All Saints down in Vicksburg, also. [00:31:57] And so anyway—yeah, so that—basically when I was in high school. And then, you know, when I went away to Lawrenceville, I—you know, we—this anachronism—we had these things called tea dances. [*Laughs*]

SL: Okay.

WH: That's something you probably had never heard of in Arkansas—

a tea dance. But anyway, [*laughs*] you would—you know, some girls would come over from another girls' school or whatever, and you know, it would be a little thing. And we had houses at Lawrenceville that we lived in instead of dormitories. They were kind of like dormitories, but they were a house with a housemaster, and there were, like, three stories, and there might be, you know, forty guys that lived in a house, you know.

SL: Almost like a fraternity house.

WH: Kind of like a fraternity house, but you were just assigned to one of these houses, you know. [00:32:45] And so they'd have the tea dance in the house there, and the housemaster'd be keeping a careful eye on you—make sure you didn't dance too close [*laughs*] or something like that, you know.

SL: Okay now, so tea dances—is that from [*WH laughs*] drinking tea?

WH: Oh, I guess it was supposedly, but, you know, I guess we had Cokes or whatever. But they [*laughs*] were called tea dances.

SL: So I'm not seeing—this is not like women with white gloves and . . .

WH: No, no.

SL: . . . and little saucers or . . .

WH: No, it was just a—it was a chance to—you know, since we were

in an all-boys school, to occasionally see some girls, you know.

[Laughs]

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

WH: [00:33:15] And so anyway, that—there wasn't a whole lot of social life in an all-boys school, and one of the things, though, that was fun to do is we would go to New York over Thanksgiving for vacation, for example.

SL: So how far is Lawrenceville from . . .

WH: It would be about an hour up . . .

SL: About an hour.

WH: . . . to New York . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . on the bus.

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

WH: And I can remember—it was very interesting back—and Thanksgiving vacation—they would expect a huge influx of boarding-school students and college students to come to New York. And the hotels would get organized for this kind of thing. For example the Waldorf Hotel would have boys on one—alternating floors and girls [SL laughs] on alternating floors. [00:34:01] So there were boys' floors and girls' floors, and they would have a, you know, a security person at the elevator on

each floor, you know, so the boys didn't go to the . . .

SL: Kept them segregated.

WH: Yeah, yeah. Amazing to think about it compared to nowadays.

The Biltmore Hotel in New York was all girls. There were no boys. They wouldn't accept any men staying in the hotel. It was all girls. And so it was, you know, it was just kind of fascinating. It was a lot of fun to go to New York over Thanksgiving and—'cause you'd just—you know, you'd meet new people or run into people from all over the place. And so I can remember thinking, you know, I wanted to go to Duke University, you know. I went down, and I looked at Duke, and I thought it was very impressive. It's like—looks like Princeton, but it's, you know, all these trees, and you know, it's . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . almost more beautiful than Princeton. I was impressed with the architecture, you know. Course, it shows what a high school kid'll be impressed with. [*Laughs*] But anyway, I remember being in New York, and I met some guys that went to Duke. I was, you know, in college. I mean, I was in high school, and they were in college. They were freshmen. And I was talking to 'em—I said, "Well, how do y'all like Duke? I'm thinking about going to college there." They said, "Where else are you thinking

about going to school?" I said, "Well, University of North Carolina." "If I were you I'd go to North Carolina. I wouldn't go to Duke." [*Laughs*]

SL: Really?

[00:35:21] WH: These were kids that went to Duke.

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: And so anyway, that was . . .

SL: That probably influenced you, didn't it?

WH: That did influence me, you know, talking to those fellows. But I think I was most influenced by this fellow, Walker Blanton, who I think I may have mentioned at the—did I mention him in the last interview?

SL: No, I don't know. I'm not sure.

[00:35:40] WH: There was a teacher at Lawrenceville named . . .

SL: Oh!

WH: . . . Walker Blanton.

SL: Yes.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, this is the one that said, "You know, you're kind of messing up."

WH: Yeah.

SL: "You should" . . .

WH: Yeah, that's right.

SL: . . . "start thinking about this."

WH: Yeah, he ended up being kind of a mentor and . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah. Well, that—I mean, I don't want to—I don't think we need to go into any detail about just exactly what your activities were that drew his attention and . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . his concern. I think you listed two or three items of a—general items that you were engaged in. But you kept in touch with him for, I mean . . .

WH: Yeah, for quite a while.

SL: For quite a while. Yeah.

WH: Yeah, yeah.

[00:36:17] SL: Well you know, that's kind of the way it should be. There, you know, a teacher—you should have mentors . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . that come from the teaching pool . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know, because . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . they're—they really are shaping the way you think.

[00:36:33] WH: Yeah. So you were asking about dating and things

like that.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

WH: You know, when I was in college I never—I didn't have any steady girlfriends or anything. And at North Carolina, just dated a lot of different people. You know, we would—it was a lot of fun. There was a lot of social life in college compared to very little social life in boarding school.

SL: In boarding school. Yeah.

[00:36:55] WH: I did date a girl for a good while from—that went to Hollins College, which was in Virginia. It was about a two-hour . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . drive away. And I can remember we'd drive up there and we'd call it a road trip, you know. We'd drive—'cause it was a two-hour drive, and usually another friend or two or—you know, we'd drive up there. And a lot of times we'd get there, you know, kind of late in the afternoon, four o'clock, and we'd get our dates, and we'd go over to this thing called the Hollins Inn. It was just a—kind of a little restaurant and bar, basically, and they had booths, and we'd go sit down at these booths, you know, and get a pitcher of beer and talk. We would talk for maybe four or five hours.

SL: Oh my gosh.

WH: Just sit there and talk and talk and talk and talk, you know.

[00:37:41] SL: How many pitchers of beer is that?

WH: Well you know [*SL laughs*], probably more than it should've been. [*Laughter*] But that was just great, you know. It was just more fun than anything you could imagine, just sitting there and talking, you know. And then, you know, we'd take our dates back, and it'd be nine o'clock at night, and we'd take them back, and then we'd drive . . .

SL: Drive back.

WH: . . . back to North Carolina and get back at eleven or something like that. So—and then, of course, on the weekends, you know, this—a girl I dated there—she would come down to North Carolina, or I'd go up there, and we'd go up to the University of Virginia. And had to—ended up with a good friend up there named—a fellow named Craig Shackelford, who was from Arkansas. And so I'd go up there and see him some and visit with him. And so—and got to know—I got to know quite a few—I got to know a number of his fraternity brothers who—still friends today, you know. So—I mean, I was a—I was in a fraternity there at North Carolina. It was the best group of people I'd ever—by then, the best group of people I'd ever been

around in my life, you know. They were just wonderful,
interesting . . .

[00:38:45] SL: Well, which . . .

WH: . . . fascinating people.

SL: . . . fraternity was it?

WH: It was called Delta Kappa Epsilon. I don't think they have a chapter at Arkansas. Well, I know they don't 'cause we had to memorize all the chapters. But [*laughs*] anyway, the—but it was, you know, it was kind of the—one of the major fraternities there and right on the corner—right across from the Carolina Inn, and then there were a lot of famous people who had been in our fraternity—people who'd been secretary of war and editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and all these interesting people, you know. It had a lot of heritage there. But—and when I went there in—we couldn't pledge until our second semester, and we had to make our grades first and—which was, I think, a good system. And so anyway, when we went through rush, I can remember a lot of the fellows—we had—there were a lot of guys that had gone to Lawrenceville who were in that fraternity who were a year older, you know, had also been influenced by this Walker Blanton to go to North Carolina. So anyway, everyone got their bids one night, and so everybody had gotten a bid

except me.

SL: Uh-oh.

[00:40:06] WH: And so I remember [*SL laughs*] walking out of the fraternity being—feeling kind of dejected, you know. And going over there—we had these little motorbikes. And so I was over there at my motorbike, and this friend of mine comes kind of running out of the fraternity—his name was Smokey Swenson, and I'd known—he'd gone to Lawrenceville with me.

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: And he came in, and he said, "Hey," he said, "Walter, come on back in the fraternity again," you know. You know, "Come on back. You just need to visit with these guys some more and everything." And I just looked across the street, and I thought, "God, I don't want to go back in there, you know. I mean, they've already given bids to most of the guys or"—and you know, but he convinced me to go back in. And I went back in there, and the next day I went by for lunch, and I got a bid. So I was probably, you know, the last guy to get a bid in that pledge class, you know. Anyway, so [*laughs*] anyway, Smokey and I talk about that every now and then [*laughs*], even today, you know, about what a great favor he did by, you know, "Show a little determination and don't give up," you know. [00:41:08]

So—but anyway, it just a great bunch of guys. We had twenty-six guys in our pledge class. We had thirteen from North Carolina, and we had thirteen from out of state. We had thirteen that had gone to boarding school, and we had thirteen that had gone to high sch—regular . . .

SL: Public school.

[00:41:24] WH: Public schools. But they weren't the same thirteen.

There were kids from North Carolina that had gone to Exeter and Woodberry Forest. There were kids from Georgia that had gone to public school and et cetera, you know. So it was just a really interesting bunch of people. A lot of these people went on to do—and were very successful in life, you know. One of 'em today is head of Bloomberg. The company Bloomberg.

SL: Sure.

WH: Yeah. And another one went on to become head of mergers and acquisitions at Goldman Sachs. And you know, surgeons and just—it's just really interesting to see, you know, what everybody did. [00:42:10] But we were really—I—that group of people were really close, you know. And I—the older fellows in the fraternity would—they would pick out, you know, a couple of us that—in the pledge class that weren't real close—maybe a fellow that went to public school in New Bern, North Carolina,

with a kid from Connecticut that had gone to Choate or some other boarding school. And maybe mix us up like that and say, "Okay, I'm giving y'all a task. Y'all have to go up to Sweet Briar and get this girl to sign this birthday note," you know. So that meant all four of us had to get in the car, drive up to Sweet Briar—course, we'd, you know, talk and visit . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . and . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . we kind of got to know each other . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . a lot better, you know.

SL: It was the trip, not so much the signature.

WH: Yeah, that's right.

SL: Yeah.

WH: Yeah, it was all about the trip. So anyway, that was a great experience.

[00:43:08] SL: I can't remember if we talked much about athletics growing up or—did you—was it baseball? I can't remember. Base . . .

WH: Yeah, I loved baseball growing up. I just was, you know, adamant about baseball. And . . .

SL: And did that continue in the boarding school?

WH: No, it really didn't. I kind of, you know, kind of lost interest in baseball. When I got to Lawrenceville, they had—first of all, I'm not a real natural athlete like a lot of people I know. And if I do anything athletic I have to really work at it, so *[laughs]* anyway, I—they had varsity teams and—but they also had intramural teams because of all these houses.

SL: Yeah.

WH: They had intramural, you know, football.

SL: Between each house.

[00:43:51] WH: Yeah, between each house. They had intramural football, and I did that. And they had intramural soccer, and so I played soccer. I'd never played soccer before.

SL: Soccer was probably something that you didn't see in Arkansas . . .

WH: No.

SL: . . . at that time.

WH: Yeah. And so . . .

SL: I mean, you do now, but back then . . .

WH: Yeah, and I loved soccer, and I ended up running cross-country. I'd never done cross-country, you know. So I did get where I really loved—they had a beautiful field house at Lawrenceville—

huge. In fact, the Princeton basketball team would come down to Lawrenceville—it was only five miles away—and they would practice in our field house 'cause it was better than what they had at Princeton. And [*laughs*] that's pretty amazing. And I'd go down there and watch Bill Bradley.

SL: Oh my gosh.

WH: And he was on the Princeton varsity team, and I watched him, you know, do scrimmages and practice and everything. And so—and they—we always had a swimming meet at Lawrenceville every year. The eastern championship swimming tournament, you know. We had a fellow at—when I was there that set a world record in the fifty-yard freestyle in boarding school.

SL: Wow.

[00:44:59] WH: And in fact, he and another swimmer at Lawrenceville ended up going to the Olympics. And so—and they ended up both being in my fraternity at North Carolina. I mean, it was [*laughs*] pretty . . .

SL: You know, it's amazing to me—I had never heard of Lawrenceville until we . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . started talking. It's—but it sounds like a really wonderful . . .

WH: Well, this field house was so big they had an indoor track in there, you know.

SL: Wow.

WH: And so I would go down, and I'd just—I'd go down and run. I just loved to run. And it was really good—I just found it was really good for me to be able to—it kind of energized me, and I could stay up and study better, you know, in the evenings if I got some exercise, you know . . .

SL: You bet.

WH: . . . after a lot of classes and things like that. So anyway—so—but—and I also—you know, when I was living in Camden before I went to Lawrenceville, I played golf a lot. [00:45:52] I loved golf. But we were—lived right—when I . . .

SL: Next to the course.

WH: . . . was ten we moved . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . next door to a golf course. So—but really, I guess, you know, later in life, golf's the one thing I've kind of picked back up again and do that. That and skiing. I've skied a long time.

[00:46:07] SL: So—but at North Carolina you didn't really . . .

WH: No, I remember, you know, we had a—for PE class, which was required there in college, I member playing some touch football

and playing quarterback and, you know, and that was a lot of fun, you know. I mean, it was a—it was just basically fun. It wasn't anything serious, but it was great.

[00:46:34] SL: Well, was North Carolina—was it a powerhouse for basketball . . .

WH: It was.

SL: . . . back then?

WH: It was. We went to the Final Four two times.

SL: While you were there.

WH: Yeah, while I was there. We played for the national championship two times. We had a fraternity brother named Rusty Clark. He was he was seven feet zero inches.

SL: Wow.

WH: And unfortunately he had to play against Lew Alcindor, who became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

SL: Right.

WH: And you know, we got beat both times. But it was a—yeah, it was exciting going to those basketball—I had never been much of a basketball fan till I went to North Carolina. [00:47:14] And then I became an avid basketball fan, and then I moved back to Arkansas. And then they hired Eddie Sutton. We ended up with a good basketball team in Arkansas, and I was one of their

biggest fans, you know.

SL: Me, too.

WH: So [*laughs*] anyway, yeah, that was great—North Carolina basketball. Football was never that great, you know.

SL: Right. That's since come on a little bit . . .

WH: Yeah, a little bit.

[00:47:37] SL: . . . hadn't it? But—well, is there—so back to the dating and girl stuff—so you got your degree at North Carolina in journalism. Is that right?

WH: Right.

SL: But you didn't latch on to your married—any marrying interests . . .

WH: No.

SL: . . . there.

WH: No.

SL: So you come back to Camden?

WH: From then, I, you know, went on to New York to go to business school.

SL: To Forbes.

WH: Yeah, to—no, to . . .

SL: Or to school.

WH: Yeah, to school. Yeah.

[00:48:13] SL: What school did you go to in New York?

WH: Well, I went to Columbia University to . . .

SL: Okay.

WH: And I got . . .

SL: And this is graduate work.

WH: Yeah. Yeah, so actually, you know, I was—when I was a senior, they went to the lottery system on the draft where everybody was given a number.

SL: Yes.

WH: Okay, so people would have a little more certainty as to whether they were gonna be drafted or not. And of course, Vietnam was raging at the time, you know, from [19]64 to [19]68, you know. And so it was pretty sure you were gonna be drafted in 1968.

SL: Right.

WH: So I decided—well, I'm—what I wanted to do is I wanted to get into naval OCS—Officer Candidate School.

SL: 'Kay.

WH: So it was February—January or February—and so I called over to Durham to see about getting a draft physical, and they were booked till, like, June. So I called Raleigh, which is thirty miles away—they were booked till, like, July. I mean . . .

SL: This is just for the physical?

WH: Yeah, yeah, just to try to go get a physical. You—they didn't have any availabilities to . . .

SL: That's . . .

WH: . . . to go get the physical.

SL: . . . that's kind of crazy.

[00:49:25] WH: Pretty—yeah. Well, you know, you had a tremendous number of college students in that area, so everyone was—a lot of people were like me. They were saying, "Well, I want to go get a physical," you know. So I want to try to—so anyway, I called back here to Little Rock—see if I can get a physical. "Yeah, we can take you next week." So I came back [*laughs*] to Little Rock to get my draft physical, and I flunked it. I was really surprised, and basically the way I—the reason I flunked it—I's in there, and it was February, and I have a—I have very dry skin. Have to put lotion on every day just 'cause my skin's so dry. I don't have psoriasis, but I have pretty dry skin. And so—course, in the wintertime it would . . .

SL: Slough off.

WH: . . . slough off. It'd be . . .

SL: You . . .

WH: . . . pretty flakey. And the draft physician came over and said, "You got pretty dry skin." I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Okay,"

he said, "you're gonna have to get a waiver to"—and I said, "Okay." So anyway, so I went back to North Carolina and went over to the School of Medicine in the dermatology department. I went in there and said, "Look, I'm trying to get my [*unclear words*]"—says, "My skin's too dry. I'm gonna have to get a—get you all to say I'll be okay, you know, if I—to serve in the military to go to Vietnam." And he said . . .

SL: Right.

[00:50:42] WH: And so—and the guy started talking to me and everything. Then he had another dermatologist in there, and then there were three dermatologists . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

WH: . . . in there. And they started debating the Vietnam War. I said, "Hey, listen. [*Laughter*] I'm trying [*laughs*] to get in." And he said, "Well, the problem is that people that have really dry skin don't perspire as much as normal people, and they're having a problem over there with people having heat strokes."

SL: Yeah.

WH: You know. And so anyway, they didn't give me the waiver, and I thought, "Oh, you know, this is gonna be the worst of all worlds. I'm not gonna be able to qualify to get in naval OCS, but I'll probably get drafted." But anyway, I ended up—so just, again,

literally by chance, a lot of my friends went to Vietnam. I didn't go. I didn't have to go. They all said, "It's great you don't have to go." But—anyway, so I was able to go to graduate school. That's how I ended up going to graduate school right out of college.

[00:51:40] SL: Well, even though you flunked the physical, do you remember what your draft number was?

WH: One-oh-one.

SL: That's—so that was—that's a hot number.

WH: Yeah, I was gonna definitely get drafted.

SL: That you would've gone.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

WH: For sure.

[00:51:53] SL: But you wanted to go.

WH: Yeah. Well, I wanted to get in and serve, you know. And I thought it'd be great to be a—to—I was—you know, if you go through Officer Candidate School, you ended up as a lieutenant. I thought, you know, I'd probably learn a lot in the military, too, and I could, you know, I could go to graduate school a lot later, you know, after I got out of that.

[00:52:12] SL: Well, if—even back in—when you were doing

boarding school, you would've—didn't you really kind of want to go to a military . . .

WH: Yeah, I'd . . .

SL: . . . boarding school?

WH: I'd—that's—that was my choice was to go to Castle Heights, and my parents made me go to Lawrenceville.

SL: Well . . .

WH: But thank goodness for them. [*Laughs*]

[00:52:28] SL: But you know, going—surely at—even at North Carolina, weren't there, like, protest movements going on with the war around and . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah, there were some. Yeah, there were some. It wasn't as hotbed up—you know, protest areas a lot of places but . . .

SL: Yeah. But the—so the prevailing attitude was you signed up, you served. I mean, that was . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . that was kind of the peers that you had around you.

WH: Yeah, and some people were in ROTC, you know. I had some friends that were doing that.

[00:52:58] SL: Well. Still, I mean, would—did you not feel a little bit of relief that you weren't gonna go, or . . .

WH: Oh, I felt . . .

SL: . . . was it just a . . .

WH: . . . tremendous relief. No one wanted to go to Vietnam. I mean . . .

SL: Okay.

WH: . . . you know. I mean, it was—yeah, tough war. Tough situation, you know. And—but yeah, oh, I—greatly relieved, and I—you know, really relieved I could, you know, go and could continue my education.

SL: Yeah, I think my number was two hundred and fourteen.

WH: Oh, yeah. [*SL laughs*] That's a little better number. [*Laughter*]

[00:53:32] SL: Yeah. I was really lucky. Well, so you go to Columbia.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And you get a degree in—what was your degree?

WH: I got a degree in business mast—MBA.

SL: MBA.

WH: Yeah. And you know, I tried to get into the School of Journalism. I decided I wanted to maybe get a combined degree in business and journalism.

SL: Yeah.

WH: I got turned down twice.

SL: Writing?

WH: [*Laughs*] Twice.

SL: Were your writing skills not up or . . .

WH: No, it's just extre—I mean, Columbia Journalism School is probably the best journalism school in the United States. That and the University of Missouri—probably the two best. And it's just the competition. It wasn't a big program and—but they did allow you—to get an MBA, you could take courses in other schools. I took a couple of courses in the Law School there. I took a couple of courses in the Journalism School, and those all counted towards my MBA. So I was able to avail myself . . .

[00:54:40] SL: You kept your fingers in it, then.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

WH: Yeah. So that was beneficial. But I decided—typically, you know, to get an MBA it's a two-year program, and you go fall and spring semester and work, and then you can do fall and spring.

SL: Yeah.

WH: I decided to go straight through. You can go through the summer, and that way I went through in sixteen months, and I graduated in January. So I elected to go straight through and then start working then, you know.

[00:55:09] SL: You know, there is the philosophy that once you do your undergraduate degree that you should get out there and work a couple of years before you . . .

WH: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . go to . . .

WH: Oh, that's what most students do today. And I think that's beneficial. And—but you know, I realized kind of—time was ticking along here because, you know, my dad was forty years older than I was, and when I got out of college, he was sixty-one, and when I got out of graduate school he was almost sixty-three, you know.

SL: Right.

WH: And I knew at some point maybe I'd come back—maybe try the business. And so I didn't probably have the luxury a lot of kids, you know, in a family business thinking, "Well, I've got a lot of time here to go out and do stuff, have fun, try other jobs, et cetera." [*Laughs*] But I did, you know, I did want to—I did work for a while, you know, in New York before I came back to Arkansas.

SL: At Forbes?

WH: Yeah.

[00:56:08] SL: You know—well, you mentioned—we were talking

about different journalism schools—good journalism schools.

You mentioned Missouri. And I was—when I was listening to our earlier interview, the name Don Reynolds comes up a couple of times. But are there two different Don Reynolds that we're talking about?

WH: No, there's only one.

SL: Same guy.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Okay. All right. I—for some reason it seemed like there was a—you mentioned a different Don Reynolds. But this is the Don . . .

WH: This is the one that was my dad's roommate.

SL: Donald W. Reynolds that . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. And you tell some great stories about him and your dad and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . how upset your mom got at him about the *Yank* magazine thing . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . and all that. So that—that's good stuff. So how was Columbia? I mean . . .

WH: You know, just a minute.

SL: Okay.

[00:57:01] WH: I don't know where—really kind of how much we talked about Don Reynolds, but . . .

SL: We didn't talk a whole lot about him.

