

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

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Arkansas Memories

Kenneth L. Smith

Interviewed by Sarah K. Moore

July 11, 2024

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.

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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 five 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 five minutes to improve readability.

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

Citation Information

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**Sarah K. Moore interviewed Kenneth L. Smith on July 11, 2024,
at The Bungalows in Fayetteville, Arkansas.**

[00:00:00]

Sarah Moore: My name is Sarah Moore. I'm with the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History. And we are here today with Ken Smith at The Bungalows in Fayetteville. And today is July 11, 2024. And we are going to be hearing about Ken's life. So my first question is when and where were you born?

Kenneth Smith: I was born on February 4, 1934, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. And . . .

SM: And what was growing up in Hot Springs like?

KS: What was growing up in Hot Springs like? Well, my parents had just moved there, and they—he was getting set up to—in an aluminum foil ins—reflective insulation business. And so he was out part of the time. And I was . . .

SM: This is your father.

KS: How is that?

SM: Your—this is your father that you're talking about?

KS: My . . .

SM: Can you tell us your father's . . .

KS: My father has . . .

SM: What is his name?

KS: Elton, *E-L-T-O-N*, middle edition *V* as in victory, Smith. And—uh—long story before that. And [*clears throat*] he and my mother met on a blind date in New York City, and he was down there, and it was—the Depression was coming on. They had rented a place in a housing development on Long Island—long—and that economic situation became bad. And for—uh—some time, I guess, before I was born—uh—he me—they married and moved in with my mother's parents. And—uh—on—so they were there, and the parents died. Or at least my mother's mother died. Grandmother Gibbs. She had cancer or something like that, and so they—uh—but—uh . . .

[00:02:51] SM: What is your mother's name?

KS: Well, the full name was Grace Caroline, but she didn't like that. So it became just Carol or Carol G. for some reason. I guess that was the Grace part. And so that they—uh—she always knew—or signed as Carol G. Smith later on, I know. She—they were—my Grandfather Gibbs, my mother's father, was quite elderly even by today's standards when—uh—they were married, my grandparents, and it was—so but—uh—my Grandfather Gibbs had been quite a—had quite a life before he, well, landed in New York and—uh—which—which was intended to—the—it

was the first graduating class or second graduating class in medicine at Colorado, in Colorado University, I guess it was. So—uh—the family was sort of—well, he'd been married before, and I think his first wife died. [00:04:30] And—uh—so that—uh—he wound up back to—uh—to New York—um—partly because a couple of his sisters lived there out in New Jersey and—uh—so that—uh—he landed there and was—became—started in medicine. And his main motivation on getting into medicine, I think, was safe childbirth, because I think his first wife, perhaps, had died in childbirth or something like that. And so that he was highly motivated to get something—have children that were live and healthy so that—uh—my—uh—he—he moved back to New York after being in the second graduating class in medicine at the—uh—University of Colorado.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:05:44] But it was this bouncing around in a family that happened and his—he lived first of all with a couple of his sisters in New York and then—and he met this patient, this woman, who was either the patient or the patient's mother. I'm not sure how that worked, but they—he was—his first wife had died, and there he was practicing medicine alone in New York. And—he—so that he met this woman who came in, and I think it was that she

brought her mother to—for some medical attention. Just a drop-in case, I think, in New York City. But the result was that the—the result was that the woman of marriageable age, I would say, that situation was that he—maybe he was to see her rather than her mother. But I don't know how it worked, but it was more than a hundred years ago. But . . .

[00:07:27] SM: Do you know where he was in New York, where his office was?

KS: Where his office was?

SM: In New York?

KS: Well, the one that I remember, there was a second address, and it was 8 West 128th Street, New York City. And he practiced medicine there. And because he became known as a person committed to safe, sensible childbirth. And in fact, my mother and I were back there in New—Washington, DC, in the 1970s, I guess it was. And mother had a—an acquaintance. This woman who had been delivered as a—by my grandfather.

SM: Oh, wow.

KS: And so I met this woman, and he had essentially a perfect record among something like close to 100 childbirths and—that he had—was involved with as the attending doctor. So Dr. Gibbs, Samuel Gibbs, he was known for that and, I guess,

even—he would travel. He was based there, 8 West 128th for years, there in Harlem, New York City, but he functioned as a neighborhood doctor there, but especially s—the people knew him as able to provide a safe, good attention at childbirth. So that's what I remember hearing about. They—he was there—in his later years—it wasn't all the way up. I guess he probably—I don't know whether he was the attending physician or the main one for my brother when my brother was born, 1925.

[00:10:05] KS: But then I didn't come along till 1934. And by—and a few months before I was born, he passed on. And my father, originally from southern Arkansas—he'd been bouncing around all the way from many places. And so he was from southern Arkansas, and I had—was interested in aluminum foil being developed as a reflective surface for insulation. So he had his mind on getting out of New York City, for one thing. And as—when Dr. Gibbs finally passed on at something past age ninety, they—he was already thinking of getting out of there. And there were old travel folders that I saw that he was attracted to places like the state of Washington. But then it was the Depression then, and it was a long, long journey out there. And his—there were some connections back here in Arkansas. One of his sisters, for example, whom I come to knew, and so that they—

he simply did his research and settled on—when Dr. Gibbs, his father-in-law, passed on, he was already making plans to get down to Arkansas. It was the Depression. He was able to buy a like new, I would call it, truck that was on the market in New York at that day. And so that—he had the truck but didn't know how to drive it, but so that what happened was that he hired a driver, an experienced driver, there in New York City.

[00:12:49] And I was already—well, it was in vitro or something like that. I was already on the worl—the way. But what happened was that my father loaded this truck in front of my grandparents' place there, a little, narrow row homes eighteen feet wide or whatever, where Dr. Gibbs had his little office and the family quarters upstairs. They loaded that. He loaded a truck, and he was carrying things out. And very uneasy, uncertain times economically and everything. He wanted to get out of there. And he said that it was the edge of Harlem. In fact, the neighborhood is known as Harlem, and if you know Harlem, not long after that, it became the cultural capital of Black America. It was already that way, but it was white neighborhood when my mother was growing up there and just above—north of Central Park, I guess, right across the street practically. So that he—there he was loading the truck, and he—

at one point I guess there was a Black man, young one, sort of feeling his oats or whatever you would call it and was harassing my father. And I simply—my father simply took a stick or whatever it was and beat him over the head and got him out of there, which is—he felt uneasy and not—apologetic about it long afterwards. He'd grown up in southern Arkansas. And there the stories of his growing up in Warren, Bradley County, Arkansas—any relationships with Blacks were—they were, of course, poorly educated or not at all. And yet they—there was essentially a tolerant, friendly relationship. I know long ago, long after that, he thought about that incident in New York, but he was essentially desperate to get out of that place. [00:15:56] After Grandfather Gibbs died, they—the place was left—8 West 128th I think it was—it was well, it wound up finally becoming—because it had some of the basic space and equipment for a neighborhood doctor's office, that I—when I saw it in nine—thirty years later I guess it was. Cousin took me down there and drove past the place. One of the—and it was another doctor who had moved in there, had his shingle up there. And it was—what was it? I'm trying to think the names, these names. It was not Gibbs because it had been Gibbs years before, but it was another doctor's name on 8 West 128th. [00:16:59] But my

mother grew up in—most of her growing up years were spent in that place, a little narrow row house. Well, all joined together. It had a tiny backyard with a board fence around it. I remember that. Seeing in old photographs. But it was a vastly different environment. And my mother, who had made good grades in high school, I guess you'd call it—and she had gone to Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. That was for two years. And my—then Grandmother Gibbs became sick with a wasting disease, and she had to drop out of Swarthmore and then the last two years were at—there in New York, where she could commute to Barnard College, the unit of Columbia University, which happens to be—have been named for a man named Barnard, who was the first president of the University of Mississippi. What I learned much later, he was an outstanding educator, and the people down south thought they were making progress when they hired this man from the New York, from the North, Barnard, to come down to Mississippi. He was the first pre—founding president, I guess, of the University of Mississippi. But it didn't—that was right before the outbreak of the Civil War. And he just didn't—it wasn't a good fit for Mr. Barnard or Dr. Barnard. So he went back. Barnard College, though, was a union—young women's college of Columbia University in New

