

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

University of Arkansas
365 N. McIlroy Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

Arkansas Memories Project

Floyd Thomas
Interviewed by Roy Reed
March 3, 2006
El Dorado, 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 Web site at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

- Brackets enclose
 - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing
 - annotations for clarification and identification
 - standard English spelling of informal words
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.
- All geographic locations mentioned in the transcript are in the state of Arkansas unless otherwise indicated.

Citation Information

See the Citation Guide at
<http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.asp#citations>.

Roy Reed interviewed Floyd Thomas on March 3, 2006, in El Dorado, Arkansas.

[Beginning of Interview 00:00:00]

Roy Reed: March the third . . .

Floyd Thomas: March 3.

RR: . . . two thousand and six. It's Floyd Thomas and Roy Reed.

And—uh—Mr. Thomas, do we have your permission to donate this interview to the [David and Barbara Pryor] Center for [Arkansas] Oral and Visual History, University of Arkansas?

FT: Yes, sir.

RR: Good. Uh—just start at the beginning. Tell me where and when you were born.

FT: Well, I's born—uh—August 30, 1923, in Monett, Missouri.

Uh . . .

RR: Who were your parents?

FT: My parents were Loyd J. . . .

RR: ?Is that? *L-L-O-Y-D*?

FT: *L-L*—No *L*. He said he only spelled it with one *L* ?because? he couldn't afford the pencil for—for two *Ls*. [*RR laughs*] *L-O-Y-D—J*. Thomas and Goldie—*G-O-L-D-I-E*—Melissa Roden—*R-O-D-E-N*—her maiden name.

RR: Meli—Melissa? *M-A* . . .

FT: *M-E-L-I-S-S-A.*

RR: Uh—what was her last name?

FT: Roden—*R-O-D-E-N.*

RR: Okay. And so you're a Missourian by birth?

FT: Right. Right.

[00:01:07] RR: Did you go to school up there?

FT: Well, [*laughs*] my dad's a railroad man and—uh—he—uh—was workin' [working] on the railroad up there, and they were hirin' [hiring] people down in—in Louisiana. He went to Alexandria, Louisiana. Went to work about 1924 on the Missouri-Pacific [Railroad]. So—uh—we remained in—uh—Missouri until he was settled down, and we came down to Alexandria and then eventually to McGehee, Arkansas. And—uh—I went to school—grade school—well, during [Great] Depression we were back and forth—uh. We was—be in Missouri awhile then we'd be in Arkansas awhile. So I went to—and—uh—I went to—one year I went to fourth grade and went to four different schools in—in one year.

RR: My God!

FT: And—uh—so—uh—finally then—went back to McGehee at the end of the Depression then and—uh—near the end of the Depression. And I went to school there from the third grade

then from—uh—fourth grade on through and then till—till I graduated high school.

RR: At McGehee?

FT: At McGehee.

RR: Now which railroad was . . .

FT: Missouri-Pacific.

RR: Okay.

FT: And—uh . . .

[00:02:25] RR: So you must've got out of high school about nineteen . . .

FT: Forty. [FT Edit: Forty-one]

RR: Yeah.

FT: Let's see. Well, I take it back—[19]41.

RR: Okay.

FT: And—uh—sitting over there one day in the house and—uh—had the flu. And was senior year in high school, and somebody rapped on the door. And had a wood stove, and I just filled the stove up with wood and—and went the door, and somebody said that—uh—Coach Fred Thomsen's out here—wants talk to you. I said, "Man, I'm sick. I can't come outside." So they came inside, and he told me he'd like for me to come to University of Arkansas [Fayetteville] to play football.

RR: Fred Thomsen?

FT: Fred Thomsen. *T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N*. [Editor's Note: Fred Thomsen was the head football coach at the University of Arkansas from 1929–1941.]

RR: Wants you to come up the university to play football?

FT: Yes, sir. So—uh—I figured anything'd beat workin' on the railroad. And—uh—I was the first one of our—member of our family who graduated high school, so. And grandparents were illiterates, and my mother had third grade and my dad 'bout [about] fifth grade, so one of those ?coming along—tail-end? deal. So I went up there and—uh . . .

[00:03:28] RR: Had you played in high school?

FT: Yeah, I played football in high school.

RR: Okay. So you went up the university.

FT: Went to university and—uh—played—uh—freshmen year and then—uh—war—'course [of course], started in December—bombed Pearl Harbor, December 7, [19]41.

RR: That was in your first semester, I guess.

FT: Yes, sir. So I went ahead then and went two semesters then my sophomore year. And—uh—joined the army. And—uh—went down to—uh—down Texas for basic training. Had what they called the Army Specialized Training Program. Had to score

pretty high on a—on a—I say literacy test [*laughter*]?—on the? test to be qualified. And they's goin' [going] send us all to college and make civil engineers out of us.

RR: Mh-hmm.

[00:04:20] FT: Well, that lasted about one semester, and then they decided that they needed somebody to think in infantry, so we all wound up infantry. So I wound up in the hundred and third [103rd] Infantry Division. Uh—four-oh-ninth [409th] Infantry, Company D—which we had heavy machine guns and—uh—eighty-one millimeter mortars. Then we finished our training down in Texas, and then we went to Europe . . .

RR: Whereabouts in Texas?

FT: Uh—Camp Howze, Texas, at—uh . . .

RR: *H-O-U-S-E?*

FT: *H-O-W-Z-E*, I believe it is. Camp Howze, Texas. I believe it's at Gainesville, outside of Gainesville, Texas, over there in south Te—north Texas.

RR: Okay.

FT: And then we got on—on a ship and—uh—took off [FT addition: from New York]—uh—went down up through the rocks of Gi—Straits of Gibraltar. And wound up down at—uh—ah—Marseilles, France.

RR: Whew!

FT: And—uh—we wade in 'bout waist-deep water goin' ashore and heard this noise and looked up, and there's airplane—had a swastika on side of it—looked like it's big as Empire State Building. That's the biggest—biggest insignia I ever saw on anything. But he didn't—didn't fire on us. Then we went from there on up into—uh . . .

RR: Now had the Germans occupied Marseilles at that time?

FT: Well, they had—they—they . . .

RR: I knew they had . . .

FT: The Thirty-sixth Division had just gone in 'bout a day or two 'fore [before] we got there. Had the ships all sunk and the boats in the harbor and everything, so we couldn't pull up to the dock. This was 'bout the same time as June the fifth when—uh—when they—they hit over there in Normandy. So our deal was to go in to southern France, come up, and join up with a bunch up in—uh—up in—uh—went in through Normandy up there.

[00:06:14] RR: This'd been [19]44. June of [19]44.

FT: Yeah. Mh-hmm

RR: Okay. And so you were gonna [going to] join up with 'em [them].

FT: Join up with the men, and then we's gonna go on down there,

but—but our deal was that we—uh—we didn't go straight up toward Paris [France] up the central deal. We veered off to the right and went over into—uh—it was into—uh—through the Black Forest [Germany] and over in that area over in there. And—uh—scaled the Vosges Mountains. They claimed we was the first army to go across the mountains on foot since Napoleon took his elephants across there. [Editor's Note: Hannibal drove his army, including elephants, over the Pyrennees and Alps during the Second Punic War in 218 B.C.]

RR: Wha—how do you spell that?

FT: Uh—*V-O-V-O-G-E-S*, I believe. *V-O-S-G-E-S* or *V-O-G-E-S*.

[Editor's Note: The correct spelling is *V-O-S-G-E-S*.]

RR: Vosges Mountains—Mountains, yeah. That's—that's up in the—in northern France or southern Germany?

FT: Yeah.

RR: Where would that be?

FT: Well, it's—uh—a—uh . . .

RR: Or was it Switzerland?

FT: We—well, Switzerland's on the right, so—so it's near Switzerland.

RR: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Anyway you scaled those mountains.

[00:07:24] FT: Scaled those mountains. We'd go up top and get up

on top the mountain, said well, got up there. And you'd look down, and it's 'bout as far down then back up again. [*Laughter*] Well, we walked along the top of those mountains. The Germans were building tank traps and things down in there [FT Edit: the valley]. We could've thrown rocks on their heads down there 'cause [because] we're ?probably? higher than they was.

RR: Mmm. Mmm.

FT: They'dn't know we were anywhere around till we got back—uh—over into where the headquarters was. And they—[FT Edit: until] we captured the headquarters, and they didn't have any idea American troops's any place around. We had five hundred thousand Germans trapped in in a pocket we—we created up in there.

[00:08:00] RR: Well. I—I never heard anything about this part of the war. Uh—this—this had to have been a major development when y'all got those Germans—I mean, that many German troops.

FT: Yeah, it was—it's pretty—it's pretty good size development, I guess. But—uh—uh . . .

RR: What happened? Would—were y'all able to take most of 'em captive or would they . . .

FT: Well, we took—we took the towns back over in there, and then—

then we just held our ground. And then the troops that come in behind us then came up through the valleys and did the moppin' [mopping] up in there, which we wasn't involved in that. We were just to hold—hold our ground. They'd try to—try to get in town on one side. We'd fight them—run them out. Then there's others that'd come—come in ?from? the other side. So we had two or three days there had quite a—quite a round with 'em. But—uh . . .

[00:08:53] RR: You remember the name of the main town?

FT: It was—it was small town. I don't remember what the name is.

RR: In Germany? [*Unclear words*]

FT: In France. In France.

RR: Still in France at that time.

FT: ?Yeah? Well, may've been in borderline. I don't—I don't remember ?what—uh? . . .

RR: I—what—what rank were you at that time?

FT: I's a—I's a private.

RR: Yeah.

FT: PFC [private first class].

RR: Yeah. In the infantry 409th?

FT: Four-oh-ninth, Company D. Yes sir. [*Hiccups*] Pardon me.

Well we actually went over the division—103rd Infantry Division.

We wound up sorta [sort of] specialized training program—we—we was training gliders and scaling mountains and all that kinda [kind of] stuff. Mountain warfare so. We di—we were sorta first one place another. We were assigned to every army, I guess, over there. We're in the First Army a while, the Third Army a while. Seventh Army—spent most the time with Seventh Army—they're the ones down south down there.

[00:09:49] RR: You saw a lot of action there.

FT: I saw—Frank [Thomas] saw—looked up one time—he called me one time, and he's lookin' [looking] at something, and he was askin' [asking] me how many [*electric fan oscillates*] days I had in combat, and I said, "I don't know." He said, "You had 167," I think he said, "days in actual contact with the enemy. Your—your unit did." So . . .

RR: That was—wasn't that considered unusual? [*FT laughs*] A lot—I mean, an awful lot of time in combat?

FT: Well—we—uh—I guess it was. 'Course [of course], I don't—'course we was just a bunch of kids over there. We was fightin' [fighting] tryin' [trying] to keep—keep them from comin' [coming] over here and takin' [taking] over our country [FT addition: We were back and forth] and then running the thing. We were fightin' for—for—really what we were—bunch of old

country boys—but for freedom was the best thing we had, you know. Bunch of eighteen-, nineteen-, twenty-year-old kids.

RR: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

FT: 'Course, we all thought we's grown but [*FT laughs*] . . .

RR: Yeah, yeah.

FT: . . . still just children and . . .

RR: Did you lose any friends during that combat?

[00:10:45] FT: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Lost a lot of good friends. Fact, I went back. After I got out, I went back to school in Fayetteville ?set up in? Razorback Hall up there. And a bunch of us gettin' [getting] ready to go down to a baseball game down at the old fairgrounds one Saturday afternoon and—uh—[*unclear word*] the summer and—uh. One afternoon—I say Saturday. I don't know what day it was. Well, anyway. A man walked up, and he said, "My name is Nonamaker." He said, "I'm looking for Floyd Thomas." And I said, "You're—you're speaking with him." He said, "My wife's out in the car—like to speak with you." And—uh—I just had chill bumps just came all over me 'cause her—they lost a son over there. And it's kinda hard to walk out and sit in that car and talk to his mother, you know. It . . .

RR: She wanted to know all about . . .

FT: She wanted to know all—I wouldn't give her all the details, and

then she finally—she—she—she agreed—she said, "Well, did he suffer [*unclear word*]?" "Did he—didn't? suffer?" Still makes goose pimples come over my arms.

RR: Yeah. Nonamaker. *N-O-N-A-M-A-K-E-R*, I reckon?

FT: Mh-hmm. And they—they lived out on [US] Highway 71 just—they had been from Tulsa [Oklahoma] where this boy was from originally. But they moved to Fayetteville for some reason another, and they were livin' [living] out on—uh—on Highway 71 . . .

RR: Yeah.

FT: . . . south there.

[00:12:03] RR: Where did you end up the war?

FT: Ended up Innsbruck, Austria.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Well, actually—actually south of Innsbruck. We went up in—we—uh—went down in—into the Brenner Pass and filled it up. And the German Fifth Army was down in Italy, and they couldn't get up—they couldn't get up through there because we were in the pass.

RR: Yeah.

FT: So they—the—they surrendered in Italy first, and then we—uh—then we pulled back off ?of 'em?. We sit there and waited a long

time just 'went out one night? and just pickin' [picking] up stragglers outside of—uh—I guess, be east of Innsbruck. And—uh—pickin' up German stragglers comin' in. Well, we had to wait till the, you know, politics got involved. We had to wait till the Russians came over and took Vienna [Austria]. And we coulda been in Vienna. We coulda been in Berlin. We coulda been a lot of places over there 'fore the Russians ever got there—just stalled the thing out. But—uh—th—the Russians, they wasn't goin' give it up to us because they didn't want to—didn't want to—uh—give up the Germans. And then we were there for awhile and—uh—gettin' ready—they were gonna pull out, come back to 'states? and train, and go to South Pacific, you know, to the . . .

RR: That would have been about April, I guess, [19]45 at that point?

FT: Yeah, probably so.

RR: Or maybe—or was it June when—when the war in Europe—I can't remember anyhow.

FT: I—I can't 'member anyway.

RR: [*Unclear words*] time left.

[00:13:38] FT: Some time in there. 'Course, you know, time—time didn't mind—didn't mean anything. I was in there a total of four and a half 'doggone?—a little over four years in the military.

But it didn't seem, you know, at the time just—just seemed like a dream more than anything else.

RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FT: Part of your life you didn't have access to [*unclear word*]. And on this—on—I's on a truck gettin' ready to come home—to come back to the states—and they come up there and called my name. I's staff sergeant at that time. [*Loud noise in background*] Said, "Sergeant Thomas, you need to unload." So I got off to find out what the situation was. "So, see, you goin' be head of a cadre here to train troops in—in—uh—infantry practice to go to—through the [FT Edit: Suez] canal to—to—to Japan.

RR: Oh, boy.

[00:14:21] FT: So—uh—we started doing that and—uh—uh—that was over in Japan then, when—when—uh—I think that President [Harry] Truman did one of most heroic things—it's a tough decision, though, to make—when he dropped that bomb over there on Hiroshima and Naga—Nagasaki. But he sure saved lives of a lotta [lot of] American soldiers—maybe mine included because—uh—'cause it's goin' be a tough cookie goin' in that—in the Japan deal over there. It'd been worse than D-day or any—anything else or Omaha Beach or whatever—it was bad enough but—but—uh—and then we—uh—uh—and the fall season came

around then and things are slacked off, and a Jeep pulled up there one day and said, "General wants—wants you at the [FT Edit: headquarters]—sent me to get you to bring you to Ingolstadt, Germany.

RR: Ingolstadt?

[00:15:16] FT: Ingolstadt. *I-N-G-L-E-S-T-A-D-T*. It's about halfway between Munich and Nuremburg. On the—on the Danube River. And—uh—so they loaded me up [FT Edit: my stuff] in that Jeep. I said, "What's this about?" Said, "You gonna play football." [FT *laughs*] I was in the Ninth Infantry Division at that time.

RR: Yeah.

FT: So they had us—we went up there, and Andy Kerr Jr., whose daddy was the coach at Colgate [University, Hamilton, New York] at that time. He was a medical doctor. He didn't know anything about football. But he knew more than anybody else, I guess. So he—he was our head coach over there. So we played football. Played our home games in Munich and—uh—and—uh—and—uh—uh—Nuremburg and—uh—[pause]. So when that was over, and they sent to me to the outfit that [*unclear words*] . . . [FT Edit: I remained with until I came home]

RR: I guess that beat—I guess that beat fightin' the Germans.

[00:16:12] FT: Well, Roy, ye—ye—well, the war was over see so—

uh—so—uh—but we did a lot of good because these—these GIs, they would get on these ol' six-by-six trucks and ride all day and all night. And we'd have eighty-five–ninety-thousand people at—at a football game over on—on a Sunday afternoon—just as many as they'd get the stands.

RR: Includin' a lot Germans, I guess.

FT: Well, the Germans didn't like it too much. See, *fußball* to the Germans is soccer.

RR: Yeah. Oh, yeah. So these—these were American soldiers then.

FT: Yeah. American soldiers.

RR: They'd come from all around.

FT: Yeah.

RR: Huh.

FT: And—uh—entertainin' [entertaining] them. And—uh—these ol' boys they had what they call depple—repple depples—replacement depots—along the route—they stop 'cause they'd spend the night. Some of 'em'd drive two or three days and nights just to come see a football game. And—and—uh . . .

RR: What position did you play?

FT: I played center and linebacker. At that time, I played both ways.

[00:17:04] RR: Back at school, had you done—had you been center

or . . .

FT: Did at—did at university. And then I got out after the spring training was over in [19]46. [John] Barnhill said he wanted me play tackle up there in [19]46. So my brother was a center. And . . .

RR: Who's your brother?

FT: Billy Ray Thomas.

RR: Okay.

FT: And Billy Ray went to Alabama. And I's overseas, and I heard about it, and I wrote him a letter, and I said, "You leave Alabama and go to Arkansas, and you and I'll be alternatin' [alternating] up there one of these days." So he left Alabama runnin' [running] first string. I'm sorry I did it because Alabama went to the Rose Bowl that year, and he was going the Rose Bowl, see, and then we went the Cotton Bowl at the university, and we also went to the Dixie Bowl. So Barnhill like to got me killed playing tackle, so [*laughter*]*—*so he—uh—I told him the season's over with, I said, "I'm gonna play center and—season—senior year." "Nah." said, "you—you [*unclear word*] playin' [playing] tackle." Said, "No." Said, "I'm not a tackle. I'm a center and linebacker." So started me out spring trainin' [training] on the seventh squad. I's the last man on totem pole.

He tried discourage me, so I—I, you know, I—I told him, I said, "Well," I said "you not gonna have any—a—any backs to—to play this fall if you do me like this." Said, "I'm gonna take dead aim on ever one of them." [RR laughs] So, anyway, the—wound up then when spring trainin' was over my brother was runnin' the first unit, and I's on the second unit—what you call the ?alternate? unit?. Barnhill had two units—equal strength, more or less. He'd run one—uh—one team in. They played—start the first quarter. And then 'bout two minutes left, he'd put the other unit in and—called 'em first and second units—unless somebody got hurt, then you had to play the whole—whole shootin' [shooting] match. So that's—uh—so I went up there playing—playing center then, and my—my senior year, my brother and I, we did—we alternated it. And—uh . .

RR: It's a great arrangement.

FT: . . . got to keep my word to him then. [FT Edit: That we would alternate at the University of Arkansas after the war was over.]

[00:19:03] RR: Had you—was Barnhill the coach when you went to the university the first time in [19]41?

FT: No. Fred Thomsen was.

RR: Okay. You told me that.

FT: And then Fred—and then Fred went into the—went into the

army. And then George Cole . . .

RR: Yeah.

FT: . . . was the coach my sophomore year.

RR: They named the baseball team—field after him.

FT: Uh-huh.

RR: Yeah.

FT: And—uh . . .

[00:19:27] RR: So you went back to the university and played football until—what year did you get out?