WH: But later in the interview we might want to talk about him a little bit. I . . .

SL: I would love to talk about him.

WH: I knew him, and I'm—I was around him quite a bit, and we were in business with him for a while and everything. I went to the Little Rock Country Club one time, and it was with people I knew, you know, and three or four people. And anytime Reynolds Foundation would make a grant, you have to raise 20 percent of the money locally, which I think is a good idea.

SL: Sure.

WH: And so, you know, they were there to talk to me about, you know, donating towards this 20 percent. [00:57:39] And there was probably four people, all pretty prominent people in town—looked around, and I said, "Did anyone here know Don Reynolds?" Not a single one of these people knew Don Reynolds. And I said, "You know, I knew him. I knew him pretty well." I thought, "This is really [*laughs*] kind of odd. They're asking me to contribute money for this Reynolds match,

and I'm really the only person at the table that knew him." But I'm wondering how many people who really knew Don Reynolds, and this is something that you all probably are gonna get into, and maybe you're already into—but going out and talking to people like Fred Smith or Steve Anderson or people like that that can tell you Don Reynolds stories, you know.

And . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . 'cause he's . . .

SL: You know, we—I've—I did a brief interview with Don—with Fred Smith back when they were doing the stadium expansion up in—and he had some good Don Reynolds stories.

WH: Yeah. Good, good. Well, he's . . .

[00:58:34] SL: And I'm friends with Neal Pendergraft.

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And I never knew his father, but . . .

WH: Yeah, I knew Ross real well.

SL: Well, we can talk about Ross and Don and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and if you . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . know Steve, we can talk about them, too. But . . .

[00:58:46] WH: Yeah. Well, Don Reynolds has [*laughs*] ended up having such a huge impact on Arkansas . . .

SL: Yes.

WH: . . . through all this charitable giving. It's—it'd be good to have more in your archives about him, you know.

SL: I would love—we can spend an hour talking about him. I would love to learn what—how you felt about him and your experiences . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . with him and . . .

WH: But anyway, I just wanted to mention that before we proceed with what we were on there.

SL: Okay.

Trey Marley: Scott, we are at five minutes on tape.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:13] SL: Okay, we're gonna talk just for a few minutes before you have to go to a meeting, and then we'll pick up after the meeting. But we were talking—we've been talking a little bit about college career, and I actually think I got you to Columbia, but we probably need to go back to North Carolina, and you kind of barely made it into this fraternity. And you ended up being—what—you—the vice president of the . . .

WH: Yeah, vice president.

SL: And now you're telling me off camera that you were also the social director.

WH: Yeah, much more important.

SL: Now, this is some real . . .

WH: More importantly than vice president is being the social chairman. [*Laughter*] So anyway, first thing I did is I took the job very seriously, you know. And I—you know, you'd go to a fraternity party or something, and you'd go there, and they'd run out of beer, or they'd run out of ice or whatever. I thought, "We're never gonna run out of ice. I mean, there's no reason to run out of ice. We got pledges, and we can send them to get ice or . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . whatever, you know."

SL: Right, right.

[01:00:16] WH: So anyway, so we—I really had fun doing that. And I was mentioning to you that, you know, we would have these mixers with the sororities—with the Pi Phi's and the Chi O's and the Tri-Delts, and we still did those kind of mixers. And those things were a lot of fun and . . .

SL: And so now was a mixer—they just came over for . . .

WH: Yeah, they . . .

SL: . . . drinks? Was there a band?

WH: Yeah, sometimes we'd have entertainment. We'd have a band or something, and if we didn't have a band, we'd have a jukebox, you know. And jukebox was really popular back [*laughs*] in those days.

SL: Yeah.

WH: And so, you know what I'm talk—we'd usually maybe have dinner and then have drinks and then have some dancing and you know. [01:00:52] So anyway, so I mentioned I was dating a girl that went to Hollins College up outside of Roanoke, Virginia. And so I thought, "You know, maybe we ought to have a mixer with a girls' school." And I'd never heard of anybody ever doing that, so she and I started talking about it a little. And I said, "Well you know, you could just—we could get a bus, and we could get about forty girls or so, you know, to come down on that afternoon, and we'd just do what we do here when we have a mixer with one of the sororities, and, you know, at ten-thirty or so, they could head back on the bus and go back to school." And so we had a Deke fraternity/Hollins mixer. [*SL laughs*] And so that was a big success, and everybody enjoyed that. And so some of the other guys in the fraternity dated

some girls that went to Hollins, but then, you know, some other guys had some blind dates and ended up meeting some girls and et cetera, and so that was successful. [01:01:54] So then I knew a girl from Camden named Judy Shankle, and she went to Randolph-Macon.

SL: M'kay.

WH: So I called her, and I told her what we'd done and said, "You know, would you be interested in trying to round up a group of girls, and we'll have a Randolph-Macon mixer with the DKE fraternity, you know." [SL laughs] So we did one of those with Randolph-Macon and then the—there was a girl from Little Rock who I'd met and had a few dates with named Tricia Cromwell, and she went to Mary Baldwin College up in Stanton, Virginia. So we had a Mary Baldwin mixer. Actually, Mary Baldwin was, you know, a good—maybe almost an hour further than Hollins or Randolph-Macon.

SL: It's a big trip.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

WH: So anyway, that was a long trip for them. But anyway, they came, and then we did a—I don't think I—that I knew anybody from Arkansas that went to Sweet Briar College, but some of the

other fellows in the fraternity did. So they helped. So we had four of these different mixers with Virginia all-girl schools.

[01:03:02] Well, I'd met this girl from Tuckerman, Arkansas, named Mary Lynn Thomas. And I tell you how I met her. It's kind of an interesting story. [*Laughs*] I came back to the fraternity one Sunday night, and I walked in. I'd been over at the library. Go over to the library at the School of Education 'cause it was right across the street, and I could—it was quiet over there, and I could study. I came back in about nine-thirty one night, and there were some guys there watching TV, and they said, "Hey, Hussman." He said, "Three girls were over here looking for you about an hour ago." I said, "Three girls were looking for me?" You know. [*Laughter*] I said—first thing I said, "Well, who were they?" you know. They said, "Well, I don't know who they were." I said, "Well, what did they look like?" They said, "Oh, they're all real attractive." Said, "Three attractive girls came in here, and you didn't even find out who they are?" you know. And they said, "No." And I said, "Oh, that's terrible, you know." [*SL laughs*] It sort of haunted me the whole week, you know.

SL: No kidding.

[01:04:04] WH: And so as it turns out, they were all in boarding

school up in Virginia at this school called Chatham Hall. And there were two girls from Wilmot and this Mary Lynn Thomas from Tuckerman . . .

SL: Tuckerman.

WH: . . . and they all went to school together up there. And they were down here. They'd heard there was some guy from Arkansas and he was in the DKE fraternity, so they just came by the fraternity just to come by and say hello and, you know, meet me and et cetera. So anyway [*laughs*], the next weekend I was up at the University of Virginia at St. Anthony Hall, a fraternity there, visiting my friend Craig Shackelford. And I ran into and met this girl Mary Lynn Thomas. [01:04:45] And we—you know, since then we've become lifelong friends, and she ended up marrying a fraternity brother of mine. But anyway—so Mary Lynn and I got to be friends, and so I asked her—I said—I told her about these mixers, you know. I was just telling her about it 'cause I thought she'd enjoy hearing it. And she said, "Well, we could do that." I said, "Mary Lynn, you know, you go to school in New York." [*SL laughs*] An all-girl school in New York, which was Briarcliff Manor. I said, "You couldn't—we couldn't do anything like that." And she said, "Well, we couldn't do it for one night, that's for sure. We'd have to do it over the whole

weekend." And I said, "Well, [*SL laughs*] yeah, maybe we could, you know."

SL: That's a big mixer.

WH: "You come down Friday, and you go back on Sunday, you know."

SL: [*Laughs*] Uh-huh.

[01:05:28] WH: So we did. We ended up with a Briarcliff Manor mixer, and they came down on Friday—brought about another—about forty girls. They got a bus at—from Briarcliff to go to La Guardia Airport. They got on the shuttle, the Eastern shuttle, and they flew down to Washington, and then we had a bus waiting on 'em there, and they'd bus—drove 'em from Washington, which is, you know, about a four-hour drive down to Chapel Hill. It took most of the day [*laughs*] to get 'em down there. So anyway—but they were there Friday night and Saturday night and had football weekend and everything. And so anyway, had a band on Sunday, and [*laughs*] they left after that. So anyway, that was a kind of a unique experience and a lot of fun, but, you know, the social aspects of fraternity life were terrific and not just social aspects with females, you know. But the social aspects with other guys—I mean, you know, I guess when I got to college I was kind of a little bit of a—just kind of a geek kind of a guy. [*SL laughs*] I mean, I'd gone to

all-boys' school, you know, and everything. But I really got to learn how to deal with people, how to relate to people, how to develop rapport with people that were hugely important in the rest of my life, you know. As important as probably anything I learned academically. And I know today sometimes fraternities, you know, go to excess or do things they shouldn't do or whatever. But they play a—fraternities and sororities play a really important role—can play a very important role in the development of people's character for future . . .

SL: Social skills.

WH: Yeah, and social skills.

[01:07:11] SL: Yeah, I suspect that you didn't get that early bid 'cause you were maybe deficient in that area, and that they came back and gave you a chance, and you took advantage of it and grew with it. So . . .

WH: Yeah.

[01:07:26] SL: Yeah, that's good. Well, listen, you've got to go to your meeting, but when you get back, I want to talk a little bit more about these mixers—just a little bit. And I'm also curious about the music.

[Tape stopped]

SL: I—we're still on our second tape. We're just kind of got started

on our second tape. And we were talking about your responsibilities as the social chairman of your fraternity at North Carolina and the expanded program of mixers, you know, which are—were essentially parties at your fraternity, inviting sororities, and you expanded to invite private girl colleges—bussing them in. And the last one was actually flying them [laughter] out of New York to Washington, DC, and then bussing them in. A very aggressive [WH laughs] social chair that tenure. Makes me wonder what kind of governor you would be. [Laughter] But really, you know, that's so interesting. And we also talked about the value of being a part of a fraternity and how it helped you enhance your social skills and kind of made you blossom in ways that would not have been possible without being a member of that fraternity. And it has played a key element in your career. And you're still—you still have relationships and friends from that period of time.

WH: Right.

[01:08:59] SL: So I can see that it was a—it meant a lot to you then, and you've realized how much it has meant to you over the years. So . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . that all speaks well of the community you placed yourself

there. But I also want, you know, as a point of history—you know, the culture, the fraternity culture and the college-campus life and sororities and private all-girl schools—you know, all that stuff is well established. It's kind of turning. There's not as many girls-only or boys-only schools anymore. Also, this is a time when the Vietnam War was going on and there were protest movements. And this whole youth culture was kind of more in the forefront than it was in the past. I mean . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . used to be you were a college kid, and you partied, and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . you got a degree, and maybe you met someone, and you married and—you know, kind of its own pattern. But at this point in time, that was kind of—it was different. It was a different time. It hadn't—we hadn't had anything like that before.

WH: Yeah.

[01:10:18] SL: And music in particular became kind of entrenched in that.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And I was just wondering what kind of music—you mentioned that the jukebox was a player in the culture back then. What

kind of . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . music were you guys listening to at North Carolina?



WH: Well, the music really was—it was very interesting at that time because [*unclear word*], you know, there was a lot—a lot had happened in the civil rights movement, you know, in the South. And it was interesting because black soul music was what was really popular in college when we were there—particularly, Motown-type music, you know. And it was interesting that that music was so popular that it sort of transcended any kind of racial lines, you know. And you had white kids and black kids that all loved that music, and it was something they all kind of unified around, or you'd go to a concert, and you know, race didn't really matter. Everybody loved that type of music, you know. So that was interesting, and that was the time when that music was having its biggest impact in the [19]60s. You know, great groups like the Four Tops and the Temptations and Smokey Robinson and Marvin Gaye and people like that. So—and that was the kind of music we had on our jukeboxes and I guess were on all the jukeboxes at all the [*laughs*] fraternities or sororities, you know, that had a . . .

[01:11:59] SL: It was a great time. And James Brown, I guess,

maybe a little bit later, and what's interesting to me, though, is that if you really trace that stuff, that music, back, it kind of comes down to the Delta area of Arkansas and Mississippi.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah. That's . . .

SL: . . . Memphis and Helena and, you know, all of those small, little towns along the river and the railroad . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . going up and down the river.

WH: Yeah, that's true.

SL: It . . .

[01:12:34] WH: That's true. And just the—something I was gonna say there. I kind of lost the thought on that. But, yeah, the music was a big part of it. You know, 1968, the year I graduated from college, incredibly tumultuous year. Maybe one of the most tumultuous years in the history of America, you know. You had Robert Kennedy was assassinated during the presidential—running up for the—through the primaries. And then, you know, Martin Luther King was assassinated. Actually it was the other way around. Martin Luther King was assassinated first and then Robert Kennedy. And you had all the—and then

the protest movements, you know, at Columbia University that—the spring of 1968. You know, I got there in the fall of 1968 and not really knowing what to expect—whether they were gonna—when—the day I got there, there were gonna be a lot of protests. Now, there weren't so many in the fall as there were in the spring but—you know, and all the talk about Malcolm X and the, you know, black separatism and things like that.

SL: Black Panthers and . . .

WH: So it was a—I think there's even a book that's been published. Its title is *1968*. [01:13:50] And there was just a tremendous amount going on then, you know. It was also another kind of more subtle thing that was happening was with the drugs in colleges at least at North Carolina which may have been a little bit behind maybe. Some of the Eastern schools or maybe the schools out West—drugs really just started about the time we were graduating. I mean, you know, when I was a freshman and sophomore or junior, I mean, everybody—they drank beer or they'd have some, you know, other kind of mixed drinks or whatever. No one used drugs.

SL: That's right.

WH: By the time my senior year rolled around, I said, "Where are some of those pledges? Where are some of those freshmen?"

"Well, they're out at their apartment. I think they're out there smoking marijuana." And it was a—it was not only just—it was not only a different thing like alcohol versus drugs, it was like—it was a different kind of culture. With alcohol everybody came to the fraternity [*laughs*], and they had a drink together, they socialized, they visited and everything. And when they were smoking marijuana, they were sort of out in their apartments and, you know, in real small groups and not the whole group di—so it was just sort of a different cultural thing, you know. When I'd go—went back to—you know, go back to the college and visit three or four years later, it was very different. Drugs were a much bigger thing. So we just sort of missed that part of it which I'm glad we did

SL: [*Laughs*] You got out of there

WH: . . . you know.

SL: . . . just in time.

WH: Yeah, got out of there just in time.

SL: Yeah.

[01:15:24] WH: But it was a real cultural change, you know.

SL: It was, and you know, I have a feeling some of those holed up in their apartments or homes—you know, it was definitely against the law

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you couldn't really be as social or you . . .

WH: Right.

SL: And to this day it's still not as socially accepted as alcohol . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . is. And it—you're right, though—it—there was a shift happening. It had kind of—you know, some people would say it was just starting to invade the white culture—the whites or the middle class was just getting familiar with the drug culture. And that's an interesting observation. [01:16:08] Well, okay, is there anything else about North Carolina that . . .

WH: You know, I had one ex—I had an experience there that sort of stayed with [*laughs*] me and the—I don't think I've mentioned this in another interview. If I did, just tell me. [*Laughs*] But the—but I was in the, you know, in the Journalism School there to—majoring in journalism and, you know, being the social chairman, and I kind of got a little bit of—I got on the Dean's List, but then I got off track a little bit and wasn't doing quite so well academically. And so the—one of the senior—most senior-tenured professors there called me down to his office. He wasn't the dean, but he was maybe more important than the dean, he'd been there so long. [*Laughs*]



SL: I understand how that works. Yes.

WH: And his name was Walter Spearman. And so he called me down to his office, and he said, "You know," he said, "I've been kind of—you've been in one of my classes, and I've been kind of keeping my eye on you." And he said, "You're really not—you're not performing up to your potential." I said, "Well yeah, that's probably right." And he said, "So what's going on?" I said, "Well, maybe I'm enjoying the social life a little bit too much and should be spending more time on the academic life." And he said something then—he said, "Well," he said, "you know, that's probably okay for you." He said, "You probably don't need to work that hard anyway academically." He said, "Yeah, you'll probably get out of college. You'll probably go back, work for some of your dad's newspapers, and you're gonna have a kind of an easy life from now on." He said, "You can play golf, hang out at the nineteenth hole, and you won't really have to work that hard. You can—life'll be pretty easy for you." Anyway, I walked out of his office, and it really bothered me, you know. [Laughs] [01:18:03] And I thought later—oh, and I thought, "You know, that guy intentionally put a big burr under my saddle." [Laughs] Which is exactly what he did, you know. I mean, he was pretty intelligent. And it made me realize, "That's not what I want to

do, you know. That's not what I want to do with my life. I don't want to go back and hang out in the nineteenth hole, you know, and just sit around and play golf and et cetera.' So anyway, I got a little more serious about life [*laughs*] after that. But that was a really great conversation, and it was more important than I realized quite at the time, you know.

[01:18:41] SL: So he didn't really, you know, overtly condemn that, but it was just the way that he gave it to you that you—it rubbed on you—kept rubbing on you.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Kept rubbing . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . on you after the . . .

WH: You know, and I'm—not to say, you know, if he'd said it to somebody else, somebody else might've said, "Yeah, you're right," you know [*laughter*], and they may have been pretty happy with it.

SL: That's the way it's gonna be.

WH: But the more I thought about it, I thought, "That's not what I want to do, you know. I, you know, I want to do something more important than that. I want to try to make a contribution and make an impact, you know."

[01:19:13] SL: Well, I have a feeling he's probably like that guy at Lawrenceville—that teacher at Lawrenceville. They probably saw something about you that you were kind of covering up or burying or kind of . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . had set aside. So that's good.

WH: Yeah, it's great to have good people along in your life that can give you some direction.

SL: So what was his name again? Spear . . .

WH: Walter Spearman.

SL: Spearman. And he taught—what was his . . .

WH: He taught journalism.

SL: Journalism.

[01:19:46] SL: Well, okay. You leave—you graduate from North Carolina with a degree in journalism. You go to Columbia to get an MBA. And you spend two years there.

WH: Yeah. Well, I'm there sixteen months through January, and then after that I start working.

SL: At *Forbes*.

WH: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you were really pretty happy at *Forbes* and pretty excited to be there. [*TM coughs*] I mean, it sounds like a great

opportunity, and you were actually in the nuts and bolts of what was going to get written and were a player. But your father had a—you know, put out there that, you know, he didn't know what he was gonna do with the business. Wasn't anybody else to really leave it to—and suggested that you might consider coming back and just try it out for a while, and you took him up on that.

WH: Right, right.

[01:20:46] SL: That's kind of a pretty mature decision for a recent graduate landing in a place that was pretty cool and exciting, and you're in New York . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you're—you'd just—hadn't you just finished an interview with an executive up there—a CEO of the company?

WH: Oh, yeah, yeah, we—I had some really interesting times working up there.

[01:21:08] SL: Do you want to talk about *Forbes* anymore? I mean, you talked about the staff meetings and going over what stories were gonna be worked on and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you talked a little bit about the interview and how nervous your guy was to be talking with *Forbes*.

WH: Yeah, yeah. You know . . .

[01:21:25] SL: Is there anything else about *Forbes* and life in New York that has—that you carry with you today?

WH: Oh, not so much. It's just being in New York and being right out of school or in graduate school or out of graduate school. It's just a fun place to be. There's—you know, [*laughs*] the way I saw New York was that—living in New York City as a young person, there's—there are tremendous pluses, and there's tremendous minuses living in New York. Every day when you wake up, the minuses are, you know, or the pluses are great, but they're all pretty expensive. I mean, you can go to Broadway shows. You can [*laughs*] go to great restaurants. You can—you know, there are some things that don't cost a lot. You can go to some museums and things like that. But most of the pluses are pretty expensive. The minuses are there every day, and they're free. You know, there's . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . pollution, there's loud—you know, it's hard to sleep in New York there's so much racket going on [*laughs*] at all hours. There's crime. There's—there were—you know—so it's a balance in the pluses and the minuses, but it's a lot of fun for young people, you know, 'cause there are a lot of other young people to meet up there, you know, and get to know and different

parties. You know, people would seem—like when I lived there, there would always be some—"Well, so-and-so's having a party on Friday night over at their apartment, you know. Why don't you come along." And so you'd go to these, and there'd be people there, and a lot of people you didn't know, you know. [01:23:00] And so you'd introduce yourself. "Hi." You know, "What do you do?" "I'm Walter Hussman. I work at *Forbes* magazine." "What are you"—"Oh, I'm so-and-so. I work at Goldman Sachs," you know. "I'm so-and-so. I work at JPMorgan Chase," you know. And it was like—you know, it was sort of—"This is sort of my badge. This is where I work. This is what I'm really proud of" . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . you know, et cetera. And it's just—you know, that's kind of the way, you know, you got to—you expected things to be and—when you'd go to one of those parties. So when I left New York and I moved back to Arkansas and—I'd go up there, and sometimes I'd, you know, be invited to go to one of those parties. And you go around, and people would say, "Well, where do you work? Well, I work at, you know, Morgan Stanley," et cetera, and then people'd say, "Where do you work?" I'd say, "You know, I work for the *Smackover Journal*." [Laughter] "The

Smackover Journal?" [Laughs] They'd look at you. "What are you talking about?" You know, I'd say, "Well, that's a weekly newspaper that we have. It's about nineteen miles south of Camden." "What's Camden?"

SL: Camden.

WH: "Where is that?" you know. But I just—it was just sort of a—kind of a little contradiction to the, oh, "Morgan Stanley" or "Goldman Sachs" with "the *Smackover Journal*, you know. It's where I work." [Laughs] So I always had fun doing that.

[01:24:23] SL: Well you know, Smackover is such a great sound.

WH: Yeah. [Laughs]

SL: And you know, we actually had a couple of day interview with Clyde Scott.

WH: Oh, really?

SL: And he talks with great affection about Smackover . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and what it meant to him and his family, his mom, and how supportive that community was. Did it—had—have you spent much time in Smackover?

WH: No, not—I've driven through there a jillion times. But—no, but we did own the weekly in Smackover . . .

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

WH: . . . which was called the *Smackover Journal*.

[01:24:53] SL: I'll bet you it—but it may not have been when you owned it, but I bet you Clyde Scott delivered those papers.

WH: May—he may have.

SL: I'm pretty sure he did. Yeah.

WH: I never knew him. I knew his daughter, Marsha Scott.

SL: Sure.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

WH: But I never knew Clyde.

