

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

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

Ed Burks

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

July 20, 2011

Helena-West Helena, Arkansas

## Objective

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

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

## Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

### **Citation Information**

See the Citation Guide at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>.

**Scott Lunsford interviewed Ed Burks on July 20, 2011, in  
Helena-West Helena, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Um—today's date is the—uh—twentieth of July  
2011. We're at the Delta Cultural—Cultural—  
Cultural Heritage Center in Helena, Arkansas.

Ed Burks: Yeah.

SL: And we're—I'm Scott Lunsford. I'm with the Pryor Center, and  
we're gonna be interviewing Ed Burks. And, Ed, we record this  
stuff in high-definition video and audio. Um—we will preserve it  
forever. You will get a DVD of the raw footage. That'll be the  
first thing . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that you get from us.

EB: Mmm.

SL: The whole thing. And it's yours. You look at it. If there's—if  
you find somethin' you don't like about it, why, you and I will  
talk about it. Uh—you will also, a little later, you'll get a  
transcript . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . where you can read . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . what we've done.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And if you find anything in that transcript or anything [*claps hands*] in that video that you are not comfortable with the . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . whole world . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . knowin' . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you—we'll take it out for you. We—we don't have any hesitation about that. This is your story . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the way you want it told.

EB: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:01] SL: I'm not here to get you or find out stuff you don't want to talk about. I'm just here to let you tell your story.

EB: Sounds just . . .

SL: And I'll—I'll help you through that.

EB: . . . sounds just like a politician, doesn't he? [*Laughter*]

SL: And then . . .

EB: "We're here to set your mind at ease."

SL: That's right.

EB: [*Unclear word*] [*Laughs*]

SL: And one—one—once we're settled on—on—on the interview  
and—and how to go about—and—and what you want in it . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . we'll take highlights of it, video clips, and we'll post that on  
the Pryor Center website, and—uh—we'll take the entire  
transcript. People will be able to read the whole interview. And  
we'll post all of the audio that we've settled on on this interview,  
and that'll . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:43] SL: . . . be on the Pryor Center website. And we will  
encourage kids in Arkansas public schools—um—researchers at  
the college level or at a professional level, documentarians—we'll  
encourage people to look at this stuff and use it in their work for  
educational purposes. We'll—we'll kind of safeguard all of that  
and make sure it's used right. Now if you're comfortable with all  
that and us—you know, our whole deal is to get these Arkansas  
stories out there for—the real stories. If you're comfortable with  
all that, we'll keep goin', and you and I will have a conversation,  
and—and we'll have a good time. And if you're not comfortable  
with it, why, we won't do any of this, and we can sit here and  
have a good time anyway. So . . .

EB: Yeah, sure. Yeah.

SL: Okay.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Good. Well, thank you very much. It's a . . .

EB: Well, thank you very much.

SL: . . . it's—it's—it's a great honor to be sittin' across from you.  
I've heard . . .

EB: Well, the honor's all my—priv—privilege is all mine, see.

[00:02:43] SL: Well, you know what, we're gonna—first of all, I  
need to—I usually start with your full name. What—what is your  
full name, Ed?

EB: Uh—Edwin Leo Burks Jr.

SL: Leo. I didn't—not know about the Leo.

EB: There's a long story about that name and—uh . . .

SL: Well . . .

EB: But . . .

SL: . . . you can tell me [*EB laughs*] that story right now if you want  
to.

EB: Oh, are we on the air? [*Laughs*]

SL: We—we are—we are rolling. Yes, sir.

EB: Okay. [*Clears throat*] I'm—I'm named after my father.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And he's named after his grandfather. Do I got this right, now?  
No, I'll take that back. His mother had a brother. We always called him Uncle Ed, but that stands for Edwin.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: So they named Daddy Edwin, and Leo was named for a—a friend of theirs who lives in either Pine Bluff or Monticello. All my daddy's people are from Monticello.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: As long as they've been in this country. But—'cause you wanna take it back to Ireland, that's another matter. [*Laughter*]

SL: You got Irish roots.

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah. And leaves, too. [*Laughs*] And limbs and leaves and roots, yeah. [*Laughter*] But . . .

[00:04:00] SL: Well now, what—what—what date were you—what's your birth date?

EB: Now don't put that on the Internet.

SL: Gotta have it.

EB: [*Laughs*] No, I was born in 1932, year of our Lord. But—so that makes me older than David.

SL: Do you remember the month and date? I mean, the . . .

EB: Four twenty-one.

SL: Four twenty-one. All right.

EB: That should agree with the Social Security people and the  
[laughter] . . .

[00:04:33] SL: Well, so—um—your—uh—great-grandparents on  
your dad's side, they were Irish—uh—immigrants, maybe,  
or . . .

EB: Uh—they came over from Ireland—Ireland before the potato  
famine.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And—uh—William Pinckney Burks—he—they—my dad used to  
call him William Pinckney—William Pinckney I.

SL: Kay.

EB: And he's the one that set up the land and sold it to—uh—the  
state of Arkansas to put the college on down there. Arkansas  
A&M, it later became.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: He sold three hundred acres down there for three dollars an  
acre. And he always kept his money in gold, and they—people  
used to laugh at him, you know, back—great-grandpa Burks,  
that'd be my—my grandfather's father, who was Captain Burks,  
when the Civil War broke out, he formed a regiment—he and his  
brother, Henry. And he lived in Camden and—or formed a  
regiment in Camden, and Captain Burks, Captain William

Pinckney Burks—uh—was from Drew County. But anyway, I don't know how they split up. One went to Camden, and one went to Drew County.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: But they both formed regiments and put that together. By the time they got down to him, all that money that William Pinckney had—they all—you know, back in those days everybody had about eight or ten kids [*laughs*] . . .

SL: That's correct.

EB: . . . in ev—in every generation.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

EB: By the time it got down to my grandfather, all the money was gone. It had been redistributed, you know, down through the . . .

SL: Through the years, through the generations.

EB: Different—yeah.

[00:06:23] SL: Yeah. Now were you—were you born in Helena?

EB: I was born in Memphis, Tennessee—uh—and there's a history of our family goin'—when they came over from Ireland, there was a split. Some went to Virginia, and some went to Tennessee. And—and my dad said, "Well, we're—we're a branch of the Tennessee Burks." There's a big trucking company in

Dyersburg, Tennessee, called the Burks Trucking Company.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And Dad said, "That's probably some of our relations."

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: Now we didn't—we didn't have it trace that all out to see how that stands. But—uh—my grandfather, who was my—my dad's father, wi—uh—Jay—Jay Pinckney Burks—was a newspaper man, and he was the editor of the paper here in Helena, the old *Helena World*, and for about thirty years. And I brought a couple of pictures of him . . .

SL: Good.

EB: . . . and we . . .

SL: Good.

EB: . . . can go through and . . .

[00:07:29] SL: So did you spend any time in Memphis growing up, or did—did they move down to Helena pretty quickly . . .

EB: No.

SL: . . . after you were born?

EB: Mother and Dad lived here anyway, but they got married in Memphis.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And by the time I came along, they chose to [*vehicle passes*]—

to—to have me in the—in the—um—I'm tryin' to think it was the Baptist or the Methodist hospital in Memphis. It's the same hospital Elvis died in late—years later.

SL: Okay.

EB: Was that the Baptist or the Methodist?

SL: I—I don't know that.

EB: You're supposed to know that. [*Laughter*]

SL: I don't know that. I didn't get—do enough homework on that.

[00:08:06] EB: That—that reminds me of another story.

SL: Yeah.

EB: No, I won't tell that here, but [*laughter*—but we came back to—uh—there and the old home place. I was telling Kris about this. We passed it on the way in comin' down here from . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . West Helena a while ago. I brought a picture of that.

SL: Good, good.

EB: [*Vehicle passes*] And that's the same house that—when Ronnie came down here from Fayetteville in [19]57, and he and I got together. And he didn't have a place to stay, and I said, "You're gonna stay at my grandmother's house 'cause she loves company."

SL: Good.

EB: So that's the way that worked out. Big—I wish I still had that big old house, but it's not—it—it's still there, but I don't even know who owns it now. My dad sold it.

[00:08:53] SL: Uh-huh. Well, let—let's talk about your—your mom and dad for a minute. Uh—what—what was your mom's name?

EB: Mary Katherine Clark . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: . . . from Mississippi. They—her father was a professional photographer, and he made violins.

SL: Wow.

EB: And—uh—down through the years, I don't know how many he even made, but—uh—my sister inherited the—the last surviving violin that he made. And—and she lives in Roanoke, Virginia.

SL: Now what—what town in Mississippi was your mom from?

EB: Enterprise, Mississippi.

SL: Okay. Last name was Clark. And now—um—um—what was your—uh—where was your dad raised and . . .

EB: My dad was raised in Monticello and Hot Springs and Pine Bluff.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: And a lot of his boyhood days were—he told me he learned to swim in Hot Springs.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: Up there behind the Arlington Hotel there's a—some kind of a body of water back up in there.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: [*Clears throat*] I've never even seen it, but he used to tell that story, said, "Yeah, boy." Said, "You ought to find you a—a big ol' hole like I did [*laughter*] with water in it and jump in."

SL: Yeah.

EB: And he said, "It—it'll prove whether you can either sink or swim. It's up to you," he said. And he said, "And that's the way life is. It's up to you. You gotta sink or swim." He said that's where he learned how to dog-paddle. And I said, "Well, okay. [*Laughs*] If it's good enough for you, Dad, it's good enough for me."

[00:10:26] SL: So—uh—how did your mom and dad meet, then?

EB: Mother was a—a—a trained nurse, and she—she took her nurse's trainin' in—uh—at—at the King's Daughters Hospital in—uh—Greenville, Mississippi. And she—uh—has other training in—uh—Meridian, Mississippi, at the King's Daughters—uh—Matty Hersee Hospital.

SL: Okay.

EB: And so back in the year of 1927, when they had that big flood, and it affected us and Mississippi, of course . . .

SL: Yep.

EB: . . . uh—it—it was part of Mother's job to go down in a—she and the crew she had with her in—in a boat, paddlin', to help the folks that were displaced and disadvantaged and caught up in the flood. If they needed help, why, they would help 'em out. And she came to Helena right after that and—uh—was attached to the—uh—board of health here in Helena, and she became the superintendent of nurses there.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And it was during those days that she met my father. My father had established his own insurance agency in 1926.

SL: Boy!

EB: And it was—it became one of the oldest insurance firms in Arkansas, so I understand. So—course, I grew up in—in—in the insurance business and know a lot about that. Course, there's been a lot of changes in the insurance industry since those days, of course, but . . .

[00:12:10] SL: So your mom and dad basically met because of the flood, then.

EB: Well, it—I would guess so. Now they never told me that but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: And . . .

SL: Boy, that was big doin's. That was a major exodus, population exodus.

EB: And see, that happened before they built the levee here—the big—the levee here now is concrete, as—as you can see.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: But when the flood happened, I guess some of it spilled over onto Cherry Street when it was just a regular—a regular dirt levee.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Course, that—that was before I was born, so I . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: . . . never did get to see any of that but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:12:44] EB: And then in 1937, we had that big freeze and another flood—diff—different parts of the same year. But I never will forget people crossin' this river, and it was all iced over.

SL: Wow!

EB: Course, I didn't think anything about that 'cause I wasn't but five years old so . . .

SL: Right.

EB: And people out there in their snowsuits and sleds and stuff like

that and [*SL laughs*] goin' across the river. [*Laughter*] Then, I didn't think anything about that. Lookin' back on that now, I said, "You mean to tell me that you could cross the Mississippi River iced over?" That's somethin'—somethin' else . . .

SL: That's somethin' else. That's somethin' else.

EB: . . . you know. I don't think that's ever happened again.

[00:13:27] SL: Did you—um—did you ever know either set of your grandparents?

EB: Oh yeah. I knew my grandfather. He died when I was four years old.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: He was—like I say, he was Jay—Jay Pinckney Burks.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: They called him J. P. Burks, and he was the editor of the newspaper here. And he—before that, he had owned a newspaper in Hot Springs called the *Bulletin*. And he had a partner, and his partner was—he was bad to drink, so that—that—that—that didn't help my grandfather's efforts to make that newspaper as successful as it needed to be.

SL: Yeah. And—uh—what about your grandmother? Did you ever know her?

EB: Oh yes. He married—now my grandmother was a Dozier.

D-O-Z-I-E-R.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And her parents were from Alabama, as far as I—I believe I'm right about that.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: Her father was the sheriff of that county that they lived in.

[00:14:33] SL: So did you—uh—uh—I mean, did you know her growin' up?

EB: Oh yeah. She wrote [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: Did she outlive her—her husband or . . .

EB: She outlived him by a good many years. She died in 1961.

SL: Okay. So she . . .

EB: So she knew Ronnie. See now, member I . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . told you when Ronnie . . .

SL: All right.

EB: . . . came down.

SL: Okay.

EB: And boy, they got along fine, and he—she was real outgoing and just loved everybody, and [*SL laughs*] they'd sit up and tell stories. And Ronnie'd slip cigars to her, and [*SL laughs*] he said, "Don't you tell your dad." I said, "No, I won't." [*SL laughs*] Or

he'd slip her a [*SL laughs*] thing of wine once in a while. And you know how Ronnie was. [*Laughs*]

[00:15:08] SL: Yes. Yeah, still is. [*EB laughs*] So—uh—is there—do you have any—uh—did she tell you any good stories, old stories?

EB: Well, she's a . . .

SL: I'm always lookin' for the oldest story.

EB: Well now, her other son, my dad's brother, William Pinckney Burks III, he was.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: He was very athletic all through school, and he was captain of the football team, captain of the basketball team, captain of the track team.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: And he—and then in later years he played semi-pro baseball for the Seaporters. I never have res—done any research on the Seaporters but . . .

SL: That's the team here.

EB: Well, it was connected to Louisiana somehow, too.

SL: Okay.

EB: In Shreveport.

SL: Okay.

EB: But when World War I broke out, of course, my father and his brother were both in World War I. My da—my dad is two years older than my Uncle Pinck.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: But they offered him a commission, and he said, "Well, I oughta be on the front lines." And he said, "Well, if we do that, you're gonna have to be busted down to a private." He said, "That's okay. I want to go where the action is." So that's what they did. And he came back home decorated with all kind of Purple Hearts and Silver Stars with oak-leaf clusters and stuff like that. He was left-handed, but he was a dead shot, and I guess that probably saved his life back—now he fought in the trenches and—when he—he was on the western front in . . .

SL: Oh my gosh.

EB: . . . World War I. But he wouldn't talk about it after he got back home.

[00:16:58] SL: Well, you know—uh—that's not uncommon. Some veterans . . .

EB: That's what I later understood, you know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But Dad said, yeah, he wouldn't—he wouldn't talk about it, you know. But he'd come home and visit—uh—he lived in

Shreveport after the war.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: But before he moved to Shreveport, he was a manager for the United Fruit Company for a coffee plantation down in Central America.

SL: Wow!

EB: And—uh—he married a lady here from Helena. Her last name was Fitzpatrick.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And I always called her Aunt Lallah. I guess that's the way she spelled Lallah. I don't know. It might . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . have been *L-A-double L-A-H*, probably. I'm—I'm just guessin'. [*Laughs*] I don't know.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

[00:17:44] EB: But they didn't have any children and so—uh—but once or twice a year, my uncle would come—come home and visit here and stay at the house. Grand—course, my grandmother was still—she always welcomed 'em home and stuff. And my first cousin, Margaret, who was my dad's sister—her mother was my dad's sister. Her name was Exye, Exye Margaret Burks.

SL: How—how do you—how the heck do you spell that?

EB: Well, that's the only time I've ever seen any lady named Exye, and *E-X-Y-E*. And my dad always called her Ex. [*Laughter*] And every—and every Christmas we'd have a great, big ol' tree in the living room of that—in that house. And course, Dad always give her a—whatever present he gave her, he'd just—he'd say, "Well, this is for Ex," and he'd hand—I said, "Dad, who is Ex?" [*Laughter*] He said, "That's your Aunt Exye, boy." And I said, "Okay." [*Laughs*] And their daughter was named Exye—I mean, Margaret Melissa. She's my first cousin. And she grew up in that house. And her father was Warfield Gist, who was the county agent here for years.

SL: Y'all thick as thieves here.

EB: Oh yeah, man. Everybody [*laughter*—you know what everybody says? "Everybody's kin to everybody in Helena," but that's not true with me. But . . .

[00:19:20] SL: Well, did—did your—um—um—father ever talk about World War I?

EB: Well, he didn't go overseas. He stayed—uh—in the States, and they commissioned him. He came—he came—he was a first lieutenant.

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: And—uh—he went to camp—uh [*someone coughs in background*]*—Camp Pike, I guess, and—and I member him talkin' bout Fort Leavenworth, and he was stationed there for a while.*

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: So anyway, when he came out of the—out of the service, then he established his insurance agency in 1926. But he worked for his father here at the paper.

SL: Paper. [*Someone coughs*]

EB: The *Helena World*.

SL: Uh-huh.

[End of verbatim transcript]

[00:20:00] EB: He was a circulation manager before he went into the insurance business. And he survived with no backing, no funding, no draws, nothin', boy. Just knockin' on those doors and whatever he had to do to sell his policies.

SL: I tell you, 'tween the . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . Great Depression and the flood, Helena kinda got a double whammy here.

EB: Oh yes. Oh yes.

SL: Well, let's talk a little bit about the house that you grew up in,

then.

EB: Well, that's the one that y'all were in out in West Helena. Now that was a house that Dad bought. He bought several houses, and he used them as rental property. Because up until that time, he'd lived at the Dogwoods. That's the name of the house that my dad and my grandfather built.

[00:20:59] SL: Uh-huh. But—so you were raised in the house that we came and . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . visited with you. Okay.

EB: After—well, I've been livin' there since I was four months old. Way—that's the way Mother told me. She said, "There just wasn't enough room in that big ol' house for three families to live in" [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . "at the same time."

SL: Yeah, yeah.

EB: She told my dad, she said, "If you don't get me out of this house, then I'm gonna take my son, and we're gone!" He said, "Hold on. Hold on, Katherine. Wait a minute. Wait a" [*laughter*]—so we moved in the house in West Helena on Richmond Hill. And I'm the oldest—I've been on Richmond Hill

longer than anybody else, these days and times. Everybody else that lives up there are newcomers . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . compared to my longevity there.

[00:21:50] SL: Well now, did you have any brothers or sisters?

EB: I have two sisters.

SL: Okay, let's talk about them a little bit. What are their names?

EB: Well, the oldest one was Sarah Katherine. She's thirteen months younger than I am. People thought we were twins growin' up. And we used to sing together, but we were kinda shy if we didn't know who was in the—we used to go down and visit my grandmother up in the den. They had an upstairs den.

SL: Okay.

EB: And one of my grandmother's good friends, Mrs. Wells, from here in Helena, happened to be there visiting, so when we came in, she said, "Oh, I've heard so much about you children." She says, "I know you just sing so beautifully. Won't you sing me a song?" [*SL laughs*] And we just—we were timid, I guess. She said, "Now darlin', won't you sing me a song that you know that we could all just love to hear your beautiful little voices?" [*Laughter*] She says, "I'll give you a piece of gum if you will." So she gave us a piece of gum, and we started chewin' the gum.

"Well, sing," she said. "If you're not gonna sing, I'll have to have my gum back." And so we reached in our mouths and gave her . . .

SL: Aww!

EB: . . . gum back. [*Laughter*] Mom used to tell that—I don't even remember that happenin', but my mother . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . used to tell that story. Had a good laugh about that. But back in those days, my uncle, by that time, had left a lot of his things that he had down in Central America and brought back and hung the stuff up in the den. He brought back a couple of idols and things that he had discovered in that part of the country in Spanish Honduras. That's where the coffee plantation was. [00:23:56] And the story goes that he and some of his buddies were down there, and they went searchin' for gold in other parts of Central America. I don't think they ever discovered [*laughs*] any gold. But he killed a jaguar down there, and he had his entourage with him. They thought he was the second comin', I guess, because he was so good with his—with a pistol, or a rifle, too, for that matter. But they looked up in the tree, and they saw this jaguar sitting on a limb, and he had a couple of guys that were—they were goin' through the jungle,

and they said, "Look out, Mr."—said, "Mr. Pinck." Said—and as soon as he said, "Look out," my uncle looked up in the tree, and there was this jaguar, springing. He pulled his pistol and fired and hit him right here [points to the center of his forehead]. And he dropped dead on the ground right—and I—and he had a taxidermist make a rug out of that jaguar, and it was on my grandmother's wall for years and years and years. Well, I inherited that jaguar skin and kept it in my room again. And more years passed and more years passed, and the [laughs] moths got to workin' on that thing.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I wish I had kept it, even at that. It could have been further restored, I suppose, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: I'm sorry I threw it away, but—and they had a—and then he had another thing with a lot of jade on it that he kept that on her wall, too. And his wife wound up with that, I think. She wanted a lot of that stuff back. He passed away before she did.

[00:25:45] SL: Well, you know, your grandmother sounds like she had a pretty full life. Was she pretty active in the community here in Helena or . . .

EB: Well, of course, she belonged to our church and all that, and

she'd go to church with us whenever she was able. Course, in her later years, you know, she got to where she couldn't get out too much, and she didn't like to be penned up where she couldn't get out. But she just loved a good time. [*SL laughs*] And see, Ronnie used to tease her about he was gonna take her out to the ol' Delta Supper Club where we were playin' out there. I said, "Boy, if my dad found out about that, he'd shoot both of us." [*Laughter*] ?Tell you what?. But she loved to cut up. She played piano, too. She knew three—I don't know how many songs she knew, but she'd love to come out to our house and play. We had an upright piano. And then she had one in her house, too. And my grandfather played trumpet and violin. I never heard him play. Like I say, he was gone after I was four years old so I . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: But I still have his violin.

[00:26:55] SL: Well, do you—I guess you went to Helena grade school and public schools here.

EB: Yeah, you n—as you remember comin' up to my house in West Helena, if you're—come out of my front door to the street. That's Carolina Street.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Look to your left and follow that all the way up, and there's the old Beech Crest School up there. But the original buildin' is gone.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And they've got all that modern stuff up there now. Years ago, before they built the school, that used to be a zoo, [*SL laughs*] so I was told. I—that was way before my time.

SL: A zoo?

EB: Uh-huh. Now I don't know how big it was, but I always heard that was a zoo in days gone by.

[00:27:44] SL: Well, was—when you started goin' to school, was Helena pretty much a hoppin' place? Was it . . .

EB: Yeah, well, it was, but of course, when I was that young, we—you don't pay attention to stuff like that. But now that was just a elementary school. You know, the first four years I went to school there. And then—so that was about a block and a half from my house. Well, about a block and a half going west was the old high school, Woodruff High School, and they tore that down in year—in later years.

SL: Mh-hmm. Were you pretty good in school?

EB: Well, I—course, my main interest has always been music, and I was—I started takin' clarinet lessons. My music teacher lived at

the end of the—of Carolina Street, so I didn't have far to go to take lessons. And she was our band director, and she taught me the clarinet, and I got the hang of it real quick, and she told my mother, she said, "If I could just make him sight-read, 'cause all he's gotta do is hear it and then he can play it." And I wasn't but—now I was in—well, I was in the third grade, and I was in—they put me in the high school band, playing first-chair clarinet music.

SL: Well, Ed, that's pretty impressive.

EB: And . . .

SL: You said you learned to read the music, then? You . . .

EB: I could read it, but I thought, "Well, I'll fool my teacher." Or when I got in the band, they didn't—then I started improvisin'. And then they were talkin' about that. Said, "Man, now this kid here, he's playin' stuff that, you know, he"—they always said, "Aww." Said, "I can't do that." They would all say, "I can't—I wish I could do that," you know.

[00:29:30] SL: Well, so how did you land on the clarinet? Why the clarinet? Is that just what the band . . .

EB: Well, my . . .

SL: . . . teacher . . .

EB: . . . mother discussed that with the band director. Her name

was Ruth Ayler.

SL: Okay.

EB: *A-Y-L-E-R*. I believe that's the way they spelled it. Her husband was a civil engineer. He was with the—he had an affiliation with all that and—but my mother knew that I was musically inclined, and I played a tonette before I played the clarinet. We had . . .

[00:30:06] SL: Now what's a tonette?

EB: Well, that's—it looks like a potato whistle [*laughter*] except it's more cylindrical.

SL: Oh, okay. [*EB laughs*] Okay.

EB: And it has fingers, you know, for both hands.

SL: Okay.

EB: Well, we had a tonette band here. Well, in that band sometimes I'd play the tonette, and sometimes I'd beat the bass drum goin' down the street. We'd have a parade, you know, and stuff like that.

SL: You mean, just in the neighborhood or . . .

EB: Well, no, downtown.

SL: Is that right?

EB: Yeah.

SL: A tonette band.

EB: Yeah. And Mrs. Ayler taught all that. [*SL laughs*] Well, that's—

so my mother said, "Well, I'd love him to take violin lessons."  
'Cause, see, both of my grandfathers played violin, and my  
great-grandfather played violin, too, Mother's grandfather on her  
side of the family. He's the one that painted that picture I was  
tellin' you about in the livin' room that . . .

SL: Yeah, looks . . .

EB: . . . at the . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . St. Louis World's Fair. And he made violins also. He was—  
and his son—he was Allen Clark. That's my mother's father.  
And you saw their pictures hangin' in the bedroom there . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . at the house.

SL: Yeah. So—but . . .

[00:31:18] EB: But we discussed what instrument I was gonna play  
which—and they discussed the trombone and the clarinet and  
the violin. And so Mrs. Ayler told Mother, she said, "Well, I  
guess it might be the thing to do to start off on the clarinet," so  
that's what I did. An old shiny metal clarinet. It was almost tall  
as I was [*laughter*] 'cause I was pretty short growing up.

SL: Yeah, yeah. Well, that's a . . .

EB: But as I went on through—course, I played in the—in high school

concert band and high school marching band and all that ever since I was in the third grade. After I had spent a year under—you know, takin' lessons from Mrs. Ayler. I guess I was in the fourth grade by the time they put me in the high school band. And the more music I played, the more interested I got in listening to other bands and orchestras and so on and so forth. And I remember the Helena band had a jam-up band, man. And boy, they had players in there. I said, "Man, if I could just play like some of those people do," you know. One lady played the harp, you know. [*Mimics playing harp*]

SL: Wow! Yeah.

EB: And she was a cousin of—what's the president's name we had here? Coolidge. President Coolidge's—she was a descendant . . .

SL: From Coolidge.

EB: . . . of President Coolidge. Anna Leslie Coolidge was her name.

[00:32:57] SL: So you're listening to this Helena band when you're in grade school or high school?

EB: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: They, see, they—well, they came to West Helena and put on a concert one time at the Woodruff High School in our auditorium.

And they played the *William Tell* overture, and boy, that got my attention [*snaps fingers*], and I was just, I mean, I was awestruck. I was fascinated. And if you're familiar with that piece of music . . .

SL: Sure.

EB: . . . I mean, you know, the flute part that dee, dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee, dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee-deedle-deedle-deedle-deedle-dee-da-boom, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: And then Anna Leslie would play the harp part behind there, doodle-doodle-doodle-doodle-doodle-doodle. Oh, it was just gorgeous. And then when the trumpets came, you know, to the last movement, dun, da-da-dun, da-da-dun-bum-bum-bum-bum-bum-bum-bum, and oh man, [*laughs*] I was hypnotized. So some of those people I got to know later on in years and—even though they were older than I was and stuff like that. And Moore Tappan played first-chair clarinet for the Helena band, and when the schools merged—see, West Helena merged with Helena in 1948, and that's when we became—we call it Central—they called it the Central School District then. But I still went to the old Helena High School where my dad graduated from in 1920. And that buildin' is still there, and it's been condemned

for I don't know how many years. But they would have the civic music concerts come in and play from all over the country. You know, the—not the big symphony orchestras, but the symphonettes, I guess you'd call 'em. And you heard me mention Warfield Gist while ago. He had a relative. His name was S. D. Warfield, and he set aside money for the perpetuation of the civic music people to put on—bring concerts here and that—they were paid out of the funds he set up. He put that in perpetuity for that to go on. We even had the Boston Pops play here a couple of times out at the college now, by that time, in the Lily Peter Auditorium. And S. D. Warfield never married. He was an old bachelor and—but when he died, all that money went into the trust fund to set up to pay cultural events like that, especially . . .

SL: That's a good stroke.

EB: . . . music.

SL: Yeah. That's a good stroke. So . . .

[00:35:36] EB: So my interest then in later years—course, I heard *King Biscuit Time* on the radio in 1941. That's when all that stuff started. The ra—KFFA started in 1941. And they had me playin' down there one time. I played my harmonica down there on a couple of shows. And Bob Evans, I don't know if you're familiar

with that name or not, but he was—he's from here. And he and his family belonged to our church, the First Methodist here in Helena. And Bob had been out in New York with a singin' group. I'm tryin' to think the name of 'em. Ah, it'll come to me in a minute, I guess. But he had quite a career in music out there, and he became the first Miss America master of ceremonies and did—he did that for a couple of years. And of course, back in those days, his children were real young, so he decided to retire from all of that and move back to Helena. He said, "Well, that's a better place to raise young folks," so that's what they did. They came back home. His father owned a big cotton-buyin' company here, Evans Cotton. And I guess they grew cotton, too. But then he became—since he quit the Miss America Pageant, then he, for many, many years after that, he was the Miss Arkansas master of ceremonies.

SL: That's where I've heard his name.

EB: Yeah, and all that took place in Hot Springs and course . . .

