

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

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**Arkansas Memories Project**

David Hampton Pryor  
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford  
September 26, 2013  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

## Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center 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 17th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

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

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

### **Citation Information**

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

**Scott Lunsford interviewed David Hampton Pryor on September 26, 2013, in Fayetteville Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, DP, let's see—uh—today's—is this the twenty-sixth of September? Uh . . .

David Pryor: Probably so.

SL: I think it—I think it is.

DP: Close enough.

SL: And we're here at the—uh—David and Barbara Pryor residence in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and I'm Scott Lunsford, and—um—David—uh—the Pryor Center is here to do an interview with you, so you're our latest victim, by the way.

DP: Okay, I'm a victim. [*SL laughs*] I—I'll be victimized. That's fine.

SL: Um—we'll—uh—we'll—uh—uh—record this in high-definition. We'll preserve it forever. Um—you guys will get transcripts and copies . . .

DP: Thank you.

SL: . . . of all this, and we'll . . .

DP: Thank you.

SL: . . . make as many copies as y'all need for friends and family.

DP: Thank you.

[00:00:41] SL: Well, thank you for starting this program. Uh—you know, it was your all's vision . . .

DP: Well, we really didn't start it. We—it just kind of—it was ready to start, and it just needed someone to build a little bit of fire under it,

and that's what we tried to do. But—uh—it—it's been very good and so exciting and people all over the state of Arkansas and either in—even in other states now are saying, "Hey, tell us about what y'all"—they—a lot of times they call it that history program, or they say, "What's that thing y'all are doin' about preserving stories and" [*SL laughs*]*—*you know, it's a little bit confusing at this time, but soon it will be—everything will be available to everyone. And—uh—I—we hope it—we hope it—that—uh—people feel comfortable with it and that they enjoy—not only enjoy, but they learn from the histories of people who have made a difference in our state and—and our country. So it's been fun and a great experience for us. And you've got a great staff, Scott, you and Randy and all of you.

[00:01:45] SL: Well, we think we have the best jobs in the world.

DP: [*Laughs*] Thank you.

SL: It's really fun, and . . .

DP: It's great.

SL: . . . it's—and the people that we sit across from are always generous and very patient with us and help us . . .

DP: And don't you find that most people say, "Oh, I don't have a story. I can't—you know, I just [*SL laughs*]*—*I hadn't done anything interesting." And you know, they said, "Maybe I will give fifteen or twenty minutes," to then, and three hours later, they're [*Laughs*] still—you know, they . . .

SL: And they want more.

[00:02:09] DP: People—there's stories with all of us, and all of us had all these experiences, and it just takes someone, a good interviewer like you, Scott, to—to bring this out in people because everyone has something to contribute. They may not think they do, but they do. We tell the story about Jerry Jones, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys, who—Arkansas—uh—native, very—very famous person, I might add. And when y'all went down there to see him, they said, "Well, we'll give you forty-five minutes max. [*SL laughs*] No more, and then we're pullin' him out." Well, about four hours later [*SL laughs*] he was still in the second grade, you know, [*SL laughs*] talkin'—Jerry was. So—but we've got to complete that one, but we—and it's just—it's amazing how cooperative people are when they first—uh—start talking. They—they have things they want to say, and that's just the way that—Arkansas is a state of storytellers that—we love stories. We learn by stories and we—that's the way we communicate in many occasions. Um—Bill Clinton, a storyteller. Dale Bumpers, a storyteller, you know. Many, many of 'em—Mike Huckabee, the former Republican governor of our state, was great storyteller, and he used to tell 'em from the pulpit, and then he went to the capital—started tellin' 'em. So anyway, we're a—we're a state of storytellers.

[00:03:36] SL: Well, it—it—you know, storytelling—uh—it's not really just Arkansas, either. I mean, there are so many things that are—you know, everything that you read is story based. Even the sports page has stories.

DP: Mh-hmm.

SL: The—all the films—all the best films have the best stories. The TV shows have good stories and good characters, and they're based on what people know and what they . . .

DP: It's so funny—I'll—I—I remember—well, I say I remember—I—I'm—as a public person, I guess you'd say, I've been called upon to—uh—I don't how many speeches or talk—I hate to say I'm givin' a speech. I never give an address, but many times I will do a lot of preparation for a particular speech, say, to the bar association or to a historical association, so I don't get my facts and figures mixed up. But—uh—years later, somebody'll say, "Oh, I remember you were down in El Dorado. You gave a speech to blah-blah." Or "You were in Texarkana or Magnolia or Jonesboro. And you'd s"—but then I wait, and I know what's coming next. They don't remember the content of the speech, but they said, "I remember a story you told about so-and-so." And so it's stories [*SL laughs*] that get our message across, many times.

[00:04:56] SL: Well, they—uh—they touch the heart, and—and—uh—they evoke emotional responses that people hold onto. It makes a difference in lives. So yeah, we have—it's a great program, DP, and—uh—we're—we're blessed to . . .

DP: Well . . .

SL: . . . be a part of it.

DP: We're—we're proud to be a part of it, Barbara and I are. Thank . . .

SL: Well, thank you for . . .

DP: You bet.

SL: . . . giving us this time today.

DP: You bet. You bet.

SL: You know—um—I've been rereading your book, and there's so  
[laughs] many great stories on every page of that book. And I—I  
don't really want us to necessarily repeat the book, but I can't help  
but—I'm sure during today I'll bring up some things that are in that  
book that maybe you can elaborate a little more on. Um—the . . .

[00:05:41] DP: Well, Don Harrell—I could never have done that book  
without Don. My gosh, he would fly down from New York. We would  
spend some time in Little Rock looking at old things and records and  
talkin' to people and tryin' to get accurate about our dates. And then  
we would come up to Fayetteville, and—uh—we would spend time in—  
in—uh—uh—library in Fayetteville, and go downstairs in Special  
Collections, and look at old pictures and news articles and old letters  
and stuff in our files. And—and—uh—I couldn't have done it without  
Don. And—uh—when he would go back to New York for a few weeks,  
then I would take a vacation and—but I would, many times, I would go  
up in the Fayetteville Library and write by longhand. Don would come  
up later in the day, maybe, with his laptop, and he would do a lot of—  
of—laptop—typing on his computer. And—and—uh—we finally got it  
together and put it together. And the Butler Center was nice enough  
to publish it, and—uh—it's—it was a fun experience, but it was work—  
uh—but—but it was good work. And it—it reminded me, once again,

of—of—of some of the better parts of my life, and—uh—Don helped put it together. I could have never have done it without Don Harrell. We grew up together in Camden and . . .

SL: I know.

DP: Yeah.

SL: We'll get . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . some stories . . .

DP: Okay. Yeah.

SL: . . . about Don here in . . .

DP: Sure.

SL: . . . just a minute . . .

DP: Sure.

SL: . . . because there are some great stories about Don and his family and—uh—y'all—the two Pryor—Pryor families and the Harrells . . .

DP: Harrell, yeah.

SL: . . . being together. Um—DP, we usually start—and I call you DP. A lot of folks—you like—I think you like to be called DP.

DP: I do.

[00:07:30] SL: Um—we usually start with when and where you were born. So exactly when and where were you born?

DP: Nineteen thirty-four, Camden, Arkansas. We were just out of—coming out of the Depression. Uh—Franklin Roosevelt would've been our president at that time. My dad had come from Holly Springs, twenty

miles up the road from Camden. He—uh—his family had a little general store in that little community. They only had about probably 150 people in the community. It's right on—literally right on the border of Dallas and Ouachita County. And their little general store was there and—and when my dad—uh—father died very early. My father dropped—I think about the eighth or ninth grade, dropped out of school. Helped run the store to feed the family and whatever and worked and whatever. And—uh—only went probably through about the ninth grade. And—um—he—and ultimately, when he was about twenty, I think, he moved to Camden and—uh—got a job sweeping the floors—um—at the—uh—Ford agency and—uh—at the Ford Company there in Camden for Mr.—Dr. Word. He was a local doctor, and he owned the Ford Company. [00:08:50] And my dad ultimately bought the Ford Company there. And at one time my dad not only had the Ford agency, but he had Chevrolet agency. [*SL laughs*] And the Ford people found out about it, and they said, "Okay, Mr. Pryor, you've got to make a decision. You're either gonna be the Ford dealer or the Chevrolet dealer. Which"—uh—well, my dad. at that time, chose Chevrolet. And so he—the—thus, we had Pryor Chevrolet, which—uh—came into being in 1932. Uh—but my dad was, I guess you would say, kind of self educated. His favorite book—he—he probably didn't read many books, but he did—uh—once again, he was not educated by our standards. [00:09:33] But—uh—his favorite book that he bought by—he would buy a case or box—was written by J. C. Penney, *Fifty*

*Years with the Golden Rule* by J. C. Penney. And he kept a box—these books right at his desk and—and when someone came in that he thought he could—um—maybe—when he was sellin' a car to or talkin' to or whatever or goin' deer huntin' with, he would give 'em a book.

*Fifty Years with the Golden Rule* by J. C. Penney. And he thought that book was the answer to everything. [SL laughs] But anyway, he gave books like that every—to everyone. Hundreds of 'em, I imagine. But he was so proud to have read that book through and through, cover to cover. And one day my dad was sitting there in 1938 in his Chevrolet agency and—and he—the—we had the *Camden News*, which came out in the afternoon. It was an afternoon paper and—uh—the—he looked up at—one afternoon, probably two or three o'clock in the afternoon and *Camden News* was just right across the street from his—uh—Chevrolet Company—agency. [00:10:48] And he looked up and saw his picture on the front page. "Edgar Pryor, Candidate for Sheriff of Ouachita." [SL laughs] He said, "What?" Now, he said, "I'm not a candidate for sheriff." So he goes over to the courthouse down the street. He said, "There's been a mistake," and he said, "I'm not a—runnin' for sheriff. Arthur Ellis is our sheriff, and he has been for over twenty-somethin' years." And they said, "Yes, Mr. Pryor, your friends came in and paid your filing fee and put you on here. You're officially a candidate for sheriff of Ouachita County." So he ran, and he—he—um—he ran against Mr. Ellis. [00:11:22] He went to him in advance, and what had happened that year, 1938—they decided, the younger

group in Ouachita County, decided it was time to clean house in the courthouse. So they ran a slate. They ran—uh—uh—they ran a candidate just—against just about everybody: the county judge, the sheriff, the treasurer, the clerks, the—everybody. They ran a slate. And he was on the slate of candidates for sheriff and he—um—to this day, I can show you out in the country where he made his first speech. And he got there to—it was a little, tiny country church, and he went out there late in the afternoon, and—and—um—it was full of billy goats. There weren't any people there. Full of goats. [*SL laughs*] And he ran the goats out, and—and soon, I think, two or three people came to hear his talk and whatever. [00:12:15] But—but anyway, he—he told—he—but he did a—he taught me something about politics. I guess I learned from him. I was only four or five years old at the time. But he taught me about what I call the politics of neutralization. He went all over the county to Arthur Ellis, who had been sheriff twenty-four years, I think. He went all over the county. And he went to his strongest—to the strongest friends out through each box, each township in the county, about twenty-somethin' areas. And he neutralized them by saying, "I know you've got to be for Mr. Ellis." He said, "I love Mr. Ellis. He's been great for our—to our family." And he says, "And after this is over, we're gonna be friends whether I win or not." Well, he neutralized so many people who normally would've been out there and fighting for Arthur Ellis's reelection, but these people were—probably still voted for Ell—Arthur Ellis, but he

neutralized them. And that—and there's a lot to that. [00:13:16]

Um—tell you who was good at that principle was Orval E. Faubus, who was our governor for many, many years. After each election he would call some of the people who'd fought him hardest, and he would say, "I know you fought me. I'm gonna be your governor"—whatever. And he kind of brought them into the family. He kind of won them over, and that was something that, as a young politician coming up, you study the older guys, the older people, to see how they did. Well, anyway, I've gotten way off subject. [00:13:48] My mother was from an old, old family in the town—in the county. Old settlers in Ouachita County, the Newton family. And—um—they had been there for generations and—um—my grand—well, not only did my dad get elected sheriff, but my grandfather had been sheriff on my mother's side. My great-grandfather. So—uh—the courthouse experience—uh—was something not new to the family, I guess. [00:14:20] And my mother ran for office in nine—in the early 1920s, right after women got the right to vote. And I—if I'm not mistaken, she was the first woman in Arkansas to have her name on the ballot. And she ran for clerk of our—uh—she ran for circuit clerk, and was soundly defeated—uh—by—uh—a gentleman named England Plunkett [*SL laughs*], who had been a hero in World War I.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:14:47] DP: And—uh—ultimately, Charles England Plunkett—uh—Judge Plunkett's—um—son—uh—we grew up together and walked to school

together just about every day. Um—were captains of the Camden Panther football team together, and ultimately we ran against each other for the legislature and—uh—and—uh—some years later—many years later. And—um—I was fortunate enough to get more votes than Charles was and—but we were—all through high school—all through ju—grade school, junior high—we were always together, and still are friends to this day. He—he became a judge—Judge Eng—Charles England Plunkett. Fine man. But—uh—uh—county politics was something we always participated in during that period.

[00:15:36] SL: You know, we can jump ahead a little bit here—uh—about neutralizing or—or—or—uh—talkin' to folks when you're gettin' ready to run that—or strongholds or—I—I remember—um—you gave—uh—when you announced for—um—Oren Harris's seat, you called—um—Richard Arnold and really was gonna ask him to manage your campaign, I think, and it's my understanding . . .

DP: It—and . . .

SL: Go ahead. You get . . .

[00:16:09] DP: Well, no, that—that's a true and a good little story. When I told—when my law partner, Harry Barnes, federal Judge Harry Barnes—I—I tell you what, I never had a job where I looked forward to going to work like I did then. When Harry [*SL laughs*] and I practiced law for those two years together—we'd gotten out of law school. We'd gotten out, and we set up practice in Camden. And—um—Harry Barnes was probably one of the finest human beings I've ever known.

He's—he became a very, very popular and well-respected federal judge and has just taken senior status. And he had been a marine. He's just a great guy [*SL laughs*]*—great man. His family—great contributions to Camden and Ouachita County. [00:16:54] But after Harry and I decided that I should go ahead and run for this seat—uh—Oren—Judge Oren Harris or—uh—Congressman Oren Harris announced he was goin' to the federal bench. Uh—Lyndon Johnson was gonna name him federal judge. Well—uh—one of the first calls I made probably the first day or two—uh—I started planning this race for Congress. I picked up the phone and called Texarkana, and I called Richard Arnold—uh—who I'd known. I knew his family. I'd grown up with his wife, who was at that time Gale Hussman Arnold. Uh—they owned the local newspaper there. They owned the *Democrat-Gazette* and several TV and radio stations and—and about eight or nine newspapers in the south—the south part of—southern part of the state. [00:17:45] I called Richard, and I said, "Richard, I'm gonna run for Congress. Oren Harris is gonna become a federal judge, and I want you to be my Miller County campaign manager." Well, Richard—very smart—brilliant, brilliant person—he responded by saying, "Well, David, I'm glad you called. I'm—I'm—I really appreciate you callin' me. I was just getting ready to dial you and ask you to be my Ouachita County campaign manager [*SL laughs*] because I'm running for Congress." So we ran against each other for Congress [*SL laughs*], and it was—and we had a run-off, and there were about seven people*

in that race. And—and it was a—it was a classic old Arkansas rock-and sock-'em political race and—uh—south—you know, we had at that time twenty counties in the south. [00:18:29] Now that district has expanded—um—and it probably has about twenty-eight counties, I imagine, at this time, maybe more. But the Fourth District—and I ran, and Richard and I were the Democratic—um—chall—I guess we were in the Democratic run—uh—party run-off in August. That's when you had elections in the summer. Um—no longer in May like they're havin' them now. But—uh—it was a—it was a tough battle, but Richard and I became friends over that. In fact—uh—just a very few years, two or three years after that—uh—President Nixon was president, and—uh—I'd only been a congressman for a short while. But two of his nominees, Haynesworth and Carswell, had been shot down for one reason or another. Not literally shot down, but they'd been taken—they'd had to remove their names, or they were defeated by the Senate—couldn't get confirmed. [00:19:27] I wrote a pret—I wrote a letter to President Nixon, and—um—uh—I imagine in the Nixon Library—I hope that letter is still around. I recommended to President Nixon that he become the president to name the youngest Supreme Court Justice ever named, and that youngest person that I recommended to him was Richard Arnold. And—um—I'm not—I—but I don't know if I ever even got a response to my letter. Maybe I did, but I suggested to him that Richard go to the US Supreme Court. I was sincere about it, too, because he—he was not only brilliant—uh—

he was seasoned, even as a young person. Very precocious and—uh—  
he would've been a fine—uh—justice of the US Supreme Court.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:18] SL: Okay. I want to get back to your dad and your dad's side  
of your family. So you never knew his father. Did you ever know his  
mother?

DP: No, I never knew his mother. I knew a woman that my—that—well,  
no, I never knew my dad's mother or father. I never did. It'd be kind  
of confusing to trace that. But they were both gone when I came of  
age, so to speak. And so I did know his brother, Judson Pryor, who  
lived—who became the postmaster in Texarkana, Arkansas, on the  
Arkansas/Texas side. I still have a picture of Uncle Judson seated at  
his desk. Half of his desk was in Texas; half [*SL laughs*] in Arkansas  
and . . .

SL: That's so great!

DP: . . . Judson—Uncle Judson was seated at the desk. Uncle Judson in  
Texarkana owned a flower shop, and every day of his life he was  
known—he wore a red carnation in his lapel. And Uncle Judson wore  
the red carnation, and at his funeral—when—probably in [19]48 and  
[19]49 along in there, maybe even [19]47. I've never seen as many  
red carnations in my life at the First Baptist Church in Texarkana as  
Uncle Judson had at his funeral. So I knew Judson, and his son was  
killed. He was the pilot in a B-24 Liberator in World War II. I knew  
Judson's son and—who would've been my dad's nephew. And then I

knew, also, Annis, who was my father's sister and then I—and Grace, who was my father's sister. He had two sisters. And so I knew them pretty well as a young youngster, and Annis married Fred Laney, who is Ben Laney's brother, and Ben Laney became . . .

SL: He was governor.

DP: . . . governor. We lived next door to the—Ben Laney in Camden on Maple Street. And he became governor. He won by—a very surprising victory and people said—he'd just been defeated as mayor of Camden [SL laughs] by Don Harrell Sr. [SL laughs] Ben Laney had just been defeated [SL laughs] by Don Harrell, and a few months later, he ran for governor. Everybody says, "Gosh, what's Ben Laney doin'?" He just got elect—defeated for gov—mayor of Camden and he's runnin' for governor." Well, he got elected governor and—anyway, so—and those are funny little local stories and families and what have you.

[00:23:21] SL: Now, your father's name was Edgar.

DP: Edgar Pryor, yeah.

SL: And did he have a middle name?

DP: He—Edgar was his—he was William Edgar Pryor. Uh-huh.

SL: William Edgar Pryor.

DP: William Edgar Pryor, yeah. And he was a gregarious—he smoked cigars, made a lot of noise wherever he went. People loved him. The day he died in 1952 of leukemia, for the first time ever, and I—we had a big International Paper mill—two thousand people employed there—out of respect to my dad, they closed the paper mill for his funeral.

And that just doesn't happen in towns very much anymore, but they did that in respect of my dad's final service. But he was a Presbyterian elder, and when the little Presbyterian church opened up, we were there. We lived—we'd just walk to church. We were—our—the back yard of the Presbyterian church and the back yard of our house on Washington Street joined, and so we didn't have an excuse not to [SL *laughs*] be in church or Wednesday night prayer meetings or Sunday school or whatever. And my mom—my mother sang in the choir and so—anyway, it was a good boyhood. Good time growing up.

[00:24:41] SL: Did you know much about your mother's side of the family or . . .

DP: Well . . .

SL: . . . what her maiden name was?

DP: . . . not really.

SL: Or . . .

DP: My grandmother, my mother's mother, lived with us. She lived with us and had her own little room in the back of the house on Washington Street. That house—actually, that house was picked up and moved and reconstructed over in Calhoun County adjoining—and someday I want to go back there. I think I know about where it is. But my grandmother had a room in the very back of the house and had her own bathroom there in her end of the house. And course, there were four Pryor children. My dad and mom and our—my mom's mother and she lived there, and she died probably in the mid-[19]40s, and I

remember her well, though. She was a kind, little, small woman and—  
anyway, she was—it was a good childhood for me.

[00:25:41] SL: So you had two grandmothers . . .

DP: Yes.

SL: . . . in your all's house or not—let's see, I guess an aunt—a grandaunt  
and grandmother. Your mom's mother . . .

DP: My mom's mother lived with us.

SL: And then your dad's mother's sister, I guess. Is that the . . .

DP: She . . .

SL: It's kind—I know it's kind of confusing.

DP: She did not actually live with us.

SL: Oh, she did not.

DP: She didn't live—no.

SL: No.

[00:26:08] DP: She lived elsewhere, but she didn't live with us.

SL: Okay.

DP: But we were all pretty close-knit, I might say—close-knit family  
relationships. And my dad's sister, Annis—course, married to Fred  
Laney—he lived nearby, but Ben Laney was married to a person—  
Lucille, but we were related only to Ben through marriage, and that  
was my dad's sister had married Fred Laney, who was Ben Laney's  
brother. And so we were related by marriage to Ben Laney, you know.

SL: Well . . .

[00:26:49] DP: And Ben Laney, oddly enough—when Strom Thurmond

decided to run for president on the Dixiecrat ticket in 1948, Ben Laney was Strom Thurmond's choice to be his running mate, his vice president. And Ben Laney had a mishap along the way. He was defeated for governor by a young guy named Sid McMath, so it sort of derailed Ben Laney's aspirations for a while. But he was going to probably end up being on the ticket with Strom Thurmond as a Dixiecrat. I don't mention that part of the story very often at Democratic conventions or anything because—but anyway, that was going to be the case. Ben Laney was much more—I guess you would say he was much more conservative than my family was, and I guess they got along because of family ties and blood relationships. But politically, I would say my dad and mom were a little more on the progressive side than Ben was. I know my mom was.

[00:27:54] SL: Well, the Dixiecrats were—they were segregationists, right?

DP: Oh yeah, total. Yeah.

SL: So that's pretty strong that . . .

DP: You bet. You bet. And that . . .

SL: . . . Strom Thurmond had . . .

DP: . . . was 1948. And Strom Thurmond even came to Camden to talk to Ben Laney and to talk him into being—and then Ben got defeated for governor and Sid—by Sid McMath, so he got derailed—Ben Laney—and never again recouped his political base and was—I don't want to say he was an outcast, but he never mounted another political campaign.

SL: Right.

DP: No, no.

SL: It was over.

DP: Yeah, and I always wondered if Ben Laney—when I ran for Congress, I always wondered if he was actually voting for me, but I was afraid to ask [*SL laughs*], so I didn't know.

[00:28:48] SL: Well, tell me about Camden. What were your earliest memories of Camden?

DP: Well, I was born in [19]34, so—but one of my earliest memories—I—we had three drugstores right downtown in a triangle on three corners. Had Dizzy Gilleland's and Usery's and Horne's drugstores. And they carried just about everything, and next to Horne's drugstore—or—yeah—Horne's—or next to Usery drug store was Watts Department Store owned by a wonderful family, and you could—I—we would just go in there, and if we wanted somethin', we didn't sign anything—didn't have credit cards at that time. You'd just s—you'd just holler at Tommy Watts or his dad, Mr. **John** Watts—said, "Charge it," and you'd just walk out with it—a pair of tennis shoes or shirt or whatever—you just said, "Charge it." And same way with—you could go into Dizzy Gilleland's store and—drugstore and have a chocolate milkshake. You never paid for anything. You just said, "Charge it," and they'd ultimately send a bill to—I remember one time I took my class from school down to Patrick's Drug Store and treated 'em all to a chocolate milkshake after school one day—about thirty kids. [*SL laughs*] And

my dad got the bill lately and said, "What is this huge bill I'm gettin' from [*laughs*] Patrick's Drug Store?" And all those chocolate milkshakes that my classmates were enjoying at the expense of my dad. [00:30:25] Those—that was Camden, but Camden right before—by about [19]44—1944—there was a farm about four miles north of Camden out—a pretty flat area in Ouachita and Calhoun County known to all of us as the **Barry Murphy farm**, and all of a sudden the federal government came in there and seized that farm and said, "Mr. Murphy, we're sorry. We gotta have your property." And it was hundreds of acres, and they took this farm, and right in the middle of it they made the world's largest naval ammunition rocket manufacturing plant for the US Navy during World War II. And course, everybody was patriotic at that time, and they gave a lot of their properties and whatever. And all of a sudden, Camden became overpopulated. Just in a matter of weeks our population grew from about, say, nine or ten thousand to maybe thirty thousand. People were . . .

SL: Wow!

DP: . . . sleeping in the streets. They were—we had people in tents in our backyard. Construction workers came. They built this rocket plant in—literally in a matter of about sixty or ninety days, and they were producing rockets. And these rockets were goin' all over the world. You know, rockets for planes and ground-to-air miss—everything you can imagine. But it was the world's largest rocket-manufacturing

plants. We still have remnants of the old rocket facilities there. And we still have the old storages and the igloos that are now covered by dirt, you know, seven or eight feet of dirt 'cause they stored these rockets in there in case of attack. They didn't want, you know, the whole southern end of Arkansas blowing up, you know. But it was the world's largest manufacturing—the Naval Ammunition Depot, NAD, as we called it. And they built a housing development out there, and probably thousands of people came in, and there are still defense contractors out there who are still working in some of the old facilities that the US Navy constructed. And they still employ a few hundred people, but it was not like it was then. [00:32:47] The traffic across the river out to the plant—every day going to work and coming back from work—not only in Camden but Fordyce and Bearden and Magnolia and all around in that part of the state was just packed with people going to work and leaving work from the Naval Ammunition Depot. My father had been the sheriff, but the new sheriff basically confiscated [*laughs*] my dad. Says, "Man, Edgar, you gotta come back and help me. I'm over my head. All these people comin' in." No background checks, fingerprinting—some of the—a lot of criminal element came. And food was hard to get. We couldn't keep—they couldn't keep enough food. You would go into a cafe and a hamburger—you know, they were almost all shut off of hamburger, you know, to the crowd out there in the dining part of the cafes. [00:33:46] And the hamburger—I mean, it was just unbelievable. It

was an unreal type of existence. And my dad was, course, in the Chevrolet business, and as fast as he could get cars and trucks, he was selling 'em. He was selling jalopies, you know, everything that would—because the car manufacturing companies in Detroit were closed down. They were makin' tanks . . .

SL: Tanks.

DP: . . . and whatever. But—and so it was a heyday for a car dealer. And I remember one day after the war—a few—two or three years—I remember my dad tellin' my mother—he said, "Man," he said, "this car business is tricky. I may have to think about hiring a salesman, you know?" [*SL laughs*] You know, he didn't have to have a salesman. All he did was took orders. And people would go at night down to the train depot—that's where they—how they moved the cars during that period—on trains—how they sent them out to the dealerships. When there were cars being manufactured, they'd go down there and see if there were cars coming in that night 'cause my dad had a list up on his wall of all the townspeople who had wanted a new Chevrolet car or truck. And everybody could see where they were on the list, and they would go into his office and look and say, "Well, we're number nineteen," you know, or "We're number twenty-six," you know. And they'd go down and start counting and see about how far it was before they—their car or their truck would be coming in. [00:35:17] But it was—those are things that I remembered. I remember Jim's Cafe and the Sanitary Cafe, and I remember the Duck Inn, and all of those

places were just swamped at night with construction workers and people. And it was an exciting time to be in Camden.

SL: I wonder what the criteria . . .

DP: And the paper mill, of course, we had the . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . paper mill, and that was big. Yeah, excuse me.

[00:35:48] SL: I wonder what the criteria was for locating that rocket plant in Camden.

DP: They wanted it in middle America. They didn't want it near a coastline, and they wanted a lot of space. And the Murphy farm and everything just kind of worked.

SL: It was defensible for . . .

DP: Yeah, it was defensible, and it kind of worked. And I also think they felt like they could attract the right type of workers into that region to service this plant. There was a company from Maine that came down and built the facilities, and some of those people are still living in Camden that were the owners of that company from Maine that came down. Marden, *M-A-R-D-E-N*, were their names. There—Wiggins-Marden and they were from—I can't remember which city in Maine. But they came down, and some of the Mardens stayed and are still there to this day. Wesley Marden, for example, a wonderful citizen of Camden in the community. But he still lives in Camden, Arkansas, after all these years. And he came down as a child, and we were in grade school together during that period—junior high, probably. But

those were good memories. Those were real good memories, and we even had a taxi company that started up, you know.

SL: Well, shortage of transportation.

DP: Yeah, we needed buses and—to haul people back and forth and were goin' to work and—but it was a sort of a thrilling time to be in Camden and to be alive in that era and watch it all happen.

[00:37:33] SL: I want to go back on some of this genealogy, and I want to finish up on your dad's side, but then I want to talk about Susie Pryor and her family. Do you rem—did you ever know your grandmother's maiden name?

DP: Well, my . . .

SL: Ed—it would've been Edgar's . . .

DP: Oh, oh . . .

SL: . . . mom.

DP: I'm embarrassed here a moment—but she would have been a Sorrells, *S-O-R-R-E-L-L-S*.

SL: Okay.

[00:38:04] DP: And they're still stalwarts in that part of Dallas County, right on the border. Winfred Sorrells is still kinfolks of mine. In fact, we sold our farm in Holly Springs just in recent years, actually, to Winfred Sorrells and his family, and his sons built two or three homes there out there on the family farm. And that's where—you know, down in that part of the state used to be cotton, but now it's pine trees. Cattle. Chickens. What have you. But very little row cropping

done in that part of Arkansas any longer. [00:38:49] And it got too expensive to grow and to harvest and too many hills and valleys, and machinery kind of took over, and many of the people who used to work in the cotton fields and plantations and whatever in that part of Arkansas, especially in southeast, they migrated to Detroit, St. Louis, to Cleveland to the automobile facilities and plants and what have you, so there was an out migration of workers. And course, the war affected—World War II affected a lot of that. Many, many of them went off to service and served honorably, I might say. But when the war was over, many of them went on to Detroit and to secure higher-paying jobs.