[01:25:09] SL: Yeah. Yeah, Marsha's a good girl. Well, I guess you make this decision to—probably because you felt like you'd be haunted if you didn't at least come back and look at the family business and . . .

WH: Well, I just had—the logic my dad threw out there is, you know, "If you come back and you don't like it, you can always go back to New York. But if you stay in New York and we sell the business, then this is an option" . . .

SL: It's gone.

WH: . . . "that's" . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . "kind of gone forever."

SL: Right.

WH: So I thought that made sense and thought it was worth giving it a try.

[01:25:47] SL: Okay. So you come back to Camden?

WH: Camden. Right.

SL: And you kind of have on-the-job training—starts every morning in your dad's office.

WH: Yeah. I—yeah, I had a little office next to his, and you know, at first there was a cultural shift in moving from New York back to Camden, you know. And it's interesting, you know, when you walk down the street in Camden, like most towns probably in Arkansas, people are very friendly. "Hello, how are you doing?" "Hello." "Hello."

SL: Sure.

WH: Yeah. I mean, people in New York—you know, it's not that way. Not—it's very impersonal. You know, first of all, you don't hardly ever see anybody you know in New York. [*Laughs*] Almost everybody you see you don't know, you know. And so, you know, walking down the street [*unclear words*] so friendly. You go—it just takes you a while to get readjusted, you know.

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

[01:26:43] WH: And then, living in New York, I finally got used to all

the racket and noise and the, you know, picking up the garbage at four in the morning and clanging over the manholes and the buses and [*laughs*] everything, you know. And so when I got a little house in Camden there to live in, and it was so quiet, at first [*SL laughs*] I had trouble sleeping.

SL: [*Laughs*] You couldn't sleep! [*Laughter*]

WH: It was too quiet, you know. [*Laughter*] So it was interesting.

Yeah, I was twenty-three years old, so I was still pretty young, you know, moving back there. And so anyway, there was that.

But then, yeah, at work it was good. And so my dad's—his modus operandi there was to try to, you know, include me in as many discussions and meetings and everything as he could, so I'd just try so I could pick up things that way. But—and pretty soon he started giving me, you know, tasks or assignments to do. [01:27:46] And I don't know if we've covered this at the last thing about going down to Vicksburg, Mississippi, but we—he called me in one day—he said, "You know, we've got the franchise to build the cable system in Vicksburg." And he said, "So I think we've decided that it's time to go ahead and build it. You know, the FCC has relaxed some of their rules, and we can have a few more television signals to try to sell on our cable service down there. So I need you to go down there and work

on that." And I said, "Okay. So what—tell me what you want me to do." He said, "Well, what I want you to do is—we need to go down there. We need to hire—we've got a consulting engineer that's done work for us, so I want you to work with the consulting engineer out of Dallas. So the consulting engineer is gonna act like an architect does on a house. He's gonna draw up a set of plans and specifications to build this cable system. And we're gonna turn that set of plans and specifications over to a contractor." So he said, "I want you to get the plan specifications, look 'em over, see if that—they look good to you. Then I want you to put this thing out to bid to various contractors, and they can bid it on like a turnkey basis where, you know"—and he said, "you know, negotiate. You need to negotiate with them, you know, on the contract and make sure the—you know, review the contract, and then ultimately we need to sign the contract after you've negotiated it." And he said, "Then we'll, you know, we'll be ready to build it." And he said, "That's what you need to do right now." I thought, "Wow. You know, I've never [*laughs*] done any of these things." So anyway, I jumped on it and took it on, and so it was—that was sort of a typical thing. My dad was pushing things on me as fast as he possibly could, you know. It wasn't like, you know, the

son goes to work for his dad, and he sits around after five years, and he's wanting more responsibilities. I had more responsibilities than I really could handle, you know. And so I was having to work really hard to try to make sure I could keep up. And I could always ask him questions and things like that and try to get advice, which was extremely helpful, you know.

SL: Sure.

WH: But I never felt like, "Oh, there's not much for me to do here," you know.

[01:30:13] SL: How'd you do in Vicksburg?

WH: We did well. We built—got the system built and then, you know, he said, "Okay, now you're gonna need to be in charge of marketing, you know, the system." And so there was, you know, there was more to do once the system got built and . . .

SL: Uh-huh. You know, if you put that, the cable business, in perspective, the—I guess the biggest opposition to cable systems were still the major networks.

WH: Yeah, the . . .

SL: They wanted to keep over the air as the main delivery platform.

WH: Right, right. And the television-station industry—the people that owned the TV stations.

SL: Local TV stations?

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: 'Cause they were all used to over-the-air stuff.

WH: Right, right.

SL: That was the technology it was built on.

WH: Right.

SL: And that's what they invested in.

WH: Well—and most—in a given market, most TV stations didn't want TV stations from other markets being brought into their markets, you know.

SL: Ad dollars?

WH: Yeah, so why—and you know, if you had the ABC television network station in Jackson, Mississippi, why would you want other ABC stations being brought into the Vicksburg market? Vicksburg is only forty miles from Jackson, you know, so they really opposed it or—so—or why would you want an independent station, you know, to be brought into your market 'cause that would dilute your audience some so . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: Yeah.

[01:31:34] SL: And look what's happened now.

WH: Oh, I know. But of course, back in those [*laughs*] days, you know, the FCC relaxed some of their rules in [19]68 and then

[19]72, and finally they started allowing you to—I know in Longview we were allowed to bring in—we could carry the three network stations, and then they were gonna allow us to bring in one independent station out of Dallas and one PBS station out of Dallas.

SL: Yeah.

WH: No other network stations out of Dallas. And I mean, that was kind of a tough go to sell that, you know. It's—of course, the prices were only like five dollars a month, so [*laughs*] it wasn't a whole lot of money. Course, five dollars a month was more money then than it is now. But—yeah, and that was before, say, 1980 and when the explosion of other channels like Home Box Office or CNN or . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . The Weather Channel and all those things . . .

SL: The whole Turner . . .

WH: . . . came along.

SL: . . . thing.

WH: Yeah, Turner Network Television and things like that. The superstations like WGN out of Chicago and channel 17 out of Atlanta. Those got to be independent stations that were carried all over the country. Yeah, the cable business changed a lot.

[01:32:55] SL: Well, we can get—we'll touch back a little bit more on that as we go. Okay, so you're really in an intensive training course with your family business when you get back. What was your social life like?

WH: Zero.

SL: Zero?

WH: [*Laughs*] Yeah, it was pretty bleak. First of all, most young ladies in Camden got married either out of high school or probably before they got out of college. I mean, there are probably a few exceptions, but there really not—no one to go out with hardly, you know. It's a—so I ended up—you know, I would come to Little Rock some, you know, 'cause there were more single people here to go out with. But Little Rock's a hundred miles. It was a two-hour drive, [*laughs*] so it was . . .

SL: You bet.

WH: . . . a pretty good ways. [01:33:45] And I remember one time I had a friend that I'd known, you know, growing up in Camden, and his name was Bo Davies. And so, you know, the weekend'd roll around, and what are you gonna do? There's nothing to do basically. [*Laughs*] So I said, "Hey, you know, there's gonna be a really great football game at—up in South Bend, Indiana. LSU's gonna be playing Notre Dame." I said, "Let me see if we

can some tickets and go to that game." He said, "Oh, it sounds pretty good. How are we gonna get there?" I said, "Well, we're gonna drive. We'll just drive [*SL laughs*] up there to South Bend." [*Laughter*] We got in my car, and we drove to South Bend, Indiana, and left on Friday, you know, after work, and you know, we got up there. I think we didn't get all the way—we think we ended up getting up there Saturday morning and got there—went to the game. After the game, drove back, spent the night in St. Louis and came back Sunday, you know. I mean, that's—that was sort of the social life. [*Laughs*] But that was fun, you know.

[01:34:51] SL: So is this—what—[19]72?

WH: Yeah, it was—it's been about 1971, [19]72—somewhere in there.

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. The—I've always heard the game experience—pregame experience at Notre Dame is pretty great—pretty special. I don't know if you got to participate in any of that. But . . .

WH: Yeah, I don't think we got to participate in the activities.

SL: You were up there as LSU fans, probably.

WH: Yeah, that's right.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

WH: [*Laughs*] We were LSU fans.

[01:35:20] SL: [*Laughter*] Well, okay, so I'm trying—what I'm—of course, what I'm trying to get to is how the heck did you meet your wife?

WH: Well, so—yeah, so actually I lived in Camden for about three years. And then, you know, I think I talked earlier about becoming the manager of the *Camden News*, you know.

SL: Right.

WH: Then we finally found someone to run the *Camden News*, so I went on to doing other things. So after about three years I'd—my dad said, "You know, I think you're probably ready to kind of be the, you know, the VP administration or whatever, vice president, general manager of the overall newspaper operations, you know." And which was Texarkana, Hot Springs, El Dorado, Camden, and Magnolia. And so I said, "I think, you know, probably what I'd need—like to do is to do that—be in another one of our papers, you know, 'cause I know a lot about that paper in Camden. So why don't I move to Hot Springs, and I'll operate out of there, you know, and then I'll learn a lot more about the Hot Springs paper." [01:36:29] Knew a little bit about Hot Springs. That was another one of my assignment was to build a building in Hot Springs.

SL: Oh.

WH: [*Laughs*] So I've—I got to hire the architect which I hired the Cromwell firm. Hired the general contractor. Yeah, one little story I'll tell you about that—building that building. So anyway, we were building this building, and I actually went out to Provo, Utah, to look at a newspaper that had been built out there with what they call the open concept where . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . basically there are very few offices, and almost everybody's in one big open room. And we decided to design the *Hot Springs Sentinel-Record* office building like that. And so anyway, they had—the building was sort of nearing—getting towards completion. It was time to put up the brick veneer. You know, it was concrete block, and they were gonna put brick veneer on the outside of the building. They put it up. They put it up during a very, very humid day.

SL: Uh-oh.

[01:37:28] WH: And that's a big problem. You shouldn't be laying brick on a really humid day. And so what happened is it stayed humid and the bricks kind of settled unevenly, you know. And so when you went and looked at this brick wall, it looked awful. I mean, you know, it—and it didn't look awful, but it really didn't

look good. I mean, some of the bricks had slipped this way, and some of 'em slipped that way . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . and everything. So [*SL laughs*] anyway, we decided to have a meeting. And we got the architects over there, and we got the general contractor over there, and we said, you know, "We've got a problem with this wall." And they said, "Well, yeah, we realize it's a problem," and et cetera, and said—so they said, "Well, we need to compensate you all for the fact that the job wasn't done, so we'll—we're gonna deduct this much from the bill—from the cost of building the wall." I said, "You know, that really doesn't solve the problem." And they said, "Well, what do you want us to do?" I said, "I want you to take those bricks down, and I want you to put 'em back up so they look right." They said, "You want us to take the brick wall down?" I said, "Well, yeah! I mean, [*SL laughs*] this brick wall's gonna be up there a long time." [*SL laughs*] It's up there today, forty years later. And I said, "You know, it needs to look right," you know. And so they all kind of swallowed hard and stared at each other, and [*SL laughs*] they took the wall down.

SL: Wall down.

WH: You know, and they put it . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . back up again.

SL: Well, that's a good call.

WH: So [*laughs*] I—so anyway, I just thought, "Well, that's the right thing to do," you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:39:06] WH: But anyway, I moved up to Hot Springs in 1973.

And so anyway, I'd dated a girl that lived out in California some, who I'd met when I lived back in New York, you know. But that was kind of a long-distance relationship, and that didn't really work very well. So anyway, I—by the time I lived in Hot Springs, it was a little easier to come over to Little Rock. And I had some friends over here, and that's when I really got to know Fred Smith, you know, who was living in Little Rock and started Federal Express here. And—oh, and a fellow named Tuck Morse, and I had gone to Africa with Tuck, you know, on a trip, and he lived in Little Rock. He worked for Federal Express, actually, as a general counsel, and Bob Tucker, who I got to know here. And so anyway—and so, you know, occasionally they'd get me a date with somebody, or I'd go to Dallas and see my friends Smokey Swenson and, you know, and his wife, Lindsley. They'd get me a date with someone. And so anyway, that's kind of what I was

doing, and so anyway, I guess after we bought the *Democrat* in 1974, I moved to Little Rock, you know. And you know, for a while I dated a girl named Anne Bartley. She was Winthrop Rockefeller's stepdaughter and . . .

SL: Bartley.

WH: Yeah, Anne Bartley.

[01:40:34] WH: There's a fellow that still lives here named Bruce Bartley, her brother. And a real nice guy. Anyway—and she's a very nice lady. Anyway, we dated for a while, and we kind of just sort of broke up about—right before New Year's Eve, you know. Fact, we'd, I think, planned to maybe go out New Year's Eve, and then we decided we weren't gonna go out New [laughs] Year's Eve, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

WH: So as it turned out, what we were gonna do on New Year's Eve is that when Fred Smith moved Federal Express . . .

SL: To Memphis.

WH: . . . from Little Rock to Memphis, he and several—he took about twenty-five people with him from Little Rock, if I remember correctly. And we said, "Gosh, you know, we need to do something with all these people moving to Memphis. We need to do something like once a year where we'll get together and

get the Memphis people and the Little Rock people together so we kind of have some reason every year to get together, you know?"

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:34.] WH: So the decision was, "Well, let's have a New Year's Eve party once a year," you know. And so I think this was gonna be the first one and—'cause I think he'd moved over there in maybe early [19]74. Maybe it was late [19]73. I can't remember. Anyway—and so the New Year's Eve party was gonna be at Justine's Restaurant there in Memphis. So anyway—so gosh, I'd broken up with this Anne Bartley, so I [*unclear words*] thought, "Who am I gonna have a date with? I gotta have somebody to go with me." [*SL laughs*] So I asked this girl that had been a—she had dated a friend of mine from Camden, you know. She'd—they weren't dating anymore and just—I was trying to find somebody to go with me. So she said sure, she'd love to go. So anyway, we went over there. So anyway—but she was just really a friend, you know, at the time. And so anyway, we went over there, and so the friend—well, the girl I had a date with who had previously dated this friend of mine from Camden—he had a blind date with a girl. And she was debating whether or not to go out and said, "You know, I

hate blind dates. I do—and here I am, going out with a blind date." And he says, "You know, you ought to go out. You never know who you'll meet." [*Laughs*] So that was Ben. That's my current wife. So she had a date with this friend of mine, and I had a date with his former girlfriend, you know. And [*laughs*] we ended up just happening to meet, you know, at this New Year's Eve party. And so that—that's how we met was on New Year's Eve.

[01:43:14] SL: So that didn't rekindle the ex-boyfriend/girlfriend . . .

WH: No.

SL: . . . relationship at all.

WH: No, it didn't. [*Laughs*]

SL: But his date and you kind of made some kind of connection and . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . it grew from there.

WH: Yeah, that—he asked her out to the Super Bowl, and we went—I went to the Super Bowl—really, without any—without a date. But we went down there and, anyway—so we—I got to see her a lot again, and then after that we started going out. And we dated until, I guess, in August we decided to get married, and we got married in November.

SL: Of the same year you met.

WH: Yeah.

[01:43:52] SL: That's good. Okay, now, what was her name?

WH: Ben, like a boy's name. Her full name is Robena—*R-O-B-E-N-A*.

SL: That's a great name.

WH: Robena. And so everyone called her Ben. Robena Louise Kendrick. And she was from Water Valley, Mississippi, and—which is a small town about nineteen miles south of Oxford, where the university is. And she grew up there, and her dad was a banker there. He was president of the Bank of Water Valley, and he walked to work every day. Walked about a mile—a little over a mile to work. Walked home every day for lunch. Walked back to the bank every day after lunch. Walk home. My—walk about four miles a day that way, you know. And . . .

SL: He lived a good, healthy life.

[01:44:38] WH: Yeah. And she had a great—you know, she grew up—wonderful thing—you know, she picked—you know, she can remember being a young girl and picking up the phone, and that was when, you know, the party lines—and you had operators in . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . town, and she'd pick up the phone, and she said, "Would

you give me Daddy," you know. And [*laughs*] just ring her dad at the bank. So I mean, a lot of people had phone numbers that were single digits as opposed to . . .

SL: Absolutely. [*WH laughs*] Absolutely.

WH: So anyway—and I remember after we'd gotten married, they decided to come over to Little Rock and see us one time. And they decided they were gonna fly. They were gonna drive to Memphis and fly over from Memphis. And they'd never been on an airplane.

SL: Yeah.

WH: You know, that was probably 1975—something like that. So anyway, that's how we met and . . .

[01:45:31] SL: So what was Ben doing at the time with her life?

WH: She had graduated from Ole Miss. And she went to Memphis and got a job working in a bank in a trust department. And I think she may have been the only female at the time working, you know, in the trust department. And that's when females were really getting more and more into the work force, you know. And—but it was sort of a new thing.

SL: Yeah.

WH: And so she worked for them for a couple of years, and then when I met her, she had gone to work at Holiday Inns in their

corporate office. And she was involved with putting together their annual report and investor relations and things like that. She was the only female in the corporate office, too.

[01:46:18] SL: Did she work with John Q. Hammons at all or . . .

WH: You know, I can't remember if she did. I don't remember . . .

SL: No. Yeah.

WH: . . . her talking about that.

[01:46:27] SL: Mh-hmm. Well, so I guess you can thank the Super Bowl for that. Is that right?

WH: Yeah. Well you know, that . . .

SL: I mean, it sounds like the time that you really got to spend some time with her, that . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah, that's right. There was a group of us down there, and that was a lot of fun going down for that. But yeah, that was a—and it's interesting—you know, Justine's was a fun restaurant to go to. The upper floor was kind of for private parties, and the lower floor was just regular public restaurant. And we ended up having our tenth wedding anniversary over there. We got married in Memphis, too.

SL: Okay.

WH: And—'cause that's the church where she went to. And so—but it's interesting. We haven't—we got to be friends with a good

number of people in Memphis, but we really—we, you know—so we just kind of established our life here in Little Rock and didn't get back to Memphis as much anymore.

[01:47:27] SL: Well, we kind of—we'll get back to your family stuff.

But we kind of just glanced over Hot Springs—life in Hot Springs.

How . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: You were there for a couple years.

WH: Yeah, just a little over a year, you know, until the opportunity came up with the *Arkansas Democrat*. Now, Hot Springs is an interesting town to live in.

SL: It's got a great history.

WH: Oh yeah, yeah. You know, it's interesting [*laughs*—you walk down the street in Hot Springs, and it's kind of interesting—I mean, Hot Springs is in the South, like Arkansas is a Southern state. Hot Springs is in the South, but it's different in Hot Springs, you know. There are a lot of people that aren't from the South that live in Hot Springs. A lot of people have retired from Wisconsin and Illinois and places like that, you know. And I found living in Camden, which, of course, it's smaller than Hot Springs but—that everyone knew everything you did.

SL: Yes.

[01:48:28] WH: And that's one of the—that's just it. I mean, there was no privacy in a town like Camden. [SL laughs] Zero. In Hot Springs there was complete privacy. I mean, it was just—you know, a lot of the people in Hot Springs—and Hot Springs is different today than it was in the 1970s, but in 1970s it was just—you know, you'd walk down the streets of Hot Springs, and you'd—there'd be—you know, rarely—sometimes you didn't see anybody you knew, you know. 'Cause a lot of people hadn't lived there very long. They'd retired there, you know, and a lot of older people. I mean, to be a young person in Hot Springs was kind of unusual, you know.

SL: Yeah.

WH: A lot of older people that lived there. So I—sometimes I'd go down, and I'd stay in late—work late at the office, you know. I'd go have dinner. I walk down to Frankie's Cafeteria or . . .

SL: Frankie's.

WH: . . . something like that.

SL: Yeah.

WH: And then I'd walk back to the newspaper and work till ten o'clock that night. I mean, it was—not much social life in Hot [laughs] Springs either. So anyway, I'd go—I'd walk down there, and I'd have dinner and come back, and I'd never see anybody I knew,

you know. [*Laughs*]

[01:49:28] SL: Well, the [19]70s—was it—I can't remember if it was [19]70s or [19]80s that Hot Springs was kind of stagnant a little bit.

WH: Yeah. Oh yeah, it was . . .

SL: It kind of . . .

WH: . . . kind of stagnant.

SL: It quit growing, and actually things were kind of closing down. I . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: I remember doing Poultry Federation shows there for several years. They used to have their annual show there. But I guess the thing that—I—and the healing—the springs—the hot springs side of it was virtually shut down. I mean it . . .

WH: Yeah, a lot of the bathhouses had closed.

SL: Bathhouses were closed.

WH: Really, what—I think one thing that kind of got Hot Springs going a bit again was the races, and the Cellas that owned the race tracks putting—started putting more and more money in promotion and everything into the races, and the crowds started building, and it started—you know, we'd run the average daily attendance, and that started picking up every year, you know.

[01:50:28] And so, yeah, but as I say—and I'll—I—my parents had built a house on Lake Hamilton, and they rarely used it. And my parents finished building this house in about 1969, and my dad went out one morning in Camden to pick up the *Arkansas Gazette*. He read it every day. And he walked out, and the paper had been thrown in our driveway. He walked—we had a carport there, and he walked out there to get the paper, and two guys came out of the carport with guns.

SL: Oh my gosh.

WH: And ski masks or stockings or something over their faces. And so they told him to get in the house, and they walked in the house with him, and he said [*laughs*], "Now, where's your wife?" [*Laughs*] You know, he thought—he said he felt like a sheep-killing dog or something. [*Laughs*] He said, "You know, I didn't—I just hated to tell 'em where she was," you know. And—but anyway—so they went down and they—you know, my mother was asleep. They were holding a gun on her. Got her out of bed, and they wanted to know where their jewelry was—where the—well, they first wanted to know where the safe was. Well, they didn't have a safe, you know. "Well, where's the jewelry?" Well, they, you know, they—my mother didn't have a—she had, you know, she had some di—you know, a wedding

ring, and she had a—probably—but she didn't have a lot of valuable jewelry. Well, they took whatever she had, and fortunately, they didn't hurt 'em. They didn't kill 'em. But they—psychologically they did a lot . . .

SL: Absolutely.

WH: . . . of damage to 'em.

SL: There's the hurt.

[01:52:10] WH: Yeah. So—and they stole the car and—anyway, so this house they'd built on Lake Hamilton was on a point, and it was kind of on this point by itself, so they really—didn't really want to spent a lot of time, you know, out on a point by itself [laughs] after this experience. So anyway, I ended up moving up there and staying in that house and working at the *Sentinel-Record*. And so—and then about a year later, the *Democrat* came on the market, and we bought it, and my dad told me—you know, at the time—that was 1974, so my dad was sixty-eight then, and he said—one of the things he said, "You know, look, if we buy the *Arkansas Democrat*," he said, "you know, you're gonna have to go to Little Rock and run it. I'm not gonna move to Little Rock at age sixty-eight and try to, you know, run this newspaper." So I thought, "That sounded great. I'd love the opportunity [laughs] to go try to run it, you know."

