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

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Arkansas Memories

Charles Buford Roscopf

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

March 10, 2017

Helena, Arkansas

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Objective

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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 https://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 ten 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 ten 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 17th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

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

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

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Charles Buford Roscopf on March 10, 2017, in Helena, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, let's see. Today's date is Friday, March 10, the year is 2017, and we are at the Charles B. Roscopf residence in Helena, Arkansas. And I'm getting to sit across from Charles B. Roscopf. My name is Scott Lunsford. We're here on behalf of the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History from the University of Arkansas. And we're gonna be talking about your life, and we will give you all the raw footage from this interview for you to have. We will eventually get it . . .

Charles Buford Roscopf: Yeah.

SL: . . . transcribed for you. And if there's anything that you want taken out of this recording, we'll take it out for you. We're not here to get anybody.

CR: I understand.

SL: And then once it's all processed and you're comfortable with it, we'll post it on the Pryor Center website so that kids from Arkansas, kids from a—everybody can hear your story, and researchers will use it for their research, and some people may want to make documentaries out of the stuff that we do. So we promise to be good stewards of your story . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and we won't let anybody abuse it in any way. We'll let the family know if there's any interest in using some of the material, so we'll stay in touch. And if you're comfortable with all of that, then you just have to tell me it's okay for us to be doing this and recording this interview and . . .

CR: I have given you my approval to do this interview.

[00:01:41] SL: Thank you very much. Well, Charles, do you go by Charles or Chuck?

CR: I go by Charlie.

SL: Charlie. And what's the B stand for?

CR: Buford. *B-U-F-O-R-D*.

SL: There you go. Well, Charlie, when and where were you born?

CR: [*Coughs*] I was born on April 21, 1928 at a little family community south of Marvell in Phillips County, Arkansas.

SL: Is that anywhere close to Turkey Scratch?

CR: It's—Turkey Scratch is north of Marvell.

SL: So it's . . .

CR: This community was Kingtown, named for my mother's family, who settled here in like 1876.

[00:02:35] SL: Well, let's talk about your mom and her family. What was your mother's name, maiden name?

CR: Her maiden name was King. Her name was Sally Virginia King.

SL: And did you . . .

CR: And her father's name was Charlie—Charles Albert King, for whom I was named.

SL: And did you ever know your grandmother—or your mother's parents?

CR: Did I know . . .

SL: Did you know your grandmother and your grandfather on your mother's side?

[00:03:05] CR: I knew my grandfather on my mother's side for many years. He was a good friend of mine. I never knew my grandmother on my mother's side. I knew my grandmother on my father's side, but I never knew my grandfather on my father's side.

SL: Well, at least you got to know them a little bit, the grandma on opposite sides.

CR: Yes. My grandmother on my father's side and I were dearest of friends. She was very helpful to me as a youngster, and she was just a great person.

SL: So was she a homemaker?

CR: She was widowed early, fairly early, and took public jobs. I'm not entirely sure what her skills were, but she would take jobs—

well, just public jobs, clerks and things like that, until she remarried at a later time.

SL: So were both sets of—father and mother's side, were they all from around the same area?

CR: Yes. At that time they were. Well, general area.

[00:04:35] SL: And so were you—did you spend much time at your grandmother's house?

CR: My grandmother—her husband died in like 1925. It broke up the family. They lost the farm, so they had to move and find something else to do. My father and my uncle both came to Helena and took jobs as young men. And she moved into Helena and—with her twelve-year-old daughter and lived here for a while, and then they moved to Memphis, and she there worked in a—some type of medical facility, I'm not sure what the medical facility was, and—until the daughter became of marriageable age, and they moved north and ended up in a little town called Granite City, Illinois. And I visited there quite frequently when I was a youngster.

SL: By train? Did you travel by train?

CR: Yes.

[00:05:59] SL: And do you member much about her house in Granite, Illinois?

CR: Her house?

SL: Mm-hmm.

CR: I have it burned in my memory, yes. They lived on—they lived there f—it was his hou—her second husband's house. That was a semi-stone house, I think maybe three bedrooms. Typical of town.

SL: It was in the town?

CR: Typical house, yeah. She lived on Niedringhaus Avenue.

SL: So did they have a garden in their yard? Did they . . .

CR: No.

SL: Didn't raise any of their . . .

CR: No. They had yards, but they were small yards.

[00:06:52] SL: So did they have any other children after . . .

CR: Oh, no.

SL: No.

CR: No, no. They were up in years by then.

SL: I see.

CR: As a matter of fact, my step-grandfather missed gaining 100 years of age by just a matter of days. I think he died in January of the year in which he would've been 100 years old.

SL: But your grandmother lived on?

CR: Yes.

SL: So was she younger than her second husband?

CR: She was substantially younger, and she continued to live in the general area of Granite City, Illinois, with my aunt, whose name was Hazel. She lived there with and was under the care of my aunt until her death.

[00:07:49] SL: So what did you do when you visited them in Granite City?

CR: [*Laughs*] Well, first off, my Aunt Hazel was married to a World War I veteran named Otto Wertz, *W-E-R-T-Z*. That area of Granite City is heavily populated by Germans. And he was a disabled veteran and did not work. My aunt didn't have any real job. I mean, didn't have any permanent job. Mainly when I was there, my Uncle Otto would take me here, there, and yon to various attractions. We spent a lot of time in Sportsman's Park in St. Louis. I would've been about eight-years-old at the time. We spent a lot of time at the zoo and the park in St. Louis. We did the theaters in St. Louis. They had local softball scheduled there, and almost every week we would be at the softball games in the park.

SL: So you spent quite a bit of time there?

CR: Oh, yes. I would stay—when I went, I would stay probably about six weeks . . .

SL: Wow.

CR: . . . in the summer.

SL: So . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . I'm trying to think. Now her—your aunt's husband was a World War I veteran?

CR: Yeah.

[00:09:35] SL: And did he ever tell you any war stories?

CR: Not really, no.

SL: That's not unusual.

CR: I was only eight-years-old, and I feel that he didn't think it was appropriate.

SL: It's not unusual for veterans . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . not to speak of their war experiences.

CR: Yeah.

[00:09:53] SL: Well, do you remember any of the stories that your aunt or your grandmother or your—any of that part of the family, did they tell stories about their lives at all, or their lineage, their parents, their . . .

CR: Well, not much in detail, no. My grandmother on my father's side was born and reared at Indian Bay, Arkansas, which is

south of Marvell, southwest of Marvell. And her last name was Dawson, *D-A-W-S-O-N*. Her parents died when she was in her late teens, and she went to live with a family called the Black family. They—it wasn't a Black family, but it—their name was Black. He had been a colonel in the Confederate army. She lived with them until her marriage in 1918. And she married her husband, whose name was Emmett Lee Roscopf. His background was a—his father had migrated to this country in 1852 from Germany. He was by himself, and had ended up as—in Searcy, Arkansas. He was a tailor by trade and had a haberdashery in Searcy, Arkansas, from the time that he got there in 1850. Well, from the time—yeah, 1856, about, until his death, and he died like in 1898. And then his son, Emmett, who was my grandfather, somehow ended up moving to south of Marvell. And he and my grandmother were married. She was eighteen, and they were married in 1900. And they had four children: My Uncle John, my Aunt Hazel, and my Aunt Erva, whose picture you have. It's the only picture we have of my Grandfather Emmett. But they were of German ancestry. They spoke German in the home for a while. And but her origination was from around Indian Bay, Turner. Down in that neck of the woods is where my Grandfather Roscopf and my Grandmother

Dawson were reared.

[00:13:12] SL: So was it—were—the German descent, was that pretty common around Marvell?

CR: No. Not in this area.

SL: Yeah, I was . . .

CR: Most of the people were Scotch-Irish, English. As a general rule, they were not German. We had no--their closest German settlement that I know of would've been Stuttgart, and that movement didn't occur until later, after 1856. There was a Swiss community here in Phillips County, but that Swiss community didn't come here until after 1900.

[00:13:57] SL: Okay. Well, what do you remember about your—I mean, do you remember any of the conversations that you may have had with your grandparents?

CR: Well, my grandmother, she liked to tell the story of her husband, Emmett Lee, who was a postal mail delivery man between Turner, Arkansas, and Postelle, Arkansas. And she loved to tell the story about the post office sending him a letter and asking him to give them the distance between Turner and Postelle. Well, that would've been in like 1901 or [190]2. You didn't have automobiles that had timers on 'em or distances on 'em. So she said that he took a red handkerchief, tied it around one of the

spokes of his vehicle, his wagon, and counted the revolutions between Turner and Postelle to give the government the distance between the two cities. Now that's the story I remember her telling about him.

SL: That's pretty ingenious [*CR laughs*] to figure that out.

CR: Yes.

SL: So postal delivery back then was kinda wild and wooly, wasn't it? I mean . . .

CR: Yes. 1900.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

CR: That was pretty rough country in 1900.

SL: And there really—the roads were all dirt. There wasn't any pavement anywhere. It's . . .

CR: I don't think there were any paved roads in this area in 1900.

SL: Right. Well, paved roads didn't really happen until the automobile.

CR: They were all dirt roads. Yeah.

[00:16:01] SL: Yeah, yeah. Well so do you remember—do—when you were born, were you born into a family that already had an automobile? [*Phone rings*]

CR: Did my family have a car?

SL: Mm-hmm.

CR: When I was born in 1928 [*phone rings*]—is Chuck here?

SL: Yeah. He'll get that. Well, maybe. Let's let this phone clear up. Hey, is there a fan on the monitor? What is the fan I hear?

JC: It's on . . .

SL: There's not a way to defeat that, is there?

JC: No.

SL: It's pretty loud. [*Hum in background*]

CR: When I was born—are we ready to start back?

JC: We need to hold. Sorry.

SL: I'm sorry?

CR: Are you ready for me to answer?

SL: Yeah. Let's—let me—he's gonna unplug that phone for us. So there was a—y'all had a car?

CR: Well, I'm gonna give you the detail on that in just a minute.

SL: Okay.

JC: Scott, I have a—when you sit up, kinda watch your hands a little bit. Sometimes you get a little in the image.

[00:17:26] CR: Kay. When my Roscopf family was broken up by the death of my grandfather, the family moved to Helena, and my father took a job as a fireman in Helena, which was just slightly before his marriage to my mother, and the answer to your question is yes, they had a car when I was born.

SL: So the—was the—do you remember the fire truck? Was it . . .

CR: I do. I have pictures of the fire truck with the—you probably saw them.

SL: I probably saw those, yeah. [00:18:13] So let's talk about your father for a moment. Do you—what's the earliest memory you have of your father?

CR: [*Laughs*] It's hard to say. You know, I remember him, but I'm not remembering any particular occasion to remember him. He later, after working for the fire department a while, took a job as a furniture salesman for Dixie Furniture Company here in Helena. And he was quite an outgoing person. He was—he had a friend whose name was Fielder who he had gone to school with at Postelle-Turner. And Fielder was elected county judge of the county, and my dad was one of his main ward heelers. He was quite a politician. I don't think there was a soul in the county that he didn't know, Black and white. But say the earliest thing that I remember, you know, he was there.

[00:19:45] SL: What about your mom? What's the earliest memory you have of your mother?

CR: My mother was one of four children of Charles Albert King. She was born and reared in the area where I was born, at Kingtown. She had a high school education and did a little bit of work at

ASU back at that time, at Jonseboro.

SL: That's pretty remarkable and unusual.

CR: Yeah, but not much. They were married in 1927 on April Fools Day. [*Laughs*] And I was born April 21 of [19]28. And they lived in Helena at the time. And I started to grammar school in Helena at that time, the old Jefferson School. I went there two years, first and second grade. Though at about that time my father was selected by Judge Fielder to be a county employee. For that purpose, we moved to near Barton, Arkansas, and I went two years at the school in Barton. And he continued to be an employee of the county up until the time of his death.

SL: So is that in Phillips County?

CR: Yeah, it's all in Phillips County.

[00:21:31] SL: And do you know what he did as a county employee? What did your father do?

CR: Several things. He started off as a grader operator on the roads. He later became the warden of the local county jail, which was a farm, Phillips County Farm, which is just out west of Barton. And he was there with—as a warden for about six months. Oh, excuse me, six years. And subsequently, he was superintendent of roads up until his retirement.

SL: That's—you know, the whole roads and keeping the roads up

and building roads, that was really a powerful position, wasn't it?

CR: It was, yes. Yes.

SL: So did he take direction from the county judge, or who determined whose road got graded and . . .

CR: The county judge. Sometimes my father took it on himself to decide. He was quite helpful to people, in that respect.

SL: I bet everyone was glad to see him coming.

CR: He was glad to see them because he wanted to make sure they voted for the county judge, who was the longest serving county judge in Phillips County. He served for over forty years as county judge.

[00:23:11] SL: And what was his name?

CR: C. S. Fielder. Fielder, *F-I-E-L-D-E-R*.

SL: So he was probably one of the more powerful people out here in the Delta, wasn't he?

CR: Politician-wise, yes. Yeah. He was quite an unusual man. He was—I wouldn't say well-educated, but he was intelligent. He had to have been to stay in office for forty years.

SL: Well, and popular.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Everyone liked him.

CR: Yes.

[00:23:53] SL: Well, let's go back to your first few years in Helena. What do you remember about Helena back then?

CR: Well, I lived in Helena twice before I came back to live. After we had moved to Barton, my father had taken a job with the county. We had moved to Helena, back to Helena, and I went to school here at the old high school for, I guess it was fifth and sixth grade. And that would've been sometime in nineteen—late [19]40s. And my dad bought a piece of property out there, Kingtown, and built a house. Our family moved there. I started to school in Marvell at that time. And I lived there until 1946 when I graduated from high school and entered the military.

[00:25:09] SL: Wow, so you went straight to the military after high school. You went straight into the military after high school.

