

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

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

J. Chester Johnson  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
November 3, 2011  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

## Objective

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

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

## Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first 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.
- Double underscores indicate two people talking at the same time.
- 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**

See the Citation Guide at

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**Scott Lunsford interviewed J. Chester Johnson on November 3, 2011, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, Chester. J. Chester Johnson and Scott Lunsford are here at the Pryor Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas—Mullins Library, University of Arkansas. Today's date is November 3, 2011. And what we're doing is we're kinda [kind of] following up. Uh—we didn't get to finish our interview—uh—last time around. So, Chester, you've been gracious and kind and generous enough to come back to Fayetteville all the way from New York City, break into your retirement [*Chester Johnson laughs*] now that I just found out . . .

Chester Johnson: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . uh—to get here to—to come back and get some more of this. And I—I have to—I'm very—uh—gratified that you've—that you're able and willing to do this. It means a lot to us and to me that you're willing to face me like this again. It's just a—it's just remarkable that—uh . . .

CJ: Well, it's my pleasure. I—you know, Arkansas has always meant

a great deal to me, and I—I grew up here in the state. And the story of Arkansas—the remarkable story of Arkansas is also very important and the various elements of the—of the great [*laughs*] story of Arkansas are—um—are—are—are also keenly important to me. And so I'm—I'm—I'm—I'm very pleased to be part of this larger exercise of telling the—the broad, comprehensive story of the state and—and all that's it been through and—and—but sort of magnificent stories and individual stories that exist. And if I can contribute in any way, I—I'd like to, and thank you for that.

[00:01:50] SL: Well, I appreciate that. You know, I—I wanna [want to] just very briefly go over—um—once again—uh—reiterate that—um—this is your story, and that's the position that we take. [*Snapping sound*]

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And we want you to be happy with it, and we want it to be the story that you want told.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—so for that reason—uh—we are recording this in—uh—very pristine high-definition formats.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: We will preserve it forever, but we will give you the opportunity to redact or—or take things out . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . uh—that you later on may feel [*clunking sounds*]  
uncomfortable about. We—we want you to be happy with it.

CJ: Right.

[00:02:29] SL: Uh—so you have that—that position. You—you can  
do that. And we'll—we'll send you the raw footage uh—of  
everything that . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . so you can look at it. We'll send you a transcript of—of  
every part of this interview that we do and the previous one.  
And we'll want you to look and read that stuff. And if you find—  
we'll ask for some more details—maybe spellings of names  
[*camera clicks*] or places or . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . dates or—you know, questions. Uh—we're not asking you to  
change the grammar.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—we believe in the verbatim transcript. We think that imparts  
[*clicking sound*] the character of the—of the conversation.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—and it's—we consider that an added value.

CJ: Right.

[00:03:11] SL: Um—but—uh—once you've looked at all that stuff and we've done what we need to do to—to make it your story—um—you know, we're gonna [going to] put this stuff out there, and we'll give you a—a finalized DVD as many copies as you need—uh—and we're—we'll hang this stuff on the Web, and we will encourage people to look at it and use it and—and learn from it. Uh—uh—I don't know—maybe la—since you were here we—we are now totally engaged in the lesson plan for Arkansas history, and so we're hoping that Arkansas students actually in public schools will have access to this . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . material and—and—uh—we just think that there—these are remarkable stories, and they're stories that have not been told or heard—uh—because no one has bothered to . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . get out there and—and do it—uh—and get it out there [*claps hands*] available for everybody, so . . .

[00:04:07] CJ: And just as a general—but the pictures that I've provided—are they going to—they'll be part of—are they gonna be sort of an inventory, or are they gonna be part of the story that I tell, and they—it—it goes before or at the end or . . .

SL: No, they . . .

CJ: . . . be throughout . . .

SL: . . . they—they—they . . .

CJ: . . . or how does the . . .

SL: They are a separate item.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—when your Web page—when—when your [*claps hands*] . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . uh—interview shows up on the Pryor Center Web page,  
there will actually be a slideshow . . .

CJ: I see.

SL: . . . of those images on your page.

CJ: Oh, okay.

[00:04:39] SL: And people will be able to pass the mouse over 'em  
[them] and look at the metadata—all the descriptions—who's,  
what, when, and where. In the DVD that you'll—the finalized  
DVD that you will have, you will have the—those files that not  
only will you be able to see 'em on your TV, but you'll—if  
you're—put the DVD in a computer, you'll be able to call 'em up  
and put them out at the resolution that we scanned them at . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or shot them at. And you can make prints. Uh—it's—it's  
really quite open and quite—um—gregarious . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . in its availability. It's just—uh . . .

CJ: Okay.

SL: And—uh . . .

CJ: Well, that's exciting.

SL: It is exciting. We . . .

CJ: Very exciting.

[00:05:23] SL: . . . we really like it. Also, you know, on the Web there will be the audio only, too.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And people'll be able to download that and put it on their mp3 player or their CDs and have kind of a Chester Johnson book.

[*CJ laughs*] Audio on book.

CJ: Right.

SL: On tape . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . kind of thing. So . . .

CJ: That's great.

[00:05:40] SL: Anyway, I just wanted to reiterate that and kind of remind you—uh—of—of what we're tryin' [trying] to do and . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . how much it means to us that you've gone to this trouble to

come . . .

CJ: You know, one—one thing—I just—I'm sorry because I know today—probably tomorrow—but we'll go through the story on St. Paul's Chapel.

SL: Yes.

[00:05:57] CJ: But you mentioned the audio, and I don't know if this is a—this is helpful or not, but for the tenth commemoration of 9/11 . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

CL: . . . um—the BBC did an interview with me.

SL: Uh-huh.

CJ: I think I sent it to you. The . . .

SL: You sent me a—a—a—a portion of it, I—I believe.

CJ: Was it only a portion?

SL: Yes. Uh-huh.

CJ: Okay. Um . . .

SL: It was kind of a trailer.

CJ: No, that was—uh—the History Channel that . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

CJ: . . . I sent to you.

SL: Okay.

CJ: The . . .

SL: No, I don't think . . .

CJ: No . . .

SL: . . . I've got any of that.

[00:06:25] CJ: Okay, I'll send you the BBC one . . .

SL: Okay.

CJ: . . . because the—it's all audio, and it was—um—it was shown on—they did it on the nine—on nine—September the tenth for broadcasting—uh—through England, Wales, and Scotland on 9/11. And it's a—they—they took it outside—they did it outside, which—right across—literally, right across the street at the base of St. Paul's Chapel, right across the street from where Tower w—the north tower had been. And you could hear the tr—you know, you could hear the street noise, and you could hear—and people would—and came—other volunteers came by, and I said "hi" and . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:07:11] CJ: You know, there was a lot of that going on on [*unclear words*]. I'll send it to you. I don't know whether there's anything you can do to tie 'em together, but I just—I—I mentioned it just—just . . .

SL: I'm—I'm sure with their—uh—permission we could probably provide a link. Do they have it posted anywhere or anything?

Uh—we'd have to—we'd seek . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . their permission.

CJ: Don't worry about it. I'll—I'll send it to you . . .

SL: Okay.

CJ: . . . and we can decide.

SL: Okay.

CJ: It's not that important, but . . .

SL: Good.

CJ: . . . anyway.

SL: Well, I have a feeling it is kind of important.

CJ: Think so.

SL: It sounds great—that ambient sounds . . .

CJ: They did a good job.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:07:40] CJ: They did a good job . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

CJ: . . . because a lot of times when you get interviewed—not here because you're—it—the time is—you know, but sometimes when you get interviewed, particularly in an event like that, people interview you with what they want their conclusion to be.

SL: Ah.

CJ: And they don't hear the story itself.

SL: Mh-hmm.

CJ: And in that instance, they wanted to hear the story, and they ended it up by allowing me to read the—um—the—my poem, "St. Paul's Chapel," which is the—the memento card that's used at—um—at the chapel for all the thousands and—thirty thousand a week, you know, would come through there. Um—and—um—and, you know, they—but they led up to that with—with leading questions and that sort of thing [*laughs*], but . . .

SL: Sure.

CJ: But—uh—anyway, it was—um . . .

SL: You know . . .

CJ: It was well done.

[00:08:35] SL: I [*camera clicks*—I think we may as well just go ahead and just talk about St. Paul's Chapel now.

CJ: Okay.

SL: I mean, it's okay. We can—we can go back—backwards . . .

CJ: Okay.

SL: . . . in time. But—um—uh—for those that don't know anything about St. Paul's Chapel . . .

CJ: Okay.

SL: . . . why don't you just tell us a little bit about it and why it's so

tied to 9/11.

CJ: Okay. Do you mind if I make it also personal, how all of this . . .

SL: Absolutely. That's fine.

CJ: . . . how all of this and how it got involved, which in—which—you know, we may spend a couple of hours on this because—uh . . .

SL: This is fine.

[00:09:11] CJ: . . . because of the way—uh—it—it happened. Um—well—um—our offices—our business offices were about two hundred yards from the points of contact. Our offices were located on Wall Street—um—on—uh—September the eleventh, 2001. Um—and my wife and I—um—uh—share—shared—and we had done this for many years—shared an office because we're—we run the company. And while others have their own—had—had their own offices [*laughs*], we kind of like to hear what the other one was saying and doing, and we had developed it in such a way that it wasn't interrupting to hear something, so ambient sounds of what was going on . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:10:08] CJ: . . . um—elsewhere in the office. And—um—I was on—I was on the—a phone call—uh—related to—for years we served as advisors to Princeton University, and we were on a—a long conference call. And there was a person on the call who

was from Lehman Brothers, and he was on—literally across the street from the World Trade Center. And we felt this impact and—during the conference call—during my conference call. And—um—the—the individual said, "It looks to me like a small plane has flown into the—uh—World Trade Center—the north tower." And, you know, that was a big thing, but he said, "Small"—you know, it as small and—um—he said, "I'll—I'll be able to learn more as we have this call." Well, within ten or fifteen minutes, we had heard there was a lot more than that, and so the call ended—um—and we started trying to find out what we could and calling various people and trying to find out what was going on. And a few minutes passed by, and we had—our offices faced the World Trade Center. I mean, we were only, as I said, about two hundred yards away as the crow flies.

[00:11:28] And—uh—my wife's desk faced the window. My—I—I didn't face it, but she did. She was working on this memo for the state of Louisiana, and she was—and looking out the window, and there was a completely unobstructed view of the World Trade Center from—from her window. And she heard—we—we were—we were not on an air pattern for jets, and she heard this out of the—but our—our—our—our main focus out of our window was the south tower, not the north tower. But—

um—and she had just—we had been hearing—we were tryin' to hear things about what was going on and whatever, but she had a deadline, and so she was at the—at the computer, but looking—you know, we—the—it was sort of a frenetic time, but she was tryin' to get something out. [00:12:15] And she saw this plane come—uh—out of the corner of her eye and it—it—you know, it's like slow motion for—in those situations when you reconstitute what was happening. And—and the plane—she—she can remembers—and—and now—and, actually, in thinking about it later, she thought this was—um—she had guilt about it because she thought, "Maybe I should've reached out and grabbed the plane." [SL laughs] You know, you have this irrational view.

SL: Yeah.

[00:12:47] CJ: And the plane crashed into the south tower. And by that time, we knew what was happening, and everybody in that close proximity knew that we were under attack—um—and we had been—so I ran down—I didn't [laughs] run—I couldn't—but I got downstairs, and there were police already around—lots of security—and saying, "You cannot—uh—leave the building. We do not know how many more—um—uh—buildings are gonna be attacked down here. We can't have people running on the

street. Go back up." And so we went back—I went back up.



And—um [*camera clicks*—within a matter of a few minutes, as you know, the south tower came down first. And the south tower came down, and as I said, we had a completely unobstructed view of the tower. There were no buildings between us and there. We were—we were on the sixteenth floor. And the big—the plume came in our direction and—um—and we saw this big cloud coming, and we had no idea what was behind it, and we could imagine what was behind it. And we only had windows looking out, and we said, "Well, there's"—I mean, we thought—I'm sure I thought, and I'm sure Freda thought—said, "This is the end." [00:14:07] And—um—but it was only the plume, and the plume came, and it had jet fuel and all—you know, pulverized cement and all this, and it just enveloped the building and the sky. I mean, it had been a beautiful day, and everything turned dark—uh—outside and—um—uh—and by that time, we had no communications—uh—for making calls out. People could call in, but we couldn't make calls out because the tower had come down, and that's where the communication network wa—so—um—and we were trapped 'cause we couldn't—we could get out. We couldn't leave. I mean, and we—you know, it—and we were—and this plume was

all around, and we couldn't get out. So we were trapped for several hours. Then about two thirty in the afternoon—um—we start—we—we saw this little speck. We went into the—into an inner office, and some people who had come through from the World Trade Center came in, and we sort of prayed together and all that. And then we were in the—in the conf—our conference room and—uh—then Freda, at one point, went out and looked and we—at two—around two o'clock or so, and there was just a little speck of sunlight, and we said, "You know, if it starts to open up, we will—we'll leave." And at that point, we remembered that we had dust masks that we'd had—we had acquired for clean-up day. We never got around to it, so we had dust masks. And—uh—you just can't imagine all the debris that was everywhere, and so we—uh—we put the dust masks on, and we walked down the sixteen flights of stairs and walked into just, you know, an incredible scene. I mean, it was a—you know, there were six to nine inches of pulverized stuff on—that we had to walk through and—um—and others were leaving their buildings at that time, too. [00:16:17] Um—and we—I remember looking up—I remember I—I got out, and I—I'm very active at Trinity Wall Street, which is the—the big old church at the head of Wall Street and Broadway—big ol' black church, and

I'm very active there, and I'm—I'm on the governing board and all that. And I remember looking up and—um—the—um—the—um—there was just still this massive cloud, and the only thing I saw coming out of that massive cloud was the spire on the top of—uh—of—um—Trinity. And it was an amazing shot. It was just an amazing view at that point. But, anyway, [*claps hands*] we—we started walking, and we—the long and short of it, we got to Chinatown, and it was starting to clear up. And we made our way all the way up—uptown and—um—I—I remember that afternoon that—uh—as well—at—late in the afternoon when we got home that these gigantic Red Cross trucks with—with blood supply came with—with military convoy coming down 86th Street where we lived. And—um—five or six completely loaded with fresh blood because there was—it—you know, I don't if you remember, there were many hospitals ready to take the injured, and there were only a handful of injured. And—um—everyone who had died or who was affec—everyone was in the pit. They were in the pile and—um—so there were very, very, very few survivors, as you know. [00:18:07] Um—so that's—that's a little of the background. But what happened after that is we were excluded from our offices for a very long time and couldn't go in. And—um—I'm a poet, and I verbalize, and I—I kept—you



know, well, I kept talking about what was happening and what we had gone through and what the city was goin' [going] through. [00:18:29] And—and in addition to that, Manhattan had been cut off. If you recall, right after 9/11 they shut down the island. You couldn't get into the island, and you couldn't get out of the island. But if you were in the island, you could do virtually anything, and so I got down very close to the—um—uh—to the—to Ground Zero—uh—just wandering around and—and seeing—um—and I'm—it relates to [*laughs*] what—I'm—I'm not just digressing. But it was—uh—so we were able—I was able to experience a lot even right—immediately after 9/11. But I would talk, and I would talk and, you know, and my—and Freda, my wife, is more of a ponderer. And after a while, she finally said, "Chester, you're driving me crazy. You've gotta [got to] go do something. You've really gotta go do something." And by that time—um—St. Paul's Chapel had become—uh—the relief center for the recovery workers. Almost immediately after 9/11—um—three organizations came together to—um—uh—Seamen's—or Trinity Wall Street, which runs the St. Paul's Chapel—um—uh—the General Episcopal Seminary, which is in Chelsea in New York City and Seamen's—they came together and began an organizational effort to make this relief center for

the recovery workers.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] And around—and it—around St. Paul's Chapel is this very large fence and at least initially—as I—and I—the reason I was telling that about Manhattan being cut off is that people would—the first phase, when we thought there was—we thought there were some survivors, people would come and put pictures in—on the fence and say—it would say, "If you see so-and-so, even if they're injured, have—try—please call this number" or "Call"—and, you know, that—there were just many, many pictures around on the fences that surrounded St. Paul's Chapel, which is—I'm sorry, I [*snaps fingers*] didn't locate it. St. Paul's Chapel is directly across the street from the north tower—which was the north tower. Literally, there's a little street called Church Street, and it's right across the street from it. And St. Paul's Chapel was all around it. I mean, there were only—there were lots of buildings completely destroyed, in addition to the World Trade Center side—the two north and south towers. And World Trade Center 7 was completely destroyed. There were many buildings around the Millennium Hotel, which is right next to St. Paul's Chapel, had to be complete—the whole—the exterior had—the facade had to be changed. There were—the

