

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Bobby Wayne Jones
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
April 5, 2006
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center 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.
- All geographic locations mentioned in the transcript are in the state of Arkansas unless otherwise indicated.

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Bobby Wayne Jones on April 5, 2006, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, so there's a couple of things we have to do businesswise here. I have to tell you that we're makin' [making] this videotape for the University of Arkansas. It will reside in the—um—uh—it is a part of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History.

Bobby Jones: Okay.

SL: Its h—its physical place will be in the Special Collections Department in Mullins Library . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . University of Arkansas campus. Um—we are also—uh—out of this tape, we'll take segments of it and use it for a video that will be premiered at the Silas Hunt Legacy Award Dinner, April 28 . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: Two-thousand and six.

BJ: Okay.

SL: The next thing is—is that I need for you to tell me your full name . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . and we always like to have folks spell it for us . . .

BJ: All right.

SL: . . . so we don't mess it up. And when we put your name at the bottom of the screen, we get it spelled right.

BJ: Okay.

SL: Okay.

[00:00:58] BJ: My name is Bobby Wayne Jones. That's *B-O-B-B-Y W-A-Y-N-E J-O-N-E-S*.

SL: You like to go by Bobby.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: Your given name is actually Robert.

BJ: No.

SL: No?

BJ: It's actually R—Bobby.

SL: Excellent. Okay, that's good news. Um—well—um—I'm gonna [going to] ask you to try to remember your very first memory . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . that you had as a child. Do you—can you place yourself where you were and what the circumstances was? Or were?

[00:01:34] BJ: Wow, that's—that's a very difficult one. When I—when I think of the very first thing is always—um—I think en

route to my grandmother's [Sammie Perry] house or from my grandmother's house.

SL: In a car.

[00:01:52] BJ: In a car. In a car. And—uh—and that's because my grandmother lived en route to our church [Saint Andrew Missionary Baptist Church] and—uh—growin' [growing] up, we spent—we tried—we loved spendin' [spending] time out in the country with my grandparents. And so as much as we could, we would stay during the school year and ride the bus in to school. And then on—uh—weekends on Friday nights—no, actually Saturday nights, we would go back out into the country to stay with my grandparents. And then on the way to church on Sunday, my—my mother and father, they would swing through, pick us up, and we'd go to church. If we stayed at home, in town in Altheimer—uh—then we always stopped at my grandmother's house on Sunday morning en route to church, and we stopped at my grandmother's house on the way back after church. And so a lot of my growin' up kinda [kind of] centered around my grandparents [William and Sammie Perry]—uh—and those are the most vivid memories that I have.

SL: What was great about visiting your grandparents? What—what was the big attraction out there?

BJ: Uh—I think—uh—it was open. It was quiet. It was peaceful.
Um—my grandparents were—uh—the typical grandparents.
Uh—they did things that were fun and exciting for us. Um—but they were strict disciplinarians, too, and—and so we knew how to behave.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: And so that didn't—didn't bother us. Uh—uh—and it was just—it was just fun to—to get out, to play, and to—uh—do the things that were available to us in the country that wasn't available to us in the city.

[00:03:41] SL: Well, give me a few examples of—what—what would you—you'd get out there . . .

BJ: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and you'd get out of the car . . .

BJ: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and what—you'd have a little bag with you that you—for spendin' the night or the weekend . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . or whatever? What—so what—what happened? What—what was the—your most favorite thing to do out there?

BJ: Uh—my grandmother always had a garden, and she would grow tomatoes—uh—cabbage, and—uh—peas, butterbeans, okra. She

would always have those, and she would always have cantaloupe. And she even had Concord grapes growin' in the back.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:04:22] BJ: And so those were the things—uh—that we didn't have access to, availability to do in the city. Also, she lived on a lake [Reed Lake], and growing up—uh—we would have breakfast. Some days after breakfast and all the chores were done, we would go fishin' [fishing], which was about twenty-five meters behind the house.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: And we would fish until lunchtime. We'd come back. We'd have lunch, and then we'd go back, and we'd fish until four or five o'clock in the evening. We'd come back. We'd have dinner. Then we'd play and do whatever. And those were the type things that were fun and exciting that we just didn't have the availability or the opportunity to do if we stayed at home in—in—uh—in the city.

[00:05:07] SL: Well, now d—was their place a farm? Or was it . . .

BJ: It was. It was.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: It was a farm.

SL: And they—th—through their life, they . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . worked it as a farm and not—were they—were they like sharecroppers, or did they own that property back then or . . .

BJ: No.

Franklin Evarts (Camera Operator): I'm gonna cut real quick. I'm sorry.

[Tape stopped]

FE: Got speed, Scott.

[00:05:26] SL: So—um—they—they owned the—the property. Is that . . .

BJ: No. Actually, it was—it was a plantation called Elms, *E-L-M-S*, Plantation . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: . . . and part of it had to do with—uh—what's called the Ben J. Alzheimer Foundation. And the Alzheimer family is a German name for which the town that I grew up in was named after. So it was this gigantic plantation spread across Jefferson County. And my grandparents lived out on part of this—uh—plantation, which was about six miles from my home outside of the city. And—and that's where we would spend our time as much as we could out there with my grandparents.

[00:06:13] SL: And so the Altheimer family donated this land or—I mean, how—what—what's the story there? I mean, what—what—what was it that your grandparents did?

[Tape stopped]

FE: We've got speed, Scott.

[00:06:26] SL: So your grandparents lived on the Altheimer family farm, I guess . . .

BJ: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and your grandfather worked for that family, or was it a different company [*BJ vocalized noise*] or group of—or a different family or . . .

BJ: Well, it was—it was generations down.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: Altheimer is the family that—name of the city.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: But this plantation had passed down and been bought and sold and was called Elms Plantation now.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: And so my grandfather was a laborer who lived on the plantation, and that was about six miles outside of Altheimer, my—my home.

[00:07:10] SL: Um—and then did they end up just buying that—

where—did he . . .

BJ: No.

SL: . . . did they live on that—in that house . . .

BJ: They lived . . .

SL: . . . at that time . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when he was a laborer?

BJ: That's correct.

SL: Okay.

[00:07:21] BJ: They lived there, and later on—uh—he bought a home in—inside the city.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay. But they kept the home out on the farm as well?

BJ: No.

SL: No?

BJ: Once he bought the home, then they moved into the city.

SL: Oh, okay. Okay.

BJ: And—and he was semiretired at that time.

SL: I see. But when you were a kid . . .

BJ: Yes. He lived out . . .

SL: . . . lived out there.

BJ: That's correct.

[00:07:46] SL: And, of course, now you've really piqued my interest 'cause [because] you mentioned fishing. [*BJ laughs*] So—um—are we talkin' [talking], like, cane poles or are we talkin' spinnin' [spinning] rods or . . .

BJ: Uh—we mostly fished from the bank with cane poles.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: And sometimes we would use a rod but mostly cane poles.

SL: And I'm probably thinkin' [thinking]—uh—crappie—uh—catfish . . .

BJ: Perch. Perch.

SL: . . . perch.

BJ: And—uh—occasionally catfish.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Uh—but mostly the—what's called the brim or the perch.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: The sun perch . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: . . . was—uh—was the biggest thing that we would get out of the lake. [*SL laughs*] [*Unclear word*]

[00:08:24] SL: Well, did—so did you keep all of that stuff [*BJ smacks lips*], and did your grandma fry it up for you and . . .

BJ: She would. Uh—the big ones. Usually the small ones, we'd feed to the cat . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: . . . or something like that or throw back.

SL: Okay, now when you're saying "we." Who—who's involved with you here?

BJ: Oh, my—my other siblings.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: Uh—because we all enjoyed spending time out there, and—uh—we'd go as much as we could, as our parents would let us.

[00:08:50] SL: Okay, now let's talk about your siblings now. How many were out there with you? What—how—how many brothers and sisters have you got?

BJ: There's seven of us altogether.

SL: Wow.

BJ: Five boys and two girls [Ernest Lee, Vernita Jean, Arlee Jr., Bobby Wayne, Arthur Raynard, Arnita Jean, Frank Orlando]. And—uh—it was kind of a stagger, boy-girl-boy, then myself, then boy-girl-boy. And—uh . . .

SL: So you're in the middle of the group.

BJ: Exactly. Right in the middle, so two brothers and a sister on each side.

SL: Um—so I'm hearing—uh—that you also spent some time in church.

BJ: Yes. Uh—?we? typically would start for a Sunday School—uh—and it was always a race to be on time. Uh—and that was one of the things that was impressed upon me about promptness and bein' [being] on time. Uh—and that would follow through with the general service, and then we'd come back home—uh—and most—most Sundays, we'd stop at my grandmother's and have lunch after—after church, and then we'd come on home later in the evening.

[00:09:57] SL: Um—were you active in the church? Did you . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . sing in the choir or . . .

BJ: I—I did.

SL: . . . you know, altar boy or . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm. I—uh—I was active in the church. Uh—I sang in the choir. I was president of the choir—um—served as a junior deacon. Um—pastoral secretary—um—and that was as—as a kid growin' up, and—uh—used to do a lot of speeches in church. Uh—different things across—uh—the county and throughout surrounding counties as well, so I've always been active in the church. One of the things growin' up is that for the different



occasions like Easter and Christmas and Mother's Day—um—we all, all of my sisters and brothers, we had to learn a—a certain speech or to be able to stand up and recite it in church. And—uh—you couldn't read it, and—and you stood still, and you spoke up clearly. And—uh—that was, I guess, the first time it might have seemed a little hard, but as we did it, it became easier and easier. And—uh—and those were—uh—things that I think really helped down the road in learnin' [learning] how to speak up in front of people. And—uh—and that was a common occasion.

[00:11:28] SL: Sure it did. And I'm sure that built confidence in you as you . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . got better at it.

BJ: Right.

SL: So—um—did you and your—uh—brothers and sisters, did you all want to go to church, or was it a thing where it was gonna happen whether you wanted to or not? And . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . was there any kind of grumbling about going to church, or I mean, was it something that everyone . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . wanted to do, or was it . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you had to do whether or you wanted to or not?

BJ: Well, it was somethin' [something] that we grew up doing.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:04] BJ: And so as a kid, we were carried as a baby. And as a toddler, we were carried to church, so when we were old enough to know that we were going to church, it was just a part of us. And it was expected that we would go to church on Sunday, and we did. And even to this day—um—Sunday, you know, is time—it's time to go to church. And not just that it's the thing to do because it's Sunday but for the real reason for going. And—um—it was never a question about if we're going to church on Sunday. It was today is Sunday, so automatically we're goin' to church because today is Sunday, and that's what you do on Sunday. It's—uh—the Sabbath day, and that's the important part of it.

SL: Mh-hmm. And I'm assuming that—um—um—your—the faith that—um—brought you to church . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and kept you in church, I'm assuming that was very present in the home as well.

BJ: Yes, yes. As a matter of fact, I—uh—I remember as a probably a teen, I think—or maybe even in my very early twenties, overhearin' [overhearing] my mother [Ernestine White Jones] say to a friend that when she was pregnant with me, that she read her Bible everyday. And that really stuck with me, and—and so I—I say in my mind now that I've always had the word of God in my ear, in my heart, and so that was impressed upon me in the—when my—when my mother passed, and just reading—getting a little more history, I learned that she was a member of this church for—it was the only church she ever belonged to—and she was a member of this church for over sixty-something years. And that's—you just don't find that in too many places where a person will live in a place and be a member of a church, an active participating member of church, for that many years. That many years.

[00:14:16] SL: Before we start talkin' about your mom and dad . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . let's talk a bit about the city.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now you're referring to Altheimer as the city . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . but really how big was Altheimer?

BJ: Well—uh—I guess, a town would be more appropriate to say. It was—when I was there and growin' up, it was about thirteen—fourteen hundred people . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: . . . populationwise. Um—but it—it seemed to be a thriving—uh—community in—in those days. Um—the—the main street had—uh—I think, three grocery stores . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: Um—had a furniture store—um—a couple of shoe stop—shoe shops—um—a post office, two or three gas stations—um—a couple of laundromats, and car washes. And so it was a pretty, kind of vibrant—uh—city.

[00:15:16] SL: Was there a—a movie theater or . . .

BJ: No, no movie theater.

SL: No.

BJ: The closest movie theater was in Pine Bluff, about fourteen miles away. Um—and then there were a couple cafés [Blue Moon Café and Teal Price's] where you could go for drinks or just to dance, and—uh—there was a—what we called a recreation center [Alzheimer Recreation Center]—more or less for the young people, where they had pool tables and darts and—uh—Ping-Pong, not Ping-Pong but pinball machines and things of that

nature. And—um—and that was all downtown on the main—
main street.

[00:15:51] SL: Now how far are you away? Are—are you close to
the Mississippi River or the . . .

BJ: About seven—eight miles from the Arkansas River.

SL: Right, okay. Um—was the population predominantly black?

BJ: Majority.

SL: Uh-huh.

BJ: Majority black.

SL: Wa—and by this time y—see, you were born in . . .

BJ: Nineteen sixty-one.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-one.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: So by the time that you were in grade school, most . . .

BJ: Hmm.

SL: . . . all the segregation stuff was . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL . . . was kinda history by then—the . . .

BJ: [*Unclear word*]

SL: . . . separate-but-equal thing had . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . pretty much gone away and . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: Uh—were the—uh—uh—racial relations in the small town, were they good? Were there—were there—were there problems?

BJ: Uh—I don't recall any real significant racial problems in—in—in the city . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:16:42] BJ: Uh—in the town. I was in third grade when the schools integrated, and—um—some of the whites decided that they didn't want to be a part of integration, and so they went to—they formed private schools—small private schools—and some were as many as eighteen, twenty miles away. Uh—but they chose to do that, and—uh—but the ones who remained—uh—seemed to have no problem with it. And we got along well. Uh—and when I think it—as a matter of fact, one of the—uh—one of the girls [Kim Zachary] in my class—uh—we were always in competition from—from day one until graduation.