CR: Within three days. And that was [19]46. That was—I had already, prior to that, in late [19]45, agreed to join the United States Navy to avoid the drafts, but they gave me an extension to graduate from high school before I actually went in. The war was actually over, the fighting war was actually over, but I am determined to be a veteran of World War II because I went in the military service before December the thirty-first, 1946.

[00:25:59] SL: So—well, let's step back a little bit and talk about your earliest memories growing up. I'm assuming that you were

out in Kington—Kingtown, is that . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: When—until—how old were you before you left Kingtown?

CR: I was twelve years old.

SL: Okay. So really, what did you do in Kingtown? I mean . . .

CR: My Grandfather Charlie was a farmer. Raised cotton. And I helped him on the farm. I chopped cotton, picked cotton, hoed corn, things that farmers do. And we lived very near my grandfather. And then of course, I went to school. I was a Boy Scout. I hunted quite a bit. At that time there were a lot of quail in that general area. So and I was an only child, so I had a lot of friends in the area that we dealt with.

[00:27:19] SL: Now when you were in Kingtown, did your family have a garden?

CR: Yes.

SL: And were you expected to work in the garden and . . .

CR: Yes. We had a chicken yard.

SL: And a chicken yard.

CR: Yeah. I was expected to pick up the eggs. We had a cow.

SL: And you milked the cow.

CR: I was expected to milk the cow.

SL: And so these were chores that you attended to nearly every day.

CR: Yes.

SL: Do you remember when that started? How old you were?

CR: It all started when I was about twelve years old.

SL: Oh, okay.

CR: Until I was graduated from high school when I was eighteen years old, so I'd've been about six years for that.

SL: About six years. Well, what did you do the first twelve years around the house? Were you assigned things that you were responsible for before you were twelve?

CR: I did those things that I told you about.

SL: Oh, I see.

CR: Yeah. I helped in the garden. I had to cut to the yard. I did the things that a younger teenager would do.

[00:28:31] SL: Were there other kids your age in the—in Kingtown?

CR: Oh, yes. There was quite a community of children.

SL: How—what was the population of Kingtown back then?

CR: [*Laughs*] You'd count 'em on both hands and both feet, I think, about. Very small.

SL: Very small. What about church? Was there a church there in Kingtown?

CR: There was a church there, a Baptist church, Missionary Baptist church. They called it the Trenton Missionary Baptist Church.

And I went there, and that's where I professed Christ, where I was baptized. And I was a pianist for the church for a while. I had taken piano lessons when we lived in Helena, and they didn't have anybody out in that community that knew how to play a piano, so I played the piano for church.

SL: So . . .

CR: I would've been about fourteen, I guess.

[00:29:42] SL: So you didn't have a piano at home . . .

CR: I did have a piano at home.

SL: Oh, you did have a piano at home. And was all—I mean, was it always hymns that you played, or were there—was there secular music, too, that you played?

CR: Well, at—for church there was always hymns of course, but I began collecting the popular music of the war years, and there was a lot of music made. When I say collecting, I collected sheet music. And I have a banker's box here, upstairs, of sheet music from that era. Flying—"Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer," that was one of the war ones. All those—big band music was generated about that time.

[00:30:41] SL: So y'all had a radio?

CR: We had a radio.

SL: And did you and your mom and dad have programs that you

particularly listened to?

CR: I had a radio next to my bed at Kingtown. Yes, there were programs that I would listen to.

SL: Was it—but was it like a gathering whe—did you wa—did your mom and dad and you . . .

CR: No, I would be in bed listening to it.

SL: What about news and . . .

[00:31:18] CR: No, I was not much on news except war news, of course. My—on Pearl Harbor Day, it was a Sunday, we were having a family dinner at our house, and we were celebrating my dad's birthday. He had a job to do that day as—came in, and it was that time that we heard the announcement of Pearl Harbor, December the seventh.

SL: Seventh. So what was reaction in the room when you all heard it?

CR: Everybody was scared to death. [*Laughs*] Yes.

[00:32:11] SL: What about—were there any serial radio programs that your family was . . .

CR: I listened to *Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy*, which was a program that came on regularly at that particular time. *The Green Hornet*.

SL: You bet.

CR: Those were the main serials that I listened to at night.

SL: What about *The Shadow*? Wasn't there a program called *The Shadow* out of Chicago?

CR: Oh, I vaguely remember that program, but I didn't watch it regularly.

SL: And then was there *Lum and Abner*?

CR: Oh, yes, yes. I listened to *Lum and Abner* all the time.

SL: And then the music that you heard on the radio, was it big band, or were you also picking up Nashville and . . .

CR: Primarily big band.

SL: Big band. Well, that's great music to grow up on.

CR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: So I dare say you were probably the only person in Big Town that could play a piano. Is that . . .

CR: Yeah. That was the reason they selected me to play for church.

SL: I bet that made your parents proud.

CR: I assume. [*Laughs*]

[00:33:29] SL: Was there a Bible in the house?

CR: A Bible? Of course. Yeah.

SL: And did y'all study the Bible together, or was that for Sundays?

CR: No, not with my parents. Only at Sunday school.

SL: And of course you got dressed up for Sunday school.

CR: Oh, yes.

SL: And did y'all ever have the preacher over for lunch after . . .

CR: Oh, yes. That was standard.

SL: What was . . .

CR: We would always invite the preacher over once or twice for Sunday lunch.

SL: And do you remember his name?

CR: Oh, there was so many of them, I can't remember their names now.

SL: Yeah, they came and went.

CL: Yeah.

[00:34:11] SL: What about—do you member any revivals?

CR: Oh, always. I played for the revivals.

SL: Wow.

CR: Yeah.

SL: So what were those like? Were they in a tent, or did they let the church . . .

CR: They were in the church.

SL: In the church. Do you remember any of those? I mean, were they traveling preachers?

CR: Oh, primarily it was the local preacher. Sometimes they'd have a visiting preacher, but most often it would be the local

preacher. Yes. They would have a week-long revival in the summer. And then they'd have the baptism in Big Creek later, at the end of the revival. So I was baptized in Big Creek, which is just east of town.

[00:35:06] SL: So I'm trying to think. What about—did your mom do all the housework . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: . . . around the house? Were you expected to make your own bed?

CR: No.

SL: She did that. And what about helping with the dishes?

CR: No.

SL: No. She took care of that.

CR: Yes.

SL: She did all the cooking . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and washed all the clothes.

[00:35:31] CR: Yes. And when we first moved to the country, we didn't have electricity. Woodruff Electric came in like sometime in the [19]40s. And that was the first time we had a refrigerator.

SL: So did you have an ice box?

CR: An ice box.

SL: And they actually delivered ice?

CR: Yes.

SL: And did that come from Marvell or . . .

CR: Yes, out of Marvell.

[00:35:58] SL: What do you member about the river traffic back then? The Mississippi . . .

CR: River?

SL: Uh-huh, the river traffic.

CR: Nothing. Nothing except as a high school kid, we used to come to Helena on the weekend and ride a ferry across the river and back for fifteen cents.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a big adventure.

CR: Yeah.

SL: So what did you do? So you just rode the ferry across to Mississippi?

CR: I—both.

SL: Right. But I mean, you had—you did things over in Mississippi, across the river?

CR: No, we didn't get off.

SL: Oh, you didn't get off? Just there and back.

CR: Went over and come back. The ferry had a—had slot machines

on it at that time. Had nickel slot machines, so we could play slots.

[00:36:57] SL: So do you remember—your times in Helena, do you remember the slot machines . . .

CR: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . in Helena?

CR: Oh, yes.

SL: They were at the drug store and . . .

CR: Oh, yes. Grocery stores. Country club. All over town. They were sponsored by the American Legion.

SL: So Helena was thriving back then, is that right?

CR: Well, not as much as it was a little later than that. It was just a sleepy little town back in the late [19]30s and [19]40s, the war years. But it did thrive in the [19]50s and [19]60s. Yeah.

[00:37:43] SL: So what was—what drove the biz—what made Helena thrive in the [19]50s and [19]60s?

CR: Industrial development. The Arkansas Louisiana Chemical Company plant was built south of Helena. The bridge was built and dedicated 1962. The federal building was dedicated 1962. The steam power plant, the Ritchie Plant, was built and dedicated in 1962. We had several chemical plants. We had Doughboy, which—well, no, I take it back. We didn't at that

particular moment. But we had Mohawk Rubber Company. We had a seamstress, a—just making—clothes-making plant. We had all sorts of woodworking plants. At least four or five different types of woodworking plants. Chicago Mill and Lumber Company, Beisel Veneer, McKnight Veneer. So I mean, we had industry.

SL: So I wanna get back to Helena and industry and all that. But I wanna go back to your childhood years, too. Tell me about the—so you went to school in Marvell?

CR: Yeah.

SL: Tell me about the school in Marvell.

CR: It was a acceptable education. The old school building is still there that I graduated from in 1946. I started there in the seventh grade and went through graduation. Had good teachers, math teachers. We had stenographic teachers, history. Miss Lily Peter was one of the teachers there at that time. She taught history and political science.

SL: In Marvell?

CR: Huh?

SL: In Marvell or in Helena?

CR: Marvell.

SL: In Marvell.

[00:40:06] CR: And—well, there was just—it was a decent education. There were fifteen in my graduating class. I was the valedictorian of the class and graduated in May 1946. And within three days I was on my way to Little Rock to take a physical and then shipped to San Diego, California, where I entered boot camp.

SL: Now San Diego is marines, isn't it?

CR: Well, it's navy and marine. I ended up as an operating room technician, a naval medic attached to the Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton in California where I served two years.

[00:41:04] SL: So I'm tryin' to—you said that you entered the Marvell school in seventh grade?

CR: Yeah.

SL: So you were in the Helena school system until then?

CR: Uh-huh.

SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about that school system. Was it . . .

CR: The Helena one?

SL: Uh-huh.

CR: Decent. I had good teachers. Yeah. All in all, it was—well, I ended up in law school, so I guess that . . .

[00:41:36] SL: Well, that can cut both ways though, right. [*Laughs*] I, you know—do you remember, when you were in Helena and

going to school there—how was the relationship with the whites and the Blacks? I mean, wasn't the population in Phillips County back then predominantly Black?

CR: Well, it still is.

SL: It still is.

CR: Well, the Black/white relationship's always been about the same. Blacks associate with Blacks, and whites associate with whites. I don't recall anybody ever being hung. I'm sure there was some mistreatment of Blacks back at that time, but it was not one of those things that a kid would know about.

SL: Did you see signs? Colored and white?

[00:42:36] CR: Yes. Most areas had—for instance, I think it was JC Penney had a sign over their fountain: white only and Black. The ferry had a—oh, [*laughs*] no, that's a little different story. They—oh, I'm trying to remember. Oh, the ferry had a sign on the bathroom that said "For white only." Later, much later, my wife and I were married, and she had a friend who came down from someplace in the North. And they had ridden that ferry to come across. And she chastised us about the way we treated Blacks. And the reason she chastised us was they had a stack of life preservers with shelves along the side of the rails. And it just so happened that those stacks were right over where the

fountain was that said "For whites only." She took it that it meant that the [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Life savers.

CR: Yeah. But there's always been discrimination in that respect. There have been some whites that are outrageous, you know, but then most often—well in my family, we get along with Blacks well.

[00:44:39] SL: The—there's a couple of things I wanna ask about downtown Helena. Was—do you remember the Gist Music Store, that family?

CR: Yes. Yes.

SL: I know they had the jukebox concession.

CR: Yes.

SL: Do you remember juke boxes?

CR: I do.

SL: Now Morse told me that he used to sell the used records from those juke boxes on the corner.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And he'd get twenty-five cents for the used ones. And that they would turn white from being used so much in the jukebox. I've never seen a white record.

CR: Nor have I.

SL: No? Okay.

CR: Nor have I.

[00:45:25] SL: And did you buy music, sheet music from the Gist Music Store or . . .

CR: Some. Bought most of it in Memphis.

SL: Bigger selection in Memphis?

CR: Oh, yeah, much bigger.

SL: Right. Now I don't remember seeing any pianos in the Gist Music Store. Was . . .

CR: They sold pianos.

SL: They did?

CR: Yeah.

SL: I member him talking about accordions.

CR: They did that.

SL: Did you ever pick up an accordion?

CR: Uh-uh.

[00:45:55] SL: You didn't? Well, what about—do you remember any of the music in town in Helena at that time?

CR: Not really, because most of the music here in town was—oh, what do you call it?

SL: Juke joints, maybe, or . . .

CR: Well, juke joints. But that's not what I'm trying to—we celebrate

the blues. Well, I never cared anything for blues, so I didn't participate much in any local music thing because—it's still not my favorite. I don't care anything about blues.

SL: So you weren't—you didn't tune in to the *King Biscuit Time* radio show.

CR: Not really. My best friend is one of the main sponsors for it, but it just never has turned me on. I've never really considered it real music. My wife was a music major at college, had her master's in music—piano performance. And she was classic. She played classical music. So in this household we were classical or popular.

SL: Well, there was reason for that. I mean, it was great music. The big band stuff, and of course, classic mu—I mean, it seems like everything was written, anyway . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that long ago. And and—everything since then is just a variation on that, or at least . . .

[00:47:47] CR: Well, my wife was a piano teacher also. She graduated and got her master's degree from Indiana University School of Music. So she was a well-educated musician.

SL: So did you just continue to play the piano all your life?

CR: Sorry?

SL: Did you play the piano all your life?

CR: Up until—I'm a little older. My hearing has got bad, and I don't play much anymore.

SL: Did you continue to play in the church?

CR: Up until the time we moved from there. Well, actually, up until the time I went in the military. But when I left that community, I never came back to it again. My parents had moved by then.

[00:48:36] SL: What about your relationships with other kids your age growing up?

CR: What?

SL: Your relationships with other children your age when you were growing up. What kind of games did y'all play? For instance, in big—in Kingtown, what did the kids . . .

CR: We had . . .

SL: . . . do when y'all got together?