SL: Yeah.

WH: So anyway, that's when I moved to Little Rock.

[01:53:22] SL: You know, Hot Springs has always played a role with the legislature, too. I mean, opening day of the races, it just seemed like there was—they all would just adjourn and go to the races. I . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: It'd be kind of perennial—a—almost a rites of passage to . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . to go to the races. And I think you're right. I think the track had a lot to do with sustaining—keeping Hot Springs alive, and then once they started upping the promotion of it, I think it revitalized the area a little bit.

WH: Yeah, yeah.

[01:54:05] SL: Course there's Cooper Communities are there, too.

WH: That's right.

SL: The Hot Springs Village.

WH: Yeah, they built Hot Springs Village, and that brought people in. And you know, of course, Hot Springs is—with all the lakes there—the Lake Hamilton, Lake Catherine, Lake Ouachita. You know, there's a lot of natural beauty and a lot of great recreational facilities there. So—and you know, the whole

concept of condominiums was fairly new at the time, and they started building some of those on the lake, and it made it easier for people to have a place at the lake, a second home or a vacation home, because there really wasn't much maintenance, and the people could just go there and stay there on the weekend and shut the door and not have to worry about it till they came back. And so . . .

[01:54:52] SL: How was the *Sentinel* in Hot Springs? How was the paper? How did it compare with where you'd come from in Camden?

WH: Well, it was a, you know, it was a larger paper, and it was serving a larger market. So you know, it was fun because there were, you know, more advertisers and a larger news hole and—but it kind of—a lot of the basics were the same.

[01:55:17] SL: Mh-hmm. Did you take anybody with you from Camden? I mean . . .

WH: No.

SL: None of the staff. You . . .

WH: No, just went up there myself.

SL: You went up there and stuck with who was there and . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah. I had a . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: I had a fellow as a general manager named Wally Ballentine, and my office was right next to Wally's, and I enjoyed working with Wally. He was a good manager.

[01:55:38] SL: Well, we're kind of getting to a point where we've—I've had—you and I have talked some about the *Democrat* purchase. And kind of problem solving with the *Democrat*—why—you know, and trying to make it more efficient and compete a little better. It was an afternoon paper when you first got it. Wasn't that right?

WH: Right, right. Did I—did we talk about in the interview last time about, you know, signing the contract and figuring out how to do the contract and contacting my—Richard Arnold in London and . . .

SL: No, I think we talked about—more about the contractual effort on the *Gazette*.

WH: Okay, yeah. Well, let me . . .

SL: But I don't think we did a whole lot of . . .

WH: On the *Democrat*.

SL: . . . contractual talk on the *Democrat*.

[01:56:25] WH: Well, so—see, here we are about to buy the *Arkansas Democrat*. And so this was a pretty big thing for our company, you know.

SL: Sure.

WH: We never had a—bought a newspaper this large, and it was like \$3.5 million, and that was a pretty major commitment for our company then, even though, you know, it was like—I think it was like \$500,000 down, and we paid the balance over twenty years at 7 percent interest. And so anyway, we needed to sign a letter of intent, you know, until we could get an asset purchase agreement drafted up.

SL: Right.

[01:57:06] WH: So Richard Arnold had been, you know, our company's attorney—the general counsel for our company.

SL: And he was married to your sister . . .

WH: Married to Gale.

SL: . . . Gale.

WH: Yeah. And they—so anyway, I called Richard, and he was not there, and I said, "Where is"—"He's in London." "Oh my goodness." So anyway [*laughs*—so I called Richard, and I said, "Hey, we're getting ready—telling it to you what we're doing—we're getting ready to sign a letter of intent. I need some help—I need your help to draft this letter of intent." He said, "Well, I can't really do it. I'm over here in London." He said, "Go down and—down to Texarkana and sit down with my dad, and he'll do

it for you." So that's what I did. I went down. His dad was a great attorney, too, and explained the whole thing. He drafted the whole thing for me, and I flew back to Little Rock, so I just kind of did that in one day. So anyway, we got that done. And so then—once—then we made the announcement that we were buying the *Democrat*. Then we had to get the asset purchase agreement. Now, this is a much longer document and takes in all the contingencies and everything. And so I called Richard again, and he said, "Well you know, I'm not—I'm still out here in London [*laughter*], so I can't do it." I said, "Well, so, you know, is this something your dad should do?" And he said, "No, I don't think my dad can—has got the time to—you need an attorney. You probably need a Little Rock attorney to do that." [01:58:36] And I said, "Okay." I said, "Well you know, we've got a problem because the attorneys that we've used in Little Rock"—which had done mostly estate work and, you know, that—estate tax. You know, in fact, Gaston Williamson in the Rose firm had handled a lawsuit my grandmother filed against the government, related to my grandfather's estate. So we had a relationship with the Rose firm. The Rose firm represented the *Gazette*, so we couldn't really use the Rose firm, you know.

SL: Right.

[01:59:07] WH: So anyway, he said, "You know, there's an excellent attorney there, and you need to get to know this guy if you're gonna be moving to Little Rock. His name's Phil Anderson." And he said, "I'll call him and tell him you're gonna give him a call, you know."

SL: 'Kay.

WH: "But he can do one of these agreements and do a good job with it." So anyway, so I called Phil Anderson and never met him before, never heard his name before.

SL: Right.

WH: And so we sat down and worked out the agreement. And Phil's been one of my closest friends ever since, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:59:41] WH: So anyway, that was another great thing that happened in [*laughs*] my life was, you know, meeting Phil Anderson and getting to work with him for so many years.

SL: Well . . .

WH: But anyway—so that's a—that—I wanted to mention that. We talked about the purchase of the *Democrat*.

SL: Well you know, it speaks well . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott. We need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:00:03] SL: We're doing pretty good. This is our . . .

TM: Third.

SL: . . . third tape . . .

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . today. I think that we've done pretty good about your growing up and the town Camden. We spent some time in Camden. I could always—I'm always interested in Camden, of course.

WH: Yeah.

SL: But the—your descriptions of the schools that you went to were all great. You—we've kind of gotten to a place where we're bumping up against that hour and a half that we spent talking about the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame questions, which dealt mostly with the family business.

WH: Right.

SL: History of the family business, the history of the newspaper war, you know, all that, and that's [*laughs*] really, really good stuff. So I don't want us to rehash things that we've already talked about, but I do want to kind of take stock. I'm taking stock of what we've done so far. Is there anything that's come to mind in these areas that we've touched on that you've thought of that

maybe we should—you want to say something about? I'm not saying that we're leaving all this stuff and you can't come back to it.

WH: Yeah.

[02:01:26] SL: But I want to kind of keep us in the same court if we can before we start moving on, because now I want to talk about some of the personalities that you've gotten to work with and people you've gotten to know. And I want to talk a little bit more about your family and the children you've adopted.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And maybe that process. 'Cause that's a process that I haven't heard much about, and I think that might be interesting.

WH: Sure.

[02:01:56] SL: So is there anything that you want to—we just got through mentioning Phil Anderson and how he became a friend, and sounds like I may be giving Phil a call and see if he'd be willing to suffer through one of these with me. But is there anything else you want to say about Phil Anderson?

WH: You know, when we were—we bought the paper in 1974, and you know, the paper—despite taking tremendous costs, unnecessary costs out of the business and actually reducing our losses considerably, we never made a profit. And, you know,

and then finally we started—decided, you know, there's no hope in being a complementary paper. We had to be a substitute. And then we started doing much better as from a marketing standpoint by increasing circulation and increasing advertising. But of course, our losses went up because it was so expensive to put out a substitute paper on a much smaller share of the revenue than the *Gazette* had. And so when we did that in 1979 . . .

[02:03:11] TM: Can—excuse me. Can we stop one second? We've got a—well, we had a beep, and now it just stopped.

WH: Okay.

SL: It's a . . .

TM: [*Unclear words*] ?truck?.

SL: Yeah.

TM: It's pretty loud.

[Tape stopped]

[02:03:20] SL: So we kind of got interrupted by . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . outdoor . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . noise that you . . .

WH: Yeah, I remember where I was here. And so . . .

SL: Okay.

WH: So in 1979, when we decided to become much more competitive, of course, we were gonna adopt a lot of the ideas we had learned around the United States from other papers. And I wanted to make sure everything we did was legal, you know. And so I would sit down with Phil, and I would explain to him what we're getting ready to do. And I'd say, "Do you see any problems with any of these things?" And you know, he'd review 'em and say, "Really, there's no problem," you know. And he had done some antitrust work before and was pretty conversant in antitrust law and explained, "You know, look, you're the number-two newspaper in this market, and you're trying to gain market share." And he said, "You know, most of the antitrust violations is where the dominant competitor in a market is trying to keep the upstarts from, you know, taking market share and trying to compete more successfully. And they'll do things that, you know, that can run afoul of the antitrust laws. But you know, if you're an upstart, you're given a little more latitude 'cause that's—it's increasing competition for you to be more competitive." [02:04:36] And so anyway—but anyway, we reviewed everything with him. And then in 1984—I guess literally five years after, you know, we started becoming

much more competitive, the *Gazette* sued us, and we went through this trial, you know. I—we probably talked about it before.

SL: Little bit about that.

WH: Little bit about it. But anyway—so Phil represented us in the trial as our attorney, you know. And he not only was a great—is a great lawyer and a great attorney, he really—I mean, [*laughs*] he had lived through everything we had done. He had reviewed everything [*laughs*] we'd done in advance. So he really threw himself into this with a passion, you know. The *Gazette* had hired this really, some would say, highfalutin but high-reputation attorney out of Houston who had won a big antitrust case. And his name was Steve Susman. And Steve had—was interviewed one time by *Texas Monthly*, and they said, "Steve, you know, you're charging \$600 an hour, you know, and most of the top attorneys in Dallas and Houston are charging \$200 an hour. How do you justify charging three times as much as any other attorney?" See, he was working for the Hunt family in Texas at the time. He said, "Well, I'm several times as good as any other attorney in Texas," [*SL laughs*] you know. So he's not too modest but [*laughs*] anyway . . .

SL: Right.

WH: But you know, we went through that trial, and we won the trial, you know. And Phil did a splendid, splendid job, you know. And he won not only, I think, because the facts were on our side but, number two, he did a really good job as an attorney. Number three, he really cared about the case in a very passionate way, you know. So anyway, that's a—you know, been a really important relationship. And after the trial was over, my parents—that was just 1986, the trial was over—my mother died in 1988, and my dad died in 1990, so they were already becoming—you know, they were older with some health problems, et cetera. And so, at that point—and I'd been running the company now for five years. I took over in 1981. I decided it was time to, you know, really expand the board of directors of our company. And get some outside directors, you know, on the board.

SL: Yeah.

[02:07:14] WH: And so, at that point, the directors had been myself and my mother and my dad. And I finally persuaded my mother and dad to have 'em—bring my sister Marilyn Augur onto the board, so there were four of us then. So, at that point, we expanded the board. Paul Smith, who had worked for us for years, joined the board of directors. Also, Phil Anderson, you

know, our attorney, he joined our board in 1986. A fellow named Allen Lassiter, who is an investment banker in Dallas, also a fellow I'd met in North Carolina when I went to school there, he joined our board of directors. And of course, Marilyn was on it. So anyway, since 1986 we've had, you know, we've had nonfamily, you know, noncompany people on our board. And the board is even larger now, but that was a really important step in kind of the evolution of our company, you know. And I don't think I've mentioned that before.

SL: No, you didn't. And, course, the biggest advantage is you had that kind of construction of a board gives you a much broader view . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . and more expertise across different fields.

WH: Right.

SL: And . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . rather than just family looking out after their business.

There's . . .

WH: Right.

SL: And so that was probably a really key step to take.

WH: Yeah, so that was one of the things I wanted to mention I think

we hadn't mentioned before.

[02:08:45] SL: Mh-hmm. So Phil kind of took over as your lead attorney, then.

WH: Right.

SL: Mainly 'cause he just got so involved and was so passionate about all things . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . involving the *Democrat*.

WH: Yeah. And he had, you know, he had been at Wright, Lindsey, and Jennings where his father-in-law had worked for many years. And then, I think in 1988, he split off, and they formed their own firm with another fellow that was there named Jack Williams. And so they formed the firm of Williams and Anderson and—that they've had since 1988.

SL: Now, is that the Jack Williams I know?

WH: He's a bond attorney that does a lot of bond issues.

SL: I'm not sure that I . . .

WH: Now, there's a Jack Williams from Texarkana.

SL: That's the Jack Williams I know.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

WH: Yeah, that's a different Jack Williams.

[02:09:40] SL: Yeah, yeah. Well you know, we—we've talked a little bit about Fred Smith. Now, there's Fred Smith with FedEx, and then there's Fred Smith with . . .

WH: Donrey.

SL: . . . Donald W. Reynolds.

WH: Right.

SL: And so did you get acquainted with both? Have you gotten acquainted with both those guys?

WH: Oh yeah. Yeah, I know both of 'em real well.

SL: Well, do you want to say anything about them that strikes you?

WH: You know, I just—you know, Fred Smith and Ross Pendergraft were two very loyal, faithful, and longtime employees of Don Reynolds that basically ended up running the company for him, you know. And Fred ended up over in Las Vegas, you know, and Ross stayed in Arkansas and Fort Smith. But they are both very capable business executives and did a really good job in running the Donrey companies. [02:10:42] And so—and of course, Fred Smith that was here in Little Rock that started Federal Express, you know, was young. He was a year or two older than I was, so more my age. And I got to know he and his wife. He was—his first wife was named Linda. When they lived here in Little Rock, I got to know them socially, and have had some good

times with them over the years. And I—course, Fred Smith—the Federal Express Fred Smith—he's a brilliant fellow, too, and . . .

SL: He's pretty famous for risk-taking, isn't he?

WH: [*Laughs*] Absolutely, you know. [*SL laughs*] And when they were doing their private placement before they became a public company, I remember—I knew Buck Remmel, who worked at White Weld in New York, and part of the Remmel family here in Little Rock. And Buck told me—he said, "You know, if you know of any investors that might be interested in, you know, investing in Federal Express, you know, through this private placement, just let us know." And so I read the private-placement memorandum, you know, myself, and I realized it, you know, was kind of risky, but—and we were—did not have the kind of money to invest in something like that, and we were investing all our monies in our newspapers. And we had the *Democrat* that was taking plenty [*laughs*] of money and so—but I did show it to Don Reynolds 'cause I knew Don had—you know, he was making a lot of investments—had a lot of cash flow. And I think they looked at it, and I don't think they ever did it. But that was the only connection between the two Fred Smiths. [*Laughs*]
Although I didn't really talk to Fred Smith at Donrey about it. I really talked to Don himself . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . you know, about it.

[02:12:32] SL: Well, so did you get to spend some time with Donald W. Reynolds?

WH: Yeah. Yeah, I did. He—yeah, because he and my dad were such close friends, I, you know, I remember one summer—I don't think I touched on this before, maybe I did, but I can't [*laughs*] remember what all we talked about a month ago. But this friend of mine named Billy Hulse, who I had met at the University of Virginia, his father was head of Southern Airways.

SL: 'Kay.

WH: And did we talk about this?

SL: No.

WH: Okay. And they were also the largest Beechcraft airplane dealer in the country. They had what were called fixed-base operators, you know, at airports in Atlanta at Hartsfield and other Atlanta airports. Birmingham, Orlando, Chattanooga—throughout the Southeast—maybe twelve—a dozen markets or so where they would not only—not only were they a fixed-base operator, but in some, they would sell Beechcraft airplanes, too. And so I got to know Billy in college. And Billy went into the reserves during college—you know, this was all part of the Vietnam era.

SL: Yeah.

[02:13:48] WH: And he dropped out of school to join the—he had to do six months of basic training. They sent him to Fayetteville, North Carolina. So he called me one weekend and—up in Chapel Hill and said, "Hey, Walter," he said, "I'm down here in Fayetteville, and I get off every weekend. And it's a long way to drive from Fayetteville, North Carolina, all the way up to Charlottesville. Would you mind if I come up to Chapel Hill and see you? It's only about half the distance to get to Chapel Hill." And I said, "That'd be fine. Come on up." So he came up that weekend and same thing—called me back that next [laughs] week—came the next week. He pretty much spent that semester every weekend in Chapel Hill, and he'd stay with me. So we got to be pretty good friends. And so anyway, when I graduated from college, I had gotten my pilot's license, and I learned how to fly while I was in college. And Billy had gotten his pilot's license, too, because his family was in the flying business, you know. So Billy called and said, "You know, I've talked to my dad, and he said that he will loan us an airplane if you'll buy the fuel, and we can go on a trip." And he said, "I thought we might go on a trip and go out West." [02:15:05] And I said, "Okay, that sounds good to me." So anyway, he

came over and picked me up, and that was the summer after I graduated from college, and we took off from Camden and flew to Dallas and stayed with my sister. And then we went to El Paso and stayed with a family friend in El Paso. And we went to—from there to Tucson, and we stayed with, I don't know, stayed in a motel there, I think. And then we flew up to the Grand Canyon and landed there. There's an airport right near the rim of the Grand Canyon. Walked in there and asked 'em about—"Is it possible to fly down in the canyon?" And he said, "Yeah." And he said, "Anything different about the air down in there? Is it real turbulent or any"—"No, not particularly." He said, "So it's okay for us to fly down into the Grand Canyon." And they said, "Sure." [*SL laughs*] So I said, "Billy, are we gonna do this?" And he said, "Yeah, let's do it." And I said, "Tell you what." I said, "I'm gonna let you sit in the left seat on this leg 'cause I think [*laughs*] I'm more comfortable with you flying this leg than me." So he said, "Sure." So anyway, we went down in the canyon.

SL: Man!

WH: It was a single-engine Bonanza airplane. You know, I was sitting there while he was flying. I looked over to the right, and it was solid rock. I looked over to the left, and it was solid rock. [*SL*

laughs] And I looked down, there's the Colorado River. And I looked up, and there's some blue sky. [*Laughs*] "Oh," I said, "I'll be glad when we get out of this canyon here." [*Laughs*] And so anyway, this is a long way of saying we ended up flying down to San Diego, and we went up to Orange County and San Francisco. And then, you know, we [*unclear words*] ready to start heading back east, so I called Don Reynolds. I said, "Hey, Don, you know, we're in San Francisco, and we're on—we got this little airplane. We're flying around the country and want to see if, you know, we could come see you in Lake Tahoe." And he said, "Absolutely. You guys come on. I got a place for you to stay and everything." So. [02:17:09] So anyway, we flew up to Lake Tahoe and went over to his—he had a beautiful place up on the north side of Lake Tahoe. And he used it as a retreat—for a company retreat. And they would have seminars up there. In fact, they were having a seminar up there when we were there. And he said, "You're welcome to come in and sit in on some of this seminar and listen to some of it if you want to." So we went in there and listened for about fifteen minutes.

SL: [*Laughter*] Yeah.

WH: And—or so—and anyway, we stayed with him a couple of days and then—and took off and headed east from there and back—

get back to Camden.

[02:17:46] SL: Well, by all accounts, Don Reynolds was a tremendous Razorback football fan.



WH: Yeah, he loved—he went to a lot of Razorback games. He also is a Missouri fan. You know, he went to University of Missouri, and he went to a lot of Missouri games, too. But he was faithful to both schools. And so anyway—and when—I'd always see Don at—there was an annual convention called the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and they would have a meeting every year. And for eighty-something years, it was at the Waldorf Hotel in New York. So I would always go with my dad, and sometimes my mother would go, and then sometimes even my sisters would go. And it was very different back in the [19]60s and the [19]70s. Most of the newspapers in America were family-owned businesses, you know. That was a—newspapers just first started going public, I think, in the late [19]60s or early [19]70s, you know. And so a lot of families would go to that, and so we would always get together with Don, you know, for those meetings and have dinner with him or sit around and visit at—some of these newsprint companies would have, you know, cocktail parties or something, and you'd sit over there, and we'd—he and my dad and I would talk a little bit

about business and how it was and everything. [02:19:08] And you know, somewhere along the way he bought the newspaper in Kilgore, Texas—Don Reynolds did. And as it turned out, the newspaper in Kilgore was a partner of ours on the cable system there. We owned half of the cable system, and they owned half of the cable system. And—or maybe we owned 60 percent now and 40 percent, so it was near ha—near 50:50. Anyway, so about a year after we—they had bought the Kilgore newspaper, we were at this—one of these ANPA annual conventions, and we're sitting around talking again. I says—and my dad wasn't there. I think he had—or late coming or something. I said, "So Don, how do you like being in the cable TV business in Kilgore?" And he said—and we had a management contract. We ran the system. They were just sort of passive owners. I said, "How do you like being in the cable business in Kilgore?" He said, "I'll tell you one thing, it's a hell of a lot better than being in the newspaper business in Kilgore."

SL: Kilgore. [*Laughter*]

WH: So he was very frank and very open about, you know, whatever he said. And I said [*laughs*—my dad would ask him—I remember my dad asked him one time—he said, "Don, do you ever have a shareholders' meeting?" He said, "I have one every

morning when I shave." [Laughter] So—but anyway—yeah, he was a—he was an interesting guy.

SL: Well, it sounds like he and your dad were best of friends. I mean . . .

WH: Yeah, they were.

SL: . . . that whole business about coming over and publishing *Yank* magazine and putting it out during the second war—Second World War was pretty—it speaks well of that relationship.

[02:21:04] It seems like you mentioned getting to spend a little time with Sam Walton, too, in our earlier part of our interview. What was it like being in the same room with Sam?

WH: Well, it's a—you know, he was a very—to me, he was a very down-to-earth, easy-to-talk-to fellow. And I didn't—I had met him maybe once or twice just casually and et cetera. And he called me one day, and he said, "Would you all be interested in us partnering with you all in one or some of your businesses?" And I thought, "Wow." I mean, this—you know, Walmart wasn't—it was—well, it was a pretty good-size company, nothing like it is today, but it was a public company by then and obviously growing, and it had a great reputation. So the first thing, oh, I was sort of flattered. I thought, "Wow, this is kind [laughs] of amazing. He wants to partner with us, and we don't

even know each other very well from a business rela"—he said, "No, I know the"—he said, "The reputation of your family, your company, is outstanding." And he said, "We have a problem." He said, "You know, we've got to own the stock in Walmart in little company, and it's—you know, there's these IRS rules about personal holding companies, and you know, we have to—we need to put something into this personal holding company that can generate a lot more revenues as an ongoing business other than just dividend income, et cetera." And he said, "So we're looking to—you know, we don't really want to put some of the Walmart business in there. We need to keep that separate, you know." And so he said, "I'm trying to find some people who I—we've got respect for and know the people are of integrity and that we could partner with." And I said—so I was very flattered by that and . . .