SL: Scholastically.

BJ: Scholastically. Mh-hmm.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: And so—and—uh—even to this day, we have good relationships. And so—um—I think that we might have been shielded and just didn't know or—uh—but we managed to overcome, I think, and

to—and to accept each other. We played sports together—basketball, football, run track. Uh—had black and white coaches—uh—a mixture of black and white teachers, and—um—and we didn't see or hear of problems among the teachers. And really didn't hear or see it among the students. I don't ever recall fights among the blacks and the white students in school from that very first year throughout . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: . . . in—in my city. But . . .

[00:18:29] SL: Wa—was the—was your church . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . predominantly black? Or was it . . .

BJ: It was all black.

SL: All black.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And—um—um—it w—how large was the church?

BJ: Uh—I would say that—um—probably a population of about a hundred and twenty members. [*Unclear word*]

SL: So there—there must have been other black churches around, too.

BJ: Yes. Yes.

SL: Multiple churches, yeah. Um—okay. Well, let's talk a little bit about your mom and dad.

BJ: Okay.

SL: Um—you—first off, what—what was it that your dad did?

BJ: My father was a World War II veteran. And after the war—um—he was a skilled craftsman that—in that he was a carpenter and a bricklayer. [*Sound of train in background*]

SL: Mh-hmm.

BJ: And so he worked—uh—as such on the Pine—at the Pine Bluff Arsenal. Uh—and that was his—his skill, his craft. Prior to working on—in the arsenal, he had kind of contracting-type jobs around the state. And part of that—uh—the grain dryers in several other cities, including my hometown—uh—Stuttgart—uh—Hazen—uh—Jonesboro. Um—he helped to build in—in those—those grain towers—uh—dryers. And—uh—that was his—his skill, his trade.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:01] SL: Those are pretty big structures.

BJ: They are. And still standing.

SL: Yeah. Kind of dangerous, too, aren't they?

BJ: They are. Certainly if you—on the inside and fall in.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

BJ: Yes.

SL: So did you—by the time you came along, though, was he at Pine Bluff, or was he still . . .

BJ: He was initially—he was doing the contractin' and across the state, and then later on, at the Pine Bluff Arsenal.

SL: So you got to see him a lot.

BJ: When he was doin' the contractin', it was on the weekends. And when he was workin' at Pine Bluff, the Pine Bluff Arsenal, of course, he came home every evenin'. And so . . .

[00:20:44] SL: Did he teach you to fish and all that stuff? I mean, did you—I assume, did you play baseball and basketball and football and . . .

BJ: No—he wasn't a sportsman really at all. And I think I attribute that probably to his time in the military because afterwards even though we had guns in the house, they were always in the closet. They were never used. He never hunted. He—I think he worked pretty hard. That's—brickmason, I did that in school, that's pretty hard work. And so he usually rested and kind of took it easy when he came in. So he wasn't a really big sportsman. The fishing was with my grandparents—my grandmother for the most part. Now he did teach me how to lay concrit—concrete and sidewalks, and as a matter of fact, when I

was in kindergarten, I spent the afternoons—some afternoons helping my father to pour concrete walks around—one the churches actually one block from my home. And, of course, he taught me how to drive, and that was something that we always had pleasure in doin' that. And he was somewhat of a quiet, a relatively quiet father.

[00:22:10] SL: Uh-huh. Did he I mean, was he always a skilled craftsman?

BJ: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: That's good.

BJ: Right.

SL: And, okay. So what about your mom?

BJ: My—well, back to my dad—one . . .

SL: Okay.

BJ: . . . one other thing about him. I learned this later on, that he had, I believe, a sixth-grade education. And that's where his education stopped. My mother—she had an eighth-grade education, but she went to cosmetology school and was a beautician. And so she was a housewife, but she worked. She had a beauty shop right behind our house, and she worked on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. And with that, I think, she was a very—the typical housewife and mother in that she had

dinner prepared every day, and we sat down for dinner at five, five thirty when my dad would get home from work. She was the disciplinarian of the house, which was kinda typical. She lined out the chores, and because there were seven of us, all seven of us had a night to do certain chores. And, I think, from my dad and granddad, I certainly learned work ethic. And from my mom and my grandmother, it was more of the academic push in that my grandmother basically taught herself to read. And my mother—she always stressed education to the point where, at age of sixty-five, she went back to school . . .

SL: [Whispers] Wow.

[00:24:01] BJ: . . . and got her GED. That was impressive upon all of us that education was very important. And both were very devout Christians. And my mother, I think, had a gigantic heart. She loved to cook. And even when I went away to college, if I called her and told her that I was comin' home and nobody was at home but her and my dad, then she would cook a feast just like all of us were home. And so even growin' up, if we had a Thanksgiving dinner or a Christmas dinner or Easter dinner, after we would eat and sometimes even after we would sit down as a family to eat, she would prepare meals for us to take to certain elderly seniors in the city. And that's the kind of heart that my



mother had. And so—I mean, that's my mother, I mean—and that's the . . .

SL: She was Meals on Wheels before that was ever heard of.

BJ: Yes, that's correct. That's correct.

[00:25:11] SL: And that kind of support for the community—do you think that was church based? Did that kind of originate in a church, or do you think she just did that on her own entirely? I mean, was there a group of folks that helped with that?

BJ: No, no.

SL: Wow.

BJ: It was—she did it on her own. She did it on her own.

SL: What a gal.

BJ: Now there were organizations, and she was the head of this organization that was called the Homemakers Club [Arkansas Extension Homemakers]. And they would do things like this, but it was at certain times throughout the year. But my mother would do it on a regular basis, just of her own will and free accord.

[00:25:53] SL: That's interesting you should say the Homemakers Club.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Why do I want to think that there were—some of that was spread out across the state? Did you ever hear of them interfacing with other Homemaker Clubs?

BJ: They do, and they call it the Home Ec Extension, I believe it's that.

SL: Yes.

BJ: And it's—it is across the state.

SL: And it was actually affiliated with the University of Arkansas.

BJ: That's correct. That's correct. Mh-hmm.

SL: Wow.

BJ: And as a matter of fact, while I was in school at Fayetteville, they had a big meeting in Fayetteville, and she came. And so she would attend those, and she was very active in the Jefferson County Home Ec Extension for many years.

SL: Small world.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, you know, it's interesting. You're so close to Pine Bluff.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

[00:26:44] SL: Did you spend much time in Pine Bluff as a child?

BJ: Not really. Not really.

SL: You were—you preferred goin' out to the farm?

BJ: Yes.

SL: Huh. Well, but—and your dad, of course, ended up working at the arsenal there, but was the university at Pine Bluff, was that—did any of your siblings go there or . . .

[00:27:10] BJ: My—three of my siblin's [siblings] did. My oldest sister, my next oldest brother, and my youngest sister. My youngest sister [Arnita Jean Jones] graduated from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. But my older brother [Arlee Jones Jr.] and my older sister [Vernita Jean Jones], they did not.

SL: Okay.

BJ: My older brother graduated more recently from another university in Virginia.

SL: Which one's that?

BJ: Oh, my goodness. He did [*audio interference*] tell me. It's ar—it's in the Virginia Beach . . .

SL: Richmond?

BJ: Chesapeake—no, not Richmond. [Whispers] What was that, golly? It's Old Dominion [Norfolk, Virginia]? Old Dominion?

SL: Old Dominion. Yeah, that sounds right.

BJ: I think Old Dominion.

SL: That's a good school.

BJ: Yes.

[Tape stopped]

SL: Really didn't mean to do that.

FE: All right. Got speed again, Scott, sorry. We're good.

[00:28:17] SL: So we're kinda talkin' about your siblings now. Let's just go down oldest to youngest, and what—where they are and what they're doing. If they're still with us or . . .

BJ: Okay. Okay.

SL: Just give me the story on your family there.

BJ: My oldest brother is actually named after my mother. His name is Ernest. And after graduating—he was an athlete, a basketball player, very good—he attended Henderson State University [Arkadelphia] for a couple of years. Then he decided to go into the [United States] Marines, and so he spent about ten years in the Marines and became a minister while he was in the Marines. And then he decided to get out. And so he's been in that field, ministry and security, since that time. Spent most of his adulthood in California. Then most recently moved back to Little Rock.

SL: Okay.

BJ: My next oldest sister [Vernita Jean] followed my brother to Henderson State University, and when he left after her first year, she left and came back to Pine Bluff to the University of Arkansas. Subsequently, my father's only sister became ill, and

my sister went to Los Angeles [California] to kind of take care of my aunt [Phenonia Neal]. While there, she became an LPN, a licensed practical nurse. Or in California, they call them LVNs, or licensed vocational nurses. When my aunt passed away several years later, she decided to come back to Arkansas, and so now she's back in Pine Bluff—actually in Altheimer, workin' in Pine Bluff as an LPN.

SL: Okay.

[00:29:58] BJ: Brings me to my next brother [Arlee Jr.], who's actually named after my father. He's an engineer. He's the one who started at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. He left the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, went into the [United States] Navy, got into aviation and electronics—spent about eight years in the Navy, was getting schooling there, then came out, and went to college—became an engineer. Now resides in Orlando, Florida—there.

SL: So now where did he get his engineering degree?

BJ: I think it's out of the same university in Virginia.

SL: Okay.

BJ: So in . . .

SL: Old Dominion?

BJ: I think it's Old Dominion.

SL: Okay.

BJ: The—that's—next is me.

SL: Okay. We'll learn about you a lot, [*BJ laughs*] okay, and who's after you?

[00:30:48] BJ: My next younger brother is named Arthur. He—probably the quietest one in the family. Is a good athlete, or he was, anyway. [*SL laughs*] And—but he—his thing is that he's a self-taught musician. Taught himself to play the bass guitar. And then transitioned to the piano keyboards, and—I mean, beautiful voice as a singer. And that's what he does now. He's a musician, plays for a church ?and? a group—couple groups and sings. Then my . . .

SL: Now where is he now?

BJ: He's in Ark—in Altheimer, back in my hometown.

SL: Okay. All right.

BJ: He's—funny thing is, he's a trained electrician, but he doesn't work as an electrician.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And so my next youngest sister [*Arnita Jean*] actually is the one who graduated University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. And basically became—I guess, a medical technologist is maybe the closest title that I can think of job related. But she spent

practically all of her working career at the University of Arkansas [for] Medical Sciences [Little Rock]. And she works in the bone marrow transplant section, where they do the harvesting and the . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . storing and processing . . .

SL: Wow.

BJ: . . . for bone marrow transplants. Then that brings me to my youngest brother. His name is Frank, and he's named after my father's father. Right out of high school, he went into the Navy. So that was about twenty years ago. Twenty-one, I think, in January.

SL: He's still there?

BJ: He's still in the navy and thinking about retiring within the next couple of years or so. And he's in Norfolk, Virginia.

[00:32:48] SL: Now what was your father's name?

BJ: Arlee. *A-R-L-E-E*.

SL: Arlee.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, so do you think your father's time in the services influenced you . . .

BJ: My entry?

SL: . . . you and the siblings that joined the service?

BJ: I really don't because he never really talked about it that much.

SL: Now he was a World War II veteran?

BJ: That's correct. And he talked very little. He talked about sailing from New York on the Queen Mary going to Liverpool, England.

SL: So he was in the European theater.

[00:33:32] BJ: Yes. And he talked about going through Germany and Belgium, and I believe, northern Italy. Talked a little about some of the things that the Germans did and flooding their camps, breakin' dams, and not being able to smoke cigarettes because the Germans could see you.

SL: Right.

BJ: And that was the extent of his talk about World War II, his time in the military.

SL: Uh-huh. Probably affected him.

BJ: I would think so. I would think so.

SL: Most veterans are pretty quiet.

BJ: Yes, yes.

SL: It's a tough thing.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: So how—tell me about the house that you grew up in. [*Audio interference*]

BJ: Okay.

SL: I mean, that's a lotta [lot of] folks.

BJ: It is!

SL: Nine folks under one roof.

BJ: It is. And I look back at that and kinda wonder how we did it.

But we were kinda spread out. My oldest brother was born in [19]55. And the youngest brother was born in [19]67. So about . . .

SL: So siblings left . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . while others came on.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: Yeah, there's a turnover. [*Laughs*]

[00:34:46] BJ: So my two sisters shared a bedroom, and then the boys shared a bedroom. And my youngest brother was small enough where he could sleep in the room with my parents.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so we had a three-bedroom, one-bath house with a livin' room, dining room, kitchen. And I guess growin' up, and it didn't seem like such a big deal. [*Sound of train in background*]
But now that I'm an adult, and I go back home, and I said, "How did we all live in this one house?" You know—and it just amazes

me. But my mother, she was a true homemaker. She could work miracles, seemed like. [*Sound of train in background*] And I think some of that came from my grandmother because my grandmother was just as wise, and . . .

SL: This's your mother's mother.

BJ: Yes, yes. And my grandmother was such that she would wake us up, sometimes at seven o'clock, breakfast would be done, waiting for us. By nine o'clock, lunch would be done, and we could go fish. And then . . .

SL: Take lunch with you.

BJ: Absolutely, absolutely.

SL: Ah, my kind of grandma.

BJ: Oh, yeah. [*Laughs*] And so . . .

[00:35:59] SL: Well, now what about your father's parents? Now—so the grandparents that are on the lake are your mother's grandparents.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: Now where—what about your father's grandparents?

BJ: My father's father [Frank Jones] died before any of us were born, so we never got a chance to know him. But my—his mother—my grandmother [Phyllis Jones]—all of us except my youngest brother got to know her. And she was the typical—if you think

about what a grandparent, the spoiling-type grandparent would be . . .

SL: Yes.