FT: Well, I graduated in—uh—got my bachelor's degree in—uh—
[19]47. And I got—fin—my—finished—went in summertime—
finished my masters then in [19]49 or [19]50. So I got my . . .

RR: What field of study?

FT: Well—uh—biological sciences. At that time, it's mainly based around education.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:02] I wanted be a teacher and coach. And had the anatomies and the physiologies and all that kind of stuff, you know. I wanted to be a medical doctor but I couldn't stand the smelling of ether. At that time they used ether in the hospitals all the time. So I took—took all this pre-med ?up there that? first year. Well, I take that back. I was so ignorant about

college, when I got up there this old Field House over there, where the—near where the heating plant is over there at that time. And they said, "You better go register." I didn't know anything about college or anything else. So I started out, first line I came to had a bunch of girls in it. Come to find out that was the home ec deal. So I went into the next line and got in that line, and I was [*FT laughs*—?that was that? College of Agriculture, of all things. And if I had kept on going, I would have eventually gotten across the street to business or something else—education. [*FT laughs*] [00:20:55] So I was—the first year I was in agriculture. And about the second week of sitting on the fence at the university farm judging cattle, and I didn't know anything of—didn't know [*laughter*—didn't know ?what a cow was?. So then after I got out of the service then, I went back and got into the College of Education. And then I—so at that time, didn't have a degree in education. Didn't have a Master's in education either. But Master's of Science and Bachelor's of Science in—B.S.E. is what it was, Bachelor's of Science in Education. And the Master's of Science didn't have one. So it was actually turned out to be a Master's of Science in Biological Science.

[00:21:38] RR: Mh-hmm. Did you teach after you got out?

FT: I went down to Paris, Arkansas, and I taught physics, chemistry, one math class, coached football, girl's basketball, track, and baseball. Had the audiovisual program. And then after two and a half, three years, an agent—one day the superintendent was gone, and Austin White was the principal. Hal Kinnemar was the superintendent. And they were gone. And I was in the office getting a list of eligibility sheets, fillin' them out for the athletes—for the state department of education. And Ralph Rawlings, an [FT Edit: Federal Bureau of Investigation or FBI] agent out of Fort Smith came up there and came in. He wanted a list of girls who had shorthand and typing. [00:22:27] And he said, "By the way, we're hiring agents now." Said, "You don't have to pass the law to be a lawyer or have a law degree ?or an accountant would? pass the law examination." I said, "How much you payin'?" He said, "Five thousand dollars a year." I was makin' bout twenty-five hundred. I said, "Give me an application." [FT laughs] So I told Beulah, my wife. I said, "Well, we may be changin' jobs." I said, "I'm gonna apply for this job here at the FBI. So I applied and was accepted and left Paris. Didn't have any money. Had a wife and a child about two years old. Borrowed ?money? from my daddy and rode on a—sittin' on a train—rode a day coach all the way from Booneville,

Arkansas, to Washington, DC.

RR: Ah, boy. What year was this?

FT: This was in nineteen and fifty-one.

RR: Fifty-one.

FT: And I went to work on Lincoln's Birthday in 1951, I was sworn in as an FBI agent in Washington, DC.

[00:23:39] RR: Well. Back up and tell me about gettin' married.

Now did you and Beulah get—*B-E-U-L-A-H*, is that . . .

FT: *B-E-U-L-A-H*.

RR: When did y'all get . . .

FT: I met her on Dickson Street [Fayetteville, Arkansas] my freshman year. And we went out ?with some Fayetteville girls?—out. My roommate had a date with Beulah the first night. Then next time we went around I had a date with Beulah. So we dated then off and on during our freshman year. And I went into the service then and got out of service and then—some my sophomore year. So I went into service, never wrote or ?did? anything. Came out and to find out she was still single, so I went to see her. And we dated about—oh—eight, nine, ten months, and then we got married.

RR: After the war?

FT: After the war.

RR: Where's she from?

FT: She's from Fayetteville. She's from Mount Comfort, a little town out [FT Edit: of Fayetteville]. . .

RR: Oh, yeah. What's her maiden name?

FT: Her maiden name is Campbell. *C-A-M-P-B-E-double L*. Yeah.

RR: Mount Comfort. Yeah.

FT: Her grandparents were—on her mother's side was McCormick.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: McCormick's had a lot of land up there at one time. Fact, they owned where the university farm is. They gave—donated that to the university. That's part of her family.

[00:24:53] RR: Yeah. Yeah. While we're talking about gettin' married and all, tell me about your kids. How many kids did y'all have?

FT: We have three children born in three different states. Floyd was born when I was coaching at Paris, Arkansas.

RR: Floyd?

FT: Floyd Jr.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: He's a lawyer here in El Dorado now. He's a graduate of University of Arkansas—bachelor's. And SMU [Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas] in law. And then Frank was

born in Newark, New Jersey after I was in the FBI up there.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: And then we transferred back to St. Louis [Missouri], and then they transferred me down to [*unclear word*] down at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and that's where our daughter Melissa [FT Edit: was born] . . .

RR: Melissa?

FT: *M-E-L-I-S-S-A*.

RR: I know where Frank is now. He's workin' for Stephens, Inc. down in Little Rock. What about Melissa? Where is she?

FT: Melissa's in Little Rock. She's married a fellow name of Whitfield.

RR: It's Melissa Whitfield.

[00:25:54] FT: Melissa Whitfield. And she's with the Department—Arkansas Department of Heritage [Department of Arkansas Heritage]. She does their PR work, somethin' [something] or another. Looks like they're publishing her pamphlets or something ?like that?. Don't know what her job is. But she's been with them now for a ?couple of years?.

RR: I think I've had some correspondence with her over the last two or three years. When she—I can't remember anything about it, but I get something now and then from the heritage department,

and that name's kinda [kind of] familiar. Anyway you've got three kids.

FT: Mh-hmm.

RR: Any grandkids?

FT: Got—count 'em up here—let's see—Floyd has four, and Frank has two, and Melissa has two. We've got eight grandchildren, two great grandchildren.

[00:26:44] RR: Yeah. Where'd you start out with the FBI?

FT: My first [*coughs*—excuse me—my first office was Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Which also covered West Virginia.

RR: What were you doing there?

FT: Just an agent. We had a hundred violations of federal law, which we took care of all of 'em. ?And? I was workin' mainly fugitive cases in Pittsburgh headquarters when they called me in one day and said, "We need you to go down to Clarksburg, West Virginia, tomorrow and meet an agent by the name of Kenny Moore. And—*M-O-O-R-E* is his name. We—I went down and met old Kenny down about four thirty. We worked till five. Before five o'clock he showed me around the offices, gave me the keys to the offices for this, this, and this, and this [FT addition: he explained how to investigate matters]. Had a map, showed me where the police department was and everything

that I may need access to. And at five o'clock, he says, "I'll be seein' you, two weeks." [*Laughs*] I said, "Where in the hell are you goin'?" Said, "I'm goin' on vacation."

RR: [*Laughs*] So just spring it on you, huh?

FT: I said, "Man, I been out—I been out of—out here workin' in the field for three weeks gonna give me all that"—I think he had seven or eight counties down in West Virginia. So I lay awake all night long worrying about that. So I got up the next mornin' [morning], got all my stuff together, went over to the Clarksville Police Department. Went in to see the chief detective; he was a retired captain of the West Virginia Highway Patrol. I showed him my credentials, told him where I was. I said, "Now I've got all this stuff here to do, and I don't know anything about it, how to do it, or anything else. Would you tell me what to do." And he looked at me?, he laughed. He said, "Well, you honest." [*Laughs*] I said, "Man I have to be." So he showed me to do this, this, this, this. I got to Clarksville—Clarksburg worked out. He said, "Where you goin' now?" I named a little down south down there, small college in the town. He said, "I'll call the radio, and so-and-so will meet you there." Well, now I met a sergeant. He led me around by the hand for two or three days down in West Virginia. So after that I was kinda on my own

then.

[00:29:10] RR: Were you looking for fugitives or ?what??

FT: Well, car theft cases, fugitives, theft of interstate shipment, bank robberies, leads.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Just a bit of all of it. Active investigations.

RR: Yeah. Kind of a sink-or-swim situation there.

FT: Yeah, yeah, it was, man. But you know what? I learned more there in those first two or three weeks than those fellows down there with experience, man. You know, if I was stumblin' around and [FT addition: acted like] "Hey, I'm a big shot FBI man." You know. If I was stumblin' round here and fumblin' round, wouldn't have gotten anything accomplished.

RR: Sure.

FT: Went in there honest, truthful with 'em, told 'em what the situation was. [*Laughs*] They felt sorry for me and helped me, so got along pretty well.

RR: That's while you were in Pittsburg?

[00:30:00] FT: In Pittsburg. Then I went from Pittsburg to Newark, New Jersey, as an agent. And worked the waterfronts, mainly of New York. Worked West New York. And then we went down to West New York, New Jersey, to cover a lead one time about—

had to interview a guy on a boat. [Pause] Commercial vehicle, vessel, voyager. Whatever you call 'em. Anyway. Well, I went in to—tried to find him around a bar during lunch hour. Well, these stevedores run those ships over there, I mean, talk about make the hair raise up on your back. These guys had patches over their eyes and scars all over their face and arms, tattoos, wore hay hooks in their belts. I went in there, and they said, "Well, the guy that you're lookin' for is upstairs, room so-and-so." There were hotel rooms upstairs, a bar downstairs. Well, I went up steps up there, and when I got to the top of those steps, it was as black as any night you ever saw in your life. There wasn't a light up there anywhere. 'Course, I's still young, you know. Didn't know what—quite what to anticipate. So I went and knocked on the door, and the guy said, "Come in." ?I told him what I was arresting him for? So I went in and told him who I was. He said, "Okay." I ?told him to? put his clothes on.

RR: You were there to arrest him?

FT: [*Laughs*] ?I? arrested him and ?away? we went.

RR: What was his offense?

FT: I don't recall. I don't recall.

RR: Well, he went peacefully, huh?

FT: I don't recall what it was. [*Laughs*]

RR: I could see where he might've been a little anxious, though.

[*Laughs*]

FT: Yeah, he was anxious.

RR: Yeah. Boy. Hmm. The waterfront. That's some pretty tough characters.

FT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RR: Did you have any dealings with—allegedly ?back then? there was a lot of Mafia influence in the ports.

[00:31:53] FT: Yeah. Yeah. A lot of gang activity. And we worked over in New York [City, New York] a lot too, particularly on surveillance and things. The thing that amazed me about New York, we'd be on all-night surveillance over there sometime, and boy, things would just be busier than a bee, people goin' ever which way. About four o'clock in the mornin', everyone disappears, nobody on the streets of New York City, downtown New York, Manhattan, except street sweepers. It's like that—it's weird. And it's like that till about five o'clock, and then they all come up out of the ground again. [*RR laughs*] And then . . .

RR: Yeah. It's a funny place. I was never up that late in New York but I heard that, yeah. New York's different.

FT: Oh, yeah, it's different. It's different than any place in the world.

RR: I never had to work very long at a time, but it's a funny place.

[00:32:46] FT: 'Course, I've been to Paris, I've been—you know, in the military, and I went to London after—took a little leave went over to England after the war was over there. And been to a lot of large cities but—been to San Francisco [California], been to Los Angeles [California], Detroit [Michigan], and ?Delle?. But New York is absolutely different.

RR: You work some cases there in New York? Any you were [*unclear words*] . . .

FT: Well, just had leads out of out of origin—we—I'd be in the office of origin over there, and then we'd still have a New York—take care—we used to cross the river. We'd just go over there, and we'd take care of our business over there ourself. But [FT addition: instead of leads to New York offices] . . .

[00:33:23] RR: Mh-hmm. Do you remember any particular cases that you were involved in during that period? When you were workin' up and down that coast?

FT: No. We had quite a lot of espionage—sabotage cases, you know. That Bayonne [New Jersey] had the [United States] Navy yard there. Used to have all kinds of fires—suspicious fires and things on that deal that we'd have to go down and investigate those things. None of 'em ever amounted to anything—most of 'em all

accidental, you know. Spontaneous combustion or something like that.

RR: I'd forgotten the FBI is in charge of espionage investi—stuff, I guess.

FT: Mh-hmm.

RR: Boy, you get into all kinds of crime. [00:34:09] Where'd you go after Newark?

FT: Went to St. Louis. And hadn't been to St. Louis very long, and they had the famous Greenlease kidnappin' case—I don't know whether you're familiar with that case or not.

RR: Great. How do you spell that?

FT: Greenlease—*G-R-E-E-N-L-E-A-S-E*—Greenlease.

RR: That rings a bell.

FT: Happened in Kansas City [Missouri]. And they caught the man and woman over in St. Louis and their \$600,000 ransom paid off in two army duffel bags just stacked full of \$10 and \$20 bills. They got to St. Louis, and the woman was a—was the wife of a guy who had been a successful stockyard dealer—owner there in St. Joe, St. Joseph [Missouri]. And the guy by the name of Carl Austin Hall, his daddy was a judge over in Kansas City.

RR: This was in the [19]50s, right?

FT: Yeah.

RR: I remember that. I was at the University of Missouri [Columbia, Missouri] . . .

[00:35:21] FT: And she was Bonnie—her name was Bonnie Brown Heady. She was a, you know, class lady. But they got on drugs and alcohol and just ate 'em up, and they [FT Edit: kidnapped and] killed this little old boy over there in Kan—take him 'cross [across] the river in Kansas City, Kansas, and killed him. And they brought him back to St. Jo and buried him in her backyard up there. And then put lime on him—so forth and so on.

RR: Would that have been in the early [19]50s?

FT: No. Let's see, it would've been fi—about the mid [19]50s, probably about [19]54 or [19]55, ?somewhere? at that time.

RR: I was still around Columbia. Oh, that was big news at that time.

FT: Yeah. Oh, yeah. It was news all over the world, yeah. Yeah.

[00:36:04] RR: So you were involved in that case? What . . .

FT: Yeah. I was assigned to a guy who—John [Oliver] Hager—he was a cab driver. He had a cab company. And this Sandy O'Day, she was a gal who Hager got a date with for Hall. He was wantin' a date. So he got her, and old Hall was drunk, and they got out there on the [US Route] 66 highway at a motel out there. Can't think of the name of that motel now. [Editor's Note: Coral Court Motel] Old Hall passed out, so she looked

in—over on the suitcases, and there was all the money stacked in there. Had—at that time, they'd taken it out of the—taken these duffel bags out and got these big old metal suitcases that had those trays in 'em. He put the trays in an alley down by the brewery down there. When they first came to town, they went on South Broadway [Street], got in a flophouse down ?over there?. Old Heady got drunk, so Hall just sacked her down there, left her, then got a younger-looking gal and all that money spendin' around, so. So then Hall convinced—he told Hager that he was an insurance embezzler.

RR: Embezzler?

[00:37:31] FT: Embezzler. So he—'course, old Hager got some of the mon [FT Edit: money]—he got a little pocket money. So Sandy O'Day got some pocket money, too. So Hager called the owner of the Ace Cab Company, who—?catch that old boy's name for me? can't think of his name now—but, anyway, the owner of the Ace Cab Company [FT addition: Joe Costello] was a good friend of a guy named of Shoulders, Lieutenant [Louis Ira] Shoulders [FT addition: of the St. Louis Police Department]. So they were convinced that old Hall was an insurance embezzler. [00:38:12] So they arranged for Hager to take him to a little hotel up in north St. Louis up there—I can't even think

of the name of that hotel. Just a little old two-story deal—two floors. Got him a room over in there. Well, then Joe Costello owned the cab company. So Joe went out there went with—and Shoulders had a lieutenant—not a lieutenant—but a guy who was Shoulders's aide. His name slips me too right now. Been a few years ago. I've gotten a few nights' sleep since then, too. But, anyway, they went out to the hotel. And first they went to the wrong room—they redecorated rooms, and every room had two different numbers on it. The first room they went into was a guy that was on the telephone callin' in an order for his company from—in Chicago [Illinois]. So we had a record of the telephone of what time that call was made. Costello had on a bright yellow sports cap—sports coat. So people saw him goin' down and carryin' the suitcases down—out the back way ?when they?—then they finally got the right room, though. Hall got his suitcases and took 'em down. Well, when they got to the fourth district then, [long pause] when they we found out later when they went in [FT addition: when they took Hall to] the fourth district [of the St. Louis Police Department], there was only one suitcase. So Costello lived out near the—lived out near the botanical gardens on a little old street out there. And people sitting—in October was when all this took place—sitting on the

porch in October, in St. Louis. Nice in October evenings. And just dusky dark. A cab pulled up and the ca—and the g—the cab driver got out, carried one suitcase up on the porch and [FT addition: the people on the porch] heard it sliding across the concrete porch, pressed the doorbell, left the suitcase sitting there, left. [00:40:38] Well, that's Costello's house. Well, they—what's that big blowout they have in St. Louis they have—sort of like the Mardi Gras except it's Miss Somebody deal up there? Well, they had that thing goin' on, and the agent in charge of the FBI was there. So they called him, got the chief of police—they had this big embezzler. So he goes down there then. 'Course, had taken the serial numbers [FT addition: and set series] of every b—off all the bills. They had a big book there of serial numbers. He looked down there and said, "This is that kidnap money." Well, Shoulders was there when that statement was made and the chief of police was there, I think maybe the news—some of the news media might've been there, I don't know. But, anyway, word was out what the money was. So, lo and behold, the second suitcase showed up at the Fourth District Police Department out there. Had white paint all on it, and white paint was scratched off the window [FT addition: at the police station] where somebody put [*laughs*] ?it in the? [FT

addition: put it through the] window because the booking officer says only one case came in to start with. But—and \$303,000 was missing. But it was an empty suitcase that showed back up there. So my theory is old Costello found what it was. He had a gas burnin' furnace in his fireplace in his basement. And he put \$300,000 in that [*laughs*—that gas burnin' fireplace and burned it up. We never did find the money. Yeah.

[00:42:18] RR: And so you had—maybe had some policemen involved in this thing?

FT: Yeah. Shoulders went to the penitentiary over it. And the guy named of [Patrolman Elmer] Dolan—his helper—his runnin' mate was a kid named of Dolan—*D-O-L-A-N*. But he was just a victim of circumstances. I don't think he had anything to do with it.
[FT addition: He was following orders.]

RR: So everybody's tryin' to get a piece of that money—that embezzling money [*unclear words*].

FT: Embezzling money, see. But it turned out to be [FT addition: ransom as a result of] that kidnappin'—that blood money deal.

RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:42:42] FT: But it—we had Mafioso come in from New York, 'cause we were puttin' the heat on them too ?all over this country?. But they came down with people, volunteerin', trying

to help us find the damn money. Because [*laughs*] . . .

RR: He didn't want that bum rap, huh?

FT: No, he didn't want that [*laughs*] [*unclear words*].

RR: What became of the kidnappers? How do you spell Heady?

FT: *H-E-A-D-Y*.

RR: Okay. And the guy?

FT: Carl—*C-A-R-L*. Middle name Austin. Last name Hall—
H-A-double L.

RR: What became of those two?

FT: They put 'em in the gas chamber over there at Jeff [Jefferson] City [Missouri]. And at the same time. And a man was tellin' me old Heady said—last thing that she said was—"Carl, is my dress down?" [*Unclear word*]

RR: "Is my dress down?"

FT: ?They? put the blindfold on, and she asked Carl is her dress down. [*Laughs*]

RR: Well.

[00:43:39] FT: ?It was? one of the most brutal killings ever was, so old Hall confessed to me about the killin' finally. And talked to ?him about? confession deal. And he tried to choke little old seven-year-old boy. Boy was seven years old. Tried to choke him. And the kid fought him, and he couldn't hold his hand on

him enough to choke him. He finally hit him in the mouth and knocked—caved these front teeth in. Knocked him out and was able to choke him down, then took him back to the house, then put him in a car, covered him up, stopped over—in north Kansas City, at a bar. And old Heady told me tha—she tell her story, too—said she spit on a tissue and wiped the blood of old Carl's face where that boy—he hit him in the mouth.

