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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Ewell R. Welch

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

August 24, 2012

North Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio and video files, 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 and video recordings in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

Transcript Methodology

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

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

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/ redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify 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 Ewell R. Welch on August 24, 2012, in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Well, this is—uh—the twenty-fourth of August. The year is 2012. And we are at the Welch residence in North Little Rock, Arkansas. And sitting across from me is Ewell Welch, and my name is Scott Lunsford. We're here with the Pryor Center today, Ewell, and we're going to—uh—make you a Pryor Center victim today. [*EW laughs*] We're gonna—uh—take you through your earliest memories to the present day. Um—we're an oral and visual history program started by—uh—David and Barbara Pryor. And we're getting as many Arkansas stories as—as we can gather. And—uh—you've been nominated, and we take nominations, and we get to them as we can.

Ewell Welch: Mh-hmm.

SL: Uh—and it was just fortunate that our schedules—uh—let us do this one this quickly. So—um—uh—it's a great honor to—to be here in your home. I want to thank you for . . .

EW: Thank you.

SL: . . . letting us come in and kind of have our way with—with

your—your beautiful residence. We've moved furniture and set up all kinds of equipment and taken over rooms, and you've been very, very patient with us, and I really appreciate that. Thank you . . .

EW: No problem.

SL: . . . very much.

[00:01:12] SL: Um—Ewell—uh—let me give you just a brief overview of what we're about to get into here.

EW: Okay.

SL: Um—this is gonna be a long interview. We're gonna—we're gonna spend as much time as you want. Uh—this is your story, and we want it—we want you to tell it the way you want it to survive 'cause we're gonna preserve this forever. And—uh—we'll take care of it. We'll be good stewards of—of this recording. Uh—we will encourage—uh—documentarians—uh—students, graduate students, undergraduate students. We're a part of the Arkansas History Lesson Plan. Um—Arkansas history will be taught in the public schools, and they'll have some of the Pryor Center material that they will—uh—be looking at, and—uh—they'll be encouraged to visit our site. We will want people to use this material. We think that these are the—the best way to portray the state of Arkansas by the people that live here. So—

um—we record in high definition—um—and it looks spectacular. It'll sound great. Um—like I say, we will preserve it forever. We'll give you as many copies of it as you would like. Um—we will give you all the raw footage of what we . . .

EW: Hmm.

SL: . . . do today. Uh—we will—uh—transcribe this for you. The transcription will take longer—uh—more than likely than it will to get you a copy of this.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[00:02:37] SL: We'll ask you to look at this—uh—recording, and if there's anything that you don't want the rest of the world to know . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or—uh—if you feel not very good about sharing with everybody, just tell us, and . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . we'll take it out, and it's gone.

EW: Okay.

SL: Uh—we're not here to get anybody . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . or to embarrass anybody or to upset anybody. And—um—it's very rare—it's very, very rare when anyone—someone asks

us to retract something.

EW: Right.

SL: It's usually, you know, "That no-good brother in law" . . .

EW: Mh-hmm. [*Laughs*]

SL: . . . or something like that. [*Laughter*] But [*laughs*] maybe they're still alive . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and maybe their relatives would be upset. So—um—I'm—it's ver—very rare . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . uh—when anything has to be taken back or withheld. Now, we can also not release things for a period of time if you wanted to wait . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for a while, we can do—we can do it. We're very, very flexible. Again, it's basically your story. [00:03:35] So having said all that, if it's okay with you, we're gonna keep recording.

EW: Okay.

SL: And we're gonna get your—your life story. And I—and it's gonna be fun. When it stops being fun, we'll stop.

EW: Okay.

SL: Is that good with you?

EW: It—that works for me. Let's—let's go for it.

[00:03:49] SL: All right. Well, Ewell, first of all, I need your full name. What is your full name?

EW: Ewell Ray Welch.

SL: And Ewell is *E-W-E-L-L*.

EW: Correct.

SL: Okay. And Ewell, when and where were you born?

EW: I was born in Batesville, Arkansas, on July the eighth, 1953.

SL: You're younger than I am.

EW: [*Laughs*] I just don't look it with the gray hair. Um . . .

SL: You do look it. You do—you are a good-lookin' guy. Well, so—um—uh—there in Batesville at—at the hospital?

EW: Uh—yes.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: Yes. But I never lived in Batesville. Uh—my—at the time, my parents lived in Mountain View, and Batesville was the closest hospital . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . to Mountain . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . View at the time.

[00:04:35] SL: Mh-hmm. And what were your parents' names?

EW: Uh . . .

SL: Or what are their names?

EW: Dad's name was Ewell Ferguson Welch. Ferguson being a family name.

SL: Hmm.

EW: And—uh—Mom's name was—or is Opal Lavoy Martin Welch. So . . .

[00:04:55] SL: And—uh—were they both originally from Mountain Home? How . . .

EW: No.

SL: Do you know how they met?

EW: Uh—no, Dad was eight years older than Mom.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: And I'm not sure exactly when they met, but they were both from—uh—grew up in—in Yell County—uh—around Belleville-Havana area.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: And—uh—uh—I'm not sure exactly when it was that they did meet—whether it was after Dad came back from the war. That's—they got married right after the World War II and—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: But I'm not sure but what Dad—they didn't know each other prior to that.

[00:05:33] SL: Mh-hmm. Um—do you know your—uh—dad's parents' names? Your . . .

EW: Yes—uh . . .

SL: . . . grandparents on your dad's side.

EW: Dad's parents' names were—uh—Jeff D. Welch Sr., and—uh—his mom's name was Maude Ferguson Welch. That's where the Ferguson came from, out of his middle name.

[00:05:58] SL: And were they also based in Yell County?

EW: Yes, yes. Uh—they were a farm family there in—in—uh—outside of Havana—uh—in Yell County.

SL: Uh-huh. Did you ever get to meet either one of them?

EW: I did. I knew both of 'em. Uh—my Grandfather Welch passed away when I was about fifteen, fourteen or fifteen, so I knew him. But—uh—then Grandma Welch—uh—I knew. She passed away after I—uh—left home for college. So I—I knew both of his parents for a long time.

[00:06:32] SL: You know, it seems like it's not unusual that the—uh—that the women . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . would live longer. If they—if they survived childbirth . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . and all that, they—they're—I don't know.

EW: Yeah.

SL: There's something hardy about—about the—uh—uh—rural life that's kind of—um—women seem to just live a little bit longer.

EW: And that—that was the case on both sides—both sets of grandparents.

[00:06:57] SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And—um—so did you get—uh—did you get to visit them and stay at their . . .

EW: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . farm?

EW: Uh—I—I did. Uh—they had moved away—moved off of the—uh—the family farm in—and—uh—by the time I was born and got to know them, but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . uh—uh—they had a small home place—uh—on the other side of town whenever I—I got to know them. But I did stay with 'em—uh—uh—both—uh—spent—and it seems like nearly every Sunday afternoon after church, we would go visit with both sets of grand—of—of my grandparents. Both—uh—my mom and dad's parents.

[00:07:46] SL: Um—so—and what town are we talking about?

EW: Havana.

SL: Havana.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And—um—uh—l—le—let's kind of stick with your dad's side . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . just for a moment 'cause I—I—I always get confused . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . when we start talkin' about Grandma and Grandpa and . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . I've kind of mixed the two. So—um—they had a—a house on the other side of Havana, but it was not a farm house anymore?

EW: That—they had, oh, probably a five-acre pasture . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . uh—uh—adjacent to the farm there. But it was not the farm that—uh—Dad grew up on.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: It was on—like I say, on the other side of town.

[00:08:23] SL: Um—was that original farm still in the family . . .

EW: It is.

SL: . . . or did . . .

EW: In fact, it still is today.

SL: It still is today.

EW: Yes.

SL: Well, what a blessing.

EW: Yes.

[00:08:32] SL: So let's see, Yellville County—is that Crooked Creek? Is there Crooked Creek around there?

EW: No—uh—Petit Jean River—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

EW: . . . uh—Piney Creek—um—uh—are the two—two creeks.

[00:08:48] SL: So—um—describe to me what a typical visit was at—on your dad's side of the parents there.

EW: On—like I say—uh—most Sunday afternoons we'd go visit with the grandparents, and—uh—at that point in time they were—uh—retired, so Grandpa—uh—wasn't in the best of health. Wasn't too mobile at that time, so—uh . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . you know, we'd just go spend a couple of hours sittin' around and visiting and—uh—catchin' up on everything and just seein' how everybody was doin'.

[00:09:24] SL: Was there a front porch to their house?

EW: There was, but—uh—I don't recall sitting out on the front porch that much.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: It was—I remember goin' into the—the bed—or the living room and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . and sittin' around in the—in the living room visiting.

[00:09:41] SL: So this is the early [19]50s that their . . .

EW: That would've been the early . . .

SL: Late . . .

EW: . . . [19]50s, yes.

SL: Or mid-[19]50s, anyway.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[00:09:46] SL: Yeah. And—um—did they have—uh—the modern amenities? Did they have electricity?

EW: Had electricity—uh—uh—at the time, in the early years, did not have—uh—indoor plumbing. Had—uh—had the well where you—uh—pulled water up and—and—uh—had—did not have indoor bathroom facilities . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

EW: . . . at that time.

[00:10:09] SL: Um—did they—um—you know, it was not uncommon for—to use the well also to—to keep milk cool and that kind of stuff. Or did they have a r—a icebox or . . .

EW: Best I remember, they had an—uh—an icebox then. I don't remember—uh—I—and I'm pretty certain grand—on the Welch side—that—uh—they had—uh—refrigerator, electricity, and—and everything.

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Um—and then as far as heat, was it a wood-burning stove, or did they have gas?

EW: Uh—gas, and I don't remember if it was propane. Probably was at that time.

SL: Probably was.

EW: Propane gas with little gas stoves in each room . . .

SL: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

EW: . . . for heat.

[00:10:57] SL: Um—they were probably—uh—well enough along in their years where they didn't really have a garden, or did they . . .

EW: Uh—on Grandpa Welch—I don't remember him being healthy enough to—to have a garden at . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

EW: . . . that point. I suspect—uh—for most years—uh—while they were—uh—uh—able to that they would have a—a garden in the summertime. But—uh—uh—at—by the time I came along, Grandpa Welch was in poor enough health that he . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . wasn't able to do that.

[00:11:34] SL: Do you have any idea how old he was at that time?

EW: He passed away—I think he was eighty-eight when he passed away . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . so—uh—the fifteen years—uh—prior to that had been—you know, mid—mid-seventies on up—early seventies on up to eighty-eight.

[00:11:54] SL: So you would go there in the afternoon, and—uh—would y'all have a—would you have lunch there, or would you have dinner there? Or was it . . .

EW: No, just . . .

SL: . . . just an afternoon session?

EW: . . . just an afternoon visit. Uh—now—uh—wasn't unusual for Grandma Welch to maybe have an apple pie or . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . or somethin' to . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . snack on.

SL: And—uh—this is probably after church. You . . .

EW: It was.

SL: You'd—you'd go to church and then you'd . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . go out and see the grandparents.

EW: Yep.

[00:12:21] SL: Um—well, let's talk about—uh—any stories that you can remember. Um—did—do you remember any conversations that you had with your grandparents at all? Any of their . . .

EW: I—I don't have a—a lot of memories. The—the only story that I really remember was—uh—one about—uh—Dad and his brother when they were growin' up, and the house had a front porch, and—and it was pretty high off the ground. And the only story I really remember specifically was about Dad fallin' off the front porch and breakin' his arm.

SL: Ouch!

[00:12:58] EW: And—uh—but—uh—I really don't remember hearing that many stories about Dad's youth and him growin' up, he and his brother growin' up—uh—other than the fact that, you know, they were just a farm family, and—uh—times were tough.

SL: Well, yeah, he—he grew up through the Depression. Your father . . .

EW: Through the Depression.

SL: . . . probably grew up through the Depression.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EW: Yeah, he was—uh—he and his brother were born in the late nineteen—in the teens and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . early 1900s and—uh—uh—you know, the—probably a pretty typical Arkansas family at that time. Just . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . subsistence.

[00:13:44] SL: I wonder—um—do you know if your dad—uh—participated in the CCC camps or . . .

EW: No, I don't recall. Dad—Dad—uh—had—uh—he was educated in high school. Went to college and—uh—he—uh—after the war, became—uh—finished his education. He was in college at the time war started and in a guard unit at—uh—Arkansas Tech, and—uh—they got activated. I remember him talkin' about—and—uh—uh—so he served during World War II, came back and finished his teaching degree at—uh—at the university and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: Uh—uh—so—but that's about all I remember . . .

SL: What . . .

EW: . . . hearin' about.

[00:14:32] SL: Do—do you have any impressions—uh—of your—uh—dad's mother—uh—grandmother? Do you—I mean . . .

EW: She was a very strong woman . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: . . . uh—just mentally and physically, and—uh—I could—I could see her bein' a—a lady that—uh—uh—would be very strong in—in keepin' a household goin', and—and with two boys growin' up—uh—I suspect she ruled with a pretty iron fist. [*SL laughs*] Kept them in line. [*SL laughs*] Pretty strong disciplinarian I would imagine.

SL: Uh-huh. In our family we'd call that a strong cup of coffee.

EW: Yes.

[00:15:14] SL: [*Laughs*] Um—well—um—so y—really, the only meals that you ever remember having—uh—her cooking was the pies? Did she . . .

EW: Yeah. Uh—you know, I, every once in a while would spend the night up at—with—with Grandma and Grandpa Welch and—uh . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

EW: . . . certainly just regular food—uh—home-cooked-food-type things. Fried chicken and mashed potatoes.

SL: And did—so—and she had a propane or a gas stove . . .

EW: Right. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that she cooked on at that time.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[00:15:50] SL: Um—what about—uh—the laundry for them? Did they have a washing machine . . .

EW: No.

SL: . . . with a wringer?

EW: No. Uh—I—best I remember, she may—I do think they had the old washing machine with the wringer and—and this kind of thing—uh—that—I'm not even sure in our very early years that they didn't have a washtub with a washboard.

SL: Yeah.

EW: So . . .

SL: That would've been—uh—pretty widespread.

EW: Pretty common . . .

SL: Yeah, pretty common.

EW: . . . back then. Mh-hmm.

[00:16:27] SL: Um—okay, anything else about your dad's dad that you can remember? He was just—uh—frail enough to where it was—probably took some energy from him to even . . .

EW: Yeah, I—I don't even remember Grandpa Welch bein'—seein' him outside any at—you know, at the time I rem—from the time

I can remember, he was always in—in frail health and—and had emphysema and—uh—just very—tired very easy, and I really don't even remember him outside.

[00:17:07] SL: Uh—do you have any idea how much schooling he had?

EW: I don't have any idea.

SL: And—uh—was he—did he participate in any of the wars, or was he a veteran?

EW: I suspect he was a veteran of World War I, but I don't know that . . .

SL: Okay.

EW: . . . for a fact.

[00:17:23] SL: Well, let's—if—if you—if something comes to you about . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . about that set of grandparents . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . why, it's perfectly fine just to—"Oh, I just remembered this."

EW: Yeah, right.

SL: Wherever we are today.

EW: Okay.

SL: And I—I'm always looking for that oldest stuff.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[00:17:38] SL: So let's shift over to—uh—um—your mom's . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . parents. Now, what—what was your mom's maiden name?

EW: Martin.

SL: Martin. And—uh—they also lived in the Havana area?

EW: Actually, they lived in Belleville—in the Belleville area, which was a small community about five miles—uh—uh—from Havana.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: And—uh—when—during my early years, I grew up—started out, we lived at Belleville rather than Havana.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: So—and we just lived right down the street from my mom's grandparents, so actually I spent a whole lot more time with them than I did the Welch grandparents . . .

SL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

EW: . . . in my early years.

SL: And—um—let's talk about—uh—uh—did—was it a farm, or was it a—a—a house that had some acres with it or . . .

EW: Uh—again—uh—best I remember, Grandma and Grandpa Martin, while Mom was growin' up, lived around Havana. I think he was primarily—logging was his—uh—uh—means of—uh—support.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EW: And—uh—but then when he retired from that—uh—they—they ended up living in Belleville, and it was just right down the street in town from where I lived in my early years. And—uh—so it was not unusual for me to go up and see Grandma and Grandpa Welch during the day—during the week, you know, when Dad was workin', although Mom was still at home with me while I was in—until I started to school, so . . .

[00:19:15] SL: Okay, now, Welch—did you mean Grandma and Grandpa Welch?

EW: Uh—Martin.

SL: Martin, yeah.

EW: Yes.

SL: So—uh—um—you're very—uh—blessed to have had that time with them.

EW: I was. I—I—I have—uh—uh—fond memories of—uh—goin' with Grandpa Martin. He still—he had had a stroke, and he wasn't—uh—in the best of health, but he was still—uh—able to get out and get around. And Grandpa Martin at that time had a Model A car, and I still remember ridin' with him goin' down—uh—and him takin' me fishin' and—and—uh—and this kind of thing. So—uh—I have lots of—uh—lot more memories of Grandpa Martin

than I do Grandpa Welch.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:05] SL: Now, let's talk about that Model A for a moment. I'm very interested in that. Did that—did the Model A require the crank or did it have a push button . . .

EW: I think this one had a push-button starter the best I remember. In fact, even after Grandpa got where he couldn't drive the Model A, they kept it at the house 'cause I remember mowin' the yard. I was old enough to mow their yard and mowin' around the Model A parked out back. So . . .

[00:20:38] SL: Was it a coupe? Did it have a hard top?

EW: It was a—had a hard top and best I remember—four door.

SL: Really? So it was an expensive Model A.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And did you ever—was it just around town that you got to ride in that?

EW: Yeah.

SL: You never . . .

EW: I don't . . .

SL: . . . been on trip with him . . .

EW: No.

SL: . . . maybe just to the river, probably?

EW: Just around town and actually don't even remember him getting it out on the highway at that time, other than just around town and goin' out in the country.

[00:21:15] SL: Were there any other Model As around?

EW: You know, I remember another one later on after we moved to the farm at Havana, and a gentleman, elderly gentleman, around Havana had a—had one. But those were the only two that I remember.

SL: It seems like they were really pretty reliable. I'm not sure if they had a tractor engine in 'em or what . . .

EW: I . . .

SL: . . . but it was a pretty substantial piece of iron and steel and . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . the—what I've heard is that the weakest thing was—were probably the tires then, and the roads contributed to that because . . .

EW: Unimproved.

SL: I—was there pavement in Belleville and . . .

EW: There was pavement in town and we—they lived just about a block off Highway 10, and it was paved, I guess, all the way from Little Rock to Fort Smith. But not much out of town was

paved.

SL: Yeah. That's the way it was.

EW: Yeah.

[00:22:30] SL: What about—did there—did Belleville have a telephone service?

EW: We did. We had party-line telephones, and I do still remember wantin' to make a phone call—you pick the phone up and see if somebody else had—was on the line or not and . . .

SL: And did that—when you picked it up, did it just automatically connect to the operator, or did you . . .

EW: No.

SL: . . . have to . . .

EW: You had—we had—the ones that I remember had the dial on 'em.

[00:23:02] SL: Okay. And let me think for just a moment. So the Martins had electricity.

EW: They did.

SL: And . . .

EW: They didn't have runnin' water in their house, either, early on—and both sets of grandparents later did get indoor plumbing. But Grandma and Grandpa Martin had a well right at the back . . .

SL: Porch.

EW: . . . porch, and so I still remember very vividly them usin' the pulley and bucket to bring up water to drink and use in the house.

[00:23:51] SL: Well, it sounds like they were in a little—in better shape than the Welch folks. So did you—and they were so much closer to you, and sounds like they were much more a part of your life. Do—can you remember—give me a typical afternoon after school, maybe, that you'd be spending with them.

EW: Oh, I—yeah, I—living in town, I walked back and forth to school. Both of my parents were schoolteachers, so they were both at school. But they usually stayed later or whatever, and I'd walk home with my friends and, you know, stop by Grandma and Grandpa's or go on down to the house or to neighbors or to play or whatever.

[00:24:43] SL: Did Grandma Martin have some kind of cake or pie always . . .

EW: Uh, usually . . .

SL: . . . whenever you came by?

EW: . . . somethin' to snack on. Yes. [*SL laughs*] Yep.

[00:24:58] SL: What was your favorite dish?

EW: You know, the one that I remember the most at Grandma and

Grandpa's was fried crappie or bream or somethin'—you know, fried fish. They were always fishing, and I still remember it was—that was panfried fish at Grandma and Grandpa Martin's.

SL: Corn bread . . .

EW: Corn bread.

SL: . . . crust—batter.

EW: Potatoes with onions, you know, panfried potatoes . . .

SL: Yep.

EW: . . . with onions and . . .

SL: Same stuff my mom used to make.

EW: Yeah.

[00:25:35] SL: So let's talk a little bit about fishing. You know, fish—I know my dad fished a lot—taught me to fish. But back then, that was a way of providing.

EW: It was.

SL: It was part of the diet. It was not sport . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . and—or recreation, it was you go out and catch a mess of fish and clean 'em and bring 'em back. So you—did you have some fishing adventures with your Granddad Martin?

