

Arkansas Governors' Project

Interview with
Sidney Sanders McMath
Little Rock, Arkansas,
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Interviewer: David Pryor

DAVID PRYOR: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm David Pryor. We want to welcome you tonight to AETN to speak with one of Arkansas' most distinguished citizens. He's going to discuss his fabulous career in politics, the military, and a law practice. His eighty-eight years truly span a significant part of Arkansas history. Of course, the person I'm speaking of is none other than Governor Sidney Sanders McMath, just experiencing his eighty-eighth birthday. He is with us this evening and we are very, very proud to welcome you, Governor McMath, as our guest.

SIDNEY SANDERS McMATH: Thank you very much. It's a privilege to be here. It's always a pleasure to appear with you, Senator, on any forum.

DP: Thank you. I want to say that this interview may be a little shabby. This is the first time I have ever been an interviewer. In the past, I have been in some uncomfortable situations being the interviewee. Thank you for being patient with me.

SM: This is the first occasion that I've had to be questioned by a United States Senator.

DP: I will do my very best. We're just going to visit tonight. We're going to talk about some Arkansas history, your role in Arkansas history, your role in the development of this state, some of the things that you have seen, and some of the things that you've been a part of. I'll begin with a bit of background, if I may. I'm going to ask you to talk about some of these things in just a bit. You were born down in Columbia County eighty-eight years ago outside the community of Magnolia. Then, it was a only a community. In 1920, when you were about eight, ten, or eleven years old, you moved from there to Hot Springs. You moved also to Smackover in Union County, for a period of time. You worked in a grocery store and you've shined shoes. You've sold newspapers. You picked cotton. They say that you were so honored and proud to become a Boy Scout that you sold your most prized possession, your bicycle, to buy a Boy Scout uniform. We'd like to hear about that after a while. What a career you've had! We'd love for you to talk about some of those very early years and your remembrances of that time in Arkansas. We would certainly like for you to expand on that for us.

SM: I was born eighty-eight years ago, on June 14. That's the day when Uncle Sam unfurled the flag, you know, and ran Old Glory up to the top of the flagpole.

DP: Very appropriate.

SM: It's a good day to remember. I've always been happy about the association of my birthday with the flag. I was born in Columbia County on the Big Creek bottom on the old McMath home place. My great grandfather, Sidney Smith McMath,

was sheriff in Columbia County. Incidentally, he was named after his great uncle, Sidney Smith of Texas. Smith was famous in the family because he was killed at the battle of Goliad. He and his detachments were going to the rescue of the Alamo.

DP: Wow! That is real history.

SM: We are proud of that connection with Texas. He [Sidney Smith McMath] was killed while he was the sheriff. He went down to arrest some bootleggers. There were three of them. One of them had a Winchester rifle. They had a gunfight and he was killed. My grandmother, Lula Mae McMath, had a large family --- eight children, boys and girls. They were all living on a farm at the time. They were of the age that they could work. They worked on the farm and kept the place going. They got the girls to school and the boys were there until they went off to work. The place we lived on was a cabin on the old McMath home place and had been used by a tenant on the farm. We lived there for about five years. My sister and I were born there. She's two years older than I am. We were born on the same day. I have some fond memories of that period in my life. I've always tried to see how far back in my life I could remember. It's sometimes very difficult to do. When you get as old as I am, it's so hard to differentiate fiction from the truth. You don't know whether or not you dreamed it.

DP: Our system just doesn't calibrate as well. I think those memories are there but it's harder to calibrate them, to bring them out to the surface.

SM: That's right.

DP: They call that a "senior moment."

SM: Right. Maybe you dreamed it or maybe somebody told you about it. If it's repeated enough, it's bound to be part of your memory.

DP: Right.

SM: There are several instances during my childhood up to ten years of age, at least, that I remember vividly and which really had an impact on my life.

DP: Tell us about them.

SM: You mentioned picking cotton. I picked cotton on a farm up to about seven, eight, or nine years of age. I was a good cotton picker. I could pick one hundred pounds a day. You got \$1.00 per pound. No, I'd get one cent per pound. I'd make \$1.00 a day.

DP: \$1.00 a day?

SM: I'd save my money.

DP: That's how you bought that bicycle.

SM: That was in Hot Springs.

DP: Okay.

SM: I was saving my money. I kept it in a sack and when I got a certain amount, I'd make stacks of it and count it. I'd always look at the date in which it was made. I was told the older a coin was, the more valuable it was. I kept it as long as I could.

DP: That was a good way to save money.

SM: I kept it as long as I could. But after a while, it's irresistible and you spend it. Most of our things were bought through the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Many of the things that people used back at that time came from the Sears and Roebuck

catalog. It was a big event in the year when the Sears and Roebuck catalog came along. The only drawback is that you can't select it, feel it, smell it and try it on.

DP: Right. You could, at that time, order a home through Sears and Roebuck. You could order a pre-built home.

SM: I suppose you could. You could certainly order everything else. I decided I'd go down to a country store about two miles from where we lived. I took some of my money with me. I was going to make some purchases. You've been in these country stores, the general stores? They have everything.

DP: Right.

SM: They have cotton seed, meal, sugar, flour, coffee, canned goods, and bananas. All of these smells blend together.

DP: Right. A great aroma.

SM: There's usually old men sitting around, a lot of them or a few old men. They were usually sitting around smoking a pipe. That pipe tobacco . . .

DP: Right. It blends in.

SM: It blends in and they've got coffee and so forth. I went in and I looked over everything real well. I remember what I purchased. The first thing I bought was a dog collar for my dog. I had a dog and his name was Buluga. We were real good companions. I bought him a dog collar and I got a pair of shoes. You had to try them on.

DP: How much did a pair of shoes cost?

SM: I don't know.

DP: About \$2.00?

SM: About \$2.00. Yes. They didn't cost very much. Of course, we wore shoes only when it was cold weather. We didn't need them otherwise. I bought a pair of blue jeans, a blue jean shirt, and I got a big Florida orange. I got a great, big, red apple. I got a Florida orange and a big apple for my sister, and I bought some chocolate drops for my mother. She loved chocolate. I went home with those prized possessions.

DP: This was your first time to do any purchasing on your own?

SM: With my cotton money, yes. I had a chance to see how people lived.

DP: That's right.

SM: It was a sort of a depression in 1928, 1929, and the 1930s. We had depression all the time in that part of south Arkansas and generally in the South. It was particularly depressed in the rural areas because we still hadn't recovered from the Civil War.

DP: If I'm not mistaken, you were moving around so your father could make a better living. You moved to Smackover over in Union County and a couple of other communities, maybe even back down to Columbia County, and then on to Hot Springs.

SM: That's right. My dad really didn't like farming, but he liked horses and he liked to deal in cattle. He would trade and traffic in horses and cows, and he would break horses. One of the reasons we went to Foreman was because it's on the Oklahoma line and he had a great opportunity to trade in livestock. People would bring him horses to break.

DP: Did you ever have to break any horses?

SM: No, I never had to break any horses, but I had to ride one several times.

DP: I'll bet you did.

SM: My dad bought a horse sight unseen, and it was over in Oklahoma, across the line.

The farmer told my dad, "You can hitch him behind your car and you can lead him home." My dad had a car with the top down. He said, "I'll do that." He took me with him. We finally found the farm where the horse was and we found the horse. My dad got acquainted with the horse. He talked to him and told him what was going to happen to get his confidence. All he brought with him was a halter and a rope. He put the halter on the horse and he tied him to the car and we started for home. The horse was very cooperative until we got off of his farm, the farm where he had lived. He sat down. He was stubborn. He wouldn't go anywhere. My dad tried several times to get him to cooperate and he wouldn't do it. Finally, my dad got a good idea. He said, "You just ride him home." I guess I was seven. "You will ride him home." I didn't have a saddle and I didn't have a bridle. He made an improvised bridle out of the halter. He tied one end of the halter and the other end, the loose end of the rope, to the halter. I got on him. My dad rode along with us for a little while. He thought we were in good shape, so he went on home. But the horse and I had some differences. We finally made it home. It was a long ride bareback. When we got home, my mother was glad to see me, but she really gave him a tongue lashing.

DP: I'll bet she did.

SM: He always bragged on me about that. He bragged on me, and he bragged on me like he used to brag on one of the big dogs he had. He had a big dog that he just

loved, when we lived on the farm. He was one of the greatest dogs you've ever seen. When he bragged on me as he bragged on that dog, well, I felt really good.

DP: Your memory is phenomenal about all of this. It's amazing you can remember that. Two times you've mentioned dogs in our interview. Don't let me forget that later on, because I am absent-minded. I want to ask you about Old Red. I want to ask you about Old Red because I remember, while growing up, a campaign issue about Old Red living at the governor's mansion. We'll get into that. Let's move now to Hot Springs. You are now what age? Twelve or so and in the school system at Hot Springs?

SM: David, before we get to Hot Springs, let me say a word. You, or we, mentioned Bussey.

DP: Yes. Bussey, Arkansas.

SM: Bussey, Arkansas. Bussey had about fifty people living there. It's a wonderful community. The train drove right through the town. Our house was right next to the track and when a train came through there, it was a water stop. If it didn't stop, it sounded like it was going right through your living room. We were talking about separating memories from imagination, dreams or something someone might have told you. There are some things about Bussey that I remember distinctly. I went to the first grade at school in Bussey. It was a one room school house. My mother walked me to school. We walked down a dirt road for about three or four miles. We got to the school house just about the time it was starting. The teacher rang a bell and we all went in. We had about 25 students, all in one room. I don't exactly remember what the preliminaries were,

because I wasn't paying attention to that. I was plotting my escape. I was going to get out of there. As soon as the preliminaries were over, all the students went to their assigned seats. My mother left the school house and I went to a window to watch her clear the school ground. As soon as she got clear of the school ground I skedaddled out. I left the school and I skedaddled over to this railroad track, which was a short cut home. I got on that railroad track and I hot-footed it toward home. There was one hazard I had to cross, which was a swamp. In this swamp, they had alligators and moccasins [aggressive water snakes]. I soft-pedaled over that swamp. Then I ran home. My mother got home and I was sitting on the front porch.