Deutsche Bank building had to come down. There were—J. P. Morgan building had—I mean, it was just—all around there major destruction, and yet this little chapel that was built in 1766—it's very small, relatively speaking. When you compare it to other churches in Manhattan, it's relatively small. And there wasn't a window broken or a stone dislodged. After—it was filthy. The graveyard was filthy. The exterior and the [laughs] interior were filthy because of all the debris that hit it, but there was literally no damage done to this building. And what made it even more phenomenal is that there were—that between—to keep the floors on the World Trade Center of the north and south tower before they started collapsing, there were joints—you know, like a regular building, you'd have joints between the floors. [00:22:46] Big joints to keep—but as the floors came down, you can imagine the pressure that was being put on those joints. And the joints actually worked as missiles, and so a lot of the damage that had been done to buildings many blocks away—even up in—you know, close to city hall, which was, you know, several blocks away. The exterior—some of the, you know, windows and things just blown out—that was the result of the joints working just like missiles being—shooting out from the World Trade Center site, and yet not one of 'em hit the chapel.

And so virtually within a matter of hours, the priest who was in charge of St. Paul's rode his bicycle down. As I said, you—if you were in the city, you could do virtually anything right after 9/11. So he rode down, and he'd expected the chapel to be completely destroyed, and it wasn't anything, and he let people know about it. And soon there after because there were—the relief or the recover [*clears throat*—at that time it was rescue. [00:24:08] It was only three weeks later that it became recovery, but they were immediately there—New York City Police, Fire, emergency medical, and they didn't have any place. And so these three organizations came together and set up a volunteer effort at St. Paul's almost immediately and stopped general ministry to the public, and it became the ministry to the workers twenty-four hours, seven days a week. And it lasted for the—from September until June of 2002. And it just developed into this extraordinary effort. It was just—it was an amazing event to see people from all over the country wanting to come to be volunteers. It was just—it was an amazing thing. There were fourteen thousand slots. There were probably nine thousand volunteers over that period of time. I started soon thereafter, and my—and I didn't work full time. Obviously, I had a job, and I had to make adjustments where—we moved our offices

midtown. We couldn't do a—we couldn't continue our offices downtown. But I continued to volunteer and supported the effort—the volunteer effort in every—in ways that I possibly could. And there were eight-hour shifts that went on. I did some during the day, and often—I would prefer at night because it was too—to be there at night, and it would be quiet and—except for the recovery workers coming in with their—all their gear. [00:26:27] And the chapel would be laid—was laid out, and it had pews, and it's where they would sleep—the recovery workers would sleep. They would sleep fully with their equipment on, and the backs of the pews would be scraped up, of course. And we would have hand warmers and parkas and food, and there was music being played. And there were some minimal sort of health support there. Being there, though—in terms of just being there and being a solace for these people who were experiencing hell over there because there were only two or three full bodies that were actually found at the World Trade Center, and everything else—there were part—there were bodies—there were—that was—and St. Paul's became this very ecumenical place as well. If you—St. Paul's is—and I like to give you a little bit of the history, too, because . . .

SL: Sure.



[00:27:47] CJ: . . . it's fascinating history. The cornerstone was laid in 1764. It's a chapel, as I said, of Trinity Wall Street. It was built in 1766—finally completed—to cover—to minister to sort of the country gentry who lived north of—that was—Wall Street was sort of the city at that time in the eighteenth—late eighteenth century. And, you know, they didn't feel like they wanted to walk all the way to Wall S—down to Trinity to go to church. So this chapel was set up for that. And in—when George Washington was sworn in as the first president of the United States, New York City was the national capital for the first two years, he, John Adams, Congress, and part of the cabinet—they all came up to St. Paul's Chapel, and they worshiped there. So it was the place of the first worship service of the government of this country. And George Washington continued to worship there until he—until Philadelphia then became the national capital before eventually going to District. [00:29:13] So it—you know, this is—and then there's James Monroe, for example. He was the fifth president of the United States. He—in 1825 he left office, and he fell on hard times, and he came to live with his daughter in New York City. And he died in 1831, and the funeral service was held in St. Paul's Chapel, and I'm—it—there—he was buried in West Village and—but it was the longest funeral

cortege in the history of Manhattan. There are—I mean, there are just so many historical facts, and I won't go into all of them. But—and Benjamin Franklin is sprinkled all through the chapel. I mean, there's—the first military memorial of our country is in the chapel for General Richard Montgomery, who died in Quebec, and Benjamin was able to get an appropriate [C] edit: appropriation] from Continental Congress to have the memorial positioned in St. Paul's Chapel. And it's a—Benjamin Franklin had three illegitimate children and his—and the wife of his oldest is buried there. She—he was a royalist, and Benjamin Franklin was a revolutionary, and he disowned his son, and his son became the governor of New Jersey before the Revolution Era. [00:30:42] I mean, the—and, you know, there's just a multitude of stories. The—as you go in the chapel, you see a—by the altar this monument called "Glory," and it serves as the background for the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments. And it was—a young architect engineer by the name of Pierre L'Enfant, who eventually designed and laid out the city of the District of Columbia. He was young and was commissioned to do this. I mean, it's just a—and the reason I'm going through this and somewhat giving you a little bit of the background is that the Christian nature of the chapel is not overwhelming. There's

the—if you saw it, there's a crucifix, but that's about it. The reason I'm going through this is that during the recovery, we had two priests, a Catholic and Episcopal, and a rabbi who were there, and whenever we would get a call from the temporary morgue, they would go down and say last rites over the people who had—you know, they'd found a finger, or they'd found whatever. [00:32:07] And so there was a feeling of ecumenical activity there. It wasn't it was just an Episcopal church. And the stories are just extraordinary. I mean, as I said, it was—became the memorial soon thereafter, after it became sort of this kiosk of pictures being on the fences and all that stuff. And you could go there any day, and it would be five people deep just wanting to show their support and wanting to show their care for the people who were doing this job at the clean-up job. [00:32:46] And who was—and also the volunteers who were doing all this work. I remember there was a man—a businessman from Kansas City who wrote a check for fifty thousand dollars and put it through the fence to keep the working going. There was a coach from Auburn, Alabama, who went around Alabama and collected boots because they—recovery workers needed boots. If they stood on the pile for longer than thirty minutes, their boots would start to melt because there was this sort of inferno

going on underneath for six of the nine months that the clean up—there was a young girl from Ohio who had—she and her family had been collecting stuffed animals since she was an infant, and she boxed them all up—sent them to St. Paul's Chapel and—so that they—the recovery workers would have pillows to sleep on. [00:33:54] You know, it was just an amazing place. And the pew that—George Washington's pew was actually turned into where two to three podiatrists could work on the feet of the recovery workers who had—you know, had foot problems develop because they stood on the pile for a certain period of time. I mean, you go back from the sacred to the historical. Benjamin Franklin, as I said, is sprinkled through there. And he gave the great seal—it's the—probably—well, if one of the oldest in the country. It's located in—I mean, it's on the wall in St. Paul's Chapel, and he—it's—he made the national bird—the wild turkey is—presented that in the great seal as opposed to the eagle. [00:34:44] So I—anyway, that is—that's—that is—I can go on for hours about St. Paul's and have, and I—but maybe I should shut up and left—let you ask some [laughs] questions. I have gone in through somewhat of a monologue, but I—it is—it's—I'll put it this way. I've said to my wife—there's this poem by W. B. Yeats that starts out, you

know, when I'm old and gray and nodding by the fire—and I've said to her, you know, "If it's possible and that's happening to me, and you know I'm about ready to—this is the end—if there's any way you can possibly get me to St. Paul's Chapel, that's where I want to die." And that's really the way I feel. I mean, I am integrated into it. [00:35:43] I am absolutely integrated into it and, you know, there—the thing I haven't even mentioned, which is so personally important to me, is that in February I started writing—February of 2002, I started writing this poem called "St. Paul's Chapel," and I worked on it for several months. It's a relatively short poem. It was published in August right before the first anniversary of 9/11. It was in a national periodical. And when the St.—when St. Paul's opened to the public on September the eleventh, 2002, there were six cardboard exhibits [*laughs*] in there just to sort of describe what had happened. And unbeknownst to me, my poem was there, and it has—it's been the memento card since then. And today, I mean, there—they—it's printed up, and they print 'em up at ten thousand—ten to twenty thousand at a slug, and they can't keep 'em in stock. I mean, it's—people are—you know, have it—people all over the world take them. So I'm integrated into that place, and that's why I can say something like that, that if—

when the day that I croak, I'd love [*SL laughs*] that—the croaking to occur when I—if I'm in St. Paul's Chapel. So . . .

SL: Well, I was gonna . . .

CJ: I'm sorry for the long monologue.

[00:37:22] SL: Oh, no, no, no. [*CJ laughs*] This is good, and it's really just the beginning of this part of the interview. The—I was gonna take you down the path of what it has personally meant to you, and I'll get back to that. But I just have to say this is so remarkable and ironic that something that's so founded in our country's fathers—Founding Fathers is just unscathed by this horrendous attack.

CJ: I know.

SL: This terrorism that—and that it became a focal point for recovering from that attack in all aspects. I mean . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . not just the recovery workers, but all the folks that were left behind by the attack—how they migrated to that place. It's . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: It had to be—I mean, that day that you went back and were dis—and got so close to Ground Zero, I mean, how did you—did you just walk into the chapel and discover what was going on? How did you get into the volunteerism that you—that program?



[00:38:43] CJ: Well, I had—I was spending time down there after 9/11 and just—generally, just watching what was going on. But I actually participated in the—I don't wanna overstate this, but I serve on the governing board of Trinity Wall Street. So—and Trinity actually had been closed down because of the—when the south tower came down, Trinity was only, like, one block from—the church, Trinity. And it's much more of a grandiose, large facility.

SL: Bigger target.

CJ: Yeah. And—but also the ground sort of shook all around. Same way at St. Paul's, but St. Paul's is smaller, and it's not as high and whatever. So engineers came down—came in, and they closed it down for a while and—for a number of months, it was closed down. And so we were—the governmental—the governing body came together very frequently to talk about—the governing board—we're called the vestry—came together to talk about what was going on and—both at Trinity and at St. Paul's. So I knew what was going on in St. Paul's from that perspective. But then, more importantly, from a personal perspective, I wanted to get my hands dirty [*laughs*] and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:40:35] CJ: . . . become part of that effort at St. Paul's. And the

fact that I was a vestry person—that I had experienced what I had on 9/11—I was a perfect candidate to be part of that story and to be part of the activity that was going on there. And so that's the—you know, that's how I really got involved, was through knowing the organizational—so it wasn't hard for me to get involved in the volunteer effort because I was part of the governing board at Trinity. But the point you're making, you know, has been emphasized [*unidentified sound*] frequently—you know, just—Rudolph Giuliani, whether you—whatever you may believe about him politically . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: . . . St. Paul's meant a great deal to him. He chose St. Paul's to be the place of his farewell address, and that's how he started his farewell address. He said, "You know, people have asked, "Why would you choose this place?" And he—you know, he walked through the—you know, the same things that you were referring to—the experience of George Washington and how incredible that is, and then the fact that it was—wasn't damaged at all after 9/11, and then it becomes this—a massive national effort. This was not just—people were coming in from everyplace to work there. And so, you know, he chose that. And then, you know, the—George [CJ edit: Bush] and—for the

fifth anniversary had an event held there as well. And frequently, you know, the presidents have been interested since then. [00:42:57] So there was so much going on on the tenth commemoration, even though there was some discussion about Obama wanting to do something at St. Paul's, there just wasn't time. There was just too much going on that—for that to occur. But others have recognized that it—and I'll—when I get—I talk about the St. Paul's story, I always combine the history with the sacredness, and they're both there. I mean, the one thing I haven't mentioned is that on September the second, 2002, the mayor of London and the archbishop of Canterbury came to St. Paul's to dedicate this—what is known as the Bell of Hope, which is right—it's now in the graveyard at St. Paul's Chapel, and it's rung at 8:46 every September the eleventh, and there's this symmetry of the mayor or whoever is in the pit ringing a bell there, and then you'll have either the rector or the—we had the presiding bishop of the Episcopal church actually ringing the Bell of Hope this last September the eleventh and—for the tenth anniversary. But you have this sort of symmetry of bells going and being rung at the same time. But the people of London as well as the Anglican communion—Anglican church—were parties of giving this significant token to St. Paul's Chapel for what it

had meant after nine—you know, after 9/11. It's called the Bell of Hope. It was—and it was modeled and constructed by the same foundry, Whitechapel Bell Foundry, that did the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. [00:45:02] And so there are all kinds of these threads of history that go through. And the new museum is going to have several of the pews from St. Paul's. And the new museum at Ground Zero is—probably be ready in 2013, and you will—there'll be pews in that museum to sort of just—they're not gonna—the museum's not gonna spend a lot of time on sacredness, but that's the—that will remind them of the effort. There's one final story about—one final comment I'll make about St. Paul's that it just—I need to get it into [*laughs*] this story—is that about three years ago, the mayor decided not to have family members read the names of the dead, which he usually allows them to do, starting early in the morning and going—and he asked volunteers and recovery workers to come and do it, and I was selected to be one of those who read the names. I had *K*—I had some *Ks* and some *Ls* that I read, and I actually—when the waterfalls opened for this tenth anniversary, I took all my names. I had the—I did some biographical work to find out everything—even—when I—before I read the names I wanted to know more about them. And I learned about them and who they

were and where they—their families and the backgrounds because there had been some work done on them. I'm getting to the [*laughs*] story, I promise, but there are so many of these vignettes that happen all . . .

SL: No, this is good.

[00:46:58] CJ: . . . all the time. So I—before I went down, I took—for it—to see the names. They have the names on the . . .

SL: Around the fountain.