BJ: . . . that's the way she was. She would give us all of her money and say, "Go to the store, and get me this, and you can get whatever you want." She was that kind of lady. But she was stern. She was—you didn't—you didn't misbehave. And so we didn't mind that at all 'cause we knew the limits, and we didn't cross 'em [them].

[00:36:56] SL: Well, now you said the same sort of thing about the grand—your mother's grandparents.

BJ: That's correct. [*SL laughs*] That's correct. Now I will say that my grandmother, I think probably disciplined or whipped us more than my mother, my father, and my grandfather put together.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And so—but it didn't—I think it kept us straight.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: It hurt for a little bit, but down the road, it kept us straight.

SL: Well, now were they at Alzheimer as well or . . .

BJ: Oh, my grandmother lived in New Town, which is one mile north of Altheimer. And she passed away in [19]67, so I was about six. As a matter of fact, yeah, first grade . . .

SL: Wow.

BJ: . . . mh-hmm. When she passed away.

[00:37:47] SL: What about music growin' up? What'd you—what'd your family listen to?

BJ: Gospel, certainly. We listened to gospel. Rhythm and blues. I guess, a little jazz, but gospel was the main thing that we listened to.

SL: Is that—does that continue to be a favorite of yours?

BJ: Yes.

SL: Gospel music?

BJ: Gospel, blues, jazz, and some country because I think the songs of my time growin' up, they told a story.

SL: Yes.

BJ: And if you listened to the words, you could get the story.

SL: Absolutely.

BJ: And the stories meant something—something positive. And so—and that was typically what we would listen to for the most part—the gospel, rhythm and blues, and sometimes jazz.

SL: Have you got favorite artists now?

BJ: Not really. Not really.

SL: Who was your favorite artist growin' up, or did you have one?

BJ: I would have to say the King and the Queen of Soul, James Brown and Aretha Franklin.

SL: Yeah. Choices.

BJ: Yes. [*Laughter*] They could sing. And they did sing.

SL: They were performers, too.

BJ: Absolutely.

[00:39:11] SL: Well, I'm tryin' to think—you graduated high school at the top of your class, is that right?

BJ: Actually, I was second in my class . . .

SL: The lady [Kim Zachary] that you were in competition?

BJ: . . . by .004. [*Laughs*]

SL: Zero-zero-four.

BJ: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: My gosh. So was that an A-plus? Did you—or was it just an A or one B or A's and one B? Or . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . how did that work out?

BJ: Somethin' like that. But it was a 3.996. [*Laughs*]

SL: Wow.

BJ: So—but, I didn't think it—lookin' back, it was good. It was healthy. It didn't hinder me.

SL: Right.

BJ: So.

SL: Well, sure. I'm sure. Certainly served you well. I mean, I'm tryin' to think—is there anything growing up that your mom or your dad said to you that really turned a light on for you . . .

BJ: [*Unclear word*]

SL: . . . really influenced . . .

BJ: Wow.

SL: . . . the direction you took?

[00:40:23] BJ: Ah, I can't say one thing in particular or a statement that they made other than just the emphasis on education and getting a good education. And they never pressured us to be one thing or another but to be good students, and that was their goal—is that we would be good students. And good citizens, too.

SL: Right.

BJ: And those were the driving forces. And whatever path, career choice that we made, as long as it was an honorable one, then they were happy with it.

SL: [*Audio interference occurs intermittently*] So you didn't—did you require much motivation doin' your homework at all, or . . .

BJ: None at all because most days I was able to do my homework at school, and rare—if I had a big paper to do, then I wound up doin' it at home. But most days, most of my homework was completed before I got home. So . . .

SL: Well, did you stay late at school to do that or . . .

BJ: No, I would use my time very wisely in class and do things. If I did have homework, then I would—that was the thing, if we had homework when we got home in the evening, we had to complete our homework before we did anything in the name of play.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so that was the thing. And, of course, we wanted to play. Basketball was a big thing, and so . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . we had to make sure that we completed our homework before we could play basketball.

[00:41:53] SL: How—what kind of basketball player were you?

BJ: [*Laughs*] Well, I played from sixth grade up.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And, I guess, junior high I was captain of the team, led the team in rebounding, free throw percentage. As a high schooler, I

played pretty steadily eleventh and twelfth grade. I played
quarterback in high school . . .

SL: Really?

BJ: . . . as a starting quarterback of the football team.

SL: How'd y'all do?

BJ: We never had a good football team, and so we were probably,
like, 3-7.

SL: Wow.

BJ: Yeah. But it was fun. It was fun. And I say sometimes that if I
had to go back to high school, the only sport that I would play
would be football—to do it again and do it better.

SL: I see. Well, did you enjoy football?

BJ: I did. I did, but I only played two years—no. No, three years.
Played ninth grader as junior high . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . played tight end. And then when I was recruited to play
high school as an eleventh grader and twelfth grader, I played
quarterback. And so . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Wow. I'm tryin' to think. I'm really not quite ready to
leave Alzheimer yet.

BJ: Okay.

[00:43:18] SL: You mentioned earlier that y'all had dances at the café. Is that like a jukebox thing or . . .

BJ: It was, but the cafés were more for the adults. At school, we would have sock hops or—there was another name that we called them—can't remem—can't remember the name now, but we would have dances at the school, as well in the gym.

SL: Were you using live bands, or had the DJs taken over?

BJ: DJs mostly.

SL: Golly, I just—I . . .

BJ: DJs mostly.

SL: . . . it's so hard for me to relate to that. [*BJ laughs*] When I was in high school, we never ever [*claps hands*] used a DJ. It was always a live band.

BJ: The live band.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Yeah, so. We had—it was DJs mostly. Occasionally, we'd have a group that would play. But it was students that would play.

SL: Right, right.

BJ: But they didn't play the whole night. But it was mostly disk jockey.

[00:44:13] SL: So the—you graduate second in your class. And what was it about—why is that you ended up at the University of

Arkansas [Fayetteville]? And not Pine Bluff or Henderson State
or . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm. It's funny that you mention that because during my
senior year—spring break of my senior year, I spent it practicing
with the Henderson State University Reddies football team to
play—to go there to play quarterback.

SL: Oh. Did they recruit you?

BJ: They did, and . . .

SL: Wow.

BJ: Just from goin' and practicin' with them, I felt like I could play,
but then I remember that this is spring, and they're already
practicing football.

SL: Right.

[00:45:02] BJ: And then they would start practicin' early in the fall,
getting ready—or actually in the summer, getting ready for the
fall. And I remembered what I really wanted to be in life, and
that was a physician. And I remember saying that, "If I'm
practicing this much, when will I have time to study and be a
good student?"

SL: Yeah.

BJ: So I battle with that, and I finally decided that I was gonna go to
the University of Arkansas. Even though Pine Bluff was closer—

again I wanted to kinda get away from home, to have a little bit of independence, and also go to the top school in the state in an effort to try to boost my chances for entering medical school.

And that's why I chose the University of Arkansas.

[00:45:49] SL: Well, I know your grades were outstanding in high school. Did you garner a scholarship or grants—or how'd you pay for college?

BJ: Ah, in a multitude of ways. And it's . . .

SL: Yeah. Like most everybody.

[00:46:03] BJ: . . . it's a *[laughs]* funny, funny thing that happened, and I have to share this because to me this is—it goes along with somewhat my whole philosophy in life in that when I was in high school, I was an athlete. I ran track, played football, played basketball. I was president of the student body my last two years. I was Mr. Altheimer High—top student—and did all of this. And, actually, was—our school served one and served as the vice president of the Student Councils for Arkansas. So we put on the banquet . . .

SL: Wow.

BJ: . . . for the state and had a chance—we invited one of the former presidents, Dr. [Charles E.] Bishop, to be our speaker.

SL: From the University of Arkansas.

BJ: From the University of Arkansas.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: So I got a chance to meet him, to introduce him, and all. And after doin' all of these things that Ben J. Alzheimer Foundation that I mentioned earlier . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . for years, dating back to the sixth grade, when I decided that I wanted to be a physician, they gave a scholarship to the top student in my school each year—four thousand dollars. And so I just felt like, you know, that I had earned the scholarship.

SL: Right.

[00:47:33] BJ: Well, I learned this maybe ten, fifteen years down the road that, initially, I was not selected for the scholarship. And my high school principal [Mr. Fred Martin Jr.] was the one who presented the names and made the recommendations to this foundation for the scholarship. And he said that he walked out of the office with the name of the people—of the person or people—might have been two, but I was not one of 'em. And so he thought in his mind—he said that, "Bobby Jones is a top student at this school. All of the things that he's done." And he said, "He's expectin' to win this scholarship. Everybody's expectin' him to win this scholarship. If he doesn't win this

scholarship, what does it say to the—all of the other students behind him?"

SL: That's right.

[00:48:21] BJ: So he went back, and he told this to the board who selected the scholarships, and he said that, "I really do believe that if Bobby Jones doesn't get this scholarship, it sends a bad message" . . .

SL: It does.

BJ: . . . "the wrong message to all of the other students, who in their mind, just know that he is gonna get this scholarship because he deserves it." Well, it turns out, instead of giving two scholarships that year, they gave five. And I was one of those. So that was part of my financing for college. Pell grants was another, and then while I [*laughs*] was in college, sometimes I worked three jobs while I was in college. I was a resident assistant, and then I worked part-time at IGA West out on Highway 62 West . . .

SL: Yep.

BJ: . . . out there in Westgate Shopping Center.

SL: Yes.

BJ: Uh—and then sometimes I did—uh—nighttime security guard at one of the female halls, most commonly over at Fulbright Hall.

And still was a student as well. So and that's how I kind of financed my way through college. And . . .

[00:49:38] SL: [Pause] So I'm tryin' to think, what did we say about how it was you got to Arkansas, I mean, exactly how did that happen?

BJ: How did I get to the University of Arkansas?

SL: Yeah.

BJ: When—after realizing it would be difficult, and I didn't want to risk not focusing on being a good student and getting to medical school . . .

SL: Yeah, the premed regimen.

BJ: . . . that I decided that I was gonna go to the University of Arkansas because it was the top school in the state, and I thought it would boost my chances for admission to medical school. And that's how I wound up there. In addition to getting away from home, instead of goin' to University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff fourteen miles away and livin' at home . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . I would go the University of Arkansas two or three hours away and live at the University of Arkansas and establish some independence as well.

[00:50:40] SL: Okay, so you had spent—you grew up in Altheimer.

You spent a lot of time on the weekend out in the country. You went to Pine Bluff some . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: Was—what was Fayetteville like and how did it affect you your first day when you got there . . .

BJ: Wow.

SL: . . . your first week of—in Fayetteville? What—compare and contrast for me what the difference was for you.

BJ: Well, it was a big contrast to see the campus with all the big buildings and kinda spread out and some of the residence halls where in one building they had more students livin' in the building than I had at my high school. And put two of 'em side by side together, had more people than lived in my town.

SL: Right.

BJ: So that was a contrast, but it didn't really dawn on me or set me back because I've always been an easygoin', adaptable person. And so I just—I felt like I fit right in, and I knew—one reason is I knew why I was there. And that kept me focused. And I had leisurely activities. I played intramural sports, went to church, and that was my typical routine, so nothin' really changed, and that's how it was easy. It was easy for me.

[00:52:19] SL: Well, so you're there in 1980 . . .

BJ: [Nineteen] seventy-nine.

SL: [Nineteen] seventy-nine. Okay. I'm actually a returning student . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . then, I think.

BJ: And that's what we called 'em.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: That's what we called—now there's a different name. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. What are they called now? They're . . .

BJ: Nontraditional.

SL: Nontraditional.

BJ: That's right. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right, right, right. So I'm tryin' to thin—I'm tryin' to—I think—'course [of course], I was born and raised in Fayetteville, so I kind of know what was going on in 1979 in Fayetteville. But . . .

BJ: Right.

[00:53:01] SL: . . . how was the—back then, the Afro-American community was not very big on the campus.

BJ: No, no. And I think probably the maximum number of students that I can remember hearin' numbers about during my time there was about seven hundred and fifty. And there were

probably more Middle Eastern students there than there were African Americans at the time . . .

SL: That's interesting, isn't it?

BJ: . . . that I was there.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: But I think it was a good mixing and assimilation of the students and the populations, and I noticed that even in the sports and things such as Ping-Pong, there was different cultures that you could routinely find playing sports and things like that and studying and working together. So it was nothing that I wasn't used to already because, again, I'd come from an integrated school.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so it was nothing. I think the—even while I was there, I played intramural sports, and I was a decent enough basketball player that I was kinda sought and somewhat recruited. And for . . .

SL: For the intramural teams?

BJ: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

[00:54:27] BJ: And so for three years, I played with an all-white team. I was the only black person on the team. And most of

these were graduate-level students.

SL: Right.

BJ: And most were in law school or the business school. And the



only time that I can remember being aware of a hint of prejudice was one Sunday night, we had played basketball, scrimmaged a team in Springdale. And so afterwards, everything was fine. It was a good game. And afterwards, we went to McDonald's.

SL: In Springdale.

BJ: In Springdale.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And at first, it seemed like they were just a little hesitant to serve me—to wait on me. And so I was patient, and then I realized that they didn't want to serve me. And so then I said, "Well, hmm, well, I don't want to be served." And that was the only real picture of prejudice that I can readily recall from my time in Fayetteville. Now it doesn't say that there wasn't other episodes where I just wasn't aware of, but that one . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . is the only one that I can clearly recall.

[00:55:38] SL: Did you carry your church attendance with you when you came to Fayetteville?

BJ: Mh-hmm. I did. I did.

SL: St. James [United] Methodist [Church] or St. James Baptist [Church]?

BJ: Ah, actually, there was one on the campus. The Baptist Student Union building, which set right across the street from the law school . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . and the Chi Omega [Sorority] house, I believe—right there on the corner. And they had services there. And then sometimes, we would go to St. James as well. And that was—I had done it all my life, and so it was no change.