York. So mother graduated there from Barnard after two years there. And she had started out—well, it want—she essentially—she began—had a degree in English. [00:19:32] And after all that confusion in New York with her mother being deathly ill, she—all of her—most of her social life was just wiped out. I talk about these things that happened to my mother because it looks like this early background toward my life was rather widespread and confused and affected by these things. Course, I didn't know about these things until many la—years later, but what wound up was that my father hired a driver in 1933 and had loaded as much of the pertinent family possessions as would fit in the back of that stake body truck. And so that one of the early stories I heard was—my father was what I would call a storyteller, not fictional, but recalling all these things that happened. So he would tell me about he finally loaded the truck and had a driver, and they started out from 8 West 128th Street, Harlem, New York City and managed—the story I heard was that here—there—he and the driver and my young brother, eighty—eight years old, sitting between my father and the driver, I guess. They started from New York City, and my father even had more or less a blow-by-blow account of that long trip, near 2,000 miles. And they had chosen Hot Springs, Arkansas. And I

think that was either because—it was because that time—for one thing, they knew that there were at least passable highways, not even paved in every places, everywhere, but they could get down to Hot Springs, which they did. [00:22:25] And so that my mother was about six months along the way toward having me but back in New York City. And maybe she'd gone up to New Rochelle where family members lived, but they—anyhow, New York City, essentially, and when they—when my father was able to unload the truck at a place in Hot Springs, which happened to be on Central Avenue across from the Oaklawn racetrack. So I knew about those things when I was a kid. That was where they arrived in Arkansas. And the problem where my brother, eight years old—[laughs] [00:23:33] There's another story there we heard. They had rented a house right next door and—to the landlady's place. And she had a bad habit of coming in to the house without telling them or anything. She just thought she could do that. And so that my brother, who was New York sassy and brassy, he noticed that. So he just walked over into her house. The only trouble was that Mrs. Nettleton or—had—wore a wig, which she—he stepped into the house, and she was not so equipped. Bald. And that, I think, was one reason that Mrs. Nettleton ceased to become our landlord or landlady. And these

are old stories, of course, sixty, eighty years old. But that was part of the fun hearing stories like that. [00:24:56] And Kettledrum. That was—Nettleton became Kettledrum to my brother so that I—we grew up with stories like that, too. Anyhow, they—that's when they started moving. And every—the next three moves, each time was closer to the center of town, which I thought was rather interesting. But that was Hot Springs. [00:25:38] Now we wound up in the last few years in my—you know, much closer to town, right across the street from the high school in Hot Springs, the old, former high school, I guess. Anyhow, these things all percolated through my life, and there were times, I guess in houses number one and number two out of the four, they—my Grandmother Smith was with the family. I member my first memory. I think I was seeing my grandmother seated in a—inside house number two of the four. And that was part of the American scene, you know, there was no Social Security or anything like that. And Grandmother Smith, after my other grandfathers died of a stroke or a heart attack he—she was with the children or two of them. My uncle in Shreveport, Louisiana, had her for a while, and then my aunt up near Rogers, Arkansas, the time that I knew. And then between those two was that experience there in Hot Springs. So

that was sort of my sort of view of the times. I was sort of a introverted, shy kid, I guess. They had dropped me down there, the family, and especially in the second or third place in Hot Springs. It was sort of—it was an interesting town. [00:28:12]

There was a neighbor who had moved in down on the corner I heard about named Alvin Karpis. If you've ever heard of Alvin Karpis, he was on the most wanted list of the FBI or something like that. There were these stories that kept floating around that were known by people in Hot Springs. And of course, there was the mayor, who had stayed there without benefit of election or getting—you know, all the legalities. Leo Patrick McLaughlin. And Leo McLaughlin, looking back on it, his operating motif with the visitors of certain classes—"Yes, you can come to can—Hot Springs, but it was now it—you gotta behave yourselves. And if you behave yourselves, then you can stay. If you don't, well, after all, we—you have a lot of other people like you, and you need to get along with one another in Hot Springs." So that was sort of a town there that McLaughlin—I remember McLaughlin was kind of colorful. He had a little buggy there that he would drive down Central Avenue at times, horse drawn, of course, that was part of the scene in Hot Springs. And a little later on when I was in junior high school or the upper grades of grade

school, he was riding with an escort on a second horse out into the country east of town a couple of years. McLaughlin was colorful, corrupt, but at least he held the lid on. [00:30:31] And so that later on, at the end of World War II, there were people ready for reform. And that—I remember these things because I was growing up in those years, ten years old or thereabouts. And I don't remember—I had—well, I was born February the fourth, maybe six weeks after they—my mother and me on the way arrived in Hot Springs into a rented house. And that was where I got to know the new—new, I guess—the Lutheran pastor of the Lutheran church that was just being built at that time. I don't know, I guess they had had makeshift quarters before that. Kuechenmeister. Kitchen master. Well, what happened was that Ruth Kuechenmeister with a baby on the way, practically, moved into the second space, half of that bed in that hospital there, St. Joseph's hospital, a Catholic hospital, by the way. But they were tolerant, I guess, of those people who were Lutheran. Anyhow, so I—Ruth Kuechenmeister had a boy baby named George Paul, whom I knew essentially all my life. And he was there in Hot Springs. [00:32:41] And George Paul, G. P. It became Jeep, and everybody knew him as Jeep Kuechenmeister. But that was—I knew him longer than anybody else. He was not

much of a student. He started out in engineering, as I did at Fayetteville, and that didn't last long. I remember Jeep being more interested in tinkering with his car or whatever it was over at the mechanical engineering shops. [00:33:24] But Jeep Kuechenmeister was part of my life. And then there were these other kids that we played with. And one of `em was Roy Allen Clinton. And who was Roy Allen? Well, Roy Allen, as best I knew, was—he told me that, yes, he had entered grade school at the time I did, but out in Oaklawn Street where his mother found out that somebody had been murdered on the street right down the way from school, so she bumped him over there and took him over to Jones School further away from that evil, malicious Oaklawn racetrack so that—and so Roy Allen Clinton was a part of the life but settled on the outer edge of my acquaintances. Although I would think that he and Jeep Kuechenmeister were—and some of the other people, were the ones there playing on the field there down the street from the Lutheran church. Those things—I was not a socialite, though. I was not interested in the kind of things like that they—team sports and all that sort of stuff. I think it was—my fa—my brother had—well, when I finished the third grade there in Hot Springs, he was just graduating from high school.

[00:35:36] SM: Can you tell us his name?