[00:39:43] SL: Are we—we're basically talkin' about African American population. Is that . . .

DP: To a large extent. Yes.

SL: Yeah. And now, there was also—wasn't there a big—a great flood in the late [19]20s?

DP: [Nineteen] twenty-seven.

SL: [Nineteen] twenty-seven. That also created some migration, some flight.

DP: It dislocated not only African American families; it dislocated white families and banks and farms and industries and whatever. Some towns were literally wiped out—wiped off the face of the map by the flood of 1927. Never a flood like that. In fact, *The Rising Tide* was one of the classic books written about the 1927 flood. And I

remember seeing a picture, and that picture's pretty well known. It may be in the state capitol today. I'm not sure. In McGehee, Arkansas, a Mr. DeWitt Poe, who was chairman of the local school board in McGehee—in the top story of his bank—in the second or third floor of his bank in downtown McGehee—standing there in the window handing out diplomas to kids who were coming by in rowboats . . .

SL: Oh!

DP: . . . to receive their diplomas. That was the flood of 1927. [00:41:06] But down in that part of Arkansas, anything south of Little Rock—anything—the Arkansas River, the Mississippi, the White—everything was inundated with oceans of water. And it didn't drain off very soon, either. I mean, it stayed for weeks and weeks. And the levees broke, and it was a time in history that changed parts of the South forever, and it changed agriculture forever. And it was pretty amazing. I don't know what else to—I was not born at the time.

SL: Yeah, I know, but . . .

[00:41:49] DP: So—but I read about it, and I studied that time, and I campaigned in all of those counties in the southern part of our state. Of course, the oil boom in El Dorado affected the southern part of our state, especially around El Dorado and Smackover and whatever. And many people don't know this, but one of the world's richest people, H. L. Hunt of Dallas, Texas—H. L. Hunt lived [*clears throat*—excuse me—at the old Orlando Hotel, and he lived there, and he worked in the oil fields during the day. And one night he couldn't pay his hotel bill, and

he got in a crap game, and he won an oil lease. And it was down at—around—it was down at Smackover. And he tried to sell that lease or get the Berg family to be partners with him in this lease. And they said, "Oh, go away, Mr. Hunt." [SL laughs] Said, "We've got so—we've got drawers full of these leases, and they're worthless." Well, the Bergs went to their grave regretting that because they had offered to cut him in 50/50 if he would loan 'em \$10,000 for six months till he got this well drilled and whatever. [00:43:08] And he hit oil, and he struck oil, and one well led to another and one—and anyway, he was the biggest oil tycoon in the world at the time. He started where? Smackover, Arkansas, right south of Camden—actually, in Union County, but just over the border. But he lived in Camden. Lived at the hotel.

[00:43:28] SL: At the Orlando Hotel in Camden.

DP: Orlando Hotel. The Orlando no longer exists today. It was on South Adams Street. He couldn't pay his hotel bill, so the Orlando allowed him to be the night clerk. So H. L. Hunt was the night clerk for a period of weeks or months at the Orlando Hotel, and he was a tough guy. He was a—there've been books written about him and his many, many marriages and so forth. But it was pretty fascinating part of our history and lore. And I'm sure some of those stories got expanded as generations went on. But once again, storytelling—and it makes it all that more interesting. [00:44:10] I—H. L. Hunt story—I never met him except one time, 1969, January. Richard Nixon was about to be

president. Winthrop Rockefeller was our governor. Winthrop Rockefeller had purchased—he was chairman of the Republican Party. Nixon was coming in. Rockefeller was chairman of the state party, was governor, and he had a box at one of the ballrooms for one of the dances for the inauguration of Richard Nixon. Well, they were all doin' something else. The Fulbrights were gonna be in the box. The Pryors were gonna be in the box. The Hammerschmidts were going to be in the box, in the Rockefeller box. And so we looked up—I looked up one time. Everybody was gone, out on the dance floor or doin' something, and I was in the box. And here comes this old man staggering by, and he was falling. And I went out there in a little hallway, and I said, "Sir, are you"—he said, "I'm sick. I'm dizzy. I'm fainting." And I said, "Come here. Sit down." [00:45:11] So I came in. I found somebody, got him some water, and kind of revived him. He was, gosh, he must've been well up in his eighties at that time. And I said, "I'm Congressman Pryor from Arkansas." I was in the House at that time. And he said, "Well, I'm from Texas. My name's H. L. Hunt." [SL laughs] And so H. L. Hunt was in the—we got him revived, and by that time Governor Rockefeller had c—and then here comes Senator Fulbright up. And H. L. Hunt had just given thousands of dollars and everything to Fulbright's opponent in the previous election. And Fulbright saw H. L. Hunt in the box, and he refused to come into the box and sit with H. L. Hunt. So he and Betty Fulbright went off and visited with other people, but H. L. Hunt didn't stay very long. He

meandered off and shuffled off. But that was my only time to meet H. L. Hunt.

SL: Wow.

DP: One of the world's richest people.

SL: So . . .

[00:46:07] DP: But here—and Rockefeller had to sort of ask H. L. Hunt to leave. He said, "You know, I've got other people, Mr. Hunt." So this was one of the world's richest people being told by another one of the—Rockefeller telling a Hunt—he said, "You know, somebody else is coming back for your seat. If you don't mind, I'll help you find another seat somewhere." But the Fulbrights and the Hunts did not have a good relationship. [*Laughter*]

SL: That's a good story.

DP: Arkansas lore.

[00:46:36] SL: That's a good story. Okay, now, let's talk about your mom's side of her family. Now, was she—were—the Newtons were Camden . . .

DP: Old Camdenites. Old Ouachita County settlers. And I wish I could go back in history and talk more about that, but they were there basically because of the river and river trade. They were merchants. They were also—they had a farm. They farmed outside of Camden. But the Newtons—and they were also politically active, and one of the Newtons was usually sheriff of the county. And sheriffs at that time had an enormous amount of clout. They were, I guess you would say, were

sort of the kingpins of the county—the local sheriff. As we still say, you know, there might be a presidential race or a governor's race goin' on—US Senate race and all this or a congressional race, but what the people—what the old settlers really are interested in is, "Who's runnin' for sheriff?" They want to know who's running for sheriff. And the sheriffs had a lot of influence at that time. And I think probably during the Prohibition era, they gained even more power because they kind of had the authority to say, "Okay, you can operate, or you can operate." Or "You can have a still out there in the Red Hill Township, or you can have a still down at Louann," or something. [00:48:15] But they had a lot of power, just raw power, and very few—we didn't have quorum courts at that time. You didn't have a lot of what you might call . . .

SL: Oversight.

DP: . . . democratic process alive and well. It was pretty autonomous, and the sheriffs were paid very little. They were paid, I think, \$4- to 5,000 a year. But anyway, that—they had power. Immense power. The county judges had a lot of power. They decided which road got gravel on them. They decided which road ultimately got asphalt. They decided if you needed to blacktop your driveway—whose driveways got blacktopped or graveled. I mean, the sheriffs had a lot—I mean, the judges had a lot of that sort of power innately in their county offices, you know, in their official positions.

[00:49:16] SL: The sheriffs were kind of where the rubber met the road as far as the community goes, too. I mean, they probably kept tabs

on—they knew everybody in the . . .

DP: They . . .

SL: . . . county or the . . .

DP: . . . knew everything. They knew everything. They knew everybody.

[00:49:33] And my dad being the sheriff and also the Chevrolet dealer gave him, I guess you would say, additional power. He was only sheriff four years, and then he stepped aside. He didn't run again for reelection. He could've been reelected, I think—I'm sure. But he stepped aside and—I never will forget—in a sheriff's race he said—he had good friends running for sheriff and even a cousin running for sheriff. And he said, "I"—one of his chief deputies, Bill Smead, was running for sheriff, and he said, "Okay, everybody. I'm neutral. I'm taking no part in this race." Well, one night a man got on the radio—not television. Didn't have TV at that time—and called my dad, "Boss Pryor." He said, "I know Boss Pryor is supporting my opponent, and we gotta clean out the courthouse and [*SL laughs*] get rid of folks like Boss Pryor." [00:50:32] And I remember we were sitting in my grandmother's bedroom, my mother and my dad and I. We were hunkered down listening to KAMD and hearing this man talk about my dad—he—injecting him into the governor's race and—excuse me—into the sheriff's race to be his successor. And my dad got up kind of bewildered, and he didn't know what to do. And my mother says, "Edgar, where are you goin'?" He said, "I'm goin' out across the river." Well, that was a code word. He was gettin' ready to go out

there and get his guys, and they were gonna gang up, and they were gonna support Bill Smead for sheriff 'cause if the guy put him in the race, he was gonna be in the race. And so Bill Smead was elected. But he went all over the county supporting Bill Smead, and Bill Smead was elected [*SL laughs*] sheriff of the county. [00:51:25] It was strange, but I remember him sayin', "I'm goin' out across the river." And one of the guys he went out to see was Howard Russell. Howard Russell had immense political power out there in his box out north of Camden, out across the Ouachita River, out around Harmony Grove and Bearden, all throughout there, and even up to Holly Springs. And he had a lots of old kinfolks and family connections and who knows what else. But he went out to see Mr. Russell, and he went out to see the Purifoy's, and up around Red Hill and Chidester, and the Lamkins up in the hills of Chidester. And he just went out to see these old families, and he got them moving, and course, Bill Smead was elected sheriff at my father—who my father supported.

[00:52:17] SL: Were you too young to be a part of that early politicking?

I mean . . .

DP: I was way too young, but I hung around the—after school many times, I would go down—out—I'd walk across the—I'd walk downtown. We just lived just a few blocks from downtown, our Chevrolet place, and the courthouse. And I'd meander down to the Chevrolet place to see what was happening. All those guys down there were nice to me, and we'd play catch, and you know, I had a new baseball glove. It cost

eight dollars. It was in the Goodyear store, and I would look at it for weeks, and [*SL laughs*] my dad says if I would mow yards and whatever and if I would earn four dollars, he would pitch in four dollars. And so I got the new glove, and Harry McGuire and Woody Thompson and all these guys—they'd just gotten back from the war, and we'd stand back there in the garage at the Chevrolet place, and we'd play catch back and forth. [00:53:16] Anyway, it was a good time to be there. And then across the way at the courthouse—I would like to go over there and—especially if there was a big murder trial. I would love to go to the courthouse and sit in the courtroom, even as a kid, and watch the lawyers. And I remember William I. Purifoy was defending Bill Turner one time. Bill Turner had killed—allegedly had killed his ex-wife's boyfriend and—big case. And William I. Purifoy in his white suit was defending Bill Turner, and he lost the case. Bill Turner went to prison. But I would love those old trials, and when Sid McMath would come to town with a big trial or making a political speech, I'd always go to the courthouse and hear Governor McMath running or whether he—I remember Bill Fulbright coming in 1944. I was ten years old. I could tell you right now where he parked his car. And he was running for US senator. He was a congressman. And he parked his car and I—and he got out and drove himself—put his jacket on, walked over to the courthouse lawn, and made a speech. [00:54:34] Course, they had sound trucks preceding all the candidates, telling that "Bill Fulbright, candidate for Senate, will be—

courthouse at two p.m. this afternoon. Everybody welcome." Well, there'd be watermelons and bands and pies, and you know, everybody would just gravitate, and sure enough, the whole lawn at the courthouse would be filled up with people to hear these candidates come through. It'd be "Uncle Mac" McCrell, and he was not only running for governor but he was selling flour [*SL laughs*], Gold Medal flour, and he had a string band with him—Uncle Mac. [00:55:11] And I remember goin' up as a kid, and I said, "Uncle Mac, you're runnin' for governor." "Yeah, I'm runnin' for governor." I said, "Well, what is your platform?" Here's a fifteen or five—ten-year-old kid askin' a guy runnin', "What's your platform, Uncle Mac?" And he would reach in his pocket, and he'd pull out a New Testament and said, "Son, it's all right in this little book right here, in the New Testament. That's my platform." And I—it was show business. It was showbiz. And it was—gosh, I remember all those guys comin' through town. Jack Holt, Uncle Mac McCrell, Sid McMath, Ben Laney, all these people who would go to the courthouse. I was gravitated to the—I gravitated to that. And then on election night was special. At the Chevrolet place right across the street it was the hotbed, and everybody was in the Chevrolet place or at the courthouse or across the street down the way at the *Camden News* because they had an enormous blackboard. And W. R. "Chicken" Holleman was the announcer, and he would say, "Okay, Red Hill Township, Uncle Mac McCrell, 12; Ben Laney, 19; blah, blah, blah; Sid McMath, 42." You know, he'd post it, and everybody

would cheer . . .

SL: Every box.

DP: . . . or boo or whatever we had. I think we had thirty-two boxes in the county—maybe not that, maybe. Maybe twenty-two. And they had a loudspeaker there, and that was at the *Camden News*. And some of the boxes—it'd take 'em a day or two to get into [*SL laughs*] the courthouse. And for obvious reasons they just . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . would hold them out, probably across the river. But they would ultimately get there, and they would be the deciding factors in some of the local races. But all that stuff and listenin' to everybody talk and watchin' 'em all and the aroma, I guess you would say, of election night and it was the cigar smoke and sweat and heat and anger and happiness and cheering and booing and [*SL laughs*] just the electricity of those times were special to me. And I think that influenced me and . . .

[00:57:28] SL: It sounds like as much excitement and influence as maybe church revivals had.

DP: Oh yeah.

SL: Or were . . .

DP: Well, they were . . .

SL: . . . who were . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . also kind of show-time . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . things.

[00:57:40] DP: It was show time. It was showbiz at that time. It was show business. [*SL laughs*] And these characters who were running, they were showmen. There weren't any women that I can recall running. Hattie Caraway had been elected in 1932, but she had been defeated by Senator Fulbright about that period of time. And John McClellan tried to defeat Hattie Caraway. He had been a congressman, and he ran against Hattie for the Senate, and she defeated Senator McClellan. Congressman McClellan, then. And so he was in Malvern practicing law. And he—but he was from Camden, also. He had practiced trial law in Camden. He was a trial lawyer. Very good one, I might say. But after he'd become a congressman, he—and was defeated by Hattie Caraway—he moved—well, let's see, he had lived in Malvern first, and then he came to Camden.

[00:58:47] But we—when we ran against each other in [19]72, McClellan and Pryor, that race, we both still claimed Camden as our home and as our voting place, you know.

[00:59:03] SL: Well, wasn't there a relationship between your father and Senator McClellan? And the—and who was the mayor of Camden back then?

DP: Well, the mayor of Camden was Don Harrell Sr.

SL: Okay.

DP: He was mayor of Camden. I guess Don Harrell was mayor of Camden

at that period. But my dad was prominent in politics, prominent in business. Good, healthy, strong town. John McClellan had come to Camden and practiced law with the Gaughan McClellan Sifford Law Firm. And he was their trial guy. He did all the trial work and very good. Very dramatic lawyer. And the home where he lived is still there, still beautiful. It's been restored. [00:59:53] And John McClellan's wife died. A son was—or two sons—one son was killed in the war; one son was killed in a train car accident on his way to college. And John McClellan went into—I don't want to say depression, but he was depressed. He was very depressed and very low. And he was involved in the campaign for the US Senate, and he was out of money. And his office was upstairs, down the street from my dad's Chevrolet business. And one Saturday afternoon my dad heard a rumor that McClellan was gonna pull out of the race. [01:00:41] And so he was at the Chevrolet place, and he walked down the street, walked up the creaky, old stairs, and John McClellan was sitting in his office, in the law office. He was at an old Underwood typewriter. He was sittin' there typing up his statement resigning or withdrawing from the Senate race. Tick, tick, tick, tick, John McClellan here, pecking it out. No one else in the office. And my dad says, "John, what are you doin'?" He says, "Edgar, I'm withdrawing from the race." He said, "I'm depressed. I don't know what to do." And he said, "I—I'm—I can't keep goin', and I'm out of money." [01:01:22] Well, my dad picked up the phone and called Garland Hurt, the president of the local

bank. "Garland, open up the bank." [*SL laughs*] And Garland Hurt came and opened up the bank. He then—my dad called Tyndle Fooks, who owned the Grapette Company. It was flourishing at that time. "Tyndle, meet us at the bank in twenty minutes." [*SL laughs*] He called Red Daniels. "Red, come on, get up! I know you're at the country club, but get up out of your seat and come on down. Meet me at the bank." Well, four men—and Don Harrell—Don Harrell, Tyndle Fooks, and Red Daniels, and my dad signed a note for \$10,000—that's a lot of money—to keep John McClellan in the race. And they took it over across the street and gave it to him—said, "If you ever get a chance to pay it back, pay it back. If you don't, we're square." And they kept him in the race, and he won the race for the US Senate. [01:02:22] But my dad orchestrated that bank loan or whatever it was at that time and had Mr. Hurt open the bank and give him the money. And they gave it to John L. McClellan, and he won the race. So here I am, years later—John McClellan and I are opposing one another. Isn't that weird?

SL: Ironic.

DP: Yeah, it's . . .

SL: Serendipitous.

DP: It—it's one of the little Arkansas quirky stories that not a lot of people know about but I—it was part of the lore. That probably got exaggerated a little bit. I don't know if Red Daniels was at the country club or not, but [*SL laughs*] sounds better.

SL: [*Laughs*] It's probably where he was.

DP: He—but he probably was. Red was . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . probably out there.

[01:03:00] SL: Well . . .

DP: I don't . . .

SL: . . . it paints an image of what kind of guy Red was—what he liked to do.

DP: Well, and it tells you a lot about a small town.

SL: Yeah.

DP: You know, where you knew the banker. "Come to open the bank up, Garland." [*SL laughs*] Two or three o'clock [*laughter*] on a Saturday afternoon, you know. [*Laughter*] Hot summertime.

[01:03:15] SL: Okay. Well, now I . . .

Trey Marley: Scott, we're sitting at about an hour right now, if you want to take a break.

SL: You want to take a little break?

DP: Yeah, yeah.

[Tape stopped]

[01:03:20] SL: DP, we're in our second set here, and it's so easy for me to sit here and listen to these stories. I . . .

DP: They're corny.

SL: No, they're not corny. They're real life, and they breathe life into this interview. And I can't—I'm just gonna let you go wherever you want

to go, but I do want—I'll try to get us back—I'm gonna get us back to Susie Pryor and her family and what Susie was like. What—do—what is your earliest memory of your mom?

[01:03:58] DP: Well, she was a force. She had four children. I was the third child. My brother was six years older. My older sister, three years older. Then I came along, and then my younger sister, three years younger—Elinor. So my mother was a force. For example, one thing I remember—during the war—world w—it—so—the war affected us, and it affected everyone. And it affected everyone in Camden, everyone in Arkansas—affected everyone in the USA. But it affected small towns in particular ways, and I think it brought us together more than anything—any other one situation—event, I should say.

[01:04:52] But I remember one time in the movie theater—we had the Strand, the Malco, and the Ritz in Camden. And we had a drive-in movie also, or two. But I remember one day at the Rialto Theatre I was sittin' there and during the intermission—seemed like they had intermissions or somethin'—the—it was packed on a Saturday afternoon or Saturday night, and the lights went on. Well, my mother came out on the stage from behind the curtain, and I was sitting out in the audience. I said, "My gosh, that's my mother!" [*SL laughs*] Well, she was makin' an appeal to the people of Camden to give money or old tires or anything—she was tryin' to get a community house built for children, underprivileged children, and for the children of the workers out at the defense plant, NAD. She was tryin' to raise money

to build what she called a community house where they could go during the day, and it'd be like a nursery, I guess, or somethin' today, but she did it. She got local businesses to give money and tires and car parts and just everything you could imagine that you could barter or sell. But she took that on as an event, as a challenge. [01:06:10] Also, my mother, of course, in the early [19]20s, as I've stated, ran for circuit clerk and was not successful. That did not deter her. She ultimately ran for school board. She was probably—man, she was the first woman, I guess, to be on a school board. One of the early school board members—female—in the whole state. But this would have been in the late [19]40s, and she was elected to the school board. And she campaigned vigorously for that job. She—strong believer in education, strong believer in reading, strong believer in, I guess you would say, parental relationships with their children and families. I know politicians talk about family values. My mother never talked about family values, but she practiced family values. [01:07:04] And my mother became—she was always active. She became the first female elder ever in our Presbyterian Church in Camden. She was an elder in our church. She sang in the choir. When my dad died at age fifty-two in 1952, he had always begged my mom at age fifty to leave the choir and sit out in the congregation with the family. And she had started doing that in—when she got to be fifty, she sat and—in the—with the—in the family pew, as we called it, at the old church, the Presbyterian church. So she was always active, and then in the

1950s, mid-[19]50s, my mother, who was a very religious person, very devout, did not believe in drinkin' or smokin' or anything of that nature. [01:08:00] And her favorite movie star was Irene MacDonald because Irene MacDonald did not smoke or drink or curse. So she liked Irene MacDonald. And—but my mother developed a relationship with a family of missionaries that were involved—not just the Presbyterian Church, but they were ecumenical, I guess you would say, nondenominational missionaries. And they talked my mother into going to the jungles of British Guiana in 1956. And she spent a year in the jungles of British Guiana in a straw hut. And she taught English to the children of the missionaries while the missionaries went further downstream, probably into the Amazon area. And the missionaries went further down into the southern part of, I guess, the Amazon basin. I'm not sure exactly where. But she was in British Guiana. May have had my geography a little mixed up but—in this great river system. [01:09:10] And every night my mother would take all these little children down to the river and bathe with the crocodiles. [*SL laughs*] And she would get out there first and beat the water out and scare the crocodiles and snakes away. And at night—the natives had hollowed out a little airstrip where the plane from Miami would bring—where he brought my mother in to spend that year. And they were curious about my mother—white woman there in the mission field in British Guiana in the jungle. And they built a straw hut for my mother to live in, but at night she would look around—there were big cracks in

the hut. She could see all these natives peeping in at her. They were so curious about her. They wanted to know what she had in her suitcase. They'd want—they couldn't speak a word of English, of course. [01:10:12] And when she landed, there were probably fifty or sixty of the native men—here, she takes off from—she'd been at the Fontainebleau Hotel. She gets on a [*SL laughs*] private, little, private Piper Cub, flies into South America and British Guiana in the jungle, and at the little airstrip here were standing probably fifty or sixty totally naked Indians. You know, my mother was [makes a face] [*laughter*]*—you know, but she got used to it. You know, it was just part of it. And—but she spent all—I would say a year—she spent almost a year. My mother finally had so many bites from insects all over her body that I think that's one of the reasons—or she would've stayed longer, I think. [01:11:06] And she loved these people, and they loved her. But she had so many huge bites all over her body and so many infected sores from all these strange parasitic insects and what have you. But as a tribute to my mom, when the plane came back to pick her up a few months later—maybe a year later—and flew into the little airstrip that they had hollowed out in the jungle for her. They went out into the jungle and captured for her and put in a basket about an eleven-foot python snake—alive [*SL laughs*]*—and presented it to her in a ceremony as she was getting on the plane. Well, they sealed it up and everything, and here she was, sittin' there with this eleven-foot python snake in this little basket. And they gave her—**

they made a huge bow for her, bow and arrows, which we still have, and that was—you know, they couldn't go to Neiman Marcus and buy anything for her, but—so they went out and got her a snake, a python. She promptly got off the plane and got a taxi and took it to the Miami zoo and made a gift from the Wai Wai Indians in the field—in the jungles of British Guiana. [01:12:30] But my mother was someone who believed in adventure and believed if you wanted to get somethin' done, just do it yourself. So she was an activist, and she was always tryin' to better the school system in our town. And my mother taught a Bible class in the Second Presbyterian Church in Camden. Well, we were in the First Presbyterian Church. The Second Presbyterian Church were—was for the African Americans, and that was their church. We had our church; they had a—but my mother taught a Bible class at the black Presbyterian church, if I may call it that. And she did that for years. [01:13:15] And as a result, she cemented relationships with the African American community and—in our little town. And there was segregation. Lincoln High School was the black high school. Camden High School—that's why ultimately there's no Camden High School anymore and no Lincoln High School anymore. It all merged, and it's Fairview High School now—lawsuits and civil-rights actions and whatever. But integration came to a bitter end. I remember the first time that a black football player played in Camden on the—for the Camden High School. And they had to—they had the state police—they called the state police. They didn't know what was

gonna happen that night. But he received the kickoff, and he ran ninety-nine yards for a touchdown, and after that—that solved a great deal of the integration problem.

SL: In Camden.

DP: In Camden.

SL: Yeah.

[01:14:12] DP: And they were cheering him and whatever. But that—it was segregated, and I must say this, that black citizens kind of, if I may say it this way, lived in a certain part of Camden, and white people lived in another part of Camden. They had a high school; we had a high school. They had their churches; we had our churches. Was it a good system? Of course not. Of course it was not good. Anyway, they could not eat in the restaurants most of my early years. I remember that. Of course, they couldn't be in the country club. I remember that. If they wanted to be in the country club to begin with. I don't know. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . they, I'm sure, would not be admitted. No, it was not a good system.

[01:15:09] SL: Was there an African American business community in . . .

DP: Yes.

SL: . . . their part of town?

DP: Yes.

SL: And . . .

DP: Down on South Adams Street, mostly. And I think you've interviewed one of the descendants of one of the south African . . .

SL: We . . .

DP: . . . leaders.

SL: We love Camden and . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . and the Ferguson family . . .

DP: That's right.

SL: . . . there.

[01:15:27] DP: And they had Ferguson's Lounge, Ferguson's cafe and . . .

SL: Yes.

DP: Yeah, they had a—and then there was the Busy Bee Cafe and all down in south Camden. And there was a man, a great entrepreneur, an African American named Jim Sumners, and he and my dad were great friends. My dad was sellin' cars and trucks, and he wouldn't ask any kind of bank clearance or paper or anything. Jim Sumners would come to the Chevrolet place and, "Mr. Pryor, I'd like to have that Chevrolet truck over there. I need it." And he said, "Okay, you take it and pay me when you can, Jim." And that was kind of it, you know. That was relationships that were formed over years of doin' business.

[01:16:16] And I'll never forget one time, and I tell this to John Ed Anthony and other Anthony descendants. One year Mr. Garland Anthony up at Bearden at the lumber mill ordered I think it was eleven

log trucks and—from my dad. And they came in by train, of course, or however they came. And my dad had to deliver these log trucks on a Saturday afternoon up to Bearden, twenty-two miles away. So he got the parts manager and the assistant parts manager and the head of the garage and the Texaco guy out in front—anyway, he had all the—everybody—and I drove to Bearden with my dad in one of those trucks. And we delivered these eleven log trucks to Mr. Garland Anthony up at Bearden, Arkansas, at the Bearden Lumber Company. And Mr. Anthony and my dad had grown up around Holly Springs, so they knew one another. And here's how they knew one another—how well they knew one another. When—my dad—when we drove up with these eleven log trucks to the Bearden Lumber Company, we said, "Where is Mr. Garland Anthony?" He said, "Oh, he's back over there in the hut. He's asleep. He's sick. He's had flu all week." And so we knocked on the door, and he said, "Come in." And so we went in, my dad and I did, and here's Mr. Anthony on an old cot, and there was an old wood-burning stove over in the corner. And sometimes you can smell sickness.

SL: Sure.

[01:17:49] DP: And we smelled sickness in that old trailer or whatever it was—or hut—this old fire—it was a cold January or February afternoon—Saturday—and my dad says, "Garland, are you sick?" And he said, "Yes, Edgar, I've got the flu." And my dad says, "Well, Garland, we've got your trucks outside. We brought the trucks." He

said, "How many do you have, Edgar?" He said, "Got eleven." And Mr. Anthony said, "Well, Edgar, look under the cot. You'll see a coffee can. Reach in there and get how much I owe you." He didn't ask him the price. Wasn't [*laughs*] any contract signed. Wasn't any notes negotiated. No bargaining. "Get what I owe you." And I remember my dad poured that coffee can out of money on Mr. Anthony's cot, and he counted out how much money he owed him for eleven log trucks, which was significant.

SL: Was significant. Yeah. That's a lot of . . .

DP: You know, in those . . .

SL: . . . of cash.

DP: Especially in those—and Mr. Anthony never asked the price. He's—"Get what I owe you." [*SL laughs*] That was the relationship those fellows had—those people had at that time. And it was pretty special to see all this, and even today, those relationships have a greater meaning for me now than they did then. [01:19:13 ] And when my dad passed away very suddenly in 1952 of leukemia—they didn't know what leukemia was at the time, and it just consumed his whole body, just like leukemia consumed the body of your brother, Scott, Porter Lunsford, at a very early age in the thir—when he was in his thirties. It consumed my dad at age fifty-two, and he died in Temple, Texas. I had just enrolled at Henderson—at that time, Henderson State Teachers College in Arkadelphia. My dad died the first week I was there. [01:19:50] But anyway, when my dad passed away, we were

going through his possessions and his things. And we looked in his billfold, and there was just little scribbles of notes. "John Adams, Bearden, owes me \$300 on truck. Joe Smith and family bought parts for their car, and they couldn't pay twelve hu—\$12.50." Or so—there were all these notes in there—you know, several hundred dollars, maybe several thousand dollars, of notes that were owed to my dad. And ultimately, all of 'em came forward, ultimately, after his death and paid our family back whatever they felt they owed him, you know, or owed the estate. [01:20:37] Only time in my life I ever saw my dad mad was during the war, and he got a truck and—from—and they got this truck in. A blue, little Chevrolet pickup truck, pretty little truck. Probably [19]46 model—[19]47, right after or right during the war or around that period when trucks were just being made again. And this man came in from north of the river. He says, "Edgar, my son's comin' home from the war. He's lost an eye in the battle of Guam," or somethin' like that or Iwo Jima—"and he's comin' home. We've got to get our crop to market, and we've got to have a truck." So my dad says, "Well, **Will**, there's a truck comin' in Friday afternoon, but it's—there's a ho—you know, there's two or three hundred people ahead of you." [01:21:31] So they got back there, and they started lookin'—so my dad said, "Well, I tell you what we're gonna do. We're gonna call everybody on this list and tell 'em the situation, tell 'em if they would take one notch further down the list, we're gonna sell you this truck." Every person on that list said, "Yes, sell him the truck. We'll take

another truck when it comes in. We'll just move down the list." Well, that may mean weeks or months of waiting for a . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . truck or a car. Got the truck and took pictures. The veteran ca—the father came. Got the truck. Picked it up. Was gonna meet his—we thought was gonna meet his son with the new truck at the railroad station the next day or two. He took the truck, turned right, went down the street to a used car lot. Sold it. Made \$500 profit. That was the only time I ever saw my dad mad.