DP: You beat her home.

SM: Yes, I beat her home.

DP: That is a great story.

SM: She sent me back to school.

DP: Tell the people where Bussey is.

SM: Bussey is west of Magnolia.

DP: It's in Columbia County.

SM: Yes, in Columbia County about ten miles. Taylor is south of Bussey, and the little town is still there. The house that I lived in is still there. I was there not long ago.

DP: Tell a story about when you were growing up. The only way you could get from Magnolia to Taylor was to ride a horse.

SM: Yes. The roads were so bad.

DP: You said to yourself, “If I ever get to become governor, I’m going to pave this road some day.” Sure enough, you did!

SM: That’s right.

DP: You did it when you were governor.

SM: When I was campaigning for governor, I went down to Taylor, and the road was so bad that I had to ride my horse. I rode my horse down there. Of course, you know, the newspaper people go along, they usually are along, and I said, “If I’m elected governor, this is going to be the first road to pave.”

DP: I think that was, too.

SM: Yes.

DP: We won’t go into the governor years yet. However, speaking of rural communities like Taylor and Bussey, Smackover and others, I understand that when you became governor there were eight counties in our state that didn’t have one mile of paved roads. We’re going to talk about that in just a moment. Now, let’s move on to Hot Springs. You’re in the school system. You enjoyed debating and speech classes and you participated in some competitive speaking here and there. Did you have a teacher that inspired you in this field?

SM: One of the greatest things that happened to me was our move to Hot Springs. They had an excellent school and Hot Springs is a cosmopolitan place. You met people from all different places and backgrounds. People came there from all over the world. You talk about working? I did all kinds of work in Hot Springs as a youngster. I went to high school there.

DP: If I'm not mistaken, you went to Hot Springs High School. This particular high school has two very famous graduates: Sidney Sanders McMath and William Jefferson Clinton.

SM: Right.

DP: There must be something in the water there.

SM: They had some dedicated teachers.

DP: Dedicated teachers?

SM: One of the teachers that we had was a music teacher, Elizabeth Bow. She was an excellent music teacher and she had a glee club. I signed up with the music department because there were so many girls in that class, very attractive girls. I thought I'd join the glee club. She cast me in a musical and, of course, we used the student body as a captive audience for try-outs, rehearsals, and so forth. This was the rehearsal before the show, the night before the show. It came time for me to go to center stage and sing my song. I couldn't hit a note. I couldn't hit a note and I talked the song.

DP: You talked through the song?

SM: Yes. Needless to say, Miss Bow got me out of her class and put me in the speech class. Lois Alexander was a great dramatic coach and speech teacher. She encouraged me and she put me in debate. She told me one day, "You're going to enter the debate at the district meeting at Ouachita and you'll have so and so as your partner. This is the subject." I told her I didn't think I could do that. She said, "You're going to do it or else!" I did it and we won second place.

DP: Wonderful!

SM: The fact is that there were only two entries. She then gave me a declamation to enter in the academic debate. It was in Little Rock, and I remember the name of the oration. It was “All-Embracing America,” by Congressman William D. Upshaw. I did that. Then she put me in a one-act play and it was *The Valiant*. Again, we used the student body as an audience. We just punished them to no end. Several years ago we had a class reunion and I talked to the group. I asked them, “How many of you remember *The Valiant*?” All their hands went up and I said, “How many of you remember the closing lines?” In unison, they said, “Cowards die many times before their death, but the valiant, they taste death only once.”

DP: That makes chill bumps.

SM: When I went to the University of Arkansas I had two things on my mind, the military and politics.

DP: Right.

SM: I kind of divided it.

DP: You left Hot Springs High School and went to Henderson for a period.

SM: Yes. That was two terms. Yes, Henderson Brown at that time. That’s right.

DP: Probably a Methodist school and, of course, now it is Henderson State, of course, now it is Henderson University — Henderson State University.

SM: I went to Henderson State for part of the time and they gave me a job. I went down there in order to prepare myself for a written examination to the Naval Academy. There was a chief of the National Park Police in Hot Springs, Richard L. Gaffney, and he had a scout troop that I was a member of. It was the third Boy

Scout troop in Hot Springs. He had a Boys Club, and he was an unofficial recruiter for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps was involved in Nicaragua at the time. He had all of these recruiting posters about the Marine Corps. I got the idea that I wanted to be a Marine and he gave me these posters. I painted my room with them. He thought it would be a good idea if I went to the Naval Academy. Congressman D. D. Glover. A great man, a wonderful family.

DP: From Malvern, I believe.

SM: Yes, from Malvern. He gave me an appointment to the Naval Academy. I went down to Henderson to kind of prep out on it. There was a wonderful lady down there that tried to help me with my math. You see, when I was in high school and got involved in dramatics, I neglected my science and math. It caught up with me.

DP: Right.

SM: When I took my examination for the Naval Academy, I flunked it.

DP: Because of the math? Or rather, the lack of math?

SM: Yes, the lack of math. I saddled up and I went to the University of Arkansas and I signed up with the Reserve Officers Corps for a four-year tour, and then I took my pre-law. I was involved in dramatics and the military and getting ready to go to law school at the University of Arkansas.

DP: You went on to the university for some undergraduate work.

SM: Yes.

DP: Then you went to the law school at the University of Arkansas?

SM: That's right.

DP: By that time, you'd had some drama. You'd been in some plays. You were in debate and speech. Ultimately, all of this seemed to be very good preparation for your two careers, well, three careers: the military, politics, and law.

SM: That's right.

DP: I think that's a grand, grand background for those professions.

SM: I had a problem. I got the commission with the Marine Corps because they gave one commission from each land grant college to the Marine Corps. I got that, but I had to complete my ROTC training camp in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I had to go to law school to get my law degree that summer. The problem was that the first four weeks, they ran simultaneously. The ROTC camp was at Fort Leavenworth. Of course, the law school was at Fayetteville. How was I going to do both? I had to scoot. I signed up to law school. I put on my ROTC uniform and hitch-hiked to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Signed up there, spent a week, hitch-hiked back to Fayetteville, spent a week and back and forth for four weeks. They never missed me at either place.

DP: I declare! That's a wonderful story. That's a great story.

SM: I got my commission in the Marine Corps and I got my law degree.

DP: Governor, here you were. You were involved in your law school training, going to school and ROTC. Did you have politics in your mind? Did you think about politics? Did you think about some day running for an office?

SM: I thought about running for governor when I was in high school. I was president of my freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior class. At the university, I was president of the student body. I had it in my mind. Of course, to be in the

military, to be in politics, and to be a lawyer—you don't know how you're going to work it in.

DP: That's right.

SM: I went in the Marine Corps and spent a year, 1936, and came home in 1937. I came home to marry Elaine Brockington. At that time, the Marine Corps' policy was that if you were a second lieutenant, you couldn't get married. You had to be in the Marine Corps two years before you could get married. They had the policy that if the Marine Corps wanted you to have a bride, they'd issue you one. I went on to marry Elaine and to practice law. That was in 1937. The paint of my shingle hadn't gotten dry when the war began, and I felt an obligation to go back in.

DP: You actually went back in the Marines right before Pearl Harbor, a year before.

SM: Yes, that's right.

DP: You went back in August, 1940.

SM: Yes, August, 1940. I stayed in the Marine Corps until the war was over.

DP: Right.

[End of Tape 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2]

DP: Governor, you went back into the Marines. I believe you took your commission.

SM: Yes.

DP: You were in the reserves and then you went back in for active duty one year before Pearl Harbor.

SM: Right.

DP: What were you doing on Pearl Harbor Day? You remember that day. All of us do.

SM: Yes. After I went home, I went back into the military in August of 1940, one year before Pearl Harbor. The reason I went back in was that I felt obligated. I had a reserve commission. I was getting out of the Marine Corps in 1937. Captain Louis "Chesty" Fuller, one of the most famous and highly decorated Marines ever, came by my quarters to see me. Incidentally, he called Scotsmen "Sandy." He said, "Sandy, I can understand your going home to marry your sweetheart and to practice law. But let me tell you something. You need to take a reserve commission because we're going to war." And that was in 1937.

DP: Four years before.

SM: He foresaw that four years before the war against Japan.

DP: He even thought it through and predicted it to be Japan. Is that right?

SM: That's right. He thought it was going to be Japan. The Marine Corps was getting psychologically prepared for a war against Japan. At that time, of course, the Marine Corps was a small organization. They had only about 17,000 marines. At the end of the war they had five divisions. I took the commission and went back into the Marine Corps. I went through a refresher course. I stayed on at Quantico at the Marine Training School there, training second lieutenants--officer candidates--for two years. Elaine joined me in Quantico. We had our son in Quantico. Sandy was born there.

DP: Sandy.

SM: Yes. Then she [Elaine] died. She died on our fifth wedding anniversary.

DP: What age was she?

SM: She was twenty-five.

DP: What a tragedy.

SM: I requested overseas duty. General Shepherd was the commander of the school at the time, Lemmel Shepherd. He subsequently became Commandant of the Marine Corps. I had put in three applications for a transfer. The third application I put in, he sent for me. I went in and he was standing in front of the desk. He said, "McMath, how long would it take you to pack?" I said, "I've got it together, sir." He said, "You'll get on the next bus to New Miller, North Carolina. You're going to join the Third Regiment. You're going to join the Third Marine Division and you're going to the Solomons."

DP: My goodness.

