

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Bud Whetstone

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

September 21, 2011

Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

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

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Bud Whetstone on September 21, 2011, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Okay, Bud. It's—uh—you and me here at your home in—uh—your and Kim's home [*camera clicks*] here in Little Rock, Arkansas. The date is September 21, 2011. Uh—my name is Scott Lunsford, and you're Bud Whet—Whetstone, and I'm here with the Pryor Center. We're gonna—uh—do a high-definition audio/video recording of this—uh—interview. And we're gonna give you [*camera clicks*] the opportunity to—um—look at all the raw footage. We'll provide a DVD for you to—to do that. We'll also provide you a transcript to read through, and we'll ask you to make clarifications and things of that nature on the content. We won't ask you to change any of the grammar. We—uh—are verbatim shop. We try to impart the character of the person that we're interviewing, and it kind of needs to match what's going on with the video. If you find anything in the video or in the transcript that you're uncomfortable with, we'll redact it for you. Um—this is all about your story, told the way you want it told, and we'll work with you to—to get that right. And—um—if—uh—uh—once we get that process done, then we're gonna post this stuff on the web. And what we'll put on the web are

some highlight video clips of this interview. We'll put all of the audio of the edited interview and the transcript. We're also gonna be scanning family pictures that you've provided for us to scan. Those will be posted on the web. [00:01:38] And we'll encourage people to look and research and use that material—um—including—uh—students in K-12—um—college students, graduate students, [*camera clicks*] researchers, documentarians. Uh—we really want the—uh—history of Arkansas to get out there as told by Arkansans, which is pretty much what Barbara and David had in mind for this program. So if all of that's okay with you, we're gonna keep goin', and we're gonna have a great conversation. If there's—if you've got any questions or any concerns, you should air them now, and we'll talk about it. If you don't wanna do this, this is the time to back out. [*Laughs*]

Bud Whetstone: Rock and roll.

[00:02:24] SL: All right. Here we go. Well, first of all, let me thank you for the support that you've already given the Pryor Center. Uh—without you, I'm quite certain that we would have never gotten Clyde Scott—uh—who is just a wonderful person and an icon in Arkansas history in many ways. And—uh—without you I doubt very seriously that we would've ever gotten Jennings Osborne—uh—who was a wonderful interview—a very—uh—

touching—uh—story and one of the hardest-working individuals I've ever, ever known. Uh—very impressive. And without your help and your encouragement—uh—to those folks, I doubt that the people of Arkansas would've ever heard their stories. So again, I wanna thank you for—for what you've done, and it is an honor to sit across from you now because I keep telling people that you're kind of the Forrest Gump of Arkansas [*laughs*]*—*that you just have a knack of being in the right place at the right time—uh—for history evolving in—in front of you. It's just remarkable.

BW: Well, I've been in a lot of wrong places at the wrong time, too, [*SL laughs*] but I—I have had a Forrest Gump life. I really have.

[00:03:39] SL: Well, I usually start with—um—uh—where and when you were born. So where—where were you born, and when were you born?

BW: It was—uh—August 1942. August the twenty-fifth, 1942—Warner Brown Hospital in El Dorado, Arkansas. And I had a sister that was fourteen months older than me, and so that's how it all started.

[00:04:08] SL: Was that your only other sibling was your sister?

BW: I've got—uh—four sisters total. Now the one I—that I just got through mentioning, she died about a year ago . . .

SL: Oh.

BW: . . . from ALS—from Lou Gehrig's Disease. But she and I were like twins, pretty much. So . . .

SL: Well, I'm sorry about that loss. That's a horrible—uh—painful disease to—to watch come over somebody. Um—so—uh—in El Dorado, Arkansas, in 1942—I guess that's—uh—during World War II.

BW: That'd make me a war baby.

[00:04:40] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, tell me a little bit about your parents, your mom and dad. What were—what—what were their names?

BW: Bernard Perry Whetstone and Carolyn Zoe—*Z-O-E*—Dill—*D-I-L-L*, before she was married. And—uh—she was from Little Rock. She grad—my—she graduated from Little Rock Central, and my dad—uh—graduated from the University of Arkansas Law School. He went to Henderson one year and then went to the University of Arkansas and—uh—graduated there in 1934.

[00:05:16] SL: So—uh—your mom made it through high school and then . . .

BW: She actually went to—to—uh—El Dorado Junior College for a—a year or two, and then she got married. But—uh—she was a—most—mostly a house—housewife. She did—did not work. She was born in—uh—1919, which would be right at the end of World

War I.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: And my dad was born in—uh—1912, which would've been the year the *Titanic* went down.

[00:05:46] SL: So—um—did you ever know either set of your grandparents?

BW: I knew—on my dad's side I knew my—uh—grandfather, and I knew my grandmother. And they are from Bastrop, Louisiana. North Louisiana and—uh—Crossett. They lived—my da—my grandfather had a store in Crossett, and he had various stores—uh—from time to time, just dry-goods stores. And all—all of that's pretty interesting within itself because—uh—I had an—I had an opportunity to meet him. And he probably died when I was about ten years old.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: But we talked quite a bit, and he was a—he was a very interesting character, very interesting character.

[00:06:31] SL: Well, let's just go ahead and hear some of these stories. I'm always lookin' [BW laughs] for the oldest stories that . . .

BW: Well, some of the—some of the stories that I tell about him are so—so outlandish until I'm almost embarrassed to tell it 'cause I

won't—know a lot of people are gonna say, "That's not true. That didn't happen."

SL: Well . . .

BW: But . . .

SL: . . . that's their problem.

BW: [*Laughter*] He had a—he had a—uh—dry-goods store. He was—he had a—Crossett was a mill town. The only reason Crossett existed was because of the lumber.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: So he had—he opened up a store where you could spend your money and come to his store in north Crossett. And the other stores were scrip stores 'cause they—the Crossett Lumber Company paid in scrip, and that would mean they'd give you some kind of coins or some kind of money that was printed by them for their stores, the company store. So my grandfather offered—uh—the alternative to that if you wanted to come to his place. And he sold everything from dry—dry goods to coffins to—uh—everything in the world. My dad used to talk about when he was—when my dad was twelve years old, somebody would die, and they'd come into the store. My dad would—would be the funeral director when he was twelve years old would say, "Okay." He had a little book, and he went through the—he'd

say, "Here's what you're gonna do now. You're gonna do this and that," and they would—and just—he'd be twelve, and the grown people would let him tell 'em what to do. Course, back then you did not have to have a license to bury anybody. You'd just go dig a hole in the yard or in a field and put 'em in the ground. And so—uh—it was that—it was that type thing. And they had—uh . . .

[00:08:11] SL: So your—your dad grew up in Crossett, then, or . . .

BW: Correct.

SL: Kay.

BW: My grandfather was—was—they called him peculiar is what everybody called him. But he was a—quite an unusual character. And—uh—he did—he—he—that's one thing I think about Whetstones—I—somebody told me one time that—I was speaking at a seminar, and a girl was a Whetstone. She said her mother was married to a Whetstone, and she said, "All Whetstones are extremely bright and—and—and crazy as hell." [SL laughs] Which—I don't know—at least half of that's true, I'm sure.

SL: Well, so you come by it honest, then.

BW: Well, maybe the crazy part more than the smart. [SL laughs]

But . . .

[00:08:53] SL: Well, so—uh—give me some—uh—uh—stories about your grandfather, then.

BW: Well—uh—his father had fought in the Civil War. His name was Grandpa Jake—fought in the Civil War. I don't know too much about him except that he fought at Vicksburg, and when he came back from Vicksburg—uh—they claimed that he swam the river when it—when they—when Vicksburg was—uh—captured. I think that was in 1863. And he ca—he walked back to Bastrop, Louisiana, where his—that's where he signed up—and he was about seventeen, eighteen years old at the time. And they said that he's told everybody to—to get back. They had a slave there that said, "Oh, there comes Mr. Whetstone." And he's—he was walkin' down the road, and he told him to get back, that he had lice all over him. And—and they—he went in the barn, and they got a big tub, and—uh—they put soap and lye in it and it—took his clothes out in—on a stick and burned our—burned his clothes. And they—and they shaved his head and—to—uh—because of all the sores and everything that he had, and he was in pretty bad sh—condition. [00:10:05] And the—the main thing I guess I know about him is they—my grandfather ordered a—uh—some casts of—a plaster cast of, like, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and those kind of things to . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: . . . sell in his store.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: And when the—when they were uncratin' the cast—uh—Grandpa Jake, who'd fought in the Civil War, saw that cast of Abraham Lincoln and took it out in the back and—and—uh—chopped it up at the wood pile, and he was—he's—he was pretty emotional about that part. And my grandmother, my—my own grandmother, married to—my—my daddy's mother, she told me when I was about fourteen years old—she died when I was in college. She—she died in about nineteen—uh—sixty. She told me, she said, "You know, I'm an old woman, and I know you think I'm crazy for sayin' this," but she said, "they tell y'all all these things in the history books that is just not the truth, that y'all are all brainwashed." But she said, "I'm gonna tell you what," she said, "Abraham Lincoln was the devil himself." [*SL laughs*] So I was introduced to some real strong Southern—uh—uh—influence, let me put it that way. And—uh—one of her daughters was a member of the women's Ku Klux Klan—one of my aunts, Aunt Bobbie, they called her. Bobbie Galloway. When—and when she was on her death bed, I was talkin' to her, and she said—she—she said—she was livin' in Monroe,

Louisiana, and she said, "Honey," she said, "looks like I'm gonna die without ever gettin' a chance to kill a Yankee or a nigger."

[*SL laughs*]

SL: Oh man!

[00:11:53] BW: And I—I—I just—course, I was doin' civil rights work in Mississippi at the time.

SL: Uh-huh.

BW: So it—it—or had done civil rights work in Mississippi, so it just chills you, but that's the way it was.

SL: You . . .



[00:12:05] BW: My grandfather—that crazy story I was gonna tell you about him—he had the store, and they had a terrible problem with rats 'cause they would get in the feed in—in the—in the ba—they had a barn, and they would get—and they'd be in the barn, and they would get in the feed and so forth. And he would kill a rat with his hands. And he would put a glove—put on leather gloves, and they would be in the shelves, and he would reach up in a shelf and grab 'em and kill 'em with his hands. And he would kill 'em with his bare hands if he didn't have time to put on gloves—if he saw one of the tails stickin' out. And he would—he would have—uh—these black people that worked for him go out to these rat holes that were out—be out

around the—the—uh—land there, and they'd be real slick with where the rats had gone in and out. And they'd heat up water and pour it in that rat hole, and he would sit there with his hands and kill 'em and stack 'em. I've heard that all my life. Old people tell me about it. And people'd ask him—they'd say, "Aren't you afraid a rat will bite you?" And he said, "When—when you're squeezin' somethin' to death, it can't close its mouth." He said, "If you haven't got the guts to hang on, you're in trouble," he said. "And you never grab a rat and—to hold it. You got to squeeze it." And he said, "You gotta squeeze it to death." But just things like that that are unimaginable to me. That's—that's not even a believable story, but I've heard everybody tell it for years.

SL: Well, it sounds like hardscrabble, pioneer, do what you had to do to survive stuff, you know?

[00:13:38] BW: Well, my dad was born in the back of that store.

And, just coincidentally, Jim Johnson who was a—"Justice Jim" Johnson who was on the Supreme Court of Arkansas . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . and ran for governor—uh—he lived next door to my dad.

And when Jim Johnson was born, my dad was ten years old, and he, my dad, was standin' outside of the room when—when the

doctor came out to tell—tell 'em that it—that it was a boy. My daddy was standin' right there. So he and Jim Johnson were always close. They were never close politically, but they were close—uh—friends.

[00:14:12] SL: So—um—you know, the dry-goods store—uh—uh—typically back in those days was kind of the gathering spot of—of the town elders, and I mean, it was like—it's where everything was. There—I—I'm assuming it probably had some kind of a potbelly stove . . .

BW: Absolutely.

SL: . . . and kept things warm. It was a place to be warm in the winter, and—uh—if you needed anything you opened up an account or did whatever you had to do at the dry-goods store.

[00:14:45] It was a—did he ever have any—um—um—wagons—rolling store? Did he ever deliver stuff out or people always come to him?

BW: Yeah, they—uh—I remember one of the things my dad told me is that, at one point in time, he was gonna sell one of his stores, and so somebody came to him and said, "Well, how mu—tell me about your store. How much—let me look at your books." And he didn't have any books 'cause back then you didn't have to pay income tax.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:15:12] BW: Didn't have to account to anything. He said, "Hell, you just order it, bring it in, and then you sell it." And they said, "Well, how—how do we know what it's worth?" He said, "Well, look at my family." He said, "I've been able to keep my family up," and that's just the way he thought and did business.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: He knew—he knew he was showin' a profit, but he didn't know how much. Didn't know how much he was makin'. And he owned—uh—land—he owned some timberland and things like that, but that was just a different time and a different way of lookin' at it. Now my dad had to get up—when he was six years old, he—his job was to get up and sweep out the store and to—uh—start the fires in the house and start the fire in—and in the store—get the store goin'—the warm—in the wintertime. And—uh—that was one of his things. Now his whole life he loved to sleep in. [*Laughs*] I think that affected him his whole life. He said he's—he'd had all that he wanted. And he was—he was—he—he was the only one in his family that could drive, and his daddy bought a car, but he never could learn how to drive it. And so my dad started drivin' the car when he was bout twelve years old, the family car. And he was the family chauffeur. His

mother couldn't drive, and his daddy couldn't drive and never could.

[00:16:24] SL: Well now, did your—did—did your father have siblings, too? I mean, was he the oldest?

BW: My dad was the next to the youngest. He had ten sisters.

SL: Wow!

BW: And—uh—my grandfather said he—he had always loved women all his life, so he just figured that—uh—God had given him a house full of women.

SL: That's somethin' else. Well, so he . . .

[00:16:46] BW: But my grandfather—you mention this, and this is—I meant to throw this in—you were talkin' about sittin' around the store and the things they did and how they gossip and everything.

SL: Uh-huh.

BW: There was a lot of that. It was a—it's a—it was a meeting place. And—uh—there's a picture of one of his stores that—that you have scanned that—the B. P. Whetstone store.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:17:05] BW: One of 'em. But—uh—my grandfather was a—was a—uh—chiropractor, but nobody ever taught him. Nobody knows where he picked that up. He—but you'd go in there and

get an adjustment. That's another thing—he'd lay you up on a table and [*laughs*] give you adjustments. And my dad—my—he taught my dad how to do that and—to give adjustments of the back and neck, and my dad taught me how to do it, and I taught my boy how to do it. So on—on a minor scale, we can do adjustments. I'm sure most chiropractors wouldn't think we do too good a job.

[00:17:38] SL: [*Laughs*] That's pretty dangerous stuff you start messin' with people's spine.

BW: Correct.

SL: [*Laughs*] But back in those days, you know, you—you dealt with what you had to deal with and you went—if someone—uh—was in the community that could do stuff like that, that's who you went to.

[00:17:58] BW: Well, my grandfather—uh—took care of horses and cows and things like that, too—you know, would—would give medicine for them.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: Or whatever—whatever grain or whatever it was. And my dad told me that, at one time, they passed a law in Arkansas that said that you had to go to school to get a—a veterinarian's license to be a veterinarian, but they say—had made it

retroactive where you could—anybody that had—it said anybody that had dealt with and treated animals could be a veterinarian. You just had to sign a—that you had.

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: An affidavit.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:34] BW: And so my dad was tryin' to get my grandfather to get a veterinarian's license, but he said he didn't need one 'cause he's—he was gonna do whatever he's gonna do anyway, but he—he would've been eligible for that. But I think it just shows you how things were back then—how different they were.

[00:18:51] SL: What about your—uh—your grandmother on your dad's side? Um—what—how—how was her—what was her role back then?

BW: Her name was . . .

SL: Ten.

BW: Her name was . . .

SL: Ten.

BW: . . . Allie.

SL: And—and ten—uh—children. Ten girls?

BW: Well—uh—I'm kind of surprised myself that I didn't—didn't discuss this with her more because I was in college when she

died. Her first five children died before my dad was born, and—uh—that's a—that's a pretty riveting thing when you think about it.

SL: Yeah.

[00:19:31] BW: And some of 'em—not many of 'em died at birth.

They died from various fevers and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

BW: . . . and this type thing. So—uh—you know, emotionally what that would do to a person. I—I buried my—my boy when he was twenty-six, and so I know a little bit about that and what that does to you. And she buried five. The first five. So I don't—I don't know how she could've survived that. And then she—back then, when people would die, she would take people in. She's raised several different people for several years or maybe five or six or eight years they would live in her house. And so at first they had the house in the back of the store, and then later on, they built a house out beside the store.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:18] SL: Did you ever get to go to that house?

BW: I never did. It was torn down by the time that I ever got over there. She moved later on to Monroe, Louisiana, and all my aunts moved to Monroe, Louisiana. And they never lived at

Bastrop in—to my knowledge.

SL: Now how do you spell that? Bass . . .

BW: Bastrop. *B-A-S-T-R-O-P*.

[00:20:41] SL: Bastrop. Kay. Well, so what about on your mother's side of the family? What's . . .

BW: Well, my mother's side of the family are a bunch of Yankees.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And they're from Indiana. And so they—the Nesbitts—Mathias Firestone Nesbitt, I think, was my great-great—was my great-grandfather's name. And he fought in the Civil War, and I've got a photograph of him as an old man, and—behind him are his two sons and then my great-uncle. And they're in—the three behind him—he's sittin' down. Behind him th—they're in World War I outfits, so that'd be about 1918 or so. And I knew my great-uncle, but I didn't know the others. He fought for the Indiana militia or infantry or whatever it was, and he and his two brothers—and I've got photographs also of he and his two brothers, and you can see that if you look at what y'all are gonna scan.

SL: Yeah.

BW: If you'll notice, there are three brothers, and they've got their pistols, they've got their uniforms, and they've got their muskets

with their bayonets. And the interesting thing is the two on the outside, the two brothers, are pretty good-lookin' dudes. My grandfather's the ugliest one in the bunch [*SL laughs*] right there in the middle.

[00:22:22] SL: Well, there's no accounting for that, I guess. I—well so, I'm tryin' to—was there any—did that cause any conflict within the family that your mother's family was—were Yankees and out of the North, and your daddy's family was deeply entrenched in the South and the Southern cause of the . . .



BW: No, my grandfather—my great-grandfather was G. I. Dill, Glenn Isaiah, I think it is—no, Glenn Israel Dill—*D-I-L-L*. They were German. He was born in the United States, but most of his family was born in Germany. In any event, when he was a young man, he moved to Harrisburg, Arkansas. And he invented the first rice tractor. [00:23:21] And he, along with my grandfather, invented the first rice tractor, and that's what opened up rice in eastern Arkansas. In Little Rock everybody was—all these different places were tryin' to get him to set his factory up in their place, and they were recruiting him. And I'm told that Little Rock—I know Little Rock gave him the land for his factory, and th—it was the first time that Little Rock ever recruited any . . .

SL: Industry.

BW: . . . industry, was that—was the Dill Tractor Company. And then it got—there was a drought sometime in the early 1920s. It was before the Depression.

SL: Yeah.

[00:24:08] BW: There was a big drought, and he had all this—he had these tractors, and nobody could buy 'em. No farmer could buy 'em. And so that deal went belly up. That's how I was almost wealthy. Everybody's got that story about how they were almost wealthy. Well, in any event, he put a bunch of the tractors on a train and went down to Mexico. And he had all of his tractors on a train down there, and that's before you had insurance, before you insured anything. And Pancho Villa burned the train and burned all of his tractors up, so that was the end of the tractor business. And I've got also photographs of him down there in those big—with the big hats, and they rode mules. And he told—he died when I was six years old, so I knew him. And he told me a little bit about it. He said when he was in Mexico that you had to have guards, and they would be on—you'd be on horses, and they'd have those, like you see in the movies, have those straps with all the bullets, and every—you had—everybody had to carry guns and that type thing. So that was a . . .

SL: Wild West.

BW: Yeah. But my grandfather, Glenn Dill—he was from—they were from Payne, Ohio—*P-A-Y-N-E*—Payne, Ohio, which is right on the border of Indiana and Ohio. I worked on a farm up there when I was fourteen years old, on their farm.

[00:25:34] SL: Now this is on your mother's side?

BW: Correct.

SL: Okay.

BW: My grandfather was about as strong on race as any man I ever met. He was a—he didn't like me much because he had such strong feelings about black, which was kind of unusual because my—he was the Yankee side. He was from the North, and I never could get why he felt so strongly about it.

[00:26:04] SL: Oh, I think that prejudice was . . .

BW: But he . . .

SL: . . . very strong in the North.

BW: It was—he was more than most. And that was a prevailing matter when I was a little boy. The race situation was always, always in our face 'cause when I was young, like twelve or so, would be 1954, about the time the decision came down. And my grandfather on the—my grandfather who—Bernard Pugh, B. P., they called him, the one that owned the store. When he was an

old man—that was in 1954—I was sittin' by his bed and he said, "Son," he said, "I understand we havin' a lot of trouble with blacks." And he called—they called 'em Negroes or colored people back then. Didn't call 'em black; called 'em colored or Negro. [00:26:53] He said, "We're havin' trouble with the colored people." And he said, "Apparently, a lot of it has to do with eatin' with—they don't wanna sit down and eat with each other even." And I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "Well, I just wanted to give you a little family history." And he said, "I was raised on an old black titty till I was about seven years old," he said, "so we've been eat"—he said, "The Whetstones have been eatin' with 'em for a long time." [SL laughs] And then he just laughed. And he didn't seem to have any energy about it, or a lot of energy about it, and he never mentioned it. And his dad was the one that fought in the Civil War, Jake. So it was kind of—but this—the feeling was so, so strong, just prevailing feeling.

SL: This prejudice toward African Americans was all around you growin' up. Is that . . .

BW: Correct.

[00:27:44] SL: And—but that's—so your—but your father wasn't like that.



BW: No, my father wasn't like that at all. And I don't [*clears throat*]*—*I'm not sure what that was about. I'm not sure how he—I mean, his sister was a member of the women's Ku Klux Klan, and White Citizens' Council, and John Birch Society, and all of his sisters that I know of were very, very strong racists, some more than others. He wasn't. He was the first—my dad was the first lawyer, he was a lawyer, and he was the first lawyer in Arkansas that had a jury quashed for not having women or not having blacks on it. He was the one that opened Arkansas up on that. And everybody knew it was unconstitutional, but nobody was gonna question it, particularly in the South, and he did question it. Course, he'd made a lot of people mad. But he's the one that put women and blacks on juries in Arkansas.

[00:28:49] SL: Well, what about your mom's family? You mentioned there was some prevailing prejudice there, too. Was your mom [*BW clears throat*] prejudiced as well or . . .

BW: No, it didn't take on her somehow. It didn't take on her. And I don't know what that was about either. It's—it was kind of hard to understand because you might have somebody in a family that would dwell on the race situation all the time. Now you understand, everybody that's a war baby, my generation, every single one of us were dealing with people that had been through



the Depression and had been through World War II. It wasn't like a lot of us—a lot of 'em of my group had, all of us had. And so we didn't get the impression, when you were growin' up and durin' the war, you didn't get the impression that anybody'd wanna take any crap off of you as far as grown-ups are concerned and teachers or anybody else. They'd whip your butt in a minute [*SL laughs*], and they didn't have any—and there was no hesitation about it. And you—it wasn't exactly fear. I never saw a neighbor whip a neighbor's child, but you were—you didn't know but what they wouldn't do it if it came right down to it. And they'd certainly call your parents and tell your parents what you did, and you'd certainly get your butt-whippin' then. And we got belt-whippin's. And you know, belt-whippin's were—that's somethin'—and I'm not talkin' about spankin's, I'm talkin' about belt-whippin's with blood and scars on your legs.

SL: Welts and—yeah.

[00:30:30] BW: Welts, yeah. Bad. But it wa—I didn't think much about it at the time. I probably had—I don't imagine—I imagine I've had ten or twenty belt-whippin's in my lifetime, but I didn't think much about it because everybody else was gettin' 'em, too.

SL: Yeah.

BW: Everybody up and down the street. And one of my best friends,

Garry Haas—he's an optometrist in Sherwood now. He—I remember he was in more trouble than anybody else. He painted [SL laughs] Oren Harris's dog. Oren Harris was a congressman and a federal judge.

SL: Yeah.

[00:31:05] BW: Later a federal a judge. Well, he painted Oren Harris's dog one time, and [SL laughs] otherwise, he and I got in some mischief around there. And I remember he—his daddy's walkin' out on the front porch after work sayin'—hollerin', "Garry!" And he'd be standin' out there with a belt in his hand, and Garry'd say, "Well, I gotta go get my butt-whippin'." And we would go under the window 'cause he'd always get his whippin' in the bedroom. We didn't have air-conditionin' back then.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So the windows would be open, and there'd be ceilin' fans, and I'd hear his daddy talkin' to him and take him in there. And we would get under the window and listen to it, [laughs] and then we would kind of say, "Well, I don't think that's as bad as the one he got last Thursday." [SL laughs] But that's the way it was. And then at the school, it was the same thing. And the coaches would hand down the whippin's, and we're talkin' 'bout

belt-whippin's, and some of 'em had paddles and whatever. And it was so common until nobody thought anything about it. They'd just—if you were actin' up in school, teacher'd just write a note and say, "Go give this to Coach Austin." And, boy, you'd—and when you—when she said that, you started negotiatin' then 'cause Coach Austin—I think when they interviewed those coaches, if they didn't really like to tear your butt up, they probably couldn't get hired. [SL laughs] But that was the enforcer, and that's just the way it was. But my point is that the mood of the country at that point in time, with people havin' gone through the Depression and . . .

SL: World War II.

[00:32:40] BW: . . . the—World War II, they just were not in any—they just—people just didn't wanna—they weren't foolin' with kids at all. My dad told me that in his lifetime he saw somethin' change that was unbelievable that I've seen in my lifetime change, too. He said that when he was a boy that the adults ate first at a table. When, like, at a Sunday table, there wouldn't be enough room for everybody. And he said the adults would eat first and take their time eatin'. And, like, after church, something like that, they would eat, and then the children would eat second. And he said now he wa—said in his lifetime he's

seen it change over to where everybody says, "Well, let's feed the kids, of course."

SL: Yeah.

BW: And then the adults are taken care of. But that was a reverse in our culture that he saw, and I've seen it to some extent, because when I was little, we'd have to all sit around a table and—you know, wasn't any fast food, wasn't any air conditioner, wasn't any TV. Course, no cell phones, no computers, no—none of that.

[00:33:51] SL: Let's talk about your home, growin' up. Did you have electricity?

BW: Oh yeah.

SL: So you always knew electricity, growin' up. So that's . . .



BW: We had indoor plumbin' and electricity, for sure, but we didn't have air-conditionin'. And we had television when I was about ten or eleven years old. But it wasn't multichannels or anything like that. It'd just be one or two channels.

SL: Rabbit ears and . . .

BW: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[00:34:18] BW: And you'd have to—if you wanted to change the TV, you'd have to get up and walk over to the TV and change the

channel manually.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And then you had a little apparatus on top of the TV set that you would turn, and it would . . .

SL: Turn the antenna.

BW: . . . turn the antenna up on top of the house.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So if you wanted to change channels, that's what you'd do. And usually somebody'd tell you to get up and change the channel.

[00:34:42] SL: So that hit your home about 1952?

BW: Pardon?

SL: The TV—when did it . . .

BW: I'ma say fifty . . .

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-five, maybe?

BW: Yeah, [19]53, [195]4. Somethin' like that. They had a—
Monroe, Louisiana, which was sixty miles from El Dorado, where I lived, came up with a TV station. And so that was the first station that we could—we got—we couldn't get the Little Rock station. And a lot of the kids in Little Rock that—Steve Stephens had his rock-and-roll program goin' up in—he's a real well-known Arkansan. Well, all the Little Rock people knew about Steve Stephens, but we couldn't get Little Rock television. It

wouldn't reach that far. So we knew there was such a thing.

[*SL laughs*] And sometimes you could barely get it on television.

You could barely see it. But it was a different time.

[00:35:35] SL: So—but before the TV, y'all had—did you always have a radio? Did you always know radio?