[00:37:29] SL: Uh-huh. That's where I've heard his name. Let's get back to your mom and dad. Talk to me a little bit about your mom. What kind of gal was she?

EB: Well, she was a—you mean from what aspect? From what . . .

SL: Well, I mean . . .

EB: She . . .

SL: . . . was she—you mentioned y'all's church was the Methodist Church.

EB: Yeah, she was . . .

SL: Was she involved with the church at all? Was . . .

EB: Oh sure.

SL: Did the . . .

EB: She was a big worker.

SL: . . . did the church play a role in your home at all or . . .

EB: Oh, definitely. Yeah. Course, the pastor would come out and have dinner with us several times, you know, off and on, or whoever the new preacher was. And dad was chairman of the board for thirteen years at the church here.

SL: Okay. So you went to church every Sunday.

EB: Every Sunday. Yes, sir. You'd dare not go. [*Laughs*]

SL: And you had Sunday clothes that . . .

EB: Oh sure.

SL: . . . kept nice and . . .

EB: Oh yeah. And . . .

SL: . . . wore on Sundays and . . .

[00:38:31] EB: . . . Dad taught a class in the men's Sunday school department, and he sang in the choir for a time. And he, like I

say, he was chairman of the board, and he just oversaw things in the church generally, you know, for years and years, even after he ceased to be the chairman of the board. My dad was also the first adjutant general of the Legion Hut here after World War I. And then he became—he remained active in the American Legion all those years. He—I still have his legionnaire cap and high—he was decorated, you know.

[00:39:18] SL: Yeah. Well, was the—I guess your mom was a housewife. She stayed home and . . .

EB: Oh yeah, she . . .

SL: . . . raised the kids and . . .

EB: Yeah, that's right.

SL: . . . and what kind of—tell me bout the meals that you-all would have. Did you—were you to be at the table at a certain time in the morning, or was it . . .

EB: We better be. Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Okay, that's what I wanna know. I mean . . .

EB: Sunday come around, you better have on your suit coat or, you know, unless it was oppressively hot or somethin' like—back in those days, didn't have air-conditioning but . . .

SL: Right.

EB: . . . especially when we were a good bit younger. We did have a

big attic fan though.

SL: And those worked pretty good.

EB: And that's still up there.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And one of these days I may reactivate it. [*Laughs*]

[00:40:05] SL: You might. Yeah, those—I remember we used to have that, too, and they worked pretty good. It made a difference. So would you—would your mom pack you a lunch for school, or did you just have lunches at school?

EB: Well, back in those days, we'd come home for lunch.

SL: 'Cause you were just a block and a half or two . . .

EB: Yeah, we'd come home for lunch and then—now after we got to the Helena school, they bused us from West Helena to Helena. Now by that time, I guess I was in the tenth grade, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

EB: That's right 'cause I went to the ninth grade at Woodruff. Then when the consolidation happened—you know, before they consolidated, Helena's football team was called the Helena Hustlers. [*SL laughs*] And the West Helena team was called the Bearcats, and our colors were green and white, and our band uniforms were green and white. And so—but now when they merged, of course—by the time all that happened, and they built

the new Central School out there in—not too far from where my house is right now. All that was pastureland out in there, and then they built the Central High School. And we attended.

That's where I graduated from. And we were the first graduating class to attend that school after it was built, so it was a brand-spankin'-new school.

[00:41:49] SL: And that was in [19]48?

EB: In—well, that was in—that wasn't completed until my senior year, so that would bring it up to about 1949. And that spilled over into 1950. The—and the, you know, the graduating . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . in May. Course, I was in the concert band there, too, and in marching band, and all that. And I wanted to play football. I got tired of playin'—just doin' music all the time. And when I snuck out for football, by the time I got to the uniform I was supposed to wear, the shoulder pads didn't fit, and the shoes didn't fit, and the helmet didn't fit, but I got the last of the stuff that we were supposed to put on. I said, "I'm gonna try it anyway."

SL: Yeah.

EB: And boy, when my mother found about that, she said, "You're gonna get killed out there wearin' that stuff that don't fit. You know that, don't you?" She said, "I'm not gonna have you"—she

says, "You need to get back in the band." And by the—the band director found out about it. Here he comes out to [*SL laughs*] where we were practicin' on the football field. [*Laughs*] And he come and got me with a scrap of the neck, and he said, "Boy, get out of that dad-blamed uniform and come on back out here and—you're missin' band practice," he said. [*Laughs*]

SL: Man!

EB: So I went [*laughs*—and we had a great concert band. I never will forget that. And . . .

[00:43:26] SL: How many kids were in the concert band?

EB: Well, let's see. It was—you know, I did know that number. I guess there was probably fifty of us. I'm not sure.

SL: Oh, that's pretty big.

EB: But—yeah, we competed with Little Rock and all that, and I went to all of the band festivals in—throughout the state down through the years. And they'd give you a medal whenever you'd go to one of those.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And that—those were interesting experiences. We'd go to Jonesboro and Russellville and Little Rock to where they put on those state band—called 'em band conventions.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Then they had a summer meet in Monticello. They called it the Dixie Band Camp. Now man, that was an experience. I got to hear some real, sure-enough players down there.

[00:44:21] SL: Did they come up . . .

EB: They were selected from different bands all across the state to comprise the Dixie Band Camp. And that lasted for two weeks every summer. And Scrubby Watson, who was the band director at Pine Bluff, he was the band director of the—of that meet. And I never will forget that's where I first heard the final movement of Shostakovich Symphony no. 5, and I was just frozen like this. [Freezes in position] It was so fascinating, you know. I had never heard of Shostakovich prior to that time.

SL: Boy, you had that stuff—that stuff was in your blood, wasn't it? It just . . .

EB: Oh yeah!

SL: I wonder if it's your violin-maker legacy that kind of coursed through you there and . . .

EB: I guess. I guess so. But—'cause I always stuck to the clarinet, and course, I picked up the harmonica on my own, and then I picked up the piano on my own, goin' down through the years. And course, then I picked up the saxophone, too, and . . .

SL: Well, did you [*EB clears throat*—so you didn't get to do any

athletics in the schools 'cause . . .

EB: Well, I went out for track, and I stayed with that for a while. And I discovered I wasn't an extremely fast runner, but [laughter] I tried to [clears throat]—I had a buddy on the track team, you know. And course, all in my mind, I knew my uncle was real athletic, and he was—he excelled in everything. He excelled in the high jump and the—all the track-and-field sports, you know, and the javelin and all that, and I thought, "Well, if my uncle can do it, I can do it too." And so . . .

[00:46:10] SL: Were you and your uncle pretty close?

EB: Well, I didn't know him as well as I'd like to have known him. He was my favorite and—but he taught me how to shoot a pistol. So for a while here, he was on the police force, and he still kept his pistol that he had while he was on the police force. And when he'd come home and visit—and see, of course, he'd always stay at my grandmother's house. That—well, that's the house that he, after World War I, he lived there, too, he and his wife. But there's a big cliff out in the back of that house. It's still there today, I guess. There's a dirt road that ran in back of the house, and they call that Stringtown Road. Now it may be paved today. I guess it is, but as far back as I'm goin'—now my uncle would set up targets out there on that old cliff, and then we'd

stay back in the backyard, and he'd put up those targets, and we'd get out there and shoot at those targets. And he taught me how to shoot and everything, and so that was . . .

SL: Those were the days.

EB: . . . that was fun. So when I got to boot camp in the navy—course, we had to learn how to shoot rifles and all that and pistols and . . .

SL: You knew how to do it.

EB: So while I was shootin' my M-1 rifle, I noticed I was drawin' a little crowd behind me there. Here come the chief and the lieutenant and all of 'em to—and I thought, "What are these birds doin' back there watchin' me?" And come to find out that I tied for first place in the—all that competition in my company at Great Lakes. So I said, "Well, lookee here." [*Laughs*] I'm proud of that, you know.

[00:48:10] SL: It's funny how stuff that happens when you're a kid, you keep it with you . . .

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . all the time.

EB: Course, I'm one of these kind of folks that remembers everything that happened as far back as when I was probably three or four years old, and then I've heard the stories of folks

that can even go farther back than that.

[00:48:30] SL: Well, I—that's what—that's the kind of stuff we like to [*EB laughs*] hear, you know. The—so your dad started a insurance company in [19]20 . . .

EB: Started an agency.

SL: Agency.

EB: There's a difference between an agency and a company.

SL: Agency. An agen—what company was it with?

EB: He was a Travelers . . .

SL: Travelers.

EB: . . . representative here. And for the—not the fire and casualty, but the life, health, and accident.

SL: M'kay.

EB: So we sold life insurance and health insurance. Back then they called it hospitalization insurance.

SL: Yep.

EB: And course, then I wound up gettin' licensed myself. Course, they grandfathered me in, you know, since—and of course, Dad was president of the Arkansas's—I mean, of the Helena Association of Insurance Agents. And back in those days, all the little Texas companies were springin' up. Dad said, "You gotta be careful of those. Not gonna represent those outfits. They're

cut-raters." So he was against stuff like—companies like State Farm. Course, they were a mutual company.

SL: So he stuck with Travelers.

EB: He stuck—well, he represented about thirty-seven different companies, all told, 'cause it—we sold all forms of insurance. Fire and casualty. We—before they established what they call the homeowners policy, if you wanted to insure your furniture, that was a separate policy that was called the contents policy, furniture and contents. Then you insure your house separately. Well, when the homeowners concept came out, they was all consolidated into one policy. And then they threw in a liability feature with that also, in case your—somebody's come into your house, and your dog bites him, and they want to sue you or stuff . . .

SL: Right.

EB: . . . like that.

[00:50:27] SL: Yeah. Well, you seem pretty well versed in insurance lingo.

EB: Well, I [*clears throat*] was licensed in Missouri, too. I lived in St. Louis for a long time and decided I'd do somethin' with that. But I represented a company that wrote college students' life policies, and I did that for a while. And just as—just to prove to

myself that I was—well, I guess I was tryin' to show my dad that I could do it, and you know, instead of being around home here. Course, I was supposed to take over his business, which I didn't do, but . . .

SL: Well, you had a—you probably had a choice of either following your music career or . . .

EB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . going into the insurance business, I would guess.

EB: And I guess he later understood that, even though it was hard for him to face up to that fact, I guess. But . . .

[00:51:29] SL: Well, you—it sounds, though, like y'all got along okay.

EB: Oh yeah. He didn't get his belt out and chase me around the room. [*Laughter*] No, he just—I always admired him very much because he started with no financing, didn't have a draw, didn't have any—he went into it—I guess he must've saved up a little bit 'cause he worked for the newspaper for several years before he did that. But he—at one time, he had thirty-seven different companies. He represented companies in Canada and the old Sun Life Insurance Company . . .

SL: Yeah, I kinda remember that.

EB: . . . which is supposed to be the—one of the largest life

insurance companies in existence. And a lot of the companies that he did represent down through the years, of course, a lot of 'em are not in business anymore. But he sold a ton of fire and casualty insurance. Course, I wrote a lot of those policies, too. And back in those days, the commissions were a lot higher than they are today. If you wrote a automobile policy, the agent would get about 25 percent.

SL: That's a pretty big chunk.

EB: And then it dwindled down, and then it went to 20. And then it dropped to 15 [*laughs*] as time went by. And a lot of other agents in town here, whom I knew, of course, and we'd talk, you know, and visit with one another. And I never will forget one of my buddies said, "I think we're in the wrong business." I said, "What's the matter, John?" And he said, "Well." He said, "I'm thinkin' about sellin' out." He said, "Because these companies are tryin' to force agents out of the business, so they can write direct," you know, like Geico does today . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:53:21] EB: . . . and others. So I said, "Well"—but I saw the same thing happenin' to my dad's business, too. But he wouldn't give up. He kept on—he finally gave up in his middle eighties, and that made him mad 'cause he had to quit. His

eyesight got—I think he was legally blind in one eye. Of course, we finally had to take the car keys away from him.

SL: That's hard.

EB: And he still did some business out of the house. We sold a lot of trip insurance, when you take a flight on a plane and insure your baggage and death benefits and accident benefits and stuff like that every time you take a flight. But you could still use that policy without having to fly or without having to travel, but they still called it travel insurance. And we had a lot of people that would keep that coverage up all through—you know, twelve months out of the year, whether they traveled or not. But you don't hear much about that type of coverage anymore.

SL: No, just when you're buyin' an airplane ticket . . .

EB: Yeah.

[00:54:30] SL: . . . or rentin' a car. [*EB laughs*] Yeah. Okay, so what about—you know, your uncle taught you to shoot. Did you ever do any fishin' or huntin' or . . .

EB: Yeah, I'd—we used to go squirrel huntin', and my dad had an old single-shot .22 rifle. And back in those days, you could go out in the woods here and shoot whatever you wanted to. I member one time when I shot my first squirrel up there on the school—in the school yard up there at Beech Crest. Saw an old squirrel

sittin' way up in a tree, and I took that old rifle and blam! Shot that squirrel down. And shot a dove in a tree further away than that, and nobody thought anything about stuff like that back in those—you can't shoot a gun in your—on your property today.

SL: That's right.

EB: But of course, that gun didn't make much noise. [*Laughs*]  
Sounded like a popgun.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Single-shot .22.

SL: Yeah.

[00:55:32] EB: [*Laughs*] But anyway, that was a—we'd go fishin'.

My dad and I'd go fishin' several times. There's a lake here. I don't know if you've seen it or not. But Phillip Steele was fascinated with it. He came down there to see me when we were workin' on my album, and I went down and showed him Old Town Lake. It's full of cypress trees.

SL: Is it a oxbow thing? Is it an oxbow lake or . . .

EB: Well, no, it runs real long. It . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . it's called Lake View.

SL: Okay.

EB: A little bitty community there called Lake View.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: That's had some press here in recent times.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:56:24] EB: But that—there's a school down there, and it faces the lake I'm tellin' you about. Old Town Lake, they call it. Years and years ago, before my time, there was a little bitty community over there called Old Town. Now I don't know the history of it.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But the remnants of the bridge that crossed that lake that went from Old Town over into the highway there, which is—we call Lake View. You can still—I guess it's still there. I haven't been down there too many times recently, but Phillip couldn't believe what he was seein'. I said, "Well, Phillip, haven't you ever seen a cypress tree before?" [*Laughter*] "Oh," he said, "that's beautiful. That's beautiful."

SL: Bass.

EB: We were gonna—he said, "We need to write a story about that." You know, Phillip wrote a lot of books, and . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: . . . I still have some books that he autographed and gave me. I appreciated that.

SL: Yeah. He's the fellow that wrote all the Jesse James stuff and the . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . ghost stories stuff.

EB: And I'd go over to his house and . . .

SL: He's tellin' me we got five minutes so . . .

EB: Oh, that's all.

SL: Well, that's our first tape.

EB: Oh.

SL: [*Laughs*] We got lots of tape.

[00:57:40] EB: Oh. Well, anyway, what I was gonna tell you while ago—oh, you mentioned huntin' and fishin'.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And talkin' bout a fish story—now this is not a fish story. You asked for a funny story a while ago.

SL: Okay.

EB: But it wasn't funny at the time when it happened. In my grandma's backyard, there's a fishpond.

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

EB: And my granddad had stocked it with goldfish, and far as I know, that's all that was in there. Probably had a lot of frogs and stuff, too, you know, and tadpoles and all such as that. And

I was about four years old, and I was out there around the fish pool, they called it the fishpond, and the rest of the folks were in the house. And for some reason, I guess my sister had come outside or my cousin had come outside, Margaret, and they went yellin', and for some strange reason, I had jumped in the pool, in the fishpond. [*Laughter*] And I was lookin' up like this [looks up toward ceiling], and it was over my head.

SL: Uh-oh.

[00:58:54] EB: And bubbles were goin' up, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, and Margaret ran in the house and said, "Uncle Edwin, come quick!" Said, "Little Edwin's out in—fell in the fishpond!" So Daddy come runnin' out and [*laughs*] pulled me out of the pool. He—everything was funny to him. He was like his mother and my grandmother. Everything was funny to her. "Oh"—she'd always call me Bubba. She said, "Oh, Bubba! What was you doin' out there in that cold water?" She said, [*laughter*] "You thought you was a fish, didn't you?" [*Laughter*] But we've laughed about that ever since and that story but . . .

SL: So you can remember that. Can you remember being in that . . .

EB: Yeah, just barely.

SL: Just barely. Yeah.

EB: And it didn't scare me for some reason. I don't know why. But I guess if they hadn't got to me fast enough, I don't know. I guess I would've drowned but . . .

SL: Yeah. Well, okay. I think what we wanna do is we're gonna take a break now.

[Tape stopped]

[00:59:49] SL: Ed, we're on tape two. This—we're in our second hour now, and what we'll probably do is work this one, and then we'll break for lunch.

EB: All right.

SL: So during the break and [*flips through papers*] Joy was goin' over some notes with you, apparently while I was out of the room, you told a few stories.

EB: I did? [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: Who, me? [*Laughs*]

SL: I can't imagine. And she's got—she wants me to ask you, so we can get on tape, to ask you about General Hemingway.

EB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's another . . .

SL: So what's—who is General Hemingway?

EB: General Hemingway married Margaret Agrippina Bell, and their daughter was my grandfather's mother. Let me trace that back

out now.

SL: Okay.

[01:00:50] EB: General Hemingway was from Carroll County, Mississippi, the way I understand it. And he married Agrippina Bell. I'm tryin' to think. She mighta been from Tennessee. But both of their pictures are hangin' in my bedroom at home. I think I showed 'em to you briefly while you were out there the other day.

SL: Mh-hmm. Now General Hemingway, general in the Confederate army or . . .

EB: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Yeah, right over here in Carroll County, Mississippi.

SL: Okay.

EB: He married—that'd be—she'd be my—she's either my great- or my great-great grandmother. How is that? Okay. My grandfather Jay Pinckney Burks's mother was the daughter of General Hemingway.

SL: That'd make her at least great-great . . .

EB: So that's—she'd be my great-grandmother. Well, the general'd be my great-great grandfather then since that was her father.

Yeah, that's right. Okay. Captain Burks—that's what she—okay,

Captain Burks married General Hemingway's daughter. That's right. I should've brought that list with me. Tells—got all that stuff on there. But anyway, the name Agrippina back then was a favorite name for a lotta women, and they named her Margaret Agrippina, and she has a sister, and they got the name Agrippina in her name, too.

[01:01:48] SL: Agrippino?

EB: Agrippina.

SL: Pina.

EB: That's an Italian name. You know, Nero's mother's name was Agrippina . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . if you remember your history correctly. [*Laughs*]

SL: You're better at that than I am.

EB: That was back before Mussolini took over. [*Laughter*] And Nero fiddled while Rome . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . burned.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [*Laughs*]

EB: But [*laughs*] . . .

[01:03:12] SL: That's good. Okay, now what about Sheriff Dozier?

And apparently there . . .

EB: His name was Augustus Dozier.

SL: M'kay.

EB: And I'm tryin' to think of his middle name. I never met him. Course, I guess he was long dead before I was born. I don't know, but that's—he'd be my great-grandfather. In other words, he was—my grandmother that I refer to here, that was her father.

SL: Okay.

EB: And his wife was, course, my great-grandmother on that side of the family.

SL: So he was sheriff here in Helena?

EB: No, sheriff in some town in—I believe they said it was some county in Alabama.

SL: Okay.

EB: And the incident that happened during the Civil War days when the war was over and the reformation started and the carpetbaggers came down and all this, that, and the other, and—to stir up trouble, of course.

SL: Yeah.

[01:04:14] EB: And so the situation happened where my great-grandfather, who was the sheriff at that time, had his back to this—I don't know whether he was in an argument with this

black man or what, but he must of had his back toward him, talkin' to somebody else for a minute, and it was—but the black man picked up a board or a ax handle or somethin' and was gonna knock my grandfather in the head, evidently. So they said, "Look out, sheriff! He's got a—he's about to do you in." So he whirled around real quick and saw what was happenin' and pulled his gun and shot the black man, and course, it killed him.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So that was—it created a lot of heat toward him back in those days when the—during that period of time. And that wasn't the thing to do, I guess. The—so he had to leave Alabama, and that's when he moved to Georgia, to get away from all of that. That's the way I understand it. I don't know what town they came to in Georgia either but—now my grandmother had a sister. She was Aunt Birdie. We called her Aunt Birdie. And she married a man who was a pharmacist in Little Rock named Gabbert. That was his last name, Gabbert.

[01:06:04] SL: Now what about this Warfield . . .

EB: Warfield Gist.

SL: . . . Gist story?

EB: Well, he was a county clerk here for years and years and years and years, ever since I can remember. He married my dad's

sister.

SL: Okay.

EB: My Aunt Exye.

SL: Okay. [*Laughs*]

EB: And their daughter was Margaret. She's my first cousin. And that's the only children they had. And—now Margaret grew up in the big house there that I was—I showed you that picture I had at the house.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: They called it the Dogwoods. My grandfather planted about fifty-some-odd dogwood trees in [*laughs*] that yard when they built that house.

SL: Beautiful tree. [*Vehicle passes*]

EB: Oh yeah. Loved 'em. That was his favorite tree.

[01:07:00] SL: So now this Warfield Gist, Wally Warfield Simpson.  
What's . . .

EB: Well, she evidently was related to the Warfields here. The name Warfield—there were a lot of Warfields around here, especially out around Lexa. There was a Charlie Warfield. Now course, the Warfields are not kin to me. Like I say, my dad's sister married Warfield Gist, whose—I guess I remember Grandma Warfield. That'd be my cousin Margaret's grandmother. But like I say, she

wouldn't be any kin to me . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . the Warfields there. But they owned a store out there in Lexa, *L-E-X-A*, which is about ten miles outside of West Helena. Home of Gene Bearden, as you might recall, who won the pennant in 1948 with the Cleveland Indians.

[01:08:00] SL: So how does this Warfield match in with the Duke of Windsor?

EB: Well, his wife was Wally Warfield Simpson. See, he married her.

SL: Okay.

EB: And that's what disturbed the royalty over there in England [*SL laughs*] 'cause she was divorced from whoever she . . .

SL: Right.

EB: . . . was married to before.

SL: Right.

EB: But her middle name was Warfield.

[01:08:23] SL: Okay. So there's some kind of . . .

EB: There's some kind of family connection there. Yeah.

SL: . . . tie, family connection there. Okay. Now what about the Tappan House story?

EB: Well, that was—that house was built back in 1858, as I understand it. And a friend of mine bought that house in about

nine—let's see. What year did he buy that house? He bought it when it was an apartment house. Somebody had divided that house up into, I think, maybe four apartments. It's over here on Poplar Street. So he fixed it up, and there was still the old kitchen out back that they used to have back in the Civil War days. It had all—the old brick kitchens were out in—back away from the house itself. So he revitalized all that and did a lotta reconstruction inside the house. And we looked under that house, and the foundation, those big runners that the house rests on. They don't even—you can't get lumber like that anymore. Just huge timbers that they set the house down on that, you know.

SL: It's got good bones.

EB: Whew! Man, I never—and they must've been that wide [uses hands to suggest a width of about one foot] and from—ever how long the house was. It—you know, just [*makes clicking sounds*] [mimics laying timbers down with his hands]. I guess it had a basement, but I never saw that part. But the guy that bought the house was named George Spivey, and they were from Dayton, Tennessee. His father had a knitting mill, and he brought—when the Spiveys moved—they had—the knitting mill is still out there in Marvell [*clears throat*], if you're familiar with

that town. As you're driving from here to Marvell, it's on the right-hand side . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . right across the highway from the Dollar General store, right in that area, before you get to the Methodist church there. But it's not a knitting mill anymore, the one I'm tellin' you about, but that Mr. Spivey had that set up, and he manufactured women's stockings and all kind of socks and like—it was a knitting mill. So he had a son named George, and George decided to buy that Tappan home and revitalize it [*clears throat*] and did a great job on it.

SL: That's good. That's good stuff.

[01:11:12] EB: But when the war was—Civil War was comin' to an end or whatever year the battle of Helena happened in, the Yankee general shared that house with General Tappan. General Tappan built that house, of course. But the way that house is constructed—like, when you [*clears throat*] come in the front door, there's a real wide hall that led all the way to the stairs, and you—looked like somethin' out of *Gone with the Wind*. You walk up those stairs and come on up to the second story, and there's—and the hall upstairs is as wide as the hall downstairs. And on either side are rooms, you know, bedrooms. So the

generals lived in that quarters, and the other general lived in that quarter. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's funny.

EB: So the story goes.

SL: Huh!

EB: So when I go to visit 'em, they say, "Now Bubba, you know your room is always ready when you"—[*laughter*] . . .

SL: That's good.

EB: I said, "Well, I'm in good company. I get to stay in General Tappan's room," I said. [*Laughs*]

[01:12:18] SL: Okay. Now where did we leave off on that first tape? We were—I'm tryin' to . . .

Joy Endicott: Fishing and huntin'.

SL: Do what now?

JE: Fishing, hunting.

SL: Oh, fishing and huntin'. So what kind of—so you were talkin' about how Phillip Steele was amazed with all the cypress trees down at Lake View.

EB: Yeah.

[01:12:42] SL: And—but growin' up, whenever you'd go out with your dad, where—would you just fish the river here or . . .

EB: No, we never did fish the river. [*Clears throat*] We started to a

couple times, but we didn't do that. We'd go down to Old Town Lake, or we'd go to—there's a place called Fool's Pocket . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] I like that.

EB: . . . that I wish I—I don't even know how to get there now. And you go a little further south, and there's another big fishin' place down there. We had a maid back in those days. She was a great big woman, and we took her with us. And we packed a lunch and went down there and stayed all afternoon fishin'. And I've still got memories of all that. And I member Dad looked up in a tree, and there was a squirrel, so he shot the squirrel, you know, and we—all the while we were fishin'. And the woman's name was Marie. Great big woman. She said, "Lord, Mr. Burks, look what I done caught me! A live catfish!" [*SL laughs*] And that catfish must have been that long, man [uses hands to suggest a length from the floor to over his head]. She [*laughs*] brought him up on her cane pole, and I never will forget that.

SL: You'd have to string it in a tree to clean it.

EB: I guess. [*Laughs*] Great big catfish.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But they tell me there's—they catch catfish as big as people nowadays in certain places.

SL: Yeah.

[01:14:09] EB: Up there around Fayetteville, there's—or not far from Fayetteville, the story goes there's a—I'm gonna ask Lyndal Brown this the next time I see him.

SL: Okay.

EB: He can tell—and he took me out there and showed—he said, "If you get up under this parkin' lot, it's like a big cave underneath all that." And said, "They got catfish up there as long as a man."

SL: Is that right?

EB: Whew! I said, "Yeah, you're pullin' my leg, aren't you, Lyndal?" And he said, "No, but the catfish will." [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, is that up at the lake—at the—at Beaver Lake or . . .

EB: It's close to there. It had to be. And that—it was—there's a body of water there, and it must've been Beaver Lake.

SL: Huh!

EB: And I remember there's a big parking lot out there and some kind of a buildin' over there, and a lot of people dock their boats around over in there. You know Curly Combs, I guess.

SL: I don't know Curly Combs. I know that name, but I know . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Now he has a boat in that . . .

SL: I'm gonna have to give him a call. [*Laughter*]

EB: Yeah. He'll sell you some tires.

[01:15:20] SL: Okay. [*Laughter*] Well [*EB clears throat*], so that's interesting that y'all would take the maid with you fishin'.

EB: Yeah. She was a good housekeeper and good cook, and we were quite young back then. I'm tryin' to member what years those might've been. [*Clears throat*] But—and she loved to fish, and we took her on that particular trip. And I'm trying to remember how—where—how do you get down in there. Modoc seems like it'd be in that area.

SL: Okay.

EB: That's south of Elaine—no, south of Wabash. I don't know if you've been down there yet or not.

SL: Not yet. Hm-mm.

EB: If you go to Wabash, it turns to your right, and that country there put you on the ol' Howe Plantation. And instead of turnin'—makin' that right-hand turn, if you just had gone straight, that'll shoot you right on down into Modoc.

SL: Okay.

EB: And that's where this fellow, Jesse Peter, had a big home down there, and that gets off into another long story, which doesn't have anything to do with me, but it's . . .

[01:16:45] SL: Well, let's get back to your growin' up. You know,

you had an African American maid. Do you remember much about the segregation growin' up?

EB: Well, back in those days, of course, they didn't—we didn't use the term segregation. I'd never even heard that word until I guess I was out of high school or whatever.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And that was a heavily weighted political era, of course, back in the days when Faubus and before that was Governor Cherry. You know, he lived here for a while after he ceased [*knocking sounds*] to be governor.

SL: Yeah. You know, I guess someone's at the door. Go ahead and let 'em in, I guess. [*Door opens*] So . . .

JE: Do we want to take a break and let him get ready?

SL: Oh, you gotta get ready for the show? Is it time to get ready for the show?

Sonny Payne: Go on.

SL: Go on? Okay.

SP: We got another twenty minutes.

SL: Okay.

SP: I just gotta get my stuff out.

SL: Okay. All right. Ed, Sonny's gonna get ready for a show here in about twenty minutes, but we're gonna keep talkin' a little bit

longer.

EB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: So . . .

SP: All right. [*Unclear words*] disturbing you.

[01:18:14] SL: . . . so [*EB laughs*] what I was tryin' to get at was when you were growin' up, I mean, were you aware that blacks and whites were separate and didn't . . .

EB: Oh sure, yeah, that . . .

SL: . . . intermingle? I mean . . .

EB: . . . that was no problem, you know. [*Clunking sound*] In other words, we [*voices in background*]*—the—course*, Faubus didn't come along until [*clears throat*] the [19]50s. And I'm tryin' to think of who was governor before Faubus. That was Sid McMath, I guess.