KS: Name? Donald. His name was Donald. First name Donald. Last name was—is my father's first, Elton. *E-L-T-O-N*. But Donald Smith. He—when I was finishing third grade, he was graduating from high school and—a little bit early, I think, in fact, and going straight into what they called V12, I think, that was our training for college—training for pilots and that sort of thing in World War II. He wound up going down to Tulane University in New Orleans. But that fell apart for him because they decided to cut back on V12. And they—later in World War II, all they were thinking of was making a final push to wipe out that militaristic regime in Japan. So he wound up, first of all, down in Southern California—I think was sort of training also. But the whole idea of going—flying airplanes for the USA was—went out the window, and he was—wound up on Okinawa. And from what I remember, it was horrific. They—he arrived about the time the last of the Japanese were being pushed out of Okinawa and, I guess, literally over the cliff at the south end of the island where they all perish—perished, I guess. I don't remember the details, except that I think my brother—well, they had to imagine that they were going to invade Japan, land an army, landing on the islands, and so that they had even—I

imagine that they had better practice the horrific parts, which means—I vaguely recall that they were going to invade Japan. So I guess they were going down there and—where the Japanese then jumped off the cliff in the last suicidal move. They were picking up Japanese skulls and using them for tower—target practice or something, fully expecting that they would have to be going and fighting Japan. Well, it did not happen.

[00:39:10] There was a—now and we remember the president from Missouri who followed a Roosevelt as having something to do with just the outcome of World War II on that side of the world. Those were things that I heard about. In the meantime, I was—my father was there and for a number of years—times during the World War II or right after he was—he lost his aluminum foil insulation business, so he was simply employed by contractors on insulation and oil refineries in Texas and military work down in Louisiana and Arkansas. And so that he was there, and then my mother was a volunteer there in Hot Springs for the USO or the United Service Organization. And Hot Springs was a what I would call a rehab location for battle-worn troops for whatever they needed, medical attention or rescue. There was a little walk-up place there in Hot Springs on Central Avenue. You go up the stairs, and all the way through the block

there was these rooms where these soldiers on rest or R and R, I guess you'd call it—he was—they were there. It was an entertainment center where they could maybe meet a girl or—and they—well, the back room was sort of a library where they had pulled together a lot of books and magazines. [00:41:49] And that's where I would go in there and read the old *National Geographics* and that. I had to come up there Saturday evenings or that sort of thing when she was—she was at the front desk there, sort of a receptionist. And then I would go with her up there, and in the back room I'd read the *National Geographics* or something like that, which was because of my father's past history. I think he was off in Texas or Louisiana or somewhere employed in war projects or that immediate afterward. And my mother and I in the grade school—and I was in grade school, but they—I would go up there and read magazines. Got interested in—I don't know how it was. Somewhere along about junior high, I think, I got interested in the geographic aspects of stamp collecting, which, looking back at it, was kinda tame. But . . .

[00:43:21] Janet Parsch: Ken, what subjects did you like in school?

KS: What subjects? Recess. [*Laughter*] That's how one of my

friends described it. Oh, well, I was—because of my, I think—both my parents had—well, Mother was a college graduate. Swarthmore. And my father had had some college courses but never was that focused. There were some things that he picked up at Columbia University, I guess, in the 1920s. But they were all relatively educated, or both of them, compared especially from what I remember one or two of those neighborhoods in Hot Springs. I know after that first move, they—where they had—well, Mrs. Kettledrum had been discovered as being bald that they were—Hot Springs was friendly enough, okay, but it was not the same sort of cultural environment that anyone had—in the family had known before, I guess. My father—I mean, my brother, I guess, adjusted to it better. He was eight and a half years older, and I. When—soon after we reached Hot Springs, he was wandering around our neighborhood after—in that phase of life when he discovered Mrs. Kettledrum. They—he went down a street, and there was the logging railroad essentially across Central Avenue, just a block or two short of the racetrack property. He went down there, and he was a different, bolder kid than I ever was, coming out of New York City. There's another story about him. [00:46:09] Anyhow, he went down there and I—and the—it was the small time informality, and the

guys on the logging track there or on the railroad going out to Mountain Pine out toward what is now Blakely Dam, Lake Ouachita, they just said, "Hey, kid, you wanna come with us? And we'll be right back here by the middle of the afternoon." Well, he did. And they—no incident at all. That's not the sort of thing that would happen today. But he was doing that sort of thing, and I was barely out of the cradle there. [00:47:00] So he and I—my brother and I were nine years apart in age. And his life was vastly different from what mine became. That's about when I, later on, heard about throwing Japanese skulls off—you know, if they'd gone down and jumped off the cliff in Okinawa, and that was what he was expecting. You—I think you're probably hearing more lore about him. But I was in those early growing up years and kinda just barely discovering the world.

[00:47:54] JP: Did you get good grades in school?

KS: How is that?

JP: Did you get good grades in school? What kind of . . .

KS: Well, I think my brother and I both were exceptional students, maybe mine more so. I don't know, I never saw one of his report cards. But they—it was time for me to gradually crawl out of my shell, I guess. But I think it was not until junior high

school or later that I became more social. There was, first of all, an attachment to my father and the fact that we had landed at least in one place where there was a sort of a working-class neighborhood. They were good people, but they were vastly different from what I had heard about around the hall—house.

[00:49:07] Now Mother was more social, and she wound up in the AAUW, American Association of University Women, not as an officer or anything, but she was more social. My father was in those—some of those years he was trying to find a means of employment. And at one point I was trooping along with him. Grade school kid or barely more than that. Where he had a friend down there in the industrial area of Hot Springs and—Roy Fink, *F-I-N-K*. And he—father was trying to get something started in the way of business, perhaps with the cooperation of Roy Fink. But I was not social and not—sure I knew Jeep Kuechenmeister, the Lutheran pastor's son and . . .

[00:50:30] SM: Did your father take you hiking?

KS: Did my father what?

SM: Take you hiking?

KS: Writing?

SM: Hiking.

KS: Pull out one of your cards. Yes. It started with my brother,

actually, and my father was younger and more vigorous, too, perhaps. But Hot Springs. I don't know that they had, well, realized it beforehand, but Hot Springs had all these little wooded hills in the national park. And so that I was with him at times on those hills around Hot Springs close in, I'd say. My—and then my—with my brother it was further on out. But that was part of the outdoor life there that I could enjoy and understood with my father. Some of the things that were going on in the school system in Hot Springs I just didn't relate to. But we did walk. By that time, brother was already in the—already in military service or even later on going to school up here in the mechanical engineering. [00:52:27] I more or less just sort of trooped along with that program and wound up majoring in mechanical engineering also because my father had done it and my brother did it. It turned out that it got me immediate employment at a less—a salary after World War II that—compared to today I guess it's nothing much, but I was able to get out and get on down to Crossett, Arkansas, and wound up there for about five years. What it was, the—by that time—well, I didn't know what I wanted to be, except that all I had known was engineering and goin' down there. And it turned out that for a year or two, the pe—Crossett Paper Mills needed to get up to

date on becoming equipped as mechanics. They had—some of the mechanics had plenty of equipment, tools, hand tools, and brought `em with `em into the Crossett paper mills, for example. But others did not—were not equipped, and everybody else, International Paper, for example, and some of these other schools, other firms, were already using company-supplied tools. So one of my first big tasks was to learn what these mechanics, those several different kinds, needed because they come equipped with tools, hand tools and the like. So that was something that occupied me for a number of months.

[00:54:52] SM: Can we go back to the University of Arkansas?

KS: How is that?

SM: What year did you start at the University of Arkansas?

KS: Well, I started at the university in nineteen—fall of 1952, which was twelve years after going in in 1940. Nineteen fifty-six I graduated with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering, for which I was not very well adapted, I might say. But . . .

SM: I wanted to ask you . . .