BW: Oh yeah. Everybody had a family radio, and it was in the, like, the living room. And you know, my earliest memories would be my dad sittin' there listenin' to football games, and that's where—sort of where the Clyde Scott thing started, that I'd listen to Clyde Scott. And I remember he had a radio by his bed, and I used to get up in the bed at nighttime—I guess it'd be—had to be on the weekends—and he'd listen to the prizefights. My dad would listen to prize—the heavyweight champion of the world was a big thing, and it was Joe Louis at the time. And Joe Louis fought Jer—a fellow named Jersey Joe Walcott, and sometimes Walcott would fight somebody else. But I didn't understand it very well, but I thought Joe Louis and Jersey Joe Walcott—I thought they fought every week. [*SL laughs*] But—and they did fight more than one time, I think. But in any event, I remember listenin' to the prizefights and the football games.

[00:36:39] SL: That—you know, that was early programming—

sports programming—where the—well, and baseball games, too. They'd broadcast baseball games as well. I guess—did you—were you able to hear St. Louis games? Is that . . .

BW: I never—I started workin' [*clears throat*] when was twelve old years and so—and that would be in the summertime, and so I didn't play baseball that much. I played some. Of course, you played it on the playground in school and played some out around the neighborhood, but organized baseball, I never played, because I started workin'—surveyin' out in the river bottoms around El Dorado.

SL: Surveyin'?

BW: Yeah, on a surveyin' crew.

SL: When you were how old?

BW: I guess I was twelve—'tween twelve—I think I turned thirteen.

[00:37:28] SL: So what were y'all surveyin' for—bridges or . . .

BW: Well . . .

SL: . . . or just mappin' the . . .

BW: . . . there was a . . .

SL: . . . riverbed?

BW: . . . fellow—there was a fellow named Methvin—*M-E-T-H-V-I-N*, I guess—Methvin. Max Methvin. He was one of the original SEAL—Navy SEALs. He was a—one of the first—I think he was

the first very group of the Navy SEALs. We used to call 'em frogmen back then. But [*SL laughs*] he had a company—he was an engineer, and he had a company, and that only consisted of a vehicle, a station wagon with four of us in the station wagon. And he would just say, "Go out here and"—you'd go out in a field, and you'd—sometimes you would survey in a field and sometimes it'd be in the river bottoms. Sometimes it would be in a residential area. But mostly it was in the river bottoms, and it was pretty challengin' 'cause there were a lot of snakes, and at—I remember at noontime we would take our boots off and take a pocketknife and scrape the seed ticks off your ankles.

SL: Yep.

BW: And that was a—and it was—course, it was hot, and the mosquitoes were awful, and you had to put—have—they'd have all kind of stuff that you could put on your—that you'd—it was real sticky so the mosquitoes wouldn't get you.

SL: Yeah.



BW: It was not a great job. [*SL laughs*] [00:38:58] We had a black fellow that worked with us named Brady—*B-R-A-D-Y*—I don't—that was his first name, and he was probably in his fifties. And he was a master with a brush hook. He could just do things with a brush hook you couldn't believe, and he could sharpen one so

you could shave with it. And I remember Brady sayin' to me—he'd say—he said, "Brady," he said, "ol' Brady's a world champion with the brush hook. [*SL laughs*] He's just a world champion." He said, "If they had Olympic brush hookin'," he said, "ol' Brady'd be standin' up there on the top step gettin' his medal." [*Laughs*] And I had—he—I was quite fond of Brady. And another thing, it influenced me because Brady was such a good, hard worker, honest, decent man. And he was makin' a dollar an hour at the time, and I was makin' seventy-five cents an hour. No, I was makin' fifty cents an hour, I think. Yeah, I was makin' fifty cents an hour. But just bein' around him had a lot of influence on me. And then bein' around Garry Haas—I mentioned him earlier. [00:40:17] Bein' around Garry Haas is—he—they had a domestic, a maid is what we call 'em, a domestic, and bein' around her just absolutely—she was the kindest, nicest, most even tempered, clean—everything. Maxine was her name, and she was with them her—their whole life. I mean, till—I mean, forty years or so. But she started off when she was, like, seventeen years old. And I was around Maxine all the time, and so that had a terrific influence on me, that when people would talk about niggers—and that's what they called 'em then, that's no question about it—talk about the niggers this and

the niggers that. She didn't match up with that, and Brady didn't match up with that. So I had a couple of people in my life that influenced me greatly that I couldn't square up that—with what everybody around me was sayin', and we're talkin' bout ninety-nine-point-somethin' percent of [*unclear word*] everybody was sayin'. It didn't—my reality was different than that because of these individuals.

[00:41:32] SL: Did you have friends your age—African American friends your age, growin' up?

BW: Oh heavens, no.

SL: No.

BW: I didn't—we didn't know anything about 'em. I remember askin' our coach—football coach, I said, "What do you think would happen if"—Washington High was the name of the black school—said, "What do you think would happen if we could"—they were talkin' bout integratin' in the [19]50s, and I was in school durin' the Little Rock crisis in [19]57, and they were talkin' bout "What if we brought the blacks over here? Could they make our football team?" 'Cause we didn't know.

SL: Yeah.

[00:42:07] BW: We never ran track together. You know, we were never—did anything together, so we didn't know much about

that. And he said, "Well, some of 'em are good enough athletes to make our team," but he said, "They're not smart enough to learn the plays. And they couldn't—they"—he said "they never would in any mass, you know, be able to play with us." And I don't there was anything mean about it. I think that was his perception.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And that was the way people thought back then. And there were so many things from when you were little back then—the people would talk about it. Like, my grandmother used to say all the time—on my mother's side—she lived about two blocks from us, and if you put money in your mouth when you're little—kids'd put a penny or a nickel in their mouth—she'd say, "Honey, don't do that. Some nigger mighta had their hands on it." And so you were hearing that constantly, and she wasn't meanin'—she didn't mean it in a mean way, she just meant it as matter-of-factly. And then when I would look at black people's hands, you'd—they had—their—they got these dark lines in 'em, and they—it looked like dirt to me, and it affected me. You know, in lookin' at 'em, I—'cause it was very confusing to me. And then when—we had black men that would come and mow our grass, and we called them uncle—and my dad always taught me to call them uncle.

And then my dad never would let me use the word nigger—ever. We didn't use that word in our house, which was very, very unusual. But when they—when the people would come and cut the grass, my mom would give me a big jar—a Mason jar full of ice, and we'd take it out there to 'em.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And I'd go out there and say, "Uncle, here's your, you know, here's your water," because they didn't drink out of our glasses. They had to drink out of a jar because it—you—they just didn't eat off our plates, and they didn't drink out of our glasses, and that was just the way it was. You wouldn't think about ever drinkin' out of a glass that a black person had had . . .

[00:44:20] SL: So did you—were the signs in El Dorado—the black and white toilets and . . .

BW: Oh yeah, and the courthouse—in the—it had white only restrooms. It had white only for drinking fountains, and that was just—that was very, very prevalent. I mean, it was just—but it was just—it was something you never thought about, and when whites talked about it, they said pretty clearly that colored people didn't want to mix with us. The colored people didn't want to do this. They didn't want to do that. And there was a—and I think people believed that. And something that's very

confusing. You know, you have to live through it to understand it. Some of the nicest people that I ever met in my life were just—were awful racists. Just awful. They would treat black people bad. And that's just the way it was. A fellow I worked for, Ed Bargiel—I—and before the ninth grade I worked at a hardware store. Worst job I ever had 'cause I'm not mechanical, and [*laughs*] I didn't know a screw from a bolt from a anything, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . Bargiel was a wonderful guy 'cause he carried me, you know, let me—I know now I wasn't worth bein' there, but anyway. [*SL laughs*] I was workin' there, and he was payin' me a dollar an hour, minimum wage at the time. And there were some black people that lived next door to him, and the little kids would come over to get change or to buy somethin' in the store, and he would just—and he would treat 'em real ugly because of the—they couldn't—he'd say, "Don't come in here and nigger-talk. If you can't talk right, I don't"—you know, he—because of—they were little kids, four or five years old, and they couldn't sp—he couldn't understand what they were sayin'. And he seemed to be really meaner'n hell about it, and I—it bothered me at the time. But Bargiel was a wonderful guy. He was one

of the nicest people I ever met, but there was just that one . . .

SL: Flaw.

[00:46:29] BW: . . . piece of him, and I think that's hard for people to understand. The race thing was maybe the most prevailing theme of when I was growin' up, of my whole life, you know, of what people talked about and what people feared. 'Cause that 1954 thing—see, I was born in [19]42.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So by [19]54, that decision came down.

SL: *Brown versus . . .*

BW: *Brown versus . . .*

Trey Marley: *Board.*

BW: . . . *Board of Education . . .*

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . .that said you gotta—so everybody started plannin' on what they were gonna do, and the big question is, "Are you gonna go to school with a nigger, or are you gonna go—you gonna do this with a nigger?" And then there was that question about "What do the niggers think about goin' to school with us? They don't wanna go to school with us. They don't wanna come to our restaurants. They don't wanna"—And just a lot of banter about it. But . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . it was a prevailing theme, let me put it that way.

[00:47:27] SL: So I guess there were black theaters and white theaters in El Dorado?

BW: I have a vague memory that what people called nigger town—and I know the word—the N word is a offensive word. I'm—it's not like I don't know that. But I'm just tellin' you with—I'm tryin' to go with the language that was—we used back then or that was used back then.

SL: Yeah.

BW: They had somethin' called nigger town, and that was two different areas of El Dorado. And I think they had a theater in one of those places, but I'm not—I couldn't be absolutely sure. Now downtown El Dorado, they had the Rialto and Majestic, and then there was another theater that I can't remember the name of right now. The Ritz.

SL: So did the African . . .

BW: The Ritz.

SL: The Ritz.

BW: Kay.

[00:48:19] SL: Did they allow the African Americans into those?

BW: But they didn't go up in the balcony. They didn't go anywhere.

They didn't go anywhere near the—those places. Now—and when I went to law school in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1966 through [19]69—they—the blacks went up in the balcony there. But not downstairs. And I'm understand—and I'm given to understand that that was fairly common in the South, that they could go in the balcony, but they could not go in the balcony in El Dorado.

[00:48:49] SL: Hmm. Well, let's get back to life in the home growin' up in El Dorado. Did you—was there a Bible in your home? Did you all ever study the Bible, or did you have—did you attend church on Sundays and . . .

BW: My dad was big on goin' to church. I don't think he was a 'specially religious guy, but he—but we went every Sunday. We went ever—Sunday school and church, and we went to church at night, at six o'clock at night on Sunday night. We had to be there those times, and not everybody had to be there at night, and some people would—some families would go to Sunday school only and church only, but we had to be there—we had to be there. I mean, when I got hurt playin' football in the ninth grade—I was fourteen years old—I had somethin' like seven or eight or ten years—I don't remember now—perfect attendance at church, and so they had the Sunday school class up in my hospital room. That's how much we went to church. But we



never read the Bible at home. We never talked about it at home much. And I didn't learn a whole lot from the—I was a Methodist, and I don't know what I learned. It was more—back then, it was—in a small town, it was more like if you didn't go to church, people thought there was somethin' wrong with you.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so it wasn't so much that you went for your spirituality or to learn about the Bible—it's that you'd, by God, better be there.

SL: Social/cultural . . .

[00:50:31] BW: Yeah, you better be there or people wouldn't do business with you. Didn't trust you and didn't whatever, even though when they went, they didn't do any more than you did. I didn't see a whole lot of spirituality, and I didn't see a—that type thing. Now later on, when I was in law school, when I was at Ole Miss and then Memphis, the—they were—everybody was scared to death the blacks were gonna come to the white churches, and all of that bothered me quite a bit. I mean, that just didn't make any sense to me that you wouldn't let a black person come to your church, but they—and they were—they would be so strongly goin' by the word of the Bible; at the same time, they'd be plan—most of what they talked about is how—what they were gonna do if the blacks came to their church.

That was just the way that was. It was a rough period of time.

[00:51:22] SL: So your father got his law degree—he started practicing law when you were how old? Or was he already practicing law when you were born?

BW: He started in [19]34, and I was born in [19]42.

SL: Okay.

BW: So he—he'd been practicin' law for quite a while. Now he was a struggling lawyer and didn't—we were—it was durin' the Depression—come—most of the time it was durin' the Depression where—when he started.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And he didn't even own a car when he first started practicin' law. And so I remember—we lived in a little house, it was probably twelve hundred square feet—and I remember when—goin' to the grocery store, I remember him comin'—bringing in the groceries from the grocery store, and they'd have big sacks of [*someone knocks*] groceries, and I remember being excited. Just real, real excited about that—could—I felt like . . .

SL: I guess we ought to stop.

TM: Let's take a break.

SL: I think the caterers are here.

[Tape stopped]

[00:52:23] SL: We were talkin' about your home in Texarkana a little bit. You said it was about twelve hundred square feet. You were—we had mentioned that your father was kind of a struggling attorney just comin' out of the Depression era. And you had gotten real excited about a load of groceries that were comin' in. So why don't you . . .

BW: Right.

SL: . . . talk a little bit about the—that day.

BW: Well, that was El Dorado rather than Texarkana, but . . .

SL: Oh, I'm sorry. El Dorado. Mh-hmm.

BW: But it—I just remember as a little boy being excited because I had a real sense that we were livin' pretty close, and I had a sense that we didn't have a lot of money. So when my dad would settle a case or got money from a case, there was some excitement about it because I felt like when that would—you know, "We're gonna be okay now." And I didn't have—my sense at the time, you know, when you're three or four years old, and what do you know? But I can remember that. We had a [19]37 Dodge, and we had a—it was an old black car. Every car was black then, I think, just about. And so it was a boxy kind of lookin' cars that you see. And they didn't make—see, durin' the war they didn't make cars at all. They quit makin' 'em. So there

is no such thing as a [19]42, [194]3, [194]4. So about [19]45 they came out with new cars. Well, this car was pretty worn out. We didn't get another car till 1949, so we had a [19]37 Dodge until [19]49. But you could see through the floors. You could see the—they had holes in the—all the way through there where it had just rusted through.

SL: Rusted out.

BW: And as a little boy I remember pickin' up rocks and lookin' through the holes and droppin' rocks through the floor. I just thought that was a fun thing to do. But that would be a fairly common thing. People were talkin' about tires all the time. That was a huge thing 'cause they didn't have rubber durin' World War II. And, see, I can remember back till I was two years old or before, so that's—when I'm sayin' these things, you may think, "Well, you—you're not old enough to remember," but I am. Anyway, I can remember those things that were pretty exciting to me as a little boy. There wasn't any such thing as a car wash back then, and we'd get—one of the recreation things that we did—we'd get out and—with a hose and wash the car, and I thought that was pretty much fun 'cause you got to do a little somethin'—a little action there with your—with my dad.

SL: Yeah.



[00:54:49] BW: So—and then when I was real little, we used to go to my great-grandmother's house in—or to her hotel in Harrisburg, Arkansas, and that was huge. That was huge. And we'd get on a train, and we would go—and I remember we would arrive late at night. And when you got on the train, the soldier boys would be on the train, and the rule was that the soldier boys got to sit down. They got the seats. And I don't think that we ever stood up 'cause I was—my—I think women and children probably got seats, but I remember everybody—the soldier boys bein' on the train. And it was all about the war, and we were really—I was real excited to see the soldier boys. [00:55:33] We'd go to the—and another time we were travelin' in a car, and we were over someplace around Pine Bluff, and my mom said that there were some German soldiers in the back of this—prisoner-of-war soldiers in the back of this truck. And I was [*SL clears throat*]—couldn't—I could not understand that. I thought, "Well, what are they doin' over here?" 'Cause I thought they were way away, and I thought, "Well, what if they got loose?" But they had a prisoner-of-war camp here in Arkansas someplace. I don't know where it was 'cause I was probably less than three years old. [00:56:08] So anyway, back to this train story—I remember goin' to Harrisburg. When we'd get there, my grandmother,

Vandiver was her name—they had Vandiver Hotel. And she was a little—'course, it was a little—Harrisburg's a little bitty town. What was so great about it, though—I would be—she died when I was six years old, so we went two or three years on the train. But she would call us in—my sister—me and my sister that was fourteen months older, Ruth, and she would tell us—she'd have a big bowl of money, of coins. And you'd reach in and get all you could get with one hand, and then she'd give you a handkerchief, and you'd put it in that handkerchief, and that was your spendin' money. And that was your own money. It was a heck of a deal.

SL: Big deal.

[00:56:55] BW: And so we would—I remember we would—I would walk around the square—the square meaning, you know, the courthouse was in the middle of the square, and you'd walk around there. Everybody called that the square in a little town. You'd go down to a little soda fountain down there, and it wouldn't be seventy-five yards from the front of her hotel. And you'd walk in there, and you'd say, "I'm Bud Whetstone." And I'd say, "I'm visitin' here from El Dorado." And then I'd say, "Do you know my Mama Van?" And they'd say, "Yes, we do. We know your Mama Van." And I was so excited, I'd almost lose my

mind 'cause I [*SL laughs*] thought, "She's like a movie star."
Everybody knew Mama Van. And this hotel that she had was a—
it didn't have an elevator, and it was a walk-up—it was—you
walked upstairs. It was two stories, and they had a great, big
kitchen there and—that you could get your meals there. And
most of the people that were travelin' salesmen, or they came—
lawyers that came to try cases across street at the courthouse.
That's where they stayed.

SL: Yeah.

[00:58:00] BW: But anyway, that was a—just an exhilarating
experience to be on a train like that and to see the soldier boys.
And then the hotel and Mama Van and celebrity status that I
had. My Uncle Ewell owned the newspaper there—a little, bitty
newspaper—and he would always do a big write-up of—in the
newspaper and say that we had come to town, and they would
read it to us. And I—I'd see my name, and they'd say, "Now
there's your [*SL laughs*] name in the paper." And I thought,
"Man, it doesn't get any better than this." So did I ever love to
go to Harrisburg. That was a highlight.

[00:58:38] SL: You know, [*clears throat*] I—I've seen articles like
that, or just a listing of who's visiting who and where. Not only
folks comin' into town, but if someone was leaving town and

going someplace to visit a relative or something, that would hit the newspaper. It was like more of a community information as far—it wasn't really . . .

BW: Well, in the El Dorado paper, up until I was in high school and maybe after that—I don't know—they had somethin' called "Negro News." And that would be—they could go to the newspaper—call the newspaper and say who was in town, and it basically would say who was in town and who was gettin' married type thing. Just a little strip like that, but it's—over in the corner, it'd say "Negro News."

SL: Wow.

BW: So . . .

SL: I'd never heard that.

BW: . . . I remember that. That was real common. You know, those kinds of things were just the way it was.

[00:59:33] SL: Goin' back to your home in El Dorado, what were the meals like? Were you expected to be at a table at a certain time, or was it looser than that? What—how regimented was the routine at home?

BW: We—there was a rule that you were to be at home at six o'clock. And when you got out of school, nobody had any interest in what you were gonna do. From the time you got out of school till six

o'clock, nobody had any interest in that. I mean, nobody—it wasn't—there was no soccer games or no—it wasn't soccer, period, but you—you'd talk to kids at school in that—from your neighborhood, and you'd say, "Let's play baseball," or "We'll play football over at so-and-so's house." And you had your own—you went with your own ball. Nobody ever dropped anybody off. It was all on bicycles. And we made up our own stuff, whatever it was. We made up our own games . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . set our own times. When we played games, we had our own rules. We refereed—the group refereed the game, and we decided who was on what side. I don't even know how we did it, but we did it all the time. But at six o'clock, you better be at home. [*SL laughs*] And everybody was about on a six o'clock deal. And then everybody would sit around the table. In our house we had black-eyed peas and cornbread and those—that kind of—turnip greens . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: That was what we ate most of the time. [01:01:03] My mother was a great Southern cook. She could cook all the—all those kinds of things. So we always ate well. We never came close to bein' hungry or not havin' enough to eat. I never got that

impression at all, but I did get the impression that we were pretty tight on money, and we were.

[01:01:27] SL: So did the girls help Mom around the house on weekends and stuff? Were they . . .

BW: [*Clears throat*] For reasons I don't—didn't particularly understand, they didn't have much to do. They didn't have many chores at all. Now I don't think that any of the girls— young girls or little girls had much to do, period, in El Dorado that I ever knew anything about. Course now, maybe it was goin' on, and I didn't know about it.

SL: Yeah.

[01:01:57] BW: [*Clears throat*] Now the guys—soon as you're big enough to push a lawnmower, you were pushin' a lawnmower. And soon as you're big enough to paint or to do whatever else, you were doin' it. And for sure, you knew when you got up on Saturday that that was your day to work. And you had to wash the cars. They didn't have car washes . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . so you had to wash and wax cars every Saturday, and you had to do—make sure that the grass—or just whatever needed to be done. But that was not unusual. It would be highly unusual if you didn't do that. And then as far as workin', like,

working in the summertime, when I was in college I worked—we worked on a construction crew. [*Clears throat*] Garry Haas, he's an optometrist here in town. Bill Norwood's a surgeon in Shreveport. Joe Clingin, he's an architect. Bobby Lecky, he's a lawyer down in Lafayette, Louisiana. All of us were workin' on this crew. And all of our daddies were doctors and lawyers, and none of us got cars when we were sixteen or any of that business. I mean, you got—you had the family car, but you didn't get cars. And no—I don't—can't remember if any of those people had a car. I don't think they did—till maybe they were out—till they got out of college, or till they were in college. But things were—it was interesting how we were expected to work, and that was just the way it was. And now I get the [*SL coughs*] impression that—you know, people—kids don't even know how to start a lawnmower. [01:03:31] When I was fourteen, [*clears throat*] my dad had a rent house. Actually, it was the same house we'd started livin'—that we were livin' in that we had moved from. And he put—he—we drove up to the front of the house, and he said, "See the house right here?" And course, I was familiar with it 'cause I had lived there till I was in the fourth grade. He said, "Paint that house." So I said, "I don't know anything about paintin' a house." He said, "Well, that'd be your

problem." [*SL laughs*] He said, "Go down to Grady Jean Lumber Company" . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: ". . . and call"—I knew Grady Jean—and he said, "Go down to Grady Jean Lumber Company, and ask Grady Jean how to paint a house. He knows." Said, "Okay." So I ended up paintin' that house by myself. Now some of my friends would come over—help me some. And he had a—we had some scaffolding that one of his clients had had, and I didn't—I told him—I said, "I don't know how to set this scaffolding up." He said, "I don't, either." That's bout all there was to that, and we had to set the scaffolding up. I'd have my friends come over and move—help me move it. When I got through, he said, "'Kay, paint that house next door—the duplex." [*SL laughs*] So I painted it.

SL: This is at fourteen.

[01:04:45] BW: [*Clears throat*] I was fourteen years old. Now you could drive in El Dorado at fourteen. I drove to football practice August the twenty-fifth when I—the day I turned fourteen is the day football practice started in the ninth grade. And I drove to practice. And everybody drove at fourteen, and people even would take their cars to school when they were fourteen. The law was that you—was that you had to be sixteen, but you could

get a learner's permit at fourteen. But we—everybody drove—everybody drove at fourteen. So that's the way it was in a small town. But . . .

SL: That's amazing.

[01:05:22] BW: Then that same summer, after I got through paintin' those houses, I shipped out to go to Payne, Ohio, where my kinfolks were. They had farms—big farms up there—and I worked on a farm for the rest of the summer.

[01:05:39] SL: Now how'd you get there?

BW: I went on a bus. Went on a bus, and then on the way back I got real disgusted with the bus stops. You know, there were layovers and whatever—and I got off the bus and hitchhiked back to—about the last two hundred miles, I hitchhiked back. And that was the first time that I ever hitchhiked—first—and I hitchhiked after that to Wisconsin, to Colorado. I hitchhiked back and forth from school—from Fayetteville. Course, back then you could do that. And there weren't any interstates to amount to anything at that point, so it was just two-lane highways.

[01:06:22] SL: Yeah, people actually would pick up kids to—that were hitchhiking. I mean, nowadays—you just don't see that happening anymore.

BW: I could hitchhike about as fast as you could drive because I had a bag—I had a big . . .

SL: Duffel.

BW: . . . bag and I put—I had tape and I'd tape "UA" on it . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . and put it down beside me, so everybody knew that I was a student. And it was real—it was an interesting time, and a good time for me. I enjoyed it.

[01:06:48] SL: So El Dorado Schools—did you have a—what kind of school did you attend? Was it—was there one public school—grade school or two or . . .

BW: There were four, I think. There were four grade schools over—all over town. El Dorado's a refinery town—or was at—pretty much at that time. And in one section of town you had the—where most of the refinery people lived and worked, and they had their grade school. And then most of the time, I was in—I was—well, in my grade school, Yocum School, that was kind of a middle-class school. But there a lot of bankers' and, you know, dentists' sons and people like that. And some kids—some of the kids I remember in the first grade came to school, and they didn't have any shoes on. They were literally barefoot, and they had to do somethin' about that. So we had—El Dorado's a—was

a town of multi-multimillionaires and also people that didn't have any money at all. When we all mixed in together, and it didn't seem to be much of a problem. Then, later on, when you go to junior high school, it was a big—that was huge, because the four schools merged at that point into one junior high. And there was about a thousand people in that school.

SL: Wow!

BW: And so when you got there, you were—we were just reachin' puberty, and we were all tryin' to figure out what was goin' on.



[01:08:12] But the greatest thing in my life—and this is part of the Forrest Gump part of my life—rock and roll started when I was in the seventh grade. So when I went to junior high, I thought they were my—I thought they were doin' this for me [*SL laughs*] and our crowd. We started off with Bill Haley and the Comets, and then I remember bein' in a little ol' place where you get hamburgers at noon, and I remember hearin' Elvis Presley for the first time. And I thought it was kind of an odd name, El—I thought Elvis Presley was an odd name and—but everybody loved his music. Most people won't tell you this 'cause I don't know—the—I guess they've forgotten, but he was real controversial. When he first started off, he w—people talked about him because he had long hair. See, we all had crew cuts

and flat tops, and he had that real long hair, so we thought him—of him as being more of a biker. And even in speech class, they would debate—they would—and have a little debate class sort of thing in the eighth—seventh, eighth grade, about whether Elvis was a good guy or a bad guy. And somebody would take the bad guy end of it, and somebody'd take the good guy end of it. But [*SL laughs*] mostly they were talkin' about how he was jerk—you know, jumpin' around out on the stage and . . .

SL: Gyrating and—yeah—hips.

BW: And then—and his hair was the—was a huge thing 'cause nobody had hair like that. So—but anyway, rock and roll started right then—right when I was in the seventh grade, so it was the greatest time in the world. That "Do Wah Ditty" songs [*SL laughs*]—those oldies that you hear now—we—that was comin' out ever day.

SL: Yeah.

[01:09:48] BW: So it was very exciting and then the bands—you know, everybody was startin' up bands and tryin' to figure out what to do about that. It was quite the time.

[01:09:57] SL: Did you play a musical instrument?

BW: I started to play—I wanted to play the drums 'cause I—I don't know why I did. And I played the drums—I mean, in a—in, like,

in a marchin' band; I did that for part of a year. But by then I started playin' football and runnin' track.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so when I started into the athletic end of it, then I never got back to it.

[01:10:20] SL: Is that junior high school that you started doin' the . . .

BW: Right, by the seventh, eighth grade.

SL: Seventh. Mh-hmm.

BW: Eighth—about the seventh or eighth grade I started playin' Little League football. And [*clears throat*] when I was in the eighth grade, I lucked out and got on a—made the track team, and we were on the state cham—we won the state championship 440 relay out of sixteen schools all over the state. And that was a life-changing experience for me because I was the only eighth grader that lettered in my class. So when I came back to school in the ninth grade, I had a letter jacket—or a letter sweater. And . . .

[01:10:55] SL: So you were already fast by the time you get—eighth grade.

BW: Yeah, I was fast by my county standards. I found out when I went to the University of Arkansas—I walked on and ran for the

Razorbacks one year, and I got a scholarship up there—I found out what fast really was. [*SL laughs*] 'Cause I was running against Lance Alworth up there, and it was just a little bit different. But I . . .

SL: Boy.

BW: But I always did have the best seats in the house. [*SL laughs*] I was only about four or five steps from the fastest guy around.

[01:11:25] SL: Yeah. Well, so the grade school that you went to—was it two story? Did each class have its own room, or was it . . .

BW: It would seem to me like it was an old school when I got there and the—and this is 2011, and I started there in 1948 or [19]47, and the place looks just about the same. It's still there.

SL: Yeah.

BW: That's amazing. The Yocum School's still there. But it just had—it was two story, and we had—you know, on either side we had the halls—a hallway. And had an auditorium, you know, where we had a little stage and where—that's where you—when you'd have music class, you'd walk single file down to music class, and then if you had a—and when you had a art class, you'd go downstairs to the art room, and they had a little place down there.

SL: Yeah.