SL: Well, no, I think Cherry was, but . . .

EB: Cherry was, yeah.

SL: . . . McMath was before Cherry, I think. Isn't that how it went?

EB: Well, that's probably true, yeah.

SL: I think that's right. I . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: You know, David Pryor was . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . Governor Cherry's driver in that campaign that Faubus beat him.

[01:19:07] EB: Oh, okay. Okay. [*Voices in background*] They said the reason he lost that election is 'cause he's too honest.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

EB: That's what the—that's the story they had . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . on Governor Cherry.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: And he bought some land down in here.

SL: Is that right?

EB: He belonged to our church for a while.

[01:19:23] SL: Well you know, before integration, you know, the separation of the races, I mean, that's just the way life was, and . . .

EB: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . it intrigues me that your father would take the maid with you guys fishin' 'cause she was part of the family, really, in a lot of ways.

EB: Yeah, well, she wasn't the only maid we had. We—there was another one way before her, and now, her name wa—I'm tryin' to think of what her name was now. Her name was Alice, I

think.

SL: Alice?

EB: [*Laughs*] That's when I was real young, you know.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And they'd cook and clean and . . .

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . do laundry and help . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . help your mom around the house, right?

EB: Back in those days, we had a great big old pot. We'd take that; put it out in the backyard, and we'd wash clothes. And we'd get a boilin' pot goin', you know, and wash clothes in that pot.

SL: Hang 'em on the line.

EB: Hang 'em on the line. That's right.

SL: Sonny was talkin' about the lye soap that they used to . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . use to [*laughter*]*—*how strong that stuff was, how it'd sting you.

EB: Yeah. And Mother's mother, which is my grandmother on her side of the family, she was a Clark. She would supervise all the operation. She lived with us for a long time. She'd instruct how to do this and how to do that. What you need to do and what you—you know, Mother'd let her take charge and . . .

[01:20:58] SL: So your other grandmother, you got to know her, too.

EB: Oh yeah. She lived . . .

SL: Your mother's mother.

EB: . . . she lived with us, especially [*music plays in background*]—they—that side of the Clark family lived in Meridian, Mississippi. Her name was Martha Clementine, and everybody called her Miss Clemmie. And when I was little, I couldn't say "Grandmother," so I said "Gangie."

SL: Gangie. [*Laughs*]

EB: And so that name stuck. Everybody called her Gangie after that. [*SL laughs*] *G-A-N-G-I-E*. Gangie. We were goin' over to see Gangie. Lived over in Meridian. We'd drive over there and visit two or three times a year, or she'd come over and visit with us, and she lived with us for a while, especially when my younger sister was born—she—to help Mother back in those days.

[01:21:58] SL: So did she ever—how old did you get—I mean, how long did she live with y'all? I mean, did . . .

EB: Oh, at different intervals. Yeah. She'd come stay sometime for maybe a year at a time. Maybe another time she'd come, but she couldn't stay as long. And you know, course, she was—she had another daughter over in Meridian who ran a boarding

house, a great big house over there in Meridian. And Mother's sister, Clara—now she was my Aunt Clara, and she had a son. We called him W. And my Aunt Clara married a man by the name of Wilton Merrill. He was an—he—I guess he must've built every highway in Mississippi. He was a superintendent of roads and all that, and he'd build roads and bridges. And they had two sons and a daughter, and my—their daughter's name was Emma Claire, and she still lives over in Mississippi.

SL: So did y'all ever have any big family reunions when you were growin' up?

EB: Well, they did with the Clarks. We'd go over there and—see, my cousin Emma Claire married Claude Whitten.

SL: Okay.

EB: And Claude Whitten—you mighta heard of Jamie Whitten, the politician that was from Mississippi? He served in the House for fifty years, longer than any other serving congressman that ever was. That record may have been beaten since that time but . . .

[01:23:52] SL: Did he—was he in the House in the [19]60s?

EB: Yeah. I'm tryin' to think when he passed away. He—I played a campaign party for him one time . . .

SL: Well, then he . . .

EB: . . . back when I had a band around here. That was in the [19]60s.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So I guess he died after that. That was early [19]60s, I'm talkin' about. I don't—but he has a home over there in [*clears throat*]*throat*—what's the name of that little town outside of Webb, Mississippi, if you know where that is?

SL: Hm-mm.

EB: I'll think of it in a minute. I'm mad 'cause I can't think of the name of the—Charleston.

SL: Charleston.

EB: Charleston, Mississippi.

[01:24:28] SL: Okay. So the—were the Clark family a pretty big family? I mean, was it . . .

EB: Yeah, my grandmother and grandfather had—well, they had five children. They had Uncle Frank and then Aunt Clara and then Mother and then Walter and then little Sarah. So she had—they had five children. And Sarah had polio when she was real little, and she died when she was fifteen.

SL: Oh!

EB: And—but she'd still do her homework at—you know, her schoolwork in—at the house, growing up. Course, I never knew

her. She died a long—I never did know her. That was before I was born, I guess, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: [*Clears throat*] But then we'd go and visit them quite a few times over in Meridian. And my Uncle Wilton, he—see, he married my Aunt Clara, and he loved to drink coffee. And every time we'd go over there and visit 'em, he'd say, "Come on now, Edwin Jr." Said, "We're gonna go down here to the bus station and get us a pot of coffee." [*SL laughs*] So we'd walk down there. [*Laughs*] He was a great big guy. [*Laughs*]

SL: Uh-huh. [*EB clears throat*] You wouldn't drink the coffee, would you? You weren't . . .

EB: Well, I was older. I guess I was probably a freshman in high school by that time or . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

EB: . . . or slightly younger, maybe, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . old enough to drink coffee. Sure, you know.

SL: Yeah, okay. All right.

EB: [*Laughs*] Now I can remember when my mother wouldn't let me drink any coffee when I was a whole lot younger, but never cared to. But those were some of the good old days.

[01:26:21] SL: Well, so when did you go into the armed services?

EB: Well, I joined the reserve back in 1949. I was still in high school. And then I graduated from high school in 1950 and then went to Hendrix in the following year. And when I got out of Hendrix, I came back to Helena and went to work at the radio station. I was workin' in my dad's office, and here come Sam Anderson up to the office and said he wanted to talk to me. Said he wanted me to go to work for him. Said, "I'll pay you double what you're getting here." Course, that caught my eye, you know. [*Laughter*] But—so that's what I did. And so I became a radio announcer. Back then they didn't call 'em DJs; they called 'em radio announcers.

SL: Okay.

[01:27:46] EB: No matter what we did on the radio, it was radio announcer. I worked up there with Cecil Scaife, and we had another guy by the name of Bob Wallace that—I lost track of him since all that time ago, but he was not from Helena. But I learned a lot of stuff about the radio business from him. And Cecil Scaife was a—he grew up around the—what we call the Barton neighborhood. That's about eight miles out around Walnut Corner. And he and I—when he married a girl in my class—Sherytha Payne, she was.

SL: Sherytha.

EB: Sherytha. [*SL laughs*] Pretty name.

SL: Beautiful name.

EB: Pretty girl. She was the football queen one year, I remember. And we graduated together. Well, what they did—they got married on the sly, see. If they caught you married, then they wouldn't let you graduate back in those days. So they had to keep that secret. And he was already in college. [*Laughs*] He went down to Monticello A&M. But we were good buddies, and so while I was goin' to Hendrix, one time he called me up and wanted me to come down to Monticello and him see a variety show they had goin' on down there. So I did that and told a few jokes and played the harmonica and tell another joke and play the . . .

SL: Now when was that? When you were at Hendrix?

EB: That was back in Hendrix. Yeah, that was back in . . .

[01:29:26] SL: So you were already performing.

EB: Oh yeah. I've been performing since 1938 [*laughs*], I guess, or [19]39.

SL: Well, but—so—I mean, I know that you were in the school bands.

EB: Oh yeah. And when I was in that and . . .

SL: But did you have a group outside of the school stuff, too?

EB: Well, now back in those days we did have a dance band that I played in some, but I don't recall that it had a name. It was just bunch of us musicians around here got together and put on—we played charts from the big-band era, you know.

SL: So you had—it was a horn section and . . .

EB: Oh yeah, and . . .

SL: . . . drums.

EB: . . . drums and trombones and trumpets, and that was a good time. It really was.

SL: Rhythm guitar? Did they have a rhythm guitar or . . .

EB: This was before guitar was popular. This was pre-Elvis days.

SL: Okay, so . . .

EB: You know, Elvis came along and changed everything.

SL: Yeah.

EB: A lot of people don't want to admit that, but he did. And I said, "Well, whether you like him or not," I said, "he's responsible for that change. He made the guitar become popular, and he made the outlandish looks of the stage dress and all of that popular."

SL: Rock and roll.

EB: Rock and roll, they called it.

[01:30:52] SL: So what about the music that was going on here in

the black community when you were growing up? I mean, how did that . . .

EB: Well, the same thing you hear on *King Biscuit Time* today . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . because that started in 1941 here at the station. At the old address down on 316 York Street. And I showed that to Kris comin' down here this mornin'. And Sonny Boy—when all of 'em come up there and Dudlow, Dudlow Taylor. We called him "Five by Five."

[01:31:32] SL: Why is that?

EB: Well, he was a huge man. [*SL laughs*] And he—and his dimensions were, like, five by five. He was great big around and about five foot five. And so they'd go down in the studio and play. And James "Peck" Curtis on the drums and Willie Love on the guitar, and he played the rhythm. I don't remember him playin' lead. But course, Sonny Boy played that fabulous harmonica, and that's what got my attention. And course, when I worked at the station, sometimes I'd bring him on the air, and that's before Sonny Payne was doin' any broadcastin'. He was out hustlin' ads for the company. [*SL laughs*] He later—see, we wrote our own spots and read 'em and all that, [*banging noises*] and we recorded some of the things. But—and then after a

while, Sonny got to where he would spend more time on the air. And Cecil Scaife, like I told you, worked up there with us. And I think he sold some ads, too, best I remember. But he was always interested in going and getting on Broadway and bein' an actor. He and I would get together and discuss we're gonna run away and go to Hollywood and get in the movies. He was already married to Sherytha [*laughs*] and had a couple of kids already. Had two daughters and a baby. Joe was the youngest child. And—but anyway, back in those days, sometimes Cecil worked at the Buick company here in—Sanders Motor Company. In fact, I bought a car from him. Bought an old [19]52 Ford from him.

[01:33:34] SL: So did you leave your dad's insurance company and just work full time at the radio station or . . .

EB: Well, back in tho—in that particular year that's what I did, you know, because I went in the navy right after that. See, I went in active duty . . .

SL: Yeah. Well . . .

EB: . . . in [19]52.

SL: . . . what kind of show did you do at the radio station?

EB: Well, I'd bring—most everything was recorded back then.

SL: Yeah.

EB: You know, we'd play records. And they had a format written out, and we'd bring on the—Mutual Broadcasting Company had their format.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So we'd patch into them at certain times when they would come on. And then, of course, we did the *King Biscuit Time* show, and then we'd interview people in the studio and had a lot of local shows and stuff like that. But most of it was all—the music was recorded. But they catered primarily to the—what they called race music back then.

[01:34:43] SL: Race music?

EB: Race music. That's how they referred to it. I don't where they got that term "race" but—I never will forget one day I thought I'd play me some more uptown stuff, as I referred to it, and Cecil—I had a—see, I had to relieve Cecil in the mornin' at about five thir—no, seven o'clock. He came on at five thirty, and then he'd bring me on at seven, and then he'd—and then he would leave. Well, he'd go home and listen to what I was doin', and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and one day I got to playing some more big-band-type music and stuff like that . . .

SL: Swing.

EB: . . . like Guy Lombardo or somebody like that. And he said—he called me up on the phone. He said, "What is this, the hour of charm?" [*Laughter*]

SL: Hour of charm.

EB: I was supposed to be playin' more country music. Back then they didn't call it country music; they just—it wasn't but two kinds of music for the radio station here 'cause that's how they made their money, catering to the black population and the people that like country music. The term "country music" had not come into being as it later did. But that tickled me when he called and said, "What is this, the hour of charm?" you know. [*Laughter*]

[01:36:06] SL: Okay. So now, you—the dance band that you had . . .

EB: Well, that was just comprised of the fellows around here that—we had some good trumpet players and good sax players and good trombone players and a good drummer and all that business, good bass player, and it was just a . . .

SL: . . . all-white band?

EB: All—yeah, as far as I can remember. And now Sonny knew a lot of those guys, too. See, Sonny was gone for a time. He played

with Charlie Spivak and his orchestra. And back then I didn't know Sonny.

SL: Yeah. Well of course, he'd gone to World War II and then got out of the war and played with some big-band . . .

EB: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . big-band stuff.

EB: So he got to meet a lot of famous band people, like Harry James, and in fact, Sonny introduced me to Harry James. If it hadn't been for Sonny, I wouldn't've gone to Las Vegas, I don't think. He talked me into goin'. He introduced me to Harry James's piano man, Jack Perciful. We became good friends when I moved out to Vegas.

[01:37:20] SL: Well now, okay, so you graduate high school. You go to Hendrix.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you spend four years at Hendrix?

EB: No, no, no. I just went one year.

SL: Okay. And then you come back here? Come back . . .

EB: And then I came back here in the summertime, and that's when KFFA called me to . . .

SL: Wanted you to come up and do . . .

EB: Come up and do the . . .

SL: . . . announcer work.

EB: Yeah. So I spent the rest of that time. And while I was workin' up there, I got the call from Uncle. "We want you, boy."

SL: Uncle Sam.

EB: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: So . . .

EB: So I went.

SL: . . . did you go to . . .

EB: Went to Great . . .

SL: . . . Little Rock or Memphis or . . .

EB: . . . went to Great Lakes . . .

SL: Great . . .

EB: . . . in Chicago. That's where I took boot camp.

[01:38:05] SL: And what part—thi—we're talkin' navy now, right?

EB: US Navy. That's right.

SL: And . . .

EB: 'Cause I belonged to the reserve unit here, see. So they called me in active duty.

SL: And this—what year would that be?

EB: [Nineteen] fifty-two.

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-two. So . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . are we talkin' . . .

EB: The Korean . . .

SL: I guess that's Korean War.

EB: . . . the Korean War was on. That's right. Yeah. So naturally, Mother cried. You know how that is.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And caught the train right here at this depot and . . .

[01:38:39] SL: Well, what'd they have you do in the navy?

EB: Well, I was a yeoman. [*Clears throat*] That's a—I worked in the ship's office. I typed up everybody's liberty cards when they took liberty when we'd pull in port, and we went all over the Pacific Ocean on an LST.

SL: LST.

EB: Yeah, it was a landing ship, tank. That's—you've seen 'em in the movies where they pull up on the shore and let down the . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . the bow doors, and the tanks roll out . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and the troops come out.

SL: Yeah.

EB: That's an LST. It's 110 yards long. That's longer than a football field.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Or an aircraft carrier is three times that long. And I never will forget. We were in Honolulu one time, and the USS *Boxer* pulled up beside us, and it was just like the sun went down. Everything got dark [*laughter*] compared to that old ship we were on. Our flank speed was eleven knots. That's as fast as the LST can go.

[01:39:42] SL: How many tanks would it hold?

EB: While I was doing duty on that ship, I didn't see—there was no tanks, but we hauled copra. What they called copra. That's something to do with the coconut. And we'd haul 'em to Chichi Jima and Johnston Island. And Chichi Jima was a place that in World War II was fortified by the Japanese. They had dug in—it took 'em forty years . . .

SL: To get 'em out.

EB: . . . to dig into—it's a mountainous island. Shaped like a horseshoe. And they had highways built through all of that and caves all through Chichi Jima, and we couldn't get 'em out any other way. And they had a landing strip on the flat part, and you mighta heard the story that—back in World War II when George Bush Sr. was—he was a pilot. And they shot him down on Chichi Jima. Course, that's before I got there. But in order to get rid of the Japanese people and to conquer that island, we

had to starve 'em out.

SL: Now we're—you're talkin'—that's World War II stuff.

EB: No, that's Korean.

SL: Korean War.

EB: Well, you're right. That's World War II. In order to get rid of that—by the time I got there, all that was . . .

SL: Gone. Done.

EB: . . . over with. That's right.

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:08] EB: The remnants of the hotels they built there, some of that was still in existence. But the reason we were there because the Seabees were constructing a submarine base on the other side of the island, and it was all top-secret stuff. So it was our job then—they came aboard ship and eat with us and all that, and then we took off and went to Korea and then Iwo Jima and different islands in the Pacific and came back to Pearl Harbor and Guam.

[01:41:42] SL: So your LST was basically a support ship for . . .

EB: For them at that time. Yeah. And see, we had orders to go to Korea to join the am—an amphibious group. And at that time, the war was still goin' on. And earlier in the Korean War, before I got to the LST, it was sunk at Inchon, at the Inchon invasion.

And it became the most decorated LST in the Pacific, and it was called the *Arkansas Traveler*. Had a lot of guys from Arkansas on that ship. But I mean, you know, there's a lot of Southern boys—places other than Arkansas, too, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . [*sniffs*] but I member we had a chief petty officer on there from Marianna and another guy, and his name was Ray Britton. He was from Wynne, just up the road here, north of Forrest City. And like I say, we got to see some—we—I remember one time we went to Maui before Maui was established. And they took us—the guide took us up—there's a volcano there, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . he said, "Look down, way down there." Said, "You see those white lookin' flow"—looked like flowers, and they look like swords. "They're called silverswords, and it's the only place in the world where they grow."

SL: Hmm. Inside that volcano.

EB: Inside the—in the bottom of that volcano. It's the largest inactive volcano in existence. On Maui. Of course, it later become a resort, you know.

SL: Right.

[01:43:45] EB: They've built it all up, and now it's—now I hadn't

been there since those days, but this was back in 1953, I guess, we went there. But—so anyway, when I got out, then I c—when I got out of the navy, I went right on into the University of Arkansas. That's where I wanted to be anyway. I didn't want—I didn't—the only reason I went to Hendrix 'cause my dad's a big Methodist, and of course, we all are, but he was a big supporter of the Methodist school and so forth and so on, and it is a highly-rated college.

SL: It's a good school. Yeah.

EB: There's only one other in the US that's rated that highly. That's Millsaps, which is a Baptist college. And if you graduate from either one of those schools, you're automatically—can enter . . .

SL: The clergy?

EB: . . . Oxford in England.

SL: Oh.

EB: Yeah. Without havin' to take an exam. A lot of people may not know that, but I just thought I'd bring that up.

SL: Yeah. Well, that's good.

EB: [*Laughs*] In case I know you . . .

[01:44:51] SL: So you spent a year there, and then you came back to Helena, and you worked at the radio station for about a year

and then . . .

EB: And then went in the navy, yeah.

SL: And then went in the navy.

EB: Went active duty.

SL: And you were in the navy for how long?

EB: Two years.

SL: Two years. Did . . .

EB: We were supposed to go, and while we were on the way over there, I never will forget, a ship passed us in the night, and we came to find out that Eisenhower was aboard that ship. It was a big cruiser. So we did—course, you couldn't get a good view of it at night, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . I said, "Lookee here, man! [*Laughs*] Maybe we'll get a presidential pardon if we can just go meet him." [*Laughter*] Man, I was a scuttlebutt around the ship, you know.

[01:45:34] SL: Yeah. So did you ever actually—were you in the Korean waters ever?

EB: Oh yeah. We went to Seoul, Korea, and by that time, the war was toning down in that part of Korea. Now I don't know where else—we got orders to go, and we didn't know what we were getting into. And so by that particular time, then we also—the

orders changed because they said that the truce had been signed, so we had to turn around and go back to Honolulu.

SL: So you . . .

EB: And that's when they let me out. And I was gonna take my test for the next advancement, and they wouldn't let me take the test because they said, "No, the war's over. You gotta get out."

SL: Huh!

EB: I guess I could've signed on. Maybe, possibly, if I wanted to stay in the navy, I could've done that. I didn't want to stay in the navy, but if I'd've signed up for another tour of duty, then they would've accepted that, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But I was discharged at Treasure Island there in San Francisco, and you could look right across the bay and see Alcatraz.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And I had another couple of friends on the ship that were discharged. They lived there in the Bay Area, and so I went and visited a couple of those guys while I was there.

[01:47:15] SL: So how did you end up in Fayetteville?

EB: Well, Fayetteville, of course—for some reason, I had always wanted to go. If I was gonna go to college, I wanted to go to the University of Arkansas, especially to get in the fraternity of

my choice, which was Kappa Sigma. And everybody from here—no, I won't say everybody, but all the guys who belonged to a fraternity were—a lot—every so many of 'em were Kappa Sigmas. So sure enough, when I got up there, I went through rush and I—well, I was rushed by several other fraternities, too. I got a bid from Sigma Nu and a bid from Kappa Sig, and of course, I took it.

SL: Yeah. Okay. Now—oh, do we need to stop because of the show?

JE: Yeah. It's noon.

SL: Okay. It's noon. We're gonna . . .

EB: It's noon!

SL: It's noon, so let's go eat.

EB: What are you doin' in bed so late? Get up! It's time . . .

SL: [*Laughter*] Let's go eat. Let's go get us somethin' to eat.

[Tape stopped]

[01:48:24] SL: Okay. Ed, we had to take a break 'cause Sonny Payne had to do his little radio broadcast here.

EB: Yes!

SL: We're in his space. He's been gracious enough to give us his room and help us get this—these stories. We were—I think what we had gotten to—we had gotten you to Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[*EB sighs*] And you were going to enroll at the University of Arkansas.

EB: Uh-huh.

SL: You had rushed. Wanted to be the—a Kappa Sig.

EB: Yeah.

SL: You got invited by the Kappa Sig and the Sigma Nus and . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . maybe some other—but you went there wantin' to be a Kappa Sig.

EB: Yeah. I said, "Well, if I—if I'm gonna have a choice in the matter, that's what I'm gonna go for."

[01:49:05] SL: Why would you choose to be a Kappa Sig?

EB: Well, I enjoyed what they stood for—and largest house on the campus. Largest fraternity house in the world at that time. And it was the only house that was not in debt, and of course, I knew a lot of guys there anyway, not only from Helena, but other towns. And I hope that doesn't make my eye shine again, but . . .

SL: No, you're fine.

EB: . . . but anyway, so when it came down to the bottom line, why, I got a bid from Kappa Sig, and so I took it. And the guys [*laughs*] at Sigma Nu were still beggin' me to change my mind.

[Laughs] I said, "No, I guess I better stick with this."

SL: So that house was on Dickson Street, right?

EB: Mh-hmm. 711 Dickson Street.

SL: Talk a little bit about your first impression of Dickson Street.

EB: Well, that—course, back in those days, what is now called Chester's, before that, it was the Library Club.

SL: Yep.

EB: And the guy that ran that was a Kappa Sig. Dickie . . .

SL: Dickie Pool.

EB: . . . Dickie Pool. And before that, it was a barbershop, and old Buddy Hayes, the black trumpet player, used to shine shoes in there. And sometimes he'd come over to the Kappa Sig house and bring a couple of guys with him, and they'd play, you know.

[01:50:48] SL: Do you remember those guys?

EB: Well, I remember him. I don't remember who all he brought, but just three or four of 'em, somethin' like that, you know. Or sometimes Buddy'd come over and play with whoever was—happened to be playin' there.

SL: Drums, piano, bass, and horn, wasn't it?

EB: [Sighs] That sounds familiar. The piano we had was up—they had that old red piano in the dinin' room. I never could figure out whether it was a dark pink or a faded red, but any

[laughter]—I used to sit up in the mi—sometimes at midnight I'd be playin' that piano in the dining room, and I could hear shoes dropping from upstairs tryin'—"Shut up, we're tryin' to sleep!" you know. [Laughter]

[01:51:35] SL: Well now, when did you start pickin' up on the piano?

EB: Well, I got into it after I got out of Fayetteville when I saw the way rock and roll was goin' and since the clarinet doesn't fit in rock and roll and the harmonica was not introduced as a strong-enough instrument at that particular time. So I said, "Well, I'm gonna give it a shot." So I got—I bought me a little ol' bitty keyboard about that long [uses hands to suggest a length of about two feet]. Back in those days, keyboards weren't so predominant as they are today.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And I rehearsed on several things and several things until I got 'em down good enough to where I could, you know, make a few chords and stuff. Just kinda taught myself like that. Then when we formed the group, the Jesters, I was tellin' you about earlier, then I played on a regular piano when we'd book out and play a gig someplace. We used to play up at Clarksdale a lot back in those days at the VFW club.

SL: Well now, didn't you form a band in Fayetteville, too?

EB: Well, that was the Tee Cups, but I just played clarinet there, clarinet and some harmonica, and didn't do much singing. It's hard to explain to somebody what that means when you say, "I don't know what the differences are between singing and singing rock and roll."

SL: Yeah.

EB: It's not like singin' in the choir in church. But the more I kept listenin' to it and kept listenin' to it and kept listenin' to it, I don't know, it just kind of came upon me, I guess you might say. [Vehicle passes] And so I said, "Well now, here I was gonna teach myself to play the piano and teach myself to sing that kind of way, that technique, and I already play good enough harmonica to add to that when it comes time to take a fill or somethin' like that."

[01:53:46] SL: So now, what year are we talkin' here in Fayetteville, when you first got to Fayetteville?

EB: [Nineteen] fifty-four, [19]55, [19]56, [19]57. And I formed the band called the Tee Cups, and I'm tryin' to remember if that was [19]55. Dayton Stratton came by the Kappa Sig house and said—you know how he used to bat his eyes like this [blinks in an affected manner] all the time, you know.

SL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, his son's the same way.

EB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: "Well, Moses," said, "I want you to come bring me a band at the Tee Table." So we had a long talk. But see, he was a Korean marine. I mean, he was in the Korean conflict.

SL: He was a veteran, too.

EB: Veteran, too. Yeah. So we had somethin' in common, you know. We hit it off right off the bat.

[01:54:37] SL: He was a tough little guy, wasn't he?

EB: Well, I always heard that about him, but I never saw him go. But . . .

SL: You never saw him go?

EB: . . . but Ronnie told me, he said, "Boy, you don't wanna be in the middle of that." [*SL laughs*] Said, "He is too fast and too stout."

SL: Yeah.

EB: And—but we were good buddies, thank goodness. But he was always in good humor, you know. You know, he'd smile at you, and he was one of these kinda guys that'd be smilin' at you and hit you at the same time, you know. [*Laughter*] If he was mad at you, I guess he would. But I never will forget the time he came to me and said—and he stuttered a little bit, too, when

those eyes'd start battin', and he was—"Um—um—um—hey—  
hey, Ed—uh—uh—reckon you guys could step down a little bit?"  
Said, "We got Carl Perkins comin' in." I said, "Who's [*laughs*]  
Carl Perkins?" And he said, "Man, ain't you listen to the  
jukebox? 'Blue Suede Shoes'?" I said, "Oh! Well, what about  
him?" He said, "Well, he's comin' here, and he's booked in here,  
so if y'all wouldn't mind steppin' down, we'll let him play a little  
bit." So he brought his group with him, and I bet I heard "Blue  
Suede Shoes" a hundred times that day 'cause Carl didn't know  
a whole bunch of songs back then.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And course, "Blue Suede Shoes" was on the jukebox and . . .

SL: That's what everyone wanted to hear.

EB: And course, so he just played it, and he played a bunch of other  
songs, too. So that . . .

[01:56:05] SL: What was he like?

EB: . . . that's how I met him. And he borrowed my guitar player—  
no, borrowed my—what did he borrow? Maybe it was my  
drummer. I guess that's right. And so we all got along, and  
they played, and then, of course, the next time it came around  
for us to play again, course, we played our regular slot there.  
But there we were, playin' stuff like out of New Orleans, you

know, Dixieland music, primarily.

SL: Right. Uh-huh.

EB: And we did a few—back in those days they called it the hit parade songs, you know, like "You got to dance with me, Henry, da, da, da, da, da." Remember that old song?

SL: Yeah. Sure.

EB: Dorothy Kilgallen. Dorothy—not Kilgallen. What's the girl's name? And "Who's That Behind the Green Door?" That was another song that—see, we had a girl singer. She was our front singer.

[01:57:04] SL: Oh! Do you remember her name?

EB: Mert Baer. [*Vehicle passes*]

SL: Mert?

EB: *M-E-R-T*. I guess she spelled it *B-A-E-R*. I don't recall exactly how she spelled her last name. And she had her brother, and I'm tryin' to think of his name, but he wasn't a musician. And she was a good singer, and she did that—the old song goes, "I just love your sexy ways." Remember that old song?

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

EB: They banned that song in a lot of cities. They wouldn't let 'em play it 'cause . . .

SL: Too racy.

EB: Too racy.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Yeah. [*Laughs*] "Y'all are just plumb immoral." [*Laughter*]  
Singin' bout the birds and the bees.

[01:57:47] SL: So Dayton's place was called the Tee Table?

EB: The Tee Table.

SL: And y'all were the Tee Cups.

EB: [*Vehicle passes*] And so I said, "We need a name for the group now, guys." So we made a list of different names we could think of, and I wrote down the name Tee Cups. "Since this is the Tee Table, we'll be the Tee Cups, and so by convention, that's what we need to call it." So that's what we did.

SL: Where was that club?

EB: Okay, as you're going past the Rockwood Club—that's on the left-hand side goin' south.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Go a little further on the right, and there was a little slope right there. And there—you drove down into their parking lot, which was gravel, and there it was, the Tee Table. It's a place where they store furniture now.

SL: Okay.

EB: Mr.—what was his name?

SL: Eoff?