SL: For good reason.

[01:22:31] DP: And he was mad. And he had to go cool off, I think. My mother thought he was gonna go kill this guy. But anyway, [SL *laughs*] the—that was the only time I ever saw him angry. Never heard him utter a cuss word or anything like that. But an interesting man. Self-made. A trader. He was an old-timey trader. He loved to trade. He'd trade a horse for a boat and then sell [SL *laughs*]*—*you know, he's just tradin' all the time. He loved trading, and he loved foolin' with people like that. And he was good at it. He was good, and he liked it.

[01:23:09] SL: Your mom—speaking of relationships and African American and white relationships—your—y'all had a house helper that had a really special relationship with your whole family, but particularly your mom. Is that—what was that lady's name?

DP: Scott, we're talkin' about the South, now. We're talkin' about—we're—

and I must say we're talkin' about the Old South.

SL: Yeah.

[01:23:32] DP: We're talkin' about the South that, frankly, is not as good as the South is today. I'm—I will say that without reservation. My—the—about the time I was born, I think, maybe even the day I was born, my mother hired this woman, African American woman, named Mary. And she came to work for us, and she worked for our family about thirty years—almost thirty years. And she raised the children. My mother was always doin' somethin', goin' to Little Rock, some convention, or doin' somethin' locally or rai—you know, doin' all this stuff, running for office and helpin' in political campaigns of one sort or another. And always involved with charities, and so she was gone. She was a doer, my mother was, so she needed someone to help. So Mary cooked and everything. In fact, when my dad was the sheriff—and actually he was helping the sheriff, Bill Smead, at that time. He was no longer sheriff. But Mary cooked for the prisoners at the jail every day. And she would get in our home about five thirty.

[01:24:44] She would cook bacon, eggs, coffee, whatever. And Biggie Young from the jail would walk up to our house to the back door and knock on the door. And Mary would give him this old basket, old wicker basket, and it would have toast, bacon, eggs, coffee pots, everything in there. He would walk back downtown, go into the jail, and feed the, as we called 'em, the jailbirds. But Mary did the cooking for the jail residents, prisoners, and whoever in the county jail. Might

be ten, twelve of 'em in there at a time. So—and then she'd cook for us, and she'd clean the house, make the beds. Well, she'd come in there about five thirty in the morning and probably would leave five, six thirty, seven thirty, eight at night when—after supper. She was there three meals a day and fourth meal was for the jail. [01:25:43] And so she was, in many respects, was almost our surrogate mother. Mary Elizabeth McFadden Cooper Heard Wilburn. [SL laughs] And her mother was a slave, and I remember meeting—I've seen her mother. She would sit out on the front porch at Mary's house on Short Street—501 Short Street. And my dad tried to get Mary to drive—learn how to drive a car. And he said, "Mary, if you'll learn how to drive—because Susie, my wife, is having to go over there and pick you up every morning at five thirty and drive you back over here and then take you home at night. You learn how to drive, I will give you a car. I'll give you a nice little car." [01:26:22] And so I'd—and he assigned me the job of teaching Mary to drive. [SL laughs] Well, I took her out on the Mustin Lake Road, and I tried to teach Mary to drive. Well, the first day she drove off down an embankment, and we almost perished, but [SL laughs] anyway, it was okay. But she never did learn to drive. She said, "I just can't learn all this." About like I am, Scott, with computers and technology. [SL laughs] I just can't do all that stuff. But she never did learn to drive. Never did drive a day in her life. But we drove Mary back and forth. And I guess she was with us almost thirty years with my mother. And just a great woman. [01:27:05]

And my mother had a great relationship with Mary. She also had another lady that came in named Birdie. And Birdie would do a lot of the ironing and washing and that sort of thing. And Birdie and Mary and my mother just became close, close friends. And my mother would speak in their churches, and in, you might say, white funerals they would come to the Presbyterian or Methodist or Baptist Church and go to funerals with our friends and families and all like that.

[01:27:41] But it was the strangest thing. In the morning, Birdie or Mary would fix my mother's breakfast after we had all left home and everything. And my mother would sit there and have breakfast, and then my mother would fix their breakfast, and they would sit there. My—and—but sit there together? It just didn't happen. It was funny, but it just didn't happen. It was a unwritten something, but they had this bond between them, and I can't quite describe it. But it was very, very special. And when they passed on, every—you know, they shed tears together, and they'd worked on projects together and everything. I remember Mary sang in her church choir, and many times my mother would go to Mary's church and sing solos for Mary's church. And you know, and that was a big . . .

SL: Big deal.

DP: . . . that was a big thing for a white woman to come into their church and sing a solo or for a black woman to go to a white funeral at the old Presbyterian church. And I don't—these were just things that took a long time to happen. They happen now, and we don't think a lot about

it, but during that period they—it was pretty rare. But my mother was very progressive in that sense.

[01:29:09] SL: Mary would travel with you guys, too.

DP: Oh yeah. Like we would go to Hot Springs for a week or two on the lake. Rent a cabin. Mary would travel with us, and we had a hotel room for her. They had an African American hotel there off of Central Avenue, and she would stay at the hotel, and she would take the baths at the—at this hotel. They had a bathhouse in the hotel because during—at the heyday of Hot Springs, many of the black entertainers, the big-time entertainers, would be in Hot Springs. So this hotel had flourished, and they had a bathhouse for—to lure the black entertainment industry people to come there and to perform in Hot Springs. So—but Mary stayed at the hotel, and we stayed out at a cabin out at the lake. And yeah, Mary went on—and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina—we took Mary with us. She went on—she was our family. And out at Mustin Lake, we had a—we built a porch—a room for Mary. It was Mary's room, and she slept there in the summer out on this screened-in porch, and she loved being at the lake.

[01:30:26] When she caught up with her chores, she would take all of us down to Walker's dock, and we'd go fishin'. And Mary would teach us how to bait a hook with a worm or roll up a spitball or a bread ball or whatever, you know. And she would teach us how—and teach us old things, like if a turtle ever bites you, watch out. If a [SL laughs] turtle ever bites you, he won't let go till it thunders. You know, things

like that. And she used to tell us, also—I used to ask Don Tyson about this. I said, "Don, we had a woman who worked with us and our family for many, many years. And she told us never to eat a chicken born in May." I said, "What's that about?" And he said, "Boy, I don't know, but I hope she doesn't tell many people about that."

[*SL laughs*] But Mary always—she had great superstitions. And she would show us her hands, and she would—enormous hands. She was a large woman, and she would show us her hands that were lighter color than the rest of her hands and appendages. And—but the hands were lighter. And she's—she would tell us as children—she would say, "See these hands?" "Yeah." "Well, you know why they turned a different color than the rest of my body?" "No, Mary. Why?" "'Cause I told a lie one time [*SL laughs*], and God turned 'em a different color." And, you know, that was a big—"Oh, wow, we didn't know why your hands were a different color, Mary." Well, Mary made up a—90 percent of this. But those old stories still ring in our ears and memories. And she was very, very special. She was very special, and she was a part of our family. She was literally a part of our family.

[01:32:20] SL: You talked about your mom's faith and her allegiance to the Presbyterian churches and—was the—did that commitment to the church—did it flow into the house? Did y'all have a—did you do any kind of Bible studies or any kind of—was . . .

DP: There . . .

SL: . . . there a routine . . .

DP: My mother . . .

SL: . . . in the house . . .

DP: My mother, every Wednesday morning, especially on Graham Street—when she lived on Graham Street, which was a large house, my mother would have, I think, eighty or ninety people each Wednesday morning, I think, at ten o'clock for Bible study. And there were two ladies in town, Ann Stadler and Fannelle Shepperson. And they would come out and give Bible studies at our home. They were also teaching in the schools, which is illegal now. But they would give Bible studies in my mother's home. And you know, you get eighty or ninety women sittin' in a house—and I—every Wednesday morning I knew that was my chore was to move all those chairs into the living room and the den and the hallway and the dining room. [01:33:45] And so Ann and Fannelle could come and teach Bible. But that was a part of my mother, yeah. And she was—I—yeah, her allegiance—she was more religious—she was religious, but more than that she was spiritual. And her spirituality, I think, is something that moved into the DNA, especially, of Mark Pryor. To some extent, Scott, some extents Dee, but it really took hold in Mark Pryor's DNA and—her spirituality. And she was a spiritual woman and had a great faith, much stronger faith than I've ever had or ever will have. [01:34:38] And she strongly believed in prayer and whatever. And she didn't go around town to the cleaners and wherever it was, a shoe store, tryin' to save souls. But her life was so lived that she didn't have to. It spoke for itself.

And yeah, she was very spiritual. She—it was pretty amazing how her spirituality emanated from herself . . .

SL: From her presence.

DL: . . . into the community. Just a few feet from where we sit, there's a lady that just moved in who said, "Oh, I grew up in Camden, and I remember your mother used to come and teach us in Bible school," you know. And she was this wonderful woman who said this. I mean, this—they're still out there—her—the lessons she left with so many people. It's very, very interesting. She was an interesting presence. Yeah.

[01:35:48] SL: Was—growing up, was there a meal where all the kids and your mom and dad were at the table together? I mean, was there ever or was . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: Was everyone so scattered that they . . .

DP: We were scattered. We were so scattered. Everybody was doin' their own thing, but on Sunday mornings, I think, was our big meal. And this was before Sunday school and church. [01:36:14] We had a big breakfast and sometimes at noon on Sunday, especially when we moved from Washington Street to Graham Street. On noon we would usually invite the preacher [*laughs*] over or whoever, his family, or whoever on Graham Street. And we had a nice, big dining room, and we would usually have fried chicken and—but many, many times at breakfast on Sunday morning, we would have a big breakfast, and the

whole family was there. [01:36:46] One thing I remember about those breakfasts—why, I'll never know. My dad loved mackerel fish [SL *laughs*], and we had mackerel for breakfast. And we kept sayin', "Why do we"—"Yeah, I want you to eat that mackerel. It's good for you. It'll make your hair grow. It'll make your teeth strong. It'll—blah." So we ate this old salty mackerel and drank ten gallons of water or iced tea or whatever. But we had Sunday morning breakfast and then Sunday noon. The rest of the time it was kind of hit and miss I think, you know. 'Cause Dad was busy and sellin' cars, and my mother was busy doin' her thing, and I was playin' football or doin' somethin'. And so it was pretty scattered out the rest of the time, but I remember those two times, Sunday mornings and Sunday at noon.

[01:37:37] SL: What about a piano? Was there a piano in your house?

DP: My mother had a grand piano in the living room, and she could play it. And she could—she was a beautiful pianist, and she could play it, and when the ladies were there for Bible study, they had people who played the—I guess sometimes my mother. But anyway, she was a wonderful, accomplished musician. Not only could she sing, but she could also play the piano beautifully. And in addition to that, she was an artist. She took art lessons almost up until the moment she died. She was constantly learning about oil painting and whatever. And I still have her oil-painting box and some of the things—her easel, even, you know. And my mother was always learning about new things and exploring things of that nature, you know.

[01:38:37] SL: Well, I guess it was probably always hymns or church-related stuff as far as the music went in the house.

DP: Yeah, most of it was. But I mentioned Jeanette MacDonald while ago, who was this wonderful actress and singer. But she always loved Nelson Eddy. Nelson Eddy was a great baritone during all those periods of time. And he was this upright-lookin' guy. Parted his hair in the middle—you know, Vitalis or whatever. Nelson Eddy. And my mother loved Nelson Eddy, and we had on rpms or—yeah—those old, big, plastic . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . records—we had Nelson Eddy records and albums all the time—you know, playin' Nelson Eddy music [*SL laughs*] and sing—songs and—but yeah, she liked all that, and she enjoyed movies. She enjoyed movies. She wouldn't like some of the movies today because they were pretty—they would be too risqué, as she would say, for her. [01:39:33] But I remember my mother—we took a trip to Europe when I graduated from high school. My sister, younger sister, Elinor, and my mother and myself. And we went to Europe, and it was 1952 and it—you know, the war hadn't been over all that long—seven years—and still in—all through Europe were battle scars and war. Buildings still not reconstructed and, gosh, just unbelievable devastation still under repair. But in Paris, our group there were eleven us from Arkansas on that trip, and in Paris whoever our leader was of the trip had acquired trips for our entire little group to go to the

Folies Bergère—the Folies. And my mother didn't quite know what the Folies were, but anyway, here we were in this magnificent theater sitting there in red velvet seats and the—all the lights were basically dim. [01:40:40] Well, all of a sudden, out of the ceiling in the chandeliers—the chandeliers came down in this enormous, beautiful theater that had not been destroyed by the Nazis. And on each of the chandeliers was an almost-naked woman, you know, model.

SL: Yeah.

[01:41:06] DP: They were comin'—the dancers. [*SL laughs*] They were coming out of the ceiling on these chandeliers. And all of a sudden my mother realized we were in the wrong place. See, we didn't ever—we never went to a movie on Sunday. My father wouldn't even read the newspaper on Sunday. I mean, it was—the—and here my mother was, taking these two minor kids to the Folies in Paris with naked women all around and dancers [*SL laughs*] or semi-naked women. They had a little bit on. But oh, it was just awful. And I think during the intermission she gathered us up, and we got a taxi and went back to the hotel. [01:41:44] But she was always [*SL laughs*] afraid my dad was gonna find out about her taking us to the Folies. [*SL laughs*] But I think he would've enjoyed the Folies a lot more [*SL laughs*] than she did. But anyway, it was funny. That was just part of lore. My . . .

[01:41:57] SL: Well, did you ever—I mean, I've got—I've gotten the impression that your father was not quite as strict or . . .

DP: No, no, he wasn't. He was from the country. He was from Holly

Springs up the road. But he always loved his old farm up there. On Sunday afternoons many, many times, we would drive up there. He always had a few horses, also, amidst the cattle and the cows, and he knew each cow by name and the horses, of course. And he always had someone living in the old farmhouse up there, a family.

[01:42:31] And when I was growing up, he had a family named the Lochridges. The Lochridge family was Clark and Lucille Lochridge and seven children.

SL: Wow.

DP: And they lived out there on the farm in Holly Springs. And they looked after the fences and fed the cows and looked after the horses and did all of that. And the Lochridge family still lives up and down those old hills in Dallas County. There's several of 'em still there. We recently went to a funeral for one of the boys, Russell Lochridge, who passed away. We went down to south of Pine Bluff to his funeral. He lived in that area in the same town Johnny Cash grew up in. Not Dyess, but another—maybe it wasn't—anyway, one . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . of those little towns . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . outside of Pine Bluff.

SL: Kingsland?

DP: Outside—Kingsland. Yeah, Kingsland. We went to Kingsland to Russell Lochridge's funeral. And—but anyway, growing up in Camden

was pretty special. We had a great youth, I guess you would say.

[01:43:38] SL: Let's talk a little bit about technology, which probably means radio in the home. Did y'all gather around the radio as a family ever?

DP: What I remember gathering around the radio for were several events. One was on Friday night. We—especially my dad and my brother sometimes if he was there, myself and neighbors, we would gather around the radio in the living room. And my sister still has this radio, by the way and—an old Zenith radio. Great, old radio. Stood about four feet tall. And we would tune in on Friday night to the *Gillette Cavalcade of Sports*, which was boxing. [01:44:18] And I boxed for the local Boys Club. I wasn't very good, but I boxed for the local Boys Club some in their league. But we would always listen to the—on Friday night to the *Gillette Cavalcade of Sports*. Now, when we're out at Mustin Lake during the summer, especially, we really listened to the radio a lot out there. [01:44:40] And then the other times we would listen to the radio was during World War II when Franklin Roosevelt would speak to the country—his fireside chats. We would all gather around the radio. The first memory I have of gathering around the family radio and listening to the radio together was one Sunday afternoon in December, 1941, December 7. And Dad came running through the house. We'd been to church and whatever—Sunday school. He says, "Turn on the radio. The Japanese have bombed us." And he said, "Bombed us." And in fact, they had bombed us. They

had bombed Pearl Harbor, and we turned on the radio and listened to war news, transfixed. Finally, after a few hours, we got up and just walked downtown as a family. And it's real funny about a crisis. People like to be together. And we all walked downtown, and people were sitting in their cars listening to car radios. Everybody had their car radios turned—and everybody just kind of gathered downtown together and listened to war news, and you know. And the next day people left Camden. They left on buses and trains . . .

SL: Volunteer.

DP: . . . cars to join the Army and to go overseas to fight the Japanese and the Germans. [01:46:10] So that's what I remember about the war. The war had a real impact on us, especially when the rocket plant located there. It impacted all of us. It changed our lives. And my nephew—my cousin, Watts Pryor—Texarkana—Judson Pryor's son, he was killed in Germany in a Liberator, a B-24. He was the pilot. And the mother—I mean, my mother took umbrage a little bit. Watts and his crew named that particular plane, that particular B-24 Liberator—they named it "Hell's Express." And my mother—"Oh, the"—you know, this cursing—this—you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

[01:46:58] DP: But that was the name of it. "Hell's Express." And then my Aunt Grace—her son, J. E., was killed. He was in the army air—Watts Pryor was in the air force. But he—J. E. was killed in the war. So the war had personal impact on all of us, you know. World War II

was meaningful in our young lives.

[01:47:20] SL: Yeah, radio was quite a leap as far as technology goes.

Course, there were telephones. People could communicate that way.

DP: Oh yeah.

SL: Do—back—growin' up, did you have a telephone operator? You just picked up the phone?

DP: Oh yeah, you picked up the operator—you picked up the phone, and you know, you'd go [*SL laughs*] pick up the receiver, and Lucy Mae Phillips would come on the other end of the line, and I say, "Lucy Mae, this is David." She said, "I know." [*SL laughs*] She said, "I recognize your voice. Well, who do you need?" She—I said, "Where is Mother right now?" She says, "Oh, she's over at Mrs. Harrell's playin' bridge. [*SL laughs*] Or "She's down at the Goodgame's takin' a art lesson." Or "She's so-and-so, and she'll be home about four thirty this afternoon." I mean, she was—they called her "Central," and she was the central communicator. And her office or Lucy Mae's—the phone exchange was up over Morgan Hardware, you know, up—you'd go up these old creaky stairs, and that was the phone company. Bell Telephone, I guess, at that time. [01:48:29] But she manned the switchboard. And I was in her wedding. I was the ring bearer [*SL laughs*] in her wedding. I wore a satin suit. I'd just had a tonsil operation—tonsillitis—tonsillectomy. And my mother didn't want me to be in the wedding. She thought I was gonna die or somethin' like—she thought I looked pale and wan. But anyway, I was the ring bearer

in Lucy Mae Phillips's wedding. And she was the town operator. And that's how we—and our number was four eight—no—no, our telephone number at home was two one. [*SL laughs*] [01:49:07] And then it became two two one, and then it became Temple six eight three one—to two one one or whatever. And you know, now whatever it is. But that was—that's kind of where we started out. And actually, when we really started out, there were party lines. And you would be on the same line with maybe two or three other families, and you would pick up the phone—you could hear them talkin'. Well, a lot of times, of course, people were listenin' in to everybody's conversations. So you knew everything . . .

SL: There were no secrets. [*Laughs*]

DP: There were no secrets in Camden. [*SL laughs*] None. And that—it was part of life, you know. Part of life. But—yeah.

[01:49:49] SL: What about the neighborhood and the kids in the neighborhood growin' up. Did you have—were there other kids on that—I mean, did you play pickup touch football or . . .

DP: Oh, you played football all the time. Now, I lived—I moved off of Washington Street downtown when we bought the Roy Sturgis home out on Graham Street. We bought the Sturgis home, and we moved, and I was probably in the seventh or eighth grade. But up until that time, out in our front yard on Washington Street, man, it seemed like it was 24/7. We had football games goin' or somethin' to do with baseball or playin' baseball. We had a basketball goal in the backyard.

We had a vaulting standard back there where we could high jump, pole vault, and our—anyway—yeah, we had constant neighbors there at our home. [01:50:46] And over in—on Graham Street we had a basketball goal in the backyard also. But by that time we'd kind of moved away, I guess, from the sandlot of the front yard. We would—then, when we especially learned how to drive, we would go over to the real football field and have games, pickup games and whatever on Saturday mornings, especially. But yeah, we did an awful lot of that. And a lot of times on Saturday morning we would go over to the big football field, and we would play some of the—we'd play a team from Lincoln High School, from the black school.

SL: I was gonna ask.

DP: And it'd be the blacks versus the whites. Okay? And we were friends, you know. We'd sit down after the game and have—drink Grapettes together [*laughs*] or Dr Peppers or . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . whatever.

SL: Yeah.

[01:51:45] DP: And we were friends, you know. And—but I guess it didn't realize—we didn't realize to the degree segregation was impacting us, but it did. It impacted us.

SL: Yeah, you know, it seems like kids growing up, African Americans and Caucasians, they would play together, but as they got older and public . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . schools entered the picture, those friendships . . .

DP: Yes, they divided.

SL: . . . left.

[01:52:14] DP: Yeah, it—and it was sad it was that way. It was sad it was that way. Why that happened, I cannot describe it. And another thing that I could never describe until—and still, till this day, I don't get it. I don't get it why Jewish people were [*laughs*] not allowed in the country clubs. I just—I never understood it. I used to ask why Burton Zavelo couldn't go with me out and go swimmin' in the Camden Country Club swimmin' pool. I used to ask my parents—said, "Why can't I pick up Burton on my motorbike, and we'll go out there?" "Well, he's Jewish. You know, Burton is Jewish." And I said, "Well, what does that mat"—you know, I never could figure out—they had their own synagogue in Camden. Their own small, little synagogue not far from our house on Graham Street. And they would have services there. We used to always say that the richest people in our town were the Jewish people. And they were. Mike Berg. He was the richest guy in our town, Mike Berg. He was the—not only the Cadillac dealer but he was—he had oil and timber and everything. And the Bergs . . .

SL: Yeah, you . . .

DP: The—it was pretty amazing.

[01:53:28] SL: Give us a physical description of Mike Berg.

DP: Well, Mike Berg was a unique character. One of—he was the Cadillac

dealer, so he always had Cadillacs. He was a small man. Had an eighth-grade education. One night he asked my mother to go to a movie when they were both single and in school. And they grew up about the same time frame together, and my mother turned him down. She said, "I'm a—Mike, I can't." Or "I have a date" or—in fact, she had a date to go to the movie house. The movie house had just opened up. And so when they—she had—my mother and her date got out of the movie, they were getting in my—the date's—my mother's date's car and it had four bullet holes in it. [01:54:16] And my mother always thought Mike had come by and shot holes in it. Mike loved guns, and he loved mystery, and he loved fires. [*Laughter*] And—anyway, I won't go into all that. But sometimes some of Mike's . . .

SL: Oh, you can. [*Laughs*]

DP: Sometimes some of Mike's buildings downtown that had been vacant a long time would just mysteriously burn at night, you know. [*SL laughs*] And there was a—oh, I shouldn't s—yeah, I'll go ahead and say it. One of the guys who knew Mike Berg and was a friend says, "Mike, I heard about your building burning down Saturday night down on Jefferson Street." "Oh, no, that's next Saturday night." [*Laughter*] You know, but that was the joke around town. [01:55:02] But Mike was a character, and he wore gloves. He was afraid of germs. And he had a doctor in New York. He'd—that was the only doctor he would go see, and he had a private plane. Milton Morris was his pilot, and

Milton would fly Mike up to New York to go to the doctor. And one of my friends was invited to go one time, R. L. Summers, the Chevrolet dealer that we sold our dealership to. He was invited by Mike to go up to New York and go to the doctor, and so R. L. Summers from Dardanelle—grew up in Dardanelle. He went with—he flew up to New York with Mike to see the doctor. And Mike made an appointment for Mr. Summers to be examined. [01:55:42] So they gave Mike what he needed to do and changed his prescription, and then they got to Mr. Summers, and they said, "Mr. Summers, you've got a different problem. We've done a x-ray of you, and we're seeing a little something up here [touches head with thumb and forefinger], and we can't quite decide what it is. It's about the size of a pencil eraser." He said, "Don't fool with it. That's my brain. And I'm goin' back home to Camden." He got [*laughter*] up and left. [*SL laughs*] But anyway, I did the eulogy at R. L. Summers's funeral in Dardanelle about three years ago, and I told that story from the pulpit. And I think it went over okay. I hope [*SL laughs*]*—*I hope it did. [01:56:21] But R. L. Summers was a wonderful guy, but he—Mike Berg loved him. He loved R. L. Summers. But Mike was interesting, and he wore gloves—afraid of germs. He had two kitchens in his home—built this big home on Washington Street. And he had two kitchens. One was gas, and one was electric. And the reason he had two kitchens was he was always fearful that the Russians were gonna come and bomb us or take us over. And so he wanted a kitchen that worked. Now, Mike

didn't eat normal food like—he ate—he boiled his food out of a can—in the can and ate it out of a can. He didn't eat—you would never, ever see Mike in a restaurant or cafe. I mean, that was—he just didn't do it. He wore his gloves and very expensive gloves, tailor-made suits, beautiful clothes. [01:57:16] Mike had a fascinating marriage. They say he couldn't get anybody to marry him, so his family went to Little Rock and searched and found this beautiful socialite and brought her to Camden, and Mike married her—Helen. And I tell you, she looked like Ingrid Bergman. I—she was—but Barbara Pryor used to always say, "Helen Berg is the best-lookin' woman in Camden, Arkansas, by far." But she was a wonderful woman, and she had a—Mike drove around in a big Cadillac convertible. He was appointed by Faubus to the State Police Commission. Kicked my brother off the State Police Commission and appointed Mike Berg commissioner. And Mike had a big star put on the back of his Cadillac [SL laughs] convertible. State Police Commissioner, you know, on the—yeah, he was big into guns and all that kind of stuff. [01:58:05] But Helen Berg—Mike had the Cadillac convertible or any kind of convertible or car he wanted. And Helen rode around in a Jeep, an open Jeep. Had about fifteen fishin' poles in it, and she fished on the Ouachita River constantly, seven days a week. That was her thing, goin' fishin'. And she fished for what? Bass? No. Bream? No. Gar. She was a gar fisherperson, and she fished for gar. [01:58:35] And she caught the biggest gar ever caught out of the Ouachita River—Helen Berg did. She would go down

there and get—go down to the grocery store and get some old kidney or old whatever and take it way out there in the middle with these treble hooks, and she'd turn on the radio and get a book, and she'd sit up on the bank at a special place. She'd stay there four or five hours and fish. She'd catch these huge old alligator gars. [*SL laughs*] One of 'em weighed well over—I think it was a 128 pounds or somethin' like that, you know. She would—she was quite . . .

SL: That's unusual.

DP: . . . a wonderful woman. She was Ingrid Bergman in Camden, and we would—all marveled at their marriage. They were so different, you know. They were just totally [*SL laughs*] different people.

[01:59:22] SL: Unbelievable. What . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: So . . .

DP: Camden just had characters, you know. Yeah, we just had characters. She—well, anyway, I could tell Mike Berg stories. Sonny—Don Harrell . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . that helped me write my book that we've already t—I hope that—I don't know if you even want to use this or not, but people would say, you know, when he was a child—said, "Sonny, what do you want to be when you grow up?" He said, "Oh, I want to be a rich Jew just like Mike Berg." [*Laughter*] They lived right across the street . . .

SL: Street from . . .

DP: . . . from each other. [*SL laughs*] "I want"—he thought all Jews were rich like Mike Berg. [02:00:04] But a Catholic family moved in—the Botnicks. They moved down the street from the Harrell family. They live right down the street and on Agee, I believe, and they moved in, and Sonny Harrell went down to watch the movin' vans. And they had two brothers, Charles and Albert Botnick. And they'd come from the North somewhere. That's what we said—my mother said, "From the North! Oh, they're from the North. [*SL laughs*] You gotta be careful." And [*SL laughs*] Sonny Harrell helped 'em unload and looked at their toys and all this stuff, and he made a comment that got him in trouble, and he came home. And he had a bloody nose and a black eye. And Annie Lea says, "My gosh! Sonny, what happened to you? I thought you went down to the Botnick's to watch 'em unload." And he said, "I did, and I was helpin' 'em unload," and he said, "I said somethin' I guess I shouldn't have said, and they beat me up." And Annie Lea Harrell—the mother—Don's mother—Sonny's mother—said, "Well, what was it?" He says, "Well, I told a joke about the Pope." And she said, "But didn't you know that the Botnick boys were Catholics?" He said, "Yeah, but I didn't know the Pope was." [*Laughter*] And so that was another little Camden story that went around about religious stuff and—[02:01:26] But Camden was a special place to grow up in. And the characters, my gosh, characters like Doodle Dodson and Sleepy Harris and Dooley Womack and Chicken Holleman and all these people had kind of nicknames, you

know. And they were just special, and you know, I learned something, I guess, from just about every one of 'em. And they were all—you know, they'd hang out in the cafes and the—everything, and you'd sit there, and it was just rich. You know, just rich listenin' to all of 'em. Billy Bob Rushing, they said, could sell an icebox to an Eskimo. He sold insurance. [*SL laughs*] He was always up and down the streets. And Po-Boy Vaughan, who sold cars, used cars, for my dad. Po-Boy Vaughan went down one hot summer day, and he put a—installed a air conditioner in his car. Didn't have air-conditioning in cars. Only Tyndle Fooks had air. Winthrop Rockefeller and Tyndle Fooks were the two air-conditioned cars in Arkansas—Camden and Petit Jean. [02:02:41] But Odie Vaughan, Po-Boy Vaughan went out and bought [*SL laughs*]*—we sold 'em, actually, down at the Chevrolet place—a cylinder—you could hook it up outside of the car window out from the passenger side—usually passenger side. And you'd go down at the ice house, and you'd fill it up with snow and ice—this cylinder—and then screwed it back on. Choo! Set it back, screw the window up, and pull all the windows up and ride around. The faster you drove the air would come through this thing and cool your car down. [SL laughs] Ha ha. Well, Odie Vaughan, in the middle of July and August, Po-Boy Vaughan would stand down on the street corner and get in his car, and it would be, you know, 110 degrees in downtown. [02:03:25] He'd stand right in front of Dizzy Gilleland's store. And he—everybody that drove by he'd try to sell 'em a car, and he'd say, "Y'all come on. I*

got a car I want to sell you." And he kept his car running, and you'd get in Odie's car, and he'd drive around, and he'd put his overcoat on in July. And he'd drive around with his overcoat on and wave at people, and everybody would look at him in this car. He'd look like he was freezin' to death, of course, in there with his ice cylinder. [*SL laughs*] Anyway, those are just crazy stories, and those are things you remember, and those days are gone. But those days are still, to me, very priceless.