[00:44:34] RR: Were you [FT addition: in] on the arrest of these two?

FT: No, they already had 'em arrested in . . .

RR: But you were interrogating 'em af . . .

FT: I was interrogating 'em afterwards, yeah.

RR: Did you have—were you in on the investigation, surveillance, or anything like that, tryin' to find 'em?

FT: Yeah. No. No. 'Cause they came to Kansas City, the thing was all over in Kansas City area. But then they came—they were workin' it over there, and we didn't know anything about it till they showed up in St. Louis over there, see. There was a station wag—?they drove? that station wagon to St. Louis.

RR: So got in on it after . . .

FT: I get in on there after they drove to St. Louis.

RR: And then after they were taken into custody?

FT: Yeah.

RR: Who—how'd they find out—how'd the police find out—well, I guess they thought they were embezzlers, but then they already had him in custody, and the woman, I guess, she'd been left behind at the [*unclear word*].

[00:45:35] FT: Yeah, she was down at that flophouse down on Broadway. [*Unclear words*] went and got her out of that flophouse.

RR: So you interrogated these people. That must've been a grim . . .

FT: It took about, oh, three or four days, I guess, to—and old Heady, boy, she's a foul-mouthed woman you ever talked to [*laughs*]. ?She is? . . .

RR: And she wanted to know if her dress was down before she died.

FT: Yeah.

RR: Mmm. Mmm. Yeah, that was all over the papers in Columbia when I was a student there.

FT: So then I stayed there a while workin' bank robberies. Bank robberies started comin' back in style, so another guy and I was the bank robbery squad in St. Louis. We worked all the bank robberies. [*Electric fan oscillates*] And that went on for quite awhile and . . .

RR: It's about to come to the end of a side.

FT: . . . and then the . . .

[Editor's Note: End of Tape 1, Side A on original media]

[00:46:30] RR: Roy Moore, who ended up in Mississippi runnin' the
FBI down there. But you worked with him in Pittsburgh ?you
say??

FT: Yeah, I worked with him in Pittsburgh, and that was the first
office—Roy was a senior resident agent in Eerie, Pennsylvania.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: And he's also a firearms instructor.

RR: Mh-hmm

FT: And then he went from there to DC, and ?they made him
became? agent in charge. Fact, he was agent in charge here in
Little Rock when I transferred down to Little Rock in [19]65.

RR: Really? Yeah.

FT: And then he transferred over to Jackson [Mississippi] when they
reopened the Jackson Division. And about that same time, they
transferred—didn't transfer, they sent me on a special
assignment—I spent three months in Philadelphia, Mississippi
over there ?when they? had those three people buried in that
dam over there.

RR: All right. Go ahead and tell me about that. That's a special
interest of mine, as you might imagine. And—I was—I didn't

cover it for *The [New York] Times*—that was before I went to work for the paper, but it was still a live case ?and?—tell me how you got involved in that.

[00:47:37] FT: Well, I was in Hot Springs at the time workin' up there—before I got transferred to Little Rock, stayed there two or three days—Roy sent me over to Hot Springs. And then—said take enough clothes to be gone for two weeks, that was the day school was out. So I left and went, Meridian [Mississippi], reported in. And got back to Hot Springs the day school started. [Laughs] So that ?two weeks lasted?—lasted the whole summer.

RR: Yeah. Yeah.

FT: Well, I was over there in that Philadelphia deal, and I was assigned a liaison with the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol. [Editor's Note: Mississippi Highway Patrol] And so I coordinated a search for things out in the field. And we checked everything out over there where those people could possibly be. In fact, the guy who was the agent over there at that time in Meridian and I were in new agents' class together, so we knew each other when we first got out in the business. And we looked everything we [laughs]—the Navy had a airbase out there at Meridian, and they flew this high altitude photography—infrared photography

all over the country. And they could take a picture you—?some of? the barbs on a barbed wire fence, you know, just tell 'em what day you wanna [want to] picture. [00:49:10] So we told 'em we needed some photographs right there, and they said—the guy went out there, "Yeah," and said, "Well, how big?" Said, "Eight by ten." So he said—so they called and said the pictures are ready. So he went out there to get the damn pictures and the—and he called back and said, "I need a truck." Said, "What's a matter?" Said, "These photographs are eight feet by ten feet." [*Laughter*]

RR: Boy. Were you able to—were the pictures helpful in locatin' the dam?

[00:49:39] FT: Well, the pictures were helpful, but, see, when we couldn't—we had crews over there, Navy boys, and they just [*unclear word*] drug all the ponds, rivers, checked everything out and everything that showed any fresh diggin' everything. Highway construction, checked all that out. So this dam's the last thing to check over there. But—and we got a picture of that dam, and it showed it had just had the core dug, and they'd just started puttin' dirt on top of it. At first we thought, well, that ?won't take too much? long, you know, and of course, besides that was about—from where John Proctor and I found the car

abandoned in the woods and processed it. And the car had been completely burned inside, so we figured the people had burned up and they took the ashes and them [FT addition: remains] out and [*unclear words*] figured they had them scattered around. Well, we couldn't find anything along that deal, so then we got—found out this dam [*electric fan oscillates*—this dam was being built ?for? this pond. So we got it figured out, and we got some sucker rods with an auger on top of 'em [FT Edit: made a drill to gid in dam] . . .

RR: Put a what?

FT: Auger. Auger on it, you know.

RR: Yeah.

FT: You screw it in? And—some words I don't pronounce very well so . . . [*Laughs*]

RR: No, I—sucker rod. Not many people know what a sucker rod is.

FT: Well, a sucker rod's a little old round rod that they run down these oil wells round here to push—pump back up with 'em, you know.

RR: Yeah. Yeah.

FT: And so I twisted the thing around and 'bout where we thought they were and pulled it out, and it was obviously human—a rotten human body smells different than anything else. I mean,

it could be a raccoon or anything else. But a human—a person's—a human being's body just smells different.

RR: So you were runnin' that sucker rod?

[00:51:12] FT: Yeah. Had ?to do it? sideways—in [*unclear word*] sideways [*unclear words*]. So then we went to Jackson, Mississippi and hired a guy with a construction crew over there, and ?he was gonna? bring over of these big cranes over there to dig it. And, of course, the thing had been—the dam had been, I believe it'd ?been built then? for a long time. So we had to put agents down in the hole, so then they started diggin' and started diggin', and about noon they had a shoe heel showed up. So, anyway, they get down there ?then? with garden tools and screens and shake the dirt come out and everything. So about three o'clock, we got down to the three bodies laying there. Two white people layin' face down with their face to the west, and the black guy was on the right of 'em. He was laying face up with his head to the south—fa—head to the east with his face turned to the south. That was—that's a Ku Klux Klan ritual burial situation.

RR: Ah, I didn't know that. That was—there was symbolism in the way they buried people?

FT: Yeah.

RR: Huh.

[00:53:07] FT: And one guy had his—had—the first one we got to had a big old hole underneath his arm here. We had a new agent down there from Chicago. He hadn't been around very much of anything. He said [FT addition: I said] somethin' about, "Well, this old boy's been shot!" Said, "He needs some help!" I said, "Go get some help!" And he went up out of that thing ?that hole? got up top and said, "That old man down there in that hole's crazy. He told me to come up here and get some help." Said, "Obviously the guy's dead!" So just—you know, gotta [got to] have a little fun [*unclear words*] go crazy.

[*Laughter*] So we got 'em out and took 'em over to Jackson. And the autopsy and everything. But—and this one guy had—the white men had their hands out in front of them, and they had dirt in their hands. And so they wasn't completely dead when they put 'em in there. [*RR breathes out deeply*] And what happened, I don't know if anybody knows this or not, if it's ever been publicized, but very few people know. What happened ?was the? old deputy sheriff let 'em out, and they met 'em ?at that?—outside of Philadelphia there and stopped 'em. Cecil Price was the deputy sheriff's man. And old Cecil called out there, and they come out there, and they stopped 'em. One guy, I can't

think of his name, from down south of Meridian down there, and he ran a music machine business, you know, jukeboxes and that kind of stuff. Well, the front bumper of the car had tricolored paint on it, had white, green, white, indicated the car that stopped 'em was three tones. So we took the bumper off, put it on an airplane, and sent it to Washington. It came back and told us what kind of car it was off of, what make. This old boy had one. We went down and looked at his car. Sure enough there the crease was where they'd stopped the car.

[00:55:20] RR: And they had come together—the cars had come together . . .

FT: Yeah, when he pulled his station wagon in front, the other station wagon, I mean it cracked the front of the [FT addition: Chrysler, three-toned] station wagon, just kind of scraped it [*unclear words*]. So we tied him in that way. And old Price—well, he help put 'em in there, ?he ended up? went to the penitentiary. He helped put 'em in there. He came out there that night after we got 'em dug out and everything. And he—'course, had me up there on an old barbed wire fence with an old cattle gap just to let law enforcement officers in only. When he came in there, the captain, I couldn't tell him not go into the site. We had to let him go in—on in the deal [FT Edit: to the

scene]. So he went in. And he got down in the ground and helped dig, helped get 'em out of the ground ?down there? . . .

RR: Price helped dig?

FT: Yeah. What little diggin' was left, and he helped get 'em out of the ground, yeah. Boy, he was somethin' else.

RR: I saw him a time or two. Yeah. Yeah, he was. He eventually got religion, I think, and repented, and I don't know.

FT: Oh, all of 'em do.

RR: But he did go to the penitentiary.

[00:56:28] FT: This old boy they finally convicted Cecil Kellum of murder over there that—see, people got mad at us about 'cause we didn't prosecute anybody on that thing. We could prosecute for violatin' their civil rights. That's the only thing we can prosecute [FT addition: had as a federal violation].

RR: Yeah, that's not known very well. That there's a ten-year maximum limit on what you can sentence somebody for violatin' civil rights. But you have no authority for murder. That's a state thing.

FT: Yeah. All we could try 'em for was for civil rights. And in fact we still today get, you know, get blasted about it. I mean, we, the FBI, [*unclear words*]. But, you know, they say that [J. Edgar] Hoover'd held the investigation back because of Martin Luther

King [Jr.] [*unclear word*] and everything. And Martin Luther King made a statement that all the agents 'down there' in the south were prejudiced 'and everything?'. Well, I'm gonna tell you what, Roy. They're some of the hardest workin' agents now. We put in twelve or sixteen hours a day tryin' to solve a thing. We did not approve of what they did. We don't—we believe in people bein' treated right. And I've never known an FBI agent to mistreat anybody on purpose. I've seen 'em help people; I've seen 'em give people money out of their own pocket that needed it. It just—it makes me mad. But I just hafta just grin and bear it, you know.

[00:57:50] RR: Well, the FBI did heroic work in that Mississippi case. I knew that. I was good friends with some newspaper men over there who were friends with Roy Moore and some of the agents there in Jackson. They knew what you all were doing. [*Electric fan oscillates*]

FT: [*Unclear words*] You know, Mr. Hoover wouldn't let us have air conditioning in our cars. He said, "Well, the agents will just drive around and spend all their time in a car with air conditionin'." 'Course, he didn't—he shoulda realized that we had enough sense; we'd get in a building or police department 'with? air conditionin'. [*Laughs*] We'd get in 'there? and get cool. But

we was ridin' around there with the windows rolled down in our cars, and they'd try to throw firecrackers in the windows of cars, see. And I'd stop—I was driving to a meeting one time, and I stopped the car. You couldn't have caught 'em with a [*laughs*] with a greyhound. [*Unclear words*] scattered ever which way, just a bunch of bluster and bluff.

RR: And you and Proctor found the car then. I didn't realize that.

FT: Yeah. Yeah, we found the car, ?Proctor and? . . .

RR: How'd you find it?

FT: Old Indian out there close to the Indian Reservation. And the Indian and John and I were riding down the road one day . . .

RR: That's the Choctaw Reservation [Mississippi Band of the Choctaw Indians]?

FT: Yeah. And ?we were? near the reservation, and the Indian stopped there and told us that the car was down there where it was and pulled off the road in these bushes. You couldn't see it. It wasn't twenty feet off the road ?but? you couldn't see it.

RR: So it was an old Indian who told you?

FT: An old Indian. I don't know who [FT Edit: what] his name was. I imagine John's dead now—but I imagine he did.

RR: Did the old guy stop you all or . . .

FT: Yeah, he flagged us down.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Flagged us down.

RR: That was a big break in the case, as I remember, when they found the car.

FT: Yeah, yeah.

[00:58:27] RR: Up to then, some of the Mississippi authorities had tried to pretend that these guys were just hiding out somewhere. [Michael] Schwerner, [Andrew] Goodman, and [James] Chaney, and they were just hiding out and, you know, there was nothing to this and that pretty well blew them out of the water.

FT: Of course, the Mississippi authorities, they resented us being down there too, you know. I mean, they didn't—they liked that Mississippi justice over there, they didn't like those people being in there. But we stayed our route, and I think 'fore—before it was over with they started, you know, kinda bein' ?comin' around? more friendly.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Had this one guy that went down in this *Mississippi Burning*—I went to see that movie.

RR: I's gonna ask you about that. What'd you think about that?

[01:00:12] FT: I went to see that thing because to get mad, really.

'Cause I figured, well, they're really, you know, lambaste the bureau on that thing. And other than the stuff in there that weren't true—that wasn't anything to do with the 'mettle' of the case, just to, you know, make it more interestin' to the public, like a agent tryin' to put the make on the jailer's wife over there in Philadelphia, you know. Anybody that's seen that old gal, that known the guy who was—'Jim Reich?' 'who was handler?' [FT Edit: who handled the investigation] over there. No, Jim [laughs]—Jim wouldn't be interested in somethin' like that. [Laughter] But it was authentic and the thing that I [coughs]— 'scuse me—thi—got a durn cold I can't get rid of but . . .

RR: All right.

[01:01:03] FT: But I was standin' on the square down there [FT addition: in Philadelphia], and they brought this little boy—they threatened to lynch him before down there. 'And from down? in Pascagoula got him. But . . .

RR: Who brought him down?

FT: Agents went down to Pascagoula and got this little black guy that they tried to threaten to lynch him but he left the country. Went to Chicago. So we got him to come to Chicago and meet us down in 'Pascagoula?', two agents went down and got him. They wanted to drive by the courthouse square down in

Philadelphia, which is full of people every day, just people everywhere. All of 'em just either participants or associates or somethin', these people involved. So I was instructed that day to get over there on the courthouse square and see if I could pick up anything anybody said, just kind of intermingle. 'Course, it was obvious who I was; everybody over there knew I wasn't a native. Had on a suit coat and a tie [*laughs*] ?and everything?. Anyway, this car came by and had a Tide [Laundry Detergent] box in the back of it. And this kid was in that Tide box, it had some holes cut in it. So he thought he saw somebody on the—over there on the courthouse square, so he turned that box [*laughs*] so he could see better. One old boy standin' on the grounds there, said "Lookie there, the FBI got a box in there that turn around [*laughs*]*—turn around on command.*" [*Laughter*]

[01:02:34] RR: Were you in Philadelphia, now this would've been much later. [Pause] When James Meredith got shot, and Martin Luther King and some others came down, and King peeled off and led a march over in Philadelphia one day, and there was a lot of violence. I don't guess you'd had any reason to be in Philadelphia.

FT: That was beforehand, I think.

RR: That was in [19]68.

FT: Oh, that was ?after??

RR: Yeah, it was . . .

FT: No, I wasn't in on that.

RR: I was there that day, and it was a scary—that's a scary little town.

[01:03:08] FT: I was there that day that Martin Luther came over to the Philadelphia, went down to the youth center. And they didn't want Martin Luther to know that we's with him, that we's lookin' after him, you know, without [*unclear word*] tryin' to stay out of sight. Well, he came into Meridian there, and they got some ?guy?—I don't know whether they rented a car or what, anyhow, it was a Chrysler. Well, had agents in front of him—'scuse me—agents in the car in front of him and one behind him. So the car behind him was tellin' the car in front where they were and how fast they's goin' and everything. And old boy said, "Well, I got this Ford wide open." Said, "Well, he doin' eighty mile an hour," he said "this thing won't do but seventy-five." [*RR laughs*] After awhile, they came around the curve, and there's piney woods over there and said, "Well, ?they can see us—they seen us?." So they slowed down and they came into town like a funeral procession. Well, I was over there in Philadelphia at that time I could hear it on the radio. [*Laughs*] So they's comin' back in to

Meridian that afternoon, and they made up their mind they wasn't gonna catch 'em then. And they took off and they did—that old Chrysler caught up with 'em [*unclear word*] back in to Meridian. I just died laughin' while they were talkin' back and forth.

[01:04:38] RR: What—did King know he was bein' protected by the FBI?

FT: He did then when he saw those cars up there [*unclear word*].
[*Laughs*]

RR: But he hadn't been told anything? He thought he's [*unclear word*]. [*Laughs*]

FT: No, he didn't know [*unclear words*].

RR: No tellin' what he thought.

FT: Yeah.

[01:04:52] RR: Eh! Those were some times. [Pause] Did you end up testifying in that Schwerner, Goodman, Chaney case?

FT: No. They called me and—?well?, two years, I guess before they ever had that trial over there. And wanted to know if I would, and I said, "Sure I will." Of course they can't subpoena, you know. State can't subpoena, have to go over there on your own dime, pay for it [FT addition: Pay your own expenses] . . .

RR: This was many years later, when this . . .

FT: Oh, yeah, about a couple of years ago when they had the trial.

RR: When they finally had the . . .

[01:05:24] FT: And so I told 'em I would. And they called back another time or two, and then it wound up that what they wanted me to testify to they could verify with documents. So I didn't have to go out there. I's kinda disappointed. I really wanted to go over there to that thing.

RR: It's a great piece of history that finally played out.

FT: Yeah.

RR: Took a while, but . . .

FT: Well, you know, FBI testimony—evidence is what led to that conviction on that preacher, what's his name . . .

RR: Yeah. Yep.

FT: . . . ?claimed he was? . . .

RR: *K—K—*starts with a *K*, yeah. Yeah, this here.

FT: . . . claimed he couldn't drive, couldn't do this, got out on that deal over there and drive around, and finally they put him back in the penitentiary over there.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Killen.

RR: Killen.

FT: Killen

RR: Yeah, the Reverend [Edgar Ray] Killen.

[01:06:17] FT: Reverend Killen. His name was frequently in the situation over there. When they would have a conference, old Preacher Killen's name would come up. Killen was Price's preacher. And he's the one that called in and told 'em to beat the hell out of those people out there ?that night? when old Price went out there and let 'em outta [out of] jail. Right then, I started to tell you while ago, I never finished it, but the shooting was accidental. They got 'em outta the car up there, one old boy hauled off—hit one—that had his pistol in his hand, hit him up side the head with a pistol, pistol went off, shot another one in the arm over here. So they decided, well, he's shot, so we got get—gotta get rid of the rest of 'em, too, then so that's [unclear word].

RR: Which one of 'em got shot?

FT: One of 'em got shot accidentally. And then they . . .

RR: Would it've been Schwerner or Goodman or who?

[01:07:02] FT: Oh. [Pause] I'm not positive. It's—it was one of the white boys, and it seems like it was Schwerner.

RR: Oh. Did they end up shootin' all three of 'em?

FT: Yeah.

RR: But they must've been still sort of alive when they put 'em in the

dam.

FT: I know one of 'em was because he had his hands full of soil—
dirt.

RR: Yeah, yeah. That was while you were assigned to the Little Rock
office?

FT: Yeah, the Little Rock office.

RR: And that would've been sixty- . . .

FT: Four.

RR: . . . four. Yeah.