EB: No, I know him, too, but that's not the guy's name that . . .

SL: Jenkins?

EB: [*Vehicle passes*] That's not—that . . .

SL: No?

EB: . . . doesn't sound right. The last time I remember seein' it, which has been many years ago, he had his name on the front of that buildin'.

SL: I'd have to—I don't know.

EB: And I just can't remember it.

JE: Dennis?

SL: What?

JE: Dennis?

Bruce Perry: Dennis Home . . .

SL: Dennis?

EB: Who? McGinney?

SL: Dennis Home Furnishings? The Dennis . . .

EB: It wasn't Dennis at all . . .

SL: No.

EB: . . . I don't think.

SL: Hmm.

[01:59:13] EB: But anyway, that's what it became. I mean, that's

what it is now, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . it might not even be that now. I don't . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . even know. Well, just like Eoff put his stuff in the Rockwood, you know.

SL: Yeah, I know.

EB: All—a lot of the stuff he owned.

SL: Yeah, his son or grandson still owns that.

[01:59:28] EB: Now see, I worked with him in Heber—in—not Heber Springs. [*Laughs*]

SL: Eureka Springs?

EB: Eureka Springs. He was in partners with a lady up there. They called it Diamond Lil's.

SL: Yep.

EB: Had to walk up a ladder to get to the perch where I played, you know. [*SL laughs*] And he'd walk around with a horn like you see on a bicycle, you know, with a big bulb on it. [*Laughter*] And he'd take the tip jar and walk around the room. [*SL laughs*] But capacity was probably sixty people, but they . . .

SL: Like Harpo Marx.

EB: . . . were just jammed—yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And make people contribute to the entertainer, you know.

SL: That's good. I love that.

EB: Good for him. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's good. So I'm tryin' to think . . .

EB: Bob Eoff. That was his name, I think.

SL: What was that?

EB: Wasn't his name Bob, Bob Eoff?

SL: Bob Eoff?

EB: I believe . . .

SL: Yeah, that sounds good. Uh-huh.

EB: . . . it was Bob or Robert. Bob. Yeah, one or the other.

SL: Yeah. Well, we're gonna—why don't we just go ahead and stop tape here. We're about out of tape.

[Tape stopped]

[02:00:38] SL: So this is tape three. We're on our third—startin' our third hour here. We're in—we'd gotten you to Fayetteville. You'd come up—you'd . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . gotten into the Kappa Sig house. Dayton Stratton came and paid you a visit, asked you to play at his club, the Tee Table, and . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . you formed a group called the Tee Cups.

EB: Tee Cups. Yes, indeed.

SL: Now Fayetteville probably only had about fifteen thousand people in the population back then. It was small . . .

EB: That sounds like the right figure, best I remember.

SL: The university probably had three or four thousand people at most.

EB: Mh-hmm. But see, the Tee Table was where everybody, all the college kids, came on weekend, like Fridays and Saturdays, and they'd dance to the, you know, the—they'd dance to just about whatever we'd play.

SL: Yeah. Now the Tee Table predates the Rockwood Club, doesn't it? Rockwood Club came in a little later, didn't it?

EB: Now I'm not sure about that because—I'm tryin' to remember my association with the Rockwood Club. That far back, I might've been up there and maybe gone into it once or twice or somethin' like that. I know that a lot of times—course, after the Rockwood Club got going, I just assumed it had always been going. I didn't know about . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . that but . . .

[02:02:04] SL: Well, how did you run into Ronnie Hawkins?

EB: Well, see, when I came up there in the—I went to summer school in [19]54 up there. I finished the—that spring semester, you know, in [19]54, and then I just went on into summer school. I was tryin' to get my hours up so I could get initiated in the fall, so that's what happened.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So here we are in the summertime out at the pool there in the city park. What's the name of that city park?

SL: Wilson Park. City park. City park. City pool.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Wilson Park is what they call it.

EB: Wilson Park. That's it.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: And he and Doug Douglas were up there doin' clown divin' on the high dive. And I said, "Who are those fools? [*Laughter*] They're gonna get killed!" [*Laughs*] He said, "Well, that's Ronnie Hawkins and Doug Douglas." And that's how I met 'em.

[02:02:58] SL: Doug was the nephew of Senator . . .

EB: Fulbright.

SL: . . . Fulbright.

EB: Yeah. That's right.

SL: Mh-hmm. And Ronnie was—had the perfect, sculptured Greek-god body. He was . . .

EB: Yeah. He likes to tell that story.

SL: . . . very athletic and . . .

EB: Yeah, very athletic and had strong legs, real strong legs, like piano legs, almost. But he used to come by the Kappa Sig house. See, I tried to get him into Kappa Sig, but we were out of bids. And they only give you so many bids, and so I couldn't get him in. Then by the time—later on he joined the—what was it, SPE, next door to us?

SL: Maybe so. SAE.

EB: SP somethin'. Not SAE. That—David was in SAE.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But the little house next door to the Kappa Sig house . . .

SL: Don't know. It's . . .

EB: . . . goin' up the hill.

SL: Yeah, it's a parkin' lot now. I'm not . . .

EB: It's a parking lot now?

SL: Yeah.

EB: And they remodeled the whole downstairs of the Kappa Sig house. I couldn't believe it. Have you been inside the Kappa Sig house?

SL: Not in a long time. I haven't.

[02:04:07] EB: Well, you know how the—it used to be all one level.

Had to walk out of the livin' room into the foyer—I mean, not the foyer, but the little meeting area before you get to the dining room . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . goes all the way to the kitchen. They have dropped that dinin' room floor about this much [uses hands to suggest a height of about one foot]. I couldn't believe it. So that if you're—you have to walk around like a—the—that perimeter, and you gotta step down if you're gonna go down to where the floor is. And I thought, "Who ever thought [*laughs*]"—you fill it up with water and go swimmin', you know.

SL: There you go. [*Laughter*]

EB: That's what I first thought of. [*SL laughs*] We had our one hundredth anniversary on [*horn honks*] the campus back in 1990, and it was right after that that they started that renovation program of the house. I'm tryin' to think what year that was. A little bit after 1990.

[02:05:14] SL: I don't know. So Ronnie—so how was it that—you know, there was Ronnie Hawkins. There was also John Tolleson.

EB: Well now, Tolleson would come over to the Kappa Sig house and

play piano a little bit and told me—he told me, he said, "I play trombone, too." And I said, "Oh man, lookee here!" But he also told me that he was with Bob Donathan, and Bob was a saxophone player. And—but anyway, I later heard 'em play someplace, and boy, they were really good.

SL: Yeah, they were.

EB: And far as I know, they never did play the Tee Table. That—soon—Dayton pretty well kept his word to us and let us play there all the time, except the time Ronnie came in one time out at—well, Ronnie would come up while we were playin' oftentimes and wanna sing. And I said, "Well, let's get together on somethin' that we both know." And he said, "Oh, I know a song or two." And he said, "Y'all know 'John Henry'?" And so he started singin', "John Henry, he could hammer, he could whistle, he could sing. Went to the moun' early in the mornin' just to hear his hammer ring, Lord, Lord." Well, so we knew that song enough . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . good enough to play it, you know, to back . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:06:38] EB: . . . to back him up. And I said, "Well, you must have another one." And he said, "Well, we might try another

one [*laughs*] later on," he said. [*SL laughs*] But he knew other—what's that early rock-and-roll song, "Ooby Dooby"?

SL: "Ooby Dooby." Yeah. Uh-huh.

EB: And we didn't know that 'cause we weren't rock and rollers. We were, you know, Dixieland [*laughs*] players.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Our stuff was on the top—no, they didn't call it Top 40 back then; they called it . . .

SL: Hit parade.

EB: . . . hit parade. That's right.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[02:07:11] EB: So okay, then he came up a few more other time, and I said, "Ronnie, I didn't know you could sing." And he said, "Well, I just know a few songs." But—and it wasn't too much longer after that, he came in while we were playing. Several weeks later, here he come in there with Al—or Pinkerton. What's his first name? The air-condition man. That's what he is now. He owns a air-conditioning company.

SL: I don't know.

EB: If you saw him, you'd know who I'm talkin' about.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He collects old—he collects cars, and he's got some fine ones.

You know, he and Ronnie were both, you know . . .

SL: Car guys.

EB: . . . car—oh, I mean, up to the hilt, man.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But anyway—Harold Pinkerton. That's his name.

SL: Okay.

EB: And now Harold doesn't play. Now he'd strum some guitar,  
but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:08:16] EB: . . . and come in there with—I forget who was  
slappin' the upright bass. And he—see, Ronnie had his eye on  
my guitar player, Teddy Souter, who was captain of the football  
team. But he played some fine guitar, and he really dug playin'.  
He's from Shreveport, Louisiana, or just outside of Shreveport.  
And Teddy played some piano, too. But anyway, Ronnie brought  
whoever was playin' with him and put on his show. And boy, he  
got down, and people started standin' up on tables just to watch  
him, you know, 'cause he'd do the camel walk, and then he'd do  
the splits, and then he'd get down on his—all fours and jump  
back up and do somethin' else, you know. [*Laughs*] And they'd  
never seen nothin' like that before.

SL: He was a showman.

EB: Oh yeah, right from the get-go. But didn't know many songs, you know, and he played—he said, "Well, I'll play all ten of 'em I know," and [*laughter*] he might've learned two or three more [*laughs*] since I'd seen him prior to that. [*Laughter*] And [*SL laughs*] so it was [*laughs*—so they played there, and then they'd go up and play at the Rockwood some, I heard. I didn't go up there and watch 'em, but that was the spring semester of whatever it was, [19]55 maybe. Somethin' like that or thereabouts. It coulda been [19]56. I don't know. But anyway, so that's how—and then Ronnie every once in a while would drive over to the Kappa Sig house, or we'd meet at Jug Wheeler's or somethin' like that and get us a milkshake or a Coke or somethin' and sit around and shoot the breeze about music and everything. And . . .

SL: Yeah. Now he was aware of Buddy Hayes, too.

EB: Oh yeah. Everybody knew Buddy Hayes. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: Good guy, too.

[02:10:25] SL: So you know, the story is, is that Ronnie wanted to be a rock-and-roll star.

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: And he just announced that he was gonna be a rock-and-roll star

and just . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . went to Memphis, I guess, or ca—I'm not sure if he started in Memphis or came here with you. I—how did y'all end up in your grandmother's house?

[02:10:53] EB: Well, he brought Jimmy Ray Paulman down with him. That's after Jimmy Ray had left Conway because Harold had just changed his name to Conway Twitty, but he didn't have any records out. He mighta had one or two songs that got him started well enough to play the clubs and stuff like that but he—by no means was he a star at that point in time. That's what made Jimmy Luke want to go play with Ronnie because Ronnie sat in with him one time at the Bubble Club, and that's how Luke first, you know, saw Ronnie.

SL: At the Bubble Club.

EB: At the Bubble Club because—wasn't that the Shamrock Club, too? Didn't Dayton change the name of it? It used to be the Shamrock, and then Dayton changed it to the Bubble Club. See, Dayton moved . . .

SL: Now there was the Huddle Club.

EB: The Huddle Club is further—is . . .

SL: Further on down.

EB: . . . further on down.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

EB: And I never was in there too much. But that was another hangout. And then it seemed like there was one more club. I can't think of the name of it. But it seemed like the Shamrock and the Tee Table got all the activity. Well, the Rockwood Club too, by that time. But . . .

[02:12:19] SL: So does Ronnie just . . .

EB: He . . .

SL: You just kinda said, you know, "If you come my way, I can put you up at my grandmother's house," or . . .

EB: Well, he had come to town. Member a while ago I mentioned Charlie Halbert to you?

SL: Yeah.

EB: Well see, Charlie owned the motel out in West Helena called the Rainbow Inn.

SL: Okay.

EB: And he was talkin' about putting—buying the Claiborne Hotel, and he was gonna put a club in there and call it the Pot of Gold. Well, it—that was still on the drawin' board about the Pot of Gold. He later got that accomplished. But Ronnie came down. And then, you know, Charlie was a big football fan, big booster.

And you know, Proctor—what's his name? Bobby Proctor. He was co-captain of the Razorbacks, and he's . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . he's from here.

SL: Okay.

EB: And so Charlie thought a lot of him. And Donnie Stone from Fayetteville . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and Ronnie were buddies, so they drove down here to—the first time, and had a talk with Charlie Halbert at the motel, and I think Ronnie was tryin' to interest Charlie Halbert to help back him or somethin' on that order. The next time he came down here, he was with Jimmy Luke, and they came down here in Ronnie's car.

SL: Okay.

[02:13:56] EB: Ronnie had a couple of old cars, you know. He had that B-Model Ford, and if you remember that—and course, he always kept his cars in top shape. And then he had a—looked like about a [19]37 Ford or somethin' like that, four-door, best I remember. But anyway, that's how we ran into each other. He came to Helena. I don't remember him ever having gone to Memphis. He may have, but that makes a good story, whether

he did or whether he didn't. But . . .

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

EB: . . . you know how Ronnie is.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He said, "I'll put the" . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . "Hawkins stretch on it."

SL: Yeah.

[02:14:32] EB: [*Laughs*] [*Vehicle passes*] So we talked, and **?we?**

said, "Well, what y'all doin' in town?" He said, "Well, we're gonna put a group together, and we're lookin' for a place to stay." And that's when I told him to come on, and I'd take him out to my grandmother's house. And once in a while she'd take in boarders and—or roomers, 'cause she didn't fix meals, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . she had an income tax guy stayin' there I member one time.

But anyway, we got that all straightened out, so we worked all that out, and so Ronnie came on out and stayed there, and we, boy, we'd sit up many nights just shootin' the breeze, you know, and talkin' bout music, talkin' bout the music industry and rock and roll and everything. And I said, "You're really serious about all this, aren't you?" And he said, "Yeah, man." Said, "We'll get

you a set of drums." That's before he met Levon, see. I said, "Well, man, I'd love to, but as you know," I said, "I'm certainly not a drummer." I said, "I can keep a beat, and that's about it." But—and we're talkin' bout a new form of music to me, you know. I said, "Now let me think a minute. I keep hearin' about this guy from Marvell.

SL: Kid!

EB: Yeah, he was just a kid in high school then, sixteen or seventeen years old. So I got them together and they . . .

[02:16:02] SL: Well, had you ever met Levon?

EB: I had played a show with him in Memphis at the paraplegic ward at the veterans' hospital.

SL: Was he with his sister?

EB: With his sister. And they did—you know, they—she played the tub, and he . . .

SL: Tub bass.

EB: . . . played the guitar. Yeah. And they both sang in harmony. Put on a pretty good little show. It was a variety show. They had—this girl I used to date taught ballet and ballroom dancin' and stuff like that, and all of her students were girls my younger sister's age. So they had all those on the show, and it had a little kid that did an Elvis impersonation. He was [*laughter*—I

didn't mean to make fun of him, but it was sort of funny watchin' him. His mother had made him a costume, you know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He looked more like an elf than he [*laughs*] did Elvis but . . .

SL: Yeah, isn't that funny? An Elvis impersonator when Elvis [*EB laughs*] was just goin'.

EB: Yeah, Elvis—the—he was hot back then in fifty—well, this was [19]57 . . .

SL: Yep.

EB: . . . or—yeah, or along—right along in there.

SL: That's somethin' else.

EB: Or this—or could that've been as far back as [19]56? I—it's a little foggy right there. But anyway, I had seen Levon on that show, and there was another kid who played accordion that knew Levon, and he was on the show, too. Chris Letterman was his name. Good accordion player.

SL: Yeah.

[02:17:40] EB: So you know, and then I played harmonica, and then I'd tell a joke and introduce the next act and then do the same thing over again for the next act and . . .

SL: So you were the MC.

EB: Yeah. Yeah. I did—back in those days, I did—well, not a

tremendous lot of that stuff, but people got to callin' me to do stuff like that sometime. So . . .

[02:18:04] SL: So what would you play on the harmonica?

EB: Well, I would just play whatever came to mind. [*Laughter*] But the . . .

SL: So the—your harmonica was influenced from what you were hearin' here on the streets in Helena?

EB: Well, to a certain extent. Now I did two kinds of harmonica playin'. I picked up the blues, and course, like I was tellin' you earlier, everybody in my peer group was in the band at school. So that kind of music, you know, we played—we had a concert band, too. You know, we did play some classical tunes. We played Schubert's *Unfinished* and—but—and we didn't play the *William Tell* overture, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . but I did on the harmonica.

SL: Is that right? Yeah, I bet . . .

EB: And that really got their attention.

SL: . . . it was a good one. It sure does. Yeah.

EB: [*Laughs*] And I played "Malagueña" on the Chromonica.

SL: Oh! That's the first song I learned to play.

EB: Oh, okay. [*Laughter*] So I would vacillate between the black

influence and the classical influence. You know, play the blues harp and then pick up the Chromonica and play some classical stuff or somethin' that fit pretty close to that. But anyway, and, you know, it would go over. I'd—they had me play at the Kiwanis club a few times and, you know, different civic functions and all that and . . .

[02:19:49] SL: So you pointed Ronnie toward Levon Helm then, Lavon Helm.

EB: Yeah, that's what I—that's what—yeah, Ronnie started callin' him Levon, but it is Lavon. That's right.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Mark Helm. Lavon Mark, or it's either Mark Lavon or Lavon Mark. I forget which. But anyway, got it all together, and seems to me like Charlie Halbert furnished Lavon with a set of drums. I think that's the way that went. They had an old *King Biscuit Time*—they had an old—I'm tryin' to remember if it was *King Biscuit Time*, not the one that's up here in the showcase, but there's one that they kept down in the studio.

SL: At the radio station?

EB: At the radio station. And that's about all they had to rehearse on for a drum at that time. And Levon might've had a snare drum or somethin' and a cymbal, and that's—they just started

out with the remnants of a drum set, so I think Charlie got Lavon a set. And he got Luke a guitar. He got him a Gretsch.

SL: Nice guitar.

EB: Nice guitar. And Luke had a brother that was gonna play the upright bass. His name was George, and I didn't know George very well.

SL: Who was the keyboard player?

EB: That was Willard Jones. He was . . .

SL: Pop?

EB: Willard "Pop" Jones. I don't know where he picked up the name Pop. But anyway, he left Ronnie early. He left Ronnie in about—in [19]59.

[02:21:40] SL: Wasn't he a really aggressive, loud piano player? I mean, I . . .

EB: He could be. Now he . . .

SL: I've heard the keys would . . .

EB: Oh yeah. Ronnie talks about the competition they had goin' on up in—at Houck Music Company in Memphis one time between Willard and—I forget who the other player was. And said, "Man, you could see the hammers flyin' out of that piano. [*SL laughs*] I mean, they just tore it up." [*SL laughs*] I forget who the other player was. But Willard, he had great big, long fingers, and he's

strong anyway. And see, he grew up, I guess, playin' the piano in church or somethin', but he knew how that rock-and-roll stuff went. And he'd come over to my house and show me some stuff, too, with that left hand. He said, "You gotta keep that left hand pumpin', man. You gotta keep that right hand goin' like this, you know." [*SL laughs*] I said, "Who do you think I am, Jerry Lee Lewis?" [*Laughter*] But see . . .

[02:22:37] SL: Well now was he older, or was he a young guy, too?

EB: Well, he was Levon's age, I guess.

SL: So he was a young guy.

EB: Pretty close to Lavon's age, and I don't remember if Jimmy Ray was a little older, I guess. But he was married.

SL: Willard was?

EB: Jimmy Ray. No, not ?Willard?.

SL: Oh, Jimmy Ray was.

EB: Willard later on married a girl in Canada, or she was—I guess maybe she was from around here, and he took her to Canada with him or somethin', but he and Ronnie—for some reason, see, Willard had a crossed eye, and when they signed that record deal with Roulette Records, they paid for that eye operation to straighten his eye out.

SL: That's good.

EB: And Ronnie had varicose veins on his jaw. You know, he used to work out with Billy Ray Smith.

SL: Yep.

EB: Sparrin' each—with each other, and that's what caused those veins to . . .

SL: Pop up.

EB: Yeah. So that's why he grew a beard, and it covered all that stuff up after that.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So he never shaved his beard again.

SL: He's got a pretty good scar on one side of his face, too, doesn't he?

EB: Well, the last time I saw Ronnie, course, he had so much hair on his face, you couldn't see a scar. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: It overgrew the scar [*laughs*] or outran it or whatever you call it. But . . .

[02:24:09] SL: He used to joke, say they used to play in joints where you had to show your broken arm and your razor blade to get in. [*Laughs*]

EB: Had to puke twice and show your razor. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. [*Laughter*]

EB: Now the Supper Club was almost that bad out here in West Helena. It's gone now.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I think there's a motel sittin' on that old property. It was the old junkyard, and that Supper Club sat in the middle of that junkyard.

[02:24:36] SL: Well now, I, you know, I wonder if Pop—let's see now. No, it wasn't Pop that was married. It was . . .

EB: Jimmy Ray.

SL: Jimmy Ray was married.

EB: Yeah.

SL: I always heard that that was against the rules, that . . .

EB: To be married?

SL: To be married and be in Ronnie's band, that . . .

EB: Well, I know Ronnie'd preach against that, you know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: "Oh, you know, we don't need these wives."

SL: Yeah.

EB: "Y'all get rid of them wives," he'd say. [*Laughter*] But anyway, Luke took his wife with him to Canada. And they wound up gettin' divorced, or she probably got tired of the rock-and-roll bit or somethin'. I don't know what their problems were. But they

had a place here in Helena rented, too, and they lived in a little place south of here.

[02:25:24] SL: You have any idea what ever happened to Willard?

EB: Well, you know, he stayed in Denver for about twenty-five years and played out there, and I to—I believe he owned the club where he was playing. And then I—and then the years went by and years went by, and he came back, and I got him a gig in St. Joe, Missouri, where I was playin' with another group back in—this was several years after what you and I were just talkin' about as far as the time frame goes . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . between the Charlie Halbert interview and the Roulette Record thing and *American Bandstand* and New York and all of that. And we came back from that era back home, and the timing for me was just right 'cause my sister was getting married, so I got to be in her wedding. And Ronnie had somethin' to do in Fayetteville. Let me see what that was. And this is after we'd been on *The Dick Clark Show* in New York, and then we went to Canada and came back to New York and recorded the *Dynamo* album.

SL: So you were part of Ronnie's band, too, then, that early band.

You . . .

EB: Well, I was one of the associates, you might say. You know, I kept tryin' to tell Ronnie I needed to play the harmonica, and he said, "Well, we'll get you up on stage, and you can play a few numbers," and you know. And I had thought that I could take Willard's place since he was leavin'.

SL: Yeah.

[02:27:07] EB: And—but Ronnie had a mind change. He said he thought he would let Fred play lead.

SL: Fred Carter.

EB: See, Fred Carter came on the scene in [19]59 also, after he'd left Dale. And Ronnie saw him at the—I believe he said it was the Fox Theater.

SL: Fred Carter left Dale . . .

EB: Hawkins.

SL: Is that right?

EB: Yeah. See, he played for Dale before he played for Ronnie.

SL: Okay.

EB: And course, Fred being from Louisiana, and so was Dale, from Louisiana.

SL: So that "Susie-Q" lick is Fred Carter's.

EB: Now that far back, Fred wasn't playin' with him.

SL: Yeah, I didn't . . .

EB: That's—well, I'll say. Who was playing guitar with Elvis when he died?

SL: Oh, that's—oh, I'm sorry you asked me that. *[EB laughs]* Oh, that hurts.

EB: We have both come to—well, it'll come to me in a little bit.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He played with Ricky Nelson after he played with . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: But he's the one playin' the "Susie-Q" lick.

SL: Oh, okay. All right.

[02:28:15] EB: And he—like I say, he played with Dale. I don't know how long, but then Fred followed him, I think.

SL: Okay.

EB: But Fred wanted—I mean, Ronnie wanted Fred to play lead. Fred played the Telecaster, and Luke played the hollow-body Gretsch. And anyway, Luke thought it over, and Ronnie said, "Well, we'll just do without a piano for a while and see how that goes over." So at that particular juncture, and I knew Willard was leavin', and so I came on back home. And not long after that—see, they had Jimmy Evans playing bass at that time, too, so Jimmy decided he would leave. And then it wasn't much longer after that, Luke decided he would leave, so Ronnie had to

hire a complete new crew. And then, well, Fred Carter came back with us, too, and he took a room at my grandmother's house.

SL: So [*laughter*] . . .

EB: So that become rock-and-roll . . .

SL: No kiddin'.

EB: . . . haven. [*Laughs*]

SL: ?I'm in? rockabilly heaven there.

EB: Yeah. Yeah.

[02:29:31] SL: So but you did go to Canada with 'em then?

EB: Oh, I went up there with 'em and—well, they tried to get me to go with 'em the very first time they went. And the way that happened was I rode with them to Jacksonville. The air force base, we were supposed to play there. We got there, and there was a mix-up in the bookings. So whoever made the deal, Ronnie come back and told us, "Well, there's been a cross-up, and they've got somebody else playin'." They double-booked or whatever they did.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So we drove on to Fayetteville, and that's when I recorded an instrumental in Fayetteville at the Fine Arts Center.

SL: Which was pretty new back then.

EB: Which was new back then, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: It sure was.

SL: Yeah, Edward Durell Stone.

EB: I played a harmonica piece, and Luke backed me up in an instrumental I wrote called "Long Lost John." And [*SL laughs*] back in those days, Twitty owned a studio in Marianna.

SL: Yeah. Wow.

[02:30:46] EB: Which leads to another story after this time frame

I'm . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . tellin' you about. So we got our business done in Fayetteville, and Ronnie had gotten Winnie, his sister, a car, and he had bought a little teardrop trailer from here so they could go to Canada. And they wanted me to go then with them.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So I decided it might be best if I not go on that particular trip, but I'd come later, which I did do. I came up in [19]59, and that's when I got up there and found out Willard was quittin', and I thought, "Well, that could be wrong." But sure enough, he did. He quit. There's a lot of stories goin' around as to why that happened, but that was between them, so I didn't get in the

middle of all that.

[02:31:40] SL: Were they doin' an afternoon show and then an evening show when you got to Canada?

EB: Well, they did an evening show, and then they did a supper—did a breakfast show after we left the stage at the Le Coq d'Or Tavern. [*Clears throat*] And the afternoon thing, I'm tryin' to remember. I don't remember if they did an afternoon thing. To my knowledge, that—they didn't do that. They mighta done it a few times.

SL: Yeah. I think that may have come later.

EB: That could be or—but that was a beautiful club, I remember. Many times I saw people standin' outside tryin' to get in, you know, and linin' up down the sidewalk tryin' to get in. And of course, Ronnie had had a record that was, you know, "Forty Days," and then "Mary Lou" and then . . .

SL: "Ruby."

EB: . . . "Ruby Baby." So he had three certified hits, and that's all he's ever had. And he hasn't had a hit since Willard quit, and he hadn't had a hit since Jimmy Luke quit. I tried my best to get Ronnie to come out in Vegas when I was out there, and he wouldn't come.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He didn't wanna give up a good thing he had goin' on in Canada.  
I guess maybe I can't blame him, but . . .

SL: You can't blame him.

EB: . . . I know what I saw in Vegas, and I know that he'd've blown  
that town down if he'd done so 'cause he was still puttin' on a  
show then.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He was still pretty lean and mean, and Levon was twirlin' those  
sticks and grinnin'. You know how he does and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:33:20] EB: . . . and the best show in Vegas in that genre of  
music was Teddy Randazzo. And he had a hit called "It's a Big  
Wide World We Live In," if you remember that.

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

EB: "For it's a big wide world we live in. Da-da-da-da-da-da-da."  
I don't remember all the words.

SL: Yeah.

EB: "My only world is you." Now that got him over. I think Teddy  
was from Chicago. But he had Gerry McGee pickin' guitar. He  
played Telecaster, and he knew Fred Carter 'cause he was from  
Louisiana also. And I heard Gerry McGee play, and I said, "Man,  
oh man, oh man! I wish I could play guitar. [*SL laughs*] But I

just love to sit here and listen to you play just as an appreciator of that kind of pickin'."

SL: Yeah.

EB: I said, "Fred's tough and—but he's tough in a different way." And then he had—he—and Teddy had three male backup singers, so he had bass, guitar, drums, and the three backup singers, and Teddy, who was the lead singer. But boy, they had a sound, and I've never heard another band play like McGee played. And I was—by that time, I'd known quite a few musician buddies of mine that were out there. We became friends, and we'd go down to Thunderbird and say, "Man, let's go down and hear McGee play." "All right, let's go." [*Laughs*] So . . .

[02:35:00] SL: So Ronnie—you're—you know that Ronnie just would've killed 'em out there if he'd come.

EB: Well, the thing about it is, provided Ronnie would've continued to do his footwork show that he was famous for having done. Had he continued that, plus he always had a good sound anyway, I think he would've knocked 'em out 'cause Teddy knocked 'em out. And Teddy was not a huge, huge, huge . . .

SL: Showman.

EB: Well, he wasn't a showman at all. Well, in a different way, you might say so. The . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: He was really good-lookin', and all the women just fell all over him and stuff like that. He was more of a pop singer, you might say. You know, smooth, Dino type, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

[02:35:46] EB: He didn't fit in the—but when—he did an instrumental called "John Lee Hooker."

SL: Okay.

EB: And he and I later became—I was—I used to hang out down there so much, we got to know each other. Not extremely well, but I told him, I said, "Yeah, I'm from John Lee Hooker country, you know." I said, "John Lee's from Clarksdale, and I'm from Helena."

SL: Yeah.

EB: And he didn't even know where Helena was. [*Laughs*]

SL: Right.