CJ: . . . bronze—yeah, on—so I—and then—so I took the biographies and read a little bit before about them—I mean, I knew about them, but when I was standing in front of their names and felt the names and said a little prayer for each. And—but, anyway, when I read on the—about three or four years ago—the names—those names and—but—and there were—as I said, there were volunteers and recovery workers reading the names. And we were only—we were given strict instructions. You could only read the names and get off the platform. Read the names. Get off the platform. But more than once—not the volunteers—but more than once, recovery workers would end their reading of the names by saying, "Thank God for St. Paul's Chapel." And that's what—you know, that—that's what it meant. And every 9/11, you go into the chapel, and you know, the recovery workers will

come. And I get invited to march and—like, the Polish police  
[unclear words] . . .

SL: Precinct.

[00:48:29] CJ: No, the entire Polish brig—Polish police  
organization—they participate in the various marches and on—  
you know, during the year. And I get invited to that and—  
although it's not just Polish people who come, but you know, I  
mean—just saying those are the kinds of relationships that get  
developed over time. And so they—we always congregate on—  
every 9/11 is sort of a reunion at St. Paul's. And as soon as I  
read my names, I went to St. Paul's, and there were people who  
had finished their names, and [laughs] they were there. It's just  
a—it's an amazing. Still. I mean, we all communicate. We  
communicate. We still communicate, and it's just an amazing  
thing. So I'm sorry, you asked me . . .

[00:49:20] SL: No, I [CJ laughs]—there's no reason [laughs] to  
apologize. I—first, you know, you can see that it's very personal  
to you.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And I can't help but think that there's just something about that  
chapel that—I mean, there's no—I'm sure there's no question  
that all the recovery folks that came through—the rescue

people—all that stuff—all those spirits gathering there has certainly infused yet a new—another element into that chapel that wasn't there before. But I can't help but sense that there was probably already something about that space that was spirit giving in and of itself.

CJ: Right.

[00:50:21] SL: There—it was like . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: I don't know. There's some—there's gotta be some kind of draw there besides it just happened to be so close to the site, and it was still standing.

[00:50:29] CJ: There's just no question about that. And what—it's actually become universal because, as I said, thirty thousand people a week come through there to experience what you're talking about, and that is they don't just come because they're tourists, and they're—I mean, yeah, maybe some of them do. But they all get affected by it, and they come—we call it the "swirl" because they come in, and they go around the side 'cause we have exhibits around the sides of the chapel. And they'll come in, and they'll—so there's this swirl that's constant going—constantly going through. And every—we have services on Sunday morning at eight and ten, and one of—the services stop

sort of in the middle, right around announcements, and we just stop, and so we have this ceremony where we ask people both in—who have—who are stopping in for the service as well as for the people in the swirl if they will identify where they're from. And every—I'm not exaggerating—every Sunday, you will find people from virtually [*laughs*] every continent. And mean not—but, I mean, they're, you know, all over the world. Sometimes we don't have as many in—sort of—in Asia, but—or in Australia, but—although we do have them come in on a periodic basis. But we have people from all the world coming in, every week, every—I mean, every possible place in the world who come in. And they also participate. [00:52:22] It is—you know, I did a—I had—I did an inventory, at one point, in terms of the e-mails I've gotten and the places where my poem has appeared. And it's more international than it is—although nationally it's certainly—but it's a—let me put it this—it's equally—I mean, the Church of Ireland has it on their Web site. The—there are numerous churches in England that have it in their—there is a group of Italian translators that send stuff back to the United States, and they decided to translate two poems as part of their—of a—sort of a celebration, and they translated the poem relate—the Lazar [CJ edit: Emma Lazarus] poem where, you

know, of—on the Statue of Liberty and my poem in—into Italian and make it, you know, available to Italians. And, you know, you just name it—wherever—I mean, it's just—it's a universal spirit that you're referring to. I mean, my point is that, yes, there is the spirit of the recovery workers, the volunteers, the history of the US, but it's not just the US any longer. It is a world community. And to symbolize that, there's an organization called the Community of Cross of Nails. And after World War II, as you know, we bombed Dresden. I mean, you know . . .

SL: Sure. Firebomb. Fire storms.

[00:54:06] CJ: And I—and Germany bombed Coventry. And after the bombing occurred at Coventry, one of the deans came out of—and wrote on it, "Father, forgive." And soon thereafter, the clergy in Dresden and clergy in Coventry came together after the war for reconstruction—for reconciliation and the const—and they created this organization called the Community of the Cross of Nails and chose limited numbers of places throughout the world where this—where reconciliation can occur. And guess where they cho—you know, [*SL laughs*] they're in St. Paul's Chapel. It was dedi—you know, consecrated in 2005, and there's—every Sunday we put out, you know, the—this big cross

that's in—a cross that was made out of the cross of Cross of Nails in Coventry. And, [*claps hands*] anyway, I mean, that—it's that sort of thing, which has become—my point is that it's international. It's—yes, it's US. Yes, Americans should feel it more directly because of what happened on 9/11, but it's universal at this point. This—both the spirituality as well as the appreciation and sensitivity of the event itself. So . . .

SL: You know, I just get this sense that it's almost measurable in some . . .

CJ: It is.

SL: . . . by some science. I—it—just to have that—I love the swirl.

CJ: Right. [*Laughs*]

SL: The name of the swirl.

CJ: Yeah.

SL: You know, it's like a vortex of . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . of spirit there that's constant.

[00:55:49] CJ: Actually, the name came—you'll find this—how the name came from—the priest in charge of St. Paul's for several years is a person named Stuart Hoke, and he actually was—he grew up in Blytheville, and he . . .

SL: Blytheville, Arkansas.

CJ: Yep. And he went to SMU, and then he went to the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts—came back and—here to Arkansas and was—operated—and was part of the group at the cathedral in Little Rock, and then took on the chair—the—in—at Harrisburg—Harrison, not Harrisburg—Harrison—and was in charge of the Episcopal church there and then went to Texas and went—but became the assistant to the rector at Trinity and then became the rector in charge of—and he was the one that came up with the term, the swirl. [*Laughs*] And I think it's very appropriate.

SL: It is appropriate.

[00:56:53] CJ: Very, very appropriate. So—but—and Stuart—it's a—actually, there's another—you know, you've probably the bookstore about That Bookstore—it's in Blytheville. You know, it's a—it's one of the—it's really one of the three or four best-known bookstores in the country [CJ edit: South], and the woman who runs it, Mary Gay Shipley, was the one—was the person who sort of discovered John Grisham early.

SL: Aha.

CJ: And that may be the story. And Grisham always starts out his books—I'm sorry, I know I'm gettin'—but it has a point—anyway, so Grisham starts out his—all of his book tours by going

to That Bookstore, and the reason it's called That Bookstore is that Mary Gay Shipley had a different name for years, but she became the president of this international booksellers organization. And everybody would say to her, "Well, you have—you run that bookstore [*laughter*] in Blytheville, Arkansas." So she said, "Yes, that's my bookstore." But, anyway, she invited me to come down and read part of "St. Paul's Chapel"—she has book—and Mary Oliver and many other poets have been there, so she invited me to come down. But she knows Stuart, so Stuart and I came down together, actually, and he gave an introduction to St. Paul's because my—the signature poem of my most recent book of verse is "St. Paul's Chapel," and it's—you know, and the name of the book is *St. Paul's Chapel & Selected Shorter Poems*. So, anyway, he kicked it off, and so I now read my poetry while I was there. So, anyway, we did that in Blytheville, so—but Stuart was one who came up, and it's very graphic sort of terminology for the way in which people would experience St. Paul's Chapel.

SL: You know, it's a . . .

Trey Marley: Excuse me, Scott. We should probably change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:01] SL: We kinda digressed a little bit—ended up in

Blytheville, Arkansas . . .

CJ: Right. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . bookstore. But it was still—because of your work on the poem.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And I think what I was going to say before we had to change tapes was that—you mentioned that you spent several months—is that right—working on that poem.

CJ: Off and on, yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Off and on.

CJ: Right.

[00:59:30] SL: And it's really a short poem.

CJ: It is.

SL: But I'm quite certain you had no idea that it would become such a icon for 9/11 and for that chapel.

CJ: Right.

SL: When they—you talked about walking in, and there were three posters . . .

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . set up and one of 'em was your poem . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . you had no idea that they were . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . going to do that. And so this is almost like—the poem has almost become like a rock-and-roll star in the poetry arena, I would say. That it's published . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . not just here and not just in New York City but all . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . over the world and in different languages now.

[01:00:31] CJ: Well, it—actually, there's a—if I may just mention this—'cause we had a—we had sort of a family discussion about that because it has been given—and we had this discussion a number of years ago because, you know, this is something we never anticipated—none of us—the way that it would be accepted and the broad distribution that it would have and the way that it has become so—you know, so related to the effort at St. Paul's and has done internationally. And I was encouraged because when that happens to you as a poet—and a lot of this—they don't pay any attention to the copyright, you know, because it's—you read—I mean, you know, you read—in the front of the book it says, you know, that this is copyrighted by, you know, blah, blah, blah, and all that. And—but it's being used without any [*laughs*—you know, people . . .

SL: Any permissions.

[01:01:47] CJ: You know, it—and, finally, ever—you know, my family said, "Just let it go. Don't—you know, it has a life of its own now and you really can't control it." And, I mean, I had sort of come to that conclusion on my own, but it's also of real benefit when you have the people who are—you're very close to and your loved ones saying, "Just don't even think about it." And there are times when I've seen the poem appear someplace, and it's—they've renamed the title. It says, "It Stood," you know, rather than "St. Paul's Chapel." [*Laughs*] And the there'll be excerpts out of the—that the last four lines will be taken, and it'll appear somewhere, and you know, those things happen and you—but you really—you can't let that—I mean, you're—you ought to celebrate, and I hope I celebrate the fact that people are enjoying it and that it means something to so many people. And I have to say when I go in—and I—I'm—I go in very often to St. Paul's and I—we have a particular program that I'm the curator for. And it's—I'm there at least once a week and—once a week, plus I go there for my services every Sunday. And it—you know, I'm always—I get a certain rush when I see people read it and then get more copies, and [*laughter*] I know where—I know what it's going to do. And one day I was there and, like,

English teacher from Denver—you don't mind my going off in the  
[laughs] . . .

SL: No.

[01:03:44] CJ: But I—Denver—and my wife and I were there in the  
Denver—and she came up, and she taught English cour—and  
she'd got the copy of the poem. And then she said to my wife,  
who had no idea—she said, "Do you think I can get a few more?"  
And she says, "Yeah, I think you can." She said, "I would like to  
give—hand it out to my English class—my writing class in—back  
in high school." And so—but—and Freda looked at her [laughs]  
and she took, you know, like, [laughs] fifteen or sixteen. You  
know, fifteen, twenty copies with her. So, you know, I mean,  
those things—you know, and they happen. And there's a rush  
about it, you know. There's a certain rush.

[01:04:24] SL: Well, it is a nice—the card is—it is a nice  
presentation.

CJ: Right. It is.

SL: And, you know, you—she could've just taken one and make . . .

CJ: Right, right. It's true.

SL: . . . Xerox copies of it or whatever.

CJ: But it's a very nice [*unclear word*].

SL: It is a very nice card.

CJ: Right. You bet. And they discuss volunteerism on the back, and part of, you know, how I got involved in [*unclear words*]. No, actually, it says something more important than how I got involved. It's—it says something that's absolutely, and I didn't write the back of the card. Someone else—and I have no idea who wrote it, which is interesting.

SL: Huh. That's interesting.

CJ: I have no idea who wrote—but on the back of the card or back of the poem they're telling—and they say, you know, something about "the poet, Chester Johnson, found that he left with much more than he brought." I'm sorry. [Lowers his head and waves one hand] [*Laughs*] But, you know, that's how I—how the event—I'm sorry, I could—I always do this. But I have a . . .

SL: No, it's . . .

CJ: When I have a long interview, it ends up—I do get—at some point I get emotional about it, and I'm sorry. But, anyway, that—and that's the way—and that's—one of the more important things is that I got—the point of it is that I got more out of it than the people I was volun—I was ministering to. And . . .

[01:05:52] SL: You know, you mentioned having discussions with your family about it, and you know, I understand that it's not just the poem.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: It's everything . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . that brought the poem to you . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . basically.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Or I think.

CJ: Right.

[01:06:14] SL: There's so much in it, and it's such a short poem.

But as far as family goes, how did—how—did they—I mean, it seems like to me that you kind of committed to the cause there at St. Paul's. Did it rest well with your family as far as . . .

CJ: Oh, absolutely. Every—the—because it was such a—it became—it was iconic for people in New York and more—I mean, the rest of the country were involved, but people in New York especially. And there are very few New Yorkers you can go to that won't—you mention St. Paul's Chapel, and they know what it's about and how significant it was. So the fact that we had the ability to—we as a family to be part of it in sense of—yes, I was more involved in it, but my children also had the opportunity to volunteer. And it is a very meaningful—it was very meaningful

for them in so many different ways. I mean, they loved doing it. And I can remember one night they were there, and they had—we—the city had built this platform right beside St. Paul's because there's so many people coming to St. Paul's that they could—people would want to see what was going on down in the pit. And they would—you could line up for hours [*laughs*], and you could go up—in—on the platform and go to—and look right into the pit. And so it was a—it was February, I think, and it was snowy. It was snowing, and we had a break. We had some other people covering for us for a moment—for a few minutes—and it was a moment that I'll never forget, and that was my two children, and I got on the platform—went out—and we were alone on the platform looking down into the pit. And it was a very special moment for us. And those are—plus, you know, having the ability to give in that context was something that they fully appreciate, and I'm sure it was one of their special moments in their lives, to be able to have volunteered there. So . . .

[01:09:00] SL: Don't you sense that they, too, probably took away more than they brought?

CJ: Yes. Yeah, I do. We all did, and that's why, you know, that that whole memory of what I—the way I've described it on occasion—

and it sounds a little—it's almost too philosophical in some ways because it—everything was so [*claps hands*—got [*laughs*—responsive at St. Paul's. [01:09:32] But St. Paul's was the antithesis of what was taken away from us on 9/11, and that's how I charac—I've tried to characterize it for myself, is that on the one end, you have 9/11 and the attacks and the death and the dying and the brutality and all the rest on one end, and then you have St. Paul's on the other end with all the love and caring and giving and reconciliation and—on the other, and that it truly is the antithesis of 9/11. And I think most—well, maybe not everyone will articulate it that way. Certainly, I think that's—in functionality and in reality and in truth and inspiration, that's what it represented. And that's why it meant so much, I think, to people in New York but also to people outside New York that they could volunteer; and they could be part of this effort, which was in such juxtaposition of what happened on 9/11, and they could be part of it. And I believe that's why it attracts people now in the way that it does. I mean, think about it—I mean, it's after ten years, and we have over thirty thousand people coming through every week. And you go on any day, and it's, you know, a massive amount of people going through that little chapel, and it's to participate in what I'm—what I consider to be

the antithesis of what 9/11 was. Yeah.

[01:11:34] SL: Well, I'm gonna ask a favor of you to actually read "St. Paul's Chapel" for us. But before I do that, is there—can you think of anything about your experience with St. Paul's that you want to talk about? Because once you read this poem, I want to talk about the poem with you a little bit.

CJ: Okay.

SL: I mean, I think you've done a remarkable job of painting the circumstance and the—your life around St. Paul's after the circumstances. And I just wanna—I don't really wanna close that door . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . in other words. And I'm afraid that if we get to the poem itself and we start talking about the poem that—maybe more things will come up, but I just wanted to kind of let you . . .