[01:12:24] BW: And of course, you had a cafeteria there. Had a place across the street—people are always talkin' about money and the price of things. They had a little place across the street and they—you could get a hamburger for a nickel. [SL laughs] A woman cooked 'em that had her own little hamburger stand set up—she had her house there—which is the cheapest I ever saw a hamburger 'cause they usually were fifteen to twenty-five cents.

SL: Yeah.

BW: But you could get one for a nickel. I remember that. Everybody thought that was a heck of a deal.

[01:12:51] SL: So would the kids leave the grade school and go over there and get 'em or . . .

BW: Right. You'd go right . . .

SL: Wow.

BW: Go across the street and get 'em. There wasn't any [clears throat]—I never knew of a child getting—being molested. I never knew anything about—of anything like that. I never heard of it. And I'm not sayin' that it didn't happen.

SL: Yeah.

BW: But we didn't know anything about it. We'd never heard of it,

and it was kind of —it was a weird experience. We didn't know anything about homosexuals. Nobody—I mean, they'd say the guy's a queer . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . or somethin' like that or—we knew people that I now would obviously know would be gay. I know in retrospect that they were. But we didn't know anything about that. [01:13:38] It was a very shut-down, naive kind of simple life. There weren't a lot of cars on the road. You'd—nobody wore helmets. I never saw anybody—had never even thought about wearin' a helmet for a bicycle or somethin' like that. That'd be absurd. [*SL laughs*] And we'd have bicycle wrecks and whatever, and I never heard of anybody havin' a head injury. I never heard of anybody gettin' killed on a bicycle. I don't remember anybody ever gettin' hit by a car on a bicycle, and everybody rode a bicycle.

[01:14:08] SL: How big was El Dorado at this time?

BW: It was about twenty-five thousand.

SL: That's huge.

BW: Yeah. We'd thought we had really arrived when we got a bowlin' alley. When I was about in junior high school . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . they built a bowlin' alley there, and I thought, "Man, it—we're goin' places now." [SL laughs] So that was—from then on I sort of thought the rural people were the ones that had—lived in a town without a bowlin' alley [laughs] but . . .

SL: That's somethin' else.



BW: It was a simple time. Everybody wore Levi's. If you wore anything but Levi's, somethin' wrong with you. And we had—they were all starched, and we wore white socks and usually black loafers. Not necess—some penny loafers, but some kind of loafer.

SL: Yeah.

[01:14:55] BW: If you'd've wore lace-up shoes, there was somethin' wrong with you. And you didn't wear tennis—there's no kind of athletic-tennis-shoe kind of things. And you only usually owned one pair of shoes, and that would be your black shoes—leather shoes—and then you had your tennis shoes, your athletic shoes, that you'd play basketball with or whatever, and that was pretty much it. That's what you owned. You might have a pair of boots, you know, for hunting or some other kind of work like that. But that was—we didn't have hard—we owned almost no personal property. When you're probably ten years old, you get a radio. Just a little radio by your bed, and that'd be your—

that'd be about the only thing that you owned, really.

[01:15:35] SL: Hmm. Well, let's talk a little bit about—so in—you are in first grade when Scotty—Clyde Scott is playing for the Razorbacks?

BW: [*Clears throat*] I was—I guess I was in the first grade when that happened, in 1948, and my dad took me to the first game in War Memorial Stadium here in Little Rock. And the talk about Clyde Scott was just daily talk. Every—that's all anybody was talkin' about. "Clyde Scott's comin' to Arkansas." "Clyde Scott's at Arkansas." "Clyde"—everything was Clyde Scott. And so I was so enthralled with that idea till—the idea of him, it was just beyond belief. And my dad wrote him a letter, and he wrote back. And when he did, my dad took that letter and put it in a frame of Cl—with a picture of Clyde Scott and hung that over my bed when I was six years old. And I've had it hangin' on my wall, not necessarily over my bed, but all the way through high school that was hangin' over my bed. It says, "Tell Bud I look forward to seeing him and I send my best regards. Clyde Scott." And so that was just a—he was like a movie star to me. He was everything in the world. And then, course, as you know, later on, I got to be his lawyer, and the main thing he came to me for in the beginning was to get his NFL retirement for him. And he

asked me—he said, "I"—he said, "You're a high-dollar lawyer, and I didn't make that much money playin' ball, and I really can't afford you. But would you look at my papers?" So I told him—I said, "Scotty, I tell you what, I'm gonna charge you exactly what you charged me when you gave me your autograph." We went up—I went up to the hotel room and got his autograph in—here in Little Rock before a football game. I said, "I'm gonna charge you the same thing you charged me." And I did get him his NFL retirement. And I also told him—I said, "If somebody told me before I went to law school that if I went to law school I could be Clyde Scott's lawyer, I would've gone to law school for no other reason but that."

[01:17:52] SL: [*Laughs*] So you—I mean, there was this—he was such a star athlete, and all this was mainly by radio that the state was hearing this stuff about Clyde Scott and his performance. Is that right? I mean, TV wasn't around then, and so you had a picture of him hangin' over your bed. Is that right?

BW: Hangin' over my bed, but I saw him. I shook his hand. He signed my—he autographed my helmet and gave me another autograph. And we went up to the hotel room, and he was—he just opened the door and stood there in the doorway and [*SL laughs*] talked to me a few minutes. But I don't think I could get

my breath. I was just—I just couldn't believe it. So it turned out, as I got to know Scotty, and as I know him now, and I talk with him every ten days or so now, he's as good a person as he is athlete. He's a—when you have a hero, you know, you'd love for the hero to be as good a person as Scotty is, and that's the thing about him—not just that he was a great athlete—arguably, the greatest athlete that ever lived. I can argue that 'cause I—you've seen his . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: You've done his interview. I won't go into that, but he was somethin' else. But as a man, I would say he's as good a man as he was athlete. And that's impressive.

[01:19:18] SL: You know, I've heard that the reason that War Memorial Stadium exists is that they needed a venue where everyone could see Scotty play. Is that kind of the . . .

BW: Correct. He and Barnhill—Coach Barnhill—went around the state and gave—he gave speeches. He took Scotty around, and they gave speeches to raise money to build the stadium. Before that, when the Razorbacks played in Little Rock, they played at Central High School stadium. And so—just to show you what a jump that was. But I remember—you know, I remember goin' to the ball game. I remember I was six years old and . . .

[01:19:59] SL: And you think that was the first game at War Memorial? Was that . . .

BW: I know it was.

SL: It was.

BW: First one they ever had there. Yeah, that was a—I was pretty excited. I didn't know much about football or—you know, I did—or that type thing, but I just knew I'd met Clyde Scott, and he was out there on that field, and that's bout all I needed to know.

[01:20:20] SL: [*Laughs*] How'd he do that game?

BW: He did great, like he always did.

SL: Yeah.

BW: Scored a couple of touchdowns.

SL: He was always kind of playin' hurt, wasn't he?

BW: If you read his scrapbooks—and I read his—all of his scrapbooks before I—we did the interview, his interview—the prevailing theme is, "Is he going to play? Is he going to be ready for the next game?"

SL: Yeah.

BW: And there was talk after high school that he might not—that he might've been hurt so bad in high school that he wouldn't play in college. And there was talk—after he played at Navy, there was talk that he might not be able to make it at Arkansas and—

because he was hurt. And then there was talk about whether he was so beat up then that he couldn't play in the pros, but—course, he played both ways and I read . . .

SL: Boy, you don't see that anymore.

[01:21:13] BW: I looked up somethin' in *New York Times* when Doak Walker—you know, the Doak Walker award. When Doak Walker got the Heisman Trophy, they said that Doak Walker was not only a great offensive back, that he was—the *New York Times* said he's the best—probably the best defensive back in Arkansas—excuse me, best defensive back in America, with the—with, of course, the exception of Clyde Scott. And the people that voted, that Cly—that played against Clyde Scott in the Southwest Conference and also played against Doak Walker voted Clyde Scott by a very large margin the better player. So that's what people—the players thought of him at the time, so—anyway. But besides that, he's a great guy, and his wife, Leslie, is every bit as nice as he.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And she was Miss Arkansas.

SL: Yeah, that's quite a story.

BW: It's a storybook. Storybook.

SL: It is a storybook romance. So . . .

TM: Hey, Scott, real quick . . .

[Tape stopped]

[01:22:20] SL: So where were we? What were we talking about?

BW: Clyde Scott.

SL: Clyde Scott. You know, he really did elevate the Razorback program quite a bit. I mean, it really got a lot of attention once he started playing for the Razorbacks. I think it . . .

BW: Well see, a lot of—well, what people don't know about Clyde Scott is that he didn't have the press in Arkansas. This was such an impoverished state at that time as compared to—Doak Walker would be in Dallas. SMU. And Bobby Lane and those people, they would be in larger towns.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so—and they had the whole state of Texas and Houston and, you know, Fort Worth and Dallas and whatever—they had all that press, whereas Clyde Scott didn't get that much press. Now Clyde Scott was famous. He was nationally known. He was second-team all-American, considered third-best runnin' back in the nation when he came to Arkansas. But he couldn't—he had trouble with the pe—getting the press 'cause—and people couldn't go see his games 'cause they weren't comin' to Fayetteville to see 'em. So he didn't really get the publicity that

he otherwise would've gotten if he'd gone someplace else, but he could've gone anywhere. Anywhere.

[01:23:38] SL: Well, his presence—I guess you were listening to the football games on the radio, I would assume, before you . . .

BW: Right.

SL: . . . ever got to go see one. And this is the—it was really the only statewide athletic product—not Scotty, but the Razorbacks—and so when you were able—when you had a radio and you were able to hear these football games, it kind of instilled in the kids growing up—they wanted to play football. I mean, football became the sport rather than an Arkansas baseball team, or even an Arkansas basketball team. It was—most—it was football. It was the time for football.

[01:24:25] BW: Oh, there's not any question about that. Now the—this business about all the red—the—course, they called the Hogs, and they had the—talked about the Hogs some but—and the Razorbacks and all that business, but nobody—they didn't have red in the stadium, and people didn't wear red to the ball games and that type thing. Back during that period of time when I—this was, well, in the [19]50s—when I went to college in 1959, a—red was not a color that was in. Colors come and go, but particularly people—by that time, people had quit wearin'

blue jeans. You had to wear slacks, and you had to wear sport coats and that type thing. People started dressin' up a little bit. But if you went on an airplane—and most people didn't go on an airplane till they—if they were lucky, by the time they were in college they'd ever been on an airplane. That was very rare for anybody in Arkansas to ever be on an airplane. When you went to a football game, you wore a coat and tie. You wouldn't think about goin' to a football game if you didn't have on a coat and tie. And it—of course, you didn't wear red, and you didn't all these other things that you see—they didn't have all that, and it wasn't somethin'—it wasn't bein' done. So it was only later on that it—people quit—as times in the [19]70s when it got more relaxed and more of the hippie crowd came in and anything goes, and people dropped the coat and tie and started wearin' whatever.

[01:25:46] SL: You know, there were black schools in El Dorado, right?

BW: Were—yeah.

SL: And they had black football teams.

BW: Right.

SL: And when you were growin' up, there were never any black players on the white teams or white players on the black teams.

It was totally segregated.

BW: They played—the black schools played on the times when we—
on our field.

SL: Oh.

BW: But—they played on our field, but they didn't play as the
Washington High Hornets. And they—and we used to go to the
ball games because we loved the band. Their bands were just
incredible and so much better than our bands. And then their
cheerleaders were funny. They had—I remember the one—the
little deals that these girls—they used to get out there and say,
"We's the yellow, we's the blue, we's the Hornets, who is you?
[*SL laughs*] Sting 'em, Hornets!" And we just thought that was
the greatest thing we'd ever heard. Everybody'd just go out
there to see—to hear that. But they were totally—we didn't
know anything about them. We didn't have any dealings with
'em. They didn't come to any restaurants. You didn't run into
'em anyway—place. They'd didn't come—they couldn't come to
a swimmin' pool. They couldn't come to a Boys Club. They
couldn't be anywhere that we were. You just never—we—I don't
know where they were, I just know where they weren't. They
weren't where we were. So we didn't know anything about 'em.

[01:27:11] SL: So there wasn't any—you were never aware of any

friction or any of that in the community—black and white friction? I mean, it was—because it was so separate—so segregated—just never really crossed paths?

BW: Well, a black person wouldn't want to be in a position in El Dorado, Arkansas, when I was in—when I was there of havin' too much to say to any white man because they weren't gonna get a fair shake. And if they got—if they did somethin' and if they went to jail, they'd probably get beat up.

SL: Yeah.

BW: If it had to do with a—if it was black on black, I don't know about that. But if it was white on black, they—you know, they were gonna take a beatin' just when they put 'em in jail if they were messin' with a white person. And if it was a white woman, I don't know what might happen, but it would've been pretty rough. Now [*clears throat*] somethin' that did go on in El Dorado that you heard about all the time—they had a group of high school kids that—and they were pretty exceptional athletes for a certain period of time, and they liked to fight. And so they did somethin' called nigger knockin'. And nigger knockin' meant that these high school fellows—some of 'em were, like, All-American—high school All-Americans, and they would get in a car, and they would go up to—what they called nigger town. I'm

usin' these terms—I understand the word nigger, but I'm tryin' to use what we—what—the way they talked back then.

SL: Sure.

[01:28:44] BW: Kay. They'd go to nigger town, and they'd go by and they would throw out a watermelon on some black person that was walkin' down the road. And they also would have a mop, a wet mop, and they'd go by, and they'd hang out the window and hit somebody in the back of the head with a mop. And just different things that they did to black people. And two boys that I knew about—one of 'em was an All-American football player—at sometime later on his life—I think when he was maybe eighteen or nineteen years old or somethin' like that, he actually had to go to prison for it. They had to put him in prison for a short period of time. I mean, not for years, but for maybe six months or somethin'. But they—everybody knew about nigger knockin'. And it was a sad time, and it was a time when the blacks couldn't do much about it. They . . .

[01:29:36] SL: When—did you ever hear any talk at home about how the blacks were being treated or—I mean, we talked earlier about how your parents were not racist and—or segregationists, but I mean, I get the sense that you were kind of—you had a sense that this was not right, this black and white segregation

stuff. Even though you weren't ever really involved with any blacks, there was something about the mistreatment of blacks that was abhorrent to you. You didn't—you weren't easy with it. Even though it was kind of the custom at the time, it seems like you have already alluded that you were kind of not the norm for your age group.

[01:30:29] BW: I remember in high school somebody's tellin' me that the only two people were in school that they knew of that were nigger lovers was me and Mary Carleton McRae, who—Tom McRae, who ran for governor.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And her daddy—her grandfather, I think, had been governor. Governor McRae. That she was—she said that she didn't care if she went to school with blacks and that—and their—and I never heard her say that, but I—people would say to me, "You and Mary Carleton are the only ones that feel that way." I don't know what they did about Mary Carleton. I still know her, and she's a real fine individual—lives in Fort Smith right now. Mary Carleton Young, I think is her name now. I don't know what her—I never talked with her about it. We wouldn't join together or anything like that. But they dogged me. They dogged me over it and called me nigger lover all the time, and that's part of

the reason that I left school after this—my junior year 'cause I was gettin' a little bit tired of it. And I wasn't—and I—you understand I wasn't doin' any—I wasn't goin' around with any poster boards and signs, and I wasn't sayin', "I wanna go to school with the niggers." I was just sayin' I didn't care. And they would say, "Well, that—what if some dirty nigger son"—and I said, "Now wait minute. You know, if you start talkin' about dirty, stinkin'—if we're talkin' smell, that's one thing. I'm not talkin' about that. If they don't—they leave me alone, I'll leave them alone." I didn't especially want to go to school with 'em. I just thought it wasn't right. [01:32:03] And also my mother had been a president of the—I think it was my grade school PTA or whatever and—for some kind of position she held at some point in time. And she went around to all the different schools, and she came back and told us that it wasn't right that the black grade schools that she went to—where she went didn't have any heat and it was—and they all had to wear their coats.

SL: Yeah.

[01:32:28] BW: And also we were real aware that when—we—they got our books when we got through with 'em. Now they built a new high school in the [19]50s in El Dorado . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . because they didn't wanna integrate, and we were—they were tryin' to do the separate-but-equal thing.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So Washington High had a beautiful building—way nicer high school than we had as far as the bricks and mortar. Now inside of there they had our books that were torn and tattered, and I don't know what they had for utilities, but—and I know in this particular grade school, my mom—I remember her comin' back and just sayin' it's not right. I member her being incensed about it. Now her—and again, her father—my grandfather was one of the biggest racists that I ever knew.

[01:33:13] SL: Did you ever see any Klan activity, growin' up?

BW: No. They had somethin' called the White Citizens' Council because the Klan came under a lot of criticism. So what they did—they just took the hoods off and went straight to the—being White Citizens' Council. But they had White Citizens' Council meetings and those kinds of things. Now my dad ran for public office.

SL: Okay.

[01:33:45] BW: He ran for prosecutin' attorney, and he won in the primary. He won in the primary, and then everybody jumped on him and said that he's—had said that he didn't care if his—one of

his daughters married a nigger, and that was the end of that business. And he had to—he—they said that he'd said it in a Sunday school class, and he took out a full-page ad and had people sign and the—they were at the Sunday school class sayin' that he didn't say it. And—but he never could stop it after that, and he lost that race. [01:34:20] Another thing I left out—one point—he ran for prosecutin' attorney twice. He ran when I was five years old, and so he couldn't be at two places at one time. So he sent me to this teacher, this schoolteacher, and she taught me his speech. And I went around all over the counties, the four counties down in south Arkansas. It's Calhoun and Union and—oh, I don't know—I can't remember the rest of 'em. It was around Hampton, Arkansas, and Magnolia, Arkansas, and El Dorado and—anyway, that area. I went around and gave speeches for my dad, and so my grandfather would take me, and he—and it was kind of interesting the way my dad raised me and the way he talked to me about the way you handle yourself. He said, "Okay now, when you get there, you know your speech and," he said, "you go over to the speaker, and you tell them that you're there to speak for Bernard Whetstone and to let you know when it's your time—introduce yourself." And so I remember I told—he said, "You be sure and tell 'em you gotta

have a chair," 'cause I couldn't reach the microphone . . .

SL: Couldn't reach the podium.

BW: . . . and I'd have to stand in a chair.

SL: Yeah.

[01:35:37] BW: And so [*SL laughs*] I went around givin' speeches all the time for him. He had a—I had a little written speech—little special written speech—and the—what the—back then, see, you didn't have television, so if you were ever gonna see the speaker—ever see the speaker, you would have to go to the rally. So that was a big thing in these small towns like Hampton, Arkansas.

SL: Sure.

BW: And they would pull up a flatbed, like a eighteen-wheeler flatbed, and then they'd have chairs there, and then they would have these big red, white, and blue banners goin' across . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . the front. And then they would have—they'd have a microphone in the middle, and the candidates would sit on the stage. And so I remember my grandfather liftin' me up and puttin' me up on that—he—now my grandfather never said anything to 'em. He just put me up there, and I walked up and said, "Who's in charge here?" And they would tell me, and I'd

walk over and say, "I'm Bud Whetstone here to speak for my dad, Bernard Whetstone. Would you let me know when it's my time to speak?" And anyway, I remember speaking, and I also remember bein'—oh, you know, semifamous, I guess you might say, in those little areas of town. You know, Hampton, and Junction City, and little bitty towns because—but there'd be—hundreds of people would come out.

SL: Yeah.

[01:36:56] BW: And so even later on when I was fifteen or twenty years old or somethin' like that, I'd be someplace and I'd say, "I'm Bud Whetstone," and they'd say, "You're not that little boy that used to speak on—standin' in the chair, are you?" So that was my brush—my first brush with fame, I guess.

SL: I think that's pretty novel. I don't know of any other account where a candidate's child is actually on the circuit makin' the speeches—helpin' cover the area, I would guess. I mean, you probably had an event over here and . . .

[01:37:25] BW: We never—he—I never spoke where he—he was never there. He would go one place; I would go someplace else. So that's how that worked.

SL: But you didn't see anyone else doin' that, did you? I mean . . .

BW: I never heard of it. Never saw it or never heard of it.

[01:37:38] SL: Yeah. Well, so how'd you do?

BW: Well, I—we didn't win the election, so I guess I didn't do [*SL laughs*] too damn good. He was tryin' to—I think he was tryin' to—he thought he was gonna have to run two or three times to ever win an office because he was a total unknown.

SL: Right.

BW: But he did real well, and he did—came in second for prosecutin' attorney both times. Now the second time, I was in the—I remember I was workin' at the hardware store, so I'd be fourteen when—the second time he ran—I was six the first time he ran.

SL: So . . .

[01:38:13] BW: But the black thing got rough, and they didn't play the race card on him the first time, but they did the second time. But he was a extreme liberal by those . . .

SL: Standards.

BW: Not by today's standards.

SL: Yeah.

BW: But by those standards. He was maybe even radical. But he was not an integrationist—wasn't especially for that. Jim Johnson ran on a race ticket . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . back in the [19]50s. And when he won, he sent my dad a letter to thank him because they had been friends forever. And he'd lived in Crossett.

SL: Right.

BW: He ran for the state legislature. When he won, he sent a letter to my dad and said, "Bernard, thanks for all your help on the campaign." And Bernard wrote him a—my dad, Bernard, wrote him on the—took the letter and wrote on the letter—he said, "Hell, Jim, not only did I not support you, I didn't vote for you." [SL *laughs*] And sent it back to him. And Jim Johnson called him on the phone, and you'd have to know Jim Johnson to know—he laughed, and he said, "I don't know if I'd have voted for me either, Bernard." He said, "I appreciate your honesty." Said, "We'll always be friends," and they were.

[01:39:27] SL: Yeah. So we were talkin' about rock and roll hitting when you hit junior high school. And so did you start going to dances then? Were there school dances, church dances, or . . .

BW: Well, we had a—we had somethin' called the TAC House that—it's called the Teen Age Club—stands for—*T-A-C*. TAC House Club. They had the TAC House, and we had a real nice place to dance there. It was in the American Legion buildin' down in El Dorado.

SL: Yeah.

[01:40:07] BW: And so—and then people would have—they first came out with these little forty-five plastic lookin' single records.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And they had a little hole in the middle, and they would—you would put 'em on, and they would drop down.

SL: Yeah.

BW: Every—but everybody had record players—what they called record players, and they played records. And then they came—then, later on, they came out with the . . .

SL: LP.

BW: . . . the LP—long play.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so that was what we were doin', but everybody would—we'd have parties over at people's houses and you—and we had those—everybody had these record players that we had. So we had 'em—my dad bought one record player for our whole house. You know, for my teenage sister and I. [01:40:52] And you know, my sister was real popular. She was a cheerleader, my older sister, and she was an excellent athlete. And she was a golf champion, and she was a—when I was in the sixth grade, I was the fastest kid—white kid my age in El Dorado, and she

could outrun me. [*SL laughs*] So anyway, she was quite the athlete, and she was quite the—she was president of her class, and she was an outstanding individual. [01:41:28] I was gonna mention that Van Cliburn came to El Dorado.

SL: Well, you're gonna have to tell everyone who Van Cliburn was, now.

BW: Well, they had a contest—I don't know what the name of it is—but it's a—the world championship contest for playing a piano—the best piano player in the world.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And we're not talkin' bout rock and roll now, we're talkin' bout that—he had to go to Russia to play. And it was—there was a big deal over it. There was a lot about it because he was by far the best piano player in the world, and so they said that the Russians—they finally told the—whatever the head guy was over there, Khrushchev or whoever it was at the time, they said, "You're going to have to let him win this thing." Usually they would fix it, the Russians would—they said, "Because we c—you know, we'll be totally disgraced if he doesn't win it." And he was only about twenty years old at the time. So he was on the cover of *Life* magazine, and he was everything. He was the most famous per—for some period of time, he was the most famous

person on the planet. And he had won that thing, and he was a real tall, thin, real unusual-lookin' guy with real curly hair. So his aunt lives in El Dorado.

SL: Yeah.

[01:42:45] BW: And he had already signed a contract or an agreement to come to El Dorado to play a year or so before that. And so he would—could played in any place in the world, they were beggin' for him. But he had to come to El Dorado. And so when he did, he came to El Dorado High School, and my sister interviewed him, and there's a picture in the annual of her interviewin' him. But that was so big. I mean, that was the man of the—you couldn't believe Van Cliburn—he's from Texas—lives—I think he still lives in Texas. Anyway, they still have a Van Cliburn Award or somethin' that they give for piano players. So you couldn't get a ticket, and all these millionaires were in El Dorado, and they were wantin' to get in. Well, I had lived across the street from the high school, and I knew every—and I had been in that buildin' many, many times, and I knew how to get through the windows—sneak in. I knew everything there was to know. So what I had figured out was, I went in there—I went to the back stage, and I had on my jeans and my—and a—like, a T-shirt, and I told 'em—I said, "I'm"—I said, "I'm in charge of

Mr. Cliburn [*SL laughs*] for tonight." And so they said, "Oh well, we don't know about that." I said, "Well, I'm supposed to be here, you know, for any—he needs water or whatever he needs 'cause I know the buildin' and I know whatever." And they said, "Okay." So went in—I went inside backstage. Well, Cliburn pulls up—and back then they didn't do limousines and stuff like that. But he comes up there, and I walked out, and they said, "This young man right here is in charge of you, Mr. Cliburn." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Hi, I'm Bud Whetstone, and I'm a sophomore in high school." And I shook hands with him, and he said, "Well"—so we went inside. We sat down, and he said, "Well, Bud, how you doin', you know? What's goin' on here?" And so I said, "What will you need, Mr. Cliburn?" He said, "I just want you to get me a—some water. I need some water."

SL: Yeah.

[01:44:28] BW: And he said, "Also, I want you to sit on the edge of the stage and watch the deal." But, anyway, I met Van Cliburn, and that was one—another one of my Forrest Gump deals.

But . . .

SL: Can't believe you just bulled your way into that.

BW: Well you know, I never was very smart, so [*SL laughs*]*—*but I had—so I got real creative to stay alive. So I don't know what

brought that up. [01:44:51] But I did the same thing—when I was in Fayetteville, Peter, Paul and Mary came. And they were the number-one group—folk group in the United States, and they were in a gym. They—I knew where they—I knew where their dressin' room was, and that's where I used to work out in that—plus I used to box a little bit and . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . work out in that gym. And so I just jimmed the window and crawled down through there. [*SL laughs*] So when they got there, I was in their dressin' room. I said, "I want to interview y'all for an article I'm writin'." And they said—and I never told 'em who I was with. And anyway, I ended up gettin' an interview with 'em, and I wasn't writin' for anybody and never wrote anything.

[01:45:30] SL: [*Laughs*] You know, I remember when they came to Fayetteville. They actually came up to our house and ate.

BW: Oh, really?

SL: Yep.

BW: Now that was somethin' 'cause they were number one.

SL: It was. It was somethin' else.

BW: They were the hottest in America.

SL: Yeah, Mary Travers was just stunningly beautiful. I—you know,

she had the really silky hair back then, and it was just unbelievable. I don't know how my brother managed to pull that off, but they got 'em to the house.

BW: Right.

SL: They ate around the round table.

[01:45:58] BW: And they were extremely nice. She cussed a lot.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, she didn't when they were at the house.

That . . .

BW: Well, that's one of the things that I remember they asked me— one, Peter or Paul, whichever one it was, asked me not to write anything about that 'cause—about her cussin' and was—he was scoldin' her about it. [*SL laughs*] And course, she was not in any danger 'cause I wasn't writin' for anybody.

SL: Man!

BW: But I did get the interview.

[01:46:24] SL: That's somethin' else. Well, before we get you up to the university, I wanna talk a little bit more about your time in El Dorado. And let's talk a little bit about your athletics in El Dorado. Did you first start—at one point you mentioned—when did you first start playing football?

BW: Well, I think I was in the seventh or eighth grade when I first started playin' organized football. Now . . .

SL: But that was—it wasn't for the school. Was it . . .

BW: No, it was—they had a—they had, like, a Kiwanis Club, Boys Club, Lions Club . . .

SL: Yes.

BW: You know, and had, like, four or five teams. And so the—but you couldn't weigh over a hundred and forty pounds or somethin' like that. And you could be in the ninth grade, but you couldn't—ninth grade is as far as you could go, but you couldn't weigh over a hundred and forty pounds or a hundred and fifty or whatever it was. So I started off playin' one year, and I don't—I think I was in the seventh grade. I don't think I got in a game, hardly, the first time around. And then the second time around—I wanted to play runnin' back. My dad wanted me to be a quarterback, and I didn't—I wasn't a quarterback. So first year I played quarterback. Second year I played runnin' back. So that second year—that's when my—that was the same year that I was on the state championship relay team. And that was the same year that I won some races—some pretty big races in the state. And so I kind of got on the map as a runner, but then in the football arena, I made five touchdowns in one Little League football game one time.