DP: Scott, we're about an hour in again.

SL: Okay, let's take another break.

[Tape stopped]

[02:04:09] SL: DP, this is our third session, and I know you have this urgency to move on outside of Camden and to tell . . .

DP: Well, I'm getting into . . .

SL: . . . some more stories.

DP: . . . way too much detail.

SL: Well, no . . .

DP: And I—and I'm . . .

SL: Let me tell you . . .

DP: . . . get—as I—the longer I talk, the cornier I get, and . . .

SL: That's not true.

DP: . . . these old stories come out some reason. Okay, go ahead.

[02:04:27] SL: Well, let me say this about what we're doin'. You know, if you don't tell these stories, who is?

DP: Well, that's a good point.

SL: So you know . . .

DP: I don't know who needs to know 'em, to tell you the truth.

SL: Well, they're wonderful stories, and frankly, as far as your career goes, there's a lot out there about your career. But these Camden stories—the only place I know of 'em is ?right here?.

DP: Well, I did that one book about—with Don Harrell. We . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: Gosh—again, I couldn't have done anything without him. But I did this one book, and sometimes I'm tempted just to do a book and call it *Camden Stories*. And I'm sure it wouldn't sell forty copies, but anyway [SL laughs] it would—just about people that . . .

SL: I know.

DP: . . . and events.

SL: This . . .

[02:05:18] DP: One event that we have not talked about . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . is about a very famous case in 1956 or [195]7 of a one woman—very prominent lawyer. Her name was Maud Crawford. She lived on 416 Clifton Street not far from our home. She was married to Clyde Crawford, who was a furniture refinisher. Sort of an itinerate person, never quite had a job, but furnished—refinished furniture around Camden. Had a garage full of stuff like that. Had a workshop. They lived in a beautiful antebellum home with columns there on Clifton

Street. Maud was not only a lawyer, she was a very accomplished lawyer. There weren't too many female lawyers in Arkansas at that time, especially in the South. Maud Crawford was one. She specialized in land, timber, oil, gas. Big time. And she was good at it, and everyone knew she was good at it. Very accomplished woman. Sort of a—I don't want to say a large woman, but she was stout, and she had kind of reddish hair, and she was a friend of my mother's. My mother and Maud were very, very good friends. She was in the Gaughan McClellan Sifford law firm as a partner. [02:06:54] Mike Berg had always wanted to be in charge of his family estate, the Berg estate. Under the will and estate provisions and whatever, according to my knowledge—this may be rumor and Camden lore—the estate was in charge of Maud Crawford. She was the executor, I guess, of the estate. Very accomplished in dealing with it. Well, one night Maud Crawford was sitting there with her Dalmatian dog named Dal [*SL laughs*]*—beautiful dog. Clyde had gotten in his pickup after supper and gone downtown to Patrick's Drug Store to the newsstand, as he did every night about seven to seven thirty at night until they closed. That's where Clyde spent his evenings. He sat out in his truck and listened to the radio and talked to people walkin' in and out of the drug store and up and down the street. That's where Clyde was. Maud was sitting at home with Dal, doing purple-hulled peas—shelling peas. Dal was right there. She had also been knitting something or doing some embroidery or something there as she was watching television.*

[02:08:19] She disappeared from the face of the earth. Small town. Lawyer. Female. Sitting there at home at night. Disappeared. Dog's still there. TV's still on. And the next morning my mother—the following morning after her disappearance, my mother, Susie Pryor, and Maud Crawford were coming up to Little Rock, a hundred miles north. From Camden to Little Rock's a hundred miles. They were gonna drive to Little Rock to a shoe sale at Kempner's Shoe Store. We had Kempners, Cohn, Blass, Pfeifer's, all those great stores at that time up and down Main Street in Little Rock. [02:09:05] They were coming up for the shoe sale. About eight o'clock, my mother pulled up in Maud's driveway and started honking. No Maud. Mother looks at her watch. Honk, honk, honk. No Maud. Sheriff Grover Linebarier comes out of Maud Crawford's beautiful antebellum home—comes out to my mother's car. "Ms. Pryor, we can't find Maud. Maud's gone. We don't know where Maud is." Mother says, "Well, Grover, find her quickly because we're gonna be there too late for the shoes. We're gonna be there too late—the sale'll be over if—we've gotta go to Little Rock. [SL laughs] I'll wait a few minutes." [02:09:48] So my mother sat out in the driveway and sat and sat and sat. No Maud. Days—hours went by—weeks. No Maud. Everyone—FBI, all over the country. And the reason it became an FBI case is because Senator John L. McClellan, who had been in that law firm, the same law firm with Maud Crawford, had been investigating Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters and the Mafia and everybody—he was after the crime

syndicate at that time. So the FBI—J. Edgar Hoover just kind of assumed, "Man, this disappearance of this well-known Camden, Arkansas, lawyer, Maud Crawford, is related in some way—is tied some way into McClellan's investigation of the Mafia." [02:10:39] Well, that gave J. Edgar Hoover a lot of fuel, and so he sent his guys down to Camden. And that was fifty-five or so years ago. Never a trace of Maud Crawford. What happened to Maud, we'll never know. Even ten years later, Clyde kept wandering around the streets—says, "Have y'all seen Maud? Do you know where Maud is? Do you know where Maud went?" In her bedroom, in Maud's bedroom on Clifton Street, for years and years her towel was still draped over the doorknob where she'd had a bath that morning—takin' a bath or a shower. It was still draped—and Clyde kept it like that. And it's been one of the great—it was even on television one time. Unsolved . . .

SL: Mysteries.

DP: . . . crimes or somethin' like that. Maud Crawford and the disappearance of Maud Crawford. And I remember when my mother died, and Annie Lea Harrell had died previous to my mother. In the church service—at my mother's service, one of the speakers said—it may have been my brother, my late brother, I don't know, but anyway, someone at one of the eulogies about my mother says, "Well, at least now Susie Pryor and Annie Lea Pryor and Maud Crawford all in heaven, and they all know what happened to Maud 'cause she [SL *laughs*] would've told 'em." So who knows? But we'll—I guess we'll

never know. But all-out bulletins—all-point bulletins went out all over the country. Clues came in. Baseball games, football games—people would say, "I think I saw that woman lawyer. I saw her picture at the post office and may have seen her at the game or somethin' like that." Clue—and all of 'em were dead ends. [02:12:39] One person, a person named Beth Brickell, wrote a series of articles in the *Democrat*—in the *Gazette*, old *Gazette*. And Beth grew up in Camden and knew the Bergs and knew the Crawfords and knew everybody—Beth Brickell did. She was on that show—I can't quite—*Gentle Ben*. She was . . .

SL: M'kay.

DP: . . . the mother on *Gentle Ben*. Beth was. [02:13:01] She wrote about six articles in a series about Maud Crawford's disappearance. She concluded and did it pretty publicly that the Mike Berg family—or that Mike Berg had Maud removed so he could take over the estate. I don't know if there's any—that was one . . .

SL: Theory.

DP: . . . hypothesis or theory, but there were many, many more. I mean, all kinds of things. I just had—we'll never know. We'll never know. It's been a—it's still one of the great mysteries, especially of old Camden. The young people there don't know anything about Maud Crawford, but every now and then they kind of need to be reminded. I know one time on the—maybe the tenth anniversary, the local paper in Camden had a big picture of a dalma—of . . .

SL: Dal.

DP: . . . the dog, Dal. He was still alive. Had a big picture of Dal and says, "Dal, if you could only speak, you know. Dal, what happened to Maud, you know." But we'll never know. We'll never—but Dal was very protective and would not—I—we don't think would've let anybody that they didn't know get near her, you know. So I don't know.

[02:14:16] SL: There wasn't any shenanigans on accounts or money . . .

DP: No.

SL: . . . handling or any of that stuff?

DP: Nothin'.

SL: Just—she just disappeared.

DP: Just zero. And she was a very brilliant, accomplished attorney in her own right. Maud Crawford.

SL: Wow!

DP: Yeah.

[02:14:34] SL: Kind of gives me chills . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . about that.

DP: So that's another old Camden story.

SL: Well . . .

JE: Let's take a break.

[Tape stopped]

[02:14:43] SL: Well, DP, we took a little break. Barbara came in, and she'd been out shopping, and we're—but we're gonna have lunch here

pretty soon, but we're . . .

DP: Did we finish Maud's story?

SL: . . . gonna keep going. We've finished Maud and another great Camden story. You know, in the athletic side growin' up and—you were on the football team, right? Were you on the track team?

DP: I was—yeah, I guess I was on the track team. I was slow, but I was on the track team. Yeah, yeah.

[02:15:21] SL: Well, weren't you the quarterback for the football team?

DP: I was quarterback for the Camden Panthers.

SL: What was your all's win/loss record?

DP: I have no [*laughs*] idea.

SL: You don't? [*Laughs*]

DP: That was—but you know, we—I tell everybody we pla—we were one of the last teams in America that played with leather helmets. I played with a leather helmet. Okay?

SL: This might explain a lot of things about you.

DP: I know it. My, you know, brain damage and whatever. But we played with leather helmets. And Coach Coleman believed in leather helmets. He was an old-time, rock-and-sock-'em play—we had about six plays. [*SL laughs*] And Charles England Plunkett, who I grew up with, was the co—we were co-captains together. He was in the line, and I was in the backfield. Charles England was all high—was All-American high school lineman for the Camden Panthers. All-American. He won a scholarship to Vanderbilt. He went over there and was injured. Then

he transferred back down to Arkansas—went to Hendrix. And that was Charles England Plunkett. But yeah, he was an All-American player, but there is no Camden High School any longer because of segregation/integration challenges and issues. Now it's all merged into one school, which is the Fairview School System. [02:16:36] And no, there's no Camden High School any longer, even though my class still has reunions every now and then. We still have reunions.

SL: Yeah.

DP: Get out our old . . .

SL: Yearbooks.

DP: . . . high school yearbook and talk about who's still around and who's not. [*SL laughs*] So it's good. [02:16:54] But I wanted to tell you one story—we mentioned the local radio station.

SL: Yeah, KAMD.

DP: KAMD. Camden. Had a local announcer there named Cal Carter, and Cal—when they brought out homogenized milk, Cal could never pronounce the word homogenized, and that was another little funny joke around. We would all try to sound like Cal Carter tryin' to pronounce homogenized milk. So that was another little deal. But when the station went on the air, lo and behold, who was one of the investors who came to Arkansas, Camden, Arkansas, as a matter of fact, to cut the ribbon and be there for the first broadcast for KAMD. Who was one of the investors? Jimmy Roosevelt, son of Franklin D. Roosevelt from New York. He was one of the New York investors that

got KAMD a license before the FCC to go on the air, and he was an investor. I don't know how long he stayed, but he did come to Camden, and I don't think he spent the night. I don't know what he—how he got there or how—when he left, but he was there for the first day that KAMD went on the air. [02:18:11] My first job—it was nonpaying—was I was on KAMD on Saturday mornings. I was an announcer. They wanted a program called *School News* sponsored by the local Dairy Queen owner, Willie Willhite. And so Willie contacted me and said, "Would you do thirty minutes every morning playing music and give school news from Camden High School. And I'll give you a free chocolate milk shake if you will every Saturday," [SL laughs] and I said, "Yeah, I'll do it." [SL laughs] So I did it and it—I would be on the radio, and people would call in to the station. It was kind of weird. I remember one time the chief of police, G. B. Cole, who lived down on Madison Street, G. B. Cole called in to the station and said, "Tell young David Pryor to use some passion." Said, "He's sounding monotonous. Tell him to liven it up a little bit." I remember that's one call. So I tried to liven it up a little bit. So [SL laughs]—he said, "Don't just read that stuff. Talk about it." You know—whatever. Chief Cole, who was chief of police when Maud disappeared, by the way, and he got national notoriety 'cause he couldn't find Maud. The state police couldn't find her. The FBI couldn't find her, so we—she's not to be found, I guess. So anyway, that's a little story about KAMD.

[02:19:36] SL: What kind of music did you play? Do you remember?

DP: I have no idea. [*SL laughs*] Probably "Tennessee Waltz" or somethin' like that, which was goin' strong about that time that—in that era. That was probably one we played. Some—"Harbor Lights" and, you know, somethin' of that nature. Some of the old goodies.

SL: So . . .

DP: I was a semi-disc jockey, I guess, for thirty minutes every Saturday morning. And that didn't last very long.

[02:20:06] SL: Hmm. Do you—what about—so in track, did you—you mentioned you had a pole-vaulting thing in the backyard on Washington Street and . . .

DP: Yeah, we—yeah, I did pole vaulting, but I was never real good. I was always afraid after that because we didn't have access, I guess, at that time, to bamboo very much, and I think all the bamboo was being used in the war effort for one thing or another. So we would go down to the furniture factory and get these long, wooden poles. And I don't know what they were used for in the furniture world. Maybe for drapes and things.

SL: Yeah.

DP: I don't know what they were for. But we would get these long, wooden poles and put adhesive tape all around 'em and pole vault with 'em. And one of 'em broke with me one time, and it went right up—it just missed my heart an area of, you know, an inch or two, and it went right up under my arm between my arm and my chest and rib cage. And I broke my collar bone that day because the pole broke. But

luckily the thing didn't spear through me or I wouldn't be sitting here today. So anyway, that was kind of a close call. So I was a little tame about pole vaulting from then on.

SL: [*Laughs*] No kidding.

[02:21:32] DP: But I think that I ran somethin' like the 880 relay or somethin' of that nature, but I was never very fast. I was just—track wasn't really my thing, I guess you would say. Football really wasn't my thing. I was always glad when the season was over because I . . .

SL: Didn't really enjoy it?

DP: . . . hated practice. I just didn't like to practice, you know.

SL: Yeah.

DP: Especially August 20, when we had to have two-a-day practices. I didn't like all that, but [*SL laughs*] it built a great deal of camaraderie, and I remember one time I started to quit football, and my brother talked me into staying and not quitting. And I was really glad he did.

SL: Yeah.

DP: You know.

SL: Bill played . . .

DP: But I was the quarterback for the team, and we had a pretty good little team, I think. We'd—our biggest rivals were Magnolia and El Dorado and sometimes Smackover and, you know, teams like that. But we even played North Little Rock a couple years when I was there, but they'd always beat us pretty badly, but . . .

SL: Big town.

DP: Yeah, big town.

[02:22:34] SL: Yeah. Well, what about Razorbacks? Were they on the radio when you were growin' up or . . .

DP: The Razorbacks were on the radio. And the big guys in the football world were Glenn Davis and Doc Blanchard from West Point. They were the big guys. The big guy in Arkansas was Clyde Scott, number 12, for the Razorbacks. And one day my dad took me—I think it was to see TCU and Arkansas play—took me to Little Rock to the War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, Arkansas. I was probably twelve, maybe, somethin' like that. And Clyde Scott was—he was All-American high school—I mean, All-American player. He had played for Annapolis one year and then was injured, I think, and transferred out of there and came to Fayetteville and played for the Razorbacks. And a true—Clyde Scott, a true gentleman. But anyway, Clyde Scott—and then he went to the Detroit Lions, I think, and played a season . . .

SL: That's right.

DP: . . . or two. And Clyde, who we have a good interview with—one day, I'll never forget, when my dad brought me to Little Rock—War Memorial—and every now and then we could get to Fayetteville. But Fayetteville's a long way from Camden. Three hundred miles. And—but Clyde Scott—after the game was over, people used to go down on the field and talk to the players and the coaches and everybody, and just kind of a general commingling of humanity. And I was down there, and Clyde Scott walked by me, and I touched him on the leg

somewhere, and I don't think I washed my hand for a month.

[*SL laughs*] I mean, but I still tell Clyde Scott that story. But anyway, he was a hero, and I kept up with the Razorbacks. [02:24:22] And I had his picture, and I had other pictures of great Razorback—Frank Thomas's father, Floyd Thomas. I had his picture on my wall. He played with Clyde during that period. I had Leon "Muscles" Campbell picture on my wall, and I had all these guys on my wall—pictures of them. [02:24:44] Another person I had my wall was a young man named Bubba Smart. He was the state junior golf champion, and he was from Pine Bluff, and they own Smart Chevrolet Company, and they have for about sixty-five years. But Bubba Smart's picture I had on my wall. He played golf for the University of Arkansas at that time, so I never was into really—I never was much into basketball or track, but mostly football. Mostly football. [02:25:12] And like I say, I did a little bit of boxing in the Boys Club league. Did a little bit of boxing, then, once I came here to Fayetteville to school. As a freshman, one night late I got involved with a pair of boxing gloves with one of my fraternity brothers. And somebody thought I had promise, so they enrolled me in the intramural boxing competition. And I did real well the first bout. [02:25:44] The next night I fought a guy, and in the second round all I did was look up, and I could see stars because he knocked me out cold. And the next thing I know, they were carrying me back into the SAE house. [*Laughter*] Hit pretty bad. But anyway, that—I wasn't a very good boxer.

SL: That was the end of your boxing career.

DP: Athletics—I'm an observer more than a participant.

SL: That's so . . .

DP: Same with golf and so forth.

[02:26:08] SL: That's so interesting. I don't think I've ever interviewed anybody that was a boxer or chose to be.

DP: I wasn't much of a boxer. I wasn't much of a—but we had a little—a good Boys Club boxing program. Harry McGuire, who was the—worked in the parts department for Pryor Chevrolet Company—ran that program. Harry and his brother Pat, two big old Irishmen brothers, and sometimes their third brother, Leroy McGuire, the McGuire boys. And one of the McGuire boys had half an ear. [*SL laughs*] And the reason they had half an ear—we had a track meet one time with Smackover or El Dorado, and a fight ensued after the track meet down by the railroad trestle. And somebody bit off I believe it was half of Pat McGuire's ear. So he just had half an ear. [*SL laughs*] We used to kid him about that all the time. But they ran the boxing program for the Y—for the Boys Club.

SL: That's interesting stuff.

DP: Okay, we need to move on to another period of life.

[02:27:16] SL: Well, okay, let's get you out of high school and . . .

DP: I go to Henderson.

SL: Now, is there . . .

DP: My dad dies in my first year at Henderson—first week at Henderson he

dies. I graduated from Camden High School, and my sister and my mother and I go to Europe for—go—we tour seven countries, and we get back. And back home a month or so, and shortly after that my dad—he's diagnosed with leukemia. They take him down to Temple, Texas, to a clinic—to the clinic there. And the first week I'm at—I'm enrolled at Henderson, and they called and say—to tell me that my dad may not make it through the night and next night my—and then the next morning my Aunt Annis calls and says, "Your dad passed away last night." So I get in the car and drive to Camden from Arkadelphia and stay there a week or so for the funeral and all that.

[02:28:24] And I go back on a Sunday night or so, back to Henderson. I drive up on the campus, and little beknownst to me and without my knowledge and without anyone telling me, there's a big banner across the main street at Henderson, which is now Henderson University—"David Pryor for President of the Freshman Class." Some of my friends were running me for president of the class. And there were three or four candidates, and I got back and started campaigning for president of the freshman class. I won that race and stayed at Henderson for one year, freshman year. I loved Arkadelphia, and I loved Henderson. I loved all those fine people, but I wanted to go where—I was tryin', I guess, to seek a little stronger prelaw and political science, and they told me I might be better in Fayetteville. So I transferred to Fayetteville, but what I did, as I had at Henderson, I—at Henderson I took a horse with me to school, to college. And I

brought the horse also to Fayetteville. [*SL laughs*] I kept him out on the mountain right by the country club at Gene Goff's Farm.

SL: Verna Lea Farms.

[02:29:43] DP: Yeah. I kept him—my dad had known Gene Goff, and he called him, and he says, "Can my son keep a horse up there?" And he said, "Sure." And so I brought my horse up here. And I tried to go out in the afternoons and ride him and on weekends, but it got too busy. I guess for a semester I had the horse, but it didn't work. But in Arkadelphia I had him there also, so I guess I thought I was a cowboy at that time. I don't know. [*SL laughs*] Anyway, we had a good time.

[02:30:11] SL: Now, this is interesting. How did your father know Gene Goff? How did that come about? Do you know?

DP: Through south Arkansas. And my dad, once again, was a trader. He traded stuff and land and horses and cows, and Gene Goff kind of came up during that same period down in southwest Arkansas. And they knew each other just from, I guess, from business relationships. I don't know how else they would have. Gene Goff was from Lewisville, which was not far from Camden. And who knows, they may have had—I don't know how. I wish Gene Goff had gotten my dad into some [*SL laughs*] good oil properties, but we never did have good luck like that. But that was a . . .

SL: Well, even the horse-racing business.

DP: Yeah, or the . . .

SL: He did very well . . .

DP: . . . horse-racing business.

SL: . . . with breeding horses.

DP: That's right. That's absolutely right.

SL: Yeah.

[02:31:06] DP: But Gene Goff and my dad were friends, and he called him up, says, "Can my son keep a horse at your"—he said, "Sure." You know, so once again, I kept the horse out there at the—nearby at the country club.

SL: That's fun.

DP: Not far from here.

[02:31:19] SL: That's fun. Well, now, didn't you come down with a—kind of a sudden illness?

DP: When I was in university—and it must—I'm—it may have been my second year up at the university, which would've been my junior year in college, I guess, 'cause I'd had the freshman year at Henderson and sophomore—yeah, junior year. I came down with an ailment and they never—I don't know what it was—what caused it. But I had a infection in my body, and they couldn't locate it. And I was home for Thanksgiving, and I was involved in so many things up here on the campus I was wearin' myself out. Probably wasn't gettin' any sleep, and I was a member of the fraternity. And I was editor of the *Guild Ticker* magazine. I was—all kinds of stuff just taking my time away from the classroom, probably. But I developed an infection, and one

thing led to another. I'll make it real short. [02:32:22] I had developed a stricture, as they call it, in my kidney—from my kidney to my bladder. And they had to do surgery. It was emergency surgery. They did it in Camden. A doctor from El Dorado, a urologist, came up and did the surgery. And—but in the meantime, before that, I had gone off to Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. And I spent a month in the hospital tryin'—they were tryin' to—why Henry Ford? Because one of our friends who was a doctor in El Dorado said he had a good friend at Henry Ford Hospital who could look after me and diagnose whatever I had. I spent a month there. [02:33:09] They did all kind of experiments and took out my parathyroid glands and everything. And they never could find—well, I kept gettin' smaller and smaller and losin' weight and weight. And I was in the hospital up there in a ward—up there with about six or eight other people. Developed great relationships, by the way, with those folks. One guy that I was in the next bed to was Martin Amberg. Martin Amberg was head of the Dutch underground in World War II, and he would tell me all these stories about how he would trick the Nazis and all the—I mean, it was just wonderful stuff. But Martin Amberg became my longtime friend. [02:33:50] But anyway, came back to Camden with no diagnosis. And one day I dropped out of school 'cause I'd missed so much school, and one day I decided I would go down to the courthouse. I heard a big trial was comin' on, so I said, "Heck, I'm gonna go down there and watch the trial." So I went downtown, and while I was there I had this

huge attack, and the police had to take me home. And they—two policemen carried me upstairs into my mother's home, put me in the bed, and they called—they thought it was a kidney stone. They didn't know. [02:34:26] Had a local doctor—says, "This is kidney related." They got Dr. Jameson to come up from El Dorado that night. He said, "We've got some big problems here, and we're gonna operate early in the morning." And so they put me in the hospital that night. Early the next day, I had big-time surgery. It was a unique surgery. So unique that they filmed it, and these doctors from El Dorado won a national—or a district award. They showed the film down in San Antonio of them doing this to this college kid from Camden, Arkansas.

[02:35:03] So—but I was very sick, and then another thing was that I had round-the-clock nurses because Camden Hospital was not the best place to have a major surgery. It was very good, don't get me wrong, but they wanted to make sure nothin' happened to me. But I was back at my private room after many hours on the operating table, and my nurse was called to the door. Somebody—and I rolled off the bed, and they had to take me back into surgery, so that complicated things. But I was pretty well out of it for several weeks and so—anyway, yeah. But I had some . . .

[02:35:44] SL: It was a big incision, wasn't it?

DP: Oh, big-time incision.

SL: I mean, they really opened you up.

DP: And for about six weeks I had—coming out of my incision—it's terrible

to talk about—a little tube that ran into a jar.

SL: Yeah.

DP: And the doctor that did that was a doctor named Henry Hearnberger from Stephens, Arkansas. Practiced in Camden. And I had this little jar, and I carried it around in a paper sack, and I would drink something and wait a few minutes, and then sure enough, it would drip right into my little jar.

SL: Wow!

[02:36:16] DP: And I called this little apparatus Henry. I called it Henry. [SL laughs] Said, "I gotta get Henry cranked up again for the day, you know." But I—Henry and I went everywhere together, you know, for probably six weeks. But I used to—I named it for Henry Hearnberger. [SL laughs] Henry. Me and Henry. [Laughs] So I did all that—that—all that's corny.

SL: Jar in a paper sack.

DP: In—I carried—I had a paper sack. It wasn't very sightly, so I kept it in a brown paper sack.

SL: Well, yeah. Well . . .

DP: But anyway . . .

SL: . . . so how long were you—how long did it take you to recover?

DP: Well, this was weeks and weeks that I was pretty incapacitated, and I was at home in—on Graham Street under my mother's care and had a lot of good doctors down there checkin' in on me. And anyway, I made it through, and the next fall I got reenrolled in the university and

kind of took up—I did change from the business school into political science, though. And kind of—yeah, I started—I guess that's when I got more serious about studying political science. Yeah.

JE: Okay, let's break.

SL: Well, so when you got back to school . . .

[Tape stopped]

[02:37:23] SL: You were a page. How did you become a page for Oren Harris? How did that come about?

DP: Well, Scott, I was—let me think—I was a junior in high school in the spring, late spring, of that year, whatever year it was. I was in Camden one afternoon or one night, and I walked downtown and went to the—well, I didn't walk downtown, I—we lived on Graham Street, so it was about a mile from town, I guess. I went to a movie. The movie was called *Born Yesterday* with Judy Holliday and Bill Holden, I believe. I don't know whoever else. William Bendix, maybe. And this movie was filmed in Washington, DC, and it was all about Washington, the Capitol, and intrigue and all this stuff. [02:38:15] And this was during the time of the McCarthy scare—the McCarthy Era, and he was devastating people's reputations and characters and lives, and he didn't care who he ruined. He was an ongoing earthquake. He was just awful. He was just a—anyway—but everything was in the news. The Army-McCarthy hearings—all these things were goin' on TV and Kefauver Committee and McClellan Committee—all—there was just a lot going on, you know. And so I became enamored with an awful lot

of this, and one thing led to another, and so I'd seen this movie, and I walked—I went back home and sat down and wrote then-Congressman Oren Harris. "Dear Congressman Harris, I've just seen a movie"—blah, blah, blah—"And I'm wondering if it's possible that sometime I might come up and be a page for you in the US House of Representatives," and blah—okay. [02:39:19] So didn't hear anything for a few weeks—whatever. So in the meantime, I'd been selected to go to Boys State—to attend Boys State. So I came up to Camp Robinson and attended Boys State and got home. And the day after I think I came home from Boys State, here comes an air-mail letter. Air-mail, special-delivery letter. I'd never seen an air-mail, special-delivery letter, and here it is—David Pryor, blah, blah. So I opened it up, and it was from Congressman Oren Harris. "Dear David, I suddenly have found that I have a vacancy in my page program. Our page is not going to be able to be here this summer, and would you like to have this slot? If you would, please call Christine Christie at this number and tell her that you'll be here—there—and—but we do need you next week. We need you [*SL laughs*] starting next week." "Ooh." [02:40:16] So here I was—this was, like, on a Thursday or Wednesday or something like that. I'd never been to Washington. I knew it was a couple of days' hard drive, so I told my mother. And we got all excited about it—and my dad—and Dad got the car all geared up for us and lubricated and gassed up [*SL laughs*], and I went down to Copeland's Department Store in Camden and bought a dark blue

suit and black shoes and black socks and black tie and white shirts and all that stuff. And so in a couple of days, here we go. My mother and sister and I get in the car, a little Chevrolet coupe, and we take off for Washington, DC. [02:41:10] I get there, and it's late in the afternoon or at night, and I'm to start my pageship the next day. I didn't have a place to live and I—well, maybe we had a few hours or a day—and we looked around up on Capitol Hill and found a place on 832 D Street SE. Not in one of the best locations, I might say—especially with today's crime statistics. But I—we found a room there for me. It was eight dollars a week. And [SL laughs] I put all my things in there, and we spent one more night at the hotel there, the Dodge Hotel in little—in Washington near the Capitol. Next morning my mother literally takes me over to the steps of the Capitol, drops me out on the steps, and drives back to Camden, Arkansas, with my sister. They drive back. [02:41:56] I go into the Capitol—never been there—and here's William "Fishbait" Miller. I'm told to [SL laughs] report to his office. Fishbait Miller is from Mississippi, Pascagoula, Mississippi. And I report in. I say, "Mr. Miller in the Doorkeeper's office." I said, "I'm David Pryor. I'll be Congressman Harris's page this summer." And he said, "Oh my gosh, we've been lookin' everywhere for you, son." Says, "The pages are all asleep down in the Senate. They've gone home to sleep. There's an all-night filibuster that's been going on. They don't have any pages, and you gotta get down there right now, pronto." I said, "Well, where is the Senate?" He said, "Just go right down that

hall as far as you can go and walk in those big double-glass doors, and you'll be in the Senate chamber. And you report to so-and-so." I said, "Okay, here I go." [02:42:43] [*SL laughs*] So man, I took off almost running and never been in the Capitol, passing all those—go through Statuary Hall, go through the rotunda, and head down to the Senate chamber. Walk in the back door. As I walk in the back door, here's a senator on the floor of the US Senate—snapped his fingers, motions to me like this, and here I'm standing [*SL laughs*] there, and I said m—he said, "Come here, come here." And so I walk down to the well of the Senate and here—with senators standing there and he gives me a ten-dollar bill. He writes out a—scribbles an address on a piece of paper, and he says, "You go out to my apartment and get my bedroom slippers and bring 'em back to me. Get you a taxi and bring 'em back soon as you can." [02:43:29] And I said, "Yes, sir." So I did. That person was Senator Joe McCarthy.