CJ: Well, as I . . .

SL: First of all, I . . .

CJ: As I . . .

[01:12:39] SL: I'm assuming that you'll grant my wish and that [CJ *laughs*] you'll read the poem for me.

CJ: Oh, I'd love to read the poem.

SL: Okay, okay.

CJ: I'd love to read the poem, and I always love to read the poem. As I mentioned to you, I could go on for hours about St. Paul's and what it has meant to me. It has been so—such a centerpiece of my life for the last ten years that, you know, I—I'm never without stories about St. Paul's. And as I also indicated, I'm—you know, I'm there every Monday for—we have poets that I arrange to come in to read periodically, and I always begin by telling them the St. Paul's story. I mean, they know—they know about it, and that's why they eagerly wanna come, and I mean, whether—and whether it's just—so you know, if something comes up, I'll—but I think I've hit all the major points. I guess the only thing I will say in addition to this was we had a special service—two special services on the tenth anniversary for the recovery workers for two reasons. [01:14:13] One is it's sort of their recognition of them. It was for the recovery workers and the volunteers but then also to recognize that many of the people who came as recovery workers—some volunteers but mostly the recovery workers—aren't with us anymore because the experience that they had in terms of the—what they breathed in caused them to die or—I mean, we lost three within a matter of two weeks recently. And so there was this service, and it was held in St. Paul's Chapel,

and what an incredible experience after ten years—and they had—the people who did it—organized it—and I wasn't—I had helped get it off the ground, but it was a long story. I had—I was actually asked to do a major poetry event somewhere else. But, anyway—but I came to the service and—but I was not as involved. But they did this marvelous job in organizing. They had recovery workers doing personal stories like I'm—I've [*laughs*] gone through but much more so of what they experienced and what St. Paul's meant to them. And then at the start of the service they took the poem—and this is why we're sort of segueing into the poem—they took the poem, and they divided it up into four stanzas, and they gave each stanza to a particular recovery worker. And that recovery worker got up and read it, and then—you know, and so they did it by all four stanzas. It was very moving. Very moving.

[01:16:14] SL: I can't imagine. I can't imagine how moving that was, especially for you.

CJ: Right.

SL: For the author to . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . have a gathering around that.

CJ: Right. Yeah.

SL: It's something . . .

CJ: I mean, that was just part of it.

SL: I know, but still . . .

CJ: It was but part of the service, but it was—you know, it was [SL *sighs*], you know, an amazing event.

SL: Well, why don't we go ahead and—I happen to have . . .

CJ: Okay. Good. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . a copy from Mullins Library. And I—you know, I guess I've had this ever since our first interview.

CJ: Okay.

SL: I'm sure it's way past due, [*CJ laughs*] and I'm probably facing some kind of expulsion [*laughter*] from the building. But, you know . . .

CJ: If they need another one, I'll give it to . . .

[01:06:59] SL: I tell you [*CJ laughs*], it's not, of course, St. Paul's is just one piece . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . that's in this book. And there are many wonderful [*laughs*] pieces in this book. I . . .

CJ: Thank you.

SL: It's just great work. But I do think it would be helpful, and it would be just a golden opportunity for us to have you read

this . . .

CJ: Sure.

SL: . . . for us, if you don't mind.

[01:17:23] CJ: I'd love to. I'd love to. Thank you. [Reads from a



book] "St. Paul's Chapel." "It stood. / Not a window broken. / Not a stone dislodged. / It stood / when nothing else did. / It stood / when terrorists brought September down. / It stood among myths. It stood among ruins. / To stand was its purpose, long lines prove that. / It stands, and around it now, a shrine / of letters, poems, acrostics, / litter of the heart. / It is the standing people want: / To grieve, serve and tend / celebrate the lasting stone of St. Paul's Chapel. / And deep into its thick breath, / the largest banner fittingly from Oklahoma / climbs heavenward / with hands as stars, hands as stripes, hands as a flag; / and a rescuer reaches for a stuffed toy / to collect a touch; and / George Washington's pew doesn't go unused. / Charity fills a hole or two. / It stood / in place of other sorts. / It stood / when nothing else could. / The great had fallen, / as the brute hardware came down. / It stood." [Stops reading] Good.

SL: It—it's so short.

[01:19:23] CJ: Yeah, it's very short. Actually, I have to give my wife some credit for that, and it's not reluctant credit. I wrote

the poem, and then I had some extra lines at the end. And I read it through, and I thought, "You know, boy, this is good," and I—so—and I had the extra lines. And she said, "Think about it." No, Freda's not like that. She has strong opinions. [*SL laughs*] She didn't say, "Think about it." She said [*laughter*]—she says, "You oughta [ought to] cut it off at—right here and just say, 'it stood' and leave it." And so, you know, I grumbled to myself and we—one of my good friends is Miller Williams, you know. And Jordan would do that to his work and has for years. [*Laughs*] And he usually has the same reaction, and we compare notes on that. And, you know, he'll go in the other room and grumble a lot and—at least, according to Jordan—and that's what I did. [01:20:31] I mean, I went in the other room, and I thought about it for several days before it—and I came to the—it wasn't reluctant, but it—I came to the identical conclusion that it should be short, and it should—the punch should be this "it stood." And the Greeks used that as a methodology [*laughs*], I mean, in terms of the process and the method of emphasis. And it's—and so—but I did, so I have to give enormous credit to my wife for figuring—and it was almost instantaneous. She read the thing through, and she said, "It'll be much more effective if you stop here and just say, 'It stood,' and leave it." And so

that's how it happened.

[01:21:23] SL: Well, good. I'm glad the truth is out. [*Laughter*]

CJ: But I have—I've told that story on occasion, so—but—and if I don't tell it, Freda will. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, you know, not only is it short, but the language is embraceable. It's easily understood.

CJ: Right.

SL: There—there's not any million-dollar words . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . in it. There's no—it's—you can see how it—I mean, just nuts and bolts. It is easily appealing to a broad range.

CJ: Right.

[01:22:06] SL: And that's gotta be rewarding in a way that it has been widely accepted—that, you know, there's probably guys out there with that poem in their possession that maybe had never even read poetry before . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . or have no poetic experience or have never wanted to read a poem before or turn their . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . eyes away and their ears off whenever [*claps hands*] heard that stuff.

CJ: Right.

SL: It's just a—it's accessible.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: So . . .

[01:22:41] CJ: You know, it's interesting when you mention that.

They—it's changed. When the poem first came out, a line sort of—I don't know why it was the case, but a lot of people focused on "litter of the heart" 'cause they'd never sort of heard that phrase, and they said, "Wow." And so I'd never thought of, sort of—you know, you leave things that—you know, the people left letters on the—and bear in mind, this was right—soon after—you know, within a year after 9/11, so it was fresh on their minds about the pictures that'd been left on the fences and the—and, you know, the letters and all the mementos and all that kind of stuff that—you know, we leave it. It's like, you know, when you're finished with, you know, whatever, you know, your coffee mug or your—you know, on a—you know, on a Styrofoam or whatever, you throw it away. I mean, it's like—that's—it comes from your heart, and you leave it, and it's sort of—and it's litter of the heart. And people [*unclear word*]"Wow, what is the"—you know, but the heart is greater than what you do in—you know, in—I mean, that's sort of a—the meaning of it, in other

[*unclear word*] where you come, you feel, you leave a memory or whatever, but it's effectively litter of the heart. [01:24:10] And a lot of people really focused—and I got a lotta [lot of] correspondence from people saying, "Gee, what a great line!" [Laughs] I mean, but you know . . .

SL: It is a great line.

[01:24:19] CJ: And so then—but since then, the larger poem has taken more of a significance. It wasn't just that phrase or an—one or—and another one said, "The great had fallen as the brute hardware came down." There are people who really like that. But, generally speaking, the last few years it's been the whole thing. People just—you know, "It stood," [*unclear words*] and how it sort of—so—and that's—most of the comments I get are on the—you know, not on the—sort of the fragments of it, but it's totality. But . . .

SL: Well . . .

CJ: So . . .

[01:25:01] SL: When I first fell on "litter of the heart," I immediately thought of the—kind of the desperate notices on the fence.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: You know, of . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . "Please contact me" . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: "If you see this, please contact me." And I—and the sum total of it—I mean, each individual piece and a piece of paper on a fence is kind of physically litter.

CJ: Right, right.

SL: But it's—but the whole effect of the fence being filled with that in and of itself becomes a giant heart.

CJ: Right. Exactly.

SL: And so . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . it's no wonder people like that. I mean . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . it's—there's a number of ways to . . .

CJ: No.

SL: . . . embrace it.

CJ: No, there is. There is.

[01:25:58] SL: I also found it interesting to see George Washington in the lines.

CJ: Right.

SL: And it's really—now correct me if I'm wrong—is it really the only reference to the chapel's age? I mean, it . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: And it kind of exalts, and it's a pew, and it—and so you immediately think, "Well, George Washington was there in that pew" . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . and it was put to use—even though that's kind of a sacred American name—next to a religious icon, it's—it was, like, everybody—I mean, all parts of the chapel—nothing was sacred. It was all about service, and it was all about support . . .

CJ: Right.

[01:26:49] SL: . . . for what was going on. So the economy of the language is—I just thought was as . . .

CJ: Well, thank you.

SL: It was thrilling.

CJ: I appreciate it. And in some ways, that was a little bit more of a—you had to know—maybe I was being too private on that because you had to know a little bit about it. It was almost sort of a secret message for the people who knew what had gone at St. Paul—at George Washington's pew. As I had previously said, we had two or three podiatrists working [*laughs*] in his pew. The pew is actually in a square. And so you can—you know, they—it was—those old boxes that were in old churches, if you recall,

and so—and the pew had a bench around it, you know, and that's where people could—so that was [*unclear words*] the pew, but it was actually a box, and so we had podiatrists working on feet in there. So here you [*laughs*] have—you know, it's a—it's really ironic—sort of out of touch, you know—out of context. You have George Washington, this—you know, one of the eminents of our country's history, and yet you've got these podiatrists in there working on people's feet [*laughter*] who have just come off of the pile, you know. So—and it's—so I don't say that, I just said, you know, "George Washington's pew doesn't go unused." And it's a—you know, if you didn't know what had been happeni—had happened, you wouldn't know what was going—you would say, "Well, I guess somehow it got used in some fashion." I guess you didn't really need to know it, but it was sort of a—in some ways it was sort of a secret code to people who [*laughs*] knew what had gone in there in terms of that, sort of the understatement of it . . .

[01:28:38] SL: Yeah, well, I mean . . .

CJ: . . . because it definitely [*laughs*] doesn't . . .

SL: . . . that—you know . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's kind of clever for the . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . private audience . . .

CJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . but for the general public, it's a clue.

CJ: Right, it is.

SL: It's a big clue . . .

CJ: Right, exactly.

SL: . . . that this is something—we're talkin' about a place that's  
old . . .

CJ: Right, exactly.

SL: . . . and we're talkin' about a place that was frequented by, you  
know, arguably, one on the most popular American icons . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . in its history.

CJ: Right, exactly.

[01:29:04] SL: So—and that it's across—that it's tied with 9/11  
just—it—I don't know, the dynamic is . . .

CJ: Right. No, it's . . .

SL: It's pretty well established in the single stanza there—in a single  
line. It's quite amazing.

CJ: Well, thank you.

SL: I was really . . .

CJ: Thank you.

SL: . . . taken aback by [*CJ laughs*] how effective that was.

CJ: Well, thank you. That's a . . .

[01:29:28] SL: Well, okay, so this thing just skyrocketed out of  
[*laughs*] St. Paul's Chapel . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . to everywhere and thirty thousand people a week . . .

CJ: Hmm.

SL: . . . are picking that poem up or . . .

CJ: Maybe not all of 'em, but they . . .

SL: The . . .

CJ: There's a fair number [*laughs*] of them that do.

SL: Well, I mean, it's a . . .

CJ: You're right.

SL: . . . memento . . .

CJ: Right, exactly.

SL: . . . thing and . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: And it's something they can take away with them and how . . .

CJ: Right. And they . . .

SL: . . . how beautiful is that?

CJ: Right. And they . . .

[01:29:58] SL: I mean, it may—you may be suffering some loss from it in some ways, but again, I think you are—you've got to—I can see how you've—you're taking much more away than . . .

CJ: Oh, there's no question about it. Yeah. And—but being—even going beyond the poem—just being—having been a volunteer, I think what they were saying in the back of the card was—you know, I came to give, and all the volunteers came to give. But what they took away from their giving was more than their giving. I mean, that they took more away for themselves than—and it—I think that's true. I mean, it—there's a replenishment a double—a redoubling [*laughs*] of that of what you give when you're—when you give in that context. And I think that's—you know, that's—that was the St. Paul's experience for me. And there's a woman who I—and I'm sort of saying the same—but I'll mention her—she makes this comment for—she's interviewed a lot about this as well. She's head of communications for Trinity Wall Street, and she was a volunteer. And she would volunteer on Tuesday nights and—for similar reasons that I like to volunteer at night as well. [01:31:39] And she said, "You know, I came because I wanted to do something, but I realized that ultimately why I was coming is I was—it was healing me. I needed to be healed." And it—course [of course], she had a

very rough day as well on 9/11, and she thought that she was going to perish for similar reasons that I did. And—because she was, you know, close to it as a part of the communications department at Trinity. So—you know, but she makes that point virtually every time that, you know, she was healed as a result of it. And I think that that's a very persuasive comment about it, that those of us who were undone by 9/11, St. Paul's served to heal us. And the way you do it is by that extra giving, and I—you know, so we took more than we gave. So . . .

[01:32:53] SL: You know, I—I've—I'm a—I can't remember exactly who it was we were interviewing, but a lady was telling an early childhood church experience where—I think it was Edith Irby Jones.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: She—her father said, you know, she had some money. Some pennies or something, and her father said, "Now you go up there and put it in the plate." And she said, "No, [*laughs*] I don't wanna do that." [*Laughter*]

CJ: Right.

SL: "I don't wanna give my money away."

CJ: Right. [*Laughs*]

SL: And he said, "No! Go up there. You will get more than you put

in."

CJ: Right. [*Laughs*] Well, that's nice.

SL: [*Laughs*] And so she went up there, and she put their money in, and she stood there and waited [*laughter*] for more to come back.

CJ: That's funny.

SL: But, you know, it is a theme. It is . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . there is a theme that you get back more than you give.

CJ: Right.

SL: And I don't know if it's just a Christian theme, but it is a—in this case . . .

[01:33:55] CJ: I think it's both a Judeo and Christian theme. Right.

SL: Yeah, I think the—this is evidence . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . that it's true—that it happens. And so, anyway, I . . .

CJ: No, no.

SL: I thought you might enjoy that . . .

CJ: I think that's good.

SL: . . . humorous antidote.

CJ: I like that. Right.

SL: But that . . .

CJ: That's a good story.

SL: And, of course, Edith Irby Jones went on to give . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . so much more . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . than anybody that—nearly anybody.

CJ: Right.

SL: Well, you know, I wanna take a little bit different tact now.

CJ: Sure.

[01:34:28] SL: In the—our previous time together, I always ask about religion and church and Sunday school and grace and all these things in growing up. And as I remember, really, there were a couple of things about the role of church and religion in your growing up. One was that your—I believe your—you lost your father early.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And your mother was kind of at odds with God about that as I . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . remember you saying.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: But that she pretty much insisted that you all—the children

attend church.