SM: I went down and joined the Third Marine Regiment. We were just putting it together. We went on out to the Pacific area.

DP: The military has always been an important part of Sidney McMath's life.

SM: It has.

DP: It's always been a very meaningful part of your life and also in your career. Just recently, you were honored here on Flag Day by the local citizens. It seems that every time I pick up the paper or turn on the television, here's Governor McMath being honored by some group, be it at the Old State House, the Convention Center, the Bar Association, or a group of military people. It's kind of a McMath renaissance period, I believe. It's a grand tribute to you, sir.

SM: Someone discovered I was still around.

DP: It's a grand tribute to you.

SM: Yes.

DP: It's really a wonderful thing.

SM: The military was an important part of my life. It was a privilege to serve. I feel my greatest contribution, if I made a contribution, was as a training officer. At Quantico I trained for about two years. I was training officer candidates. Not only were they outstanding youngsters, honor students from colleges and so forth, but some of them went on to be senators, judges and so forth. As a matter of fact, I tried a case about five years ago before a judge who was one of my students in officer candidate school at Quantico.

DP: What a small world!

SM: I went on to the Solomons in August, 1942. We were to join the First Marine Division, but en route we were diverted to American Samoa. That was a base of operations in that part of the world. We had to protect it against the Japanese, who were moving south toward New Zealand and Australia. As soon as I got ashore I said, "I'm sure I'm going to get a company or a battalion," because I was a major by then. They gave me orders that I was going to be training officers for jungle warfare school.

DP: Oh, my. That was important.

SM: We set up a jungle warfare school and put the non-commissioned or junior officers of the Third Marine Regiment through the jungle warfare school. After that, I was made operations officer for the Third Marine Regiment. That's where I was.

DP: You saw some real combat at Guadalcanal, Guam, Gugandel, the Solomon Island chain and the Pacific Theater. You came out of the Marines and you were decorated with the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star. You were now a major. You became a major general in the United States Marine Reserve, if I'm not mistaken.

SM: Yes.

DP: Once again, we see the impact the military has had on your life.

SM: Yes. I was in Guadalcanal, but I was not in the first phase of Guadalcanal.

DP: I see.

SM: Guadalcanal was fairly secure by the time we got there. We used Guadalcanal as a base to go up to New Georgia and Bella Labella, Bougainville. We had a lot of activity in Guadalcanal. We still had conflicts, but the big fighting was over when I got over there.

DP: Governor, your military career is one thing and your legal career another. Let's talk a little bit about that political career. Let's talk about when you leave the marines. You come back, and you come back to Hot Springs. You come to Garland County, Arkansas. Tell us about Garland County, and what that was like when you came back in 1945.

SM: We moved to Garland County when I was ten years of age. I stayed there through high school. I had, of course, kept contact with Hot Springs until I went into the Marine Corps. From a political standpoint, the situation in Hot Springs was sad or tragic, to say the least. We had illegal gambling in Hot Springs. It wasn't just the gambling *per se* that was so bad or really evil. However, in order to operate there illegally, the machine had to control the election machinery, appoint the

judges and clerks, the elected commission, and others. They did this so that they could control all law enforcement officials, the mayor, the prosecuting attorney, and the circuit judge.

DP: Up and down the line.

SM: Up and down the line. They selected the grand jurors and the petty jurors. If you had a lawsuit over in the municipal court, you had to be on the right side if you were going to get anything like justice. If you had a case out of circuit court out at the courthouse, and the machine had an interest in the other side, you were in trouble because they selected the jurors. The jurors were people from downtown, from the casinos. They were the bookies, or from the houses of ill-repute, or businesses who relied on the administration and were beholden to them for operations. They could do you in. They could raise your taxes. If you were in a certain business that required a license, they could make it difficult for you to get a license, or the license might be revoked. If you persisted in opposing them, you'd be in serious trouble.

DP: You were in your early thirties?

SM: Yes.

DP: You had returned to Hot Springs, Arkansas. You looked around and you saw that it was a machine county. There was an individual there by the name of Leo McLaughlin. Who was Leo McLaughlin?

SM: Leo was a very personable guy. He had great charisma and great ability. He'd gone to law school at Tulane. He was elected mayor. He was a colorful guy. He wore a straw hat turned up in the front and had a boutonniere on all the time. He

dressed immaculately. He had two horses named Scotch and Soda. He'd hitch them up to a buggy and ride down through Central Avenue to be admired by the vassals. He was an excellent speaker. He could really rouse a crowd. When they had a political campaign he was interested in, he'd have everybody come over to the auditorium and he'd give them a speech and they'd get their instruction. Sometimes he'd go out and try a lawsuit. You see, he practiced law.

DP: But he didn't hold an office, did he?

SM: Yes. He was the mayor. He had been the mayor for many years.

DP: All right.

SM: He presided as the mayor and his second lieutenant was the municipal judge.

They kind of ran things. As I say, if you had a case out of circuit court and he was on the other side, you were probably in trouble. There were other GIs who had come back and we weren't intimidated. We felt that we'd been fighting for freedom around the world and we said we could use a little of it at home.

DP: Did you get these other GIs together?

SM: Yes. I got them together.

DP: What did you do? Did you meet at your home? Did you go to the courthouse?

You couldn't get in the courthouse because those were all his people, I imagine.

SM: There was a good citizen by the name of Earl Ricks.

DP: Earl Ricks?

SM: Earl Ricks and another citizen by the name of Raymond Clinton, the uncle of the president. They had the Clinton-Ricks Buick Agency. They had a huge garage, so we held our meetings in the Clinton-Ricks garage.

DP: I don't imagine they got to sell very many cars to the city with Mayor McLaughlin.

SM: No. That's where we met most of the time.

DP: Did you have to meet in secret?

SM: No, we didn't meet in secret. We kept our flags flying.

DP: Is that what was known as the GI Revolution?

SM: That was the GI Revolution.

DP: Most of the people involved were young men like yourself and maybe young women who had served their country and had come back.

SM: That's right. They weren't in business, so they couldn't be closed down. Their licenses couldn't be revoked. We just wanted to make a change, and we thought that the time was right to do it.

DP: So you ran for prosecuting attorney.

SM: Yes.

DP: Was there an incumbent?

SM: Yes. We had a GI candidate for every spot, from constable on up. The primary was in 1946. I was the only one elected in the primary. I was elected because Montgomery County was a part of that judicial district, the 18th Judicial District. I swept Montgomery County to make up for the count in Garland County. Somehow the telephone lines between Malvern and Hot Springs were cut. The people in Garland County didn't know. It was too late to figure how many votes that they needed in order to overcome the votes from Montgomery County. So we organized an independent party and all the candidates, the GI candidates who

had been defeated, ran as independents for the offices that they'd run for in the primary.

DP: They didn't really have a Republican Party at that time.

SM: No. We had no Republican Party.

DP: We had one Republican in Camden at that time. Only one person. Things have changed a lot.

SM: Judge Isley's father and grandfather were probably the only Republicans there. There was a lawyer by the name of Richard Ryan, who also was a Republican. There were others that we didn't know about. Anyway, we organized the independent party and the candidates all ran. You'll recall in the primary that you had to get your poll tax. That was when you had to get your poll tax.

DP: We want to talk about the poll tax after a while.

SM: You had to get it in one year before. The people weren't particularly interested in elections. They thought, "My vote is not going to count. It's not going to do any good." But then when I won, people got interested. They thought, "Maybe there's a chance." We organized a drive to get the poll tax for the general election. You could, as I recall, get the poll tax for the general election 20 days before the election. The women spread out and called people to the polls and got on the telephone. We swept the field in the general election, and elected everybody.

DP: The whole slate? The GI Revolution had taken place.

SM: The whole slate. That was the GI Revolution. That's right.

DP: That was in 1946?

SM: Yes.

DP: Speaking of lawyers at that time, there was one that I eventually knew. I served with him in the state legislature. He was a man I admired a great deal. He was a very complex man, I might say. I'm speaking of Nathan Schoenfeld. Was Nathan sort of an ally of yours at that time?

SM: Nathan was one of my closest friends.

DP: That is correct. He was a brilliant man.

SM: He was smart.

DP: Wasn't he from Harvard Law School?

SM: I don't remember what his school was. Whether it was Harvard or not, he was a brilliant guy and he was a tremendous help.

DP: With all the election machinery?

SM: I neglected to say that in the general election, of course, we avoided those illegal poll taxes. We brought suit in a United States federal court. We were able to get the issue in federal court because I had a friend in Pine Bluff, Pat Mullis, who volunteered to run as an independent, to file as an independent. This gave the federal court jurisdiction over the issue because a federal office—a congressional seat—was going to be voted on. We threw out maybe three or four thousand of those illegal poll taxes and made it possible.

DP: If I'm not mistaken, Dr. Robert A. Leflar at the University of Arkansas Law School, the venerable dean of the law school and probably the best known man in legal circles in our history, also became a semi-advisor to you, Nathan Schoenfeld, and the other people.

SM: That's correct. We had a close relationship with Dr. Leflar.

DP: Yes. You had been a student with . . .

SM: With his brother, Eli Leflar. I got to know Dr. Leflar real well when I was a student. Of course, he was a tremendous teacher. He was a great lawyer. One of the things that I did as governor was to appoint him to the supreme court. He always wanted to be on the supreme court.

DP: He was a great man.

SM: He had run at one time, but he wasn't politically inclined. This made it possible for him to conduct a judge's school in New York, to conduct an annual seminar for newly elected judges.

DP: He flew back and forth to New York all the time.

SM: A remarkable thing to do. A remarkable man.

DP: I hope some day that historians will give him very, very exalted praise in Arkansas.

SM: Have you met his son?

DP: Yes. I know him well.

SM: Do you know that he speaks Japanese?