KS: I got out of there right after World War II, and there were—it was a market in which I had two or three job offers—offers after going and interviewing at these companies. But I chose Crossett, Arkansas, because I was interested in the—still

interested in the timber industry one way or other.

[00:55:59] SM: Can you tell me about the hiking group you joined at the university and seeing the Buffalo River for the first time?

KS: Well, we prepared for a couple of remarks. I had heard about the Buffalo River, I guess, that there was a nice river back up in north Arkansas. And I remember one time in commuting back up to summers at my aunt and uncle's place at Rogers that I went in that direction by bus just in—I guess across the Buffalo River there somewhere, an event which I hardly remember now. But what happened was that I fell in—that was—there were people at the university who wanted to get out there to the—this place called the Buffalo River or other places, Devil's Den State Park or wherever, and so that I was at every opportunity getting out in those places in the woods on day trips with friends. Which it turned out in the long run, the best friend was someone who, as a child, had fled the Nazis actually, Heinz, *H-E-I-N-Z*. Kurt Heinz Stern was Jewish, and I would say he would—he had the facial characteristics, maybe, of being Jewish. But he was quiet. He had—his family had escaped Austria at the last minute. And fortunately, it was a family member who had agreed to sponsor them in, I think it was Hoboken, New Jersey. And so he sort of spent and grew up there and then wound up with a Ph.D.,

eventually, in physical chemistry. [00:58:38] So and he wound up down in Fayetteville and met his wife there. She was Lutheran and had come out of and grown up in Tacoma, Washington, I think it was. But there was—I was beginning to learn of about the wider world of good people from many places. And Kurt and Faith were there in Fayetteville to begin with. And then he—by that time he had six or seven years of service in the University of Arkansas and research and that sort of thing, so that he was eligible to get a sabbatical and wound up in Washington, DC. And that was another experience of a widening—widening world and a different vision. And Kurt—well, Faith just passed on here, oh, a very few years ago. And Kurt did, also. But those things, that wider experience, new acquaintances, or different places began to build up in me at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. And by that time I had taken a month-long trip to meet my mother's peoples, the ones of 'em who were still left up around New Rochelle, New York. And where one of the cousins took me down one day and down into Harlem and past that row house on 8 West 128th Street. And that's where I discovered that the place still had a doctor's shingle on it there, somebody who had moved in, I guess, after my Grandfather Gibbs. And so that all these things, bits by bits and

pieces, I was beginning to get to know more about the wider world. And it was not so much that—there was plenty to learn about in Hot Springs, but it was not where I wanted to remain, or even in Arkansas. And I eventually . . .

[01:01:42] SM: Would this be a good time to take a break? Would you like . . .

KS: Pardon?

SM: Would you like would you like to take a break?

KS: Right now?

SM: 'Cause we've been going for over an hour.

KS: Yeah.

SM: Maybe we should take a break.

KS: Well, you've heard me yapping for an hour, more or less.

[Recording stopped]

[01:02:02] SM: We just took a little break, and we are starting on part two of today's interview. We got you through your time at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. And I wanted to ask you to speak about your time working at the Crossett Paper Mills again, if you could pick up there.

KS: That was a market in those war years in the 1950s when the United States was gearing up and revving up and changing and modernizing, and the Crossett Paper Mills had been started I

guess back in the 1920s, [19]30s because there was that huge resource of growing timber and—half a million acres, more or less, with the Crossett company. That was—they were people out of the northern Midwest who had moved south. And Crossett company, they were—people were good enough, but it was—to me after a first year or so, I remem—knew that I wanted to be out of there and somewhere else on the West Coast.

[01:03:33] SM: Well, I saw that you started writing articles about the Buffalo River while you were working there.

KS: Well, and that first year or so after graduating from the university, I still was going up northern Arkansas and thinking about taking pictures and writing things, writing about travels. And I was especially interested in this place called Lost Valley. Lost Valley was nothing but the name that a publicity agent for the state had given it. But I knew there was something unique there, and so that I was beginning to try to map and write about the place. And I'd found out from one of the professors at university, I think it was a man named Hugh Iltis, who came to the university for a few years right there in the 1940s—and I had fallen in with him on hikes. He was quite willing to lead hikes, and that was one of the truly epical events, I think, for the

University of Arkansas to have people like Hugh Iltis and Kurt Heinz Stern to lead hikes. In fact, Kurt took over after Hugh Iltis had to go somewhere else. But that had an impression on me, partly because my father had done that sort of thing forty-odd years before, not just little le—day hikes, but there's things that he was doing with this pair of crazies from—one from Mississippi and the other Alabama, who were unguided rich boys. And so.

[01:05:59] JP: Ken, we need to talk about you, not your father today. [*Laughter*]

KS: Well, it keeps on goin'. Let's see what we have. Graduate school in California. I did start out from Crossett to go to get an MBA at the University of California, Berkeley, thinking that was a way to [*unclear word*] to move ahead and up. And what happened was that that graduate school, the first trimester, I guess they'd call it the way they had it divided it in those days, they—it was a happy accident that they pulled some of us from backgrounds other than business administrations, thinking that likely all of us—we needed to know about the wider world. Hells bells, I knew the wider world already. But I wound up with that class in UC Berkeley. There were two teachers for that section for going for the MBA, but first of all, we had a weekly trip to see the wider world of business, and that included such things as a

trip to—they had pulled it together in a hurry. It was the first semester of a new plan, and it included a—field trips all around the Bay Area in California and—so that we were seeing stuff that very largely paralleled or echoed the stuff I'd already experienced in Crossett. And furthermore, it was damn boring.

[01:08:35] And you know, they—all about the—I don't know. There was a place out in the East Bay where they were rolling hot metal to make sheet metal for tin cans. And there was one in the south down in Milpitas, I think it was. An assembly plant for Ford Prontos or the Broncos or whatever the little one was was there all around the Bay area. And then I saw that that was—really quickly I saw that was tending to repeat what I had gone through before in Crossett Paper Mills and that sort of thing. And I—so there was one of those trips coming up. And I was always riding with other class members 'cause they knew how—the freeway network and streets and everything. So here we were going over across the Bay Bridge and into San Francisco to Pacific Tel. & Tel., which I never did visit because I got out of that car, and I said, "I have an errand to make. But anyhow, I'll be back to see you by noon when you headed back to Berkeley."

[01:10:19] Well, I headed down within walking distance just a few blocks and into a nondescript building of the kinds that, you

know, are rented out to government agencies. And there I was—had already made contacts and appointment with a personnel man with the National Park Service. I [*laughs*] said—and I had already told him, "I wanna go [*laughs*] be happy again." And so that's where I went. And I was hired, and by the—well, I stayed to the end of the semester just to have a grade on the record. But then I went into—from International House Berkeley, where I was staying, I went on over to what they called residence clubs. Well, hell, it was nothing but a boarding house over in San Francisco. Nice place, though. And so I was there about three or four months until—and was working downtown at the Park Service regional office. They were getting to know me. I was getting to know them, which was sort of dull, grunt, government sort of employment under a couple of the old has-beens that were ready to retire anyhow. I remember they were handing me little assignments of some kind. [01:12:06] But at the end of the semester, I was out of that and very soon on my way to Mount Ranier as a national park engineer trainee, which also turned out to be less than totally stimulating, except for the country. That until the next eleven or twelve years, whatever it was, I was bouncing around the Park Service. But back in Arkansas was the best thing of all.