SL: Really.

WH: But it—we really didn't, I mean, we didn't want to take any of our businesses and split 'em off. And I thought, "Well, you know, if we come across an acquisition, you know, we'll let you know," et cetera. So—and then another time Sam called and said, "You know, Walmart owns the *Benton County Daily Record*." And he said, "Walmart is really not a good—it's not an

ideal situation for Walmart to be owning this newspaper," you know. And he said, "I think we're gonna sell it." And he said, "So would you be interested in buying it?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. You know, it's pretty far from [*laughs*] our other operations."

SL: Yeah

[02:24:01] WH: And he said, "Well," he said, "would you just take a look at it?" And he said, "If you were gonna buy it, would you send me a letter saying, 'This is what I think it's worth,' you know, if we were gonna bid on it?" And I said, "Sure, I'll be glad to do that." So we did that, you know. And so I know they—and I think what they—well, I know what they ended up doing is they ended up selling it, and his son Jim bought the paper, you know. And—which was a good move because Jim, you know, lived in Bentonville and really cared about Bentonville and was . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . cared. Not cared—cares [*laughs*], you know, about Bentonville, and did a good job with the newspaper and put out a good quality paper and everything. And so—but anyway, I remember, you know, going up to Bentonville on sales calls, and you know, when we'd go we would sometimes talk to Sam, you

know, about it. And I remember he came down to Little Rock one time, and he was walking through a store in North Little Rock.

SL: Yeah.

WH: You know, one of his stores there. And he was just asking people as he walked through the store, "Hey, excuse me, I appreciate you being in Walmart today. Do you read a newspaper?" [SL laughs] And they said, "Yeah." "Which newspaper do you read?" "Well, I read the *Democrat*." "Okay." You know, he—"Yeah, excuse me, do you read a newspaper?" You know, he did his own little survey, and he's like, you know, 5:3 that read the *Gazette*, you know. Course, the *Gazette* had a lot more circulation than we had . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:25:35] WH: . . . you know. So he went back to Bentonville—said, "I think we're advertising in the wrong newspaper there in Little Rock. I think we need to be advertising with the *Gazette*." So they switched their advertising to the *Gazette* [unclear words]. You know, that's one of our best advertisers. So I had to go back up there, explain to Sam why I thought our customer base was better, you know, fit for Walmart to be advertising to than the *Gazette* customer base. And they eventually, you

know, switched their advertising back to the *Democrat*. So anyway, I had sort of a business relationship [*laughs*] with him there, too. So—but—and I remember going up there on a YPO meeting one time when we went up there. And he took the whole YPO group around personally on a tour of the, you know, distribution center and the executive offices and everything. And while we [*laughs*] were sitting there and he was taking questions from people in the group, you know, and somebody said, "Sam, why did you ever go public," you know. He said, "Well, that's easy. Well, I had to go public. I had to have more money. [*SL laughs*] I didn't have enough money, you know."

SL: Yeah.

[02:26:48] WH: Which was true, you know. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . so anyway—and I started going up there to some of the shareholder meetings back when they held 'em in the Bentonville High School gymnasium.

SL: Wow.

WH: And . . .

SL: That's a long time ago.

WH: Yeah, that's a long time ago. But—I mean, and Sam was kind of, you know, a one-man ringleader, you know. He would run

the show. He would. And I can remember him—he'd call on different district managers, you know. "Fred, down there in Longview, Texas, tell 'em about what you did down there with your fishing tackle—why your fishing tackle sales are up 42 percent." And Fred would stand up, and he'd say, "Well, you know," he said, "I decided I'd—I knew we were selling aquar—these aquarium products in the store, and I went over there and got one of these aquariums, and I filled it up with water, and I put it over there by all the fishing tackle and the fishing poles and everything. And I put a couple of bass in there. [*Laughs*] And these fishermen would walk by, and they'd see these fish, and it'd just get 'em kind of stirred up, and they'd buy stuff, you know." [*Laughter*] And he'd say, "Isn't that a great story?"

SL: It is.

WH: "Isn't that a fantastic story."

SL: Yeah.

WH: "Shouldn't we be doing that in more of our stores?" You know, and he'd call on somebody else. And I remember I had bought some Walmart stock in 1973 for our employees' profit-sharing retirement plan, you know. [02:28:27] And gosh—in 1973 and then, you know, the stock kept splitting and splitting, and what started out as a thirty-two thousand dollar investment ended up

being worth several million dollars, you know. And I remember Sam one time being up there at one of the meetings—he said, "I want to recognize a few people that are here." He said, "So-and-so so-and-so—you know, this guy was our first store manager over in Rogers or something," you know.

SL: Right.

WH: "And so-and-so so-and-so"—so he says, "Walter Hussman is standing up. He's one of our large shareholders." And I went, "What?" You know. [*Laughter*] Sure. [*Laughs*] But I was totally surprised, you know. [02:29:07] And I remember after the meetings Sam would go back to his house and people were invited to come to his house for barbecue. And he would stand out there in a line and greet several hundred people, you know, coming through the line and knew most of 'em and maybe all of 'em by name, you know. So he was a very personal, gregarious, you know, outgoing fellow.

[02:29:36] SL: What was his house like?

WH: A beautiful house designed by Fay Jones. It was a typical Fay Jones design, but it had the creek that ran right next to it, and, yeah, it's a wonderful house.

[02:29:53] SL: Okay. Let's see. Maybe we should talk about your family. Let's get back to your family. And if you think of

someone that's—you've crossed paths with that you'd like to recognize or talk about any influence they may have had—I mean, these folks you've been talking about have obviously had some kind of influence at different stages in your life. And so if you think of someone while we're talking, why, feel free to get to 'em. [02:30:26] But I want to talk about your—now, do you have three daughters? Is that right?

WH: I have—no, I have a son who's now twenty-eight, and I have twin daughters who are twenty-four.

SL: Okay, okay. And you—y'all chose to adopt.

WH: Yeah. Yeah, my . . .

SL: And so that's kind of a tedious process, isn't it?

WH: Yeah, it is. My wife and I had been married—I got married in 1975, and we tried to have children and hadn't had any success, and so then we finally decided that we'd—we would try to adopt. And so I remember we called the Gladney Home down in Fort Worth, which is the largest adoption agency in the United States. And they, in those days, would only generally place children in four states: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

SL: Yeah.

[02:31:27] WH: So anyway, they basically took our name and says— but really nothing more than just our name, you know. And so

some time went by—I said—you know, we were gonna be in Dallas. I said, "Ben, why don't we go over to Fort Worth and just, you know, just walk in the place and look around maybe." So we did, and so we got there, and we told the receptionist—said, "You know, we called down here some time ago, gave you our name, but we just wanted to maybe come by and maybe say hello to somebody, you know, or whatever." So anyway, they took us in and introduced us to some—a lady there and visited with us. And so I don't know what—how important that was to do that or not, but anyway, sometime after that they contacted us and said, "You can fill out an application," you know. And we filled out an application, and then—and they actually would do a home—they would do—come do a home visit and, you know, ask you a lot of questions, you know. More questions than you can imagine, you [*laughs*] know. And so anyway—but it was, I guess, eight years before—after we got married when we adopted our first child, Palmer.

[02:32:43] SL: Uh-huh. How long a process was it from the app . . .

WH: It took a couple of years.

SL: Couple of years.

WH: Yeah, at least two or three years.

SL: So they're probably very, very careful with . . .

WH: Well, there's just so many more people who want to adopt children than there were children for adoption. And adoption was a little different back in—that was in 1983. Most adoptions then were referred to as a closed adoption where you really don't know the biological parents, and the biological parents . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . don't know the, you know, the adoptive parents. And now there are a lot of open adoptions where all that information is open to everyone. And—but anyway, so it was kind of interesting because what they would do is they would tell you, "Now, if you're gonna—you know, you're on the list, you know, and we will—what we're gonna do is we're gonna notify you. You're approved, and you're gonna get a child, and it's just a matter of when. So whenever you leave town, you need to call us and let us know how we can get in touch with you [*SL laughs*], you know." And we said, "Okay." So any time we'd leave town, we'd call 'em and let 'em know, "Okay."

SL: That's kind of neat and exciting.

[02:34:04] WH: Yeah. So anyway, we were gonna go down to see our friends the Swensons in Dallas. And we were—they've got a ranch out around Abilene, and we were gonna go quail hunting with 'em out there that weekend. So anyway—and my parents—

this is 1983—they were looking at possibly having an apartment or something in Dallas where they could spend some of their time there where my sister Marilyn lived, and they'd get an apartment at the Rivercliff Apartments here in Little Rock and would spend time here where we lived and—because their health, you know, was not as good as it had been. And so anyway, my parents were in Dallas. And so we thought, "Well, since we're going to Dallas to go on this hunting trip, why don't we go down there and help go with my sister Marilyn and look at these—some of these apartments," or maybe it was even a—one of these assisted-living places, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[02:35:06] WH: And so—anyway, so Marilyn said, "Great, you know, y'all come on in, and I'll come out to the airport and pick y'all up," you know. So anyway, you know, when you left town you left 'em a number where you're gonna be. But if you didn't—they couldn't reach you at that number, you had to leave other numbers, you know, where [SL *laughs*] other people in the family—so we left 'em my sister's phone number, you know.

SL: Okay.

WH: So we fly to Dallas, and we land, and my sister's supposed to pick us up with my parents so we can go look at this place. And

so I get there. My sister's very punctual. She has this phrase, you know, "If you can't be on time, be early." And so she wasn't there. "Oh, this is really strange, you know." So she—"You know, where is Marilyn?" you know. So anyway, we called the—called her house, and so they said, "Hey, we're looking"—there—somebody was there—you know, somebody that worked there, I think, for her—said, "We're trying to find Marilyn. We're at the airport." "Oh, she's not there yet?" And I said, "No." And I said, "Well, why isn't she there?" And she said, "I think they went to buy some balloons." [*SL laughs*] "Some balloons?" [*SL laughs*] I was talking to Ben—I said, "What is going on, you know. Marilyn's not here. They've gone to buy balloons." Of course, she figured it out immediately, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh, she did?

[02:36:34] WH: The Gladney Home had called us. We weren't there, so, you know, they'd called Marilyn. So anyway, when they got to the airport, there they were in the car—my mom and dad and Marilyn—and they had all these pink balloons and blue balloons. [*Laughs*] So anyway, so we got in the car, and I said, "So did you [*laughs*] get a call from Gladney?" And they said, "You got it, you know. They've called." And they said, "Well, what kind of—is it a boy or a girl?" And they said, "They wouldn't tell us."

[*Laughter*]

SL: So they got both colors.

WH: Yeah, we got both colors. So we called over to Gladney, and they said, "Yeah, we got a little boy for you." So we said, "Well, we're on the way," you know. So we drove over there. Called the Swensons, told 'em we couldn't go hunting. [*Laughs*] So anyway—so we got the—went over there, and we picked up Palmer, and I mean, he's so—it's was so strange, you know, I mean, I guess if you're a biological parent and your wife's been pregnant for nine—you've been building up for this whole thing, you know.

SL: Right.

[02:37:39] WH: And then all of a sudden, though, you know, you're just totally single and free and can go on a hunting trip. And then, you know, you walk out of Gladney, and your life's changed forever, you know. [*Laughs*] I mean, you know, now you have this child, and it's number one, and everything's gonna revolve around, you know, you being a parent.

SL: Right.

WH: And so it—by then it was sort of late in the day, and we didn't have enough time to go back to Little Rock. So we ended up checking in a hotel, and so—and course, we took Palmer with us,

and we were going up the elevator with our luggage. And the bellboy—actually, it was a woman, you know. [02:38:23] And so anyway, she kind of looks at Ben, and she looks at this baby, you know, and the baby's only thirteen days old.

SL: Oh my gosh.

WH: You know, and you could look Ben—looked—you know, she's very thin and [*laughs*] everything. She's—and she said, "By any chance did you all adopt this child?" And we said, "Yeah." She said, "Where did you adopt it?" That's a lot of questions coming [*laughs*] from somebody doing our luggage for us. She said, "We—over at Gladney in Fort Worth." And she said, "Well, I'm a Gladney baby."

SL: Wow.

WH: The bellhop did.

SL: I just got chills.

WH: You know, it was pretty amazing, you know. [*Laughs*] Anyway, so we spent the night there and then drove back to Little Rock the next day. It was—I think it was about December the eighth—something like that the day we came home. And so anyway, that's . . .

[02:39:13] SL: It did change your life, didn't it?

WH: Oh absolutely. [*Laughs*] Yeah, yeah. [*Laughter*]

SL: Oh brother.

WH: So when we adopted our daughters, you know, we'd put in— Gladney would guarantee you a second child. They thought it was best for children to be in a two-child home, and so anyway— so you know, one of the hundreds of questions they ask you on your home visit is "Would you accept twins?" You know, and so I said, "Yeah," and Ben said, "Now, you answered that really fast." "Yeah. [*Laughter*] You need to think about that." "Do we need to think about that?" So we said, "No, we don't need to think." So anyway—so Ben had gone to Dallas, and she was down there visiting I think the Swensons or some friends down there, and I was at home with Palmer. And Palmer was three and a half years old. So I got a call from Gladney, you know. [02:40:10] And I remember picking up the phone, and they said, "Hey, Mr. Hussman, this is so-and-so at Gladney." I said, "Oh, great. How you doing?" She said, "Fine." She said, "Are you sitting down?" [*Laughs*] And I said, "Oh, you're calling—we'll get another child." "No," she said, "I want to ask you—are you sitting down?" [*Laughter*] I said, "No, should I?" And she said, "Yeah, you ought to sit down." And so I sat down, and she said, "We have twins for you." I mean, this is—there's about one out of every hundred births are twins in the United States.

It varies a little bit from around the world. [*Laughs*] But anyway, so it was very rare to be able to get twins, you know. And so I remember telling Palmer—he was in the room there with me—I said, "Palmer," I said, "you're gonna—we're gonna have twin sisters." And I remember he just immediately started doing somersaults . . .

SL: Huh.

[02:41:00] WH: . . . on the floor. He was so excited. Anyway, so I called Ben and told her the same thing. I said, "You need to sit down." [*Laughs*] Anyway—so anyway—so I flew down there and with—and we picked up the twins and brought them back the same day. So in fact, we took, you know, of course took Palmer with us and said, "Okay, Palmer—now, we're—they're gonna take you back in the nursery there, so I want—you pick out some good children for us." [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh. [*Laughs*]

WH: Course, obviously they had already picked 'em out, but . . .

SL: Right.

WH: Said, "Now, be sure to get the best set of twins back there."

Course, there was only one [*laughs*] but . . .

SL: So he's three and a half.

WH: Yeah, he's three and a half.

[02:41:42] SL: Yeah. Well, so what—what's become of your children? What—what's their stories now?

WH: They're doing great. Well, today my son works at the newspaper. And he's had lots of different jobs. Right—currently, he's working in the business office. He's married, and he has a—has an eighteen-month-old son, so that's our first grandchild. [02:42:08] And—named Thad. And then our two daughters, Olivia and Eliza, they went to the University of North Carolina and graduated. And then after they graduated, they went to work in San Francisco 'cause they actually—they went to a boarding school in California, and so they went back to California after they graduated from college and lived in San Francisco. My daughter Eliza got a job at the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

SL: Cool.

WH: She ended up working there for a year as a travel writer. And the other daughter got a degree in education and wanted to be a teacher. Unfortunately, when she got there, they were laying off teachers by the tens of thousands in California.

SL: Right.

WH: And course, usually it's . . .

SL: Remember that.

WH: . . . first in—last in, first out. So you know, they weren't hiring many teachers right out of college. She ended up getting a job being a nanny for a family. They had a five-year-old and a seven-year-old, and she loves children. [02:43:15] And anyway, today she's—they both had lived—they just lived in San Francisco a year and decided to leave. And my daughter Olivia came back to Little Rock, and she's teaching at the eSTEM Charter School downtown. This is her second year to teach kindergarten. And my other daughter Eliza went back to college. She was offered a full-time job after two six-month internships. She was offered a full-time job there at the *Chronicle*, and she turned it down to go back to graduate school. And she's getting her master's in journalism at University of North Carolina.

[02:43:53] SL: Sounds like kid—more than one child may be in the business—in the family business.

WH: Yeah, yeah. It's encouraging to see young people that want to get into our business 'cause our business has had a lot of reversals in recent years, you know.

SL: Yeah. Yeah, you know . . .

Kris Katrosh: Excuse me, we're gonna have to take just a short break.

[Tape stopped]

[02:44:17] SL: We were talking about your children and the adoption process and all that. I think you had something—one other thing you wanted to say . . .

WH: Yeah, you know . . .

SL: . . . about the process.



WH: . . . the adoption is an interesting thing—when you first think about adopting children and think, "Well, is this something that—you know, how do I think about this?" And you know, it's interesting—you start thinking, "Well, really—what really binds people together?" And you think about families, and you think about, you know, biological children and think about these families that get along great, and you think about these families that don't get along at all and get in huge squabbles and fights and everything. And you start thinking, "Well, really, it's not really so much blood that binds people together—it's love, you know."

SL: Yeah.

[02:45:13] WH: And when you really think about it, I mean, love's what holds marriages together.

SL: Yes.

WH: And it's what holds families together. Love's much more important than biology, really. So anyway, it's sort of a

philosophical thought, but that's kind of the way—what we thought about it. And I think what's really important is love.

[02:45:35] SL: How old were the twins when you adopted them?

WH: They were twenty days old.

SL: Wow.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Wow.

WH: So they were very young, so . . .

SL: That's—it really is a blessing to have—to be able to do that.

WH: Yeah, it sure is. Absolutely.

SL: I know it made a difference in your—you and Ben's lives, but . . .

WH: Oh, absolutely.

SL: . . . also I'm quite certain in your children's lives, too, to have . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . that love available . . .

WH: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . so early.

WH: Yeah, we've been pretty close as a family, so it's a—it's been a great experience.

[02:46:14] SL: Well, we're kind of rolling around to—since we covered so much of the newspaper business and the family

business in that first hour and a half in our first interview, we're kind of rolling around to bringing us up to where we are now. And you know, I know that the family business has been central to your life and your—I mean, the history of your family—this business has been central. But I'm sure that in your lifetime you have probably acquired more—taken on some other passions. And I'm thinking in terms of things that you like to support or things that you believe in or . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . things that you've gotten involved in that are—that your business has allowed you to do—the success that your family has had has given you the freedom to go out in the world and try to make a difference . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . in other ways. And . . .

WH: Sure.

[02:47:23] SL: So I thought you might like to talk a little bit about the other things that you've gotten involved with . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . in your life. And we—if that involvement started twenty or thirty years ago, that's fine, too.

WH: Sure.

SL: But I'd—I just think I want you to talk about the things that are important to you now.

WH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you know, I think I kind of picked this up from my father and my mother about how important it was to—you know, if—to give back to the community and to try to help the communities you lived in. And certainly, if you were prospering, you know, to help those that weren't prospering, you know. [02:48:04] So anyway, I just kind of—that's the way I grew up and have—kind of way I've always, you know, kind of been my thought process. So anyway, I guess once I moved to Little Rock—I remember when I first moved to Little Rock the—I know the—Winthrop Rockefeller's family, and they were trying to get the city of Little Rock to take more ownership of the Arkansas Arts Center that Winthrop Rockefeller had supported so—had provided a majority of the support for so long. And so the—I think the Rock—one of the Rockefeller Foundations had come forward and said, "Look, we'll do a 3:1 match, and every dollar you raise locally, we'll match it with three dollars," you know.

SL: That's very generous.

WH: Trying to—yeah, trying to encourage local donations. So we had just moved to Little Rock and just bought the *Democrat*, and so

we decided to make probably at that time one of the largest donations or maybe the largest donation we'd ever made, which was twenty-five thousand dollars. It doesn't sound like that much money now forty years later, almost [*laughs*] forty years later, but it was a lot at the time. And so we realized if we did that, you know, it'd end up in a total of a hundred thousand 'cause they'd match it 3:1. So we did that, and that was the first thing that we really supported in Little Rock was the arts center, you know. [02:49:41] And we also donated a number of ads to the arts center so they could try to encourage more people in the community to donate 3:1. You know, after that I got involved with the Arkansas Symphony. I think I—invited to join, you know, their board. And of course, I love music, but I'd not been as knowledgeable about classical music, you know.

SL: Sure.

WH: But anyway, I—we got involved in that. And so I remember hearing from a friend of mine in the newspaper business that they had done a concert in Shreveport on the Fourth of July. And the newspaper was the sponsor of it, and they would get the symphony to come play at an outdoor concert, and then they would shoot off, you know, fireworks . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . for the Fourth of July. So I thought, "Well, that's a great idea. Maybe we ought to do that here." So I talked to the symphony and said, "You know, we'd like to do a pops concert—outdoor pops concert on Fourth of July." So we started that. I'm trying to remember—it was like in the 1980s. It may have been [19]83—somewhere in that. Anyway, and we've done that every year since, and I think, you know, we'd get crowds of thirty or forty thousand people, I think.

SL: Wow.

[02:51:07] WH: They'd come to that. And so it's a—we'd do it—we started it down in the—on the Arkansas River when the park was just—Riverfront Park was just getting organized, you know. Getting started. It's developed a lot since then. But we've continued that and that's—you know, we felt like that was something that was meaningful to a lot of people, you know, in the community. I remember going to see this movie, *Home Alone*. [Laughter] And there's a scene in *Home Alone* where the little boy is up in the attic. I think he's up there talking to this woman who's kind of a—maybe she's a homeless or whatever woman. Intentional. She's intentionally homeless. And they're up in the attic of Carnegie Hall, and you can see down—you know, looking from where they are up there, down there is—

there's a symphony orchestra, and they're playing—I think they were playing "The Nutcracker Suite."

SL: Okay.

[02:52:10] WH: You know. And so I started thinking about that after watching the movie, and I thought, "I don't think there's a Christmas concert in Little Rock." And so anyway, I came back, approached the symphony, and said, "Look, you know, what about doing a Christmas concert? If y'all do a Christmas concert and play a lot of Christmas music, you know, we'll sponsor it." So we started sponsoring the Christmas concert every year and have continued to sponsor that every year since. Now, you know, in recent years they don't want to call it a Christmas concert anymore. It's a . . .

SL: Not politically correct.

WH: The Yuletide celebration or the holiday pops or something like that [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . but anyway . . .

SL: Right.

[02:52:57] WH: It's still to me the same thing. It's a Christmas concert. So anyway, but—so anyway, that's some of the things that we've been involved with, you know, with the symphony.