EW: Just day trip, you know, down to the creek and this kind of thing. And it wasn't fancy equipment. It was a cane pole with a

hook and a bobber on it and . . .

SL: Yep.

EW: . . . fish with a worm and go down to the little creek with a—they had a wooden bridge across it and sat on the edge of the wooden bridge and fishin' pole off the edge. And . . .

SL: You're lookin' for that crappie.

EW: Yep. It's a . . .

[00:26:40] SL: So did he or your dad teach you to clean fish?

EW: You know, I don't know that I ever did much fish cleaning myself. I always let Grandpa do it, or later on Dad pretty much did most of it. But . . .

SL: Well, you got off easy.

EW: And I didn't fish a whole—I haven't fished a whole lot since I left—you know, left home for college and this kind of thing, so.

[00:27:06] SL: Do you know what the name of the creek was?

EW: It—that particular one—I think it was probably Piney Creek, which ran into . . .

SL: The big Piney . . .

EW: . . . Petit Jean River then.

SL: Oh, Petit Jean.

EW: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: Yeah, I've got to—I'll have to look at my geography on that and

see how it—I'm always interested in creeks.

EW: Small. It was a small creek. It wasn't very big. Now, there was also on the other side of Belleville was a lake, a Forest Service lake, pi—Spring Lake. And I remember goin' out to Spring Lake and doin' some fishin'. Grandpa as well.

[00:27:45] SL: Okay, well, let's talk a little bit about your mom and dad now.

EW: Okay.

SL: Your dad—what did—they were both teachers.

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: So they had some postsecondary education, I would guess?

EW: They did.

SL: Where did they go to get their degrees?

EW: As I indicated earlier, Dad had started college at Arkansas Tech prior to World War II and was in National Guard and got activated. And after the war, came back and finished his degree at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. I think he and Mom had already gotten married at that point and so—but Mom didn't get her degree until later. She worked on it—I remember her takin' summer school classes, and I think she did quite a bit of correspondence work and this kind of thing to get her education degree. But she didn't start teaching until after I st—

when I started to school, so she had worked on her degree while she was raisin' me and my sister and completed her education then.

[00:29:06] SL: So were—she was working on that from Belleville?

EW: Mh-hmm. Yeah, commuting back and forth to Russellville to Tech. Mh-hmm.

SL: How much of a commute is that?

EW: It'd be about a forty-, forty-five-mile drive.

SL: Yeah, that's . . .

EW: And . . .

SL: . . . pretty doable.

EW: . . . best I remember, a lot of times, you know, there'd be two or three that would drive back and forth together during that time.

SL: Carpool it. Share the cost.

EW: Right.

[00:29:39] SL: Yeah. What—I want you to try to remember your earliest, earliest memory of your mother. And it could be something really—it means nothing. You know, maybe at the sink or at the stove or comin' out of the house. It—do you—what's your earliest memory of your mom?

EW: My earliest memories are before I started to school and Dad was—and the sister were gone to school, and she would—she

was stayin' home with me and her ironing clothes, or during the day sittin' down and readin' a story before I went to take a nap, you know. And I remember the soap operas durin' the day, and *As The World Turns* was always on in the house durin' the day. And . . .

SL: Black and white TV.

EW: . . . black and white TV. I—and I do still remember when we got our first TV. Woulda been probably . . .

SL: [*Unclear words*].

EW: . . . I was four, five, somewhere along in there.

[00:30:57] SL: Yeah, you know, not everybody got TVs when they . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . first came out. It was kind of a—I remember people—neighborhood coming to see our TV. Or you know, we'd go to friends' houses, and it was always an added bonus if there was a TV there.

EW: Right.

[00:31:19] SL: So prior to the TV, then you—I'm assuming they had radio. Do you remember much about radio?

EW: I don't remember a whole lot about radio. It—my early youth—now, I do remember Dad havin' a transistor radio, and we'd sit

around and listen to the Cardinals play baseball at night. I do remember that.

SL: He was a baseball fan.

EW: Oh yeah. Yeah.

[00:31:54] SL: So we ought to go ahead and get your sister's name now.

EW: Okay. Sister's Jean Hall—Jean—well, Jean Kay, and she was three years older than I was, so she was the big sister and . . .

SL: Kay, being *K-A-Y*?

EW: *K-A-Y*.

SL: Jean Kay. And *J*- . . .

EW: *J-E-A-N*.

[00:32:18] SL: Three years older than you, so you can remember her and your father going to the school. So I'm . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . assuming your father taught at the local . . .

EW: At the local school.

SL: . . . school. And that school. Tell me a little bit that . . .

EW: Belleville school. Small school. He—at that time, it was a consolidated school from loc—small, country, one-room schoolhouses and probably had a enrollment of, oh, maybe a couple of hundred.

SL: Pretty big.

EW: Class sizes run in, you know, twenty—fifteen to twenty'd be my guess.

SL: That's pretty perfect.

EW: Yeah.

[00:32:59] SL: So were the classes—did you actually have first- and second-grade classrooms or . . .

EW: We . . .

SL: . . . were classrooms . . .

EW: We did. Now, all first through the twelfth grade in the same buildin'. I—some of the classes were combined where you'd have a second and third grade combined or third and fourth or fifth and sixth grade. I'd—I know the fifth and sixth grade was all both in one classroom. And I believe the second, third, and fourth were kind of split.

[00:33:40] SL: So that means maybe half a dozen teachers or maybe ten teachers . . .

EW: There were . . .

SL: . . . at the most?

EW: Would've been probably four teachers in grade school and then, you know, six or eight—six—probably six or seven high school teachers. I'm not sure.

[00:34:05] SL: Now, when your mom did become a teacher, did she teach there, too?

EW: She did. She did. She—my first recollection, she was a fifth-sixth—fifth- and sixth-grade teacher and she was my fifth- and sixth-grade teacher and I sus—I would imagine she was my sister's fifth- and sixth-grade teacher. But un—fortunately or unfortunately, after I finished the sixth grade, then they moved her up to high school to be a English teacher. And so I had Mom as a teacher in, I think, five of my . . .

SL: Class [*laughs*] grades.

EW: . . . twelve years in high school.

SL: Well . . .

EW: Seemed like every time I would move up to another class, she'd get a different assignment the next year. I don't know if that's a reflection on the need to keep reins [*SL laughs*] on me or what.

[00:35:02] SL: Well now, let's talk about some reins on you. What kind of kid were you, growing up? Did you get in trouble much, or were you pretty mischievous or . . .

EW: Not too bad.

SL: Mischievous.

EW: No. Dad and Mom were pretty strict disciplinarians and kept me and my sister both in line pretty good. We didn't create a whole

lot of problems and certainly not at school because with parents bein' there, even if you weren't in their class, they knew what was goin' on because the other teachers were keepin' 'em informed. So we didn't cause a whole lot of problems, growin' up.

SL: You know, my mom's—my mom would go cut a switch. Did you ever face a switch or . . .

EW: We had a lilac bush right outside [*SL laughs*] the back door, and it was a good provider of a switch. Yeah, and so you tried to stay away from gettin' into trouble where you'd have to go pick a switch on the lilac bush. [*SL laughs*]

[00:36:11] SL: Well, I didn't—that didn't happen very often at our house, either. But it was—it's interesting that that—you know, I'm just assuming that that came from her parents—you know, that . . .

EW: I suspect both sets of parents were—my grandparents were strong disciplinarians and wouldn't be too concerned in usin' a switch or a belt for punishment. Keep you in line.

[00:36:44] SL: I never faced a belt, but I'm glad I never did. [*Laughter*] So it sounds like to me that you were probably responsible for helping around the house.

EW: Always had your chores to do.

SL: Well, tell me—give me your list of chores.

EW: Oh, you know, feedin'—feeding the dogs. We always had a little pasture out back and—with a milk cow or calf or a horse or somethin'—keeping the animals fed and this kind of thing. Keepin' things picked up around the house.

[00:37:25] SL: Did—were you responsible for making your own bed?

EW: Yes.

SL: That's a strong indicator.

EW: Yes.

SL: And what about the dishes?

EW: You know, I don't remember that I was ever responsible for washing the dishes after a meal.

SL: Not even drying them?

EW: No, I don't remember that as bein' an assignment of mine.

[00:37:49] SL: And the heat—primary heat in the house was propane probably and—or did you have a wood-burning stove there or . . .

EW: Actually, in the house I grew up in while we lived at Belleville, we had natural gas, and so it would've been gas heat, but natural gas.

SL: Well, at least you didn't have to chop wood or . . .

EW: That's right.

SL: . . . haul wood or . . .

EW: And we did not have a fireplace or an active fireplace. I think the house that we were in had a fireplace or two, but they were not used.

[00:38:26] SL: Let's describe that house.

EW: It was a big house. It was a rent house—we—in town that we were living in. And two story—had livin' room, dinin' room, kitchen on—and then two bedrooms downstairs. But our—my bedroom was upstairs, as was my sister's. And so . . .

SL: Mom and Dad were down.

EW: Mom and Dad were downstairs.

[00:38:53] SL: And you all had indoor plumbing.

EW: We did. We did.

SL: That's a great luxury.

EW: Yes.

SL: And then I know you had a back porch.

EW: We did.

SL: Did you have a front porch?

EW: We had a front porch with—it was a big front porch with a porch swing, so there was a lot of time spent out on the porch with—you know, on the porch swing. But I remember also on the back porch it was screened in, and so there was some time spent out

there as well. We always had a garden. Dad had a—always had a pretty good-size garden and tomatoes and peas and okra and corn.

SL: In—were—did you work that garden at all?

EW: Yeah, I had—I spent my time out tilling and hoeing and picking.

SL: Yeah. What—maybe—I don't know what—was it bigger than a quarter acre or smaller than . . .

EW: Probably about a quarter acre. And Dad usually had a horse around. In the early years he'd till the garden with the horse.

SL: And a plow.

EW: Harness it up and plow it and . . .

SL: You remember seeing that?

EW: . . . break it up and—yes. Mh-hmm.

[00:40:16] SL: Did you—did he ever let you drive?

EW: I never did walk behind the plow, other than just to follow him.

SL: You know, Clyde Scott tells a story that he and his dad would take turns having the plow strapped to them. They didn't have a horse or a mule.

EW: Mh-hmm. Wow.

SL: Yep.

EW: They—the—to see how he would [*SL laughs*] use that to help become the athlete that he was.

SL: That he was. That's exactly right.

EW: Yeah.

[00:40:47] SL: So the screened-in porch in back—was it big enough for a bed to be out there?

EW: It would've been, but . . .

SL: You never had a sleeping porch?

EW: . . . we didn't—we didn't. But the house was not air-conditioned, so I would use a window fan to help it at night to get a breeze blowin' through the bedrooms—crack the windows and sleep by the windows to get some fresh air comin' in—cooler air.

SL: And in the winter, did each bedroom have its own heater?

EW: It did.

SL: And it was probably a—one that had legs and sat out on the floor and had a . . .

EW: It—the . . .

SL: . . . a hose, or not a hose but a . . .

EW: The . . .

SL: . . . pipe that it . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . tapped into.

EW: With the valve that . . .

SL: Valve on it.

EW: . . . turned the gas on . . .

SL: And the ceramic heating elements.

EW: Mh-hmm. Right.

[00:41:42] SL: Probably white porcelain . . .

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . I would guess. So you had a pretty big house. Did you—did that kind of invite the neighborhood kids in a way? I mean, were—was your house kind of a gathering spot for the neighborhood?

EW: We—we'd roam from—go from one house to the next, you know, where the kids were growin' up. Actually, right around the corner from us was another family that had kids about our age. And we may spend time at either one of 'em at the time.

[00:42:26] SL: Describe Belleville for me.

EW: Small town, three hundred population, very conservative people, you know. Church-goin'.

SL: Baptist?

EW: Baptist. I grew up in, at that time, in the Baptist Church, and it was a pretty strong upbringin'.

SL: You bet. Sure, it was. So there wasn't any—there wasn't really a town square.

EW: There wasn't. Main Street had a general store, grocery store,

post office early on—barbershop, jeweler.

SL: A jeweler?

EW: Yeah, it did. I do remember in the—in my earlier years there bein' a jeweler there. Now, it did later close down and—as did a lot of the stores there in town.

[00:43:27] SL: So really, it was—probably the general store kind of established the street there, and it serviced the rural . . .

EW: Yes.

SL: . . . community. People would come into town. Do you remember an influx of activity on weekends in town when . . .

EW: No, there wasn't—at that point . . .

SL: It was . . .

EW: . . . it wasn't the place everybody'd come to on Saturday. Maybe Saturday morning people'd come in from out in the countryside. But it was in addition to groceries and other general-store-type items—the feed store in the back and, you know, people'd come and get feed for their livestock and horses, whatever.

[00:44:23] SL: All right, what about—so I assume the church was small, too.

EW: It was. That particular church was probably one of the bigger ones in town. I don't remember—it was certainly—it was quite a

bit bigger. The Baptist church at Belleville was bigger than the church I moved to later on when we moved to the farm—to Havana—the Presbyterian church.

SL: So Batesville was the closest large town.

EW: Actually, Batesville, where I was born, wasn't even close. We left that part out—my mom and dad lived at a small town, Mountain View, whenever I was born. He was a vo-ag teacher there, and both my sister and I were born while they lived in Mountain View. And Batesville was the closest town that had a hospital to Mountain View . . .

SL: Yes.

EW: . . . where we were born. But when I was born, Dad accepted a job at Belleville, which was where he'd grew—closer to where the family was and had grown up. And so he . . .

SL: Yellville?

EW: . . . actually moved to Belleville while I was—Mom and I were still at the hospital when I was born. [*SL laughs*] So I never did live at Mountain View or Batesville, but that's where I was born.

[00:45:45] SL: So did that make Yellville the closest town?

EW: Nah.

SL: I'm—my geography . . .

EW: Yeah, you're . . .

SL: . . . probably confused here.

EW: In—back in Yell County, Belleville and Havana—then Danville was the county seat . . .

SL: Danville, okay.

EW: . . . and wasn't too far from Russellville—forty miles from Russellville was the biggest town.

SL: So you probably didn't have any revivals.

EW: Oh, yes.

SL: Oh, you did?

EW: Oh, yes.

SL: What . . .

[00:46:14] EW: Every summer there would be a revival at the Baptist church. In fact, that's when I found my commitment to Christ was at a revival.

SL: Was it under a tent?

EW: It wasn't. It was in the . . .

SL: It was in the church?

EW: . . . in the church. It was. But . . .

SL: And was it a traveling pastor? Did . . .

EW: It was a pastor that was invited in to conduct a week-long revival there at the church.

[00:46:43] SL: Was it fire-and-brimstone kind of stuff or . . .

EW: Yeah, not just real heavy, but yes. Yeah.

SL: So were your—I—I'm just going to assume that both sets of grandparents were probably pretty strict Baptists.

EW: Actually, no. Neither set of grandparents were Baptists. On my mom's side they were Methodists, and on my dad's side were Presbyterians. And course, that—the Presbyterian is when we moved to the farm at Havana, we moved our membership and went—started goin' to the Presbyterian church there at Havana, so . . .

SL: There's quite a bit of difference between Presbyterian . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and Southern Baptist.

EW: Yes.

SL: And there's—there is some kind of rivalry, and I think Methodists are viewed as a little bit looser than the Southern Baptists were.

[00:47:50] EW: The Methodist was a little bit more laid back than the Baptists, and then the Presbyterians are on further rem—more relaxed probably than the Methodists. So . . .

SL: So who was the driving force as far as your religion in the household? Was it your mom or your dad or . . .

EW: Both my parents were religious folks, and Mom was what—was the reason we went to the Baptist church there at Belleville.

Dad never did join the church. He always maintained his membership at the Presbyterian church down the road at Havana. So when we moved to Havana, it was natural for us to start goin' then to Dad's church. But he would always go to church at the Baptist church. We grew—attended church as a family, my sister, myself, Mom, and Dad. But Dad was—he never became a Baptist and was never baptized in the Baptist church.

[00:49:01] SL: So I'm assuming you never missed—there was Sunday school.

EW: Sunday school and church every Sunday and, in fact, then on Sunday night, you'd go back for Sunday evening service.

SL: What about Wednesdays?

EW: You know, they—we went to Wednesday night service some, but it wasn't as regular as Sunday nights . . .

SL: As you could.

EW: Yeah, mh-hmm.

SL: But Sunday . . .

EW: But Sunday was church . . .

SL: . . . was church day.

EW: Yes.

[00:49:32] SL: And did you have Sunday clothes . . .

EW: Oh, yes. You . . .

SL: . . . that . . .

EW: . . . always wore your . . .

SL: . . . always kept nice?

EW: . . . tie, and even as a young child, I always remember dressin' up to go to church on Sunday.

SL: Couldn't really get out and play in your Sunday clothes.

EW: No, you'd come home after lunch, change . . .

SL: Change.

EW: . . . and then you'd get out and play.

[00:49:55] SL: Did your folks ever have the pastor over for meals?

EW: I don't remember that in the Baptist church so much when we were goin', but later when we moved to Havana and went to the Presbyterian church, we would have—sometimes have the preacher come for Sunday dinner because they didn't live in town. And they drove in from wherever you could find a Presbyterian preacher. And so it was not unusual for the preacher to stay and have Sunday lunch after church with . . .

SL: Sure.

EW: . . . a member—family.

SL: But in Belleville the—there was a resident . . .

EW: The full . . .

SL: . . . pastor.

EW: A resident pastor. Mh-hmm.

SL: Had a parsonage.

EW: Right.

SL: And . . .

EW: Yes.

[00:50:48] SL: So there probably was no dancing . . .

EW: No dancing.

SL: . . . early on.

EW: Now, you know, my folks, I guess, didn't view dancing as that big of a deal, although it just wasn't somethin' that was done in the community . . .

SL: Right.

EW: . . . when I was growin' up. And—but you know, we always had a deck of cards and play solitaire or rummy or gin or somethin' like that . . .

SL: Right.

EW: . . . around. So it . . .

SL: Didn't feel like you were facing damnation for that at the time.

EW: We didn't worry about goin' to hell for playin' solitaire with a [*SL laughs*] deck of cards.

[00:51:28] SL: Well, what about—I'm assuming there was a Bible in

the house.

EW: Always.

SL: And were there family times with the Bible in the house?

EW: Ever mornin' before breakfast, we'd do a family devotional. Dad'd read a scripture and this kind of thing, so . . .

SL: That's strong.

EW: Ever morning.

SL: That's very strong.

EW: Very strong.

SL: So I'm assuming that grace was then said at every meal.

EW: At ever meal.

[00:51:55] SL: And did y'all take turns, or was it always the father that . . .

EW: Usually Dad led the blessing. Now, later on I can remember, you know, my sister or I sayin' the blessing as we got older.

SL: So did your parents have favorite passages that they liked, or was it Old Testament . . .

EW: I don't recall . . .

SL: . . . or New Testament?

EW: Yeah, I don't recall a particular passage or anything like that that Dad would always go back to. But I—he—usually the devotional came out of a monthly devotional book or somethin'

like that. So . . .

[00:52:47] SL: You know, Ewell, this is the first time I've heard of a family having a devotional every morning in the home. That, to me, is very, very impressive that they instilled that, and it was important . . .

EW: It was important . . .

SL: . . . part of your life.

EW: . . . and Dad used that as the basis of building my character in my growin' up, and it's had a big influence in my life.

[00:53:23] SL: Were they active in the church? Did they . . .

EW: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . volunteer a lot and—deacon kind of stuff?

EW: You know, as Dad wasn't being a Baptist, he couldn't be a . . .

SL: A deacon.

EW: . . . deacon in the church.

SL: Right.

EW: But he was there every Sunday and made sure that we were as well. Now, when we moved to Havana, Dad was a—he was an elder in the Presbyterian church—led—helped lead the service and uncle—his brother was always the Sunday school teacher, and they were extremely active. Dad was the treasurer, you know, the entire time I can remember until he passed away, I

guess—the treasurer at the church there at home.

SL: A great source of strength for your upbringing.

EW: Very much so.

[00:54:19] SL: So your mom's parents would always be at church with you or . . .

EW: No, Mom's parents were—Mom's parents went to the Methodist church.

SL: Oh, that's right. Okay.

EW: So . . .

SL: And there was a Methodist church . . .

EW: And they lived right across the street from the Methodist church.

SL: I see. Okay.

EW: And now, by the time I can remember, Grandpa Martin had had a stroke and wasn't able to—the church had a long set of stairs goin' up to it, and he wasn't able to climb the stairs into the sanctuary of the Methodist church, so my memories aren't of Grandpa Martin goin' to church, but Grandma Martin was always at the church service.

[00:55:06] SL: So did Belleville have a mayor or was there any kind of structure—any administration there at the . . .

EW: Not a strong administrative structure. I don't remember a mayor of the town.

SL: So . . .

EW: I don't—there wasn't a city hall as such, this kind of . . .

SL: So is . . .

EW: . . . thing.

SL: Was there a post office?

EW: There was a post office. It was a post office, a Masonic hall—but I—there wasn't a city hall. No city services, no city sewer, no city garbage service, no fire department.

SL: So really it was—really county was the . . .