FT: Roy Moore was an agent in charge of the Little Rock office. Then
they reopened the—up until that time Memphis covered half of
Mississippi, and New Orleans covered the other lower half. They
sent Roy Moore over there then, and he started settin' up a new
office there in Jackson then at the same time.

[01:07:59] RR: Did you do any more work havin' to do with the
Klan?

FT: Yeah. After I got back to Hot Springs, people down in south
Arkansas and north Louisiana were shootin' through people's
houses. Blacks shootin' through whites' houses; whites shootin'
through blacks' houses. And they needed somebody to come to
south Arkansas. And wasn't anybody wanted to come. I said,
"Hell, I'll go down there." So I came down here; and 95 percent

of the police departments, elected officials, and everything, they were on the side of the Klan. And a lot of 'em were Klan or Klan sympathizers. And I's kinda the lone ranger round here for awhile [*laughs*] when I got into the situation. And a policeman asked me one time, said, "What'd you do if a Klan burned a cross in your driveway?" Kinda got a little hot around the collar. "I sleep in that front bedroom up there." Said, "I got a wife and three children out there in that house." I said, "Klan or anybody else wanna mess with my family," I said, "I guess the doctor [Frank Thomas Edit: Dr. Pinson, the county coroner] and the chief detective get through with their investigation. I'll just go out there with a hose and wash the ashes and blood out of the damn driveway and go on about my business."

RR: Yeah. Yeah.

FT: And that's the last I heard about that fiddlin' around my house, about anything like that.

RR: That's when you bought this house, was it?

FT: Yeah.

RR: In sixty-. . .

FT: Sixty-five.

RR: . . . five. Yeah. And you were workin' south Arkansas and north Louisiana?

[01:09:36] FT: Well, with the agents in north Louisiana but did some work down in south Louisiana. This Klan group or sorta—went all the way—had south Arkansas—any Klan—well, there was one guy in Pine Bluff over there by the name of John Moore, and John worked—he worked the southeast Arkansas Klan, and I worked everything from Ashley County over to [FT Edit: to Texarkana, Arkansas] .

RR: Where was the Klan the strongest in Arkansas?

FT: Probably El Dorado. [FT addition: El Dorado had the most members]

RR: I would've guessed Forrest City. I didn't —I wouldn't . . .

FT: Well, might've been for—I did some work up in Forrest City, too. Forrest City, they were more active in the destructive deals up around Forrest City than they were down here because—what I do, see, the Klan was a financial deal, what it was. They didn't want the black people gettin' their jobs, you know, and so it was financial situation as far as these old boys were concerned. So I said, "Well, they got their sheets to hide under, so if I ?let 'em? expose 'em, they'll know who—I'll know who they are, and other people'll know who they are, and they'll quit it." So I had two informants—cost some money, I bought some membership lists. [Doorbell rings] And I go and interview every one of 'em.

RR: Mh-hmm.

[01:11:08] FT: And let 'em know that I knew they's in the Klan.

Fact, I'd tell what gro—what meeting you'd been to. I said, "Now I want you to understand there's a statute on the books that if you are in a meeting, and they agree to burn up—burn down someone's house—called [Federal Criminal] Conspiracy Statute—burn down someone's house, if someone was in that house and lose their life, in the meantime you say that you didn't want to participate in it, according to that statute, you're as equally guilty as they are even though you backed out of it 'cause you was there when the agreement's made under— between two or more persons. So then they wouldn't show up anymore. So I just—it was a long, drawn-out process but interviewin' 'em but most of 'em fall by the wayside.

RR: That would be effective, I think.

FT: Yeah. ?That's just 'cause, you see?, they know if I know, they don't know who else knows.

RR: Yeah. Yeah.

FT: And they know I know 'cause I's givin' 'em some specific thing that they had done that I knew about.

[01:12:17] RR: How many did they have [*electric fan oscillates*] in the El Dorado area?

FT: Numberwise?

RR: Yeah

FT: I don't have any idea, Roy, I didn't know.

RR: Twenty, fifty . . .

FT: Oh, a hundred and fifty to two hundred people probably.

RR: Oh, yeah. A pretty good size. They can cause some mischief.

FT: Yeah.

RR: When did they—just when did they get to be no longer a viable organization?

FT: Well, I guess when I knocked the props out from under 'em. I went out here one time—I got information that they were having a meeting out here on [Arkansas Highway] 335 at a guy's house named Dwight Farrish.

RR: Farrish?

[01:12:57] FT: *F-A-R-R-I-S-H*—Dwight Farrish. Dwight was in the exterminating business. He'd go around these black houses and exterminate different insects and whatever. But then he'd go around and harass them at night. So I hear that he's gonna—had a meeting at his house that night. And gonna do somethin' to the high school to burn it, set it on fire, burn part of it, make it look like the blacks had done it. So I got ahold of A. Pieroni at that time, who's the lieutenant of the [Arkansas] State Police

here.

RR: A. who?

FT: A. Pieroni—*P-I-E-R-O-N-I*.

RR: Pieroni, okay.

FT: *P-I-E-R-O-N-I*.

RR: Okay.

[01:13:54] FT: A. is the name he went by—his name was August.

And a guys by the name of Watson, who was a [Arkansas state] trooper. We got in a marked patrol car out on [Arkansas Highway] 335, sittin' in the driveway gettin' [FT addition: writing] these license numbers down. Waylay 'em when they came over to the high school to start the ?other stuff?. Well, Pieroni's in the backseat and looked up and here come a guy. We still had half the car on 335 right-of-way and the other half, I guess, on Farrish's property. Here comes a guy walkin' up the—toward us. So I got out over here, and he had a pistol in his hand. I laid my pistol down across the hood of the car, and I call—I knew him—I called him by his name. I said, "Just hold that by the handle very gingerly and go back and give it to the lieutenant in the backseat of the car." So he did. And here comes a guy out there on some crutches. He'd been in a fight before that and got his leg broke, somethin' or the other. He

was on crutches. He tried to smart off. I said, "You better get back in the house, or I'm gonna kick those crutches out from under you and make you go back on that sore foot." So he went back in the house, and after awhile here comes twenty-five, thirty of 'em out there. And old Farrish said, "You trespassin' on my land." I said, "No. This sign, this little concrete thing right here's the right-of-way. That means"—I am not on your property over here. ?Then he said?, "I own all the way to the center of the road." I said, "Well, maybe I better tell the [Arkansas State] Highway [and Transportation] Department, so they can quit maintainin' that out there. If you own, you oughta [ought to] be able to take care of it." [RR laughs] He may have said somethin' smart, and I said, "I'll tell you what to do if you step on this side of that ROW [right-of-way signpost], I'll show you how the cow ate the cabbage." I said, "I'll beat the hell outta you right here in front of all your boys." He wouldn't—he didn't do it. [01:15:57] So then the next thing I knew, they called me on Saturday morning said, "You be in court, ten o'clock on Monday mornin'." I said, "Is that on so-and-so's case? That boy that ?got arrested with? that pistol" Said, "No, it's on your case." [Laughs] I said, "On my case?" Said, "We got a warrant for you for trespassin' and disturbin' the peace."

So Judge Harris—the US district judge at that time—Oren Harris—he heard about it. He got mad, and he ?was? upset with it, got ahold of the sheriff and the chief of police and told 'em he said he's tired of me doin' all this work down here. Said he's been knowin' about it, and he wanted them to give me some assistance. So they transferred [*unclear word*] . . .

[01:16:45] RR: The judge was upset that they were pickin' on you at that time?

FT: Yeah, that I was fightin'—I was tryin' to fight the Ku Klux Kan battle by myself, nobody'd give me any . . .

RR: Yeah, you're not gettin' any help.

FT: . . . help, yeah. So then they transferred to his court and out of state court. So we got ready to go, and old Robert Shelton, the imperial wizard, had just gotten out of the penitentiary over in Texas.

RR: I knew him.

FT: So I went up there to the courtroom, and there's sittin' old Robert up there. So I got ahold of a US Marshall Glen Thompson . . .

RR: Grand wizard or. . . .

[01:17:24] FT: ?Whatever?. Yeah. Grand wizard or whatever it was. Anyway. I said I know what let's do. Let's have some fun.

I said, "Shelton come over here to be a spectator; let's make a witness out of him." Said, "What're you gonna do?" I said, "Subpoena him and all his records of all the names of the Ku Klux Klan members in north Arkansas and south Arkansas and all of Louisiana. So they did. So then they had a meeting, and they decided to dismiss the charges against me [*RR laughs*] with prejudice. So they dismissed the charges.

RR: The Klan had the meeting?

FT: Yeah. So naturally it all kind of started fallin' by the wayside then.

RR: Yeah. Yeah. So that was kind of a—the beginning of the end with the Klan.

FT: Yeah. Yeah.

RR: When would that have been—like what year? Late [19]60s?

[01:18:18] FT: I'd say probably [19]66, [19]67, somewhere in there.

RR: Yeah. Yeah. God, that's—did you ever get involved in any of the north Louisiana Klan cases down there?

FT: [Pause] Well, I have some, but I don't know what you're referring to.

RR: I have in mind a particular—Jonesboro, Louisiana. You remember the Deacons for Defense and Justice?

FT: Mh-hmm.

RR: And they came along in response to some Klan activities around Jonesboro and other places. The Klan was harassing—they'd drive through black neighborhoods, and I forget just how much violence there was back and forth, but there was some shootin'—that kind of thing. I was wonderin' if you ever had any ?involvement? . . .

[01:19:15] FT: No, I never was involved in any of that other than I had an informant ?that I would? send down there to him 'cause he was—he didn't have any more use for 'em than I did, and he was one of 'em. And he'd go down there, and he'd get information from 'em. That's all. I never had any physical contact with any of the members down there.

RR: Well, the informants were really important, weren't they?

FT: Oh, yeah, ?they were? really important. And you know, my informants anyway, I paid mine on a COD basis. And I's fortunate enough, had two informants was informin' on the other—I mean, these two'd go to a meeting [*laughter*]*—two of 'em would go to a meeting. Then one of 'em would come back and tell me what happened, and the other one tell me back—come back what happened. See, wa—I know I'm gettin' the truth. ?Where? you got one man in there, you never know*

whether he's just gettin' after the money or what.

RR: Yeah. Did you ever work in Alabama? Any of those Selma cases?

FT: No. No. Never worked on those.

RR: I's thinkin'—that old boy who's—who was the informant in Birmingham who was in the car when they killed Viola [Fauver Greg] Liuzzo. I was coverin' a lot—the aftermath of the trials. In fact, I was sitting in a cafe in Montgomery the night she got shot. And then the years afterward—and that went a long ways towards breaking the Klan over in Alabama. And it was an informant who made it all possible.

[01:21:03] FT: You know, I injured my finger—had a run-in with a table saw ?here? in my shop one time, went to the emergency room and had—we have a black orthopedic here—that's a black doctor—and he worked on my finger. Well, ?did a little seem? had to have a shot in the knee or whatever. I walked into his waiting room one time, there must've been ten people in there, including me, and seven out of those ten were either the wives or themselves members of the Ku Klux Klan when I came here.

RR: Are you kiddin' me? [*Laughter*]

FT: I couldn't sit there—I was kinda grinnin' to myself, you know.

"Now I wish you'd lookie here now."

RR: Any of them recognize you?

FT: Oh, yeah, they recognize me, see. You know, we spoke, you know, we didn't spoke a thing about ?none of that?. Here y'all were, boy, just antiblack—?anything? to do with 'em, now comin' in here and seein' one that's a medical doctor.

RR: You'd think they'd have the courage of their convictions, wouldn't you, and stay away? [*Laughs*] Oh, Lordy. [01:22:15] Were there any other Klan cases that stand out in your mind?

FT: No, tha—'course, I—you talkin' 'bout Forrest City while ago. And after I got through this mess down here, they send me up to Forrest City on that deal up there. I stayed up there for [pause] almost all summer one summer on that thing up there, interviewin' them and kinda puttin' them through their paces up there, but . . .

RR: Refresh my memory on what brought that to a head in Forrest city.

FT: Interviewin'. Interviewin' these people—interviewin' these people. Let 'em know who, you know who they are [*unclear word*].

RR: I mean, there hadn't been a particular crime or anything?

FT: No. Huh-uh. Wasn't any particular thing that ?was goin' about?.

RR: I remember goin' to a Klan rally up there one time where Robert

Shelton came over and spoke. And they had a pretty good turnout.

[01:23:09] FT: 'Course, on paper it looks like there were a lot more members of the Ku Klux Klan here than there were because at one time, I think Shelton was here, and there's an old drive-in theater on Highway 67 South [Editor's Note: US Route Highway 167 South] down here, and they had a big rally, big meeting out there. Well, the FBI—this was before I came down here—sent people [FT Edits: agents] 'round there takin' license numbers. A lot of people are just wantin'—wonderin' what's goin' on. They're not interested in anything. They wanted to go out there and see what's goin'—who's out there. And all those people and all, you know, decent people, they wasn't interested in the—you know, they wasn't gonna interfere with the black population, wasn't gonna interfere with anything. They were just out there. But of course they got their name on the list. But they got their names off the list, too, but.

[01:23:56] RR: Am I understandin' you right, that one of the tactics that you all found effective against the Klan was just lettin' them know that you knew who they were?

FT: Yeah. Remove their secrecy.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Plus the fact that they're usin' that [*laughs*] one old boy over in Monticello over there had an LP [liquified petroleum] gas company, and he was real mouthy. He was real Klan [FT Edit: he was a real fanatic]. We went over there and interviewed him, and they's the best kind—type to interview, you know. [*Laughs*] All wind and no brains, more or less. [01:24:31] But I told him, I said, "Well, ?there's a? conspiracy statute." I said, "You have a wife and four children, you know." "I do." I said "Well [FT Edit: suppose], you went to a meeting the night before last, and y'all were talkin' 'bout that [*unclear word*] Fountain Hill, and y'all were talkin' 'bout a old so-and-so out there, you're gonna go out and burn his house up." And I said, "If somebody in that house gets hurt, or if they don't get hurt, just burn their house up," I said, "that's arson." He said, "I wasn't gonna go with 'em." I said, "Well, you were there when the agreement's made—you agreed to go with 'em, didn't you?" "Well, I guess I did." I said "That's conspiracy. You're goin' to the damn penitentiary if that thing happens. You better go out there and stand guard, make sure they don't set that thing on fire out there." [*RR laughs*] ?Now after? he's talkin' 'bout conspiracy, just sayin' himself over, "Conspiracy, conspiracy, conspiracy." I don't know how many days he said that, but he said it all the time. [*Laughs*] So

that got him out of the business [FT Edit: KKK].

RR: Yeah, yeah. I can see where it would—it would be effective, they just hadn't thought it through. And, of course, they found out that the FBI's on to 'em that's give 'em . . .

FT: Yeah, know who they are, you know. And you used to dri—you'd drive by the house, you know, let 'em know you're still there, and you're still lookin' at 'em, still interested in 'em.

[01:25:50] RR: I have a small confession to make. I—when I would find myself in a mob of white people who were really worked up, and I didn't want it known that I was a newspaper reporter, especially with *The New York Times*, I would hide my notebook somewhere on myself, and I never said I was with the FBI, but I would try to give the impression that I might have been an FBI agent, and then they'd leave you alone. [*Laughs*]

FT: Yeah. Yeah.

RR: A lot of reporters would do that. You all probably ?knew it?. But one old boy, a friend of mine, reporter, they were about to turn over the phone booth he was in, a bunch of Klansmen, and he opened the door, and he was talkin' to somebody—he's dictatin' his notes. But he suddenly changed and pretended that he was talkin' to somebody in the FBI headquarters in Washington and made some reference to Mr. Hoover, and the mob just melted

away from him. They didn't wanna have anything to do with an FBI agent. [*Laughs*]

FT: Well, that's —well, we used—you know, I posed as a newspaper reporter. You know, that's nothing wrong with that.

RR: [*Unclear words*]

FT: Ain't nothin' wrong with posin' FBI agent as long as you don't try to obtain something of value.

[01:27:11] RR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And we were aware that various law enforcement people posed as newspaper reporters. Just to continue. You—how many—you were in Newark and then from there to where?

FT: Newark to St. Louis, Poplar Bluff, Missouri. [Long pause] See the FBI had offices of preference, and I listed Little Rock as my office of preference a long time ago, but we were happy in Poplar Bluff, and we were down visitin' my mother—my wife's mother down in Fayetteville one time for Thanksgivin'—got us a phone call from Little Rock [FT Edit: St. Louis]. I'd been transferred to—from St. Louis I'd been transferred to Little Rock. Well, I coulda told 'em—I thought I'd changed my ref—my preference to St. Louis. I really had. I thought I'd changed my preference. And if we did, they lost the routing sheet or whatever I sent up there to do it. But, anyway, I asked ?since

they transferred there?, I just went ahead and took it.

RR: What year would that have been? That you went to Little Rock?

FT: When I went to Poplar Bluff?

RR: No—Well . . .

FT: Or when I came to Little Rock?

RR: To Little Rock, yeah.

[01:28:40] FT: Well, see my family's over there for eighteen months, but I wasn't there that long because that—took the summer I spent over there in Mississippi, so must've been [19]63. [RR Edit: 1964]

RR: And I guess it was while you were in the Little Rock office that you ended up workin' here, movin' down here?

FT: Then Hot Springs . . .

RR: Hot Springs?

FT: And then the Klan opened up, and they needed somebody to come grab the Klan. And at that time they had an office in Camden. I told 'em—I said, "I won't go to Camden. I'll go to El Dorado." That's where the district court is. They transferred me to El Dorado and then transferred the guy from Camden about three weeks later down to El Dorado. [*Laughs*]

[01:29:17] RR: Tell me about Hot Springs. I wasn't workin' there, what sort of work did you in—get involved in there?

FT: Well, we used to interview the, you know, mob had their meeting there every year. That's when Owney Madden was still operatin' over there. 'Course, Owney—old man Kennedy ran him out over the liquor business out of chic—out of New York City up there because old Kennedy had the whiskey boats, scotch boats off the [*papers shuffling*] Manhattan Island up there, and they'd go out there outside the three mile limit and load 'em up. And Owney Madden had the yellow cab company in New York, you know that story. [*Laughs*]

RR: Well, I knew he'd been run out, told he'd be killed if he came back.

[01:30:00] FT: So they sent him—so he came to Hot Springs and married a—but he was still active, you know that's—Owney Madden's the reason that the Vapors Club [FT Edit: and the Southern Club]—those clubs with these top-notch shows, you know, when they were operatin' up there out in Hollywood and different deals, Owney Madden would get 'em down there, see. But we'd interview the group that'd come to town and . . .

RR: Did you ever interview Madden?

FT: Never interviewed Madden.

RR: He had a knack for stayin' out of the spotlight.

[01:30:32] FT: Yeah. He'd leave his house everyday over there on

Grand Avenue, and he'd leave his house, go down to the Southern Hotel—Southern Club. [*Unclear words*] all day long. He'd get in his car, and he'd go back home.

RR: Didn't he op—do his op—his work out of the Southern Club—telephones and that kind of thing?

FT: Yeah.

RR: I assume you all pretty much knew what his business was.

FT: Yeah, yeah. But—and the kids would come home up there Hot Springs, and they's talkin' 'bout, you know, so-and-so says you can do so-and-so in Hot Springs if you know so-and-so, you know. And to me, bein' in the business I was in, just was not a—Hot Springs was not a good environment for me to feel like I could raise my children in. Plus the fact that I kinda like—little work or a little extra duty or somethin' or other, and I figured that Klan would be ?fun?, somebody needed to put 'em outta business.

RR: Oh, yeah. Boy, that was some bad times . . .

FT: And so I came down here to do that.

RR: So did you all—do you remember any arrests that you all made in Hot Springs that had anything to do with the mob? Or was it more just a matter of keeping up with what they were up to?