Other things I think we've done that have made a pretty big difference is I remember, you know, we bought the Terminal Warehouse Building down in—down on Markham Street, which was a basic—it was a warehouse. It was built to be a warehouse in 1926. It's a over two hundred thousand square foot building. A large building.

SL: Yeah.

WH: And we'd bought it in, I think, 1983 or [19]84. We'd bought it so we could put our printing press and production plant in there. And so—and that's what we did. We put it in there. And so in 1991, when the *Gazette* closed, we ended up with two printing plants. We had that one, and we had the one that the *Gazette* had had. And we went out and hired a nationwide engineering firm out of Cleveland, Ohio, to come in and advise us which printing plant should we use. And they recommended the *Gazette* printing plant. So we did. We shut down the printing plant on Markham Street in 1992 or so. I mean, we'd only had it up and running six or seven years.

SL: Yeah.

[02:54:34] WH: And so the building now is sort of unoccupied—you know, this big, cavernous building. And so at that time, the museum here was looking to, you know, relocate, build a new

building or whatever. And I can remember going to lunch with Dean Kumpuris and—who's been very, very active in civic affairs here. And on—been on the city board of directors. And Bob East, who had been our contractor, general contractor, and they said, "You know, would you consider letting the museum relocate to your building?" you know. And so as we talked more and more about it, we thought, "You know, if the museum moved into our building—that's just an old warehouse district—maybe we could convert the whole area into something other than a warehouse district, you know. And maybe we could develop that as an office building if the museum was there, you know." [02:55:46] And so we decided to donate about forty-four thousand square feet of that space to the museum and let them have it essentially for a dollar a year for ninety-nine years.

SL: Right.

WH: And just generally donate the space to 'em. And so anyway, we worked it all out. I worked with Dean Kumpuris, and we got all the details taken care of, and the city helped us a little bit with some infrastructure costs on the building like the windows and things, to make the—it's just—as a one-time, you know, contribution to the project. And so anyway, we worked that out. And so then we went in and made some significant changes in

the interior of the building to make it much more attractive as office space.

SL: Right.

[02:56:39] WH: Put a giant skylight over the top, carved out a big atrium, et cetera. And so anyway, the museum has been there, and they just, you know, they just got a \$9.5 million grant from the Reynolds Foundation and just had their grand opening last week—reopening after the last weekend. So anyway, I think that's proven to be very successful for the museum. And the—we figured—I think the office space—the space they have and it's not at a very high rental rate. It's worth about \$240,000 a year, and so actually we trade checks with 'em. We give 'em a \$240,000 donation, and they give us \$240,000 for rent, so it's [Laughs] still kind of a wash, but . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . it's sort of the same thing. And we have developed the rest of the building into an office building. And of course, as you know now, that whole area has been redeveloped. After the—after that building, they put in the River Market building next door, and then the public library decided to renovate. And some people have kind of forgotten that the original renovation down there was our building. But—and the museum moving in there.

But anyway, so I think that's been really good for the community. [02:57:59] You know, back in the [19]80s, late [19]80s or so, we had a really serious problem here in Little Rock with gang violence. In fact, Home Box Office did a show about the gang violence in Little Rock, and it was just a very troubling thing, you know. What—you know, how can we kind of go about trying to make this less of a problem, you know. And what are the solutions, et cetera. And so anyway, about that time this fellow named Keith Jackson, who had been a, you know, very well-known athlete, you know.

SL: You bet.

WH: And he had—was playing in the NFL, and I'd never met him. I'd—course, I'd heard of him—heard—knew who he was. He'd gotten to know a fellow that worked at our newspaper and—named—let's see, who was that? I'm trying to remember. I might think of his name in a minute. Anyway—so anyway—called and said, "You know, would you be willing to meet Keith Jackson? Maybe we can all go to lunch together." And so I said, "Sure." You know, so we went to lunch, and Keith told me—he said, "You know, I've got this vision I'd like to do where I would like to try to build a facility and have it for at-risk young people—say, from the eighth grade through their last year in

high school." And he said, "I want to call it Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids. P.A.R.K. And he said, "I want to put it over here in Granite Mountain and—area." And he said, "I want to bring these kids in after school and keep 'em until seven o'clock in the evening. And we're gonna do tutoring, and we're gonna do some athletics, and we're gonna try to build character. And we're gonna make a religious program out of it," 'cause Keith's a very strong Christian. [03:00:18] And so anyway, he said, "I'm looking for people who'd be willing to help me with this thing, you know. But it's not gonna be easy." And he said, "I hadn't—I haven't even retired yet. I'm still playing football, you know." [Laughter] So anyway, I was very impressed meeting this fellow and thought his interest was really genuine and that he really had great motivation in what he was gonna do. And I thought, "You know, maybe this guy would be a good role model for other kids in Little Rock. And instead of turning to drugs and violence, you know, maybe they'd think about maybe getting in a program like this, you know."

SL: Yeah.

[03:00:57] WH: So anyway—so I agreed to help him, and so I ended up being chairman of his board, and he and I went around and raised—the two of us—about a million seven hundred thousand

dollars to get the program started. And we made a lot of decisions just the two of us sitting around talking, you know. We decided, look, if this is a—if this is—part of the program here is religion, you know, then we can't take any government money, you know. So it's gonna have to be totally privately funded. You know, I said, "You need to get a good, strong board of directors—people respected in the community. People will feel better about donating if it's governed by a board like that. So you need to do an annual financial audit by an auditing firm. Make the audit available to any of your donors, et cetera." And so anyway, we worked out a lot of the kind of founding principles of it, and anyway he—you know, *[laughs]* as he looked more at Granite Mountain, he realized why it was called Granite Mountain because you go a few feet down and it's just solid granite rock, you know. And so it got to be—really, his plans for doing what he wanted to do out there were not feasible from an engineering and construction standpoint. So anyway, he found a—an old—I think it was a Gold's Gym or some type of gymnasium down in southwest Little Rock.

SL: M'kay.

[03:02:31] WH: And bought that and—I think for \$300,000 and borrowed the money to buy it and moved the program in there.

And you know, the first day the kids would go in there, he would say, "Okay, how many of you know the Lord's Prayer?" Very few hands would go up.

SL: Right.

WH: And he'd say, "Okay. The first thing we're gonna do is we're gonna learn the Lord's Prayer." And he would teach 'em the Lord's Prayer. And they would say it every day when they came to start, you know. And so anyway, you know, as the program developed, expanded, and was successful, we really needed to enlarge the facility, to modernize the facility. It was an old gym, basically—and applied to the Reynolds Foundation and got a five-million-dollar grant. And we raised the million dollars—another million dollars to match the five million. And I remember J.D. Simpson who's a good friend and was involved with us at P.A.R.K. And we said, "We're gonna have breakfast down at the community bakery, J.D. Will you meet us down there, you know, tomorrow or whenever?" So he came down there, and J.D. was there, and so there were several people were—had the—and so we kind of went around the table—"How much can you give?" "You know, how much can you give?" "How much can you give?" You know, we raised several hundred thousand dollars at that [*laughs*] breakfast, you know.

Had J.D.—he likes to tease us now—he said, "Man, last time I ever go to breakfast with you guys. [*Laughter*] It's the most expensive breakfast I've ever had." [*Laughter*] [03:04:17] But J.D.'s a very generous fellow. He's done a lot of great things for our community. But anyway, it's been a great program. We got the, you know, got the \$5 million grant from the Reynolds Foundation. Totally renovated the thing. It's a wonderful facility now. The same program but—and most of the kids that go come in the eighth grade and stay through the twelfth grade. Most of those kids get college scholarships 'cause Keith goes out and talks to Ouachita Baptist or UA Fayetteville or ASU or whatever, and they'll donate a scholarship, you know. Ouachita Baptist has donated quite a few scholarships. So anyway, it's, you know, it's about 200, 250 kids. It's, you know, it's not a huge-scale program but—and they even looked at expanding the program over to Oklahoma—to Oklahoma City. But they just—it didn't seem to have worked the way—you know, clicked the way it was gonna work in Little Rock. So they really never got it off the ground over there. So anyway, it's meant a really—it's been—made a major difference in a lot of kids' lives. And so anyway, I've been pretty involved in that—still involved with that.

[03:05:36] You know, I guess the other thing I've gotten very

involved with in more recent years is we were invited to go to a meeting out in California one time with—by a friend that owned the newspaper in Richmond, Virginia. And he was on the board of this thing called the Hoover Institution, which is located at Stanford University. And the Hoover Institution was started by Herbert Hoover when he was sent over on humanitarian relief mission after World War I. When he got over there, he realized that there were incredible archives of the war that were just being thrown, you know, to the trash. And he thought, "Man, this is sad. This is real history."

SL: Yeah.

WH: "We need to retain these." So he just started saying, "Look, don't throw that away. I'll take it." He started collecting all these things, and he would pack 'em—you know, get 'em packaged all up and ship 'em back to Stanford University. He had been chancellor at Stanford. [03:06:47] And he said, "Look, find someplace to put this stuff. [*Laughs*] And when I get back there, we'll figure out what to do with it, you know." And so that's what it—it started as an archive.

SL: Okay.

WH: It's still one of the more incredible archives in America. And that's how the whole thing got started. Well, it expanded over

the years, and now there are a lot of—there's an endowment of several hundred million dollars. There's—you know, there are Hoover Fellows who specialize in certain areas of public policy, and now you have people who've been Hoover Fellows like Condoleezza Rice and George Schultz and people like that. So anyway, they had a—have an annual meeting in the summer, and this friend of mine from Richmond invited us to go. So we went to the annual meeting. And so they invited us to come back and have a retreat in the fall and the spring. So we went to this retreat in the fall. And so for, like, a day and a half they had all these public-policy discussions. And you know, everybody would go listen to one, and they'd break up into other smaller groups. [03:07:56] And they'd be talking about—oh, in one they'd be talking about al-Qaeda, and you know, in another one they'd be talking about the Iranian nuclear threat. In another one they'd talk about education. In another one they'd talk about Social Security. Just all different topics. So I went to hear one about al-Qaeda, and Ben, my wife, went to hear one about education. So at the break we came out, and she said, "Well, how was your talk?" And I said, "Well, it was just pretty interesting. I heard a little bit of some things I hadn't heard before."

SL: Yeah.

WH: She said, "This meeting on education was fascinating." And I said, "Really? Well, what was so interesting?" She said, "Well, the way they talk about education—I'd never heard anybody talk about education like that." [03:08:46] And I said, "Well, what did they say that was so different?" And they said, "Well, one of the things they really drove home—the point was the answer to improving education in America is not money. Everyone assumes the answer is money. And they say the answer is not money." And I said, "That's interesting." I said, "If that's true, that's great news for Arkansas."

SL: Yeah, no kidding.

WH: We'll never catch up with a lot of these states . . .

SL: That's right.

WH: . . . in money. But if the answer is not money, well, there's even more hope for Arkansas than you might imagine, you know.

SL: Right.

[03:09:19] WH: And I said, "So you know, tell me more about what they said." Well, you—so we kind of talked about it, and she said, "Well, what they did is apparently this foundation in San Francisco called the Koret Foundation—they decided they wanted to do an empirical study of education around the United States

to find out what was really working well and what really wasn't working very well. And so they decide—they ended up basically having the Hoover Insti—hiring the Hoover Institution to do this for 'em, and Hoover went out and has hired eleven scholars from around the United States. Three from Stanford, two from Harvard, one from University of Chicago, one from the University of Virginia, et cetera. And these people are doing this study, and they're about two or three years into a five-year study, and they've already published a couple of books." So—"Well, that's interesting," I said. [03:10:20] So anyway, we got a couple of the books, and we brought 'em back to Arkansas with us and started reading these books, and they were great. I mean, the first book they put was *A Primer on American Education*. Tells you the whole history of public education in America—how it—we started in one-room schoolhouses, you know.

SL: You bet.

WH: How the teachers' unions got organized; how they—what the need for them was, and I mean, just literally, it just kind of gives you basics of everything. And another book on teacher quality, you know, what makes for quality teaching and . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . things like that. So we were reading these, and literally, we

came home in September, and in November the Arkansas Supreme Court handed down the decision on *Lake View* that said, "We've got to overhaul our K-12 education system because it's unconstitutional, it's inequitable, and et cetera, and" . . .

SL: This had to do with funding for each school district?

WH: Yeah, a lot of that. Yeah, a lot of it was on the funding, you know. And so you know, as I thought about this, I thought, "You know, if they're gonna—we're gonna overhaul the educational system in Arkansas, why don't we look at what these people have been discovering about what really works and what doesn't work elsewhere, you know."

SL: Right.

[03:11:39] WH: So the first thing I realized is that, you know, I really didn't know a lot about K-12 education. I'd been the head of the—of a private school—school board—a private school here in Little Rock. I'd been on the Board of Visitors at the University of North Carolina, but I just didn't know that much about K-12 public education. And so I called back out to Stanford, and I said, "Could I come back out there and meet with you all, you know, and just ask some questions?" So they said, "Sure, come on back." [*SL laughs*] So I went, and I had lunch with a fellow named Rick Hanushek who was one of these eleven people. Rick

is a wonderful fellow and very easy going. Took me to lunch, et cetera. He said, "Look, I'm gonna, you know, I'm gonna—after lunch we're gonna go meet with these other two guys that are on the Stanford faculty and who are part of the Koret Task Force, and we're gonna sit down and answer whatever questions you got, you know."

SL: That's great.

[03:12:42] WH: So anyway, I spent most of the afternoon with 'em, and you know, I just asked questions like, "Okay, what state has done more in education reform than any other state?" "Oh, that's simple, that's Florida." "Florida? [*SL laughs*] Why Florida, you know. I mean, you think of Florida—you—stereotypes, a bunch of retired people.

SL: Right.

WH: "Why would they care that much about"—they said, "It's a fluke, you know." I mean, there was Jeb Bush, and he just had a real passion for education, and he was in an unusual situation because both the house and the senate were the same political party as he was. Said, "You look at all" . . .

SL: Wow.

WH: . . . "fifty states—try to find one where the governor and both houses are the same party." You know, I guess Arkansas has

been that way for many years, but usually it's not that way, you know?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[03:13:34] WH: And so he got a lot of education-reform legislation pa—so I just, you know, I kept asking questions like that. So—and then when I came back to Arkansas, I realized—I thought, "You know, to tackle something like this, I need to find some people that know a lot more about this than I know."

SL: Right.

WH: "'Cause I don't know that much about it. I'm trying to get educated, but [*laughter*] there's—you know, the first thing you gotta realize is how much you don't know." And there was a lot I didn't know. So I started looking around for people who did know a lot about it, and there were some people like that. One was Jim Walton 'cause Jim had been very involved in the Bentonville Schools. [03:14:18] And he had—his family had found—their family foundation had taken a real active role in education of, you know. And so I called Jim, talked to him—and another person I learned that knew a lot about education at the, basically, local level was Claiborne Deming, who was CEO of Murphy Oil. And Claiborne had been real involved with the education school—with the El Dorado schools. And then the

other person I discovered knew a lot about education in Arkansas was Steve Stephens, and Steve had been head of the education committee for the Arkansas Policy Foundation. And he had learned a lot about how education was funded in Arkansas. And his earliest foundation on this was—he was in the municipal-bond business doing school bonds for Stephens for . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . a number of years, you know. So anyway, we decid—I decided to get all these guys to come have—come together, and we'd have a meeting and have lunch. So that's what we did in December of 2000—I guess it was 2002, I believe? Yeah. We all met there at the Capital Hotel and sat around and talked for a couple of hours, and then we had lunch and talked some more. And we said, "You know, we need to tackle this problem. What's the best way to do it?" And we all made a decision—turned out not to be too good a decision but [*laughter*—and . . .

SL: At least you made a decision.

WH: . . . said, "Well, let's start at the top. [*SL laughs*] We'll go talk to the governor."

SL: Okay.

[03:16:14] WH: "So we'll call Mike Huckabee, et cetera." "So we'll take him the books, you know."

SL: Yeah.

WH: So we went out and met with the governor, talked to him about it, and said, "You know, these are some great ideas—what works, what doesn't work. Here are the books, you know. Why don't we—why don't you kind of look at this, and you can craft your legislation based on, you know, reforms? And the good news is it doesn't take a lot of money, you know. Everybody thinks that, but it really doesn't, so that's great for Arkansas." So anyway, you know, the governor had already decided that, really, the solution that he needed to tackle was consolidation—that there were too many school districts in Arkansas, and by eliminating the extra administrative costs, that would be a big plus.

SL: Yeah.

[03:17:07] WH: Well, we thought consolidation was okay, too, but consolidation ended up being a tremendously contentious issue. And we thought, you know, "If you save all the money of every superintendent in Arkansas except for one, you still aren't gonna save—you aren't gonna solve the education problem [*laughs*] in Arkansas as much as reforms would" . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . "resolve it," you know. And the reforms were basically

under three broad categories: accountability, transparency, and choice. And the accountability was to make everyone more accountable for educating kids whether it was the student or the teacher or the superintendent or the parents or whoever.

SL: Right.

[03:17:55] WH: You know, the school district, the board of—school board, whatever. Everyone needed to be more accountable if the results weren't good. And the transparency was to let everyone really see, "How well is the school doing? How well are the students doing?" you know. So often it's all clouded in a lot of, you know, obfuscation, so you don't really know really how the school's doing, you know. And the choice was that if kids get stuck in failing schools you give 'em a choice to go to a better school. And as we started advocating, not a private school, but another public school. So anyway, as it turns out, as the next legislative session was going, the governor was not really picking up any of these ideas, you know. He was really focusing on the consolidation battle. And understand what—you know, that he was—he didn't have a lot of other things he could address while he was fighting consolidation. So someone finally suggested to us—they said, "You know, if the governor is not advocating some of these reforms, maybe you ought to write

your own legislation." [SL laughs] I said, "Write your own legislation? You know, how would you do that?" I mean, you know . . .

SL: Right.

WH: So basically kind of went back to the folks at Hoover and said, "You know, someone suggested we write our own legislation. I—how would you—how would we go about doing that?" They said, "Well, there's actually a fellow in Washington, DC—works for the subcommittee on education in the House. And he actually wrote a lot of the Florida legislation. Maybe you could get him involved." And so I called him—said, "Would you be involved in doing something like this." And he said, "Yeah," he said, "I can't take any money for doing it. I'd have to just—but I"—he said, "I think I'd be interested in helping you."

SL: Hmm.

[03:19:57] WH: So anyway, pretty soon he and all the—several of these other people on the Koret Task Force were laboring away at crafting some legislation for Arkansas. And they were saying, "Here's some of the mistakes they made in Florida, and this could be better in Arkansas if they do it this way," you know. For example, in Florida they gave every school an A, B, C, D, or an F based on the academic performance of that school. And

they said, "You know, that probably was a mistake to limit it just to academic performance. We should've taken into account improvement over the previous year. So if you had a school that was a F one year, and they moved up to a C in one year, that's tremendous improvement."

SL: Huge.

WH: "You know, they ought" . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . "to get an A for how much improvement they made, you know."

SL: That's right.

[03:20:47] WH: So that—the Arkansas legislation got changed to give two grades: one for overall academic performance, one for improvement. So anyway, I know this is a very long answer to a [*laughs*] simple question. But this is something we've been very involved with . . .

SL: Yeah

WH: . . . recently. So anyway, got the legislation written and found—Jim Walton found some fellow in northwest Arkansas who was willing to introduce the bill. And so this fellow Rick Hanushek agreed he would come back and testify in the House Education Committee here in Arkansas, and he did. And he got questions

like, "What's some guy from Stanford University think they know about education in Arkansas and tell us how to educate our kids?"

SL: Yeah.

[03:21:48] WH: "You know, some guy"—anyway, so it went down in flames and didn't get anywhere.

SL: Oh.

WH: Didn't get anywhere, basically. And so we realized this top down, oh, and you know, to—while we were trying to get it passed, it got—most of the Fortune 500 companies in Arkansas were running full-page ads in the *Democrat-Gazette* saying, "We endorse this legislation," you know, et cetera.

SL: All the other ducks were on the pond except the top-down theory.

WH: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

WH: Yeah, top-down didn't work, basically. So we went back to the drawing board, and of course, they didn't get any—the legis—they didn't get the consolidation done in the regular session.

SL: Right.

[03:22:31] WH: So—and then the next year the governor called a special session. So at that point we regrouped, and we said,

"You know, we need to try the bottoms-up approach instead of the top-down approach. So we need to get more of a grassroots organization." So basically, we said, "We need to go out, and we gotta inform people about what is the true story of education in Arkansas." You know, Arkansas was forty-ninth in the United States in per capita income in 1983 when Bill Clinton said, "We need to solve our educational problems by putting a lot more money in it. We're gonna pass a one-cent sales tax and put all that money in education." And you know, here it was twenty years later, Arkansas was still forty-ninth in per capita income. And our educational—we'd made some progress but very, very marginal. You know, it really kind of reinforced the argument, "The solution is not more money," you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[03:23:32] WH: "It's more reforms." So basically, I went around and made a lot of civic club speeches to a lot of Rotary clubs and Kiwanis clubs in El Dorado and Fayetteville and all over the place just . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . trying to give people basic facts about what had happened and what had—you know, what was going on, and that we could really improve the system, and that we didn't have to put a lot

more money into it to improve it, you know. And you know, we started—we did those kind of things—we started running newspaper ads, and we st—one ad would explain one aspect. The next ad—and we ran sixteen full-page ads.

SL: Wow.

[03:24:13] WH: I wrote the content for every one of those ads. And then, at the end of the sixteen days, we ran 'em all in one—a special section on Sunday. And I remember after about the tenth—ten or eleven ads or something—the very influential person here in public relations—she came to see me [*SL laughs*], and she said, "I've gotta tell you, you gotta quit running those ads in the paper." I said, "Why?" She said, "It's driving the—they're gonna have—this legislative session is coming up in January. It's driving the legislators crazy—these ads are." I said, "Why is it driving 'em cra"—"Cause they're hearing from their constituents and they're outraged by what's gone on in Arkansas. We've gotten all this money. We haven't improved education that much. You know, they're demanding that they do something, you know." [*Laughs*] [03:25:05] So I thought, "Well, wow, this is working better than I thought."

SL: Much better.

WH: "You know, we're getting [*SL laughs*] the citizens" . . .

SL: Traction now.