DP: He speaks Japanese and he's going to teach a course at Harvard in the next several months. He's going to teach. He's a wonderful young man and the legal profession is lucky to have him. What did Sid McMath do during his first few weeks as prosecuting attorney in Garland County?

SM: The first thing we did was to convene a grand jury to investigate the gambling operations to see what their earnings were and what they did with the money. We

closed down all the illegal gambling in Hot Springs. They had the race track, but that was a legal operation.

DP: The casinos were closed down?

SM: The casinos, the bookies, everything was closed down. That was the first thing we did. We had a few cases to prosecute, and then I started campaigning for governor.

DP: You ran for governor two years later?

SM: Two years later.

DP: Was that 1948?

SM: Yes. 1948.

DP: Who was the governor of Arkansas at that time? Ben Laney?

SM: Ben Laney. We had some differences, but not the equalization plan, the distribution of funds.

DP: The Revenue Specialization Act.

SM: The Revenue Specialization Act. You know, you can't spend more money than you take in.

DP: That's right.

SM: That was a tremendous boom and he was responsible for that.

DP: Right.

SM: That was in his administration.

DP: I think that's how he got the name "Business Ben."

SM: "Business Ben." He was running on his record as a businessman. His people were bragging about how he had cut taxes. We did a little research on how much

tax that he had reduced. Of course, I liked Ben. He was a very personable guy, but we found out he had reduced taxes on lightning rods, bee hives, and buggy whips. So, that was our theme. It was “lightning rods, bee hives, and buggy whips.”

DP: That is a great Arkansas political story. Ben Laney from Camden. In fact, our homes were next door to the Laney's and our families would sort of intermingle there to some extent.

SM: Ben Laney was involved with the Dixiecrats in 1948.

DP: That's right. We want to talk about the Dixiecrats after a while. Ben Laney became very infatuated with the Democrats.

SM: Do you mean the Dixiecrats?

DP: The Dixiecrats. Strom Thurmond walked out of the convention. I guess he'd have been governor of South Carolina at that time.

SM: Strom Thurmond. Yes, I guess so.

DP: Maybe he even wanted Ben Laney to become his running mate on the Dixiecrat ticket for president. You did a very courageous thing in 1948 and you were not governor. You were the governor-elect. You'd been elected in the primary. We were faced with the choice, in our country, of Thomas Dewey or Harry Truman. Everyone, everyone assumed that Thomas Dewey would just clobber Harry Truman and defeat him and send him off into obscurity. But Harry Truman won that race. Arkansas was one of the very few southern states that remained loyal to the national Democratic ticket. Why was that?

SM: Truman, at that time, was unpopular principally because of the civil rights program. Strom Thurmond, Fielding Wright, Ben Laney and others were in the Democratic convention in Chicago. They were unhappy about the platform. They withdrew from the convention and I think they went to either Montgomery, Alabama or Jackson, Mississippi. I don't remember exactly which one it was. They nominated Fielding Wright for president, Strom Thurmond for vice president, and Governor Laney chaired that Dixiecrat meeting.

DP: You don't think they flew the Confederate flag here and there, do you?

SM: Yes. But as you pointed out, all the polls indicated that Truman would be defeated and no one thought he would win, except Harry Truman. He was a great president and I imagine we'll have an opportunity to talk about him.

DP: I'd love to talk about your relationship.

SM: As soon as I was nominated in 1948, I took on two or three things, but I feel that the most important thing I did was start campaigning for President Truman. We were able to carry Arkansas by a real good vote, a majority vote. As I remember, we were the only southern state that stayed in the Democratic Party. Maybe North Carolina wasn't considered a southern state, a deep southern state. Anyway, Arkansas stayed in the Democratic party and President Truman appreciated that. He came to Arkansas several times.

DP: There's a fabulous picture of you and President Truman walking down Main Street. He had on a white suit and a Panama hat. You were in a dark suit with your famous, red tie and y'all were spiffy. I'll tell you that. That's a great political picture.

SM: Bob McCord took that picture and it won a national award.

DP: It's a great picture. It says so much about that era.

SM: Yes. You know, that was the 35th Division reunion, his old Army outfit. Truman was a captain in the First World War, you know. There's a national guard out there. He always went to their conventions and he always marched with the troops. On this occasion he came to Arkansas and we marched down Main Street in front of the troops. When we got down to Markham, we turned west or left on Markham and went on up to the old Marion Hotel.

DP: I want to ask you about that. They say that you had a private audience with President Truman. Can you say on television what you and Truman did or talked about?

SM: I think we can tell about it.

DP: You were in the Marion Hotel.

SM: The Marion Hotel in the Presidential Suite. You didn't have the entourage around the President that you have now, so we had a quiet visit. It was in July, or was it in the summer? I think it was July. We went into the suites and he said, "Governor, how would you like to have a drink?" I wasn't about to turn him down.

DP: Wow! The President of the United States.

SM: I wasn't about to turn him down. I said, "That's fine, Mr. President." He said, "How about Bourbon and branch water?" "Great." He said, "You're going to be waited on by the highest paid bartender in the world." I looked around and there wasn't anybody but the two of us.

DP: Harry Truman poured you a drink.

SM: He gets behind the bar and he took one of the low ball glasses and he poured half of Bourbon and half of water. We sat down to visit for forty-five minutes to an hour. He talked, I listened. He wanted an attentive ear, and I provided it for him.

DP: Did you talk about the upcoming election that he was going through? No, this was 1949. This was after he had defeated Dewey.

SM: That's right, and old Dewey. You talk about pictures. Do you remember the *Chicago Herald*?

DP: Yes.

SM: That big headline "Dewey defeats Truman," and the picture of Truman holding that up.

DP: He loved that.

SM: That big, big smile.

DP: He was rubbing that in, wasn't he? He was rubbing it in because he was so controversial as a president.

SM: Yes, he was.

DP: But he was tough. Wasn't he a tough pine knot?

SM: He never took a poll, and he had a sign on his desk that said, "The buck stops here."

DP: "The buck stops here," and he didn't blame anything when something went wrong.

SM: That's right. Nobody thought he'd amount to anything.

DP: Right.

SM: They thought he was just a penny glass politician.

DP: Right. From Kansas City.

SM: But he had great character.

DP: Yes, sir.

SM: He ran a good state government and he was for the people.

DP: Furthermore, he knew and understood history. He was a historian. Harry Truman was a historian.

SM: He sure was.

DP: By the way, we're trying to do that right now. We're trying to have Arkansas history taught in all of our schools and we hope our people will get behind that effort. We're trying desperately. We've now gone through a generation and not taught Arkansas history.

SM: David, that's one of the finest things you can do.

DP: We need to do that.

SM: Like I was telling you about going to Bussey.

DP: Right.

SM: In the morning when we would go to school, the first thing we'd do, we'd sing the "Star Spangled Banner," pledge allegiance to the flag, and sing "Arkansas."

DP: That's right.

SM: That's a great song. I don't guess the kids sing it anymore.

DP: We sometimes have great rivalries with our friends in Texas and no question about that. We have had rivalry in the past and will have in the future. But there's one thing about Texans that I admire: they're proud of their state. One

reason I think they have an excessive amount of pride is because they know the state's history. They know where they came from. They know who they are. As Dr. Gatewood at the University of Arkansas always says, "It's time we start defining ourselves and not let everyone else do it for us."

SM: That's right.

DP: I'm really hoping that our state will get behind this effort. We're going to really make an effort.

SM: That's great. You know Arkansans needs to be proud of their state. No state has had a more fabulous, colorful history than Arkansas. If you know our history, you have to be proud of the state.

DP: That is correct.

[End of Tape 2]

[Beginning of Tape 3]

DP: Here you are in 1949, Governor. You've been sworn in as the new governor of our state, probably the youngest in our history and maybe one of the youngest governors throughout the country. They're even now referring to you as "Mr. Charisma." You had invented charisma way before John Kennedy. You were a dynamic governor. It was a dynamic time, not only for you, but for our state.

SM: It was right after the war.

DP: It was after the war and things were rolling. People were buying things and there was a great deal of excitement. The new crowd was coming in, and you were right at the forefront, the apex of this movement.

SM: Right.

DP: Let's talk a little bit about Arkansas at that time. I've always heard that when you became governor, there were eight counties in our state that didn't have a mile of paved roads. What did you do about that?

SM: Getting back to my farm life, we went to town over a corduroy road. That's the logs, the trees, laid parallel, with dirty wet spots that left areas flooded. If you can believe it, I never saw a paved road until I went to Hot Springs when I was ten years of age.

DP: That's the first time you saw a paved street?

SM: The first time I'd seen a paved street. I'd seen sidewalks. My sister and I were taking the streetcar out to South Wittington where we lived. We had to change streetcars at the junction of Park Avenue and Wittington. My sister used to tell this on me and just get the biggest kick out of it. She said that while we were waiting, I went out in the middle of the street and tapped on the pavement and I said, "Look a-here, sister, here's a pavement out in the middle of the street!"

DP: A "pavement out in the middle of the street?"

SM: We didn't have any hard surface roads. In Arkansas, at that time, we'd just been through a war and most things had been neglected, particularly the roads. We didn't have the roads. The farmers didn't have roads to get their produce to the market and get the children to school. We were losing population in the rural areas. We came up with a bond issue, and we were able to sell the bonds and get a road program going. One of the interesting things that happened was that I went to New York to help sell the bonds. Incidentally, we sold those at less than 3

percent interest. We had to pay, I think, a little more than 2.5 percent interest.

The Chase Manhattan Bank had a cocktail party for me.

DP: In New York?