SL: Wow.

[01:48:10] BW: And so that was a big thing 'cause in El Dorado they were always tryin' to figure out who's the next big runnin' back gonna be 'cause we had Jim Mooty and we had, you know, all those kind of people. They were the—Eli Mooty and Jim Mooty and Bobby Bates and Larkus Pesnell and all these superstars. Now you understand, the—there wasn't TV. You didn't—they had football games—well, there was TV, but you didn't see football games on TV hardly ever. So we didn't get to see, you know, the plays and the replays and all that business.

SL: Yeah.

BW: There wasn't any such thing as that. So a lot of people—in a little town like that everybody knew who the football players were, and they knew who the fastest guy in the school was. Everybody in town wanted to know that—who's the top jock.

SL: Yeah.

[01:48:54] BW: So anyway, I scored—I made five touchdowns in one football game, and so [*SL laughs*] everybody started gettin' a little attention at that point.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so then the next year, when I was—I was in junior high the next year in the ninth grade. Well, I had lettered in track, and I probably was the fastest guy—white guy in the state at that

time. We didn't run with the blacks, so we don't know 'bout all that. But I . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: I'll concede that. So it ends up that I started playin' football. Well, after about the third or fourth game—fifth game—somethin' like that—I got my lung busted. I played offense. I played—I was first-team offense and defense. I ran the kickoffs back, and I ran the punt returns back, and I never came off the field. I was the captain of the team. I never came off the field. And so I was over in Pine Bluff one night, and I had an impact injury and actually—I got hit so hard—for one thing, I could run fast, and I hit hard. And these guys were all bigger'n me. I didn't weigh about a hundred and thirty-five pounds at the time. And so I was hittin' . . .

SL: You stayed low, I would guess.

BW: Pardon?

SL: You probably stayed low.


[01:50:13] BW: Right, but I—they—back then, the coaches taught you to hit somebody on every play, and they taught you to spear with your head.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And they—then it was a—something that—when you watch

football now, it's nothin' like it was then on the—if you hit somebody on every play—hurt somebody—and that was—the whole idea was to hurt somebody whether you made a yard or not. So you run far as you could, and then you'd just pick out somebody's chin strap and put your helmet . . .

SL: Helmet.

BW: . . . under his chin strap. That's what they taught you to do,  which is why I take medication for my neck today. But anyway, I had run this kick-off back, and I'd run quite a ways, and I was running between the last two men, and they were runnin' forward and they—one of 'em hit me in the front, and one of 'em hit me in the back at the same time. It was kind of a collision like that, and it busted my lung—my right lung. So I played the rest of the half . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] On one lung.

BW: . . . on one lung. But every time I got hit, I was out. I couldn't get back up, and the coach got pissed off at me. And he said it—that he'd thought I'd taken such a beating that I—he thought I was—you know, didn't—wanted to come out of the game.

SL: Right.

BW: And he kept sayin', "Yeah, you just wanna come out of the game." He said, "I'm surprised at you. I've never seen

you" . . .

SL: Shut down.

BW: . . . "you know, turn yellow and shut down." And he said, "These guys have got you psyched out." And I didn't wanna tell him I was hurt.

SL: Yeah.

[01:51:32] BW: But anyway, long and short of it is that ended up that I didn't—I finished that game, and I couldn't put my pads on. Well, on the way back these guys that were on the team—we stopped at a eating place, and these people that were on the team—the kids that were on the team—they stole a bunch of stuff at this eating place.

SL: Uh-oh.

BW: And I was hurt too bad to go in to eat, so I told 'em—they stole a bunch of silverware and some other stuff, and so I told 'em—when—before the coach got on the bus, I said, "I want everybody to take that stuff and give it back. I want you to take it and pile it up over here, and I'm gonna give it back to the coach." I said, "We can come over and get our ass beat, but we're not thieves." And I said, "Long as I'm captain of this football team, by God, we're not gonna do that." And so they took a dislikin' to that idea. They wouldn't do it. They would not

give me the stuff, so I told the coach about it, and that was the end of my football career. They told me I could never play again—and even though after my lung got healed up and everything in high school, they wouldn't let me play. And the coach got fired, and he blamed that on me and . . .

[01:52:46] SL: So I—so the coach told you that you could never play again or just . . .

BW: No.

SL: . . . would never play you . . .

BW: The coach talked to the players, I'm assuming. And they—and the coach came up to my room—my hospital room but he—that one time. Then when they told him I could never play again—that I could not play that year—I never saw him again. And so some of the—and a lot of the players that I had turned in to—for stealin', they wouldn't come up to my room. And so when—then they fired—ended up firin' the coach, and then the players after that made it real clear to me all the way through high school that I wasn't ever gonna play again. And so that was my dream. I was Clyde Scott. It's all I ever wanted to be. I was wantin' to be a cowboy and a football player. That's about how intellectual and sophisticated I was. And I was a cowboy without any cows and without a horse, and I was a football player without a team.

So that probably shaped me more than any one thing that ever happened in my life 'cause that was the one thing that I wanted to do, and it's who I wanted to be.

SL: So somehow or another you were able to leave high school early. Is that . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott. We need to change tapes.

SL: Oh. Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:54:09] SL: I wanna talk a little bit more about your father's political efforts in his races for prosecuting attorney in El Dorado. And you know, I have a feeling that this race thing is a little bit more—even more pervasive and more personal than we've kind of been led—that we have kind of unfolded here. Now it's my understanding that your father was a struggling lawyer in El Dorado, and he had cases, and he won cases. And you said something about whenever he'd win a case there'd be lots of food coming in the house . . .

BW: Right.

SL: . . . and you'd be okay for a while. But were there cases that your father took on that he became noted for, or that he—his demeanor in the society there in El Dorado kind of set him apart? Did he defend black clients as well as white clients?

[01:55:21] BW: Oh yeah. He—Bernard had this kind of sense of fair play. I think—somethin' that I—I don't know if I learned it from him or if I picked it up from him or what. If I don't like somebody, you pretty well know I don't like you. And if I do like you, you'll know that, too. So I don't hide my feelings very well. And if I'm irritated, I don't hide that well. And it serves me well in a courtroom because a jury knows how I feel about the case, and they know when I'm sayin' somethin' that I believe it. And that's powerful. He had that and had it in spades. He could—he—that's just the way he was, so he didn't have much stomach for—when he was around somethin' that was injustice—I think injustice is a theme. I know it's a theme in my life, and I think it was in his life, too. He just didn't like injustice. I couldn't quite figure out where he made the leap racially from his sisters bein' in the Ku Klux Klan and all that stuff that he thought was crazy and him tellin' me—one of the first things that I remember in my life is comin' home and sayin' somethin' bout a nigger, and he said, "We don't use that word in this house." And I said, "Well, Papaw," my grandfather, I said, "he does." And I started tellin' him who else did, and he said, "I know." He said, "They can do whatever they want to in their house." He said, "This is our house. We don't do it in our house." And he said, "I wanna"—

he said to call 'em colored people because he said "It hurts their feelin's for you to say that." And he said, "And it's disrespectful and," he said, "there's not a reason to do it. So don't do it." So—I mean, I would—if I'd've said nigger in front of him, I don't know what he'd've done. But he woulda—it wouldn't've been good. [*SL laughs*] [01:57:03] But he had that way about him, and I think that people, even good people, didn't like that part of him, that he wasn't going to participate in that. And when he represented people—I know he told me one time that when he represented people, he didn't think that these people were gettin' [*SL coughs*] a fair shake. He was appointed one time to a criminal trial for a black man, and so he told the fellow—he said, "I'll be over at the jail tomorrow and talk with you." And the jail was across the street from his office in the courthouse, in the top of the courthouse. So he goes over there and the next day—late that afternoon the next day, and he goes over to talk to this guy—this black man—and they said, "Well, he's already gone to prison." He said, "How could he go to prison?" He says, "He's my client. When it—it wasn't a trial. What"—and they said, "Oh, we just came up—prosecutin' attorney went up there and made a deal with him." He said, "Why are you—how are you talkin' to my client?" And they said, "Oh, Bernard, you know, these

niggers, you know, just a made a deal with him, and he—we don't wanna fool around with him and all that." Said, "You just kind of a token—appointed." And he said—Bernard said, "Well, I don't see it that way. You know, if I'm the—I'm his lawyer, I need to be representin' him, and I didn't get to discuss with him what the deal was you made," and the whole thing. And they just—and they—he didn't understand that. He didn't think it was right, and he didn't think it was fair. He didn't think it was fair to the man. The fellow was illiterate. He didn't know anything, and he'd go—gotta go off to prison. Well, he didn't like that, and so he just—I don't know. He—that's just the way it was.

[01:58:41] SL: Well, didn't he also—wasn't there a case where he felt like it wasn't right for an African American to be . . .

BW: Oh yeah. There was a case where a fellow sh—killed—I'd forgotten about that. There was a fellow—somebody was breakin' into the backs of the caboose of a train where the people that are on the train that worked on the train, the firemen or whatever, they had their raincoats and stuff like that back there. Somebody was st—had broken in there a couple times and stolen a raincoat. So this fellow that worked for the railroad bought a pistol and went out—practiced shootin' a pistol. And he got on—he got—he went and got in one of these cars

where he thought this fellow might break in, and a fellow did break in. Now whether it was the same fellow, we'll never know, but he did break in. And he shot at him, and the fellow started runnin'. The black fellow started runnin'. And this other fellow with the pistol started chasin' him, and he chased him all over the railroad yard, and chased him for somethin' like twenty minutes. And finally, he was inside—I think he was inside of a phone booth. I'm pretty sure that's right. The black fellow's inside of a phone booth, and this white fellow walks around the corner and saw him and shot him two or three or four times and killed him. [02:00:09] And my dad said, "Okay, let's, you know, assume that he's a thief and assume whatever you wanna assume. You don't execute somebody." So he tried—they wouldn't bring a criminal charge against him. And so my daddy sued him civilly, and he sued him in a civil case, and tried that case, and I saw that trial. Saw part of it. I was probably, oh, in the seventh, eighth grade or so—tenth grade, maybe, when that happened. And he just got up and said, "This is not right." And it was an all-male jury—white male jury. They weren't out ten minutes. And I remember one of the people came down and said, "Oh hell, Bernard." Said, "These niggers—you know, you can't be lettin' them do stuff like that." He said, "They know

better'n that." Said, "Nigger got what he deserved." And my dad took that case to the Supreme Court. He just said, "It—you know, that excessive force under those circumstances"—he said, "if you wanna put him in jail, do that, but you can't execute a man standin' in a phone booth, and they did." So it was . . .

[02:01:15] SL: How'd it go at the Supreme Court? This . . .

BW: They didn't reverse it.

SL: They didn't?

BW: They didn't reverse.

SL: Man! State—Arkansas State . . .

BW: Yeah.

SL: . . . Supreme Court?

BW: They didn't do anything about it. He didn't get any relief on it at all.

[02:01:25] SL: So he's kind of marked. Your father got kind of marked for . . .

BW: He got . . .

SL: . . . standing up . . .

BW: . . . marked for two or three or four different things like that and he—that's the way he was. And it was a [*vehicle passes*—I mean, my dad was a peculiar guy. I mean, he wasn't—he was not—he'd had to work all of his life. He worked his way through

college. He had to come home after school and work, and he never was allowed to go and, you know, socialize and do things like that. He always had to work in the store. He was a—he had a article in him in the new—about him in the newspaper—called him the wonder boy as an athlete. He was a—terrific track. He could throw the javelin. He could high-jump, he could pole-vault, and he was fast. He was a—by—everybody always talked about what a great athlete he was, but he never got to—and he—the only thing he ever got to do was some track. They would—his daddy wouldn't let him play football 'cause the first time he played football he knocked somebody cold, and his daddy found out about it and said, "No, you're gonna hurt somebody out there," and they wouldn't let him play anymore. So he was always frustrated about that. He—when he went to Henderson—he—when he was sixteen years old, he went to Henderson, and he went out for football there, and they were the state champions, and he played a little bit at Henderson, but that was the only time he ever got to play at all. And there's a picture of him—some pictures of him in his Henderson uniform—it's kind of—that are kind of cool—in 1929.

SL: Wow.



[02:02:55] BW: But anyway, I don't know what you'd say about it.

He was a—my dad was one of the most talented, toughest people I ever met in my life. And he just had sand, and he had guts, and you just don't wanna be on the other side of him. And I don't mean other side of him because he'd be dirty. I don't mean it that way. I just mean there was no quit in him. Once he made up his mind somethin' was wrong, that was just it. So that didn't go over well in El Dorado. But, see, in El Dorado there's only two classes of people when I'm there—when I was there—the filthy rich and the filthy, and we weren't rich. And that's the way—there was a peckin' order, and you couldn't run for office without goin' by and talkin' with Charlie Murphy or talkin' with some of the people down there that were the big—that were the movers and shakers. In other words, you'd have to have permission to run. Now most people don't know about that, but that's the way it is, and it's the way it was. And so . . .

[02:03:56] SL: Also, the Citizens' Council, right?

BW: You had to go before the White Citizens' Council. Well, he wouldn't—after he got in a runoff, he won on—he won and he was ahead on votes. Then he got in a runoff, and they said, "You gotta come before the White Citizens' Council and talk and make your peace with them." And he said, "I'd rather lose the race than talk to the White Citizens' Council." He said, "I'm not

gonna go to a racist organization—hate organization—and get on my knees to them." He said, "I'm just not gonna do it." The other side—the other lawyer did do it, and then they all decided at that time they would do the race card—play the race card on him. And they did play the race card on him, and that was it on that. It was rough. I'm—I was fourteen years old at the time. I didn't know what to do or say to him, and I've felt—I've always felt badly that I didn't console him more or say more about it. I wasn't ashamed of it at all. I was just—I don't know, I think I was stung and hurt—maybe not as much as he was, but I was. And I didn't know what to think about it, exactly.

[02:05:13] SL: Well, did his principled commitment to principle and doing the right thing—did that cost not only him and, in this case, his political career and maybe his relationship with the local law enforcement and courts and the general community—but did that spill over into the home as well? Did it affect the relationships that your sister or your sisters and your mother had with the community and what you were doing in the community? I mean, all of a sudden, were the Whetstones kind of, you know, the black sheep, for lack of a better word, of the community? Were you . . .

BW: You know, I . . .

SL: . . . ostracized, I guess, is . . .

BW: . . . I thought about that, and I don't really know what the rest of the community thought about us so much. We know we went to church and sat down there on that second row and all of that. Now my daddy was no choirboy, and I'm not tryin' to make him into some kind of saint or somebody that he wasn't, 'cause he certainly had his faults. But I don't know what people thought. My sister and I—my sister that died this past year, almost exactly a year ago from ALS, my older sister—she and I were like twins. We talked about it a lot, about what did people think about us and what did—you know, what—and I think we thought—she and I laughed about it and said, "I think we didn't know that—we thought higher of ourselves and thought we enjoyed a better place in the community than we did." But I think that's probably—I think we probably—I think that's probably the way it was.

[02:07:00] SL: You were a little—maybe a little naive, and I guess you probably weren't aware of how vicious the unspoken or the . . .

BW: Yeah, there were lot of good . . .

SL: How insidious that kind of stuff can be.

BW: There were a lot of good people down there, see? Now Ed

Bargiel, for instance—I talked about him earlier—Ed Bargiel's one of the kindest men I ever met, and he was the one that hired me to work at the hardware store, and I wasn't worth a damn as an employee. And [*laughs*] I mean, he wasn't exactly clamoring to get me back [*SL laughs*] 'cause I didn't know anything about mechanical things. My—even though my grandfather—my great-grandfather had already invented the first rice tractor, my daddy was not mechanical, and so I didn't know anything about that.

SL: Yeah.

[02:07:44] BW: So when I went to hardware store, it was a bad place for me to be. But Ed Bargiel was a terrible racist. See, I don't know what Ed thought about my dad, and I don't know what he—he said somethin' to me—it was that summer—he said somethin' to me that "That's just kind of the way things are, son," and—but he wouldn't—he didn't say it in an ugly way, so I didn't feel the sting from him. He didn't say, "You guys had got it comin'," or anything like that.

SL: Do you remember . . .

[02:08:09] BW: Now let me say this about Bargiel.

SL: Okay.

BW: There was a guy—to understand—to make sure that anybody

that ever listens to this understands—it wasn't as simple as just, "It was this way or that way." Bargiel told me one time that this one policeman down there that was a motorcycle policeman—he was the one—the guy that always had the shiny boots and the sunglasses, and he's kind of a pretty boy around town and all that. And he told me that he saw him take a blackjack and beat a black guy up one time out on the street and, I mean, just beat the hell out of him. And he said that wasn't right, and he said he didn't care if it was a nigger, that he didn't go for that. He didn't like that cop for it, and told me that he was a—told me that cop was out of line. He said, "I don't care what he did or what he said." He said, "He didn't have that much—he didn't have a beatin' comin'." And he said, "And he beat that man up." And so this is the same Bargiel that was ugly to the—that I said earlier—to these little kids—black kids. So I don't know. Sometimes you—it was confusing about what anybody thought about you, your family, or the race thing. It was not just they liked you 'cause—or didn't like you or whatever. I don't know how to explain it. You didn't know. You didn't know what they thought.

[02:09:28] SL: Do—I'm tryin' to—I just wonder—so you never really saw any Klan activity or any—did you ever see any mistreatment

of blacks, personally?

BW: Now you're talkin' bout in El Dorado?

SL: Yeah.

BW: Now I went to a Klan rally after that, but I didn't to go to a Klan rally in El Dorado.

SL: Right.

BW: Okay, I'll talk about that a minute.

SL: Yeah.

[02:10:00] BW: I didn't see—they—you know, there was a thing that they used to say all the time back then about stayin' in your place. "A nigger has to stay in their place," and they did stay in their place, and they did know what their place was. And so I didn't see blacks challengin' anybody. And they—it wasn't—it was a counterproductive exercise for a . . .

SL: Sure.

BW: . . . black person to challenge because you had these—you had this motorcycle cop that might beat you up or whatever. And then the court—the people at the courthouse, you know, they way they were.

SL: They'd send you to jail.

BW: And so they—it was a—it was—you wouldn't want to be black in El Dorado, Arkansas. Or any place in the South, for that matter.

[02:10:44] SL: Okay. Well, I just wanna—I just felt like there may have been more to your father's winning primaries and then losing the general election than what I let go by. I just wanted to make sure that . . .

BW: Well, I think your point about the White Citizens' Council—I think that was a—to me, that was one of the things that I was proudest of him on . . .

SL: Sure.

BW: . . . that he just said, "I [*unclear words*] cater these people." He said, "They're hatemongers, and I'm not gonna do it." He said, "If I've—if that's what it takes to win, I'm not gonna win." And he didn't. But . . .

[02:11:16] SL: Well you know, who knows what would've happened if he had won? I mean, he probably would've tried to turn things right, and probably would've gotten even more grief and . . .

BW: He mighta got killed if he'd've won.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

BW: I don't know what woulda happened.

SL: Yeah.

BW: But he was his own man.

[02:11:32] SL: All right. And now I wanna revisit your football stuff. Here you were, possibly the fastest guy in the state; five

touchdowns in one game; obviously, a gifted athlete, and then you get hurt. You get a collapsed lung in a game. And when they told you you couldn't play anymore, w—there was also medical stuff goin' on there, too, right? I mean, did the doctor say, "You know what? You need to lay off a year," or whatever? Or—tell me the story again. Why was it that you couldn't play anymore? What . . .

BW: Well, let me—let's go back and—for a minute—let me get—make sure I give you this kind of background. My dad could punt a football extremely well, and he could throw a football well. And he was apparently—he liked—he didn't get his chance to play, so he worked with me when I was—startin' in about the third or fourth grade. And I remember he used to stand in the yard and kick a football over the top of a telephone pole, and I would stand out in the street, and I know it was in the fourth grade or before because we moved from that house in the fourth grade. So he would kick it over the top of that telephone pole, and I would catch it. So we started off sayin', "I—he—I'll do a nickel a ball. [*SL laughs*] A nickel for every one you miss, you know, you owe me a nickel." And so we—so that didn't last very long. So I was walkin' away—after about two days I was walkin' away with about a buck and a half, somethin' like that. And he said,

"We'll not play that anymore." [*SL laughs*] So . . .

SL: You had hands.

[02:13:28] BW: So—well, I don't know. I think it was a concentration that I learned—I was tryin' to please him, I think was the main thing. And I think a lot of the—I think if men really take a good look at themselves, a lot of what we do in life is to please our fathers.

SL: Yep.

BW: That's why we need the male energy in our house, which is another story. But anyway, I was tryin' to please him, and I was wantin' to show him that I could do anything. And I was wantin' to show him that I could be Clyde Scott. And you know, I had this Clyde Scott picture hangin' over my bed, and certainly under no circumstances, could I have been Clyde Scott. I don't ever think I'm hintin' anything like that. I couldn't carry his travel bag, under any circumstances. But it was a thing that he and I—after school we would throw the football, and he always said—he would say, "Anybody can catch one in the numbers. You gotta—if you can't catch 'em with one hand—can't catch 'em over your shoulder," he said, "nobody pays to see anybody catch one in their numbers." So he never threw me a football in my life in my numbers. I couldn't even—couldn't catch a ball as well

with two hands as I could with one. [*SL laughs*] 'Cause he never threw me one that—I was always like this [raises arm to right and looks at hand]—I was always up this. I was always over the shoulder. That's the only kind he ever threw. And we did it hours and hours and hours and hours. So then the speed was just God-given speed, you know, that I had. It wasn't like world-class speed or anything, but I mean, you know, for—I could outrun anybody my age that I ever—was ever—that I ever ran against. [02:15:01] So you—all of that builds up, and it was this tremendous thing to me. And I remember tellin' him—I remember the first day of football practice, I told him—I said, "I'm gonna be first-team offense and defense. I'm gonna run the kickoffs and the punt returns back." And I said, "I hope I'll be captain of the team 'cause," I said, "I'm not in charge of any—I'm not in charge of the boat." And he said, "I hope you understand that there are other people that coulda come to town that you don't know about or somebody can grow up over the summer, and you need to be afraid of that." And I said, "Well, I'm not afraid of it." I said, "There's no way I'm not gonna do that." So I walked out there, and I walked out there with that attitude. I was one of the littlest guys on the first team.

[02:15:41] SL: This is freshman year?

BW: Freshman—yeah, junior high.

SL: Yeah.

BW: Ninth grade. I said . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

BW: I said, "This is my time. I been waitin' my whole life to do this."

So it was more than just somebody goin' out for football; it was my Clyde Scott obsession. And then I had just come off the state champion—on the state championship relay team. So I was gonna be the man in my mind. And in a small town at that time, that was important because everybody knew you, and it was everything. I don't know. I'm—you know, you could even argue—it was—it's sick that we do this to young people or that I felt that way. I didn't wanna be a doctor. I didn't wanna be anything. I wanted to be a football player. That's all I ever wanted to be. So I was obsessed with it. So when I went out there, I was willin' to run into us—to a—wide open into a brick wall if that's what it took, and that's what I did. And so when I got hurt, I got a collapsed lung and as a—I had to—I got hurt in football season and I—they didn't operate on me until—I had to go down to New Orleans, and I had tubes in my chest. This was a long, drawn-out thing, and I was in the hospital a couple weeks at a time during my ninth grade year. And so this was

over a period of time. And so I don't know—it was—I think you have to understand my obsession before you understand, you know, some—for somebody to take that away from me was—I'd've rather have my arm cut off than lose that. I really would.

[02:17:17] Then the ninth grade I was confident I was gonna get the—set the state record in the 100 and maybe a 220 or 440 or whatever, but I didn't get to run my ninth grade year because my lung was messed up. I had to have a—I got an operation during track season, and so I came back and had to watch guys that I could outrun—this one boy, Bobby Williams, that played on the football team—I was—I sat there and watched him win four or five races. And Bobby's a really good guy, but he couldn't outrun me in a million years. Never could. [*SL laughs*]

And I just—the—watchin' that—but, see, here's the part of it—that I'm—that's—I mean, the relevant part of it, if there is any relevant part to what I'm sayin'—may not—but this may not be relevant except to me—this gave me a whole different kind of way of lookin' at life 'cause I had put my hands in a team and in a coach and in a person—my whole future in this person . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:18:21] BW: . . . and then they took it away from me. And so I made up my mind I—that it never was gonna happen to me

again, and I also made a—I also made up my mind that whatever I did, I was gonna do it on my own. And same way I—I do the same way lawyerin' as I do—as I did then. And if anybody gets—if anybody says they're gonna do whatever, I just figure, "You ain't been through what I been through." And if I came through that when I was fourteen years old, hell, I can come through anything. I almost died—emotionally. And I'm pretty sure I was clinically depressed from that point till I went to college. But, see, it wasn't just that—it wasn't just that. They wouldn't even let me run track. When I ran track, these guys would stand on the sidelines and say, "You're gonna get your ass beat today." You know, you're in—you know, they taunted me all the way through school. I member one boy moved from New Orleans, and they said, "Would—have you seen this guy from New Orleans?" He said, "He even won third in the state of New Orleans." And they said, "And you ain't gon' be the fastest guy. How do you feel about that?" And I said, "Well, we ain't had the race yet." And it was that kind of thing.

SL: So . . .

[02:19:36] BW: But it was that—it was the football thing and these guys tauntin' me all the time. [*SL sniffs*] And then the race thing—all of that put together—but by the time I was fif—sixteen

years old, I was ready to go to college. I was read—I was done for high school. But the funny thing is at the class reunions and times when I meet people that were in my high school—I'll meet some girl, and she'll say, "This is Bud Whetstone. He was a star football player in high school on our team." You know, the—it's like—and you—we all live in our own little world, you know, and it was a little world to begin with, and then my little section of it was real little. But it was my world—it's all I had, and we're all the star of own story, you know.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So that was it. I don't know what to tell you about that, but . . .

[02:20:19] SL: So did you—how much further did your sporting career go in El Dorado? I mean, did you have a sophomore and junior year at all or . . .

BW: Well, I went out for football my sophomore year, and I would—I'd been workin' on a farm in Indiana, so I came back—workin' on the farm, and I went out football. And I played on a—I was on a B team, and I think I played in one game, and I scored a touchdown in that game. And then after that my grades were so bad, and I was depressed, and everybody was tellin' me that I couldn't play—they didn't want me playin' and just all of that kind of stuff. So I just said, "I'm—I don't need this." And so I

quit playin' football. And then after my junior year, then I started runnin'—I ran track, and I ran the 100 for El Dorado when I was a sophomore. When I was a junior, I could outrun anybody at any distance, and so I felt like I didn't have anything to prove in track—exc—to that group, at least.

SL: Yeah.

[02:21:22] BW: And I was tired of bein' taunted. And then the high school coach came and asked me if I would play football. He said, "Will you be my halfback next year?" 'Cause he saw me catchin' a football in spring trainin' and runnin' punts back, and nobody could even come close to gettin'—to touchin' me. And he said, "Would you be my halfback?" And I said, "I'd—I appreciate it. I'll think about it." But I didn't wanna tell him—I felt like if I told him about the other guys, it'd mess up—if I didn't stay, it would mess up his team and put him in a bad position of havin' to go to those guys and say, "Are you not gonna let him play? Are you gonna tell me 'I'm the coach?'" And you know, it just wasn't right . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . to the coach. I didn't give a damn about the other guys, but it wasn't right to the coach. So I never mentioned it to him. I—he died about a year or so ago, and I've seen him since then,

and I thanked him for offerin' me to let me play, but I'd never—
but I didn't tell him then what happened. He died not knowin',
and it's not a big deal. I mean, to him it's just somethin' that
doesn't need to be—he didn't need to know about it.

SL: Yeah.

BW: He has his relationship with those guys, and that's what it is,
and it's not for me to interfere with.

[02:22:27] SL: So when you say "these guys," you're talkin' the
other players on the team.

BW: Yeah.

SL: And they were just that way to you because of your stance on
race and . . .