[00:56:12] SL: What about the curriculum?

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did you struggle with the college level curriculum, or did you just burn that up, too?

BJ: No, I think the thing that gave me the biggest trouble was organic chemistry.

SL: Yes.

BJ: And I hated it. And that might have been part of it—is that I didn't enjoy it. But everything else wasn't that bad. And so I think if I had not had to work as much as I did, then I would've had more time that I could've devoted to my studies and could've been a better student as well. And I think that would

be the thing that I would change if—and, [*laughs*] of course, everybody would like to be able to just go to college. And not have to worry . . .

SL: Do better with gr—yeah sure.

BJ: . . . about the cost of college.

SL: Right, right.

BJ: And that would be the thing that I would change.

[00:57:07] SL: So in the summers, you'd go back to Altheimer?

BJ: No, actually, I stayed in Fayetteville most of the summers. I think, three summers because I was working, and I had a job. And one or two of those summers, I took a class each semester, each summer session.

SL: So you graduated early?

BJ: No, I didn't. [*SL laughs*] I did not. [*Laughter*].

SL: Was you . . .

BJ: In two of those years, I also worked as orientation leader, so that was a summer type job as well. I started out to get a double degree, and at that time, botany and bacteriology.

SL: Yes.

BJ: But now it's called microbiology.

SL: Yes.

BJ: And org—I was worried about taxonomy, which was to me the

hardest botany class that I had run across.

SL: What is that the study of?

BJ: Oh, it's the classification—name, genus, species . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

BJ: . . . of all plants.

SL: Yes. [*Laughs*]

[Tape stopped]

[00:58:15] SL: University of Arkansas and some of your classes.

BJ: Yes.

SL: Is that where we left off?

BJ: That's correct.

[00:58:20] SL: Okay, I want to drop that for right now 'cause I
wanna [want to] go back to Altheimer.

BJ: Okay.

SL: I'm not quite satisfied that I've gotten enough of a story back
there.

BJ: Okay.

SL: Let's talk about the discipline and the disciplinarian that your
grandmother was. And . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . tell me, I mean, are you leading me to believe that [*BJ
laughs*] you never got in any kind of trouble at all back home?

BJ: Definitely nothin' serious. We never, never ever got in trouble at school where our teachers or the principal had to call our parents for anything. That was just unheard of. And my parents wouldn't hear of it because they—that was one of the things that was drilled into us, that we knew how to behave, and we called it—the kids—children in growin' up—we called it "home training." That we had home training. And that was a thing that you just didn't do. Any adult, any adult in those days had the authority of your parents. They were to be treated just like they were your parents. And you did not walk by an adult and not say "hello" or "hi" or "good morning." Even wakin' up at home, you did not see your parents and not say "good morning" the first time you saw 'em. And it was just common courtesies and things of that nature. If we misbehaved or did something that wasn't in line with what our parents expected of us, then those adults had the authority and the blessin' of my parents to correct us, to chastise us, whatever they felt was appropriate. Not only would they do it, but they would inform my parents what we did and what they had done to correct us. And sometimes our parents would recorrect us. [*Laughs*] If you know what I mean.

SL: You got a double dose.

[01:00:29] BJ: That's right. And so we knew what was expected.

We knew that all the eyes of the community was upon us because everyone knew my parents. And my parents, especially my mother, knew everyone in the community. Because of her association with the Parent-Teachers—PTO, Parent-Teacher Organization, the Home Ec class, and through her contacts in church and Home Ec Extension, and she worked the polls for voting. So she knew all the citizens of the town and the surrounding county. And so, I mean, we were under the gun, so we knew how to behave, and we did. We did.

[01:01:14] SL: That's a great, great fortunate way to grow up, I think.

BJ: I think so. I really think so.

SL: You know, it really—I don't know—it made you know that it definitely was not worth it to mess up.

BJ: Mh-hmm. That's correct.

SL: That you were gonna get it goin' and comin'.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: That—and there, I think, it's also—there's also a spiritual side to it, too.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: It's like, you know, someone knows . . .

BJ: That's correct.

SL: . . . what you're doin'.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: All the time.

BJ: Absolutely. [*SL laughs*] And sometimes before we got home, my mother already knew what we had done or said or didn't do.

SL: [*Laughs*] They'd made the call.

BJ: That's right. That's right. [*SL laughs*] And . . .

SL: That's great.

BJ: . . . it taught us respect for our elders. That's one. And I think that goes a long ways if respect is truly a two-way street, and it starts out by respecting your parents. And then you respect all other elders. And you learn how to respect yourself at the same time, you know.

[01:02:20] SL: Okay. Some more about Altheimers—you said that you integrated when you were in third grade.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: Okay. So tell me about the school that you came from before you integrated. What was that like?

BJ: Uh . . .

SL: What was the name of the school?

BJ: Martin Elementary.

SL: Okay.

BJ: Of course, all the students were black. I believe all of the teachers that I can recall were black, but I believe we had a white principal [Mr. Jesse Ross], if I remember correctly. I know we had a white principal once the school was integrated. And I believe we had a white principal before the schools integrated. I think that other than the integration, I didn't really see a big difference. I think the teachers were still caring and compassionate, talked to our parents about our good behavior, our bad behavior, what needs to improve. So I didn't, other than whites coming to the school, I didn't see a real big difference. Oh, we had more white teachers as well.

[01:03:35] SL: Okay, so in Altheimer, there were two schools.

BJ: Yes.

SL: And those schools were, I mean, because the town was relatively small . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . really relatively tiny in the way . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . towns go, was it K through twelve in one building or . . .

BJ: No, it was . . .

SL: K through six and then . . .

BJ: K through six in one side of the campus and seven through

twelve, I believe, on the other side of the campus.

SL: And that was twice.

BJ: Yes.

SL: There was a black set and a white set.

BJ: That's correct. That's correct.

SL: And so when integration happened, whites came to the black school, and blacks went to the white school. It became mixed.

BJ: That's correct. So on the traditional black side of the town became the elementary school and the middle school . . .

SL: Okay.

BJ: . . . sixth, seventh, and eighth. And on the traditional white side of town became the high school, and that's the way that it was.

[01:04:36] SL: Okay, now in third grade, I'm tryin' to think how aware were you as a third grader . . .

BJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the kids around you, of the civil rights movement and all the hubbub about integration and all that? I mean, you had to hear the talk.

BJ: Right.

SL: It had to be—was it ever talked around the dinner table or at home? Was it talked about at church?

BJ: Uh-huh.

SL: I mean, you can't just . . .

BJ: Yeah.

SL: . . . say it went around, I mean . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . what was goin' on in the community?

BJ: I think as a third grader, we probably didn't hear it or didn't pay attention. But even beyond that—fourth, fifth, sixth grade—you didn't—you heard about it in the news, but it wasn't like it was something local—like it was something that was national more than local. And so—and that's why it's not as fresh in my mind that it was a big problem local. Of course, I knew the story of—about Martin Luther King and his marches and speeches and what he went through, and the boy—bus boycott. And things of that nature. We learned all of that. And certainly in church, at home, and just other venues throughout the community as well. But because things seemed to be pretty quiet and people got along locally, it was—seemed to be kind of removed from us in that regard. And, again, I do not ever remember any fights between blacks and whites simply based upon being black and white.

[01:06:30] SL: So [*sound of train in background*] you didn't experience—I mean, were there signs?

BJ: Uh-huh.

SL: Were there cafés that you couldn't eat at or . . .

BJ: Not at this time.

SL: I mean, it was just a small enough community everyone got along fine.

BJ: Mh-hmm. Right.

SL: And it didn't really—that outside-world stuff no one could really relate to it, but here you are in third grade, you . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . all of a sudden, there is a change.

BJ: Right.

SL: It's something from the outside world has instigated . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm. Right.

SL: . . . something that affected you personally in some way.

BJ: The only thing I remember is that my parents sayin' that there will be whites coming to school with us. That was it. That was it.

[01:07:17] SL: But you had probably been playing with whites and—
or not? I mean, how did it change your social life? Or did it
change it at all? And was it just something that happened
during school hours, and then you went back to your normal life
or . . .

BJ: Yeah, it mostly happened during school hours because if you're— most of the whites lived on one side of town, and most of the blacks lived on another side of town, and so after school, everybody went back to their sides of town. And you really didn't interact or have the opportunity to play together until the next day at school. And so in that way, it wasn't such a big change. We were at school together, and then we went home, and we played with our friends from the neighborhood. And that's kind of the way that it was, I remember. Later on, we began as we grew up, we began to go across town to visit each other's homes and to play and to do things like that with our white friends who lived across town.

[01:08:19] SL: So there was kind of a division.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: There was a black part of town and a white . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . part of town.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: So there really probably was never any reason for the two to mix anyway.

BJ: Well, all the services were on . . .

SL: The same.

BJ: . . . one street. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And so . . .

SL: So there was. You shopped next to each other.

BJ: That's correct.

SL: You ate in the same cafés . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . next to each other. You . . .

BJ: That's correct. And then out—on working—worked together.

SL: Right.

BJ: Particularly out on the farms and the plantations, worked side by side together. And so . . .

[01:08:58] SL: Now what kind of—did you do work?

BJ: On the farm?

SL: When you were growin' up?

BJ: As a matter of fact, I did. And I forget exactly what age I first started, but I think my very first day of working in the fields was for a family friend [Mr. Joe and Mr. Earlee Armstrong], who had a farm. And I remember this to this day that I worked this full day in the summer chopping cotton, and my wages for that entire day was six dollars. Man, I look back at that now and say, "All day for six dollars." And I remember bein' so tired when I



came home that day that I made it to the living room couch. And I laid down. I didn't eat dinner. I just laid down. And I dreamed, and it seemed like I could see grass growing up through the floor.

SL: Wow.

BJ: And that was my first full day labor in—on the farm. And so subsequently, I worked some out on the plantation with my grandfather. There, in the summer, I chopped cotton. Later in the year, as the soybeans grew, we cut the big weeds out of the soybeans. Then also worked in the rice fields. And that's what I did in the summer until, I think, I became a sophomore or junior. And then at that time, I got a job workin' on the river at one of the lock and dams. And I did that for two summers. And then after that, I went to school in Fayetteville.

[Tape stopped]

FE: And we've got speed.

[01:10:54] SL: So you chopped cotton?

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And how many years did you do that?

BJ: About three or four.

SL: And out there in the fields, was it predominantly blacks that were chopping cotton?

BJ: Predominantly, but there were whites, too, and so we worked together in the fields as well.

SL: Were the folks out in the fields, were they all local, or were there transients that worked 'em, too?

BJ: Local. Local.

SL: All local?

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And what were the other crops at the time?

BJ: Soybeans.

SL: Soybeans.

BJ: And rice.

SL: Uh-huh. Did you ever work out in those fields, too?

BJ: Oh, yes. Yes.

SL: Wow. I've never heard anyone talk about the rice thing.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: Is that—you went out there to plant the rice?

[01:11:37] BJ: Well. No, they planted with a machine, but they had the levees and the gates with the water runnin' through. And so most of the work was around making sure the gates were—and the levees were intact and the gates were open where the water could run. That was the big gist of workin' in the rice fields.

SL: That's a lot of real estate, isn't it?

BJ: It is. It is. It is. I remember in some of the fields, the rows might be quarter of a mile to half a mile. And I remember some were almost a mile long.

SL: Right. [*Sighs*] Big stuff.

BJ: And—a lot. A lot. A lot.

SL: And this is—that's the labor that your grandfather did.

BJ: Mh-hmm. Yes.

SL: So you actually got to work beside him.

BJ: Yes, yes. Mh-hmm.

[01:12:30] SL: If you had to say what your grandfather imparted to you, what would that be?

BJ: I think, work ethic and an honest living. I think those are the things—is that—if you think—I think work ethic and an honest livin' is probably the best way to kinda sum it up. He was a hard worker. He didn't believe—and even to this day at ninety-seven, he's not one to just lounge around. He's up early and looking for somethin' to do to stay busy. And I think those things kinda—was what kinda sticks with me, and he still continues to show today. In addition, he was another person who had a very generous heart as well, and he would help people. And that was a thing in growin' up in those days, families they really were close. And I'm talkin' other families, like neighbors, were really

close. If one neighbor needed a ride or needed a cup of sugar or needed a stick of butter, then it was—or a couple of eggs, then it was given readily.

SL: What's mine is yours.

BJ: That's right. That's right. And I remember days where the lady next door might send over to my grandmother's house and said, "Will you ask Miss Sammie if she will lend me a cup of sugar." And my grandmother, of course, would do it . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . but she wasn't lendin' her anything. She was givin' it to her.

SL: Well, of course.

BJ: And she didn't expect anything in return. And she would actually tell 'em, "Then don't worry about sendin' it back." You know.

SL: Right.

BJ: And that's just the way it was in that day and time.

[01:14:38] SL: [Pause] What about your father?

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you're saying your father—your grandfather was the work ethic . . .

BJ: Uh-huh. Okay.

SL: . . . model. What kind of model was your father?

BJ: He worked hard, too. And he—I learned work ethic from him,

because, again, carpentry and bricklayin', outdoor work, and bricklayin', particularly concrete laying—masonry is hard, difficult work. And I did that, learned that trade in school and did it with him for a little bit. So the work ethic I learned from my father and my grandfather. And I think one of the things that I regret about my dad is that—all of us, all of my brothers—were—except my two younger brothers—so my older brother, my next older brother, myself, we all played sports and basketball and were kind of like starters or—and . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . and I cannot recall my father ever coming to a basketball or football game to see us play. He would give us money to go.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And then he would give us money after the game for, you know, something, but I can't ever remember him comin' to see me play or to see us play. My mother would come sometimes.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: But, mostly, most of the games were on Friday nights, and she worked on Friday—Friday nights, and so she couldn't make it most of the time. But she did come.