SM: In New York. It seemed to me that all the people there were vice presidents of the bank. I figured that the job of a vice president was to attend cocktail parties, to be a personal relations person. Anyway, we were standing around talking and one of the vice presidents said, "Governor, how close can you get to Little Rock by airplane?" I looked at him and saw he was serious, and I said, "We can get to Memphis by airplane. At Memphis we take a boat and go down to the Arkansas River and we go up the Arkansas River to Pine Bluff. At Pine Bluff we get a stagecoach in to Little Rock." By then he figured out I was putting him on. Back then, people didn't know much about Little Rock and Arkansas. One of them asked me, "Do you have any moisture in Arkansas? Do you have any water? Is it like Arizona? Is it arid?"

DP: Right.

SM: They didn't think there was anything west of the Mississippi [River]. Now, everybody knows about Little Rock and half of the people have been here. We got the road program bonds passed and a good road program started. We divided the money equally between the rural to market roads and the primary highways.

DP: If I'm not mistaken, you probably built more miles of paved roads than any other governor in history. You did this in a four-year period and you did it with a bond issue.

SM: Right.

DP: That's really amazing.

SM: Those bonds were paid off.

DP: They were paid off?

SM: I think with a two-cent tax on gasoline.

DP: Speaking of a two-cent tax — every time I go by the University of Arkansas Medical Center — and by the way, I go there often — I look up at that great facility. I think of what we're doing in cancer. We're renowned all over the world now. People are coming here to the AC or RC Unit, the Cancer Center Unit. We're renowned in many ways, as many of our other facilities are in the city and in the state. Every time I go by there or go in the med center, I say, "Thank goodness for Sidney Sanders McMath." The reason I do this is that you helped build the med center. You did it with a two-cent tax per package of cigarettes. Let's talk about that. Was that a hard thing to pass?

SM: That medical center is one of the things that I'm proudest of. It's a tremendous place, and they have so many dedicated people. The doctors and nurses could get more money at other places, but they're doing a tremendous job there. It's internationally recognized. You go out and see the cancer research waiting room or treatment room and it's like going to the United Nations. You've got people there from different parts of the world. Louis Webster Jones was the president of the University of Arkansas. He and several other people came to me and talked to me about the medical center, the need for a medical school, to train doctors, and to encourage them to go into the rural areas. We put our heads together and came up with a tax of two cents on each package of cigarettes. That was in 1949 and

you can see what's happened since. What an excellent source of revenue for a tax! Half of the patients at the hospital were being treated for a tobacco-related disease: emphysema, lung cancer or something else. That passed and we were able to build the medical center. The medical school, you'll recall, was over in the Old State House until about 1925.

DP: Right. Where the Old State House is.

SM: It was down in the basement. In about 1925, they had an incident about the sheriff losing his dog, his hound dog. He found it over behind the medical center with the other dogs that they were using for experiments. The doctors in charge wouldn't let him have his dog back. They thought, "He's just an old hound dog." The sheriff got an indictment. He got an indictment issued against the doctors for stealing his dog. He got his dog back. By then, the neighbors had been complaining about the animals over there and all the fuss they were making, so they moved the medical center out to MacArthur Park, where the law school is now. They got the medical center operating. We passed the bill in 1949, I guess. By 1950 or 1951, the hospital was in operation over there and the med school moved over to the medical center. It's a wonderful med school.

DP: You've always had a special relationship with the rural areas of Arkansas, out in the communities and the farms. I'm sure that is a reflection of your upbringing.

SM: That's where I came from.

DP: That's right.

SM: That's my roots.

DP: Early on in your administration, one of your areas of intense interest was trying to get electricity to rural Arkansas. To do this you had to take on some pretty powerful forces. Let's talk about that a moment.

SM: David, that was a passion with me to get electricity to the farms. Where I lived on the farm in south Arkansas, we had no electricity. A washing machine was a black pot in the backyard and a dryer was a clothesline. We had a tub with a scrub board. We had no indoor plumbing. I recognized the quality of life that could be experienced by the people in the rural areas if they had electricity. It certainly would lift the burden of the women on the farm. When I was running in 1948, two people came to see me in Hot Springs: Tom Fitzhugh, who was the attorney for the rural electric cooperative, and Harry Oswald.

DP: Harry Oswald?

SM: Bless his heart! That pioneer, that champion.

DP: What a man.

SM: He did a tremendous job. They came to me and talked about their program and what they wanted to do.

DP: What portion of the state did they cover? Do you remember at all?

SM: At that time, fifty percent of the rural areas in Arkansas had no electricity. They wanted to extend it up into the rural areas. They couldn't get the power interests to do it. Arkansas Power and Light Company was totally owned by MidSouth Utilities. Although they told us that it was just a little old Arkansas county company, it was owned by MidSouth Utilities. They owned all the common stock. They were opposed to the power company extending lines out in the rural areas

because it was not profitable. They didn't foresee that some day it would be highly profitable, which has happened. They were opposed to the cooperatives extending out into this rural areas beyond the areas that they already had. They [Fitzhugh and Oswald] wanted to build their own steam generating plant and their own generating lines to get the power up into the northern part of Arkansas. They had to get a loan with the REA program from the federal government. At that time, it was up to the Interior Department. Secretary Wickard was the administrator at that time. We started working with Secretary Wickard in order to get a loan to the cooperatives in Arkansas to build this plant. That was in 1951. The president's executive assistant was Steelman, who was from Arkansas. We worked with him. John R. Steelman.

DP: John R. Steelman.

SM: Yes. We and Mr. Wickard weren't making too much progress because the power company was really opposed to this. MidSouth Utility had a lot of power, political power. I thought I'd call on the president. He was involved in the Korean War at that time. He had a lot on his mind, but I thought this was sufficiently important to talk to the president. I got in touch with the president. He must have made a telephone call to Wickard, because right after that Wickard sent me a wire announcing that they were loaning some \$10,000,000 to the cooperative to build an Ozark steam generating plant. The co-op had to get the approval of the Public Service Commission, the State of Arkansas Public Service Commission. They supervised the granting of permits and licenses and supposedly supervised the rates. They filed this petition and the power company

opposed it. There was a real fight that went on for months. The power company was trying to persuade the Arkansas Power Commission to deny the application, but they granted it. Then the power company went to a judge and got a restraining order, which was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Arkansas. It said that the REA, in its original act, back in about 1936, way back there, did not authorize the cooperative to build their own generating system. Our argument was that if they authorized them to build transmission lines by implication they could build a generating plant to furnish the power to go over the transmission lines to their customers. The supreme court didn't see it that way and they ruled against us. In 1953 or 1954, we introduced a bill in the legislature. I was out of the governor's office at that time. I'd been defeated for the third time to permit the co-ops to build a steam generating plant. The power company had a lot of influence and the legislature defeated it. The next year, I think that was 1954, we got another bill passed. The cooperatives got the loan to build the steam generating plant at Ozark, Arkansas. Then they were off to supply electricity to the rural areas that hadn't been getting their electricity. Let me give this as an aside. I was the first governor to go to a rural electrification state meeting. The people were pretty well convinced that because this cooperative was going in and borrowing money, the government was going to compete with the private power companies. That's socialism.

DP: It's socialism. Yes, that's what they called it.

SM: I was invited to go up to Berryville to talk to a cooperative meeting. I flew up there in a one engine airplane. We had to land in a turkey pasture, and we had to make two passes to shoo the turkeys out of the way.

DP: To shoo the turkeys out of the way?

SM: Yes. I had my statement for the press and the committee all ready. I'd thought about it, and I was sure there was going to be a big crowd out there to meet me at the air field. I got out of the airplane and walked to the gate. No one was there. Nobody. It was a hot July day.

DP: How did you get to town?

SM: I took my coat off and I started walking down a dusty road, another road that I later paved. A farmer came along in a truck. He stopped and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the co-op meeting."

DP: Here you were, the governor of Arkansas.

SM: Yes. I was the governor of Arkansas. He said, "Get in. That's where I'm going." We visited. I didn't tell him I was the governor. I assumed he knew. My name had been in the paper with a picture. The cooperative meeting was in a great big tent. Russ Gates was the manager of the cooperative. He introduced me with a flowery introduction. He said, "I give you Sid McMath, the Governor of Arkansas." Well, this old farmer that had brought me to town was sitting on the front row. He leaned to his neighbor and he said in a loud voice, "That ain't no governor. He's a hitch-hiker. I know 'cause I brung him to town."

DP: He thought you were an imposter, didn't he?

SM: That's right.

DP: I'll bet they had a big crowd of people there, didn't they?

SM: Oh, yes.

DP: Harry Oswald could get more people to turn out, and he'd put them all in a tent.

SM: That's right.

DP: He had two secrets for getting people to turn out to a meeting, as I recall. One, he would feed them. He would feed them well and it was free. He would have some music and fiddlers and whatever. The second thing, he would give away a color TV, or an old second-hand pickup or a fishing box or something, and he would make them stay. He wouldn't give it away until right at the last. They had to sit there and listen to the speakers.

SM: Yes, that's right.

DP: I've been to some of those myself. That's a great story about rural electrification in our state.

SM: Harry and Tom Fitzhugh and Clyde Ellis. Congressman Ellis.

DP: Clyde Ellis.

SM: They were pioneers. Today we have 16 electric cooperatives and I believe they have around 175,000 customers.

DP: One of the pictures on my wall is of an old store in Ben Hur, Arkansas in Pope County, which was the last community to receive electricity. Governor Sid McMath is largely responsible for helping to electrify the state. These were powerful interests that you took on. I'm not saying they were sinister, I'm not saying they were bad, I'm not saying they were not progressive, but these were interests that were not encompassing the rural areas at this time. You helped make

it possible for many, many thousands of homes, plants, factories, and farms to have electricity. Those are major accomplishments. With all of the things that you've done, it seems that you were there much longer than four years. My point is that you did an awful lot in four years. Along the way, you met up with a man and you brought him in to your administration. His name was Orval Eugene Faubus. Tell us about that.