BW: I don't—I think it was partially stance on race. One of the major
guys, his dad was a huge racist—huge racist—and he bragged
about it all the time, and so that was part of it. The other part
was that they were under the impression, for some reason—see,
they never won another football game after I got hurt, and so
the coach got fired. And so the coach has gotta tell somebody
somethin' about why he got fired, and he didn't letter me. And
when he didn't letter me, I told the high school coach—he told
me he wasn't gonna letter me partially 'cause the high school
coach wouldn't give me a jacket. And I said, "I'll pay for the

jacket." He said, "Well, you didn't—I'm—we're not gonna do it." Anyway, I told the high school coach that I wanted to make sure that—whether he was in on the deal or not, and he said he wasn't in on the deal, and he gave me a jacket. He ordered me a jacket. When he ordered that jacket for me, then they—everybody else knew that I didn't get the jacket—the high school coach gave it to me—my dad wasn't in on that—that's when they turned the heat up, right then, and then he got fired. And so when that happened—I don't know what he said to him—them—but I think they had some misguided loyalty. You know, young guys like that [*unclear words*]*—hell, they were, what, fifteen years old?*

SL: Yeah.

[02:23:58] BW: Sixteen years old? But they wouldn't let it go.

Wouldn't let it go. So anyway—you know, you mix the race part in with it, and you mix the—me turnin' 'em in for stealin' and the coach thinkin' that maybe he truly thought I got him fired. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if I'll ever know what happened on that. But anyway, it shaped me—made me tough. And you know, I don't make any bones about that.

[02:24:31] SL: So how were you able to leave high school early?

BW: Well, they had a—the Little Rock crisis was goin' on, and there

was a lot of talk—which is sort of a like another subject—there was a lot of talk about whether they were gonna come to school with us, and on the PA system—the public address system in El Dorado—there was a lot—they were sayin'—the principal was sayin' all the time, "If anybody left—if you don't come to school, you'd better have an excuse. I mean, you better have a doctor's excuse 'cause we're gonna not—we're not gonna be as lax as we have been," because the talk was that a bunch of students were gonna go up to Little Rock. And some of the guys—some of the kids that were—lived kind of out in the country, they had shotguns in the back of their car and rifles all the time. And I—you never even saw 'em—I mean, they never got 'em out or anything. But they would go squirrel huntin', see, before school.

SL: Yeah.

[02:25:29] BW: And stuff like that—or after school they'd go squirrel hunt. So I mean, that wasn't—I never saw a pistol, now, but you'd see people have shotguns. So they said, "If you get caught with a shotgun or a rifle in the back of your car, you're in trouble. Don't you—don't have one in your car, and you better be at school." And then we heard people talkin' every day, sayin', "My uncle and my daddy are loadin' up, and they're gonna get—they got their shotguns, and they're go up there and

kill some niggers in Little Rock." Well, I was under the impression that maybe ten thousand or [*laughs*] a hundred thousand people were converging on Little Rock. I didn't know. And a lot of 'em would say, "I wanna go—I may go with my dad. I'm thinkin' about goin' tomorrow," and there was all this kind of stuff. We didn't know what was gonna happen. Now in history, when you read it and it's already been printed and it's in the past, when—it's different than when you're experiencin' it. But I remember all this turmoil. So, see, the—everything—the emotions were runnin' high at that time, so that's what was goin' on at our school. [02:26:29] And then we were talkin' about, "'Course, we may be next." And they were even sayin', "We may bring the blacks in that next semester." Or were they—"We gonna shut our schools down?" 'Cause they'd shut the Little Rock Central school down. "They gonna shut our school down?"

SL: Right.

[02:26:42] BW: My junior year we ran the state meet in Arkadelphia because they had shut the Little Rock Central down. That's where we ran the state meet. So—anyways, it was a—there was a lot of turmoil.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So I don't know if I'm—any of this is even worth talkin' about,

but I don't—I never heard anybody talk about what was goin' on in any other school except Little Rock Central. But—then everybody was tryin' to take a stance. "Okay, what are you gonna do? What are you gonna do next year when you show up and the niggers get off the bus—what are you gonna do?" That's what everybody was talkin' about. Every day. And I was sayin', "I ain't do a damn thing. I ain't doin' nothin'. They don't bother me. I don't bother them." That was what all I was sayin'. And everybody else was talkin' bout how they weren't gonna do it. They were comin' to school, and they were gonna beat somebody's ass, and they were gonna—you know, a bunch of nervous high school prattle. I don't know.

SL: Right.

BW: But anyway, that's what was goin' on. It was rough.

[02:27:38] SL: So how did you extricate yourself from high school . . .

BW: Okay.

SL: . . . that early?

BW: Well, they had a Little Rock rule, they called it, and they said if you had fourteen or sixteen hours or somethin' like that or sixteen credits, and even if you didn't graduate from school—if you had these particular courses that you'd passed, you could go

straight—with a recommendation of your principal you could go to college. So my—after my junior year, I took senior English, which was one of the required courses, and I had lined up every other course. I found out what the courses were, and I took 'em. So by the end of my summer—half—the first half of the summer of my—after my junior year, I was eligible to go to college, and I went to college that summer. And I was up there summer when I was sixteen years old. I turned—I was up there—I finished my first part of summer—last half of summer school, then went back up there—and when I went back up in the fall, I turned seventeen just at that time.

[02:28:41] SL: So was it just enough just to pass the courses to qualify? I mean, you—you've mentioned earlier that your grades kind of suffered after your injury.

BW: Well, my grades suffered. I didn't know I had learning disabilities. I never could figure that out. I had a lot of dyslexia and learning disabilities, but back then nobody'd ever heard of that.

SL: Right.

BW: So we didn't know what that meant.

SL: Yeah.

BW: That you just thought, you know, you must not be very smart.

So I couldn't quite figure—I was always confused because I didn't feel like I was stupid, but I couldn't make—didn't make very good grades. [*Clears throat*] But anyway, my dad told me my sophomore year—he said—I was makin' terrible grades my sophomore year, and I was depressed, and I was in a bad way mentally. He said, "You're plannin' on runnin' track this year, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes, sir, I am." I said, "Nobody—nobody in this school ever letters when you're a sophomore," and nobody'd ever hardly heard of it—just once in every five years did that ever happen. And I said, "I'm gonna be that man," 'cause if I couldn't play football, by God, I could run track. And he said, "You ain't runnin' anything till you—your—you have this—a B average," or whatever it was. I think I had two D's and two F's or somethin' like that. He said, "You're gonna have a B average or you ain't runnin' anything." So he said—so if you go look at my high school yearbook, my sophomore year I'm not even in the picture for that year of being on the track team because they made the picture before my grades came out. And they started the—started track season, and my grades didn't come out but—for another week, and my dad said, "No, we'll see how your grades are." I said, "I'm tellin' you, my grades are—I got 'em." And he said, "Let me see 'em." So that's how I got

my grades up. The only thing—the only way I ever got my grades up high enough to go to college was because my dad said, "You ain't runnin' track till you got 'em up." So I did get 'em up.

SL: Tough love.

BW: Whatever it took.

SL: Yeah.

[02:30:46] BW: So anyway, I got my grades up and ended up—you know, I—later on, I mean, I made probably a B—you know, A's and B's at the—toward the end. But that was pretty hard with the learning disabilities that I got.

SL: Yeah, but—not only that, but that you were able to climb out of the depression that you were in from your experience with the football deal. You were able to turn it around. You turned it around. You got the hell out of there.

BW: Yeah, I felt like a bird out of a cage. I never—let's just say I never got homesick after I left.

[02:31:24] SL: Well, I think—it sounds like to me you weren't leavin' a whole lot behind. I mean, there wasn't much reason to stay.

BW: No, not that. I had little—I had little sisters. I had a little sister that was sixteen years younger than me, see, so she was about a year old, and I had another sister that was ten years younger

than me, and we were real close. And so I was real close with them, and I missed them, but I—past that I didn't miss anything about it.

[02:31:58] SL: So your mom and dad were supportive of you takin' off for Fayetteville?

BW: Yeah. I mean, I—they were all—they were good to go. My sister, see, who was a superstar—maybe the best all-around person I've ever met—she was a great speaker, public speaker. She was a nice-lookin' person. She was a like—everybody liked her. She was popular. She's everything. She was a great athlete. She was everything.

SL: Yeah.

[02:32:29] BW: Well, she and I went up at the same time.

SL: Oh, okay.

BW: So that's why I'm—I keep referrin' to this twin thing.

SL: Yeah.

BW: See—and when we started kindergarten—digressing, slightly—she started kindergarten when she was four. Well, you couldn't go to kindergarten except when you were four and five, but I had a little sister that was younger—was two and a half years younger than me, and so they wanted me gone. So they told my older sister, "You take care of him," and they went and

talked this Catholic Church into takin' me in kindergarten when I was three. So I [*laughs*] tell people all the time—I say—people always say, "You must be really smart, Bud." I say, "I ain't too damn smart. [*SL laughs*] I went to kindergarten for three years." Which I did.

SL: Yeah.

[02:33:17] BW: But they said, "Your sister'll take care of you." And then they told the nuns. They said, "He"—and I had real good manners, and I was well behaved. And you know, my dad—you knew you didn't mess around with him. When he told you to do somethin', you better be doin' it.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so my sister was my mother, and she was my twin, and that's the way that was. So we went off to kindergarten together, and we went off to college together. So . . .

[02:33:44] SL: So what was your first impression when you got to Fayetteville?

BW: I felt like—I've never been in prison, but I felt pretty much like a—I think a person would feel like when you walk through—out the gates, and you hear that door clang behind you. I remember standin' out front of Old Main thinkin', "If I wanna go to a movie, I can go to a movie. If I wanna go to two, I don't

have to ask anybody this and where to be. And I won't have to put up with all those assholes that were on my football team. And I don't have to put up any of that racial stuff." Now that was—I did have to put up with some more racial stuff, but not anything like it was in high school.

[02:34:30] SL: Fayetteville was—were they about the same size—Fayetteville and El Dorado back then?

BW: No, I think El Dorado was probably larger.

SL: Yeah, I was just wondering if that might've been the ca . . .

BW: El Dorado was twenty-five thousand. I don't know what Fayetteville was. The University of Arkansas was sixty-five hundred, as I recall, when I was in through the . . .

SL: That puts Fayetteville probably at about twenty, twenty . . .

BW: Yeah.

SL: . . . two.

BW: Just a little smaller.

[02:34:53] SL: Yeah. Well, so you moved into a dorm?

BW: Well, this is another crazy story. [*Laughter*] I end up goin' up there in that summer, and these bunch of guys were in the Sig—these guys were Sigma Nus that I moved in with. And they were all seniors—either seniors or fifth-year guys just finishin' up. And they were twenty-two years old, and I was sixteen, okay?

Well, I had thought they were the wise old men of the world and, my God, when you're twenty-two . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . you know just—almost everything. And so here I am up there, just completely infatuated with—I'm in college and all this other stuff, and I was, like, "Oh my God!" And so they were all Sigma Nus, and so they just kept tellin' me, "You need to get in the fraternity." I said, "I don't see me as bein' a fraternity person. I don't"—and I—this went back to my football days, and I don't wanna be in a deal like that. I don't wanna be in an organization like that. "Oh no, you gotta do it. You gotta do it." So anyway, I ended up joinin' Sigma Nu. Well, I was there about three weeks before they understood that I wasn't pledge material. [*SL laughs*] And I understood that I wasn't, either. I more blamed it on them than me 'cause I didn't know what all that was, and they did. And they knew me, and they shoulda known better. At least I [*laughs*] blame it on them, at this point. [*Laughter*] But anyway, after the end of—I was miserable. I was miserable at the Sigma Nu house, and I mean, they rode me like crazy 'cause I didn't wanna play the game, and I didn't wanna do it. And I'm sure I brought it on myself. I'm not sayin' I didn't. And they just said, "You're too cocky, and you're too

whatever," and I said, "I ain't—I've already done the humble, football-hero routine, and it didn't work for me, and I'm not gonna do it anymore." But anyway, bottom line is that at the end of that semester, after goin' to four—what they call pledge court five times, five out of five times I had to go up before the initiates and asked me what was wrong with me. [02:36:56] Anyway, when I got out of there—now that was the second cage that I got out of, and when I got out of that cage I moved into a dorm, and I thought I had gone to heaven. And that's when I got this crazy idea that I would walk on and run track. But I had not run, see, all summer. I had not run all spring, all fall, and all these other guys . . .

SL: Were . . .

BW: . . . that I'd run against in high school that were freshmen, they had been runnin' the whole time.

SL: Yeah.

[02:37:30] BW: So then I went down there. I have no idea what would possess me to think I could run for the Arkansas Razorbacks. I have no idea. But anyway, I went down there, and I damn near died. They nearly killed me. And anyway, I got a scholarship, and I walked . . .

SL: For track?

BW: Yeah.

SL: Was that Renfrow? No, that's . . .

BW: No, that . . .

SL: . . . too early for Renfrow.

BW: That was Bidwell.

SL: Bidwell.

BW: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[02:38:02] BW: And I—so I got to go to the Southwest Conference track meet, and I got to do—you know, go—I got to travel, and I got to wear a Razorback outfit and everything, and I was pretty smitten with that idea. But my dad and I got into a disagreement. He was always wantin' me to do somethin' in college that other people didn't have to do. He was a real control guy, you know, and he was controllin' me up from college then and I . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: Finally, I just told him I wanted—I'd had all the control I wanted for a lifetime, and he said, "Well, let me explain to you somethin'." He said, "There's—the definition of a man is that you pay your own way." And he said, "You're a boy, and you'll always be a boy till you pay your own way." I said, "Well, you

just color me a man. Startin' at the end of this semester," I said, "I'm not gonna quit track 'cause I'm gonna letter, and I'm gonna get a scholarship, and that's important to me." And it was sort of important to me, you know, I'm sure, to go back to El Dorado to those guys that were tauntin' me all the time—say, "How do you like them apples?"

SL: Yeah.

BW: But anyway, I got my letter, and I got my scholarship, and then I was on my own. And I—so I had to start payin' my own way to school, so I was . . .

[02:39:17] SL: Well, how'd you do that?

BW: Well, I washed thirteen hundred dishes a day . . .

SL: Wow.

BW: . . . and mopped floors and—but I'm—I wasn't as stupid as most people might think. I did it at the freshman girls' dorm [*SL laughs*] where all the freshman girls had to be, and I was the headwaiter at the freshman girls' dorm for four years. So that worked out pretty well. I knew every girl on campus, which wasn't necessarily good, but I knew 'em. I've called a few of 'em and say, "Hey, this is Bud Whetstone. What about goin' out?" And they say, "Are you that guy that waits tables?" And I'd say, "Yeah." They'd say, "Un-uh. No way." I'd say, "Well,

okay." But I got some quick answers, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[02:40:05] BW: I got some turn downs, but I didn't blame 'em. I mean, I was wearin' a white coat, and I didn't look like I had too bright a future. And so anyway, I paid my way to school, and then in the summertime I did construction [*someone coughs*] work, workin' six to six on the highway. And at a dollar an hour, I'd make over eight hundred bucks in one summer. And it was grueling. It was worse than the chain gang. And then in the—then at the end of the time, I would always go up to Springdale, and they had a—they had the grape harvest up there.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And so you can unload grapes at the grape factory from six in the afternoon till six in the morning off the—grapes off the—and wooden crates off the back of the truck, standin' on concrete. And if you wanna be—if you want God to tell you your sins and punish you at the same time, that's a good way to do it. You do that for about two or three weeks, but see, you get time and a half. So you work about fifteen or eighteen days or somethin' like that because I had to pay my rent on my apartment anyway. So I might as well go up there and get in that overtime, which I did.

[02:41:20] SL: So were you still runnin' track all the way through college?

BW: I had to quit runnin' track.

SL: Didn't have—you had to worry about gettin' the money to . . .

BW: I couldn't—well, they didn't have full scholarships back then for track.

SL: Uh-huh. Okay.

BW: So I didn't—there was no way I could go. I couldn't do both. But then I started work—I, you know, worked out liftin' weights and boxin' and started boxin', so . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: I had boxed some in high school.

SL: Yeah, you've mentioned that.

BW: Yeah, I—and that was just somethin' that I liked to do. But anyway . . .

[02:41:50] SL: Did you ever compete?

BW: Well, that was the crazy thing. They didn't have Golden Glove when I was in high school, but they had a coach there that had us in somethin' like Golden Glove, but it was when—just within the school. So I boxed within the school. He had a system set up there. So I did that, and then when I went to college, I trained with the Golden Glove guys, but I couldn't ever go to the

meets because I couldn't leave my job, and I didn't have a—I didn't have any money for a motel room.

SL: Right.

BW: So I couldn't go.

SL: The team had to . . .

BW: So . . .

SL: . . . pay their own way.

BW: Yeah, so I didn't have anybody to pay my way, so I had to—I couldn't ever go. So I—my boxin' career is probably—is thinner than my football career.

[02:42:30] SL: So what years are you up in Fayetteville?

BW: I was up in Fayetteville from [19]60—from [19]59 to [19]63. I went to law—I was admitted to law school when I was nineteen years old.

SL: Fayetteville.

BW: In Fayetteville.

SL: Or University of Arkansas . . .

BW: Right.

SL: . . . Fayetteville, Law School.

BW: 'Cause you didn't have to have a degree at that time, so I did that. And I flunked out of law school in Fayetteville, and then I went back to undergraduate school and got a degree and ended

up in [19]65 gettin' a degree in education—coaching. And I—
then I—and to teach—and so I was a speech/social studies
major.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And then I went to Florida, and I taught school for a year. And I
coached track down there, and I coached a boxin' class down
there.

SL: All right.

BW: And then I decided that I needed to go back to school. I was
twenty-four by then, so I needed to go back to school, and I did
go back to law school.

SL: In Fayetteville?

BW: I went to Ole Miss.

[02:43:43] SL: Went to Ole Miss. Okay now, before we leave the
Fayetteville law school, I guess Leflar was there. Was Witte—
Witte was there . . .

BW: Yeah.

SL: . . . at that time.

BW: He told me I wasn't lawyer material, by the way.

SL: Well, if you were flunkin' out, you probably weren't. [*Laughter*]

BW: I woulda said the same thing if I'd've seen my papers. [*SL
laughs*] I wasn't disagreein' with him at the time. I was ready

to go.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

[02:44:10] BW: But, see, when I left Fayetteville, that's when I hitchhiked to Colorado.

SL: Now what happened in Colorado?

BW: Well, I got out of—I just had a semester where I was—I had just left law school, and I just dropped out of school. And I was—and I knew I was gonna have to go in the service because Vietnam was goin' on.

SL: Oh yeah.

BW: So I was waitin' for my number to come up—my draft number to come up. So I had sixteen bucks in my pocket, and I hitchhiked west, and I didn't know where I was goin' for sure. But I ended up in Estes Park, Colorado. 'Cause I found out when I got right in the middle of Colorado that it was against the law to hitchhike in Colorado.

SL: Oh my gosh.

BW: And I didn't have enough money to get out of there. [SL laughs] So I had to [laughter]—so the state policeman told me, "Next time I see you on the road out here, you can just get in the back of my car." And I said, "Yes, sir." But I—so anyway, I got a ride to Estes Park, and I worked there for four months at a ranch,

and I was a headwaiter. That was the best job in the place. But I was there in April, so I was there early, and I got the best job. And I was a—I worked in a bar, and I was a bellhop and in charge of about twenty people.

SL: Yeah.

[02:45:25] BW: I was twenty years old. So then I came back and joined the Marine Corps and then . . .

SL: Came back to . . .

BW: El Dorado.

SL: El Dorado and joined the Marines.

BW: Joined the Marine Corps. And I went over to Texarkana, and they took me and tested me, and then they took me to—I think it was Shreveport to take my physical, and they said, "You've had open-chest surgery from a bad lung, so you can't go in the Marine Corps. You can't go in any corps. You can't go in the service." So . . .

[02:46:04] SL: Well now, did you sign up for the Marine Corps because your draft number came up?

BW: I knew it was comin' up.

SL: Did—what—did you ever get a draft number? What . . .

BW: No, I never got one, except—but I knew it wasn't gonna be very long, and when—I was out of school, see?

SL: Yeah.

BW: And I didn't wanna go back to school at that point, and so I thought, "Well, I'll just go in the service 'cause I'm gonna have to go eventually." So I just thought, "Well, I'll go ahead." And so Nam was gettin'—was heatin' up at that point, and so I draw—I joined the Marine Corps and, oh, how—when I say I joined the Marine Corps [*laughs*], I wasn't gone but about twenty-four hours, and I hitchhiked back from Shreveport to—and school had already started in Fayetteville. And I just hitchhiked back up to Fayetteville, and went back to school and finished out.

[02:46:48] SL: Let's talk a little bit about the draft.

BW: Yeah.

SL: You know, my number—when my number came up I was, like, 216, and so the way that the draft worked—if you got a—if you were—birthdates were assigned a number. Is that—isn't that the way it worked? Like, if you—March 12, in my case, was number 215. It was almost like a lottery thing, wasn't it? I'm tryin' to remember how it worked. But if—I—it seems like they were drafting, like, at 125 and down—the 125 numbers that came up, you were drafted.

BW: Well, I think this was before they did that kind of lottery draft.

SL: Oh, okay.

[02:47:39] BW: This is when they were takin'—if you dropped out of school, you were gone—and you were—you could fog a mirror, you were gone.

SL: Ah!

BW: So . . .

SL: You needed to stay in school.

BW: Well, I didn't wanna go back to school. I was tired of school. I'd flunked out of law school. I didn't know—I was totally confused about what I wanted to do. And I'd been in Colorado and was just doin' whatever I wanna do, and I just wasn't in the mood to do it. And then—but I finally just ran out of options. And my dad taught—said, "You know, you need to go back to school. You don't even have a degree." So I thought, "Well, okay." I mean, I kind of didn't have anything else to do, so I went back to school.

[02:48:18] SL: So what'd you do when you got back to Fayetteville?

BW: I went and got a job again and finished up my degree in education.

SL: Okay. Was there a specialty in education? Did you do the—I know that you went to Florida, and you coached, so . . .

BW: Well, I was a speech major.

SL: Oh, okay.

BW: I left this out—this part out that—which is not—maybe not worth tellin', but when I was in the eighth grade, I gave a speech—was I—no, I was in the seventh grade, and I gave a speech before a thousand people in a gym for my sister, who was runnin' for president of the student council. And so I got up before this group of people and couldn't say one damn word. Could not say a word. And you talk about—if somebody had said, "Bud, here's a gun right here," I woulda said, "Thank God." [*SL laughs*] I was just standing there before a microphone with all my peers and people older than me and every—all the football players and the cheerleaders and everybody else that were the most important people in the world at the time, and turned into a puddle of piss, and I said to myself, "I will never—that will never happen again." And that's when I became a speech major—on that day. And I took every speech class you could take after that. And that's what I majored in. So anyway, I think I went back and I majored in speech.

[02:49:47] SL: Do you remember who your instructor was?

BW: Where?

SL: In Fayetteville—your speech major?

BW: The head of the department . . .

SL: Yeah or just . . .

BW: . . . was Hart.

SL: Hart. David . . .

BW: Dr. Hart.

SL: . . . Hart.

BW: Dr. Hart. I don't remember his first name. And then there was . . .

SL: Short little kind of rotund guy? No.

BW: No, no.

[02:50:05] SL: No, Hart—David Hart was in a different department.

Okay, we'll—so you get—you graduate with a degree in speech . . .

BW: Right.

SL: . . . and education—in the education . . .

BW: Yeah.

SL: . . . division.



BW: Now the major reason that I was in the education department—I finally figured it out that I couldn't pass math. I was—I'm dyslexic. You know, I can't do math. I can't spell either. Couldn't—you know, there's a lot of stuff I can't do, and I couldn't—every test I've ever taken—every test I'd take, like when I took a test on my IQ and I—when I was in the ninth

grade I think they said my IQ's about 100, they thought. And then when I went to the Marine Corps, they said, "You're not—you can't be an officer 'cause you don't score enough—high enough to be an officer." I'd already been in college three years, and every place I go—when I went—even when I went to law school at Ole Miss they tested me and said—after my first semester, they said, "You can't—you gotta go back to undergraduate school and take some more English." And I said, "Well, how come I'm number fourteenth ranked out of a hundred and eighty-five, and I've gotta go back to undergraduate school? Does it make any sense to you?" And they said, "No." I said, "How come it is I got two A's in legal writing, and I gotta go back to undergraduate school?" I said, "Does it make any sense to you?" And they said, "No, you don't have to do it." So I mean, I don't—I can't test out at anything. I can do stuff, but I can't test out. Course, you know, people are know now—you—they're knowin' now that you can take oral exams and stuff like that, but, see, nobody knew about all that when I was doin' it.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And you just have to figure out how to do it. So it's hell to be in college or be in any kind of scholastic situation with the kind of learning disabilities that I had, and nobody knew what that was.

So . . .

[02:52:56] SL: All right, so you get your degree out of University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and you get—land a job in Florida. Is that . . .

BW: Right.

SL: And where in Florida was that?

BW: Titusville. It was Cape Canaveral—Cape Kennedy.

SL: How was that?

BW: It was great. I loved teaching. I loved teaching. You just can't make any money doin' it.

SL: Yeah.

BW: I like that part of the country, and it was a good thing for me. And you know, I liked coachin'. I liked the whole deal. It was great.

[02:52:29] SL: But that only lasted a year?

BW: A year.

SL: And you decided . . .

BW: To go back to law school.

SL: And why Ole Miss?

BW: Well, this is another Forrest Gump job. I went to California, actually, to try to get a job out there, and I couldn't get an—even get an interview. Well, then they had it all backed up—it

was all—the whole system was all bugged up. You couldn't even get an interview for weeks or months. So I just got disgusted with it, and what interviews I could get, they'd say, "Well, you don't have a master's degree, and you don't have this." I said, "I don't need a master's degree to teach what I'm teachin'," and the whole thing. But anyway, I just got disgusted with it, and I finally just called my dad—I said, "I'ma go back to law school." And he said, "Well, you head back this way, and I'll see if I can get you in a law school." So he calls—so he told me on the way—he said, "Go to Ole Miss." I said, "Okay." He said, "I think you might can get in Ole Miss." So I go to Ole Miss. Well, you could transfer from Arkansas to Ole Miss, but you couldn't transfer if you'd flunked out. So I wasn't in good standing at Arkansas, so I go to Ole Miss. And so I start school, and so I make a B, but they don't have my transcript yet. So I make a B in this course. So next scene is the woman that—in case you don't believe in miracles—the woman—her name was Mrs. Brown. She was the registrar and had been there thirty-five years, and she was the one that was supposed to get my transcript from Arkansas. Well, she—that summer was her last time there. She had been there thirty-five years. She retires.

SL: Kay.

[02:54:14] BW: And they forgot to get my transcript for—and they ain't got it yet. [*SL laughs*] So [*laughs*] I started to school in the fall. I'd already had a B. The new registrar—they weren't payin' attention. They had a big influx of people.

SL: Sure.

BW: I'm at Ole Miss. After first semester I'm fourteenth ranked out of a hundred and eighty-five. I get a scholastic scholarship. Pshoo! I'm outta there, man.

[02:54:39] SL: Okay now, what year is this?

BW: [Nineteen] sixty-six.

SL: All right. So we're talkin' big-time civil rights stuff had been happening for a couple of years now. Is that right?

BW: Yeah, two years before that, somebody got killed on the steps of the law school, and Ross Barnett, who had been the governor—and they'd had big riots—all kind of riots, and I mean, it was the biggest mess you ever could imagine. That guy named Meredith was the one that integrated that there. And, oh, these people were hot. I mean, they—and Mississippi is not like Arkansas. You know, in Arkansas they would say, "We don't wanna go to school with the colored people because we have to bus, and we don't like busing and all that." In Mississippi they say, "We don't wanna go to school with niggers. That's all there is to it. We

don't give a damn about the busing part of it. We don't wanna go to school with niggers." And that's the difference in Mississippi and Arkansas. That's the way they talked over there.

SL: Yeah.

[02:55:34] BW: And if you go—if you walked up to a—the drugstore and handed somebody a dollar at the drugstore, they'd take your dollar. And if a black person walked up and handed 'em a dollar, they'd go like that and make 'em put it down. You couldn't—a black person couldn't hand a white person anything in Ark—in Mississippi. Stuff like that. It wasn't right. It wasn't right.

[02:55:58] SL: And this was pervasive. It was everywhere. It was—you know, the representatives—the federal—the . . .

TM: Excuse me, Scott.

SL: . . . congressional . . .

TM: We need to change tapes.