CR: One thing that was a little bit unusual about the community at Kingtown was we had a play party almost every Saturday night. Trenton and Kingtown are isolated areas. Very few people had automobiles down in that section. And yes, we had play parties. We'd go walking and—you know, games that the young couples would play.

[00:49:36] SL: So did y'all have running water in Kingtown?

CR: Yes. Yes. We had a pump. Everybody had their own pumps once we had electricity. Before we had electricity, we had to pump it with a pump.

SL: Right. So but the running water, was it in the house, or did . . .

CR: No, no. You brought it in a bucket.

SL: So the bathroom was outside the house, then?

CR: Yes. It was an outhouse.

SL: And the kitchen, was it out on the back porch of the house or . . .

CR: No, it was just one of the rooms in the house.

SL: And it was a wood stove?

CR: Yes.

[00:50:23] SL: So when it came time to eat, were you expected to be at the table at a certain hour every day, or was it a little looser? Was it just whenever the food got ready?

CR: Well, at night, mainly, because at the morning my father got away before I got away, so we didn't eat breakfast together. At noon I went to the cafeteria at the school, so we didn't get to. But yes, at night we did have dinner together.

SL: And so you were the only child . . .

CR: Right.

SL: . . . so it was just you and your mom and your dad?

CR: Yeah.

SL: And did y'all take turns saying grace at the table?

CR: We didn't say grace at the table.

SL: You didn't say grace at the table?

CR: No.

[00:51:11] SL: I'm trying to think. So after dinner was over, then your mom would clean up the table and . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and that was her—that was . . .

CR: Yeah, I would normally go to do some studies and then finally to bed.

SL: Did your parents help you with your studies?

CR: Some. Yeah. Not a great deal. I did a lot of reading on my own.

SL: So you enjoyed it?

CR: Oh yeah. Yeah.

[00:51:49] SL: What about newspapers? Was there a newspaper delivered to the home?

CR: No. We got no newspapers, except my dad would bring in the paper on Sunday occasionally. He'd have to go to town to get it. Wasn't delivered.

SL: Well, tell me what it was like having to go to town. I mean,

were you in a—you said you had a car when you were growing up. And do you remember what kind of car it was?

CR: Yeah, Chevrolet. Four door, black.

SL: So was it reliable? I mean, did you . . .

CR: Oh, yes.

SL: Yeah. I guess by that time . . .

CR: As a matter of fact, it was one of the few cars that—or trucks, for that matter, in the community. And my father would very often end up awakened in the middle of the night to take somebody to a doctor or to the hospital from the community. He was sort of an emergency ambulance driver being the only car.

[00:52:59] SL: That's good. So you mentioned hunting. You used to go hunting?

CR: No, not anymore. I did up until I became aged.

SL: Oh, so you didn't—you really didn't start the hunting until after you were out of the military maybe or . . .

CR: That's when most of my hunting was done. Yeah. After I came out of law school back there, then I had friends that hunted, and so I would duck hunt and deer hunt. Yeah. I belonged to a club down in Dallas [Charles D. Roscopf edit: Bradley] County, a deer club.

SL: Deer hunting. Well, I wish we could recall any kind of stories that your mom or your dad would've told you growing up about maybe about their folks or their brothers or sisters. Was there any . . .

CR: Very little.

SL: Very little.

CR: Only rela—you know, only in terms of who they were, their ancestors. They kept me up genealogically pretty well.

SL: Well that's the way it was done . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . back then. There weren't DNA tests.

CR: That's right.

SL: I know my mother, when she gave me my Bible, she had it written down inside the Bible. There were pages where . . .

CR: I have about three Bibles like that. Oh yeah.

SL: So that's how the family was passed on.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Back then. Well, I'm trying to think. What was your favorite thing to do when you were in Kingtown? What was . . .

CR: When I was where?

SL: When you were in Kingtown, what was your favorite thing that you liked to do?

[00:54:57] CR: Well, I was a member of the Boy Scouts for—from the time I was twelve years old up until the time I left to go in the military. And we had a summer camp in Hardy, Arkansas.

SL: Yep.

CR: And I served on the staff at Cedar Valley in Hardy, Arkansas. I liked things associated with the Boy Scouts. I particularly liked camping at Cedar Valley or Jamborees or campouts and stuff like that.

SL: So you were an accomplished scout, much like . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . valedictorian in your school?

CR: Yeah. Well, I'm also an Eagle Scout.

SL: And so you earned all the merit badges, you went through . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: Started with Webelos and . . .

CR: All the way.

SL: All the way. That's quite an accomplishment.

CR: Webelos had not gotten started when I was in Scouting proper.

SL: Oh yeah?

CR: I was later a Scout Master when I became acquainted with Webelos. Yeah.

[00:56:09] SL: So Hardy—wasn't there also a girls' camp up the

river?

CR: There were two girls' camps in Hardy.

SL: Yeah.

CR: There was a Girl Scout camp and a YW camp at Hardy.

[00:56:22] SL: Well what about sports? Were you involved with sports at all?

CR: Yes, I played football. I played softball. Those were my major sports.

SL: What positions did you play?

CR: I was a pitcher, softball. I played running back on the football team.

SL: Was it fo—what—was it Marvell that you played for?

CR: Yeah.

SL: And how did Marvell do in the . . .

CR: Not well.

SL: Not well? [*Laughter*]

CR: Well, back in those days, there was a period of time during the war when we had six-man football. We didn't have enough players to team. So some years we would have eleven men, and some years we'd have less than eleven.

SL: Wow. So and that was because of the war?

CR: Sorry?

SL: That was because of the war, is that . . .

CR: Yeah. Well, to some extent, yeah. There just wasn't enough kids of that age and desire to play to form a team. So we had to go back to what we had.

[00:57:44] SL: Right. What about fishing? Did you ever go fishing?

CR: Fished some, but I never was a great fisherman. I never cared much about fishing.

SL: And you mentioned chickens and cows. Did you ever ride horses or . . .

CR: Not really. I had—we rode horses a little, but not much. So we didn't have many horses in the community. Very few people had horses back then.

SL: I'm trying to think what other activities would've been in a small town back then.

JC: We're at about one hour.

SL: We're at one hour? All right. We're at one hour. Why don't we stand up and take a break?

CR: Okay. That's fine.

SL: And we'll get back . . .

CR: All right.

SL: . . . to where we're at.

[Recording stopped]

[00:58:39] SL: Okay. Well Charlie, we've been talking about your early years and your grandparents and your parents and living in Kingtown and Helena . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . kind of bouncing back and forth between the two. You had some stories from Granite City . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . which were pretty good. I guess what I'd like to—if you could—well, first let's—describe the house to me in Kingtown that you grew up in.

CR: My parents bought a—probably a three-acre tract of land between Kingtown and Trenton near where my grandfather lived and built a house. It was the first house that had been built in that community in years. That would've been like 1938 or [19]39. It was a very common house. It was frame. It had four rooms. It had a bedroom, my mother and father's bedroom. It had a kitchen, had a living room, had a dining room, which my bed was in the dining room first. And it had a screened-in porch. It was a very comfortable house.

SL: So did you sleep on that porch in the summer?

CR: Sometimes, yeah.

SL: I mean, there was no air conditioning.

CR: Wasn't no air conditioning.

SL: And you mentioned that . . .

CR: I had a fan once we got electricity.

SL: Right.

CR: Now, before then we didn't have a fan.

SL: But you had screens on the windows and screens on the door.

CR: We had screens on the windows. It was a modern house, except it didn't have running water, it didn't have a bathroom, it didn't have electrical wiring, [*laughs*] you know, none of that.

[01:00:44] SL: So there was a chicken coop out back.

CR: There was a chicken house and a chicken—fenced-in area for chickens in the back.

SL: And the cow was out on one of the . . .

CR: Cow had a barn.

SL: Two acres. About two acres.

CR: A small barn. It was a shed.

SL: Small barn. And was there—I mean, there wasn't much—probably wasn't enough property for a bunch of hay. You probably didn't cut your own hay.

CR: We didn't do any haying, no.

SL: So they just—he just—the cow just ate off the feed?

CR: Yeah, well, we brought hay—we brought feed in. Yeah.

SL: So and it was just a milk cow.

CR: It was a milk cow. Yeah.

[01:01:28] SL: Yeah. Yeah. So what about—was there a fruit cellar?

CR: A what?

SL: Fruit cellar?

CR: No.

SL: Or a storm cellar . . .

CR: No. There was no cellar. Nothing underground.

SL: So what about flooding? Did the property ever get flooded?

CR: Flooding was not a problem. It was high enough, it never flooded.

SL: Okay. I'm trying to think what else to ask you about that house. Now it didn't have a dog trot, nothing like that? It wasn't split.

CR: No, it wasn't that old.

SL: Wasn't that . . .

CR: It was a newer model. It was rectangular in shape, single roof, sloped on either end. It was a design that was popular at that particular time, except it was small.

[01:02:27] SL: And you had neighbors—did you have neighbors across the street, across the road?

CR: I had neighbors. My uncle and aunt lived across the street. And

my grandfather and grandmother, step-grandmother, lived across the street. And it was only a matter of three or four blocks from the church.

[01:02:46] SL: Did the—did Kingtown have a town square?

CR: Oh, no.

SL: Wasn't that big.

CR: Neither Kingtown nor Trenton was identifiable hardly. It was just an accumulation of houses.

SL: A community, really.

CR: Stores. Yeah. Not many stores. Trenton was one of the oldest communities in Phillips County and remained that way until the railroad came through and bypassed it.

SL: Railroad.

CR: Yeah.

SL: The—I mean, that was the way people traveled great distances for quite a while.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And but you say that the railroad rerouted itself away from the town or . . .

CR: There was no railroad there for a long time. And they—a railroad was finally built from Helena to Marvell, which is along 49 highway, or near 49 highway now. And it was about two and

a half miles north of Trenton, near a little community called Poplar Grove.

SL: Right. I remember that.

CR: Yep.

SL: I remember seeing that. [01:04:07] So do you—wasn't there a flood in the [19]30s?

CR: Yeah, [19]37.

SL: [Nineteen] thirty-seven. Ten years after the [19]27 flood, right?

CR: Yeah.

SL: So do you member that flood, the [19]37 flood?

CR: Oh yeah.

SL: Did . . .

CR: We weren't affected by it.

SL: It didn't reach Kingtown.

CR: No. Well, see, we don't—we were not in the—most of the flooding in Phillips County's always been in the south part from the White River and very little from the Mississippi River. The [19]37 flood was primarily from White fell—from the White River. And that was well south of where we lived.

SL: Closer to Des Arc, probably.

CR: Huh?

SL: Closer to Des Arc, I would guess. Isn't Des Arc on the White

River?

CR: Yeah, but that's . . .

SL: Way south.

CR: No, it's way north, Des Arc is. Yeah.

SL: Way north, I see. Okay. My geography's confused here.

CR: Yeah.

[01:05:14] SL: Well, what was the biggest social event in Kingtown each year?

CR: [*Laughs*] Ladies made quilts. And so sometimes they would have auctions, and they'd serve food. [*Laughs*] That's about it.

SL: Made pies.

CR: Pies. Pie suppers.

SL: Yeah, I remember there's a pie walk . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . down in Elaine. Still on the street there.

CR: Yeah. Well, we never had a pie walk . . .

SL: Right.

CR: . . . but we had pie suppers. Yeah.

[01:05:54] SL: What was your favorite meal at home?

CR: Fried chicken at that time.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Was there—did y'all eat much beef? Was there . . .

CR: Not much. Not even hamburger.

SL: Yeah.

CR: We ate a lot of bacon. We ate some pork. We raised some pigs.

SL: So did you slaughter your own? Did you process your own hogs at all? Do you member whenever they'd dress out a hog?

[01:06:33] CR: I remember my gran—my uncle. Let me get it right. My great uncle. His name was Tom King, and he was one of the first suppliers on the corner market—on the curb market here in Helena back at the turn of the century.

SL: Okay.

CR: And he accumulated, in the winter months, meat to take into town. And I can remember the slaughtering and the preservation and the transportation of the meat into the curb market. We—I don't know what my father did with the pigs. I think he sold 'em, or he may have put 'em in that curb market down there, and they slaughtered them down there.

SL: And then . . .

CR: That was just—not far from our house.

SL: So he'd maybe have a locker there . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . a freezer. They'd keep 'em in the—keep them frozen.

CR: Oh, no.

SL: Or cold.

CR: No, no.

SL: They smoked them, didn't they?

CR: No electricity.

SL: They smoked 'em.

CR: No, they were hung up outside. Oh, I've been there at my uncle's place that had—oh, it'll have all sorts of racks for hanging meat. That thing'd be plum full. There would just be, you know, whole hogs hung up there, draining.

[01:08:09] SL: I member some folks I've talked with talked about the—slaughtering a hog, and sometimes it was a big event. Families would go together on a hog.

CR: Yes, I have been to some of those. And they, of course, primarily entailed shooting the hog in the head, bringing them to a metal pot that has boiling water, putting the body in to get the hair off, you know, scraping the pig to get the hair off . . .

SL: Yeah.

CR: . . . the skin. Yeah, I've been to those.

SL: But and it would yield so much meat that it would be kind of split, wouldn't it? I mean, you wouldn't take—like your parents wouldn't have the entire hog with you.

CR: Oh, yeah. Unless you had a smokehouse. My grandfather had a smokehouse, and when they'd kill hogs, they'd kill two or three. And they had a salt place where they could put—salt the meat down . . .

SL: Yes.

CR: . . . or hang it up or whatever.

[01:09:22] SL: So did you have a favorite subject in school?

CR: A favorite?

SL: Subject in school when you were growing up?

CR: Subject? I guess my favorite subject's always been history. Yeah.

SL: Was there any part of history that you were particularly interested in?

CR: No.

SL: No, you liked it all.

CR: European up to now. Yeah. I took Latin in high school.

SL: I can't imagine doing that.

CR: Yeah. Two years.

SL: So that . . .

CR: Took two years of Latin.

SL: That probably helped you in law school, didn't it?