SL: Gosh!

DP: He had been filibustering all night. Here I was, in the US Senate chamber—first time in my life—first time I'd ever been in the US Capitol building. First time I'd ever been in the Senate chamber, and it was the first time I'd ever had a taxi ride. We didn't have any taxis in Camden, so I'd never been in a taxi before. So I go out to his apartment out on Mass Avenue, I think, and get his bedroom slippers and come back down to the—tell the taxi to wait on me. I bring 'em back down and give him his slippers. [02:44:07] But I only worked

one day as a Senate page, and then I was transferred back where I was supposed . . .

SL: House.

DP: . . . to be, over to the House of Representatives. Fabulous summer. Man, I had the best summer. I ate it alive. I went to every committee hearing I could go to. I met wonderful friends. Not only fellow pages but I met friends there that I'd ha—I kept for life. Fishbait Miller, for example, became my friend. Turner Robertson from North Carolina, head of the page program, he became my friend. He even came one time to Camden, Arkansas—surprise visit—to see me later on when I had—after I'd married Barbara and we were there. Here comes Turner Robertson [*SL laughs*] to pay a visit. So people like that—it was just wonderful. But I must say that I was captured. I knew that there was something about Washington and all that and the politics of it and the chemistry of it and the good, bad, and the vile and the ugly and the beautiful—all of it together. I just said, "You know, this is" . . .

SL: This is it.

DP: . . . "something special. And this fills a passion of mine." And so I came on back home. Finished my senior year at Camden High School. And I was president, I guess, of the student council that year, and then one year later is when my mother and sister and I went to Europe and came back from there, and that's when my dad died. But that was my time as a page. [02:45:47] And I still have my page book. I had to have that page book, and we had to know each

member's name when we saw them. We had to . . .

SL: Address them.

DP: If they walked by, we had to stand up, and I learned a lot. I learned about people and learned about protocol, and I learned a lot about parliamentary procedure. I learned—I tried to learn a lot about that, you know. And I just had a wonderful summer, 1951.

[02:46:17] SL: You mentioned before—after you sent the letter off and you went to Boys State.

DP: Yeah.

SL: Did you run for anything at Boys State?

DP: I did run. I ran for speaker of the house at Boys State and was elected to speaker of the house. I even thought about running for governor of Boys State, but I just didn't have quite the . . .

SL: Confidence.

DP: Whatever—the confidence, I guess, and I don't remember who was elected governor that year. But I was—I think I was—yeah, I was elected speaker of the House of Representatives, and that was a thrill. And I had a good experience at Boys State, and I, once again, I met a lot of friends there, and I kept up with a lot of 'em and took their names down, and that's when you didn't have to have zip codes and all like that. You could just say, "Joe Smith, Harrison, Arkansas," and they'd get it, probably. [SL laughs] You know, get your letter. And stamps were probably three cents . . .

SL: Yep.

DP: . . . or somethin'.

SL: Yep.

DP: But anyway, those were good times, and I tried to take advantage of those moments and those opportunities, and I was really fortunate to have those opportunities.

[02:47:28] SL: All right. So let's get back on track up to—you go to Henderson, but you end up coming down with an illness. You miss—you go to the University of Arkansas.

DP: Mh-hmm.

SL: You come down with an illness. Have to take a year off from college to recover from your surgery. You end up back in Fayetteville. You switch majors from . . .

DP: Business.

SL: . . . business to political science. And within the next couple of years, you meet Barbara Lunsford.

DP: Mh-hmm.

[02:48:01] SL: So tell me how you met Barbara.

DP: Well, there's two—it was a good—over fifty-five years ago, so it was a good, long time ago. There are two versions of where we [*SL laughs*] met. One version was at the SAE house, and she had a date for a football game, I think, with Don Corbin, who is now a member of our state supreme court. [*SL laughs*] Don Corbin from Lewisville. I think it's Lewisville. And she had a date with Don Corbin. I had no date that day, and I think that I—through Don I met Barbara Lunsford from

Fayetteville. And then either right before that or right about that time, I was sitting up on the balcony of the old student union, which is right there on Dickson—on . . .

SL: Maple.

DP: . . . Maple Street where the old student union was. And I was sitting up there one morning with a bunch of my buddies drinkin' coffee, and I saw Barbara Pryor walking—Barbara Lunsford walking down that street. And I looked at her, and I looked at her, and I said, "I'd like to meet that girl." And then I think it was when I was at the SAE house maybe that weekend or a week or two later that I actually met her. And I called her up that weekend and got her phone number—503 Assembly Drive in Fayetteville. Called her up, and I said, "Listen, I met you down at the SAE house, and I've got a function at Heinie's Steak House coming up Sunday night, and I don't have anybody to go with me. Would you go? It's a Blue Key dinner or somethin'." And so she said, "Yes." [02:49:38] At that moment I was fa—on the phone at—I can still—I've always been fascinated with Barbara's voice. I've just been fascinated with her voice. I still am. [SL laughs] I love to hear her voice. And so I was fascinated with that, but anyway, we went to Heinie's Steak House, now no . . .

SL: No gone but—yeah.

DP: . . . longer there. It burned down. No tellin' what's there now—up near Springdale. And it was great, and the people that owned Heinie's for years after that knew that that was our first date that we'd had at

their steak house. And it got to be embarrassing because when I would come back up here and dating Barbara that fall and later on, and even when we were married and we'd come back to Fayetteville for a weekend, we'd go to Heinie's—they would not let us pay for our meals. And it got—kind of got strange there, and I felt bad about going 'cause they wouldn't let us pay and I felt like I was mooching off of 'em. But they were just wonderful people—the Shermans. Fred Sherman and his wife. [02:50:40] But anyway, that's when we got to know one another and then in—on Thanksgiving morning of 1957, we married at the Central Pres—Methodist Church [*laughs*] right here in Fayetteville, and the Lunsford family lived on 503 Assembly Drive, and Barbara and I took off for a short honeymoon in New Orleans. And I say short—it was really short, about three or four days, because we were at that time just beginning the publication of a weekly newspaper in Camden, the *Ouachita Citizen*. We had published, I think, one or two issues of the paper. And so we had to get back and get the paper goin' and sell the ads and write the copy. And we didn't have any press—Associated Press stuff to do all that. We had to do every bit ourself from scratch. We started that newspaper from scratch. And in the beginning it was Barbara Pryor and myself and my mother, and every now and then we would hire someone. And then we couldn't pay 'em enough, and they would have to go to a better-paying job. So it was constantly in transition, but for four years we published the *Ouachita Citizen*. And it was tough—it was touch-and-go, financially.

It was a very, very major drain on us financially. I had inherited a little bit of money from my late dad, and my mother was kind to us. The Lunsfords were kind to us, not only ultimately babysitting for us when we came back to law school, but feeding us so many days and nights out of the week it's impossible to count them. [02:52:33] But we had the help of both families in the newspaper days and in the days of law school. And I had finished the—well, no, I was finishing my—getting ready, I would say, to have the fourth or fifth year in the newspaper when I decided to run for the state legislature. And I ran for the legislature against a young man named William S. Andrews, who had been in office for about, I think, around ten years. He had voted right down the line with Orval Faubus, and I told him about a year before that—I says, "Bill, if you keep votin' for Faubus, someone is gonna run against you, and that someone may be me." I kind of warned him, I guess. And so sure enough, a year later I called up Bill Andrews, William Shaw Andrews was his name, and I says, "Bill, I just want you to know in advance—next day or two, you're gonna read in the paper that I'm your opponent." [02:53:38] So we had a tough little primary fight there for several weeks. And Barbara Pryor became one of the best campaigners you could imagine. She never forgot anyone's name. We went out to—our opponent had been 100 percent down the line with the labor unions, which I wanted to be, also. I mean, I was a strong labor person, but he was—he had a record of 100 percent. So we went out to the heart of the labor unions, the

International Paper Company in Fairview, and we chartered it house by house. And starting about every afternoon around four thirty or five, we would get out there, and we would campaign from door to door, askin' people for their vote. And it paid off. And ultimately, when the election was over, we had won. We had won by a very big margin—victory—and we were very grateful. [02:54:39] I remember after that race an event that I'll—that will always be etched in my mind—I'd—here—and I was also looking for a way to sort of get out of the newspaper. It was totally unprofitable—was not making—it was just a financial drain on our family and on me. And we just didn't have the resources for it. But I remember that I was invited with several south Arkansas legislators down on the lower part of the Ouachita River. Dr. Shelton and Shade Rushing had an annual barbecue and fish fry down there on the river, and they had these huge barges. And on these barges they would have a couple of hundred people on each barge. They had a Dixieland band goin' on one of 'em. They had everybody you could imagine. Governor Faubus, I think, was on one of the barges, and it was just all kind of political people and political talk. [02:55:39] And I had just finished my race in the summer and was elected. I did not have a Republican opponent for the fall, and so we went down to this camp. Barbara was not with me. I think it was probably all men this time. It was a big, big, big fish fry. Several hundred people. And what I remember about that evening is is that that was the night of the first Nixon/Kennedy debate. And they had

rigged up some black-and-white TV sets down there on a sand bar, and we sat there and ate fish, catfish, and barbecue and watched John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in their first debate. I was seated right next to Senator Fulbright, who had that morning, that very morning, in Washington, DC, briefed John F. Kennedy, young Senator Kennedy, on the issues of Quemoy and Matsu and Palestine and Israel and other foreign-related—foreign-relations-related subjects. [02:56:48] He had briefed John F. Kennedy that morning in DC for the debate. And I was sitting next to Bill Ful—Senator Fulbright and every time Kennedy would ask—answer a question on these issues, he would say, "No, no, Jack! No, it's—yeah, that's it. You've got it. You've got it. [*SL laughs*] Stay on that tra"—you know, and boy, just to live through that and, boy, was very exciting. Shortly after that, another incident that I remember about JFK was that I had gone out to the airport with Senator Fulbright that fall—was speaking to Camden Chamber of Commerce at Municipal Auditorium. [02:57:28] And I was charged with going out and meeting his plane, maybe with a couple of more people, and we were to drive him back to the Camden Hotel. He was gonna freshen up, and then he was gonna speak to the—at the Municipal Auditorium. And coming back into town, a state trooper pulled me over and stopped me and says, "You've got Senator Fulbright in your car?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Go get to the hotel as quick as you can. President-elect Kennedy wants to speak to Senator Fulbright." I said, "Woo, boy!" So, boy, I had a police escort getting

into Camden. We get to the hotel, and I go back to the manager's office, who I know—Bob Hite. And Bob says, "Come on back here, David. Bring Senator Fulbright back in my office." [02:58:11] So we get back there, and Bob Hite dials the—and Bob Hite, by the way, is another story. He was a Doolittle Raider. He was a Jimmy Doolittle Raider, and he was manager of the Camden Hotel when this was happening. And I think there were thirteen in the crews, but he was captured, of course, by the Japanese. Still alive, barely, and I think he lives in Tennessee. But ji—Bob Hite says, "Use my office and dial this"—so we dialed this number up, and I was sitting right there by Senator Fulbright when John F. Kennedy told Senator Fulbright—he said—I guess he called him Bill—he says, "Bill, I'm—I hate to make this call to you, but I'm going to name Dean Rusk and not you as secretary of state. I'm gonna name Dean Rusk, and I'm gonna announce it tomorrow. But I wanted you to know it in advance." And Fulbright says, "Oh, man, I understand totally, Jack. Man, don't worry. You've got my support," and all that stuff. So he was very gracious about not being named the secretary of state. [02:59:14] I go to the legislature and those years in the legislature—I tell people—they say, "Well, what—which job do you like best, Pryor?" I said, "Well, let's see, I was a state representative; I was a US Congressman; I was a governor; I was a US Senator. But you know what? I think being a state representative was about as much fun as I've ever dealt with bec—ever had." Because everything was kind of

black or white, and I thought—I was young enough to think that everything I did was right. And I felt adventurous, and I was excited. Our family was just beginning. Dee had just been born. And Barbara and I moved into the Grady Manning Hotel. They fixed us a little place up on the top floor for Dee, Barbara, and myself. And it was just a wonderful world being around politics and politicians and decision-making and all like that. I was, in the legislature, persona non grata, though, with all of the Faubus people, and he controlled the legislature at that time. [03:00:22] And I voted against so many things that he proposed, and they all thought I was a radical and—I say they—not all of 'em. There was a group called the Young Turks that I was a part of, and we took on and challenged Faubus on various things and issues and what have you. But I was—those were days of passion for me, and I really did love those days and had a great time. Went back home, and all of a sudden I said, "Man, I can't live on \$100 a month," which is a legislator's salary. I'd just sold the little newspaper. And it was struggling, and the people who bought it primarily bought it for the printing business and the contracts they had for printing things. And so I'd sold . . .

SL: Bibles. They . . .

DP: . . . the paper . . .

SL: . . . printed Bibles, didn't they?

[03:01:16] DP: No, they—well, the old Miehle flatbed press that we bought up in Iowa, which was used, had been in a big printing

operation that printed Bibles. You're right. The old press that printed Bibles, not the one—not the office in Camden. But they had—they printed Elk Roofing stuff. They did a lot of stuff for the roofing company down there in se—roofing companies in—Bear Brand Roofing in Bearden and Elk Roofing Company in Stephens, and they had contracts to do that. And it was a—the printing part of it was somewhat profitable. The newspaper was not. But I sold the paper, and all of a sudden I just didn't know what to do. Then all of a sudden, one night literally in the middle of the night, I woke up, and I said, "I'm going to law school." And I woke Barbara up, and I said, "What would you think about movin' to Fayetteville and goin' to law school?" She said, "Let's do it." And so here we did it. We moved to law school. We moved up to Fayetteville and rented a house over on Lollar Lane from—681 Lollar Lane.

SL: Yeah.

[03:02:27] DP: From your family members.

SL: From Brickey. From the . . .

DP: Yeah, from the Brickeys. And we sure did. And I got a job. It was weird. I had told—been told that I could come up there and teach during the summer, so we moved up there about the first of June at the university, but when I got here they said, "Well, we were wrong. There's been an attorney general's opinion"—of course, the attorney general didn't care for me. But [SL *laughs*] "There's been an attorney general's opinion saying that as the state legislator, you cannot draw

two paychecks." So I couldn't teach.

SL: Conflict.

[03:03:02] DP: But I got a job for several weeks working at Brough Commons laying in all of the pipes and . . .

SL: Wow!

DP: . . . hardware and dining facilities, all those big hot tables, everything. I worked there for several weeks with a construction crew out of Little Rock. And I just want—answered a want ad and went over there and said, "I'm"—you know, so here I go. So I don't think they knew they had a state legislator working for them at the time, but I did. I spent some weeks there. And Barbara worked down at the drugstore at night—Palace Drug—quite a bit—quite a few nights. And we—and with the help of the Lunsfords and my mother and everybody else, we made it through those three years of law school, and I was constantly going over the state speaking in behalf of a new Constitution and changes in our governmental structure at the county level. And that was—I—it was a terribly wrenching and busy three years, and I'd been in Fayetteville only a year in law school when my opponent, Charles England Plunkett, announced that he wanted to be in the legislature. And Charles Plunkett—he—I never will forget an ad he ran in the local paper in Camden. It showed a picture of the Fayetteville telephone directory [*SL laughs*], and it had my telephone number out of the telephone directory in Fayetteville and no telephone number in Camden. And boy, that hurt me. I thought I was beat. He had that

thing in the local newspaper, and they stuffed it with every mailbox ad. But even in spite of that, I prevailed because of Barbara Pryor's ability to campaign and keep me on track and focused. [03:05:00] And so that was another experience. So then the next thing that happened was I finished law school, got back, and started my practice with Harry F. Barnes. He was from Mississippi County. He had been—he had gone to Annapolis. He'd been in the Special Forces—just a remarkable guy. Just remarkable. And I said to him one day sitting in the law school lines—I said, "Harry, when we get out of law school in a few months, where are you going?" He says, "Well, I don't have any idea." He said, "I may wind up back over in Mississippi County." I said, "Well, come down to Camden, and we'll go down there in a couple weekends. We'll take our family and drive down. You look at it, and who knows? We may want to open up a shop down there, a law office." And we did. We spent the weekend. [03:05:49] We came back, and he said, "I like that town, and we'd like to live there." I said, "Man, you've got it." And he got out of law school a semester ahead of me because I had to—I think I had to lay out a semester because of being in the legislature. I was down in Little Rock. I was in law school spasmodically and kind of erratically, I guess I would say. How I got out of law school and passed the Bar, I don't—I'll never know, but I did. [SL laughs] And so we got to Camden, and we opened up a little practice—opened up an office. And I'll tell you, from the first day in that law practice, we had the best time together. We

tried—we decided that any case that came in the front door, we would take it. We would take it, no matter what. [*SL laughs*] [03:06:36]

And the—one of the first cases—it wasn't even a case. A guy became—one of the law firms there—the Gaughan McClellan Sifford Law Firm—came in and says, "Listen, we've got this stack of files were inactive. You boys can have 'em if you want to work on 'em. It's fine. Whatever you do with 'em, settle 'em, just throw 'em away, whatever, but we're through with 'em. We can't go any further with 'em." I looked at the first—one of the first files and it was a collection suit—case—against a little oil company down in Stephens, Arkansas. Somebody was tryin' to collect I believe it was \$6- or \$8,000 . . .

[03:07:13] SL: Maybe . . .

DP: . . . for drillin' a . . .

SL: . . . fifteen.

DP: Huh?

SL: I think it . . .

DP: Was it \$15,000?

SL: I think it was 15,000.

DP: And . . .

SL: Big.

DP: . . . said they were on a retainer . . .

SL: Big money.

DP: . . . fee for half, and so I said, "Well, heck, let's see what we'll"—so I—we got in the car, and we drove down to Stephens, and I happened to

know the guy that owed the—allegedly owed the money. And we drove up, and it was in the late summer, and he was sittin' out on his front porch eatin' some watermelon. He lived up on a big hill, and I looked up there—he said, "Pryor, is that you, David? Is that you?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Come on up here. Eat some of this watermelon." So Harry and I got out of the car, and we went up the hill to his house. [03:07:50] And I—we talked about everything, politics and everything. I said, "You know, I'm embarrassed, but I'm here—we're here for a crazy reason." He said, "I bet I know. I bet you're here to collect that debt that I owe." He said, "I'm gonna pay 'em, but I wasn't gonna pay 'em under their terms. I didn't like the way they [*SL laughs*] harassed me and all this stuff." Says, "How much do I owe 'em?" I said, "Well, they say you owe 'em \$15,000." And he said, "I think that's about right. You boys sit here." And then he went back and got out a checkbook and came out and handed me a check for 15,000. We kept half of it. We kept 7,500. That was our first fee. And boy, that—you talkin' . . .

SL: That's big dollars.

DP: . . . about two hungry guys. We split that, you know, and bought us some more law books and—but it's just one thing like that after another. [03:08:37] One other case was a poor old man fell in a manhole. Sued the city, and the city sued back—they countersued. They were smart to countersue against him, and they accused him of—let's see, it was some crazy thing—we'd—walking while intoxicated

or somethin' [*SL laughs*] like that. Anyway, that suit never went much. But we had all kind of funny and great . . .

[03:08:59] SL: Well, what about . . .

DP: . . . and pitiful . . .

SL: What about the one . . .

DP: The coon dog?

SL: The coon dog.

DP: Well, the coon dog was famous in that county and that part of the state because [*SL laughs*]*—and this—the coon hunters down in south Arkansas are big. I mean, it's [*SL laughs*] important. And you think the Super Bowl draws a lot of passion. Nothin' compared to coon hunting in south Arkansas at night—on—especially on weekends. And they go out, and they stay out, and they hunt late at night, and they have these wonderful dogs—these coon dogs are trained to chase and tree these raccoons. And this fine—as they call it—a bluetick coon hog—dog—just one night over in Calhoun County, I guess, just disappeared. Didn't come back to its owner. [03:09:46] And sure enough, in a few days they found the coon dog in another guy's pen—another dog pen over at Hampton, I think. And so the man who owned the dog—who allegedly owned the dog—came to us—says, "Man, I want my coon dog back, and I don't care how much it takes. I'm gonna go over there and get him and haul him out of there." We said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, don't do that. That's called self-help, and that's not healthy." [*SL laughs*] [03:10:21] I said, "Let's see what*

happens." So we sued, and we said, "You've got to bring this man's dog back. We know it's his dog and everybody does. And we've got witnesses and whatever." Well, the next thing we knew, they'd—he had denied it, and we went into court. And Judge R. K. Mason was the judge. And R. K. Mason owned a—he didn't even own a car. He was a funny old geezer. [SL laughs] He wore a frock tailcoat—court—coat into court. And he had on his frock tailcoat, and we made our plea. The courtroom was packed. It—people were sitting in the windows watching as this trial started for the coon dog. [SL laughs]

[03:10:57] And finally, the judge had ordered the coon dog to be near the premises, so we couldn't—no one—we were at a stalemate. No one would admit that they'd stolen the dog—no—and this guy kept sayin', "That's my dog." This man says, "No, it's not. It was given to me years ago, and I've raised it from a puppy," and all this kind of stuff. So finally the judge—we—he couldn't decide it, so he said, "Get the dog." [03:11:24] They went down in the jail and brought the old stinkin' dog up. [SL laughs] Brought him into the courtroom. Big ol' lippy ears and he—they took the leash off and our—we were right over here, Harry and our client. William I. Purifoy, and his client were right over here—the one who'd allegedly stole the dog. And the dog walked right down the middle aisle, and the courtroom was breathless. [SL laughs] You know, no one—this dog [sniffs] sniffed and [sniffs] sniffed, [sniffs] sniffed and sniffed and sniffed, and then finally came over to our guy. And the judge says, "You keep the dog. That's your

dog." And it was never appealed, and we won that case.

[03:12:12] SL: And did the courtroom just erupt?

DP: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I [*SL laughs*]*—well, three-fourths of 'em cheered and the other fourth of 'em booed.*

SL: Booed. [*Laughs*]

DP: 'Cause he had brought his own family members and . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[03:12:22] DP: But it was a big—and that case had a way of spreading our name around. And we handled another case where a guy shot a man comin' out of a grocery store. And that word spread and the—two or three cases for lawyers—doesn't take many in a small area for the word to spread. And it would—our name was kind of made on those two or three cases.

[03:13:57] SL: You know, who was the dean of the law school when y'all graduated?

DP: Dean Barnhart.

SL: And what was . . .

DP: Ralph Barnhart.

SL: . . . his advice or—when you all—didn't you tell him that you all were gonna go into . . .

DP: We . . .

SL: . . . practice together. [*Laughs*]

DP: We went to Dean Barnhart one day when we were about to get out of law school. And we said, "Dean"—boy, he always wore a tie and had a

crew cut, and he was a smart little guy and [SL laughs] good guy.

Dean Ralph C. Barnhart. And we went to Dean Barnhart, Harry and I did. We got an appointment with him. He said, "I'll see you boys at nine o'clock Saturday mornin'." So we put on our ties and jackets and left our families at home. And here we came down to Waterman Hall, and we come into the dean's office, and Ms. Grisso's in there. And [SL laughs] we said, "Ms. Grisso, David Pryor and Harry Barnes. We're here to see Dean Barnhart." "Oh yeah, he's expecting you. Just go on back." So we go back there. He's back there, and I think he's smokin' a pipe. I'm not sure. But anyway, he's very pensive and contemplating. And we say, "Dean, we just gonna come this morning and seek your advice. We're thinkin' about goin' to Camden, my home town, and starting a law firm, Pryor and Barnes. And what do you think about this? What do you think our chances would be?"

[03:14:19] And he looked and stroked his chin and looked around and looked up at the ceiling. [SL laughs] Very quiet little man. He says, "Gentlemen," he says, "I think this is a classic case of the blind leading the blind." [Laughter] That's what he said to us. Well, that kind of discouraged us. And then he laughed, and he says, "Do it." [SL laughs] He said, "You'll do it. You'll make it. Do it." [SL laughs] And he said something else like—he said, "Be fair to everyone, and your fairness will come back to you," or something like . . .

SL: There you go.

[03:145:59] DP: I mean, it was just some little somethin' like that. But I

always liked him a lot, and that little few minutes with him that Saturday morning meant a lot to us. And—Dean Ralph C. Barnhart. Boy, what a good—he gave me a quote one time that I've used in several speeches quoting—I think—I don't know if was Oliver Wendell Holmes or one of the great jurists who said, "Remember that the role of the reformer is no task for the faint hearted." And that's right.

SL: You bet.

[03:15:35] DP: The role—and that time I was known as a reformer.

SL: Yeah.

DP: And he said, "The role of the reformer is no task for the faint hearted." So I took that admonition, and I took that advice and that thought. It's carried me a long way. So one thing led to another. We—and, you know, had—when we got to Camden in the law practice, hadn't been there a year, year and a half—just announced that Congressman Oren Harris was gonna be appointed by Lyndon Johnson to the federal bench. And that's when I placed that call to Richard Arnold down in Texarkana, and that's when Jimmy Red Jones then announced he's running for Congress. Chuck Honey down at Prescott, who had been on Congressman Harris's staff, he came home, moved back to Prescott. He announced for Congress. John Harris Jones, the president of a bank in Pine Bluff, he announced for Congress. So there were about six or seven—oh, Dean Murphy down in Hope, who had almost defeated Judge Oren Harris the—this . . .

SL: Previous cycle.

[03:16:39] DP: Yeah. Yeah, got 46 percent of the vote or somethin' like that, you know, running on the truck stop down there. And so there was a—there were bunch of us in there—been a long time since there'd been an open seat like Judge Harris created—Oren Harris—when he went to the bench. So we—all of us got in that mix, and we started running, and boy, one thing led to another, and it got—you know, it got interesting pretty quick because there were so many of us from very many parts of the state who were running. And course, Richard Arnold's people—at that time his adopted family or his family he married into was the Hussman family, and they owned six or eight newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, owned the KAMD by that time at home. And they had a very powerful communication system in place right there. And I must say they were fair about it, the Hussman family, they were fair in every way about that. [03:17:48] I don't think they ever abused it too badly. There was a time or two when I felt they did, but it—as a general rule, I thought they were pretty fair to me in that campaign for Congress. Barbara had a child. Had Scott Luns—Scott Pryor during that period. Pine Bluff was a critical county for us. About one-fifth of all the votes in the district were in Jefferson County, and I just had to get something going there, but I just couldn't seem to get things going. It seemed like they were either all for Chuck Honey or Richard Arnold or John Harris Jones, who was from Pine Bluff. [03:18:29] But I had a hard time in—working into Jefferson County. I use this story because a eighth-grade civics

teacher—ninth-grade civics teacher came out and suddenly started supporting me. She'd heard me make a talk in Little Rock at something, and she came out—I'm tryin' to remember her name, and I'm embarrassed, and I can see her very plainly. But she came out and opened for me. She got a few teachers goin' for me in Pine Bluff. One thing led to another—they started goin' door to door. I ended up carrying Jefferson County by a huge margin and defeating Honey and Arnold and all of 'em. I think I got in that county probably 53 or [5]4 percent of the vote. And it was . . .

SL: That was the difference.

DP: . . . the power of one woman. Power of one. And boy, she started it off, and she got it organized and opened a campaign headquarters, swept it out, and here we go from there. I just went to her funeral about two years ago, but anyway—nice, nice—I'll think of her name in a minute.

SL: Volunteers.

DP: Yeah . . .

SL: Volunteers.

DP: . . . volunteers, man. That's it. That's it.

[03:19:38] SL: And you—it seems like you always had a lot of women volunteers.

DP: I—yeah.

SL: That they were passionate about you were tryin' to do.

DP: They were—I think I did well with the women's vote. Lot of these

women to begin with in some of these counties had met and worked with my mother through Presbyterian work, and I had a little tiny base. Then I had a little tiny base of Jaycees, then I had a little tiny base of Young Democrats, and then I had a little base of African Americans. Then I had a base of labor because of the paper mills in Camden. [03:20:19] And you—and in—you know, politics is not about subtraction, it's about addition. And you added all these little coalitions and groups together, and before you know it, you come close to havin' a majority. I mean, you build a force. You put 'em all little pieces together, kind of like a puzzle. It's pretty fascinating tryin' to put 'em all together, but those Pine Bluff people were so good to me and I always—the only problem I ever had with Pine Bluff is one time I had to—I helped them when they were redoing their railroad terminal down there and their railroad track. I helped 'em on some other issues on highways and whatever. When I was governor I helped 'em, but when I got to the Senate, I crossed with the—kind of the leadership of Pine Bluff to some extent. I came out strongly opposed to manufactured nerve gas, and we had the largest facility in the US.