[Tape stopped]

[02:56:07] SL: We're gonna start on hour four here. We've gotten you to Ole Miss, and this is at a time when civil rights has really heated up. There's already been some atrocities on the steps of the law school of Ole Miss, and so the climate as you step into this place—and there's some serendipitous things that allowed

you to stay there, and that's all neat stuff. But the environment—the hostility that is so open and in your face at Ole Miss at that time has got to be beyond troubling. And I don't know—I mean, I've already seen how you have this ability to kind of bow up and take a stand. I think you got that, quite honestly, from your father and probably from the generations before your father. I'm just wondering, with this racist attitude that's pervasive all around you at Ole Miss, how is it that you—how did you survive that? I mean, by this time that had been so distasteful to you, and you had already kind of taken a stand that—your father had taken a stand. Now you're in the hot bed of it and it—I was saying, you know, like, the congressmen were that way. Elected officials were that way. Folks that actually supposedly represented the black community, you know, were—in Congress were treating African Americans this way. How did . . .

[02:57:53] BW: Well, when I got to Ole Miss, see, Trent Lott was there. He was Speaker of the House later on and got into some problems for makin' some comments that people considered to be racial comments or maybe racist comments. But any event, I knew Trent fairly well 'cause my best friend there, it turns out, it was Trent Lott's roommate, and that—and—which is kind of



crazy that this person could be best friends with Trent and best friends with me, but that's the way it was. [02:58:26] But I need to say that before I got to Ole Miss, somethin' had happened to me in Arkansas that had changed me some, that prepared me for Ole Miss, not knowin' that—I mean, things happen to you, and you don't know why they're happenin' at the time. When I was a freshman I went to—and in the summer of my—when I first went to Fayetteville, I went to a cafeteria there, Brough Commons, and absolutely there's—now you understand, there was no blacks on the football team, basketball, track. A black person could not stay in the dorm. I mean, they had to—if they—if a black person went up to Fayetteville, they had to stay with a professor. That's how the—that's how they went. Well, this was the summertime and there were a lot of blacks up there in the summertime tryin' to get their master's degree or gettin' their master's degree. But in any event, I go up there, and I walk into this cafeteria, and I get my tray. And I walk over and I accidentally—these two trays are sittin' there, one lie over here and one over here, [gestures first with right, then with left hand] and I didn't know who they were, and I just saw 'em, and I just went over and sat my tray down. Well, these two black guys come up, and I'm sixteen years old. Now that's the first time I

ever was in a position to be—to eat beside a black person, and I was—I mean, I was, like, "Wow!" My metabolism was up, and everybody in the place was lookin' at me, and it was a pretty dramatic thing as far as I was concerned, and for other people, too. 'Cause everybody was lookin' at me. They were laughin' like, "Well, you're screwed. Now what are you gonna do?" [*SL laughs*] Because they knew what I was gonna do—I get up and get the hell out of there, and everybody's gonna laugh their ass off, is what was gonna happen—what everybody thought was gonna happen. So I was—so I don't think it—I don't think there was very many heartbeats went by that I just thought to myself pretty quick, "You know, I need to—I need—if I'm gonna be doin'—talkin' that stuff about fair play with blacks and all that, I need to do it. I need to back it up. No matter what the cost is, I just need to do it." So I just reached over and shook hands with 'em—said, "I'm Bud Whetstone." And they looked at me with this funny look, like—first, they looked at me like, "You're screwed," and I—then they—anyway, I shook hands with both of 'em. And I said, "Where are you guys from?" We just started talkin'. So I broke the ice accidentally. It wasn't like it was such a courageous act that I said, "I'm gonna go over here with these black people and sit down and eat with 'em." I mean, they—we

kind of came together. [03:00:45] And so after you've done that one time, you know, it's kind of like anything else—that once you've done it, okay, there's not gonna be another first time. So I kind of got okay with it, and then some of the people on campus at Fayetteville were callin' me—would call me nigger lover and stuff like that just for sit—stayin' there. But anyway, as time went on, I met some other black people there, and so I was—I had been around blacks, is my point, when I got to Ole Miss. And I had—and in the law school there were one or two guys—I played on a touch football team at—for the law school touch football team. We had two black guys in law school—only two guys in school, and they were on our touch football team. Paul Berry, who's from Fayetteville.

SL: Yeah.

BW: He was a quarterback on that team.

SL: Is that right.

BW: And so the name of the team was the Brown Bombers [*SL laughs*] and—because we were the only—they were the only black guys, I think, in that whole league that we played in. And Paul Berry was a quarterback, and I can't think of the other fellow from El Dorado that's in the timber business—is in the House of Representatives. [*Snaps fingers*] Beryl Anthony.

SL: Beryl Anthony.

[03:01:58] BW: Beryl Anthony was on that team.

SL: Wow!

BW: He was a wideout on the left side, and I was a wideout on the right side. And so—then we had these two black guys. So I had been around them, and then when we'd go to Student Union, I would see 'em at Student Union. We would sit there, and nobody else would sit with blacks at Fayetteville, but I would. So I—I'd—you know, I had a little break-in period there. So when I get to Ole Miss, it was nothin' new to me. So I get to Ole Miss and—but the hatred and the knob was turned up in Ole Miss. You know, you could feel it way, way, way stronger. I know they had a dress shop there on the square right there across from the courthouse, and if a black person walked in there—like, a black woman would walk in this dress shop, they would say, "We don't sell clothes to niggers." I mean, just that kind of stuff, you know, and it just—like, "Gosh! How could you say that?" [03:02:51] And so anyway, pretty quickly on I got involved in drinkin' coffee with the—as they say, "the niggahs" in Mississippi. What happened was about two weeks after I was there—now I'd already been there in summer school, and there weren't any blacks. So what happens is I go to this little

student-union-type thing that's not there anymore—but Trent Lott was in charge of that thing—of that student union. And it had a little motel in it and a student union right next to the old law schools. They had—different law school than they got now—building. So I go in there, and I see this black guy sittin' at a table, and it's all filled up, and it's just a little kind of a student union for the law school. The Alumni House, that's what they called it. So I walk in there, and there's this black kid that's in one of my classes sittin' there, and I go over, so I—look—see—I walk over there—I took a cup of coffee, and I sat down. I said, "Hey," I said, "you mind if I sit down here?" And he just looked at me like, "You must be nuts." I was gettin' that same deal, and I said—I shook hands with him, and I said, "Are you—you're in my contracts class, aren't you?" Whatever—and he said, "Yeah." And he said, "Sit down if you want to. It's okay with me." And so he said, "What's your deal sittin' down with me?" And I said, "I ain't got any deal. I'm just—you're an empty seat. I need to sit down." I said, "What am I gonna do, stand over there in a corner?" [03:04:19] And he said—he just shook his—his name was Alix, spelled *A-L-I-X*. He said he thought his parents didn't know how to spell it. [*SL laughs*] That's why he was called Alix. But anyway, Alix and I talked for a while. So I

was visited pretty quickly after that by somebody that'd been secretary of the Associated Students when all that rioting and stuff went on at Ole Miss, and he was in law school, and his name was Brad somebody. And he's in this car with this other fellow, Allen Pepper. So Allen Pepper's drivin' a car. Brad's in the back, so Brad said, "Bud," this real thick Southern accent—he said, "you know, we've been pretty nice to you over here in—you know, in Mississippi and accepted you in and all that." And he said, "You ain't gon' have no friends over here if you keep foolin' around with these niggers"—said, "We don't drink coffee with niggers over here." So I'm not even really proud of what I said back to him, but I told him, basically, in as vulgar of terms as I could, which I got a pretty good vo—cussin' vocabulary, that I wasn't lookin' for those kind of friends, and I was gonna decide what I was gonna do, and I didn't need any help from anybody in Mississippi or anyplace else to decide what I was gonna do. And they can—if we're playin' checkers, it's their move 'cause I'm not gon' change. [03:05:41] So he got out of the car and Allen looked at me, and he said—this is important, and I'm gonna link this up, believe it or not—Allen looks at me, and he said, "You know, Bud," he said, "I couldn't go home." He said, "I'm from Mississippi. You can go on back to Arkansas." He

said, "I can't"—he said, "I'm not sure that I'm much different than you are in the way we believe and what we believe." He said, "I'm not gonna drink coffee with blacks." But he said, "Bud, you know, I can't go home. I've gotta live here." And I said, "I understand that, Allen. I understand that." And I said, "If you can't be my friend, I understand that part, too. If I'm too much baggage, you know, you don't owe me anything." And he said, "No, no," he said, "I'm not backin' off from you at all. You're still my buddy." And we went on, and we were—and we continued to be buddies. I was—he asked me to be in his wedding, and Trent Lott was in his wedding, and I was in his wedding, if you can believe that. [03:06:36] And so the sequel to the story, which is, I think, worth tellin'—thirty years later or so, when Clinton is in, Trent Lott is Speaker of the House, and he tells Allen—he says—Allen, who's a lawyer—he says, "Allen," he said, "I can get you a federal judgeship if you can get through the liberals." He said—but he said, "Clinton would have to okay you." He said, "And I bet that crazy son of a bitch, Bud Whetstone, who's in Arkansas, probably knows the Clintons because he's—you know how he is." So Allen calls me up, and he said, "Bud, do you"—and I'd been in touch with Allen over the years. I was in his wedding; he was in my wedding.

SL: Okay.

[03:07:22] BW: So it ends up, finally, that I call the Clintons. I had some connections with the very people—with the Clintons—course, I know Hillary real well and Willie Fletcher, who's a federal judge. He—before he was a federal judge, he was in charge of all that. He went to school with the Clintons. I call Willie up, that's one of my sister's friends. I'd known him. He called me back in two weeks and said, "Tell your man"—and I told them about that incident. I said, "Now this guy is not a racist, and he was over there, and here's the way he treated me, and everybody else told me they were gonna kill me and that I wasn't ever gonna see the light of day and all that, and he stood by me to the point that I was in his wedding." And they called me back in two weeks and said, "Call your friend, Pepper, and tell him he's a federal judge," and he's a federal judge right now. And he's a federal judge right now because he had the guts and the loyalty to me to not say, "You know, I'm sorry, Bud." He didn't go the—as far as I went, but to me that's a story worth tellin' 'cause you never know. And . . .

SL: That's a great story.

BW: Anyway, he's a federal judge, and he's still a great friend of mine, and we still talk and so forth. But anyway . . .

SL: Hmm. That's a great story. So . . .



[03:08:45] BW: So I started workin' the Legal Services depart—office, and we were—that was in—our office was in Oxford part of the time, and it was in Holly Springs part of the time. So they worked out some kind of deal where we worked in a law office a whole semester and didn't even go to school—just worked and just did civil rights work in—out of that office in Holly Springs. And the things that were goin' on there—they've got some kind of little college—black college in Holly Springs. I don't remember the name of it. I've forgotten the name of it. But they were marchin' around the courthouse because they put a six-year-old boy in jail in—while we were there, and we had—and we went and got him out. Got—went to federal court and got him out of jail. And just stuff like that that was goin' on, and they had a trial in Oxford where a black man—I think it was he'd stolen somethin' allegedly, and a bunch of black people said, "No, he didn't do it. He was with us at that time." An all-white jury convicted him, and immediately the judge said, "Okay, take all of those black people that testified for this black guy." Said, "Obviously, they lied because a white jury was ruled in favor—ruled against the black guy that was charged, so go arrest every one of those people for perjury." So if we had a witness that

would testify on behalf of a black, they—the sheriff would arrest 'em for perjury if they lost. And they were gonna lose because it was an all-white jury.

SL: Right.

[03:10:14] BW: So that was what I was dealin' with, and it was rough, and it was mean, and it was ugly. And I remember walkin' into one place over around Holly Springs and they told me to—they said—I walked in there, and he said—this fellow that owned the store—he said, "You're a civil rights worker, aren't you?" And I said, "Well, I don't really call myself that." I said, "I work for Legal Services down here." He said, "Representin' niggers, aren't you?" And I said, "Mostly." And he said—he reached over and got this shotgun—he said, "Next time you walk your ass in here, I'm gon' blow you right out that door." And I said, "I won't be back." It was that kind of thing. But then my own classmates were—that was the thing that was roughest about it—you know, some of my own classmates told me that I wasn't ever gonna see the light of day. Said, "You ain't leavin' here alive," and stuff like that. So it was pretty rough over there. [03:11:10] And then in the summertime, we got a summer job workin' at Legal Services up in New Haven, Connecticut. Now people forget when they start talkin' about

how bad things were. You—they forget there were riots. They were burnin' whole areas down. I'm talkin' 'bout acres and acres. Had a big riot in Washington, DC, and they had one in New Haven, Connecticut. We were workin' at a Legal Services office, and we—I worked there all summer. And when that—where we were in this little office, real small office, there were buildings all the way around it, and there was a grocery store right up the street. And these—when these people that got their checks—got their check from wherever they got 'em—these black people and Puerto Ricans—a lot of 'em were Puerto Ricans—when they got their checks, they'd go to the store to buy—and they—on a certain date—they'd get their checks, say, on the thirtieth. The night of the twenty-ninth they would stay up all night long at that store markin' all the groceries up. Made all the people stay stampin' over the top of 'em, markin' the groceries up 'cause the people were get—got the checks that—at that time. So that's what that store was doin'. And I know that's a fact. So anyway, we end up representin' these people and seein' all these atrocities and stuff—and all these people bein' jerked around. And the one thing I remember that—I can't believe it now, but I know it happened—they had a—some fellow there that was black that was—that represented—said he

represented the city, but he was just a black guy there that had all the power in the city, and it was a young guy. And he was real well known. Everybody knew him, and he would—he'd come to the city council meetings and just do—just talk everybody down. Anyway, he told these people at New Haven that, by God, they were gonna give him the money to run some programs for the youth there. And he said he was gonna run the program. Now I don't know how that went down—you know, whether it was through the city council or what it was, but I know that we were filin' lawsuits and tryin' to get some of the blacks involved with the blacks. Anyway, we ended up with this check, but it was a question of "How are we gonna get it to him?" And so I told 'em I'd take it to him, and they said, "You're crazy to walk—go down there were you—where he was." And I had a 1966 Mustang. [*SL laughs*] My first car. And I get in this car . . .

SL: "Mustang Sally." [*Laughs*]

[03:13:56] BW: Right. [*SL laughs*] I get in this car and drive down there where his place is, and it was a—kind of like you see in the movies. It was kind of a pool hall sort of a thing and—with an office in the back. You know, you've seen it in the movies a thousand times. But it was that kind of thing, and I walked in

there and I—but I—interesting thing is I had a Mississippi license plate on it.

SL: Oh man. [*Laughter*]

BW: So I walked in there, and I said, "Where is Mr. So-and-so?" And they said—and they all just looked at me like, "This has gotta be a trick," you know. And so I said, "I got somethin' I need to talk with him about." So they said, "Well, he's back here in the back." So in a minute somebody went back there, and there—nobody even moved in that place. They just stood there and looked at me. They couldn't figure out what it was. And he called me back there, and I went back and he was sittin' at a desk, and he said, "So what are you doin' here?" And I said, "I came to deliver this check thing from the city." From—I don't know how—why that was supposed to be, but it was. So I said, "I came to give you this check." He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "From Mississippi and Arkansas." I said, "But I work at Legal Services." And he said, "You got a Mississippi license place, don't you?" I said—he said, "Yeah." He said, "You ain't got any sense. You'll get killed." He said, "You—wonder you ain't dead already." So I said, "Well, I just figured, you know, if I came in here respectfully and treat you with respect, you'd treat me with respect." And he just laughed. He said, "That

don't always work that way." And he said—he was real amused, and I handed him the check, and he looked at it, and he said, "Okay," he said, "get your ass out of here." And he laughs—he was laughin' when he said, "Get your ass out"—he said, "Don't come back down here in this part of town." And he told one of those guys—he said, "Make sure he gets out of here."

[03:15:45] And so—but I don't—I—you know, I don't know what that was. I don't even—call it brass, call it stupid, call it whatever. I don't know what it was—that I just didn't—I've always felt like I lived a charmed life, and I just felt like there was somethin'—I wanted to see the guy. I'd heard so much about him, and I thought, "Well, hell, I—you know, everybody's—"What are we gonna do? How are we gonna get it to him?" I thought, "Well, I'll get it to him."

SL: Well, talk about the burning.

Joy Endicott: Hey, Scott?

SL: New Haven.

JE: Stop for a second, please.

[Tape stopped]

[03:16:11] SL: We were talkin' about your Legal Services work in New Haven, Connecticut. And New Haven was also one of these kind of firestorm places. Wasn't there a bunch of burning in New

Haven as well?

BW: Well, they—we left on a Friday. This other fellow from Ole Miss that I was with, Tom Bowman, who had been my roommate—we left on a—like, on a Friday, I'm pretty sure. And we read—and we saw in a newspaper the next day where they burned that whole area down that we were in, and it was—it looked like somebody—it looked like Hiroshima. Looked like somebody dropped a bomb on it. I mean, it was leveled. They rioted and leveled that place, and there was one little buildin' standin'. One little buildin', and that was our buildin' right there. And everything in—I mean, even on the sides of it—it was all—the windows were broken out, and it was all burned down. The whole thing was burned down as far as you could see in the whole picture except that one buildin', which mightily impressed me at the time and still does—that on some level—they didn't even break the glass out of that place 'cause we—I called back and talked with the people in the office about it, and they said they didn't do—nobody ever even came in that buildin'. So you know, you feel like that you're touchin' some people. You feel like that as much out of control as they were, that they didn't wanna tear that buildin' down. So I've always felt good about that. I always felt good about that. [03:17:52] But there were

[*clears throat*]*—*it was a dangerous place. I mean, the area that we worked in was dangerous. And walkin' up and down the street and bein' white, and we had Mississippi license plates, and we had Southern accents and the whole thing. And a lot of the people that worked with us didn't—wouldn't go—said they would never go to Mississippi under any circumstances. They were scared to death. None of the blacks said they would go to Mississippi under any circumstances 'cause—and they said—we'd say, "Well, come see us." They'd say, "We're not comin' to Mississippi." And their idea was—at the time was that that's not a place—they literally thought they couldn't travel through Mississippi without probably gettin' killed. Now, and it wasn't that bad because, you know, a lot of people didn't—most people were not [*laughs*] gettin' killed, but that was their perception of it. And so it was a—the—it was a very, very turbulent time, more so than people can remember right now. But I remember leavin' there wonderin' what on God's earth is gonna happen to the United States of America? 'Cause when you're—got the people puttin' demands on the—like, that black guy was puttin' these demands on people. The same thing was goin' on in Memphis and places like that, that a guy named Willie Wine—they called him Sweet Willie Wine, and he marched from

Memphis to Little Rock, and he spit on the sidewalk at Forrest City, and they arrested him, and you know, stuff like that goin' on all the time. You just didn't see how this country, racially, was gonna make it. And course, they had the riots in Watts, was it—Los Angeles and so forth.

SL: Yeah. . .

[03:19:31] BW: So I—we're not talkin' about it—breakin' a few windows out. We're talkin' about levelin' the buildin's. But, anyway, I went through a lot. I went through a lot. I saw a lot, and I still don't understand how we ever got out of that—how we ever got our bearings and got back. Not that we we're doin' so great now, but it's been pretty rough out there.

[03:20:58] SL: So you survive Connecticut.

BW: Yeah.

SL: You head back to Oxford.

BW: Right.

SL: And you got, what, another year in Oxford or a semester or . . .

BW: Right. Then my senior year I got married, and I married a girl from Memphis. And she came down to—she had been to Mississippi Women's College and—but she went down—moved down to—of course, moved in with me when we got married.

And I got married the day that they buried Bobby Kennedy. And

I remember at the time, my dad was sayin' to me, "Man, you need to smile [*laughs*] a little bit. Act like you're glad you're here." And I was in a pissed-off mood about the whole thing. But anyway, it was 1968. June the eighth, 1968 is the day I got married, and I think he got killed on somethin' like the fifth or sixth or somethin' like that.

[03:21:05] SL: Maybe we should talk a little bit about Bobby

Kennedy right now. The—really, the Justice Department took a stand on the civil rights, and they had a presence in Mississippi, right? I mean . . .

BW: Well, here's what happened in—at least in Oxford. People were sayin' real openly that there was somethin'—this thing could get so bad until there would be a, like, a state trooper that would be black. And they'd say, "Well, ain't no nigger writin' me a ticket. I ain't pullin' over for no nigger." So you—and you just really believed that they believed it, too. I mean, they were—these people were not kiddin'. They were dangerous or seemed to be dangerous. And so the atmosphere was that way. Well, anyway, the federal court judge told these people that they had to integrate the schools, and they said, "Come up with a plan." And so I went to this meeting in Oxford at a school, and they had blacks and whites there, and they were supposed to come

up with an integration plan that they could all recommend. Now I don't know exactly who the people were, but it was—there were representatives from blacks and whites. So I remember this white guy got up there—and they were just so flip about it. He was just, like—and he says, "Anybody wanna go to school with the niggers? If you wanna go to school with a nigger, raise your hand." And nobody raised their hand, and everybody laughed, and it was just the biggest—I'm sittin' there thinkin', "Boy, there's a federal judge out there who's gonna bust your butt. I mean, you may think this crap's funny right now, but it ain't gonna be funny when you get before a federal judge." Well, they just—and of course, they was pissin' the black people off that were sittin' there. And they were sittin' on opposite sides of the room.

SL: Sure.

[03:22:59] BW: And it was a—just a demonstration in arrogance like nothing you could never imagine. They just thought that was the biggest joke in the world, that they—"Anybody wanna go to school? Well, you don't. Well, I don't know what we can recommend, you know." Kept just goin' on with that thick accent and the whole deal, man. I was just sayin', "Oh, man!" And the federal judge said, "Okay, here's what we're gonna do.

Next year this school right here is called such and such school, and it's from first to third grade. This school is such and such school, and the name of it is—from fourth grade to sixth grade." In other words, they integrated that place 100 percent—no gradual, no—we're gonna start at grade whatever, just like that. [*Snaps fingers*] That just—it just went from—and these people were, like—one guy that owned a barbecue place had a big sign up there that said "no niggers" on it and it—and his—and he was braggin' about it all the time bout what—bout how he wasn't gonna do this or that or whatever. And these two FBI agents went up to his place and said, "We need to see you." And they sat down at a table and said, "Tomorrow we're gonna have so many black guys—however many there are—they're gonna come in here to be served," and said, "you're either gonna serve or we're gonna shut you down." Said, "And you just make up your mind what you wanna do. But," he said, "nothin' better happen to 'em or we'll—because we're givin' you notice—givin' you a heads-up on it." And he—they served 'em, and they kept—that place was open—they told 'em to get that sign out of the window. [03:24:42] So—and also they integrated the theater—the movie theater. There was black upstairs, white . . .

SL: Yes.

BW: . . . downstairs, and they integrated that. So stuff started happenin', like, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam—like that. So I saw it happenin', and I didn't think it could happen that fast, and I didn't think it could happen that way. But it's interesting to me now when I go back to Ole Miss or class reunions or whatever—everybody's got a lot of amnesia about all that. They don't remember what it was like, and they don't remember what they said. They don't remember what they did, and they don't—I mean, I don't bring it up to 'em 'cause it's—it is what it is. But it was an interesting—it was a very interesting time. [03:25:29] I never went to a Klan rally there, but I wanted—did wanna point this out. When I'm in—I was doin' some civil rights work in Florida when I was teachin' school, okay? I was takin' some kind of federal course—civil rights course or whatever—and so I keep seein' these—I was in Titusville, Florida, and I keep seein' these signs that says there's gonna be a Klan rally somewhere. So I never had been to a Klan rally. I thought, "That's somethin' I need to see." It didn't have anything to do with the civil rights work I was doin', it was just I wanted to see it. So I asked my roommate—I said, "You wanna—why don't we go to this Klan rally?" He said, "You crazy to go out—no tellin' what's gonna happen out there." So they're out in the woods. You know,

down a—like a dirt road-type thing. So anyway, I go to the—I go to this rally and it—I remember it was cold. It was—there was a cold snap in Florida, and I remember we had on heavy jackets, and they had big fires built out there. And these people were standin' around the fire and all age of people—kids—young kids—everybody standin' around the fire, and they were talkin' bout the niggers and the this and [*unclear words*] thing. And I wasn't sayin' anything. I was just standin' around coolin' my—you know, warmin' my hands up, just listenin'. And everybody just assumed that you felt the same way they did. [03:26:49] Anyway, they finally called this grand dragon or whatever the deal it was—he was the secretary in charge of, like, all the states in the South for the Ku Klux Klan, and then they had the fellow that was in charge of, I think, Florida for the Ku Klux Klan. But one of 'em was the big—like, the—a secretary or vice president or whatever—of course, they call 'em some other kind of crazy name.

SL: Grand Poobah. [*Laughs*]

BW: Yeah. Well, they all got on these sheets and stuff and all this stuff. So anyway, this guy gets up there and starts talkin', and he's on the back of a trailer—flatbed trailer—again. Well, he's up there on the back of this truck talkin', and while he's talkin'—he's

talkin' bout the niggers and how they wanna rape our women and do all this kind of stuff. It was just the most ignorant, inflammatory thing. I just couldn't even imagine it. If you saw it in a movie, it couldn't be any worse. You couldn't even make it up any worse than it was. And I remember one of the things he did—he said, "Hand me that little girl right there." And he handed—and he took this little ol' girl. She was about a year and a half old. The cutest little girl you ever wanna see in your life—little blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl. He said, "Look at this little girl." He said, "Can you imagine some nigger havin' sex with this little girl?" And he said, "That's what they wanna do—mix the blood." And he got—these people were just goin' crazy. Man, they were—you could just—and when I looked around in the crowd—oh, man, the hate in their eyes. You could—and you could feel it. It was almost like the energy was comin' up out of the ground. It was just frighteningly awful. So he hands little girl back and they—out in this field out there, they burn these crosses that are real tall—like, how tall is a telephone pole? And they got stuff wrapped around 'em and, I guess, kerosene or whatever—I don't know what. But anyway, they burned these big crosses out there at the end of the ceremony of this deal. And then—so anyway, I left. And I was just thinkin', "What a

deal." So the next mornin', which would be, like, a Saturday or Sunday mornin'—'cause I was teachin' school, see, there at the time, and so I saw these two guys turn into a place—a breakfast kind of place. And so I was just really curious about it . . .

[03:29:14] SL: You're talkin' about the guys that were on the . . .

BW: The two guys that were on—up there talkin' on the stand. The one that was . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . like, the secretary or vice president or whatever, and the guy was over all of Florida for . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: Now, you understand, Ku Klux Klan has different grou—different sects. It's not . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . just one deal . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . like—it's not like a Republican Party or Democratic Party or somethin'. It's a different—they have different things. But anyway, these—that's what they were claimin' to be. So I walk in this place, and I said, "Hey, I was at y'all's rally last night." And they—I said, "Do you mind if I join you for bre"—they were eatin' breakfast. And they said, "No, sit down. Sit down." So

we started talkin', and they just assumed, course, I was there for the same reason they were. So we talk a while, and so I said, "Let me ask you somethin'." I said, "What do you think about the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims and that kind of group?" I said, "How do you—how are y'all gonna deal with that?" And he said—they both—they looked at each other and they said, "What are you talkin' about?" I said, "The Black Muslims and the Black Panthers—you know, these black groups—militant black groups." And they said—he said, "I don't know anything about that." And they literally—they'd never heard of 'em—never heard of either one of these groups. And you got all these black power things—you know, people holdin' up their fists for black—black people holdin' up their fists . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . for black power—even, like, at Olympics and . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . stuff like that.

SL: Yeah.

[03:30:50] BW: And these guys—they were so ignorant, they didn't even know what I was talkin' about. And so one of 'em said to the other one, said, "I think we probably need to look into that." He—they were sayin', "Well, tell me about it," so I told 'em a

little bit about it. And they said, "Well, we hadn't heard of that. We need to look into that." But I was so struck by the ignorance of them at the rally and then at the ignorance of them again at that breakfast, and I—of course, they never asked me what I thought about . . .

SL: Anything.

BW: . . . anything. And I never—they—we left there, shook hands with 'em, and I left. And I thought, "Man, this is crazy."

[*Laughs*] But it was an experience. Again, sort of a Forrest Gump experience 'cause I just saw these guys turnin' in to a—like, an IHOP or a—you know, a breakfast place. So . . .

SL: Huh. Oh brother.

[03:31:38] BW: So I had seen a little bit of that action before. One of my classmates at Ole Miss that was the worst of the worst—he was a real smart guy. He was—you know, made straight A's, and he was—and I'd talked with some people about him. I asked people what ever happened to him 'cause he's one of the ones that told me that I wasn't gonna make it out of there alive. And I asked 'em about him, and he said that—they said that he had moderated, and that he was okay. You know, he—now at this point in time—course, it's forty years later—over forty years later—but they said that he had moderated. And . . .

[03:32:17] SL: You would think at some point, intelligence would take over. I mean . . .