CR: It did. Well, it's helped me generally in writing.

SL: So . . .

CR: At that time, there were very few public schools that had Latin teachers, but Miss Lily Peter taught Latin, and another lady taught Latin, and it was very helpful.

SL: So you had Lily Peter as a teacher?

CR: Yeah, she was my teacher. She taught me.

[01:10:26] SL: Well, let's talk about Lily Peter for a while.

CR: Okay.

SL: 'Cause she's pretty famous.

CR: Oh yeah.

SL: There's an auditorium named after her . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: . . . at the college here.

CR: Yes.

SL: I never got to meet her. But what was she like?

CR: Seemed weird. [*Laughs*]

SL: Weird, huh?

CR: Yeah. Well, I shouldn't say weird. She was different. She was an old maid, so she never married, never had a family. And she was well-educated. She was educated as a violinist. And she went to—her parents sent her to the good schools in the east. I think maybe she graduated from Vanderbilt. And she was just

an interesting person though. She was very inquisitive, and she liked to teach. Had money, so there wasn't a—money was no problem for her 'cause they had large farm down at—near Kingtown. And she came from a family of about—I think there were four. Her brother, Jesse, was an outstanding farmer, farmed quite a bit of land, and never got married either. He was peculiar. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, I just know that she's well respected. Her work was . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . highly thought of.

CR: She was a brilliant lady. Yeah.

SL: So did you ever have—did know her at all outside of the school? Did . . .

CR: Did I know her outside the school?

SL: Yeah, I mean . . .

[01:12:41] CR: Yeah, pretty well. My parents knew 'em as friends. Yeah. As a matter of fact, I think my mother may have dated her brother back when she was seventeen or so I think.

SL: But he never married either.

CR: Yeah, never married.

SL: Well, maybe your mom broke his heart. [*Laughter*]

CR: I don't know. I have a camera that he gave to her that—yeah.

SL: Is it a box camera?

CR: It's a box camera. Yeah. Well, it is a box. It flips open, flips up the top.

SL: Right. Kodak.

CR: Yeah. It's about that long and . . .

SL: Or Polaroid. Was it Kodak or Polaroid?

CR: . . . and it flips up at the top.

SL: Yeah. And it's a viewfinder to see it.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, my mom had one of those too. [01:13:12] Well, let's go ahead and talk about your time once you graduated and you went . . .

CR: High school. Yeah.

SL: High school. And you immediately enlisted and ended up in San Diego.

CR: Yes.

SL: So that had to be—I guess you had been to St Louis.

[01:13:33] CR: Oh, yeah, long before that.

SL: Growin' up, so you—yeah, so you . . .

CR: Yeah. I wasn't but seven years old when I fir—or eight years old when I first went to St. Louis. I went by myself on a train.

SL: On a train. And that was not unusual though, was it . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: . . . back then?

CR: Yes.

SL: So you were—you had bigger city experience.

CR: Oh, I'd been—yeah, Memphis. I had not been to Little Rock. I didn't know Little Rock. I knew Memphis. I knew St. Louis.

SL: What did you do in Memphis?

CR: Well, you know, that was—it's only seventy miles from here. We shopped there. Yeah.

SL: Clothing?

CR: Yeah, for clothing or appliances or whatever.

SL: So were there concerts that you would go to Memphis? Any concert performances that your mom or . . .

CR: Not during my high school days.

SL: No.

CR: Since we've been back here we go to a lot of performances in Memphis. Yeah.

[01:14:30] SL: Well, so what was your first impression of San Diego, then?

CR: Well, we didn't get to see much of San Diego because we were shipped directly to the camp, where we—to the naval station. And we only got off on—a little while on the weekend. San

Diego was a thriving city because it was one of the naval capitals of the world. All sorts of boats, all sorts of service people, yeah, like that.

SL: Was the—I know—my brother was a marine at . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . Camp Pendleton, and I member him talking about some of the early training when you first get there, the first six months or so.

CR: Yeah.

SL: It was pretty brutal. Was it that way for you too?

CR: Say that again.

SL: It was pretty brutal, the training as a marine was pretty tough.

[01:15:34] CR: It wasn't in the navy. Our principal—[*laughs*] I hate to say it, but the principal thing we did was march. We had a marching field there that—and we would march. We had a company composed of, oh, I guess maybe 300 people. And we had a few classes in naval history related, but nothing of any real consequence. And at that time, the boot camp lasted something like nine weeks, I think it was. So we were there nine weeks. And they came back to recruit transfer unit, and that's where you get shipped out from for your regular duty. And I ended up at Camp Pendleton.

SL: Camp where?

CR: I ended up—well, I did at that time. I ended up at—they do aptitude tests in the navy, see what you're likely to be real good at.

SL: Right.

CR: And somehow or the other, I got selected for a hospital corps school. So I ended up as a navy medic. The navy medic school was something like—not very long, six weeks maybe. And then I went from there to Camp Santa Margarita ro—a hospital called Santa Margarita Ranch Naval Hospital, which is the hospital on Camp Pendleton.

SL: Okay.

CR: And I was there the rest of my career.

[01:17:28] SL: So you never had to go on forced marches or . . .

CR: No, none of that. We did have to do rifle range. But no, we didn't do any forced marches or anything like that. That was one reason I joined the navy because I didn't want to march.

SL: [*Laughs*] That was smart. That was really smart. So how was your marksmanship?

CR: I passed. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, that . . .

CR: Yeah, boy, we qualified on M1 and .45.

SL: Well, the M1 was the utility rifle, yeah.

CR: It was the standard rifle of the time, yeah.

SL: Yeah. Okay. So you spent how many years in the navy?

CR: Twenty-two months.

SL: Twenty-two months.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And then you were out?

CR: Yes, out for good.

[01:18:18] SL: And what did you do then?

CR: I came home and started looking for a school to go to. The GI Bill was in play.

SL: Which was a great . . .

CR: Yes.

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

CR: And so I knew that I could go to school.

SL: Yes.

CR: And that was one of the reasons I joined up to go to begin with because my parents couldn't afford to send me to college.

SL: Yes.

CR: And so I came back here and worked in the summer on construction jobs, driving dump trucks and stuff like that. And I entered Hendrix College in Conway.

SL: In Conway.

[01:19:03] CR: And I started out in pre-med. But they had me operating on grasshoppers and frogs and stuff like that. And I had already scrubbed more than 150 major abdominal operations by that time when I was in the navy. I was an OR tech. And [*laughs*] I just couldn't see myself cuttin' up on frogs and grasshoppers when I'd already been there. So I switched to law.

SL: I would've never thought that there'd been that many surgeries at Camp Pendleton.

CR: Oh yeah. Oh, Camp Pendleton?

SL: Yeah.

CR: Well, you got all sorts of orthopedic situations there.

SL: But this was abdominal.

CR: Oh, it was abdominal, some orthopedic. We didn't do any lung surgery or heart surgery, but we did all sorts of abdominal and orthopedic, knees, ankles, shoulders, wrists, hands.

[01:20:15] SL: So pre-med was a step backwards for you?

CR: Yeah. Well, [*laughs*] it was a waste of time.

SL: [*Laughs*] So you decided to—you switched to law then?

CR: Yeah.

SL: And but Hendrix didn't—oh, you were doing pre-law, right, at

Hendrix.

CR: Oh, no, I was doing pre-med.

SL: Pre-med. But so how—where did you pick up law school at?

CR: Where'd I pick it up?

SL: Uh-huh.

CR: With pre-med.

SL: Okay.

[01:20:44] CR: That qualified me. All I had to have was ninety hours, I think it was, to get into law school. And so I switched—after two years, I switched directly to the University of Arkansas School of Law.

SL: In Fayetteville.

CR: Uh-huh.

SL: And was Bob Leflar there then?

CR: Oh yeah. Yeah, Dr. Leflar.

SL: Well, let's talk about . . .

CR: That was a good friend of mine.

[01:21:09] SL: Let's talk about Bob Leflar.

CR: All right.

SL: An amazing teacher.

CR: Oh, yeah. Oh, unquestionably.

SL: He was teaching torts?

CR: He was teaching conflicts primarily.

SL: Con—but . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . was it—was he going to New York at that time?

CR: Yes. Yeah.

SL: So he was . . .

CR: Commuting. Yes.

SL: That's just . . .

[01:21:35] CR: And now my first year in law school was in the old pharmacy building. That's where the law school was before it moved into the new building.

SL: So where was the pharmacy building? I . . .

CR: Right behind the—oh, what do they call it? Right—where you went to get coffee and stuff.

SL: Behind the union?

CR: Yeah.

SL: So that was . . .

CR: Two story. It was pretty near Old Main.

SL: Okay. So it was . . .

CR: That was a pharmacy building. That's where law school was.

SL: Was that—did that later become the psychology building?

CR: I think so, but I'm not positive.

SL: I know Peabody was down the street . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . from the Union.

[01:22:20] CR: My class was the second class to enter—maybe first class to enter the present law school.

SL: The Newman . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . Building. And so I'm trying to think. Who el—what other instructors were there? Was Al Witte there yet?

CR: Yeah. No, he came later.

SL: Whu—did you get a chance to have him as a teacher?

CR: I knew him, but I was nev—I never had him as a teacher.

SL: I guess Dean Barnhart?

CR: Barnhart was there. Yeah.

SL: Well, let's talk about the school of law at the University of Arkansas . . .

CR: Kay.

SL: . . . at that time because in many ways that was kind of the heyday of that . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . law school. I mean, Leflar and Barnhart. And I'm trying to think. There was someone else there that was there that was

remarkable.

[01:23:16] CR: There were several. And I can't immediately put a name on 'em. And that was about the time that they were arguing about whether the Blacks should be able to come into school.

SL: So . . .

CR: They had turned, you know, they had turned them down. And I had—my class was the first class to have Black applicants.

SL: So . . .

CR: And th—we had three Black applicants in my freshman class.

SL: And do you remember their names?

CR: Yeah.

[01:23:47] SL: It was—I've interviewed George Haley Jr.

CR: I know—he was one of them.

SL: And we talked about the rail.

CR: Yeah.

SL: There was a rail.

CR: He wouldn't have known it—well, maybe he would've known about the rail because there was—it was Emmett somebody was the one that was behind the rail.

SL: Silas Hunt.

CR: They had no rail when I was there.

SL: But Silas Hunt didn't finish, did he? He—didn't he die of pneumonia or so . . .

CR: He died. Yeah. Well, he—that's right. He died. But none of the Blacks that I went to school with ever . . .

SL: Had the rail.

CR: . . . were behind the rail. They were right there like everybody else.

SL: Well, didn't Robert—didn't Bob Leflar just put the rail . . .

CR: I think that . . .

SL: . . . in a closet or something? He just . . .

CR: I think that's right.

SL: He wouldn't have anything to do with it.

CR: Yeah. Well, I never saw the rail.

SL: Good.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Good. What about—let's see, was C. C. Mercer there?

[01:24:42] CR: C—Yeah, Chris Mercer? Yeah. He was a good friend of mine. As a matter of fact . . .

SL: Branton?

CR: . . . Chris Mercer and I played on the same softball team, the law school softball team. I was the pitcher, and he was the catcher. And he—every time time I'd see him after we

graduated from school, he'd rub his hands like that [rubs hands together], you know, sort of hot for receiving. [*Laughter*]

SL: We love that. I got to interview him a little bit.

CR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: Not a real long interview, but he was there back at the law school for some reunion or something and I—they put me in front of him and . . .

[01:25:20] CR: Yeah. And then there was one more prominent than that. I can't remember.

SL: Willie Branton?

CR: Who?

SL: Willie Branton? Really—Willie Branton? No. Then there was, oh . . .

CR: The one who went to—he went to—he became the dean of the Black law school in Little—in Washington. He was from Pine Bluff. He was the first—no, first civil rights lawyer, Black civil rights lawyer in Arkansas. I can't think of his name right now.

SL: I can't either, but I should . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . because I was deeply ensconced into all that period when I got to do the interview with George Haley. So now when I was interviewing George Haley Jr., he kind of—he didn't really tell me

the whole story of all that was going on at that time when the law school integrated.

CR: Yeah.

SL: But he actually was fairly heavily harassed.

CR: I never knew that.

[01:26:35] SL: Yeah. He—and—who—it wasn't Mercer that was with him. It was the fellow we're trying to think about. There were bottles thrown at 'em at one point and . . .

CR: I heard about that many years after I was in law school. I never knew—while I was there, I never experienced it, never knew it.

SL: Course, George Haley was brother to . . .

CR: Alex.

SL: . . . Alex Haley . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that wrote *Roots*.

CR: Oh, the one I'm thinking about's son is a judge in Little Rock right now.

SL: Oh, Walker.

CR: No.

SL: No, not Walker? No, he's a lawyer.

CR: Not John Walker.

SL: We'll think of it.

CR: Yeah.

SL: It'll come to us. Well, those were—that's really pretty great history that you got to be . . .

CR: I thought so.

SL: . . . in that class. Yeah.

[01:27:35] CR: I went back later. I was a member—well, I guess maybe as president of the bar association—I went back to a meeting that they called for whatever planning purposes there were. And by then they had dedicated a room at the uni—at the law school for the Black—what do they call them? Pioneers.

SL: That's right. That's right.

CR: And . . .

SL: And that's probably when I interviewed C—Chris.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

CR: And we went around the table to introduce everybody. There must have been about twelve people there at that time. And the pictures of the pioneers were on the walls up there, you know. So they got around to me, and I introduced myself, and I said, "I guess I could be considered a pioneer. I was at school with all these guys." [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, you were. You were. And you know, all indications were

that within the law school . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . there were no problems with that.

CR: Yeah.

[01:28:46] SL: Now the—what about the bathroom stuff? How did they handle the bathroom?

CR: I never knew there was any . . .

SL: No problems?

CR: . . . problem with bathrooms.

SL: Well, that was something that was addressed at one point. They used the dean's bathroom.

CR: I never knew that. I thought they had to use the same bathroom as everybody else.