SL: Pine Bluff Arsenal.

[03:21:30] DP: Pine Bluff Arsenal. And it had kind of been deactivated during the Nixon years but was being reactivated again during this time. And I said, "Wait a minute. Enough's enough. We've got enough nerve gas stored all over the world to kill everybody in the world a hundred times. Let's don't do this. Let's don't fall into that

trap." And I asked somebody to get me before the Pine Bluff Chamber of Commerce board, and we met with a—I guess about twenty or thirty of 'em one afternoon. And I said, "Y'all, I've been against—with you on all these projects, but this one—you're gonna have to give me some running room. I can't support you on this." They wanted—for the jobs.

SL: Sure.

[03:22:15] DP: Of course. And I said, "I can't go with you. And I'm gonna fight it, and I'm gonna fight it with everything I have." Well, you know what? They didn't agree with me, but I think they liked me comin' there and tellin' 'em in advance what I was gonna do . . .

SL: Diffusing the situation.

DP: . . . and expressing my position. I think they liked it, you know.

SL: Neutralizing.

DP: "Well, okay." And eventually many of those guys came around. Eventually they probably—for other issues and other reasons, they never quite came around, but I had a very good base in Pine Bluff for a long period of time. A strength base. And—but I enjoyed all those years and all those jobs and . . .

[03:22:57] SL: Yeah, I want to . . .

DP: . . . had a good time.

SL: . . . ask you a few things about your time in the House. The way the House—some of the practices and some of the accepted culture in the House of Representatives when you first got there. It's nothing like it

is now, but it was pretty loosey-goosey, wasn't it? I mean, what all . . .

DP: Well, look at—example of what we went through just yesterday in the US Senate with a freshman senator having been there only six months, a guy named Ted Cruz, getting up and bringing the Senate to a halt in a filibuster. That never, ever would've happened in the early days when I was in there. It just wouldn't have happened. And the old seniors and the old bulls would've chopped his legs out from under him, I mean, before he could even get up on the floor, but he did it. It's a new day. It's a new day. And so—yeah. [03:23:58] Another example of that was my first few months I was in the US House. There was a big issue that President Nixon and—well, Nixon and Johnson were tryin' to cut out funding for the public libraries, and so my mother was a big advocate of libraries, public libraries. And she had mentioned to me about not lettin' 'em cut the money out for the libraries. And here I was at thirty-three-years-old, a freshman member of the US House, and didn't know any better, and I knew that I didn't have the authority to get up and speak 'cause I was there too short a time. But one day I looked up in the gallery and here—I looked up there, and there was Dr. Bessie Moore, who was the guru of all libraries in Arkansas, and she had her little hat on with a feather in it, and [SL laughs] she was seated up in the gallery. And she sent a note down to me with a messenger down on the floor of the House, and she said, "I'm sitting up here waiting for you to—watch you make

your maiden speech about libraries." I said, "Oh, gosh! Dr. Bessie Moore is up there." [03:25:11] And I went up to the speaker of the House, Dr.—I mean, John McCormack, and I said, "Mr. Speaker, I'm embarrassed. I've only been here a few weeks—months." I said, "But Dr. Bessie Moore is right up there, the lady with the feather in her hat, and I've got to get up and say somethin' about libraries." He said, "You get up in the next few minutes when this speaker finishes, and I'll recognize you." I said, "I"—he said—I—bop, bop—"Congressman from Arkansas is recognized." [03:25:35] So I got up. [SL laughs] And that was my maiden [laughs] speech. And Dr. Bessie Moore was very happy and I—we passed the amendment, increasing the library funding—restored several million dollars in the bill for it. But Dr. Moore all—she always kind of gave me credit for that. Another example of the old bulls versus the young occurred when I was in the US House pretty early on. I'd been there a couple of three years. When I took on the nursing home industry. And there were about six committees in the House. They didn't have a House committee on aging. The Senate did at the time, but the House did not have a committee on aging. And there were about six committees. Ways and Means, human—I mean—Health and Welfare, Ways and Means, Finance, Veterans' Affairs, HUD—there were about six or seven House committees that had some little sliver of jurisdictions over nursing homes. [03:26:37] But no one committee had total jurisdiction, so I was trying to get a forum created—the House committee on aging—to

talk about these issues of being old and warehoused and all these terrible places and whatever. And I couldn't get anyone's attention. And Wilbur Mills protected his little segment of it—the Ways and Means and Finance Committee, healthcare—they all had their little jurisdictions they protected. [03:27:06] And so I—my mother told me—says, "I've just been out to a local nursing home in Camden, and it's terrible. There are rats and terrible food, and it's cold and hot." All this stuff. And so I got a bunch of people representing the federal bureaucracy, I guess, together in my office. I said, "All right, here's a letter from my mother. I want each one of you to chime in on it. Okay, what do you say, HUD? What do you say, Veterans' Affairs? What do you say, blah, blah, blah? What do you say, Health and Human Services?" So each one of 'em—and finally, the conclusion was "Your mother's right. We've got a problem, and no one's doing anything about it." [03:27:45] So I went out and sort of disguised myself. I didn't tell any lies. I didn't tell 'em I was a congressman, but I worked on weekends as an orderly in the nursing homes—twelve of 'em—and came back after that twelve weeks and after a guy had gotten in—he had heard about me doin' this. He was a photographer with the *New York Times*, and he took my picture shaving an old decrepit guy one morning in a nursing home out in Maryland, and it went viral, if you—anything could go viral. "Congressman disguised as orderly finding—on a fact-finding mission—American nursing home." Front page of the *New York Times* all over the world. London was—

you know, you name it—everywhere. And we got inundated with literally thousands of letters. Thousands of letters.

SL: Struck a nerve.

DP: From everywhere. I didn't have the staff to even open all these letters. They wanted me to come to their nursing home. They wanted me to—they would pay my expenses to fly to San Diego to see a good home or they'd pla—to see a bad home or "Please go and see my aunt in her old, dilapidated nursing home." They're—you know, all these things, and we had to—so that's when we created—I got all these kids to volunteer from all over the country, twelve or thirteen of 'em, and we created a House—not House Committee on Aging, but the House Trailer Committee on Aging. [03:29:15] And during that summer we raised hell with 'em. Man, we let 'em have it. And we had a big fish fry to pay for the expenses for the kids they moved in. The Episcopal church opened up a big gymnasium-type thing. They slept over there—part of 'em did. A big wholesale company got enamored with the story about the kids in town helpin' the old folks, and they came down and said, "Here's a blank check. Anything you need in our wholesale food chain is yours. Your people—you go get it and let—just tell 'em I sent you." And each one of 'em got a little card, and they could go shoppin' to—groceries cost 'em nothing for the whole summer. [03:29:55] But we did hearings, and we had a guy named Ken Schanzer on our staff.

SL: 'Kay.

DP: Schanzer. He had walked in there one day after the nursing home story, and he walked in there on a Friday afternoon, and he told Pat Poley out in the hall—he's out in the conference room or reception area. "I want to see Congressman Pryor." "Well, what's your name?" "Schanzer." "What do you want with him?" "I need to talk to him." And I [*SL laughs*—and she said, "Well, he's gettin' ready to go home for the weekend," or somethin' like that. He said, "No, tell him I'm here. I need to see him." So anyway, she lets him—I said, "Come on back. What's your—what are you doin' here?" [*SL laughs*] He said, "My name's Schanzer. You need me in this operation. I just graduated from law school. I'm studying for the Bar, and I want to work for you. I've been readin' all about you and the old folks." And he said, "This is a cause that I'm interested in." And he was brash. He was gutsy, grimy, mean [*SL laughs*], smart [*laughter*], and in about three minutes I said, "You're hired." [*SL laughs*] And I hired him. Didn't even know anything about him. Kenneth D. Schanzer. He just retired as vice president of NBC Sports. [*SL laughs*] Ken did. And he came to see us last year [*SL laughs*] and just hilarious. Hadn't changed a bit. [*SL laughs*] And used to play golf every Sunday with Tom Brokaw and those guys and, you know, just a character. Just as brash as he could be. And we would hold a hearing that summer out there in our trailer. Yeah.

[03:31:32] SL: Yeah, talk about the trailer. I don't understand that you couldn't get—you weren't given room inside the Capitol building to . . .

DP: No.

SL: . . . to have any hearings.

DP: They wouldn't let us.

SL: So . . .

DP: The old bulls wouldn't let us in—do it.

SL: So this young semi-upstart [*DP laughs*] congressman . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: . . . moves a trailer.

DP: We borrow . . .

SL: But . . .

DP: . . . a house trailer . . .

SL: And how did . . .

DP: . . . from the American mobile home institute, or somethin' like that.  
They had heard about . . .

SL: And . . .

[03:31:58] DP: I said, "I need to borrow a house—a used"—they said, "You got it. How big?" And I told 'em. We moved it up on the Capitol Hill at Joe's Gulf Station. He let us borrow his parking lot behind his station. It's a scene—right now there's a big office building right where it was. But they wouldn't—the—Carl Albert, who was Speaker by then, and all the old bulls of the House, they thought I was just awful. They thought I was Ted Cruz, probably. But they thought I would—had blown a socket some way. They wouldn't give me a [*SL laughs*] chance to hold a hearing. They wouldn't—none of 'em would

hear about creating a committee on aging that would take jurisdiction. There was only one congressman in the House that gave me the time of day, and his name was Claude Pepper from Florida.

SL: Yeah.

[03:32:49] DP: Claude Pepper.

SL: Claude Pepper.

DP: Who, by the way, spent one year teaching at the law school in Fayetteville, Arkansas. And one of his students was a young student named Bill Fulbright.

SL: Bill [*unclear word*]. Oh, Bill Fulbright. Yeah.

DP: And Claude Pepper had moved to this state to establish a political base, and he was gonna teach law school. He was just out of the service, and he saw that there were too many up-and-comers. There was a McMath, there was a Fulbright, there was this one or that one. And he moved on to Florida and became first a US senator from Florida and then he was defeated for the Senate and came—and became a US member of the House. He took a step down. But he was defeated by George Smathers in—for the Senate. And George stayed there many years in the Senate but—and—but he alleged that Pepper was a Communist or [*SL laughs*] he—somethin' like that. But Claude was nice to me about it, and we built up such a head of steam. *Washington Post* just went berserk, and Nick Kotz did a front-page story about me and the nursing homes thing and the—I mean—and finally, they ultimately—I—then I started runnin' for the Senate and

pretty well left. And about that time—the next year after I'd been defeated for the Senate against John—McClellan had defeated me—the House created a committee on aging. And Claude Pepper became the first chairman. That's how he became—got his notoriety all over the country, being friends with the elderly, and he would always—when we would—we did legislation together, and he would also—always say that I gave him his first job [*laughter*], you know, which was, course, not true. But he was the aging hero of America. But that was a good fight. We—it was—they didn't want to hear about me or aging committees or any . . .

SL: Well, DP, do you . . .

DP: . . . nursing homes.

[03:34:59] SL: Do you think it was the industry, the nursing-home business, that was . . .

DP: Oh yeah.

SL: Kept that tamped down.

DP: Oh yeah, they didn't want any part of any aging committee.

SL: I mean . . .

DP: Yeah.

SL: And doesn't this kind of play a little bit into your Senate campaign against McClellan in some ways?

DP: To a sense. Yeah, to a degree it does.

[03:35:23] SL: I've always wondered, and I've never asked you this, but I've always wondered, did you—were there ever—in any of your time

in DC, did you ever receive any kind of threats that—toward your life or your career? I mean, were they just—or is that—I don't know.

DP: No.

SL: For some reason I kind of . . .

DP: At one time I thought—this gets pretty sensitive—I'll be careful. At one time I thought I was being set up. I was on the Ethics Committee. I was in the Senate, and I felt I was being set up by somebody or some group because we'd gone through the ABSCAM stuff with all the senators and the House guys and everything. And I'd been in a hearing over in the federal building in Hot Springs. And I walked out, and a guy approached me in a funny kind of a way, and he said he wanted to talk to me and needed to talk to me just the two of us and wanted to meet me at some isolated place. And he looked funny and acted funny, and he said, "You'll be glad that"—no. It was like, "You'll be sorry if you don't meet with me," or somethin'. So I said, "I need to get your name." And so he scribbled out his name. Wouldn't give me his address. And I got right in the car, and I think Frank Thomas or Skip was driving me that day, and I said—this was before cell phones—I said, "We're goin' to the nearest pay phone. I gotta make a phone call." And I called the US attorney. I said, "I'm in Hot Springs, and I think that I have just had an offer to be set up." I said, "I've been through too many of these investigations, and I'm suspicious of these people." [03:37:27] And I said, "I want you to—I'm making a call to the US attorney's office to be on record that I think somebody's

tryin' to set me up." Then I called up, the next day, the sheriff over here in Garland County, in Hot Springs, who is a former FBI agent. And I said, "I really need to meet with you." So I did, and I told him all about it. And he said, "I can tell you that guy is a bad guy." He said, "Had I known he was in town, I'd have run him out of town." He said, "That guy is bad, and he does dirty work for a lot of people." [03:38:06] And I kept that guy's name for a long time, but I have a feeling they were—somebody was trying to set me up. One other time when I was governor, one of the security men out in the governor—in the state police . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . .was approached and was told that they would be willing to pay—who "they" would be, I don't know, but there would be some money available if any of the security force could tell them anything about Pryor or his family—could tell them about Pryor or his family. And that got back to me the next day, and it was so convoluted. I've never heard any more from it. Those are probably the only two kind of strange . . .

SL: Scary stuff, though, isn't it?

DP: Yeah, you never know. You know, there's a lot of crazy—there's some sick people out there, and there's some, yeah, some sickos out there. And they're—a lot of 'em have a lot of money, and I don't know, but those two instances or episodes kind of come to my attention. That's about all. But normally, things were pretty easy.

[03:39:38] SL: What about the camaraderie in the House? I mean, you talked about the old bulls and the reformers and all of that. But wasn't there generally—wasn't it generally friendly or . . .

DP: Oh yeah, in the House and even when I went to the Senate, it was friendly. For example, this weekend we've got Senator Alan Simpson from Wyoming. Bout as big a Republican as you can—he was comin' to Little Rock and see us, you know.

SL: Yeah.

DP: He was gonna make a speech there, and then we're gonna see him the next day and have breakfast and lunch with him, maybe even supper. I'm not sure. Alan and Ann Simpson. We've been to his home in Cody, Wyoming, two times, maybe three. But we were friends with Jack Danforth of St. Louis and, my gosh, all—you know, I'd played golf with Dan Quayle. I—you know, I was—we had a good relationship with these people. We were of different parties, but there was not the bitterness and the hatred there is now. It's a poisoned sort of environment. I don't know what brings it back. I don't know—I just don't know. The worst case that's ever been held in my lifetime, and Dred Scott was not my lifetime, but the second-worst case to the Dred Scott decision, I think, is the case of Citizens United, which allows corporations and labor unions and multi-jillionaires the opportunity just to freewheel any amount of money they want to to political candidates now. No stopping place. No ceiling. And I don't know how you turn this off. I don't know how you stop it. But five to four in the

Supreme Court says it's legal. And that's—when people vote for a president, they go and vote in—for a president—"Whoa, I don't like Obama," or "I do like Obama," or "I don't like Reagan," or "I do like Jimmy Carter." I mean, all this kind of stuff. What they don't realize—they're voting also for the Supreme Court, and with it split like it is now, five to four, even a vote for president is even more important 'cause two or three of these folks are getting well up in years.

SL: Yeah.

[03:41:56] DP: And whoever is gonna be our next president is gonna dominate the control of the Supreme Court. And boy, these are important decisions, and people I don't think make that link between the Supreme Court and the federal judge system and the US attorneys, and they just don't make that connection, I'm afraid. They look at—they single in on one little old issue like abortion or, you know, you name it. And gay rights or anything like that and they become kind of one-issue people, and they forget the larger issues.

[03:42:35] But it was a—it was really good. The thing about—I think the thing that inspired us about the—get—being involved with the Pryor Center was being down in LSU at Louisiana in their special collections and looking at some of the old tapes and film clips and radio stuff that they've saved in their oral—they don't have a visual part. They may have it by now, but we have oral and visual. But seein' what they have there in their library, especially about the old

Huey P. Long and Uncle Earl Long days and Edwin Edwards Day. All that Louisiana stuff is just fascinating to me. Seeing what they did, I said, "You know, they ha—they res—they have kept their history. " And when you keep your history, you keep your pride, and you keep yourself and your values, and that's one thing I think that kind of encouraged us to kind of branch out and see if we couldn't start saving some of that history right here in Arkansas and it—our only problem—we just can't get fast enough to enough people [*SL sighs*] to do it, because everybody has a history.

SL: It's . . .

DP: Everybody you see has a story to tell, and I just wish we were out there, and I wish we had an office in seventy-five counties . . .

SL: Me, too. [*Laughs*]

DP: . . . interviewing people every day, Scott. 'Cause every day I know you guys get hits. "Oh, you gotta come interview my granddaddy. He was in World War II on Iwo Jima," or "You gotta do this. You've gotta interview this person." Or just last night I had a call from someone who wanted us—our film crew to come down to Fort Smith and do some filming of things down there, which I hope we—and we've done some, and I know we'll do more, but it's just a matter of getting a very, very small number of staff people into enough places. And man, it's just so consuming. But anyway, we're gonna—we're getting there.

[03:44:42] SL: Well, you know, it's a—maybe we're kind of like the spark that you fired off with the committee on aging. Maybe down the road

here it'll be full bore and widely accepted, and there'll be ways to accommodate all these stories.

DP: Well, when I started off in politics, the environment was very different. In Arkansas we had two major newspapers, the *Democrat* and the *Gazette*. They were competitive. We had three TV channels in Little Rock. Two or three up here in the northwest part of the state, and it was different. Politics then, when I started was retail, and when I say retail politics, it was one on one. It was goin' to the plant gates and thankin' 'em for their vote and askin' 'em to vote for you. It was like goin' to the home demonstration clubs and havin' a cup of coffee. It was goin' to the fire station. [03:45:44] First time I ever met Bill Clinton was at the Arkadelphia fire station—he—in Arkadelphia one time and he was nineteen years old. And he was helping Frank Holt run for governor, and I was runnin' for the US House, and Barbara was out in the car, and we were delivering off some bumper stickers and posters there at the fire station. And I got to talkin' to this young man, and Barbara kept honking. We were in an unair-conditioned car, and we had to drive down to Dumas that afternoon [*SL laughs*] late. And we had stuff all in the back of the car and mosquitoes and hot, and it was in the summertime. And finally I got out to the car, and she said, "Who was that guy you were talkin' to?" And I said, "His name is Bill Clinton." And she said, "Well, who is Bill Clinton?" [*SL laughs*] I said, "I'm not sure, but we're gonna hear a lot about him in the future." And so that's when I met him, but that was re—he was

retail politicking. I was retail politicking. [03:46:37] But we used—I know one thing—we used to give out, when we would go to the fairs and the pie suppers and all that stuff you'd do and go door to door—people expected something. They expected a pencil. They expected a pencil with your name on it or a comb or a calendar or something. We always gave out thimbles in many of our—most of our campaigns. This one is—let's see, this one is David Pryor for US Senator. We had 'em in all colors, blue, red, white, orange, pink, every kind of a color. But we gave out thousands of—and at estate sales and yard sales today, every now and then you'll see a thimble, and somebody . . .

SL: A Pryor thimble.

DP: . . . sent me this one the other day. They got it. But now you gotta be careful what you give people. We used to give match covers. Well, that implies—you give a match cover to somebody, that implies that they're smokers.

SL: Yeah.

[03:47:37] DP: And to imply someone's a smoker is not a good accusation, I guess . . .

SL: Right.

DP: . . . you would say. So you don't give matcher covers anymore—matchbooks. And even with thimbles—you give someone a thimble, you're saying to—some people said, "What you're saying to a women—you give 'em a thimble, you're saying, 'You should be home darning'" . . .

SL: Sewing . . .

DP: . . . "your husband's socks."

SL: . . . socks.

DL: You know, so everything has a symbol. Today you've got to really be glad—I mean, careful about politically correctness—political correctness is something that people have really got to beware of, especially in young people starting off in a political career today.

[03:48:17] But anyway, we used to give out this stuff by the trainloads. I tell everybody about one of my first races. I said, "Yeah, I was over there in Osceola one day givin' out thimbles and cards to people. Winthrop Rockefeller pulls up in a huge air-conditioned van. Right behind him, he's got an 18-wheeler. They lower the back end. He gives eve—I give everybody a thimble. He gives everyone a bicycle [*laughter*], you know." I said, "You know, so he" . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:48:53] DP: The wealth he had was enormous. And by the way, Winthrop Rockefeller, he did a lot of good for this state, I'm gonna tell you what.

SL: He was progressive.

DP: He was progressive. He did a lot of good for this state and . . .

SL: Well, do . . .

DP: . . . I can only say—now, I'll have to be—well, I won't even have to be careful—I'm so glad that Jim Johnson did not prevail in that race. Jim Johnson was the Democrat.

SL: I know.

DP: Winth—in 1966. Winthrop Rockefeller was the Republican, and thank goodness for our state, Rockefeller prevailed in that—Jim Johnson would not have been right for our state. He would've set us back thirty years.

[03:49:35] SL: Well, he ended up bein' on the Supreme Court—state Supreme Court.

DP: Well, he was on the Supreme Court before he ran . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . for governor. That's why they called him "Justice Jim."

SL: Justice Jim.

DP: Yeah, he was on the Supreme Court a short while, but even as a young man from Crossett in the state Senate, he had his eyes on high ambitions and he—high ambitions and low ways to get there. He didn't care what he did to get there, and he pulled out just about everything in the book to divide the races and to belittle certain parts of our population, African Americans, specifically. But he's now gone on and—but Rockefeller was a good governor for this state. He was very good.

[03:50:28] SL: DP, let me kind of . . .

TM: Scott, we might take a break here. We're a little bit . . .

DP: Yeah.

TM: . . . over an hour.

SL: Okay, let's take a break.

[Tape stopped]

[03:50:33] SL: DP, we're starting another session here. It's, what, three o'clock in the afternoon. We're hopin' that we can wind this up soon. We've had a pretty good spectrum of your life, and we've gotten into the political career side of things. And I think—I mean, I know your interest in politics is early, early on, probably before you can remember. But when y'all—when you and Barbara had that newspaper, you were writing opinions, editorials. And it was mostly coming from a progressive-reformist position that the Faubus administration had gotten so widespread and had so much influence that there was this—it was unhealthy. And so you kind of—you came into the state legislature on that. You were part of the Young Turks. I believe—was it during that time—your time there that the poll tax got repealed? That's a major victory. There were all kinds of segregation things that were going on that you were fighting against, and eventually that wins out through history. [03:51:52] The—you get to the House, and a letter from your mother about the condition of a nursing home sparks what eventually becomes the committee on aging. You go through all kinds of shenanigans [*DP laughs*], and it struck a nerve. It became global. It was viral, if there was such a term back then. You—and correct me if I'm wrong. If there are other causes in here that were dear to your heart that you were tryin' to make things better, you should bring them up now, even if we run out of time. But you should bring 'em up now. [03:52:33] But you—out

of the House, you kind of decide to run for the Senate against a very powerful, powerful man in John McClellan. One from Camden. One that your father kept in a race to keep that senate seat. And you almost beat the guy. But tell me about that campaign and how—I know tha5t had to be the toughest campaign of your life.

[03:53:05] DP: Well, that was 1972, and here I was—I was still in my thirties. I had been a congressman for six years—five years, actually—and I was very restless. I had taken on the nursing home crowd, as I called 'em, and I'd had some partial victories. I had established myself as a friend of the elderly, so I had a lot of, I guess you would say, cachet there and that I called upon eventually. And they called upon me. I mean, we were joined at the hip for one reason or another. We'd become allies. And I had had a pretty good experience in the House, but I was frustrated. I was frustrated by as much—I guess I was frustrated about the system, and I knew that—here I was, on the appropriations committee. That's another story, how I got on the appropriations committee my first week in the House of Representatives. I'll tell you that in a minute if I can remember it.

[03:54:19] That was unheard of for a freshman. But I went over to the appropriations committee one day, and I said, "Okay, there's fifty-one of us on the appropriations committee." I'm thirty-six years old, somethin' like that, thirty-five, thirty-seven maybe. I said, "Tell me when I might be chairman of a subcommittee or a committee or the full committee. Tell me when it might be, under our system." And the

person I'd gone to, Homer Skarin, said, "Give me a couple days. I've got to figure this out—look at mortality rates and all this kind of thing, you know. [*SL laughs*] Who's healthy. Who's not healthy, and who's up, who's down, who's retiring, who's gonna be defeated, whatever." And he came back in a couple of days. He said, "You'll be a subcommittee chairman in all likelihood in about eighteen years from now. You'll probably be committee chairman if you can stay that long, probably about twenty-five years from now, you know." [*Laughs*]

[03:55:25] And I said, "Okay." So that was my main committee—appropriations. And so that was pretty discouraging. So then I started thinkin', "What are my options? Do I just quit politics, go home? Do I go home and become a teacher? Do I—what do I do? What do I do? And I'm stymied here in the House. I've gone about as far as I can go. I can be here and be patient and wait and wait and wait and wait, which has not been my nature so far. [*SL laughs*] And I think I'll just go for broke." And I talked to Barbara I don't know how many hours about it. And so we decided that "Let's do it. Let's give it a try." We knew the odds were against us. Every editorial writer, when they sniffed out that Pryor was thinkin' about takin' on the mountain of steel, John L. McClellan, they—everyone knew that—everyone thought it was a lost cause on my part. They said, "Oh, why didn't he wait his time—wait his time?" But I was ready to do something, and so I decided I'd just run. Just let it go, so we did.

[03:56:44] And we moved to Little Rock. We met some wonderful

people, Steve and Kathy Nickles. She just died, by the way.

SL: I know.

DP: And we'd—Steve and Kathy moved up to look after our boys and run our household—keep them in school up in Virginia—Arlington. We moved down to Little Rock into an apartment and on the—on February the nineteenth in Camden, Arkansas, I announced for the Senate. And it was a hard, hard decision, but we'd made it, and we were ready to go. We had a primary coming up in May, runoff in June, June 13, and the last of May we had our first primary. I made an enormous blunder during that period of time. I was really picking up some steam about—after I'd been in the race about a month, and one day I was asked to be on a Jaycee call—not a call-in, but just a talk show for the Junior Chamber of Commerce. And it was on a Sunday afternoon. I didn't think anybody'd be watching and whatever. [03:58:05] Well, lo and behold, a *Democrat* reporter and a *Gazette* reporter came to the deal over in the TV studio, and we were going through all this stuff, and it was, in fact, a taped show. I believe it was taped. And as we were just about to conclude the thirty-minute show, somebody asked—one of the reporters says, "How do you feel about giving amnesty to those people who went to Canada to evade the draft?" And I said, "Hmm. Let me think that out a little." [Laughs] And I said—an answer was kind of like this. I was tryin' to be kind of lofty about it, and I said, "Well you know, usually after every war we forgive our enemies and try to work with 'em. And after this war, I hope we

will forgive our friends and our sons and accept them back in our society," or somethin' like that. [03:59:13] Well, headlines next morning and on the news that night: "Pryor - Amnesty for Draft Dodgers." That was the story. And man, our campaign took a hit. Our campaign came to a standstill. The phones stopped ringing. The contributions stopped coming in. Old friends left us. New friends wouldn't have anything to do with us, and it was tough. Today you could make that statement, and you know, people would say, "Well, okay," but not then. Everything is timing and perception and stuff like that. [04:00:06] So the next thing I knew, our campaign was really, really in trouble. We struggled, and we came up with a—I came out with another statement tryin' to kind of ex—you know, say something in a different way about that statement. But that statement stayed with me the rest of the campaign. And people who at first thought I didn't have a chance to win by the time of the first primary against McClellan—and I could not talk about his age. He was seventy-six or something at that stage. I couldn't talk about his age. I couldn't talk about I'm run—I'm a young man, and I'm runnin' against an old man. I couldn't do that. I just had to let that work itself out. [04:00:56] But I had regained enough footing by the first campaign to throw Senator McClellan into a runoff. That time it would be thirty—I mean—excuse me—two weeks until we had the final heat in the Democratic Primary. But I threw him into a runoff. He edged me out by probably two percentage points, and I was still behind, but I had all

the other—the—I had the other people, Ted Boswell and Foster Johnson, I believe, who were always—also in the race. And I was—everybody was assuming I'd pick up their vote. They assumed those were negative McClellan votes. [04:01:43] But here I was, and I got him into a runoff, and when you threw an opponent into a runoff—an incumbent into a runoff—the old assumption was is the challenger wins, and everybody thought I was supposed to win. And so I threw him into a runoff, and two weeks later I lost by fifty-four or what—fifty-one, forty-nine or somethin'—it was very—it was a close race. I think about twelve thousand votes difference throughout the whole state. Close race, but I lost it. [04:02:28] The first election, the first primary I won it in many respects because I wasn't supposed to win it, and I came so close to beating him in the first go-round. In the second, two-week heat people thought I was supposed to win it, and I lost it, so I lost—they thought—I lost the race, which—that's what they remembered. The saving grace of that race was about a—that night—late on election night when I'd lost and the Sheraton Hotel, I believe it was, was just packed with people. All of our old well-wishers and all our old people—old friends who'd come to wish us well and hope we'd win who were so disappointed and cryin' and whatever. [04:03:20] I gave a speech that was considered to be magnanimous, and people remembered that. They remembered it. And that's one of the great lessons in politics. If you run, chances are 50 percent you're gonna lose, and two, if you lose, be magnanimous. Be big about it, and so

they thought I was big about it. So they gave me another chance.