EW: County and it was five miles west of Danville, and Danville had the volunteer fire department. So if you had a fire in the community . . .

SL: Danville.

EW: . . . it was Danville always responded to it.

[00:56:08] SL: Do you remember much about Danville? How big it was or . . .

EW: Danville was the cit—you know, that's where the movie theater was, the bigger downtown. Later on that's where you went for grocery shopping as the businesses closed down at Belleville and Havana. So you—you'd go to Danville for all your commerce and trade and banking. And that's the closest bank.

[00:56:36] SL: So did you get all the way through twelfth grade at

Belleville?

EW: At Belleville I went until the eight—through the eighth grade. And then at that point, Dad retired from teaching. Built two chicken houses out on the farm and built a house, and we moved to the farm at Havana. And Mom then moved to start teaching at Havana, and Dad stayed on the farm. And I started goin' to school at Havana.

SL: Well, that's . . .

EW: That was in the—goin' into the ninth grade and my sister moved. She went all the way through the eleventh grade and graduated, then, from Havana, in the twelfth grade.

[00:57:19] SL: Did you like Havana?

EW: Yeah. I mean, it was a—I've always been a very shy person, so the change was not easy for me. I wasn't excited about it. Didn't really want to make—change schools, but after you, you know, broke the ice and got to know the other kids at the new school, it wasn't too bad. I'd—I remember the summer before school started when I was gonna start at Havana—always—only thing we had to do was play baseball in the summer and basketball in the winter. And I remember some of the guys there at Havana comin' and invitin' me to come out and play baseball that summer. And that helped break the ice, and I

started playin' baseball with 'em and got to know 'em, and that made the start of school that year a lot easier.

[00:58:13] SL: A lot easier. So what are the size differences between the two communities?

EW: Very similar. Very similar. Both of 'em about three hundred—somewhere in the neighborhood of three hundred population.

SL: And so how—what's the distance between the two?

EW: Five miles. And I went from bein' a city boy livin' in Belleville [*SL laughs*], a town of three hundred, to movin' out on the farm, which was about two miles outside of town, mile and a half, at Havana, five miles apart.

[00:58:47] SL: Well, we probably need to talk about the house at Havana, out on the farm.

EW: The house at Havana was your typical three-bedroom ranch-style brick—red brick house.

SL: Really?

EW: Yeah. Moved into it in the winter of [19]67, I guess—[19]66, [19]67—January, December—January [19]66, [19]67.

SL: So did it feel more modern and more substantial?

EW: Oh yeah, very—it was modern. You know, it was all electric, had a fireplace that helped supplement the heat. But didn't have natural gas service down on—out on the farm. It was about a

mile away from the closest gas line, so rather than run natural gas service not—have to do the propane-butane. Built an all-electric—and I believe AP&L—I still remember—had some kind of certified all-electric-type house. And . . .

SL: Yep.

EW: . . . that's what we had. Very modern.

[00:59:56] SL: So the farm was about 110 acres?

EW: At the time, the farm was jointly owned by Dad and his brother—a total of probably 250 acres and . . .

SL: Wow.

EW: . . . had—they owned a beef-cattle herd, Angus cattle, and Dad and his brother—they were both vo-ag instructors. Dad was the vo-ag instructor at Belleville, and five miles down the road, Uncle Jeff was the vo-ag instructor there. So the Welch brothers were well known in the community because at that time the vo-ag instructor was the local veterinarian as well. So if someone had a cow get sick or a horse get sick or somethin', they'd call the vo-ag instructor to come out and . . .

SL: Do the doctorin'.

EW: . . . administ—do the doctorin'. There wasn't a local veterinarian, and that was the case throughout the county. Belleville, Danville, Havana, Ola—all your high school vo-ag

instructors were the local vet.

SL: That's interesting. I've never heard that.

[01:01:14] EW: And that is one of the fondest memories I have in my childhood is goin' out with Dad on the calls after school—in the evenin' go out and help somebody doctor their sick animals. And quite honestly, he did a lot of that at his own expense. He'd buy the penicillin and vaccines or whatever, and folks didn't have the money to pay him for it, and it was just kind of part of his duties. If they could pay him for the medicine, they would but if—there wasn't any charged professional fee involved in it. And if he got paid for the cost of the medicine, he was fortunate.

SL: Big heart. So . . .

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay. We've got our first hour in.

EW: Went fast.

[Tape stopped]

[01:02:06] SL: Well, Ewell, you've made it through your first hour, and I want to congratulate you.

EW: It was almost painless.

SL: [*Laughs*] Almost.

EW: Almost.

SL: Well, I hope it doesn't [*EW laughs*]—I hope the pain is . . .

EW: No, no.

SL: . . . continues to subside because you're giving us great stuff. You're giving us stuff that we've never heard of before, and you've given us some fairly intimate details about your life growing up that—and you seem to be getting a little more comfortable talking about it. I hope that's the case 'cause I . . .

EW: It is. It is. It's a . . .

SL: I . . .

EW: I've enjoyed it.

[01:02:39] SL: The intent here is pretty impeccable. We're—we try to do exactly what you want to do. So—we've been—just a brief review—we've just now are startin' to talk about your move, and I believe you were in the eighth grade . . .

EW: Correct.

SL: . . . from Belleville to—and I love sayin' Belleville instead of Belleville or [*laughter*]—it's kind of like Fayetteville. [*Laughs*]

EW: Right.

SL: Fayetteville—to Havana.

EW: Yes.

[01:03:13] SL: And they're towns of equal ilk. Same—about the same size, same sort of communities. But now you're on a farm . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . rather than downtown on Main Street.

EW: That's correct.

SL: And that, of course, to me means a different lifestyle, even though you're only a few miles out. And even though you've experienced—you're familiar with some of the farm life 'cause they're both rural communities. But now you're actually out there on 250 acres.

EW: It was different because—I was given—by that time, bein' a teenager, up old enough to do to work, more work, and this kind of thing—I had more to find work to—myself to do. More chores, feeding the cattle, helpin' dad—the chicken houses and this kind of thing. So at that point it really helped build that work ethic in me that I've relied on throughout my lifetime.

[01:04:28] SL: Did your hours change? Did you wake earlier now?

EW: You know, Dad wasn't a slave driver from the standpoint of "You gotta get out and do—you do chores before breakfast." It wasn't like that. It was—you know, I'd get up, have breakfast. Mom would always have—cook a big breakfast for us and get ready for school, go to school, and then come home and take care of the feeding hay in the wintertime—the cows and doin' whatever needed to be done on the farm.

[01:05:06] SL: Now, is your mom still teaching over in Belleville, or is she . . .

EW: Oh, she continued to teach until she retired about twenty years ago at age—around sixty-five is when she retired. And course, Dad passed away about five years ago, so he's no longer living. But Mom is still living. She did move, when Dad passed away, off the farm. My sister at that time was livin' in Springdale, still is, and so Mom's up in Northwest Arkansas close to my sister now.

[01:05:43] SL: But when the family moved to Havana, did both your mom and dad teach in Havana?

EW: Actually, we moved to the farm when Dad retired from teaching.

SL: Oh, that's right.

EW: He retired early. He took an early retirement. He was able to count his military years toward his teacher retirement, and so he actually retired when he was probably before he was fifty or right around fifty. I'm not sure exactly how old he was, but he had enough years in that he qualified for his teacher retirement and built two chicken houses. They were commercial egg houses, which were about all that you could do as one person. And he had that and his cows and loved bein' on the farm. That's really what he wanted to do.

[01:06:36] SL: And did your mom teach at Havana?

EW: Yes, when we moved on the farm, she did change from Belleville to Havana and really started, at that point, started teachin' English in high school and then later became the librarian and—but she taught up until she was retirement age.

SL: So she continued to be your teacher as you . . .

EW: She . . .

SL: . . . went from . . .

EW: She did.

SL: . . . class—grade . . .

EW: Uh-huh. Yes.

SL: . . . to grade.

EW: I had her two or three more years after I—in high school.

[01:07:12] SL: I want to get back to your dad just for a little bit . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . because we're always very respectful of veterans, and I can't tell you how many times we've heard how a father never really talked about . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . his war experiences. And then the—there's some that—there's one story where the father would sit the children down, and he would tell the story once, and then it was never talked

about again. And usually it was painful for the veteran. War is not a pleasant thing.

EW: Right.

SL: And so do you know what your father's—what your father did in the war? What . . .

EW: Yeah, he was in an artillery unit, and they ended up bein' stationed in the Aleutian Islands in Alaska in his—that particular unit. And I think if memory serves me correct, that area up there was the only part of the United States . . .

SL: United States.

EW: . . . that actually ever saw . . .

SL: Action.

EW: . . . battle. Action. Mh-hmm. But he didn't talk about it a whole lot, and it wasn't action that, you know, like the Normandy or the—out in the Pacific. But he never did talk about it a whole lot.

[01:08:45] SL: So—but it was—Japan did . . .

EW: They did.

SL: . . . approach those islands at one point.

EW: Yeah.

[01:08:57] SL: So do you know if his unit ever took on fire?

EW: I don't know. He never did . . .

SL: You don't know.

EW: Like I say, he never did talk about it out—I kind of think he probably was involved in a little bit of that, but I don't know for a fact.

SL: And it was army. It was not . . .

EW: Yes.

SL: Yeah. So he didn't ever talk about his training or boot camp or . . .

EW: No.

SL: . . . how the military was run at the time? Okay. Well, I just wanted to give you . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . that opportunity because we have the greatest respect for . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . the greatest generation.

EW: Right. The . . .

SL: And that's part of what makes the greatest generation is that they served like that, and really, there was a spirit back then of wanting to serve.

EW: Right. Right.

[01:09:42] SL: There was commitment that—it's changed a bit now

or is least not as prevalent. So—well, that's good. I—you know, it sounds like he was in a kind of a low-impact zone where, you know . . .

EW: It—it . . .

SL: . . . maybe the weather was as much a challenge as anything.

EW: Right.

[01:10:07] SL: Did he ever talk about being in Alaska and being that far north or . . .

EW: Nothin' other than just, you know, the mention that it was cold up there and the conditions weren't that great. But not a whole lot. He did talk about—after he came back, part of his job as the vo-ag instructor—vocational education was to help train military veterans, war veterans, and doin' veteran classes afterwards and this kind of thing. And I'm not even sure exactly what all that involved, but apparently there were some kind of government-sponsored programs for—to provide the training for veterans after they returned from the war.

SL: Well, of course, there's the GI Bill . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . which was—some would argue it was one of the most successful . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . maybe the most successful government program ever instituted.

EW: And I think that's what Dad finished up his degree on, was on the GI Bill.

SL: It's only right.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And fortunately most took advantage of it and got great education and became leaders, you know, in their communities, so that's—you know, and it sounds like to me that your mom and dad were leaders in their communities.

EW: They were. They were always . . .

SL: That they were highly respected . . .

EW: . . . very engaged in community activities. We talked about the church but, you know, the local school board—Dad served on the school board and local civic group—helped get a civic group goin' that has meant a lot to that community over the years and anything to help improve the quality of life in the local community.

[01:12:01] SL: Trey mentioned that we ought to get back to your veterinary runs with the—your father, the vo-ag teacher, that . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . became kind of the default veterinarian, and it was kind of like that for vo-ag teachers . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . in rural communities. So do you remember the first time you went out with him?

EW: I don't remember the first time. I just—I remember various situations, and you know, it was not unusual to go out and not only doctor the animals but have to chase 'em down, help get 'em up and corralled in order to be able to doctor 'em. And course, I'm—bein' a young boy, always helped with that and herding the animals up and gettin' 'em cornered and gettin' 'em roped or penned and whatever in order to be able to doctor 'em.

[01:12:59] SL: Was it—was there any moment where you felt like you may have been in danger? I mean, these . . .

EW: No.

SL: I mean, these are pretty big animals.

EW: Yeah, but . . .

SL: You wonder . . .

EW: Nah, I grew up around livestock, and so that never was that big of an issue. But you know, it really—it didn't matter what time of day or night. If a neighbor had a cow that was tryin' to calve and havin' trouble in the middle of the night, it was not unusual

for the phone to ring, and . . .

SL: Off you'd go.

EW: . . . off you'd go. Yeah.

[01:13:32] SL: What about—did both the communities have resident medical doctors?

EW: No. The closest doctor was in Danville, which was—from Belleville, five miles—ten miles from Havana. So there wasn't—during while I was growin' up, any kind of medical doctor in either Belleville or Havana.

SL: Did your dad ever get any calls to wrap somebody up or . . .

EW: I don't . . .

SL: . . . sew anybody up.

EW: . . . ever remember that bein' the case. If he did, he never talked about that.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's probably crossin' the . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . line a little bit, but you know, things happen.

EW: Yeah.

SL: You do the best that you can do when it has to be done.

EW: That's right.

[01:14:24] SL: So you got this really nice brick ranch house.

EW: Right.

SL: Has all the modern amenities to it. Are you still on a party line?

EW: We were at that time still on a party line in a little bit less populated area, so there wasn't quite as many folks on the party line, but three or four families. Yeah. But you know, for the most part, by the mid-[19]60s to late [19]60s, your amenities were a little bit more modern and life was a little easier.

[01:15:05] SL: You know, we ought to talk a little bit about the nature of a party line. You know, they're—most kids these days probably [*EW laughs*] don't have any idea what that is or . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . had never experienced it or known many people that had ever experienced it. Now, it's my understanding that you'd pick up the phone, and you'd dial the operator, and she would connect you or . . .

EW: By the time I was growin' up, you, even on a party line, you could direct dial to a local number. You didn't have to go through an operator. Now, if you were placing a long-distance call, you'd have to dial the operator to get the long-distance call placed. But if you were dialin' a local exchange, you could dial direct.

SL: Probably no more than five numbers.

EW: That is correct. Five numbers. [*SL laughs*] You had the last

number of the prefix and then the other four numbers, I think.

[01:16:02] SL: Yeah. And so there would be times when you'd pick up the phone and someone else would be on it.

EW: Yes.

SL: And you'd probably know who it was.

EW: Yes.

SL: 'Cause it was a small community.

EW: And you know, I still remember—probably not a lot different than it is today—but your—the old ladies that didn't have much more to do than sit around talkin' to each other on the phone, they may tie the phone up most of the day. And if you really had an emergency where you had to make—needed to make a phone call, you'd have to ask, "Could I use the phone for a while?" And [*laughter*]—in order to get 'em off.

[01:16:43] SL: You know, so really, it was just kind of a automatic conference call if they wanted to.

EW: If you wanted to, it could.

SL: Anybody could pick up and . . .

EW: That's correct.

SL: . . . listen to any call.

EW: Mh-hmm. And in fact . . .

SL: You kind of would know if someone had picked up on your call.

EW: Only if you could hear some—somethin' in the background on one of the other extensions. But it was—it was just like in your house, where you've got three or four phones on the same line. If you discreetly picked the receiver up, you were in a position to listen in on someone else's phone call.

SL: So everyone's business was everyone's business, wasn't it?

EW: Mh-hmm. No secrets. [*Laughter*]

[01:17:26] SL: So do you remember any—on this goin' out with your dad takin' care of the animals—do you remember—is there any one particular memory that sticks in your mind, or did you go out on those late-night things with him?

EW: Not in-the-middle-of-the-night-type things, but I did go out with him a few times after dark if it—before bedtime or this kind of thing and certainly in the summertime while school wasn't goin' on during the day, all day, you know, I'd spend half a day or so with him goin' different places, and that gave us a lot of quality time together and time to bond and for me to grow up really knowin' my dad, and it was time well spent.

[01:18:26] SL: Your dad had a pickup truck.

EW: A pickup. That's all . . .

SL: And it was really . . .

EW: . . . we had in the ear . . .

SL: . . . the family vehicle, was the pickup truck.

EW: That—up until the—probably the mid-[19]60s, the only vehicle the family had was a pickup truck.

SL: So really, once you were old enough to drive, had y'all gotten another car?

EW: We had, and I did learn to drive on the family car, and actually I learned to drive on the pickup truck down on the farm. And—but by the time I got my driver's license we did have a family car, and I was—they allowed me to use it on weekends and to use for dates and this kind of thing.

[01:19:11] SL: Did both vehicles have clutches? Were they manual transmissions?

EW: The first family car we had was a manual transmission, and course, the truck always was.

SL: Was it on the column?

EW: On the column. Yes.

SL: Three speed.

EW: Mh-hmm. Yeah. So I learned to drive with a standard shift and, gosh, was quite a bit older before we got a car with an automatic transmission.

[01:19:36] SL: Yeah. Well, let's talk a little bit about—you know, I think we can almost—I don't know—maybe there is a big

difference in your friendships that you grew up with—the kids around you. You know, peer pressure is always somethin' that every child goes through. Was there a qualitative difference at all between Belleville and Havana? Was it basically the communities were enough alike where the situations were . . .

EW: They're very similar. Situations were pretty much the same. The only difference is as, you know, the young people I knew at Havana was—they were teenagers and up and, course, you—the same—the challenges that age presents but really not—I don't believe the peer-pressure issue was anything close to what it is today, where your kids have so much pressures put on 'em. Everybody knew everybody where I grew up, so there wasn't any sneakin' around to speak of—any secrets. Somebody was always—had an eye on you and knew what was goin' on.

[01:21:01] SL: Did the—and this is not uncommon—did the neighbors and the friends of the family—did they have disciplinary privileges with the children?

EW: Pretty much, yeah. We had—I grew up with a really close family, like a second set of parents right around the corner, and they had two children that were about our age, and certainly they had full disciplinary authority and treated you just like one of their own. And if you were at their house, they had—you did

what—they ruled the roost, and you did what they instructed you to do.

SL: It was "Yes, sir" . . .

EW: Just like your own parents did.

SL: . . . and "Yes, ma'am," wasn't it?

EW: Yes. Very much so.

SL: And . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . if—I guess if you did something that you shouldn't be—been doin', your parents probably knew about it by the time you got home.

EW: That's—was always the case in my youth, growin' up, because the community—the schoolteachers knew Mom and Dad, and even if Mom wasn't one of my teachers, they all knew me. All the teachers knew me and my parents, and you couldn't get away with anything, so . . .

[01:22:22] SL: Well, let me ask you this. Did you enjoy school? Did you like . . .

EW: Yeah, I . . .

SL: . . . goin' to school?

EW: I did. I—my parents always stressed the importance of an education, and they insisted that I take care of business with

regards to studies and . . .

SL: Homework.

EW: . . . homework and gettin' it done. And because of that, I always maintained good grades, As and Bs, and just—it never was an issue in our family. Education was just somethin' you took care of.

[01:22:57] SL: And did you get the—did your parents help you with your homework at home?

EW: Oh yeah. Mh-hmm. Yes. If I had a problem, they would always be there to help so—very engaged in school activities. Always in attendance at ball games, class functions, whatever because edu—school—with them being teachers, too, they were just—that was part of everyday life. And they were just always engaged in all aspects of community and education.

[01:23:37] SL: So they loved it, didn't they?

EW: Yes.

SL: They loved being teachers.

EW: Yes, they did. They loved seein' the outcome and the kids grow up and mature and what they became. And because of that, as their students went on to other things in life they—we always were havin' company from somebody that was a former student. And that's always been the case and throughout my whole life,

and you know, people still come see Mom even at eighty-plus years old that she had in school. Taught . . .

SL: She made a difference.

EW: Yeah.

[01:24:16] SL: Made a difference for them. You mentioned games—school—and I'm considering—I'm thinking team sports here.

EW: Right.

SL: So did the—each school have a baseball team or a basketball team or was . . .

EW: Yes.

SL: . . . baseball just in the summer?

EW: Baseball was in the summer, and basketball was in the winter, during the school year. And . . .

SL: Probably not enough students for a football team.

EW: No football. But we always had active sports, and that was big in the community. I—you know, it was when people turned out and went to the basketball games whenever school year was goin' on. And in the summertime, always a big crowd at the baseball games. And I grew up involved in team sports, and it was important in our lives, and I enjoyed sports. Wasn't the best at it, but I—at—bein' from a small town, if you were interested you got to play because you didn't . . .

SL: They needed you . . .

EW: They needed you.

SL: . . . to fill the position.

EW: Yeah.

[01:25:26] SL: What position did you play in baseball?

EW: In baseball I played a little bit of everything—shortstop . . .

SL: That's a hot . . .

EW: Did . . .

SL: . . . position.

EW: Did—we had two levels in baseball. You had the Little League and then the Pony League, which were your older ones and we never all—never had enough kids on—at Pony League so the better players on Little League team always played in the outfield in—for Pony League and all—I played Pony League. I'd play two games a night in the summertime [*SL laughs*] because I played a Little League game and then play in the—with the big kids. So—but shortstop, outfield—when I was playin'—when I was a Little League age playin' for the Pony League, I'd play in the outfield. Did a little pitching. I enjoyed catching. I liked to . . .

SL: That was my favorite position . . .

EW: . . . catchin' position.

SL: . . . was catcher.

EW: Yeah.

[01:26:25] SL: I think it was 'cause you got to wear all that stuff.

EW: Yeah, and you were in on every play.

SL: Yeah.

EW: You know.

SL: Every play.

EW: It—you were right in the middle of things. And basketball—I played basketball in junior high and high school. I was very active.