SL: I think—and it seemed like—I think it was Haley told me that he dined alone. That they had a place for him, nice white tablecloth and white napkins. But he dined alone in some way. I . . .

CR: Where would he have dined?

SL: I'm not sure. I'm—I'd have to go back and look at that interview to get that.

CR: Well, I can't think of any dining in the law school.

SL: Right, right.

CR: So.

[01:29:54] SL: I guess the women came in later.

CR: Well—no, we had a couple women that were . . .

SL: You did?

CR: . . . in our class.

SL: 'Cause I . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: They did have to go across the street to go to the bathroom, I think. There wasn't a lady . . .

CR: I don't know about that either. I don't think so.

SL: There wasn't a lady room at time at the time.

CR: I don't know.

SL: You don't know? Okay. Hmm. That's interesting. I'll have to review all that.

CR: Yeah.

SL: I haven't thought—I'm so sur—I'm so thrilled that you were there.

[01:30:19] CR: Well, I know they didn't have to in the new law school 'cause I know there were bathrooms for women and men in the new law school. There may have been some difference in the old pharmacy building . . .

SL: In the old pharmacy building.

CR: . . . because of its antiquity but . . .

SL: That may be it.

CR: Yeah.

SL: That may be it. 'Cause there wasn't always women in the law school. I mean, it was kind of a breakthrough.

CR: There was always when I was there.

SL: When you were there?

CR: Yeah. There were two at least. Yeah.

[01:30:51] SL: I'm trying to think. Do you remember their names?

CR: Yeah. One of 'em, they named the new center meeting room for her. She—Norma—can't say her last name. She went to Dallas. Believe it was Dallas. And somehow or the other got in the title insurance business and made a lot of money and dedicated that downstairs section to her. Beasley, Norma Beasley was one of them.

SL: Beasley, that sounds right. Yeah.

CR: Yeah. And then the other one was—she ended up being a lady lawyer in Little Rock. And I can't—she was funny little woman. I can't remember her name.

SL: Yeah. So let's see, that was in [19]49, [19]50?

CR: That was later than that.

SL: It was?

CR: Yeah. I graduated from law school in nine—my graduating year

should have been [19]53.

SL: Okay.

CR: But I was elected to the General Assembly while I was up there, and I had to go an additional semester in order to get my degree. So my degree reads [19]54. So those years would've been [19]50, [19]51, [19]52, along in there.

[01:32:18] SL: Did that—did the dean make—give you special consideration for being a state representative?

CR: Not really.

SL: Not really?

CR: I mean, I sat in on some of their appropriation meetings, but I mean, I didn't have much to do about it other than they wanted me to know what they favored. So and naturally I was a supporter of the university. That would've been 1953.

[01:32:47] SL: So was it just—did you have a special area of interest when you were in law school?

CR: Not really.

SL: Just gettin' through was the deal.

CR: Oh, I guess my special interest was to make a living. [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah, I understand that. So after you graduated from law school, what did you do?

CR: I'm sorry?

[01:33:14] SL: After graduation from law school, what path did you take after that?

CR: Well, my mother and father—my mother—my father was a warden at the county jail farm here at that time, and my mother—they had quarters there. And I had not been home to live since I was graduated from high school. So they—I had a application in to the FBI because they were hiring at that particular time. And but my mother and dad wanted me to come back here, and I said, "Well, you know, how am I gonna make a living over there? They're just stocked up with lawyers." Well, my dad in the meantime had spoken to an old lawyer whose name was Peter Deisen. He had been lobbyist for the Arkansas Medical Association for a long period of time, but he just sort of sat in an office over here, and my dad arranged for me to sit in his office. And that would've been 1954. I took the bar examination in July of 1953. Excuse me, I took the bar examination in February 1954. And I sat in his office. He—we had one desk. He was on one side, and I was on the other. Very little work, but I did pick up how to do deeds and a few things like that. [01:35:03] In the course of that, I ended up representing—let me get it straight. Yeah, I ended up in representing a Black family. And at that time they had a lot of

truck traffic between here and Elaine taking cotton choppers down to—south to chop cotton.

SL: Okay.

CR: And this truck had about thirty-two people on it in the back. And a company down at—an ice company truck down in Elaine forced it off the road, it turned over, and my client was killed. And so turns out there wasn't but $25,000 worth of insurance. I filed a suit on it to recover along with a lot of other people. And it was defended by the firm of Burke, Moore and Burke here in Helena at the time, the insurance company. The case was finally settled because there wasn't enough money to go around anyway, you know. And in the course of that, I had to deal with Senior [CDR edit: Graham] Burke, the firm head, and in working out the settlement, I was in his office to get the papers worked out and started walking out. And Judge Burke said, "Charlie, would you be interested in working for us?"

SL: He was impressed.

[01:36:51] CR: Yeah. I guess. [*Laughter*] However, he did—he had a son who was a lawyer who had gone back to the Korean War and decided not to come back to the practice. So they needed an opening. They needed somebody young, and so they picked me. That was in 1950—ah, that would've been in October 1954,

and I've been there ever since.

SL: So you made—you had three major things happen to you in [19]54. You got your law degree officially, passed the bar . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . started work in a small firm, and then you ended up in the firm that you're still here today.

CR: That's right. Firm has been here since 1876. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's a lot of cases.

CR: Well, it's water under the bridge as they say.

SL: Yeah. So whe—I guess maybe we should talk about some of your case work. Is there—was there . . .

[01:38:05] CR: You want to talk about the legislature?

SL: Yes. Yeah, let's talk about that.

CR: [*Laughs*] There's a funny beginning I tell about that. My friend Jim Howe, who's my dearest friend, kids me about it all the time. I was in my last year of law school, next to last, and I got this call from my dad, and he said, "Buford"—[*laughs*] he called me Buford instead of Charles. He said, "I signed you up for state representative." I said, "You do what, Dad?" [*SL laughs*] He said, "Jimmy Nichols, who is the current candidate, who is the current state representative's not gonna run, and I found out about it, so I signed you up." [*Laughs*] I said, "Well, I don't

know about that." And well, as it developed, that's what happened. He qualified me down here. I ran. I didn't have any opposition. I ran three times, never had opposition. And so I served six years in the state house.

SL: So let's see . . .

[01:39:25] CR: And that would've been in 1953, [195]5 and [195]7.

SL: So that's Faubus stuff.

CR: That what?

SL: Governor Faubus staff? Governor Faubus.

CR: Oh, fa—well, actually Cherry first, and then Faubus the last two. Yes.

SL: And . . .

CR: Cherry was elected in [19]53.

SL: Right. And did you like him as a governor?

CR: I didn't have much to think about him. He was not what I would call an aggressive governor.

SL: And then he ran—and then Faubus ran against him the next time around . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and beat him.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And that race is kind of legendary, isn't it? I mean, wasn't fau—

Faubus came out of, what? Combs . . .

CR: Madison County.

SL: . . . or Huntsville?

CR: Madison County.

SL: Madison County.

CR: Yeah.

SL: His dad was a sheriff up there.

CR: yeah.

SL: And you know, the legend has it that he did some of his campaigning barefoot, I mean . . .

CR: I don't know about that.

SL: You don't?

CR: I never saw it.

SL: I guess there was a political cartoon of him barefoot on top of a stump or something.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And so he was kind of a people's candidate. So.

[01:40:45] CR: Now this is about the time that Winthrop Rockefeller is moving into Arkansas and is taking positions. For instance, the farmers had appointed him to do something with the Industrial Development Corporation and . . .

SL: That's right.

CR: . . . all that sort of stuff. And we were making progress because of Rockefeller's influence. And so I worked on several of those committees dealing with industrial relations at that time. I was always interested in probate. So I did a lot of probate legislation at that time. And generally, it was just an experience because I was still in school on the one hand [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Right.

CR: . . . learnin' how to make law on the other hand. So it's kind of unique. You don't have very many people that have that experience.

SL: Yeah, I think David Pryor was in law school the first time he was . . .

[01:41:59] CR: David Pryor and I were good friends. And it was during that period of time that I knew David, yeah.

SL: So were you one of the Young Turks?

CR: I was a Young T—I was probably one of the first Young Turks before David Pryor became a Turk.

SL: Well, what a great honor to sit across from you. [*Laughter*]

CR: Well, I don't know about that, but I was a Turk 'cause we had to deal with people like Paul Van Dalsem, Carroll Hollingsworth, those guys who were crooks up one side and down the other. And we had to deal with 'em.

SL: That's really something to be proud of.

CR: Well, very few people know it, so. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, I knew about it.

CR: You know it, now.

SL: Yeah. But—yeah, it was not—I mean, when you guys first started, you were just a very small group of people.

[01:43:00] CR: Well, one of the first things that happened to me in the house. I guess it would've been in 1953. I sat on the center section, left side, as you enter, about the second row back. Paul Van Dawson sat right across the aisle from me. Some important measure came up, and I can't remember what it was, but I was called out of the chambers for business reasons. And when I came back in, I found my name on the board that I had voted. And Paul Van Dalsem had voted my machine. [*Laughs*]

SL: So the board consisted of the legislator's name . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and there was a light . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and . . .

CR: Present and yay, nay.

SL: Yay or nay. That's right. So what'd you do?

CR: Well, I cussed him out to begin with. I said, "Don't ever let me

catch you in my seat again or particularly never vote unless I authorize you to do it for me." And he was offended because I was twenty-six years old, I guess, something like that. So yeah, and he's the big boss.

SL: Was there a lot of money going around?

CR: A lot of what?

SL: Money? Or was it . . .

CR: I never saw any.

SL: It was just strong arming stuff.

[01:44:34] CR: Yeah. There—I think there was some bribery going on in several instances that I could tell. And we would undertake to try to—the Young Turks would undertake to try to disclose it where we could. That's how Young Turks came about.

SL: So . . .

CR: Ray Smith was a Young Turk.

SL: Yep.

CR: Remember him?

SL: Yes.

CR: And I'm trying to remember, there was one from Little Rock. There was one. I can't say his name now. [*Laughs*] But that was fifty years ago.

SL: Yeah, but it was important—it was an important moment in

legislature history in Arkansas.

CR: It was. It was. Yeah, it was, I think.

SL: A group of men that stood up . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . against the machine. I mean, it was really the good old boy network that . . .

CR: Yep.

SL: . . . didn't feel like they had to [*CR laughs*] kowtow to anything or anybody.

[01:45:36] CR: Exactly. Well, I didn't have any political issues to, you know, press. I felt [*unclear word*]. All I had to do was represent my people here and vote properly. And so that was an easy job as far as I was concerned.

SL: You know, but it doesn't seem like that easy of a job anymore. I mean . . .

CR: [Laughs] Not the way they do it.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

SL: And of course, back then, it was all Democrats.

CR: Oh yeah. Everybody was Demo—we didn't have a—[*laughs*] you couldn't find a Republican in those aisle seats except Winthrop Rockefeller.

SL: Yeah. Well, Winthrop, he was a very progressive . . .

CR: Oh, unquestionably.

SL: . . . Republican. I mean, he . . .

CR: Yeah. He's the one who got our industrial relations going . . .

SL: Yeah.

CR: . . . and we've benefited from it for years—Helena for a number of years.

SL: Well, most of the state did.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. And really, I guess that was the beginning of Republican Party influence.

CR: Oh, unquestionably. Yeah.

[01:46:58] SL: John Paul Hammerschmidt came in on his coattails.

CR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And—but that—back then, there was still some honor. There was still . . .

CR: I think so, yeah.

SL: There—I mean—there was something still respectable about . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . having differences of opinions, but still trying to do the right thing. And that just doesn't seem to be the case for the most part these days. It's all . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . me or nothing. I don't know. I don't get it. Well, that is so—I'm so thrilled that you were part of the Young Turks. I . . .

CR: I'm sorry?

SL: I'm so thrilled that you were a part of the Young Turks. I—now I'm wondering if I'm worthy.

CR: I like to think I'm one of the originator of the organization.

SL: I know. I'm wondering if I'm worthy to be sitting across from you.

CR: Oh.

SL: It was—that's really big stuff.

CR: Oh.

SL: Okay. So I guess—were you—you served in [19]57 as well?

CR: Yes.

[01:48:03] SL: Okay. So let's talk about 1957. I mean, that was a big, big year.

CR: Well, [19]57 was a little different year. I had—in the meantime, in 1954, right after graduation of high school, I had gotten married, and we came back here to Helena to live and set up an apartment, things like that, and I sat at the old guy's office. And then finally got associated with Burke, Moore and Burke. And by [19]57 my firm was getting a little bit disappointed because it

was taking up too much time. So I—while I was dependable, I finally decided to not run anymore. And I haven't run since as far as that job.

[01:49:04] SL: Well what about the Central High School situation in [19]57?

CR: [Nineteen] fifty-seven, that was a hard time. You never could get straight exactly what was going on. I couldn't, as a state representative, I couldn't tell what was happening there. I didn't know enough about civil rights, I guess, to understand it. But there were—there was a lot of talk going on about there being a riot and people getting hurt if they kept it open and that sort of stuff. So when the time came for Faubus to close it, I voted to close it, thinking that it's better to do that than to have somebody hurt.

SL: Right.

CR: Yeah.

[01:49:55] SL: So those kids that were in school, then, didn't some of them go to North Little Rock to start—to continue with their school?

CR: Oh, the other—you mean the students?

SL: Yeah.

CR: They went all over everywhere.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Yeah. They went out of state, even. Yeah, a lot of those kids that were in that class, and particularly that semester, just—they went to other places. But I didn't participate in that much other than voting.

[Recording stopped]

SL: Well . . .

CR: My people over here didn't want integration at the time.

SL: Yeah, you know, that cri—what they—what became known as the crisis . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . that really went a long way to defining the state.

CR: I think that's right.

[01:50:51] SL: And how do you think that relates to the rise of Rockefeller and him becoming governor? I mean . . .