[01:16:23] SL: Did your grandparents come see you play?

BJ: No, they didn't. They didn't. Because they didn't like the noise, and so I can understand why they didn't come.

SL: So it was just the girlfriends.

BJ: [*Laughs*] Well, let me think back. The cheerleaders.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh. What was the dating scene back then?

BJ: Okay.

SL: What did you do on a date? [*BJ vocalized noise*] Or did you date? I mean, did you?

BJ: I think it all revolved around athletics really. So going to the games, being an athlete and goin' to the games. When the girls would come to the games, you'd have the chance to be with them, talk with them, to dance, and do things like that.

SL: Right.

BJ: And that's what it kind of revolved around. Every once in a while you'd go to a movie, and then, of course, prom when you were in the right age and grade. And that was kind of the gist of it. Of course, you could always see your girlfriend if you went to church as well, so that was a good place to go, to see her as well.

[01:17:29] SL: Did the church host dances, too?

BJ: No, they didn't. They didn't.

SL: Bake sales?

BJ: No, not—well, usually not at the church. Sometimes they would do things at certain members' homes in that regard. But singing sometimes on Sunday nights or Sunday nights for the most part. Choirs and groups would get together and sing at some of the different churches in the community.

SL: So y'all got to hang out.

BJ: Yes. Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Yes. That's a great environment.

BJ: Right.

SL: I'm tryin' to think. What other—back on the—back into the church, did you have—do you have a favorite scripture?

BJ: Oh, wow.

SL: Or do you have one maybe in your youth that really gotcha [got you]?

BJ: That really got me?

SL: That really came through for you? I know it's impossible to go down to at least one, but . . .

[01:18:45] BJ: Wow. From my youth. I guess from my youth, it's one where it talks about the youth. It says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth when the evil days come not or come nigh." But I know it's, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." That one always kinda sticks out from my

youth. As an adult and some of the other challenges in life and things I've kind of gone through—dangerous times and things like that has led me to one where it says—it's initially written in the Book of Psalms, the 91st Book of Psalms. But it's also in the Gospels where the devil is talking to Jesus Christ where he takes him out on the mountain and try to convince him, to tempt him. And he said, "For it is written, He shall give the Angels charge concerning thee. And in their hands, they shall hold thee up when they shall bear thee up lest at anytime thy dash thy foot against the stone." So that verse from the Book of Psalms and then the Gospels has probably been my most favorite verse over the past few years because of bein' in the military and the dangerous jobs and positions and circumstances that I've been in that I've never really worried or truly been afraid because of that verse or those verses and my belief in that. And it kind of goes back to an episode when I was in Bosnia[-Herzegovina]. I was a flight surgeon, so part of my job was to take care of the people who fly.

SL: Sure.

[01:20:40] BJ: And part of the requirements was to fly as well. On this particular day, it was the Saturday before Easter. We flew from Tuzla, Bosnia[-Herzegovina], down to Southern Bosnia to a

town called Mostar.

SL: Okay.

BJ: We had lunch. And then we were checkin' the weather, and we knew that a storm—a snowstorm—was comin'.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And it was comin' from the south heading north, and so we had to fly back north. So we said, "Well, we can beat it."

SL: We'll be ahead of it.

[01:21:08] BJ: So we took off, and we were ahead of the storm.

But when we made it about six nautical miles from Sarajevo [Bosnia-Herzegovina], the clouds were sitting on top of the mountains. So when you're flyin' in a helicopter, you always want to be able to see the ground, so you don't fly into the clouds unless you're on radar. And so we had to turn around and to head back south into or toward the storm. In less than—it seemed like less than two minutes of flying, we were in the midst of white all around us. Couldn't see anything except snow. Just white. So in this particular case, what you're supposed to do, the training is is that you know the highest peak or level in the area where you're flyin'. So you don't stop. You don't turn. You keep flyin' in the direction that you're going, and you ascend to that—above that height. And then you squawk

or—to kind of put out an emergency call.

SL: Right.

BJ: And they—once you do that, then everybody is quiet, and they pick you up. And then they guide you in. Well, on this particular day, it was four of us in the helicopter. Of course, I was the most senior person and the oldest person . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . in the helicopter. I wasn't flyin'. I was a passenger. There was a really young guy sitting next to me, and a young pilot and another more senior pilot on the controls. And so I—I'm on the headphones, and I'm hearin' everything, and I'm seein' everything.

SL: Right.

BJ: And I can hear and sense and see the fear and the anxiety in their voice and their actions.

SL: Right.

[01:22:55] BJ: And so they did what was appropriate. That the pilot, he said—he immediately said, "I got the controls. I got outside." That means he's lookin' around, and he talked to the copilot. He said, "You got the inside," which means that you got the map. And so—and I'm knowing that as long as the helicopter is level by looking at the gauges, which is the other

thing that you're supposed to do as the pilot . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . and you're ascending, and you get above that height, then you're fine. And so I remember to this day, feeling my pulse and just listening and knowing that my heart rate didn't go up. I didn't breathe fast. I didn't get anxious or anything—that I knew that we—as long as we're doing the right thing, then we were fine. And that led me to that verse. Afterwards when we got back and got on the ground, and we looked at everybody. They were still shaking.

SL: Oh, sure.

BJ: Yeah. The—and one—the pilot had been flying for years, but it was his first time ever being in a situation like that. And so that was probably the very first time that I really realize that I was in a very dangerous and precarious situation. And so that verse has kind of stuck with me as I look back and especially through the yearlong deployment to Iraq, it stuck with me in my mind.

[01:24:25] SL: When—was there an event, or when was it that you decided that you were gonna do the doctor thing?

BJ: Sixth grade. I had gone to a graduation . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . a school graduation. And one of my cousins [Frank Tyrone

Whitmore] had been the top student and had won this scholarship. So, afterwards, I went by the principal's home at the time. He was out in his garden, and I was talkin' to him and asked him, "How do you go about winnin' this scholarship?" And it turned out that I mentioned that—he asked me what did I want to—why did I want to win it, and what did I want to do. And I told him that I wanted to win it, so that I could go to school to be a physician. And true, indeed, I did win it, and I did follow through on my sixth-grade aspirations on becoming a physician.

SL: So—but really . . .

BJ: What led to me to want to be?

SL: Yeah. What led you to that?

BJ: In my town, there was a small clinic.

SL: Right.

BJ: It seemed like it was a four-room clinic.

SL: Right.

BJ: And at the time, and it's still true that you have to have certain immunizations in order to go to school.

SL: Right.

[01:25:39] BJ: So we went to this clinic to get immunizations, and I remember it being small and crowded and thinkin' in my mind

that one day I would do something about this. And later on, my thought how I could do something about it was to become a physician and to have an office and to come back to Altheimer and set up an office and to practice and to do that.

SL: Yeah.

[01:26:01] BJ: And so—and later on, I said, "Well, that's what I want to do." And I strove for it wholeheartedly to become a physician. I was almost sidetracked a couple times . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . in reference to whether I was gonna stick with my goals or not, and I actually spent a couple years—at least a year and a half—working or in a dentist's office [Dr. Norman Dwight Heathman] in Springdale while I was in college, and I wound up applyin' to dental school because I was afraid that I wouldn't get into medical school. I didn't know why, but I was afraid that I wouldn't get into medical school. So I applied to dental schools, accepted at the University of Louisville [Louisville, Kentucky] and University of Tennessee [Memphis, Tennessee].

SL: Gosh, but isn't that supposed to be harder? Dental school?

BJ: [*Laughs*] I don't know, but then I was accepted in medical school, too. And so then I said, "Well" . . .

SL: You had options.

BJ: . . . and then I said, "Man, that's what I've always wanted to do." And so I didn't even know why I didn't follow my own dream all the way without veerin' off and so . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: And that's—I said, "That's what I wanted to do since sixth grade, and that's what I'm gonna do."

[01:27:20] SL: Well, now what about the army stuff?

BJ: How did I choose the army?

SL: Yeah. Now did you do an ROTC thing in college or . . .

BJ: No, growin' up and going to different doctor's offices and hospitals, in reading their certificates and diplomas and things on the walls, I noticed that most either had their training or had done service in the military. They received their trainin' in the military—had service in the military.

SL: Right.

BJ: So I said, "Well"—that kind of stuck in my mind. And then later on, during the Iran hostage crisis is one of the things that kind of stands out is that the hostages when they were released, that they came back to the military hospitals in Germany . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . rather than coming to the United States. And then I noticed that whenever any American, citizen, soldier, whatever, was

involved in something overseas, before they came back to the United States, they always went to one of the military hospitals in Europe. And I said, "Must be some reason for this, that they're good, and they know what they're doin'."

SL: Well, that—yeah.

BJ: And so I said, "Well, that's what I want to do, is that—is to be a part of somethin' like that." And then what drove me to the Army is that the Army has the biggest program and has led the way in a lot of medical research and technology and immunizations and work. And that's how I settled on the Army.

SL: Wow.

[01:29:01] BJ: And so at the time, when I was in—when I was accepted to medical school . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . I decided that I—in an effort to improve my chances for doin' my training in the military, I decided that I would enter the National Guard. So I entered the National Guard. And I had to apply for residency in the military setting, but I took a year off because I didn't want to do two big things at one time.

SL: Right.

BJ: So I got married, and I put off medical school for a year just to get used to bein' married before I went to medical school.

SL: Sure.

BJ: And then afterwards, I was accepted into the residency program in the Army, and then I came on to active duty and have been on active duty ever since.

SL: I'm hot. Are you hot?

[Tape stopped]

[01:30:00] SL: So, okay. Do I have enough? I think I've got a little bit more. Is there—what about—back at Altheimers, let's talk about your mom a little bit more.

BJ: Okay.

SL: Seven kids . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you said, you know, you all—all of you had to do chores . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . and stuff like that. And at one point in time, you said something about there being seven kids, so everyone had a turn doing chores.

BJ: Yes.

SL: So is that the way they divided it up? You had an eve—you had a day when you had to do chores, and no one else did or . . .

BJ: No, no, no, no.

SL: Okay.

BJ: That seven days was to do the dishes, so everyone had a night to do the dishes.

SL: I see. Okay.

BJ: And so—but—and that was one of the things my sisters—they basically worked indoors. All of their stuff was female and indoors. And the males, we took care of all the male-related things outdoors.

SL: Heavy liftin' . . .

BJ: That's right.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: That's right. And so—but dishes, we all had a night to do the dishes. My sisters, they would cook, of course.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And the guys would take care of the lawn, the leaves, and things of that nature, painting the house, and stuff like that.

[01:31:25] SL: When—talk to me a little bit about dinners again.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: I don't know if we really covered that very well.

BJ: Okay.

SL: I know—I think we talked about it off-camera. I'm not sure we talked about it on camera.

BJ: Okay.

SL: If—your—and we talked a little bit about your grandmother
cookin' . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . breakfast, having it ready . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . and then you go off fishin', and then she'd have lunch ready
by nine. You'd come back . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . and do lunch . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . or grab your lunch and go back out fishin' . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . for the rest of the day. What about at home? What was
the routine at home as far as dinner went?

BJ: Well, we'd have breakfast every morning. That was one thing
that we always did. We'd have breakfast.

[01:32:06] SL: Did you always say grace?

BJ: Oh, yeah.

SL: Before every meal?

BJ: Absolutely.

SL: Did you take turns doing it, or was it always your father or
always your mother or . . .

BJ: Ah, we, I think, we took turns.

SL: Okay.

BJ: It depends upon—we took turns.

SL: Okay.

BJ: But for dinner, it was usually about—my father would get off work at about four thirty. So he could be home from Pine Bluff by five o'clock, and so we usually sat down for dinner together through the week—five—somewhere between five and five thirty. And that was the traditional routine. And most days my mother would cook, and as my sisters grew up, they would cook. And I remember my oldest sister's first meal where she prepared the entire meal. And even to this day, we all laugh when we think about it and talk about it because everything tastes bland. We all said it that day that it tastes just like water. [*Laughs*] But my mother was an excellent cook, and my sisters are excellent cooks. And even a couple of my brothers—they can bake. They can do it.

[01:33:18] SL: What did y'all talk about around the dinner table?

What each of you were doin' or news or gossip . . .

BJ: Ah, a little bit.

SL: . . . around the town or politics? Everything?

BJ: We didn't talk a whole lot because, again, that was part of the

etiquette, is that you don't eat and talk, you know, or chew and talk with . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . with your mouth full. But we talked a little bit about just things that were goin' on in the community, and my mom and dad would talk about the day at work and things like that, what we were doin' in school. Sports, games comin' up, or things of that nature, and as the holidays and things approached, we talked about, of course, what we were gonna do in celebration of the holiday. Those were the typical conversations around the dinner.

[01:34:12] SL: What do you think your mother imparted to you?

BJ: Perseverance. Perseverance. And that goes back to her sayin' that, as a youth, that she wanted to be a teacher. And in order to be a teacher, she had to graduate from high school and in that she never lost sight of that goal. And to go back and get her GED at age sixty-five . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . and then one day, she had the opportunity to be the lead instructor in an adult education class. And that basically satisfied her lifelong ambition and goal of bein' a teacher.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And so from her and my grandmother—perseverance in reference to education and stickin' with it and not losing sight of it.

[01:35:11] SL: So, okay. I'm about to head back to Fayetteville now.

BJ: Okay.

SL: How did you get to Fayetteville? Folks? Did your folks drive you up there?

[01:35:25] BJ: As a matter of fact, they did. My sister [Vernita Jean] and I had gone in together and bought a car during my, I think, my senior year.

SL: And what kind of car was it?

BJ: It was a 1971 Ford Galaxy 500. [*Laughs*]

SL: Ah. I know this car very well.