[01:31:46] FT: We just harassed 'em. Just ask 'em what you doin'

here, you know. "We come to take the baths" and all this kind of crap. Well, then we'd know. Oh, we had devices. We knew what they were doin'. We knew what room they were meetin' in and we knew this and knew that. We had electronic devices, I'll say, that we were workin' on 'em with.

RR: I wonder if they—I guess there's no reason for Mafia people to come to Hot Springs any more, is there?

FT: No, Owney's gone, you know, they don't need a—I don't know where they have their meetings now, but they—probably Chicago [Illinois]. 'Course, a lot of 'em old boys are dead, you know, knocked off, who would come down when we were there.

RR: Yeah. Yeah. I grew up in Hot Springs. I remember . . .

FT: And I've interviewed 'em all. Just about all the big boys when I was in Hot Springs the two years I's up there, and we—Clay White and I, he—Clay was senior agent up there—and we interviewed all of 'em who'd come to town. We'd—they're just as nice, you know, ?and interestin'. I mean, you'd have a drink, you know, and ?whatever? [*laughs*], and then you'd leave, and they'd say what they told you this, what they told you that, what they told you this, and ?whatever else?. [*Laughs*] Tellin' their other buddies . . .

RR: I interviewed Clay White for a book I was doin' on [Arkansas

Governor] Orval Faubus [1955–1967] some years ago. And he was a lot of help on what was going on, mainly about the illegal gambling and the connections to the governor's of—[Editor's Note: This interview was recorded on cassette tape. The last word in the previous sentence "office" was interrupted when the automatically shut off.]

[Editor's Note: End of Tape 1, Side B on original media]

[01:33:20] RR: We're Floyd Thomas and Roy Reed.

RR: What was it you started to tell me 'bout interviewin' a lot of the Mafia figures that came to Hot Springs and—you and Clay White?

FT: Yeah. We just interview 'em and let 'em know we knew—mainly let them know we knew ?where? they're—they knew—we knew they wasn't going to tell us anything.

RR: Yeah, yeah.

FT: And—And they, you know, like I said, we had electronic devices, and they'd go back and they'd call their buddy, "Well, the ef— ?had? feds by—over. I told 'em so-and-so's," you know, use profanity, "And I told 'em this. I told 'em that," you know, and ?theys? [*laughs*—we'd go back and listen to it and laugh.

RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FT: Whoever he'd call, we'd go knock on his door then interview him,

so he knew who we was.

RR: Did—was that—did that have any effect on the mob in the same way it did on the Klan—lettin' them know that you knew?

FT: No, no. It didn't affect them. They just kept on their own operation.

RR: Yeah.

FT: 'Course, they knew that we knew they were in Hot Springs, and we knew that they—we knew that, in our own minds, they wasn't there—they ?were not? there, just for socializin' and takin' the baths.

RR: Yeah, yeah.

[01:34:41] FT: Territorywise and plan this and plannin' that and everything else. But we needed to find out what their deal was because the ones involved in it were the top-notch boys, and there wasn't no way to get at a place like that, it was either from an electronic device or most of their activities took place in cars or meetings, you know. Get out in automobiles someplace that they knew that nobody ever had access to or whatever.

RR: I was wonderin' how they got their plans made since you all were all over `em in their houses and offices and places. But—so they'd meet in cars?

FT: Yeah. ?Right?.

[01:35:26] RR: And Owney Madden just kept right on till the end, didn't he?

FT: Yeah, he sure did.

RR: What became of his money? He must've had a wad of it.

FT: Well, I don't know. I don't know what happened to—'course, he had a lot of friends up there that he kinda ?picked? from the police department. He kinda took pretty well care of 'em, you know. And he lived very modestly. He didn't . . .

RR: Married the postmaster's daughter.

FT: Married the postmaster's daughter. Yeah.

RR: Very respectable family.

FT: Had that big old house up there on Grand Avenue, you know, out there on the corner. But . . .

RR: That old [Joseph Patrick] Joe Kennedy [Sr.]—was it—j—was it Kennedy who kind of ran Madden out of the New York area?

[01:36:12] FT: Framed him on a extortion deal. 'Course, the judge was in on it, too, I guess, everything. I don't know it to be a fact, but it had to be. But his sentence was to leave New York and never come back.

RR: Yeah.

FT: No jail time.

[01:36:28] RR: Didn't—there's a movie that went into that a little

bit—a movie called *The Cotton Club*, I believe it was.

FT: Yeah, yeah. [FT Edit: Owney Madden owned the Cotton Club at the time].

RR: Owney Madden was one of the figures.

FT: Yeah.

RR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

FT: Well, old Owney was the one who st—founded that Cotton Club, you know . . .

RR: Yeah.

FT: . . . up there in Harlem.

RR: He didn't much want to leave it, as I remember. [*Laughter*]

FT: No. Well, see, old Joe couldn't sell his scotch—he could sell it, you know, ?to the dealers and everything?, but the main distributor of the alcohol was the cab company, and old Owney owned the cabs.

RR: Yes.

FT: And if Owney didn't want to deliver it, he wouldn't deliver.

[01:37:11] RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you moved down here in [19]63. And when did you retire from the FBI?

FT: The phone may ring in there at twelve o'clock at night and say, "You be in St. Louis in the morning at seven o'clock. We've got tickets for you on the airplane goin' to Chicago or St. Louis or

San Francisco somewhere—on special assignment."

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: Well, I'd go in; sometimes I'd be gone a month. Wasn't gone a whole, whole lot. And they sent me to St. Louis one time. I had been on a special assignment up in north Arkansas—an extortion case. I mean, I'd even get special assignments here at Forrest City, Fayetteville, you know, and ?not? my territory there, but the case load kept buildin' up while I was gone. Then I'd have to come back down, and we'd be three weeks behind or four weeks behind. So they sent me to St. Louis up there—whether you remember or not, when they [FT Edit: the US Attorney General] had the—set up these squads there—some Secret Service, Internal Revenue [Service], various agencies—organized a task force for them up in St. Louis. And they were working out of St. Louis, Missouri, 'cross town up there—working southern Illinois and around—different type of antiracketeering deals and dope peddlin' and all kinds of stuff. Well, they sent us up there on that thing. They sent me up there and another agent outta Hot Springs. So then we went up to St. Louis. So they sent me up there. I said, "How come I catch all these things?" "Well, the Bureau calls out and says to send you," said, "you're—you made the—you're on that special squad." I said, "You better tell the

Bureau to train somebody else." I said, "Because August the thirtieth comes, I'll be fifty years old, and I'm gettin' out." They didn't believe it. So August 30 come around, by gosh, I got out. Sent in my resignation.

RR: So you're eligible to retire at age fifty. Is that right?

FT: Age fifty. Yeah. And twenty years of service. 'Course, I had twenty-three years of service.

RR: Yeah.

FT: I kind of wish I'd stayed to twenty-five, but I didn't. I don't know what difference it would've made so.

[01:39:52] RR: I would imagine it's pretty tiring work, what, with all that travel and—pretty wearing.

FT: Well, it's pretty tiring, but at the same time, you know, it was—time passed fast. You're busy. ?If? you get on special—normal hours are eight to five, you know, but you're on a special deal, the hours were can see to can't see, more or less, you know. And . . .

RR: Oh, yeah.

FT: . . . seven days a week. On the seventh day, you know, normally there wasn't too much investigation, just a have evening—have a conference and everybody hash out what they done, and then so everybody knows what's going on.

RR: Yeah.

FT: They call 'em big special.

[01:40:35] RR: How did you relax when you were, you know, workin' hard, maybe into the night, day after day? And, you know, finally you've got to do something to relax. What did you do?

FT: Well, in St. Louis, up there it wasn't bad because Jack Buck, who's a—was an announcer up there at that time—Jack and I were old Army buddies. We met when I was playing football over there in Europe. And he transferred to St. Louis with KMOX at about the same I did and announced ball games. I called Jack, and he'd go out there to the ballpark, sit up there, and we'd have dinner maybe before the ballpark and maybe after.

[FT Edit: Sometimes movies, etc.]

RR: Cardinals? St. Louis Cardinals [professional baseball team]?

FT: Yeah.

RR: Yeah.

FT: And he'd invite me up to the press box—up there to the press box.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Free beer and free sandwiches up there. So it wasn't bad [laughs] when you had time to go. In fact, old Jack died a couple of years ago. Frank and I—he'd take bunch up on

Stephens—one of Stephens's planes. Frank dragged me along with him, so I could introduce 'em to Buck while we were up there. [*Laughs*]

RR: Yeah, yeah.

FT: So I got a little bit of good out of that Stephens aircraft.

RR: Yeah.

[01:41:47] FT: It's a . . .

RR: Did you go on doin' any kind of sports back in—you know, while you were working for the agency?

FT: Yeah, we had a [*clears throat*—a softball team in St. Louis, and also played in the federal league, and also in Newark, I played in the federal league. When I's a . . .

RR: In where? In n—did you say Newark?

FT: St. Louis and Newark.

RR: And Newark.

FT: They had a federal league.

RR: Yeah.

[01:42:16] FT: But I was drafted by the Green Bay Packers in the Americ—National Football League and also for the San Francisco 49ers when I got out of college. But, hell, they wasn't paying any money. I could make more money selling peanuts than I could playing pro football.

RR: Boy, that's changed, hasn't it?

FT: Oh, yeah. Had the—I talked with Muscles Campbell ?right just? before old Muscles died. He had his knees all messed up. That professional football deal didn't help him. He had to pay his own medical expenses gettin' his old knees all worked on and everything.

RR: Boy.

FT: I think old Muscles made about \$1,500 or \$1,600 a month pension off that five, six years he played up there and all beat up, you know, and everything.

RR: Yeah.

FT: 'Course, also out of high school the St. Louis Cardinals—I's a pretty good athlete, I guess—the St. Louis Cardinals invited me to spring training with them.

RR: Really?

FT: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

RR: Had you been playing baseball?

FT: No, I's playing sandlot baseball.

RR: But not in college?

FT: Huh-uh. No, this was out of high school.

[01:43:17] RR: Yeah. Yeah. [*Laughs*] Were you able to go—you've played softball down through the years. Any other sports? Golf?

Bowling?

FT: Yeah, I played golf till I had a hunting accident. Showin' my kids how to give 'em a safety lecture on how to string a hunting bow. That damn thing get away from me, hit my eye and knocked my ?whole? eye out. [*Laughs*]

RR: Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

FT: That messed up the driving as far as a golf ball is concerned.
[*Laughs*]

RR: Were you a pretty good golfer? My guess is you were.

FT: Well, semiscratch, I guess you might say. [FT Edit: I played the sand green mostly; probably around 10–12 over par.]

RR: Well, you're talking to an eighteen handicapper, so I'm impressed. [*Laughs*] Mmm. Did you ever play any 'round here after you moved here?

FT: No. I gave Frank my golf clubs.

RR: I'm gonna call Frank. This spring the [University of Arkansas, Fayetteville] journalism department [Walter J. Lemke Department of Journalism] puts on a golf tournament every April, and they try to get a lot of alumni to come and play in it. I'm going to make sure they call Frank. Is he still playing? Do you know?

FT: Yeah, he still plays all the time. Yeah.

RR: I'm gonna see if we can get him up there.

[01:44:40] FT: He plays out at Pleasant Valley [Country Club], I think, out there. He's part of that Pleasant Valley group. Then he was really active in Jack Stephens's formation of Tee One [Editor's Note: The name of Jack Stephens's organization is "The First Tee."] up there. Frank was kinda headin' that thing up till they got the thing going up there, and then they . . .

RR: That's for the poor kids?

FT: Yeah.

RR: Oh, that's a great thing.

FT: And then he finally scooted out from under—from that ?thing? later on down the line.

[01:45:02] RR: What's Frank's job title up there now? Do you know?

FT: Vice president of—[pause] vice president of somethin' [long pause] [*papers rustling*—just vice president's all it says.

[Editor's Note: At the time of this interview, Frank Thomas was vice president of media and public relations at Stephens Inc.].

RR: Uh-huh. Stephens, Inc.

FT: Uh-huh.

[01:45:45] RR: What have you done since you retired in [19]71, you say—from the FBI?

FT: Seventy-three.

RR: Seventy-three.

FT: Well, I ran the police academy up at Camden for about three years. Decided I wasn't a politician. And they just wanted to finance someplace, so somebody ?can? go up there. But I set up the standards up there when I first ?went? up there, you know, you could make a zero on the examination and still be a— get you a police license. So I put some—I forgot what it was now—85 percent, I think it was, on a test to pass it. But there again a lot of fellows up there in class work—they knew their—they knew their business, Roy, but they—a lot of people can't take a test, you know.

RR: Oh, yeah.

FT: They can't take a test. I'd take 'em in my room in there, in the office, I'd give it to them orally. They'd go right on through it.

RR: Yeah.

FT: I'd go ahead give 'em a—certify 'em to be a police officer.

RR: So you were up there three years?

FT: Mh-hmm. Dooley Womack—he got to where he wanted to run the show when he was a senator. And he's g—he's dead now.

RR: Oh, yeah.

FT: He died not long ago.

RR: Yeah. I never met him, but I've heard . . .

FT: I was the on-site director, and so I figured they didn't need but one. If he was gonna do it, I'd just let him have it so. [RR *laughs*] [01:47:10] Then I went into private investigating. Had my own agency down there for a while and worked for lawyers.

RR: Here in El Dorado?

FT: Uh-huh.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Worked for Georgia Pacific quite a bit—did a lot of their workmen's comp deals and injury claims and ?hurtful?—some of these lawyers handling insurance company. Worked for a lot of plaintiff lawyers. Did some criminal work for lawyers—just general—and I got to where I couldn't read the street numbers on the houses on the street due to cataract deal, so, hell, I [*laughs*]—I just finally quit that. So . . .

RR: Have any particularly interesting investigations that you could talk about when you were a private investigator?

FT: I better not talk about any of those things. Those people still alive or whatever ?else?.

RR: Yeah. Okay.

[01:48:00] FT: Then I got interested in woodworkin'. I've always been interested, fiddled around with it, so I just built me a woodworkin' shop there in the back and started makin' things for

family and people who want it. I hadn't—don't ever sell anything. But I've—it costs me money to make somebody something, but I give it to them.

RR: Yeah.

FT: And I take an old piece of wood and put it in a lathe, start turnin' it. You don't have to ma—decide what it's going to be, that wood, I think it's Divine Providence, or somebody will tell that wood what it wants to be. Put that blade on there and that sucker will form 'bout what it wants to be. [*Laughs*]

RR: That's really interesting. I've never ?had the talent?
[*Laughs*] . . .

FT: Well, it is—I mean, you can say, "I'm gonna make so-and-so outta this. You put up—you put that knife on that thing and that lathe spinnin', and that thing'll start taking shape up there, I guess, the way the wood's cut or something or other, and you might wind up turnin' somethin' that you hadn't even thought about makin'.

RR: Yeah.

[01:48:59] FT: Like this old deal here over here—that started out to be a candleholder.

RR: It now has toothpicks in it. It's about two inches high, two and a half. Yeah. This says you made that in the year 2000. "F.

Thomas, 2000." That started out to be a candleholder?

FT: Yeah. Came off an old limb out on my farm out in Mount Holly over there, off a walnut tree.

RR: That's black walnut, right?

FT: Yeah.

RR: That's pretty. Did you make these [*clacking noise*—these?

FT: No, huh-uh. No, I did these things here, though. ?And it was? made out of these. That's just an old . . .

RR: What about this tray?

FT: No, my wife bought that tray someplace. I made this table.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Made the thing the TV thing is on over there.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Made some holders in there in the—some candlesticks there on that record-player machine in there in the living room.

RR: I've always thought that would be very satisfying—woodworking.

FT: It is. It is. You know, time passes really fast. 'Course, I've had a bad sinus infection and a cold after that, so that dust and stuff [*unclear words*] I've got a dust thing up there that circulates air five times an hour all throughout there, ?without? wearing a mask, I still get that fine dust in there.

RR: Yeah.

FT: It—I can't do as much as I used to, 'course.

[01:50:25] RR: Do you do any outdoor work—garden or anything?

FT: Well, I've gardened up till this year. Tell you a story about gardening—about Frank's—you know about Frank—about his experience in gardening.

RR: No.

[01:50:37] FT: I had a garden down behind this red building over here that belongs to me, and I had my garden down behind it. And I been—I was still in the FBI then, and Frank's at college up at Fayetteville [FT Edit: and was back home for the summer], he come by, and he say—I'd hear people tell me, say, "Frank's [*clears throat*]— Frank's not going back to school this fall." I said, "Oh, really?" "No." "What's he going to do?" "He's going to work Cliff's Men's Shop selling clothes." "Okay." So that went on all summer, and all the people were telling me about it. [RR *laughs*] So [*laughs*] I was down in the garden one day, you know, along about fall school to begin. Frank came down, and he stood there. I knew he didn't want to run that tiller, so I just kept on runnin' the tiller till it run out of gas. [01:51:13] I knew what he wanted to talk to me about. "Dad, I want to talk to you." "Okay, what's got on your mind, son?" "I'm not going back to school this fall." I said, "Oh?" "No." Said, "I'm gonna

work full-time in Cliff's Men's Shop." "Mmm. Nothing wrong with that. How much are you gonna make?" He told me how much he was going to make, you know, I've forgotten what it was. I said, "Well, that Volkswagen you have, I bought that for you to go back and forth to school in. So you won't need that anymore, so we'll go down to the bank, and you can borrow money for it and give me my money back out of the Volkswagen." "Okay. That'll be all right." "Where are you gonna live?" "I'm going to live here at home." I said, "Well, your mother, now—who's going to do your laundry and stuff—cookin'?" "Oh, Mother will." "So then your Mother needs so much a month now because of laundry and upkeep and everything." [*RR laughs*] So I's—in the back of my head, knew what he was gonna make—in the back of my head it kept, you know, addin' up. I don't remember what the last thing was. Anyway the last deal—I said, "Oh, yeah. Insurance on your car now is gonna be so much." He stood there a minute. Didn't say a word till he started walking off. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to see if I can't get back in school up at Fayetteville." [*Laughter*] I said, "Well, Frank, you make up your own mind, son." I said, "You're the one who's got to make that decision."

RR: Oh! That took place in the garden, ?really?. [*Laughter*] But you're not gardening this year?

FT: Well, I had some tomatoes last year. I may put a few out—I've got that old place fenced in out there, but I haven't broken anything up. I've got these boxes. Earth boxes, they call 'em. I had tomatoes last year as big around as my fist that kept disappearin', and the dadgum squirrels were carrying them off.

RR: Oh, yeah, they'll [*unclear words*]. [*Laughs*] [01:53:04] You and your wife belong to any organizations around town?

FT: Just church activities. [FT Edit: My wife was a hospital volunteer for thirty years and an active garden club member.].

RR: What church is that?

FT: First United Methodist Church.

RR: Yeah.

FT: And she's active in the women's society. But—and me, being a woodworker, if the church needs something made, they'll come see me.

RR: Yeah.

FT: They did a new youth—Sunday school program there called Rotation Sunday School, and they needed a bunch of tables made out of two-by-sixes, so I made 'em a whole bunch of tables out of two-by-sixes.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Made 'em an ark—life-size ark [FT Edit: a scale model of the Ark of the Covenant] for the kids to look at and study. And women's society has a sale up there or somethin'. I've made birdhouses for 'em. I've made bird feeders for 'em. And this last—they've got a youth director up there who wanted to have some things made for the carnival—Halloween carnival deal, so I made a lot of stuff for them up there this year for the Halloween carnival. Just stuff like that. They'll have somethin' break—a piece of furniture would break, and they'd bring it out here, and I'll fix it back together.

[01:54:23] RR: I notice you've got a Mike Beebe sticker on your pickup. Are you active in politics at all?

FT: Well, yeah—Democrat.

RR: Yeah. [*Laughter*] Do you do any campaigning or organizing or anything like that?