[01:26:43] SL: Did the teams travel to other . . .

EW: We did.

SL: . . . schools?

EW: We did.

SL: And . . .

EW: In basketball, we played all throughout the River Valley area, and it was not unusual for a two-hour bus ride goin' to a basketball game and then gettin' home late at night and gettin' up and goin' to school the next day.

[01:27:08] SL: What about—were there other organizations—you know, a small town like that, I don't—would you have, like, 4-H or . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . any of the . . .

EW: I never was just real involved in 4-H. I participated in 4-H a little bit at Havana primarily because there was a couple of girls involved in 4-H that I . . .

SL: Okay, we'll get to . . .

EW: . . . liked, but . . .

SL: . . . girls here in a little while. [*Laughs*]

EW: Really, extracurricular activities besides the athletics—FFA. FFA was a big program in high school, and course, that was always led by your vo-ag instructor. And Dad bein' vo-ag instructor, I grew up around FFA. And my uncle was the same way. He was my vo-ag instructor in high school, and we participated in all the FFA activities. Parliamentary procedure, particularly at Havana, was a big activity—bein' on the parliamentary procedure team, and we were very successful at it. We—he had a system figured out that was very good, and you know, you'd go to regional contests and then state. And Havana won several state contests at FFA—or at parliamentary procedure and I enjoyed bein' a part of that, and it's proven to be very helpful to me in my career where I am. We do lots of meetings, and parliamentary procedure is important in that, and so the basis I got in high

school and FFA in parliamentary procedure has been a benefit to me through my whole life.

[01:28:52] SL: You didn't see that comin' back then, though, did you?

EW: Didn't have a clue about it.

SL: But you enjoyed it.

EW: I did because you were a part of somethin'. You were a part of—and the other young men your age wanted to be a part of it as well, so it was something to be a part of, just like team athletics were.

[01:29:20] SL: Well, are there any of those folks that you grew up with—did they—do you still stay in touch with them? Have you lost contact with all the . . .

EW: I still know where most . . .

SL: I mean, I know there's not many.

EW: Right, right.

SL: But . . .

EW: Yeah, there was sixteen in my graduating class in high school, so it's not a whole lot to keep up with, but I know where most of 'em are and I—I've seen 'em from time to time. We don't talk. We don't have class reunions, so we don't . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . get back together. But I know where most of my high school classmates are and what's happened to 'em.

[01:30:03] SL: Okay, let's see now. Now, your sister is older than you. Is that . . .

EW: That's correct.

SL: That's correct. And I—I'm assuming she was active in . . .

EW: In all the same kind of things.

SL: Same stuff.

EW: Basketball player. Girls' basketball in high school. Active in—not FFA, but FHA—future homemakers programs and all your other school activities that were a part of life then.

[01:30:35] SL: Tell me what you guys did for, like, Halloween. What did you do on Halloween?

EW: Well, you know, when we lived in town, we'd go trick or treating in the neighborhood. After we grew up to—and after we moved to the farm . . .

SL: You were probably . . .

EW: That's . . .

SL: . . . a little bit old to be doing . . .

EW: . . . too old to go trick or treating.

SL: . . . trick or treating.

EW: But if there were parties, Halloween parties, Mom and Dad didn't

much allow gettin' in mischief that would go on related to Halloween, so I wasn't too much into—wasn't—I didn't go [*SL laughs*] to many Halloween parties after I was older where you get in and go raise heck around town and this kind of thing and get . . .

SL: Soap a car or . . .

EW: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . paper a yard or . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . any of that kind of stuff.

EW: They kept a pretty close . . .

SL: Tight rein.

EW: . . . rein on . . .

[01:31:37] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, okay, let's talk a little bit about—you would travel—Danville, I guess, was where the nearest theater was.

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you remember the first movie you got to go see?

EW: It was probably—it may have been *Gone with the Wind*. I'm not sure.

SL: Really?

EW: Not sure about that one.

SL: That's an epic . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . first time out.

EW: Yeah. Didn't spend a whole lot of time goin' to the theater up until I was old enough to go on my own date and this kind of thing. So I didn't go to many movies while I was young. It wasn't anything that—one, it was costly, and I didn't spend a lot of money on entertainment, so we just didn't do that kind of thing . . .

SL: Well, now . . .

EW: . . . very much.

[01:32:38] SL: You know, both parents working and your dad able to take early retirement and having a farm, I would assume that y'all had a—relatively speaking at the time—y'all had a pretty good income coming in.

EW: The key to that is relatively speaking. Teacher salaries were not too great, but compared to the wages of a lot of people in rural areas like we were in, we were probably better off than most. But you didn't waste money. You—Mom and Dad counted their pennies, and they provided for us very well, but we weren't affluent by any means.

[01:33:30] SL: My parents were very conservative, too, and I know

that it's the Depression that . . .

EW: That—yeah.

SL: . . . forged that . . .

EW: That's right.

SL: . . . in America . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . in that generation. They would not take risks.

EW: Right.

SL: They'd been bitten before, and they'd . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . seen others that . . .

EW: Others that . . .

SL: . . . had been bitten before and . . .

EW: . . . had gone through life without and they just . . .

[01:33:51] SL: But at the same time, even though you may not have been wealthy and maybe even you were poor, you didn't really suffer.

EW: We didn't suffer. We always had food on the table.

SL: There you go.

EW: We had clothes on the back, you know. I remember gettin' ready for the new school year. We'd come to Little Rock and usually as a part of the state ff—of state vo-ag teachers'

convention, they'd have it at the Marion Hotel, and we'd come down and spend a couple of nights at the Marion Hotel . . .

SL: Whoa, that's big doin's.

EW: . . . Mom would take us out to do our school shoppin'. We'd get two pair of new jeans and a couple of new shirts and a pair of shoes, and we were set . . .

SL: Set.

EW: . . . for the school year.

[01:34:33] SL: Yeah. I remember those trips at the beginning of school.

EW: Yeah.

SL: I mean—and it still goes on.

EW: It does.

SL: It's the same thing now.

EW: Yeah.

SL: It's a different way of doing it. It's a much different kind of shopping, but it's still basically the same. New clothes.

[01:34:50] EW: You had—but you had to come to Little Rock to really do your clothing shopping. Sources close to home—there wasn't many clothing stores around home. You could go to Russellville and find it, but we'd usually come to Little Rock, and that's when Main Street in Little Rock was still boomin', and you had Blass

and Penney's and Pfeifer's and Sears, and you had the world at your hands and, you know, lots of choices.

[01:35:20] SL: Boy, it's a big town, wasn't it?

EW: Big town. Yeah.

SL: And y'all drove.

EW: We would.

SL: You know, lots of folks used to jump on a train to come to Little Rock.

EW: I never rode on a train to—as a necessary means of transportation.

SL: Yeah, we're probably a little bit later . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . generation-wise.

EW: Yeah.

SL: That . . .

[01:35:43] EW: I still remember—we—there was—Rock Island rail lines came right along Highway 10 up through where I grew up, and you know, the passenger train would come through. But then they had the Dinky that was a little single thing that delivered the mail. And I still remember that, and it was a passenger vehicle, but I never really rode the train.

[01:36:15] SL: So I guess we ought to talk about—did you really

not—you probably didn't really start dating or any of that until late in high school or . . .

EW: Until I was able to drive and got my driver's license and this kind of thing, so.

SL: You know, small communities like that, everybody knows everybody.

EW: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: [*Laughs*] Everybody knows about every minute that—who's spending time with who, who's got a crush on who, and all that stuff.

EW: Yeah.

SL: I mean, it's . . .

[01:36:50] EW: But you know, the emotional—the pressures and this kind of thing back then are the same as kids today have of boyfriend-girlfriend-type thing and some—"Does she like me or does she not?"

SL: Right.

EW: And all that. I never did have a real steady girlfriend until probably a short term in my senior year and—but I always had a girlfriend. And it may be somebody in that community or someone at a neighboring community.

[01:37:40] SL: Well, I mean, what would a typical date be? I mean,

what—you know, one thing we've forgotten to talk about are horses. Didn't your family also have a horse or two or . . .

EW: We did. I always had a horse when I was growin' up, and I always enjoyed riding horses. And I took a lot of—that's one thing—Dad generally had a mare that he'd try to raise a colt or foal from every couple of years. And he gave me a horse. He gave my sister her own horse, and we always had two or three other horses around that he raised. And we'd break 'em ourselves, and it was a lot of—lot to learn there on takin' care of the animals and this kind of thing. But enjoyed riding the horses.

[01:38:35] SL: Well, did the rest of the kids in the community, generally speaking . . .

EW: Not necessarily.

SL: Really?

EW: Not necessarily. There were a few, and you know, we'd run together and ride together. But because we always had two or three horses, it was not unusual for somebody to come over, and we'd saddle up and ride our horses out in the pasture or around the community.

[01:39:03] SL: So it wasn't that uncommon to see a horse downtown and . . .

EW: No, no. It wasn't the Wild West by any means . . .

SL: Right.

EW: . . . but I enjoyed riding horses out in the countryside and around. I did it quite a bit.

[01:39:25] SL: Okay, we probably ought to talk a little bit about—I want to stick with the small towns. I—I'm going to assume there was zero African American community anywhere near you. Is that true?

EW: Actually, no. Belleville did not have, in the school district, did not have any African American, but there was an African American community close to Havana, and once consolidation took place in the probably early [19]60s, there were African Americans. It was a consolidated school and wasn't a large population, but I didn't have any African Americans in my class in high school. But in the class before me and ahead of me, there were. And I had good friends that were African Americans.

[01:40:18] SL: Did you ever get a sense of segregation or . . .

EW: Oh, yeah. I was—I do remember because there were—there was the community in the area. The kids loadin' up on the bus and bein'—the closest African American school, high school, was Morrilton. And you know, that was an hour bus ride . . .

SL: Wow.

EW: . . . to go to.

SL: Wow. And I'm going to guess that that community was mostly a sharecropping kind of community and . . .

EW: Yeah, very economically depressed. And you know, I still remember in the area, the signs in the restaurants about . . .

SL: Whites only.

EW: African—yes.

SL: Colored fountain here.

EW: Colored fountain or Blacks Served in the Back and this kind of thing. It was part of the life in the late [19]50s and early [19]60s in that area. And there wasn't a big—as you—as I said earlier, it wasn't a big African American population, but there were a pop—there was a population of African Americans in Danville and also in Havana. So it was—the segregation was visible, and you knew it was there.

[01:41:48] SL: But—did you sense any animosity?

EW: No, and that's the difference. And in the small town everybody knew their role. There wasn't any tense feelings or anything. People got along and you just—you knew what you would—could do and couldn't do and everybody got along with it. And that didn't make it right. That didn't make it right that folks were treated that way, but that's just way life was back then.

[01:42:27] SL: Was there ever any—did you ever experience any kind of—any kind of animosity expressed by anyone in the community toward the African American folks? I mean—or I know the language was . . .

EW: Right, yeah.

SL: . . . not good.

EW: Right.

SL: But that's the way people were brought up, and that's the way they referred . . .

[01:42:50] EW: You know, probably the only animosity I remember was in the class behind me, there were two African American boys as a part of that class, and they were involved in sports and, you know, the cruelty of teenagers and how they can be—there was a time or two in high school when they'd get fed up with it and bein' teased or harassed and let their emotions get—take over and, you know, you'd have a typical high school fist fight or somethin' that'd break out as a result of it. But for the most part, everybody got along.

[01:43:40] SL: Well, let's talk about fighting just a little bit in general. I mean—and I've heard stories where kids—and it's not a Black and white thing . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . just among whites, that kids would fight. And that when the fight was over, they'd be friends again.

EW: Right.

SL: It was a—it was just a matter of course. And in this respect and the incidents you're talking about, by that time, civil rights was actually coming to the forefront.

EW: Right.

SL: And so there were—there was justification—that acknowledgement that, "You know what? This is not right."

EW: Right.

SL: And—because these people are saying so or the president is saying so or . . .

EW: That was in the late [19]60s, so that was—it was at the time when you were havin' the marches and all that goin' on. And the African American community was beginning to claim their rights and their place in society. And so that was pretty commonplace, but we didn't have that kind—that level of issues goin' on in our community.

[01:44:50] SL: I was gonna say something about—oh, team sports. So when the consolidation happened and all—and now you had some African Americans on the team, were there communities that would not play Havana or Belleville because there were

African Americans on the team?

EW: Not that I'm aware of. Now, if that was goin' on, that was done, you know . . .

SL: After your . . .

EW: . . . at the scheduling level or this kind of thing. I don't—I'm not aware of, you know, the team walkin' into a gym and issues being there because we had a couple of players that were African Americans on our team.

[01:45:33] SL: We have interviewed folks where they're saying that certain towns, certain teams, would not play if the opposing team had an African American on the team or that there were special accommodations for teams. If they had African American players on their teams, they had to stay in one place and . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . maybe even locked up in the evening, you know, so there wouldn't be anybody out walkin' around or—and also the restaurants. The—even on a team bus or team caravan, there were some restaurants that would not . . .

EW: That just . . .

SL: . . . let the Blacks come in.

EW: That wasn't a part of my heritage. That wasn't—didn't exist there. Now, while I was in high school and my junior year, I

guess, we had a pretty successful basketball team, and we made it to the state tournament. And as a reward for that, the community rallied together and paid for us to come down. We didn't make it very far in the tournament, but they paid us—paid for us to come down, spend the night in Little Rock, and attend the finals of the state tournament that we'd played in. And so we had the lodging issue of the whites and the African Americans. And I can remember in—my parents volunteering me to share a room with the African Americans that were on the team because they needed somebody to, and that was just the right thing to do for—from my parents' perspective. And so we did it.

SL: That's very good. That's—you know, they were enlightened.

EW: Yeah.

[01:47:26] SL: Well, if you think of—you know, if you think of anything else regarding race and segregation . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and desegregation and any other personal experiences that you had or may have affected those around you, why, you can bring it back up. But it's one of those things that happened in the United States—happened everywhere and in some degree in every community.

EW: Yeah.

SL: It affected 'em, and it was a big deal. And it had to be dealt with, and it's still being dealt with today.

EW: It is. We still haven't gotten over all of it.

[01:48:03] SL: Sure haven't. Well—so you had a pretty good basketball team. What league, I mean, what level was it—1A . . .

EW: We were the . . .

SL: . . . 2B or . . .

EW: . . . lowest. Yeah, it was B. I think it was class B at that time, and you know, we had—we didn't have football, so the lowest classification was B, and we'd play other schools about the same size as us.

[01:48:36] SL: Let's talk a little bit about football . . .

EW: 'Kay.

SL: . . . in Arkansas. I'm sure ya'll had footballs.

EW: Danville had football—had a football team and so, you know, the communities in the county that didn't have football generally were supportive of Danville and was—they always had a pretty good football team. And when I was growin' up in high school—you know, once I was able to drive, I'd go Friday night. I'd go to the football game and watch Danville play football. And . . .

SL: Good players came out of Danville.

EW: They did and they always—they've won a bunch of state championships, and they're very successful. So football is part of the culture in Arkansas. And growin' up, Dad bein' alumni of the University of Arkansas, Razorback football on Saturday nights—listenin' to the Razorbacks play, was always important. And really, that's one of the things that—I always wanted to go to the University of Arkansas, and that was the connection that I had was watchin' or listenin' to the Razorbacks play football.

[01:49:53] SL: In Belleville and Havana, surely you tossed the football around.

EW: Oh yeah, yeah.

SL: I mean—and you had . . .

EW: Sandlot-type football.

SL: . . . the games among the kids.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And you just didn't have enough for a team to have a school team.

EW: Yeah, you know, that was—we'd always have a little pickup football game—divide sides in the neighborhood or on Sunday afternoon go up to the school ground and play football—either tag or, you know, back then you'd play tackle football . . .

SL: You bet.

EW: . . . without the pads or anything but [*SL laughs*] still—yes.

[01:50:28] SL: So do you remember any favorite players that you liked to listen about or any—or did you—I'm sure—you probably read the sports pages too, I would assume.

EW: Did, and you know, the one that I remember that was—I looked to was Lance Alworth.

SL: Yeah, you bet.

EW: You know, that was . . .

SL: What an athlete.

EW: Yes, incredible. That's the one that I really remember while I was growin' up, but you know, you had the [19]64 Razorback national champion team that—I would've been in my early teens, maybe. I'd been eleven, I guess, in [19]64, so that was big time.

[01:51:21] SL: You know, living in Fayetteville, I got to meet a lot of players, and I had older brothers that were contemporaries of Lance Alworth and those teams. And they used to come up to my parents' house where I was living, and . . .

EW: Wow.

SL: . . . Dad would cook chicken, barbecue chicken, and they'd—they would eat with us and . . .

EW: That . . .

SL: . . . we—I can tell you. It changed my life. [*Laughter*]

EW: Yeah, that was big time.

SL: It was big time, and I can tell you the first time I ever met Lance Alworth, he was—had his feet under our dining table. And he looked—he didn't look real. I mean [*EW laughs*], it was almost like he was airbrushed. There was just a glow about him that . . .

EW: Huh.

SL: . . . was just—I'd never experienced anything like that.

EW: Yeah.

[01:52:14] SL: Do you remember a player named Dick Cunningham? He was a . . .

EW: I don't.

SL: He was a big lineman, and you know, the card table that we have set up your bedroom in there?

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: Put him in a chair—he could not get his thighs under that card table . . .

EW: Wow.

SL: . . . they were so big. I mean, it was . . .

EW: Wow.

SL: These were specimens . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know. And it was really hard-hitting, hard-playing football and it—there's no question Razorback football was a player in the state.

EW: Yeah, the whole state tracked and followed Razorback football. And like I say, I never wanted to go to college anywhere else because . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Of course.

EW: . . . of the Razorbacks. Even though Arkansas Tech was just down the road and they had pretty successful football teams themselves over the years, but it was always, "I want to be a Razorback."

SL: That still happens, too.

EW: Yeah.

[01:53:23] SL: It's amazing. Well, I'm just wondering—A and B student all the way through high school.

EW: Cosalutatorian of the class . . .

SL: Congratulations.

EW: . . . out of sixteen.

SL: That's big stuff. And so you ended up going to the University of Arkansas. And did you go immediately after . . .

EW: Yes.

SL: . . . high school?

EW: Right out of high school.

SL: And did—course, back then tuition was not a huge burden . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . but at the same time, I know I got Pell grants and stuff like that. Did . . .

EW: My parents—and that's another very fortunate thing that I had my parents help me through my college, and I didn't come out of college with any debt. I did get a scholarship one year, but I'm not sure that—one semester—but I—we're talkin' $200 a semester for tuition, if I remember right. [*SL laughs*] And then, course, your room and board back then, it was—for the time, it was expensive, but Mom and Dad always helped me out, and so I didn't worry about comin' out of college with debt.

[01:54:46] SL: So let's see, what time did you—what year did you come to Fayetteville?

EW: I started in the fall of 1971 and lived in the dorm—Yocum. And . . .

SL: Yocum? Yeah.

EW: And it was—for a country boy, it was . . .

SL: It was wide open wasn't it?

EW: . . . wide open. Yeah, yeah. I was fortunate in that my sister was up there and had been for two or three years. In fact, she was already married at the time I started. And her husband was—that was durin' the Vietnam War time, and he had gotten—joined National Guard and had gone off for Guard training. But she was living up there, and she was able to help me through the registration process my first—that—when I came up for orientation and get registered and everything before classes started. And I . . .

SL: Cards. Little punch cards.

EW: That's right, punch cards.

SL: Men's gym.

EW: Exactly. At the men's gym. That's exactly right. And probably I wouldn't have been able to have made it on my own if she hadn't've been there to help me 'cause I was in a world totally out of anything I had ever experienced before in my life.

[01:56:02] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, do you think that she reined you in and helped you stay focused or . . .

EW: I'm not sure she did that, but she at least [*laughter*]—she at least kept me between the ditches and [*SL laughs*] able to help me maneuver the process and find my classes and everything. For a kid that had gone to high school in a one—you know, all

twelve grades in one buildin' to the University of Arkansas was a—that was a big step.

[01:56:37] SL: You know, Fayetteville had actually grown pretty significantly. I mean, of course, I saw it grow from the time . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . I was first there. But it was a pretty good-size community by [19]71 . . .

EW: I think the . . .

SL: . . . [19]72.

EW: . . . the student enrollment at that time was somewhere between eight and ten thousand, so it was a pretty good size. But it was a long way from Fayetteville to Springdale, but it was a long, empty, undeveloped gap there and . . .

SL: That's right.

EW: And . . .

SL: Two lanes.

EW: Yep, up Highway 71. The mall wasn't there and—'cause I remember makin' that trek, and to go to Rogers was a long trip.

SL: 71 Drive-in Theatre . . .

EW: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

[01:57:26] SL: . . . where Fiesta Square is now. So what about—did you ever pledge a fraternity or any of the Greek stuff?