BJ: But I couldn't drive it to school, and so my mother, my granddad, and my oldest sister drove me to college. Okay. Drove me to Fayetteville.

SL: What—were you scared when they left?

BJ: No.

SL: You weren't?

BJ: It was a little quiet, you know.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: It was a quiet Sunday evening, and I guess I thought more of them traveling back home than what I was about to do the next day.

SL: Right.

BJ: And it seemed like a long evening, but we talked once they made it home. And I was okay after that.

[01:36:33] SL: Did you have any friends up there already? Did you know anyone up there?

BJ: Ah, not really.

SL: Wow.

BJ: Not really. I—well, I take that back. There were two people [Thomas and Brenette Hughes] from my hometown who were senior classmen who were there. And so both females, and I knew them. And those were the only people at the university that I really knew.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And it turned out later that my wife and her sister [Corine Ackerson-Jones and Velmon Ackerson Johnson] were there, and because of the two ladies who were from my hometown, they were good friends of my wife's sister. And they met my wife, and so I was introduced to those two sisters and—which included my wife. And so those were probably the first four people that I

ran across and associated with when I went to the university.

[01:37:28] SL: So you met your wife when you were a freshman?

BJ: I did. I did, when I was a freshman.

SL: And what were the circumstances there?

BJ: I—one of the young ladies who was from my hometown was gonna show me around the campus, and they actually happened to be roommates this particular summer, and that's how I met my wife.

SL: So she was along for the tour?

BJ: No.

SL: No?

BJ: It was just a quick meeting—"hello" . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . "how are you." [*SL laughs*] And that was it.

SL: No hearts flying everywhere?

BJ: Oh, no. No, no.

[01:38:01] SL: So—well, how did—did she take classes, I mean, was she in the—was she a freshman, too?

BJ: No. She was actually gonna be a sophomore. She was a year ahead of me.

SL: Ah, an older woman in your life. [*BJ laughs*] You be sure to tell her I said so. [*BJ laughs*]

BJ: Oh, she—I—reminds of that sometimes, and I remind her more often.

SL: Okay.

BJ: And so for about a three month period, a two month period we're the same age. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, okay.

BJ: Numerically the same age.

SL: There you go. And what were her interests?

BJ: She was in education. Ah, so even though she said that she never wanted to teach, she was in education.

SL: Right.

[01:38:29] BJ: But later on, she got her Bachelor's there, and she got a Master's there. And then we were workin' in residence life, student residence life.

SL: Yeah, I remember that.

BJ: And so all of her professional career had been in residence life. And so after we left the university and I went to medical school down in Little Rock, she took a job at the University of Central Arkansas [Conway] in their residence life department [Editor's Note: Department of Housing & Residence Life]. And from there, during my junior year and senior year of medical school, she took a job at Memphis State University [Memphis,

Tennessee] in their residence life program as a conference manager and programmer. And after that, when we moved to Augusta, once I came on active duty, Augusta, Georgia, she took another job with the local college there, Paine College, as a director of Environmental Learning, again in Student Services administration area. And so that's—has been her professional career in college level student services administration. And that's where she wanted to stay. As we began to move around after leavin' Eisenhower, she interviewed for a couple of jobs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and University of Maryland, College Park, again in student services. Both times, both jobs it came down to her and one other individual, and the other individual already worked in a department at the university and got the job.

SL: Right.

[01:40:25] BJ: And so she was a little despondent because the people who were interviewing her—some of the people had expressed that they really wanted to hire her. But they couldn't.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so she was kind of despondent. And . . .

SL: Well, sure.

BJ: . . . she met a sorority sister in the DC area, who said that she

worked as a substitute teacher and basically worked full-time as a substitute teacher, and convinced my wife to try it. And her first job was a weeklong substitute position, and I believe it was with a kindergarten class. And she loved it.

SL: Oh.

BJ: So ever since then, 1994, everywhere we've gone from there to Hawaii back to here, to Germany, and back to here, she had been a substitute teacher. And she enjoyed it because she could say, "No, I can't do it today."

SL: Right.

BJ: And she could say, "No, I don't want to do it today."

SL: Right.

BJ: And so she enjoyed it. But once we were getting ready to come back to the States this time, she said that she wanted to get back on the college level. And so she took a job at Armstrong Atlantic State University [Savannah, Georgia] as an academic advisor.

[01:41:38] SL: So how long after you met her did—was it before you got married?

BJ: Let's see. It was two years after we met that we began to date.

And three years later, we got married.

SL: Yes.

BJ: Six years later, we had our son [Bradley Christopher Jones].
And now almost twenty-two years later, here we are.

SL: [*Laughs*] [*Audio interference*] Well, where did you—what?

FE: You're buzzin' pretty good there, Scott.

SL: Do what now?

FE: You're buzzin'.

SL: Oh, I'm buzzin'. Oh, I'm sorry.

FE: That's o—no that's okay, Scott.

SL: What—how did you propose to her? Where were you?

BJ: Ah, wow, if she was here, she'd laugh. [*Laughs*]

SL: Good.

BJ: And I do, too, for her and me, too.

SL: Okay.

[01:42:26] BJ: At the time, she was a head resident at Gibson Hall.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And I had always said and believed in my heart that I would be successful—the word "successful," whatever that meant. But in my terms, it meant that I would be through medical school, through residency training, have my own practice, have my own house, and then I would get married because . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . at that time, I felt like I could support myself, and I could

support a wife and a family. Well, she had faith in me, and so I remember one night, we were just talking. And we had dated for three years—close to . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . three years and had done a lot of things together, traveled, and did things. And she said, "Why don't we just go ahead and get married?"

SL: She proposed to you.

[01:43:20] BJ: Well, [*laughs*] in a sense she—in a sense, yes. And so my next question was, "When do you want to get married?" [*SL laughs*] And we both settled on the Sunday before Labor Day. And we did. And that's how it came about.

SL: So you said yes.

BJ: Of course. [*Laughter*]

SL: That's a good story.

BJ: No question. To this day, she still teases me sometimes and says, "Well, you never really proposed to me."

SL: That's right. She proposed to you. [*Audio interference continues intermittently*] I like that.

BJ: But I said, "When would you like to get married?" That's a proposal. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, around the back way.

BJ: I may not have been the first to mention it, but I did propose.

SL: Yeah, that's good.

BJ: And I'm glad I did. I'm glad I did. I'm glad she brought it up, too. [*Laughs*]

[01:44:11] SL: How did you find the professors at the University of Arkansas?

BJ: I think most of the professors that I had were senior professors. They were true "professor" professors and not assistants or associates.

SL: Right.

BJ: Most were true professors.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And they had been around and didn't seem to have biases or prejudices. If they did, they didn't show it to me . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . in a way that I recognized it. They were helpful. They answered questions. They were accessible. Dr. Kraemer, Louise Kraemer, she was one that stood out, one of the first that I had. Actually, was my advisor. Even though she was a zoology professor, and I never had any zoology classes. But she was one that stood out. Dr. [Edward E.] Dale in botany—a botanist professor—a botany professor. Dr. Talburt, Dwight Talburt, and

even to this day when I go back to the university, I go by to see him.

SL: To see him. They love that, I'm sure.

BJ: Yes. So . . .

SL: That's good.

BJ: . . . so they were very, very helpful and open in that regard. Offered me good advice. Attempted to help me to get into graduate programs. And so I thought that they were pretty helpful in that regard.

[01:45:43] SL: So you graduate from the University of Arkansas, and you end up going to UAMS [University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock].

BJ: Yes.

SL: And—but—and didn't you tell me that you had—you got accepted other places, too?

BJ: Wayne State University Medical School [Detroit, Michigan]. And the University of Louisville and University of Tennessee Dental Schools.

SL: Oh, yeah. Okay. Well, how did you find UAMS? Was it difficult?

BJ: It was. It was. There, I think the—some of the professors were very helpful, and then some made it clear, and some even stated that, "We determine who's gonna be a doctor in this state."

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And they made it very difficult for students. And I remember one professor who, on a totally subjective test—totally subjective essay—he failed me. [*SL groans*] He failed me. And it was from where I see it then—where I saw it then and where I see it now, it was simply because he had the power to, to fail me. And ironically enough, on a trip back to Fayetteville—no, back to Little Rock, I was flying out of Dallas, some—actually—yeah, 2000—yeah, 2005, I was flying back to Little Rock from Dallas, and lo and behold, this professor is sittin' in the seat next to me.

SL: Oh.

BJ: I recognize him quite handily and readily, but he doesn't recognize me.

SL: Right.

[01:47:41] BJ: And in the back of my mind, this is the guy who failed me just because he could.

SL: Right.

BJ: And I'm thinking, "Should I talk to him about this now, some" . . .

SL: Or just—yeah.

BJ: . . . "some—almost fifteen years later." But the Christian in me did not let me do that.

SL: Took the high road.

BJ: That's right.

SL: Well, that's good.

BJ: That's right. So . . .

SL: That's a victory for you.

[01:48:07] BJ: In—it was. And I think I give the credit certainly to the Christian ethic and spirit that I wouldn't. It wouldn't have gained anything. And so—and I didn't. But I'll never forget that—that he failed me just because he could. And the paper that I wrote the next year wasn't significantly different, but I passed.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so . . .

SL: Different professor?

BJ: Same.

SL: Same professor.

BJ: The same professor.

SL: So it was an arbitrary thing?

BJ: Mh-hmm. Same professor.

SL: That's too bad. Did he have a history of doing that kind of stuff?

BJ: Yes. Yes.

SL: That's too bad.

[01:48:45] BJ: And also had professors at the university, where—in the labs, basically where if white students were around, well, to back up and to say that this professor would go to an area where there were white students and offer information and spend a lot of time. But if a black student approached, then he would finish, he would get up, and he would go somewhere else. And this was the same professor who said that he determined who would be a physician in the state of Arkansas.

SL: Wow.

BJ: And so—and that was difficult, but I made it.

SL: Wasn't Dover, was it?

BJ: Dover?

SL: Yeah.

BJ: The professor?

SL: Yeah.

BJ: No.

SL: Okay.

BJ: No.

SL: Now that's—he probably wasn't there when you were there.

[01:49:42] BJ: And so—and that was the kind of thing that made medical school very difficult. Is just the impartial treatment, and some things you—sometimes you think that things would

change, but sometimes they don't as much as they should.

SL: Yeah, you know, some of the folks that I interviewed talked about the kind of prejudice that you don't see.

BJ: Right. Very covert.

SL: Yes.

BJ: Very covert.

SL: And you felt like you were running into some of that . . .

BJ: Without a doubt.

SL: . . . in Little Rock.

BJ: Without a doubt.

SL: Do you feel like you ran into some of that at Fayetteville?

BJ: Ah, other than that one occasion, well, that was overt in Springdale. But the others, if it was there, it certainly had to be very covert. But do not recall any episodes. I think that the professors were pretty fair and straight across the board in grading papers and things of that nature. I think they were. And offering advice and instruction and criticism.

[01:50:51] SL: Was there any one professor in Fayetteville that you were particularly fond of?

BJ: Let's see. Dr. Hobson, Art Hobson in the Physics. He was a different type of professor, but he was a very practical, very practical and a very good teacher, and I think he impressed a lot

of people in his mannerisms and how he taught and portrayed
and taught physics. And so . . .

SL: Do you still get the Fayetteville paper?

BJ: No, I don't.

SL: He writes a column every—is that . . .

BJ: Oh, does he?

SL: . . . I think it's every Sunday.

BJ: Does he?

SL: An editorial. He's a hoot. He's a hoot.

BJ: Yes.

[01:51:33] SL: I asked him to be onstage with [actor] Robert
Redford. We booked Robert Redford in for a lecture series,
and . . .

BJ: That should be good.

SL: . . . I called him up. You know, Redford's a big environmentalist
and all that, and so is Art.

BJ: Right. Right.

SL: I just thought it was a good fit.

BJ: It is.

SL: I'm not sure the administration was crazy about it. [*BJ laughs*]

Because he's kind of a strange—he's kind of, you know . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . he's a loose cannon, too. He says what he believes . . .

BJ: That's correct.

SL: . . . and things which I admire and respect. And 99 percent of the time, I'm right there . . .

BJ: That's right.

SL: . . . with him.

BJ: That's right.

SL: Yeah, he's a really smart guy.

BJ: He is.

SL: And he just got—I think he just got some kind of national award.

BJ: Wow.

SL: He's still workin'.

BJ: Is he?

SL: He's still pu—he's still writing, and it's still getting published.

BJ: Yeah.

SL: You know, and I think his textbook is still being used . . .

BJ: Wow.

SL: . . . across the country, so . . .

BJ: He was—he really stood out.

[01:52:26] SL: Yeah, he's an asset. There's no question.

BJ: And his lectures were practical. And I remember days where we talked about sound and sound waves, and he would bring his

trombone. I think he plays the trombone.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And he would bring it . . .

SL: And demonstrate what's [*unclear words*]. Well, it's a good instrument to do it with.

BJ: That's right. And make it practical. That's right. And so . . .

SL: Yeah, that's neat.

BJ: He kind of stands out, and of course, Dr. Talburt—I had in microbiology. He was the chairman of the department and my advisor.

SL: Right.

BJ: Had multiple classes with him.

SL: Mh-hmm. So you . . .

BJ: And so . . .

[01:53:02] SL: If you had to kinda sum up your experience at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, what would you say about it?

BJ: I think it was well rounded, I think, from an academic, cultural aspect, both in that regard. If I had to do it again, I would go back to the University of Arkansas. There—it was easy to, I guess, assimilate into a larger, more diverse population and environment and to have the exposure to the different cultures.

And I enjoyed that. And even to this day, I think, just havin' that opportunity at the university to associate with, interact with students from around the world, has kinda made it—kind of increased my desire and made it easier for me to do that on a worldwide basis now to see and experience it and enjoy other cultures around the world as well.