CR: I think it assisted because he was able to grasp the Black voting power, and the Black vote in Arkansas has always been important, particularly in East Arkansas because of the number of Blacks compared to the number of whites. And of course, it's in this county, Phillips County, something like 62 percent of the occupants are Black. What do you do politically under those circumstances?

[Recording stopped]

[01:51:34] SL: You know, back to the Industrial Development Commission, did you ever get to do any work with Bob Lamb?

CR: Last name?

SL: Bob Lamb.

CR: I know the name, but I can't recall right offhand.

SL: He actually worked with Governor . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . with then Governor Rockefeller.

CR: Yeah. I don't recall ever having personally worked with him. No.

SL: Okay, so you get married. We gotta talk about your love life now.

CR: Oh, love life. Okay.

SL: So . . .

[01:52:18] CR: My wife, Mary Anne Maddox, was born in Winslow, Arkansas, and sometime during the war years—well, first, in Winslow her father was the postmaster for a while, and he also operated a restaurant out on Highway 71. Maddox. And she had a brother who was a—quite a brilliant professor, chemical engineer, recognized at the university in the engineering department. And she then got her undergraduate degree from

Fayetteville. She was—she liked music, so she enrolled at the University of Indiana in their music school—theirs was renowned—and got her master's degree in piano performance there. We became acquainted in the summer of 1953.

SL: How did that come about?

CR: [*Laughs*] Do you know that story?

SL: No. I'm ready to hear it.

CR: I had a friend whose name was Daniels, my roommate. Matthew A. Daniels was his name.

SL: Okay.

CR: We called him Jack.

SL: [*Laughs*] Of course.

CR: Yeah. He and I were rooming together in the summer of [19]53. And he was quite a ladies' man.

SL: Okay.

[01:54:07] CR: I was in the—at the Kappa Sig House. I was president of Kappa Sigma house . . .

SL: Kay.

CR: . . . at that time. And I had a call from my friend, another Kappa Sig who was married and had an apartment and lived out. And the wife said that—was Jack there? And I said, "No, he's someplace, wherever it is." And she said, "Oh heck, I wanted

him to meet this cute girl," who she had invited over for dinner that evening. And I said, "Well, I don't think you're gonna be able to catch him because I think he's out in the western part of the state." So that was the end of it. Well, in a few minutes the phone rang back, and the—it was the wife again. She said, "Well, Charlie, why don't you just come on over and be our guest and meet this young woman?" I said, "Okay." So I went over.

SL: She didn't have to twist your arm. [*Laughs*]

CR: Uh-huh. No, not when you get a free meal.

SL: That's right. [*Laughter*]

CR: And I had known Mary Anne before, but not well. She was a Tri Delta up there. And so we met, had dinner together, started dating. Well, she ended up married. [*Laughter*]

SL: So . . .

CR: And the irony of it is that the young wom—the woman that called me about coming to eat with 'em has a daughter, and that daughter and my son Chuck were married first. But they later got divorced. Yeah. Did Chuck tell you that story?

SL: No.

CR: Oh. I thought maybe he told you that one. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, no, he—no, not exactly.

CR: Oh.

SL: I mean, we went over some pictures, but no, he didn't tell me that exact story.

CR: Ah.

[01:56:14] SL: So how long did y'all date?

CR: We dated from the summer of [19]53 until August of [19]54.

SL: So did you go to her father and ask for her hand?

CR: Yeah. They lived at Fayetteville. They had moved to Fayetteville by that time, and he had the restaurant down on the square. They lived out on College Street. At that time, there was a utility building right across from the church. That's where they lived. Yeah, I asked for her hand. [*Laughs*]

SL: Were there—was there any hesitation on his part or . . .

CR: No. Didn't seem . . .

SL: Didn't ask you any questions or . . .

CR: No.

SL: . . . give you any conditions?

CR: No. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, by that time he had gotten to know you, though.

CR: Oh, I knew him pretty well. He was a strange old duck. That's him up there on the wall there. [*Laughter*] But we got along well as father-in-law and son-in-law. Yeah.

[01:57:19] SL: So where were you married?

CR: Where?

SL: Mh-hmm.

CR: Central Church in Fayetteville.

SL: Central Methodist.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Beautiful church.

CR: Yeah. It was fairly new at that time. That would've been 1954.

SL: Yeah. Paul Young designed that church. That was my church.

CR: Yeah. Oh, is it?

SL: That's where I . . .

CR: Oh.

SL: That's where I grew up. Okay. So you get married. Then what? So you finished school?

[01:57:47] CR: Well, then my father and mother had insisted that I come back here, and so we climbed in the car and came down here and moved into an apartment. She took a job as a teacher, and I was making hardly anything in sittin' across the desk of the old man.

SL: Right.

CR: And that's when I started. Then finally, I got the job with the firm . . .

SL: Right.

CR: . . . and the income improved, and we started havin' babies. [*Laughter*]

SL: And with—Charles was your first?

CR: Yes, and I have a daughter, Ann.

SL: And where is she now?

[01:58:32] CR: My daughter, Ann, is—lives in Salisbury, Maryland.

SL: Okay.

CR: She was a good student, extremely good student. She graduated from—let me get it straight. Daughter Ann graduated a year early from high school and went to Millsaps College . . .

SL: Okay.

CR: . . . in Jackson and got her undergraduate degree. She was top student at the school during her graduation.

SL: Acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

CR: Then she went—Chuck was in school in Fayetteville by then, so she went to Fayetteville and got her master's degree. So when she finished that, she wanted to do a little more work. She's an English major, so she applied at UVA . . .

SL: Okay.

CR: . . . and was accepted and went to UVA to work on her doctorate, and while there, met her husband and got a MD or got a [*laughs*] marriage license instead of a degree.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah, well, just getting accepted to UVA is a pretty big honor.

CR: Yeah.

SL: That's a great school.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:00:02] CR: She did well there. As a matter of fact, she left there and went—her husband was enrolled at Washington and Bisby . . .

SL: Washington and Lee?

CR: No, William and Mary.

SL: Oh, William and Mary. Okay.

CR: Law school. And they were married while he was in law school. And she was accepted to teach in the law school, writing, legal writing. And then they—he has—his hometown is Salisbury, Maryland. And he's a lawyer there now. And she has taught in the colleges there. She has two children. She has a son, who has just graduated from William and Mary Law School and is practicing with his father there. And she has a daughter who just got her master's degree from Georgetown University. And she is married to a student, dentistry student, [*SL laughs*] at the University of Kentucky. [02:01:13] And of course, we have

Chuck. Chuck has one son of his own by the young lady that was a friend of mine, and his name is Charles. He's twenty-seven years old, I guess, has a master's degree in accounting, and he is working at Ernst and Young in Dallas. Doing real well down there. He's been with 'em now for going on five years. Will be married this summer.

SL: Oh.

CR: And I got a notice from he and his fiancée about a month ago that said, "Reserve July the first, nineteen—2017, for our wedding. Lauren and I are gonna be married in"— [*laughs*] what am I trying to say? "In Italy."

SL: Oh, a destination wedding.

CR: Yeah. It's a destination wedding.

SL: That's expensive.

CR: They're going to be married in Florence. That's where it is.

SL: That's a great town.

CR: On July the first.

SL: Yeah, my son went to school there for a year.

CR: So.

SL: Yeah.

[02:02:33] CR: That's the story of our life as far as the family is concerned. My wife, Mary Anne, died in 2009, so I've been a

bachelor since then.

SL: Well, none of the women are hounding you, are they?

CR: Oh, I got a little interest, but [*laughter*] . . .

SL: That's good.

CR: It's just a lot easier without 'em.

SL: Oh! Yeah? So you can do without, huh?

CR: Well . . .

SL: Just a little is enough.

CR: Uh-huh.

SL: Yeah. That's probably wise.

CR: Yep.

SL: Yeah.

JC: We're at two hours.

SL: We're at two hours?

JC: Mm-hmm.

SL: Okay. Let's . . .

CR: Now you didn't ask about one area?

SL: What's that?

[02:03:18] CR: I was president of the Arkansas Bar Association.

SL: Okay.

CR: For one year, 1989–[19]90.

SL: How do you get to become the president of the bar association?

CR: Well, there—we have districts. We have I think it's five districts throughout Arkansas for the bar association. And the lawyer has to come from that district. So every fifth year, it, you know, it circulates. And so I was nominated, elected, served for a year.

SL: That's a big honor 'cause that's your peers that . . .

CR: Well, I guess it's—I consider it one of the biggest honors that a lawyer could [*laughs*] almost have, other than maybe Supreme Court of the United States.

SL: Yeah. Well, that's good.

CR: But and then later I was president—two years later, I was president of the Bar Foundation. And then three years later, I was designated as outstanding lawyer in Arkansas. I've got a plaque somewhere that shows that. So.

SL: Well, did you enjoy being the president? I mean . . .

CR: Oh, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

CR: We had a great time. We traveled a lot.

SL: Just around the state?

CR: My wife and I traveled . . .

SL: Or you go to the Washington DC? Or is there a National Bar Association that you represent Arkansas at?

[02:04:54] CR: Well, they have an agency called the Southern

Conference of Bar Presidents, which is fourteen states in the Southeast. And each one of them—you know, invited to each one of their conventions. So we did that. And that was interesting. I learned—we went to the American Bar Association meetings. I haven't told you about my European experiences.

SL: Well, I mean, we're not done.

CR: Oh, I thought we were done.

SL: No. No, no, no. We were—it's just . . .

CR: Oh, okay, got it.

SL: . . . we've been going for a couple hours, so we were gonna take a break.

CR: Yeah.

SL: But I wanna get back to the Arkansas Bar Association.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And we'll talk about your European stuff. But I also want to talk about Helena.

CR: Oh, okay.

SL: Modern-day Helena . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and how it got to where it is now. But let's take a break now.

CR: Okay.

SL: Stand up, get some circulation and . . .

CR: All right. We can do it.

SL: Give our camera guy a break. And we'll get back to this.

[02:05:55] CR: Well, that's where these come in is with the bar association.

SL: Okay. I'm gonna pull those down and . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . take a look at them.

CR: Oh, incidentally, one other thing you may want to hit on at some point in time—we had a constitutional convention.

SL: In [19]72.

CR: In Arkansas in [19]69. First one.

SL: Oh, in [19]69. Okay.

CR: And I was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. And you were asking about Bob Leflar.

SL: He was the president of it.

CR: Yes. Bob Leflar appointed me chairman of the county government committee . . .

SL: Okay.

CR: . . . for the—for that Constitutional meeting. And we came up with a provision, which is the only one that was finally accepted separately. You know, the Constitution was not accepted, but

the—later on, Amendment 88—81, I think it is, adopted our work for county government change.

SL: Well, we're gonna talk about that.

CR: Okay.

SL: Okay. Thanks.

CR: All right.

SL: All right. Let's get up and move around a bit.

[Recording stopped]

[02:07:03] SL: All right, so we're starting our third segment here.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And you've done well. So far, you've survived being a . . .

CR: Yeah. Okay.

SL: . . . Pryor Center victim. I . . .

CR: I hope I have answered your questions properly.

SL: Oh, you have. And I love to hear—I love to let you go and let you finish out a story. So I think we had gotten to the bar association.

CR: I think that's right.

SL: And what an honor it is to be the president of the state bar.

CR: Yeah.

[02:07:36] SL: And we were—you were talkin' about going to the different bar associations in the Southern . . .

CR: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . Southeastern region.

CR: Yes.

SL: And there were fourteen, was it?

CR: Fourteen.

SL: Fourteen of 'em.

CR: Yeah.

SL: So does that mean you went to fourteen different bars during your twelve-month period?

CR: Well, I did the American Bar.

SL: The American Bar.

CR: Yeah. American Bar was in Los Angeles that year.

SL: So you really just address issues that have to do with being a lawyer. Is that . . .

CR: In other states, yeah.

SL: So is it . . .

CR: And we went to places like Charleston, Biloxi, St. Louis, Oklahoma City. Where are some—were like four of 'em—North Carolina. Virginia. We went to all those places that had—they had socials, so a weekend situation. They had legal issues discussed, but primarily it was social.

[02:08:54] SL: So what are the—I mean, give—what are some of

the examples of the issues that bar associations address?

CR: Well, law covers a wide area, and there are constant changes and an effort to improve the law generally in every bar association that you'll ever hear anything about. The American Bar Association, the Arkansas, Tennessee, like that. And so for our local bar association, it's primarily to keep it functioning from the standpoint of providing the services that a local bar should preside—provide. For instance, one of the most important services that the Arkansas Bar Association provides lawyers now is CloseCase. It's a research system that's free. Comes with your registration. You can do computer research on your computer for law. And it costs the—we have to pay *X* amount of dollars for the service for that many lawyers throughout the state of Arkansas. That's one thing. Other thing is improvements where we see they're needed in legislation. If there is a defect someplace in the legislation, we take the responsibility for approving it, for changing it. We also—we handle publicity for the bar, so for our lawyers generally. We provide resources for people that are huntin' for lawyers. You can get on your computer system under ABA. And you'll find a thing called "Find Lawyers." If you wanted to do a recommendation as a—for a specialist on law, you could go in

that computer system and punch it up, and there would be six or eight people available throughout Arkansas maybe to handle your case. So it's—those are basically what we do.

[Recording stopped]

[02:11:38] SL: As far as addressing legislative issues and the changing laws.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Those changes—those seem—there—I would assume that there are sea changes anytime that there is a turnover in the legislature, from like a maybe a majority of Democrats changes to a majority of Republicans.

CR: Like now.

SL: Like right now.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And so there's all these more—like for instance, now there's a much more what people would normally consider a conservative approach or a less-government approach.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And it seems like that some of these laws that get passed get challenged . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: . . . and overturned . . .

CR: And they should.

SL: . . . or appealed and . . .