WH: "Yeah, we're getting some traction." [*SL laughs*] So anyway, we got in the special session, and we had to work, you know. I mean, I went out and met with some of the people in the legislature—wanted to ask questions about this and everything. Anyway, it—we ended up—the legislation got passed. And Mike Huckabee came around and endorsed the legislation, you know. And so it became Act 35, which is the basic—main educational law on the books right now to make reforms in our educational system. And we had to give up some things to get it passed. The opponents, you know, the teachers' union, the superintendents' association—they're some—they didn't want A, B, C, D, F. They wanted 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. [*SL laughs*] Okay. "Well, what's 5? Is 5 good or bad?" [*SL laughs*] Well, that's why they want it, so nobody knows. [*Laughs*] See, I mean, [*SL laughs*] it takes some of the transparency away. But we had to agree to 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. You know, some of the—we wanted—instead of punishing schools for doing poorly, we wanted to reward schools for doing well. We wanted to give schools a hundred dollars per student if a school got a A or a B in either academic performance or an improvement. You know, let's change the culture from punishing people to rewarding people.

SL: Right.

[03:26:39] WH: It seems to work better in business. I think it might work better in education, too.

SL: I think it might.

WH: And so anyway, that got passed, but it got put off for five years, six years, eight years, you know. "So we aren't gonna do that, you know, for about four years, and then the one—you know, we'll do academic perf—we'll do improvement four or five years from now, and then we'll do academic"—we had to agree to delay a lot of these reforms. And the fact . . .

SL: So . . .

WH: . . . is now most of those years have gone by and all the provisions are in there. So it's a law. It's on the books. The question is getting the government to fund these kind of things, you know, to—and to my way of thinking, you know, that ought to be part of the basic education budget is the incentives for schools that do well. Let's start with that, and then let's add everything else on top of that, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[03:27:27] WH: So—but anyway—so anyway, it's been a—we've been at this since 2002. Now it's 2012. And you know, one of the reasons I'd never really gotten involved in a public-policy

issue 'cause my position always been, "Look, we're at the newspaper. We'll take positions editorially, you know, and" . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . "that's the way we try to exert influence." And—but you know, I started thinking about this—I thought, "You know, Arkansas was forty-ninth in per capita income when my dad retired—when my grandfather retired. Arkansas is forty-ninth in per capita income when my dad retired. You know, I don't want to retire [*SL laughs*] and be forty-ninth. [*Laughs*] Let's do something [*laughs*] to try to improve things here. You know, I don't know how many years I've got left, you know, when I can really be involved to try to make a difference." So that's why I kind of took the unprecedented step, at least in my career, to get out and get involved in a public-policy issue. And so it's brought a lot of slings and arrows and all that, but that's just, you know . . .

[03:28:37] SL: So I guess the opposition is the measure of—I mean, what constitutes a good score. Is that . . .

WH: You know, the opposition is to reform is the status quo.

SL: Yeah, that's tough.

WH: There's so much—so many people who are so invested in the status quo that don't want change. No one really likes change.

Generally, people like things generally the way they are. I mean, some people want change if things are really bleak and terrible. [*Laughs*] But as long as people are pretty comfortable, they're pretty happy with the status quo.

SL: Yeah.

[03:29:12] WH: And there are a lot of people in the education field—it's not Arkansas—this is nationwide—that really—so you're up against changing the status quo. So I think we've made a lot of progress in ten years. You know, Arkansas now—I think *Education Week* magazine—there was an article came out and ranked Arkansas fifth in the United States now in education—a number of different ways they measure it. Well, that's tremendous for Arkansas to be fifth, you know. But in student achievement, we're still thirty-fourth. And we're up from thirty-six the previous year. We've got a lot of work to do there, you know.

SL: Yeah.

WH: There's—but the great news is Arkansas can make huge strides against states like Connecticut and these wealthy states. We don't have to be wealthy to make great strides. [*Coughs*] Excuse me. [*Coughs*] Excuse me. A little water.

SL: Me, too.

[03:30:17] WH: Talking too much. So anyway, that's a—it's been—I've enjoyed it. It's been rewarding, and it's still challenging. You know, I'd say on the education front, before we leave that, you know, I got involve—when we were working on this legislation, I really felt like one of the problems in education is that every year pretty much anywhere in America all the teachers get across-the-board raises. Doesn't matter if you're the best teacher in the school or you're the worst teacher in the school. You're gonna get the exact same raise. I've just found that that doesn't work real well—at least as a businessman, you know, over forty years—that you need to reward your best people more than you do your worst people, you know. I don't know, maybe it's too much common sense. But anyway, so [*SL laughs*] why not do this in education? So I kept saying, "We need some kind of incentive or a bonus for the teachers out there that are doing really well." Most of the education research in America says the single most important thing in a student's learning is the quality of the teacher. So I thought about it one day—I thought, "You know, if somebody made me education czar of the United States and I could make any single decision and I was gonna make a decision that was gonna have a huge short-term impact, not a long-term impact, a short-term impact,

what could I do that would improve education more in America in the next year than anything else? What would I do?" And I thought, "What I would do is I would keep all the teachers one more year—the really great teachers, the quality teachers who are getting ready to quit, I would keep them one more year." That short term would help more than anything . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . okay. How could you keep those people teaching one more year? I thought, "Give 'em a bonus. Give 'em some more money, you know." And so I came up—I kept telling her—my friends here that were working on this with me—"We need to put in some incentive compensation for the really good teachers." They said, "Man, if we do that, we'll never get this legislation passed [*laughs*], you know." And they were right. So we didn't include it, but it just kind of stayed in my mind, and I thought, "Oh, I'd like to do something on this." And so I was talking to some friends about the whole idea. And so there was a principal of a school here in Little Rock at Meadowcliff Elementary. Her name was Karen Carter.

SL: 'Kay.

[03:33:06] WH: And she had gone into this school in southwest Little Rock that was primarily low-income, minority—about 80 percent

low-income, 80-something percent minority students—and she had worked some wonders there in three years. She'd started a great early childhood education program. She had weeded out some of the weaker teachers, had hired some new teachers, had gotten some really good teachers. And so she was worried that she was gonna lose some of her good teachers. They were gonna leave and go to work at Alltel—back in those days it was Alltel and Dillard's or some of the other big companies here, you know, to get more money.

SL: Sure.

WH: She said—she went to this thing called the Public Education Foundation in Little Rock . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . and asked 'em, "Could you get me some money for some bonuses so I can keep some of my good teachers?" And they said, "Well, we don't have any money for that, but we know somebody in town that really likes the idea of teacher bonuses. We'll pass this along to them."

SL: Uh-huh.

[03:34:08] WH: So they came to see me—said . . .

SL: Of course.

WH: . . . "We got this principal out there's interested in—you want—

you—maybe, you know, something you want to look into." So I called her, and I said, "Hey, Karen, you don't know me, but I'm Walter Hussman, and I'm interested in teacher bonuses, and I understand you are, too." And she said, "Yeah." And so I said, "Well, can I come out and look at your school?" She said, "Yeah, come on." So I went out and took a tour of the school, talked to her—sort of like a due-diligence trip, you know?

SL: Mh-hmm.

WH: Like you'd look at a business you might want to invest . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . money in. And I thought, "This looks like a good place to invest some money." And so I sat down with her, and I said, "Look, I'll fund your teacher bonuses if you'll let me design the bonus plan." And she said, "Well, what have you got in mind?" And I said, "Well, let me tell you what I don't have in mind." And she said, "Okay, what's that?" [03:34:59] And I said, "I don't want to do the bonus plan they do in the state of North Carolina." She said, "What do they do in North Carolina?" I said, "Well, they decided that they would look at how much progress a school made on their test scores from one year to the next. If they made a certain level of progress, they gave every teacher in the school \$1,000. The best teachers got 1,000; the

worst teachers" . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . "got 1,000." So I said, "You know, they like the plan in North Carolina so much they raised it to 1,500." I said, "I don't want to do that one." And she said, "Okay." She said—I said, "I'll tell you another plan I don't want to do." And so she—"Well, what's that?" I said, "Well, that's the plan they have in Chattanooga." "Well, how do you know about the plan in Chattanooga?" I said, "Well you know, we—our company owns a paper over there, and I go to Chattanooga quite a bit, and I've learned about what their teacher-bonus program was."

SL: Right.

[03:35:49] WH: Said, "What do they do?" And I said, "Well, they don't do it based on the school, they do it based on the classroom. So they'd look at this classroom, and here's how the students did, you know, one year, and here's how much progress they made in a year under this teacher. And if they make over a certain amount of progress, improvement in their test scores, the teacher gets \$5,000."

SL: Wow.

WH: "And if enough teachers in that school make that much progress, the principal gets \$10,000." I said—she said, "You don't want to

do that? Sound like a pretty good plan." I said, "Well, there's a lot of merit to that plan, but, no, that's not the plan I want to do." Said, "What do you want to do?" [SL laughs] I said, "I want a bonus on every child. There's a bonus on every child." She said, "Well, how does that work?" I said, "Okay, here's how it's gonna work. When the students get there in August, they're gonna take a nationally standardized test. You'll figure out from that test score where they score on a national-percentile rank. The school—student scores at the twentieth percentile, that means that they did better than 20 percent of the kids in the United States, and they did worse than 80 percent of the kids in the United States."

SL: 'Kay.

[03:37:07] WH: "Then in May, they're gonna take that same national standardized test, but it's now for kids, you know, almost a full academic year later" . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . "and we're gonna see where they score at the national-percentile rank. If the kid doesn't move up, there's no bonus for that child. If the kids moves up by any at all up to a 5 percent gain, then that's a \$100 bonus. So the—say, the kid's at the twentieth percentile and scores the twenty-first percentile, one

divided by twenty is 5 percent. That's a \$100 bonus. Okay, if the kid moves up 5 to 10 percent—\$200 bonus; 10 to 15 percent, a \$300 bonus; and if the kid scores more than a 15 percent gain, \$400." So I said, "When your teacher walks in that classroom and looks out there and she looks at twenty children, she's saying, 'Eight thousand dollars. If all these kids improve 15 percent this year, I could make another \$8,000.'"

SL: That's a big number.

[03:38:20] WH: A schoolteacher in Arkansas may make—they start out at about 35,000, 36,000 and make—well, this was a few years ago—maybe make \$40,000. That's about 20 percent. And this is something the people at the Koret Task Force told me, you know, "If you do a bonus plan, don't give 'em \$1,000. That's not gonna move the needle. That's not gonna change anybody's motivation. If you can pay 'em maybe 20 percent more, 15, 20, 25 percent more, it gets people's attention that"—you know, et cetera. So anyway—so she said, "Well, let me think about your plan." And she came back in about a week and said, "I like your plan, but I want to make some changes to it." [SL laughs] And I said, "Okay, what do" . . .

SL: All right.

WH: . . . "you want to change?" She said, "I like the plan for the

teachers. No problem with that." And also the plan was if the whole school made a certain amount of progress, then she'd get a \$10,000 bonus, you know.

SL: Wow.

[03:39:20] WH: So she said, "Now, I like the bonus for me, too." But she said [*laughter*], "I want everyone that works under this roof to be involved in this. I want—you know, if it's a cafeteria worker, if it's a"—no, they didn't have a cafeteria but—"If it's a janitor, I want everybody here to have a vested interest in these kids improving. Now," she said, "you know, if the guy's a janitor, you don't have to give him much of a bonus, but I want 'em to get some bonus, you know. I want this whole place to be pulling together." So I said, "Okay, so we'll do that. We'll tie that to the whole school's improvement—you know, the people like the support staff and things like that." So anyway, they put that program into effect, and I'd read about these programs where there was cheating going on where the teachers would cheat; the students would cheat so they'd get, you know . . .

SL: The bonuses.

WH: . . . the bonuses would look good. [03:40:14] And so we hired outside monitors to come in and monitor the testing, you know, et cetera. And so the program went great. We hired an outside

firm to go in. We hired the—actually, the Public Education Foundation here in Little Rock to, you know, to take the test-score results and tabulate 'em and figure out if there had been any improvements so the school wasn't figuring out if they'd [laughs] improved. It was the . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . third par—so you know, I just approached this kind of in a businesslike fashion, like I was doing this as a business, you know. And so anyway, they came back—the school on average scored at the twenty-fifth percentile—now, remember this is kids that are in . . .

SL: Yeah.

WH: . . . you know, low income and in August, and in April they scored the thirty-fifth percentile.

SL: That's . . .

WH: That's school-wide average.

SL: . . . big difference.

WH: Huge gain.

SL: Big difference.

[03:41:13] WH: So anyway—so what happened is they got ready to pass out the bonuses, and so the checks are all—I wrote a check—we wrote a check to the Public Education Foundation.

They sent the money that—they wrote out the checks to all the teachers, et cetera, and so Karen Carter got ready to hand out all the checks. Well, one of the teachers was on vacation or out of town or whatever. So—but she called Karen, and she said, "Hey, I'm out of town. I understand you're handing out the bonus checks today." She said, "Yeah. Yeah, I am." And she said, "Have you got mine there?" "Yeah, I've got yours." "Would you open it and just tell me how [*laughs*] much I got? I'm dying of curiosity." So Karen said, "Sure, I'll open it." And she opened the envelope, and she said, "You got \$1,800." This teacher was ecstatic. She said, "Oh, that is fabulous! Eighteen hundred dollars!"

SL: Well, sure.

[03:42:10] WH: "That's gonna mean so—help me so much with some of my expenses and things." And so anyway, teacher got back to town, and she may have gone back and read the article in the paper 'cause it was in the paper, and the teacher bonuses varied from, I can't remember exactly, something like maybe \$7,200 tops to a bottom of \$1,800.

SL: Ooh, so she was at the bottom of the ladder.

WH: She had gotten the lowest bonus of anybody, and she didn't know who got what other bonus, but she knew from just, you

know, the facts that she was the lowest. She came down to Karen's office, closed the door, sat down, and she started crying.

SL: Yeah.

[03:42:53] WH: And Karen said, "You know, you shouldn't take this hard. I mean, there are several kids in that class who made tremendous progress, and you made a huge difference in their year. And you know, may have made a huge difference in their whole schooling, you know, from now on, you know." And she said, "I know, I know, I know the kids I made a huge difference with. But you know, I didn't do well enough. I need you to help me figure out how I can do better next year."

SL: God, that's great.

WH: So to me, that anecdote, you know, was more powerful than anything. I thought, "This is gonna work." If this is the way the teachers are responding, you know, this is what you want 'em to do. "How can I do better?" You know, this is what I want my ad salespeople to do. This is what I want my reporters to do. "How can we do better?" You know, if they do better, everyone's gonna do better. They're gonna do better. The readers are gonna do better. The advertisers are gonna do better, et cetera. So anyway—so I thought, "Okay, we gotta expand this program. We gotta get it in another school, you know." And so . . .

SL: I can't imagine that . . .

WH: I . . .

SL: . . . more schools wouldn't be receptive to the idea . . .

WH: Oh yeah, yeah. So . . .

SL: . . . of joining up.

WH: . . . we had—Little Rock had just hired a new school superintendent.

TM: Excuse me. We're gonna need to change tapes.

WH: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:44:21] SL: Tape five today. And we've been talking about some education reform, and in the recounting of what you've been through so far with this, you had some success at one of the schools, had really good results even at the lowest end of the improvement—it was significant, and it made a big difference in lives of people that were involved. And—but then I think you were looking for other schools to . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . to implement the . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . policies in.

WH: Right.

SL: And I think Little Rock had just hired a new . . .

WH: School superintendent.

SL: . . . superintendent.

WH: Right.

SL: And then we ran out of tape. So . . .

[03:45:03] WH: Right. So they had hired a new school superintendent, and he hadn't been here when we started this program at Meadowcliff. So I called him, and I asked to have lunch with him. We sat down and had lunch, and I explained to him what we had done at Meadowcliff. And his name—I may have mentioned his name was Roy Brooks, and he'd come up from Florida, and he'd been a superintendent—assistant superintendent down there, I believe. Anyway, he really liked the program at Meadowcliff, and he said, "That sounds like a great program." And I said, "I think I would like to see it expand into another school." And he said, "Well, let's do it. You know, how would we go about doing that, you know."

SL: Yeah.

[03:45:44] WH: And I said, "I've got an idea on how we could do it." I said, "First of all, we've gotta find another school where you have a strong principal—a really good principal, you know. That's number one. And number two, we gotta find another

school that's dealing with this type of student population, you know. This doesn't work if you go into one of the best-scoring elementary schools in Little Rock where the kids are at the eightieth percentile. Well, they're not the kids that need the help anyway, you know."

SL: Right.

WH: And so he said, "Okay, I'm on board with that." And he said, "What do you—how do you think we ought to go about it?" And I said, "All right, I'll tell you what—I've got an idea on how to do this." I said, "I'll pay the teacher bonuses for the second school—the new school we do, but you're gonna have to pay the teacher bonuses at Meadowcliff next year." [03:46:38] And he said, "Me?" I said, "Well, no, not you, I mean the school district needs to pay [*laughs*] for the teacher bonuses," you know. And I said, "If you'll pay for the teacher bonuses at Meadowcliff, I'll do another school." And I said, "If you're not wanting to do that, it was a great one-year project and it's over." [03:46:59] And he said, "Oh!" He said, "I'll be—how much does it cost?" you know. And I said, "We spent about \$140,000 last year to do Meadowcliff." And he said, "Well," he said, "I'm willing to do it, but where would I get \$140,000?" I said, "I've got one idea." And he said, "What's that?" And I said, "I'd take that \$140,000

out of your \$300 million budget for the Little Rock School District." He said, "You know, I think I can probably figure out a way to do that—140,000 out of 300 million—I can probably find that."

SL: Okay.

[03:47:36] WH: And he said, "Would you be willing to go around and talk to the school board members to try to convince 'em we ought to do this, you know." I said, "Sure, I'll be glad to talk to 'em." So anyway, that's what we did. We met with several of the school board—most of 'em, the school board members, and talked to 'em about it. And so they voted to do Meadowcliff and fund it the next year, and we picked another school, and Roy helped me pick the school. It was Wakefield Elementary. It was down in south Little Rock—again, about 90 percent African American, 88 percent low-income students, et cetera. Really strong principal—and went down and met with the principal, did our little due-diligence trip down there, and were impressed with it, thought it would work there. Okay, so we did the program—make a longer story shorter [*laughs*]—at Meadow—at Wakefield. The kids scored at the sixteenth percentile in the fall, and then in the spring they scored at the thirty-second percentile.

SL: Wow.

[03:48:46] WH: Tremendous progress. Now, because they did so well, so much improvement, most of the teachers made—I think the lowest bonus may have been \$6,000. A lot of 'em made \$7-, 8-, 9,000. So it was more expensive, maybe over \$200,000 to do Wakefield. And Meadowcliff, again, did well, made progress, you know. So now we had two of the public schools in Little Rock on this program. I think there are about twenty-five elementary schools and there are about fifty total schools in Little Rock. I said—I told Roy—I said, "Look, let's expand it again next year. Same program. You pick up the cost for Meadowcliff and Wakefield in your school district budget, and," I said, "we'll try to do three more schools next year." And I said, "I'll fund one of the schools—our foundation, the Hussman Foundation, will fund one of the schools." And I said, "I'll try to find funding for two more schools." So we got—worked through the Chamber of Commerce, and we had a meeting and asked everyone that came—told 'em the program. Roy was there. Karen Carter was there. Explained the program. And we said, "We want you to make a donation, but we don't want anybody to make a donation of more than \$500 'cause we want to get a broad group of people all contributing to this effort." Well, a whole bunch of people signed up at \$500, you know.

SL: Sure.

[03:50:24] WH: And one fellow came up to me—George O'Conner—and said, "Look, I want to help more than this. Tell me how else I can help, you know." So anyway, we talked to George later. He got his family's foundation called the Brown Foundation out of Houston to do a school. And we got the Walton Foundation in Bentonville to do a school. So we had three schools set up even without the \$500 funding, you know. We set that aside to use for future efforts. And so we did three more schools the next year.

SL: Wow.

WH: Again, did the same process. We went out into Geyer—what else was it—Geyer Springs. We went to several more schools. Geor—I took George down. We met the principal, a strong principal, you know, there—they—so he could know exactly what school they were funding, you know. And so the program was in its third year now with five schools. Four schools did well. One didn't do all that well, you know.

SL: Oh.

[03:51:31] WH: As it turned out, I don't think they really got excited about the program like the other schools had. So it wasn't a complete success but still quite successful. This was driving the

teachers' unions crazy. They didn't like the program. I understand that—why they didn't like the program. They don't want any money to go to the teachers unless it's negotiated through the teachers' union. That's the reason they're there, you know. This was sort of circumventing what they're there to do for the teachers, you know. So they didn't like the program, and they raised all sorts of objections to it, and they'd say, "Look, it says in our contract," which is probably a hundred, over a hundred pages long or many pages, ninety pages, I don't know, but most teachers' union contracts are unbelievably specific about everything that has to be done in schools. "It says you have to have a vote of 75 percent of the teachers to— for any extra compensation plan to be adopted." And our response to that was, "Well, let 'em vote." And they'd vote, and 99 percent or more would vote [*laughter*] to get the bonuses. I mean, what teacher didn't want to have . . .

SL: Right.

[03:52:50] WH: . . . an opportunity to earn a bonus, you know. So that really disturbed 'em, you know. "How can we stop this?" They finally figured out a way to stop it, and that was to get control of the school board. And the teachers' unions are very good at getting control of school boards because they've—they—

in almost every state in the United States, they have set the school-board elections on a special date that's not a general-election date, so there'll be a very low turnout.

SL: Low turnout.

WH: And so . . .

SL: Activate their base and . . .

WH: The Koret Foundation proposed recommendations in Texas for reforms. One of the ten reforms was to set school-board elections on the same day as general elections so you get a bigger turnout.

SL: Sure.