CJ: Right.

SL: And, of course, later on, she became more active—as much of a social thing and maybe the support . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: Again, probably getting more out of it than what she expected. But I also got the impression that it was not really a central thing that your life was built around, growing up.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: That—and I think we'll—later on we'll—maybe not—it's certainly not an atheist, but almost an agnostic stance growing up. So I'm just wondering, when was it that this influence—this church-centered influence entered your life? What—how did that come about?

[01:36:02] CJ: That's a very good question. I think it happened through my—through literature. And I—I've—I know it happened [*laughs*] through literature. I grew up a Methodist, and we didn't have what was equivalent to what the Anglican Church or the Episcopal Church have in the form of *The Book of Common Prayer*. And *The Book of Common Prayer* has—it's a—I—it is a wonderful—wonderfully literary piece, and it's a—the prayers are beautiful and—not that the Methodist book—it was—

I mean, but there were—it wasn't—it—they didn't—the Methodist Church just didn't have sort of the literary tradition that the Anglican and the Episcopal Church had, notwithstanding John Wesley and all the others but just never quite the literary tradition. And I really admired *The Book of Common Prayer* and also the fact that there were so many poets associated with *The Book of Common Prayer*—well, not directly with *The Book of Common*, but with the Anglican Church and with—I mean, George Herbert—you know, wonderful poet. John Donne—my God, you know, I mean, [*laughs*] wonderful, wonderful poet he was. Gerard Manley Hopkins, you know, and I—had some association, mostly Catholic—but the Anglo-Catholic kind of world that surrounded *The Book of Common Prayer*. And so I was associated with it and—I mean, I associated in terms of my interest in it, [*TM coughs*] not formally associated with it.

[01:38:10] Well, Chester Johnson goes to New York, [*SL coughs*] and he works a while, and he's also workin' on his poetry and that sort of thing. And he gets a—he begins to do some work with an older poet at the time named Jean Starr Untermeyer.

SL: Okay.

CJ: And her husband's [*SL coughs*] name is Louie Untermeyer, who

was a very famous anthologist of poetry over many years.

[*Sniffs*] And so—and Jean Starr and Louie had been married and divorced at least a couple of times, but anyway, they were living apart at this point. [*SL coughs*] And she was doing some translations, and she and I began to do some collaborative translations of various poetry. And about that time—and now I'm in my twenties—I'm in my—probably twenty-four or twenty-five, something like that—about that time I hear about this work that is being done on *The Book of Common Prayer*—that it's being—that there's a revision of *The Book of Common Prayer* going on that really hasn't been done in several centuries, and that they—and that the Psalms, which I've all—had always considered poems, and they are poems . . .

SL: Sure.

[01:39:41] CJ: . . . were part of that. And I did some investigation, and I found out that—you know, it was very well—they had lots of scholars, and W. H. Auden was on the committee. And they sent around—after working a few months on it, they sent around a—five poems that they—or five Psalms that they were revising—and their revisions. And I'd done enough translations. I looked at the first five. I was able to secure on my own interest, and I looked at the five, and I said, "Gee, I

can't believe that Auden's really spending a lot of time on this."  
I mean, I just didn't—I didn't resonate with it. Now this is the  
hubris of the young, right?

SL: Sure.

CJ: So I looked at the five, and I said, "Gee, you know, I don't think  
Auden is doing a lot of work on it." So I send a letter to several  
members of the revision committee of the Psalms, and I said, "I  
looked at this, and had you—did you think about doing this? Did  
you think about doing the other?" Blah, blah, blah, and I'm  
doing this very courteously, but [*unclear words*]*—and I sent a*  
*letter to the custodian of *The Book of Common Prayer*. I mean,*  
*the guy who's in charge of the entire *Book [SL laughs] of**  
*Common Prayer*. I mean, you talk about hubris. My God! And  
[*laughter*] got notes back from Auden and from other people and  
all this stuff. [01:41:23] But then I got a long letter from the  
custodian of *The Book of Common Prayer*, who was the chairman  
of the Psalter Revision Committee, and you've gotta—in order to  
do the—to be that, I mean, you've gotta know—away from  
English—you've gotta know Hebrew, Greek, old Latin, modern  
Latin—I mean, all that kinda—so he sends me back a letter, and  
he said, "Why don't you come and meet me at the national"—  
which is in New York—the Episcopal national headquarters. So I

go see him, and we sit around, and we chew the fat for about an hour and a half. Only later did I know that his wife had passed on two days before that. ?Jesus Christ?.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

[01:42:13] CJ: But, anyway, by the time I left, I—he—well, one thing I had done—sorry—I left part of the story—I said—I wrote in the letter—this is even—it gets worse in [*laughter*] terms of arrogance—but I—and I said, "You know, I would be more than happy if when y'all finish these, to offer suggestions just—you know, I'm—I—just as an interested observer," and that's I put myself. "As an interested observer, I'd be more than happy because this means something to me." Here I am, a Methodist, and I'm not even Episcopalian, and I'm twenty-five years old, and you know, anybody could [*SL laughs*]*—well, you know, and too arrogant for my own good. And so I go see him. An hour and a half later, he invites me to be a member of the drafting committee. And Auden is actually leaving the United States about that time, going back to—he had been appointed to the poetry [*sniffs*] chair at Oxford to—where he had graduated, and he was going back home, basically. And so he wasn't gonna be spending much time on it any longer, so I get—I become a member of the drafting committee on the—for the Psalter in *The**

*Book of Common Prayer*. [01:43:37] And I worked for—  
between—I worked five solid, but seven years in total, but five—  
well, when I say solid, I mean, I—we met two weeks out of each  
year, but we had to do independent work and put pieces of it  
together. And mine was really on the poetry. Mine was not on  
the translations. But I got to know—I got to really dig deep into  
the translations. And within probably two or three years—here,  
he had appointed me, being a Methodist. I wasn't Episcopalian.  
He appointed me, and I just gradually fell in love with the  
Episcopal Church. And it began to mean, you know, what it did  
and thro—it was through the language that—of *The Book of  
Common Prayer*, and my love of it and my work—and then my  
work with it. And one thing led to another. I began reading  
theology and Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and  
Buber and Tillich and—you know. And I just got into it. And so  
it had a manifest impact on me, and I became very intent. My  
religion—it's not just religion. In some ways, I—Bonhoeffer  
made a comment once to a—wrote a note to his friend—he says,  
"I hate religion. [*Laughter*] And I hate—I am—I hate being  
considered religious." So I understand what—it's the—it's not  
the institutionalization, it's the spirituality of it that is what—and  
it's the spirituality of the language, and it's the spirituality of

what it does to people that—you know, it made a difference in my life. [01:45:53] And so I was—religion was not our—and certainly not spirituality was not part of my upbringing, but the seeds were planted there. I mean, you know, goin' to church, and I knew enough about the Bible, and I—there were members of my family away from my mother who were pretty religious, and so I had that as a little bit—you know, the institute—the infrastructure was there, we just needed a—something needed to be done. And I have a very active prayer life. I mean, I pray and read the scriptures twice a day and—not that people have to do that, but I mean, I'm just saying that I have a very active prayer and spiritual life. And I go to St. Paul's every Sunday for the small service, and then I go to the big church for the eleven fifteen service. And I serve on the vestry of the—of Trinity. Sometimes I'm sure the rector wishes I would [*laughs*—didn't serve [*laughter*] on the vestry, but anyway, it's very important to my life.

[01:47:11] SL: Well, that became clear as the—as you started talking about 9/11 and your involvement at St. Paul's . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . and some of the other things I've read. But . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . it—you know, and I understand the different or what you're tryin' to say about religion versus spirituality.

CJ: Right.

SL: You know, in most of the interviews that I do, the religion side of the thing and the spirituality side of the thing are maybe kind of grayed and a little bit confused 'cause there's so much ceremony . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . involved and so much repetition and habit, you know, that it almost becomes, in some cases, kind of comical, you know.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: The—who says grace around the table? Well, maybe the kids would say . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . you know, two words and that . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . would be their version of grace . . .

CJ: Right.

[01:48:09] SL: . . . 'cause they're tryin' to get out of it, or you may [*claps hands*]  
—maybe there's a Bible in the house, and people [*claps hands*]  
go to it, and they spend time with it or . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . there's prayers at bedtime that not really—you get the impression no one really understands exactly why they're doing it [*coughs*] or why they're brought up that way, but that's the way they were brought up.

CJ: Right.

SL: So in your case, I just didn't get that passion for the religion, growing up, that I'm seeing now, that . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . that . . .

[01:48:43] CJ: But, you know, there's a little bit of history on [*SL clears throat*] that, and I'll—that—that's interesting. You know, I grew up in Monticello, and my paternal grandparents lived in Wilmar for most of the time, although my aunt and my grandmother moved to Monticello later on. But there was never sort of—you know, and the—religion, per se, was never really sort of—even they didn't—there wasn't a forcing it. It was a matter—because I'll tell you a real interesting story—my grandfather—my paternal grandfather who was Methodist, but who was more than an agnostic as a young man. He—as a young man, he was a hard and fast atheist. And he and other men of the same views [*SL coughs*] used to break up revival camps in Arkansas—southeast—southwest Arkansas and in

Texas by riding—you know, riding horses through the camps.

SL: Through the tents.

CJ: And disturbing and uprooting and creating havoc in these revival camps. And he was certain that, you know, their—you know, I'm—I've heard the stories. He was certain there was no God and that it was actually intellectually damaging to the world around us and . . .

SL: And many would say a source of problems. Wars and . . .

CJ: Right. Exactly.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:50:33] CJ: And so he was intellectual about that, and yet he—and I don't know what the nature of it—because he was a lot—well, I was, like, four or five when he died, so I never had these [SL clears throat] conversations, so most of this is through, you know, secondary sources but no primary sources, so—but [clears throat] apparently he had a conversion experience no unlike [laughs] St. Paul's in some respects. And—but my point about all of this is that there was never the force that—you know, you may be agnostic today, Chester—I mean, the theme was, we're all within salvation. You don't necessarily achieve salvation by virtue of what your family foist on you. If you're an independent thinker and you're an independent person, it will come if it

comes. And that was actually a theme. And it wasn't unu—I mean, and it—my—the fact that my mother was—oh, for most of my sort of growing-up years, was largely an agnostic didn't really fall out of that sort of model, if you will. I mean, it's okay to be an agnostic, even though—I mean, you know, because something will happen or may happen or whatever. And so I—I'm only saying that my own experience was not outside the sort of family tradition. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

[01:52:18] CJ: And so—and my other grandfather was actually not religious at all. I mean, we've—there's a whole story of where he ended up being buried simply because that he was an agnostic in the sense that he—you know, it's a—I remember Mother telling me this story once that, you know, when he was getting old—he was getting to a point where it appeared, you know, he could die in the not-too-distant future, and they asked him, "Where would you like to be buried?" He was living in Little Rock at the time, and he said, "Ah, don't worry about it. You know, we're just like dogs. Throw me out in the backyard." And so he would never respond to the question, so there was a big uproar when he died, where they would bury him. So, you know, I mean, I wasn't gettin' a lot [*laughs*], you know. I

mean—no, no—so it came—but there wasn't a distraction in terms of the—sort of—there was institutional streams of agnosticism in my family, but it—on the other hand, there was a lot of infrastructure that—and availability that was given to me—that were given to me that eventually found fruit as I became more involved on my own and—in the literature of theology of precedent. So . . .

[01:53:51] SL: I guess it was okay if you were agnostic as long as you behaved and tried to do the right thing and . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . understood . . .

CJ: Exactly.

SL: . . . what was right and wrong and . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: And I do sense that coming through it privately and personally getting that spirituality discovered by self rather than preached to you or fed to you, you know. Discovering it is probably—I don't know—its retention is probably—I mean, it's genuine, I would guess . . .

CJ: Yes.

SL: . . . is what I would say.

CJ: But there's also some—one other element. I started out with the

literary side . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: . . . but there's also another part of it . . .

SL: Okay.

[01:54:42] CJ: . . . that was equally as important, and that is, growing up in the South that we grew up in, that the civil rights movement was enlivened—inspired by the black churches and the fact that you had people who were willing to put their lives at substantial danger because they believed in rightness and God, and the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. And they're willing to die because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it does bend toward justice. I have to say that's a hell of a persuasive argument, too, when you would see the things courageously that so many of the civil rights workers were willing to do and to put their ri—their lives at risk—that was pretty persuasive, too. I have to tell you, having lived through that period, I could—I would say, yes, you know, literature played its important role, but I have to tell you, the civil rights movement also did. And that—it was very educational for, I think, our generation.

SL: Now . . .

CJ: Whether you're black or white.

[01:56:21] SL: How old were you when you came back to Monticello to teach?

CJ: Well, I taught after—within a year after I worked—I mean, after I graduated here.

SL: Okay.

CJ: And . . .

SL: I mean, part of that you . . .

[01:56:37] CJ: It was the last year before total inte—before integration of the public schools, and I taught in the African American schools the year before integration occurred. But it was a year after I'd graduated here. It was, like, [19]69, [19]70, [19]69. But I'm just saying—I mean, you were askin' me about sort of the formative process here, and I was—because it was a really—you know, it was so interesting, so it's—there was so much—I don't know whether I should go here or not. But, I mean, there was—the religious establishments so—particularly in the white churches at the time—were giving the—you know, the interpretation of the Bible and the way in which it was presented were so—was so different in so many respects than what was happening on the street. And then, on the other hand, you didn't see white preachers out there doing what—what's happening in the civil rights, and you didn't—I mean, for

example, there's this wonderful scene—it has nothing to do with the white preacher, but one of the Little Rock seven—one of the girls—black girls—a young woman—was isolated and that she was getting spit at and hammered and yelled at and even struck on occasion by, you know, this white mob. And this—I'm sure, a very spiritually oriented—she wouldn't have done it [*laughs*] otherwise—white woman—middle-age woman came up in the midst of all of that and said, "Honey, I have to take care of you," and took that black student—you know, I'm talkin' about Little Rock Central, as you know.

SL: Yeah, sure.

CJ: And I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[01:58:45] CJ: And took care of her and put her on a bus and, you know, took her away from this white mob. And you didn't have, you know, the institutional—white institutional church makin' that kind of statement. So, I mean, you had that kind of conflict going on, and I think that some of us realized that spirituality existed on the street in what was happening in civil rights.

[*Unclear words*]. Anyway, I'm probably blithering. [*Laughs*]

SL: No, I think that's a great point. I think that's a really great point and . . .

TM: Scott, we should probably change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[01:59:19] CJ: No, I had made the comment that I got involved in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and I was a member—one of the seven members of the drafting committee for the revision of the Psalms after I met with the custodian of *The Book of Common Prayer*. His name was Charles Mortimer Guilbert. And he spelled his name, Guilbert, in an unusual way. It was a Norman spelling and—*G-U-I-L-B-E-R-T*. But we worked together for virtually a decade on—we—I really—the way I describe my involvement in the Psalter—the revision of the Psalms—was that Auden was the show horse, and I was the workhorse.

SL: Ah.