EW: I did. I was rushed to—there was never any question of what I was goin' into. I alw—from high school, I always wanted to go into some area of agriculture, so agriculture was it. And I was recruited to join AGR before I went to the university, but I didn't want to do the Greek life type thing. I had a schoolmate that was a year older than me that was goin' to the university, and he had pledged in his freshman year and decided it wasn't for him, and he left the fraternity system and was living in Yocum and asked me to be a roommate with him. And we roomed together the freshman year. He was a little bit bigger partier than I was, and by the time the freshman year was over, I wanted to be a little bit more focused and wanted to get out of that particular situation and environment, so I then went back to the fraternity and people I knew in the fraternity and asked if they'd have me. And they took me, and I pledged AGR my sophomore year and lived there.

SL: And that helped.

[01:58:59] EW: It did help. You know, at the time I think the image was that the fraternity system was where you went to party. I turned it around. I actually used it as a way to get out of the—out of partyin' . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . and get more focus in my life, and it turned out to be a good move. I met my wife my—late in the sophomore year, second semester of the sophomore year. And we got married midterm of my junior year, and so I lived in the house three semesters is all I lived in the fraternity house, but it worked out all right.

[01:59:42] SL: You've been married about as long as I have.

EW: A pretty long time. Most of my life.

SL: Yeah.

EW: I got married when I was twenty and . . .

SL: Yeah, me too.

EW: . . . way too young to really know . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] What you were doing.

EW: . . . what I was doin', but [*SL laughs*] it—it's worked out. We've gone through a lot together and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . grown up together, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

[02:00:11] SL: So let me think for just a moment. You know, there's no question that church and church activities were a big part of your early life and your life with your mom and dad. Did your involvement with church continue once you got to Fayetteville or did—was there a lull and you got back into it? Or did you immediately . . .

EW: You know, strangely enough—I mentioned the party environment that I was in my freshman year, but it was not unusual for me and my roommate to get up—he had a car. I didn't at that time in college, so I relied on him for transportation. But even though the—it was a party environment, we did go to church on—not all the Sunday mornin's, but it was not unusual to attend service at University Baptist.

SL: Reverend H.D. . . .

EW: Reverend . . .

SL: . . . McCarty.

EW: . . . H.D. McCarty. Yeah. He was a big draw for a lot of the college students then.

SL: Well, he was the pastor for the team.

EW: Yeah, yeah.

[02:01:18] SL: I attended the Methodist church across the street. But of course, I know—knew H.D. and . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . everyone did.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Well, that's good that that stuck with you. And I'm sure that also helped rein you a little bit.

EW: It did, and you know, it was there. It was a—somethin' I had not been exposed to in high school—the partyin' life and you gotta try it out and see. And you—at that point, you've gotta make your own decisions, and after I'd been exposed to it for a while, I decided that wasn't the route I wanted to go. And my upbringin' had a big influence in that, that had been instilled in me.

SL: Tryin' to think. Let me think about this for a second. Boy, that was the height of black lights and . . .

EW: Uh-huh.

SL: George's, of course, was there. I guess there was a club called West Street. I'm tryin' to think of all the . . .

[02:02:34] EW: We had decorated our dorm room—we were actually, because he was an upperclassman, able to get on the study floor at Yocum. The tenth floor was the quiet floor, and I'm not sure why—what the draw was for him to want to be on the tenth floor because he enjoyed partyin', but we were on—and it was not usual that a freshman was able to get on the tenth floor. But because my roommate was an upperclassman, we did. But we had—we did decorate our room up with the black lights. In fact, I've still got [*SL laughs*] in a box somewhere a little—it's an incandescent light—lamp—a light bulb that's got the peace

symbol in it.

SL: Yep.

EW: It was the end of the World War II period [EW edit: the Vietnam War period] and peace symbol and everything. And we had the black light and the black light posters and fishnet and all that that we got at someplace down on Dickson Street. And . . .

SL: Sure. Dream Merchant.

EW: Yep, that's it.

SL: Absolutely.

EW: That's it.

[02:03:41] SL: Yeah, the guy that ended up buyin' the Dream Merchant—it's now—it morphed into a thing called Melody's. He was the drummer in my band.

EW: Is that right?

SL: See, I was playing in bands . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . while you were . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . experiencing Dickson Street, and so I'm—I was very familiar with Dickson Street and the fraternities and . . .

EW: You know, I wasn't old enough—I didn't turn twenty-one till after I'd gotten married, and then I looked young and wasn't able to

go into the—I didn't do the bar scene. I . . .

SL: Couldn't get into the . . .

EW: . . . didn't—couldn't get into the Library . . .

SL: . . . Library Club.

EW: . . . or George's or any of those places.

[02:04:20] SL: Did you get to experience the Cate Brothers and any good music? I mean, there's . . .

EW: Would—I did . . .

SL: . . . remarkable music.

EW: There—my wife and I—our first date was a blind date out at The Rink and so . . .

SL: There you go.

EW: . . . you know, we—I did go to The Rink a time or two and . . .

SL: You bet.

EW: . . . get to experience some . . .

SL: Tower of Power.

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: Yep.

EW: Get to experience some of that.

[02:04:46] SL: That was quite the facility . . .

EW: Yes, it was.

SL: . . . back then. And that has a great history. I . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: I can go on and on [*laughter*] about the history of music and entertainment in . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . Northwest Arkansas, but The Rink was certainly a key—and it was a massive facility.

EW: It was.

SL: Massive venue. A lot of fraternities had things out there and . . .

EW: It was . . .

SL: . . . big bands.

EW: . . . so integral to the campus or to the college atmosphere and part of the college experience. The Rink was a place that—it touched a—most everybody went through the University of Arkansas.

[02:05:23] SL: I got a call from Randy Stratton just yesterday, and you know, he would be—I'll tell him about what you said. It'll tickle him.

TM: Scott, we're gonna need to change tapes.

SL: Okay. Hour two.

EW: That hour went faster than the first hour. [*TM laughs*]

SL: Well, you know, and . . .

TM: ?Hit stop?.

SL: . . . it'll probably continue to accelerate a little bit. We'll get to a point . . .

EW: Yeah, as you get more current, you remember more of the details and . . .

[Tape stopped]

[02:05:50] SL: Tape three. Startin' your third hour here.

EW: 'Kay.

SL: Did you think that you would only be, you know, getting to college after two hours of Pryor Center activity?

EW: I expected about after the first hour, we'd pretty well have the story told. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, I know it's a lengthy process, and it takes people off guard that we ask for so much time.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Again, thank you for giving us all this time. I know it's—I know you're a busy guy, and . . .

EW: It's . . .

SL: . . . it's not weekend.

EW: Not a problem at all. I've—it's been an enjoyable experience so far, and I look forward to the rest of it.

[02:06:31] SL: Okay. Well, now, as I remember, we had gotten you to Fayetteville, which was a very big, eye-opening experience for

you. Bigger town [*laughs*]—lots of kids.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Coming into a university situation for the first time. Some experienced kids had been there for a while. It's a typical university thing that happens from—for kids just coming out of high school and out of their mom and dad's home and . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . out on their own. This is where people get strong, and it sounds like to me it took you maybe a year, but it sounds like to me you made some good decisions and you got some strength. And it speaks well for you now. Before we keep goin' on about your university experience, there's a couple of things. [02:07:25] Trey mentioned that you grew up kind of in the shadow of Mount Magazine.

EW: I did.

SL: And I—you know, we don't have any mountain stories, Mount Magazine stories. But was that a place that you would—the family would go early and you . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . later enjoyed?

EW: Mount Magazine—at the time, there was a lodge and cabins up there. It was all part of the national Forest Service and run by

the Forest Service. And it was a destination for a lot of folks to kind of get away from things and go to. And they had a pretty good restaurant up on top at the lodge. And once or twice a year, family would go up on the mountain to the restaurant and to the lodge and have a nice meal and everything. But it was always a—it was a unique experience. It's such an incredible place up there and almost pristine. It's just virtually untouched, and of course, now they've gone in and made a state park out of it and built a new lodge. The old one had burned down and they pretty much shut everything down up there. But the state parks has taken it over and built a new lodge and cabins, and it's become quite a destination and popular place. But it was unique because people goin' up on the mountain had to go through downtown Havana. So you saw some tourist traffic through, and it was a neat place to go. The roads weren't paved, when I was growin' up, to the top of the mountain. So it was a pretty rough trek up there. It was not an easy seven or eight miles to the top. Very winding, dirty, narrow road, mountain road. But—so you had to be wantin' to get up there to get to the top of the mountain.

[02:09:26] SL: It's the highest mountain in Arkansas, isn't it?

EW: It's the highest peak between the Rocky Mountains and the

Allegheny Mountains. And certainly, yes, it is the highest spot in Arkansas. So it's a unique place, and not too far from there as well was a Corps of Engineer lake. And so we had plenty of places for recreation—the lake or the mountain—and the lake was a opportunity for employment as well. I worked at the lake in—for sur—in summers as hourly labor for three or four summers while I was in high school. So a pretty good place to work.

[02:10:12] SL: Well, what did you do?

EW: Oh, you know, hauled—picked up garbage in the campsites and cut weeds and picked up cigarette butts and pop-tops and just whatever needed to be done to keep it as a nice campsite area. The last summer I rose through the ranks to become a summer ranger, and I really made it to the big time then.

[02:10:44] SL: Did you ever think that maybe you might wanna do that?

EW: I did. I did.

SL: 'Cause that's a pretty cool thing.

EW: I thought about that. In fact, after I got married and went—moved to Fayetteville, I worked for the corps at Beaver Lake for a couple of summers and, again, extremely good employment opportunity. It was a better summer job than haulin' hay or

catchin' chickens—this kind of thing. So a lot easier work and good pay. So I did think about tryin' to pursue that, but just ended up goin' a different direction.

[02:11:21] SL: Well, let's thank Trey for mentioning that because that was a—something that you spent a number of summers doing that . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . we just kind of graze—we didn't even touch that. So there was a great example of stuff that was happening in your life that, you know . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . influenced you, in a way.

EW: I always had a summer job, from the time I was big enough to start mowin' yards—you'd make a little bit of extra money. And as I got up bigger, haulin' hay was one of those summer jobs and catchin' chickens—pretty big poultry industry in the area where I grew up. And he always used a lot of high school labor to catch chickens. A lot of those jobs were, as Dad always said, character-building experiences [*SL laughs*] that helped you keep focused on an ultimate goal so that you didn't have to continue doin' that the rest of your life.

[02:12:26] SL: Hmm. Character builders.

EW: Character builders.

SL: The other thing that I failed to ask you—you say you met your wife while you were at the University of Arkansas.

EW: I did.

SL: Is that—that's right?

EW: That's correct. We were set up. I think I mentioned earlier that my sophomore year I joined a fraternity, Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, and we had a group of folks from another fraternity come in one weekend for some kind of a conference. And so tried to get everybody fixed up on a date and ended up, they had an extra girl that was with the group that they'd fixed up. And so I agreed to go on a blind date that night to The Rink, and it turned out to be a worthwhile evening, and that was in, like, April of my sophomore year, and we got married midterm of our junior year. So nine—about ten months—we decided that we'd like to carry that relationship to another level, and it's worked out real well. Forty years. Nearly forty years later.

[02:13:52] SL: Do you remember the band that y'all went to see?

EW: No, I don't remember the band. I don't have any idea.

SL: Okay.

EW: The band wasn't the most important thing [*SL laughs*] in my mind that night.

[02:14:04] SL: Well, let's get a name for this young lady.

EW: She was Deanna Willey. She was a native of Clarksville. Her freshman year, she had gone to UCA. And I think the story is every weekend she and her roommate were comin' to Fayetteville see if the college life at Fayetteville was a little bit more exciting than it was at Conway. And her mom told her at the end of the year, "Either you're gonna quit goin' to Fayetteville every weekend or you're gonna go up there to college," and she chose to go. And we were fortunate enough that—to cross paths then.

[02:14:45] SL: Well, that's great. So ten months later, you marry.

EW: Ten months later we got married and really didn't have a whole lot of opportunity—income comin' in or didn't know how we were gonna make it, but . . .

SL: Didn't matter.

EW: . . . it didn't matter. It didn't matter, so.

SL: I understand that.

EW: Yeah.

[02:15:06] SL: So is she—was she a year younger than you or . . .

EW: No, we're—actually, we're the same age.

SL: Same age.

EW: So—yeah.

SL: So y'all were both twenty when you married.

EW: Yeah. Yeah, she's I think three or four months younger than I am, so—July to November.

[02:15:23] SL: Well, okay. So you—but you're still both in school when you get married.

EW: We were. She finished her degree in elementary education, and we decided that I would finish mine and go on and get my master's. And so she got a job teaching kindergarten at Lincoln Elementary School, and she did that for two years while I worked on my master's. And then I was able to get out and try to find a job.

[02:16:02] SL: So what was it that you majored in with your undergraduate degree?

EW: Undergraduate degree was in plant pathology, agriculture, with a business minor. And then worked during—on campus as a—in the plant pathology department throughout my—the whole time I was there in a work-study-type program. And then—so I got my undergraduate degree and then switched to agricultural economics for my master's. And that was a good switch. It proved to be a good education—good mixture that's served me well.

[02:16:50] SL: So plants and math. [*Laughs*]

EW: Plants and economics. Yeah, math. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, did you have any favorite instructors or favorite classes that—while you were there? Was there somethin' . . .

EW: You know, I wasn't the most scholastic student. I got by. I made decent grades, but I never was on the dean's list. It was—having gotten married midway through, I was just tryin' to figure out how to position myself to provide for a family whenever I got out. But I worked at—in my undergraduate time, worked on campus for Dr. Walters, who was a plant pathology professor there and worked in the greenhouses and then worked for him at his own farm some in off times. So he helped me quite a bit. Had a relative that owned a dry cleaners up there, and I did some work for him—Ozark Cleaners in—off the . . .

SL: Sure.

EW: . . . square. J.O. Hays . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: Everybody in Fayetteville that's ever spent much time knew J.O. and Jenny, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . Jenny was a first cousin of my dad's, and they helped me stay employed some. And so . . .

SL: Right by Maxine's Tap Room.

EW: Exa—right next door to Maxine's. [*SL laughs*] That's exactly right.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's fun.

EW: Sure was, yeah.

SL: Wow, small world.

EW: It is. Yeah.

[02:18:32] SL: So did y'all start having children immediately or . . .

EW: You know, I finished my master's, and I started lookin' for a job, and I was on an assistantship, and so I had a little bit of income comin' in. And after I finished—started lookin' for a job but continued to work in the ag-econ department for a few months. And it was November, I guess, of [19]77, whenever I got an opportunity, a job offer, to go to work for Farm Bureau. And right as—right about the same time that I got the job offer, then I found out she was pregnant. And I started to work the first of December, and she stayed in Fayetteville and finished out the semester at Lincoln teaching and—before she moved down. So spent a month down here in Little Rock livin' with some friends before we moved down. And so we'd been married about four years, three or four years, by the time we started a family.

[02:19:56] SL: Well, I'm not quite ready to leave Fayetteville yet.

EW: Okay.

SL: And the university. I'm tryin' to think—all the things that were going on in Fayetteville at that time that you were there. It had grown quite a bit.

EW: Yeah.

SL: I guess the—I'm tryin' to think what major events—I guess the—were they still doin' the soap box derbies then? They weren't, were they.

EW: No.

SL: They had already finished those.

EW: That was kind of right on the end. All during that time was right at the end of the Vietnam War, so everybody that went to—came to college there, if you stayed you enrolled in ROTC to get that deferment, which I did. And that was before they started the lottery. They started the lottery my freshman year, and I got a really high number in the lottery. And . . .

SL: Me, too.

EW: . . . I didn't do well at ROTC. I just—I struggled with it, and so the first thing I did the next day after the lottery was announced . . .

SL: You dropped it.

EW: . . . was I went and dropped ROTC. Wasn't too long after that—I

think the next big fad that hit campus was the streaking, and that was [*SL laughs*] a pretty exciting time on campus.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*] I remember that. [*EW laughs*] Oh brother.

[02:21:24] EW: Other—it was really the start of basketball really takin' off at the university.

SL: Eddie Sutton.

EW: Eddie Sutton came on. Lanny Van Eman—actually, Duddy Waller, I think, was still the basketball coach when I started, and Lanny Van Eman came, and he raised the bar a little bit. He brought in Martin Terry and Dean Tolson and some of 'em. But you could still go to a basketball game, and Barnhill had a dirt floor and—walk in at tip-off and sit down midcourt and go to the basketball games. And then the last two or three years we were up there, La—Eddie Sutton came in and brought the Triplets in. And it got to where you couldn't get into Barnhill to get a seat to watch 'em play.

SL: The house that Eddie built.

EW: Yep. Yeah.

[02:22:11] SL: Yeah, I remember that dirt floor and Martin Terry, and there was temporary basketball . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . court that they'd pick up and move.

EW: Yeah.

SL: 'Cause the football team . . .

EW: Football team . . .

SL: . . . used to practice . . .

EW: . . . practiced—did spring practice in there.

SL: And the stands were temporary.

EW: Yeah.

SL: They folded those up and carted 'em out.

EW: First thing they did when Eddie Sutton was in was on the west side, I believe it was, they expanded it and put more permanent seats in. And that filled up and sold out in no time. And then they started the big renovation of it, and I think even did another one after that before they finished usin' Barnhill and built Bud Walton. So a lot of . . .

SL: It . . .

EW: . . . excitement and growth and expansion of—during that time.

[02:23:04] SL: Yeah, footballwise, I guess it was—Lou Holtz had come in.

EW: Yeah. Actually, Coach Broyles was still there. Joe Ferguson was the quarterback when I came up there. He and Scott Bull. And course, goin' to football games on Saturday was a big social event, and all the students'd dress up with a coat and tie and go

to the football games. And that's a little bit different than the way it is now.

SL: Yeah, I'm tryin' to think—the Broyles Complex was just getting built around then, I guess.

EW: At some point . . .

SL: Started . . .

EW: . . . during that time they built the Broyles Complex in the [19]70s, I guess. Yeah.

SL: The football team was getting integrated then, too.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Had our first Black players . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . startin' to come in.

EW: Jon Richardson and some of 'em.

[02:24:06] SL: Let's see, we—well, if you—is there anything else about your classes and your instructors? Anybody that—I mean, it's hard to beat the fa . . .

EW: The icon in agriculture was Dean Hardy. Dean Hardy . . .

SL: Okay.

EW: . . . was the . . .

SL: I remember him.

EW: . . . father figure for everyone in the college of agriculture. And

the opportunity to get to know him and—you know, I still think the world of Dean Hardy whenever I see him. I do get to see him from time to time at activities and . . .

SL: How's he doin'?

EW: Doin' great. The last time I saw him, which has been a few months ago—still goin' strong.

SL: I remember him. Also, wasn't—and Tyson's was startin' to really take off . . .

EW: Beginnin' to grow . . .

SL: . . . at that point.

EW: . . . durin' that time. And I think it was during that time that J. B. Hunt moved from Stuttgart to Northwest Arkansas and became a common carrier rather than just agricultural commodities.

[02:25:22] SL: Lots of things were . . .

EW: Lots of things happenin'.

SL: . . . going on.

EW: And Sam Walton was beginnin' to kick off Walmart up there, so it was really before things really started to grow. But that was when it was all gettin' started in Northwest Arkansas.

[02:25:37] SL: You were there at a good time.

EW: Yeah, it was.

SL: In a number of ways.

EW: Yeah, I'm still amazed every time I go back up how it changes and continues to change and evolve, and it's just been amazing to watch the campus grow and the changes that have taken place with just the campus and in the surrounding area as well.

[02:26:05] SL: Okay, so let me go back. You get your graduate degree and you hire—I'm sorry—where was it you hired on with who, now?

EW: I stayed and worked in the ag-econ department . . .

SL: Right.

EW: . . . for a few months until I started to work for Arkansas Farm Bureau.

SL: Out of college.

EW: Out of college. First job out of college I took and really the only place I've ever worked full-time.

SL: So let's—we need to start talkin' about Arkansas Farm Bureau, then. I—tell me what Arkansas Farm Bureau is.

EW: M'kay. Arkansas Farm Bureau is a general farm organization. It's an advocacy organization that basically works to enhance the well-being, economic well-being, of the farmers and ranchers. And over the years its focus has expanded somewhat to more improving the quality of life of people who live in rural areas.

Agricultural advocacy is still a major part of that, but in order for agriculture to be successful pe—everyone that lives in rural areas has to have a good quality of life. So we work on a lot of different areas besides just agriculture.

[02:27:35] SL: Well, is it—is there insurance involved with it?

EW: It is. And Arkansas Farm Bureau was founded in 1935, and it was founded in Mississippi County by a group of farmers and ranchers who knew that by working together through a common voice, common organization, they could be more effective in influencing decisions that impacted their livelihood than they could as individuals working separately. So they formed the organization in 1935, and really, its genesis is very closely tied to the university from the standpoint of the Cooperative Extension Service, which is a segment of the Division of Ag of the university. And the extension knew that they could be more successful in their mission if they had their clients working in support of them and if they had an organization that they could work through. And so in the early days, your county extension agents were actively engaged in encouraging people to get involved in Farm Bureau and become members of Farm Bureau. So we continued to grow from that perspective in the early years, and then after World War II, insurance companies

wouldn't go out into rural areas and write insurance for homes or life insurance or auto insurance or anything in rural areas.