[01:12:54] I had met this doctor in Bentonville who was intensely interested in making something much more than I had imagined at first. Buffalo National River. And there I had thought of about a 1,200-acre reserve on one little side canyon called Lost Valley. But he quickly changed my mind about that. When I got to see the rest of the river, I knew he was right and I had missed that opportunity, I guess you could call it, or realization until he—Dr. Neil Ernest Compton, who had dreamed about the entire Buffalo River ever since he and a student friend of his had followed—and guided a fisherman down the river one time. So that era—that's when another change came. I was a few more years longer with the Park Service, but then it was more fun to be in Arkansas than being bounced around wherever their latest whim took them, the Park Service.

[01:14:26] JP: How did you come to do *The Buffalo River Country*?

KS: How 'bout the . . .

JP: How did it start that you wrote *The Buffalo River Country*?

KS: We needed a book. We, meaning Dr. Compton and everybody who realized that there was more to the Buffalo River than just Lost Valley or the stream itself. I always thought of the Buffalo River as being the river and its watershed. And the real essence of my story was always somehow I had the money to—saved the

money to move ahead. And those—that was crucial. Dr. Compton in Bentonville was a great help and a great positive influence on the whole thing, but he needed somebody who could tell the world what it was. [01:15:52] That's why I thought of the Buffalo River and its watershed as being potentially a great resource. Not that we would have all the watershed in a park, but that the watershed was unique, and it needed some protection, as well as the river itself. They—we—what happened was I remember meeting. I had decided we needed to have a book about it because the Sierra Club, for half a century, had been writing, putting out books. And the Appalachian Mountain Club, and to some extent some other outdoor organizations. And nothing had happened in Arkansas up to that point, but it needed to be done. And Neil Compton realized that early on, but there was not—the Ozark Society, which he was the first president, was an infant, in its infancy, I'd call it. They had originally organized, I guess, with a group of people who had met at the Law School at the university. And then when they started talking about promoting the Buffalo River or whatever, they—I was back on the West Coast at that time, but they told me that they—instead of moving—meeting in that law school, when they took any official action, that sort of thing,

to influence legislation, they stepped out of the front door and out on the public sidewalk so that they would not be mistaken as being University of Arkansas advocating whatever they needed to do, advocate. And I—but I was with Dr. Compton by that time. [01:18:26] There was a man, another seminal, epic figure in Arkansas conservation, a man who was employed by the state game and fish commission, Harold Alexander. He was a native of Kansas, but he'd come down and was a biologist, I guess, for the Arkansas Game and Fish. Important enough now that one of their Wildlife Management Areas is named Harold E. Alexander up in northeast Arkansas. Harold had put me, I guess, onto Dr. Compton as an advocate because he got around and made me talk to Neil Compton. So that's when I made the connection of Neil Compton. But it was Harold Alexander, another one of those seminal figures, who was here, and he was always afraid he was gonna be reprimanded, disciplined, or just suspended or fired because he was advocating on behalf of protecting natural areas. That was the way it was back in the [19]40s, [19]50s. Very limited visions with the—some of these people. [01:19:58] Anyhow, Harold and I would talk to Neil. And I remember I talked to the ad—the people in Arkansas Audubon Society, and a group of friends, I guess, of this Mrs.

Archer. Evangeline Pratt Waterman Archer, whom I had met on a bird-watching trip that I—where I was promoting buffa—Lost Valley protection. And there we were sitting in a bin in the back of a Jeep with Mrs. Archer and got to talking. And I was—by that time I said, "I'm gon—getting out of Arkansas," and I saw a Volkswagen. [*Unclear words*] got to drive one. Somebody'd brought it in from England to Crossett— Europe, rather, to Crossett, Arkansas. And it struck me as a great car and—more my size, and philosophically and everything. [01:21:21]

Anyhow, Mrs. Archer later on—they had a little meeting outta Mrs. Archer's living room, and I remember I was trying to get a book published about the Buffalo River. And none of 'em had any conception of what actually these big, organized clubs in the east and west had been doing about publishing. And even Evangeline was, "I can't imagine anyone publishing a book about this sort of thing. And where's—who's gonna pay for it?" I thought about that a while, and I thought, "I'll do it." [*Laughs*]

Neil Compton had no problem with that. The way we figured it out is simply that, yes, there was a risk of putting \$10,000 or whatever it was into a book that might not sell. But on the other hand, it might sell. And so that Neil and I worked out a little, simple scheme where—it involved the money being deposited

from sales of the book in the bank of Bentonville where there were some people that Neil knew. And then we—I was able to write a check or whatever it was or for—paying for the publishing, printing costs. And that's the way it got started. And it worked. [01:23:23] It—of course everybody—this is shame on Arkansas because the first income from sales, not came from Arkansas, but from Kansas City people who'd come down to the Buffalo, and they were ready to buy a book. Arkansas kind of trooping along, hey, later. [Laughs] But and once they saw the book and what we were able to put in there in the way of maps and photos and everything, it worked. And so that I went ahead with it. Took six months, I think it was, leave of absence without pay from the Park Service so I could get back to Arkansas. And oh, I had the crazy idea about writing the book and get it published and everything, the whole shebang, in six months. No. I was able, fortunately, to get up and down the Buffalo River, and there were people already getting to know the river well enough that I was able to float the river with 'em and that sort of thing. And it all got pieced together, and most of the book writing, though, page layouts and everything, was done at the—I think Sequoia National Park in peh—California where I'd gone back to work. And I was doing that sort of thing on

weekends. And that's why I didn't see much of Sequoia because I down there scribbling and doing page layouts. [01:25:24]

And I was, of course, getting some things done for the Sequoia National Park. Sequoia and King's Canyon. They're two joining parks. So that—and Neil Compton was a steady supporter. Not—he wasn't able to do that financially. He had plenty of family comprob—complexities and problems. One of—his daughter had, by about that time, had lost her eyesight or part of it, central vision. I know that was plenty expensive trying to deal with that. But what—and here is where I'm goin' on a little side trip. [01:26:24] One side trip that I made about that time—by that time I was going—every six months or so Neil Compton had another little homemade movie to show to people, and I went to those movies and down—and it was projected in a room downstairs. And there was a woman there whom I got to know, Eddie. And Eddie—and much—I realized that she was as important a figure, even though she had never been to the Buffalo River or anything—she was the mother-in-law who apparently owned that house, that big house where he—where Harold Alexander had to gone to every visit of Neil Compton, and she—he thought maybe she was—well, Eddie was a picture perched on a mantelpiece. Had a little apartment for herself

down at the far end of the house. And yet, I—and this has to be investigated a little—I think the house was lock, stock, and metal piece and everything hers. Because she had built or inherited a business and, I guess, had the money to pay for that house, which became Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art or the core of that building. What I think—that is my—she was quiet. I went—there was one day when she and I were in that house, and Neil and the other people had went off on errands of their own. And she began to talk about how she ran a women's clothing business in Bentonville, Arkansas, in an expanding economy with high markup items of clothing for, particularly, for women. And I thought, here was a woman who took initiative and knew what she was doing and wanted to be and do. She never talked about that publicly, and Neil, for all the good that he has done—and he was the central figure, but there was a backup over on that side with the mother-in-law who lived in a little apartment at the far end of the house. [01:29:42] And apparently, because of her photograph sitting on the mantelpiece at the front end of the house, had something to do with ownership. To me, I think that is the great thing that needs to be investigated and acknowledged that Eddie, Edna, Edna Putman, the management—mana—there—that she was there,

and it opens the possibility—I could, you know, I could talk about other women who were in the—involved in the Buffalo River effort before and after. Eddie never did say anything except to every one of Neil's movies—I remember when he was down there and projecting pictures, she was there just along—even more consistently, I think, than her own daughters or children or Laurene. Eddie's daughter, of course, had married Neil. [01:31:08] But I remember Eddie being there and just quietly admiring the pictures of Neil, made by Neil. And that sort of thing is what I—right now I'm promoting that idea when I'm here in this place, and I kinda like somebody get and talk about Eddie and find out what she actually did do. I think, as far as I can see, she must've owned that big house that became the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. It was, of course, after Eddie passed on, and they bought—and Neil was gone and he—everybody in the family was gone that the Waltons bought the property. And, well, the building was just opened up into a shell, and then they converted it, all of that art museum. That was where, of course, the Waltons looked and thought about making a museum of worldwide art or something like that, and it was just more than they—even they could handle. But American art, in this case. But Eddie—I think of that place as Edna