SM: Orval and I met in Fayetteville. I was running for governor for the first time in 1948. We rode from Fayetteville over to Huntsville--his home town--in a car. We visited. He was interested in feeling me out, finding out what my platform was.

DP: He was not the postmaster yet. What was he at that time?

SM: I don't know whether he was the postmaster or had been, or whether he was a county clerk or something.

DP: Right.

SM: He was trying to make up his mind who he was going to support in that election. By the time we got to Huntsville, he decided he'd support me. He supported me and did a good job for me. Of course, he had a particularly close contact with the rural people in northern Arkansas.

DP: He could speak their language.

SM: Yes. Speak their language. He understood their needs. He was one of them. When I was elected governor, Orval said, "Sid, I'd like to have a paying job." He came down and went to work for me as a secretary. His job was to meet with these county committees coming down to try to get their roads paved. He knew their needs and understood them. He was very good and helpful in that area. I was

defeated for the third time by Francis Cherry. Then Orval came back and defeated Francis Cherry for his second term. The Central High School crisis came along in 1957. I guess he served for five terms. Orval was a good administrator and a very personable guy. One of the best campaign pictures I ever saw was one of Orval and his coat and hat.

DP: I know that picture. I know it well.

SM: Great campaign picture! It ran in the front page of the *Gazette*. We were okay until 1957. Then we had the Little Rock high school crisis. I call it a “crisis” because that’s what it was. I did not feel that he made the right decision on calling out the guard to keep those children from entering the high school. I felt that leadership, moving in the right direction, could resolve that before it got out of hand. We’d been making a lot of progress in racial relationships, in getting educational opportunities for blacks. We mentioned the medical center. In the 1948 campaign, during that race for my first term, race was a hot issue. It was mean. I took my feelings about it from when I was on the farm. I had worked with blacks, and I had seen their conditions. I had seen them with poor whites at the end of the cotton picking season having just enough money to get them through the next year. I felt that they needed an opportunity to get an education and go to school like everyone else. When Orval called out the guard, I felt that that was moving in the wrong direction. I started to say that in 1948, that was a hot election because of the race issue. During that election, it was in the spring, a black woman applied for admission to the medical school and her name was Edith Irby. She became Edith Irby Jones. Dr. Louis Webster Jones, the dean of the medical school, came and

talked to me about it. They didn't know what to do. As I say, race was a hot issue in that campaign and the election hadn't been decided. My advice to them? I said, "Let's wait until the elections are over and let's see what we can do." As soon as the election was over, they contacted me and I told them to admit her into the medical school. They accepted her. She was the first black student to be admitted to the medical school, and I think the first student to be admitted from our public schools. There was no court order. There were no demonstrations. It was done in an orderly way. She became an outstanding doctor and moved to Houston. There, she became president of the National Black Women's Medical Association. As soon as I was nominated in 1948, I supported President Truman. The blacks couldn't vote in the south, you know. They couldn't participate in the election process because of the southern Democratic Party.

DP: The Democratic Party outlawed them at that time.

SM: They were not members of the party, therefore, they couldn't vote.

DP: It's unbelievable.

SM: That's right. In September of 1948, at Robinson Auditorium, we changed the Democratic Party rules so as to get the blacks.

DP: That was one of the most courageous things that you've ever done.

SM: We felt it was.

DP: Was that a fight? Did you have a fight there?

SM: We had done a lot ground work.

DP: You had?

SM: We did a lot of ground work on that and got it passed. Virgil Blossom, the superintendent of the schools, was giving lectures and talking to people. We headed in the right direction. Remember that the background of all of this was the Cold War. We were fighting for the minds and hearts of people around the world.

DP: Yet we were the people who practiced segregation.

SM: Yes. We wanted to demonstrate that everyone was free in this country. When this happened, that didn't help us around the world. People around the world didn't like that old, bad Arkansas from what they knew about the Little Rock Crisis.

DP: Governor, one of the best books about you was written over twenty years ago by Jim Lester. It's *A Man for Arkansas*. It's about the life and times of Sidney Sanders McMath. Wonderful little book. In this book, Jim Lester details your speech in 1951 in Minnesota to the National Urban Institute or Urban League, talking about the need for tolerance. Then in 1956, no longer in office, with nothing to gain, nothing to lose, you try to help move for the abolition of the poll tax that we still had.

SM: That's right. We didn't have a policy for the poll tax until after 1964.

DP: That's correct. The poll tax was one of those obstacles created to prevent the minorities from voting.

SM: You're absolutely right, David. The poll tax was used, number one, as a means of corrupting elections.

DP: That's right.

SM: Then it was used as a means of disfranchising the blacks.

DP: That is correct.

SM: You had to go down and pay your poll tax, and you had to do that a year before the election.

DP: Let's stay back on 1957 for a moment. Faubus calls out the national guard. He's the governor. You're out of office. I want to talk about a campaign or two between that, but he is in the governor's office. He calls the guard out, and you strongly disagree with him in public. Evidently you go on television, and you characterize this as a very wrong direction for us to be taking at this time. He fires back at you. You are his mentor. You're his former boss. He worked for you. You paved that highway 23, which we affectionately call the "Pig Trail" and that Faubus had you build. Don't you agree? Personally, you and the governor had a split, and it really never healed to any extent.

SM: Politically, yes, it was a serious split. Personally, I had no animosity toward Orval. I understood what he was doing, and we got along personally. I never fell out with him as an individual. We didn't see each other. We didn't have lunch and so forth. We didn't review old times, but the difference was a political difference, a social difference.

DP: It's real interesting about him. This program is not about Orval Faubus, but he was such a dominant force in Arkansas politics for so long. Roy Reed spent about ten years researching and published a fabulous book three years ago. He characterizes Faubus as not necessarily, especially in his younger years, as what you might call a segregationist. He grew up there in the mountains. There were not very many

minorities. There were no black citizens there, and he didn't really know black people until he came to the central part of the state. He got acquainted with them but ultimately, and it's my theory only, that he ultimately decided that that's where the votes were at the time.

SM: In his second term, Jim Johnson ran against him.

DP: Yes. In 1956.

SM: Jim Johnson really used the race issue, and he ran a hard race.

DP: He still uses it.

SM: Orval, at that time, said, "Nobody is going to use this race issue against me in the future."

DP: Right.

SM: Another thing happened. In light of the progress we were making, I say it was a mistake to call out the troops, to bar, block the court order to keep those children out of the school. I also thought it was ill-advised for President [Dwight David] Eisenhower to send out his 101st Airborne. It just gave the wrong impression. It's an invasion of the Yankees again. I talked to Vice President [Richard Milhouse] Nixon and asked him if he could dissuade the president from using the 101st Airborne. If we couldn't work it out locally, the United States Marshall would have been a very appropriate instrument for coming down and doing what's necessary to enforce the law. If the United States Marshal shows up, people are going to respect him. But using the 101st Airborne, we were close to a civil war. A lot of our people came from Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. We inherited that feeling. Regardless of how loyal they are to the flag, we had some ties that were

still binding and suffered together. When they used the 101st Airborne, the people who were not for Faubus rallied and cried, "We've been invaded!" That gave him the political power that he needed to be in office.

[End of Tape 3]

[Beginning of Tape 4]

DP: Governor, we've been speaking of the integration crisis, the development of rural electrification, the public school system that you so strongly supported with great passion, and the medical center. I've always associated two people with you, two people who are still very prominent in Arkansas. One of those persons is Judge Henry Woods. The other is Leland Leatherman. These gentlemen became your law partners. Early on in your career, they were your friends, mentors, and advisors. I've heard a story about you and Judge Henry Woods. This was many years ago when you were thinking about running for governor. I believe Henry Woods may have come to Hot Springs. He was an avid president of the Young Democrats. You're trying to find someone to manage your campaign. Do you mind sharing that with me?

SM: I remember that. Henry and I have been friends forever. His mother and my mother were friends. His sister, who was much older than Henry, and my mother were friends. We both graduated from Hot Springs High School. I was ahead of Henry probably about four years. When I was elected prosecuting attorney in 1948, there was speculation about me running for governor. Henry, at that time, was practicing law in Texarkana. He was the president of the Young Democrats. He came over to see me about any way that he could help me in the campaign. I

said, "I'd like you to be my campaign manager." The Young Democrats were a big organization. They were a live-wire organization back then.

DP: That's right.

SM: They were well organized and active back then, probably more so than the Democratic Party.

DP: That's right.

SM: I said, "Would you be my campaign manager?" He said, "How much money do you have?" I said, "I've got \$1,500 cash and I've got \$1,500 promised." He said, "We can win on that."

DP: That's the power of positive thinking.

SM: Can you imagine starting off a campaign with \$1,500 cash and \$1,500 promised?

DP: Oh, my goodness! That wouldn't pay your filing fee. It wouldn't pay for one thirty second television spot.

SM: Henry stayed with me in every campaign I've ever been in. He was my right-hand man when I was governor.

DP: He's a real thinker, isn't he?

SM: And you talk about Leland?

DP: Leland Leatherman.

SM: Leland. He was my good friend in Hot Springs. He's always been there when I needed him. When the good people of Arkansas retired me in 1953, Henry, Leland, and I opened up a law office. We practiced together for some twenty-five years until Henry went on the bench. David, we did it all on a handshake. No

written contract. We've never had a cross word or an argument about a fee division or anything else. It was a perfect relationship.

DP: That's great.