[02:00:24] CJ: And Charles would put out drafts of the Psalms of—we would take a certain number of Psalms every six months and work on them, and then we would meet for two weeks—no, for a week, sorry—and then we'd work on another batch and then work on them for a week together. So it—we worked together on them two weeks out of each year. Well, I just—I really got into working on them, and Charles and I became very close, and it almost became a father-son kind of relationship. And as you know, my father died when I was only one, and so Charles really

became a father figure to me. And when my son was born, I named him Guilbert—*G-U-I-L-B-E-R-T*—after Charles. My family here in Arkansas was not so happy about it [*SL laughs*]—my mother and my aunt and all—because they didn't know who this guy was, and all of them were Methodists anyway or at least they—by that—they were on the rolls in that church. So, anyway—but—and my daughter's name is Juliet, the way in which Shakespeare spelled it—*J-U-I-L-I-E-T* [CJ edit: *J-U-L-I-E-T*]. But it was that—at the time I was married my first wife, and we thought that was a lovely name, so that's what we chose. So that's the derivation of the—our two—my two children's names.

[02:02:30] SL: Well, thanks for gettin' those names in there. I . . .

CJ: Okay.

SL: . . . was a bit remiss when I didn't ask you . . .

CJ: No, that's all right.

SL: . . . for them earlier.

CJ: That's okay.

SL: The—this is our third tape in this session, so you've survived a couple hours with me now . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . and I had a great time. I'm glad that we went ahead and went to St. Paul's first. I . . .

CJ: I'm glad you . . .

SL: . . . feel like . . .

CJ: Good.

SL: We might—can go back and forth with that, you know, the rest of the . . .

CJ: Yeah, because it's not dead. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

CJ: I mean, it's . . .

SL: Yeah, I mean . . .

[02:03:06] CJ: . . . it's alive. I mean, you know, the tenth anniversary—tenth commemoration—I don't like saying anniversary 'cause anniversary sounds like a celebration.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: Commemoration, I think, is a better word for it. But it's just occurred, and I mean, it was a—an amazing experience going through that. And it's—you know, it has its own life now, so—and there were things that we did durin' that period. I was asked along with six poets to be—there was a commemorative reading, and they chose seven leading American poets to read and—Poets House did—and—to read primarily about 9/11 poems but also poems other than 9/11 that played a role within sort of the 9/11 theme. And it was really an amazing—we ended up

with three hundred people—more than three hundred people coming to the event. And one of the board members of the Poets House came to—up to me and said, "I just want to let you know that this is what we've been looking forward to—we've been wanting to do for ten years." You know, it's—how do you put your arms poetically around—I mean, as an organization—around an event like—you know, I mean, like 9/11? It's impossible. And what a wonderful event it was. But, anyway, that and then the—I mentioned the two services we had for the recovery workers and all that happened. There were—you know, it was just an extraordinary time, and it's building—you know, it's built on top of that, so . . .

[02:05:02] SL: Well, of course, the—I think the value for us is to hear these stories from someone that experienced 9/11 firsthand.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: You know, the nation experienced it all on TV as it was happening, and everyone was horrified and, you know . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . everyone kind of pulled together over it, but it's being—not being there on the ground.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: No one—you just can't know . . .

CJ: No, I know.

SL: . . . what it was like. And so you being able to tell us these stories and what—and how it has evolved is—I think it's pretty priceless, so I appreciate you . . .

[02:05:46] CJ: Well, I'm glad I'm able to do this because I will say this—that my wife is better about this than I am because I'm so active. I don't have a lot of time to do it, but anything that happens to me, for example, related to 9/11 events, whether it's the History Channel or BBB—BBC or whether there's interviews here or tapes there or whatever, she—to the people who have shown a real interest over the years in that—in the 9/11 story related to us, she always sends out information like that. And so she's very good about doing that, and I'm—I admire her for doing it, and she does it all on her own, so it's—so, anyway, I'm . . .

SL: Well . . .

CJ: I'm only makin' the point that there seems to be a thirst for it out there if based upon this sort of small group that we know [*laughs*] about . . .

SL: Right.

CJ: . . . or throughout the country who wanna know more, and she

tries to help in that respect.

SL: So we kind of—we got a little bit back to Monticello [pronounced MontiCHELLO]

CJ: Hmm. Well, it's Monticello [pronounced MontiSELLO] . . .

SL: Monticello [pronounced MontiSELLO].

CJ: . . . here.

SL: Monticello [pronounced MontiCHELLO] . . .

CJ: But Monticello [pronounced MontiCHELLO] in . . .

SL: . . . in . . .

CJ: . . . in Virginia.

SL: . . . Virginia. [CJ laughs] I'm sorry. I always . . .

CJ: That's [laughs] okay.

SL: I always slip up on that.

CJ: That's okay.

SL: I don't know, maybe I feel more sophisticated if I say Monticello [pronounced MontiCHELLO]. [CJ laughs] I don't know.

Anyway, the . . .

CJ: Same Latin words, you know.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: The small table.

[02:07:22] SL: [CJ laughs] We were talkin' before we started today about biology class.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you just said, "Well, I got kicked out of [*CJ laughs*] biology class in high school." And I think you need to tell us how that came about.

[02:07:37] CJ: Well, it's a—I guess it's sort of an interesting story.

The person that was teaching me biology had a creation kind of view of the world, which is—you know, I'm very religious, and I'm—I—I'm very spiritual, let's put it that way. And I wasn't necessarily buying off on all of this immediate sort of—you know, it's seven days, and the world is created and all that, and the—in the conventional seven days. It may be seven days by some measure that I [*laughs*] don't know about.

SL: Biblical proportions.

CJ: Right. [*Laughter*] Exactly. But, anyway, I don't know about seven days, so I started doing research in sort of the various phases that embryos go through and, you know, the—with hair and fuzz and all this kinda stuff, and I started having discussions about it. And we ended up having more than just discussions. It started dominating a good chunk of the time, and finally, she was just—told me I wasn't—you know, I wasn't being constructive. So I had to—and, literally, I had to—and, literally, I never took a biology course. I didn't take one in high school or

in college. But in high school in Arkansas, it's mandatory, but then by being in Monticello, which is close to the—obviously, next door to the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and they allowed students on occasion and—from Monticello High School to take courses. And there was one course that we—some of us took, which was a physics course, and so that was allowed to be used for my . . .

SL: An equivalent.

CJ: For that class.

SL: An equivalency.

[02:09:45] CJ: The equivalent. And I—but they actually had to—I understand they had to appeal to the Department of Education to get that waiver, so . . .

SL: [*Clears throat*] That was Arkansas A&M at the time.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Is that—that's right.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And . . .

CJ: Wonderful, by the way. They did—they allowed you to audit classes and—you know, like this physics course—we—I mean, which was a real credit course that we took and I—it was such a resource for us, growing up in that community—being able—and

they opened their arms to students coming in and taking advantage. I mean, the library was available to us, and oh, it was just wonderful. I'm sorry. I interrupted your question.

SL: No, no. The—so comin' out of high school, you get your diploma.

CJ: Right, [*laughs*] I got my diploma.

SL: [*Laughs*] I—and, you know, we make it sound like, you know, it was a real—and I guess, in some ways, it was kind of touchy—touch and go there . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . for a moment, but it really wasn't because of poor grades.

CJ: No, no, it's true.

[02:10:53] SL: In this case, you were pretty much challenging the—oh, the syllabus of the class or the . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . flavor of the syllabus of the class. And you . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . just wouldn't let it rest.

CJ: Right.

SL: And so I get the impression that it was taking away time to get through the course or something. You all . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: You and the teacher would . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . go head to head. But you graduated high in your class.

CJ: Yeah.

SL: How—were you top of the class or . . .

CJ: No, there were—there—we had a bunch of people who did well in high school. Montice—the class I grew up with was a very good class. I was, like, I think third in the—in my class, but I was—I wasn't at the very top of my class. I had mostly A's all through school, but I think the people who finished top had straight A's all the way through. And I—you know, I didn't had straight A's. I had maybe a couple of B's, and I forget where they came—surfaced. It may've been when I was a page, and I got a B or something, and they transferred it over as a B or whatever. I don't remember. I don't recall.

[02:12:13] SL: All right. So now you were—you say when you were a page. This is a congressional page?

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: In Washington, DC.

CJ: Yes.

SL: And this is—you're still in high school at the time? Is that the way . . .

CJ: I was actually in the ninth grade.

SL: In the ninth grade.

[02:12:27] CJ: In the ninth grade. And I got interest—there's a little bit of a story here. It's sort of interesting, though. My paternal grandfather I talked about who was the—lived in Wilmar—was a farmer—was a very successful farmer and was a depot agent and all that kind of stuff there and had been the agnostic before he had this St. Paul's conversion-type experience—but, anyway, he was reasonably powerful in Drew County where we grew up, and he wanted his daughter to be the postmistress in—for Wilmar. And his daughter was—hadn't—was unmarried and lived at home, and he thought it'd be a perfect thing. Well, W. H. [CJ edit: W. F.] Norrell —that was our congressman—who lived in Monticello—didn't give her the appointment, and there was always this cross thing from then on. So when I was about thirteen, I'd been reading up about being a page and whatever, and I didn't tell my mother about it. So I went out—I—Norrell was in town. [SL laughs] Another—you know, this hubris kind of thing—anyway I go up, and I go into his office, and I was walkin' back from school one day, and I went in his office. And he knew the Johnson family, and he knew I was a Johnson, and so he asked me to come in. So I

came into his office, and he said, "What can I do for you?" And so I told him I wanted to be a page, and he said, "Well, you're a little young. Most of the time they're in high school, but I'll check into it." So I think as a gesture because of my grandfather—by that time had passed away—but politicians remember things, you know.

SL: Absolutely.

[02:14:32] CJ: And so I think it was a gesture of reconciliation to the Johnson family. He thought it'd be a good idea, and so he put me at the top of the list. And then I—I'm—and then I told my mother about it, and my mother wasn't overly thrilled about it because there was no—at that time, there was no supervision of pages. You lived wherever you wanted to. You got a salary. You know, you could—and so she called—she talked to the congressman and said, "Is he too young? I mean, my goodness, he"—and Norrell said, "I'd rather have him at this age than when he's sixteen or seventeen. There's a lot less trouble he's gonna get into." And so I became a page. And I was a—it was a really interesting—it was in [19]59. I—when I became a—I was fourteen when I became a page, and I was in the ninth grade. And what a wonderful—I mean, it was unbelievable. It was the last year of Eisenhower's administration. It was in the middle of

an election—a presidential election, when John Kennedy was running, and Lyndon Johnson was majority leader of the Senate. Sam Rayburn was Speaker of the House. John McCormack was the majority leader in the House. It was just a—you know, these were all characters. I remember going into the men's room, and Hubert Humphrey was crying because he had lost the West Virginia primary to John Kennedy. And, you know, I mean, what an incredible time to be there. It was just an amazing time. [02:16:20] And I was—I got so into it that I didn't see—didn't go out to any of the exhibits or monuments or any of that stuff until—and then my last [*laughs*] week in Washington I said, "I'm sure I'm gonna be asked about all these monuments." [*SL laughs*] And I—so I went on a sprint of all the [*laughs*] places I should've been looking at over the months I was there. But, anyway, it was a terrific experience. I actually got to—I—everybody serves as a page for everybody, at least in the House, not on the Senate. You're not a Senate for—you know, you're representative for all the—I mean, you're a page for all the representatives. And one day John [*SL clears throat*] McCormack's office called up and had us—had asked for a page to come down and explain to a Japanese delegation what a page does. So I went down and—I mean, I was asked 'cause I was

the only one hangin' around at the time, I guess. It was pure luck. So I go down, and I make a presentation, and so from then on, whenever McCormack wanted a page, he'd ask for me. And then on the—or his office would ask for me. And then on the weekends, occasionally I would go in, and they would—they'd ask me to work or do very odd jobs and that sort of thing, which is probably borderline, but I did 'em anyway. And we—but—and I did a lot of work, and I got to know him. And then the last weekend I was going—when I was about ready to leave he came—he asked me—I went in his office. He asked me to come in, and he said—looked around, and he said, "You can have anything in here you'd like." And I saw his nameplate, and I said, "Like that?" So, I mean, he probably has dozens of them. But, anyway, he gave me his nameplate. I still have it. So it was a nice—it was a great experience. It was a terrific experience for me.

[02:18:21] SL: So was this for one semester?

CJ: Well, it was actually for a few months. You had only—in Ark—at least in—there was a person from McGehee that came behind me. I think it was, like, for three months that I was a page.

SL: Uh-huh. And so what about your quarters? Where did you live?

[02:18:38] CJ: Well, we had a rooming house. Mrs. George Smith's

rooming house, and that was a place where Norrell felt that I should live, and there were seventeen pages in this boarding house, so it—you know, and then we—you know, we had—classes started at six o'clock in the morning in the Library of Congress, and then we would have classes until ten, and we would work as a page. And if you—if the session ended before midnight, you'd still have—you would still have to do your homework for the next day. If it was past midnight, then you were excused from doin' the homework on the following day. But it was a great experience. I mean, I remember Carl Sandburg coming in and speaking to—in the House of Representatives and reading his poetry and—they don't do that anymore. I wish they'd [*laughs*] still do it 'cause it—certain sensitizing aspect of it. But he . . .

SL: Sure.

CJ: . . . came in and read his poetry to the hou—at the House of Representatives and, you know, had that sort of stuff. It was really a fascinating time, and it was right after Brooks Hays had lost his election to Dale Alford and, you know, interesting time for us as Arkansans and . . .

SL: Do you wanna talk about that race at all or that . . .

[02:19:59] CJ: Well, I—I'd—I was a little young for it. I just

remember that Dale Alford is—I think he was a dentist, as I recall. And he came in and substituted for Brooks Hays, and there was—I know that there was some resentment in Washington about it, and I remember the—you know, what happened in—about—I mean, Brooks Hays being more of a moderate and wanting to facilitate things and all—in terms of integration and Little Rock and Alford not taking that position. And so I—when Alford came to Washington, I think there was a level of resentment for him coming and probably rightly so. But, anyway, I didn't—I was—when—I wasn't precocious about politics at thirteen or fourteen, so—you know, at that time—a fascinating time. But I'm glad I did it, and it was a—it's sort of a—served as a precursor. [02:21:02] I was lucky enough when I was in the summer of my junior year in high school to be elected to Boys Nation. You know, there's Boys State, and you go to Boys State, and you—I ran for governor of Boys State and lost to a person who won named Bill Allen. And—but I was elected Boys Nation, which is not sort of unlike Clinton. Two years after me, he ran for governor and got whipped by Mack . . .

SL: McLarty.

CJ: . . . Mack McLarty. [*Unclear words*] . . .

SL: His friend from Hope.

CJ: Yeah, exactly, he was—and [*SL laughs*] he was—but then he was elected to go to Boys Nation. And, actually, Clinton and I have had—have joked about this on occasion about—you know, when he went—there—he has used—I don't know where he got it from, but he's used that moment of meeting John Kennedy—he did—and particularly the [19]92 election for president, you know. I mean, it was shown everywhere, where he goes up, and he shakes John Kennedy's hand and, you know, all that, and he's used it forever.

SL: Well, sure, I still . . .

CJ: And . . .

SL: . . . get chills [*CJ laughs*] just hearin' it described.

CJ: [*Laughs*] Right. Exactly.

SL: Yeah.

[02:22:14] CJ: And so he was at Boys Nation when that happened.

Well, I met Dean Rusk. Well, [*laughs*] Dean Rusk was [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: Secretary of State.

CJ: Right.