Putman. And she was the unknown, unsung origin of good things. And that little—yes. And that's where we need to do the research on finding the financial record of expenditures and everything. But my impression was that that house, the Compton house, belonged—at the first belonged to that woman whose little photograph was sitting on the mantelpiece in the front room. And that Eddie and the way she talked about it—yes, she was running a clothing store. And her—in fact her husband and later her son, Bill David—or grandson, Bill David Compton, were involved. But that was after she had made decisions. [01:33:56] Course, she wanted a place as a widow, unattached, my—to have a place right there where her— she could be with her family, obviously. But, hell, most situations like that, the mother-in-law does not own the place.

SM: Yeah.

KS: But she apparently did. And Neil—I know Neil was—wished that he had a real darkroom in that place, so his—fiddling with his photographs. And but she'd already made the decisions on the layout and everything. Neil's pictures were printed in a closet or something like that on the lower level, which, in a way, was actually an advantage for him as well as everybody else. His—he could—his main focus of practice was delivering babies. And

he didn't have to have a great big clinic or anything like that for tha—what he was doing. And so that he could do that, and he did a lot of picture taking. [01:35:37] And Neil's pictures were always made on the run. They were not always carefully composed or anything. But he was doing that. And Eddie, in the background in the early years that I knew, she would simply—she would get in her car, or a car would—somebody working with her would bring her after breakfast or something and then just take her down to the store, Putman's, *P-U-T-M-A-N*. Putman's—well, it was the women's store there. And there was a men's store that Neil's son, Bill David, ran for a while. But she was the brains and most of the money. And I think we need to take a look at that. And I hope I'm making a good impression on somebody that—I haven't heard anything where anybody is making a move toward learning more about Eddie and her contribution, but my assumption is that that house belonged to that woman who was in a little portrait sitting on a mantelpiece there in the front room of the Compton home. And anything that I can do to help move that idea toward greater knowledge and acceptance . . .

SM: Well, you telling us about her in this interview is a good start because I think a lot of people will learn about her now.

KS: I'm not hearing everything here.

[01:37:55] SM: I wanted to get back to finding out about your move to Fayetteville and how that came . . .

KS: It was about your move to Fayetteville?

SM: Yeah.

KS: It was not hard to decide to go—come to Fayetteville when returning to Arkansas. But I had become acquainted—it sounds scandalous like we were riding in the country in the back of a Jeep—and met this lady from Fayetteville, Evangeline Pratt Waterman Archer. And we hit it off very soon, and I realized that she was intelligent and honest, and she wanted to go back to Europe for a visit. And they'd been oh—she'd been over there with her first husband, I—no, second husband. And she wanted to go back there just one more time. And yet—we talked about it in that ride down onto the Arkansas River bottoms when we were looking at bird places that she wanted to go back there, and yet she really didn't—I was talking about buying a Volkswagen, the first Volkswagen in the 1960s. And she thought, "Yeah, that's a good car, too, or I"—but we, really, we retired. Laird Archer and I were on sort of a restricted income. So didn't wanna do any—didn't care to do anything about buying a new car. [01:39:52] That's when I thought, "That lady is

honest, ethical, and I think that she's going with a friend from Fayetteville, so that I think we can—they—one of them can drive or both of—between the two of them they could work it out." But that's when I just—I don't remember ex—\$1,800 or whatever was the wholesale cost of a Volkswagen Bug. And I just mailed 'em a check for that amount or whatever was sure to cover it, just mailed her. I'd gotten her address in Fayetteville there, Markham Road. And I thought, "Well, she's honest. I think that all could work out." It was [*laughs*—to our amazement, it did. She and her friend bought the car and took it over, picked it up at Munich, Germany and did some traveling in Germany and down into Italy and then later on back up into France. And **00:03:17**. And put it—had it arranged to put it on a boat. And some time later with—duly informed, I drove down to—took the bus down from Crossett, Arkansas, down to New Orleans and picked up that car. [01:41:46] And my brother saw it. I have a different—Mark. All he could think of was cars. There's some scratch on the fender of that place. Well, it's where she and her friend had tried to climb over—well, had put luggage up there in that little front bonnet area and scratched the thing. That didn't bother me one bit. The main thing was to get a car at a bargain price. The other benefit was that she—I

made a friend. And when, a year or two later, when I was ready to jump ship from the Park Service, they—she let me know that there was a—not much of a house, but there was a house down behind her house where I could live until I got my own house built in Fayetteville. And it all worked out. [01:42:55] The house that I lived in for the first year, year and a half there after arriving there in Fayetteville to be a—employed by the Ozark Society—that had been worked out, too. But [*laughs*] it was not much of a house. And part of it was they—what had happened was that Dean Waterman of the Law School, her first husband, had let her buy adjoining properties, and there were some of 'em down behind the house that were real derelict places. But when they came on the market, they were available at low prices, and she just picked 'em up one by one. And then Julian Waterman would say, "Is that all that you—is this all that you want?" "No." [*Laughter*] And so [*coughs*] I was—year and a half I lived there. It was interesting because that place—it had a trap door down on—and down on the one corner of the main room floor. I opened up that up—first time I did that, I looked down and saw a black snake coiled on the top step. Well, it was at least a black snake, not poisonous. So we lived with that. And I moved out after a year or two into my own house.

[01:44:56] SM: Can you tell us about that process? You said you worked with this woman, an architect . . .

KS: Oh, René.

SM: . . . for building it. Yeah. Can you talk about that process?

KS: Yeah. René . . .

JP: [*Unclear words*]

KS: . . . was . . .

SM: Oh! It was a man. Excuse me. A man named René?

KS: Everything was revolving around that group of people, and Neil Compton's younger doctor—daughter had married this man she'd met in New Orleans when she was studying art down there. And René—I met him up after they moved to Fayetteville, and he seemed like the obvious right choice to design this house where I still own. Trying to sell that, of course, and put it to a better use than just a vacant house. But René, he was, I guess, born in Mexico City. And we got along, great friends. He was not an outdoors person, particularly, but he had—very sensitive to what I'll call artistic angles. So he was the one who designed that house. There were some fatal flaws, or a couple of 'em, that I overlooked. Well, one of 'em was that that darn house—to use a bathroom for anything you had to go upstairs. And I remember there was a spiral stair of—economical of a spacious

that I had discovered, and I did some of the location work or retail research toward finding things, and that staircase was made out in western Maryland or somewhere by some shop. But it was better looking than some of these things that were produced in the Midwest. So I tracked that down for René. And he got it. He did—and but René—the younger daughter of Dr. Compton, Edra Ann, and René had gone somewhere across the country hauling a cage, closed cage, full of native birds of some kind. And there was, I guess, some sort of a virus that the bird carried that affected her eyesight so that she'd lost her central eyesight, which was crucial for a person schooled in art. But anyhow, that—I know I stayed in their house with—René and Edra's place one time when they were out of town. And there again, it was a two-story house, essentially, that I could not handle while—but I wasn't thinking in terms. So that house of mine is essentially a story and a half house with the crucial parts being upstairs. [01:49:24] And so they—that house is another part of my trying to get things sorted out, and I, fortunately, I think I can, once we get the proper things worked out, it could be a living place for a student. One or two students, probably. It's a small house.