BW: It took a long time.

SL: . . . here's a brilliant guy—smart guy.

BW: Well, apparently, it did, and you know, I hope it did because he was carryin' a terrible burden himself of the hate. We—they had—Medgar Evers . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: Medgar Evers is a guy—he was a civil rights worker that got killed. He got killed before I was there. Anyway, his brother, Charles Evers, was a big civil rights guy down there after Medgar—and he came to our graduation—our —I saw him the day that we graduated down there from law school. But he came and taught one of our classes, and this fellow that you're—that I'm talkin' about that was such a racist—he took his chair and sat it out in the hall, and it was where he could see through the doorway. He said, "I'm not sittin' in a room with any nigger." Now that's the kind of crazy stuff that was goin' on.

[03:33:20] SL: Wow! [*Sighs*] So any more Mississippi law school stories?

BW: Oh, you know, there are a lot of individual, you know, things that happened—a lot of things that happened, but mostly it was

just hard to understand these people. It's hard for me to understand there are—that—I mean, I can understand 'em having some feelings or some prejudice. A lot of people do, and I probably still have some myself, but that kind of hatred—I just didn't understand it.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And I still don't. I don't see how they could live under that. But I went over—I'd go—I went over to people's houses a lot—guys that I knew. There'd be a Bible sittin' there. Pictures of Ku Klux Klan rallies up on the ceilin'. There'd be a Bible and a pistol sittin' there. But they're—that's how they think—Bible and a pistol's all the same thing to them—or was. I think a lot of 'em, you know, have changed. I don't—I necessarily don't think in this day and time it's anything like it was. And when I've been back, it's my experience that it's not . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: . . . that way. But I think people forget how rough it was. It was bad. It was real bad.

[03:34:40] SL: All right, so you graduate law school—Mississippi. You didn't have to take any more undergraduate courses. They never got your transcript. [*Laughs*] I love that.

BW: I'm still—I still break out in a cold sweat when I [*SL sneezes*] get

m—when I get mail from Mississippi, I still break out in a cold sweat thinkin' maybe they're gonna [*SL laughs*] recall my license.

[03:35:00] SL: [*Laughs*] And so what do you do next?

BW: Well, in Mississippi, at that time we had diploma privileges, which meant we didn't have to take the . . .

SL: Bar.

BW: . . . Bar. So we automatically were lawyers.

SL: Yeah.

BW: So my dad had moved in the meantime. In [19]68—let's see, [19]69 I graduate. [Nineteen] sixty-eight, I go—I come to Little Rock, and I really didn't especially wanna be a lawyer. Everybody thinks that I—you know, that I've always wanted to be a lawyer and all that kind of business, and that my dad was a lawyer. My dad was a hell of a lawyer. Now he wasn't just an okay lawyer, he was good a lawyer as I ever saw.

SL: Yeah.

[03:35:39] BW: And anyway, I decided to come to Little Rock, and I told him—I said, "Well, I tell you what I'll do." I don't know what I wanna do. I thought I'd probably teach school or do somethin' like that. So I get to Little Rock and I started doin'—he's doin' some insurance defense work, so I started doin'

insurance defense work along with some plaintiff work, and we were doin' personal injury work.

SL: This is you and your father together.

BW: Yeah, together.

SL: Kay.

BW: So we started off about the first three years, I'm doin' about half defense and half plaintiff work. And tryin' to figure—you know, learn my trade. Well, I'm told immediately that nobody can beat—you know, they—it's kind of like the gunfighter mentality that lawyers have, about who can—who's the best lawyer and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, I'm told that nobody can beat the great Sam Laser—*L-A-S-E-R*—Laser. He died in the last year or so. Anyway, he would be ninety-two years old right now, and the reason I know that is he was in the same high school class as my mother, who is still alive. And anyway—and they knew each other in high school. But anyway, Sam's about—I'm about twenty-six or -seven years old—somethin' like that. Sam's probably in his fifties. And he was a great lawyer, no question about it. So I—it just didn't sit right with me for people to say, "No matter what the case is, you can't beat him." I said—I told a judge one day—he said, "You know, you just can't beat Sam Laser." I said, "Well, I can beat him. What everybody talk bout

they can't beat Sam Laser." I said, "I can beat Sam Laser." So I think Sam, in some respects, was a—and a couple of other guys, but mostly it was Laser—they kept sayin', "You can't beat him." So I started studyin' to beat him. [SL laughs] I said, "I'm gon' beat him. I'm gon'"—so I started goin' and watchin' him try lawsuits, and I saw exactly what he was doin' and how he was beatin' everybody, and he was waltzin' people all over the courtroom. And so I had some of his opening statements and cross-examination—had some of that stuff typed up. You know, you can do that. A court reporter takes it down. If you pay for it, they'll—so . . .

SL: They'll give you a copy.

[03:37:58] BW: Yeah, I got copies of it, and I started studyin' all the stuff and the words he used and how he did what he did. And then, finally, one day I ended up with a case that I knew looked like a ?dog? case—looked really bad, but it was a case that I knew I had answers to that—and he didn't even bother to take depositions, and he didn't have any respect for me, and not any reason, necessarily, why he should have. But I was out of law school maybe three, four, or five years at this point, and I'd tried some cases. It wasn't my first case, by any means. I'd never lost. I was tryin' some defense cases. I never had lost a

defense case, but I didn't like the work. It didn't feel right. So anyway, I get this case against Laser. And I went to seminars—that's one thing about my dad—he sent me to seminars. I went to seminars in St. Louis. I went to seminars everywhere. Then I went to—and I was eatin' that material up. I'd try—heard the best lawyers in the world talk about how to try lawsuits, so I got—I forgot that I didn't especially wanna be a lawyer. I forgot about that part. [*Laughter*] And so the next thing I know, I've got this case with Laser, and I am all over him, and he bout lost his mind, he was so mad at me 'cause I took all of his words and I did—everything he did, I did it before he did it 'cause the plaintiff goes first in a lawsuit. In opening statement, I said—told 'em what all was gonna happen and what all he was gonna try to do and the whole thing, and he—it was—it—fore it was over with, it got so ugly the judge told us that we couldn't stand—neither one of us could talk to each other or stand up without permission from the court. [*SL laughs*] [03:39:39] And so anyway, the . . .

SL: Bud!

BW: . . . jury was out about fifteen minutes, and I won. I got everything I asked for. And it was—it was a \$2,500 case. It was that—it wasn't the money. It was just that I was tired of

hearin' about Sam Laser. But anyway, a lot of details about that, but suffice to say, I won. And Sam Laser never beat me and he—it's partially because I—you know, I picked my cases, and I've . . .

SL: Right.

[03:40:08] BW: . . . obviously—I don't mean that I could beat him on any case or anything—or I couldn't beat anybody on any case. But anyway, I figured his style out. People got a style, and if you do—if you go with a certain style, you can win. Just like Jim Moody, who's a federal judge right now. He's from El Dorado. *M-O-O-D-Y*. There's the football player named Jim Mooty, and then there's Jim Moody. They're about the same age. That's—I'd hated to try lawsuits against him 'cause he's so nice. He can just take the—any situation, no matter how horrible it is, and say, "Well yeah, we did that, but you know"—it doesn't seem so—it seems horrible when you're in your office. When you get in a courtroom, he can make it seem not so horrible. And we tried lawsu—I tried some lawsuits against him, and I didn't like to try lawsuits. I didn't like his—studied—I couldn't match up with his style very well. It's kind of like boxin' or somethin' like that or football—one style met—you can do better with—against one kind of lawyer. And I like lawyers that bump 'cause I'm a

bumpin' kind of lawyer.

SL: Yeah.

[03:41:09] BW: So if one won't bump, you—it's hard. It's like you can't hit 'em. So anyway, it turns out, finally, that my dad and I—in 1979 we go down to El Dorado. There had been less than a hundred verdicts—way less than a hundred verdicts for one—as much as \$1 million that had ever—anybody had ever gotten in America, and there'd been two in Arkansas, but they didn't collect 'em. They got 'em, but they didn't collect all of it. They just had—they settled for less than a million.

SL: Yeah.

[03:41:45] BW: So we go down to El Dorado and tried this case, and our client had gotten a ticket—it was—he was a truck driver and he'd gotten a ticket at the scene. But the long and short of it is I asked the jury for \$3.8 million, and they gave it to me. And so when that happened, we were on the map. Then the next scene is about four months later we got 1.7 million, and these are off top-gun lawyers, too. So we got 1.7 million on the second one, and then, I don't know—it was a year or two or so later, we got a mil—we got a verdict for \$4,070,000. And the first two verdicts that we got were in the two—first two hundred that anybody got in America—ever got in America that—and collected

'em. I don't even know who—if they collected 'em or not, but I know we collected ours. But anyway, it ended up in—the long and short of it is over forty-two years now, I've gotten eight verdicts for over \$1 million. And none of 'em has been as little as 1 million, so I think 1.5 million is the smallest one. But it's like a dream to me because, again, it's sort of like a Forrest Gump thing. I didn't wanna be a lawyer. Never had any intention of bein' a lawyer, and here I—you know, here I am forty-two years later.

[03:43:15] SL: Was there a mentor for you that—there's a photograph of a guy on your refrigerator in there. You're standin' next to a white-haired guy. I don't know what his name is.

BW: Jim Clark.

SL: Jim Clark. Jimmy Clark. Tell me about Jimmy Clark.

BW: Well, I'll try to make this—hold this under a day and a half.

SL: [*Laughs*] Okay.

BW: I met—Jimmy Clark was a worker's compensation judge, and he was a labor—big labor person, and he was second in Labor before it was all over. And he was secretary-treasurer of Labor and could've been president, if he'd wanted to be, of Labor in Arkansas—AFL-CIO. But anyway, he had worked at Alcoa, and

he'd gotten his worker's compensation job through—Rockefeller appointed him. And so when I first started practicin' law, he'd been a judge for about a year. Now he's a—he's from—a redneck from Saline County. He died about two years ago, and I spoke at his funeral. So I didn't know anything about worker's comp. I'd never taken a course in it, and it's real complicated. And so I tried a case or two or three, and so—and I didn't—I couldn't tell much what I was doin'. I—it was pretty sad. But anyway, I made—I knew Jimmy. I'd met him, and he was a—he—you gotta understand, Jimmy Clark's the most [*clears throat*] unusual guy you'd ever wanna meet. He's a Saline County arm wrestling champion, and he's one of these guys that liked to fight [*SL laughs*] when he was young. I mean, he liked to fight.

SL: Yeah.

BW: He'd go out and just get in a fight 'cause he liked to fight.

SL: Yeah, sure.

[03:44:56] BW: And he was the strongest person—physically strongest person I ever saw. He'd grab a hold of you and move around like this, so [*moves fist from side to side*]*—*and he was just unbelievably—a rough kind of guy and very, very bright and very, very talented and very, very redneckish kind of guy. So I

see Jimmy at this picnic, and he said, "Hey," he said, "you know, I've read some of your transcripts." I didn't try the case before him, he read the transcripts 'cause he's an appellate judge. So the case would be appealed to him, and he would read it. And he said, "You don't give a damn who you offend, do you?" And I said, "Not too much." [*SL laughs*] I said, "I'm not runnin' for office." And he said—"Well," he said, "I wanna tell you somethin'." He said, "I haven't seen anybody that tries a case like you do." He said, "You're—you just go after them like crazy." And he said, "You got more guts than anybody I ever saw in my life." And he said, "You don't take anything off anybody." He said, "It's amazing." He said, "I admire that." I said, "Well, I appreciate it." And, boy, I was just soaring. I was thinkin', you know, "This is wonderful." And he said, "You know, it's too bad you don't know any law." [*Laughter*] So I said, "God!" You know, talking about deflating somebody. So I said, "Well, it's hard to know." I said, "You know, worker's comp's a hard area." He said, "Well look, I represent labor," and see, there would be a labor and a management and then a neutral person on the board. He said, "If you wanna know anything, call me." He said, "It's a damn shame a guy that's got as much talent as you got, that doesn't know any law." So I said,

"Okay." I said, "I'll call you." I said, "When you wanna talk?" He said, "Well, we'll have lunch," and said, "Just get your book"—they had a book, you know, the worker's comp book. And he said—so I said, "Okay." So I called him. I said, "What about Monday?" This is on a Friday. I said, "What about Monday?" He said, "We can do it Monday." We go down to the bottom of the hill down here to—in the place called the Leather Bottle.

SL: Yeah.

BW: Down on Rebsamen Road.

SL: Yeah.

[03:46:58] BW: We go down there, and we eat lunch, and we le—and we eat lunch, and we go start—and I got my legal pad, and we're goin' through these sections, and we eat supper. We go all the way through, and we eat supper. And so about nine o'clock that night, he said, "I gotta go home." [*SL laughs*] I said, "Well, you said you'd take as much time as you—as possible." He said, "Okay," he said, "we'll do it again." He said, "When do you want to get together again?" I said, "What about tomorrow?" He said, "All right?" So next day we ate lunch and supper again. Well, after that I called him four times a day, I'll betcha. And it wasn't a year after that, everybody said, "Bud

Whetstone knows more about worker's comp than anybody in Arkansas." And I ended up writin' two books on it for the state of Arkansas. And Jimmy and I got to be, you know, best friends—as good of friends as you could imagine. And then that was a picture—I got a community service award of some type, kind of like the citizen of the year, from the FBI in nine—in—let's see, 2007, and that was that ceremony. He came to the ceremony, and then he died shortly thereafter. But he's retired. He was a retired judge. But I loved him to death, but there was nobody like Jimmy Clark. And if he—if you didn't wanna know, you better not ask him.

[03:48:26] SL: *[Laughs]* Well, so his tutelage—did that become—did all that work with him kind of give you a cornerstone for *[BW clears throat]* your practice?

BW: Well, I didn't ever want to—I never wanted to do worker's comp 'cause that's not trial work. I mean, it's trial work, but it's—but you do so much cross-examination in it. See, you take doctors' depositions just like you do at trial. So I handled thousands of those cases, so I took hundreds of doctors' depositions. So on most—if you do—if you just do personal injury work, you usually—you don't ever get that good because you maybe take four a year. Well, I'm takin' forty a year, not four. And then I—

and I'm presentin' cases and goin' over and over and over. So I got so good at damages because worker's comp is primarily proving damages because you don't have to prove negligence. Just have to prove that it happened on the job, and then you prove what the damage is. So I got so good at proving damages, but partially by talkin' to Jimmy. And I'd say, "Jimmy, what's the best way"—I'd call him up. I'd say, "I'm not askin' you bout this case that I got." I said, "What's the best way to prove this? What are the best of—you've seen other lawyers prove this. What's the best way?" He'd say, "Well, so-and-so does it this way. Such and such does it this way and this way." I'd say, "Great." Hang up the phone, and I'd do it all three ways. [*SL laughs*] So . . .

SL: He'd cover all bases.

[03:49:51] BW: Anyway, he just made me [*clears throat*] into a super lawyer as far as, you know, experience and tutorin' me and the whole thing. And he and I were just as close as—he would tell anybody, you know, who his best friend was. And somebody says, "I don't know if I'm gonna hire you or not," I said, "Call Jimmy Clark. He's a worker's comp judge, and don't tell him anything about me. Ask him who the best lawyer in Arkansas is, and then hire him." They'd say, "Okay." Call up—

they'd call me back and say, "Okay." So anyway, Jimmy and I were like brothers, almost. He was—I will say this—I'm proud that—I'm proud of the friends I've got. I think that's one of the ways that you measure yourself. That's how I measure myself, not by jury verdicts for sure. You know, how many good friends you got that are people that'll—as my wife, Kim, says, you know, will ride the river with you—people that are foxhole people. I call 'em Alamo people. You know, people who'll be there on—and when the going gets rough, they're gonna be right there beside you.

SL: Yeah.

[03:51:01] BW: That's what I call Alamo people. But yeah, he's a—he was that way. He was a good guy and very, very important in my life. Had it not been for Jimmy, you know, who knows what I woulda ever done as far as how far I woulda gone 'cause I could—you have to get the business. That's the first thing. It doesn't matter how good you are, you gotta get the business.

SL: Right.

BW: It's like a prizefight, you know. If you can't get the fight—you can be the best fighter in the world—if you can't get the fight—so Jimmy helped me get the business, and I, you know, I owe a lot to him, and he knew it. He knew that I felt that way.

[03:51:40] SL: [*Sighs*] So—well, you were—did this tutelage happen while you were still with your dad together or . . .

BW: Right. My dad and I were together fifteen years—first fifteen years. [*Clears throat*] And that was a—kind of a sad event in so many respects, I think, for both of us. But he's—he was—my dad was a real control-freak kind of guy.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And he tried to control everybody around him, and that's just the way he was. And that was okay when I wasn't as good a lawyer as he was, but as I got more experienced and as time went on, it got to be a little bit different, and he would want to control me. And I'd say, "I don't wanna be—I don't wanna do it that way." So I don't know, you got too many cooks in the kitchen or whatever you wanna call it. But it got to where it wasn't workin'. He didn't—he wanted to do it the way he wanted to do it, and I wanted to do it the way I wanted to do it. And it—but I'll be forever grateful to him for what all he taught me. I saw him do some things in a courtroom that you'd buy a ticket to see, I would guarantee you. So—and he would—he was peculiar like his daddy, and he was so hard to be around and all of that, but we—they called us [*clears throat*—if you look at a lot of the newspaper articles, we were on the front of

magazines—you know, *Arkansas Business* and all of those kinds of things. And they called us Batman and Robin, [SL laughs] and that's what—and he didn't like that.

SL: Yeah.

BW: And I thought it was great, because I thought, "What better way to, you know, get business and get—be legendary than to be called Batman and Robin?"

SL: Right.

[03:53:29] BW: But anyway, he didn't like that idea. He thought that was too unprofessional, and he came from the old school, and he just didn't like that.

SL: Sure.

BW: But anyway, we tried a bunch of lawsuits together, and we set records all over Arkansas. And it was very, very difficult 'cause when I came to town and when he came to town, we came at the—you know, a year apart. The McMaths and some of these other law firms had this place sewn up for business, and it was extremely difficult to ever get the business. I don't know if we would've ever gotten the business had it not been for Jimmy Clark. And Jimmy Clark helped me, and so the more business that I built up in worker's comp, then, see, you'd have other cases that would be liability cases, which is what I really wanted

to do and what Bernard and I did. He didn't—Bernard didn't do worker's comp. But anyway, that's kind of what [*unclear word*] . . .

[03:54:25] SL: Well, so you all were together fifteen years.

BW: Right.

SL: And then kind of parted ways 'cause . . .

BW: Right.

SL: Too many cooks in the kitchen.

BW: Right.

SL: So I—I'm assuming that your dad's no longer with us—that . . .

BW: Right. He lived to be eighty-eight years old. He got a fibrosis—lung fibrosis. And he got to where he couldn't move around—couldn't breathe—and he got—his hearing got bad. And so he got to where he couldn't try lawsuits. And I say this for anybody that hear—ever hears that he wasn't a hell of a lawyer—he tried—he stayed in the game too long. It's somethin' that every professional athlete or lawyer has to look at. You've only got so much stamina, and there's a day where you—your knowledge reaches a peak, and your stamina reaches a peak, and they cross, and that's the best day you—that's as good as you'll ever be.

SL: Yeah.

[03:55:23] BW: And when that stamina goes down, even though you get—may get even more knowledge, that stamina or . . .


SL: You can't deploy . . .

BW: You can't do it. So he stayed in the game too long, and I was sad for that about him, and I couldn't get him to quit. And my sisters tried to get him to quit and he—so the last part of his life—some people that might know his record in the last five years or so might not think much of him, but if they'd've seen him when I saw him, when he was at top of his game. . .

SL: He was impressive.

[03:54:57] BW: Well, he got an award from the American Trial Lawyers. It's—when they gave it to him, Russ Herman, who was the president of American Trial Lawyers, said, "Bernard Whetstone, you're the best lawyer in America." So yeah, he was pretty good. Yeah, he was pretty good. He and I both got the Outstanding Trial Lawyer in Arkansas award, and I think we're the only two, you know, father and son that ever did that—from the Arkansas Trial Lawyers. But I'm—I owe a ton to him. I owe a ton to him. But he—one of the things, I think, that is a downside and maybe the upside at the same time is he wouldn't praise you. He wouldn't—you know, when I made five touchdowns in a football game, he didn't say much about it. And

he didn't say much about anything, and so it made you wanna make six. And the same way with lawyerin'—you'd just get up and do somethin' lawyerin', just get up and tear a witness all to shreds and sit down, and you just wait for him to say, "God, that was incredible," and he wouldn't say it. He wouldn't say it, and he wouldn't ever tell anybody when we got—at the supper table he'd never say, "Let me tell you bout somethin' I saw Bud do in a courtroom." And he saw the stories. He saw things that coulda been stories, but he wouldn't tell 'em, and I think that's—



you know, as I say, I think our fathers influence us greatly 'cause we want their praise.

SL: Right.

[03:57:26] BW: And we want 'em to say, "You're great," or "Nobody's better'n you," or whatever you want 'em to say.

SL: That's right.

BW: And we're strongly influenced by that, and that's what my kids—my black kids deal with all the time—my Boys Club. That's what I'm tryin' to give them, is that male energy to say, "Man, you did good and you—it's against all odds and—but you can do it. You can do it, and you did do it." But mostly, "You did do it" when they do it. And I think praise is somethin' that every young man's lookin' for, and that's—what we've got right now is we've

got boys raisin' boys, and you don't get—a boy can't get the proper praise from another boy. You gotta get that from your daddy. Your daddy's the one that's up in those stands watchin' you catch that ball that couldn't be caught, watchin' you make that run that nobody else could make and tryin' that lawsuit or just gettin' up and goin' to work and gettin' that paycheck. Whatever it is—what—you know, what you're doin'.

SL: We got . . .

TM: We need to change tapes.

SL: Time—change tape.

[Tape stopped]

[03:58:30] SL: You know, in the last segment you mentioned a couple of things to me. You mentioned your black sons or your—and also the Boys Club. And I think we oughta talk about that a little bit. Now I do know a little bit of something about Boys Club. You were—you—I don't know if you were the lead gift or the driving force, but didn't you locate a Boys Club in, like, a really depressed area of Little Rock? I mean, wasn't that on purpose that you did it that way?

BW: Well, what happened was [*clears throat*] I was on the Boys Club Board of Directors, and I was sittin' around talkin' with all these people on the Board of Directors that were—we were talkin'

about buildin' a Boys Club and where to build one and—but we needed one in southwest Little Rock at the—in the Wakefield area, they call it. There had been a club out there before of some type. It was a community center. It was a—just an old gym is what it was, and it was all boarded up. But we're not talkin' bout that. We were talkin' bout building a brand-new—a \$2.4 million club. So I kept sittin' around listenin' to these people talk about it. Every time—every month we'd talk about it—raisin' money and all that type thing. And you know, frankly, a lot of people didn't wanna put their name on it or do a whole lot because it's about a block off of the—of 65th Street. So . . .

[04:00:18] SL: And why would they not want to do that? I mean . . .

BW: Well, you know . . .

SL: . . . tell me about 65th Street.



BW: . . . people give money, and they wanna have their name on the buildin', and so—and then some of 'em just—I don't know, they just—people are odd about race and about poor people and where there's a high crime area. To me, it makes no sense to put a Boys and Girls Club in a place where people are doin' fine. You know, they're gettin' their needs met. I think we need to scratch where it itches. So that's the way I looked at it. But

anyway, I just got a little bit tired of seein' these peop—hearin' these people. And I tend to be—this is one of my downsides, for sure [*SL laughs*—I'm a little bit prejudiced against rich people 'cause I see people that can do so much. And in this country, a lot can be done if people would just step up and do it. And there's not a good reason for 'em not to do it, and there's a hell of a lot of good reason for 'em to do it. And part of the reason is just your selfish reasons. You feel good about what you do. So I don't understand people that have a lot of money that don't wanna step up and do things. And I don't understand somebody that's a leader of a country, and they got billions and billions of dollars, and people got no electricity or sewage or they're starvin' to death. Who wants that—who wants to go down in history that way? But I mean, who wants to be that person 'cause you are what you do. So I'm sittin' there listenin' to this, so I'm—my son, Dalton, was twenty-five years old, and I was talkin' to him about it, and we were—we used to get together about every two weeks or so. And so I was talkin' with him about it. He wasn't married at the time, and I told him—I said, "Somebody needs to step up and give some money and build this club." I said, "It's ridiculous all this money that people on this board have and people in Little Rock have." So I just was

kind of bein' a little bit overly judgmental, probably, which I tend to be—so I said—I was talkin' to him'bout it. So. [04:02:19] About that period of time in [19]96, he was—lived down here on Cavanaugh, and he was—his girlfriend was over at his house one night, and a black guy broke in his house and at gunpoint tied him up and raped his girlfriend. And then they took his—put him in his own car and took him over around Central High—one of those bridges over there just west of Central High, and a fellow told him—he says—this black kid's probably about his age—said, "I just wanted you to know that I enjoyed rapin' your girlfriend," and he said, "I'm gonna kill you." Said, "But I wanna tell you before I kill you that I enjoyed rapin' your girlfriend." And he said, "And I know you hate me." So Dalton said, "I don't hate you." He said, "If"—he said, "I'm angry for what you did, and I'm not gonna tell you that I'm not." And he said, "If"—he said, "I was raised a certain way, and I had certain advantages that you didn't have." And he said, "If you—if I'd've had—if you'd've been raised and had the advantages I had, and I hadn't had the advantages and been in your shoes," he said, "I might be holdin' this gun to your head right now." He said, "That's just the way things work out." So this fellow says, "Oh hell, I can't kill you," and he got out of the car and walked off. So it was a near-death



experience, of course, and it was a terrible, tragic, traumatic experience. So he and I had this—started this conversation again, and so I didn't know what his reaction to it was gonna be because I'd tried as best I could to raise him. He knew I'd done a lot of civil rights work and that I'd done a lot of things, so I'm tryin' to raise him, you know, to—as best I can to be a better man than I am. [04:04:12] And so we're havin' this conversation, and he said, "Dad," he said, "why don't you—have you ever thought about just buildin' the Boys Club yourself?" And I said, "I'm talkin' about people that've got a bunch of money, Dalton." I said, "I don't have millions and millions of dollars." And he said, "Well, how much would it take?" And I said, "About a million." And he said, "Well, you've got a million, don't you?" And I said, "Yeah, I do." He said, "Well, why don't you do it, then?" And I said, "Well, I moved to town with a \$3,500 student loan, and I couldn't decide whether to move my furniture from Oxford to Little Rock 'cause I had \$300 worth of furniture, and it cost \$300 to move it. And because I have waited tables and washed dishes and done everything on God's earth, done construction work to save up money, and I've—it's just hard to let go of it." And I—and so he said, "Yeah, but you wanna do it, don't you?" And I said, "Well, I suppose so." I

said, you know, my—he said, "Well, Dad, you've always said that you are what you do." And he said, "Why don't you be that guy you wanna be?" So I said, "You're pretty fancy, man. [*SL laughs*] You're givin' away my money." I said, "That's about all the money I got." And he said [*clears throat*], "Well," he said, "if you're a good a lawyer as you think you are, you'll make a bunch more." And so I said, "Well, you're not gonna inherit any money. That'd be for sure." And he said, "Well, you already gave me my chance." And he said, "Why don't you give somebody else a chance." And so I said—then he said, "Those people out there need a chance, Dad." Said, "You need to do it." So I said, "Well, Dalton," I said, "Dal—I'm, you know, proud of you for—after the traumatic thing you've been through—to feel this way. I think you're reaching your higher self and," I said, "it makes me proud as a dad." So he said, "Well, I want you to tell me that you're gonna do it." So I said, "Well, I probably will." And he said, "No, I want you to tell me that you're gonna do it." And I said, "Well, okay, I'm gonna do it." So he said—he pointed at me—he said, "Have I got your word on it?" I said, "You got my word on it." He said, "You gonna write a check for a million dollars?" And I said, "I am." And he said, "I got your word on it," and I said, "You got my word on it." So . . .

[04:06:28] Then the next scene is he came over and shook my hand—or hugged me and grabbed my hand, you know, like that [makes one-handed hugging motion] and started—and then he hugged me, and he said, "I love you," and he left. And that's the last time I ever saw him. [*Sobs*] Just a minute. And he drowned. He drowned in a hot tub or in a swimmin' pool. He got out of a hot tub, got in a swimmin' pool and fainted and drowned. So I wrote the check. [*Dog makes squeaking sound*] And from that—and you know, from that I've gotten a lot because there's some scripture, and I'm not big on scripture, but there's some scripture to the effect that, you know, where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be. And that's the truth.