SL: Yeah.

[02:29:15] EW: So you just couldn't get it, and if they did it wasn't affordable. So the leadership of the organization established several different insurance companies, and some of 'em are multistate, regional companies. The property company is a single state—Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company. Just single state for Arkansas. Then we have the casualty company that is a multi-state, regional company, as is our life insurance company, which has ten states participating in it.

[02:29:54] SL: I didn't realize that it started in Mississippi County.

EW: Yeah, Mississippi County in Arkansas.

SL: Yeah.

EW: In fact, we've had a lot of very strong leadership over the years and continue to have very strong leadership in Farm Bureau coming from Mississippi County. Our current president is a farmer that lives in Mississippi County. So our first president was there. Our se—our last—our most recent one is from there, and there's been another one or two along the way that were from Mississippi County.

[02:30:29] SL: Stuff next to the Mississippi River, the Delta area,

where farming was on a big scale and there were family farms but . . .

EW: In the 1930s, farming was evolving at that time. You were beginning to see more and more capital-based farms as opposed to human-based, labor-intensive, small, tenant-type farms, and you were beginning to see equipment become a bigger and bigger role. And that allowed the farms to get bigger and bigger and—which is a trend that continues today. We continue to see fewer and fewer farm numbers, and they get bigger and bigger. And even though they're still family farms they—they're much bigger and continue to get bigger. It started in east Arkansas kind of with that emphasis. Certainly, since then it's gone—become a statewide organization and it's unique in that it's a general farm organization, so you've got livestock producers in the west part of the state and row-crop producers in the east part of the state workin' together through a common organization and finding solution to issues where they're on opposite sides of the issue. And that's what's unique about Farm Bureau is it's—it allows them to come together, resolve their differences, and come out with a common voice.

[02:32:08] SL: That's a great concept. Great idea. And I—it's—I'm sure it's making . . .

EW: It's . . .

SL: . . . huge differences for . . .

EW: It's been . . .

SL: . . . farm families.

EW: . . . effective, and it's—it has impacted Arkansas tremendously. Farm Bureau was an organization—helped provide some of the seed money for Arkansas BlueCross BlueShield, which is our primary health insurance company in the state. Was instrumental in getting road—highway funding for—to get roads paved and improve the transportation infrastructure in the state because farmers have to have good roads to get their commodities . . .

SL: Products out.

EW: . . . to market.

SL: You bet.

EW: Helped in getting funding for electrification—rural electric cooperative system—Farm Bureau worked on it for a long time to get it established and get electricity out in the rural areas. Telephones—our emphasis right now is tryin' to broaden broadband availability to rural areas so that people in rural areas have the same opportunities and access to broadband internet service that folks in urban areas have.

[02:33:24] SL: So isn't there some kind of broadband initiative on the federal level, too? Or has that funding been cut or . . .

EW: No, that funding is there, and there's a group in Arkansas called Connect Arkansas that is kind of the state organization that is working to promote expansion of broadband service. And there have been—there are grant programs at the federal level that your local communication companies can have access to to help expand broadband service.

[02:33:59] SL: Is that all cable oriented, or are they doing . . .

EW: It's all different kinds. It's fiber optic . . .

SL: Cellular and fiber . . .

EW: . . . it's wireless. It's just whatever fits a particular area or region.

SL: Makes a difference.

EW: It does. You know, for a—particularly in east Arkansas a lot of your rural communities are really struggling. The labor base has left, and the economic activity has always revolved around agriculture. That's been the main economic force in these communities, and as agriculture has evolved and employed fewer and fewer people, your population bases have—it's been a struggle to maintain employment opportunities. And in order to have employment, you've got to have the education and the

technology in these rural areas that will bring employers in. They don't want to locate where there's not opportunities like that.

[02:35:08] SL: Yeah, I would guess that you'd really have to have broadband . . .

EW: To . . .

SL: . . . for starters.

EW: Yeah, yeah. And you know, even with your health care, your hospitals, doctors' offices, it's critical that they have access to internet service. Your telemedicine. 'Cause you don't have specialists out in rural areas that can't support a specialist to have the telemedicine to be able to connect to UAMS and the bigger hospitals that have the expertise to treat individuals. Internet's all a part of it. It's become such a important part of everyone's life and our whole society.

[02:35:55] SL: Well, even the commodities side of it—you know, just the restocking and getting commodity where it needs—where it's . . .

EW: Where it needs . . .

SL: . . . it needs to go . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . because of sale or market—what's driving the market at that

time. You gotta—if you're . . .

EW: It . . .

SL: . . . not connected, you're out of the loop. You don't . . .

EW: It's incredible . . .

SL: . . . have the information you need.

EW: . . . how, over the last ten years, that one piece of technology has become so critical to everything.

[02:36:26] SL: Are they doing anything satellite-wise? Are they—it would seem like—you know, that would be a really . . .

EW: It—it's an option, but it's still . . .

SL: So expensive.

EW: . . . very expensive—that individuals really have a hard time justifyin' the cost, bein' able to afford it—on satellites.

SL: It would seem like we could help in some way as—at the federal level with that, that there's gonna be, I don't know, some kind of incentive that could be laid out there to provide that. And you could—you would think you could identify that it's a rural area that qualifies for that kind of connectivity. I don't know. I'm just speculating, but it's inevitable that it's—something has got to happen there.

[02:37:14] EW: Our higher-education system in Arkansas, the linking of the universities around the state . . .

SL: The ARE-ON.

EW: . . . and the new network is really gonna provide a lot of opportunity to assist with that, I think, over time. You get that network in place, and then you can branch off of it to expand availability.

[02:37:44] SL: Well, what was it—what was your first job with Farm Bureau?

EW: I was—my job was director of the poultry division. That was workin' with our poultry-producer families in the state, helping them in addressing issues that they had, whether it be marketing or economics or whatever.

SL: That's a pretty heady first job comin' out of your master's degree to all of a sudden be a director of the poultry division. I would . . .

EW: Well . . .

SL: . . . think that . . .

EW: . . . the title sounded good, anyway, but [*laughter*] it was a new program. It hadn't been goin' on in Farm Bureau very long and hel—tryin' to get people—staff members to work with specific commodity-producer groups, rather than in general, focus on individual commodities. Producers of soybeans—to work with them on their problems and poultry on theirs and livestock on

theirs. And so it involved travel, a lot of travel around the state, goin' to night meetings. You know, Farm Bureau has a lot of meetings and producers. They're farmin' durin' the day, doin' their job, and they meet at night. So a staff person gets to travel around the state and go to a lot of night meetings. [*SL laughs*] And that impacts your . . .

SL: Everything.

EW: . . . home life quite a bit.

SL: You bet. You betcha.

[02:39:24] EW: So you know, as my family started growin'—we had our kids. Deanna basically was responsible for helpin' take care of them while I was . . .

SL: On the road.

EW: . . . on the road.

SL: So two children?

EW: Two children.

SL: Their names are . . .

EW: Wesley is the oldest, and Natalie is our daughter, and both of 'em are now in their thirties—up and grown.

[02:39:56] SL: Boy and a girl. That's good.

EW: Boy and a girl. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EW: Three years apart and . . .

SL: That's textbook.

EW: Typical . . .

SL: The same . . .

EW: . . . American family.

SL: Same with us.

EW: Yeah.

SL: I've got three, but we tried to space 'em about that . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . length apart. They say that's best.

EW: Yeah.

[02:40:15] SL: So are you still involved with the poultry division or what—is there a sequence . . .

EW: Actually . . .

SL: . . . of positions . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . that you . . .

EW: Over the time I changed and worked in different areas in the commodity department and eventually became department head. And that took place over about a twenty-year period and gradually moved into administration and department head. I became department head in the mid-[19]90s and did that for

about six or eight years until I was appointed to my current position as executive vice president of Arkansas Farm Bureau.

[02:40:59] SL: So commodities division—what—tell me what that means.

EW: It was—we had structures of twelve different commodities that are significant—economic importance in Arkansas, and you work with the producers of those individual commodities. So I worked—started out working with poultry producers. Later worked with soybean, rice producers, and pretty much at one time or another worked in most all the different commodity areas of the organization. And—but it was just a organizational structure that allowed us to address needs of the individual commodities that are produced in Arkansas.

[02:41:46] SL: So has cotton really all but gone? I mean . . .

EW: You know, cotton gradually faded away in Arkansas back until the 1980s. The cotton industry almost totally went away, and all of a sudden it came roarin' back and reestablished itself and became an economic force again. And now is—the acreage is gradually diminishing. It's a function of economics and profitability and that commodity versus rice or soybeans or corn or somethin' else. So cotton has gone through different cycles of highs and lows.

[02:42:36] SL: Let's straighten your tie just a little bit there. It's off to the—no, you—there you go. Is cotton just—is it just hard on the soil? Is it—I mean . . .

SL: Actually, it's not all that hard as long as—because a lot of producers grow cotton continuously, and as long as they maintain the fertility of the soil and everything, it's not that bad. Now, what happened back in the [19]20s, [19]30s—we were growin' cotton on ground that wasn't suited to be cotton ground. At one time cotton was grown in every county in the state of Arkansas, and we've got some counties that have pretty shallow soils and pretty steep hillsides, and yet cotton was bein' grown all over the state. So a lot of those counties where cotton was bein' grown, it wasn't suited for it, and we saw the industry in west Arkansas just kind of fade away and go away because you just couldn't afford to do it there. And it was hard on the soil because those soils weren't made to be tilled and plowed. And so instead, we saw the poultry industry become established, and that helped—the fertilizer from the poultry has helped grow the cattle industry in west Arkansas. So now then, most of your row crops are grown in east Arkansas, and livestock and poultry are grown in west Arkansas, and it's much more satisfactory—suitable for the terrain and soils and this kind of thing.

[02:44:18] SL: Who were some of the—maybe we should talk about some of your colleagues that you've gotten a chance a chance to work with and how they've influenced your life . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . in Farm Bureau. I mean—I think we're gonna—we need to spend a lot of time on Farm Bureau 'cause you have spent a lot of time there.

EW: Yeah.

SL: So do you remember exactly who it was that hired you in the beginning?

EW: I do, very, very distinctly. He was one of the earliest employees in Farm Bureau, one of the founding employees, W. F. Wright, and he was the grandfather of the commodity department. He was first department head in that area, but he was a longtime—one of these, like I say, one of the very first employees in Arkansas Farm Bureau. And he had a huge influence on me. He was a stickler for detail, and you did things exactly the right way, and it was his way and—but you learned a lot. And so he had a big influence. He and another one was Arnold Berner. Arn—Mr. Berner was the executive vice president of Farm Bureau at the time, and his daughter is the wife or was the wife of Stanley Reed, who later became president of Arkansas Farm

Bureau. So Mr. Berner's family has been around. It's amazing how all this comes back around and the intertwinings within Arkansas. It's just pretty typical of Arkansas to see things like that happen.

[02:45:58] SL: Well, did you have to interview for that first job?

EW: I did, and in fact, I interviewed—the first time I interviewed for a job with Farm Bureau, I didn't get the job. Someone else that was finishin' school about the same time did, and that was in June of [19]77, then in November they had another position come back and come open. And I came back up and interviewed in the ag-econ department for that one, and I was fortunate enough to get hired that time. And the reality is the person that got the first job is still an employee and the department head for Farm Bureau so—and was a very close friend of mine at the time. So . . .

SL: Sounds like a good place to work.

EW: It is. It's not uncommon to have people work there thirty, forty, forty-five years before they—spend their entire career. It's the—it's com—more common than it is the exception.

[02:47:04] SL: Who else in Farm Bureau you've gotten to work with that . . .

EW: Jack Justus, another executive vice president that's been a

person of high visibility in the state of Arkansas. It was—spent his career there. The very first executive vice president was Waldo Frazier, who was—worked in that role for about thirty—the first thirty or forty years of the organization's existence. He was the key staff person, so there's only been—I think I'm the sixth executive vice president of Farm Bureau since it was established in Arkansas in 1935. So not a lot of history there, and not a lot of different people have served in that role, anyway.

[02:48:05] SL: So is there always just one executive vice president?

EW: There is. Yes. It is—the way we're structured, you have an elected president, who is a farmer—leader. And he's the chairman of the board and president of the organization, but it's always been a full-time farmer. It's not a paid staff position, so the executive vice president leads the day-to-day function and directs the staff operation of the organization. And so you've got to have individuals that—in the staff role that work closely with the elected leadership. And that's the position that Mr. Reed served in. Today the president's Randy Veach in—from Mississippi County, and both of 'em are strong, outstanding individuals. They just—Farm Bureau's noted for having leadership of the caliber of your Stanley Reeds, your Randy

Veaches, your—Mr. Olendorf from Mississippi County is a name that's been known statewide for his contribution to the state and the leadership that he served. Folks that have served on the Department of Higher Education and served in key leadership roles, not only in agriculture, but in directing the overall well-being of the state. Nicky Hargroves—a lot of folks that have made an impact on Arkansas.

[02:49:44] SL: How many members does the organization have?

EW: Our membership today is 210,000 members.

SL: Wow!

EW: And those are family memberships, so if you multiply that 210,000 by an average family . . .

SL: Two and a half.

EW: . . . size, two and a half, you're talkin' somewhere close to 600,000 people in the state of Arkansas. Out of a three million population, 20 percent of the people belong to the organization. A lot of those belong simply for our insurance programs, our insurance services, but a lot of 'em belong because they believe in what the organization stands for and what it does.

[02:50:26] SL: So I'm just wondering if—so when you say the chair—or the president is elected, do all the members—is that determined by the membership?

EW: It is determined by the membership. Then Farm Bureau has a county organization in every county in the state. It's a independent, priv—independently chartered, stand-alone, non-profit organization. It has its own board of directors. There's an office in every county, so it's probably the only organization in the state that has a presence in every county in the state besides maybe your Cooperative Extension Service that still does, but that's why it's been such a force in lobbying and in influencing public policy. The people that are members of it are people at the local levels that know the elected politicians, that help the politicians get elected, and that's why the organization has been so effective over the years. It's not what we do here in Little Rock. It's that presence in every community, every county in the state, that is the power of the organization.

[02:51:49] SL: Sounds like a goin' Jesse to me.

EW: It's worked very well, and you know, it's just been a tremendously big influence over the direction and the development and growth of the state of Arkansas.

[02:52:11] SL: Are there declining farms, declining family farms, as . . .

EW: The trend is for fewer farms, but larger in number. Now, over the last ten or fifteen years, particularly in western Arkansas,

we've seen a change in that trend because we've seen a lot of people that have lived in the city that want to go out, and they'll buy ten, twenty acres.

SL: Yeah.

EW: They'll put a small herd of cattle on that land, and they classify—they're classified as a family . . .

SL: Family.

EW: . . . farm. And so we've seen an increase in the number of west Arkansas and I call 'em lifestyle farms. They—it's a quality-of-life-type living. Be able to live out and get away from the hustle and bustle in town . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . and have that quality of life. So actually, the number of farms in Arkansas over the past ten to twenty years has stabilized, if not increased slightly because of that growth in the lifestyle farming.

[02:53:15] SL: So you know, that kind of sounds like farm light a little bit—the lifestyle [*laughs*] farming. It's not necessarily mom and pop . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . eking out a living like at the time that you were growing up or hardscrabble . . .

EW: It's . . .

SL: . . . horses behind the plow.

EW: Right.

SL: It's more of a genteel . . .

EW: It is, and it's not their primary source of income. They don't depend on that twenty to fifty acres for their livelihood. They'll have a job in town. At the very least, the wife works in town if both don't. But it's not unusual for both of 'em, both the husband and wife, to work in town and then come home in the evening and have their cattle and take care of those in the evening and on weekends, put the hay up and this kind of thing.

[02:54:10] SL: Well still, that's gotta be exciting that the trend is reversing.

EW: It is. It's an opportunity and one that's a challenge for the organization is to engage those folks and let them—help them to understand what the role of an organization like Farm Bureau is and to challenge them to the point to be engaged because they can be as effective as a full-time farmer in impacting policy issues if you can get 'em activated and engaged. Far as that goes, the folks in town that go to the grocery store and buy the food products that are produced on the farm have an interest in policies that impact agriculture. And that's kind of the new

challenge is to try to engage the urban consumer in an organization like Farm Bureau so that they understand the challenges that the agricultural producer have and are there and can support you whenever issues come up in the public-policy arena.

[02:55:25] SL: You know, I see a growth in what we call farmers' markets on the town squares in . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . in small towns. The community will, you know, rope off a place . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . where they can have these once a week or twice a week. Is that something that's kind of statewide, or is that just up in here?

EW: It is. In fact, it's a national trend. You see it all over the country, and it's a very positive thing. It's fillin' a niche of helping people consume food that they want—they—where they know where it came from, who produced it, and this kind of thing. The challenge is to be able to do that on a large enough scale to be able to feed a population of three hundred-plus million people in the state—in the country. All of it can't be produced locally. You have huge urban areas that there's no

way that you can produce enough food and fiber to meet the demands of a city like even Little Rock or of the entire population—and particularly, a city like Dallas, Texas, or New York City. You—farmers' markets will never be able to fill all the food needs of the population in those kind of places. There's nothin' wrong with it. It serves a big—great function, but there's a role for that, and there's a role for commercial agriculture.

SL: Right.

[02:56:58] EW: And everybody needs to understand what those roles are and why all of it's needed to keep us as a country well fed at a level where we've got the safest, most affordable, most abundant food supply of any country in the world. We spend—our consumers spend less than 10 percent of their income on food, and that's half or even less than half of what a lot of other—most other countries. No other country comes close to that. So.

[02:57:47] SL: So—I had a train of thought about—you think that—oh, let me think—see how to put this—this is complicated stuff for me to [*EW laughs*] comprehend.

EW: Yeah.

SL: This is territory I'm not familiar with. But generally speaking, the farming has—I know what I was gonna say. I did an

interview lately with a guy named David Lambert. Do you know that name? He's with World Food Security.

EW: Okay.

SL: Making sure there's enough food for the world to eat. Just yesterday, or maybe it was last night, I was watchin' TV or heard on the radio that America basically throws away about—eats about half their plate . . .

EW: I saw that article . . .

SL: . . . and . . .

EW: . . . somewhere.

SL: . . . tosses it, you know.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[02:58:48] SL: So you've got this one hand that says, "We're tossin' half of it away." You've got another hand that's saying, "Worldwide, we're short on food."

EW: Right.

SL: And so how does that reconcile, and where does what you guys are doing come into play on those two extremes?

EW: That's always a challenge in the production of anything. Getting a product from where it's produced into the hands of those who need the product. And that's the biggest challenge that US agriculture has. There's endless demand worldwide for the

products that we produce. Being able to get it to those individuals that need it and to be able to produce it and get it to 'em affordably—where they can afford it. You know, you can't produce all this stuff for nothin'. It costs you to produce it, and . . .

SL: Sure.

EW: . . . so it's gotta be paid for, and that's the challenge that, particularly in your third world countries, is they don't have the resources to pay for it. So how do you reconcile all that? And that's a huge issue. As economic conditions improve in those countries, they have more disposable income that they can use to buy the products that our producers grow and produce. So the key to it is improving the economic well-being of those consumers in those countries and where they've got the income to spend to buy what they need to have a better life.

[03:00:39] SL: So there's other forces at play, too. For instance, Mississippi River right now.

EW: Huge issue.

SL: How many dollars are stuck on the river right now?

EW: That's a really big issue. We're coming off right here in the middle of harvest. There's not enough facilities to store all the grain that's currently bein' harvested. Normally, we're loadin'

that onto barges and shippin' it down the river. And right now segments of the river are closed, and our farmers are beginnin' to wonder exactly what they're gonna do with the grain. They may have to start truckin' it down—further down the river to get it onto a port where it can be loaded on then. But that costs somebody money, and either the farmer's gonna have to pay for it or whoever's buyin' it's gonna have to pay for it. But it's gonna cost somebody more money, and ultimately it's probably gonna be the consumer that pays for it. It's gonna cost them more.

[03:01:46] SL: That's how it always works, isn't it?

EW: Yeah.

SL: I mean . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . you can't really get around that.

EW: That's right.

SL: Even if it's a—even if there's any federal support . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . to remedy a situation, that still comes back to consumer pocket.

EW: Consumers, ultimately. Yeah.

[03:02:11] SL: You know, one of the interviews we did was a fellow

that described how they figured out how to ship fresh fruit to the coasts. That before that time, you know, you couldn't put 'em on a train without them rotting.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And they figured out they could use the motion of the train itself to go across ice bunkers, and if they just built ice houses along the tracks at certain intervals, they could re-up the ice and send 'em on their way and pour some salt in the bunkers . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . and it would—I'm just wondering if there was any thought of—when you mentioned storage, not having enough storage, when the river's stopped like it is now or whatever avenue that you're using to deliver your commodities. Is there any talk about storage that . . .

[03:03:11] EW: Yeah, but that's not a solution that you can immediately provide. It takes time and money to increase the storage, and you know, hopefully this is a short-term situation on the river that hopefully it'll start rainin' again one of these days, and the river levels will get back up. So then you've got all this storage that you've built that has no function, so really enhancing the storage is not a practical solution to the short-term problem that we're experiencing today. Long term, it could

help.