[01:54:43] FT: Well, I do some campaigning. I never have organized anything. My oldest son does and Frank—Pryor—Frank worked for [Mark] Pryor [*unclear words*] worked for Pryor down here on sign makin' and puttin' out and stuff like that and—I don't know what side of the fence old Floyd Jr.'s on. Had a guy down her other other day, he was Republican, old Chuck

Banks. He was runnin' for [Arkansas] Lieutenant Governor, and Floyd took him around to raise some money with him, and I said, "Which side of the fence are you on?" He said, "I'm on old Chuck's," so forth and so on. Chuck—Chuck's [A.A.] "Shug" Banks's son up at—up at . . .

RR: Shug Banks?

FT: Shug Banks, used to be county judge up at Mississippi county so many years.

RR: That's—yeah, that's where that name's from. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[*FT laughs*]

FT: Do you know how he got his shoes on his feet? Screw 'em on or whatever. Anyway he said he'd known Shug a long time he asked him to do it, so he did it.

RR: Well, it's kinda funny. I—one reason I liked being a newspaper reporter is 'cause you get to know all the people and politics and people like David Pryor and, you know . . .

[01:56:04] FT: You were talkin' about the Southern Club while ago—did Clay tell you about the state police car used to pull up behind the Southern Club over there every Friday night?

RR: Yeah. [*Laughs*] I'm pretty sure that was the one that carried the money.

FT: Yeah. I followed that car to the governor's mansion a few times

myself over there.

RR: Did you?

FT: Yeah. A local—attorney here was up there at that time, Attorney General Bruce Bennett. You know ?that old? renegade—old Bruce Bennett [Arkansas Attorney General 1957–1960, 1963–1966]. You c—I knew what old Bruce was, but you couldn't keep from likin' him.

RR: I know it.

FT: [Sheriff] Marlin Hawkins [of Conway County]. I just liked old Marlin Hawkins as well as anybody I ever contacted in my lifetime.

RR: Me, too. I loved talking to him. And, you know, he just . . .

FT: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

RR: And you know what he's up to. [*Laughs*] That Bruce was the same way. Yeah.

FT: Talk to old Marlin, and he'd sit there with a handkerchief and that old eye—daubin' that eye up there, that deal [FT Edit: which was sightless].

RR: Marlin had said he'd . . .

[01:57:03] FT: At a police school one time at Russellville—old Marlin would want to stop by on the way up there goin' up to Mount Nebo. They're talkin'—said, "I don't know what I'm going to do

about these people just runnin' this highway down here crazy." I said, "Marlin, get you an old mannequin. Put your old car out there with a blue light on top of it and put a mannequin in it behind the wheel. Put a hat on him and uniform on him." I said, "That slows people down." And a month later, I think, "Boy, it sure had—it sure slowed 'em down." Next thing I knew, I heard somebody from Oklahoma came by and took Marlin's mannequin. They called the sheriff's office. He called up at Ozark, and they stopped him up there. Old Marlin drove back down there and tried them for grand larceny. I don't know if they were charged, I don't know if they was ever convicted for anything [*laughs*—grand larceny or not—for stealing his mannequin out of a patrol car. [*Laughter*]

RR: I never heard that story. Oh, he was a character.

FT: Oh, yeah.

[01:58:12] RR: Did you say that you were with—knew about the state police taking the money over to the Governor's Mansion? Did you follow them over? What were you saying?

FT: Followed 'em over there several times.

RR: Yeah.

FT: That's how that big house got built up there at Huntsville.

[*Laughs*]

RR: I had about seventy-five interviews with Faubus, and I would think of a subject that I wanted to talk about at the next interview. I had been down to talk to Clay White and some other people around Hot Springs on the gambling business. I knew pretty well what was going on, or what had been going on. So—and I can't remember the figure that Clay put on it—the amount of money that was passed. It was a substantial figure every week.

FT: It was a box full.

RR: Yeah. The figure of \$50,000 comes to mind, but that may not be the one. I don't know. Anyhow, it was a lot—several thousand dollars—every week. So I asked Faubus, "What about this?" And, of course, he denied it, you know. He said, "Oh, the gambling people—yeah, they gave me money. They contributed to my campaign just like everybody else did—every other special interest." He didn't put a ?figure?, but he said, "You know, for people who had as much at stake as they did, they were the stingiest campaign donors I ever had to deal with!" [*Laughs*] 'Course, he denied the whole thing as far as big amounts of money. But you all followed—would follow 'em to—you all knew exactly what was going on.

FT: ?Yeah, we followed them out there?.

[01:59:56] RR: Was there ever any thought given to trying to make a criminal case against anybody in the administration—governor or state police or anybody else?

FT: Well, what would you charge them with?

RR: Well, that was going to be my next question.

FT: [*Laughs*] Had nothing to charge them with. You can't charge a man for driving money down the highway.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Can't charge a man with taking money to somebody's house.

RR: Yeah.

FT: Gotta prove bribery in some manner, and then that involves the legal definition of bribery.

RR: Yeah. Did he know that you all were on to him?

FT: No, I don't think so.

RR: So y'all didn't treat him like you did the Klan?

FT: No, huh-uh. After old Bruce come back [FT Edit: to El Dorado] before he died, I used to kid him about it, you know.

RR: Yeah.

FT: He just kind of had a snicker on his face, you know.

RR: Yeah. Yeah, he really wanted to be governor—Bruce did.

[02:00:56] FT: You know, Bruce would've been a good governor, too.

RR: You think so?

FT: I believe he would have. I believe deep down in old Bruce's heart, he had the best interest of the state of Arkansas. Of course, when he got in trouble with that Arkansas Loan and Thrift deal, you know, and he had that cancer taken off his deal [FT Edit: his throat], and he'd go up to old Oren Harris's office up there four or five times a week to report, I guess. He wasn't fit to stand trial, but he'd had to go to trial on that. So some people were convicted over it.

RR: Yeah. He finally died before he came to trial, didn't he?

FT: Yeah. Never—his health never ?improved?. . .

[02:01:31] RR: Yeah, yeah. You've seen a lot of history in our state and other places. You think of anything else that we haven't talked about that you think you ought to mention before we wind up—personal or professional?

FT: No, I can't think of anything.

RR: Anything during the FBI work? I would imagine the Klan might have been—did you consider that the most interesting of the work you did in the FBI, or the most important?

FT: No. I—as importance—as far as importance is concerned to the state of Arkansas. I think it probably was the most important thing I ever did.

RR: Well, I might add, then, and to the country, you know, gettin' those folks out of business—to the country?

FT: Yeah. Of course, it kind of caught on, you know. After they found out what I was doing, these other agents in other states started doing the same thing, you know. And their deals started going down pretty fast, too. In fact, weekly—when Oren Harris came down here to be federal judge, left Congress came to be federal judge, he was very interested in the Klan, and so were those people back in DC. And I'd go in his office every mornin' and tell him, "Well, we lost so many more this last week," you know. He asked me one time—he said, "Does your department mind you comin' up here and talkin' to me about this?" I said, "I don't know why they wouldn't."

[02:03:11] RR: Yeah, yeah. I never knew that about Judge Harris—that he had a particular interest in breakin' up the Klan.

FT: Yeah. He had a big interest in breakin' it up. Yeah, he—well he was very interested in it. He called—I don't know who he called—Washington, DC, or something. A lot of times he'd call while I was sitting down there right with him. "Well, I got so-and-so to report today, you know." And this and that and everything else. When they had me arrested, though for disturbing the peace and that deal—oh, he got hot about that.

He wasn't going to stand still then. But the thing about it, though, I was guilty of usin' loud noises and usin' abu—of makin' loud noises and using abusive language toward them, but I was not trespassin'—?that's one of 'em?. [*Laughs*] I wasn't guilty of that, but was guilty of the other two items. [*Laughter*]

RR: Oh, boy. Well, why don't we think about winding it up? We've just about taken up your morning here. And if you think of anything else, why . . .

FT: If I think of anything else, I'll contact you. If you think of something else you want to ask me, you can call me, and I'll . . .

RR: Okay. All right. Good, good. I'm staying over at Ray Ellen's [RR Edit: Ray Ellen, an El Dorado businessman, is the brother-in-law of RR's wife.] . . .

[02:04:27] [Editor's Note: Interview stopped and started again.]

RR: Okay. Here we go. You'd thought of something else.

[2:04:32] FT: Yeah, I was thinking about the little old humorous things. You know, people think that—and it is—police work's hard work, but every once in a while, you do catch something that sort of pays off. When I was in Hot Springs, Clay White got a Teletype in one night at about ten o'clock for a fugitive who had some relatives down near Murfreesboro. So we got in the car and went down to Murfreesboro, and about two o'clock in the

morning, we found this—the house this guy was in and had to drive down the road—it was back up in the woods and everything. So I s—pull up in the yard, and Clay was driving. I started to get out, and looked face to face with a dog. That dog's head was even with the window. I said, "Clay, what are we gonna do now?" He said, "What?" "Lookie here." He said, "Oh, crap! What are we gonna do?" I said, "Well, we've come this far. [*Laughs*] And maybe we can get the guy to come out here." So the guy who lived there came on the porch about that time. Said, "Can I do anything for you fellows?" Clay said, "Is so-and-so here?" He said, "Yeah. He's in bed." He said, "Get him up. Bring him out here and tell him we need to see him." [*Laughs*] The guy came out there—had his clothes on, come to the back door [FT Edit: of the car]. The guy got in the back door. We drove off and never got out of the car to arrest the fugitive! [*Laughter*]

RR: Without ever going to the door.

[02:05:54] FT: Yeah! Old boy said, "That dog won't bite." I said, "I'm not gonna give him the opportunity." So that was a curbside arrest on that guy.

RR: Yeah. It must have been a Great Dane or something like that.

FT: It must have been a great—might have been a big old wolsh—

wolfhound—big old Irish wolfhound, you know. Man, that thing's big as Shetland pony! He really was, big old dog. [RR laughs] 'Course, two o'clock in the morning, he looked bigger than that.

RR: Yeah. [Laughs]

[02:06:19] FT: Another incident that involved me was—I was in Pittsburgh, I told you earlier. I was called one night to meet two other agents down at the office. They had a fugitive located some place over there on the north side of Pittsburgh, over—about where the ball—baseball field is now, kind of a slum area. So they briefed me on the thing and everything, and the old boy was one of those guys, armed and dangerous and all that kind of stuff. So they said, "Well, you go round to the back. You cover the back." So it was a three-story building, and the top two floors were apartments, and the downstairs were business places—business storefronts. So I went around to the back alley about midnight, I guess, and I was easin' along there—dark, scared, and didn't know what—hadn't ever done anything like that before. So I looked up in the window, and I saw this guy we were looking for in the window up there. Well, he come out—he could escape this house, went to the door of this house about two or three feet from it. I said, "Well, I need to get up on that back porch." So I was standin' on the step—on the front

of the steps where they wouldn't squeak. I's easing up there and makin' my last turn, and the awfulest commotion I ever heard in my life took off. I stepped on a sleepin' dog.

RR: Oh! [*Laughs*]

FT: That dog let out a yelp! [*Laughter*] Hair on the back of my neck stood out about an inch and a half, and the dog finally found—finally got ?squared away? going down the steps. This old boy up there said, "What is that?" Some woman up there with him said, "That's old so-and-so's dog having a fit." Didn't know I's the one about to have a fit. Anyway, about that time I heard these agents say, "Get your hands up. You're under arrest." So they come in and arrested him while me, and dog had a fight on that [*laughter*] on that back staircase.

[02:08:15] RR: That must be—you know, you're talking about bein' scared—I'd think that there'd be a lot of times that an agent would find himself in a position where the only rational thing to do is be afraid. [*Unclear words*]

FT: Well, you can't tell. That's just human nature. I don't know. It's not the kind of fear of doin' somethin', it's the fear—[*electric fan oscillates*] the fear of the unknown, I guess, is really what it boils down to.

RR: Unexpected and unknown.

FT: Yeah.

RR: Yeah.

[02:08:44] FT: One of the stupidest things I ever did in my lifetime was in Poplar Bluff. Had some fellows that—when they ran out of money—out of Ellsinore, Missouri—that's [*unclear word*] out in the woods out in Mark Twain National Forest, out east of Poplar Bluff, 'bout twenty miles or so, I guess. An airplane flying over there one time, saw some people—saw some smoke coming up, so he started circlin'. [*Electric fan oscillates*] There's a couple of fellows in there that were settin' the woods on fire. Well, these natives would run out of money. They'd set the woods on fire, and the National Forest Service would hire them to help put it out. [02:09:23] So I went up there and investigated and made an arrest. And [*laughs*]—National Forest Service man was with me, the guy's house that we were at lookin' for this guy to start with 'fore I ever found him and arrested him, he—the guy said—Junior Reynolds was the guy's name whose house we were at—he said, "Junior, don't cut over the line. Remember what happened the last time you cut over the line." And the guy was sitting in a—just an old house out there, a homemade house—had one big old room and in there's a bedroom, kitchen, and all them little, had two or three little kids running around there, and

the wife was probably in her early twenties. And this old boy—probably hadn't washed the dishes in that house for two or three weeks. And I was sitting in a corner, and the door was over here, and this guy was sittin' by the door. The guy who lived there, this Reynolds guy, was over here. He started cleaning off coffee cups off that table [throwin' them] at this old boy. Well, he ran out the door. The guy started to fight. But old Reynolds started throwing saucers, plates, and cups and things at me. So I weaved and ?wobbled? around and didn't get [hit] with anything heavy. So I finally got a hold of him. Well, the coffee spilled on the floor. And when I did, I stepped in that spilled coffee, and I slipped down on my knee. When I was down on my knee, he was hitting me on the back, so I just picked him up and—on my shoulder—and an old wicker rockin' chair over there, so I ?just? dumped him down on that wicker rockin' chair, and ?when? I did, the whole seat come out, and ?he was? hanging up there by his arms.

RR: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[02:10:56] FT: So I didn't arrest him. I got mad at that forest guy, so I didn't arrest the old boy. So [*electric fan oscillates*] went on about my business, ?went over there to this other guy and? arrested him. Well, the forest people got mad 'cause I didn't

arrest the guy. And I told 'em, I said, "Your man started a fight. I mean, I—he ran off and left me with it." So then later on then this old boy got out of jail. The judge didn't give him much time for burnin' it up. Got out of jail and was on probation—was on federal probation. So I heard 'one' morning, he'd had been picked up a DUI over there at Poplar Bluff, and so I called the probation office in Little Rock [FT Edit: St. Louis], and I told 'em, I said over in Little Rock [FT Edit: Ellsinore] a guy named Buck Roark. And I said now, "Now, Roark has been arrested for DUI, and y'all may want to revoke his probation." I said, "If you do, let me go get him for you." 'Cause they'd been sendin' word every time somebody come up there. They said, "Are you the guy who arrested old so-and-so?" "Yeah." "You better be careful, boy." A bunch of cousins. "Next time you go up there," said, "'they're' gonna carry you out of the woods."

RR: Mh-hmm.

[02:12:01] FT: And, of course, I got mad every time I hear this anyway. They called me back a little while later, marshal's office called back and said, "Probation office called and said you want to go pick up old Roark up, that they've got a warrant—has issued a warrant for him." I said, "Yeah." So we got to the office at seven thirty in the morning or so, so they called about

the time I got there—called the highway patrol ?on my way in? [electric fan oscillates]—and ?didn't anybody? go to work till nine o'clock, called the sheriff's office didn't have anybody to work till eight o'clock. So I called Beulah, my wife, and I said, "If I'm not back by noon, you call the St. Louis office and tell 'em I went to Ellsinore to get Buck Roark." Well, I figured they might be laying up there in the woods. I didn't know, so. Anyway I took off and had a knot on my stomach that big around—big as a softball or bigger. So I drove on up there, and I could hear his saws running down in the woods. So I parked my car on a country road and walked down in the woods, and there's five of them down there. I spotted them all. I looked over at Roark, and I said, "Roark, set your saw down." I said, "You're under arrest." When he shut his down, the rest of 'em, you know, shut theirs down. They're standin', lookin' ?intent?, makin' marks in the ground, and I's backed up against a big old tree about thirty-six, forty-eight inches around, so there's no way to get behind me. Well, I had my pistol in my pocket, so I had my hand on my pistol down in my pocket figurin' if they were gonna start swarming, I was going to be ready for 'em. They sat there and they marked the ground there for a while, and I said, "Roark, now time's over, ?now? hit the trail." So he started walking up

that trail, and I was walkin' there behind him. I looked back, and they went back [*laughs*] to work. So I walked 'im out of the woods up there and took him on to jail. [02:13:42] Got to ?home? and I called my wife, it was about ten thirty, I guess, I called her. And I said, "Well, you don't have to worry about it now. I'm back in town." The next thing you know, the boss called me. "Did you go arrest that guy by yourself?" I said, "Yes, sir." "Why?" I said—I didn't want to tell him that it's pride because they'd been saying they were going to carry me out of the woods. I wanted to see, I guess, if they could. I don't know. And it was another reason why, I said, "Because I don't want some first office agent going up there knockin' on the door, investigatin' an ?active investigation? [FT Edit: on a routine matter], they come out there and beat the devil out of 'em." I said, "And I'm gonna feel bad about it." "Okay." So they accepted it and that's all ?there was? on that deal.

RR: Mh-hmm. They might've jumped you out there.

[02:14:22] FT: Well, I think they probably would if they—if—because later on this Roark [FT Edit: Reynolds] guy told a rural mail carrier up there; he said, "If you don't move that mailbox over on my side of the road," he said, "I'm not gonna—I'm gonna do something to you." Threatened him. So the guy's real

meeek, mild mannered. He came over to Poplar Bluff, a different county, to talk to the sheriff over there. Said, "Sheriff," said, "I need a permit." Said, "I can't wait three days. I need a permit. A man threatened my life." He said, "What would you do if a guy threatened your life?" Sheriff said, "Hell, I'd k—I'd shoot him. I'd kill him. And I'll get your photograph"—or whatever. I was coming back up to the office that next mornin' and turned the radio on, and this post master had shot Junior Reynolds that night in Ellsinore and killed him. The guy went home, bought that .22 the sheriff signed for, so he could get it immediately—signed that deal. And went to get gas 'fore he went home, and this Reynolds came up to him. He said, "I told you what I's gonna do to you if you didn't start leaving my mail over there 'cross the road." So he reached in and grabbed the old boy, and this boy had that twenty—bought a .22 pistol there laying there in the seat. He pulled up and shot him, hit him right betwe—where his nose joins onto his face and killed him. So they had a big postal inspector come to see me about it and everything. [FT Edit: I told him about my case] And I'd, you know—I'd think about it every once in a while what would've happened to me if—left a wife and three little kids there [*laughs*] in Poplar Bluff ?with me going up there all bull-headed?. But, anyway, it

worked out all right.

[02:16:09] RR: There are some bad actors out there—just mean.

[*Laughs*] Did you run into much resentment as a federal man?

You know, antigovernment feelin' that a lot of people seem to have—taking it out on whoever works for the government.

FT: Well, you had to—overcome the state authority's jealousy, I guess you'd call it. You had to—each agent had to set himself to the community, set himself to the fellow police officers because they were all, I guess, ?of the? idea, "Hey look, you think you're better than me," or so forth and so on. So I actually wound up probably doing more local work than I did federal work, really—in a lot of respects because helping these old boys out and doing things. They'd have a burglary, and I'd have an informant, somebody who knew where somebody—and I'd get the information from them and pass it on to 'em, and they could settle it. But . . .

[02:17:13] RR: How important is it to be on good terms with the local sheriff—police chief—local officers? Can you do your work if you're not on good terms with 'em?

FT: You can do it, but, Roy, it's a lot harder.

RR: Yeah.

FT: It's a lot harder because, you know, a sheriff, you hear—you talk

to a sheriff, he says, "This is my county." He really think it is his county.