EB: [*Laughs*] He might not have known where Clarksdale was. I don't know.

SL: Right.

EB: But they played that thing every night. And I—till this day yet, I've never heard another guitar player that can play like Gerry McGee. Gerry McGee did a movie and played all the stringed

instrument parts called *Heaven's Gate*. And Ronnie . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . Ronnie was in that movie.

SL: Ronnie [*laughs*] was in that.

EB: Yeah. Well, that was Gerry McGee playing guitar in that movie.

And I was visitin' with Ronnie after that movie was made, and we got to talkin' about Gerry McGee, and he said, "Yeah, I've heard you talk about that guy in Vegas, you know." And I said, "Well, that's the same one." He said, "Yeah, that is the same one 'cause he played in Vegas with Randazzo." And I've often wondered had I got Ronnie to go out to Vegas, I'm sure he wouldn't've disappointed anybody.

[02:37:10] SL: Yeah. Well now let's talk about you—so you didn't go to Canada the first time that they went up there.

EB: Hm-mm.

SL: But did you just drive up there, show up there while they were up there, or did you travel with 'em?

EB: No, I took a I took a plane up there. I flew to New York and got off and drove to—met 'em at *The Dick Clark Show*. And of course . . .

[02:37:32] SL: And what was that like?

EB: Well, that was fun. [*Laughs*]

SL: What was Dick Clark like?

EB: Well, he surprised me. I mean, you know how those celebrities are. A lot of times they can really put on an attitude, you know, that . . .

SL: Right.

EB: . . . they're better than you are. But he was very, very nice, very cordial, and admired the jacket I had on. [*SL laughs*] And I had a—I have to admit, it was a good-lookin' jacket. [*Laughter*] I wish I still had it.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And he said, "Where did you find that jacket?" He said, "Man, that's good-lookin'." And I told him it was a little place in Helena, Arkansas, called Lazar's Men's Store. [*Laughs*] Yeah, he's gone now, but they . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . he used to have a store down here on Cherry Street. I bought three or four suits from him. But see, back in those days, Harold Kudlets had been Conway Twitty's agent, and of course, by that time I got up there, Conway, I don't guess he was using him anymore. But he—but Kudlets became Ronnie's agent at that period of time. So . . .

SL: So he got the Dave Clark gig for him?

EB: He got the what?

SL: He got the Dave Clark gig—the *American Bandstand* gig?

EB: Well, he—yeah, by that time Ronnie had hits goin' at Roulette Records, see.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He had an inside with Roulette, anyway. Kudlets did.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

EB: Harold Kudlets—called—Ronnie called him "The Colonel."

And . . .

[02:39:09] SL: Okay. So you do the *American Bandstand*, and then what happens?

EB: Well, then we went further on up into—went on to—drove on to Canada. And went to Le Coq d'Or, and then we drove down to Hamilton to the Brass Rail, and then we went to London. See, London was—was London the Brass Rail or Hamilton the Brass Rail? Well, I don't know. I can't remember. But I got 'em reversed, I guess. But he had already hired Robbie by that time, but Robbie hadn't been with him terribly long.

SL: Well now, was Danko and . . .

EB: No, this was before Danko. This . . .

SL: Before Danko.

EB: . . . this is . . .

SL: Before Manuel.

EB: Robbie was just a roadie when I was up there.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: In that time I'm tellin' you about.

SL: Oh, okay.

[02:40:15] EB: And so—but he had written a song that Ronnie liked called "Someone Like You," so he recorded that on the *Dynamo* album. So Ronnie had me write out all the music for the—each song. And they put him in a sound booth, and all he had to do was read the words, and I'm playin' some percussion on that, too, with a little bongo beat and a little tambourine with a guy whose last name was Rodriguez. Well, Ronnie's pet name for me is Edriguez. [*SL laughs*] Well, that guy heard Ronnie call me, said, "Is your name Edriguez? ?You nombre Rodriguez?" And I explained that to him. I said, "No, my name is Ed. Eduardo." But [*laughter*] Ronnie called . . .

SL: Edriguez.

EB: . . . instead of callin' me Ed, he puts the -riguez on it—on—with it. Edriguez. [*SL laughs*] And that's when he told me his name was Rodriguez. [*SL laughs*] So we got to be good buddies there in the studio. And Morris Levy was there for the session.

SL: Yeah, now he—did he own the studio or . . .

EB: Well, we did that in Capitol studios and—but studio time, of course, was paid for by Roulette because that's—Ronnie had a contract with Roulette at that time.

[02:41:36] SL: Well, talk about Morris Levy a little bit if you can.

EB: Well now, that's the only time I ever saw him. And he did take us out to dinner at The Roundtable, and what's the famous broadcaster's name that—"Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. America, and all the ships at sea."

SL: Hmm, I don't know.

BP: [*Unclear words*].

SL: Ed Murrow? That's not Ed Murrow.

BP: No.

EB: Before his time. Well, Murrow was around then, I guess he was, but this guy came on every night. He happened to be in the dining room when we were there, and somebody pointed him out to us. We didn't go over and say anything to him but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . but he—Levy also owned another club there in Little Rock—I mean [*laughs*] New York, which was famous and—but we didn't go there. But we used to hang out in Greenwich Village some, too, and that was a fun thing. That's before the term . . .

SL: That was before the folk thing hit, right?

EB: And also before the terminology of hippies was coined.

SL: Yeah.

EB: They called 'em beatniks back then.

SL: That's right.

EB: And they'd stand around on street corners and read poems and smoke pot or whatever they did, you know. See, pot wasn't big then either. It was all pills back then.

SL: Amphetamines and . . .

EB: Yeah, uppers and downers and in between.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And the marijuana thing came along later but . . .

[02:43:30] SL: So let's see. Now how many tunes did y'all cut in the studio?

EB: Well, we cut the whole *Dynamo* album.

SL: Oh, the whole *Dynamo* album.

EB: Yeah.

SL: How long'd that take?

EB: Oh, shucks, we was in there just about all night, I guess.

[*Laughter*] And Ronnie did that Robbie Robertson song, "Someone Like You." And I guess they might've put "Ruby Baby" on there, too. I'm not—I don't remember about that.

And Fred and Luke were both playing on that session, and see,

Luke didn't like it because Ronnie wanted him to just play rhythm and wanted Fred to play lead, so that was one factor that upset Luke. So he decided he would come back home. So that's what happened, and as it turned out, Fred came back home right before Luke did.

SL: So he lost both guitars.

EB: We all rode back down here together, and Fred decided to stay—he jumped ship with Ronnie and went to work for Conway for a little while and then Roy Orbison after that, I think. And then he still—then he came back to Helena and stayed at my grandmother's house and put a little group together called Fred Carter and the Hungry Four [*SL laughs*] and took it to Nashville. And had Tommy Markham as his drummer. Tommy's from Conway. Strong drummer. He wound up bein' Conway's drummer after he put in about twenty-five years with Conway. And [*clears throat*] so, anyway, it's just one story leads to another.

[02:45:15] SL: So when you get done with the recording sessions, then what do y'all do?

EB: Well, you mean, at the—when we were doin' the thing at Capitol studios?

SL: Yeah.

EB: Then we head back to Arkansas. By this time, it's November of [19]59, and like I told you, we got there just in time for me to not . . .

SL: Get . . .

EB: . . . miss my sister's wedding, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . we also went to Fayetteville, and I met Ronnie's grandmother, and she lived out around—was it Combs down through there?

SL: Yeah, Hawkins Hollow.

EB: Hawkins Holler. That's right. But I remember that little town called Combs, the little community.

SL: Yep.

[02:46:00] EB: And—so I knew Ronnie's mother, but just briefly. She taught school a lot. And course, his dad used to cut my hair in Fayetteville when he had the barbershop there in—over there by the student union, I think it was. Jasper Hawkins.

SL: Jasper.

EB: And then Ronnie's sister, Winnie, if you remember her.

SL: I don't know if I ever met her.

EB: Boy, she was good-lookin' back in those days.

SL: Yeah.

EB: She just passed away here not too many years ago. And she—after I had come back from Canada—see, I went back to Canada again in 1970 and played up there for several months. My son was born up there.

SL: Ah!

EB: So—and I played in a place not too far from that place where they extract oil out of sand grains.

SL: Yeah.

EB: You've heard a lot of talk about that recently.

SL: Yeah, fracking and—yeah.

EB: Well, if we'd've waited another week, if we'd've stayed up there another week, my son would've been born there, but we came on back into Edmonton, which is about a hundred miles away from—playing at the Peter Pond Hotel.

[02:47:20] SL: Now we hadn't heard anything about you gettin' married.

EB: Oh, you didn't?

SL: No. When did you get married?

EB: Well, I didn't send out invitations. [*Laughter*] Where's my weddin' present? [*Laughter*] Well, that happened—I got married in [19]70, and then along toward the end of [19]70, my son was born. I married a girl from Iowa and . . .

[02:47:45] SL: Now what was her name?

EB: Linda. Linda Baker. Her dad was a farm manager, and he was a real good welder, too. And then her grandparents lived on the same property not far from them. All good, hardworkin' people and . . .

SL: So did y'all meet while you were on the road or . . .

EB: Well, I was on the road with another group by that time. I was on a group after—I guess I better carry the story back a little bit to try to connect what . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . I'm talkin' about.

SL: All right.

EB: Oh, I went to Vegas in [19]62.

SL: Okay.

EB: Sonny Payne gave me the number of a guy to contact out there who worked at the Stardust Hotel in case I was tryin' to find a job, so I took that information. I don't know where—I don't know how Sonny knew him but—and I already told you about Harry James's piano player, Jack Perciful, who knew Sonny. So when I went to Vegas, I looked up Jack 'cause I had met him when Harry James and them had played in Little Rock at the armory.

SL: Okay.

[02:49:13] EB: Winthrop Rockefeller was governor then.

SL: That's a strange room.

EB: Yeah.

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

EB: It's round, yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Glass everywhere and . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . domed ceiling. The sound is bad in there.

EB: But I got to listen to him almost every night when I was in Vegas, man. I'd go in there 'cause Harry James was playin'.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And there would be ol' Jack sittin' up there at the piano playin, you know, and once in a while I'd go over to his house and, if I had some time off, and we'd talk about music, and he'd say, "What you gotta do is exercise this finger and that finger and do this and do that." And I said, "I'm gonna remember that, Jack, now. And then I'm gonna go home and practice that, and I'll see if I can do that." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: He said, "Because you have to practice liftin' that third finger."

[*Laughs*]

SL: I'll remember that, too. [*Laughter*]

EB: I don't know if it's ever done me any good or not. [*Laughter*] I just make the octave runs with my left hand and [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:50:16] EB: . . . and do the da-da-da-da-da-da, and there's a lot of pretty chords I can do other than rock and roll. But I left Vegas in [19]64, tail end of [19]64. Charlie Halbert called me. By that time, he had built the Pot of Gold that I was tellin' you about . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

EB: . . . a while ago. And he called me up in Vegas, and he said, "Edriguez, you got to come down here and help me run this club."

SL: He called you Edriguez, too?

EB: Yeah, well, after Ronnie started it . . .

SL: That stuff sticks, doesn't it?

EB: . . . [*unclear words*] [*laughter*]. And now, if he got serious, he'd say, "Now Ed"—and I said, "Uh-oh, it's gonna be serious now."

SL: Oh, not, "Where's Edriguez?" [*Laughter*] Yeah. Yeah.

EB: Anyway, but he had a beautiful motel out there. Course, it's still there and the—they've done some remodeling to it, but when Charlie had it, boy, it was top-flight place.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And so he got to where he, you know, he'd let Ronnie and them stay there whenever they'd come to town. And I never will forget, this was in [19]65 when Sonny Boy had been touring with the Animals and the Yardbirds and came back to Helena, when it so happened at that same time, Robbie and Lavon and Danko and Garth Hudson and—that's before they called themselves the Band, however.

SL: Yeah.

EB: That's before they went to work with Bob Dylan.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So they stayed at the motel also, and the place had—each unit had two bedrooms and then a bath in the middle and then a livin' room area with a kitchen.

SL: That's great.

EB: Boy, it was sharp, man.

SL: Yeah.

[02:52:06] EB: And so they had already left Ronnie by that time, of course.

SL: Well, Ronnie had broken his own rule. He'd gotten married.

*[Laughter]*

EB: Well, he got married before that.

SL: Yeah, I know but . . .

EB: Yeah, I asked him bout that one time. I said, "Well, how long'd you have to chase Wanda?" And he said, "Uh-uh, she chased me." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, I think she was only fourteen years old when they met, wasn't she? I mean . . .

EB: Ah . . .

SL: . . . she was . . .

EB: . . . now I don't remember about that but . . .

SL: Yeah, I think she came in on those kids' shows in the afternoon, is—I—now I may be wrong, but . . .

[02:52:43] EB: Well, you could be right because, like I say, I—there was a time elapsed after I had left up there and came back here, and then he got married in the early [19]60s, as best I remember.

SL: Mh-hmm. She may've been sixteen. I—she was young.

EB: Yeah.

SL: I think she was pretty young. Yeah.

EB: Well, he had a lot of women hangin' on him when I was up there but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: And boy, he had one gal that was a knockout [*SL laughs*], and I

can't remember her name. I'd go look her up if I could find her.

[*Laughter*] But I'm surprised he—I don't know what the—what their deal was, but Ronnie was funny about stuff like that.

[02:53:20] SL: So they were stayin'—so Levon and the Band were staying out . . .

EB: That's before they were known as the Band. That's before they went to work for Dylan. And that was when I was—was I telling you earlier about this, when they came to town and Robbie found out that Sonny Boy was in town?

SL: No.

EB: He was just back off the road from the . . .

SL: Hm-mm. No, you—I bet you were tellin' Kris this. Go ahead and tell us that story.

EB: Okay. And Lavon had just bought a new Mercury.

SL: Kay.

EB: So we were just sittin' around shootin' the breeze one afternoon in the motel, and Robbie heard me say somethin' bout Sonny Boy. "Oh, do you know Sonny Boy?" I said, "Well, I used to work at the radio station, and course, I used to bring him on the air from time to time. I guess he might [*laughs*] remember me." "You think he's in town now?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." "You know where he lives?" [*SL laughs*] "I don't—well, we'll go

see. We'll go"—"We can? We can?" And boy, I thought he was just gonna explode right there. [*Laughs*] I thought he was gonna hug my neck, I swear.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

[02:54:33] EB: [*Laughs*] So sure enough, we got in the car and took a trip down to Helena. And I knew about where Sonny Boy lived. He had a place down there on Walnut Street, I think, in that area. So we drove down that street, and as luck would have it, there we saw this tall figure with a black derby hat on and a swallowtail tux coat, you know, and two-tone pants.

SL: Oh!

EB: One side was white, and one side was black, and had them spats on and, you know, stylin', you know, like this. So we eased up on the curb there beside him, you know, and old Sonny Boy, he—I was in the backseat, and he leaned down like this, [*leans forward*] you know, and he looked in there, and he saw me and, "Hey, Mr. Burks, what you doin' out here in this part of town?" [*Laughter*] I said, "We're lookin' for you, Sonny Boy! Come on and play with us. These are my friends from Canada." And I introduced him all around. So sure enough, he said, "I'm gonna go upstairs and get my harps and come back down." I said, "Okay, we'll guard—we'll [*laughter*] keep guard for you." So he

came back down. Had a great big old doctor's bag full of harmonicas.

SL: Harps.

[02:55:46] EB: Called 'em his harps. [*Laughter*] So we went on back out to the motel and had a jam session that lasted for about a week. He said, "Now you boys gets me a big jug of wine and bring me a little taste of vodka and a Co-Cola." And he got to mixin' that stuff, man, and we played and played and played and played and played and played. Somebody had some yellow jackets, so he wouldn't go to sleep.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And that went on for three or four days and nights. Whew!

SL: It's hard to recover [*laughs*] from that!

EB: Well, he didn't.

SL: He [*laughs*] didn't. Yeah.

EB: Well, he's not—I mean, he died maybe a few short months after that. Somebody gave him the rest of those pills, and he took 'em home with him, and I guess he over—he must've overdosed on 'em or somethin'.

SL: Didn't show up for work.

EB: He went to sleep and didn't wake up. So they called me to come play the gig that he was booked for at the country club, so I got

the honor of sayin' I played for Sonny Boy one night at the country club.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I said, "That is an honor." I said, "He was a fine harmonica player."

[02:56:58] SL: Yeah. You know, you mentioned the radio station. I know there's—we're gonna go a little bit out of sequence here. Earlier, I guess back in the [19]50s, early when you were at the radio station, Elvis ca—showed up at the radio station, didn't he?

EB: Yeah, I was tellin' Bruce that earlier, and that's the first time I ever saw him.

SL: So bout what year was that, you think?

EB: This was fifty—I was home on leave, as best I remember, from the service. And I'd always go up there and, you know, visit with everybody 'cause I used to work there. And we didn't know who these guys were that came up the stairs and said—askin' somebody could—he wanted to record. And I said, "Well, this is not a recordin' studio; this is a radio station, and we don't have recording facilities except for ETs, they call 'em—those great big old round discs. And so he said his name was Elvis Presley, and he wanted somebody to help him record. And they said, "Well, you're welcome to go down in the studio and practice if you'd

like to, but we don't have any way to record." So I think they went down and played for an hour or so, and then they . . .

SL: Packed up and left.

EB: . . . got up and left. And that's—never heard any more about him until "Well, that's all right, Mama" [*laughter*] came out, and then we heard about him, you know.

[02:58:39] SL: Yeah. [*EB laughs*] Well, I guess we oughta—I mean, when you were workin' at that radio station, did you have a lot of artists come in and play, I mean, want to play and . . .

EB: Well, back in those days, we did have a group from Mississippi that came in. I'm tryin' to think of—Mr. Parker was his name, and he had two sons, and one of 'em played saxophone, and Gene Parker was his name. And best I remember, Gene also played the fiddle, unless it was another son. That's been so long ago now.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But they had to put Coke boxes so he could be tall enough standin' up by the microphone to be heard playin' that fiddle. Brad Parker was their daddy's name.

SL: Okay.

EB: And they were all from Coahoma County over here. And came over here and played every—what day of the week was it? I

can't remember. It coulda been a Saturday. It could've been a Friday. I don't remember about that. But—and then once in a while, Harold Jenkins would come up there and play some of his country stuff. And course, I knew all the guys in his little aggregation. We tried our dead-level best to get him to come play in the band with us. "Man, why don't you put that guitar down and get you a trombone or a saxophone and come on in with us?" "No, man, I'm gonna play my guitar," you know. And he had the last laugh.

[03:00:17] SL: He did. [*Unclear word*]. All right. So we've gotten Sonny Boy Williamson and the Band together for three-day, all-night, all-day jam session. And they . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . they were down here. They were gonna play Memphis with Bob Dylan on that tour?

EB: No, no, no, this was before they—Robbie told me at that meeting he would like to meet Bob Dylan. And boy, that pulled my chain. I said, "What do you wanna meet him for?" I said, "He can't sing, and he can't play the harmonica." [*Laughs*] That struck a chord with Robbie, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He said, "I'd give anything in the world to meet him," you know.

I said, "Okay, then." So sure enough, after the Sonny Boy thing that I was tellin' you about at the motel, they got—what was the manager's name that they were fooling with then?

SL: Albert Grossman?

EB: Grossman. Yeah, he introduced 'em to . . .

SL: Dylan.

EB: . . . Dylan, and Dylan hired 'em to back him up.

SL: Okay, now we're gonna break for a tape change here, but I wanna pick up from there 'cause interesting things happen . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . right then. And you know, I wanna be parallel in what you're doin' and what the rest of the music business is doin' along that time, too, so . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . why don't we go ahead and break tape here.

[Tape stopped]

[03:01:53] SL: What is—is this tape four?

BP: Tape four.

JE: Yes.

SL: We're on our fourth tape, startin' our fourth hour. We were talkin', let's see, we were talkin' about the Band bein' down here and hookin' up with Sonny Boy Williamson. And they were just

startin' to work with Dylan. It was really before . . .

EB: [*Computer beeps*] Right before that.

SL: Right before they . . .

EB: They met up with Dylan.

SL: . . . met up with Dylan. So but were they here to do a gig with  
Dylan, or were they just . . .

EB: No, they just—they were . . .

SL: . . . down here giggin'?

EB: . . . no, they were just down here visitin'.

SL: Was it . . .

EB: They just came down to . . .

[03:02:36] SL: . . . was it Levon Helm and the Hawks back then?

EB: No, they just called it—see, back in those days—and I sat in with  
them when they played over here at the Catholic Club.

SL: M'kay.

EB: Okay, at that same time, I had a trio that played across the river  
at Moon Lake. Conway Twitty had bought a club over there for  
his folks to run.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So we called it Conway's Place. But anyway, after we got off,  
after my trio, we—I had a group called Eddie and the Storms.  
That was the little trio we had. Had a guitar player and a

drummer and myself on keyboard and clarinet and harmonica. So anyway, we came back over here. We heard that Levon and them were in town, and they were gonna be playing at the Catholic Club. So we stopped in to see them, and they got me up on stage, and that's where I met Manuel, and I'm tryin' to remember if Danko was with 'em then. I'm not sure about that. Course, they had Garth and . . .

SL: Yeah, I bet he was.

EB: Could be.

[03:03:41] SL: Yeah. And was Robbie playin', or was he just . . .

EB: Robbie was playing there. He was more or less the MC type, you know, spokesman . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . on the mic by that time. Boy, I wish anything in the world I'd had that recorded. That've been a feather in my cap.

SL: Well, I wanna tell you, they could play. And you know, you gotta give Hawkins some credit there.

EB: Oh, sure. Yeah.

SL: I mean, Hawkins—Hawk always had a knack of getting the best musicians . . .

EB: That's right.

SL: . . . on stage with him.

[03:04:14] EB: And here's another thing about Ronnie. I doubt he—  
I doubt if he ever took a music lesson from anybody about  
anything, and as far as I know, he couldn't play anything. Might  
know three or four chords on the guitar, maybe. To be able to,  
like you just said, to know who can do what and whether they  
were good enough to do this or that or the other thing, he had a  
knack for that. He could pick out the guys who would fit with  
what he wanted done. Every time he'd change bands, you  
know, I've known him to have a lot of groups. At one time, he  
had—oh, what's that girl's name? Janis Joplin. She had that  
band, Full-Tilt . . .

SL: Boogie.

EB: . . . Boogie Band, and they played with Ronnie for a while.

SL: Well now, there was that train tour across Canada that . . .

EB: I was up there then, and I was playing in Saskatoon. That—but  
at the time I didn't know they were comin' through. I later saw  
that on a film on TV, and I said, "Man, here comes Levon," and  
all those guys that were happenin' back then, you know. Playin'  
on the train, you know. What was the name of that tour that  
you just . . .

SL: I'm not sure . . .

EB: It had a . . .

SL: . . . what it was called, but . . .

EB: . . it had a—some kind of tour name . . .

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: . . . or somethin', but I think Joan Baez was in on that and—oh, I don't forget—I forget who all but . . .

[03:05:41] SL: Yeah, there's some great shots in there and footage in there of Rick Danko and Joan Baez, and they're just kinda jammin' on the train.

EB: On the train. That's right.

SL: Yeah, I mean . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's what . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . the fun stuff was.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, they'd stop and do a concert, do a show . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . but it was all that stuff on the train that was so riveting, you know, seein' those folks together.

EB: Well, I had a gig right there in that Bessborough Hotel. It was built by an English earl way back ago, years prior to that, of course. It looked like a—almost like a castle. It was gigantic.

And I played there for—it was either a month or two months, right after my son was born. And I thought, "Man, here we are out in the middle of nowhere." And you know, Saskatoon is kind of remote, sort of. It's in the middle part of Canada.

SL: Yep.

EB: If you know where that is. I . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: But it looked like a scene out of *Dr. Zhivago*. Man, the snow was real high. I loved it 'cause I love snow and that kind of weather. And right across the way from in front of that hotel was a Bierks Jewelry Company [*laughter*], but he spelled it different than I spell mine. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: I think it was *B-I-E-R-K-S* or somethin' . . .

SL: Right.

EB: . . . like that.

[03:07:07] SL: Well, you know what? Let's back off just a little bit about the—Ronnie and the Band and all that stuff. I wanna—so I'm not sure where we left you and your career goin'. You had a group here in town.

EB: Yeah, that was the Jesters.

SL: The Jesters.

EB: Right before I went to Vegas.

SL: Before you went to Vegas. Now . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: And Sonny Payne kinda helped you make a contact in Vegas.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: And did you take a group with you to Vegas, or did you just . . .

EB: No, I just did it all myself. I went out there to get—thinkin' somehow I might be able to get a break in—out there. I didn't know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But I did know Jack Perciful, who was Harry James's piano player, and I said, "If—maybe if I get to be buddies with him, he can lead me to this or that, you know."

SL: Yeah.

EB: Open another door here and yonder. But as it turned out, by that time, see, I was playing all of the old Ronnie Hawkins numbers. And I went out there and went to a music store, and my credit must've been good 'cause he let me have a Hammond organ.

SL: Yeah. That's pretty good credit.

EB: [*Laughter*] And to this day—Garheim Music was the name of that store, and the . . .

SL: The . . .

EB: . . . nicest guy in the world. And boy, if I needed a harmonica or a reed for my horn or somethin' like that or whatever I'd need, he'd just come by the store and, "Well, I'll just put that on your account." And I'd say, "Well, that's okay. I'll pay you for this." He said, "But don't forget your monthly note on the organ." And I said, "No, I'm not." [*Laughs*]

SL: So was that a B-3 or a Porta-B or . . .

EB: It was a C—and I forget the number that followed that, but it had no percussion.

SL: Okay. But it still had the Leslie unit.

EB: It had the great big old tall Leslie.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

[03:09:11] EB: Well, did you know that I did not know that who we played with in New York that started that sound that Jimmy Smith got, you know, on the B-3?

SL: Uh-huh.

EB: That was Jimmy Smith on the *Dynamo* album.

SL: Wow!

EB: Man, if I'd only known that back then. But the organ that I rented in Vegas . . .

SL: Vegas. Mh-hmm.

EB: . . . was the old—the real tall Leslie, and I just had one of 'em. I didn't have two of 'em . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . like Smith did. Well, he had the shorter version, I guess. But anyway, I finally talked Mr. Garheim into lettin' me trade down. "Let me give you this organ back, and I'll get this Wurlitzer electric piano." That's what Ray Charles used on "What'd I Say."

SL: Yep, yep. Mh-hmm.

[03:10:03] EB: And so that got me through out there, and then I played in a club in Vegas called Rico's Lounge. And they had a long grand piano, perfect tune, and the lady that played didn't sing, but she played beautifully and did all the sing-along stuff. And they'd all sit around her and sing all the songs.

SL: Yeah.

EB: "Walkin' through the park one day, in the very month of May," [*laughter*] and do all that kind of stuff, you know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And "You wore a tulip, a sweet yellow tulip, and I wore a big red rose." And then they'd request another song. She had all the words to the songs spread out on the piano bar. [*Laughs*] And people would come from the Strip after they got off work. And I

got to meet a lot of the pit bosses and singers in other shows and stuff. She became a good friend of mine, and she'd always call me up to sing. And somebody said, "Well, don't forget now"—they called her "Contessa."

SL: Okay.

[03:11:06] EB: And I can't even remember her real name, but she was beautiful. She was a graduate of Baylor in Texas, the music school there. And said, "You know," said, "Ed plays some piano, too." She said, "Is that right, Eddie?" She always called me Eddie. I said, "Well, I know a couple of Fats Domino numbers," and I didn't know if that'd go over in the sing-along session or not. So she said, "I'm takin' a break. You got it. You're on," she said. So I sat down and started playin' "The Night Time Is the Right Time" by Ray Charles and "Ramblin' Rose" by Nat King Cole and "Blueberry Hill" by Fats Domino, and one song after another like that would keep comin' to mind. And then I wound up doin' "What'd I Say" and, man, next thing I know, I had me a crowd goin', and I sat and played till four o'clock that next mornin'. [SL laughs] Whew! But it was fun, man, and I wasn't even on the payroll, see. Now if the union had found out about that, they've closed 'em down. But luckily, the guy who owned the place liked me, too, so—and he played violin. And I later

found out he was from St. Louis.

SL: So [*EB laughs*] that had to be really, a really good time.

EB: It really was. And boy, I got good write-ups in the Vegas paper. And I wish I could find that guy, his name was Phillip Jordan, who gave me two real good write-ups. Man, I couldn't've—man, it was just like I paid some promo guy to come in and do it. Talkin' bout the boy from Arkansas who—course, back then I worked for a finance company in the daytime, and they referred to me as the finance man, you know.

[03:12:54] SL: Uh-huh. [*Laughter*] So you were—you had a day job, and you were doin' the . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . music stuff at night.

EB: Yeah. That's right.

SL: And that's the way it was in Vegas, too, where you'd . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And my manager at the finance company was good enough to let me take off in the mornings and just come in in the afternoon at the finance [*laughs*] company.

SL: 'Cause you'd be up all night doin' the . . .

EB: Yeah. And then I got to where the—all the guys in the office

would come and listen to me, too. But that was a neat club, man. It had a fireplace.

[03:13:29] SL: So how long were you out there in Vegas?

EB: Almost three years. I went out there in [19]62 in July and came back in latter part of [19]64, so that's nearly three years.

SL: So I guess that's where you were when Kennedy got shot.