[04:03:48] Major politicians in our state have all been defeated one time or another. Dale Bumpers was defeated. Defeated for the state legislature by Mike Womack, 1962, I believe. Bill Clinton defeated for reelection. Bill Clinton defeated for Congress. So I—they give—peep—voters in Arkansas are pretty doggone smart. They'll from time to time, and oftentimes they do—most times they give their politicians a little spanking and then give 'em a chance to come back home.

[04:04:29] And I think that most of us who have had those defeats learn from those defeats, and we maybe learn our lessons, or maybe it wasn't supposed to be, and we philosophy about it and whatever. But I thought that that night after I conceded, I frankly thought that my career was over in 1972. I had no idea in the world what I would do, what I would be. I was thirty-six, -seven years old. I was defeated, and I went around moping with my tail between my [*SL laughs*] legs. And it's so funny about that race—that was a race in 1972 that divided families, divided relationships and husbands and wives and kinfolks and everybody. Some—you know, they—we'd drive down neighborhoods, and there'd be a Pryor sign here in one end of the yard and a McClellan sign in another. I mean, it was just that kind of race. It was a visceral, emotional race, and it wasn't just about young versus old or liberal versus conservative or—I don't know quite what it was, but it was one of the real political races Arkansas, I don't think, will ever quite get over. Political scientists talk about it all the time,

and people speculated about it all the time. I'll be in the grocery stores still today after winning several political races after that. People would—they like to come up and say, "Let me tell you why lost that senate race back in [19]72." [SL laughs] You know, they know all that. So that's part of it, and you sit there and listen to 'em, and you have to kind of agree with 'em most of the time. [04:06:20] But I lost the race and came back and decided ultimately that in the fall we would come back to Arkansas, put the children in school, which we did. Moved to Little Rock and sold our home up in Arlington, Virginia, and by the way, many congressmen and senators don't even own homes anymore. They either stay in a townhouse or share a condo, and many, many, many of the congressmen are living in their offices today. Living in their offices, which I can't quite grasp, but they do. But it's a matter of economics. You can't—on a congressman's salary, it's very difficult to have a family and a home back at home, plus a home in Washington, DC, which is probably the highest job market of any town in the United States. But—I mean, highest housing market—most inflated. But anyway, many of 'em are living in their homes now. But we sold our home in Arlington. Bought a home in—on Ridgeway Street, 315 Ridgeway in Little Rock. Moved there. Put the boys in school, and I opened a little small office downtown, and kind of the rest is history. And I sat there, and I was in no mood to make a race. I didn't want to even think about politics. People would come into my office, and they'd want to talk about politics. They wanted to talk

about the race. They wanted to talk about "Why did you run this commercial at this time?" "Why did you go to this town instead of that town?" "Why did you say this instead of that?" [04:08:02] And it finally just wore me out and wore me out. And I sat there, and I had a—some wonderful buddies that would take me fishin' a lot and floated rivers a lot, and that was a good part of it. I got to spend a lot of time with Barbara and the boys, and that was a good part about it. So maybe that was supposed to be. But when we got on in for a year after that election, it looked more and more like Dale Bumpers wanted to run for the Senate against Senator Fulbright. He didn't want to run against him, he just thought someone was going to run against Senator Fulbright, and whoever defeated him—he thought he could be defeated—he thought that if it were not him, it would be someone else, and they'd be there for forty years or thirty-five years.

[04:09:51] So Dale did not want to run against Fulbright, but he wanted to run for the Senate, and he felt like it was time to run. His—he thought it was time to run for the Senate. He was a very popular governor. The economy had been very strong. It created a lot of jobs, and agriculture was just booming and soybeans at an all-time high at that time, and people were happy. And so that—all of that worked together. It was the perfect storm, I guess you would say, that he corralled and pushed forward into that race for the Senate in the Fulbright campaign. The polls showed that Fulbright started off at a certain percentage or level and stayed there. Just stayed there the

rest of the campaign. Fulbright never went up or down. Bumpers started about here and just kind of kept goin' up. Fulbright started at a medium point, but just stayed—never varied. And it was—I think those polls that Dale could probably flesh that out a little bit better than I could or maybe Ernie Dumas or John Brummett. [04:10:02] But I wanted Dale to run for president. I didn't want to make the race for the Senate. I wasn't ready. I'd had it with politics. And I encouraged him. I said, "Dale, run for president. You can run for president, and I hope you will run." I went over to Memphis to see Deloss Walker, his campaign guru, who had helped him get elected the first time and all—every other time. And I said, "Deloss, get Dale to run for president. He could do it." And I said, "I just—I don't—one, I don't want to run for governor, but he could run for president and win." And so, sure enough, Dale stayed in the Senate race and—in the race against Fulbright and defeated him. Defeated him handily, I might add. But that would've been in nineteen and seventy-four, and Jimmy Carter was just coming out of the governor's office in Georgia. And Dale Bumpers and Jimmy Carter, Reubin Askew—Florida—had—or Jimmy Carter of Georgia; Dale Bumpers, Arkansas; Reubin Askew, Florida. They were the three bright, shining lights in the South in the governor's offices. And they're—it was called The New South, and they were the new ramrods. But I saw—I looked at the race for the governor's job, and I said, "Well, if I'm gonna run, I better run now because I still have the name recognition."

SL: Yeah.

[04:11:57] DP: "And if I'm gonna run, I better give it a try." So I did.

And we won, and I'll never forget when I announced that the governors—no. I announced in my home on Ridgeway for the governor's job. And one of the reporters says—no, no, you know what? I'm gettin' races mixed up. When I announced years later, four years later, for the Senate, they said, "What's gonna be different about this race and the race [*SL laughs*] you ran"—and I said, "Well, this time I'm gonna win," which I did.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

DP: But that's how I answered that question—kind of a smart aleck. But [*SL laughs*] anyway, that was a opportunity for us that—you know, you never know when those defeats like that—why you have them or why you're dealt that hand or why this mishap has been visited upon you or whatever. But there's kind of a reason for everything, and I look back—that gave me a chance to be a governor, gave me a chance to get reacquainted with the state, gave me a chance to take a breath, and I enjoyed being governor for four years. Two two-year terms. So that was the good part about the [19]72 defeat. But I enjoyed being governor a lot. The problem with being governor at that time—we were in a recession. We had to cut back on school funding. We had to level out everything in—far as state services. I had committed not to raise taxes during that period of time, which I did not. [04:13:42] But it was some—there were some tough economic times and tough

economic choices. The aluminum industry was not only threatening to but it was leaving Arkansas. There was a big tax base. Our economic development was just slowed down, as it was all over the country in this economic recession, and Arkansas was in a tough bind.

Agriculture prices went down. National developments finally impacted Arkansas very adversely, so we really had to do some cutting back in state government. And it—but I enjoyed being governor, and I came up with a plan that most people probably don't want to hear about anymore or don't want me—my friends don't want me to talk about it.

[*SL laughs*] [04:14:38] It's called the Arkansas Plan, and it's to reestablish a new, I guess you would say, a new culture between state and local governments. And Steve Nickles helped devise this plan.

And basically it was to reduce the state's income tax to let these taxes and these revenues be decided on—upon by the people. At the local level, if they wanted to build a new fire station, hire a new police chief, or buy a new police car, let them decide the level of local government they wanted and sort of decrease the dependence that local

government would have on state government. [04:15:26] And I said,

"We're—we've become—the state legislature has become a giant school board. We're tryin' to run 357 school districts, and it's a shot in the dark. As a result, everybody's suffering. We don't know what they need. We don't know what they're doing. We're unaccountable to them. They're unaccountable to us. Let's try to push these decisions down to the local level." Well, that was called the Arkansas

Plan. It became known as the Coon Dog Plan because one night I was in [*SL laughs*] Mountain Home tryin' to sell this plan, and I was traveling all over the state in a bus, in a van, and had four or five people with me. And we'd stop at these places and go to the courthouses. And I was at the courthouse in Mountain Home one night, and one guy says, "Wait a minute. I"—out in the crowd—he said, "Governor, you're gonna cut back my income tax 25 percent." "Right." "You're gonna send me a check." "Right." "Then I'm supposed to decide if we want a new fire truck or a city hall or somethin'." I said, "Right. You're supposed to take that money and decide." "And if we vote against it and don't want to give that money to the local people, what do we do?" I said, "Well, it's gonna be your money. You can do whatever you want to. You can go out buy yourself a new coon dog if you want to." That was what got me in trouble. That became the Coon Dog Plan. [*SL laughs*] [04:16:44] Well, everybody laughed and oh, ho-ho-ho-ho. George Fisher, the cartoonist, took that up, and every time from that day until he died, every time he drew a picture of me, here I was . . .

SL: With a little . . .

DP: . . . with a coon dog.

SL: . . . coon dog.

DP: Which was funny. He always did Frank White with a banana peeling, you know, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: You know, look—legislation in the state legislature owned all that . . .

[04:17:07] SL: You know, another thing about the Arkansas Plan was that—didn't y'all calculate—there was a big percentage of money just in the process of transferring . . .

DP: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . the taxes up to Little Rock and then back out.

DP: Oh yeah, back out.

SL: So . . .

DP: There was no question about it.

SL: Yeah.

DP: There's no question about it. But who I made mad—I made, as they say, I made everybody mad. [*Laughter*] I made the mayors mad. I made the county judges mad. I made the sh—everybody was mad. I made schoolteachers mad. Everybody got mad about it. But you know what, that was a fight I enjoyed, and I'll tell you why I enjoyed it. One, it got me out in the state. I was passionate about doing something. I didn't ever think I could get the whole package passed but it—we made people think about it and talk about it. And that in itself was enough for me, just to have people talkin' about it in town meetings and deciding what the relationship should be between our local county courthouse and the state legislature or the department of local services or our schoolteachers and the state and the counties and the school systems and what—just to have people talkin' about all this stuff, I think, was very healthy. And in the next election cycle, when I

ran for governor, I may be wrong, but I don't know that any of those enemies I had made during that fight stayed my enemies. I don't know. I didn't sense their anger still being out there. Maybe I didn't pick up on it, but I enjoyed that fight, and I had good time.

[04:18:49] And [*SL laughs*] we presented it one night up at Petit Jean Mountain to State Representative Lloyd George, my wonderful. . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . friend from Yell County who died about two years ago, year and a half ago. And we had Steve Nickles and Ron Copeland of local services and had about eight or ten of us up there. Dick Heath from Finance and Administration—had a big whiteboard or blackboard and had Lloyd George sittin' there, and it's after dinner. We said, "Lloyd, here's how this thing's gonna work." And I said, "This way, this way, that way, that way. Here's who's gonna be mad. Here's who's gonna be happy. Not many. But anyway [*SL laughs*], here's how it's all gonna fold out." And old Lloyd, who's a student of government—smart as a whip—has a Ph.D. in physics. [04:19:38] But anyway, everybody thought he was a country bumpkin. [*SL laughs*] And I s—w—and after it was all over with, I said, "Okay, Lloyd, what do you think?" [*SL laughs*] See, we were askin' him to carry the water in the legislature. "Governor, I don't understand a damn thing about this plan, but I'm for it 100 percent." [*Laughter*] You know, that's the way he was. He was [*SL laughs*] just—he—that's Lloyd. But oh, I loved that guy. Boy, do I loved him. And Lloyd Reed George. But anyway, that was the

Arkansas Plan. [04:20:14] And I did—I became passionate about it, but I got through only a little of it. We got through some of the powers of the quorum court. The local quorum court was pretty well created during that period and—but that was okay. We had a good state discussion about it. It was healthy.

[04:20:38] SL: And you got reelected, so it wasn't . . .

DP: That's right.

SL: I mean, a lot of people talked about it, but they didn't really hold it against you.

DP: I know it. Yeah, yeah.

SL: So that's good.

DP: It was fun. I enjoyed it.

[04:20:48] SL: So while you're in the governor's office, Senator McClellan passes.

DP: He sure did. One year before I left the governor's office he passed. And I had to name his successor. The governor has to name a successor. The governor cannot appoint a member of the House. It has to be a special election. The governor has to appoint a US Senator if it's in a certain time frame before the election. So I was faced with the problem of having to appoint a successor for the year that he had remaining, and I had several of my very close friends who came to me and wanted that appointment.

[04:21:34] SL: Well, you had to offer it—you offered it to his wife.

DP: Well, I offered it to Mrs. McClellan.

SL: Yeah.

DP: She knew that I was coming that night to the apartment—the night of the funeral—Norma McClellan. And I did—I went there and there about fifteen people over there, and she asked them all to leave. They all knew the scenario. She asked 'em all to leave and just the two of us sittin' there like this. And we were both sittin' on the sofa, as I recall, at the Riviera apartment building. And I said—I don't know if I called her Ms. McClellan or Norma or what. I said, "You know I'm here in good faith to offer you a seat that belonged to your husband for many years. He served our state with distinction, and I'm here to offer you that seat, and it'd last for one year. And the state would be honored if you would take it." She says, "Don't go any further, David." She says, "I'm through with politics." She says, "You're very nice to do this. I'm movin' back to North Carolina to be with my family." And it was no—and from then on, it was—we were okay, you know. I had offered her the—and her family and everybody else—all the dignitaries that came. We called out sections of the state police and I think National Guard and whoever else to be protective and—of them and caring about their visit to the state for the funeral and all like that. But Mondale came down representing the White House, and I guess about twenty, twenty-five senators came, and that was that night that I did go over to her apartment and offer her the Senate seat.

[04:23:36] So in the next day or two I called up Kaneaster Hodges in Newport, and I said, "Kaneaster [*SL laughs*], I want you to"—this was

a big surprise to him—I said, "I want you to take the Senate seat for a year." "Man, I can't even begin to. I've got six farms to run. I've got planting coming up. I've got the harvest. I've got children in school. I"—he named me about twelve different deals. He said, "I'm tryin' to pay off loans from this drought. I'm tryin' to do" [*SL laughs*—I said, "Kaneaster, in the morning I'm gonna call you back at eight o'clock. And during the time between now and then, you be thinkin' about how you're gonna tell your children that you turned down a seat in the United States Senate." [*SL laughs*] [04:24:26] So next morning, eight o'clock, I dialed new—I was over at the lake house. I dialed Newport. Dialed his home. "I'll take it." [*Laughter*] "Yeah, I'll take it." That was Kaneaster. And he did a . . .

SL: He did a good job.

DP: . . . remarkable job.

SL: Yeah.

DP: He was very popular up there. And he served well and did Arkansas a lot of good up there that year. This was the year of the Panama Canal vote. It was tough, man. [04:24:58] It was tough on Dale Bumpers and Kaneaster, and by the way, we haven't talked about Dale Bumpers much. Maybe mentioned his name during this interview, but no member of the Senate could ever have had a better partner or a better friend to serve with than Dale Bumpers from Charleston, Arkansas. He was the best. He said something—I called—the night before I became governor, I called every former governor. I called Orval Faubus. I

called Sid McMath. I called everybody that had ever been governor. I called Ben Laney, and I said, "I'm gonna be governor tomorrow. Gonna be sworn in. Do you have any thoughts or advice?" I'll never f—I don't recall what each of 'em said. Faubus said an interesting thing. He said, "I hope you never have to sit through the night of an execution." I remember he said that. Bumpers said, "Always remember that it never hurts to be magnanimous." I remember that.

[04:26:11] But anyway, I served in the Senate with Dale. I was there eighteen years. He was there twenty-four years. What a remarkable friend, and what an outstanding senator. He had the respect of the Republicans and the Democrats and the right and the left. He had everyone's respect, and Dale Bumpers was truly a giant in the Senate. And he made that great speech during the—or right after he left the Senate, two weeks later they called on him to—out of retirement to come back one more time to the Senate floor for a last hoorah on the Senate floor, and Dale delivered that great oration in the impeachment trial of William Jefferson Clinton. [04:26:56] And after that speech that night, I called him up [*SL laughs*] late in the night 'cause I couldn't get through to his phones. I was back in Little Rock. In fact, Barbara and I had just gotten back from a trip to Europe, and we'd just gotten in that afternoon. And I'd watched his speech on the floor, and I started calling, and I couldn't get through. It was busy and busy, busy. But that night about nine o'clock, I guess, I finally got him out at his home in Bethesda. He answered the

phone. [04:27:26] I said, "Dale. David." I said, "That's probably one of the best speeches—probably the best speech ever delivered on the floor of the United States Senate." He said, "I'm inclined to agree with you." [*Laughter*] I would tease him about that all the time. He's just that way. And then—and I'd—he said—when he said that, he—I—anyway, he was remarkable in that speech. But years—even today, people come to me. I'm on a plane recently to Washington, DC. Somebody came up—"Aren't you Pryor from Arkansas?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You gave that speech defending President Clinton." [*SL laughs*] And I used to say, "No, that was my wonderful friend, Dale Bumpers." And I explain all that. Finally, I've just started sayin', "Well, thank you. I enjoyed [*SL laughs*] making it." Or "I studied hard." Or finally it just took—I took too long to explain that it was not me, but it was my pal, Dale Bumpers. But on many of 'em I used to tell 'em it was Dale Bumpers. But every time I see him or I have lunch with him, I said, "Well, I've had another four people congratulate me on that speech that you gave on the floor of the Senate, Dale." But he was remarkable. [04:28:35] He was a great governor and one of our greatest governors. And the economic times were with him. It gave him a lot of wind to his back—the economics of the moment—the economy of the moment, I should say. And he was a great governor and a great United States senator. And a wonderful public servant who never, ever in all of those years in public life had one iota of scandal. Not even a thought or a charge or anything about any kind of

scandal whatsoever. Pretty remarkable guy.

[04:29:16] SL: I'm tryin' to think of any mistakes that he made. I . . .

DP: Well, his hardest vote, I imagine, was Panama Canal.

SL: Yeah.

DP: And the overwhelming sentiment at the moment was against it.

"Givin' away the Panama Canal."

SL: Yeah.

DP: And he stuck with President Carter. He stuck with what was right. It was the right thing to do. Here we are today. Look at us now, with the president of Panama. Where'd he get his college diploma? Right here. Fayetteville, Arkansas.

SL: And he agreed to a Pryor Center interview.

DP: That's right. He did an interview.

SL: Yeah.

DP: So the world is fascinating and all the players and parts of it and moving . . .

[04:30:06] SL: What do you think it was about you and Dale that clicked so strongly? I mean, what was it? I mean, you're both progressive. You were both trying to do the best—the good thing—the right thing all the time. But there's no question there's this great chemistry between you two. I mean, I have a feeling that even if you weren't in politics, you all would've—if you'd ever crossed paths . . .

[04:30:31] DP: Governor Beebe was tryin' to talk about that, I think, a little bit recently at the Political Animals Club in Little Rock. I was out

in the audience, and in fact, Dale and I were at the same table. He was makin' fun of—he likes to make fun of each of us in different ways and using different methods of making—poking at us. But I think he was saying that we got along because we were so different. Not because we were conservative or liberal, but because we were so different in our respective demeanors and the way we did and whatever.

SL: Yeah.

[04:31:10] DP: I was kind of "Aw, shucks" and he—Beebe was sayin' somethin' like this—I've heard him say it fifty times—"Pryor gets up there and says, 'Aw, shucks, I'm so glad to be here and to see you,'" and Dale will get up and say, "You're so lucky to see me here tonight."  
[laughter] You know, that kind . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . of stuff.

SL: Yeah.

[04:31:29] DP: And that old cornball stuff that goes over good in the present audience. I think it's more than that. I think I know his values, and I think he knows mine, but more important than that—I think our relationship has been cemented because of our respective senses of humor. And my ability to make fun of his; his ability to make fun of me; and our common abilities to make fun of each other—ourselves. And I think that in itself bring—has brought us together. I also think that he's never challenged me, and I've never challenged

him on anything. If I would do something in the Senate, he would always be there in support even though he might not agree with it. If he would try to do something, I would always be there in support and never tried to get in his way, you know. He would give me free rein; I would give him free rein. Our constituencies were primarily the same to a large extent. From, I guess you might say, sort of the progressive base of the state.

[04:32:50] SL: Both married to very strong women.

DP: Oh boy, that's the truth. That's a good point. And those strong women have kept us—if we have any perspective left [*SL laughs*], they've kept us in our little cocoon of perspective. [*SL laughs*] Barbara and Betty. Yeah. What two remarkable ladies. And two former first ladies.

SL: Yeah.

DP: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DP: Yeah, just amazing people. Amazing. Not only amazing women, amazing human beings, you know. My gosh, look at Betty—what she did for the, you know, the vaccination program, and what she's done for children, and they've got a wing named up the Bethesda on the mental health institute for her [*unclear words*].

[04:33:41] SL: Peace Links.

DP: Yeah, Peace Links. My gosh, you know, worldwide, you know. But both of 'em represent kind of a commonsense approach. "Don't give

me all the horror stuff. Let's talk about what we need to do and get it done. Let"—you know, that sort of practical aspect of it. I—they're two great women. Two great women.

[04:34:13] SL: We can go back to Dale and Betty at any moment.

DP: Yeah.

SL: We're—we've got you in the Senate now, and I'm not sure what cause or causes you want to address with the time that you spent in the Senate. We should probably talk about that some. But we've also—at some point in time, we need to talk about your relationship with Bill and Hillary Clinton. You're . . .

[04:34:42] DP: Let me talk about getting to the Senate just a little bit.

SL: Okay.

DP: This was a classic political race. Here was a seated governor who had been there about four years—me. Here was an outstanding duo of congressmen, Jim Guy Tucker and Ray Thornton, both about as imbedded in the political hierarchy and system and quagmire, if you want to call it that, as any two human beings could be.

SL: Both good guys.

DP: And both good guys. Both progressive guys. Both believing in education and justice and all this, you know. So here are the three of us, you know, and Jim Guy enters that race as from the House. He'd been there only a short time. He'd gotten on Ways and Means Committee, but he enters it, and he enters it probably the Senate race a little prematurely in people's minds. They say, "You know, he hasn't

been there quite long"—so he gets in this race, and as a result of his quickness, that he's in the House and then he jumps up and runs for the Senate. He becomes not only a progressive, he automatically kind of becomes a liberal. Physically, he kind of looked like John F. Kennedy, who they equated with a liberal. His voice, his enunciation, his movements, his statements, his positions sounded like a liberal. So he sort of became in that race—in politics perception is 99 percent of it. He became the liberal. [04:36:24] Ray Thornton. Ray Thornton—a little bit different. Very progressive. Very smart. Very educated.

SL: Oh . . .

DP: Law degree. Had—ultimately became president [*laughs*] of the University of Arkansas. Deep roots in a family—in the Stephens family. My goodness. And here he is. He moves a little slower. He talks a little slower. He's methodical. He kind of waits until everybody says something, and then he says somethin'. So his mannerisms and his timing and everything else—he sort of becomes the conservative. Here I am—who'd gotten beat up a little bit with the Arkansas Plan and sometimes the teachers and sometimes various groups and whatever. You sit there in that governor's office long enough, you're gonna get beat up, regardless. [04:37:18] You'll still remain fairly well respected or liked or something, but you're gonna take some hits from their organizations and from a lot of people. And frankly, they get—you know, after about four years they kind of get tired of seein' you

every night on TV. You know, just like right now with Obama—he's been in the White House six years. People—it got that way with Bill Clinton, got that way with George W. Bush. It's Bush fatigue. It's Obama fatigue. It's Pryor fatigue. It's whatever. They'd see me every night, you know, for four years on the television. I'd just run for the Senate. I'd just run for the governorship and whatever. And the newspapers were competitive at that time and fighting for news, so I was always in the news. [04:38:10] Okay, so here comes Jim Guy Tucker. Here comes Ray Thornton. Here comes David Pryor. So I became kind of the moderate in the race. Not the conservative, but the moderate. Ray's the conservative; Jim Guy's the liberal; I've—and these are all perceptions woven into this strange sort of a mysterious box that—cloudy and all get out. [SL laughs] [04:38:35] And during that campaign, things happened. One thing that happened while I was governor. There was a—I'd had the labor support all my races, and one thing that happened when I was governor one night. I was sittin' there in the Governor's Mansion about eight o'clock. The mayor of Pine Bluff calls up—state policeman comes in and says, "Mayor of Pine Bluff's on. It's an emergency." And I picked up the phone. "Yes, Mayor. David Pryor." He says, "Governor, all of our firemen have gone on strike. We don't have any firemen at the fire station." And I said, "Really?" And I said, "Well, what do I do?" So I called out the National Guard. Well, the labor people said I broke the strike. What was I to do, let the town of Pine Bluff . . .

SL: Pine burn.

DP: . . . catch on fire? You know, come on. I called out the National Guard. They maintained I kept the Guard out too long while they were negotiating and couldn't negotiate a settlement, but I couldn't let those fire stations be empty and bare and whatever. [04:39:39] So the Guard was in there within two hours, manning about twelve fire stations—twelve or fifteen. So I lost unions right there. I lost 'em and they went to either Jim Guy or Ray. Most of 'em to Jim Guy 'cause Ray had made a vote or two in the House that had angered some of 'em, but anyway. So I lost the unions. I retained—I lost some of the minorities, some of the African Americans to Jim Guy because they considered him to be more progressive, more liberal than me, the moderate. [04:40:18] Even though I'd appointed a lot of minorities to boards and commissions and all like that. Anyway, that was another thing. So you sit there in that governor's office, and you very seldom gain. You sit there, and you just count—you just try not to have too many lawsuits. [04:40:36] But Ray, on the other hand, stood kind of steady. And Jim Guy was up and down. I was kind of up and down, but Ray was kind of steady. And Ray built his campaign on something called trust. He had a radio thing. Every morning he'd come on the radio for two minutes, I believe, statewide, and he said—there was a little song, "You can trust Ray." And it was Ray Thornton. Said, "I'm Ray Thornton. I'm here to answer your questions this morning. Do you"—somebody—they had 'em planned out, of course.

SL: Sure.

[04:41:07] DP: Somebody would ask a question. Ray would—the he would say, "You can trust Ray to"—well, that, to me, was brilliant. I said, "Gosh, why didn't we think about that?" It doesn't cost much. It's statewide—you know. But anyway, Deloss Walker had thought that up. He was working for Ray in that campaign. But anyway, one thing led to another, and that campaign ended up with Jim Guy Tucker and myself in the runoff barely edging out Ray Thornton. The night of the first heat—the night of the first election in the Democratic Primary, I went to bed at the governor's mansion about two o'clock not knowing if I was even in the runoff. I didn't know who'd—we were nip and tuck, the three of us. Nip and tuck. I got up about seven o'clock, six-thirty, wandered out to the guard shack, got a cup of coffee. And state policeman was out there sound asleep. [SL laughs] And I woke him up, and I said, "Hey, so-and-so." [SL laughs] And I said, "Do you know who's won the governor's—I mean, the Senate race, you know." He said, "Oh, I don't know, Governor." I said, "Well, why don't you call down to the Associated Press and see if they have a update." So he did. And it—they said, "We"—they said, "We think"—the Associated Press was—"We think that it's Jim Guy Tucker and David Pryor," and Ray third. So it'd be Tucker and Pryor. [04:42:30] And I had two little books I'd kept during the campaign. Two notebooks. Small. Carried 'em with me. One of the notebooks was if I'm in the runoff with Ray Thornton [SL laughs]; one of the books if I'm in the runoff

with Jim Guy Tucker. If I'm running against Ray Thornton—no, if I'm running against Jim Guy Tucker, I wake up on Tuesday morning. First thing I do, if Tucker is my opponent, I'm going to Grant County to Sheridan, and I'm gonna round up every Ray Thornton relative and kinfolk and friend at the courthouse and have a town meeting. And I'm gonna say, "Look, I'm asking your support. Ray is my friend. He's always been my friend and blah-blah-blah." Now, had I been in the race with Ray Thornton, I had some more ideas about what I'd—I probably won't mention those. [*SL laughs*] But I was going to attack probably—not attack, but I was going to make it known who some of his backers were that might . . .

SL: Upset . . .

[04:43:44] DP: No, I shouldn't even say that. I don't even want to use that. But I had different strategies for each race, if I—you know.

SL: Friendships and follow the money.

DP: But I went to bed that night—I didn't know if I was in the runoff with either one of 'em. I thought maybe . . .

SL: How could you sleep? Just exhausted.

[04:44:01] DP: Well, I was exhausted, and there's not much you can do . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . at that time.

SL: Yeah.

DP: What else could I do? It was like Harry Truman the night in 1948. He

went to bed, and he didn't know he had beat Dewey. He thought Dewey . . .

SL: Dewey'd won.

DP: . . . defeated him, you know.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

DP: He went to bed. He said, "What else could I do? I drank a glass of buttermilk and went to bed." [*Laughter*] You know, Harry Truman! [*Laughter*] So that's kind of the way I felt. But that—those were interesting days and . . .

[04:44:27] SL: So did you go to Sheridan?

DP: Oh, yes sir! I went to Sheridan, Arkansas, in Grant County. I got Archie Schaffer. He was helpin' Ray. I got Archie in on my side. I got—I think Paul Berry was probably helping Ray. I'm not sure. I—but there were a lot of Ray Thornton people that I started calling. I had a list of Ray Thornton people calling them to get 'em to come over to our side, so they did. And anyway, it—[04:44:58] But Jim Guy is a good friend. He's given Mark Pryor money and his support. Ray Thornton is a good friend. We just had lunch with Betty and Ray about a month ago in Little Rock. So you know, when those races are over, they're over. You like for 'em to be over. But boy, I've—anyway, it's all been fun. I've enjoyed [*laughs*] it.

[04:45:26] SL: Well, so I'm assu—so the runoff—was it close? I, you know, I don't remember if it was very close.

DP: It was mean-spirited.

SL: It was?