[04:08:09] So I spent a lot of time out there, and as a result of that, Keith Jackson, who has his own place, P.A.R.K. He's a, you know, professional football player. He's been voted, I think, by *Sports Illustrated* in the top hundred football players that have ever lived. He and I have gotten to be best friends—I mean, very, very, very close. And I was able to give more money than the million, but I was able to go around and tell this story, and people have given me hundreds of thousands of dollars. And I think I raised, you know, pretty much all that money that I didn't give. But the important thing from that is it opened me up

to a hobby that I was a little bit involved in anyway, but not to this extent, to workin' with these kids. [04:09:09] And so I've got, you know, seven or eight or ten kids in college at any one time. And I usually give 'em fifty cents for every dollar they make, and it's kind of—that was my deal with my daughter, Lee. I just had Dalton. He died when he was twenty-six. And Lee, who is about thirty-six right now, four years younger than Dalton, and got a little girl, Hallie, on the way, so I've got a granddaughter comin' up, which I'm pretty excited about, to tell you—I can tell you that for sure. [SL laughs] One of my blessings. But I've got these kids that—and I had a deal with Lee [clears throat] that I would give her a dollar for every dollar she made in school, and that was her—that was—'cause I didn't want her to just be some little snob person. She's been in a Mercedes most of her life in terms of, you know, me drivin' her around or her mother drivin' her around. I didn't want her to think she was anybody special—you know, think—she was born on third base and think she knocked a triple, as they say. I don't want her thinkin' that way. So I made her work, and when she didn't make her grades, I pulled the money back, and that's the way I dealt with her. And she accepted it and met her responsibilities. Got a master's degree in psychia—she's a

psychologist/social worker, and I'm real, real proud of, you know, her, but I—that's kind of the deal I had with her, so I got this idea of doin' that with my kids. So that's not all I give 'em. Sometimes, you know, you got to give 'em more than that because they can't work or sometimes there's [*telephone rings*] . . .

SL: Uh-oh.

BW: Sometimes they're student managers or somethin' like that.

[*Telephone rings*]

[Tape stopped]

[04:10:59] SL: So, Bud, we were talkin' about your effort with the Boys Club. Is it Boys and Girls Club?

BW: It's Boys and Girls Club.

SL: And you just kind of—after passing the idea by your son, you landed on the reality that it's real—what you really wanted to do, and he helped you through that. And you lost him shortly after that, and you have since—you talked a little bit about how you've encouraged your daughter to earn her way, which she has done. And you've also taken on responsibility for kind of adopting, in a way, several other kids. And I'm assuming—are all these kids African American or are there—is there a mix of . . .

BW: I don't—I think they all are, actually. I hadn't really—I'd say 99 percent. Might be one or so that's not. [04:12:06] But, see, Keith Jackson, who's one of my very best friends—I was married for twenty-two years to Kirby, the girl that I married in law school. And then we got divorced, and then I went about, oh, ten or fifteen years, and I was with Julie Brown, and then she got cancer and—breast cancer, and then she had breast cancer for five years. We got married when she got breast cancer. And so the—we set up a foundation, Julie and I did, the Bud and Julie Whetstone Foundation, which is a million—aside from the Boys Club, I put another million dollars up 'cause Dalton was right, I could make more money. So we put up—we made—we put a million dollars to start this foundation. So anyway, I work with Keith Jackson a lot, and we have—a lot of our kids are the same kids. We use a lot of the same resources, and I can call on him anytime. And Julie was—when Julie was sick, she was—the last twelve months she was in hospice, and I stayed home with her in this house. And Keith Jackson came over and brought me meals, you know, weekly, and called me daily, and so some of these tragedies—you know, you—there are some blessings that come with it 'cause Keith and I were pretty close before that happened. But then when Julie got sick, then—and I was here

for fourteen months, we got real close. And he—you know, he's done a lot of things for me. And I've worked with his kids, and I'm on his board of his foundation. But anyway [*clears throat*]—and I've contributed quite a bit of money to him, too.

[04:13:59] I've given away a lot more money than I've got, which is what I think you oughta do. I mean, if God blesses you, what do you—what are you thinkin'? And I've said this a lot of times—digressing—but I've said this in speeches before—some of these people got more guts than I do 'cause I don't wanna meet my maker with as much money in the bank as they got [*SL laughs*] 'cause I don't wanna—when God says, "How'd you let that happen?" And I—it's God's money. God decides who has the money. You don't decide. Now you may be the best at—I was a great dishwasher, but it didn't pay very well. And so you may be great at somethin', but it doesn't pay very well, and you get to thinkin', well, because you're—because it does pay well, you get to thinkin' that it's all about your money, but it's not 'cause God decides who has the talent, and then God decides how much money you get for that talent, if any. So that's the way I look at it. That's my point of view. But I think that a lot of people think it's their money, and I think they're misappropriating God's money, and I'm just sayin' they got more

brass than I do. A lot of things I'll take on, but I wouldn't wanna take that on. [04:15:03] So Dalton used to always say that if I make it—he said, "Dad, if you make the cut at—and make it into heaven," he said, "maybe God'll give you the opportunity to cross-examine all the wealthy people about why they didn't give [SL laughs] more money." He said, "Because [laughs] that seems to be like what you like to do, is cross-examine people." And I said, "Well, maybe so." [04:15:24] So anyway, Julie died in [20]06—in February of [20]06, and so she and I had this foundation. And so they—we ended up—somebody ended up namin' that old building that we had out there beside the Boys Club—Boys and Girls Club. They made that into a teen center, and they named it the Bud and Julie Whetstone Teen Center, which I don't really approve of 'cause I don't think you oughta be buildin' buildin's and then puttin' your name on it. I just—I mean, that's just me personally. I don't have anything against anybody else doin' it, but I don't wanna be buildin' any monument to myself. I did put Dalton's name—it is the Dalton Whetstone Boys and Girls Club, but there's a reason for that.

SL: Yeah.

[04:16:10] BW: And—but in any event, it's given me the opportunity to work with these teenagers and to—I've got some of 'em,

literally, that were six or seven or eight years old when I met 'em, and they're graduating college now. And I talk with 'em on the phone all the time. I have probably sent—I don't—I haven't—I really don't know—I forget sometimes—probably twenty kids to college and maybe a little more, maybe a little less. I don't even remember. Every now and then one of 'em will pop up and call me, and I hadn't heard from 'em in a while. They'll tell me they're workin' in a bank in St. Louis or somethin' like that, and they're just checkin' in. They just check in from time to time. But I mean, that's its own blessing. But when you see somebody come from the projects, and I'm talkin' about places where they hear gunfire frequently and where they're in some little place with a bunch of kids and crime and everyth—and you see them come from that—out of that—and go to someplace—go to a college like University of—like UALR or someplace like that, and they graduate. [04:17:32] Like this one boy, Nicky Pettus is my—one of my star pupils. So Nicky ends up playin' football at UCA for a while, and I talked with him about that, and I said, "Man, you know, you need to work on your grades and gettin'—and get rid of the football business." But I said, "Do if you gotta do it, but that's my"—he did drop it, and he said that was great advice. He didn't know if he'd've

made it out of college. He was overextended. He lives in Bryant. He's married. He's got a degree. He's makin' over forty thousand dollars a year, which is—anybody that watches this may not think that's very much money in this day and time. When kids are startin' at twenty-five thousand if they're lucky, if they can get a job, forty looks pretty good. It wo—he's at UAMS workin' out there, and they love him, and they're gonna help him get a master's degree. His wife's got a master's degree. He's got a little girl on the way. He lives in a home that's—in a brand-new home in Bryant. It's never been lived in. You see that, and I mean, that's got to touch you. That's gotta touch you. And I don't know—he—I'm not sayin' that he wouldn't've made it. He says he wouldn't have without me. I don't know—Nicky lights up the sky. You know, you don't know—you can't say Nicky couldn't do anything. [04:18:51] But you know, I've got others—many, many others, and you know, I'll get a e-mail from one of 'em that I haven't heard from in a year or so, and they'll say—a little girl, Porchia Roby, she was in a little financial trouble a year or so ago, and I don't even remember—I, frankly, don't—I cannot remember—when I give people money, I cannot even remember it. I've got a record of it 'cause they gotta give me their grades, and they gotta give me their check stubs, so I

can give 'em the money and know what they're doin'. I gotta keep up with 'em to know what they're doin'. But I honestly don't remember things like that, and I've gotten involved, also, by virtue of Julie dyin' from cancer—I've gotten involved with the cancer—you know, makin' donations to cancer and workin' with that part. So workin' with the cancer—people that have can—problems with cancer and then workin' with the Boys Club and with P.A.R.K. and all that, it's just its own blessing. That's all there is to it. I can't figure out, to save my life, if you were totally amoral and you had a bunch of money [*clears throat*], and you go build a Boys Club or do somethin' big like that, you know, people give you a pass. Ever since I built that Boys Club, I'd've never even dreamed of it—never thought about it—but they give you a pass in life. Every time I screw up, they say, "Oh, that's okay, you know, 'cause you built the Boys Club. [*Laughs*] It's stupid. But it's true. So you know, it's a—you can buy yourself a little insurance there. Well—I mean, with the community, people have been great to me, and a lot of people that thought bein' a trial lawyer and all that—they didn't think much of the way I—what I—way I make my livin'. But I've gotten a pass. Nobody's given me a hard time since I built that Boys Club. And that's so—I mean, that's another [*clears throat*]

thing—it puts a lot of wind at your back and—but I never dreamed of it. I never dreamed that that's how it would turn out 'cause that wasn't—that was no—not the motivation, but that's how it turned out. I recommend it to anybody that's—that can do it, for a lot of reasons.

[04:21:15] SL: Well, you know, the things that Dalton said to you that night, they have probably come to pass. I mean, you've continued to be a good lawyer. The million that you committed to for the Boys and Girls Club—it may have been all you had at the time, but the benefits have been logarithmic, not only for you personally and for your spirit, but the lives that you are affecting—it's not just the—one of the kids that you've helped, but it's that kid's family and how they're growing. And so it's like the benefits continue [*BW clears throat*] indefinitely into the future. By plopping down that first commitment, it's self-generating. It gives everyone the opportunity.

BW: It's pretty amazing. I'm—you know, I'm married at the present time to Kim, and we've been married about a year and a half, and I think when I knew that we were gonna get married is about the first year—we dated for about five years before we got married. But she'd lived up the street from me, a hundred yards away, and I didn't really hardly even know her when Julie died.

But we started datin', and she met Nicky Pettus, and so I asked her—and when it got to be her birthday, you know, I'd—when we'd been datin', and I said, "Okay, well, what do you—I'm don't—I'm not very good at these surprise birthday things." I said, "What do you really, really want," you know? I said, "I wanna buy—I'll buy you somethin' nice. What do you want?" She said, "I want you to buy Nicky Pettus a car." And I said [*SL laughs*], "You want me to buy Nicky a car for your birthday present?" She said, "Yeah." And I said [*laughs*], "What kind of car do you think that I should buy Nicky for your birthday?" And she said, "Price is no object." Said, "Buy him somethin' nice." So we went over to Teeter Motors over in Malvern. Teeter's a—Darrel Teeter's a good friend of mine, a great guy. And he sells me anything at cost for my boys—my little boys. I've bought a bunch of cars, too, for kids 'cause that's their biggest problem is transportation.

SL: Yeah.

[04:23:41] BW: So anyway [*clears throat*], I drive a—I get a car and drive over to Nicky's place. He's in college, and I drive it up there and say, "Hey, Nicky, come here. I wanna show you somethin'." And he comes out of his apartment, walks out there, and I say, "How do you like this car?" He said, "Man,

that's great! That's great!" He—course, Nicky thinks everything's great. "That's great!" And I threw the keys to him. I said, "Baby, that's your car." And you just can't even imagine. You just can't even imagine. You can't give everybody things, but you can give a kid like that somethin' 'cause he is takin' it, and he has done well with it. And I told him—I said, "Now there are some other kids that're goin' to school here. I expect you to carpool and get these kids around and do what you need to do." "Yes, sir. Yes, sir, Boss," is what he said. [SL laughs] "Yes, sir, Boss." But anyway, that's another thing that you're able to do. A lot of these—a lot—people die all the time. Elderly people die with cars that are ten years old, and they don't have thirty thousand miles on 'em. And if you can find out where those cars are, you can buy 'em and take 'em to a place. And I got friends that'll fix 'em up—put tires on 'em and whatever—and sometimes you give 'em to a family. [04:24:56] See, transportation is the big problem. People keep sayin', "Well, they can get a job if they want to," and all that. Well, that's okay for you to say, but if they don't have transportation, how are they gonna do it? Sometimes you can give a whole family—they got three or four or five kids, and the mother's workin'—give 'em a car. That's pretty simple. You get a pretty good car



for four or five thousand dollars.

SL: Yeah.

BW: You know, those kind of cars—so you give 'em a car. Give 'em transportation so the kids can go back and forth and do the things that they need to do. So there are a lot of ways that you can plug into these kids and these families. And I've been real fortunate to be able to do that, and I love doin' it, and that's my hobby. But I guess I got that hobby the same way I got to be a lawyer. I just kind of Forrest Gumped it, you know. Just [*SL laughs*] stumbled into it or—you know, Dalton inspired me.

SL: Yeah.

[04:25:52] BW: But that's another thing I say to people. You may not have the money, but you can—maybe you can inspire somebody, or maybe you can do the work. You know, money's not the whole deal. But anyway, that's my hobby, and I tell you, it's a great one. And Kim has been a blessing to me. You know, they say the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Well, that's the truth, too. And I couldn't have found anybody better than her in a million years. She's great in every respect. She's an RN. She's a nurse. When you get to be my age, you need to marry a nurse. I recommend that. And I'm her only patient. She says I'm full time. So anyway, I—I'll—I'm crazy about her

and feel very fortunate, and so I'm—I've had some things—I've had some rough things happen to me.

SL: Yeah.

[04:26:47] BW: No question about it. And I recognize that. But, man, I have been blessed more'n about anybody I know. I just—I wouldn't trade places with anybody. And I think all of the experiences that I've had have given me a way to look at things that are different than a lot of other people 'cause when you're not—unless you're in pain, you're not really workin', most of the time. I've been in therapy probably a total of maybe—I don't know—five or ten years, off and on, years at a time. And you know, when I got divorced that was one of the most painful things ever, and—'cause, I mean, that's some—they—that's a failed deal. That's somethin' you gotta chalk up that—you know, somebody got tired of you for probably a pretty good reason, and so that's the way that went down. But it did put me in therapy for the first time, and I—after I was in therapy for a while, I was kind of wonderin' why she hadn't left me a long time before. [*SL laughs*] But anyway—and she's a—you know, a fine person and somebody I'm proud to have been married to. So that—but that's its own lesson, and that's its own pain, and you've got to see that there is a reason for that, that it catapults

you in a way that's hard for you to imagine at the time 'cause when you're in the middle of that pain you can't see it. But I know you personally have had some tragedies in your life with your brothers and situations like that, so I think you probably know what I'm talkin' about. But spiritually, it can stimulate you to move and do the things that you shoulda done in the first place. And then as far as the therapy, figure out what in the hell's goin' on here, and you think you're doin' pretty good, and then you go through therapy and you think, "Oh my God, I cannot believe I didn't know that!" [SL laughs] [04:28:57] And so, you know, the—I consider the tragedies—you know, Dalton's death—I couldn't practice law for over a year when he died. But then I wouldn't have the Boys Club, and I wouldn't have Keith and—Jackson and a lot of other things that happened to me that are just rich. That's all you can say. It's rich. So . . .

[04:29:18] SL: Well, you know, the spirit that you tapped in to—and I think that spirit was actually there early on, but it became evident in a really [laughs] big way with the Boys and Girls Club. But you know, I—I've got a list here of stuff that is pretty hefty. You got outstanding trial lawyer from the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association; premier lawyer from *Fortune* magazine—one of the best lawyers in Arkansas, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*, one

of the best lawyers in Arkansas from the *Democrat-Gazette*, community leadership award from the FBI director; you've lectured at the law school and the school of medicine here in Little Rock. You got a distinguished citizen's award from the governor, outstanding lawyer, humanitarian award, Golden Gavel award, lawyer citizen award, Pulaski County Bar Association for two years. I mean, these things don't happen unless you've done something that has made a difference in people's lives. And so I think you've gotten over the not playin' football in high [*laughs*] school and all the challenges that you've had, and you've taken the gift that you've been given, and you have made a difference. So I think you've—you're on to somethin'. It's a great honor to be sittin' across from you—all these . . .

BW: Well . . .

SL: . . . stories that we've heard today.



[04:31:06] BW: . . . that's kind of you to say and I'm flattered. The [*clears throat*] awards you appreciate, but the reward is the Nicky Pettuses. And I've got plaques. I've got plenty of plaques to hang on the wall, and I'm proud of, you know, some of the things that I've done. But the real deal is, you know, what can you do next, and what's comin' up next? And you know, what

people can you help, because while I've talked about a lot of this, I hadn't talked about the ones—the kids that have called me from jail that I've helped out. They call me and say, "Well, I'm in jail." And they tell me—I say, "What'd you do?" And they tell me, and I say—they say, "I'm in jail." I said, "Good. That's where you need to be." Says, "Where they put people in cages that don't know how to act," and that's hard to do. It's—so I mean, it's some—it's not all awards, and it's not all—easy. It's a percentage. It's like playin' football or somethin'. You know, you win a certain amount of games, but boy, you can take some real butt-whippin's, too, and I have taken some. And some of my kids have—you know, have kept me up many, many nights. [04:32:29] I know one of my boys that's—he's in gettin' a master's degree right now. I was talkin' with him, and his name's K. J. Hunter. He won the two hundred meters in Arkansas, by the way, when he was in high school, and he's got a—he's the man with a million-dollar smile. He's—I—he wasn't seven or eight years old when I first met him. And he got in some mess one time. He called me up and was needing some money for whatever. I'd already given him some money, and I said, "K. J.," I said, "I wanna ask you somethin'." I said, "Why would I wanna get involved in your disastrous career?" I said,

"You are a disaster." And I said, "You're not a—personally a disaster, you just act like—you're—you just make disasters." [SL laughs] And I said, "You got more talent than anybody in Arkansas that I know of. You can ask any black kid in Little Rock, Arkansas, 'Do you know K. J. Hunter?' And they say, 'Oh, yeah, we know K. J. 'cause K. J. knows everybody. He could be governor. He lights up the sky.'" But anyway, I had to tell him—I said, "I don't"—I said—and when I got through it, I said, "Look, I can love you. I love you, and I'm not through with you, but I'm not gettin' any further into your disastrous career 'cause you don't know how to plan. Now if you wanna sit down with me and plan, we can do some plannin' together. But we're not usin' your brain to go any further on this." [04:33:50] And so he called me the other day and—from college, and he's gettin'—they're payin' for his master's degree, and he's over in Atlanta. And he told me that he would—he said he wanted to give me his ring—one of his rings. He's won a conference championship over there playin' basketball now. But anyway, he wants to give me one of his rings and I—and [SL laughs] championship rings. And you know, and those kind of things happen. You have to look at it and say, "Well, you know, maybe I'm doin' some good," because when somebody is doin' somethin' disastrous, and they

end up . . .

SL: Turnin' it around.

[04:34:25] BW: . . . turnin' it around, you feel good. But it doesn't always happen, is my point.

SL: Yeah.

BW: It doesn't always happen. And some—and now some of 'em—and now, some of 'em will con you. You know, some of 'em will tell you somethin' that's not the truth. But it's its own blessing, but it's tough. It's tough work, but I love it. [*SL laughs*] I do love it.

[04:34:43] SL: Well, what do you see ahead for you?

BW: [*Sighs*] I don't know. I'm just mostly fightin' gravity right now.

SL: [*Laughs*] Gravity eventually wins.

BW: Well, I've got a great life, you know, and things are goin' well for me. My health's good. I'm married to the person I wanna be married to. My daughter's got a real good situation. She's married to a really nice guy, and she's got a baby who's due in about a month or so, so I imagine . . .

SL: That's your deal.

[04:35:18] BW: I imagine that's gonna be my new hobby [*SL laughs*] is a little girl named Hallie.

SL: That . . .

BW: So . . .

SL: Yeah, your role will be that of spoiling . . .

BW: I'm sure of that.

SL: . . . your granddaughter.

BW: I'm—and I'm real excited about that, so we'll just kind of—

[04:35:35] I'll tell you little story. When Dalton was a little boy—he was about four years old—he had a list of about fifteen different items for Christmas that he might get. And so I said [*SL laughs*—I looked at it—I said, "This is ridiculous." So I called him up—I said, "Come here." I said, "Dalton, if you could only have just one or two of these things out of these whole list—I'm gonna read this stuff off to you," 'cause he couldn't read. "I'm gonna read this to you. Now you just tell me which one or two—can't—if you couldn't have 'em all, which one do you want?" I said, 'Now are you ready? I'm gonna read 'em off.'" And looked at me, and he said, "Dad," he said, "let's just wait and see what's gonna happen." [*SL laughs*] And he got every damn one of 'em.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh man!

BW: So I didn't raise no fool.

SL: You did not. You did not.

BW: So that's kind of the—that's kind of what—that's a saying that

everybody says in my life, when we talk about what's gonna happen next, everybody says, "Why don't we just wait and see what's gonna happen." But that's kind of what we're doin', but . . .

[04:36:35] SL: You know, one thing that comes to my mind—you said your mom is still alive. Is that right?

BW: Oh yeah.

SL: And do you get to see her very often, or have you—is there anything that you wanna say about your mom?

BW: I'm glad you mentioned that 'cause I really would be remiss in not mentionin' her. She lives at Woodland Heights. She's ninety-two years old. She walks every day. Probably walks a half mile a day every day. She's got a great sense of humor and seems to be enjoyin' life and does not burden me at all. And she's done a lot for me. I admire her because she had—when she was twenty-one years old, she had a child. Fourteen months later, I come along. Two and a half years later, another child comes along. My sister, B. K., who's a teacher down in Houston—teaches college in Houston. So she's got that load. She's got that load and somehow—you know, back then they didn't have the washing machines. They—we didn't have the—all those kind of things. She's got kids in diapers and—to put up

with all of that and to shuffle all that around and get us dressed and do the things that she had to do and still have any time for herself. I don't really know how she did it. I don't—and those kind of women—you know, they don't—they're stay-at-home moms, but I was—she had—man, she had a—until you have children, you don't realize what that is. But that—that's more than I would think a—that a person oughta have to do—and on a very limited budget. [04:38:28] So I really admire the way she's—she stuck in there and I—she's a great cook. She's all—she's one—it's one of those situations when—as I was growin' up, you'd go to our house—I could invite you over without even tellin' her. I could say, "Well, Scott, let's—come on over and eat your—six o'clock, come on over to my house." And you'd walk in—say, "Mom, Scott's gonna eat with us." She, "Okay." [*SL laughs*] And there'd be more food on the table than you could ever imagine, and that's the way she, you know, she'd've took care of everybody and took care of my dad. And he was a hard case, and he was a hard case to put up with. But, man, she's—she oughta be given a medal. She oughta be—the president oughta give her one of the president's award or whatever they give for bein' a great American because she is really, really—she's done great, and she's still doin' great.

[04:39:23] SL: Well, you gotta know that her reward has been the quality of —and the quality of her children and what her children have contributed to this world—you know, what their children have done with the hard work. The time-and-a-half, low pay, no pay work that she did for so long.

BW: Well, you look at—she's got—the—my sister, Ruth, that died—she had a law degree. She was a superstar in every respect. I've got a law degree. B. K.'s got a master's degree. Martha's got a law degree. She's in San Francisco. She was the head of FEMA for all the states west of the Mississippi. I've got—another sister's got a Ph.D. in psychology in San Antonio. So when you take—you know, those five, you—I think it's pretty hard to find five that can load up that heavy.

SL: Yeah.

[04:40:19] BW: And I was not the pick of the litter, for sure [*SL laughs*] because every—but everybody always asked me—they'd say, "How did you—you musta been spoiled havin' four sisters." I said, "Yeah, it really spoils you to get to mow the yard and get [*SL laughs*] to do all the heavy lifting. If anything needs to be done, you—you're the one that does it. They didn't paint any houses." But anyway, I think my mom's done extremely well—and my dad, too, you know. 'Cause that was somethin' he was

really big on, is education. I don't know if I woulda ever gotten a college degree had he not pushed me. He just—you know, he would push me—"No, you need—hell, no, you need to go back—no—" type thing. He was just always on me to do it. And to a large extent, inspired me to do it, and then helped me as a lawyer. And so, I mean, I've had a lot of help along the way. But that's—I had some rough times in Fayetteville, you know, financially. And I can remember it gettin' to be the end of the month, and I worked at a cafeteria, and at nighttime on Sundays they didn't serve, so we didn't get it—we didn't get to eat there, and I'd be out of money. I'd go over to somebody's—Sigma Chi house or someplace where I knew a bunch of people. I'd just get in a car and go with 'em. I wouldn't have a dime. We'd go to one of those big—like, AQ Chicken Houses or somethin' like that in Springdale. You go in there, sit down, and when everybody ordered, I didn't order anything. Get up. Go to those tables where people got up and left and let—they left a bunch of chicken and rolls and stuff on a table—nobody touched it—get up, go get those little bread plates, load up, sit there and eat. And I've had people say, "I've got too much pride to do that." And I've said, "I've got too much pride not to do it."

SL: Yeah.

[04:42:13] BW: So I think it just depends on what you make out of life. I lived in my cousin's car one time for two weeks 'cause—in between jobs when I was up in Fayetteville. So I've had some tough times, but I've—also, I got a lake house. I got—you know, drive nice cars and got a nice place, so I'm blessed. And to have both sides of it—that's the thing I feel sorry for, the people that have inherited millions and millions of dollars. They don't get to see both sides of it, and they don't get to see—to be affluent enough to do what you wanna do and then be livin' in somebody's car and takin' chicken off the table. You don't—they don't get to see both sides. They just—I don't play golf, but I used to be a hell of a caddy. [SL laughs] So it's that type thing.

SL: Yeah, I hear that. I hear that. Well, Bud, is there anything else that we need to talk about? Is there anything that we hadn't brought up that—I do kind of feel like I may have shortchanged you a little bit early on, but I think we've done pretty well this afternoon. But is there anything that you need to—that you can offer up that . . .

[04:43:36] BW: No, I do—I have this to offer up. I think that what you're doin' and what Barbara and Senator Pryor are doin' here is gonna mean an awful lot. I think a lot about my grandfather and my grandfathers—and we were talkin' about Grandpa Jake

earlier and my other grandfather. I didn't know to ask them their story. I didn't know how to do that. And my grandmother just—I'm almost embarrassed that I was around her as much as I was and—the one I talked about that lost first five children, and I didn't ask her about that. And so this gives my children and anybody else that may be interested or my grandchild, at least, a way to know a little bit about me and also maybe anybody else that would look at it to know what was goin' on back then.

SL: Yeah.

[04:44:29] BW: And what was goin' on when rock and roll hit; what was goin' on when I—in the Little Rock crisis or civil rights and all of those things. And I don't know if anybody's interested in it. Maybe some of the things I've said are helpful. But I appreciate the opportunity that you have given me in—to be able to do this, and I'm flattered because I know I'm in some pretty heavy-duty company on that.

SL: [*Laughs*] Yeah, well, most everybody that we've talked with have done great things. And so, yes, you are in good company.

[04:45:07] BW: I wanted to mention—one thing I did leave out is Jennings Osborne, who . . .

SL: Yeah.

BW: Jennings died about sixty days ago—somethin' like that—and he and I became best friends. I represented him in a lawsuit. But we just became best—we were at Fayetteville at the same time—we just got to be so very, very close toward the end. And hardly anybody—I would say nobody was as close to him as I was, except Mitzi and his daughter, Breezy. But—and I do wanna say, you know, he is—he was a really top-of-the-line guy, and you know, what a privilege it was to be able to get as close to him. But that's been my blessing—you know, the Keith Jacksons, the Jennings Osbornes, and a lot of other people that I could mention—you know, to be able to get to know these people in living color, you know. 'Cause they're all colorful, great people. But I've lived a Forrest Gump kind of life of—it's just—it's been a—it's all—everything's been extraordinary. And I suspect I've still got some tread on me anyw—you know, left anyway.

SL: [*Laughs*] You look like it to me. You look like you're doin' . . .

BW: Well, I . . .

SL: You're ready to . . .

BW: As Dalton says, "I guess we'll just wait and see what's gonna happen."

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a good way to end our conversation.

[End of Interview 04:46:35]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]