SL: So you came out feeling, or you have found that both the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and UAMS prepared you well . . .

BJ: Yes, yes.

SL: . . . for your career and your life's path.

BJ: Mh-hmm. I think so. I think so.

SL: That's good news.

 [01:54:40] BJ: Mh-hmm. And I think medical school was tough, but people out of the University of Arkansas have proven to do well. And so it's—I've heard it said that that does not kill you will only make you stronger.

SL: Will only make you stronger. Yes.

BJ: And so I kept that in the back of my mind. [*SL laughs*] I kept that in the back of my mind. It didn't kill me, and I'm the better for it. But when we can change things and we have the power to do so, then I firmly believe that we should exert that power and

influence to make things better.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Not just for ourselves but for everybody and the ones to follow.

[Tape stopped]

[01:55:24] FE: Got speed, Scott.

SL: Okay. So in grade school . . .

BJ: Eighth grade.

SL: Eighth, well, in—except for eighth grade, all through grade school you were an A student.

BJ: Yes, yes.

SL: Except for . . .

BJ: Eighth grade. I was an A student, but I had an English teacher [Mrs. Geneva Daniels]. She was a white teacher, and she was a by-the-book person. And she gave me a B-plus. She gave me a B+, and she told me she gave me a B-plus because she didn't want me to get the big head. [*SL laughs*] Really. And now this lady, there's no doubt that she cared about me. She took me under her wings, and we remained close with her family and all. And I don't regret that, but she told me why she gave me the B-plus, is that because she didn't want me to get the big head. Now I don't regret that to this day. I don't hold that against her at all. And as a matter of fact, I tell people when I went to the

university at the time, I think if you made a B in English I and II, I forget what the numbers are but I and II, then you got credit for III. And so I did. And as I've kinda traveled around the world and meet people, and they say, "Where are you from?" And I say, "I'm from Arkansas." Then they said, "You don't sound like you're from Arkansas?" Then I say, "Well, I give credit to having good English teachers," and I give her a lot of the credit. And I did, and I tell people honestly that my English—I know—sometimes, and it may be true—I didn't learn any additional English after high school or probably ninth grade because my English teachers up to that point were so good, and then I learned that I didn't see anything else to learn. And so I did well in English, and I give them—give her a lot of the credit for it. And so I don't begrudge that B-plus at all. At all.

?Okay?.

[01:57:51] SL: Back in Altheimer . . .

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . kind of it takes a village . . .

BJ: That's right, to raise a child.

SL: . . . to raise a child.

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: And, you know, all the adults have parental authority over

all the kids and all that stuff.

BJ: Right.

SL: So did you not ever get into any kind of mischief? [*BJ laughs*] I mean, I just can't believe you're just quite the . . .

FE: Make up something.

SL: Yeah, get me off your back here. [*Laughter*] I mean . . .

BJ: Probably the biggest mischief that I can think of is maybe throwin' dirt against a—somebody's house or playin' on top of a car and making too much noise. But that was—I was a pretty well-behaved kid [*unclear word*].

[01:58:45] SL: So what was the throwin' dirt against someone's house about? What was all that about?

BJ: I think I was throwin' at somebody and just missed and hit the house.

SL: Oh. So it was . . .

BJ: [*Laughs*] Imperfect aim.

SL: So it was like a—just a . . .

BJ: Mud balls.

SL: Mud ball fight.

BJ: Mud balls. [*Laughs*]

SL: I see.

BJ: And so I—that was probably the biggest mischief that I got in.

SL: Did you parents get a call on that?

BJ: Oh, yeah.

SL: Oh, yeah.

BJ: They did. They did. Then—but it was okay. It was okay. They understood, and I don't think I got punished for that. I don't think I did.

SL: Well . . .

BJ: But the noise because I didn't stop the first time they told me. Oh, so I got in trouble for that.

SL: Oh.

BJ: Yeah, I got in trouble for that. And—but that was probably the only two real occasions where it kinda stood—oh, I remember one other time.

SL: All right. Here we go. [*Laughs*]

[01:59:43] BJ: My mother had sent me uptown to meet my father, and I think—I can't remember now if she had sent money by me to give him, and I had to bring some back. And somehow, I don't know why, but I kept part of it, and, oh—and I lied to her that I didn't have it, that my dad had all of the money. And so she walked uptown to see my dad and got the real story. And that was probably [*sound of train in background*]*—well, that was probably the worst trouble that I'd ever been in. And since that*

day, that's the worst trouble that I've ever been in. [Laughter]

SL: Wow.

BJ: Because, one, I lied to her . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . and had accused my father and then had angered her because I didn't have her money and falsely accused my father. And that was just the worst thing that I could do is to lie to my mother and accuse my father. And that was truly the worst trouble that I had ever been in in my life.

[02:01:04] SL: So you learned your lesson, and you were straight and narrow the rest of the time.

BJ: For the most part. For the most part, certainly so. You know, you talk about funny stories—I remember drivin' back from Fayetteville one night. And, sometimes, we would leave after class on Friday early, and it would take us usually about three hours or so to get home. And so I was—we had made it, and there was about—we had left late, and so it was about eight or nine o'clock at night, and we were coming through the back roads through a town called either Scott or Keo, and it was known in those days as a speed trap. So my wife and I had stopped in Little Rock—North Little Rock and had bought some cookies and some chocolate milk, I believe it was. But it was a

milk. Milk, either white milk or chocolate milk. So we had eaten the cookies and drank the milk. So we made it to this little town, and we were pulled over by the police. So the first question he asked—I don't even remember if he asked for my driver's license. He asked had I been drinking. And I said, "No, I haven't been drinking." Then he said, "Are you sure you didn't—you haven't been drinking?" I said, "Well, I had some cookies and some milk." And the next thing that he asked me, he says, "Blow your breath in my face." [*Laughs*] And that was it, and afterwards my wife said, "How stupid was that? I mean, is he a breath-o-meter?" And that was probably funny, but you know, he could have falsely accused me and took me downtown.

SL: Sure.

[02:52:02] BJ: But I would have come out okay because truly I haven't been drinkin' anything other than milk at that time. Now one other time, just to show you how you don't think far forward. This is another occasion, we were on our way home from, this time we were on our way, we were comin' from Memphis . . .

SL: Okay.

BJ: . . . and we were again taking the back roads and stopped in, I believe, Stuttgart, Arkansas. And college students, we were

down to our last dollar. And we go into this convenience store, and for some reason, we buy—we have this taste, and we buy hot pork skins, the pork rinds.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: It takes all of our money. So we get back in the car. We have gas, so no trouble. We get back in the car, and we eat these hot skins. And now we not only want, but we need something to drink. [*SL laughs*] We had no money. That's probably the most—the least thoughtful thing I think that I have done to myself. And those are probably the two funniest stories that I can readily think of right there.

SL: That's pretty good.

[02:04:09] BJ: And even to this day, sometimes my—some of my sibli'n's, we told them that story, and sometimes they would write us a letter—particularly when I'm overseas or somethin' like that, and they will say—even my brother [Frank O. Jones] sent me a big bag of skins [*laughter*] to remind me . . .

SL: And a gift certificate for some bottled water.

BJ: That's right. And so . . .

SL: That's funny.

BJ: It was. That was. It was. It wasn't that day because we were—they were hot. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And we needed somethin' to . . .

SL: Well . . .

FE: Scott, are you ?talking to? the cable or something there. I'm just—can hear a pop.

SL: Is it—am I still there?

FE: Yeah, you're good.

SL: Okay.

FE: Right then I heard it again, so whatever you did right there.

SL: Well, I . . .

FE: All right. We're good.

BJ: Okay.

FE: We've got speed.

SL: Okay. [Pause] [02:05:03] If—so you get out of UAMS. Where—what do you do when you get out of UAMS?

BJ: Well, I—that time I'd been selected to do my residency trainin' in the Army, which was my desire.

SL: Right.

BJ: And so we go to Augusta, Georgia. Fort Gordon. And spend three years there doing internal medicine residency trainin'. And, of course, this being 1990 and still in the South in Georgia. I'll never forget this case. I think I was probably a junior

resident and on-call—so head of a team, responsible for covering the emergency room for potential admission to the internal medicine service or for codes or things like that. So I get a call that a patient is havin' angina, or threatening a heart attack. And so I walk to the door. I get to the emergency room door, and I see the gentleman—the story is presented to me kinda quickly, and I see the gentleman in the bed across the room. And I walk to the bed, and I'm introduced as Dr. Jones, who's gonna be responsible for taking care of him. And he's an elderly white gentleman.

SL: Yeah.

[02:06:29] BJ: And he looks at me. He looks back, and I'm seein' and thinkin' the cogwheels are turnin' in his head. [*SL laughs*] He looks at me again. And then he looks back, and then he feels his—puts his hand on his chest, and then he looks at me, and then he begins to talk to me. And at that point, I'm thinking, "I'm black. He's white. He's thinking, 'Do I want this black person'" . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . "to take care of me?" And at that point, I think, he weighed the risks, the pros and the cons, in his mind. "Do I have someone who can help me help me, or do I lay here,

suffer, and die?" And he chose to live. And I learned from that day, is that people are not really interested—they don't care where you went to school—undergraduate school or medical school or anything else. All they want to know is, "Can you help me?"

SL: Yeah.

BJ: "Can you help me?" Nothing else matters. It's "Can you help me?" And that's what it should be.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Everything else is superfluous, meaning it should not matter. It's "Can you help me?" And that's—and being professional and Christian, I did my best, and I helped him. And he was thankful for it. So . . .

[02:07:56] SL: So everything came out okay?

BJ: It did. It did.

SL: Perfect.

BJ: It did. We both learned somethin' that night.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Certainly so.

SL: Yeah. Well, do you wanna talk anything more about your career and wha—so you did your residency in Augusta?

BJ: Mh-hmm. Did that in Augusta, and since that time, moved

several places around the world—from one side to the other and then back to Georgia—and have kind of enjoyed every place where we've been to the point where we always say that we wouldn't be disappointed if we had to go back to either one. It's been an enjoyable experience. I entered into the military with a three-year obligation and decided that I enjoyed it well enough to stay and still enjoy it well enough to stay. And so we really—I think the hardest part and the only real downside to being in the military is the times where we've been separated as a family. And I've been deployed away for more than a month, ranging from one month to a little over a year on four different times, and—five different times. And the last was a year, a little bit over a year in Iraq. But I'm—lookin' at all of that, I still think that I'm on the very fortunate side because there are others who spent two and a half out of the last three to three and a half years in Iraq or Afghanistan, away from their family. So I have to be thankful for that and not complain. [02:09:48] As far as professional, I think that—I tell people that we have the best patients in the world. And it's—I say that it's a privilege and an honor to serve World War I veterans, World War II veterans, the Vietnam/Korean War veterans, and even the Persian Gulf War and the latest, the Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans, and their



dependents. Medal of honor winners, I've had the opportunity to meet and to greet and take care of them. Prisoners of war, former prisoners of war, and I've never met a more gracious and thankful group of people than our veterans. And I can tell you that when I first entered the military, I did things because it was the soldier thing to do. I was in the military, and I wore the uniform.

SL: Yeah.

[02:10:55] BJ: But after doing what we call operational tours with the people who go out and deploy and fight the battles and things like that . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . rather than being in the hospitals or back in the fixed hospitals in the United States, I really got a close and up hand view of our military and the people in the military. And it gave me a much greater appreciation of what we actually do and what they actually do. I've become more aware and appreciative of their efforts along with my efforts. And now I truly see and feel the same sense of pride and patriotism that those old veterans do when you go to a parade, and the US flag passes by, that they stand and salute. Or when the flag is going up in the morning, they stop and get out of their cars. They face the flag,

and they salute. And I can tell you that there's, when you're deployed in a foreign country, there's nothing better and more reassuring than to see the American flag flying crispy in the air. And that is very reassuring. And so much so is that now, whenever we deploy, is that we always have the American flag on our right shoulder. And that flag is the embodiment of America. It truly is. I mean, it is—there's not, I don't think there is a country around the world that does not recognize the United States flag. I can tell you there are many countries in the world that I don't recognize their flag . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . but I can tell you that there's not a country that does not recognize the United States flag.

SL: Sure.

[02:12:53] BJ: And for another soldier to see that is very reassuring. Very reassuring. You know, I had a chance to take care of one of, I think the first civilian hostage that was captured and later released or escaped in Iraq. And he told a story that he was taken captive, and during the process, he had his arm broken—open compound fracture where the bone was kinda exposed. [*SL gasps*] And the captors were—they were hospitable in that they, even though they segregated 'em, took

'em, and hid 'em—is that they fed 'em three meals a day.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: And that they actually took him to see a doctor who dressed his wounds the first couple times, and then they gave him bandages to dress himself, gave him antibiotics, and taught him how to administer them himself. And, finally, he was left, and no one came to see about him, that they were bringing him food in the morning, and then they would come back and bring him food in the evening. Well, he got the pattern, and he decided that he would try to escape.

SL: Yeah.

[02:14:16] BJ: And so here he is. He's out in Iraq, in the desert, a desert land, white guy, and he's saying that US helicopters are flyin' over him close enough that he could almost read their name.

SL: Right.

BJ: But he can't get their attention. [*SL laughs*] He said, "I'm a white guy here in Iraq, out here in the middle of the nowhere, and I can't get their attention." But one Sunday afternoon, he was picked up, and our hospital was the closest. And so he came to our hospital. And it was truly an honor for our hospital to have him and to be the people to evaluate him and to hear his

story and to take care of him and then to get him back to Germany and back to the United States to Mississippi. And that was a really reassuring thing for our hospital. When we got there, a lot of our staff were very, very junior. Some were just out of school, hadn't even gotten their household goods shipped from the United States to Germany . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . or ?oversea? their cars before we're gone to Iraq. And some had never seen a person die and never seen trauma, blood-and-guts kind of thing . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:15:33] BJ: But I tell you they really were professional. They learned. And the goal—the mission was to do what we were trained to do and take care of people. And if I had to handpick people to be in an organization with me and a hospital, there's not one person that was part of that hospital that I would not pick to be with me if I ever had to go somewhere again. Just top rate, and that's why I say that one year—on the long and separated from my family was the most professionally rewarding year of my career, of my life. And certainly so without a doubt, hands down. [Pause] It was tough . . .