EB: I was there when Kennedy got shot, and Vegas went dark. I never will forget that. That's the only time I've ever seen Las Vegas with no lights. You know, normally, at nighttime, it's just as bright as it is in the daytime, but you walk downtown—here's the Fremont Hotel over here, and there's Wayne Newton performin' over there with his brother, Jerry. That's before he made it big.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And I got to meet his folks, and since I worked for the finance company, they had an account there, and they had me come out to their home and appraise their furniture to renew the loan that they had with us. So that wasn't a good experience.

SL: So but really, career stuff didn't really materialize out in Vegas, and so you come back . . .

EB: Well, it materialized because I was learning. I was in the learning process. I kept telling myself, "I am not ready to go

and really, you know, put on a four-hour show" or whatever, you know. I mean, there's a lot of single piano players that can do that, but they—in order to be able to do that, you gotta have a little experience . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . to be able to take somebody's money to pay you to do that, you know. Luckily, I can do that now.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And I've been doin' it for years. I did it all through St. Louis and all through Little Rock, and I'm still doin' it in Little Rock.

[03:15:10] SL: So you—so after Vegas, you came back to Helena?

EB: After Vegas, came back to Helena and helped Charlie Halbert with the Pot of Gold. And he put me bartendin'. Well, I had bartendin' experience in Vegas. I'd go on stage to play music at nine o'clock and work till two o'clock in the morning and get off and then go behind the bar and tend bar till ten o'clock the next morning. And I did that for about nearly a year. So I was workin' both things. I was gettin' my playin' experience, and one of the guys that played drums with me, he used to be Ray Charles's drummer. I said . . .

SL: That's a lick.

EB: . . . I said, "Lookie here, man! I'm in tall cotton now."

[Laughs]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: Billy Tolles.

SL: Now this was out in Vegas.

EB: In Vegas, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Yeah. Called the Rustic Inn. It was an old place that'd been out there, and you never knew who was gonna come in.

SL: Wow!

[03:16:11] EB: But it was—and an Italian guy from Jersey ran the place, and he liked me. I'm glad he did 'cause I think he had some Mafia connections. But . . .

SL: Most likely.

EB: Galardi. Must be—[laughs].

SL: Yeah. Huh.

EB: But I was just—I remember—course, back in those days, the Rat Pack was doin' their thing at—on the Strip, you know, and at the Sands.

[03:16:44] SL: Did you ever catch any of their acts?

EB: I should have, and I spank myself every time I think about it 'cause one of my good buddies who used to hang out at Rico's where I told you about where I was playin', my friend Contessa

was playin', and she'd always turn it over to me after she left. After her shift was over, she'd say, "Okay, Eddie. You're on," you know, and she'd leave for the night. And she was engaged to some guy who was from San Diego, but he lived in Vegas at that time. But anyway, they wound up gettin' married, and then I've often wondered whatever ever become of her because she was so nice to me, and she didn't have to do that, you know.

SL: Yeah.

EB: She could've, "Oh, we can't let you play cause you ain't in the union."

SL: Right.

EB: But I got another gig out there, if you know where the—what's that famous tower out there that—I guess it's still there.

BP: Luxor?

SL: What is it?

BP: The Luxor?

JE: No. It's the end of the Strip—the tall—it's the . . .

EB: Landmark tower. Landmark tower, which is at the—Paradise Road runs north and south. And as you leave the Stardust Hotel, that's—it runs right into it.

SL: Okay.

EB: And it—right there is where the Landmark tower is, and I got a—

I had some political connections, so I got in there even though I didn't belong to the union, but the union found out about it. So they picketed the place, and I [*SL sighs*] wasn't gonna charge the picket line, so I said, "Well, there goes that gig." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: But . . .

[03:18:21] SL: All right. So you end up back here in Helena and you . . .

EB: After I come—that's when I put the group together, the . . .

SL: The Jesters?

EB: Jesters was before I went to Vegas.

SL: Oh, okay.

EB: Then after Vegas was—after I worked over at the Pot of Gold with Charlie—and matter of fact, I played music there, too. And back in those days, Conway's bass player had quit Conway. [*Clears throat*] Great big old Joe Lewis. I don't know if you remember that name or not . . .

SL: Hm-mm.

EB: . . . but he was a famous member of Conway's band.

SL: M'kay.

[03:18:59] EB: Joe was from Newport, and he wanted me to come—me and him to get a band up together. We never did do that,

but anyway, I'd play there, and then I'd go behind the bar at Charlie's and tend bar for a while. And that went on for several months and then as—when I organized the little trio that I was tellin' you about a while ago after that called Eddie and the Storms.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

EB: And we did that for about a year. And Jimmy Luke comes to town. [*SL laughs*] And so we get together, and he's talkin'—he—by that—in those days, he's playing down in Midland, Texas, and wants to know if I would like to join him down there. And I—somethin' lit up in my mind. I said, "There's my opportunity, right there." I said, "I think I can play well enough to help Luke out a little bit, you know." So that's what—I went down there and, at the very start of 1966, and stayed with him throughout that whole year until I met up with these guys that I was tellin' you about earlier called the Eccentrics that had the hit . . .

SL: The hit "2525."

EB: . . . "In the Year 2525," which happened a lot later. But they came out, and I kept—I didn't even know who they were. They came out to see me in this little club that Luke and I were playing, and they got me on a break and told me they wanted me to come talk to them about playing with them. They had a

guy leaving, and so we discussed that very thoroughly, and so that's what led to me going with them. And so they explained to me where they were going next on their itinerary. They were headed up to Lincoln, Nebraska. So I got my ducks in order, and I took off to Lincoln, Nebraska, in an old [19]59 Oldsmobile that needed a lube job, and [*laughter*] the oil—the black smoke from the oil was pourin' out in back. It's a wonder I made it to Lincoln, but I did, pullin' a one-wheel trailer [*laughter*] with all my stuff in it. But I learned a lot from Luke, too, because he was a—he loved Floyd Cramer, and so I perfected the style of playing like Floyd.

SL: Not a bad style.

[03:21:24] EB: What—and after I got with the Eccentrics, Rick Evans told me, said, "I notice you play a lot of the Floyd Cramer licks." And he said, "Some of the songs we play, that's not gonna fit." I said, "Okay." So I had to watch myself so that I wouldn't, you know, play that da-doo-da-doo-da-doo-doo, like Floyd does.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And so I said, "Okay." So I—well, that was good training, too, knowin' when to do this and when not to do this.

SL: When to hold back and when to let go.

EB: To hold back, and he said, "If you're ever in doubt, just lay out."

[*Laughter*] I said, "That's good to know, too." [*Laughter*] But they hired me to do all the black music; the Ray Charles and the Fats Domino and Clarence Carter and James Brown and whoever else we could think of that had hits goin' back in those days.

SL: Yeah.

[03:22:16] EB: And I got to where the more I'd do that Ray Charles stuff, the more I sounded like him. And it worked out real well on that Wurlitzer electric 'cause that's what Ray Charles did "What'd I Say" on.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And they made 'em right over here in Mississippi. Did you know that?

SL: No, I didn't know that.

EB: Wurlitzer electric made right over here in Corinth, Mississippi.

SL: Gosh!

EB: [*Clears throat*] So yeah, we stayed together—I—with those guys, we—that's when I got Willard Jones up there. I kept tellin' the guy who owned where we were playing—and this was in St. Joe, Missouri. And for some reason, we got to talkin' about somebody that could play our breaks, and a little light [*snaps fingers*] went off in my head, and I said, "Well, wait a minute. I got a buddy that used to play with Ronnie Hawkins, and I might

be able to get him up here 'cause he's back home now." So sure enough, I found him, and he came right on up there, too.

[*Laughter*] And he stayed up there for, oh, I forget how many months he stayed up there, boy, and had a fine time. He'd play on our breaks. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[03:23:25] EB: And then I went with another group after the Eccentrics, and I named that group the Executive Suite.

SL: Okay.

EB: And we came on stage with a new outfit on each set. And this guy owned all the uniforms that I was wor—it was two bands who merged together. He—Bob Marriott had a band called the Continentals, and they broke up, and the band that I was with, Rick Evans, the Eccentrics, and they sort of disbanded and everything like this . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . after Rick went back with Zager.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So it worked out real fine because we had the same agent in Kansas City. And so he put us together, and the whole—so Willard heard—got to hear me play with the Executive Suite, and we'd take a break and go back in the dressin' room and change

clothes and come back with a new outfit on. Course, all the ladies liked that, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . sittin' in the audience and [*laughter*]*—*and that was when Martin Luther King was killed, that same year. That was [19]68 by that time, and then Bobby Kennedy right after that, not long after that.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Well, Willard was up there with me then in St. Joe when all of that was goin' on. So . . .

[03:24:56] SL: So how'd you end up in St. Louis?

EB: Well, after the ride was over with with the Eccentrics and the . . .

SL: Executive Suite.

EB: . . . Executive Suite, I had already played on one of our agent's bookin' tours, a club in Kansas City. Well, I knew a buddy of mine who played saxophone in St. Joe, and I came into the saxophone that was part of the Eccentrics group, which I didn't play while I was with them, but our bass player played a little sax. So when we were distributing the gear, I bought them out and picked up that saxophone and all of the mics and the amplifiers and speakers and all. We had two great big Voice of the Theater speakers . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . one on each side of the stage in St. Joe or everywhere we'd go play. They sent us on a USO tour to Thule, Greenland.

SL: Wow!

EB: I don't know if I told you that or not.

SL: No! Huh-uh.

[03:26:02] EB: That's when I first went with 'em. And I played a couple of clarinet numbers. You remember that old song that Acker Bilk used to play on the clarinet?

SL: Hm-mm.

EB: "Stranger on the Shore."

SL: Oh, okay. I know that—I've heard it.

EB: Beautiful song.

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: And I got that thing down pat, man. That got to be a crowd-pleaser. And old Rick started tryin' to criticize that, you know. "Well, uh-huh." Said, "That's not the symphonic tone." I said, "No, it's the Acker Bilk tone." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "That's what draws the people, so we're gonna keep doin' it if that's okay with you [*laughs*]"—unless you want me to leave."

[*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[03:26:38] EB: Now and, of course, I played keyboard and harmonica even then, too. But so we left there. We played this place called Robbie's Happy Corner in [*clears throat*] Lincoln, Nebraska, and this was the college kids' hangout. Well, we went over there, you know, and Rick was afraid we wouldn't go over. He wasn't sure. He was kinda like Ronnie in a lot of ways. He's one of these kinda guys that's not sentimental. He's not romantic. He's [*laughs*]*—*he doesn't have much pity on anybody. Not that he was a mean guy. I don't mean that. But he just had that kind of personality. Everything to him was . . .

SL: Business.

EB: Which I don't blame him. That's the way . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . that's what you have to do. But we got along, and so the agent booked us on the USO tour up in Thule, and went up there and played there for a month. And I got photographs of those wild foxes that would run loose in the snow up in there. And most of 'em are rabid, so they tell me. You know, I never did try to catch one, but boy, they were good-lookin', white and black foxes. Now I've got some of those pictures that I'm tryin' to run down.

SL: I—you know, I saw one of the white ones . . .

EB: Yeah, that's the . . .

SL: . . . on the dining table.

EB: And when I saw that, I said, "Now the rest of 'em gotta be here somewhere close," but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . but they weren't.

SL: Oh.

EB: I said [*laughs*]*—*but you know what? You know, Denmark owns Greenland.

SL: Kay.

[03:28:10] EB: And the United States, that's where they—that was their largest installation where they could track everything in the sky. And I got a private tour. Now I don't know why he picked on me, but this colonel who ran the base up there for the air force, he showed me stuff that ain't—nobody's supposed to have seen. I said, "This is unbelievable, man, you know." Here's this gigantic room, and there must have been two hundred computers, that many people at each computer, so we can see "everything that is in the sky. [*SL laughs*] Doesn't matter where. Doesn't matter where it come from or anything about it. And there's nothin' on this earth that can go that fast. You think we don't believe in UFOs? Man can't build what they can make

run that fast." And man, I was just spellbound. [*SL laughs*] I said, "Tell your story, brother. Tell it." [*Laughter*] But that was really, really an interesting tour. We played three different—well, we played the officers' club and the non-com club and the enlisted men's club. And they moved all our equipment each time, and you know . . .

SL: Gotta love that.

[03:29:25] EB: . . . there was four of us with a girl singer. Oh, we loved it, man and just—and the weather there would get up—it was in—sometimes the wind would blow a hundred miles an hour. They had it broken down into what they called phase one, phase two, and phase three, and if you were caught out in phase two or three, they had these—I called 'em snow buggies, but they were all enclosed. I mean, not like an open buggy, but I mean, they'd patrol the weather, and if anybody was out there, they'd get 'em, you know, bring 'em in.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Take 'em back to where they're supposed to be.

SL: That's interesting.

EB: And course, that's all tundra up there, and you had to be careful where you stepped cause you could fall through if there happened to be a hole there or a weak place in the tundra, and

boy, you could get lost and ?nobody? wouldn't hear from you again. So I didn't go outside too much. [*Laughter*]

SL: I wouldn't.

[03:30:22] EB: But that's when we—I took pictures of some foxes up there. And then they sent us in a helicopter to another base, which was—I forget what direction off of Thule. And if you remember the guy we were just talkin' about that owned the Library Club while ago?

SL: Dick Pool.

EB: Dickie Pool happened to be up there . . .

SL: No!

EB: . . . at that other station.

SL: Nah! [*EB laughs*] Unbelievable!

EB: Man, if you think Thule's remote, you should've seen where they had him. [*Laughs*] Well, back then I didn't know him. But we got to talkin' about this years later. [*Laughs*] I said, "You were there the same time I was." He said, "I remember when y'all came up there and played."

SL: Unbelievable!

[03:31:06] EB: And then they loaded us back up on the helicopter, and we flew back to Thule after the—we put on a little show for them 'cause they were so remote where Dickie was and the guys

who was with him. [*SL laughs*] It was a little outpost up there, you know. [*Laughter*] They couldn't get out. They couldn't go anywhere. They didn't have a commissary or—I don't guess.

They flew in their supplies to 'em, of course, but they had special duties of some kind that they needed 'em up there.

SL: Unbelievable.

EB: And on top of this great big—it wasn't quite a mountain, but it was a real tall hill, and course, everything was always ice-covered and snow-covered in Thule. And there were ten satellites in a row. I couldn't believe what I was seein'. Each one was a hundred yards long. Now you imagine ten of 'em in a row. That's how they saw whatever they wanted to see in the sky.

SL: You mean dishes?

EB: They were dishes, but they weren't round. They were rectangular.

SL: Okay.

EB: And I guess they were concave too, come to think of it. And they had 'em pointed up wherever they wanted 'em to be pointed. They served the same purpose as a dish, but they were not round; they were rectangular. But they logged in every—that's why they had so many guys up there in that big office that

manned each computer and write down every, ev—make notations of what time it came over, or if somethin' come back the other way, they'd put that down. If they could identify it, they'd put that down. If they couldn't identify it, they'd designate that, too. And I was just fascinated by all that information. Now why they let me in on all that stuff, man, I don't know. But I said, "I'm not tellin' anybody what I've seen," 'cause [*SL laughs*] I imagine that was a military secret of some kind.

SL: Yeah.

[03:33:03] EB: But that was quite an experience. So anyway, we enjoyed—and while I was there, I met this guy that used to play in the Glenn Miller Band, and he gave me one of his clarinets.

SL: No!

EB: He was a clarinet player. I've still got it. [*Laughter*]

SL: He must of liked the way you played.

EB: Well, I guess. I don't know, unless he was just tryin' to get rid of it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

EB: "Well, here comes a sucker. We'll let him have it."

SL: Oh yeah. [*EB laughs*] Well, so you had a really good USO tour in Greenland.

EB: That's right.

SL: I—you just would never imagine that [*EB laughs*] great things would happen in Greenland, but it sounds like it was just a really eye-opening experience and good response and run into Dickie Pool. I can't—it's just unbelievable how small a world it is.

EB: Next time I see Dickie, I'm gonna ask him the name of that outpost they had him up there. I said, "I bet you felt like you was in jail, didn't you?" He said, "Well, I was! I was!"

[03:34:04] SL: [*Laughter*] That sounds like him. Okay, so you get—you finish up that tour. Then what happens?

EB: Well, we came back to the States and flew in on Capital Airlines. I'll never forget that. And we thought that old plane was gonna shake itself to death fore we could make it back to shore, you know. [*Laughs*] But we—well, we drove to New Jersey carryin' our equipment and had two vehicles, I guess, back then. And when we got to Fort Dix, then they put all that stuff on the plane, and we flew out to Thule and, you know, came back and picked up our stuff and drove then back to Iowa. We opened in Waterloo for a New Year's Eve party.

[03:34:50] SL: And that's where you met your wife?

EB: No. I met her, let's see, I met her after I'd been with the Eccentrics. That's right. I met her in—let me see; let me see;

let me see. [*Sighs*] We came back from Thule, and we played in Waterloo. This was sixty—must've been [19]67, I guess, by that time. Then we played a couple of other places and then went to St. Joe after that. And when they got myself and Bob Marriott together, who had the Continentals, the agent sent us up to Sioux City. He had us playin' in two different places. He had us playin' in St. Joe; then we'd go to Sioux City. He sent us up there two or three times. But that's where I met her, in . . .

SL: At Sioux City.

EB: . . . Sioux City, yeah, 'cause she . . .

SL: And . . .

EB: . . . lived in—not far from there. Little town called Whiting.

SL: And what was her name again?

EB: Linda Baker.

SL: Linda Baker.

EB: So after I left that group, then I came back to St. Joe and got with my buddy who played the saxophone, and he said, "I think I can get us in with a group over there in Kansas City called MBs." That stands for Mother Blues.

SL: Kay.

EB: They were a good blues group. So they put us to playin' horns—twin horn—twin saxophones. Had a kid on the—an Indian kid on

the keyboard, and he did—he was a—did most of the singin'.  
Course, we had harmony . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . with him, too. And the drummer was from Oklahoma.  
Tulsa. Ed Tankersley. And by that time, it was [19]69, and he  
came in, bringin' that album *From the Big Pink*. He said, "Hey,  
Burks! Look what I found. This is that guy you been tellin' me  
about, *Big Pink*." That's before they named themselves the  
Band.

[03:37:23] SL: So what did you think when you put that on the  
stereo and listened to it?

EB: Well, I—that's when I started hearin' all those new songs, you  
know. That's before they had named themselves the Band.  
That came along a little bit later. But see, Woodstock had  
already been, so evidently it was right along in that time frame,  
but on the—on that album, they had done these songs, but they  
said, "We need to give ourselves a name, so then we'll just call it  
*Music from the Big Pink*," cause they lived in a pink house up  
there in Saugerties, New York.

SL: Yep.

EB: So anyway, I got to . . .

[03:38:16] SL: You know, a lot of people think that that album was

a game changer for rock and roll, that rock and roll was kind of—  
had lost its way a little bit and . . .

EB: Well, it could be.

SL: . . . had kinda got . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: You know, the . . .

EB: And I know I've . . .

SL: . . . kinda endless guitar solos . . .

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and all of a sudden, you know, the old two-and-a-half-  
minute . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . length on a record to be played on the radio had gone—you  
know, people were listenin' to "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," and  
[laughter] you know, it just wasn't, it wasn't the same and all—  
and when that album came out, you had characters, and you  
had stories, and you had melody, and you had choruses, and  
you had a ride, you know, and it was—I mean, it wasn't a  
strict . . .

EB: And a tuba.

SL: [Laughter] And a tuba. [Voice in background] That's right.

EB: Bom-pah, bom-pah, bom-pah, bom-pah-bom.

[03:39:13] SL: You know, it's interesting. Those guys had—even back when they were visiting here before they became the Band, you had a piano player, and you had an organ player.

EB: Oh yeah. That's right.

SL: Had two keyboards.

EB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: And really, you had more than that because he played a Lowrey, didn't he? Was he travelin' around with a Lowrey?

EB: Who, Garth?

SL: Garth? Yeah, I mean . . .

EB: You know, I don't remember that. See, when I first met him, like I told you, playin' here at the Catholic Club . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and I—course, they had a piano, but I don't remember an organ. See, Garth also played a little saxophone, as best I remember, didn't he?

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

EB: Yeah. And he and Manuel, I guess, might've swapped off on the piano or somethin' from time to time.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I don't know how they handled all that. I didn't notice all that detail when I was up there sittin' in with 'em. But the guy that

was with me that night who was part of my trio was C. W. Gatlin. He's a guitar player. And C. W. lives here now. Well, he always has lived here. But he's just back recently from a visit with Lavon up in New York. And they drove on up from Lavon's house up into Canada and did a concert at the same place Ronnie cut his birthday bash when he turned sixty. Massey, Massey Hall . . .

SL: Massey Hall. Okay.

EB: . . . in Toronto.

[03:41:06] SL: Well, okay. So you—you're—are you in Iowa City when you hear *Big Pink*?

EB: No, I was in Kansas City.

SL: Kansas City. Okay.

EB: Yeah, that—so I—now it was his album. He didn't give it to me.

SL: Right.

EB: I just took note of all the stuff that—he was reiterating all the stuff I had been telling him . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . 'cause he'd never heard of Levon Helm, never heard of any of those guys. And he said, "This is what you been tellin' me about." I said, "See? [*SL laughs*] See there? Listen to me, won't you now, from now on, won't you?" [*Laughs*] He was a

good drummer, but he was certainly different. Fine blues drummer and all that but . . .

SL: Didn't have the shuffle.

EB: Well, we did some shuffle stuff. Yeah, we . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . we did "Crosscut Saw" and blues tunes that had the double shuffle to 'em.

SL: Yeah.

[03:42:05] EB: Now Jerry Nolan, the guy that I had with me when I had Eddie and the Storms, us three guys, now he'd play with two bass drums, and [*thumping noises*] you couldn't wear him out. Man, he loved the double shuffle. You could play it every number, all night long. [*SL laughs*] Ta-doo, ta-doo, ta-doo, ta-doo, ta-doo-doo. "Come on, man. Let's play it." And he'd get to goin' like this, ba-ding, ba-ding, ch-ch-ch-ting, ch-ch-ch-ting. [*SL laughs*] Boy, he had it down, too, and you couldn't wear him out. I've never seen nothin' like it. I've only seen one other guy that come close to that. It was Dave Trupp. He's playing drums on "2525," and he's from Lincoln, Nebraska. And he found out I knew Levon, and boy, he used to follow me around like a little puppy dog 'cause—just 'cause I knew Levon. [*Laughs*]

[03:42:48] SL: Well, I can . . .

EB: Great guy. Great guy.

SL: A lot of drummers feel that way about Lavon. They . . .

EB: I know it.

SL: . . . they really . . .

EB: And even back then, I sa—and I said, "He's got to be the greatest rock drummer alive today or at least one of 'em." He was in the—I got him in the top five, anyhow.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And when he played down here at the—long time ago—what year was that—at one of the first festivals they had here, blues festival, and so I was playing in Little Rock that time. I couldn't get off to come down here, but I sent my son down with C. W.'s wife and so she—that's how he met Levon. They set him up. Course, he was just a kid then. This was back in [19]85 or [19]86, somewhere along in there. And he said, "Yeah, Dad. He's a great drummer." And I said, "I wish I could play like that." [*Laughs*]

[03:43:45] SL: All right. So back to meeting Linda, and I guess y'all were married pretty quick. Is that . . .

EB: Well, we, yeah, we got married in the early part of [19]70. And then I went back with Ronnie in [19]70 but she—I took her to

her mother's house, mother and dad's house, while—and then I took a flight from there up to Canada to see what all I could accomplish with Ronnie. I already had it worked out with him how—what the possibilities might be. And he said, "Well, come on up, and we'll talk about it." And he—the idea was then to form a group behind me, and he had agent connections up there where he could place me with. So that's how it worked out. But we were playing in western Canada back then, Edmonton, Alberta.

SL: And so you mainly were keyboards for him then or . . .

EB: Well, back then when I went up there, he just had me get up on stage with him and play a few harp numbers.

SL: Oh, okay.

EB: And that's when he had David Foster.

SL: Yeah.

EB: David was drivin' our bus. [*SL laughs*] He was like a recluse, man. He—I think he's shy by nature a little bit.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Ronnie told me, he said, "This kid's a genius." Said, "He's goin' places." And he was not wrong.

SL: Yeah.

[03:45:18] EB: I saw David the other night on TV. He was backin'

up that little girl that—little old bitty girl about twelve years old that has a monster voice.

SL: Yeah. I don't know that, but I know who you're talkin' about.

EB: She is somethin' else. Oh, [*laughs*] man. But that's the most TV exposure I've seen of David . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . because it showed him—of course, he had the piano, and they had a big orchestra backin' 'em up, you know, and all that. And then he visited with her on a break. And that's all available on PBS or . . .

SL: I'll have to look that . . .

EB: And so, you know, back when Ronnie got sick and had that pancreatic condition . . .

SL: Yep.

EB: . . . and everybody thought he was not long for this world . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . David came to see him in Toronto. [*Clears throat*] And Bill Clinton went up there and George Eldridge and . . .

SL: Don Tyson.

EB: . . . and I believe Don went up there and . . .

SL: Yeah. Who else was in that?

EB: Somebody said Whoopi Goldberg went up there.

SL: That may be true, and wasn't the president of Sony Records there, too, I think, and . . .

EB: Could be.

SL: Paul Berry go up on that one, too?

EB: Paul, I'm sure, was there.

SL: Spook?

EB: And . . .

SL: Probably Dasher.

EB: I'm not sure about Dash. Ronnie's funny about Dash sometimes.

SL: Oh, he is? [*Laughter*]

EB: Said, "You gotta watch Dash. He never picks up a tab."  
[*Laughter*]

SL: Okay. I'll tell him that next time I see him. [*Laughter*]

[03:47:00] EB: I think Dash has figured it out by now. [*Laughter*]  
But you know, that tape that Ronnie did—I don't know if you've seen it or not. When we played the Cajun's Wharf in Little Rock and had the Canadian film crew come down and filmed us doin' that. And I—he didn't know that that had been released in the States 'cause he had to sign an agreement with—oh, what's his name? The guy that owned the—Bruce Anderson. He owned the Cajun's Wharf. That Ronnie could have rights to it in Canada

but not the United States. Well, guess what? When Ronnie was down here visitin' me in 1998 when we played on the boat I was tellin' you about . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . at the blues festival, guess where that tape showed up at? Down here in Bubba Sullivan's record shop right down here at the corner. But that's how it got to me. I said, "Mh-hmm. And all this time Ronnie told—he told me that that wasn't goin' to be in the States." I said, "Guess who's got it?" [*Laughs*] So he sent his wife down to pick up a copy. [*Laughs*] So Wanda went down there and got it—one for them. But I was surprised Ronnie didn't say anything else about that like that. But there's some good stuff on there, and we had Stan come down and play with us.

SL: Now that's a loss. Stan's gone.

EB: Well, yeah, he's with us on that session . . .

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

EB: . . . at the Cajun's Wharf. Nicest guy in the world.

SL: Nicest guy in the world.

[03:48:43] EB: And speaking of Stan, when I was playing in Little Rock a couple of years ago, there was a troupe of players that came in to put on the Johnny Cash show at Robinson Auditorium

in Little Rock.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Well, one of the players in that group was from Buffalo, where Stan's from.

SL: That's right.

EB: Well, they all came in where I was playing at a place called Easy Street.

SL: Okay.

EB: It was the name of the little club. And I was playin' on the grand piano. And I had—they just happened to come in on the night I played. I played there every Tuesday night back then. And this guy kept lookin' at me, and he had that—like, I'd be on the stage like this. Well, then, off out there was a row of seats next to the wall like that, you know, with a table here and a table there and a table there, all the way down the line. Well, there was a bunch of those folks in the same bunch, and I figured, "Well, they all must know each other or somethin', but here they are." And so this one guy, after I'd played several songs, he comes up to me, and he says, "Man." He said, "You sound like a friend of mine." [SL laughs] I said, "Where you from?" He said, "Buffalo, New York." [Laughter] And I says, "You can't be [laughs]—you're talkin' about—what's his name, Stan Szelest?" And his mouth

dropped open, and he says, "How did you know?" [*Laughter*]  
Yeah, Ronnie Hawkins, Stan Szelest, Levon Helm. And boy, we  
just [*laughs*] shook hands like it was old home week, you know,  
right there.

SL: Yeah.

[03:50:26] EB: His name was—his last name is Yeomans, and he  
played with Stan sometime in Buffalo. He was part of Stan's  
group that Stan had in Buffalo . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

EB: . . . when he'd come to Buffalo. So he gave—he saw to it that I  
got tickets to go to their show at the Robinson Auditorium and  
told the managers to expect me and what my name was and la-  
dee-da-dee-da. They gave me that good seat. It was okay of a  
seat. It was way up. It could've been closer to the stage, I  
thought, but you know, don't look a gift horse . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . in the mouth. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, yeah.

[03:51:05] EB: So they called my name out from the stage after  
they put on their show and—going into their last set. And it was  
a good performance, but they did all the Johnny Cash songs,  
even though nobody sounded like Johnny Cash. But, oh, I guess

whoever was doin' the singing part sounded, you know, enough like him to where you knew . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . get the connection. But anyway, he signed my program book, and I still have that. His last name is Yeomans, and I can't think of his first name. Steve, was it? Now it didn't have an unusual name. But they did put on a good show, and they said they—everybody had to audition [*clears throat*] for the . . .

SL: Each part.

EB: Yeah, in New York, for all that, you know. It was like a Broadway show-type program, which made it a little schmaltzy, I thought, but . . .

SL: Well, theater.

EB: . . . what else can you do, you know . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

EB: . . . if you're gonna sing like this, la-la-dee-dah, you know. [*SL laughs*] Each and every one of 'em didn't sound exactly like that, but they didn't sing like this here, neither, "My name's Johnny Cash," you know. [*SL laughs*] Nobody sang like that. [*Laughter*] But he played some good guitar, Yeomans did. And I've often wondered what happened to him.