SM: Wasn't it designed to be energy efficient?

KS: Pardon?

SM: Was it designed to be energy efficient with the passive solar heating?

KS: It was meant to—we made all kinds of things—decisions made about that house. It would be—well, at the time, forty-five years ago, it was going to be solar efficient and a great, big, south-facing sloping roof soaking up the sol—sun and solar panels. None of that—well, the roof was there, but the panels were never installed because it was an efficient, small house to begin with. [01:50:51] And a lot of insulation and double-glass windows and all that. So that there it sits, and we will need to think about the best use for it. There have been a couple of people who have just stayed there overnight. There was a woman here who came back to Fayetteville and—to see her father, I guess, in the hospital. And she stayed there. And this is, again, where you might think about what can best become of that—what I call a wacko house. *W-A-C-K-O*, wacko. [*SM laughs*] Because I think now in retrospect, some of those decisions we made forty years ago are just not pertinent to today's world, including that huge south-facing roof. But it's there. The house was designed and built that way. It could at least stay as sort of a museum piece because [KE edit: forty

years ago] we thought it was important. Not now so long—so important if the—but the whole thing about designing that house was get it in close to the university and some other things about it that I think were pertinent at the time and I think I still want.

[01:52:51] Can you imagine the average person in the United States, even here in the—wallowing in the richest of this country going and building some of the stuff that has been built over the last fifty years in Fayetteville, even. It—and even that house across the street that was built a year or two after mine. A great big window across the midsection of the front of the house, that was part of the energy-efficient thing. Soak up the sunshine. I don't know how that works—how it works, but mine and theirs, the house across the street, were all built about the same time. And they—I guess they're youthful museum pieces for energy efficiency. This furniture was put in there at that time. None of that except for this damn thing I don't need.

Yeah.

[01:54:17] SM: Well, shall we get back to your time working with the Ozark—let's see, the—you were the publications coordinator.

KS: Publications coordinator for the Ozark Society Foundation. Well, it probably never has gotten as far as Neil Compton would've imagined, but it has gone somewhere. And I was—that first

book had to be out and published and circulated, and that's where I wound up at least paying for the first printing. And fortunately, the darn things sold like hotcakes, as they say and so that we kept turning money back into the fund, and I was okay collecting I think a 10 percent royalty or something like that. Everything worked out. And that was, I guess—well, it was my initial expense into that—experience in that role. And it was not a new idea at all because the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Sierra Club especially had been doing that sort of thing. It was merely following and introducing what had been done and had been done in the Ozarks—I mean, in the Appalachian area and in the Sierra in the west into Arkansas. And it was, of course, a much smaller scale than they, but the thing worked. Neil Compton could simply—he even held—I guess money was put in a personal account of some kind that Neil set up. And when I needed money for to do a new printing or something like that, I simply asked him to send a check normally. I don't remember all the details, but it worked. And that book, I think—well, now you know that it's forty years down the line, and there needs something more up to date, more pertinent and applicable to the [*unclear word*]*]*—well, probably right now, there are—most people, the outdoor community, who don't know beans about

what happened in the past, and it doesn't have to matter that much to them, but there will need to be some sort of publications that reflect not only what is pertinent today and being left out of the old books—there's a cave that we knew—pit cave over there on Cave Creek belonged to some friends of mine, and a picture of it in the original printings of the book. That could be dropped out, and I don't know what the publicizing—publishing arm of the Ozark Society will wanna do, but it needs to be something to fit today's na—needs and today's favored format, even. [01:58:49] I can't imagine one of those books being popped—pulled out while looking at a darn little card or something that's electronic, but I guess the original book is more a curiosity. And whatever is needed and pertinent to serving the purpose always run as a good, efficient, money-making business because that's the way it has to be. Which means that's what we were able to do before. And but when I say business, you need to have—it started out with flyers to bookstores or wherever, retailers, saying that we have something for you to sell at a price, your price and your markup, and we cover our costs. That's one thing that I guess I don't think I knew all of that in a few weeks at the University of California, Berkeley where I was in graduate school business

administration, but business is the way it's run in this country. And probably the best way that we know of in today's world. But and the other side of it is making a problem—product that will sell and serve as the original purpose toward making, assuring a better natural environment. Maybe I oughta shut my mouth and say . . .

[02:01:18] SM: Well, I—along those lines, I wanted to ask you about your trail-building efforts on the Buffalo River, if you could speak a little bit about that.

KS: I had hiked trails beginning in Hot Springs, Arkansas, that little national park. And that's—well, it has to be. You have to have—and frankly, it's fun to do that sort of thing, to build a very good trail. It is more than just blasting through the country in the fastest way possible. It is, the whole business, is a work of art. And some places we've done it better and some less so. Even in Hot Springs National Park, where the trail system was built probably in the 1920s, 1930s, in the Depression years, maybe, most of it is good, but there's one stretch I can tell you where they just, "By golly, we gotta get up there! Go as fast as we can." Well, it looks like crap. Even in a national park I've seen that sort of thing. I hope the part of that effort over there on the—I haven't seen it, but I have the feeling that some of that is

what—we gotta be—to use a vergal—vulgar term, fast, half-ass—and I don't wanna say we—any part of the natural world, but especially the national park system, needs to be better than that.

[02:03:50] JP: Are you referring to a section of the Buffalo River?

KS: Huh?

JP: Are you referring to a section in the Buffalo trail or elsewhere?

KS: I'm not hearing all of this, but I'll just—the future?

JP: No. When you described a trail section just going straight up, is that Buffalo River trail or someplace else?

KS: Well, one section I was thinking of was done many years ago at the park, National Park Service trail in Hot Springs.

JP: Okay.

KS: There are also old trails in the Hot Springs National Park that were probably built way, way back in—have been abandoned because they were not right.

JP: Yeah. Okay.

KS: But you got to—and I think I have seen some of it on our friends and competitors in the Ozark Highlands Trail Association, at least a few things. There is that big noise that "We gotta have a trail to the"—wherever it is. And here we got the—people will wanna do it, and we got the organization and the tools and everything.

Go for it. Well, crap. They come up with something that is less than lasting. I have seen enough trails that—well, even in the national parks, they're in the wrong places where they built trail on too steep a side hill and cut in there and churned up the dirt or whatever they did and caused it to erode. You can see it in places even on the Buffalo River where, before the park days, there were always people who were in a hurry and sloppy and careless. And I could point a couple of people—places up above the Boy Scout camp where they were careless even be—well before the Boy Scouts. [02:06:41] But they were—there was also that ten—always that tendency to be there and put somebody out there who was great on enthusiasm and ha—sloppy in approach. What is known as the FHA approach. FHA is Federal Housing Administration, used to be. But on trail construction, I'm thinking of another FHA which is called fast, half-ass. And I hope when you go walking a trail that you are able, at least, to see what looks right in original construction. Or maybe what looks right in maintenance that they just get it fixed right.

[02:07:51] SM: How did you learn those techniques in trail building?