[03:03:52] SL: Well, I mean, it—isn't market also driven about not just meeting demand but producing more than what the demand is?

EW: And spreadin' that out over time . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . to have it available whenever the demand is there. Yeah, it is. It is all part of the process, and you know, that's the other part of the agricultural production system we have here. We rely very heavily on foreign markets for a lot of what we produce in this country.

SL: Grain.

EW: The grains, particularly—40 to 50 percent of what's produced is exported, so that's huge when you can't get it down the river to the export markets. And you've got the market there, but you can't get it to it. And so, again, you just—we're just gonna have to keep our fingers crossed that it starts raining here one of these days before long. It's amazing—this time last year—or you know, at the start of last year, we were experiencing record flooding.

SL: Floods.

EW: And here a year later, we're seein' the river so low that we can't

even move up and down it, so times change.

[03:05:08] SL: Conditions change.

EW: Conditions change. Situations change.

SL: And as far as the flooding last year, drought this year—those are dynamic extremes . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . that are going on. Is there any concern, or is there anything that—I mean, I know that you guys think about this kind of stuff all the time . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you weigh what needs to happen soon, how can we better prepare for the future, and all that. But is there—are there techniques that you guys are constantly looking at? You know, one of the things that I got to be a part of this last meeting up here in Springdale with y'all was goin' out and lookin' at—I think it's called pigweed?

EW: Mh-hmm.

SL: What a scary thing that is.

EW: Right. The . . .

SL: Resistant to . . .

EW: Chemical-resistant . . .

SL: Yes.

EW: . . . weeds. Yeah.

SL: Yes.

[03:06:10] EW: And that brings us into an area that has been so—such an impact on agriculture and that's the research. Probably no other industry relies on strong, effective research programs any more than agriculture does. And historically, that service has been provided through the land-grant universities—your—such as the University of Arkansas. And our farmers and our ranchers in Arkansas fully understand the value of a well-funded, effective research program. They put a lot of their own monies in. They self fund a lot of research programs through the division of ag, and it's a critically important—it's had a bi—huge impact on increasing productivity. The amount of production you get from a given acre for a given dollar amount and the farmers today are producin' so many times more product from fewer acres than ever before. And it's because of the research that's developing new varieties, more efficient, more effective production practices and with limited—more and more limited resources.

TM: Scott, we should change tapes.

SL: Oh, okay.

[Tape stopped]

[03:07:39] SL: Trey, is this tape four?

TM: Yes, it is.

SL: Okay. You're doin' quite well. You look like you're holding up pretty well. I think you're holding up better than I am.

EW: [*Laughs*] You—the heat's taken its toll, but I can't believe we're already at tape four. It's gone by in a hurry.

SL: It goes fast, doesn't it? And that's also a good sign that you're not really suffering through it too much.

EW: Not too bad.

SL: Yeah.

EW: Not too bad.

SL: If it was really dragging . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . you'd be thinking, "Okay, I gotta [*EW laughs*] do this some more, but" . . .

EW: "Let's get this over with." [*Laughs*]

[03:08:12] SL: Well, this last hour we really got into the meat of where you are really strong with your enthusiasm and your knowledge and what you can feel you can do to contribute to those around you and to the effort that Farm Bureau—that you—there's—obviously you are totally—have bought into Farm Bureau and believe in Farm Bureau making a difference for the

best. And that's so strong.

[03:08:48] EW: Without a doubt, and the thing about Farm Bureau is it's not the employees. It's not the structure. It's the people that basically volunteer, people that also believe in what the organization's all about, that give their time and their energies to it to be county and state leaders in the organization. And these are salt-of-the-earth people. That's your rural families that have strong morals, strong ethics, and they just—they believe in what they're doin'. They believe in the importance of agriculture and what it does, and they give it their all. And they're good people to work with, and that's what makes a career of thirty-five, forty years possible. That's what keeps you goin' to be able to sustain that length of a career. It's the opportunity to work with people like you see in Farm Bureau.

[03:09:56] SL: You know, maybe you should talk about some of those families that are so committed and believe in what they are doing. And it's not just about Farm Bureau, but what they are doing with their land and with their families and with the community. Are there some stories in there somewhere?

EW: Yeah, the—probably an endless number of stories, but in general, it's people that—they're devoted to preserving and protecting—people that are not involved in agriculture don't have

a clue anymore, you know. And I am fond of saying when I was growin' up, I grew up on the farm. People that I went to school with, that I was surrounded with, were—had ties to the farm. And even though Arkansas is generally a rural state still today, most of the people don't understand the farm life. "What's the draw? Why are—why do people want to live out in the farms, and what are they doin', and how are they doin' it?" And there's a lot of misconception. There's a lot of people that have good intentions in the world, wantin' to make it a better place that look at agriculture and some of the things that agriculturalists do, the producers of the food and fiber do, and they don't understand it, and they misinterpret it. They think that plowin' the field is a waste of resources—that it's destroying the land. They think that the keeping of the animals is inhumane to 'em, and they just don't understand that, in my opinion, God put those animals on this earth to serve man, not the other way around. And as long as you're taking care of those resources and treatin' 'em right, they're productive. They prosper, they propagate, they—and they're servin' the purpose that God intended for 'em to serve when he put 'em on the earth. And we—the biggest challenges that producers of agriculture face today are those individuals that don't understand all that—those

environmental extremists—those animal-welfare extremists that are tryin' to influence policy to limit the ability to produce the food and fiber that we all have to have to sustain ourself. And it—that's the biggest challenge that agriculture has today. [03:12:34] So you've got people out here that are doin' what they believe in—that they're doin' a good service in providing food and producing food. And they're doin' it in a way that research shows is sustainable. That it's been being done for over hundreds of years now, and the land is still productive and the—they're doin' it in a way that I think the earth was put together to be there at the serv—for the service of mankind.

[03:13:11] SL: I would guess some of that comes from, you know—the folks that aren't involved with agriculture that think that they're tryin' to make the world a better place. And maybe they think of animals and stock as pets, like their dog or their cat. And you just can't treat—you would never treat their dog like that . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . or their cat like that. Or you'd never certainly slaughter them or eat them or anything [*laughs*] like that. It's a . . .

EW: And it's all a matter of keepin' things in the right perspective, and you know, we've got people today that I—we've got a pet.

We've got a dog that stays in the house and is a part of the family, but it's an animal that—and we're charged with takin' care of it. But a lot of people are puttin' human values on that animal as opposed to animal values, and there's a difference. And I think society in general is evolved over time to not understand that there's a difference in all that. And it's—it makes it difficult in agricultural production, and people are goin' out and terrorizing production facilities, destroyin' 'em, burnin' 'em because they don't agree with the way that it's bein' done. And we're just all screwed up in this [*laughs*] world.

[03:14:51] SL: You know, I wasn't aware that that kind of stuff was goin' on but . . .

EW: It does all the time.

SL: That's just remarkable.

EW: But at the same time, the people that are producin' animals have the responsibility to make sure that they're well taken care of, that they're fed, that they're watered, and have their needs met. But you've got to differentiate between the animals and the people. They're just different.

[03:15:21] SL: I guess I can understand some concern for waste products and the adverse effects, if that's not controlled and . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . taken care of—that I can see some arguments there and some improvements that have made a difference in that—some regulations that have—that came along that . . .

EW: That . . .

SL: . . . addressed that . . .

EW: That's right.

SL: . . . effectively. But I also can see how things that can get over regulated to a point of absurdity—that . . .

EW: [*SL laughs*] And you know, there's—we've got to take care of our streams—our forests. We've got to protect all that. Keep your streams pollution free, and this country has done a tremendous amount of—made a tremendous amount of progress in the last thirty years in cleaning up waterways and this kind of thing. But to think that your Mississippi River can ever—will ever be a pristine waterway is not reasonable. You know, the state of Oklahoma has imposed some water-quality guidelines on some west Oklahoma waterways that are beyond what they were before man even inhabited that area. And to think that that's reasonable is just not attainable. So we've got to take care of our resources. We've got to be able to do that while we're producing food for a growin' population and a hungry world. [03:16:59] And you know, another issue that

agriculture's dealing with—so much of the things that we do are facing are political decisions rather than decisions based on right or wrong or what's good or what's bad. And a lot of that—talkin' about the breeding of genetics and of plants and the ability to produce more nutritious food through genetic engineering and this kind of thing, but your African countries won't let those grains and that food in your European countries in to feed their people. And they're basically using techniques that we've used for centuries to crossbreed plants and this kind of thing. They're just helpin' facilitate that process, and there's no—absolutely no negatives that have been shown to nutritionally enhanced rice that helps prevent blindness in kids, but yet the countries won't let those grains in. So we're gonna have to see some political easing and acceptance of technology and—if a lot of your countries are ever going to be able to pull themselves up and give their people the opportunity to have a better life. And agriculture can provide that if it's just allowed to.

[03:18:40] SL: You know, you—after we ran out of tape, we'd touched on population growth and the challenges that that presents . . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . to the agricultural community and, really, the whole world.

I mean, there's only so much real estate.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And there's only so much production. And so what do you all—how do you all grasping a hold of that problem?

EW: Again, it goes back to research and development, R and D, and the adoption of technology. You know, being able to produce more with less land, less inputs, and making sure that the inputs that you use—that they're used to maximize the benefit that you receive from 'em—the technology of where they're usin' satellites to control where chemicals or fertilizers are put on the field so that they can specifically put those where they're needed the most to maximize the production. Those kind of technologies limit the amount of chemicals and fertilizers and things that are used, yet enhance the productivity of the ground because you're puttin' it right where it's needed, and that technology is really just beginning to come along. And you're seein' a tremendous amount of potential there to do things to produce more yet use less resources and making sure that the resources you use are targeted and utilized, rather than they're runnin' off in the river and this kind of thing.

[03:20:26] SL: That reminds me of a really—a fascinating segment of Stanley Reed's interview. You know, he went back to the

farm after he got his degree.

EW: Right.

SL: And he applied the technological advancements in surveying techniques to determine where to shave a field and where to add to a field as far as the elevations go because it was all about irrigation and . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . getting an even amount . . .

EW: Getting the most . . .

SL: . . . of performance . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . out of what you had in front of you.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And up until that time, it was hit or miss . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you pretty much irrigated the whole field, even though there would be a high spot here and a drowned spot here. He was able . . .

EW: And . . .

SL: . . . to turn that around. And it made a big difference in the production.

[03:21:21] EW: And the same is true in the technology that allows

the targeted use of your pesticides. So rather than sprayin' everything, you spray exactly where the weeds are, the insects are, and the fertilizer is placed in the field exactly in the spot [*beeping*] where the fertility is lacking and it's needed, and the whole realm of technology is—holds the key for meeting that population growth that we're lookin' at in the world over the next thirty to forty years. It's a—it all revolves around technology so that we don't have to plow up the world that's not suited for agricultural production, that we're able to keep it out of production, keep it in grass land, let the cattle feed on it. Let the other animals or whatever have that, and plow that that's productive and capable of being used for its maximum benefit. And we—the—in the state of Arkansas, we've got probably four or five million acres of land that once was in agricultural production that no longer is because the technology has allowed us to increase production on the good land. The marginal land is goin' back to forest and pasture and this kind of thing. So all that is tied to the advances in—from research and technological development.

[03:23:00] SL: Here's kind of a selfish question, being that we're a part of the University of Arkansas. How does the University of Arkansas agriculture college, the Bumpers College and its

research arm, how does it rank among land-grant universities in the research being done? The Tyson—the poultry . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . center and all that. Are we kind of players?

EW: Oh, we're huge players. Huge players. Arkansas is very blessed with a—an extremely strong land-grant university division of agriculture that provides the—not only the education—meets the educational needs for folks lookin' for careers in agriculture, but also the research and then transfer of that technology through the Cooperative Extension Service back out to the end users, the agricultural producers. We're—we've probably got, if not the best, one of the top five or ten division of ags in the country in Arkansas. And that's been proven by the productivity increases that we've seen in the poultry industry. One of the—we're first—either first or second dependin' on the year as far as the production of poultry. Largest rice-producing state. We're a major—historically major cotton producer. You know, we rank in the top ten to fifteen nationally in the production of probably twenty different commodities. [03:24:36] So all that is reliant upon the strong university agricultural research programs. And it's a partnership because not only is the university providing that technology, but the producers are puttin' money back in.

They're—they self assess and put millions of dollars annually back into research directed toward their crops that they're producin'. So it's a strong, strong partnership. And over the years we've seen programs in other states kind of fade away and go more toward private research programs, and your public research has kind of faded away. But the industry in Arkansas is very much committed to maintaining a strong public research program through the division of ag.

[03:25:38] SL: That agriculture or the extension service is—isn't it, like, the most popular thing . . .

EW: It's . . .

SL: . . . that the university engages in as far as . . .

EW: It probably reaches more people than any one program that the—that's in the university, and that's because they have a presence in all seventy-five counties. And they have programs that are directed toward all segments of your population, whether it's home gardening, whether it's, you know, lawn care, landscape—whatever the issue is, the extension has a program to help individuals adopt and adapt. And so it reaches more people, without a doubt, than any other program in the university system.

[03:26:36] SL: That's really somethin' to be proud of.

EW: Yes.

SL: Because that, in turns, affects many other lives.

EW: Yeah, and it enhances the economic well-being of the state. People have the information they need to improve their situations, and the extension is a huge part of that.

[03:27:00] SL: Let's kind of—you know what, I have a feeling that as we talk now, we'll continue to come back to the role of agriculture in our world. And I'm talking—speaking in a global sense but I also want to get back to your story as well because there's something quite remarkable about how well versed you are on the issues at hand that face us. And that just didn't happen. I mean, I know that it started with your mom and dad and stressing education and your grandparents and experiencing the rural life in a small community and surviving [*laughter*] your freshman year at the [*laughs*] University of Arkansas and getting smart about your life and your choices. And so I want to get back to a little bit of your story. Now you know, I know that as soon—shortly after you got your master's degree, your graduate degree, you're with Farm Bureau, and you mentioned Dean Hardy, I guess, and how—what an influence he was. Tell—give me some chronology about your path with Farm Bureau and how you've evolved to where you've got this great understanding of

what's at stake.

[03:28:37] EW: First of all, you know, I didn't grow up dreamin' about bein' a Farm Bureau employee. I—honestly, until I interviewed for a job with Farm Bureau, I really didn't even know there was a Farm Bureau or what it was or what it did. So I—it wasn't something that I always had a dream about doin', or it's somethin' that, you know, God sends you down these different roads and these different paths in life, and you make decisions to go left or right. And you just—you end up somewhere, and that's kind of been the way I've gone through life. And I've been given an opportunity at different times and for whatever reason, and I don't know why sometimes that I've been given opportunities that I've been given. But it goes back to some of these people that saw somethin' in you, like your Stanley Reeds and your W. F. Wrights, and they gave you a chance to prove yourself. [03:29:40] And I—probably the one thing that had the biggest impact, again, was the strong work ethic that my family gave me, and I always said, "I'm—I'll never be the smartest person anywhere, but there won't be many people that'll work any harder at accomplishing something than I will." And I think that hard work has opened up doors of opportunity for me and allowed me to grow and increase my abilities and

opportunities within Farm Bureau, you know. [03:30:20] If you sit back and just wait on things to come to you, then sometimes those things may never come. So you've got to work at it and continue and hope to be ready whenever opportunities present themselves, and hopefully I have been able and ready in large part when those opportunities came along. But you know, I started out with Farm Bureau probably at about as lowly of a position as you could have. And I worked hard, and people gave me chances to prove myself to continue to grow my career. And for whatever reason, they did that. I don't ?know?. But again, your folks like W. F. Wright, your Stanley Reeds, your Randy Veaches that were there and supported you, and whenever you fell down, they were there to help pick you up and give you a pat on the back and a word of encouragement and a word of advice on what to do to better yourself, and that's just been my career. I've never been—I don't think ?I've? done anything to really distinguish myself, other than work hard and believe in what I did.

SL: There's no getting around working hard.

EW: No.

SL: It—you can get lucky, but still, if you haven't worked hard, your luck will run out.

EW: At some point.

SL: You make your luck.

EW: That's right.

[03:32:05] SL: So I feel like—can you say something about W. F. Wright? This is someone I have no idea who he is.

EW: Yeah, right.

SL: And so it sounds like to me he was one of your mentors, helped guide you, and he saw—he did see something in you, obviously. But what about him? What about him made you all connect? What was it?

EW: Probably—he had a way of instilling almost a fear level. You were afraid to fail. [*SL laughs*] You—he was the type of personality that he wanted you to succeed. He wanted to give you what you needed to help you succeed. He was good about doin' that in a way that was effective. But he made you want to reach his expectations some way. It's kind of hard to define. I've never really thought a whole lot about that, but he was an individual that demanded your respect, and you wanted it—you—and you worked hard in order to accomplish what he knew you could do. He was the grandfather—there's probably still six or seven employees in Farm Bureau, and Mr. Wright's been gone for twenty-five years now, and there's still six or seven

employees that he hired right out of college that have spent their entire career. And every one of 'em has been, you know, successful and extremely effective in their job assignments because he knew—he could recognize skills. He could recognize abilities and talents, and he challenged you. And he got you to perform at the level he knew you could.

[03:34:21] SL: Must've been something about him that drew respect from folks, and you didn't want to fail him.

EW: You didn't want to fail him. You didn't want to let him down. Yeah, that's a good way to put it.

SL: Well, I'm sorry I never got to meet him. Sounds like a good guy.

EW: He was.

[03:34:40] SL: Let's see, now what—you know, I'm gonna run the gamut here . . .

EW: Okay.

SL: . . . on some of these names because they obviously meant something to you, and maybe you haven't thought it out about how exactly they meant something to you. But they're folks that came—that were there and did something that made you better. So whoe—who—you mentioned Dean Hardy. Is there anything else you want to say about Dean Hardy?

EW: The one I want to talk about's Stanley Reed.

SL: Well, let's talk about Stanley Reed because . . .

EW: You could—got to.

SL: . . . I have spent some time with Stanley Reed.

EW: You know Stanley Reed, and you know what kind of person he was.

SL: I do.

EW: But Stanley kind of got started in Farm Bureau from—as a leader—as a volunteer about the time I got started in Farm Bureau as an employee, and you know, Stanley was an individual that was committed to service in whatever endeavor he participated in. He recognized the need to be involved and engaged and try to help shape its future and this kind of thing. And he saw that as an opportunity in Farm Bureau to help shape the future of agriculture. And so he got engaged and involved and volunteered his time and energies. And we kind of came up in the organization together, and I always had a lot of respect for Stanley. I got the opportunity back in the early [19]80s to start workin' with Stanley in different program areas, and we just kind of bonded. Our kids were all about the same age, and Stanley and Charlene, when they'd come to a meeting, they'd bring their kids, and we'd bring ours, and they'd play together.

And so just over time, we grew closer and closer in that relationship. And as Stanley rose up through the ranks of the organization, without doubt that gave me opportunities because of that relationship. He obviously saw something in me as well that—where he could, he wanted to help me out. And I have no doubt, and I don't have any first-hand knowledge, but have no doubt that he was an important player in the decision to allow me the opportunity to be executive vice president of Arkansas Farm Bureau. He was on the board at that time and I just—I know that he helped promote me for that position. And then once I got in that position, he was always there as a friend, as a counselor to—anytime I had a challenge to meet, he was always there to listen and give me words of encouragement and advice. And he's pulled me out of more fires than I can begin to recount. He—it just—he was always there for me. And not only on a professional basis but as a personal friend and close acquaintance just almost to the point of bein' a brother.

[03:38:07] SL: It sounds like to me that you guys trusted each other.

EW: Wholeheartedly.

SL: It—in . . .

EW: Without . . .

SL: . . . in every regard.

EW: Without any question. Totally. Totally.

SL: You know, as far as the work goes, if you have an opportunity to choose who you want to work with and have around you, you choose the folks that you can trust—that you can rely on. And I have a feeling that this was a—as much of a back-and-forth thing as it was Stanley rising you up. I think that there was some support going on there both ways that he probably needed to have as well.

[03:38:51] EW: I would hope it—and I feel like there was, that, you know, somehow I, from time to time, was able to pay Stanley back and give him some words of encouragement or advice or insight into somethin' that he found helpful and useful. But for people that never had the chance to be around Stanley Reed, that never had the opportunity to get to know him, he was an incredible individual. Not—he was such a strong person. He was—his morals, his ethics were unquestionable. They—you just—you knew that the decisions that Stanley would make would be based on the right criteria and never what's in it for Stanley. Never what's—how he might benefit. It's what was for the greater good. And probably one of the most articulate—without a doubt, the smartest person I've ever been around and

the most articulate person. The most well respected, most widely known. You know, he could walk into any room, and there'd be people there that knew him, that had some kind of relationship with him, and to just be able to follow behind him and watch him was just [*SL laughs*] amazing. It was just a—an experience, a positive experience, every time that you got to go somewhere with him and just watch him.

[03:40:32] SL: Marianna.

EW: Marianna, Arkansas.

SL: Marianna, Arkansas. Well, thanks. I mean, I can relate to everything you said, so . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: And I . . .

EW: Anybody that knows . . .