SL: Dean Rusk.

CJ: Secretary of State and was a little bit less charismatic, to put it

mildly, and so [*SL laughs*] I said, "You know, you met John Kennedy, I met Dean Rusk, and the rest is history." [*Laughter*]

SL: Oh, brother.

CJ: So I . . .

[02:22:38] SL: Now was Boys Nation in Washington, DC? Is that . . .

CJ: Yeah. Well, it's actually at the University of Maryland. That's where you would be in dorms, but then they would bus you into Washington every day, and you would—and it was really quite a nice program. I mean, you went to every major department and bureau, and you learned a great deal about things and about—you know, just sort of the general background. And so . . .

SL: It's a week long?

CJ: Yeah, it's a week long.

SL: And . . .

CJ: Virtually—same—well, not quite a week. There was—like Boys State, it's not quite a week but virtually a week. So—and it was a wonderful experience. It was very good. And it sort of—it whetted my appetite for going to Washington, and I did go to Washington for a couple of years in the Carter admin—the Carter years, I went to—I was deputy assistant secretary for the US Treasury Department and—but that served to—for my appetite,

I—you know, since then I've decided that the world is divided up into two people—two kinds of people: those who have white marble fever and those who don't. And those who have white marble fever need to be integrated into government in some form, and I realized after two years in Washington that I would—I did not have white marble fever. So I didn't have that . . .

[02:24:11] SL: How did you get that appointment?

CJ: Well, I was at J. P. Morgan. I can—do you want me to go through?

SL: Not . . .

CJ: Okay.

SL: . . . necessarily.

CJ: Okay.

SL: If you wanna save it for later, but I . . .

CJ: I can . . .

SL: I mean, this is . . .

CJ: I can tell you, I mean, it's a—it's part of a larger story, and I can go through that now or—and I . . .

SL: Why don't we save it, then, if it's a . . .

CJ: Okay.

[02:24:43] SL: . . . larger story. Let's go back—so you get back from Boys Nation, and it's now your senior year. You're still

playing football. And it's . . .

CJ: But, yeah [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: I remember it's fullback and linebacker?

CJ: Good for you. Yes.

SL: Middle linebacker.

CJ: Not middle.

SL: Oh, no.

CJ: We had two . . .

SL: Monster.

CJ: We had two line—well, yeah, I played monster in the All-Star Game, but I was their—we had two linebackers and the way that we played defense and that was for the Monticello Hillbillies, so [*SL laughs*—and now that was a—it was great. I loved playing. I loved playing high school football. It was my passion. I absolutely loved it.

[02:25:31] SL: You know, you—in your earlier interview you were talking about—let's see, what town was it that was your big rival?

CJ: Warren.

SL: Warren. You're talkin' about a turnout of about . . .

CJ: About . . .

SL: . . . three thousand people for that game. And it's funny—you

know, we've interviewed Clyde Scott, and oh, who was the—  
Buddy Sutton.

CJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And apparently Clyde Scott recruited Buddy Sutton.

CJ: Hmm.

SL: And, you know, of course, Buddy Sutton was in awe of . . .

CJ: Right, right.

SL: . . . Clyde Scott, as everyone was.

CJ: Exactly.

[02:26:10] SL: And when he was talking with Buddy at his home,  
he—Buddy asked him something—"Well, how is it being, you  
know, an Olympic star and a great football player?" And he  
says, "Buddy, it doesn't get any better than Friday night."

[*Laughter*]

CJ: Right. Exactly. It's true. It's true. There was a—you know,  
you'd never—you don't forget—I mean, you don't—you just don't  
forget some great lines from—there's great poetry in a lot of  
lines by athletes. And there was a—I don't know whether he  
came up with it or whatever, but there was a player who was a  
few years—couple of years younger—his name was Chuck  
Latourette. I don't know . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. I know that name.

[02:26:56] CJ: . . . if you remember—he played in Jonesboro or something. And we never played them, but he described with this line that he hated practice. And at least the story is the coach, "Chuck, you're late. You're nonenthusiastic," and, you know, whatev—he said, "Why is it so"—he said, "Well, Coach, you know, when the band—when the crowd's yellin'—no, when the crowd's yellin', and the band's playin', I'm ready [*laughs*—I'm ready on Friday night. But I'm not—I don't like this practice stuff." [*Laughter*] But, I mean, that—you know, when the crowd's yellin', and the bands are playin' . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: You know, that's . . .

SL: Yeah, the adrenaline gets goin'.

CJ: Right. Exactly.

SL: I'm sure it does.

CJ: So . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: But I thought that was a . . .

SL: Lights and . . .

CJ: . . . pretty good line.

SL: . . . all that stuff.

CJ: Right.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: Exactly.

SL: Yeah. Well . . .

[02:27:39] CJ: Actually, the—in that book, my—the—I—there was a poem in there about—I call it "Friday Nights on Hyatt Field." And I actually had called it—and this is very—I'd called it, "Friday Night Lights." And then before the book got published—within a matter—it was almost weeks—I had to rush to get it—the—there was a TV program that came out called *Friday Night Lights*. And I said, "Oh, my God, I gotta"—and so I changed it to "Friday Nights" at—"on Hyatt Field."

SL: Hyatt Field.

CJ: Which is—that's the name of the high school field that I played on. So—but [*SL laughs*—I'm sorry we . . .

SL: Well, still—I mean, there is something about Friday nights.

CJ: Friday nights, boy, I mean, it's just a—it's a—there's nothing—there's really nothing like it. And I—I'm glad ESPN's doing some of the Friday night—we get a lot of that, and it's all from all over the country. We get some of that in the New York area as well. So that's good.

SL: Okay, so . . .

[02:28:50] CJ: But I wanted to play college ball. I did want to play

college ball, and I . . .

SL: And you had the opportunity to play college ball.

CJ: Yeah, I did. I—you know, I would've liked to have played here to some extent—I mean, I—but Arkansas really didn't recruit me very hard. I mean, I—there was a guy named Doug Dickey who covered us, and he seemed . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: . . . somewhat interested and that sort of thing but never particularly interested . . .

SL: Let me ask you this.

CJ: Sure.

SL: You know, I know we've talked about radio in the home, and you didn't really—y'all didn't really gather around the radio like some families did, but did you listen to the Razorback games . . .

CJ: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . on the radio?

CJ: I listened . . .

SL: I mean . . .

[02:29:35] CJ: Yeah, exactly. We had—actually, we were particu—I was always particularly interested in Razorback games because there was a guard who played—who was the other—let me see, what was—there was a guard here back in the [19]50s who—

Buddy something, who was an all-American. I can't remember his name. Anyway, the other guard was named Bobby Gilliam and—here. And he lived, like, four doors down from me and, you know, I—I've really—I mean, when I—in the [19]50s and—you know, I mean, I was really impressed by the fact that Bobby Gilliam played for the Razorbacks and Henry Moore and Lamar McHam and all those people, you know. And so, yes, I listened to the radio about—all the time. I mean, it was con—I mean, I just—I had a glor—I loved the Razorbacks. [02:30:30] And then Charlie Whitworth, who was my coach in high school and one of my real idols—he used to bring me up here. And on Saturdays after we'd play a ball game, he would be able to get us in the—so he would take two or three. And Arkansas recruited me enough to invite me up here and invite—you know, invite me to Little Rock, and I'd sit on the sidelines and whatever. But my grades were pretty good. I was a good—I was sort of a all-around student and athlete, and I—by accident, I became very interested in Harvard. My mother [*laughs*] read a article in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and—about Harvard trying to expand at—when I'm—you know, when I—during that age—that period of time, like, 75 percent of all the people who—well, it was all male. And then 75 percent came—easily, 75 percent—

maybe 80 percent—came from private schools. I mean, you know, the Phillips Andover, Exeter, Choate, Groton—you know, Deer [CJ edit: Deerfield]—so, I mean, you know, they were—it was just that—it was the—those were the recruiting grounds for Harvard. But they started—and my mother read an article about Harvard wanting to branch out and bring in more public school students. And so I—she showed me the article, and I had been sort of interested—and bear in mind, you know, I had been page when John Kennedy was running . . .

SL: Sure.

[02:32:25] CJ: . . . for president—John Kennedy, and you know, there was the old story that—you know, when Kennedy came in they took all the Yale locks off of the [*SL laughs*] doors in Washington. You know, I mean, there was that sort of thing. And so the—and he came—I mean, you know, he made his relationship with Harvard pretty well known—I mean, how much he—so, you know, it was in every—you know, it was in the national consciousness. So, anyway, I wrote a letter to Harvard, and I gave 'em a little bit of my background. Well, one Sunday morning I get a special-delivery letter from Harvard, and I had written the letter so poorly that they thought I was a senior rather than a junior. It was in the end of my junior year that I

wrote the letter—maybe in the summer. Maybe it was after I came back from Boys Nation. But, anyway, it was in the—and I they thought—they said, you know, "Hurry up. Send this in. It would have to be an emergency. Admission—blah, blah, blah—if we got"—and so I sent them another letter and said, "I'm sorry, I'm a junior. I'll be going into my senior year." And they said, "Well, apply on a regular basis." So, you know, the fact that they were that interested that I could've possibly gotten in when I was—earlier, and that they were so interested that they would go to that extent—this thing was special delivery and [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: Right.

[02:33:51] CJ: You know, and they kept up that communication. And I would meet with—I met with representatives here and there, and they sent one to Little Rock. And the person that they really wanted to recruit that year was Wesley Clark [*laughs*] [*unclear words*] Arkansas. I mean, I—they wanted me, but they definitely wanted Wesley Clark. He was at Hall at the time, and I knew Wesley. But, anyway, he went to West Point, of course.

[02:34:16] SL: Yeah, how did you know Wesley?

CJ: Swimming. I used to swim in the summers, too.

SL: That's right. You used to swim.

CJ: And . . .

SL: Swim club.

CJ: And he swam.

SL: Warren Swim Club.

CJ: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: Yeah, good memory. Yeah, I was—Monticello at the time didn't have one until later years they had one. But I swam for Warren, and Wesley and I got to know each other a little bit that way. And—but, anyway, the—I was admitted to Harvard, and I played football. I think football had a lot to do with Harvard wanting me, and so . . .

SL: Well . . .

CJ: . . . that's how I got in.

[02:34:50] SL: So how was Harvard? I mean, did you—was it difficult there? Was it . . .

CJ: Academically, it wasn't that—wasn't particularly difficult. I mean, it was hard. I mean, you really had to work. I mean, it was very challenging. But it was challenging not on a sort of a competitive basis. It was challenging on an individual basis. And I was there, you know, my freshman and sophomore years, and I had the—and I just couldn't get Arkansas out of my

system. I really just couldn't get it out. I mean, it was—it just—it was just so much a part of me at the time that I just couldn't get Arkansas out of my system. And . . .

SL: Well, were you . . .

CJ: And then . . .

[02:35:51] SL: Did—excuse me. Did you—were you kind of an anomaly there, being that you weren't . . .

CJ: I was definitely anomaly.

SL: You weren't from a private . . .

CJ: But there were some . . .

SL: . . . school and . . .

CJ: Well, but there were three of us from Arkansas who were not from private schools. There was a person named John Ferrell from Walnut Ridge and then a person named Jerry Bass. He didn't stay very long, and he died soon. He had—he—soon after he left. He came here for a while, and then he went to Dallas, and he got hepatitis, and he died. And then there was me. Everybody else had come from private schools. I'm talkin' 'bout [about] from Arkansas. There were three other people from Arkansas. One had come from Castle Heights Military, Tennessee; one from a private school in St. Louis; and one from Phillips Exeter. But then there were three public school, and

yeah, I mean, we were definitely fish outta [out of]—a little bit outta—for one thing, it was also in the midst of the civil rights movement, and you know, everybody there—we were all held responsible for three hundred years of slavery, you know.

So . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:37:13] CJ: . . . yeah, that made it ha—and they—and that was very clear, and that made it tough. And—but then football to me was somewhat of a salvation and—but I got hurt in my sophomore year, and I had a bad concussion, and I started losing reaction time on the right side—my right side. And one thing Harvard does that was just—I mean, I give them all kinds of credit—is that if you get hurt, they're gonna give you the best medical care in the world. And then sent—I was injured in practice in my sophomore year, and I was—you know, I had a concussion and they—I—they put me in the Holyoke Center, which is their medical facility. And then they sent me to a very top-notch brain surgeon and—just as a precautionary matter, and he did a bunch of test on me. And I'd had one concussion in high school playing football, playing Warren. [*Laughs*] And then I had had a very serious accident when I was, like, five or six that I—a head injury that I almost died from. And a combination

of those obviously sort of created vulnerability in my skull, and so I started—and he did a bunch of tests, and he showed me where I was losing reaction time on my right side. And he said, "I have some precau"—he said, "I don't want you to ever get in a fight, and you can—you've played your last game of football," which was a real shock to me. I mean, I've—I adored football, and it was sort of my salvation. And I went through a tough time. I really went through a hard time and—but I still couldn't get Arkansas out of my system, so I came back, and I eventually graduated from the University.

[02:39:30] SL: So—hard time in that, really, the thing that you really loved the most was just kinda—you lost it. I mean . . .

CJ: Yeah, I did.

SL: . . . you couldn't have football anymore and that . . .

CJ: Right.

SL: . . . was kind of your—you were passionate about football.

CJ: Right.

SL: And so did your studies—I mean, you just couldn't be focused anymore? Was that . . .

[02:39:54] CJ: No, no, it really wasn't that. I mean, I got in—the studies weren't so much the issue 'cause I continued to enjoy the—that part of it, but I was—I wanted—there was so much

going on in the state. I mean, this was in the—it was in the mid-[19]60s, and there—you know, the civil rights movement was going on. [02:40:23] The—William Fulbright was taking on the Johnson Administration in terms of the Vietnam War. And Arkansas was a hot bed for a lot of the peace movement, and I—you know, I loved the state, and I wanted—I'd—quite frankly, I didn't—and a lotta—I had a lot of friends who were in the middle of a lot of that stuff, and I just didn't wanna miss out. That was part of it. And I also wanted to take a fresh look at who Chester Johnson was 'cause I had been produced by this culture and, you know, every—and I wanted to see—I had had the two years' experience at Harvard. And I actually went back my junior year for a semester, but I was fiddling back and forth. And so it was actually—I'd gone through two years and a—two and a half years, and I just—there were a lot of things that—I mean, my family really opposed my doing it. I mean, they really—everybody thought, you know, "You have your ticket to life if you go to—graduate from Harvard."

SL: Year and a half.

CJ: Yeah. You know . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:41:53] CJ: God, you've really—and then—but I've always taken

risks. I mean, it's just been part of my life. And Harvard continues to stay, I mean, part of my life, too. I mean, I get—I've read my work up at Harvard, and I'm always invited to the class reunions, and they—I'm still involved. And so . . .

SL: Listen, before we go . . .

CJ: Hmm?

SL: . . . get into your time here in Arkansas, I don't remember—I don't recall hearing about your accident when you were five or six years old—your head injury.

CJ: Yeah.

SL: So what was the story on that?