RR: Yeah.

FT: And the people in the county say, "Well, I can't do this because the sheriff finds out I did this, and he's gonna be mad at me."

And all, so . . .

RR: Mh-hmm

FT: . . . so the sheriff and the chief of police are the people you have to ?deal?—of course, where I was in these small communities like Poplar Bluff—had rural communities all around. [02:18:03] And—but you had to have—and then you had to be active in your community, too, you know. Like I was district commissioner—Boy Scout[s] [of America] district commissioner at Poplar Bluff and active in the scouts. And my wife was active in church and PTA activities. I's the president of the PTA up there. And then those types of things, you know, help out time consumin' and whatever.

RR: What about later on in the [19]60s, like when the Klan was ridin' high, and you had to do a certain amount of dealing with the local law enforcement people? And I believe you said—were saying earlier, at least it's kind of common knowledge, that a lot of those same guys were in the Klan, or at least sympathetic, or

at least didn't have any use for integrationists, and here comes the federal man. [02:18:59] Wha—how did you handle that?

FT: Well, I convinced them that my job was—the federal job was to come down and stabilize the racial feelings in the community, so we could all live as one, and one live as all.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: "It's going to cut down on—it's gonna improve jobs; it's gonna improve—gonna make more companies to want to come in and set up shop and go to work. It's gonna improve the whole community. The community grows, your job is gonna grow, you're going to get more money," and so forth. There, again, the klu—Ku Klux Klan was a financial deal to start out with. They didn't want the blacks to beat out people then financially, which—they wasn't making much financially, anyway.

RR: Mh-hmm.

[02:19:44] FT: It was a financial deal with the local law enforcement officer. You convince them if they toed the line and did the right thing. Then they's gonna benefit financially from it, from retirement and jobs and schools and the whole works.

RR: I'd imagine that you'd still find some local police who were just so set in their ways, their c—their feelings about the race matter, that they wouldn't wanna have anything to do with the

FBI. [*Electric fan oscillates*]

FT: Well, that's true. And a lot of them right now have been retired. They'll still refer to me as "nigger lover" . . .

[Editor's Note: End of Tape 2, Side A on original media]

[02:20:17] RR: Now I think we've got it goin' again.

FT: But none of them ever bothered me or anything like that. But, like you said, a lot of 'em raised up—'course, I was raised up, too, not to respect black people. But then after I found out what the situation was, realized that the place that we as white men had put 'em, really. Then I got to feeling sorry for 'em. And my—as far as any racial prejudices or anything else, well, you know, It's like old McGehee where I's raised up, had a Chinaman had a store down on south highway, down [US Route] 65. Well, blacks lived south of the store, and then whites lived north of the store. The black may live on one side, and white on the other, but the, you know, black kids played together. They played with white kids.

RR: Yeah.

FT: People have—couldn't stand a black person. They'd have a black woman in the house cookin' their meals for 'em and takin' care of their babies for 'em and feedin' 'em for them. But then when they left there then, it's just a horse of a different color.

[02:21:28] RR: Yeah. Did you ever feel threatened—physically threatened by a law enforcement person out of all this, or did that one—was that just considered, you know, "You don't fool with the FBI" and wouldn't threaten you? Are—did you ev—did some of them go over the line?

FT: No, I never was. I never did feel threatened by any law enforcement officer. Now you mentioned Forrest City earlier. You go round Forrest City back in the [19]60s—unless you were maybe the agent assigned up there, most of 'em—you couldn't get 'em to talk to you.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: You know, it was just one of those situations.

RR: How did you get around that?

FT: [*Laughs*] Just acted like they didn't exist. Go to the next person and eventually find—you'll find someone that will.

RR: Yeah, yeah. These—were these just ordinary citizens that you were trying get—talk to? Or . . .

[02:22:32] FT: Yeah, ordinary citizens. In fact, the guy I played football at Arkansas with before the war was the mayor of Forrest City, and they sent me over there to work on that mess over there ?on it?. I went over there when they set a dyna—set a bucket of bolts and things, a five-gallon bucket full of dynamite

in a doctor's yard over there [FT Edit: the doctor was a school board member]. I went over on that case, that was my first ?job? at Forrest City. [*Electric fan oscillates*]

RR: Did that hurt some people?

FT: No, it messed up a house a little bit. But that and nobody was comin' down the street, just blew nuts and bolts ever which way and blew some into the house, but no one got hurt on that. But the mayor of the town had some information. And he wanted to have lunch. We met at a town about thirty miles away to have lunch that day 'cause he give me information, and he didn't want to be seen with me. He and I were good friends.

RR: Yeah, yeah. That's pretty indicative of how emotions can get out of hand and take over a whole community.

FT: Yeah.

RR: If the mayor felt that way, I guess you had to figure that some of the business people felt that way—leaders of the town.

FT: Why sure.

RR: Yeah.

[02:23:42] FT: We had a guy here [*laughs*] at the barbershop on the corner of Marsh [Avenue] and Hill—West Hillsboro [Street] named Bill Platt—*P-L-A-T-T*. I think old Bill died not long ago. He later became a preacher, but he was a real, real racist

[unclear words]. There used to be a little beer joint out here on Calion Road. Some of these old boys would get up out there out there and drink beer. And they called me about—oh, I got several calls at about midnight at night, you know, tryin' to disguise their voices.

RR: Threatenin' or . . .

FT: And—sir?

RR: Threatening you?

FT: Yeah. Or semi.

RR: Yeah.

FT: I knew who they were.

RR: Yeah.

[02:24:29] FT: So one time I said, "Platt, if I get one more of these phone calls, I'm going to come out there at that joint, and I'm gonna tear it up on your head." So I didn't get any more phone calls. Well, Manasco's had an eat shop over there on South Main Street, on Southwest Avenue where some of 'em would hang out with the Ku Klux. And on the opposite corner over there in that same big block of buildings this—there'd been an old service station where Platt had his barbershop. So I went over and interviewed him one time, called him outside and interviewed him, and I notice these cars come round Manasco's ?and his

crew?—about four or five carloads of 'em come around. I had a guy come down from Little Rock one time to interview Platt with me. We went over there, and so I's sittin' in the back seat of a government car. Platt was in the passenger side, and this guy was drivin'. And so there's a stoplight there then—an electric stop sign. So, you know, got red and people stopped. About five of these cars—these Ku Kluxers [*unclear words*—so I reached in my pocket and pulled out a piece of tablet paper and handed it to old Platt, and he took it before he realized what it hit him, and he hid it [FT Edit: he pushed it under the seat]. Boy word got out. [RR *laughs*] They kicked old Platt out of the group. Word got out that he was [*laughs*] "cuttin' niggers' hair" in his barber shop [*laughs*] and everything else and put old Platt out of business.

[02:26:04] RR: Put him out of the Klan and out of business at the same time.

FT: Out of both of 'em, yeah. [*Laughter*]

RR: Expelled from the Ku Klux Klan. That'd be something to have on your resume.

FT: Pretty sorry. Pretty sorry. [*Laughter*]

RR: Oh. Oh, boy.

FT: I think about that about every time I drive by that place down

there.

RR: Yeah, yeah.

[02:26:21] FT: Then this bunch went off down there in the—way down Southfield Road, down south of El Dorado. Old house out there, they're all [*unclear word*], and they'd fix the thing all up [FT Edit: They were putting up paneling, rewiring, and such]—way out, didn't think anybody knew where it was. They worked about three weeks on that house to get it all fixed up.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: So the first night they had their meeting, I got in the car, and I [*unclear word*] just backed up off in the woods, so I could see it and hear what was going on. And they showed up. [*Electric fan oscillates*] And I went down to a radio service deal down here, and they worked on radios and things and bought all these bright red and yellow insulation, so if any wires fell out, out there—different-colored wires [*unclear word*] radio [*unclear word*]. So I got me a bunch of those scraps of that and went down there one afternoon and scattered around the porch. They came down that night for their first meeting. Pretty soon I—"Hey! So-and-so Thomas has been down here. Got us bugged." "How do you know?" "Lookie here. Look at these wires, see. He's dropped some insulated wires around here." And, Roy,

"Rip, rip, rip." They tore up the whole inside of that thing looking for a bug [*laughter*], and there wasn't a bug in it. I was back up there in the woods just dyin' laughing. [*Laughter*]

RR: It was not all grim work, was it? You had to laugh some, I'd think. Mmm, mmm.

[02:27:47] FT: And another thing we used some—I didn't use, some people did once in a while. I'd get two of 'em and, you know, by the time you get three people—two of 'em—two of the three don't like each other. They've got some kind of a problem. So one of those old boys didn't—two—one of the two guys didn't like the other one who's in the hospital and had a baby. So an old boy sent a bouquet of flowers up there to her and put this other guy's name on it. [*RR laughs*] That caused quite a fallin' out.

[02:28:15] RR: Oh, boy! [*Laughs*] Yeah. I remember—when you were talking about burning the woods up in Missouri in the national forest—I worked a story one time in North Carolina that had that angle, that guys would go in and set fire to the woods because they just didn't like the government and the Forest Service. They always had a running feud with the Forest Service. And it was a real problem for the people who worked for the government up there. You know, they had to deal with

that all the time. And there was a mentality that "if you're anybody working for the federal government, we don't want you around here." I figured that sometimes you'd run into that with the FBI just because you worked for the government. You know, a lot of . . .

FT: Yeah, you run into that thing, you know. Particularly, if somebody's had some trouble with the IRS or something like that, you know, and they'll the neighbors may be a little bit more reluctant to associate with you, or whatever, or be seen in public with you. But that's a—back in the [19]60s, there was a certain period of time—and in the late [19]50s—there's a certain period of time in there that—when this country was, you know, near revolution, really, in a lot of respects. And people were—would treat you a little bit different—a little bit distant. I don't think my wife ever experienced any of it.

[02:29:44] RR: Good. Good. You were a football player, and I assume that you were, you know, pretty muscular. In fact, even after you went to work for the FBI, I suppose you kept in shape. Do you remember how much you weighed during those years?

FT: Two hundred and twelve pounds.

RR: How tall were you?

FT: About six-three [six feet, three inches].

RR: So a guy would hesitate to take you on, I would think, just to
[unclear words].

FT: Well, yes, I—probably. And of course, we had, you know, we
didn't make an arrest unless we had two people, that was the
deal. So sometimes you had to—just had to make one, like I did
on that one. And I spent most of my time in the FBI out in a
resident agent, you know, just either one man or two men. And
the last ten years I was down here, or the last eight years, I had
first office agents with me down here all the time.

RR: Had what?

[02:30:41] FT: First office agents—just out of trainin' school. They
stayed in Washington a while, and then they came out here, and
they stayed in Little Rock for about a month. Then they send
them down here with me, and I keep 'em in the balance of the
year. And they'd come down [laughs], and I'd say, "You were in
Washington. They taught you a certain amount up there. Yeah.
You went to Little Rock, and they taught you so-and-so. Now I'll
tell you what you do. You forget everything they told you. You
sit down with me. Now here's a book of rules and regulations.
Here's a book of operations over here." Said, "Now if you can't
find ?something? [FT Edit: something to explain] you come and
ask me, and you and I will look it up, and we'll both find out.

We'll both get something out of it."

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: So that's what I did to train those young kids down here. And it was fun and it was a lot of good. I must have done a pretty good job. One or two of them wound up in Washington, DC, in supervisory jobs. [02:31:32] But they were—another thing that was real funny. We had a bank at Advance, Missouri, that was robbed. And on the way over there, I had a state trooper who was wavin' his hand to stop at a little old station over there on—close to [*unclear word*] road down near [*unclear word*] road [FT Edit: went along to Advance] to see if anybody strange had been by. Well, he stopped [FT Edit: at a restaurant], and this waitress in there said, "Yeah. Guys came by here with a Kentucky license plate on their car. Kept wantin'—hittin' on me, wantin' me to go out with them, so I wrote their license number down." And it wound up that that was a bank robber get-away car. So when we traced that thing and wound up it was some old boys [FT Edit: soldiers] out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in the 101st Airborne.

RR: Oh.

[02:32:16] FT: And one of them lived at Chaffee, Missouri. They were—they came over there and visited him on the weekend and

went down and robbed the dadgum bank. Well, put out word on 'em, and they stopped—Illinois State Police stopped part of them over at Cairo, Illinois—running across the bridge over there—stopped them and arrested them. So we got to checkin' around and found out that [FT Edit: where one lived in Chaffee, Missouri]. The agent in charge come out of Little Rock—I mean out of St. Louis and brought some people with him. Well, along about seven o'clock, you know, things're just gettin' goin' good on the bank robbery then [FT Edit: investigation], gettin' leads and all ?covered up?. He said, "Well, everybody, let's go to Cape Girardeau [Missouri]. I made everybody reservations for a room at a hotel. We'll go to Cape Girardeau and spend the night." So I drove to Cape Girardeau, and I turned around and went back to down Chaffee because I knew we'd had this old boy's house located down there, and those people didn't have any money when they arrested 'em. So I went back down there, and state police they came out there, and they looked all through the car and everythin'. Said, "You by yourself?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, [*unclear words*] let you know what's going on." Said, "If you have any more agents with you, we wasn't gonna let you go." One of these jealousy deals you're talking about while ago.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: So we went down and found \$73,000 in a chicken nest.

RR: In a chicken nest?

[02:33:31] FT: Yeah, an old setting hen. Boy, she pecked the hell out of us when we were ?getting? [RR laughs] that money out of that nest. But she was on the nest setting. She was protecting it, too. We got the money recovered and counted. And, oh, I guess it was maybe one o'clock in the morning by the time we got it all counted—later than that maybe. So we took it—took the money, then, [electric fan oscillates] and got to the courthouse counting on it, the phone rang [FT Edit: about 6:00 a.m.]. Boss on the phone, called me, said, "What are you doin'?" I said, "Countin' this bank robbery loot." Said, "I thought I told you to come up here to Cape Girardeau and go to bed." I said, "Well, I think I'd heard something about that, so I came back down and investigated a bank robbery. That's what we're over here for." But he, you know—?he give me hell?, he ?threatened to give? me a transfer. It made me mad.

RR: Yeah.

[02:34:18] FT: But, anyway. I went back up there, paid for my hotel room. Went up there and turned the sheets over and turned the front of the bedspread up and messed up the bed, so

they'd have to make it back up. Went back up there and got back on my business. So we took the money—took it back over to Cape Girardeau and counted it. Took it back to Cape—to El Dorado—I mean, Poplar Bluff. When I got back to Poplar Bluff, it was kind of late or somethin' or other, so we didn't have any place to put it, so I took it home with me. So went out to the highway patrol to count it the next morning before we took it back to the bank. Had four or six dollars less than we had when we counted it the night before. Old Captain [O. L.] Wallis was captain up there of the state police then, and they were out on patrol. He said, "You know, hell, old Floyd just stopped and got a case of beer on the way home." He said, "Hell, it's about four dollars' worth." He said, "Don't worry about that." [RR laughs] So a trooper and I took the money back to the bank. They guy said, "Let's go back there and count it." The ?guy there countin'? came up with \$98,000 and \$74,000 was all we ever had. He come out and gave me a receipt for \$98,000. I said, "No, ninety-four [FT Edit: \$74,000] is all we had." "No, we counted \$98,000." Well, what had happened—somebody had hit the till over there and took from the bank [FT addition: took the money for personal reasons], so they used that bank robbery to get it back in there. [Laughs]

RR: Get it back in there while he had a chance.

FT: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[02:35:44] RR: Lordy. Did you work a lot of bank robberies?

FT: Worked a bunch of 'em—bunch of 'em

RR: Did they all seem kind of the same pattern after a while, or were they all different?

FT: They're all different. Had one guy who robbed a bank—the Bank of Commerce on South Broadway in St. Louis. And a teller allegedly robbed it. And the teller described the robber as being five [feet], say ten and a quarter inches high and everything else. But the thing that got him, he said he had a .38 caliber revolver, and he had his fingernails manicured a certain way. That hit a trigger, see? A guy with a damned gun on you, you're not going to look to see what kind of fingernails—if the fingernails are trimmed or cut or anything. Outside I took him off to the side, and I said, "Look, fellow, you stole the money. Save us a whole lot of damned problems and everything. Just come on and tell us about it." So he did. Said, "Yeah, I got the money. Blah, blah, blah." But he had a pretty good story until he got to talking about the way the guy's fingernails were manicured.

[02:36:58] RR: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm. [*Laughs*] Lot of

inside jobs on banks?

FT: That was about the only inside job we had. Now we had one guy robbed banks at St. Louis. He robbed the savings and loan companies. He robbed two at—on Thursday afternoons about every other week, you could count on two savings and loan robberies taking place in south St. Louis. Well, one day old boy went in, and he was robbin' a bank and a postman [*unclear words*] a mail—a telephone repairman was on the pole up there behind him, and he saw the guy go in. He saw him put his mask on and get his gun out and everything else before he went into the bank. So he called it in.

RR: From the top of the phone pole?

FT: From the top of the phone pole. Yeah. And a guy walked in that time—said, "Well, I'm back again." So he turned out, he was a barber in Chicago. He come down and robbed these loan companies and get, you know, \$4,000 or \$5,000 or \$10,000 or maybe \$20,000 out of 'em, not much, and he'd go back to Chicago. He'd spend it. Cut hair for a week. Then he'd come back, you know, and get him some more. [*RR laughs*] But there was lots of people ?who all? would come back and hit the same over again.

RR: Did you ever hear about the—do you know the—do you know

Elkins, up near Fayetteville?

FT: Yes.

RR: The Bank of Elkins had a reputation at one time as being a choice target for bank robbers. I don't know why. Did you ever happen to work a robbery out of there?

[02:38:34] FT: I never worked one in Elkins, but I worked a similar deal up on—up here on Chidester—bank up there. But there was a group of fellows that headquartered—traveled from Kingsport, Tennessee, to Pasadena, Texas. There's about ten or twelve of them, and this was on their deal—the bank of Portland was on their—on their list, I mean the bank of Parkdale, and they burglarized it three or four times. These were burglars. Chidester was hit two or three times. We finally came up with a deal that the—Bell Telephone Company worked it out with them—they could rig up a thing in the—anywhere in a bank—we usually put it in the bathroom—that when the break-in was made, it'd open this line up. It would ring out at somebody's—some [FT addition: designated] employee's ?living? away from the bank. Just a telephone line is what it was.

RR: It was a break-in at night rather than a stickup . . .

FT: Yeah.

RR: Okay.

FT: But the first time I got one up at Chidester up there, it ended up bein' on a Saturday at about midnight, I guess. The phone rang, and said, "Listen," said, "Get the bucket of water. Floor's on fire. Get the bucket of water. The floor's on fire. Hurry up. Hurry up." So the old boy was sayin', "I hear that ?parts? burning." Somebody had cut a hole in the safe at that time. So I said, "You notify the sheriff's office?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay." I jumped up and drove up there. The sheriff got there before I did naturally. They walked right in on those old boys. They were on hands and knees there cutting a hole in that safe.

RR: Chidester is about, what, thirty miles from here?

FT: Yeah, just on [Arkansas Highway] 24 just out east—west of Camden. But . . .

RR: Caught 'em red-handed!

[02:40:35] FT: And that little old bank of Pevely, got hit one time—south of St. Louis. The whole bank was probably was not over three hundred square feet. They had a little bitty building. The guys went in and robbed it and got around \$100,000 out of it. And I investigated it. Said, "Well, they could have got into the big money." I said, "What do you mean, big money?" They had Mason fruit jar boxes underneath the counter of the bank there full of currency.

RR: Mason fruit jar [*laughs*] . . .

FT: That was their safe. That was their safe.

RR: Just under the counter?

FT: Under the counter.

[02:41:18] RR: [*Laughs*] Oh, boy! Did—were—did the bank robbers usually go after small banks like that, or did it make any difference?