DP: It was mean-spirited. And Jim Guy and myself—and I'm sorry it got that way, but it did. Yeah, there were a lot of things said that I think each one of wish—each one of us wish we could've taken back after the race. One, he accused Jack Williams, our campaign manager, of making an overture during a rate fix—during a rate case for Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company that looked awful bad, and I had to defend Jack. In fact, I had to fly down to Texarkana and hold a big meeting and defend Jack in front of all those people there. The US—the prosecuting attorney in Little Rock had to step into the case and look into it and investigate it. Called people and had to come out with a very quick decision exonerating Jack Williams and our campaign, so that helped. But there were a lot of moving things going on, and it was a tough race. I was glad when that one was over.

SL: Yeah.

[04:46:58] DP: That one actually got—really, it was probably worse in just pure old vitriol . . .

SL: Than the McClellan . . .

DP: It probably was meaner than the McClellan/Pryor race, the more I think about it. Some of the McClellan people may have done some stuff that I don't think John McClellan authorized or did. But I don't think he knew about it—some of the things that they did about me—some would label as dirty tricks. But I don't think he knew about those instances or those things that were done. It's just like me—one

night Richard Arnold down in Dumas said to me—he says, "When we were running"—and you don't know what your campaign people are doing. Richard Arnold came to me right before I was goin' up on the stage and speaking at the football stadium to all these people in our race for Congress. Man, there were a couple of thousand people out there that night and those mosquitoes in the hot summer—and just as I was going to speak, Richard stopped me. [04:48:08] He says, "David, you're out there pullin' up all my yard signs all over the place." And "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I said, "Whoa!" I said, "I'm not pullin'—I don't know anything about that. Richard, I'm not doin' it." And I had a young man—I said, "Are we pullin' up any of Richard Arnold's yard signs?" "Not that I know of. I hadn't done it. I don't think our pe"—well, we—Barbara and I got in that night about midnight and drove into our driveway, and there was this car sittin' there. [*SL laughs*] It was an old friend of ours, old Pop Henderson, and Pop was asleep in his car. [*Laughs*] We pulled up his old brown Oldsmobile. I'll never forget it. I said, "Pop, what are you doin' here?" "Hold on!" He's—he got out of the car. He opened up the trunk [*laughs*] of his car. He says, "What do you want me to do with all these Richard Arnold yard signs?" [*Laughter*] I said, "Gosh, Pop! Don't do that!" [*Laughter*] You know, he—you know, he's about eighty years old. He was just a tough old guy—great friend of ours. But you don't know sometimes what your campaign supporters are doing. But—well, Scott, let's see—is there anything else that . . .

SL: Well, yeah, we've got some more to do. Why don't we take a break.

[Tape stopped]

[04:49:10] SL: DP, we're gonna try and finish this thing up.

DP: Yeah, let's do it.

SL: We've gotten you to the Senate. You know, we're not even talked—we haven't even thought about everything you've done since the Senate.

DP: Whew!

SL: But—and we can kind of run through that very end. But you get to the Senate. Your friend Dale Bumpers is there. You've got some other friends that you . . .

DP: Birch Bayh is there. Wonderful friend of mine for many years. Birch Bayh is there. John Culver of Iowa was there—an old House member friend. John Heinz is a member of the Senate from Pennsylvania—Republican. Very close friends. We were joined together on aging issues in the House when I was there. But anyway, I had—I'd—John Glenn, a wonderful friend. Jay Rockefeller—we were governors together. So David Boren—I've never had a better pal than David Boren—now the president of the University of Oklahoma. We were governors and senators together. But anyway, I have a lot of friends in the Senate. None better, I might say, than Dale Bumpers from Charleston, Arkansas. And he was a friend—not only a friend, but a mentor in a wonderful, wonderful way. He had a touch. He had a great touch, and course, as an orator, there was no one in the Senate that could match Dale Bumpers. [04:50:34] And his best speeches

was when he didn't have any preparation. Anyway, he was—he could do it. He could do it, and he knew how to do it. He knew—I think he'd been in enough church services or something to watch the preachers and the reaction of the audience and the congregations and—but he was good. A master of timing. But I did have good friends in the Senate when I got there.

[04:51:09] SL: What were the issues that lay before you that you wanted to address when you got to the Senate.

DP: Well, I did—I don't want to say that I had a huge agenda when I got to the Senate. I was put on the Governmental Affairs Committee, which had jurisdiction over a lot of different agencies of government. That was a good thing for me. I had tried to get on the Finance Committee. I was not successful my first term. And I worked hard in the Governmental Affairs—government operations area of trying to—also, we were—once that—we were still in a very bad economic situation and to try to bring, I guess, some sanity into state expenditures. One thing I really got into was the matter of consultants in our federal government. Jimmy Carter, when he became president, he told Bert Lance, who's chief budget person who just passed away—he says, "Bert, tomorrow morning I want you to bring me a copy of all the government contracts with consultants we have." "Oh, okay, Mr. President." Well, the next morning Bert Lance walks in—says, "Mr. President, this will take about three 18-wheelers to bring these into the White House grounds if you want them. That's how many

government contracts we have." So I started saying, "What are these contracts? Why is it we have to contract all of these services of government out that should be federal functions and government functions? Why do we have to have, for example, in our park systems, contractors to run our parks. Why do we have to have a Department of Defense? Why do we have to employ all of these RAND Corporations and think tanks and multibillions of dollars worth of outside contractors. Look at Afghanistan. Look at Iraq. Look at all of the contractors we've had in the last ten years in those two countries, and look at what they've led us"—I don't want to say they've led us into, but—which they—which we got into in spite of their services.

[04:53:22] So it—I—we call them the Beltway bandits. We call 'em the Beltway bandits. Some people called them the underground government. I had a kind of little semifeature in *Time Magazine* about some of the speeches I'd made about the use of consultants and some of the findings that I'd had. [04:53:44] I really tried through the Government Affairs Committee to seize this issue. It's an issue that the press is not real interested in. It's too arcane. But it is sapping more and more of our dollars every day from the national treasury and with fewer and fewer results, I might add. But we have consultants now for everything and everybody. And you try to close a fish hatchery here—the Department of Interior will hire twenty-five different consulting firms at millions of dollars each to say, "Should we close or keep it open?" Well, you know, come on. I mean, it's just

absurd the reasons that we hire consultants and how much we pay these consultants. We pay them much more than we pay the federal workforce, and it demoralizes the federal workforce, to a large extent. [04:54:38] That was one of my issues. I stayed on the—I also came to the Senate realizing that we had to do something about pharmaceutical pricing. And I worked hard. I worked, I think, tirelessly almost. I made very little headway—made some headway in trying to keep prices of pharmaceuticals down or at least near the inflation level. They were going at sometimes three times the rate of inflation each year, ratcheting up. And one day I called, for the first time, I think, on the Senate floor, I called the drug manufacturing companies—I referred to them as greedy, and I used the word greedy. Some of the people on our—my staff said, "Oh, don't call them [*SL laughs*] greedy." I said, "Well, why not? That's what they are. And they are greedy. And I'll call 'em that again. They're greedy." And I met one time with the president of one of the major pharmaceutical companies, and we had breakfast together. He called and said, "May I come to see you?" And I said, "Sure." So I met him for breakfast the next day or two—some hotel. And he said, "What do you want? What do you want from us?" I said, "I tell you what I want." I said, "It's very simple. You give us the same prices for the drugs you manufacture. Give the Americans the same price that you give to the folks in Great Britain or even Russia" . . .

SL: Canada.

DP: . . . "or China or Canada." Anyway, "Give us the same prices. That's all we"—"Oh, we can't do that. It doesn't work that way." [*Laughs*] I said, "Well, that's what we want. We want it to work that way." But those were a couple of issues that I took on. Another issue—of course, I was continuing on the issue of nerve gas, and I fought the Pine Bluff production of nerve gas. Went down to Pine Bluff, met with the Chamber of Commerce. I said, "I love all of you, but I've got to part with you on this issue. I know you want the jobs, but I—but we've got enough nerve gas now stored in this country and all parts of the world to kill everybody a hundred times over. How much do we need? You know, how"—and I don't think they liked my position, but I think they thought it was good that I came down there and told 'em what my position was. [04:57:04] But I did a lot of that sort of thing. I did a lot of things I think—I was on the agriculture committee, and I tried to do some things for our—especially our rice programs and I think that has benefitted the target loan that I helped with Thad Cochran in Mississippi—Republican to legislate and to make the law of agriculture policy. I think it's helped the rice farmers, hopefully considerably. But I just had a lot of general issues out there going and enjoyed working on all of 'em.

[04:57:46] SL: You know, the Senate is a pretty small club. It's basically a hundred seats and, arguably, I would guesstimate maybe the most powerful hundred seats in the world [*DP laughs*] if—in some ways. I mean, once you got the Senate—I mean, I know that you recognized

that careerwise and influencewise, it would escalate much more quickly in a smaller unit than the House of Representatives. And once you got to the Senate, did you sense how much influence it had? And not just nationally, but globally? And what about the relationship between it and the House and it and the presidency and it and the . . .

[04:58:40] DP: You know what I think, Scott? That's a very good question. I think, as I look back, the longer I'm out of the Senate and away from the Senate, the more I respect the Senate and its powers and its obligation and its authority and its meaning, I guess I should say. I think the longer I'm out, the more I see how important it is. I went to the Senate—and let me just describe a little nuance here, a little comparison. I had been in the House for six years. Here I was, elected to the Senate for upcoming six-year term then another six then another six. But when I got to the Senate chamber—and what grabbed me was, I think at first, is how different I felt in the Senate chamber than I felt in the House chamber. In the House chamber I felt I was in a big coliseum. I felt like it was an enormous basketball gymnasium with about four different games in a tournament going on at the same time. In the Senate, you sit there in the Senate. You have your own desk—not so in the House. You have your own desk, your own seat. You have your seatmates. You have all of your colleagues on one side of the aisle. And you're sitting there, and it's like sitting in your den at home. There's a comfort level. [05:00:24]

I never will forget the first speech I ever made in the Senate. It was—

I can't even think—I think it was about agriculture issues. It was. It was about when the farmers were up there circling Washington.

SL: With the tractors.

DP: Yeah, the tractor business. I made a speech about it in supporting them tryin' to get some stability in their pricings and—for the family farmer. But I got up, and I think I kind of shouted in the Senate. [*SL laughs*] And I'll never forget that Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio came by my desk a few minutes later and said, "Can I give you a hint?" And I said, "Sure." He said, "Here, you don't have to shout. You just have to talk. People will listen to you if you're makin' sense. You don't have to shout." I said, "Howard, I appreciate that," which I did.

SL: Well, of course.

[05:01:29] DP: You know, in the House you shout. It's almost a shouting match to—one, to get recognition and all this kind of stuff. In the Senate, it's supposed to be more civil. It's not as civil as it was when I was there. But in the Senate you don't see many shouters. You—every now and then you do. They don't last too long. You can tell. You'll know. But it's very different. You feel different.

SL: It's more intimate.

DP: You feel like you're in a small clubhouse, or you feel like if you say something, you better watch out because you're gonna be listened to, you know. And so you kind of measure your words. But in the House it's very different. It's rambunctious and raucous, and you know,

everybody's tryin' to get the microphone and do that five-minute rule or one-minute rule, depending on what rule was adopted earlier in the day for that particular bill and—but in the Senate, you know, you get up and you talk as long as you want to. You just talk. And you see some of that today—filibustering and all like that. I do believe the filibuster is hurting the Senate today, and I think it's been employed for the wrong reasons. I don't see it going away anytime soon. But while I was there in the Senate, I tried to bring about some rules—changes in the Senate. I was not too successful in doing it, but some things we accomplished. I worked with Senator Danforth of Missouri. And we even had on one occasion a actual breakfast that we had arranged between the Senate Democrats and the Senate Republicans. Had a real breakfast. Sit-down, where we'd just talk. No staff. And that was helpful, but that didn't last long. So . . .

[05:03:35] SL: From the—I mean, did you see changes happening in the demeanor of the Senate from the—I mean, when did you start to see—or did you detect that some—that something was changing about the Senate while you were there?

DP: In the early [19]80s I sensed something was happening, and I think what I saw happening, and I never was sure I was accurate about this feeling I had—or drawing these conclusions. But what I think happened is in the [19]80s there were a whole group of House guys—Trent Lott and Danny Quayle and four—I don't know—eight or—five or six or seven—Steve Symms and Republicans especially in the House

who for years had been bottled up, stepped on, squashed, if you want to call it that, by the Democratic leadership and had been held back by their own leadership on the Republican side. And it seems like all of a sudden the floodgates were open from the House to the Senate, and a bunch of those young—I don't want to say firebrand—but energetic Republicans especially came from the House over to the Senate. Well, when they got there they looked around and say, "Man, we're just about as important as anybody else in this body." They didn't have to obey all the rules because there were no rules. There were Senate rules, yes, but there were no rules of decorum like they had had to go through in the House. So they were kind of unleashed, and they felt a freedom, and I think it was hard for them to calibrate this new freedom and to basically measure that freedom and to make it constructive. They wanted to kind of get it out of their system. And some of 'em—I'm not sayin' they were just Republicans. There were probably some Democrats, too, in that group. They became . . .

SL: Unchained.

[05:05:51] DP: Yeah, unchained. Yeah, that's a perfect—they were unchained. That's right. [SL laughs] And I think that's when it started. But now, in the last several years, the thing that has changed the House and Senate and American politics is the Citizens United case, when the sky's the limit for contributions. No accountability. Super PACs. All of that. I don't know how we put that genie back in the bottle. I just don't know how we could . . .

SL: You know, this may be totally cockeyed, but it kind of reminds me of the poll tax—that whoever pays the money gets the vote.

DP: Well, you can . . .

SL: I mean . . .

DP: You could think that way. And you say, "Wait a minute, you accepted so-and-so—Senator so-and-so or Congressman so-and-so or Mayor Jones. You accepted all this money from those people who are doin' business with you or contracting for your compa—I mean, contracting for your county or whatever. And they're giving you all these contributions and"—"Well, they're just buying access—the right to come into the office to visit." That's a poor answer—poor excuse. And listen, I took contributions from all kind of people. I don't think I ever took them in the volume that they give now. I mean, nothing like the volumes that these folks are receiving from all over the country.

[05:07:23] And the other thing about campaign contributions is, is not only the unaccountability of who's giving or why they're giving. But the other really, really bad thing that I think right now is our senators and congressmen and leaders of all—county, city, whatever—I better say congressmen and senators right now. The time—just the time they have to spend to raise the money—just the time they spend. I heard Tom Brokaw speak one day at the—actually [*laughs*], when I was at the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School at Harvard, I went to the Republican National Convention, if you can believe it, and stayed a couple of days. I never went out to the convention floor, but

I went to a lot of the meetings at the hotel and listened to a lot of speakers. Tom Brokaw spoke, and this was right before the convention of 2004. Is that right—2004? I think so. Somethin' like that. And Tom Brokaw got up and said—kind of in his deep, melodious bass [*SL laughs*] voice—said, "Well, we're not—at NBC we're not gonna cover the conventions live this time. We're not gonna go gavel to gavel. All they are are fund-raising activities for the members of the House and Senate and, in other words, we're just not gonna stoop that low to do all of that. They're just fund-raisers." I started to get up. I didn't, because I was in a sea of Republicans, and I was probably one of the two or three Democrats in the whole ballroom. But I started to say, "Mr. Brokaw, you make \$9 million a year, and 79 or 80 percent or 85 percent, probably, of all the tee—all the dollars that a candidate raise, they go to the networks, and they go to the TV stations, and they go to pay your salaries."

SL: Good point.

[05:09:28] DP: "So you're a little bit hypocritical, Mr. Brokaw, about this." Says, "That's why they're having to raise money, is to pay your salary and to pay your TV stations, and that's the only reason. That's why it costs so much." So—but I didn't, but that's the case.

SL: That's a good point. That's a really good point.

DP: Yeah.

[05:10:52] SL: Well, any—was there—have you got any Senate-floor stories? You know how you've told us all these great Arkansas stories.

Are there any Senate stories that kind of exemplify the . . .

DP: Well, one little funny story that I can remember is—well, one—I remember that I went to the Senate, and we didn't have television in the Senate.

SL: No cameras.

DP: No cameras. And Robert Byrd and some of the old barons fought—Senator Russell Long fought it. Herman Talmadge fought it. Robert Byrd really fought it. Blah, blah—they thought it would destroy the decorum of the Senate. It's changed the decorum. I—but I still think because we're on public view in the Senate now, for the first time—as the House was. I think that overrides the decorum. I think that's important. And I think—I know some of the older guys were sayin', "Well, wait a minute—those cameras are gonna be on my bald head. They're gonna show my [*SL laughs*] bald spot." I mean, it was all these arguments. And some of the guys running for president are gonna dominate this thing. And then the guys from California are gonna wait till—they're gonna wait till eight o'clock at night before they come to the Senate so it'll be . . .

SL: Yeah.

DP: . . . six o'clock or five o'clock . . .

SL: Prime time.

DP: . . . in California, you know. They're gonna be—a lot of that—some of that has occurred, but not all of it. [05:11:31] But I never will forget that one day Lloyd Bentsen—I was handling a bill—or Lloyd Bentsen

was handling a bill, and he saw me—I was on the Finance Committee—he said, "Could you help me? I've got to leave for about thirty or forty minutes?" And he was handling some big tax bill. Some Republican was speaking, so I was sittin' there in the manager's chair in the Senate, and there was a young lady sittin' there that worked for Senator Lloyd Bentsen, and she was right there. And [*SL laughs*] whoever was speaking on the other side was talking, and this young lady says, "Doesn't this make you nervous?" And I said, "Well, not really. Why are we nervous? Why are we nervous right now?" She says, "Knowing that two hundred million people are watching us right now." I said, "Let me tell you somethin'. If there's two thousand people watching us [*SL laughs*] in this world, we'll be very lucky." [*Laughter*] I said, "They're not watchin' us! [*Laughter*] Very few people are watching us right now." But the staff people—some of 'em get so . . .

SL: Spooked.

DP: . . . overwrought and so overreacting about—I guess you would say their importance. Sometimes they carry things too far, which is good. She's—I knew what she was saying. [05:12:47] But—oh, there were a lot of little funny things. I remember one night late, Senator Dan Quayle—I may have told this story—was—his son was playing, I think, in a basketball game out in Bethesda, I believe. I'm not sure where they lived. Before he was vice president, he was a senator. And we were in the Senate together, and it was eight—six o'clock at night or

seven, and Dan [*unclear words*]*—*I noticed Dan Quayle fidgetin'*—*walkin' back and forth and askin' the leaders when the vote was coming and all like this. And they kept sayin', "Oh, probably in thirty minutes. Maybe an hour or hour and a half." And I went to Dan. I said, "What have you got goin' tonight? I noticed you're fidgeting." He said, "My son's playing in a basketball game." Now, he's nine years old or somethin' like that. "He's playing in a basketball game. This is the championship, and he wanted me to be there, and I promised him"*—*I said, "Dan, get in your car. Go." I said, "There won't be any more votes." He said, "How can you say that?" I said, "Because if you're gonna go and you need to go to your boy's ball game, I'm gonna take the floor, and I'm not gonna let it go till you get back, okay? So don't worry. You're not gonna miss a vote." He never forgot that. It was a little thing.

SL: Yeah.

[05:14:09] DP: So I took the floor, and there were no more votes that night. Those are the little old tiny things that guys*—*people, I should say*—*kind of remember, you know.

SL: Part of the heart.

DP: Yeah. But those are just little things. But you know, today*—*in today's environment, I don't know if those occur very often. I'm afraid they don't. It's, as we say, pretty poisonous. Well, let's see*—*those are a couple of little stories. I enjoyed*—*one thing I did*—*the one thing I really miss about the Senate*—*and I've been out of the Senate now

about as long as I was in the Senate. But one thing that I enjoyed always about the Senate each week—I enjoyed the Senate caucus meetings at lunch on Tuesdays, when just the members of the Democratic Caucus were in there. We were planning our strategy for the week, and each senator was getting up from time to time, saying somethin'. And I enjoyed that. That's when you really get to know what these folks are made of. And they talk about—we've got—we've lost our definition of who we are. We've got to redefine ourselves. Who are we, anyway? Why are we a political party? Why are we in this body, anyway? And those are the times when you—times, if there is any soul searching as a . . .

SL: [*Unclear word*].

DP: . . . community of like-minded individuals, that's when it occurs. It doesn't occur out on the Senate floor in front of all the TV cameras and the press sitting up there. [05:15:58] It's—but it's a pretty amazing place. It's amazing body of people and the staff people who make it up and make it run and the parliamentarians and all the people who make that thing function, when it does function. It's a pretty great institution. I hope someday—I just hope that it will be restored to its greatness. I don't know when that's going to occur, but someday I've got to think it will.

[05:16:32] SL: You have faith in that.

DP: I do.

SL: It—there is a crisis quality about all of it now that—you know, there is

that—there's also that attitude that, "You know, this thing is broken."  
It's been . . .

DP: Well, it's broken.

SL: . . . goin' for a couple of hundred years.

DP: Yeah, Humpty Dumpty was broken, too, and we gotta put Humpty  
Dumpty [*SL laughs*] back together again, and it's broken. There's no  
question about it. But it had—it is a beautiful institution if it is working  
right. It's not working right right now and . . .

SL: Well . . .

DP: . . . I don't know.

[05:17:09] SL: I always wondered if you decided not to run again after  
three terms, if it was because you saw this coming or if you felt like  
maybe you could do more outside of the Senate. Or was it more . . .

DP: I . . .

SL: . . . time for someone else to . . .

DP: Well, it was all of the above, I think. A lot of people say, "Oh, I didn't  
want to get out there and raise all that money." "Oh, it's too  
poisonous up there. I don't—blah, blah, blah." I—with me, it was  
probably a combination of things. I think it boiled down to the fact  
that I'd done it eighteen years. I'd loved it. It was just time to move  
on, and I was ready to come back home. I was tired of airplanes,  
goin' back and forth every weekend, almost. Tired of traveling. I was  
tired of raising the money. I knew I would have to raise it again. I'm  
not good at it. I was never good at raising money for my campaigns.

I would be glad to help someone else raise money for their campaign, but I never liked it for my campaign. Never liked to do it. Some senators did. For example, Howard Metzenbaum loved to get in there and raise that money for his [*SL laughs*]*—he just loved askin' those people for money. Alan Cranston of California loved gettin' on the phone and badgerin' those folks—those rich folks in Silicon Valley and banks and whatever for money for his campaign. He loved—they both loved it. [SL laughs] [05:18:33] But I—I'm uncomfortable with that and—but I think it's going to get better if the American people will get better. And when I say if the American people are gonna get better—if they demand that it gets better. And when they demand it—I mean, if they turn out the people that they think are making it stay broken or making it—or help to—who helped break it, I think the American people may someday rise up and say, "Enough's enough. We're gonna go back. We're not gonna take this anymore. We're gonna have some people who are gonna make this system work, and those people who don't want it to work, we're not gonna support anymore."* Now, I could name two or three of those. I won't do it, but [*SL laughs*] I think there are those . . .

SL: Well, I think we all could.

DP: . . . people around.

SL: Well, D . . .

[05:19:32] DP: Why don't we think about concluding this, and if y'all look at it in the next few days and weeks and months, and if you want me

to do another segment, we'll come to the new building and I'll finish it up. If you see gaps or holes. What do you think?

SL: Well, I think that's fine. Would you like to save the—what you've done since the Senate for that time? Would you like—because if there's anybody that's ever flunked retirement, it's you and Barbara Pryor.

DP: Yeah, okay.

SL: I mean, you guys are as busy as you've ever been.

DP: Oh, boy.

SL: And . . .

DP: I've got four speeches next week.

SL: I know.

DP: One in Benton Tuesday night. I'm—I don't know why. I don't know how. Yeah, let's do that. Let's wait until after—yeah, let's wait till we get in our new building, and I'll come in, and . . .

SL: Okay.

DP: . . . you'll have cameras—a place to interview and . . .

SL: Well, I don't know—probably won't, but we . . .

DP: Oh, okay.

SL: I think we can make somethin' happen.

DP: Oh, okay—or we can come back.

SL: It's gonna be another several months . . .

DP: Okay.

SL: . . . before we're actually set up . . .

DP: Okay

SL: . . . to do that stuff. But . . .

DP: Well, we—why don't we try five minutes, then. It's five minutes till five. Let's go five minutes about the afterlife.

[05:21:45] SL: Okay. You know, I know that you continue to be engaged with Bill Clinton some and his initiatives. And I know that you all talk and you're still close friends—and Hillary, too. I sense that that's a part of your life after the Senate. Maybe not as big a part as the boards that you sit on and your active membership in different organizations. But what would you like to talk about as far as the after life? I mean, I think the first thing that happened was the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

DP: Probably the first thing was comin' up here doin' those seminars . . .

SL: That's right.

DP: . . . you know, with Todd. You know, when I left the Senate, I was so fortunate because Dan Ferritor at the University of Arkansas and others said to me, "Look, we want you to come up here and do a class or teach or seminars or whatever." And I said, "Whoa—okay." So I decided to do that. I also did a short stay at Arkansas College in—I mean—Arkansas College—Lyon College—used to be Arkansas College in Batesville. I did another little series of seminars there, but I spent almost a year up here on this campus in [19]97—at the Fayetteville campus doing seminars with Dr. Todd Shields in political science. And then I would go around the campus—the business school and the Dale Bumpers College and the law school, all these places around and

different departments and wonderful sections of the University of Arkansas. And I'd do little shows—not shows, but I started to say dog-and-pony shows—but I'd do little seminars or speeches. And many times I would bring in speakers. I brought in former ambassador to China and US Senator Jim Sasser. One day I brought him to Giffels Auditorium during that time. I brought in several of—I brought Dale Bumpers to the campus a time or two. Brought the attorney general of our state here. I brought various people into the campus to try to give the students as much accessibility and opportunity as we could do at the time, to give them the chance to see that these people were real, you know. They might've read about 'em. They might've seen 'em on TV, but here, they're real people and sit down with 'em. And not in a big environment with a bunch of TV cameras rolling, but—and then I did a lot of that, and I enjoyed that.

[05:23:30] I went to a few of the other colleges from time to time at their invitation. I also ultimately became—I was on the board of WinRock International, which is a wonderful institution. I was on the board of Heifer International. I was on the board of the Georgetown health care crisis center for a year. I was on Teresa Heinz's foundation for two years looking at various leadership possibilities out in the charity—not charity sec—but the sector in private enterprise that would—could do some good in the field of public service out across the country and making those awards. Teresa Heinz's foundation that she granted those awards—I was on the awards . . .

[05:24:31] SL: Is that Senator Kerry's . . .

DP: . . . committee. Yes . . .

SL: . . . wife?

DP: . . . Senator Kerry's wife. And . . .

SL: You spent a little . . .

DP: . . . I did that . . .

SL: . . . time in Boston.

DP: I did. And I spent two and a half years at Harvard, and I told 'em the only way I could get into Harvard was with a [SL laughs] blow torch. But I was at Harvard as a fellow for one semester. And then they asked me to come to Harvard as—it's a stay at Harvard as director of the Institute of Politics, which I did for two years, and that was a great experience. We lived in a dormitory, Barbara and I did, with six hundred freshman students. We had a great little apartment on the ground floor. We just had a ball that two and a half years. That was great. [05:25:15] And then I went on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and they—we fund NPR and PBS, and I'm in Washington once every sixty days for board meetings on that. That's a nine-member board. I've enjoyed that so very much. It's bipartisan. And then, of course, I've been on the board of the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees now for about five years—four years, I guess. And that's very, very rewarding, and to see this university and what it is and what it has been become and what it can become in the future is very exciting to me, and I've enjoyed it.

[05:25:56] Barbara is also—she can't say no to people. [*SL laughs*]  
You know, and . . .

SL: You're both afflicted with that.

DP: . . . we're speaking, for example, to LifeQuest next week as a pair, and that's for their big awards dinner, and we're gonna be the speakers there at that dinner or be on a panel. I'm not quite sure. I've been to—when the late Paul Simon asked me to—Senator Simon from Illinois asked me to come to Southern Illinois University on a panel, I gladly went there—I—for a panel of two days. And I've just—you know, just had a lot of great opportunities and experiences, but I tell you, we catch ourselves going and coming more than we would like to. And . . .

[05:26:44] SL: Founding dean of the Clinton School.

DP: Founding—yeah, I spent two years at the Clinton School of Public Service. You know, I'd forgotten that two years.

SL: So DP, are you actually busier than you were when you were . . .

DP: I'm busier in different ways. I'm—I think in Washington I was state—more stationary. I was kind of in Washington in my little domain there or here, in this domain. It seems like here I'm just all over the place, you know—constant. Here, there, and yonder. Out of state. In state. Whatever. But I was a little more confined to two places, either Washington or Arkansas, but here I'm just everywhere, it seems like.

[05:27:29] But I declared a moratorium for this year, and Barbara was so proud of me, and I was proud of myself. Every time that

someone called me and asked me for us to make a speech in 2013, I think maybe with one exception, I answered this way—I said, "Look, this year I've declared a moratorium, and I'm not gonna make any speeches this year." Well, that runs out October first, and that's—my year is up. But I'm gonna really try to keep with some degree of schedule. It's not the speeches, it's the getting there. It's the preparation. It's the worryin' about 'em and getting back late at night. It's all of that that really presents the problem. It's not the twenty- or thirty-minute speech that's involved, but it's the preparations . . .

SL: Logistics and . . .

DP: . . . and the logistics. You start—you know, a week or so you—or you start thinkin', "Wait a minute. What am I gonna say to this group? What am I gonna say to that group? You know, do I have enough facts? Do I have the figures right? And—well, how am I—what am I—what's gonna be my theme or message." You start thinking about all that kind of stuff and it really kind of—just that in itself is kind of nerve wracking.

SL: Yeah.

DP: Takes its toll. But I'm gonna come when we get to our new center, and we'll finish up in this, okay?

SL: DP . . .

DP: Thank you.

SL: . . . can't thank you enough.

[End of interview 05:28:54]

[Transcribed and reviewed by Pryor Center staff]