CJ: Well, I was—I'll take a line from Martin Luther King—it's—I won't—I—so I won't say that I'm being immodest because I'll ascribe it to Martin Luther King. He said that he was physically more precocious than—he was physically—I won't say more 'cause you can't be—he was physically precocious. And I'll say that I was physically precocious in the sense that I could—I learned athletics fairly quickly, and I could do things. And so there was a—the Red Cross used to do—and maybe they still do—teaching people to swim every summer. And so I—just to—and they did it in the mornings in Monticello, and I'd swim in the afternoons. But I said, "Why shouldn't I do the"—and I was real

young. I was, like, five or six years old, and so I could get in the pool in the mornings if they were gonna teach you to swim. And I already knew how to swim, and so the instructor would—you know, he didn't wanna be bothered with me. [02:43:53] So I could go take, you know, a toy—whatever—and go to the diving boards and put the toy in the pool and then dive on the toy. You know, just playin' games and all. That—while everybody was learnin' to swim. And they had a high-diving board, and they should have paid more attention to me, but anyway, I was carryin' my toy up the high-diving board, and I did several times. And I—one time I got to the top, and I slipped, and If—I was at the top—the very top—and I fell. I fell backwards off of the diving . . .

SL: Oh.

[02:44:35] CJ: . . . and I hit the concrete. And I was given a 50/50 chance of living, and I made it, but it obviously weakened my skull. And so it came back later, but you know, I wasn't Claud Smithey. I don't know if you remember Claud Smithey.

SL: Hmm.

CJ: Anyway, I played with him in the Arkansas All-Star Game. He played tackle here at Arkansas, and he was a—apparently he had something similar—a soft—and the actually died in the

Texas A&M game.

SL: Oh, my gosh.

CJ: I don't know if you remember that.

SL: Um-um.

CJ: But . . .

SL: I don't remember that.

[02:45:10] CJ: Mh-hmm. Anyway, thank God that never happened to me. But, anyway, that didn't happen to me. [*SL sniffs*] But I had—that's the story. I mean, I had to—it was really touch and go for a while. And—but, you know, I survived and probably lost a few brain cells, but [*laughter*] . . .

SL: You probably had too many [*CJ laughs*] to begin with.

CJ: I don't know.

[02:45:37] SL: Well, so you come back to Arkansas. Is there—you had—you said you had friends here. Peace Movement was going on. You didn't wanna miss out on that. What's going on with your love life during this time?

CJ: Well, I—it—I didn't have much of a love life in some respects. I mean, I had dated a girl from Monticello in the summers and—but I wasn't—and a dated a girl from Wellesley some as well. But—you know, and then I—there was an attraction to coming back for the girl in Monticello, who was actually—came to the

university, but that wasn't the primary reason I came back, but it—you know, it was an added attraction. [*Laughs*]

SL: So you're in Fayetteville in [19]63?

CJ: Well, no, this'd be [19]65 at least.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-five.

CJ: Sixty—maybe [19]66. Something like that. And—but I took courses in the summer occasionally down at UAM—two summers. So—but I had more credits than I needed to graduate up here. I actually took—you know, took more credits. And as I talked before, I liked the—I just—I took some credits I didn't have to take. And classes I didn't have to take, and I liked—I enjoyed the atmosphere up here a lot, and it gave me a lot, and it allowed me to explore in ways that I—and to pick and choose and—in ways that I didn't feel like I had been given the same kind of opportunity when I was at Harvard.

[02:47:45] SL: Well, what was the—I guess the campus was maybe, what, five thousand?

CJ: Probably.

SL: Something like that.

CJ: Something—yeah.

SL: It wasn't as—generally as big as it is now.

CJ: No.

SL: Town was smaller.

CJ: It was still big, but I mean, it was the . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

CJ: It was still big. I mean, Harvard wasn't big either. I mean, Harvard was, like, four thousand people. I'm talkin' about the undergraduate.

SL: Right.

CJ: So . . .

[02:48:13] SL: Well, do you remember much about the town of Fayetteville back then? Was there . . .

CJ: Yeah, I remember a lot about it. [*SL laughs*] I remember—and Tontitown.

SL: Did you have a favorite place in Fayetteville?

CJ: The Huddle Club. [*Laughs*]

SL: The Huddle Club out on 71.

CJ: Yeah, right. Exactly.

SL: Yeah, the little Gator Golf place is just down the street from it.

CJ: Well, I—it was the Huddle Club was where I spent a lot of time. So . . .

SL: Was the [*CJ laughs*—what about Jug's and was . . .

CJ: Yeah, I'd go—I would go to Jug's, but I don't know, I just—I had an attraction to a—to the Huddle Club. I just liked going out,

and they had that—the table shuffleboard stuff. I loved to play that and . . .

[02:48:59] SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Do you—were there any bands that you remember when you were here?

CJ: Yeah, I remember Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks here, but he had also surfaced on occasion when I was in high school down in southeast Arkansas. You know, he played all around here, so . . .

SL: Yes. Uh-huh.

CJ: So I remember him. I don't remember history so well. I wasn't into rock music in the way that's—that a lot of people were, and I didn't—you know, I later, as I've mentioned to you—the—you know, I love "The Last Waltz," but—and I actually didn't realize—I mean, my wife is big on rock music, and she can play *Jeopardy* like you can't believe in terms of that time. I can't. But I didn't—never realized that kind of connection, and I didn't realize the connection between—until later. I mean, there were some people that I knew here that knew about, you know, the connection between Bob Dylan and The Band, and The Band played front for Dylan for a while. And then, you know, the—various members of The Band played for Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks or played with 'em and all. And I—you know, I knew

some—but I didn't follow it closely then.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: I just didn't . . .

[02:50:30] SL: John Tolleson.

CJ: Oh, yeah. Yeah, right. Absolutely.

SL: "Tennessee Stud."

CJ: Yeah, right. Exactly. [*CJ hums a tune*] Yeah, I remember that.

[*SL laughs*] [*Unclear words*].

SL: Let's see. So I guess there was—George's was here.

CJ: Yeah, and George's was a very frequent place. And . . .

SL: The Square had the Palace Drugstore.

CJ: Yeah, yeah. And let me see.

SL: Well, what . . .

CJ: It's . . .

[02:51:05] SL: Who were some of your classmates that you remember from that time?

CJ: Well, you know, I—my classmates would—well, I knew—and I guess I'm—I knew a lot in the—my professors. I mean, you know, the—but I didn't—I mean, some of the people that I knew were already in graduate school, not necessarily my classmates.

SL: Oh, okay. Well . . .

CJ: And in—you know, like . . .

SL: Maybe the broader sense.

CJ: . . . my friend from my high school was in law school at the time—Virgil Trotter, I think. I think you actually talked to him at one point. And then my ol' high school football coach was here doing graduate work. I spent some time with him. There was a guy named Jim Bob Hillis who was in the graduate program in history here, and we used to play lots of cards together and—but most of mine were not in the actual—my actual class.

SL: Yeah, well, I meant it in a broader sense.

[02:52:25] CJ: Oh, okay. All right. Yeah, I—and that—that's fine.

And then I met my first wife here. She had been—she was a Chi Omega and was from Fort Smith and . . .

SL: And . . .

CJ: And so that took up a lot of my time, too. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, of course.

CJ: And so . . .

SL: Are you comfortable talking about your first wife or . . .

CJ: Yeah, that's fine.

SL: And her name was . . .

CJ: Dickie Ann Boal. *D-I-C-K-I-E A-N-N B-O-A-L*. Came from Fort Smith, and she was in history. And so I had met her through—she was actually in the graduate program with my friend, and

that's how I got to know her. And . . .

SL: Well, so what did you end up getting your degree in here?

CJ: History and English.

SL: Let's see. So I'm tryin' to think who the—was Kimpel English?

CJ: Kimpel, yeah.

SL: And . . .

CJ: And Bennett. Edward Bennett and then . . .

SL: Dr. Bennett. Now was he . . .

CJ: . . . [*unclear words*] and Weiss—and why—Jim Whitehead was here teaching poetry at—and, actually, I was involved—I was doing quite a bit of poetry at the time, too. I mean, Whitehead and I participated in—Tulsa had a poetry festival—a very big poetry festival—and we participated over there together. So I knew—you know, I knew a bunch of the people on the English side.

[02:54:06] SL: Did you ever have Whitehead for a class?

CJ: Yeah, I think I did. I can't recall.

SL: Do you remember much about Jim?

CJ: No. I had him for a seminar. We had a seminar, and he was—on poetry—and he was doing some—but, no, I never had a class under him. But I did—I spent time with him because he was very accessible, and we had certain poets—modern poets. By

that time, I was really into—and concentrating on—more on the poetry side, and he was a poet. And so I remember we're—we had discussions about various poets, but that was more in terms of, like, a—more of a discussion environment as opposed to a class.

SL: Were they discussions, or were they arguments?

[02:55:01] CJ: No—well, he liked to get his points across, but I had a particular poet I was interested in, and he liked him as well, and so I remember having discussions like that. But—and—no, I mean, he could be very combative. There isn't quite—it wasn't a question about that. But I never had any trouble with him . . .

SL: He was a . . .

CJ: . . . and that sort of thing.

SL: . . . an imposing figure.

CJ: Right.

SL: He was a big guy.

CJ: Like, was six five and weighed two forty-five or something.

SL: Uh-huh. Were you still weighin' around the two-hundred-point mark back then?

CJ: 'Bout that time. Yeah.

SL: Yeah. So there was probably some mutual physical respect there of . . .

CJ: Right, I guess.

SL: . . . each other.

CJ: I guess so.

SL: Big guys writing poetry.

CJ: Right. [*SL laughs*] And I liked his—I liked some of his—there was one line in one of his that he made, and he played off the idea of air conditioning, and he called it "conditioned air," and I mean, he played up—I like some of his work and so, you know, we—but he—there wasn't—you know, there—the Creative Writing Department really hadn't started at that time, and it was—Miller came—was coming later, I think. And football was king here and, you know, and . . .

SL: Of course.

[02:56:16] CJ: . . . at that time, of course. And so—and I was tryin' to broaden out beyond what I'd grown up with, and so poetry sort of served that niche for me. And so I reached out to Jim, and I reached—you know, and he was responsive. So . . .

SL: Mh-hmm. Bill Harrison. Did you . . .

CJ: Bill Harrison.

SL: . . . ever get to meet Bill?

CJ: Yeah, yeah. I think Harrison was actually involved later in the creative writing group.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

CJ: And so I'm—and so was Jim.

SL: Yeah.

CJ: But I—he was a fiction—more on the fiction side, but Whitehead was more on the poetry side, so . . .

SL: Right. I think Bill maybe recruited Jim.

CJ: I—probably so.

SL: Or maybe one recruited the other.

CJ: That sounds right [*unclear words*].

SL: I—I'm not sure exactly how that worked.

CJ: Yeah, exactly. Right.

SL: So . . .

[02:57:07] CJ: But I did a lot of—I did—I wasn't really part of—I mean, quite frankly, I was getting adjusted to a different Chester Johnson because I'd—I had this—you know, I—football had meant so much to me, and I had to give that up. And I did—I wasn't not—and I made—last year when I was given the award—Distinguished Alumnus Award—I made [*laughs*] this poem that I was—you know, I wasn't a—I wasn't an out-front kind of person when I was here. I did a lot of soul-searching and reading on my own and goin' to the Huddle Club [*laughs*], and I spent a lot of time alone when I was here. And occasionally I would see a

Jim—you know, Whitehead or a few other professors. And I did okay while I was here, but I mean, academically, but I—it was a time for reflection and coming—deciding who I was and what I was doing.

SL: It kinda sounds like you happened into the University of Arkansas at a good time for you—that it accommodated . . .

CJ: It did.

SL: . . . that introspection and . . .

[02:28:35] CJ: It did. It was not as—you know, I made this point last year also in my speech—you know, you could—liberal arts was alive and well, and the academic freedom for the student as opposed to being programmed for specialization wasn't here. I mean, my goodness, I—you know, I could take—I took—I can't remember [*laughs*] the professor's name, and I'm really sorry because—I think I've mentioned it to you—there are very few days that go by that I don't think of something—and his art—it was a survey of art history—of Western art history. Magnificent course, and I just happened on it, you know, and it was . . .

SL: Dick Knowles?

CJ: That may be it. I think that's his name. Thank you.

SL: Yeah, he lived down the street from me.

CJ: He was . . .

SL: Major influence in my life.

CJ: Oh, was he?

SL: Yeah. Sure.

CJ: I'm a—but what a wonderful course he—I mean, he made that stuff really live for me, and I did well in the course, I think, and—because he did do that. I mean, he just made it—and I appreciate your mentioning—it was a little bit of an iconoclast. Is that the guy you're . . .

SL: Yeah.

CJ: Yeah, okay.

SL: Yeah, dark hair—short.

CJ: Yep, yep.

SL: Yeah?

CJ: Yep. Had a—nose.

SL: Had a long nose.

CJ: Right. You [*laughs*—yeah, I was—I didn't . . .

SL: His father . . .

CJ: . . . wasn't gonna say that, but that's right.

[02:59:51] SL: His father was a billboard painter.

CJ: Right.

SL: And I've got a couple of his pastels.

CJ: Oh, is that right?

SL: And I've actually got a couple of his oils. The particular oils I have I'm not particularly fond of, but Barbara and David have several of his figure paintings.

CJ: Oh. Well, good.

SL: And they're wonderful. I mean, he was a good—I really liked his painting, and it—in fact . . .

CJ: Well, he was a great . . .

SL: . . . it's probably why . . .

CJ: He was a great teacher.

SL: . . . I ended up with an art degree . . .

CJ: Is that right?

SL: . . . 'cause he lived down the street from me and kind of got that fired up for me.

[03:00:22] CJ: That's great. I'm glad—thank you so much. I've struggled over his name for a long time. And I made this point last year when I taught some classes around—you know, when I came in. And they'd say, "Well, what was his name? What was his name?" And I said, "Damned if I can remember." But thank you. Dick Knowles. That's exac—'cause—and I know that you're—and because I associated it with one thing he said, because, you know, in addition to football, you know, beauty queens run parallel, you know. They're . . .

SL: Sure.

CJ: And beauty queens are an analogue to football, you know. And so—and he's—he had a thing against beauty queens [*laughs*] and he said—and I remember lookin' at him when he was sayin'—he said, "Beauty queens have no distinguishable physical feature." And then I'd looked at him 'cause he had that—you know [*laughs*], and I made the comparison to what he said. It—so that was many year ago, but I remember looking at him and making that comparison 'cause he was a . . .

SL: He was smart, and he and I played a lot of horse. We had a . . .

CJ: Oh, is that right?

SL: . . . basketball goal in my backyard and nearly every other day—evening he would . . .

CJ: He was also very—he always liked to be intellectually challenging, too . . .

SL: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[03:01:43] CJ: . . . you know, and that was part of it. And I loved that—I loved his course. I really—I—it was one I—and I talk about it now all the time because he—there was so much—I can go—I mean, we went to an exhibit of—and I saw the painting on the wall, and I said, "That must be Miró." And Freda, who's—goes more to art exhibits than I—and she asked somebody,

"Who is that?" "It's Miró" [*Laughs*] I give it to—you know, Knowles for that. I mean, it's that sort of thing he put the artist in context for you and why they did what they did and what kin—I mean, going all the way, you know, back to the ninth century. So, anyway, I'm sorry. No, but he was a—that—he was wonderful, and I really got into that. But those are the—those are kind of the courses that I explored. And I took a—you know, an advanced algebra class like that. I mean, and you were able to do things that—and be part of your exploration as opposed to being part of a trade. And . . .

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

[03:02:59 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]