FT: Well, most of 'em go—went after small banks. Now I had word that they's wantin—they's gonna hit one over on South Delmar [Boulevard] in St. Louis one time. And they kept that money on payday because mill payday was over in Illinois in South St. Louis, too. They kept their money stacked up on dollies up there, so if you [*laughs*] [*unclear words*] just get your dolly and drive the truck and take off across the river there. You were on your way, see?

RR: Yeah.

FT: And the chief detective and I went up there and spent most of one afternoon talkin' 'em into takin' that money and putting it down on the elevator and puttin' it down the steps of the stairs in the currency vault.

RR: Mmm. Mmm. Why would a bank manager do—that just seems dumb, leaving the money lying around on a dolly. [*Laughs*]

FT: Expediency—didn't want to hire—get extra help, I guess is what it was.

RR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[02:42:23] FT: All kind of screwball deals. Some people—well, that Bank of Pevely was robbed down there, and people said they could identify the guy. So we got some regular pictures of him and put him in with a group with about ten or fifteen other pictures. One old gal said, "I can't identify him. It's that diaper—that diaper thing around his face." These guys had diapers on them with a face cut out of 'em—holes cut out. So we had 'em [FT addition: the photos] blown up bigger, the pictures. So I went home and got some diapers—had some small children—I went home and got some diapers, cut holes in them, and put them over the deal and covered every—covered 'em all—all the faces up with diapers. And old gal picked him out.

RR: A diaper as a mask. I've never heard of that ?before?.

FT: I hadn't either. She couldn't pick out the eyes unless they had a diaper on.

[02:43:27] RR: Yeah, yeah. I thought of something after I left here that I wanted to ask you. Did you ever meet J. Edgar Hoover?

FT: Yeah.

RR: What was the occasion?

FT: Well, everybody gets to meet him when they go in the Bureau, or when you went back into service, you can request to go in and meet him.

RR: Mh-hmm.

FT: But he's just a little old short fellow—short, fat fellow, dark complected.

RR: Yeah.

FT: [*Laughs*] Wasn't any different than anybody else. But he was a disciplinarian. He really wanted—you know, he really demanded loyalty and discipline. And if you got into trouble and you were right, he'd stay by you 100 percent, but if you're wrong, he'd jerk the rug out from under you.

[02:44:18] RR: Yeah, yeah. What did you make of those stories that came out after he died? 'Bout—the suggestion was he was a transvestite or some such—that he liked to dress up like a woman and that kind of thing. What'd you make of that?

FT: Oh, it was just something—you know, nobody can refute it, and nobody he respects enough in the Bureau knows better to dignify it by refuting it—just go ahead and just let it go and die a natural death.

RR: You don't think there's anything to it?

FT: No, there wasn't anything. He was just an old bachelor. He was married to the organization. Old Clyde Tolson was his good friend, and he was married to the organization.

RR: Yeah. Clyde Tolson. I'd forgotten about him. Yeah.

[02:45:10] FT: But he wasn't any more of a—I'll tell you something funny that very few people know. It's been so long, I guess it won't make any difference. There was a guy later—from Arkansas—he came down here and worked for me just before I retired. Was assigned to the Washington field office when Hoover died. And they sent he and another guy out there to find out why Mr. Hoover hadn't shown up for work. So they went into his house, and he was lying on the floor between his bed and the bathroom holding his stomach, all drawn up and dead. So they called the office and told them about it—headquarters. They didn't know what to do. They was all—they's all panicked. They didn't know whether to call the hearse and neither of 'em [*unclear words*]. You'd thought that the president of the United States had died. They just didn't want to announce that Hoover had died. They sent another car out there. [*Laughs*] These agents put a sheet over Hoover and carried him [*laughs*] out there and put him in the back seat of a car—sittin' up.

RR: Rather than an ambulance or something like that.

FT: One on either side of him [*laughs*] and took 'im down to the morgue.

RR: For crying out loud. Boy, isn't that something? [*FT laughs*]
Well, I guess he inspired that kind of—call it respect or fear or whatever. [02:46:36] Did you ever meet a president while you were working for the FBI?

FT: No. Huh-uh.

RR: Or assigned to help out the selective service or anything like that—[United States] Secret Service?

FT: No, I never was.

RR: Presidential detail or . . .

FT: I never was any close to havin' any dealings with a president.
No. [*Electric fan oscillates*] Saw several of them, pretty close to some of them, but I never did have any personal contact—dealings with them.

RR: Yeah. What would be the occasion—up at Washington and saw them speak, or something like that?

[02:47:29] FT: Well, Harry Truman—old Harry—he'd get in that old car, and old Harry'd go any place. He—you're liable to see him walking down the street. In fact, he slipped out of the secret—he slipped out of the White House up there, and they called the Secret Service sayin', "Do you know where the president is?"

"Yes, he's in his quarters." "No, he's walking down the street in front of the hotel over there on Pennsylvania Avenue." [RR *laughs*] Old Harry'd climb out the window and go down the fire escape and everything else, but. Old Harry would come lots of times down on Market Street in Newark—sittin' back there in the back with his old hat cocked on his head, wavin' and grinnin' at people.

RR: I called him up on the telephone one time when I was a student at the University of Missouri, and he picked up the phone himself. Answered his own phone [*laughs*] after he had left the White House. He was [*electric fan oscillates*]*—he was some guy.*

FT: Old Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy, he come to St. Louis one time when we were—when he was attorney general and went through the office up there. But he looked like somebody who came off of South Market Street or East Market Street. He had on the sloppiest-fitting clothing I've ever seen on any human bein' in my lifetime.

RR: I guess if you're rich enough, you can get away with dressin' like that.

FT: And he acted like he owned that whole part of the world up there.

RR: Yeah.

[02:48:58] FT: Let's see, there was something else I thought about the other day I thought you might be interested in about the Bureau. [Pause] In fact, when I lost my eye they's all worried about Little Rock, whether or not I's gonna—what was I gonna do—we didn't have any one-eyed agents in the field [*unclear words*], and I was still in the hospital. Beulah brought in a letter about that [FT Edit: five-by-seven inches] big from Hoover—had his return address on it. It wasn't official. It was just individual-type of old envelope. Had a stamp on it. Said to the effect of, "Dear Mr. Thomas, I've been informed of your injury." Said, "Follow the doctor's instructions and give your—give my deepest regrets to your wife and boys—to your wife and children." Said, "When the doctor says you can go back to work, resume your normal duties." That meant be resident agent here in El Dorado. So I called Little Rock. Old Herb Hoxie was the agent in charge then. I told him, I said, "Herb, I know what I'm gonna do when I get out of the hospital." "What?" Said, "I'm going to stay in El Dorado." "Who says?" I said, "Mr. Hoover." [*RR laughs*] "How'd you get—how did you find out?" I said, "He sent me a letter." "Well, I didn't get a copy." I said, "You didn't lose an eye either." [*RR laughs*] I told the Beulah, I said, "He'll be down here before dark." About two and a half or three hours,

here he come. "Let me see that letter. Let me see that letter."
So I showed it to him. Said, "Never heard of it. Never heard of
a thing like that. Never heard of this. This is unheard of. Can I
take this to Little Rock and make copies?" I said, "Hell, no, you
can't make that over and make copies of it." He said, "How's it
going to be on record?" I said, "I've got a record. That's as far
as I know of. [*Laughs*] There's a copy [in] Washington, and the
one I've got on this [*unclear word*] desk." [*Laughter*] [*Pause*]
Anything else you can think about [*unclear word*]?

[02:50:55] RR: Well, after bank robberies, you mentioned
surveillance and that kind of—what other kinds of cases would
concern the FBI that you'd get involved in? You mentioned
fugitives . . .

FT: Theft of interstate shipment. Most any crime where interstate
commerce is concerned.

RR: Yeah.

[02:51:14] FT: Theft of interstate shipment, car theft, interstate
transportation of a motor vehicle, interstra—interstate
transportation of women for immoral purposes, bank robberies,
bank embezzlement, thing—theft of government property. I
made a case one time—I used to laugh about it—the interstate
transportation of stolen cattle. Had a case up in Poplar Bluff one

time—having a periodic inspection. The inspectors out of Washington came to St. Louis, and he said, "Hey, the inspectors are raising hell up there. We haven't had an interstate transportation of stolen cattle in the history of the FBI office at St. Louis." I said, "I'll get you one 'fore dark." So I called the sheriff over at Doniphan, Missouri. I said, "Sheriff—anybody bring any cows up there? Did anybody come by and bring any cows?" "Yeah, that old boy from Poky brought a cow up here the other day and put it in the sale"—Pocahontas, Arkansas.

RR: He called it "Poky?"

FT: Called it "Poky." Pocahontas. [*RR laughs*] I said, "What is it worth?" He said, "Well, I think it brought about \$25 on the sale." I said, "What was the old boy's name?" He told me. "Got him in jail over here now." Said, "Okay." I called the United States Attorney up at St. Louis. I said, "I've got a guy who stole a cow down at Pocahontas—brought it up here and sold it \$25 in the sale at Doniphan, Missouri." He said, "Hell, I'm not going to prosecute that case—prosecute for lack of worthiness or something like that." I said, "Okay with me." So I dictated it and put it in the mail and sent it to St. Louis. I said, "You'll have an interstate transportation of cattle case when the mail comes in the morning." So [*laughter*] . . .

[02:53:11] RR: So anything involving—between the states and the federal government? Anything outside of the jurisdiction of the local authority?

FT: Anything that's not specifically assigned to some other agency. That was in the deal. We was in charge of the interior security of the United States—espionage, sabotage, handled deserters durin' the war period—still do, I guess—interstate transportation of women, as I said a while ago—unlawful flight to avoid prosecutions, kidnappin' . . .

RR: Were there any other kidnappin' cases besides the one Greenlease case that you—that you were involved in?

FT: No. Not of any magnitude. No.

RR: Yeah.

[02:54:09] FT: But, Roy, you know, those people in law enforcement in—can do people a lot—can do a lot of good for the community. State police—[Missouri] State [Highway] Patrol up there in Missouri called one time. Said, "Got a guy out here just arrested just south—north of the line just this side of Corning with a stolen car out of Illinois." So I went up there to the jail and interviewed him. The guy said, "Yeah." Said, "I went out tryin' to find a job 'cause I couldn't find one around home anywhere." From down at Walnut Ridge. "I couldn't find a job around home,

so I decided to just drive till I could find one. Ridin' a bus, hitchhikin'." Said, "I called home last night, and my wife is in the hospital, an emergency appendectomy." Said, "I've got two little kids at home, and they haven't got anybody to take care of 'em." He said, "I was tryin' to get a ride back home and saw that old car." He pulled up in front of a drunk, so he pulled up in front of an old beer joint over there in southern Illinois. Said, "I looked in, and the keys were inside." Guy said, "I just needed direct transportation home." Said, "I'm gonna take that car home. As soon as I get through with my business, I'll take it back, put it back where I got it." [02:55:17] So I called the United States attorney's office and told him what the situation was. I said, "Dead right violation of interstate transportation of a stolen motor vehicle," I said, "but the intent is lacking." You have to have intent to violate a law. Said, "There's lack of intent. He didn't intend to use it for his own use other than to goin' home and see about his sick wife and see about his kids." "Decline prosecution." I said, "What reason?" "You put any reason you want to." I said, "All right. I'll put in 'lack of intent.'" Old boy, said, "Well, we're not going to prosecute you." So I went down and bought him a bus ticket and gave him five dollars, put him on a bus to Walnut Ridge. [*Laughs*] Called up

in the mornin' and told the old boy's car was down at the courthouse in Poplar Buff, and 'he better' come get it. [*Laughs*]

RR: Oh, my. Oh, that's wrenching when you have to deal with somebody like that—down on his luck.

FT: Yeah, it is. Now what good would it have done me to send him to the penitentiary for a year?

RR: Yeah, yeah.

FT: But it did me a lot—did my heart a lot of good, though, to help him get home to see his wife and those little sick kids. I verified if she was, and she was sick. I wonder if that old boy ever thinks about that to today.

RR: I'll bet he does. I'll bet he does.

[02:56:39] FT: There's another time I was at Kennett, Missouri.

There was a guy had recovered some counterfeit money from a guy down there, and they gave it to me to give to the ter—to the Secret Service. So I took it home. We lived at Poplar Bluff in a rented house. I took it in, and I told Beulah, "You know what?" She was wanting to talk about buying something. I said, "We don't have to worry now. We've got the money." [*Laughter*] I showed her these \$10 and \$20 bills. She said, "Where'd you get that money?" I said, "That guy—some fellow who's president of the National Bankers Association had a bank down at Kennett.

He got out of his car—it fell out there on the sidewalk, and he just kept on going." She said, "What did you do?" I said, "I picked it up." "Well, that's stealing!" I said, "No, I found it—I found this money." Said, "You call that man and tell him you've got the money." Said, "No, he'll know I's stealing it. I can't do it. We're just going to have to spend it." [RR laughs] She went to pick up the telephone. Said, "What are you going to do?" She said, "I'm gonna call the state police."

RR: And turn you in! [Laughs]

FT: So I finally convinced her it was counterfeit money, and so that settled that problem. [RR laughs]

[Tape stopped]

[02:58:04] FT: Any other questions that you've thought of? That's just ?three little old simple things?. I could probably think of a hundred after a while, but . . .

RR: Well, I'm glad you called me. 'Cause I—this has, you know, I'm glad you got me back over here. I don't think of anything else right now, but I may think of something else later on, so I'll . . .

[Tape stopped]

[02:58:24] RR: You were telling about being out in . . .

FT: I was visiting with my grandfather at Uniontown, Arkansas. It's up north of Van Buren over there in the Cookson Hills. I was

about nine or ten years old. I believe it was 1932 or 1933. So we got in a wagon one day and went to town. A guy had—Jess Byess, had a store up there and a post office and whatever included with it. A big old wagon, big old porch there where they'd back their wagons up and load them. We were sitting there, and a guy came by in a black Model B Ford coupe [FT addition: It was a Model A Ford Coupe]—had on white shoes, was really dressed up—never seen anybody dressed up like that in my life. He knew ever—all the old men sittin' around and everything. And visited with him. Bought me an orange soda pop and bought everybody a drink. Then he got in his car and went on down the road. 'Bout thirty minutes later, here came a guy up there, boy's out of breath, white as a sheet, had a \$10 bill wavin' it around. Said, "I just w—I just changed a tire for a guy down there at the—by the creek," said, "had a flat." Said, "He gave me a \$10 bill. Said his name was Pretty Boy Floyd." He said, "It was him, too!" And these old boys said, "Shh! Don't say anything about that." Said, "Don't mention his name up here." Said, "He came by a while ago [*laughs*] and bought us all drinks." Said, "He's a friend of ours." So he—they chastised that old boy pretty well. [*Laughs*] But he did. I remember him being there before and the state militia being out there and the

army and everybody else trying to find old Floyd. He'd go up there and hide out in those hills up there, and everybody would protect him. He was sorta the Robin Hood of the Ozarks.

RR: Now this Uniontown was in Ok—in Arkansas?

FT: In Arkansas.

RR: But not far from the Cookson Hills?

FT: The edge of the Cookson Hills. It's a Short, Oklahoma, and Long, Oklahoma, over there, the first things you come to, going over towards McAlester—I mean, Muskogee. [FT Edit: Salisaw]

[03:00:34] RR: And your grandfather had a farm . . .

FT: He had a farm over back on Lee's Creek out there—bought a farm. Will Roden—*R-O-D-E-N*. My mama's dad.

RR: And where was the farm that was next to Floyd's father's farm?

FT: There was another farm my granddad had owned before that—it was over next to—over west of there, down over there towards Oklahoma. And he had some farms either on the Oklahoma line or just over in Oklahoma because Pretty Boy Floyd's brother later was sheriff of that county over there.

RR: Mmm.

FT: At the same time, he was outrunnin' the law. His brother was the sheriff over there.

RR: I'll declare. Yeah. And your grandfather's farm was next to . . .

FT: Was next to Pretty Boy Floyd's daddy's farm.

RR: And that's where he would come and hang—and hide out when they were . . .

FT: That and back up in the hills. I think they were up towards . . .

RR: Well, I just wanted to get that story. I've . . .

[Editor's Note: End of Tape 2, Side B on original media.]

[End of Interview 03:01:37]

[Transcribed by Cheri Pearce Riggs]

[Edited by Hope Amason]

[Edited by Susan Kendrick-Perry]

[Formatted and reviewed by Sheila Czech]

Upon his review of the transcript, Mr. Thomas provided the following information, which has been included as an addendum.

BULGE

We pulled back to Worms, Germany, for rest and relaxation. After one day, we pulled out about 5:00 a.m. and headed north. We traveled until dusk and were told to dig in at a junction of two roads. Orders were to hold this junction at all costs. I do not recall how much time had elapsed since the 101st Airborne had been surrounded at Bastogne. The strange thing is that I don't believe we fired a shot or took any fire. Things were rather chaotic in that the Germans had American uniforms and vehicles and were roaming the area at will and capturing American troops, vehicles, and guns. When this was solved and things returned to normal, after about a week we returned to Germany—vicinity of Worms. In the meantime, General Anthony McAuliffe took command of the 101st after leading the attack for three weeks. We were pulled back for rest and relaxation. The first night of the alleged rest and relaxation, we walked north for two to three hours and then started across country—through forest—and after all night, and until about 4:00 the next afternoon, we arrived at a point where there were two small towns about two miles apart at the intersection of three highways. Our job was to secure these two towns and hold

them until the armored [division], plus additional infantry, could drive from the north and south in pincer movements—join at the intersection. We were successful in our mission, and after about a day and a half the armored units arrived. We were told that the pocket formation contained an entire German army totaling about 400,000 troops. After this, resistance became weak. I don't recall if this was before or after Munich. I am inclined to think it was in Bavaria.

POW CAMP

Early in the war, the German army surrounded Stalingrad, [Russia]. The Russian army surrendered and joined Germany in fighting the Russians. At the end of hostilities, they gave up to the Allies. They were all in a POW [prisoner of war] camp. I do not recall the location. American and Russian G2 [army intelligence] decided who was to be returned to Russian control and charged with high treason. As a result, my stay was extended for an indefinite period. I was assigned eleven men whom I had never seen before to perform the task of separating those to be returned from those [who would] stay. We were issued eleven nightsticks and one carbine. I chose a man from Colorado to handle the carbine. We were told that all barracks were alike, with doors at each end and the bunks arranged down each side the same as American barracks' arrangements. I was assigned the

barracks farthest from the main gate. I requested two times to check the barracks to ensure it was like the others. I was assured it was. It contained the army commander and other general officers. Being assured the building had doors in either end, I still did not believe them, and upon arriving at the back of the barracks at 4:00 a.m., I discovered a solid wall. I checked around the corner and observed six doors down the side. Not being surprised, we proceeded room to room. I was given a sheet of paper written in Croatian, which I was told requested the occupants file out in an orderly manner, plus a sheet of paper containing names. Some had red lines through them. These were the ones being sent back to Russia. When we got inside the first room, I asked in my best German, "*Vi beist de kommandant?*" ["Where is the commander?"] It was pointed out that he was on the top bunk at the back of the room. He sat up in bed, and after reading the note, he replied, "*Warum?*" ["Why?"] I replied, "*Weil.*" ["Because."] He reached for something in the rafters above his head. He was then assisted from his bed and out the door into the snow. We emptied the building and then took them one at a time back inside for personal items. No one was seriously injured in the matter. I took two men in the rooms to clean them out. We loaded them in freight cars for their return to Russia. They left the area in the same train in which we arrived. I was told later that upon turning them over to the

Russians, they took the POWs from four of our cars [forty men] and put them all in one car and nailed the doors shut.

[Edited by Hope Amason]

[Edited by Susan Kendrick-Perry]

[Formatted and reviewed by Sheila Czech]