SM: When Henry went on the court as the United States district judge, he had the segregation cases arising out of Pulaski County. In early decisions, he held that the school districts in Pulaski County should be consolidated. In 1948, one of my objectives after I was nominated and elected was to consolidate the schools. There were too many of them. There were some 700 school districts. We supported that bill to raise the millage to 18 mills on schools and also to consolidate the schools, reducing them from 1700 to around 1500. It's still too many. We shouldn't have more than one school district per county. Henry believed strongly that these school districts in Pulaski County should be consolidated and he so held. However, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals didn't agree with him and he was reversed. You can imagine the time, money, and energy that could have been saved if, instead of it all being in the court room, this emotional effort of integration and segregation had been put in the classrooms. He was correct about that and had a lot of vision, foresight, and courage. In September of 1948, when they changed the rules of the Democratic Party to let blacks into the party, Henry led the floor fight.

DP: It was at the state Democratic convention.

SM: It was at the state Democratic convention down at Robinson Auditorium in September of 1948. We got this bill introduced. Henry led the floor fight to get it passed.

DP: But you had done a lot of state work before. You had worked a lot of people.

SM: That's right.

DP: That could have been a very explosive moment for the state Democratic Party.

SM: We did a lot of ground work on that before we went to the convention.

DP: Right.

SM: We had the leaders there. We tried to point out to them the direction we should be going.

DP: Right.

SM: It's so basic. When you go back to the *Declaration of Independence*, our forefathers were inspired that all men are created equal. If they're created equal, they should have an equal opportunity to find their talents, to hone their skills, to be competitive, to be good citizens. Then there is the preamble to the Constitution of the United States. "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union establish justice." Justice requires that everyone be treated equally, that everyone be given an equal opportunity in this land. That's why so many people want to come to this country. They're beating down the doors to get into the United States because of the freedom. That's another thing about the 1957 incident. That gave the wrong impression. That flag stands for freedom. Run that flag up to the top of the pole, and people say that it stands for freedom for every man, woman, and child. Henry is a great judge, and he was a good friend. Leland, when we began practicing law together, took the attorney job representing all rural electric cooperatives. We maintained our relationship with rural electric co-ops.

DP: Speaking of a real visionary, Leland Leatherman, in my mind, is truly an Arkansas visionary. He saw so much earlier than the rest of us did. Not only did he have an impact on you and the young men of Arkansas coming up, but you had an impact on them.

SM: A perfect relationship.

DP: One of those young men that we've not mentioned, that you touched early in life, was a young bond salesman, a young financier. This was Jack Stephens in Little Rock. If I'm not mistaken, he became the youngest member of the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees and you appointed him.

SM: That's correct, David. Jack and I became acquainted early in the campaign and he supported me, I guess, in every election I ever ran, certainly in the early days. I thought he would be of great service on the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees, because he and I had a shared philosophy about educational opportunities for everyone. Jack was on the board for, I guess, ten years. He did an outstanding job.

DP: He certainly did. Let me put in a plug, if I might. Jack Stephens today is a primary supporter of this program that we're initiating to teach Arkansas history in our school systems.

SM: I'm proud to know that.

DP: We had a seminar not too long ago in Fayetteville. We brought fifty Arkansas teachers there to teach them how to teach Arkansas history, and to teach other teachers how to teach Arkansas history. He was a very, very generous financial supporter of that cause, and remains so to this day. He's done wonderful things in

all these years, like what he's done with the arts center and many, many other causes.

SM: That's an indication of his vision and his willingness to be a public servant.

DP: That is correct. Henry Woods, Leland Leatherman, Jack Stephens, and all of these people that you have watched in your productive life! By the way, in two more years you're going to be ninety, and you still have passion. You are known basically as a winner, but you did not always win. Let's talk about that election of 1952. We won't go into it in great detail. By the way, I lost a race one time. I think I've won nine or ten races, or fifteen. I've been on a lot of ballots, but I lost one one time to John L. McClellan in 1972. Yet in the grocery store, people say, "David, I'm going to tell you why you lost that race in 1972." They don't talk about the ones that I may have won. They talk about that one that I lost. You lost one in 1952 and it was a big blow. Tell us about that.

SM: The 1953 race, when I ran for the third term? I shouldn't have run.

DP: 1953 or 1952?

SM: The 1952 race, yes. 1952. It was a new term again.

DP: Okay. I see.

SM: I should not have made that race. The power aligned against me was just overwhelming.

DP: You had taken on a lot of groups.

SM: Oh, yes. They said that they had the highway audit thing, and that was spectacular. They held it until the beginning of the race in 1952 in the spring, then released all of these charges about my administration.

DP: Let me say this. Ultimately, no wrongdoings were found.

SM: Three grand juries went through this business. The chairman of the Highway Audit Commission was a member of the Board of Directors of Arkansas Power and Light Company. On each of the grand juries, there were either members of the Arkansas Power and Light Company Board of Directors or representatives. In the second grand jury, they had private funds to hire a private prosecutor to see that everything was covered, but then the opportunities to get an indictment were passed over. After three grand juries in succession, they came up with two indictments of the highway employees. The first indictment was thrown out by the trial judge for lack of evidence, and the second trial went to the jury. The jury was out four minutes and returned a verdict of not guilty for that particular defendant. All of that was a result of the highway audit.

DP: But your attention, your focus, and your resources of energy were focused on this episode. You were consumed with this.

SM: It's hard to defeat the allegation.

DP: Sure.

SM: You've got a blue ribbon grand jury coming out with all of these charges. The first grand jury found no indictments, but two members of the grand jury who were associated with Arkansas Power and Light made a dissent. There were a lot of statements about, "They should have been indicted," putting so much heat on the judge that he called another grand jury. That was the one where they hired private prosecutors. The regular prosecuting attorney didn't know anything about it, and the judge didn't know anything about it. When he found out, he dismissed

that grand jury. They called the third one, and then they came up with the two indictments.

DP: There were a lot of people in that campaign. In 1952, that was the race that Francis Cherry of Jonesboro ultimately won.

SM: Yes.

DP: He had a gimmick that worked that year, the talk-a-thon. Do you remember his talk-a-thon?

SM: Yes, I sure do. Yes, that was Francis. He was a []. We were in law school at the same time. We ran on the same ticket. When I ran for president of the student body, he ran for president of the senior class. We were on the same ticket. So I've always known Francis, but he's a [].

DP: Sure.

SM: Judicial and so forth. The president of the Arkansas Power and Light Company was against me at that time, naturally. He came up with this talk-a-thon because a candidate in Florida had used it and had won. It was a natural for Francis. He prevailed on Francis to use it, and it was great for him. You had to call in. You have people call in and ask questions about me.

DP: He would be on those little radio stations for hours and hours, as long as people would drive up and give the money to the station owner or manager. They'd bring cherry pies, and the cherry ice cream, and all of that business.

SM: He's the one that Orval beat for a second term.

DP: That is correct.

SM: There were several interesting characters in there. One was a former judge and prosecuting attorney. Another was a former congressman, and they were all from different parts of the state. Another one at the time would be attorney general.

DP: That's right.

SM: The Arkansas Power and Light Company had each of the headquarters. I led the ticket in the July primary, and so Francis and I went in the run-off. They all gathered in Jonesboro. All of them, our senior senator, and the president of Arkansas Power and Light Company, gathered in Jonesboro and endorsed Francis. I was defeated, and as I say, I shouldn't have even raced.

DP: You didn't stay out of politics for very long. You're still that fire horse and you still had that passion in you. You wanted to do something. Two years later, you challenged John L. McClellan, Senator John L. McClellan, in 1954.

SM: Right.

DP: This was at the peak of the Joe McCarthy era.

SM: Right.

DP: You took on John L. McClellan. Talk about that race a little bit.

SM: In the first place, John McClellan and I had been good friends. I campaigned for him when he was first elected for Congress. But we got cross-wise because of the power issue, you know, and he was against President Truman's program. So I ran against him in 1954 and was defeated. That was at the time of the McCarthy era. This is an interesting little anecdote. McCarthy was running for re-election at the time Eisenhower was running for president, and they were on a joint program in Minnesota. McCarthy had been accusing General Marshall of being a

communist. President Truman revered General Marshall as one of the greatest generals we've ever had. He took exception to that. Marshall would have been the commander of the forces in Europe, except that he was needed by Roosevelt and then needed by Truman. General Eisenhower and Senator McCarthy were on the same platform in Minnesota. McCarthy had been attacking General Marshall, and General Eisenhower was going to respond after he made that attack on this particular occasion. General Eisenhower listened to McCarthy make his tirade. When General Eisenhower made his talk, he didn't say anything on behalf of General Marshall. He didn't take exception to McCarthy.

DP: He did not defend him.

SM: He did not defend him. President Truman did not like that. President Truman was going out of office and General Eisenhower was coming in as president. The custom is that the incoming president goes up to the White House and escorts the outgoing president down to the limousine. They ride together out to the Capitol for the swearing-in ceremonies. General Eisenhower didn't get out of the car. He didn't get out and open up the door for the president to come in. President Truman didn't like that. He didn't care what you thought or did to Truman, but he revered the presidency. So on the way out, things were kind of tight.

DP: To say the least.

SM: General Eisenhower said, "Mr. President, I've wanted to tell you for a long time why I wasn't at your inauguration. That was your day. I didn't want to interfere with your inauguration and your day. I didn't want to take publicity away from you on that day." President Truman thought about that for a minute and he said,

“General, do you know why you weren’t at my inauguration? By cracky, I didn’t send for you.”

DP: That was tough stuff, wasn’t it?

SM: Eisenhower was the commander of the NATO forces at that time.

DP: We were in high school at the time when Harry Truman fired Douglas MacArthur, General MacArthur. Our whole school got to listen on the intercom to MacArthur’s address. Then it came out in 45 rpm on records, that address. “Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.” I committed great chunks of that speech to memory. Shortly after that, I became a page in Congress. I used to think about that great speech, some of those great speeches, not only his speech. That was one of the great orations ever delivered to the Congress.