[03:53:43] WH: Well anyway, so they managed to get enough people elected to the school board to get control of it. And at that point they had then gotten a—they didn't like Roy Brooks at all because he was in favor of this bonus-point . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . program. And finally the school board, they tried to fire Roy. They couldn't fire him. It basically said that—well, it went to court. He said, "Okay, you can fire me, but you gotta tell me why you're firing me." Well, he had done such an outstanding job they didn't have any grounds for firing him, and it went to court. And the court basically said the same thing. "You can fire

this guy, but you've gotta give him the reason why you're firing him. And until you give him a reason, you can't fire him." So they went back, and instead of firing him, they bought out his contract, paid him for about another three years—another 600 and—maybe \$800,000—just to get him to leave. And so he left, and now we have a new school board, and we got a new school superintendent. And so the next year's rolling around, and I said, "Look, with all this turmoil, let's just try to keep the program in the same five schools. Let's don't try to expand it." So we got all the five principals together. "Are you all wanting to do this again?" "Absolutely, we want to do it again." "Okay, I think we can get the funding back, you know. School district will do two schools. The three foundations will do the other schools. We'll try it another year and—but we've got to get the approval of the school board 'cause they're gonna fund two of the schools, you know." [03:55:23] And so we were trying to contact the school superintendent and the school board—we couldn't get anywhere. So I said, "Look, you're gonna have to call 'em. As superintendents you're gonna have to call and talk to the"—I mean, "As principals you're gonna have to call the school superintendent. You're gonna have to get their attention and get this approved, you know." They called and they called and

they never did get a response, so they just let it die, you know, which was sad to me because the program came to an end, you know. And it just show—you know, when you're involved in education reform you gotta be ready for setbacks. You gotta make two steps forward; you're gonna have one step back, et cetera, you know. And the thing is, when businesspeople get involved in education reform, the status quo, the organizations that wanna keep things they way are, they want you to get frustrated and quit. Well, you can't quit. You got to just hang in there and keep doing it, you know. [03:56:34] And so with that program killed, we started thinking about, you know, "How can we help these kids in Little Rock that are trapped in under-performing schools? They don't have an opportunity. They don't—their families don't have enough money to buy a house in a neighborhood and attend one of the better schools—better public schools. They don't have enough money to send their kids to a private school. And what can we do to help those kids?" You know, we thought by going out into these schools that we were helping. We were reaching out to those kids. And so the answer became, "Well, why don't we start some charter schools, you know. Because at a charter school, every child, rich and poor, has got an equal chance to go to that school." And so

that's what we did. We started the eSTEM Public Charter Schools: an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. And we took the old *Arkansas Gazette* building, and we put the elementary school on the ground floor. We took the middle school, put it on the second floor. And we took the high school and put it on the third floor. So we got a—finally got approval from the state board of education to do this in December, and so I called Bob East, who had been our contractor on many jobs, and I got the Whitsell, Evans and Rasco architecture firm to sit down, and I said, "We've got to renovate this building, and we gotta have it ready to go in early July 'cause this school's gonna go eleven months a year and they're gonna start classes in July." I said, "Is there any way we can do this, you know, on a fast track, you know, whatever?" And they said, "There's a possibility we can get it done." And I [laughs] said, "Well, let's do it" . . .

SL: Do it. Yeah. [Laughter]

WH: . . . you know. So anyway, Jim Walton and I both agreed to equally fund all the renovations. We said, "You know, we're gonna do this. We're gonna start out with a nice environment. We're gonna start out with good—the type of classrooms that the kids would have if they went to a public school. We're gonna

start out with facilities like electronic chalkboards and everything, you know . . .

SL: Sure.

[03:58:53] WH: . . . that—what you need." And 'cause most charter schools start out on a shoestring, and we said, "You know, this is really untested. We're gonna put a public school in downtown Little Rock. No one's ever tried to do this. Public schools hadn't tried to do this. We're gonna try to have a school that doesn't have an athletic program. And we're gonna have a school that's gonna have a focus on engineering, science, math, and technology. This thing may be a bust, you know." And so anyway, that was the reason, you know, to try to make the school environment look really good because we realized how risky it was. So anyway, we did, and we opened the school, and it was full. Roy Brooks went out. We hired Roy Brooks. He had been the superintendent that the school district bought out his contract. So we hired Roy Brooks to be head of the charter management organization. And Roy went out in the churches and the neighborhoods—in the low-income neighborhoods and recruited families to send their kids to this school. It was the only way we could try to be sure we were really reaching the underserved kids because by law if every kid, rich and poor, has

the same chance, you gotta go out and actively recruit in the poor neighborhoods [*laughs*] to try to be sure you get . . .

SL: Sure.

WH: . . . you know, those are the kids . . .

SL: Get the right . . .

WH: . . . you're serving.

SL: Get the mix. Yeah.

[04:00:23] WH: So we started out—I think it was, you know, maybe over 60 percent African American, 30 percent Caucasian, and about—the others, you know, Hispanic and Asian and different things. You know, this is now, I think, the third full year for the school. The word spread. It's—the school's doing really well. More and more people want to send their kids there. I think last year maybe it was only 55 percent African American. More and more white kids are trying to get [*laughs*] into the school. The—so you know, the down economy probably helped the school. We've drawn kids from private schools that are now going to this school, you know. It's a—'cause it's—there's no tuition. It's a regular public school. So it was doing so well that they felt like, "We need to expand." So the school—we own the *Gazette* building. We're leasing the space to 'em. But they decided to buy the building across the street, which was the old Federal

Reserve Bank, and move the high school over there so they could make more room for elementary and middle-school students in the *Gazette* building. And so they did. And this year is the first full year that they've had the—you know, they've had the high school across the street. And so now they're up to four—they started out with eight hundred and some odd students. They're now up to fourteen hundred students, and they have four thousand students on a waiting list . . .

SL: Wow.

[04:02:09] WH: . . . to get in. So there is tremendous demand for this, and you know, one thing we have at eSTEM is we have teacher bonuses. And so you know, we got shut out in the regular public schools, but in these schools they can have bonuses. And the teachers make the same salary as the public schools, but they make bonuses. And they—they've gotta work harder. They've gotta be at school earlier in the day. They gotta work later hours every day. My daughter teaches at one of these schools, and she's there by seven-fifteen every morning. Classes start at seven-thirty. They go till four-thirty or five o'clock in the afternoon and . . .

SL: Eleven months out of the year.

WH: You got—yeah, about eleven months of the year. They don't

teach a—they don't do a—go on Saturday, which some charter schools do. But they teach about twenty more full days a year than the regular public schools. So anyway—and of course, we're trying to expand, but the school district here in Little Rock has sued the State of Arkansas, saying the State of Arkansas should not allow the expansion of charter schools and they should restrict the charter schools, you know, because of the desegregation settlement. And they say they're actually—they're making it more difficult to get—you know, they're taking some of the kids that would go to the regular public schools. Well you know, the truth of the matter is we've drawn a lot more kids from the private schools, you know, which I think is a good thing, you know. [*Laughs*] I mean, people are paying taxes for the public schools. Why shouldn't they benefit from 'em? So anyway, it's a—it's been interesting and encouraging that a lot of kids are getting a better education—a lot of kids that really need it.

SL: It sounds a little bit . . .

TM: Hey, Scott, let's stop for a second. I think I hear the elevator.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:04:07] SL: We've been talking about—you know, I was thinking

that your efforts on the education front—reform—education reform—it's almost—it almost sounds like revolution to me. I mean, it's a totally different way of approaching a performance issue and seems—the record seems to bear out it's been very effective.

WH: Yeah.

SL: So you were also talking about—you mentioned something about a program in Pine Bluff, and also Joy has brought up a good question, too. So . . .

WH: Yeah. The—a lot of people, it's interesting, will ask me and say, "Well, what is a charter school?" And [*laughs*] a lot of people just really don't know. And a charter school is—the charter, the name is a—is kind of a—another name for a contract—a charter or contract. And the charter or the contract is with the state. And so basically the school agrees in an agreement or a charter or contract that they'll do certain things. And they'll improve student learning over time or they'll—you know, they're gonna specialize in this area and do well. And if they don't live up to the terms of their contract, the state closes the school which is the way it ought to be. If a school is failing, it ought to be closed. And so—but a charter school is a regular—it's like a regular public school in that it—it's no enroll—its enrollment is to

anyone. Actually, in Arkansas, any student in the state of Arkansas can apply to go to any charter school. If you live in Fayetteville and you want your kid to go to a charter school in Little Rock, Arkansas, and you have a grandparent down here and want your kid to come live with the grandparent, they can apply for the charter school in Little Rock. It's not just for kids in that school district. [04:06:09] And so the way charter schools are funded is the state of Arkansas now provides the majority of funding for public education, instead of the local school district. And so the state of Arkansas now provides around \$6,000 per pupil. So every school in Arkansas gets the same \$6,000 per pupil, including the charter schools. And so that's where the charter schools get their money. Now, the regular public schools get more money than the charter schools. And the reason they do is they get the local property-tax revenues that go to support the public schools. The charter schools don't get any of that money. And so the char—the public schools get more money. The test scores at the eSTEM Public Charter School here and in most of the charter schools in Little Rock are well above the test scores at the regular public schools. The eSTEM Public Charter School spends a little over \$7,000 'cause they get some federal money. They get some

grants and things. They're spending over \$7,000 per pupil. Little Rock Public Schools spend well over \$12,000 per student. Now, there are some reasons, too, that they don't spend as much. They don't build stadiums. They don't build indoor gymnasiums. [*Laughs*] They don't have public-transportation systems, you know, bussing systems to move the kids around, et cetera, so that saves some money. But there are a lot of efficiencies in the charter schools, so—anyway, I wanted to kind of explain how the funding was done.

[04:07:49] SL: Okay. So now what about the—what you've got going in Pine Bluff? What's going there?

WH: Well, I mentioned Pine Bluff because I've gotten to know this fellow named Ron Nurnberg. And he is in charge of all the Teach for America teachers in Arkansas and Mississippi. And so I was talking to him, and he was telling me that they have set up a training program at Delta State over in Cleveland, Mississippi, where they train the Teach for America teachers. And he said, "If you take the whole cost of everything we do: we rent the space at Delta State; we hire the instructors; we come up with a curriculum to teach the Teach for America teachers; and everything we do, we spend about \$21,000 per teacher to do this training, intensive training, six or eight weeks or so, you

know." 'Cause most of the Teach for America teachers will typically come out of an Ivy League school, and they've majored in history, you know. And so they go through this crash course and learning student discipline and administration and pedagogy and all this other kind of things, you know . . .

SL: Right.

WH: . . . they need to learn. And he said, "But," he said, "what we do is we try to get some funding from the state of Arkansas and the state of Mississippi, and we try to get some funding from the local school districts, you know, and—to help support—to place a teacher." [04:09:17] And I said, "So what if you get some private funding? What"—I said, "What does it take for a community to come to you and say, 'We want a Teach for America teacher to come to Blytheville or Osceola or, you know, DeWitt or someplace like that.'" I said, "If you get a certain amount of private funding, will you try to place a Teach for America teacher there?" And he said, "Oh sure, we'll do that." And I said, "So how much does it take to do that?" He said, "If somebody'll commit to raising \$5,000 and defraying 5,000 of that 21,000, we'll send 'em a Teach for America teacher." And I said, "Really?" And I said, "Well, that's interesting." I said, "Have many places done that?" He said, "A few. We haven't

had very many, but a few have done that." And I said, "Well, are there—have you had any Teach for America teachers go to Pine Bluff?" And—we have a business in Pine Bluff, the cable television system there. And of course, a lot of people read the *Democrat-Gazette* there and . . .

SL: Right.

[04:10:24] WH: So I said—he said, "Yeah." He said, "I'll tell you a story about Pine Bluff." He said, "Frank Anthony is the school superintendent down there." And I said, "Yeah, I know Frank." And he said, "You know, he was trying to find five math and science teachers." And he said, "He called UA Fayetteville and said, 'I'm looking for five teachers,'" you know. He'd called Ouachita Baptist. He'd called ASU. He said he had totally struck out. He said, "I guess nobody wants to move to Pine Bluff. I don't know what the problem is. We can't get these—we've gotta have five math and science teachers, and I can't get 'em." And he said a friend of his said, "Well, have you called over at Teach for America to see if they could help you?" He said, "How can they help me? I've already called all these schools of education. I can't get any of these people." He said, "Well, you ought to give 'em a call." So Ron said, "This fellow, Frank Anthony, called me. He said, 'I'm in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and

I'm trying to find five Teach for America teachers.' He said, 'Do you know anywhere I could find five teachers?'" And Ron said, "Well, tell me about your situation, you know." And they talked a lot about the schools there in Pine Bluff and everything. And Ron said, "You know," he said, "I can get you five teachers." He said, "You can get me five teachers? How are you gonna get me five teachers?" And he said, "I can get five teachers for you, and they'll be there this fall." He said, "How can you do that?" He said, "I can't hire 'em myself, and I'm the superintendent." And he says—Ron said, "You know, probably what you don't understand is the people who Teach for America—that sign up for Teach for America—they don't want to go to Darien, Connecticut, or Palo Alto, California. They want to go to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. They want to go to Lake Village, Arkansas. Yeah, they want to go to Cleveland, Mississippi. They want to go to the Bronx. This is where they're looking to go teach, you know. These are idealistic young kids that have gotten a fabulous education, and this is what they want to do. Maybe not for their whole life, but this is what they want to do for now." [04:12:41] So he said—anyway, so I saw Frank Anthony one time, and I said, "Frank, how are those teachers doing for you down in Pine Bluff?" He said, "They are doing—those five

teachers are doing fantastic." He said, "Not only are they doing a great job teaching the kids, but they've inspired the other teachers that are there." He said, "It's been a multiplier effect." So I talked—when I talked to Ron about this again, I said, "Ron," I said, "let me [*SL laughs*] ask you about this." And I said, "What about—I understand there are five Teach for America teachers in Pine Bluff right now that you've moved and got over there." He said, "Yeah." I said, "I'd like to see if we could double that and go to ten Teach for America teachers." So I said, "What I'm gonna propose is that if it costs \$5,000 to get a teacher that we try to come up with \$25,000 out of Pine Bluff to do five more teachers, and that'll take you from five to ten." And I said, "So what I'm willing to do is Pine Bluff Cable TV will put up \$12,500. We'll put up half the money. But we've got to get other people in Pine Bluff to match the other half. And so if we can do that, fine. If we can only match, you know, 2,500 comes out of Pine Bluff, we'll do one more teacher." I said, "Could you do that?" And he said, "Absolutely. You do that. We'll get the five more teachers." So I was mentioning this to a friend named Haskell Dickinson who lives here and his partners are in Pine Bluff—the McGeorge Construction Company. So anyway, so I mentioned it to Haskell, and Haskell called me, you

know, about a week later and said, "I've matched your other \$12,500." [*Laughter*] So anyway, as a result, now there are other people in Pine Bluff that have come forward, and now I don't know—there's more than ten Teach for America teachers in Pine Bluff. You know, we hope it'll keep growing, you know.

[04:14:54] There's a tremendous number of Teach for America teachers in Lake Village. They're making progress. So what you gotta think about when you think about improving education—you can't think, "Let me come up with something globally that's gonna work for the whole state, for the whole school district, for the whole nation," you know. You know, great, think that way and try things like that, you know. But you gotta improve it, you know, one school at a time, you know, one classroom at a time, you know, one teacher at a time. You know, get one more teacher in Pine Bluff. She's gonna make a big difference. I've had personal letters from some of these teachers in Pine Bluff that, you know, you—that really, you know, get to you emotionally—read—these kids love what they're doing. They love teaching these kids. They love making a big difference in their life, you know. So anyway, that's been very great, and, of course, the Teach for America program—today in the United States there are about—over four thousand kids each year that

get placed into classrooms, but there're forty thousand, over forty thousand kids that apply for this. You know, it's some of the Ivy League schools. It's an enormous—I mean, 10, 15, 20 percent of the kids are applying to get in Teach for America. You know, they probably don't plan to be a teacher their whole life, but they have to agree to a two-year commitment. [04:16:25]

And so anyway, that's encouraging, and now the Walton Foundation has put up—gosh, I wish I could remember the figure. I'm kind of embarrassed I can't—25 million. It's a large sum of money to try to expand that four thousand, you know, a year—to expand that to more kids. So you know, I'll tell you, Arkansas—you know, I think at least our education-reform efforts benefit from a lot of things. One is the Walton family is a huge—you know, obviously the wealthiest family in the state, but this is a family that cares a great deal about education as they are the largest, single supporter of charter schools in the United States. They support charter schools in all fifty states in the United States. And we got the KIPP school in Helena that's been a huge success. I think that had a lot to do with the Waltons', you know, involvement with KIPP. And so that's been a big plus. [04:17:37] You know, our newspaper, I think, does—the *Democrat-Gazette*, well, first of all, there are hardly

any statewide newspapers left. We still have one. I don't know how long—if we'll be able to continue to be a statewide paper with the economics in the newspaper business. But we have been statewide, and so we have a statewide footprint, and we've done a lot of education reporting, and of course, in our editorial page, we've advocated for education reform, so I think that's helped. You know, we've got a lot of knowledgeable people like, you know, Claiborne Deming. He came up with the El Dorado Promise you know, which was \$50 million to send kids in El Dorado to colleges. So anyway, I think Arkansas has made some good strides in education. You know, our governor, Mike Beebe, has been supportive. Course, we're always pushing on him, wanting him to be more [*laughs*] supportive, you know.

SL: Sure.

WH: But that's okay. He's been supportive of a lot of our efforts. And so anyway, it's a—we've got a lot—long way to go, but we're making progress.

[04:18:47] SL: Walter, it sounds like to me of all the things that you've gotten involved with, this, at least these days currently, this has your greatest passion. I mean, first of all, it sounds like it's made a difference and that's—you didn't know that it was gonna make a difference when you had the idea and started it,

but it's caught on. So we're gonna see more of this, aren't we?

WH: Yeah. You know, I'll tell you why it's so important. I mean, everybody can sit around, and it's a cliché—education is important and all that, but you know, America is changing—has changed. And what we've seen is the entire global economy become much more competitive. And this has been, I think, in general, a good thing. It's raised the standard of living for millions of people all over the world by letting them compete for business worldwide. But it means there are a lot of countries that have much lower wages and much—they can produce things more cost-effectively than we can. And so as a result, we've lost a lot of our manufacturing in the United States.

SL: Yeah.

[04:20:08] WH: Well you know, that's sad that we've lost some of that manufacturing, but what it really means is for the United States to still be competitive we need to compete not on those low-wage jobs, we need to compete on the higher-wage jobs. And the United States can still see our gross national product increase, our standing of living continue to increase. The only way we can do that is, though, is to compete more effectively for the higher-wage-type jobs. And the only way to do that is have a better-educated workforce. So the United States has got to

improve their education, or we're gonna see our standard of living stagnate or even decline. And—because there are many other countries in the world that have surpassed us in K-12 education.

SL: That's right.

[04:21:03] WH: And so this is something that's not—it's not just important—you know, there's a wonderful benefit to being an educated person. But it's really important for our country to be able to prosper and succeed in the future to be better educated.

SL: That's really good, inspiring stuff. And it's not just a cliché. I mean, that . . .

WH: Yeah.

[04:21:30] SL: It's the truth. You know, Roger's gonna be back here in a few minutes. And I kind of hate to cut us off, but I think we probably ought to shut down here.

WH: Well, we . . .

SL: But you know what? I think . . .

WH: We . . .

SL: . . . I think that—well, first of all, is there anything else that you want to say here in closing before we stop? And let—before you answer that, I'm perfectly willing to meet again.

WH: Yeah. No, no, I think we've . . .

SL: And I think . . .

WH: . . . covered every . . .

SL: . . . if we've got more to talk about, I think we ought to go ahead and do it. And so we can do our calendar thing again, and we can—maybe not necessarily wear out our welcome here, but . . .

WH: Yeah.

[04:22:16] SL: . . . we can—maybe you can come to . . .

WH: Yeah.

SL: . . . Fayetteville and . . .

WH: No, I feel . . .

SL: . . . visit us.

WH: I feel good about everything we've done. I don't know really what else to add. You know, the one thing I would add that I haven't added is I think I've mentioned repeatedly during our talk—discussion here—how chance has so much impact on your life. And you know, I think about it. I think about all the chances and the way I ended up living my life in Arkansas. And I'm so grateful for that. I mean, I can't tell you—I can't think of any other place I would've rather spent my life. Arkansas is a wonderful place and very unique—the people, you know, and I had a chance to publish a paper here that's been, you know, a

lifelong dream, really, to be involved with publishing a quality newspaper—a statewide newspaper. So that's a—it's—a lot of it is hard work, dedication, determination, but a lot of it's chance. And some of it—maybe it's just been the luck of the draw, and maybe, you know, maybe there was more to it than that. Maybe there was, you know, a purpose in all this. So . . .

[04:23:40] SL: That's great. You know, we—we've gotten in the habit of asking our interviewees at the end of the interview if they'll do something right straight to the camera. I know it's kind of hard to see the [*WH laughs*] camera back there. But we ask 'em to say their name and say, "I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

WH: Oh, well, okay.

SL: [*Laughter*] You just pretty much . . .

WH: I just said that.

SL: . . . said all that . . .

WH: Right.

SL: . . . just now.

WH: Yeah.

SL: But you know, if you—if you're willing to do that, we could . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . do that. And you . . .

WH: Sure.

SL: . . . just say, you know, "I'm Walter E. Hussman, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Is that—can . . .

WH: Absolutely.

SL: You think you do that?

WH: Yeah.

SL: I'm gonna get out of this chair so you don't look at me.

WH: Okay. [*Laughs*]

SL: And the lens is right here.

WH: Yeah.

SL: And you—after you say it, you just need to kind of look at the lens for a couple of counts.

WH: Okay.

SL: So that gives us time to cut it and edit.

WH: Correct.

SL: You know, what . . .

WH: Great.

SL: Okay.

WH: Great.

SL: All right. So whenever you all—you're ready.

TM: Good.

[04:24:38] WH: Good. Yeah, I'm Walter Hussman Jr., and I am proud to be an Arkansan.

TM: Excellent.

SL: Good.

TM: Yep.

SL: All right. So Roger's not back yet. Is there anything else we want to . . .

WH: Oh, I . . .

SL: . . . talk about? And really, I want you . . .

Robert Porter: [*Unclear words*] [*Dog barks*].

SL: Oh! In fact, that was perfect timing.

WH: Hey there. [*Clicks tongue at dog*]

SL: Hey, big 'un. [*Dog barks*] Hey, big 'un.

WH: Hey there. How we doin'?

SL: Hey!

WH: How we doin'? How we doin'? Huh?

SL: Hey! [*WH laughs*] Yeah, hi! [*Laughs*]

WH: [*Laughter*]

RP: Kimmy, hey, come here, girl.

WH: Friendly dogs.

RP: Come on. Kimmy [*Dog runs out*] [*Laughter*] Hey, Kimmy,

come here.

SL: That's funny.

[Tape stopped]

[04:25:19] SL: Okay. Well, so . . .

WH: Yeah, I can't really think of anything else, but I'll be thinking about it and think—if there's other things I'd like to say about it, maybe, you know, another session.

SL: Just give me a call. I've—you've got my card now, so . . .

WH: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . you can call me. You can e-mail me, and I'll get—I'll send you some stuff as we get it ready and . . .

WH: M'kay.

SL: You know, it's a process. It's a long process. It takes us a long time to process this stuff, but . . .

WH: Okay.

SL: . . . we're gonna keep in touch.

WH: Okay, this has been great. I've really enjoyed it, and I think it's really great—worthwhile what y'all are doing. And . . .

SL: Well, thank you.

WH: I think . . .

SL: Hopefully, we'll get into the charter school curriculum, too.

WH: Yeah. Yeah, that'd be great.

SL: Okay.

[04:26:02 End of Interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]