KS: How is that?

SM: Where did you learn those skills for trail building?

KS: Looking at trails, first in Hot Springs National Park, the good ones, and then elsewhere. And there are books put out by these outdoor organizations, a very few places, that simply show that when they're on a side hill like that, you've got to be able to deal with leveling it off a strip, and it has to be just right width, right slope from side to side and right way to slope lengthwise, too. So those things happen. And I know I handed my little library of half a dozen books about trail construction to our present supervisor, or the one who took over from me, and I have never heard whether they were used. There's not much in those books that is necessarily appropriate for trail construction in Buffalo River right now, but I never did hear anything about instruction on building trails the best way, the right way. It takes a little longer, and especially at the beginning where you're laying out the trail, there has to be both the proper grade this way and the slope or out slope this way. So I am happily out of that business, but hope someone else knows the right way.

[02:10:31] SM: Well, you're welcome to speak about anything else at this point, but I thought this would be a good kind of a wrap-up question about what do you think the most critical issues surrounding land conservation in Arkansas today are?

KS: Well, there are a lot of things that are affecting it, and we've just

been talking about this—people being content and happy in building ahead as fast as possible, doing it—doesn't matter if it's fast, half-ass, just go on. Well, that's one critical issue.

[02:11:21] The main one, I think, is much broader in scope.

We have, for long—we have too many people doing and wanting too much, overwhelming the country. That doesn't mean to say that even the people contributing to destruction are bad people at all. It's just that we're overwhelming the system. The system is that which has been developed over the last hundreds of thousands of years that has settled into something that was more or less harmonious, and then, well, we just, through ignorance and an ability to just push dirt around, we're making a mess of things. That's one aspect of it. [02:12:39] I was with the Parsches only two or three months ago when we went over to Boxley, and they—Jim Liles, who was with the Park Service, retired, stayed here in Arkansas, north Arkansas, was tellin' me he regretted the—what—having done what he did for a woman who wanted to live in the Boxley valley. Anyway, there was a—he—was a vacant property over there, and he made arrangements so that she could buy a little piece of land over there behind the Boxley Church. And she—there was an old house there, and she was able to get in there and make some

updates and revisions. But what resulted in—the lady died recently. Well, she went on a hike up into Lost Valley in cold weather and, I don't know, fell, succumbed to cold. That place that she has there—I saw it, and it was sort of a jerry-rigged little arrangement that she had to do with limited resources. And I think of that as—and right around the bend behind the Boxley Church—I think that's behind the church—there are people with—they wanna be there, but they just don't have the funds or the brains to do it right. And I saw behind that—I guess there behind the Boxley Church somebody'd just wanted a place to put a house or whatever and just got a bulldozer and leveled that ground there, put their little dinky, goddamn house on it. I think that, yes, if they wanted to have a house there, there might be other adjustments to be made, but everybody is going—well, back in the government days, they call that FHA construction or something like that. Federal Housing Administration. But some of—too much of this FHA nowadays is fast, half-ass. It is people not thinking, not having—wanting to be there and living there maybe part year, at least, and not doing it or preparing the site in the right way. [02:16:24] I don't know how they—the Park Service as one of their early experiments with living—people living in private homes on public

lands or something—whatever you called, sort of a mixed arrang—was over in the Appalachians, I guess. And there they—there were certain concessions made to let people—public—private land be there and private residences. That one was a different problem forty or fifty years ago. They—people still had these properties but wanted to be somewhere else. So they moved out of their—I don't know the whole—some of those things just got dumped back into the lap of the Park Service. And here in the Boxley Valley—I even talked to Jim Liles. He was running a lot of that thing, trying to be accommodating to people while still protecting the property. But right there at the Boxley Church, they—these independent-minded people just simply—they had a little space for 'em to work, so they just got a bulldozer and made space. It looks like—never mind. You can go over there and see, and the problem still is there.

[02:18:19] Everything has been happening so fast, though, I— with the price of motor fuel and all that being what it is and is apt to be, I think a lot of these places it may not be possible or feasible to live in these or commute frequently to these outlying places in the country. In other words, there will be problems, and I can think of—see it even here. Where in this longer run, will there be enough of a tax base and tax income to support a

place like this where I'm sitting so comfortably. But, kids, it's your problem, not mine. I'm goin' away. [*Laughs*] [02:19:44]

I think that Neil Compton had one thing he said. "People overdo." And that they are asking and grabbing for too much. I could've kept a car and gone buzzing around the property, around the town here, maybe. I began to back out of that because I could see—I may be goin' around there and at least incurring a big expense and messing up a car. This is not what I would like most to do right here, but this is—with your effort, I think, it is the best we can do. I'd like to get out. I would like to—I sold the car, got rid of the car, and then I am more or less confined most of the time to that walk out there that goes all the way around this building. But it does not—it does allow me to, if I can get my brains together, and I think they're not quite as much as they were just a year ago, but if I could get some things done, I can have a good time doing it and maybe be useful to other people. [02:21:47] My prom—project, one of 'em, is to try to write up part a long trip that my father made with these two rich-boy, daredevil friends nearly 100 years ago. He's managed to go through that truck, and they did—trip, and they did, too, down the west coast of Canada. And it—the more I say about it—they'd been up into northern Canada, northwest

Canada, shooting the wild animals and that sort of thing and having a great old time, I guess. My father was sort of the junior member of that trip. And he came out of that—he never did tell me what he thought about it except that they were adventurous, his two friends, older than he. World War I came along. Well, everybody had to get into that war to protect the country or whatever. And he went and signed up into the coast artillery. But turned out that the US didn't get into the war right away, but that was way back 100 years ago. He did that, and then he opted out of the military, wound up bouncing around, wound up in New York City instead. [02:23:55] But his two friends, they were all for excitement. And so they wound up, soon as the war broke out in Europe and England became impaired—imperiled. Germany was about to wipe out England, so they thought, so they got over—they were rich boys from Mississippi, Alabama. They went over there. "Oh, war is such fun. It's more exciting than"—well, they got out there and word came back that one of 'em was—had been wounded there in a hospital, and he disappeared. And the other one just simply disappeared somewhere over in a Flanders Field or whatever there, I guess wound up. That does not wind up as a plus in any way in their lives or anything at all, but my father saw it, too.

And they went all the way—they—and I need to try to write up at least the critical part. [02:25:35] The last six months, I guess, of his life, my father's life, he'd had a heart attack, and so there he was at home in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. And that's where I began to pick out these—this story piece by piece. And I don't have all of it, but I have enough, I think, that the lesson and the essence of the thing, their trip up into western Canada and then back on a boat goin' down to Seattle, that I wanna talk about that and how his friends—I guess they call it hubris. They were—his two friends were all for going where the action was. Well, the action just promptly wiped 'em off the airs—Earth.

SM: Well, we look forward to hearing about—more about that, but I think we're gonna go ahead and wrap up the interview for today.

KS: You know, I'm not able . . .

SM: Is there anything else?

KS: . . . to pick this up.

SM: I think we're going to stop the interview for today.

KS: Yeah. I—whatever you say. When you say that I should stop, just say, "Bam!" [*Laughter*] And that will do it.

SM: Well, we really appreciate you telling your story today. Thank you.

KS: Now, what—you know, this is a confining sort of existence, and

there are a few things that I'd like to continue to see right here in Fayetteville, visit here in Fayetteville, and then the rest of it is right here in these two rooms with institutional food down the hall and a walk around the outside. And is that enough?

SM: It is wonderful. We got so much great material today.

[End of interview 02:28:10]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]