SM: MacArthur was a great general, there’s no question of that. But he had some conflicts with President Truman on foreign policy. President Truman was trying in the worst way to keep from getting into a third world war. The Russians had gone in and trained the North Koreans and equipped them. The Chinese came across the Yalu River in November of 1950. It looked like we were going to get involved with China, and our troops were being driven out of South Korea. He had some big decisions to make. General MacArthur was taking issue with the president’s foreign policy by proposing using the bomb, by using Chiang Kai-shek. So President Truman made a trip to Wake Island to visit.

DP: That’s right.

SM: He went to visit with General MacArthur and get from him his evaluation of the situation, and to see if they could come to an understanding. The main question

he wanted answered was whether the Chinese were going to come in. Marines up around Choce Reservior were making contact with a Chinese patrol. But General MacArthur assured him, “All this commotion about the Chinese coming in, their statements they’ve made? They’re not going to come in to this war.” President Truman went home and he hadn’t been in the Oval Office very long. The Chinese forged on, the armies were coming across the Yalu. Things deteriorated. He had to release MacArthur. He had the advice of General Marshall and the Chiefs of Staff. They had problems with him.

DP: That was a momentous time in our country’s history. MacArthur was an almost god-like figure there.

SM: He was god-like. He was running for president.

DP: He did run for president. I believe it was in September of 1954 that Joe McCarthy was censured by the United States Senate. A censure came down against him. I’ve heard you speak of this often, and I know that you feel very strongly about it. You’ve developed an expertise in this field that no one knows much about. Briefly tell us about Bauxite, Arkansas in Saline County, and its contribution to the World War II war effort. Very few people know about it.

SM: David, I appreciate you asking me that question. You talk about history. This is a dramatic chapter in the history of Arkansas, and the history of the country, that no one knows about. The average person doesn’t know anything about it. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt announced to the world that we were going to build 100,000 airplanes. You have to have aluminum to build airplanes, and the experts didn’t think that we could do it. Hitler didn’t

think we could do it, because at that time the bauxite that we were using was coming from South America. The Nazi naval blockade had sunk these ships bringing up bauxite. They blockaded the south Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, so we weren't getting that source of bauxite. Alcoa had a policy of conserving their resources for the future, so they were using this South America bauxite. Roosevelt knew something that the experts and Hitler didn't know. He knew about Bauxite, Arkansas. Ninety-five percent of the bauxite in North America was in Bauxite, Arkansas. He knew about the people that would be called upon to go in and dig it out. The people at Bauxite and central Arkansas went in and worked around the clock to dig out that bauxite. Aluminum was produced, planes were built, and battles were fought. Victories were won. We j[had] just observed D-Day on June the 6th. The 8th Air Force had a mission. After they made the amphibious landing, their mission was to prevent Rommel and three crack Nazi divisions from launching a counter-attack against our beachhead. Rommel had his divisions ready, but he was waiting for orders from Hitler. Hitler was asleep and nobody would wake him up. When Rommel finally got the orders, it was too late because the 8th Air Force had destroyed the lines of communication, the railroads, and the highways leading down to the beaches. So the Nazi troopers never got there. The planes that the 8th Air Force was flying were made from aluminum mined out from Bauxite, Arkansas.

DP: What a great story.

SM: Isn't that a great story? It is a thrilling story. Bauxite was mined to make that aluminum. I'll say this about Alcoa: it's a great company. They scarred the earth

down there to meet the defense demand. If you'd flown over it, it looked like Mars or the moon. Do you know what they're doing? They're working with the [Arkansas] Game and Fish Commission to rehabilitate that land, restore it to its natural state, and turn it all into state parks.

DP: That's great. That's just great. Now, here you are, you're practicing law. You're out of office.

[End of Tape 4]

[Beginning of Tape 5]

DP: Governor, there's one more race that I'd like to bring up, if you don't mind, and that is the race in 1962. You had hired Orval E. Faubus in your administration. He was involved with the highway department. He had become governor, elected in 1954, upsetting Francis Cherry, I might add. It comes to 1962, and you think you'll just take on your old former employee, Orval E. Faubus. By that time he had acquired and assimilated an enormous power base. I guess every board member, every commission appointee in the state had been his. In 1962 you challenged Orval Faubus for governor. What was going on in your mind? What was your motivation? Let's talk about that race just a moment.

SM: I gave that a lot of consideration. In the main, I'd be running against people who had been my support, against an organization that I helped build. I understood the difficulties. That may have been a mistake, to make that race, because of the formidable opposition and the issue that was so paramount in the minds of the people. But I wanted to make a statement, and I made that race in order to make a statement. I thought our leadership was going in the wrong direction at the wrong

time, and I made that statement. I was defeated. I did the best that I could. I ran as hard a race as I could, but I didn't have enough votes in the ballot box.

DP: You sure were up against a massive amount of fire power with Orval Faubus at that time. He was probably at the peak of his power. By 1962, he had gotten through the integration crisis and all of that business, and he had built an enormous power base probably unlike any other governor we've ever had.

SM: If it's any consolation, at least I have a feeling that I've been vindicated by history.

DP: Yes, I think people will agree to that. I certainly do. Governor, I want to go back. We have one thing in common. Both of us have been defeated by John L. McClellan.

SM: Yes.

DP: Senator McClellan.

SM: Right.

DP: You said there was a race that you should not have run, when you thought about making that race for a third term. Maybe that was a race I should not have run in 1972, but I did. Looking back on it, I don't have a lot of regrets. Things have worked out great for me.

SM: That made a base for you.

DP: It's just been wonderful. People have been wonderful to me and very, very tolerant of me for all of these years.

SM: Let me say this right here, David. There's no one in politics, past or present, that has more loyal friends and supporters than David Pryor. I say that from the heart.

DP: That's very, very kind of you, especially coming from Sidney McMath. Thank you very, very much. I appreciate you saying that. You almost defeated John McClellan in 1954. Now, that was a razor-edge, razor-close race. A lot of people say that in certain counties you were counted out. I don't know that to be the case. I don't know whether that's true or false, but you surely almost won that race.

SM: It would look like sour grapes or a poor loser if you say, "I was counted out because they cheated." But there were two or three counties in eastern Arkansas where people that I had relied on in the past went the other way at the last minute. It made a difference in the race.

DP: That's right. Many more have come to you than have ever come to me, but many times young people come to me and they say, "David, tell us. We're interested in running for office. Tell us what we should do. Tell us how we run. How do we choose a campaign manager or a slogan? What should be our message?" I say, "Listen, there's no secret to this." There's one thing that I tell everybody, I say, "Be prepared to lose. Hopefully you're going to win, but be prepared to lose. If you lose, be a good loser because people in Arkansas watch how you lose, I think, much more closely than how you win." You have always been a magnanimous, gracious politician in victory and defeat.

SM: Thank you.

DP: I think people have always admired that in you. You have risen above whatever degree of hurt you might be having in your own self, soul, and heart at the moment.

SM: Thank you. You mentioned about young people getting into politics. You know, I think you would agree with me that first they have to have a motive, the right motivation, and a passion to accomplish something, that they're willing to go out and pay the price of being a politician.

DP: There is a price to pay.

SM: In order to accomplish that one thing, you have to be willing to fight for that whether or not at the time it might be politically correct or the thing to do. There's a quotation somewhere in my mind about motivation, if I can remember it. "The right motive gives [indecipherable] to thought, and freedom and strength to speech and action." You have the right motive, otherwise don't get in.

DP: That is fabulous. I'd like to conclude on a story. I brought it up earlier in our conversation because you had mentioned dogs at two times, various dogs. I want to know the story of Old Red. I remember, in growing up, I heard about Old Red at the governor's mansion. Tell us that story one more time.

SM: Old Red was a great dog.

DP: Was Old Red from Grant County?

SM: No. He was from up in northwest Arkansas, just below Sebastian County, just before Fort Smith.

DP: Maybe even in Van Buren, or up in there?

SM: That's right. They were having a road opening dedication, and they invited me up to cut the ribbon. I cut the ribbon. Those coon hunters up there knew that I was a coon hunter. My boys and I hunted coons down on my farm. They made a great ceremony out of giving me Old Red. I took Old Red home with me and he was

there at the mansion. We were feeding him out of the Governor's Fund. There was a newspaper reporter in North Little Rock who took up the issue and accused me of misusing the Governor's Fund, the operating funds, to feed my dog. My response was that Old Red had replaced one state trooper as a guard at the mansion. Since he was working for the state, I thought it was only fair that he be fed by the state.

DP: Fed by the state. What a fair compromise! I think you prevailed in that argument there.

SM: I prevailed in that argument, that's right.

DP: That's one of the great stories. We've talked about the med center. We've talked about the highway program. We've talked about the rural electrification that you have felt so passionately about, but probably the most passionate that you've become is when you talk about education of our young people. I don't think I know of any governor in history that has done more for education than Sidney Sanders McMath. Talk about that for just a moment.

SM: As I mentioned earlier, I have felt with a passion that every child is entitled to an opportunity for an education, to find his talents, hone his skills and be a good citizen, a productive citizen. I, as governor, tried to appropriate more money for public education. I helped in consolidating the schools from some 1,700 to around 300. I advanced the program at the AM&N College in Pine Bluff, the one for black people. As I say, it was one of my passions and I tried to further that while I was in office.

DP: The late Daisy Bates would say in her speeches and admonitions to young people and in reviewing her life that, “Those who are not educated are not free.”

SM: I agree.

DP: I think that is true and I think you have believed that.

SM: Correct.

DP: For these many years! Governor, let me say that this state is better off today because of you, sir. What an honor it has been for me to visit with you during this program on AETN.

SM: Thank you.

DP: We’re very, very proud that this is the first in a series. We couldn’t have gone any higher to begin and to inaugurate this series.

SM: Thank you, David. I appreciate it very much.

DP: Thank you, sir.

[End of Interview]