SL: Well, that's really pretty warming that he could see Stan in your

work, you know, or that he could see the influence of . . .

[03:52:42] EB: Well, that's what I wondered about. I mean, you know, Stan can play rings around me, but it's strange. I played a piece that—it's on my album, too, that—I'll give you a copy of that album . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . that I did with Phillip. But I'm playing a tune called "After Hours" on there, which is an old blues instrumental. And I didn't know Stan played that, but that's what got Yeomans's attention. He came up to me on the . . .

SL: Ah.

EB: . . . bandstand and said—well, after I had played it, and that's when he told me I reminded him of a friend of his from Buffalo, New York. [*Laughs*]

SL: Similar tastes. You know, I mean . . .

EB: I guess, but . . .

SL: . . . you and Stan, you know, hear the same things.

[03:53:26] EB: . . . but I'm sure if Stan played it, he would embellish it a lot more than what I did. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, yeah. Yeah, there's no question about that. Yeah.

EB: And I was still tryin' to figure out some of the ways—some of the way he formed his chords. I don't know who taught him, but

man, he's . . .

SL: Somethin' else. Nothin' like it.

EB: . . . he's got to be—and I'll tell you somebody else who reminds me of Stan is in the Rolling Stones band, his keyboard player. What is—what's his name?

BP: Oh, well . . .

SL: Well, you're not . . .

BP: Played with 'em for years, forever, decades. Oh . . .

SL: I can't think of it.

EB: But I heard him play one time with the Stones, and I, for some reason, I don't care a whole lot for the Stones, but I don't mean that in a negative manner. I mean, you know, you—everybody don't like vanilla ice cream either, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . it's a hot seller, right? [*Laughs*]

SL: Right. Right.

EB: But whatever that guy's name is, now, he reminded me of the way Stan played. I said, "Now there is somebody else that sounds kinda like Stan." And I should've chastised—what's their leader's name?

SL: Mick.

EB: Mick Jagger, 'cause they introduced all the people in the band,

and it was like, "Oh yeah. And here's so-and-so on the keyboard."

SL: Well . . .

EB: And I . . .

SL: . . . yeah, that's . . .

EB: . . . "Oh man!"

SL: . . . that's Mick and Richard.

EB: Shh!

SL: Yeah.

EB: I said, "Man, this guy knows so much music that he ought to be teachin' you how to play that guitar better than you do."

SL: Yeah.

[03:55:05] EB: [*Laughs*] They played in Little Rock here five or six years ago, Stones did.

SL: Yeah. I'm tryin' to think. I think I came to that gig. I'm not—I think I was—I think I watched that.

EB: Yeah. I didn't see it.

SL: Or maybe it was Memphis. May've . . .

EB: Yeah, that—they did go to Memphis, I think . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . after that.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I believe that's right.

[03:55:26] SL: Yeah. Okay, so you've mentioned your son. Now what's your son's name?

EB: Daron. *D-A-R-O-N*.

SL: And so he came along about a year or so after you got married and . . .

EB: Yeah. Yeah. He came along in late [19]70.

SL: And what's ever become of him? What's his story?

EB: Well, he—when his mother and I parted ways, why, I was tryin' to figure out a way to see to it that—you know, she decided to go the women's lib route, you know, and what I didn't think much of back then, and I said, "Okay. Here's one more family tryin' to—gonna break up, you gonna fool with that stuff," which actually happened, but nobody thought anything about it as time went on by. But now, I got some legal things straight, and I got him, got legal custody, and she went her way, and I went mine. And so I raised him in St. Louis. And you know, a lot of folks don't care about their kids as much I think they should, but, I mean, who am I to say? I mean, I'm responsible for what I think and for what I feel, so that's—now I'm glad it turned out the way it did. So anyway, he's in the culinary field, and he's doin' good.

SL: All right.

[03:57:20] EB: And he plays drums, and he's played with me on a few gigs.

SL: That's . . .

EB: He's not fancy, but he . . .

SL: Well, you don't need fancy on the drums.

EB: . . . he keeps it just like a metronome. And he—and one night we were playing in the hotel in Little Rock, and he says, "Now Dad, I tend to rush sometimes." [*SL laughs*] I said, "Okay, Daron." I nodded my head at him and then, "Now you've—now you got it." [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, that's gotta be great, that you could—that your relationship is strong enough to where y'all could play together. That's really good.

EB: Yeah. He took clarinet lessons when he was in the second grade, I think, but he didn't stick with that. And then he took violin for a while, and that was the Suzuki method, I think they call it. But he didn't stick to that either. But the closest thing that he really likes is drums. And I said, "Well, we can always cook and play drums and keyboard together," I said. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's right.

EB: Yeah.

SL: That's right.

EB: We got it going on.

[03:58:24] SL: Well, where is he now?

EB: St. Louis.

SL: St. Louis.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: He stuck in St. Louis.

EB: That's a great town. Now . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . sometimes I wish I was back in St. Louis.

SL: Well, we've—I've known people that've lived in St. Louis, and they loved it.

EB: Yeah. I worked steady there for thirteen years. Played all over St. Louis. Played in all the key places.

SL: And raised a kid.

EB: Mh-hmm. Yeah, I got . . .

SL: That's strong, Ed. That's really strong.

EB: . . . I got very fortunate. I found a lady, and even though I'm not Catholic, I found a lady in the Catholic Church that referred me to a lady who had a young son, and she would keep him while I went to work at night. And later I'd pick him up after I got off, and we'd come back home to our house. And so it

worked out okay. And then I'd get him off to school the next day, by the next—yeah, the next.

[03:59:23] SL: Well, okay. I didn't wanna put you through all this and not know a little bit more about your family life, so I'm glad that we got that in. It—so he's still—is he single, or did he . . .

EB: He's still single, and course, he's got the gals after him. He's tall. He's about six two, thin, and he can eat a—I don't know how he can do it, but some people are like that. They can eat and never gain an ounce.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And he's always been like that.

SL: High metabolism.

EB: Mh-hmm. He's brown-eyed, and his hair is not just fiery red, but it's sort of reddish brown, I guess. Lot of ways he looks my dad when Dad was young like that. Even though my dad was not quite as tall as I am, but people used to call him "Red" [*laughs*] when he had all his color still in his hair. And . . .

[04:00:31] SL: So all right, now where were we? We're gonna—I wanna get back to where we were before we started talkin' about family stuff. You had—you were still—I think you were still in Kansas City. I—did we get you to St. Louis? I'm not sure we got you to St. Louis. Did we . . .

EB: Yes. Yeah, when—let me see. When I was in Canada . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and my son was—he wasn't even out of the crib. He was—I was in this place north of Edmonton that I was tellin' you about.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Well, I had an apartment in Edmonton, and so when I got back from the Peter Pond Hotel, which was up the road, came back to Edmonton, and then Daron was born in Edmonton. And so after he was born, then we still—my agent still booked me in different places, for instance, Saskatoon. I told you about that.

SL: Seein' the train. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: And a couple other places I played over there, and then I got a call from St. Louis with a guy that I used to play with before I went to Canada in 1970. That was another group that was called the Newcomers. And there was three of those guys. They had been called the Par Three 'cause they loved golf. [*SL laughs*] And they hired good old Ed to play with 'em because [*laughs*] I'd be the fourth man. They says, "Now we gotta change our name." [*SL laughs*] We couldn't . . .

SL: To the Foresome.

EB: . . . "be called the Par Three." [*Laughter*] So . . .

SL: You had to be the Foresome.

EB: So [*laughter*]—"Fore!" Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[04:02:30] EB: So we called ourselves the Newcomers.

SL: Okay.

EB: And we played all over Missouri and Dallas, Texas, and we even went to Phoenix to the home office of Ramada Inns. And then came back through Houston and Dallas and played each one of those places a couple of times each and so forth and so on. And we had a fantastic little drummer with us. After I left them, I went with another group with a girl singer who's probably the most dynamic female singer I've ever seen. Her name's Peggy Chappell from—she's from little—from hot—from St. Louis. And her husband played guitar, but he didn't have a rock-and-roll voice. Now can't you imagine somebody singin', "Left a good job in the city [*SL laughs*], workin' for the man every night and day." [*SL laughs*] You know, his voice was like that on every song he'd sing, and he got away with it. And I still don't know [*voices in background*]—I don't mean to put him down 'cause Johnny was the best guy in the world. [*Laughs*] But it just . . .

[04:03:45] SL: He wasn't a rock-and-roll singer.

EB: . . . doesn't fit. And . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . but the audience didn't complain, so I guess it was all right.

SL: Yeah. [*EB laughs*] Or maybe they just weren't paying attention.

EB: But she was unbelievable, man. She had all the stage gestures, and she had a voice like Barbra Streisand, if not a little more warm-sounding than Streisand. A lot of power. Good-looking, man. Guys'd just be sittin' there with their tongues hangin' out in [*SL laughs*]*—*at this club where we played in Dallas. And our drummer, his name was Vincent Dee, and I've often wondered what ever happened to Vince. He got an offer to go with—what's the famous trumpet player's name that . . .

SL: Al Hirt?

EB: No. Older than that.

SL: Older than that?

EB: Al Hirt's a young guy compared this guy I'm tryin' to think of. He did "Tenderly."

SL: Oh! [*Claps hands*] Oh man, you're hurtin' me again.

JE: Dizzy Gillespie?

SL: Dizzy Gillepsie? No.

EB: No, that's jazz. This guy was a—he was a . . .

SL: Oh! Old—but older than Al Hirt.

EB: Well, Al's not much older than I am.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I don't guess. [*SL laughs*] Unless ?his boy? lied to me.

[*Laughs*]

SL: Tryin' to think. You know what? Let's stop the tape here.

[Tape stopped]

[04:05:15] SL: All right, buddy, we're on tape five now. [*EB whistles*] Startin' on our fifth hour here. You doin' all right?

EB: Well, what'd you say? [*Laughter*]

SL: All right. So I wanna get us—you spend thirteen years in St. Louis.

EB: Thereabouts.

SL: Is that right?

EB: So close to thirteen years, might as well say thirteen years.

SL: And now so at the end of thirteen years, are you tellin' me you go back up to Canada and get with Ronnie?

EB: Well, yes. That's right. Let's see. Let's go back just a hair.

SL: Okay.

EB: When I'm playin' with the Newcomers, and in fact, I got married when I was with them. And we go to Phoenix, Arizona, and come back to Houston and Dallas. And they decide that they want to go back to three instead of four members, so I went with another band called the Johnny Chappell Review. His wife's name was Peggy. She's the one—the fantastic singer I was

tellin' you about.

SL: Kay.

[04:06:36] EB: But we played the same places that I did with the Newcomers, pretty much. We played Dallas and Houston, but we didn't go to Phoenix with that outfit. And our—the drummer that I was tellin' you about that was so fantastic, he was like another Buddy Rich, and I couldn't believe it 'cause he was just a little short guy, too. And Ray Anthony offered him a deal to go with him, so that's what he did. So that left us without a drummer, so we had to find somebody from the union. That's when they picked up somebody out of the union that—he just as well not even been there. I don't even know who he was. But this all happened in Dallas, Texas, and so that's when I saw that things were goin' downhill with that group. So I picked up the phone and called Ronnie and told him that I was runnin' into a stump down [*laughs*] here in Dallas, and so we talked about me comin' up there with him. So that's what caused me to go to Canada, and so that's what I did.

[04:07:56] SL: You know, you're talkin' about the union drummer, and you're talkin' about how the union picketed the place that you had been playin' that was a union shop.

EB: Mh-hmm.

SL: Why did you not just join the union when you were in Vegas?

EB: Well, I—okay, I belonged in Arkansas, back in—as far back as [19]58 or [19]59, right along in there. Back when Dayton and I were . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: But I thought, "Well, there's enough places to play"—I found this out when I got to Vegas. "There's enough places to play that didn't have anything to do with the union." So I didn't put my card in. I didn't tell 'em I already belonged. If I—they have a rule that says if they accept you as a member, you have to—they freeze you for ninety days. You can't play for ninety days.

SL: 'Cause you're from out of town.

EB: No, it doesn't matter.

SL: Oh.

EB: It's because you're a new member.

SL: Oh.

EB: So all new members come in, they take the first three months off.

[04:09:02] SL: You mean in that local union?

EB: In that local—yeah.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

EB: Now you can play somewhere else, but you can't play in Vegas.

SL: Right.

EB: So that's what I was tryin' to do. I figured, "Well, I don't want to run into any of that." And this political connection I had I thought could get me over that hump. He was a nephew of a strong US senator. In fact, he used to be Harry Truman's chauffeur at one time.

SL: M'kay.

EB: And he had all kind of connections. That's another long story. I ain't gonna get into it here but—so he's the one that got me that job in the Landmark . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . tower. And the union got word of it somehow. I don't know whether they—you know, they got ways of findin' out things.

SL: Sure.

EB: Now these guys ain't gonna mess with you. They come break your arm and throw your stuff in the river, you know.

SL: Right.

EB: So I didn't want that—I did not dare invade that picket or try to cross the picket line, anything like that. I just turned around and went back [*laughs*] and didn't ever go back. But I played there for about a month, I guess.

[04:10:10] SL: Okay, so you give Ronnie a call. You're down in

Dallas, Texas . . .

EB: And he said . . .

SL: . . . or somewhere in Texas and . . .

EB: . . . he said, "Well, come on up." Yeah, I was down in Dallas.

SL: Okay.

EB: And says, "If they let my man, Vincent Dee, go"—or he just—he left. He [*laughs*]*—*they didn't fire him. He left the band to go with Ray Anthony.

SL: Yeah. Can't blame him.

EB: And—well, in a way I did, in a way I didn't. Ray Anthony came in to see us in another club where we were playin', and that's how I met Ray Anthony. He was a little, short guy. A little, short trumpet player. So by the time I got to Canada—and like I said, I dropped my wife off in her hometown, and then I flew on to meet Ronnie up in Edmonton. And then after I did what I did up there as a single act and went through Saskatoon and a couple of other places—I need to think of the name of, and I can't think of the name of 'em. So I got word from my buddy that I had played with in the Newcomers that he has opened up a new deal for us and he's waitin' on me to come back and be part of it in St. Louis. And he called me three or four times and talked—and finally talked me into it. And I said, "Man, I got a

brand new baby, and here I am up here in the freezin' cold north country," and da-dee-da-dee-da. And he said, "Don't matter. Get on a—whatever you gotta do, and come on down, and it's a good deal." He told me what kind of money we'd make and all that, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . I could stay with him till I got settled and had—it'll be there for us as long as we can hold it. So we shift all our stuff back down to [*laughs*] my mother-in-law's house.

SL: Yeah.

[04:12:15] EB: And got Daron and got him a brand new bundle of clothes so he wouldn't get cold in that weather up there in case we got in places where he'd—it's best to be as warm as you can when you go that far north.

SL: Yeah.

EB: [*Sniffs*] And it was so cold that our luggage froze on the plane comin' from Calgary to Sioux City. [*Laughs*] And so that delayed us a little bit, but the airport made it good. They—if I hadn't've had Daron with me, I don't know. They [*laughs*] . . .

SL: Yeah. They probably wouldn't've cared.

EB: They wouldn't've cared, probably.

SL: Yeah.

[04:12:48] EB: So we made it on back down to my mother-in-law's house and spent a day or two with them, and that's the first time they'd seen Daron, of course. So then we—I had a good car back then, and so we drove back down to St. Louis to meet Mike, the guy who'd called me. And so, sure enough, we got to the club. I said, "Man, you mean we're playin' here?" And it was a gigantic place. It was called the Red Carpet Inn. And some local construction guys, they owned the company. They had built this monstrosity of a place. And the name of our band was called the Four Easy Pieces. [SL laughs] You remember the movie that came . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . out, *Five Easy Pieces*?

SL: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

EB: [Laughs] So it was the Four Easy Pieces. It was me and Mike and the cons—and the builder's nephew, and the drummer's name was Mike also. So I had my electric piano, and I had it on long legs where I could stand up and play it. And Mike played guitar. But he wasn't a blues player, but he was just a well-rounded player, you know. He'd—every song . . .

SL: Utility guy.

[04:14:12] EB: Yeah. He could play the right chords at the right

time, and he didn't do much improvising but—and he was from Enid, Oklahoma. Mike Lee was his name. So we played there about six months, and this is a place where you go in, and it's down—you have to go downstairs to get to this particular room where they had the bands play on a stage of, oh, about this—the riser was about this high [uses hands to suggest a height of about one foot]. But then once you get off the riser, then you gotta step down two or three more steps to go down to this long expanse where there was a Olympic-size swimmin' pool there . . .

SL: Wow!

EB: . . . if you can imagine that. [*Laughs*] Can you imagine the drunks tearin' their clothes off at midnight and jumpin' in the pool and stuff like that? That went on. [*Laughter*] And sometimes it was so crowded in that place, we couldn't even get offstage.

SL: Hot.

[04:15:16] EB: That was back in the day when you wore bell-bottom trousers . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and fuzzy vests and walkin' suits and all that and with scarves around your neck and stuff like that, like—back in those

days, that's—that was the—especially musicians would dress that way. And the guy that ran the club really liked us, man, and we stayed there and stayed there and stayed there. But there was dissention between a couple of the players and so forth and so on, and it grew and grew until it got so bad that a couple of 'em—one of 'em said, "Well, if Ed'll stay here, I'll stay, but if he don't," said, "we're leavin'." So it came down to me gonna quit, too, 'cause I had an offer from another group that was called the Four Score. And the room where we were was called the Malachi Room, and they served a big old drink about this big around [uses hands to suggest a width of about six inches] called mai tais, and you could share 'em with your girlfriend or whoever you had with you.

SL: Yeah.

EB: She had a straw, and you had a straw, right? And it was [laughs]—that was the most popular drink in the joint, and it was probably the most expensive, I guess. But that was a successful venture in that place. And upstairs they had a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful dining room and cocktail lounge upstairs. And you just—the—it just kept on rambling. It just went—I don't know how many rooms it had. It was a motel—it was a hotel on top of all that. Anyway, played there until I went

on the road with the Four Score, and that's when we went to St. Paul and Milwaukee and—what's that town in South Dakota? Aberdeen. Aberdeen [*laughs*], South Dakota. And then we came back to St. Louis and played at the place called the Singing Sword, and that later became under another name, and so they called it whatever that was after that. And so now I'm playin' steady all this time, even though I'm goin' from doin' a single act to another group and leavin' that group and goin' to another group and makin' all these changes, and we're still doin' fine. And so after I left the Four Easy Pieces and went with the Four Score, and then I decided to go back to St. Louis and do a single act again.

SL: Kay.

[04:18:06] EB: And the guy that owned that was named Don Breckenridge, and he had—the name of that place, it was a big old ten- or twelve-story-high high-rise, it was called the Breckenridge Motor Lodge. Well, I had played there before with the Newcomers. And so tha—I got book—I knew the guy who managed the lounge, so he let me play in there as a single act. So I played there for about a year, I guess, until it changed over into 1971. He said, "Well, we're gonna have to—we just—the owner says we're gonna have to close down and not have any

more entertainment." And so it worked out okay because I had just got an offer from the room where I'd been playin', in the Malachi Room. They found out I was back in town, and they said, "We want you to come back and play in our lounge upstairs." I said, "Lookee here." [*Laughs*] So I took him up on it.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So it—I was lucky like that, you know. Just like a frog from one lily pod—lily pad to another, man! [*Laughs*] I'd just keep . . .

SL: One door closed; another one opens.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

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

SL: Yeah.

[04:19:36] EB: So doin' all this, and I had a baby along on the trip, too, you know. And but it was workin' out fine. And so went from there and played—and during the time I was playing in that room, the owner came to me, and he says, "Ed, guess what? I want you to see this now," because I'd been playing a spinet piano when I first got there. He says, "Guess what we've got for you? We're renovating the lounge, and a special shipment from New York City's come in. Here's a Knabe eight-foot grand piano

for you to play on." And my mouth dropped open like this, you know [acts astonished], and I sat down to play it, and it sounded about like that thing over there [gestures to his left]. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh!

EB: I said, "I am leavin'!" [*Laughs*] But I finally got used to playin' on it, and they did, you know, attempt to tune it from time to time. And I did that in the afternoon, and then I went over across the river and played Belleville, Illinois, in a place called Diamond Lil's and played there at night for a month. And then—so between those two jobs, man, I was doin' all right, you know, 'cause the apartment wasn't all that expensive that I had then.

SL: Yeah.

[04:21:03] EB: So let's see, where'd I go after that? I left—after that thing in Belleville didn't exist anymore, then I just got on the phone and started callin' other places and got booked in a place called Three Flags, and I played there for quite a while. And while I was there, Ray Charles came in to the big room. I said, "Lookee here. My man's comin'." [*Laughter*] Well, I had written some songs and had made a recording of those songs, and I had a buddy who was—he didn't really know Ray, but he had a roundabout connection to him. And we carried those songs over to Nashville and aired 'em with Fred Carter, and Fred

says, "You've got about four songs here that I think are hits."  
So that left eight more that he didn't think might not—he said,  
"Now that's just my opinion." So he told me who to go see, and  
he said, "If you'll call on Mr. So-and-so over at Hickory Records,  
that'd be a good place to start." And then he told me to go see  
a couple other places, so I made the rounds. And you know how  
you used to hear these stories about "Don't go to Nashville  
'cause nobody'll see you?"

SL: Yeah.

EB: Well, everybody saw me. And every place I called on, I had a  
three-piece suit on, and I didn't smoke or drink or take dope or  
nothin' like that, so they must've thought I was [*laughs*] a  
different breed of cat, I guess.

SL: Yeah.

[04:22:45] EB: "Here comes a clean guy, you know, and we're not—  
we're—they"—I don't know. But I made the rounds and got two  
offers to sign with a couple of different labels, which I took that  
information back to my attorney in St. Louis. He said, "Well, I  
advise you not to sign with either of these outfits." He said,  
"Read this fine print down here." Said, "They can call on you at  
any time to make you come up with money that they're not  
gonna fund, and if they decide not to fund it, why, they can

make—they can hit you up." So I didn't sign with 'em. [*Laughs*]  
But anyway, I . . .

[04:23:28] SL: So Ray Charles is comin' into the big room.

EB: Ray Charles comin' into the big room.

SL: And you got a couple of tunes that you wanna try to get to him.

EB: So my black buddy who helped me on the session where I recorded these songs—I'm playing all of the parts except for the drums and the guitar and the bass on those songs that I wrote, and I think there was twelve of 'em. Anyway, we got all that stuff packaged up and made a little, you know, a nice—it was a demo, of course. I think I spent about three grand of my own money on that project. But when we got to see Ray, I handed the—my tape off to his road manager, and he said he'd see to it that Ray got it. Well, I got to thinkin' about all that, so after the show I went down—of course, I knew where the dressing rooms were, and I hung around there till Ray came out. And my buddy went with me, and he, like I say, he didn't know Ray, but he knew Ike and Tina. And there's a picture on him on an album that they did and—with his picture on it with Tina. And so—his name was Sid Wallace, and he was from Tunica, but he was a professor at one of the schools in St. Louis, and he liked what I did. And he'd bring some of his folks out to see me in the

different clubs that I'd play. And one of the clubs I played was the Holiday Inn, and guess who walked in on that gig while I was playin'? None other than Billy Joel himself.

[04:25:18] SL: Yeah? [*Laughs*]

EB: And I had no idea who Billy Joel was. I had heard "Piano Man."

SL: Right.

EB: Well, the hostess in the club came up and told me that Billy Joel was in the room and that if I wanted him to come over, that she'd introduce us. And I said, "Billy Joel? Billy Joel? Billy Joel?" I said, "Well, yeah, bring him on over. Fine. And send him"—it was a regular—real—like a piano bar is supposed to be, where people could sit around the piano . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . on barstools, and it was down low. It wasn't up high like this [*uses hands to suggest a height from the floor to his shoulders*], like some of 'em are.

SL: Yeah.

[04:25:57] EB: Well, he—she brought him up there, and we shook hands, and I had been playin' for bout an hour before she brought him up there. And back in those days, I had a contrivance on my microphone that had a brace on it that went into the piano where I could clip my harmonica onto the mic and

play piano with both hands and still play harmonica without movin' the—wobblin' the microphone back and forth.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And that's what attracted Billy Joel [*laughs*] the longer he kept sittin' there, and he says, "Hey, man." He says, "I dig what you're doin'." [*Unclear words*] And he said, "Tell me about your contrivance you got there." [*Laughs*] And I said, "Well, I'd rather hear you play now." [*Laughs*] I said, "I know you and the 'Piano Man.'" It just dawned on me who this guy was.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And he was in town doin' a concert at the Kiel Auditorium, I think it was.

SL: Great, great room.

EB: And so I talked him into comin' up and playin' "Piano Man." [*Vehicle passes*] He says, "Well, I don't have my harp." And I said, "Well, there's mine." So he used my harp and played it just exactly like the record [*SL laughs*] and hung around, and we visited even after I quit playin'. And I guess he'd still been there talkin' to me today, but he was with a guy who wanted him to leave. It must've been his manager or . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . some band member or somethin' like that.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I don't know who he was. But he was a nice guy . . .

SL: Nice guy.

EB: . . . Billy Joel was.

[04:27:25] SL: You know, one thing I didn't ask you about, you know, you—how did you meet Dale Hawkins?

EB: Well, I met Dale in Little Rock when I was playin' with Ronnie. And . . .

SL: That was in seventy . . .

EB: That was in [19]83.

SL: [Nineteen] eighty-three. Okay.

EB: Yeah.

SL: You know, I'll just tell you this. Ronnie tells a story that he didn't know who Dale Hawkins was.

EB: I know it. That's what he told—kept tellin' me.

SL: He thought he was black 'cause he was playin' the Apollo Theater after "Susie-Q" came out, and he didn't realize that . . .

EB: That was his own cousin.

SL: His own cousin. Yeah.

EB: Well see, I—now that brings up another thing like you just said because he told me a similar story. I got the impression—now it came to my mind, "Well, you guys are first cousins. How come

you didn't know each other?" See, because Ron's dad and Dale's dad are brothers. Course, I know Dale's dad, you know, was part of the Sons of the Pioneers in Hollywood so I—that probably took him away from home. That would explain maybe why Ronnie didn't—you know, the families didn't keep in touch or somethin' or other. I don't know.

[04:28:51] SL: Well, yeah, and I—Dale was down in Louisiana, wasn't he? I think he . . .

EB: Yeah, he was.

SL: . . . he was out of Louisiana, and Ronnie was out of Hawkins Holler.

EB: Yeah. Huntsville and . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . Hawkins Holler and all that kind of stuff—St. Paul.

SL: Yeah.

EB: His mother taught school in St. Paul. But it just made me wonder, since they were first cousins, you know, I can't imagine not keepin' in touch with a first cousin. I mean, that's just me. But maybe in his family looked at things different. I don't know.

[04:29:24] SL: Well, I think they were probably both raised in kind of a hardscrabble . . .

EB: Yeah, I think . . .

SL: . . . atmosphere. Probably didn't have a whole lot of communication available and . . .

EB: Well, maybe so.

SL: . . . you know, just didn't get to it, I guess. I don't know either. It is kind of unusual, though. I mean, they—anyway . . .

EB: But when he—course, when "Susie-Q" came out, Ron, let's see, Ronnie was—that was in [19]57, and then the next year he had "La-an-da-an-dada," which went to number one, too. And so Dale got—I guess Dale probably told you this. I don't know whether he did or not. But that broke up the—somebody offered Dale a deal for a TV show, and he let his band go, and that's how come Fred was out of—was not with Dale anymore.

SL: Is that right? That's how that happened.

EB: And when Ronnie saw Fred play at the Fox Theater, I believe he told me it was—so you know, that kind of went to Dale's head, I guess. He said, "Yeah, I got it easy now. I got backing. I got a TV show, and I'll get me a better band," and I don't know. All that kind of stuff.

SL: Yeah.

[04:30:39] EB: Well, it didn't work, and I—and course, back then, I didn't know him. But . . .

SL: Yeah. Well, and of course, back then everybody signed

whatever was put in front of 'em, too.

EB: I guess so, yeah.

SL: Yeah, he didn't . . .

EB: But it might've worked if he'd've kept off the marchin' powder  
but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . or whatever he was sniffin' or drinkin' or whatever.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He had both problems, I think. But see, we got a—he got a gig lined up for both of us in Little Rock, and we were gonna do a duo act in this place I call the Cadillac Club, which is now—don't call—they don't call it that anymore. But anyway, we—I—Dale kept talkin' about this deal, and this deal we were gonna put together, "And I've talked to the lady, and she wants us to come in and let us"—see, she didn't know me, the lady that managed the lounge. So I lost touch with Dale. I said, "I can't get in touch with Dale, but we're supposed to start playin' in here in a couple days," or somethin' like that or whatever the length of time was. And I was tellin' Ronnie this story. He says, "You don't need Dale, man." Said, "He's just an idea man. What do you need with him?" Said, "You do it by yourself." And I said, "Well, I know it, and that's what I'm gonna go tell this lady." I

forget her name now. But I told her the circumstances, and that's when I found out that, you know, Dale had had a problem with his stuff, and so I said, "Well, I"—I said, "I can handle the show myself." And so that's when I started playin' there. I played there and—for almost a year there. This was back in—by that time, [19]84 was comin' around. And so it worked out okay, and then Dale kinda got lost in the shuffle. He went back up to Fort Roots and was in the detox zone or whatever you call it.

SL: Yeah.