SL: [*Exhales*] It's a family, isn't it?

BJ: It is. It is, and I tell you. You talk about family. Our hospital—several spouses were in the division, which is the fighting side of the military. And we were in the same area, and as they would go out—when we would hear bad news, the first thing is: is it my husband, is it my wife . . .

SL: My . . .

BJ: . . . is it my friend—that type? And within, I think, the first couple of weeks of the division getting there—one of our ICU nurse's fiancé was killed one morning. And that was an eye-opener. And it was really a big shocker for us, and this was within the first month of bein' there. [*SL gasps*] And we had to go through the rest of the year, knowing that our husbands and wives and neighbors and significant others were . . .

SL: Over there, too.

BJ: . . . were available to that harm's danger everyday, every night. We were available to it, too.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: But it's amazing that some would think that Red Cross is very protective. And . . .

[02:17:52] SL: It's a bearer of bad news, isn't it?

BJ: It is. And I tell people that in prior years, I loved to fly in the helicopters, and the beating of the blades always got my

attention and brought a smile, but in Iraq, it was just the bearer of bad news because every time—almost every time, except for when droppin' off supplies, it meant that they were bringin' us a casualty, that somebody had gotten hurt. And so—but through it all, through it all, you realize the things that you did, that you made a difference. And that's what we were there for, to make a difference. I think the biggest compliment that we, as a hospital, ever got was a battalion commander and his company commanders told me, is that their guys' morale was boosted just by knowing that we were there.

SL: Well, yeah.

BJ: Just by knowing that we were there and that if something happened to them, that we would take care of 'em. And that's the ultimate compliment as a healthcare provider that I think that you can get. And that made it worthwhile for us. Worthwhile.

[02:19:13] SL: Your son.

BJ: Yes?

SL: He's apparently headed for the University of Arkansas. If he follows through . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . works out and all that?

BJ: Mh-hmm.

SL: [*Clears throat*] What are you gonna tell him when he's headin' to Fayetteville?

BJ: One of the things I think is that we, my wife and I, we try to be positive with him and realistic as well. I think that he's well adjusted, and it goes back to people being in the military and moving. And the traditional term is "military brats."

SL: Right.

BJ: And with that moving, you tend to make as well as break relationships. In doin' that, you learn to build relationships.

SL: Right.

[02:20:06] BJ: And so he's had a chance to live around the world, experience a lot of different cultures, and he readily makes friends. So I don't think that he'll have any trouble with that no matter where he goes. And he's proven that over and over again. And so we tend to concentrate more on encouragement and the positive things . . .

SL: Right.

BJ: . . . in that, if he behave himself—himself, make good first impressions, be respectful and courteous, then those things will bid him well, and that he will do fine, as long as he has the determination to succeed at whatever he wants to do. And I



think those are the things that we will impart on him. I tell him that it's—and when I go back to talk to students in high schools and junior highs, I tell 'em about myself, that it doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter where you go. It's what you bring with you. And if you bring the determination and the will, then you can succeed because that's what it takes. Because even the smartest people fail if they stop. So it's the will and the determination to succeed that will get you through. And then just being courteous, treating people with respect tends to open doors. [02:21:31] And I learned this over the years that I remember sayin' that growing up in the church and speakin' around different places a cousin [Rev. Theotis Williams], he was a minister, and sometimes I would—I had to go somewhere to give a talk or a speech. And I would call and ask him, "Are you going this way today?" And his answer would always be "Yes." And so I would say, "Well, can I catch a ride with you?" And he would always say, "Yes." Well, twenty years later, he tells me just in talkin', he said, "Remember when you would call me to ask if I was goin' somewhere and that you had a speech?" Said, "A lot of those days, I had no intent to go. I was not goin', but because you needed to go, I said 'Yes,' so that I could take you." Twenty years later, I find this out. Like I said

about my principal and that scholarship, fifteen years later, I find this out. And so I tell people and students—particularly young people, is that if you show people that you're willing and tryin' to help yourself, to better yourself, treat people with dignity and respect and courtesy, and have the will and the determination, people will go out of their way and bend over backwards to help you. And you will never know who did it or why, but they will do it. And if we can impart that on our youth to have that self-respect and respect for others and determination, there's nothin' that they couldn't do. There's nothing that they couldn't do. And that's what we try to impart upon our son, is to do that. And we tell him that when people tell us how well he's behaved when we're not around, it tells us how well we've done our job.

SL: Yes.

BJ: And that's the best compliment that we can get from him and his actions. So . . .

[02:23:46] SL: [*Sighs*] Pretty sensitive parents.

BJ: Try to be.

SL: Yeah, and . . .

BJ: And . . .

SL: . . .and I bet you got a great kid. I bet he's a great kid.

BJ: He is. I think so. When we first got back from Germany, and he

went to school, and we were getting to meet some of the people, one of the ladies said, told him one day—she said, "You go home, and you tell your mother that she's doin' a great job." And so he told her, and then when we finally met her, she said, "I told your son that he had better tell you that you were doin' a great job, because he's—he is the most respectful student at this school. He always says, 'Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am. Yes, sir. No, sir.'" And we grew up like that. We didn't say, "Yes." We didn't say, "No." We didn't say, "Nah." We didn't say, "Yeah." It was, "Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am. Yes, sir. Yes, ma'am." And that's the way it is. And, you know, funny thing, too, is that in the



military, bein' an officer, I have patients who are my grandfather's age, who were enlisted soldiers. And they called me "sir." And they could be my grandfather, or my great-grandfather. And I call them "sir." I respect . . .

SL: You bet.

[02:25:10] BJ: . . . for their age. And I remember one patient. He would argue me down. He said, "Call me Billy. My name is Billy. Call me Billy." And I would always say, "Yes, sir." [SL laughs] And he said, "I know why you say it." And I say, "Yes, sir. That's why I say it because that's the way I was raised to respect elders."

SL: Yeah.

[02:25:33] BJ: And so—and it's just—and that's what we impart upon our son to respect your elders. And it didn't hurt us, and I don't think it will hurt him at all.

SL: Have you got anything that you wanna—you know, when you get your award at the dinner?

BJ: Yes.

SL: They're gonna give you two minutes . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . at the podium. I mean, they figure ten awards—that's twenty minutes.

BJ: Right, twenty minutes.

SL: We figure there'll be some that go over.

BJ: Right.

SL: There might be some that go less but . . .

BJ: Right.

[02:26:04] SL: . . . we're tryin' to get everybody out of the dinner by ten, I guess . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . or nine forty-five, or somethin', so two minutes isn't a whole lotta time to talk, but . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: And I don't know what you're gonna say in that two minutes,
but . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . is there anything that you wanna say about the University of
Arkansas that, you know, do you have any, I mean, you've got a
you're—you have acquiesced to having your son go there if—
that's where he chooses to go.

BJ: Right.

SL: What do you think the university—I mean, you've been in touch
with the university . . .

BJ: Yes.

SL: . . . and so—and I know that you're a giver there . . .

BJ: Right.

SL: . . . and all this stuff—so I know that you have faith in the
university.

BJ: Yes.

[02:26:51] SL: What are your hopes for the university?

BJ: One, I think that it will continue to grow and continue to go up
the ladder to be one of the leading institutions in the United
States and to still be an institution that focuses upon the native
Arkansans, or the residents of ur—of Arkansas, whether they're
black, white, Hispanic, or any nationality or culture, to make

them first and foremost and to offer that first-rate education to them without any significant barriers in that regard. And I think that's the mission and the purpose for which the school was founded, was to educate the state's population. And I don't think we should get away from that. I think we're in an era now where we're gonna overcome some of the negative experiences that people during my time and certainly before my time had and continue to talk about. And when we talk about those negative experiences, particularly to our children or in front of our children, then it doesn't give them a good feeling about the university or wanting to go to the university and be a part of it. So I think we have to do like the university, focus on the good aspects of the university, and the people who've come out of the university who've proven that the university has been beneficial and a significant contri—contributor to their life and their success. And if we do that, then I think that we will overcome and increase the minority enrollment at the University of Arkansas. No school is perfect. Nothin' in the world is perfect, but no matter what you do, you have to make the most of whatever is available and offered. [02:28:51] And so—and I sum it up by telling people that if you lived in a castle with a maid and a butler and—at your beck and call and never went



anywhere else and did anything, sooner or later, you'd be bored. And so you have to get out. You have to enjoy life. And like my high school principal told me, is that life—happiness is not a station you arrive at in life. It's simply a matter of traveling. So you have to be happy as you travel. And you have to go out and get things because if you wait for 'em to come to you, you'll always be waiting. You'll always be waiting, and it will pass you by. An opportunity is fast and quick to pass.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: It certainly is. And you have to go out, seek it, look for it, grab it, take hold of it, and work with it. And only then will you have the chance to be successful. Only then.

SL: That's pretty good. How about that?

BJ: All right. [*Laughs*]

SL: Did pretty good. That was good . . .

BJ: Did I survive? [*Laughs*]

[02:29:57] SL: That's pretty inspiring. You—is there anything else you wanna say? I mean, I've gotten you in a heap of trouble. I know I've gotten you in trouble . . .

BJ: Okay.

SL: . . . with your wife. I can tell by the expression on your face.

BJ: No. I'm [*unclear word*].

SL: It's six o'clock.

BJ: Mh-hmm. No, I think she'll be fine. She'll be fine.

SL: Is there something that I've . . .

BJ: Ah.

SL: . . . kinda skipped over that you wished.

BJ: Well.

SL: . . . we'd spent more time on?

[02:30:20] BJ: I would like to talk just a little bit about—I talked about my father and my grandfather as being the people that taught me work ethics and my . . .

SL: Yeah.

BJ: . . . mother and grandmother in reference to perseverance. And in honor of my grandmother, who taught herself how to read and read a lot. And then my mother who constantly encouraged seeking education, a good solid foundation, in goin' back to school to get her GED at the age of sixty-five, I decided that I would contribute back somethin' to the university in the form of a scholarship named after my grandmother and my mother—the Sammie Perry [and] Ernestine Jones Perseverance Scholarship. And to make that available to a minority student from one of three countries in Arkansas: Jefferson County, which is where I'm from, and from Philips County, which is where my wife is

from, and Ouachita County, one of the other counties in southern Arkansas. And so that's an attempt to give back to the university, to the community, and to the state as well. And I tell people that what we become [*sound of train in background*] is not totally left up to us. And it goes back to that, it taking a village to raise a child, and I could not have been anything close to successful without the contributions, the support, the prayers of my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, the community, the church, my teachers, college professors, friends, and just people in general that I met along the way. And so I'm truly thankful. We've been blessed beyond measure. I've always had my aspirations beyond Altheimer, beyond Jefferson County, beyond Arkansas, and beyond the United States. And as such, I've had a chance to visit almost fifty different countries around the world, to take my family to about thirty of those different countries around the world, and we've—on four different continents, and we've really enjoyed the opportunities that a good, solid education will afford you. [02:32:44] And that's what we try to impress upon our son and all the other youth that we come in contact with, is that a good education will—used to be an advertisement that says, "Stay in—don't be a fool. Stay in school." And they had another one about stayin'



out of jail, I think, in the same term. And if you look at statistics in reference to the population in jails, and there're probably more jails and prisons than there are high schools. And if you look at Georgia, there's about, I think, a hundred and seventy-five counties in Georgia.

SL: Okay.

BJ: And there's probably about that many prisons. And some counties have more prisons than they do high schools. And so it gets back to one, respect for elders, respect for self, and then determination in seeking a good education, so that you can get a good job.

SL: Yeah.

[02:33:43] BJ: And I tell people that I look at my grandparents, great-grandparents, who—and most of my parents, too—who worked hard most of their life because they had to. But they encouraged us to get a good education, so that we could get a job where we wouldn't have to work hard all of our life, so that we could one day retire and then enjoy our retirement. And that's—those are the type things that we try to impart on youth as we see 'em and talk to them, to be a humble example of what opportunities are available, and if you only take them. If you only take them. So we—blessed beyond measure and thankful,

humble and thankful.

[02:34:32] SL: It's awfully generous for you to give back, too, and to encourage that—provide that opportunity. You know, I'm curious about Ouachita County. How did Ouachita County get [unclear words] . . .

BJ: How did they come in?

SL: Yeah.

[02:34:44] BJ: Well, we have family that lives in Ouachita County.

SL: Is it out in Camden or . . .

BJ: In Camden.

SL: Is that right?

BJ: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: I've been to Camden many times.

BJ: Oh, yeah.

SL: Yeah. My sister married—David Pryor's from Camden. So . . .

BJ: That's right. That's right. I do remember that now.

SL: So, yeah, I know Camden. And who else was from Camden? It was . . .

FE: Oh, it was—not Mr. Ferguson, no?

SL: Yeah, it was Randall Ferguson.

BJ: Oh.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Okay.

SL: And the Womacks, he knew the Womacks, and the Lindseys,
and . . .

BJ: The Lindseys, yes.

SL: Yeah.

BJ: Mh-hmm. Wow.

SL: Well, anyway. Okay, so do you think we're done? Do you think
I've gotten you in enough trouble?

BJ: Oh, yeah. [*Laughter*]

SL: There's the funniest—that's the line right there, the truth. Oh,
yeah.

BJ: No, no, I'm fine.

SL: Okay.

[02:35:29 End of interview]

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