[02:12:32] CR: There are certain things that fall within the legal practice. For instance, the making of court rules. They're trying to make that a legislative determination. And it's not. It should be a court determination. Courts should decide the rules that a lawyer uses in court, not the legislature. Because we're not controlled by what the people wish to have. We're only trying to do in a fair system. So right now, there's a lot of stuff going on over there that I don't agree with. They tried to put a cap on damages in certain medical cases.

SL: Right. A $250,000 cap.

CR: Yeah. And I don't know how you can do that. You can't place one value on somebody's life and apply it to everybody. Some people's lives are more valuable. They earn more money. They're more responsible to their families. They're more responsible to the community. But they want to put a cap on it saying anybody that's negligently injured or killed, the most they can recover for loss of life is $250,000. But it's just [*laughs*] . . .

SL: One size does not fit all.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:13:56] CR: But it's that kind of thing that you get into arguments about. You got people that are conservative that don't think that lawyers ought to collect fees. And they're trying to decide how much and what percentage of contingent fee a lawyer can charge. The legislature is. Well, that's a part of what the bar association does is to represent itself, so to speak.

SL: So basically there's, for instance, there's basically three . . .

CR: Branches. Yeah.

SL: . . . branches of government. There's the legislature, there's the presidency or the governing, the executive . . .

CR: You've got the judicial, you got your legislative . . .

SL: And then the judicial.

CR: Yes.

SL: And so the judicial has a set of laws that are . . .

CR: Out of the Constitution.

SL: . . . are Constitution-driven. And then the legislature tries to pass laws that are social . . .

CR: Where they would take it. Yeah. Yeah. I mean that's what happening now. Fortunately, it doesn't happen often. Yeah.

SL: So it really tests the judicial system, doesn't it?

CR: Yeah.

SL: I mean, especially when—and there's always so much hubbub

about appointments to the courts. You know, how . . .

[02:15:29] CR: The bar association makes recommendations, yes, on appointments to the courts based on their knowledge of their capability and the ability of the applicants. Yes.

SL: So when someone is appointed to the court, they're bound to hold the constitution, right?

CR: Yeah.

SL: And they really can't . . .

CR: Take hold. Yep.

SL: So but at the same time, there's so much hubbub about, you know, nominees.

CR: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Whether they're fit or not, or whether they're left or right, or . . .

CR: That's right.

SL: . . . in the middle. And so those interpretations of the proposed laws becomes really . . .

CR: You've always got somebody that's opposed to it. They think it's improper. I mean, that's true, I guess, with anything. But, yeah, our rules are controlled by the state constitution.

[02:16:35] SL: Which, in Arkansas's case, is a pretty ancient constitution, isn't it?

CR: That's right. [*Laughs*] 1836.

SL: Yeah. Yeah. So it would seem like it would be kind of—I mean, it makes sense in some ways that you would maybe drop some things in that old constitution . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . because it doesn't really apply.

CR: You can't do that unless you pass a . . .

SL: A whole new constitution.

CR: . . . an amendment. Yeah.

SL: An amendment.

CR: That's right. So it's basically supervision of the law in the states, is what it amounts to. That's what the bar association does. And it provides an agency like any other for lawyers. I mean most every profession has a—an association. Lawyers have associations, too. Doctors have associations. The medical association.

[02:17:35] SL: In the case of the lawyers though, they end up—well, first of all, many of them go into the legislature. I mean, there's . . .

CR: Not many.

SL: Not many?

CR: Not many. You'd be surprised. I bet they're not a half dozen there now.

SL: Is that right?

CR: As a matter of fact, there are more there now than were—than I know when I was in the legislature—less than 10 percent lawyers. Very few.

SL: So that's probably where the law is being passed at that level . . .

CR: Yeah, and . . .

SL: . . . are vulnerable . . .

CR: . . . they have the knowledge of what the—yeah.

SL: They don't have a knowledge of what will go. They just pass what they want.

CR: Yeah. That's right.

SL: Not really the way it is.

CR: What seems right. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Right. Well, that's a heavy responsibility.

CR: Well, that's—what we live our life under is what controls us. So we need to have the best we can get. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah. Well, what a great honor to be a president of that organization. That . . .

CR: Well, I felt it was so, yeah.

SL: Well, I'm sure every member feels that way, too. You know, to be, you know . . .

CR: Well, of your whole profession, it's the highest . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

CR: . . . point. Yeah.

[02:18:57] SL: Now there's a—and I was looking at your gavels during the break, and there's another gavel there next to the being president of the bar as being president of the Bar Foundation.

CR: Bar Foundation is a fundraising organization to provide money. Like, well, part of it is the building of the Bar Foundation headquarters in Little Rock. Takes care of a lot of that. Or whatever is needed in terms of physical—fiscal requirements comes out of there. You can make a—for instance, if you had a friend to die, you can make a memorial to him through there. And the funds are used for various purposes. Well, for instance, we do things like support a debate among students to encourage them to be lawyers, to encourage them to understand about debating, funded by the foundation. It's things like that.

SL: So it's funding, but it's also fundraising or . . .

CR: Yes. Oh, yeah.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

CR: It is the fundraising arm of the bar association.

SL: And then du—is it—I would assume that there is some sort of

endowment.

CR: Yeah.

SL: That . . .

CR: Yeah, you could do that. Yep. It's just like any other foundation. Whatever purpose that's good for their—for the sponsoring agency. Yeah.

SL: So as . . .

[02:20:48] CR: And that foundation now has in it about two and a half million dollars.

SL: I'm sorry, say that again now.

CR: I said that foundation now has about somewhere around two and a half million dollars in it that we use to raise income to take care of these obligations.

[02:21:10] SL: Well, as your term as bar—president of the Bar Foundation, what was the—what were you proudest of under your leadership of what you provided support for? Was there any one issue or any one event or any one program that . . .

CR: I think the thing that I most felt—maybe the best thing that I did when I was president. We used to have a system in criminal cases where you had an indigent that couldn't pay a lawyer. The court appointed a lawyer to represent you.

SL: Right.

CR: And the—at that time, the fees paid by state are minimal. I mean, there's almost nothing. Just hardly wouldn't even think about it.

SL: And you have to take the case if you're appointed to it?

CR: That's right. If you're a lawyer, you have to take the case. And of course, that's imposing on the lawyer's time and on his income.

SL: Sure.

[02:22:27] CR: Well, I worked on and got passed a method of public defenders. You've heard of public defenders.

SL: Sure. Absolutely.

CR: Well, that occurred during my administration. Public defenders now are an agency of the state, and they're paid by the state. When the court needs to appoint a lawyer for an indigent, they appoint somebody who is paid by the state and not out of some poor lawyer's pocket. So.

SL: That's big. And it's . . .

CR: Yeah. And theoretically, it's better for 'em because public defenders can specialize in criminal areas where they might appoint me as a criminal defense lawyer in a case that I know absolutely nothing about. So it's better for the . . .

SL: Representation.

CR: Yeah. Right.

SL: It's better representation.

[02:23:22] CR: So I think that's probably the thing that I think most. And then this didn't come about by virtue of me being president of the bar association, but the other thing I'm proud of in my career is I wrote the opinion in the supreme court as a special Supreme Court justice to do away with the blue laws in Arkansas.

SL: Okay. So now tell us what the blue laws are.

CR: The blue laws are that you can't sell certain things on Sunday. That'd been so in English law since the time immemorial. So you have mo—you can buy pantyhose on Sunday, but you can't buy a brassiere or [*SL laughs*], you know, that sort of stuff.

SL: Right.

CR: Well, in a case called *Handy Dan v. Little Rock*, which I presided as a judge, I wrote an opinion saying it was unconstitutional. It's never been challenged. That's the reason that Walmart are opened on Sundays these days.

SL: I remember.

CR: Yeah.

SL: I remember before.

CR: Yes.

SL: So what . . .

[02:24:36] CR: I didn't do that as president of the bar association. I did that as an individual because the court appointed me to be the judge.

SL: So how does that—what about alcohol sales? Alcohol sales on Sunday?

CR: Alcohol sales on a Sunday? I've not had any dealings with it. That's been the law forever, and so . . .

SL: Yeah. But that's an example of a blue law, isn't it?

CR: In a sense. In a sense. But it's . . .

SL: 'Cause you can buy on Monday and Saturday, but you can't buy it on . . .

CR: But blue—the difference is objects normally considered in blue laws are legal for every other purpose, whereas alcohol is a controlled substance.

SL: I see.

CR: Yeah.

SL: So it's a totally different . . .

CR: That's right. Falls in a different category.

SL: Okay. Well, that's good. That's good. So a special Supreme Court justice, is that . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: So what is that?

[02:25:38] CR: Well, that's done all the time. A Supreme Court justice recuses himself for some reason. He has an interest in the case or for whatever reason is too close to the case, recuses. The governor then has to appoint somebody to fill that vacancy. So he picks out a lawyer, and the state appoints him, and that lawyer then becomes a Supreme Court justice.

SL: Just for that . . .

CR: Just for that case.

SL: Case.

CR: Yeah. Uh-huh.

SL: And then when that case is over, the recusal . . .

CR: That's right.

SL: . . . recusal lifts . . .

CR: Right.

SL: . . . and the appointed Supreme Court goes back. Well, that's kind of an honor too, isn't it? I mean, it's not a lottery.

CR: Well, I think it is. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

CR: I guess some people don't take the . . .

SL: I mean, how do they choose who's gonna be the special justice?

CR: I don't know.

SL: It's mysterious.

CR: There's not any way. It's just impossible to do.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Yeah. How can you have a store that can sell you tomatoes on Sunday, but can't sell you potatoes?

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

CR: Yeah.

[02:26:46] SL: That's good. Okay. So now if you think of something about the bar that you wanna get back to, we should come back to it. But you also mentioned that you'd like to talk a little bit about your European experiences.

CR: Oh, yeah. Okay.

SL: So by this you mean travel?

CR: I—yes.

SL: And a lot with your wife.

CR: Yes. Oh, I've always been interested in European history. And so—and my people immigrated from Germany. Koblenz, as a matter of fact, is the town they came from.

SL: Okay.

CR: And so I have been interested in exploring Europe. In 1971, I believe it was, Ed Wright was—a past president of the bar association, was elected president of the American Bar

Association.

SL: Okay.

[02:27:51] CR: And he and the English bar established and scheduled a joint meeting of the American bar and the English bar in England. And at that time, my kids were—I think Chuck was maybe thirteen, and Ann was maybe eleven, something like that.

SL: Okay.

CR: So we decided to go and celebrate with Ed Wright. That was the first trip. With the bar—one week in London and two weeks on the continent. My boss was Sid McMath and Henry Wood and other dignitaries in Arkansas. That was my fir—our first European trip. And the following year, my wife and I made our second trip. We decided we were gonna go on a trip to Europe. So we went on a three-week trip. One weekend in Rome. One weekend in—let me get the towns. Paris. One week in Rome, and one week in Berlin. And so we had an opportunity to be further exposed. And then we'd been—well, then [*laugh*] I recommended a client to the [*unclear word*] park. And they underwrote a trip for my wife and I to we—to Eastern Europe. So we went to—my wife and I went by bus trip to Berlin, to Warsaw, Krakow, Vienna, Prague, like that. So it's that kind of

traveling that we've done. And I've traveled Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bucharest, Czechoslovakia, in that area on I guess it's six different occasions.

[02:30:13] SL: So you go there. You were attracted—well, first of all, you had your first taste with the English . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and American bar. And so that really whetted your appetite to . . .

CR: Sure. Oh, very much so.

SL: To continue and . . .

CR: Very much so. To see some of those places, like where the Magna Carta was . . .

SL: Right.

CR: . . . founded. I saw that. Or the Tower of London or whatever, you know, it was just . . .

SL: Coliseum.

CR: Yeah.

SL: [*Laughs*] The Vatican.

CR: The Vatican. That's right.

SL: Right. Right. Each region is its own personality, isn't it?

CR: Yeah.

SL: I mean, each country. It's . . .

CR: Oh, yes.

SL: There's something different in each area.

CR: Something interesting, yes. Uh-huh.

SL: So...

[02:31:17] CR: Budapest, for instance, one of my favorite cities. Beautiful city. Just you won't believe it. And you'll see it on all those Viking advertisements . . .

SL: Cruises.

CR: . . . about—yeah.

SL: I've always wanted to do a small barge tour.

CR: Well, now that's what these are for all practical purposes. The Viking—now we haven't been on Viking on all these trips. We've only been on Viking twice.

SL: Okay.

CR: The rest of them were done on Motorcoach and airline and stuff like that. But the Viking tours are—they are—I think they're 150 people that occ—that is the capacity of most of the Viking river cruises. I'm not talking about the ocean cruises 'cause they . . .

SL: Right.

CR: . . . they will accommodate 3- or 400 people.

SL: Right. Like a hotel.

CR: So you've got a small number of people. You got a dining room

that is attributed to you, or you got a bar. You—they stop in little towns along the way, and you can get off at night and go into their night spots, or do whatever you wanna do. And your room is right on the river. You can look off and see the water.

SL: It always—they send me the brochures every . . .

CR: I'm sorry?

[02:32:52] SL: I get a brochure from Viking every month.

CR: Oh, wow. I get one every week. Less than that.

SL: Yeah. You know, and . . .

CR: Yeah, once you've signed up, they keep sending it to you. I would like to go back again. I took my children, my daughter and her family, on a trip to the World War II—to Brittany. That's not what I'm trying to say. It's where the Landing took place.

SL: Yeah. Normandy.

CR: Yeah. Uh-huh. And that was the last trip we took on Viking.

SL: It's stunning, isn't it? That . . .

CR: Oh.

SL: It's . . .

CR: Well, yeah, we got to see the American cemetery there and stuff like that.

SL: It's huge.

CR: Yeah.

SL: It's huge. And to walk down on the beach and see the kind of terrain they had to traverse to get off the beach is just—it's amazing.

CR: Oh, it is. Absolutely. And then just read about it, you know, about the battle as it came off and how it was fought because of the fencerows, the hedgerows . . .

SL Oh.

CR: . . . how to get across them and all that. Yeah. But it just enlarges your knowledge of things, you know.