[04:32:48] EB: And he tried to get me to come up there with him. I said, "Well, what am I gonna do up there?" [*Laughs*] I said—he said, "Well, we could talk 'em into lettin' us play up there." I said, "Oh, you mean like you did down here?" [*Laughs*] Thanks for the gig, Dale."

SL: Yeah.

EB: But now he was like that though. He would—he'd talk a big game like that and then—but we did wind up playing up there one time for those guys up there, and . . .

SL: Worked out all right?

EB: . . . and it worked out okay. He sang a little bit and played a little guitar but—and man, you never knew what—where Dale

was comin' from next. And then I had another friend of mine in Little Rock that hit the gold mine. [*Laughs*] You know the house up in—the *Designing Women*, they used in the . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . TV show?

SL: Yeah.

[04:33:41] EB: Well, a friend of mine's family owned that . . .

SL: Oh, okay.

EB: . . . property. Course, it's still there. And he and Dale became—I saw a thing in the paper, in the Little Rock paper, about Dale Hawkins gettin' together with Chip Whitmore, and there was a color picture of them and big write-up about doing songs of the risqué [19]50s. [*SL laughs*] And Dale called it the *Risky Fifties*. So did Whitmore. Well, this guy Whitmore was the son of the Whitmore family that—I guess they were—I didn't—never do know whether they were originally from Little Rock or originally from Fort Worth, but the Whitmore, Jimmy Whitmore, used to play with Bruce Channel, the "Hey, hey, baby. I wanna know if you'll be my gal."

SL: Yeah.

[04:34:46] EB: He played drums with him on that record. And there was a time he played with Jerry Lee Lewis. But we knew each

other out in Vegas. I'm takin' you back now before I come back to Little Rock . . .

SL: M'kay.

EB: . . . and before he even knew Dale. But when I saw this piece in the paper about Dale and him doin' a record session in Nashville, I picked up the phone and called Dale, and I ask him if this Whitmore guy—because Dale had asked me to come to Nashville and be on the session with him.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So I agreed to do that, and I said, " I don't know, but let me ask you this. Is that Whitmore named Jim Whitmore, by any chance?" He said, "I think so. They call him Chip." I said, "Well, that sounds like what I heard before." Back when I knew Chip in Vegas, he had his own group, playing at the Golden Nugget. And that's where I met Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, and back in those days, Buck was still married to Bonnie, and later on she left him and went with Merle but—and Whitmore had the afternoon show, and he's a pretty good drummer. He wasn't quite up to par with Levon, but you know, I judge everybody [*laughs*] by Levon.

SL: Yeah.

EB: [*Laughs*] Or Vincent Dee.

SL: Yeah.

EB: But . . .

[04:36:25] SL: Well, so did you go do the session in Nashville  
with . . .

EB: Went to Nashville and did the session. Did about thirty songs,  
and Dale promised me I could play harmonica on—he started  
namin' the songs he wanted me to sing and play harp on.  
Wound up—didn't let me sing. I sang one song, and he didn't  
like the way I did it. "Now"—I said, "Now, Dale, let me tell you  
somethin'. You been comin' to see me in Hot Springs." He was  
married to a chick over in Hot Springs and lived there then.  
He'd come out to see me almost every night when I played in  
Hot Springs. I said, "So you know how I sound. And now I get  
over here in Nashville, and you're tellin' me about this and this  
and this and this." I said, "I didn't just fall off the turnip truck."  
And the song he wanted me to do, which I had been doin' a long  
time before, and I'd do all that old Jimmy Reed stuff, too, you  
know. So I thought that since he had invited me to come in on  
the session that he was satisfied with whatever it was. Well, I  
think what happened was that he got back on the toot, see . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . and got in one of those moods where nothin's okay. You

gotta change this, and you gotta tweak that, and you gotta say, "Hm-mm," you know. And he'd mince words about it in front of all the other guys in there, too, with all these session musicians [*laughs*] over there in Nashville.

SL: Yeah.

[04:37:47] EB: But he wound up lettin' me do one song, "Lovey Dovey," if you remember that old song.

SL: Mh-hmm.

EB: "Lovey dovey, if you wanna spend time with me." So I did that song and—but he didn't put it out on the session. I still got the demo just for myself. None of those songs had been released, but there were—all the stuff that they did record—and I got paid too, incidentally. That's good.

SL: That's good.

EB: And the bass man was Duck Dunn.

SL: Is [*laughs*] that right?

EB: Yes, sir. And Duck had to go over to Europe to play another gig, so he had to leave the session, so they brought in Joe Overtree, which [*clears throat*] was a—I mean, it was either Joe Overtree, or was his name Osborn? He was Ricky Nelson's bass player.

SL: Kay.

EB: Or had played with Ricky for a long while. Nicest guy in the

world, and he knew Dale. Now he's from Louisiana also. And so we finished the session with all that, and so we did get all the stuff recorded, and I kept waitin' for Dale to bring me back in and lay down some harmonica tracks, and that never happened either. And I'll never forget Dale ridin' this guy's butt, the guitar player they had over there, 'cause he was supposed to play the slide guitar, and he didn't slide right like Dale thought he should. [Laughs] And I thought to myself, "Dale, what's wrong with you, man?" It's just like it's gotta be perfect, but then when you get where you think that that—but that's still not perfect. Nothin' really pleased him. But that stuff was never heard from again, and that session cost us \$50,000—not my money, but Whitmore's mother-in-law's [laughs] money.

SL: Yeah.

[04:39:45] EB: He got into her pocketbook. And nobody to this day don't know what happened to the tapes 'cause it was—the records weren't ever pressed but . . .

SL: Hmm. So . . .

EB: So that kinda turned me against Dale a little bit [*vehicle passes*], so I got in my car and drove back to Little Rock. [*Clears throat*] But you know, I was, "Well, I'm not gonna hold a grudge." So I went by to see Dale several months after that, you know, in his

place on Main Street there in North Little Rock.

SL: Yeah.

[04:40:19] EB: And he wanted me to lay down some organ tracks for him. I had a keyboard that had some pretty good organ sounds on it, so I brought that over there, and we did all that and got along okay. So I said, "Well, maybe there's some people you can get along as friends, but you can't work with." Long as—as long as you don't—'cause I know Dale has played with some great musicians now. And Roy Buchanan—I guess he mentioned that to you.

SL: Yeah. [*EB clears throat*] I believe so.

EB: And Gerry McGee and Fred Carter. Man, these are heavy, heavy people. And the other one I'm tryin' to think of the name of that we were tryin' to think of a while ago that wound up playing with Elvis.

JE: Burnside? Burnside?

SL: Burnside?

EB: No, no, no, this—what is his name? Oh now, see?

[04:41:17] SL: That's all right. [*EB laughs*] We can look that up. So well, I'm sorry that Dale—that y'all crossed like that on some stuff. I sure did like bein' with him. I, you know, I think he, of course, was battling cancer all the time that I spent with him, so

he was probably a little bit different guy.

EB: Well, that could be too. But he did apologize to me that time when I went over to see him, and he said, "Man, I didn't mean to get crossways."

SL: Yeah.

EB: Said, "I didn't mean you any harm." And I said, "Well, that's okay."

SL: Yeah. [*Vehicle passes*] Well, I think he—I think we like—you know, what you'll see on that interview when he's talkin' about some of the music that he'd just mixed and stuff—you'll really see the pride that he has in what he had gotten done with that particular piece.

EB: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: And there's some good—there's some pretty good licks in there, and you know, it's a pretty honest assessment of where he was at the time . . .

EB: Right.

SL: . . . which is all you can do. I mean—okay. Well, I appreciate—I—you know, I just didn't hear how you had met Dale and you-all's relationship. So we've probably got—we don't have a whole lotta time left, so let's talk about anything else that you wanna talk about. Now you know, chronologywise, we're still forty

years away from present day, or thirty, anyway. So you've just continued to play all these years.

EB: That's right, yeah.

SL: And were there any more bands that you put together, or are you just doin' solo stuff now or . . .

EB: Well, see, when I came [*clears throat*]*—*when I left Ronnie in [19]83, and like I say, we played Cajun's Wharf in Little Rock and Cajun's Wharf in Nashville, then came back again to the Cajun's Wharf in Little Rock, and that's when I told him I was jumpin' off the train and gonna just do a single act by my—you know, here in saint—just like I did in St. Louis.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And so that's what I did. And the lady at—that owned the club in Cajun's Wharf—well, she managed it for Bruce back in those days. She said, "Well, if that's what you wanna do," she said, "I'd"*—*she said, "Between me and you, I don't blame you for what [*laughs*] you're doin'." She said—*it's just like I just told you a while ago; everybody don't like vanilla ice cream. And some people . . .*

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . do, and some people don't, but . . .

SL: Right.

[04:44:07] EB: . . . I said—she said, "If you need any help," said, "I can make some phone calls." So she got on the horn and got me lined up in Hot Springs, and that opened a whole lotta other new doors after I got over there.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And wound up playin' in a club over there called the Captain's Walk, which reminded me a whole lot of the club I had played in Las Vegas with a big grand piano, and it has a little dance floor and cozy place and serves seafood and steaks, and people drive up with their boats. It was right on the water, Lake Hamilton. And I played there off and on for about five years. And then I fell into a whole pot of gold in Little Rock goin' from the Excelsior Hotel to the Camelot Hotel and then on to the—oh, what's that other hotel over there that I—the Legacy.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Back then it was not called the Legacy. I forget what they called it, the original name—you know, just like one gig after another. Afterthought. I played the Afterthought off and on for twenty years over there in Little Rock. That was about—that and the Captain's Walk were my two favorite rooms to play.

[04:45:25] SL: Now the Afterthought, that's a little place, isn't it?

EB: It's a little place. Seats nine . . .

SL: I've been—yeah, I think I've been there.

EB: I was the first entertainer to play there after Wally bought it, or Wally ran it. He had an interest in it. I think two doctors had the most money in it, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . he came and got me from the Excelsior Hotel and offered me the gig there at Afterthought. The guy he had playin' there was a great piano player, but he didn't sing. He said, "I want somebody that can sing." So I showed him what I could do singin' and playin' the harmonica, as well as the piano, and it went over fine. And we sent out a mailing. I had a mailing list, and of course, by going to the university, I knew so many people in Arkansas that were still in the area.

SL: Yeah.

EB: So that paid off. So here come my people, and it just snowballed. And then I'd go back from the Afterthought to Hot Springs to the Captain's Walk and then played a couple of other places in Hot Springs, came back to Little Rock, and I was just runnin' with my tongue hangin' out, you know.

SL: That's good though.

EB: I know it. [*Laughter*] That's awful good and . . .

SL: And keeps you out of trouble, too.

[04:46:42] EB: People keep sayin', "Well, when are you goin' quit that music playin' and do somethin'—get you a sho' enough job?" [*Laughter*] I said, "Well"—I said, "You know, the secret in life is to get paid for what you do and make enough to support yourself." I said, "What else do you need, you know?" And that's been my philosophy, to just keep smilin' and dialin' and goin' to the next place. And course, I do private parties, too, and country club dates, and so it's been good to me. And it may not've been to a lot of people. I've had a lot of musicians call me and want to come in with me, and I said, "Well, if I got room for you, if I can, you know, I'll bring you in when I can." But then I got this deal at Sonny Williams's over there. But you may not be familiar with that 'cause you're not from Little Rock, but that's . . .

SL: No. Huh-uh.

EB: . . . down in the River Market.

SL: Okay. Okay.

EB: And I've been there for eight years now, goin' into my ninth year.

SL: So I need to check that calendar, huh?

EB: Yeah, it's in—I'm on . . .

SL: 'Cause we go to Little Rock. We do interviews in Little Rock and

we, you know . . .

EB: Well, we could do another one over at my place over there if  
[laughs] you want to. If we don't finish up here. [Laughs]

SL: Well . . .

EB: It's a whole lot smaller than—I don't know if we'd have room for  
all this, though. We might have, though, come to think of it.  
[SL laughs] I could stand back in the closet . . .

[04:48:17] SL: Well, so have you got some dates over there in  
September?

EB: I probably do. I've got a date in Marianna in September and I—  
we're gonna book September when I go back. I'm booked  
through August right now . . .

SL: Okay.

EB: . . . at Sonny's. But I alternate with two other players.

SL: I'm . . .

EB: So it's like every third weekend I've got—and that's been goin'  
on for—since I started playin' there and . . .

[04:48:40] SL: Well, I think we have—we're linin' up some  
interviews for the first week in August, and then I know we've  
got some business to do down there around the ninth of  
September.

EB: Yeah.

SL: And it's startin' to look like we may have some business in October, so I'll come see you.

EB: Yeah, do that. It's a piano bar. It's the only piano bar left in Arkansas.

SL: Okay.

EB: You can sit at the piano.

SL: And it's Sonny Williams's?

EB: Sonny Williams's Steak Room.

SL: All right.

EB: And . . .

SL: So I can get a steak, too?

EB: Oh, can you ever! It's . . .

SL: All right. I like that.

EB: . . . it's always highly rated.

SL: Good.

[04:49:13] EB: And it's owned by some guys that's got a lot of deep pockets. The Stephens Inc. people own it.

SL: Okay.

EB: And then I'm playin' another little place called the Bistro, which is out on old—if you're familiar with Little Rock, but you're not, but it'd be hard to describe to you where that is.

SL: Bistro? I may have been there.

EB: Well, it's called the Union Bistro.

SL: Union Bistro.

EB: They have just opened it recently.

SL: Oh, okay. Then I haven't.

EB: Less than a year. And years ago, it was called Shug's, and I played there. I was playing there in [19]98, or [19]89, rather. [Vehicle passes] [Clears throat] And . . .

SL: I kinda remember that. I know that name. I've heard of the place. Shug's.

EB: Yeah, Shug's . . .

SL: It's . . .

EB: . . . was a—the guy that owned that place was in the construction business and he—I can't even think of his name now. I didn't know him all that well but he—I knew who—fact, I was playin' there when my father passed away. But you know, everybody says, "Well, there ain't nothin' goin' on in Little Rock, so I guess we'll have to go to da-dee-da-dee-da or someplace." Well, you gotta go wherever the action is. I said, "It's been good to me, you know." I said, "I've spent since [19]83 playin'—or—yeah, [19]83, [19]84, after I left Ronnie in [19]83, and I've been playin' in the Little Rock area and the Hot Springs area and in north Arkansas, too, playing up in Fayetteville and

Springdale, and doin' stuff for Don Tyson and Alice Walton."

Alice Walton called me one time and wanted me to play a party for her and Imelda Marcos from the Philippines. Imelda was visiting her in Fayetteville.

SL: Uh-huh. Well, that's strong. That's a strong fan right there.

[04:51:20] EB: And she . . .

SL: Alice.

EB: . . . and she—well, she walked in one night with the son of my dad's—my dad had a secretary back in World War II. And her last name was Hurgett. And my dad always told me, he said, "If I just had a secretary as good as Mary Esther Hurgett," said, "I'd really be goin' to town. And she could do it all. I could just turn it over to her." So when Alice walked in all these years later, I was playing at LJ's in Fayetteville.

SL: Fayetteville. Sure.

EB: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: Above Evelyn Hills. Sure. Been there.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[04:51:59] EB: I was the first entertainer to play there.

SL: Okay.

EB: Prior to that, I'd been playin' down there on the square for

Scotty McLaughlin.

SL: Yeah.

EB: You remember old Scotty?

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: The lawyer?

SL: Yep. Yep. And . . .

EB: And Dash Goff got me that deal. He called me and said, "See if you can come on up here and do some playin' for us." I said, "Whereabouts?" He said, "Up here at Suite 26." That was what they called the name of the club. He told me where it was. Well, we got our deal [*SL laughs*] together, and I started playin' there. [*Laughs*] I played there from—oh, I guess about six months or so.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Till here come the folks from LJ's heard I was there. And this is where Alice Walton hung out, Don Tyson hung out, Dash Goff—now this is every day. Every afternoon, they'd all be there. They'd all gather round.

SL: At LJ's?

EB: At LJ's and . . .

SL: I know that.

EB: . . . also . . .

SL: Phillip Steele, too.

EB: And Phillip Steele.

SL: I had lunch with Phillip Steele, talked with Phillip. Phillip wanted me to do some filming for him so . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, I've been there.

[04:53:05] EB: And I had to—played the happy hour there, you know, at Scotty's. Called it Suite 26.

SL: Gosh, it's a small world.

EB: It really is. And so I—when I started playin' at LJ's, I played over in the—that side of the building where the stained-glass window—my back was to that stained-glass window. I had my keyboard 'cause they don't have a piano, or they didn't then.

SL: Right.

[04:53:33] EB: So I thought, "Well, let me see." I noticed that space over there that later became . . .

SL: The stage.

EB: . . . the dance floor.

SL: Oh. Yeah.

EB: And the stage, too.

SL: Uh-huh. Over in the corner.

EB: But before they tore that wall out, I ask 'em, I said, "What's behind the wall over there?" And they said, "Well, that's where we just—we don't use it for anything right now." And you know, he went to town and knocked that wall out and put me over there on that side. He said, "The crowds are pickin' up." So he [*laughs*] got me to play over there.

SL: I—you know, I never—I don't think I was ever there for happy hour, but I did go and see—Leon Russell played on that little stage.

EB: Well, I knew Leon played there, but that's after I had left.

SL: Yeah.

EB: I had left there before that. I played there for, oh, I guess a couple of years, I guess—LJ's. And the ki . . .

SL: Wild times.

EB: Yeah.

SL: Those were wild times.

[04:54:29] EB: So LJ's stole me away from Scotty, and it's just—I guess it's a good thing 'cause Scotty lost his practice and his wife . . .

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

EB: . . . and his house and his license and everything. Behind that

dope.

SL: Yep. It's really . . .

EB: But he was a good friend of mine. I'm glad I never did have a cross word with him.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And so, you know, it's just a—now I guess I've been lucky in a lotta ways, and course, when the economy went down, that—I could tell a difference in the way things went.

SL: Everybody. Everybody . . .

EB: It hit . . .

SL: . . . has been . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . affected by that.

EB: Yeah. But I've got this country club party here in September, and I had played one for them before, a couple of years ago, so maybe it'll be—?it'll always?—and . . .

SL: It . . .

EB: . . . every door you go through opens another door.

SL: That's right.

EB: Sometimes two or three doors.

SL: Yep.

EB: And just be sure that you don't open the door where the tiger is,

right? [*Laughs*]

[04:55:34] SL: Well, Ed, is there anything else we hadn't talked about that you wanna squeeze in here before we—they run us outta here?

EB: Well, tell me where I can get a record deal.

SL: Ha! Boy!

EB: That's what you guys oughta go into all that. You got your camera set up. You—I guess you're—I guess you can do recording. I don't know but . . .

SL: Oh yeah, we could. I mean, if we kept it simple.

EB: That's what I'm saying.

SL: But you know, that's the thing. I—you know, I—one of the best things I ever got to shoot was Billy Lee Riley in Giffels Auditorium up on the university campus. It was just him and his guitar and his harmonica.

EB: Well, I saw him there. Ronnie and I went to see him.

SL: Okay!

EB: He was on stage by himself.

SL: Yeah! And I . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . I got Ronnie on film talkin' to him about gettin' a call from Bob Dylan. Remember? He was on his—he was told—he was

tellin' the story about being on his tractor. He says, "I don't want any calls. I'm gonna be on my tractor and" . . .

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

SL: And sure enough, soon as he gets out there on the tractor, why, here they come and says, "You got a phone call," you know. [*EB laughs*] And he goes back, and he gets on the phone, and he says, "It's Bob Dylan." And he says, "Ronnie, I just got to play with Billy Lee Riley in Nashville." [*Laughter*] You know?

EB: Ronnie told me he did. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[04:56:50] SL: You know what? But that was one of the best shows I'd ever seen, just Billy Lee Riley by himself on that stage.

EB: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: It was so honest and clean and up front. And he called me for months after that. And he . . .

EB: Oh, did he?

SL: . . . and he sent me CDs, one he'd just finished recording, and it was so overproduced. It . . .

EB: Oh.

SL: . . . there was so much stuff on it that it just wasn't Billy Lee Riley anymore. It wasn't anything like what he'd given us. I mean, it's a beautiful performance. I—it's probably a forty-five-minute, one-hour show.

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SL: It's really good. I really enjoyed that.

[04:57:29] EB: Well, see, at that time, Billy Lee—remember I told you I did some stuff in Nashville with Ronnie.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And Billy Lee was in Nashville then doin' a thing with Jack Clements . . .

SL: Yeah.

EB: . . . at the Clement's studio, and I got in on that with my clarinet. I did a clarinet . . .

SL: Well, I probably have a recording of you [*EB laughs*] playing with Billy Lee Riley in my—next to my stereo 'cause I, you know, I still listen to it from time to time. But that's—small world!

EB: I know it.

SL: I can't believe you walked in there with Ronnie Hawkins.

EB: Yeah, we were together. Ronnie was down visitin' me, and, let's see, I had a place in Springdale then.

SL: Yeah.

EB: Over at the West End apartments. I think that's where I was.

[*SL laughs*] That was in [19]96, as best I remember.

SL: That sounds about right.

[04:58:21] EB: And I member we had a lot of snow that time in the

wintertime. And Ronnie says, "I just left Canada to get away from all this stuff" . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

EB: . . . "and it's come down here." [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

EB: You know, Ronnie is kin to the Cogers in Huntsville.

SL: That doesn't surprise me.

EB: And so Miss Coger hired me to come play a party at her house.

[*Laughs*] And Ronnie went with me.

SL: Good.

EB: That was a fun little . . .

SL: That's fun.

EB: . . . fun little deal.

SL: That's fun.

EB: And [*unclear words*] . . .

SL: Well, it's, you know, all this Arkansas stuff, it's a pretty big family, isn't it?

EB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. One thing leads to another.

SL: Somebody knows somebody. [*EB laughs*] It's funny, isn't it, how it all crisscrosses?

EB: And interweaves.

[04:59:09] SL: Yep. Well, you've done a great job today. You've

done some really good things here, and you've told some great stories. And I tell you, you've painted a picture of a guy that's worked hard all his life. You kept after it and kept gettin' better and adapted . . .

EB: Yeah.

SL: . . . and changed . . .

EB: Can't—you can't get . . .

SL: . . . with time as time changed and kept friendships, and you know, that all speaks well, Ed. It all speaks well.

EB: Well, one of these days it may pay off. I mean, you can't ever tell.

SL: Well, it's always just around the corner, isn't it?

EB: It's always just [*laughs*] around the corner. [*Laughter*] And if I ain't made it in the next thirty years, I'm gonna pack it in.

[*Laughter*]

SL: That's right. That's right. [*EB laughs*] Well, I can't thank you enough for givin' us all this time. And I'm gonna come see you. Wherever you're playin', I'm gonna hook up, and I'm gonna come see you, and I—you know, if it—if I have to suffer through a world-class steak to do it [*EB laughs*], well, I'll do that too.

EB: Well, they—a good friend of mine's a chef back there. See, my son worked there for a while.

SL: Okay.

EB: He worked there for about eighteen months, and he was in charge of the kitchen.

SL: Yeah.

EB: The one in charge of the meat department, rather.

SL: Good.

[05:00:18] EB: And—but then he went back to St. Louis after that.

But the guy who is still the head man in the kitchen, his name's Clay, Clay Sikes—Sipes. Good guy. And he's younger than my son but—every time I play at—well, you're familiar with the *Nightflying*, I guess, aren't you?

SL: Oh yeah. Peter Read.

EB: Well, he—yeah, he—yeah, Peter puts me in there. Every time I play Sonny's, it's always listed in there.

SL: Okay.

EB: And I'm also on the Internet under Sonny Williams's.

SL: I recorded both of Peter's albums at my studio back in the day.

EB: Well, what albums did Peter come out with?

SL: He—well, the first one was *Peter Read*, and the second one was *Reter Pead*.

EB: *Reter Pead*. [Laughter] I started to say that. *Reter Pead*.

SL: Yeah. He's a piano player, singer. That's all . . .

EB: I did not know that.

SL: Yeah.

EB: He never told me that. He's done . . .

SL: Piano player/singer.

EB: Peter Read is?

SL: That's what he did back—gosh, this was [19]76, maybe, [19]75, [19]76.

[05:01:26] EB: Well, he came out and wrote a nice piece on me when I was playing at the Afterthought. One of the best write-ups I've ever had.

SL: Yeah. He's good.

EB: I did not know that he was a musician.

SL: He's good, and he knows everybody.

EB: He never told me that.

SL: Well, next time you see him . . .

EB: Now he's been sick, too, hadn't he?

SL: I don't know. Has he?

EB: Where'd I hear that? I hope that's not true, but it could . . .

SL: I don't know that. I haven't seen him in a long, long time.

EB: I haven't either—since Fayetteville, I think.

SL: Yeah.

[05:01:51] EB: Well, one time I ran into him in Hot Springs but—he

used to come around quite a bit, you know. He . . .

SL: Oh, that was what he did. He . . .

EB: . . . he would show up, you know.

SL: . . . he—that was his beat.

EB: Always took a picture.

SL: Yeah, that was his beat.

EB: Took a picture of Ronnie and I one time in Fayetteville.

SL: That was his beat.

EB: Yeah, yeah.

SL: The club scene.

EB: But I did not know he was a music man.

SL: Yeah. That's how I met him. He walked into my studio and liked what he saw, and we sat down, recorded one album, and I don't know, maybe a year later, he came back and did another one.

EB: Well, I'll say! That's . . .

SL: Small world.

EB: It really is. I mean, it's a—it's nice to be active. I should spend more time in the studio myself and see what I can get done.

SL: Well . . .

EB: And . . .

SL: Yeah. It's gotten easier. You don't have to spend a whole lot of

money to do it anymore, you know.

[05:02:48] EB: I've got a friend of mine from Missouri who's in charge of the geological department at Columbia, Missouri. I used to play there some, too, when I was with the Newcomers. But I saw him recently at a Kappa Sig luncheon in Little Rock. And he's—he said, "Well, are you still playin'? You still entertainin'?" And I said, "Well, best I can." And he said, "I want you to send me some of your tapes." And I said—no, he says—"CDs" is the way he put it. I said, "Well, I don't have any CDs, but I have some tapes." He said, "Well, I don't want a tape. [*Laughs*] I want a CD."

SL: What kind of tapes you got?

EB: Cassette, you know.

SL: Cassette?

EB: Yeah. That's what Phillip did, but they're CD capable. But I don't have the master. Course, he controlled all that since, you know . . .

[05:03:46] SL: Where is all that stuff? Where are all the . . .

EB: Well, I imagine she's got it.

SL: He's got it?

EB: No, I'm talkin'—no, I'm talkin' about Charlotte. I imagine she's got it.

SL: Oh, okay.

EB: I would assume. I don't know who else would have it. But a lot—I think a lot of that stuff needs to be reworked. Might even take out a couple of things. And I'm playin' all the parts. I'm playin' the sax and the keyboard and the harmonica and the bass line on the keyboard, which sounded like a bass. And then I had Rick Ebe. I don't know if you remember Rick or not. He plays . . .

SL: I kinda remember that name.

EB: He owned part of that studio that . . .

SL: At Phillip's?

EB: At—that we recorded in, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

EB: And Earl Cate's playin' guitar on it and—but other than that, I'm playin' all the other parts. And we took several months to put that all together.

[05:04:43] SL: Well, have you got a cassette of that stuff?

EB: Well, I'll have to drop you one off. Was you gonna drop back by the house or somethin'? I can see that you get another copy there.

SL: We'll keep after that. I'm gonna keep after that. I—you know, we might could use that on your stuff.

EB: Well, that's a—yeah, it might be—yeah.

SL: 'Cause I don't—I—we don't . . .

EB: *Burks' Blues*, they called it.

SL: Okay.

EB: Phillip's idea for me to do that. "Heritage Production and Phillip Steele and Ed 'Moses' Burks were fraternity brothers at the University of Arkansas."

SL: I—you know, I kinda remember him talkin' about that.

EB: Do you? Yeah.

SL: I do kinda reme—that rings a bell. By gosh. [*Sighs*]

EB: And I forget who the guy was that did that narration, but I think—the introduction before the music starts. Then when the music starts, I'm doin' . . .

SL: Look for that thing. Look for—get a copy of that cassette or somethin'. You got more than one copy?

EB: Oh yeah. I've got—I wound up with whatever he had left. We sold close to five thousand copies just up there and down here and in Little Rock and all over and, you know, just five here and ten there.

SL: Well, if we can get—if we get out of here . . .

EB: Alice bought thirty of 'em from me herself.

SL: Is that right?

EB: Walked in one day and wrote me a check for \$300, and I said,  
"Here, you want some more?" [*Laughter*]

[05:06:20] SL: Well, let us—I'll try and swing by when we leave  
here.

EB: Yeah, do that.

SL: I'll try and pick it up. Okay?

EB: Do that, 'cause I gotta get my stuff back anyway.

SL: Yeah. Okay. We gotta take you home anyway, don't we?

EB: That's what I'm sayin'. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: [*Claps hands*] Okay.

EB: Well, I could hitchhike. [*Laughter*] It's too cold to walk.

SL: Okay. [*EB laughs*] We're runnin' outta tape. I can't thank you  
enough, buddy.

EB: Well, my pleasure. My pleasure.

SL: My honor.

EB: I'm glad you . . .

SL: Thank you very, very much.

EB: . . . I'm glad you stopped by. I've been waitin' on you all this  
time, and you finally got here, lo and behold! [*Laughter*] You  
showed up!

SL: Well, you and I are gonna keep crossin' paths for a while.

EB: I think we should.

SL: Okay.

EB: I think we should.

SL: All right. That's good. Thank you.

[05:07:04 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]