SL: . . . really can't say much else.

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . than what you just said because . . .

EW: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: He's a—he was a keeper.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And he's a great loss. It was a great loss.

EW: He was a great loss, and the state of Arkansas's a better place

for the fact Stanley Reed lived and served in the state of Arkansas and served in a lot of different capacities and gave so much to so many people.

[03:41:07] SL: You know, he took us to lunch—interview—they were havin' a—some kind of—it may have been a Farm Bureau event where they had all kinds of big vats of different meats and foods at some local—maybe a Farm Bureau facility there . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . at Marianna. And he walks into that room and I—it does not matter who was in that room—if it was, you know, a kid or an old guy or someone that—with beat-up overalls or someone in a suit, they all knew him . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and they all addressed him. And they—you couldn't deny the amount of respect that—he kind of just lit up a room when he walked . . .

EW: He did.

SL: . . . into that room. It was . . .

EW: He did.

SL: . . . really quite amazing. And of course, you know, we were his guests, and so [*laughter*] you know, it was very humbling to . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: You know—you don't really know until you get out there with him just what kind of guy—how he's effected everyone that he touches. It's just amazing.

EW: Everyone he touches . . .

SL: It's amazing.

EW: . . . can—has a story to tell about how Stanley Reed impacted their life. Yeah.

[03:42:19] SL: Okay, well is there anyone else? I mean, you know, is there someone else that you want to mention that meant something to you or somehow or another inspired you to keep goin' and keep—and have the faith that you had in what you were doing and how you were going about doing it.

EW: The other person I would mention that I have almost as much respect for, if not as much, is the current president of Arkansas Farm Bureau, and he was a personal friend of Stanley's as well, and he learned from Stanley and has the kind of character that Stanley had, and that's Randy Veach. [03:43:06] And Randy has fallen—followed Stanley's footprints—footsteps as a leader in the organization and kind of followed right behind. And when Stanley decided to step down as president, Randy stepped up and has the same type of convictions and has had a—has always also been there to help build me up and, you know, on those

days when you're down, show you how—that things can get better and how things can get better and provide that guidance and counsel. And the common thread of both these individuals is they believe in their creator. They believe in a higher power, and they trust in the Lord with all their heart and their soul and their might. And that's their day-to-day driver and what keeps them goin'. And you know, they just—they set such a strong example for people that are around them to live your life and make a difference. And Randy Veach and Stanley Reed—to have two people that strong [*SL laughs*] in all that they do in a leadership role in an organization—Farm Bureau's just tremendously lucky to have that kind of people at the helm.

[03:44:35] SL: Now, where did Randy come from?

EW: Randy's from Mississippi County. He was a cotton farmer. Grew up on the—very similar life to Stanley in that he loved the farm and has kind of devoted his life to agriculture, and he grew up on the family farm, cotton farm. And I think they bonded just the first time they met, and [*SL laughs*] they formed a relationship that helped—of synergy that helped both of 'em as they grew in the organization. And you just—I live my life wishin' that I were half as—half the person that they are as far as quality of person. So those are the two individuals over the

past ten years, particularly, and Stanley goin' back even another fifteen years before that, that have helped shaped my professional life in Farm Bureau. And did so not as a mentor or as a professional staff person but as a volunteer that had a huge impact on me.

[03:46:00] SL: Well, let's talk about—I know that we'll get back to Farm Bureau, but I think we ought to talk a little bit about your family now because we're kind of on this path of things—people that you care about that have—that are an influence in your life. And you have a—by all accounts, a remarkable family. So I think we should talk a little bit about them right now.

[03:46:28] EW: Yeah, that's a—any accomplishment that I have made in my lifetime—the greatest is the outcome of my family and who they are and what they are. And my wife had a very—extremely successful career as an elementary school teacher. She was one that touched, you know, a lot of lives and is one of those individuals that young people—that they're gone on, and gotten their college degrees, and gone on to a successful professional career, comes back, and said, "Miss Welch, you're the one that set the stage for me to do whatever it is that I'm able to do now." And so she gave her heart and soul as a school teacher. Only taught for twenty years. She didn't start teachin'

until our youngest child started to school. She stayed home—was a stay-at-home mom because that was important to us for her to be able to be there at that point in our kids' lives, so she didn't start to work after we moved from Fayetteville to Little Rock and she moved down here pregnant with our son. And didn't go to work then until our daughter started to school. [03:47:47] So—but she—because I traveled so much durin'—in my career, she was always the stable force in our family. And she helped mold and guide and develop our young—our youngsters, our young children, and did a fantastic job and did it—a lot of it by herself because I wasn't here. And so—but . . .

[03:48:22] SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about y'all before the children. We'll get back . . .

EW: M'kay.

SL: We'll get back to your time with the children, but I recall that y'all met and went to a place called The Rink in Fayetteville.

EW: Right.

SL: Blind date. Ten months later, you're married.

EW: Right.

[03:48:45] SL: And so what was it—I mean, you saw something in her, and maybe you were young, and maybe you were both naive, but there was some—there was something about y'all

together that—I mean, have you thought about how it is that as young as you were, you—there was this commitment that happened that was just—it had to be understood but not known somehow. I don't . . .

EW: I don't know. The first time we saw each other we just—things just kind of clicked, and I was very shy. Very—I have always been one that didn't talk and was hard to—it was difficult for me to build a relationship like—but from the time she walked downstairs and I saw her [*SL laughs*]—you know, it was . . .

SL: It was over.

EW: . . . there. It was over. It was there. [*SL laughs*] And I think it was the same way for both of us, and [*SL laughs*] I don't know what the quality was—what the traits were that we saw in each other. Her childhood was not unlike mine. Her family was a very loving family, very supportive. Helped her develop a strong character and a work ethic. And so we had similar backgrounds from that standpoint, and it just clicked. And I don't—it's just—it's been a tremendously enjoyable thirty-eight years now that we've been able to go through life together. It's—probably very few relationships are—can have the bond that—it's just un—words aren't there to describe it. We just—she's always there for me, has been supportive every step of the way, is always the

bright spot and opportunity to come home to. It's—you know, keeps you goin'.

[03:51:12] SL: Now, I think that's a key. Always something you come home to. It's a—I think that's a good acknowledgement that . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . there is a place where there's refuge and there's . . .

EW: That's . . .

SL: You're out of the storm and . . .

EW: . . . the refuge.

SL: . . . and you know that you're safe.

EW: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And that's kind of hard for men, I think, to acknowledge but, you know, they—there's a—it's not just a . . .

[03:51:45] EW: She's a much stronger woman than I am a strong man. [*SL laughs*] I tell you, she . . .

SL: There's nothin' like strong women.

EW: [*Laughs*] That's right. That's right. [*SL laughs*]

SL: Well, if you think of—I wish there was some kind of anecdote that you could conjure up that—something that happened while you guys were out traveling or something. Or maybe she said something to you that [*snaps*] turned the light on for you . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . as far as "I hear that" and [*EW laughs*] all of a sudden, "My gosh, I don't need to look any further," or something like that. I don't know. And I don't know when that would've happened in my life . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . either, but I'm just saying—you never—you—it's hard, and I'm with you on it's hard to define exactly how it comes about. But somehow or another, early on . . .

EW: For us it was, you know, from the first moment that . . .

SL: Love at first sight.

EW: Yeah, yeah.

SL: That's a remarkable thing.

EW: That it is.

SL: Especially in today's age.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And that it holds like that.

[03:52:59] EW: And the strange thing about it is, when you look at the characteristics, the personalities of the two of us, how different we are—if there's ever an example of opposites attracting, that's it because I'm very reserved, quiet. She's always—when she walks in the room gains the attention of

everybody [*SL laughs*] in the room, you know, is outgoin', talkative, and I'll sit over in the corner and be the . . .

SL: Hang on.

EW: Hang—just hang on. [*SL laughs*] And I couldn't tell you how many times I've gone to activities and functions with her that that's been the case. I'm not a social butterfly, and she is. And she just always has that ability, and she likes to get out and be active and do things, and I just like to come home at night and sit down and sit in front of the TV. But yet she keeps me goin' and drivin', and so we're very opposite in a lot of ways, but that has really kept us pulled together. We've, I guess, fed off each other's strength and supported each other's weakness.

[03:54:24] SL: Sounds like—yeah, she keeps you moving, and maybe you provide some calm . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . somehow.

EW: Yeah.

[03:54:32] SL: I don't know. Anyway, what about the kids?

EW: The kids have turned out extremely well. Neither one of us gave 'em—neither one of them gave us that much trouble in school. They weren't discipline problems. They didn't get—go out and get into a lot of trouble. They—the son, from the time he was

probably twelve, thirteen years old, he had made his mind up that he wanted to be a designer of either cars or airplanes. And . . .

SL: Really?

EW: . . . I think he's the only person I've ever known that decided what he wanted to do at that stage in his life and went on to do it. He went to the university and got a mechanical engineering degree. He pestered 'em out at Falcon Jet out here at Little—east Little Rock to give him an internship, and he kept after 'em till—I know [*SL laughs*] they said they'd do it just to get rid of him. [*SL laughs*] And he came on board and did such a great job that he's continued and had a very successful career with 'em and continues to prove himself and his value to 'em every day, and so . . .

SL: So he's—he'd . . .

EW: . . . I'm extremely pleased with . . .

SL: He actually designs stuff and . . .

EW: He . . .

SL: . . . solves problems with designs and . . .

EW: And most recently has served—it's—Dassault is a French company based out of Paris, and they basically build the planes in France, fly 'em over here as a shell, and finish 'em out. And

most recently over the last two or three years, he's been engaged in France in helping design and build and develop a new airplane for 'em and putting the liaison from the finish out here to the basic engineering of it over there. And so he is doin' what he always wanted to do, is to be involved in design.

[03:56:38] SL: That's really exciting. So is he married? Does he have a wife?

EW: He—he's thirty-four years old and, this spring about three months ago, got engaged and . . .

SL: Congratulations.

EW: To a wonderful girl that we're extremely excited to have join in our family and—had the opportunity to take her to Paris with him where he engaged out on the [*SL laughs*] banks of the Seine River in front of the Louvre or some museum over there. So you know, it was a fairy-tale-type engagement, and they're scheduled to get married next April.

[03:57:22] SL: Well, big congratulations.

EW: Thank you.

SL: That sounds beautiful. That's exciting.

EW: I'm just as excited and proud of my daughter, the mother of our on . . .

SL: And—oh, no, wait a minute. Now, what—what's your son's

name?

EW: Wesley.

SL: Wesley.

EW: Wesley.

SL: And your daughter's name . . .

EW: Is Natalie.

SL: Okay, Natalie. Now let's . . .

EW: Natalie is the mother of our three-year-old grandson . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

EW: . . . and—who is a story into itself, but [*SL laughs*] she has her master's degree in speech therapy, speech pathology, and is a contract speech therapist here in the Little Rock area and is extremely successful and good at what she does and is even more successful and good at bein' a mother to our grandson.

[03:58:14] SL: So she's three years younger.

EW: Three years younger.

SL: And to FYI, I have a daughter that just got her degree in art therapy. She's an art therapist.

EW: Okay.

SL: So—and they both provide different sorts of therapy, but in Elise's case, my daughter's case, she works with people that have refused to speak at all, and after a month or two with her,

they now talk.

EW: Wow.

SL: So it . . .

EW: Talk about makin' a difference in people's lives.

SL: I think that they could cross paths at some point.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Anyway, that's exciting, and I know what it is to be proud of the children.

EW: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

[03:58:57] EW: You know, as I look back at my life and my career and everything, the biggest accomplishment has nothin' to do with the job or the opportunities from a professional standpoint. My biggest accomplishment is my family and what they've turned out to be—the kids have turned out to be. I couldn't be prouder. And that'll always be the highlight of my life.

SL: You know, it's—there's nothing like seein' them stand on their own feet.

EW: That—that's right, and they're both independent, live on their own, and able to do their own. And if I were to die tomorrow, I'd know—I'd go away knowin' that the kids are gonna be able to take care of themselves, that they're goin' to be successful in

whatever they do and set their minds to, and they can make it without us.

[03:59:57] SL: Yeah, I sense not only make it without us, but actually . . .

EW: Prosperin' and . . .

SL: . . . take that gift, and it be better for them.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Somehow or another, they'll have a better life . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and that's . . .

EW: That's what you're—what you set out to do is to give your kids an opportunity to have a better life and to do better than you had. So you're right, and if you can accomplish that, man, the rest of it's gravy.

[04:00:24] SL: Okay, now what about the grandson?

EW: Grandson Tucker. Three years old. You know, I keep goin' back to the fact that I traveled a lot while my kids were growin' up, and I missed a lot of things.

SL: Yeah.

EW: I'd—and that—being gone and bein' so young that I didn't know to appreciate them and the things that they did as they were growin' up, I've made a decision early on that when I had a

grandchild, I was goin' to not miss those things that I had missed whenever my kids were growin' up. And it's been such a treat to watch an individual as he has been a sponge to . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] They are.

EW: . . . learn things and . . .

SL: The little recorder.

EW: . . . watch 'em grow up, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EW: . . . I can't believe I missed all that with my own children.

[04:01:15] SL: Well, apparently, though, they've turned out well and they're fine. But I—don't you think that it's your job now to pretty much spoil your grandson, and it's your children's job to make sure that that doesn't hurt them? [*Laughs*]

EW: I don't want Tucker to do without anything, but [*SL laughs*] at the same time, I'm—I got too much discipline in me to let him run rampant. And . . .

SL: Right.

EW: . . . so I do try to instill right and wrong from—in him.

SL: That's good. Yeah, that's—I think that's part of spoiling . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . too. Well, okay. So again, if there's anything else you want to say about family, the door is open all the time. And you may

. . .

EW: Right.

SL: . . . think of somethin' as we're talking here. [04:02:10] We had been talking about some of the issues that are facing us as a human race and our planet and the role of agriculture and how, you know, basically, you gotta have food.

EW: You gotta have food. You gotta be able to eat to . . .

SL: You gotta be able to eat.

EW: . . . to sustain yourself.

SL: It's part of what it takes to live.

EW: Yeah.

SL: So you know, I know we've relied heavily—we're relying heavily on research, and we know that science is a path for sustainability for life on the planet. There's so many issues going on now about the health of the planet and adjusting our ideas of what our stewardship is.

EW: Mh-hmm.

[04:03:07] SL: You know, it's kind of—I liken it to we have a gift.

EW: That's right.

SL: And it's—it is life, and the planet has its life, too. And what you do with your life and our stewardship of our planet's life are—they're together. So do you see research and agriculture in the

best intentions of the agricultural community? You just—it's not gonna happen alone. I mean, it seems to me that the rest of the—the rest of us have to get involved, and the consumers have to get involved and not just the producers.

[04:03:52] EW: Well, I think it's gonna be important that people understand what goes into producing their food that—where it comes from, what goes into it, and understand that so that the decisions that are made are supportive of that in a way that protect the planet that we live on. And we can all survive on the planet. We can take care of it. We can do it in a way that is sustainable that we all continue to have a future. You know, there's a lot of questions about global warming, climate change, and all that, and I don't think we know all the answers but—or understand all that's goin' on. But I do think that climate has evolved, and from the beginning of time we've gone through the ice age, we've gone through different eras, and climate's changing all the time. I don't think you can deny that there's climate change. The question is, what's the impact of mankind on that climate change? Is it accelerating it? Is it impacting that—influencing it in any way? And I'm not sure that we totally know that. But at the same time, we are here on the earth, and so our challenge is to have the least impact that we can on the

environment while we're doin' what we have to do to sustain ourselves.

[04:05:36] SL: Yeah, I—you know, there's also—I heard something the other day or read it that as far as the American population goes that here in the next twenty years or so, 100 percent will be obese. That—and you know, I'm not so much sure that that's a—as much a nutritional thing as a behavioral thing.

EW: Behavioral. I think it—I think that's exactly what it is. We've become a society that's a little bit lazy. We don't get the exercise. We don't do the physical activities that we do. And a lot of that's because we have riding lawnmowers. We have, you know—the technology has developed over time that allows us to do things in a way that are much less physical. We come home at night, and we sit down with—in front of the TV, and what we eat may not be the most—as nutritional as it used to be. But at the same time, I grew up eatin' eggs and bacon every day, and you know, I don't know that that was all that bad for me. And they're sayin' now that eggs or bacon aren't necessarily all that good for you. But I think it's a lifestyle deal more than it is, and I know if I were to be more regimented in an exercise program, I'd be a whole lot better off and weigh a whole lot less.

SL: Yeah.

EW: And I just don't have that drive or that initiative to get out there and do it, but . . .

[04:07:14] SL: Well, also I think some of the behavioral aspects are also the quantity, you know.

EW: Yeah.

SL: Somewhere along the line, eating and feeling good got put together, and it was like if you just ate more, you'd feel better.

EW: Feel better.

SL: But really, you know, I remember Coach Broyles saying one time, "Nothing feels better than thin." [*Laughter*] You know . . .

EW: I never had a weight problem until the last probably six or seven years. I started putting on weight. I was—always been very skinny and could eat just about anything and everything. And now that I've gotten to a point in my life where I do start puttin' weight on when I don't watch what I eat, I don't feel near as good as I—you can—it does make an impact on you and it—I think he's right on target. Skinny's—makes you feel good, so . . .

[04:08:17] SL: Well, Ewell, I feel like we're at a place where we're startin' to think in terms of anything that we have missed or anything that you want to talk about that we haven't talked about or maybe we didn't finish talking about. I wish that I

knew more about your expertise and that I could tap into that. But I feel like you've given me a pretty good and, still, at the same time, broad range of just what it is that Farm Bureau and your commitment to agriculture and a healthy food supply. I get that. I get that from you that you have a great passion for that. Is there anything else that you want to touch on? I mean, we can stop and take a break, and you can—give you some more time . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . to think about it? But I'm really appreciative . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . of all the time that you've given us today.

EW: Scott, you've helped me as I've gone through this to think about and hit on things that I hadn't thought about in years and thought within myself about things. And so I've said a whole lot more about me and my history than I would've ever thought I would've [*SL laughs*] been able to have talked about goin' into this. As far as somethin' we've missed, I think I've said more than enough. [*Laughter*]

[04:09:58] SL: Well, you know, I'm from the—my position is I really never get enough.

EW: Yeah.

SL: And I always feel like I shortchange somebody because I'm only here for a day . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . and you've lived a lifetime. So I know there's lots of nuggets that you have that you haven't thought of. I know that you will—and this is not uncommon—when we get done with this stuff and we're gone, tonight you'll be about to fall asleep, and you'll go, "My gosh, I didn't" . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . "even talk about that person" . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . or "I didn't talk about that day" or, you know, that revival, or you know, whatever—you know, that car or that person . . .

EW: Right.

SL: That teacher or that . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . town or that movie or—you know, there's all these things that influence us all the time, but it—you can't just make it all happen in one day.

EW: Right.

[04:10:52] SL: And so I always feel like there is more there, and I just want to let you know that I'm ready to stay as long . . .

EW: Yeah.

SL: . . . as you like.

EW: Well, I—this has been such a incredible opportunity and experience to sit here and have this conversation with you and to—for you to help me pull things up out of the past that—some things that I hadn't thought about in years and years. And you know, I never felt like my life has been one that has been a story that really needed to be told. It's—I've always kind of felt like it was a pretty common life, and to have this opportunity to sit before you and open up and share this, that maybe there's somethin' that I've said today that will end up makin' it worth y'all's time to have spent the day here with me.

[04:11:49] SL: There's no question that—hopefully, we've made your life better.

EW: Without a doubt.

SL: 'Cause I know that you've made others' lives better. So I hope that somewhere you will find some goodness in this for yourself.

EW: Well . . .

SL: You can pass on.

EW: The—this program that's being done through the Pryor Center is—I can see how future generations will have the opportunity and sit down and look at some of the people that have come

before them and the things that they have done and the impacts that they have made in allowin'—that allows future generations to do the things that they'll be doin'. This is a very valuable service that y'all are doin', and I want to thank Senator Pryor and the Pryor Center and y'all for takin' this project on. It's a great activity.

[04:12:47] SL: It is a great activity. We're very blessed to be a part of it. Listen—and I forgot to do this yesterday with **Vic**, but one of the things . . .

TM: Hey Scott, we've gotta change tapes.

SL: We gotta change tapes. [*Unclear words*]

[Tape stopped]

[04:13:01] TM: And anytime . . .

EW: My name's Ewell Welch, and it has—it's really an honor and a privilege to be an Arkansan and to have had the opportunity to grow up in Arkansas.

TM: That's great. Let's do one more just for the fun of it. And basically the same thing, one more time.

EW: My name is Ewell Welch, and I've been privileged, and it's a truly an honor to be from Arkansas.

TM: Now let's do one more. Just even . . .

EW: Okay.

TM: . . . shorter . . .

EW: Okay.

TM: . . . this time and then just—okay.

[04:13:45] EW: I'm Ewell Welch, and I'm extremely proud to be from Arkansas.

SL: That's the money.

EW: Okay. [*SL laughs*]

TM: Good, good.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's good. Thank you.

EW: Thank you.

SL: Thank you. Thank you.

[End of Interview 04:13:59]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]