[02:34:11] SL: And still, even after a wonderful tour, it's always good to be back home, isn't it?

CR: Oh yeah. No question about that.

SL: You really appreciate . . .

CR: But then you think about when am I gonna go next? [*Laughter*]

SL: Yeah. There is no end to it, that's true. That's true. Well, was there any—what were the—maybe give me the top three favorite places that you've been in Europe. What—if you . . .

CR: In Europe?

SL: Yeah, if you . . .

CR: Yeah. Okay. Rome, of course, is—would be close to number one. Berlin is an interesting place. And the—what was I gonna say, the—Budapest. Now I like Czechoslovakia. Those little

towns are nice. But I think those are—now London I enjoyed, but it's kind of staid. You know, it's not—to me, it's not quite as jovial as they are in these other places.

SL: Yeah. I've been on the double-decker buses there, and . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . I always heard that the food is not great there, but I thought it was okay.

[02:35:26] CR: Yeah. I like Vienna.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Vienna is a nice place.

SL: Okay. We'll . . .

CR: Munich is a nice place.

SL: Munich.

CR: I've been to Oktoberfest twice. [*Laughter*]

SL: And survived.

CR: And survived.

SL: Yes. Well, I want to talk—and we can get back to Europe . . .

CR: Okay.

SL: . . . if something comes up, but I really wanna talk about Helena.

CR: Okay.

[02:35:52] SL: You know, you live here.

CR: Yeah.

SL: You chose to come back here. You raised your family here. You know, I'm a latecomer to Helena.

CR: Yeah.

SL: I just started visiting Helena just a few years ago, maybe several years ago. But I can't seem to stay away from it.

CR: Yeah.

SL: I'm really fascinated by Helena.

CR: It is a fascinating place.

SL: And of course, the history of Helena is remarkable.

CR: Oh, unquestionably.

SL: And it just—and there—it seems like I learn something more remarkable every time I come back to Helena. So how is it that it has gotten to its current state? I just don't understand how it can be just—it just seems to be in some ways just completely falling apart.

CR: It is. In a lot of ways.

SL: And caving in on itself. And I—and it's just such a—for me, it just almost seems—I don't want to say criminal, but it's such a shame to see that happening.

[Recording stopped]

[02:37:03] CR: When I moved back here in 1954, Helena and

Jonesboro were competers for most of the things that were being improved along the way. I go to Jonesboro now, and it's absolutely remarkable what that city has done. That is a fine city. A lot of growth, a lot of work, a lot of people, college, the whole bit. Whereas Helena on the other hand has gone to hell in a handbasket.

[Recording stopped]

[02:37:35] SL: So when did it turn? I mean there had to be some kind of—I mean, it hasn't really . . .

CR: Well, it really turned, primarily, it began turning when the farms were mechanized.

[Recording stopped]

[02:37:54] SL: When—I mean, was there—you know, of course I've done a lot of research on Elaine, and then there's the 1927 flood . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the [19]37 flood. But you said that was mostly White River, but it seems like there have been some sort of calamity that had an impact . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . on the community as well. And I guess there's all kinds of migration away from the area after calamities like that.

CR: Oh, unquestionably. Well, and then when your industry goes out . . .

SL: And so you lose some talent.

CR: . . . people leave.

SL: Yeah.

CR: Because we've had industries to go out. Mohawk Rubber Company was the starting point. And that was not so much Black-white discrimination as much as it was labor. Union.

SL: Union.

CR: I mean, they ran that company off, and they were payin'—at that time, they were paying eight dollars an hour, which was great for twenty years ago.

SL: Yeah. Twenty years ago, yeah, sure.

CR: Yeah.

[02:39:11] SL: So—what was I gonna say? So that was—you feel like that was one of the first industries that . . .

CR: Oh, that was one of the first things we lost. Yeah.

SL: And this is right . . .

CR: But that wasn't Black-white discrimination.

SL: It was union.

CR: That was union, yeah.

SL: And so—but this is a right-to-work state, right, you . . .

CR: Yes.

SL: But still the union had a foothold here that . . .

CR: Well, they elected to unionize, and so they could make the choice. And they upped their requirements so high that—and the irony of it was, right behind the plant in West Helena they—Mohawk had already moved in equipment to do—oh, what do you call the tires that are lined like—you know, they used to . . .

SL: Steel belted? Not steel belted, but radial?

[02:40:10] CR: Radial. They had moved equipment in by train, and they were sitting on the rails behind Mohawk ready to be installed so that they could make radials here. And it was during that time that they were negotiating their union contract, and they hung up. Mohawk turned those railroad trains around, sent them up to Virginia, opened a new plant in Virginia, which has been [*laughs*] successful since then. That's when they went out.

SL: So it was literally here, in place.

CR: You know, sent—yeah.

SL: And the vote just sent it out.

CR: Exactly. I mean, and it's all because you had a bunch of people that were totally unreasonable. They're gonna insist, "Oh, they're not gonna leave here. You know, they won't leave here."

SL: And they did.

CR: That was the argument and attitude. They're not gonna leave here. But they turned those railroad trains, radial equipment around and sent it to Virginia.

SL: So that was twenty years ago?

CR: Well, more than that, maybe, yeah.

[02:41:22] SL: So were there—can you think of some other industries that left after that, once that started happening?

CR: Well, our wood industries have all closed down. We had Chicago Mill and Lumber Company that used to be one of the biggest providers of wood products that you could find. Beisel Veneer went out. McKnight Veneer went out.

SL: All these ancillary . . .

CR: Yeah. We had a plant here that made women's clothing went out. Oh, yeah, we—there are more than that. But that's just some of them.

SL: So you had a beautiful town.

CR: It is.

SL: A thriving town. Lots of great things going on and . . .

CR: The only thing that makes it attractive are the people and the friends that have been for fifty years.

SL: Yeah.

CR: And you know, when you get my age, you don't consider

moving. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[Recording stopped]

[02:42:26] SL: I really hope that—I hope there's some kind of—something—some kind of hope will rise, you know, something will turn this around.

CR: Well, those of us that live here, that have to live here, are hoping for that.

SL: Yeah.

CR: But you don't see . . .

SL: You don't see a leader among you. Now I remember someone, who was it? Oh, who's the family that has Doe's Eat Place?

CR: Has what?

[02:42:55] SL: Doe's Eat Place? Who started the Doe's, the restaurant?

CR: Oh, Doe's down in Mississippi?

SL: Yeah, wasn't there a son that was here that was starting to try to . . .

CR: Not from Doe's. I don't know who it would've been.

SL: Well, he—I guess he got here and was really starting to work on

that. And then he died in a car crash or something. There was . . .

CR: I don't know about that.

SL: . . . seemed like there was some—I forget what the names—what the family name is. I'll find that and . . .

CR: Yeah.

SL: . . . come back to you on that. But yeah, well I'm stuck. I love this place.

CR: Oh, I do, too.

SL: There's something about it that it's just remarkable.

[02:43:41] CR: It is. Well, you know, the attractive part about it was—and most people don't understand this. But at the turn of the century, Helena was a town made up primarily of Scotch-Irish, English immigrants. Sharecroppers, fifty of 'em. Since the turn of the century, we have attracted Italians, Chinese, Syrians, Lebanese, Jews. We have—our community probably is more homogenous with ethnic groups than any community has ever been. Now that's changing some, because they're dying off. But that was one of the things that made Helena so attractive.

SL: So vibrant. Yeah.

CR: It was—it has so many ethnic groups, so many cultures. And I haven't named them all. There's Swiss. We have a whole

community of people out in West Helena, the Swiss community. And I've been tryin' to get 'em to build a—some sort of a monument down on the square, a tribute of this homogeneity. And sooner or later I think we'll get it. But I wanted—what I wanted was a pl—a—some sort of a stone that showed . . .

SL: The ethnicity?

CR: . . . Lebanese names, Syrian names, Italian names, Jewish names, German names, you know, like that to show how mixed it was. And we'll get it one day.

SL: You know, I've heard that.

CR: Yeah.

SL: From several other interviews, that there was a great mix.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Very broad. That's a good point. I'd be interested in that memorial.

CR: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. I'd go to that.

CR: And it's amazing. You can't go to another town in Arkansas that would've had that many cultures intermixed.

[Recording stopped]

[02:46:04] SL: Well, I mean it's still a Mississippi River port.

CR: Without any question.

SL: And for—it would seem like that that alone would be . . .

CR: We should have gotten some of this stuff that they got up in Crittenden County and in Mississippi County.

[Recording stopped]

CR: But now we've got a billion dollar plant being built in—outside of Osceola right now employing people, paying all sorts of good money. But we don't have it.

SL: Okay.

CR: Yeah.

SL: I get it.

CR: I know the cause, but I don't know the cure. [*Laughs*]

[02:46:53] SL: Yeah. Yeah. Well, what have I not asked you that I should be asking you? Is there anything else that we haven't talked about? I mean, when I've . . .

CR: Well, no, but I wanna say one thing.

SL: Okay.

CR: My wife and I have been blessed, very blessed. Because, you know, Chuck has remarried, and he has three stepchildren.

SL: Okay.

CR: And he has his own son, that's four.

SL: Yes.

CR: And my daughter has two children. So we've got seven

grandchildren. All of those grandchildren have been to college and got advanced degrees except one. How about that?

SL: That's the American dream.

CR: To me, it's the end of it. That's right. Every one of 'em, they're all workin', all got high-paying jobs.

SL: Contributors to the community?

CR: Yes, sir.

SL: Civically aware?

CR: They have a new . . .

SL: And grateful. Understand . . .

CR: Unusual talents. I've got a granddaughter who works for JB Hunt. She is an industrial engineer. You know what she does? She plans the shipment of special shipments that are going wherever they're going. In other words, you got a company in Minnesota that has some kind of special product that they're being shipped out, going to wherever, she plans it.

SL: It's a great logistics company. Yeah.

CR: Yeah. And my grandson in—my grandson is a—has a master's degree in accounting in Texas, in Dallas. And is making all kinds of money. You just wouldn't believe.

SL: That's great. You are blessed.

CR: One's a lawyer in Salisbury, Maryland. He's getting involved in

politics up there now. I've had a blessed life, isn't any question about that. I don't know whether it deserves to be in the Pryor museum, but . . .

SL: [*Laughter*] You do, you do. And I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get to you 'cause I—we've been talking about this for years.

CR: That's okay.

SL: So I'm glad we finally got together, and I hope we continue to cross paths.

CR: I hope so too.

SL: This is not . . .

CR: Any way I can help you. I'll be glad to.

[02:49:57] SL: Well, I appreciate that.

CR: I know I . . .

SL: And Barbara and David would too.

CR: Yeah.

SL: And I'll—of course, we—I talk to them about who it is I get to sit across from all the time and . . .

CR: Yeah. David will tell you about my conduct as one of the Young Turks. David Pryor.

SL: He's a great guy too.

CR: Oh, without any question. I'd say he's one of the—one of the best, as far as I'm concerned.

[02:50:24] SL: Yep. Yeah. Okay. There's one thing that we usually end with on these interviews, and we haven't ever really used this, but I think we will eventually.

CR: Okay.

SL: And it's a very simple thing. When I'm—I'm gonna get out of this chair, and I'm gonna ask you to look straight in this camera, and I'm gonna ask you to say your name.

CR: Okay.

SL: My name is Charles B. Roscopf . . .

CR: All right.

SL: . . . and I'm proud to be from Arkansas.

CR: Okay.

SL: Can you do that for me?

CR: Of course.

SL: I love that. Okay, now I'm gonna get up, and he'll tell you when he's got it framed and he's ready.

CR: All right.

SL: And you just look in there and you say your name.

CR: You want me to put a chair right there in the front to sit? Or how you want me to stoop, or how are we gonna get the picture taken?

SL: Well, you just sit—you just look right in the middle.

CR: I stay where I am?

SL: Yeah. You stay where you are, and I'm gonna get out of the way.

CR: Yeah.

SL: So you're not looking at me.

CR: Do I need to say Charles B. Roscopf?

SL: Yes.

CR: Helena, Arkansas?

JC: Kay. Right.

SL: You can say Helena, Arkansas.

JC: Scott.

SL: And I'm proud to be from Arkansas. Yeah.

JC: Here?

SL: Yeah.

[02:51:30] JC: All right. Once Scott gets out of our light. [*Laughter*] Let me make sure I got good focus. All right, go ahead.

CR: I wanna say something else.

SL: Okay.

CR: All right. I wanna say I am a fourth-generation Arkansan, and I love Arkansas.

SL: That's good.

JC: All right.

CR: All right.

JC: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

JC: You can just . . .

SL: Now can you go ahead and give us your name, too, and . . .

JC: Look right in . . .

SL: . . . say you're proud to be from Arkansas?

JC: Look right at—straight in—yeah . . .

CR: You want me to look here or there?

JC: Nope, look straight into the lens.

CR: Okay.

JC: And just say your name and say, "I'm proud to be from Arkansas" or—right? Go whenever you're ready. Just take a look right into here . . .

CR: Oh, wait a minute, now. I don't follow. I'm not hearing you.

JC: Oh, okay. He's not hearing me real well. So . . .

[02:52:26] SL: Oh, okay. So we've got the recording of you saying you're fourth generation, but what we need—what I'm asking you to say is, "I'm Charles B. Roscopf, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

CR: That's all you want me to say?

SL: Yeah.

CR: All right.

SL: 'Cause everyone has said that.

CR: Yeah. Okay. It's . . .

SL: So I have a bunch of faces.

CR: If that's uniform, that's fine.

SL: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

JC: And just look straight into the lens. Take a second. And then whenever you're ready, go ahead.

CR: Now? I'm Charles B. Roscopf from Helena, Arkansas, and I'm proud to be an Arkansan.

SL: That's good.

JC: Excellent.

SL: That's good.

JC: Excellent.

SL: All right. [*Claps*]

CR: That it?

JC: Perfect.

[End of Interview 02:53:12]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]